

Go ahead. So we have come from your growing up in Germany--

Yeah.

--through the time that you were in the camps in France--

Yes.

--and to your train trip to Marseille--

Mm-hmm.

--to hopefully get to freedom.

Yeah.

I was wondering if you could say something about how you felt at that time about your identity. Here you were, fleeing from a country who was persecuting Jews, of which you were one. And you were literally having to flee the continent, if you were lucky enough to do so.

Yeah.

And you've mentioned a number of times about your identity, that you had trouble with that.

Yeah.

Can you say what it was like then?

Well, then, I didn't have a trouble because I was with people of my own sort, so I had no trouble at all with that. You know, and as you said, the overriding feeling was to get out-- get out of Europe. I mean, by that time, it was clear that things were going to be bad, you know, that you had to get out. So I didn't have any trouble with that at all at the time.

That cropped up really much later. That cropped up in connection to when I had a child, and I didn't really know who I was. And there were a lot of sad things which happened then. But at that time, I didn't have any trouble. I had my friend, Miriam, and my mother was there, and my yana, whom I liked very much-- you know, a few other people.

You used to go to stores, and even-- I guess we got some money sent from America, and I remember we must have bought something because there's a picture of mine on that-- on that visa, which-- a new outfit. I know I didn't bring that from Germany, you know.

And I know we went, and I bought a terrible hat too. I remember that. [LAUGHS] So I didn't have any identity problems then. I didn't have to be a clown. I didn't have to be anything. My only trouble was really that I was so hung up on food and that I was not good about sharing. And I look back at that not proud at all. But--

Did you speak French then?

No, and my mother did beautiful, so she spoke French in all the stores. And so the only thing I could say was, whether I've been helped-- no, not yet, you know. That French lady would try to talk to me. I wouldn't know. And I had the same experience going to France to see my dear niece, who had sent me all these magazine things. And I said something to her neighbor, how happy I was to see her, in perfect French. And the woman started asking in French, and me, I couldn't understand a word. [LAUGHS] I didn't do it again.

So German was spoken mostly in the camp?

I guess, yeah. We spoke German. Yeah, right.

And you had learned some English?

I had learned English, and it came in very handy to our dealing with the hotel manager, who was probably from the French police. I'm not sure. He didn't harass us. He didn't give us any trouble at all.

Did you feel optimistic about going to America?

Well, I wanted to go to America very much, but it was off-- we were very worried about getting this transit visa. And that was really a job, and we would never have-- there were some special connections, which my yana had in Marseilles, without which we would never have gotten those visas. So that was a big-- that was a big worry. And, of course, you worried every day about that.

The transit visa?

The transit through Spain, through Portugal, you know, and also to get a shift-- a ship-- that was extremely difficult. And it was a miracle that they came up with something.

--miracle if they came up with something. So there was constantly something, whether it would work or whether would not work. And it was obvious that it was just hanging by a thread.

Right.

Just how much it hung by a thread, we didn't know at the time. But there was a feeling that was very exciting whether you would get all these things, really very--

Now, you've been very impressed by how much your father did.

Yes.

But at this point, he couldn't have been doing it, right?

No. My brother and sisters did.

Your brother and sisters did.

Yes. And I'm also very impressed about what my brother did, and then Victor's and Paul's sons, and then this a brother of my yana, who did a lot. Of course, that I didn't know at the time.

I knew that Victor's and Paul's sons were in the east, and they were constantly communicating with my brother and sisters here in the west. And I knew they were in touch. But I didn't know about this other person who was so influential and so important in getting things together. No, my father couldn't do it anymore, but he had started a lot of things.

What was the fate of people who didn't have these connections?

Not good. You know that. Well, there was a roundup-- you know that-- in 1942. And these people were all picked up and sent to Poland. And most of them, you know what happened to them. So that wasn't good.

So you were in Marseille for six weeks.

Yeah.

And waiting for the transit visas.

Yeah.

How did that happen that it all came together?

Well, that was clearly absolutely amazing because we would go to some of these places, and I remember how pathetic it was to see my dear Uncle Paul just absolutely begging. And, oh god-- you know. But then what happened-- and I don't know how this actually happened. Two friends turned up, of my yana's father, who had been an eminent chemist at the Polytechnikum there in Karlsruhe, where we lived. He was a professor there.

And these two men were students of his, or at least one was a student of his. The other one, I don't remember. And how my yana knew about them, how she got in touch with them, I don't know.

They had lived in France. And they were at freedom. They were really free to live.

And they spoke French fluently. And they went with us to some of these consulates and apparently convinced the guys to give us a visa. It was a lot of going back and forth, but it was just absolutely amazing that they did this.

And then we met a very nice middle-aged fellow whose mother had also been freed from the camp, I think. And he was, I think, in the French resistance in North Africa and so on. And he was very nice. Just specifically what he did, I don't know. But he was very nice.

So these things really hinged on said people being able to speak French or--

Exactly.

--things like that.

Exactly, exactly. And that they should have been there at that time and that she should have known about them, it's just absolutely amazing. And then this whole business with the passage was a fantastic thing that that came about because there was apparently a lot of speculation about passages being sold which didn't even exist, on boats which didn't exist. But they really had a boat which actually left Portugal eventually. It's just absolutely fabulous. I mean it's--

So you got visas to go across Spain and Portugal--

Yeah. Right.

--to where? Lisbon?

To Lisbon. We were supposed to embark from Lisbon.

Was it a Portuguese boat?

I'm pretty sure it was Portuguese, yeah. And it burned later in Brooklyn, I think. As a matter of fact, my ex-husband used to go down to the harbor, and he thought he saw the boat. He might even have seen me come off the boat. I don't know.

[LAUGHS]

[COUGHING]

But it was an amazing thing. And then we did get those French-- we did get the transit visa. And it was absolutely a miracle. The last one, we got on my 19th birthday in 1941.

But then we actually had to go, and something happened. We missed a train somewhere. And we were absolutely beside ourselves-- in Barcelona, I think-- because we thought we missed the boat.

