

Interview with Nina Menrath

Holocaust Oral History Project

5/17/90

San Francisco, CA

Interviewer: Maria Jensen

Transcriber: Sarah Rosenberg

Q: MY NAME IS MARIA JENSEN. I'M INTERVIEWING NINA MENRATH, MAY 17TH, 1990 AT THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOLOCAUST CENTER. PROFESSOR MENRATH, WHEN WERE YOU BORN?

A: 1928, in Austria, in Gratz, which is close to the Yugoslav border.

Q: WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO?

A: My father, who we're talking about, his name was Frank Pestle, and he was a consulting engineer. He had an office in Vienna, one in Hamburg, one in Paris, and one in Barcelona. So I was sort of raised like an Army brat, because wherever my father had 2 or 3 factories to build, that's where we would move to.

Q: IN HIS WORK AS A CONSULTING ENGINEER, HE MOVED AROUND ALOT. WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF YOUR CHILDHOOD, MOVING AROUND ALOT? WHAT KIND OF KIND OF A LIFE WAS IT FOR YOU? WERE THERE PEOPLE IN AND OUT?

A: Well, I was thinking the other day that I had a fairly blissful childhood until I was 8. And then from then on it became incredibly difficult because we were in Spain during the Civil War and we fled from there; and then we were in Austria during the Anschluss and we fled from there. By this time I'm 10, it's 1938. From Austria we went to France; by the time we got to France, my father's office was requisitioned by

the Germans. He couldn't even get into his office, so we got into the car and we left for Spain. By this time they're mobilizing and all hell is breaking loose.

So my memories are of meadows in Austria and vacations at my grandfather's house. Wherever we lived during the year, we would in summer go to Gratz, my father's and my home town. And I think of squirrels and rowboats and meadows and Grandpa, who was a lawyer and a delightful fun man. I think of picking flowers and mushrooms and blueberries in the woods. It's so much in contrast with the rest of my childhood, it's almost like I have a light childhood and a dark childhood. And the dark childhood actually started probably when I was 5 or 6 because that's when my father started to work as an activist against Hitler. Hitler came in '33, so I was 5. By '34 or '35, my father was pretty clear that we were in the forces of evil, and he started to talk to his Jewish friends and say "Aren't you listening to what that guy is saying? He wants to 'purify' the German race. He's going to do you in." and alot of his friends wouldn't believe him.

Q: HOW WAS YOUR FATHER ACTING? DO YOU THINK HE STARTED IN '33?

A: '33 is probably early; I think '35 was probably when he started. He had a connection through his business world with Schact, who was Hitler's finance minister. Of course, I don't know how he got to do this, but what I do know is that my father once a month had Schact's car and chauffeur, with a diplomatic number and diplomatic immunity. And that Schact said to my father, "I'll give you the car once

a month with my chauffeur. I **never** want to know what you did, and my chauffeur won't tell. And go do what you need to do."

And so my father would go back to Germany, to Hamburg, to Berlin, to different places in Germany, where he had Jewish friends who had actually worked with him in his offices, and he when he could get them to believe him, he would get them in the car and he would bring them through the border. If it was north, it was to Belgium, or if it was south, it was to France, or it was to Italy. A lot of the people he helped to come out to America. Some of them he took to Spain, some of them went to Israel.

And what I remember about that as a child is my father had always travelled a lot, and I wasn't scared when he travelled. But I began to notice that there were times when he travelled that were terrifying. The whole family was terrified, because we never knew whether he would come back. Now, nobody ever said that to me, because I was the youngest in the family. My older brothers certainly understood, but little children feel things, and I started to feel, whenever I heard my father was going to Germany, like "My God, don't go, don't go!" And he would say, "It's all right, honey, I have an office there." And it was like I didn't believe him; I **knew** he wasn't going to the office. Besides, his trips were very short; he would go for 2 or 3 days.

Q: YOU WERE ABOUT 6 OR 7 YEARS OLD AND YOU STARTED BEING AWARE OF CHANGES GOING ON IN EUROPE. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY SPECIFIC INCIDENTS AS A CHILD WHERE YOU KNEW WHAT WAS

BEING SAID AND WHAT WAS BEING TALKED ABOUT AND WAS IMPORTANT?

A: The clearest memory I have of that was after the Anschluss when I was 10. Our family doctor was Jewish and he lived 3 houses down from us. One morning I got up to go to school - it was just after the Anschluss - and there was an SS guard standing over the doctor. He [the doctor] was on the sidewalk with a brush and he was supposed to... People had done the [6:57] in tar made it out of the Swastika. You know, there's the Austrian cross, so what they would do was when there was a Swastika, they would complete it and make a [6:75], which was our symbol. Well, they got him out of his house and they had him on hands and knees to brush that down. Well, I just ran over to him and I put my arms around him and I said "Don't let him do that to you." And the guard took the rifle, turned it around and hit me over the head. My mother was standing on the balcony and she came running down and she got me in the house.

Well, what she said was "What we talk about in the house and what we believe in, you must never say in the outside world. And if you see something like that, you've got to walk by it." And I was saying, "But you can't do that, you can't walk by and let that man be treated like that." And she said, "You have to, you have to for your father's sake, or they'll kill him or they'll kill me or they'll kill us, or they'll kill you, but something terrible is going to happen."

The other side of that that's really amazing is that I was learning English at the time, and my English teacher was Jewish, and my mother's hairdresser was Jewish

and people started to call us up and say, "We can't come to your house anymore." And we'd say, "Why, are we Jewish?" and they'd say, "No, we are." A lot of the time you didn't know; all of a sudden you had to research up to your great-grandparents.

So, anyway, I'm still in school; the Anschluss has only been a month and my father is figuring out how we're going to get out of there. The schoolteacher says, "Now, in the morning when we come in, instead of saying 'Good morning,' we say 'Heil Hitler.' And when you go home to your parents, you are to say 'Heil Hitler' to your parents, too." And I noticed that I wasn't allowed to go to my English lessons, and that the Jewish children in my class weren't in class anymore.

So anyway, I started to ponder this, and my mother and I had a difficult relationship, so one day I go home and I say "I think I'll try it," so I ring the doorbell, my mother opens the door, and I say "Heil Hitler." And she slaps me across the face and slams the door and says "You're not getting into this house until you greet me properly." (And we used to say [8:57], which means "I kiss your hand.") So I'm standing outside the door and I'm thinking, "You know, I don't like that woman very well. I could now go to the police and denounce her, and they'd take her away." The danger of implanting these possibilities into a child's hands are just obvious and enormous. Anyway, thank God I didn't do it - I rang the bell again and I went back in.

But for me as a child, it was incredibly difficult to sort out what my father was doing and what we were talking about at home, and my mother actually was

accidentally born in [9:17}}, in a little town in South America. Her father lived like my father; he bought for [9:23] and he travelled all over the world. So my mother had an Argentine passport besides having an Austrian one.

So she went to the Jewish hairdresser and there was a guard in front of the door. My mother was so obviously blonde and blue-eyed, and the guard said she can't go in there and she said, "Yes, I can," and she took out her Argentine passport. The guard let her in, but he quick read her name, and called my father in the office. He said, "If you don't get your wife out of the hairdressers, you're going to be arrested." I mean, it went that quick.

Q: HOW SOON WAS THAT AFTER THE [ANSCHLUS]?

A: 2 months. We left about 3 months after the [Anschluss]. Illegally. And my father had to make sure that we would be received along the way, so that we could get out. From Vienna to Paris is a long way. And I can't tell you how we got there, I don't know that. I mean, I know we rode in cars at night, and I know we came to borders, and I know we were told to be quiet, and we climbed over things, but I don't know the facts or the route, or whatever that was.

And I remember we arrived in Paris... In Vienna, we had a very big, beautiful house, and we had to leave everything there, and then the next thing I know we're in Paris in a dinky little apartment. I'm saying, "What happened?" "Well, that's the way it is now, and it will be different again." We went through that also when we left Spain during the Civil War.

Q: HOW MANY WERE THERE TRAVELLING? YOU MENTIONED OLDER BROTHERS. HOW MANY OLDER BROTHERS DID YOU HAVE?

A: I have 2 brothers. Had. One was 4 years older than I and the other 7 years older than I. And the one who was 4 years older than I lived in Argentina, and he died of cancer about 3 years ago. The one who is 7 years older than I is still alive in Brazil in [10:66].

Q: DID THEY EVER SHARE THEIR MEMORIES WITH YOU ABOUT THAT TIME?