I remember, actually, the boat then was leaving 10 days later. That was another thing. We would have missed that, but it left later.

Was there any difficulty getting across Spain and Portugal?

We went by train. And I remember how impressed I was how bad Spain looked. Yeah. It was tremendous amount of destruction from that war, awful.

No, it wasn't-- I don't remember. I know we stayed overnight in Barcelona when they told us we had missed the train. And [LAUGHS] as a matter of fact, it was funny.

Again, all six of us were together. And then, in the morning, Uncle Paul came down. He had such a precise way of talking.

And he said, I have some very bad news. And we were-- god, what happened? Well, actually, I guess there were some insects which bit him, which was not-- [LAUGHS] at that hotel.

[LAUGHING AND COUGHING]

And then I don't know how long it took to go to Portugal. We must have stayed at some hotel there too. Portugal was very pretty.

And again, Miriam, my friend, and I went out. And we saw the town. Don't remember too much, except there was a lot of beautiful tile around, you know?

But I can't remember the detail at all. Unfortunately, I don't have-- certain people have wonderful memories about places, but I'm not good about that at all. And it's gotten worse as I get older.

But you were only there a few days.

Yeah. Well, let me see here. Yeah.

I guess, a little bit-- a week, I suppose, because we left the 3rd of June, arrived here on the 13th. And let me see. We got the last transit with the 13th. I see some things which were stamped for the 20th of May. So I guess it was about two weeks, I imagine.

Two weeks in transit?

In Lisbon, or maybe altogether, I can't tell you that for sure. And again, my mother found where we had to go. Or they all found, and I just followed along. I mean, for 19, my god, I gave them no support or whatever. I can't--

How did they deal with the language barrier there? Do you have any memories?

Well, I don't know. I don't remember that we had much problems. My mother probably spoke French, and maybe I spoke English. I have forgotten. I don't remember that at all. The food--

No one spoke Portuguese?

No, no one spoke Portuguese that was in there. So maybe somebody spoke German too. I've forgotten.

But we managed. Again, we had money. And I think my brother and sisters must have sent us money because I don't remember what we ate, but I know we weren't hungry. And there were lots of things in the stores there.

I was going to say, you could eat anything you wanted in Portugal.

Yes. I remember beautiful fruit there in the stores. I don't remember.

Did you try to make up for what happened in the camp?

I probably did. I can't remember that. That's funny.

I don't even remember where we stayed in Portugal. I remember the place where we stayed in Marseille. I have some memory of it. But in Portugal-- and yet we were there for two weeks-- I don't know. I remember staying in that place in Barcelona.

What was the name of the ship?

SS Nyassa. N-Y-A-S-S-A, Nyassa.

Big ship, small ship?

That was a small ship, as I remember. But there were probably a few hundred passengers on it.

Were they all refugees like you?

They were all refugees. I remember there was an Orthodox rabbi. I don't know where he came from.

And they were all refugees, yeah, and Portuguese sailors who used to sing there at night, and Portuguese stewards. And you had a cabin. I remember being seasick for a short time, but then not.

Was it a passenger ship then?

It was a passenger ship.

Or was it-- it really was.

It was a small passenger ship. And again, I had no inklings that there were torpedoes [LAUGHS] that landed.

[LAUGHING]

Ignorance is bliss.

Yes.

[LAUGHING AND COUGHING]

You don't remember other passengers being frightened?

No. Nobody was. I guess everybody was really so glad to get away.

I remember that there was a young French woman there, and she had a little boy. And he kept saying, [FRENCH]. And I thought he meant she was mean, but she was really sick in her stomach. She was seasick.

[LAUGHS]

And my mother told me, no, no, he doesn't mean she's bad. He means she's sick.

[LAUGHTER]

Remember how long the trip took?

Oh, 10 days. That I remember because I know the dates. We embarked on the 3rd, and we arrived here-- arrived in New York on the 13th of June.

What was your first impression of America?

Well, we stayed with a cousin, fairly well-to-do cousin who stayed in a residence hotel. I know we were with her. And somehow, I think we actually had a little apartment, my mother and I. Maybe she had gotten us one. It was quite plain but nice. It was wonderful to be in luxury again.

And let me see. We stayed with her-- I visited some other relatives who were on a big estate, I guess in Long Island somewhere. And I remember meeting a very nice young man, but I had to leave the next day. I was very sorry about that.

You had an eye for the man?

Yes. I liked him, and he liked me. And that was so-- I didn't always have that much luck.

And so I was very sorry about that. But we had to go the next day. And then we traveled across the country.

Immediately after arriving here?

Yeah. About four-- we only stayed in New York for a few days.

Where were you headed?

To San-- to Berkeley, as a matter of fact, to Berkeley.

To Berkeley directly. Were your siblings already there? How did they come to be in Berkeley?

Well, I think, actually, it happened through friends of my family's, well-to-do people who had come out with quite a bit of money, who were able to buy houses. Of course, that was Depression days, so houses were fairly inexpensive. But they had them in nice neighborhoods.

My sister was an au paire girl for one set of these friends. And the other friends liked my brother very much. They had girls whom I think they would have liked my brother to marry or something.

But in any case, they liked my brother. And right in the beginning, I think he was encouraged, in New York, to go elsewhere because there was such a concentration of refugees in New York. So he was very glad to go.

He told me years after that he really would have liked to go to Oregon. But he said, I didn't have the guts to do it. So he came to Berkeley where those people were.

Oh, actually, my sister, my older sister and he lived in San Francisco for a while. And there were some relatives, too, who actually gave affidavits, very nice. I never met them. But they apparently were very nice, two older men who had lived with their mother, and the mother had died, two brothers. And they were apparently very nice to my brother and sister when they first came, and invited them and things like that.

Of course, they all tried to get jobs, and they did get jobs. It wasn't easy, but they did get jobs. And then there were some other young refugees with whom they became friends.

And let me see. Oh, and then my younger sister, she got married to a young refugee whom we're still close to. And he found a house in Berkeley right next to the Claremont library. The house is still there.

It was a beautiful house, five bedrooms, four bath, or three and a half bath. And he rented it. He leased it for very little money at the time. So we all lived there.

And I think my brother had also gotten married in the meantime. So there was the two young couples and my elder sister and myself and my mother. And then a very good friend of my brother-in-law's, whom we became close friends with, he was there too.

He was doing his own cooking. And he was a little-- a strange man. And he and my mother didn't always get along. My mother did the cooking.

And I very soon-- it was made clear to me that I had to get a job. As a matter of fact, that was really very hard for me because here I had always expected that things will be done for me, you know? And here I had lived through the camps, so wasn't I a real special person?

For a long time, I thought the world owed me something. It didn't help me at all. I wished I hadn't.

But in any case-- but I did have to go out and work. So there was no question about it. They made it very clear that I had to.

How soon after you came?

Oh, I think within in a week or two, I probably got a job.

What kind of a job?

Oh, the only thing I could do was a little housework. I couldn't even cook. And there was a lot of competition going on between my younger sister and myself. I mean my sister who was in between, because she was always so capable.

And of course, there was a tremendous amount of emphasis on capability. And that was very hard. That really was hard for me to deal with. That was harder than [LAUGHS] Nazi Germany.

I didn't realize that they were all personal things. I had so long lived with this that, oh, if you only get out, if you only get out, things will be fine. But then comes the real things of-- I really didn't know enough about it. It was very hard for me, at first, to get going there.

But eventually, I got a job in Alta Bates for a while, I think. And I worked as a kitchen girl there. And I had watched the cooks quite a lot. And that helped me.

And then, later on, I got a job with a very nice Swiss family who were veterans? of the-- a Jewish Family who were weathering the-- the war in-- in the United States. They were apparently quite well-to-do, very nice people, though. And I worked with them for a while. And then, actually, I was accepted at the university, and I was getting a scholarship. I was accepted at the co-op living. So in 1942, I--

What were you studying?

Well, [LAUGHS] that's another really sore point. I was supposed to be a nurse. And it was probably just as well I didn't do it at the time because I'm sure I wouldn't have survived nursing school the way it was then.

But you had to take freshman chemistry for that. Don't ask me why nurses have to take chemistry. It seems absolutely ridiculous.

And I happened to do very well in that freshman chemistry. And I also took an English class where I was doing well. And the professor was saying, well, I would say to the student-- he was reading something I had written. He said, I would say to this student to go on in English.

And I thought, well, I'm doing so well in chemistry, and chemistry seemed such a glamorous field to go to as a woman. I mean, my motivation was always-- didn't until in mid-life, my motivation became more sensible. In those days, whom could you impress? And impress your family, impress some boys maybe, who were not too numerous.

So actually, I did decide to go into chemistry. And I think the second semester, I still was in pre-nursing. I took some bacteriology.

But then my brother-in-law, who was a chemist also-- and as a matter of fact, he was doing very well. He was working with Seaborg. And I think he was somebody who came very close to win a Nobel Prize. He was-- clearly, he's a very bright man. He still is.

And they were up in Idaho. He had a-- he wasn't a professor there, but he was something. It was still hard to get jobs.

And my niece, the niece in France, was actually born there. And I came to visit them during that summer. And I was trying to make up my mind what I should do. And I met a very nice couple who were professors there at the university and friends of my sister and brother-in-law. And, oh, they kept encouraging me I should go into chemistry or maybe medicine, which thank god, I didn't do.

So I came back, and I decided to go into chemistry. And I really didn't have enough talent to do it. I got quite far with it because, during the war and after the war, government was very, very generous with their grants.

And it was just as well. It's a nice way to keep people going. But I didn't really-- I didn't have the motivation. I didn't have the talent.

And then afterwards, actually, when I had so much trouble with my little girl-- I think I was working part-time then. I did look for psychiatric treatment. And what we came up with was I shouldn't continue with that. I should stay home with my kid-- which [LAUGHS] the feminists would tear their hair out-- which I think was the right decision. I'm very glad I got to stay home with the kids, although for that little one, it was too late. But I had another one, and it worked out better.

We need to back up a little here.

[LAUGHS]

Yeah.

We left off when you went to the university.

Yeah.

And then somewhere along the line, you obviously acquired a family. Can you fill us in a little?

Oh.

[LAUGHS]

OK. Now, let's see how that went. Well, I did go to the university. And I graduated in the spring of '47. I did get a



degree in chemistry.

And let me see. And then, by that time, I'd met a young GI who had come back from the war. And I liked him right away. And so sooner or later-- so we got acquainted, and we were going out together.

And I had a job with Standard Oil at the time. Years later, I realized-- they had me translate patents. And the patents they had me translate were-- they had all picked this up in the war. This was '47-- were actually how to make oil from coal, which the oil companies didn't want.

So of course, I didn't put two and two together. Oh, it was a job. It was prestigious. It was-- you know.

So actually, they had me go through, and go through which articles talked about that. And I think they very conscientiously took those articles [LAUGHS] and destroyed them. But of course, I didn't know that at the time.

And then my young GI, he was back in a pre-dental program to go to the dental school in San Francisco. Met his mother. And just recently-- we're divorced, but we're still very good friends. And just two or three weeks ago, we went back up to where the mother had bought a house during the war.

And, hey, I hadn't been back there since [LAUGHS] those early days. It was amazing. It was much harder to get up the hill than it used to in old times.

[LAUGHS]

But anyway, so I met his mother, who actually-- these people had come from New York. He, I guess, is a second or a third generation American. See, the "Bregoff" actually was a Russian name, Bregovsky.

His father's grandparents were Russian. And his mother's-- his father's parents were Russian. And his mother's parents were Polish. All four grandparents had immigrated.