A: You know, I became a psychologist probably because I was so traumatized in my childhood. They did the reverse; they shut down. My brothers had a great deal of difficulty talking about feelings, talking about childhood. If I tried to talk childhood with them, they would talk about the meadows in Austria and Grandpa and the happy times. They don't want to talk about the other stuff.

Q: LET'S GO BACK TO SOMETHING YOU MENTIONED BEFORE, YOUR FATHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FINANCE MINISTER, SCHACT, WHO I BELIEVE WAS LATER DEPOSED BY HITLER. DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG THEIR RELATIONSHIP LASTED?

A: It lasted for as long as we were in Europe. We landed in South America in 1940. And it's interesting that people who on the one hand were loyal to Hitler and were doing things which I believe were pretty horrible, on the other hand had allegiances, sort of underground allegiances. I've heard that from other people, too, where they've named names, and I've thought, "Oh my God, you knew **him**?" I'm not

talking Goebbels or Goering, I don't know anyone who knew them, but I do know people who knew {those} lower down in the hierarchy and who said things like, "Yeah, he saved my life."

Q: WHEN DO YOU THINK THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHACT STARTED - MANY, MANY YEARS BEFORE 1933?

A: Probably. Probably in my father's business world and totally unrelated to anything political originally.

Q: WHEN DO YOU THINK HE STARTED MAKING THESE MONTHLY TRIPS INTO GERMANY WITH SCHACT'S CAR?

A: I'm quite sure it was '36. '36 to '40.

Q: SO WAS HE GOING IN ABOUT ONCE A MONTH?

A: That's what Schact had said to him originally, that he could have the car once a month. Now, I'm not sure that that went on for all that time, because 2 of those years we were in Spain - '36 to '38 we lived in Spain. And then the Civil War came and then my father took people out of Spain who were being persecuted by Franco. And so he couldn't have gone back to Germany at that time.

Q: YOU WERE VERY YOUNG THEN, 8 YEARS OLD IN 1936. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY DISCUSSION ABOUT THE GERMAN AID THAT WAS GOING TO FRANCO'S FORCES - THE DESTRUCTION OF GUERNICA, FOR EXAMPLE?

A: No.



Q: SO YOU WENT BACK TO VIENNA AND YOU WERE THERE UNTIL 1938?

A: Right.

Q: AND 3 MONTHS AFTER THE [ANSCHLUS] YOU FLED TO PARIS. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW LONG IT MIGHT HAVE TAKEN YOU TO GET TO PARIS?

A: No. No, it's like lost time. I remember the feelings. I remember sitting in places like this {gestures around} where that {puts finger to lips} was the signal, and then you'd hear people walk. I have no idea how long that was; it seemed an eternity. It could have been 6 days or 7 days.

I'm not sure at all.

Q: BUT YOU DO REMEMBER DISTINCTLY BEING TOLD THAT YOU HAD TO BE QUIET, YOU KNEW IT WAS DANGEROUS.

A: Oh, yes, and I was told so many times **never** to speak about what we spoke about at home. It was always like my father's life depended on our being able to keep secrets, including when we were in France and when we went back to Spain, and when we got on the ship and went to South America. My parents didn't feel safe until we had landed in Buenos Aires and had a place to live. So there were many years of not being able to speak like other kids do. When they would say, "Where do you live," or "What does your father do?" "Well, we move alot." "Well, what does your father do?" "Well, he's an engineer, that's why we move alot." And we weren't

even allowed to say that we were fleeing, because you never knew who you were talking to.

Q: GOING BACK TO YOUR FLIGHT FOR JUST A MOMENT, DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN GOING THROUGH GERMANY? DO YOU REMEMBER ANY LANGUAGES BEING SPOKEN AROUND YOU? OR DID YOU TRAVEL JUST AS A FAMILY BY YOURSELVES AT NIGHT OR DURING THE DAY?

A: We travelled just as a family. When we went to South America, we were on that ship that was full of Jews - we were the only non-Jews on the ship. But when we left Austria we travelled as a family and we got to France. Wherever we stopped at night, we drove, we took trains, whatever.