[CLEARS THROAT]

The grandfather, the Russian grandfather actually was a pharmacist, had gotten his degree in Saint Petersburg, which was very unusual in Saint Petersburg, and then had come here. And the mother's parents were both from Poland. I think the woman was a very gifted dressmaker. And the daughters became-- were all in the dress business. Not my mother-in-law, but her sisters were.

And first, they had lived at the East Coast. And my future husband, he went to the-- well, there was a very bitter divorce of the parents when he was only nine years old, from which I heard early on in the marriage. And [CLEARS THROAT] he actually [CLEARS THROAT] was talented enough to go to the High School of Music and Art, which was really something at the time.

In those days, people really did get a decent education. There was a different spirit in the air, I would think. And he even went to college for a little while.

[CLEARS THROAT]

But then he enlisted in 1943. And he went out to the Pacific. And he had a brother and a sister. The sister was married to an officer. And the mother had lived in New York.

But in the middle of the war, her younger sister wanted to divorce and decided to go to Reno. So the two ladies headed west, and then went on to San Francisco and bought the house which I just looked at a few weeks ago. So they were here.

And when the boys came back from the war-- I don't remember whether the brother was out of the States at all. But my

ex came back and was discharged in California. And he came to San Francisco.

And then, on the GI Bill, he came over to Berkeley to take his pre-dental. And I lived in a house of a friend of my brother and sisters, actually, a rather bohemian house, a very interesting woman. And she had all kinds of people coming in. And the young man she lived with was friends with my future husband. That's how I met him.

But he was involved with another girl at the time. But eventually, we became friends in early '47. And then I brought him to my mother's house.

And my mother was absolutely delighted. She really liked him. He was nice man also, and for an American, for a New Yorker, he seemed soft-spoken.

And what amazes me to this day, which I didn't really know right away, but which over the years-- he had a tremendous amount of knowledge about European art, geography, history, politics. I mean, way beyond-- here I was in Europe, and he knew much, much more than I did. To this day, I'm amazed how much he knows.

So we got together. But in '47, he just couldn't make up his mind. And I thought I better go on.

And so I had good enough grades to go to graduate school. And of course, graduate schools also wanted students in those days. So I went to graduate school at Washington University in Saint Louis, which actually happens to be a good school and a very good medical school. Of course, I had a little bit of dealings with the medical school, but not much.

But he went to the dental school for-- well, first, he started here, and then he transferred to Saint Louis. And we actually got married in 1948 at Saint Louis. And we spent those student years there, which was, again, pleasant and easy. And then in 1952, we came here, and he started a dental practice.

Did you lose any family in Europe?

Well, not close family. Here again, these were well-to-do people, and most of them got out, managed to get out somehow or other. We had all these special connections in France, which was really miraculous we got out.

But many of the others-- and then this one lady who went to Palestine eventually, she made it, also amazingly. Her sister was one of the ones who went to Palestine in 1939, and they couldn't land. And her husband was taken prisoner. But they have lived in Palestine-- in Israel all this time.

I did lose those aunts in Palatinat because they were in that-- they were deported from that to Theresienstadt. And then the two aunts-- the one who committed suicide in Baden-Baden. Her sister tried to commit suicide too and didn't succeed. And the Nazis woke her up gently.

And then I don't know. She wasn't on that transport. But they eventually got her to one of the extermination camps.

And let's see who else. See, it was-- I mean, relatively speaking, this is very few people. I'm trying to think.

I think the two old cousins who brought up the young man who was orphaned, I think they probably died a natural death. I'm not sure. But their death dates were different dates, I'm pretty sure.

So I'm not quite sure. They were buried in Mannheim. So I'm not quite sure what that was.

What about the one who went to Theresienstadt? Did they die there?

Yeah. They died in Theresienstadt. They were elderly, you see, and probably already malnourished.

They weren't being killed there. They died of illness or--

No. They just died from illness or malnourishment. I'm trying to think.

I think one of these women went to Auschwitz, not the one in Theresienstadt. But I think the sister of the one in Baden-Baden, she might have died in Auschwitz. Very few people in that circle actually did-- well, the Germans-- of course, the German Jews had more warning than the Jews in the east, where this whole thing just swept over them.

Yeah.

I'm trying to think. But it's actually amazing. I have never thought-- the whole Holocaust thing, you so much identify with the victims that you don't think much whether it was your own relative or not. It was just something so awful to happen to people you knew or people in whose situation you actually were that I had never really counted who--

Yeah.

--was in there, but not very many people, obviously. So again, luck.

You went on to graduate school. Did you--

Yeah. I did go to graduate school.

Did you get a degree?

I got a degree. I got a graduate degree, but I didn't do much with it. I did a couple of postdoctoral things.

And it wasn't too bad. I mean, nowadays, it would be what a lab technician does. But times have changed.

[LAUGHS]

But then it turned out that it really didn't work out with that little girl of mine. And I'm not sorry I made that change. I'm not sorry at all about--

Now, you've referred several times to how oblivious you were to what was going on at those times in France and even in Germany.

Yeah.

And yet you come with a dossier, with very detailed things. So clearly something has happened in your life where you had decided to focus on what happened--

Oh, yeah.

--and to put it together in your own way and in your own words. Can you tell me how that happened?

Well, actually, in a way, it was a funny thing. I took an anthropology course with a very, very lenient professor at Laney College over in-- that was at the time when I was getting my nursing training. My marriage had broken-- lots of things happened to me.

In mid-life, I became a teacher. With a degree I had, I could just take a few education courses and become a teacher. And that was the first job I took with any kind of sense of responsibility.

I wasn't so much of a feminist as I felt that my husband was getting older. Here he had already worked for-- I don't know-- 20, 25 years bending over the dental chair, and I thought I should help him. So I got that job.

And I did all right. But the hiring-- [LAUGHS] not unusual for me. The hiring authority said, Mrs. Bregoff, there's

nothing wrong with your work, but you have kept company with the wrong people. And I had. So I lost that job.

At the time, teaching was really getting rough. And then very soon after, my marriage broke up. And my daughter, my eldest daughter had horrific schizophrenic symptoms.

And I knew it, and I wasn't trying to hide it. Neither did my ex-husband. But we really couldn't get any real help for her. I mean, the psychiatrists knew less how to deal with it than I did-- than we did.

What was the time frame for this, if you would?

Oh, she's born in '54. And she was always a strange youngster. But then I'd been a strange mother.

So I knew there were some things which weren't right at all. I had another child to whom I related a lot better. And so I tried to relate better to her too, but it wasn't too successful.

But anyway, by the time she was about 10 or 12, she began to show signs of not operating right. And I knew it. I told the pediatrician about it. And he thought he could have her checked. And somehow, I didn't go along with that.

In any case, she got really quite sick in her early teens. And then we did go to a psychiatrist. And he actually put her on Stelazine, which helped her.

But then we moved to Berkeley. This was the time of the Civil Rights thing. And we lived out in the suburbs, and it was pretty suffocating.

So we thought Berkeley was a better place. I don't know whether it really was or not. Well, they had the-- in the school, indications there, which we were in favor of.

So we moved to Berkeley. And somehow, we couldn't stay with the psychiatrist. I was teaching school. And we couldn't make any time arrangements for her to see that same psychiatrist.

And then the help she had in Berkeley was just terrible. We couldn't really put her on medication. And then by the time-- later, she didn't want to take it anymore. And it was just a real goofed-up kind of a deal.

People try to reassure me that it has nothing to do with how I treated her, but I can't get over that feeling. So it has a lot to do with my own feelings, confusion and so on. I can't feel that-- can't help feeling that I'm-- I really consider her a secondary victim of the Holocaust. I really, honestly do. But maybe I'm not right.

Could we go back just a little bit. You said that you lost your teaching job because you spent too much time with the wrong people.

Yeah.

Who would the wrong people have been then?

Well, the wrong people were some people the administration didn't like. And what I found out later was that they were anxiously-- it was a school district where the enrollment had dropped tremendously. And of course, teachers had tenure. I had tenure myself.

And they were very anxious to get rid of some teachers. So naturally, they would get rid of the teachers they didn't like. And I stood up for one teacher who I had a lot of respect for.

And I've never regretted it. As a matter of fact, in a way, it was a very fortunate thing for me, although at the time, it looked terrible. But it actually pushed me in the right direction. And I'm not sorry about it.

There was a young man involved who was a little bit of a flake, but basically a good teacher, and obviously somebody whom the administration didn't like. And I was with them. And our school was a small school. It was very polarized. It was either those two and one other teacher who was with them, or some really absolutely impossible ladies, who were, of course, very much favored by the administration, very rigid, very-- in every respect.

And so it just was-- although that's what I did. And of course, it doesn't look so good. But anyway, as I said, it turned out well for me. Nowadays, it would have been really catastrophe. But I was able to get into another field and do much better in that.

Did you stand up for them as a result of some of the things that had happened to you?

Yes. As a matter of fact, in a way, I did because one of the teachers kept saying, if we don't speak up, that's how it was in Germany. This was not a Jewish lady. And of course, that always hits a nerve with me.

Afterwards, I really felt we couldn't help them at all. The administration had it all-- and teachers' jobs were already getting scarce. So the teachers in the teachers unions are teachers themselves who have to protect themselves. I don't blame them at all.

And so we couldn't really help them at all. This actually had something to do with the fact. And then, of course, I've always, all my life, [LAUGHS] I've always been on the wrong side of authority. It's amazing that I survived this last job and actually retired in honor.

[LAUGHS]

I can't still believe it.

What field did you get into when you left teaching?

I actually was very lucky. Nursing was wide open at the time. And I had always-- I was a pre-nursing student originally. And I had terrible regrets I hadn't done that.

In the mid '60s, before I became a teacher, I knew a woman, I guess, through a nursery school. I took both my kids to a nursery school. And I knew a woman who had gotten a degree from the University of Wisconsin. And she could work an afternoon or two a week and still have a family. And I thought, oh, Jesus, why didn't I do that?

And besides, nurses were getting much more prestige. And my elder sister, the one who had been a pharmacist in Europe, actually became a nurse during the war. She'd trained over on Mount Zion and then had got her degree, her BS, at Cal. And she was then at Highland Hospital over in-- you know, in the-- she had a high position there. She did very well with it.

And I had regrets I hadn't done that. I thought that was foolish. And then, actually, I didn't know that the nursing-- actually, that I could have gotten a nursing degree too, instead of a teaching degree, and I was sorry about that.

But then I think it really wouldn't have worked out. It worked out better with the kids to have a teaching degree and have vacations and we-- if they have, and so on. So in a way, I'm really not sorry about it. I taught for five years, [LAUGHS] and I still get a tiny, tiny pension from where I left my money in.

Now, you said earlier that you had flirted around with nursing and that you were-- it was a good thing that you didn't--

Yeah.

--do it because you were all thumbs.

Yes.

But you then got into it, right?

Yeah.

Did it turn out that you only had two thumbs and eight fingers?

No. I'll tell you, it was much, much more lenient. I was older. So as an older person, in those days, as an older person, you had certain rights.

It was a very, very mixed group. It was a very diverse group. And it's different from diversity nowadays.

It was a very, very liberal time to get into nursing. And I went to one of the junior colleges over there. It was for me an excellent time because I still had-- I still was all thumbs.

To this day-- I had this nursing job. I was never as good as some of the other people with my hands. I was good with my head.

And they were still putting a lot of emphasis on being able to do fractions. And of course, when you give medications, you have to do that. And that was one thing which was an advantage.

Eventually, I was in a hospice situation. And we gave very high dosages of narcotics. And I was always very sure of my arithmetic.

I remember the pharmacist calling me up one afternoon. And you have to give that person-- how did you calculate that? How much did you come up with?

And he said, yes, you're right. That's right. It's correct.