I want to tell you just one story that I remember really clearly. When we left France, we were going to go back to Spain. We got to the border - the chain just closed in front of us and the Frenchman said, "Mobilization has taken place. Everybody has to go back to their own country and has to go into the army. And so just turn back and go." And my father had a gray Packard. Everybody just stopped dead and the borders closed and we don't know what to do and what's happening. And all of a sudden we see the Spanish guard comes over to the French guard and he's pointing at my father's car and he's saying something. And my father says, "This is probably it, that's the end, somebody recognized me." And the French guard comes up to our car and he says, "Are you Mr. Pestle?" "Yeah." "And this is your family?" "Yeah." "Get through." And my father's totally puzzled and he's white as

a sheet - I can just see him. We still don't know whether if we get on the other side if we're going to be shot or **what's** going to happen. We get on the other side and the Spanish guard says, "Well, you saved my life during the Civil War and this is my turn to save your life." My father looks at him and says, "I don't even know you." And he {the guard} says, "I am the brother of the guy who worked in your factory and you came to get me at night and you drove me over this very same border and you risked your life." My father had done that hundreds of times; he'd never even looked at the people he was taking over the border. This was during the Civil War, so he was gone almost every night, and I remember that. One guy would say to him, "Go over there, go to this house, it's my brother and his wife and their 3 children." And my father had an Argentine flag and an Austrian flag over his old Packard and he would drive people over the border. Well, this guy is one who he had driven over the border, and he let us in. And that's how we got to Spain - and if it wasn't for that guy, we'd all be dead.

Q: YOU'RE CONVINCED YOU'D ALL BE DEAD. I'M CURIOUS ABOUT THAT BECAUSE SHORTLY AFTER THE [ANSCHLOSS] CLOSE TO 80,000 PEOPLE WITHIN A FEW MONTHS WERE ROUNDED UP IN AUSTRIA, UNDESIRABLES, POLITICAL ENEMIES, OF WHICH THERE MANY. YOUR FATHER MANAGED TO ESCAPE THAT. WHY WERE YOU CERTAIN THAT YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD?

A: Because if we had gone back to France - by this time the [Anschluss] had taken place - we were Germans. Everything would have been taken away from us, or if

we were recognized as activists, we would have been sent back to Austria or Germany to a camp. So one way or the other, we would have been dead. And the reason that we got out of Paris is because somebody from the German embassy called my father and said, "Get out of here, they're going to mobilize in 2 days." And that was supposedly from the enemy's side.

Q: HOW DID YOUR FATHER KNOW THIS PERSON FROM THE EMBASSY;  
DO YOU KNOW?

A: I don't know. But it must have been somebody he helped one way or the other. He helped **so many people**. And besides, he had to have had a guardian angel for us to get through all the things we got through. Then we got on the ship to go to South America, we're the only non-Jews on the ship. Just before we get to Brazil - by this time it's the war - a British U-boat surfaces and stops us, and ask the captain to come on board. By this time my father is a German who would be captured by the British, right? Wherever he was, he was the enemy. So the British guy comes on board and he says to the captain, "Give me all your passports," so the captain gives him all the passports. By this time all the Jews have a "J" in their passports, and almost everybody on the ship are German Jews or Austrian Jews. This is a little transport ship, there was room for 40 people, and we were 360 people, so we're sleeping everywhere, and he [the captain] has 360 passports. So the Spanish captain gives the British guy the passports. By this time, my older brother is 17, so he would have been taken, too.

So the British guy starts going through the passports and says, "Well, these are all Jews, don't you have any others?" And the captain says, "I don't make any difference, I don't know what you mean by others or by Jews." So he looks through another, I don't know, 120 passports and then he says, "That's all you got?" and the captain says, "That's all I got." And he gets off the ship. in the meantime, we're in the cabin saying, "Okay, 2 minutes before freedom and they're going to get him yet." And they didn't.

Q: THEY DIDN'T GET YOUR FATHER, AND IT SOUNDS LIKE FRANCO'S FORCES DIDN'T GET YOUR FATHER. THEN THE NAZIS MARCHING INTO VIENNA DIDN'T GET YOUR FATHER. AND IN FRANCE YOU MANAGED TO ESCAPE THE NEW ONSLAUGHT, BUT AFTER THE WAR DID YOUR FATHER EVER GO BACK TO VIENNA AND FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES?

A: Yeah, my father went back to Germany and to Austria on business and to visit family, and what was so...And he visited his Jewish friends who had either returned or his Jewish friends in America, he had some in New York and he went to visit them a number of times; in Chicago; and some in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and, you know, they just adored him. In Los Angeles.