[LAUGHS]

But I had never any worry about it. I would do it several times, so I got to be very, very sure. But I had never any worry about it.

I made only one mistake, which was a stupid mistake and was not really strictly mine. Only I should have thought more. A doctor put the wrong thing in, and I should have questioned it right away. I didn't. But luckily, nothing happened to the patient.

Could you come back now to the anthropologists?

Oh, the anthropologists. You see, I first got a degree as an LVN. That's the first thing I got into. And then I did very well there.

Of course, it wasn't all fair. I did it all in my head. And a lot of these people were Black women who had nursed for years, who could nurse circles around me. But of course, me with my high score in the little courses we took, and my spelling and my writing and what have you, got into the nursing-- in the RN program. They had one slot for an LVN to go, and I was the one who got it.

And so I went to RN school. And that's where we had that anthropology course. Anthropology was one of the requirements. And I think I took that, actually, at Laney College. And there was a very lenient professor there.

[LAUGHS]

I remember he said, you have a project. You can write it with your fingernail on a slate, or you can whisper it in my ear,

but it's got to be a project.

[LAUGHTER]

So that's how that project came about. And I had found these papers which my mother had saved. See, my mother died then in 1971. And the papers were left over. And I put them up in my attic.

And I really wanted to burn them. And I think I burned some of them or threw some of them out. But then I came across that pack. And I saw this-- that I really ought to show you later. I saw this affidavit with all-- and I thought, hey, that looks sort of interesting.

But I didn't know anything about the project. I wasn't taking anthropology or anything. I just put it aside.

And then this man asked us, I guess in '76-- because I got my degree in '77-- to do this project. And I went over to the Judah Magnes Museum and looked around. I couldn't really find anything.

And then I remembered those papers. And I thought, well, why don't I go look and see what it is? And so I just got so fascinated with those papers.

And I wrote this for-- and then, again, when I went over them because we were going to do this, I was just absolutely amazed. I went into more detail on some of the papers. And I thought it was just absolutely-- that I found very interesting.

Well, you see, my worldview has changed. I have a wider view of the world than I did as a younger person. And for one thing, I've gotten away from this business that it's only the Germans. I know there's just a lot of sad things going on in the world, and things one can't always help, and one doesn't know how to combat. And somehow, I just-- and I have taken much more interest in the past.

As a matter of fact, when my sister passed away in 1980, my older sister, she had a photo album-- or she had photos, which I then put in an album. And I came across one photo. I have looked for it. I couldn't find it. It was a small shot of two of my cousins at the station in Germany, leaving for America in 1936 with their family.

And I made an enlargement. And the daughter of one of the cousins lives around here. And she is so for family. Oh, she was so delighted to have that picture. Luckily-- I can't find my own enlargement. But I sent several away, so I know they are around.

And I got sort of interested. Every time I see old photographs or old cemeteries, I'm much more interested. Cemeteries, well, I was always interested in. But old family photographs also, I'm very interested in that. Also, when I hear other people talk about their background, I find this interesting. Some people coming from Nebraska and--

You haven't mentioned much about your second child. Can you fill us in a little?

Yeah. She turned out OK. I had her after I had treatment, and it worked out much better. I had a much better relation with her right from the beginning. And I never laid a hand on her, not like the older one.

Do you attribute that to the training you had in Europe or to the general internal discomfort that you felt being a refugee and making all those adaptations?

Yeah. Well, I feel-- at the time, the psychiatrist, when I sought help because I couldn't get-- I sought help because I couldn't get along with her. He said something very apt. He said, well, you have your-- you're mixing her up with you, and there's so much in you you don't like.

And I also couldn't accept her because she was a girl, and I wanted to have a boy. My sister with whom I was always competing had two girls, and I wanted to have a boy. Well, it turned out to be a girl. And that fed in right with my never

having really identified my Jewish identity, not having accepted that very well.

I think he was absolutely right. I think I got myself and her mixed up. And I was very hard on her.

When my second child was born, I didn't have that problem. She was a little child, and I was an adult. And I could deal with her.

I was trying to do things better with my older child. But of course, a lot of damage had already been done. People say now it's genetic, but it's genetic with some things which trigger it. And I just am afraid I was a trigger.

Can you say a little about what you alluded to earlier, which was this feeling that you have about, it wasn't the German and that-- you've mentioned a number of times that you've gone back to Germany. Tell me how you've worked that in your mind so that you feel what you feel now about Germans and Germany and going back there, how you feel when you're back there?

Well, when I feel back there I-- I wouldn't want to live there anymore. I feel their standard of living has gone up tremendously, but that is just a minor thing. But I feel very happy seeing some people again. And I very much appreciate their warmth toward me. And I'm glad we can all bridge this.

I mean, we cannot bring anybody back to life. And for years, for 30 years, I felt, well, I can't do that. All these people died, and I can't go back.

But I just don't feel that anymore. Mainly, also, other things have happened. Other atrocities have happened in other places of the earth.

What allowed you to take that first step, then, and say, well, I will go back?

Let's see.

And when was it?

Actually, we were still married. I went back with my ex-husband and the two kids in '71. And I'm trying to think what it was, why I felt that way.

Well, of course, there was a lot about the Civil Rights Movement already. And there were feelings about that. And I don't know. It was sort of gradual. And that old friend whom I told you about, who died in the-- before I could apologize for my stupidity, he had said this business about-- I think it was things I was reading.

Oh, I know one thing which was a very determining factor, but which was earlier, was I saw-- I haven't seen many plays in my life. I'm not a very literate person. But I saw this play by Durrenmatt, *The Visit*.

And that, to me, all of a sudden, I felt-- that was-- well, of course, when I-- from olden times, I guess I was pretty much influenced by some socialist reading I did, not a lot. That summer when I was in Idaho in 1943, I know this English professor, who encouraged me so much to go into chemistry, gave me Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*. And I was 21 at the time, and I think I've never really changed my mind about this thing.

[LAUGHS]

And I felt that, sure, it was Germany. I felt very much that this whole thing, this whole fascist thing had been brought on by the German industrialists, for sure. But I think they had help from overseas also.

And then other things came up. That was actually after '71. Our involvement in Central America, some things, that was, of course, later.



I mean, this feeling that this was a very put-up kind of a thing because there was this tremendous threat of socialism from Russia, of course. And Germany mustn't fall by any means, and that it was more than German industrialists who stuck together there. I still feel that.

So did you say, "help from overseas"?

Yeah. Help from overseas. I mean, from the Allies.

And I don't exclude America either, although my ex always said, oh, no, no. The Americans-- he's a great patriot. I mean of the Roosevelt type. The Americans weren't into that. Well, I don't know.

But I felt-- well, for one thing, Hitler was able to march into the Rhineland in 1936, and nothing happened. I felt there was just a collusion there. And the overall picture was that by no means must Germany fall.

And then other things which happened-- of course, some of them were later, like Chile and so on-- is that one thing we apparently cannot tolerate is a socialist government. It's not even so much a communist government. It's a socialist government, a moderate government which has social reforms. This we just can't tolerate. And I felt very much that Germany-- this whole Visit thing somehow brought it out. Germany, as this man so rightly said, was caught in a certain historic, geographical, economic situation, and that was the result.

I think Hitler would never have won. That came out with Shira. I never read all of Shira, but I happened to read the first book.

Hitler would never have won if he hadn't had a tremendous amount of money being pushed his direction. And money was to keep socialism and communism out of Germany, mainly socialism. And they did a wonderful job.

And I think-- oh, that was the thing with Durrenmatt. I think that the Weimar Republic was starved on purpose, like the Allende government and some of the other governments. It was that kind of a deal.

I think they didn't want a Weimar Republic in Germany, and they succeeded in destroying it. And I feel it wasn't the Germans alone. I think it was a whole Western society kind of a deal.

Do you think that these kinds of conditions could reoccur in the world and we could see a similar thing?

Alas, I do. Alas, I do. I wished I didn't because I think of my two poor old aunt in-- who always was talking about it and talking about it and talking about it.

I'm very worried. I cannot say otherwise. I'm really very worried about things.

And I see a lot of-- I wished I didn't see them, or I wished I was paranoid. I wished I wasn't right. But I see a lot of parallels. I cannot say otherwise. So I don't know.

What mark do you think these experiences have left on you?

Well, let me see. Well, I think I'm a sharper observer. And I don't buy-- I don't buy a fatherland so much anymore. Also, I really have adopted America. And that's, I think, why I'm so terribly grieved at seeing things not going well because the America I adopted was a post-New-Deal one, which was, of course, a wonderful place to live in for many of us.

I think it's made me a sharp observer. As well, the Jews, in general, are considered outsiders and often sharp observers. In that respect, I was very amazed at reading Heinrich Heine. And he has a poem there about a slave ship.

And that was before. That was back in 1830. And, boy, he really knew it.

When I was in Germany, I didn't know anything about-- very little about slaves or anything like that. But here was that

man, and he had no illusion about it. Of course, he was in trouble with the authorities all the time.

So I think it's made me a sharper observer. But I think I'm probably also a lot more distrustful of people. And I've had a lot of trouble with personal relationships. There's no question about that. Not only with my own child, but in work and other places.

Now I think I'm learned a little bit, after all these years, to shut my mouth a little bit, and look first and listen first and not always be so prejudiced right away for my viewpoint. But some of the things I've said, which were sort of in opposition to what people felt, were correct.

Are you glad you said them?

Hm?

Are you glad you said them?

Yeah, sometimes I'm glad. Sometimes it's the wrong thing. But whenever I say something which is well-motivated and thought out, and which isn't acting out, then I'm glad I said it. That acting out business, that I learned from that psychiatrist when I had so much trouble with my child.

And of course, I realized my father was really an actor-out. I mean, he didn't treat his wife very nice. And she was terribly devoted to him.

He was really hard on the kids. He was very hard on my brother. It's amazing how well he turned out.

And he was, in many ways, hard on me. And he acted out, no question about it. But it took me years to really understand that. And on the other hand, he did these real wonderful things too. So I don't know.

Well, and of course, you know-- that, of course, I'm not alone. Everybody, it's in your consciousness. You can't get rid of it anymore. You know.

But so I think always-- lately, I've said, the worst thing about the Holocaust is that it actually happened, so that you know it's a possibility. That's so awful. And of course, I haven't been very-- I've been very chicken about-- I've seen some of the movies. I've seen some of it. But I'm cautious about exposing myself.

Is there anything else you want to add?

No, I don't think I have to say much at this point. So I thank you for your time. You've been such patient listeners.

We thank you--

[LAUGHS]

--for sharing your amazing story.

I appreciate you taking the time and the energy that you put into this.

Yeah. Well, I'm glad. I'm glad if it-- if it does some good to somebody, it's good.

It will.

Good.

It will. Thank you.

OK,

OK.

OK. This was one of the houses at the Haydnplatz, where we lived. It was a semi-circular thing. And our house was a little further over.

And as I told the other two, it had been bombed during the war, long after we left, in one of the big attacks. It was bombed and burned out. And it's been rebuilt, not very well.

But this is how the original houses looked like. They were built before the First World War, very solid and very elegant for those days, and very large, very big. OK. OK.

And that was my high school. That's where I left in 1938. Started in 1932, 10 years old, and I left in '38.

It was a good place. And I came back to it not only in '71, but then I came for the 40-year reunion and the 50-year reunion. No, maybe not the 40-year.

Then there was the 75 anniversary of this thing, where all the classes came together in a big-- and I saw the inside, and it was totally unchanged. Old school yard-- same old thing. It was really amazing, as if time had stood still. It was not damaged by the war.

Out of curiosity, were these pictures taken in '71 when you went--

These were all taken in '71.

OK.