It was so amazing about him; he was so much more forgiving than I am. He would just go back and he would visit his Jewish friends, and his friends who had been Nazis, and he would listen to their stories. And eventually he would say, "You know it doesn't matter very much on what side you were. It was horrible, it was

painful, it was devastating. We all suffered, we all were hurt, we all were wounded. Yeah, more people were killed on one side than on the other, but then look at Leningrad and the millions of people who died in Leningrad, Russians."

**Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S BACKGROUND THAT MADE HIM TAKE SUCH EXTRAORDINARY RISKS, DO YOU THINK, GOING INTO GERMA-  
NY?**

**A:** The psychology of the rescuer is fascinating. He was raised a Catholic, we were raised Catholics. He was a deeply honorable, loving kind of man. We always had servants. He treated the servants with the greatest respect. He would go to the kitchen and compliment them after dinner, and thank them for the beautiful meal that they had made. I never ever in my life saw my father put somebody down. Or even criticize somebody, which is why it was so incredibly shocking to me when Hitler came into Austria - we were in the street, watching the parade - and my father said, "Why doesn't somebody shoot him." And that was the only comment that I ever heard my father make that was so devastating that it took me months and months and months to integrate how this father who was so loving to us, to his family, to his friends, and to everybody, could say something like that. Then I began to understand more and more, even from accidental conversations where my father would come home and say to my mother, "You know who they just deported," or something like that. And then I'd say, "Was that Hitler?" and he'd say, "Yeah," little by little, I got it.

**Q: WITHIN A FEW MONTHS - THIS WAS STILL IN VIENNA?**

A: Yes.

Q: SO YOU HEARD ABOUT DEPORTATIONS, ABOUT PEOPLE BEING TAKEN AWAY? DID YOU RECOGNIZE THE NAMES AS FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY? WERE YOU AFRAID FOR YOUR FRIENDS? FOR YOUR OWN CHILDHOOD FRIENDS AS WELL?

A: Yes. And actually, some of my cousins were taken into the German army by force. The SS would come into a high school classroom, and take all the boys, put them in SS uniforms and send them to Russia.

So I've had people on both sides who were fighting on that side and fighting on this side, which eventually also taught me that no matter where you were, it was horrible and it was cruel and it was senseless and yeah, Hitler initiated the whole debacle, but nobody won. The winners didn't win.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER IF THERE WAS ANY KIND OF DISCUSSION WITH YOUR BROTHERS ABOUT BEING PART OF HITLER YOUTH OR ANY THING LIKE THAT? DO YOU REMEMBER ANY KIND OF CONVERSION?

A: Oh, we were made to join the Hitler Youth.

Q: SO YOU WERE A MEMBER OF HITLER YOUTH AS A CHILD?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I remember three meetings of being in the Hitler Youth. Anybody who wasn't Jewish was forced from their schools to go into the Hitler Youth. And I remember that the first time that we were there the teacher said with this friendly phoney smile, "What do you children know about Hitler?" And I said that I knew that he was a painter, I mean painted walls, and that his father was a

guard at a train station or something like that. Well, I obviously wasn't supposed to say those things, those were not the heroic things, but interestingly to me, that I had those facts. I must have been told at home that he was a kind of a nobody, that he came out of no education, no culture, no background that had any thinking or value or whatever. And amongst those things, I heard those things [above].

**Q: DID YOU HEAR THAT HE WAS AUSTRIAN?**

**A:** Oh, yeah. I also remember once, you know the Georgians, the Russian Georgians, were friendly toward the Germans because Hitler tried to help them stay independent from Russia. And when they couldn't - from the Soviet Union, I should say - and when they couldn't, the Germans helped Georgians to get out of the Soviet Union. And at some dinner with some bigwig that I attended, a Georgian said to me, "You must be very proud [laughs] that Hitler was an Austrian." And I said, "Oh, exactly as proud as you are that Stalin was a Georgian." And oh boy did he shut up. He never talked to me again the whole evening.