And that was a very pretty fountain. There was a marketplace, an open market with cobblestones, not very old. And actually, behind it is the elementary school to which I left. And then, over there is the high school.

So this was all a nice big market. And that's where that greengrocer was, had his stand. He also had a store-- who was later killed, who was so good to us and who was later killed.

OK. And I believe-- I'm not quite sure. This may have been Uncle Victor's house. It could also have been across the street. And that I couldn't tell you for 100% sure. Anyway, it was a very nice house where they lived, and they eventually lost that.

And this seems to me-- this is the house of some very good friends of mine who were there before the war, and we picked up friendship after the war again. And they are still there. So it's a very nice house with a lovely garden.

The lady, I saw just-- I was in that house just last May again. So that is still there. Some things are very permanent.

OK. This is in Southern France, not very far from where the camp is. And it happens to be-- of course, now you can't see color or anything. But it happens to be a lovely, lovely spot, a beautiful, beautiful part of France called Bearn.

And as I say, it's close to where the camp was. And that's a trip we made in 1971. We took the train to Bordeaux. And then my ex rented a car, and we drove across Southern France and saw these places and saw Gurs.

The camp was still there?

No, the camp wasn't there anymore. There are some pictures coming. The camp wasn't there anymore.

OK. And that's Oloron. This is another place. And I think they had some kind-- it was raining, obviously. That's another small place, close by, that's so beautiful in France.

OK. And that, I think, is in Oloron again, I imagine. Some of these things have been taken a long time ago, so I don't remember details.

That one is a castle in Pau. And that's a beautiful Renaissance castle, which Henry IV built-- or he-- no, I don't think he built it. I think he was born there. And they make, of course, a lot of Henry IV there.

So it's a beautiful place. It was very popular with the English before the war. And it's very lovely.

OK.

OK. That's just all I have to say. I don't know what this-- I know nothing snow-capped there. Well, that was the height of the summer. It was August.

And these are the Pyrenees?

These are the Pyrenees, yeah. Yeah, just a little bit of snow cap there. That one, I always liked the cow, the cow modeling for us.

OK.

I'm not quite sure. We walked a little ways at the time of my father's funeral. So the camp might have been across the road. I'm not sure.

Anyway, this is the entrance there. And it was a beautiful day. And it's a beautiful sight.

And what is this again? I'm sorry.

That is the cemetery, the camp de Gurs.

Is your father buried there?

Yeah. My father's buried there. As a matter of fact, there is a picture-- not a very good picture of his grave.

That, I think, is the inscription, which you can't see very well. I don't know what it says. It's probably in French. And I couldn't read it, so I can't tell you.

And that was in the middle. And that is a monument in the middle there. And the only thing I could read on it was [FRENCH]. But it probably said a lot of other things.

But I might have-- I've really got to look in my books because I have some books from Karlsruhe. The mayor of Karlsruhe, in 1988, the 50th anniversary, he invited people, and then two books were put out. And there might be actually some pictures in that. I didn't even think about it to look at those. But if I have some, I can make some photocopies or something and send them on to you.

That is actually my Father's grave. My ex took a much, much better picture, but I couldn't find it. I don't know where I put it. I know it's somewhere, but much closer up and in color, much better.

And then this was a little lady who was a friend of my mother's, an old lady. But that's what the gravestones look like. And there's a wall around it. And when you look over the wall, it looks on beautiful cornfields, very peaceful, very beautiful.

So this is that little town of [NON-ENGLISH], which shares with my hometown, Karlsruhe, the upkeep of the-- I told you about that-- of the cemetery. That's the front of the church. And of course, I'm sure there is a monument for the First World War because there isn't a place in France where there isn't a monument to both First and Second World War. But I didn't catch it in this one. I guess I wasn't focused on that.

OK. That is actually Carcassonne. That's a different town there.

That was one of the places I saw from the train when we made that trip, and I wanted to come back. And it was well worth it. It's a beautiful place. I don't know if you've ever been there.

It's a lovely place. And very soon after, they-- we still went there to a museum. But then, afterwards, they closed the museum because, structurally, they didn't want so many people there anymore.

So that is all old medieval fortifications. And it looked just so dreamlike from the train. And it was no disappointment when we saw it again. It was really very, very enjoyable. And of course, my ex-husband being so interested in history and geography in Europe, he was right with me on that one, so that was really nice.

All right.

Oh, that's interesting there. You asked me about citizenship. And it says here that she is a bearer of no valid passport or other document for travel to the United States because of being a Jewish refugee. So this is actually an affidavit in lieu of a passport. And the vice consul Myles Standish-- yeah. You can see that.

And there's a picture of my mother there, which as I told you, she looks very grieved after. And I apparently was on her passport with her. So there's not too much more to say of that.

Well, there, it didn't want to stand. That's all right. There's some stuff on-- yeah.

[INAUDIBLE]

You want me to do that?

Yeah.

That makes it hard for you.

No, it's OK. It won't take that long.

OK. Go ahead.

Yeah. Well, actually, I tell you honestly, I don't know what the individual stamps are. But one of them was, of course, Myles Standish. That's American visa there, immigration visa, April 23, 1941, as you can see, and for both of us, one for my mother and one for me, same date.

And then this is a Portuguese visa there. And that looks like 15th of May. But there's another one where it's very definitely 13th of May. And that one, I'm not even sure.

Let me see there. That one says 13th of May, 13/5/41.

That one's Portuguese.

Yeah. Yeah. As I say, I don't know too much about them either. I only know there were a lot of--

OK.

Yeah. OK. Well, there's really not much more to say here, except that, as I say, I'm not 5'4", and I had long hair braids, which later gave me a lot of trouble in the United States. So let me see here. I can't-- and that, I guess, is a Spanish thing there too, seems to me.

Portuguese.

Portuguese.

Yeah.

Yeah. And there's one of-- maybe that's when we entered Portugal, on the 20th of May, '41. Could be. I'm not sure. That's the date I see here, but I'm not sure.

[PAPERS RUSTLING]