**Q: WHEN DID YOU HAVE TO JOIN THE HITLER YOUTH?**

**A:** From school.

**Q: IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ANSCHLUSS IN MARCH?**

**A:** Immediately. Immediately. Within...maybe April. Maybe it was April. Until things got organized.

**Q: YOU REMEMBER SEEING THE PARADE WHEN HE ARRIVED?**

**A:** Oh, yeah. I remember seeing the parade, I remember the Jewish children leaving class. One morning they were in class and the next morning they weren't there. And



of course, you know, being who I was, I went right up to my teacher and said, "Good morning, where are my friends?" and she said, "You didn't say 'Heil Hitler'" and I said, "Okay, Heil Hitler, where are my friends?" and she said, "Well, they are now going to special separate schools from you because they're not the same as you." And then I went home and I said, "Is this about the Jews again?" "Yeah." Because of course, they didn't say it, they didn't say, "They're Jewish;" they said, "They're different."

I want to share one experience that was very important to me. I work in Europe in spring - normally, I'm not here, I'm in Europe, I teach there, all over the place, in different communities. And a friend of mine started a community in northern Germany, and she asked me if I would come and do some teaching there. And I said, "Sure, I'll do anything for a friend." And then I'm in Holland working, and all of a sudden I realize that I have made really sure since the war never to go to northern Germany, 'cause that's where my father was persecuted. And so I went to southern Germany, I went to Frankfurt and I went to Munich, and I went to places in the south. South, close to Austria, kind of, but not northern Germany. Austrians have a prejudice against northern Germans anyway. But that's where my father went, Berlin and Hamburg, was where he went when he was getting Jews out, so I never went there.

So then I'm on the train going to Hamburg and I think "Oh my God, I wonder what's going to happen to me? I could get back into "5-year-old" and be terrified. And I'm supposed to lead a group of northern Germans!" So I arrived there and I

said to my friend, "You know, this is where my terror comes from as a child. And I'm not sure I can do it; or I may do it and fall apart in the middle of it." And she said, "Well, I'm a pretty good group leader. If you have to fall apart, fall apart."

So one night - this was a week workshop - I worked with a woman my age [about] a dream that she had which was about the war, and I've had thousands of those dreams. As a matter of fact, I did a lot of therapy to get over my war dreams. You know, some things I dreamed that I never experienced, that I heard and I read and I lived with.

So anyway, I worked with this woman's dream and it was absolutely devastating. So then I go to bed, and all hell breaks loose; I start dreaming more dreams again. And I wake up and I'm in tears and my friend comes in and she says, "Well, you don't have to lead the group today, I'll lead it." And I said, "Oh no, this is my opportunity. I'm going to lead the group and I'm going to tell them. I'm going to share with them who I am," which I never do in Germany. And she said, "Okay." So I went in and I said, "You know, I'm just going to talk about my childhood for about ten minutes, and it comes from the dream that you shared last night. My childhood was as difficult as yours, and yours was no more and no less difficult than mine. And I have finally understood that we're all the same. But I need to talk about the terror." So I did, just a little bit. And then there was a Dutch woman there, and this was the month of May, which is when the Dutch were liberated, and so she talks about her experience as a child, and she's my age. And then somebody else talked, and then all of a sudden this one German woman with a voice like a

general says, "Get up everybody!" and it sounded like an air raid is happening; we all got up. And she says, "Put your arms around each other!" and we put our arms around each other and she starts to sing "We Shall Overcome" and we just all sang "We Shall Overcome" - it still makes me tearful - and that was my real healing to be able to realize that we're all one, and that we've all gone through these atrocities. But we have to stop blaming and we have to stop pointing fingers and we have to learn to forgive and we have to remember so that it never happens again.

Whew - I didn't know that's where I was going, but that's fine.

Q: IF YOU WANT TO TAKE A BREAK, IT'S ALRIGHT.

A: No, I'm okay. I always think that tears are just fine.

Q: THERE'S SOME PEOPLE WHO FEEL THAT STRONG PEOPLE CAN HAVE DIFFICULT CHILDHOODS AND MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE STRONG AND VERY SUCCESSFUL IN LIFE WILL SAY, 'WELL, IT'S BECAUSE I HAD A DIFFICULT CHILDHOOD.'

A: That's true.

Q: YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY REFLECTED ON WHAT THE WAR COST YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. WHAT DO YOU THINK IT COST YOU IN TERMS OF YOUR CHILDHOOD? WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR CHILDHOOD WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE IF THE WAR HAD NOT INTERCEEDED?

A: No, I'm so much of a realist that that wouldn't occur to me but I have a very complicated and interesting family and I think we've all suffered a great deal and

some of us are more able to look within and work with the suffering than others. My mother is 85 and she's a very bitter, sad old lady who's still pointing fingers.

Q: WHERE'S SHE POINTING FINGERS?

A: Oh, at the Germans, and at life, and at my father, and at the risks he took and at how traumatized we were. (My father's dead.) Everybody is at fault except her, that's how my mother deal with is, which is a total non-dealing-with-it.

Q: SHE DIDN'T APPROVE OF YOUR FATHER'S ACTIONS?

A: She did, but it cost her. And it cost her much.

Q: HOW DID IT COST HER BY HIS DECIDING TO RISK HER AND THE FAMILY'S SAFETY BY...

A: Tremendous fear. My mother lived in terror alot of the time. And sometimes she talks about it like he was a hero, and sometimes she talks about it like he was crazy. And that he also endangered alot of people who knew what he was doing. She's confused about it and she's on all sides of it and none of it digested or...she's just not that kind of lady. My mother cares more about make-up and hairdo, and about image. Amd when it's convenient, then the image is that he was a hero, and when it's not convenient, he was a crazy man.

Q: IT ALSO SOUNDS LIKE IT WAS IMPORTANT AS A CHILD - YOU HAD TO ADAPT, YOU HAD TO HAVE SEVERAL DIFFERENT IMAGES. AT SCHOOL, THERE WAS HITLER YOUTH, AND AT HOME YOU COULD BE YOUR SELF AND DISCUSS THE REPRESSION GOING ON AROUND YOU. DID YOUR PARENTS - GOING BACK TO HITLER YOUTH - DID YOUR

BROTHERS AND YOU EVER DISCUSS WHAT YOU WERE BEING TAUGHT THERE? WHAT DID YOU DO AT A HITLER YOUTH MEETING AS A LITTLE GIRL OF SIX OR SO?

A: You sang songs, you saluted, you were told you were of a priveleged race. I was told that if I was very, very good, during summer vacation I could go to Germany and live with a wonderful German family. Stuff like that. And I wanted to go! I went home and I said, "Hey, I can go to Germany this summer and live with a wonderful German family!" It's so confusing in a child's mind. Then my mother says, "No, that's for poor child, children who have no means, and they can probably go live on a German farm where they will be well-fed. I didn't what poor children were - I mean, they were in class with me, they looked like me. I didn't know the difference. My father also built a glass factory for the Shah of Persia, the old Shah. We had Hindus and Persians and Japanese - Mitsubishi people were at our house when I was a little kid in Vienna. We had people from all over the world in our home. I didn't know what prejudice was! I didn't understand.

Q: BUT DID YOU START TO LEARN AT HITLER YOUTH?

A: Oh, sure.

Q: DO YOU FEEL, LOOKING BACK, THAT YOUR PARENTS WERE MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO STOP THIS EDUCATION THAT YOU WERE GETTING IN THE SCHOOL AND HITLER YOUTH? AND WITH YOUR BROTHERS AS WELL - WERE YOU AWARE OF ANY...?

A: My parents were just waiting to get us out of there, so by being truthful and honest when we were home, they were counteracting everything that we were learning. And I guess part of my memory is how incredibly strong the family bond was and is. Still with my brother who lives in Brazil (I just phoned him, it was his wife's birthday), we're a closer family in many ways than many families who live in the same town, because we've been so torn apart. And, yes, having such a difficult childhood makes you a strong person or you go under. And I've seen some of my cousins after the war who stayed in Austria, who couldn't get out and who experienced a lot of what I experienced and worse, and were absolutely neurotic, who've never gotten over it, and with whom I can't talk, because if I talk to them like I'm talking to you, they go nuts! "What are you talking about, you're crazy, how can you work this through, what is there to work through, we were damaged forever and ever and ever, we're just damaged people." And I say, "Hey, we were damaged people until we were 10 or 12 or 15, and what are you now, 62? And you're going to tell me you're a damaged person? You've had 50 years to work on it, and what have you done?" Oh, they go so crazy.

Q: IT SOUNDS LIKE - YOU WERE STARTING TO SAY YOU DID SINGING...

A: Singing, storytelling, like Boy Scouts, Boy Scouts of America.

Q: WAS IT A FUN ACTIVITY?

A: No, it was so conflicting for me that it wasn't fun. Because I was always afraid that I'd get caught saying something I wasn't supposed to say. I was afraid to believe

what they said. If I did believe it and went home and talked to my family...a couple of times I was ridiculed, which was very hurtful, "How can you believe that?"

Q: WHEN WERE YOU RIDICULED AND WHAT HAPPENED?

A: I don't remember what the story was I brought home, but it was something I said which my teacher had said. You know, with big eyes, and wanting to know whether it was true or not. And I was laughed at, and I don't know what it was I said, but I do remember how hurt I was. They probably, living in that kind of crisis, expected much more maturity of me than a 10-year-old girl could muster. And they would forget that I was 10 years old.

Q: WHEN YOU FLED TO FRANCE, DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

A: Yes, I went back to school in France. I went to a Catholic nun's school and I was terrified, just terrified. It was so austere. It was in a castle and there was a gate and there was an old nun who opened the gate and she had a cane. And if she didn't like the looks of you, she'd just hit you one as you walked by. It's funny, then I got terrified by Catholic nuns, who are supposed to be kind and loving and accept this traumatized child. I was probably more terrified in that school than in some of the times in Vienna or in Spain.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN SCHOOL IN FRANCE?

A: One year. 1939 was the year I was in school there.

Q: AND THEN IN SPAIN?

A: No, in Spain I wasn't in school anymore.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN SPAIN? WHERE DID YOU GO?

A: We went back to Barcelona where we had lived and my father had associates, and we stayed there maybe two months before we got on the ship to get out.

Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT EVEN UNTIL YOU LANDED IN BUENOS AIRES, THERE WAS THIS SILENCE THAT HAD TO BE KEPT ABOUT THE FAMILY'S BELIEFS, WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO. THAT PERTAINED IN SPAIN AS WELL. WERE YOU TOLD SPECIFICALLY TO LIE?

A: Oh, yes. In Spain, Franco was ruling, so if it came out that my father was a anti-fascist and most of his friends with whom he'd had the factory, by the time probably through necessity had become fascists. Or had bowed to Franco and his politics, or whatever, so then we couldn't talk about it again. And they actually - I remember conversations where they were making pretty positive comments about Mussolini, and about Hitler, and Franco and this big alliance that is forming.

Q: AND WHAT DID YOUR FATHER SAY OR DO?

A: My father didn't say anything. At that point he kept his mouth shut because he wanted us to get out of there and there was no point. I mean, the purpose of going to Spain was to escape, to get out of Europe, and there was no point in starting anything at all. And that's when my mother went to the Argentine consulate and said, "I was born in Argentina. I want to be repatriated." And they said, "Fine," and she said, "And I have a husband and three children." "Oh, yeah, they can go with you." And it was an absolute miracle - and it was my mother's idea. My father didn't even think of it. My father was working with his political connections to try to get us out. But my mother naively and innocently went to the Argentine embassy and



came back and said, "Hey, we can get out legally." My father said, "What happened?" and she told him.

Q: YOUR MOTHER STILL HAD HER ARGENTINE PASSPORT, WHICH ENABLED YOU LEGAL PASSAGE TO ARGENTINA. HOW SOON AFTER THAT DO YOU REMEMBER BOARDING THE SHIP? DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE SHIP?

A: Cabo San Antonio, out of Barcelona. 360 people were on board. It was a cargo ship.

Q: HAD THIS BOAT BEEN CHARTERED OR WAS IT JUST A SCHEDULED RUN?

A: It was a run, and I think it was by the grace of the captain that all of those people were getting on board, because we had also gotten out of Spain during the Civil War on a similar ship. And we had lots of - at that time, the Catholic nuns and monks were being thrown into churches and being lit on fire by the [30:82], whoever they were. They were Communists, but they weren't just Communists, they were pretty wild. The Spanish Civil, between the [30:90] and Franco, you didn't know which was going to be worse. And so, those are memories that I have of seeing a church go up in flames and hearing people scream and yell.

Q: THIS WAS IN BARCELONA?

A: In Barcelona.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU IN BARCELONA?

A: On the Avenida [31:05]. You know [31:08], the mountain in Barcelona?

Q: NEAR [31:14]? DO YOU REMEMBER THE CHURCH THAT WENT UP?

A: No, but we also had a summer house in [31:18] on the Costa Brava, and we saw a church lit on fire there and people burnt alive.