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Interview with INGE ROSENTHAL

Holocaust Oral History Project

Date: March 10, 1991

Interviewer: Mike Askinaza (Phonetic)

Transcriber: Sandy Dubin

ROSENTHAL-2

MIKE ASKINAZA (PHONETIC): TODAY IS SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH, 1991. WE ARE AT TEMPLE EMANUEL IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA. I AM MIKE ASKINAZA (PHONETIC). I AM INTERVIEWING INGE ROSENTHAL FOR THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA; AND ASSISTING WITH THE INTERVIEW TODAY IS SHEILA HACKMAN.

Q GOOD AFTERNOON. THANKS FOR JOINING US.

A Hi.

Q COULD YOU PLEASE TELL US YOUR FULL NAME AND WHAT YOUR MAIDEN NAME WAS, YOUR DATE OF BIRTH AND CITY AND COUNTRY WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

A My full name is Inge Rosenthal. Inge Pikarski before I was married. I was born October 10th, 1927, in (Norroda), Germany, which is now Poland.

Q COULD YOU SPELL YOUR FIRST AND LAST NAME INCLUDING YOUR MAIDEN NAME?

A I-n-g-e, Rosenthal, R-o-s-e-n-t-h-a-l. My maiden name was Pikarski, P-i-k-a-r-s-k-i. That's it.

Q NEAR WHAT MAJOR CITY?

A Breslau, which is in (Salazia.)

Q AND TO GO FURTHER, WHICH PART OF GERMANY IS (SALAZIA)?

A Near Czechoslovakia which is near, I guess -- that's east, isn't it?

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Q EASTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY NEAR THE BORDER?

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A Very close.

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Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR HOUSEHOLD, MOTHER  
FATHER, ANY BROTHERS OR SISTERS?

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A Mother, father, grandma and myself. No  
brothers or sisters.

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Q WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S NAME?

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A Max, M-a-x.

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Q AND WHAT DID HE DO?

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A We had a small department store in Germany.

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Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE STORE, WHAT WAS IN IT?

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A It was mostly clothing store and some  
yardage. What we would consider a small department store  
in a small town in the United States.

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The town I was born in was extremely tiny. I  
lived there for -- well, my grandparents opened the store.  
They lived there about 60 years. So all my life, which is  
first 10 years of my life, I lived there and so did my  
parents. Good life until Hitler showed up.

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What else would you like to know?

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Q WELL, WHEN DID YOU NOTICE HITLER? WHEN DID  
YOU NOTICE HIM BEFORE 1933?

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A My memories are only Hitler. I was only five  
and-a-half when Hitler took power. So there is nothing

else to remember, except some good moments with children and friends which was immediately cut off when Hitler came.

I was not allowed to play with anyone, talk to anyone, and that made it rather uncomfortable. I was the only Jewish kid in town which was kind of unusual, I think, and as I said before I was completely isolated. In school too, there was very little contact with anyone. They wouldn't let anyone talk to me, and of course I was frightened stiff to talk to anyone else, and frankly that's about the worst of all of my memories being completely alone, cut off.

Q NO OTHER JEWS IN TOWN?

A Two couples. My aunt, uncle and cousins. A couple of cousins and my own family. That's it. Extremely small town.

So frankly, I hated every minute of it, but there was very little I could do about it. I have to admit, my parents had very little compassion for me. They did not understand what I went through. They really didn't or didn't care to. I don't know.

Q COULD YOU DISCUSS THAT A LITTLE BIT MORE?

A Well, I can only say that I had a lot of imaginary friends and I had books, continuously. And I did

a lot of crying. I felt that I was the only one who lives that kind of life, which obviously wasn't the case, but as I had no other Jewish friends, I didn't know.

I also felt I was guilty at this, something I must have done because, how can a child live under those conditions? I was screamed at, yelled at, kicked at on the streets. Everyone knew me, as in the little town you cannot hide. It was very, very bad, mostly during gymnastics where I was very tiny, very shy, and as everyone knows, the Germans put a lot of stress on gymnastics and performance. I wasn't very good at it.

So they had a very good game. They used to put me in the middle of the circle and say, "See that stupid Jew? She can't even lift her feet." Or whatever was necessary.

I used to come home and cry, "I don't want to go back there, mom." And of course being -- well, she obviously wasn't German, but her attitude was very German.

She said, "That's ridiculous. Tomorrow you will go back and take it again."

I did not take too well to that, I admit. I was very, very unhappy. In fact, it got to a point where I really didn't want to be Jewish. You picture a ten year old child who suddenly says, "Not me. I don't want to be

Jewish. It's just too painful," and this is not really a story.

This is the real truth. I hated being Jewish. I hated everything about it which naturally made no sense to anyone else but me. It took me many years to overcome this feeling.

By the way, I have never discussed that before. I really never have. My children know nothing about all of this.

Q IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR ITEMS LIKE THAT OR TOPICS LIKE THAT TO BE DISCUSSED FOR THE FIRST TIME. A LOT OF PEOPLE WE INTERVIEW FEEL GOOD ABOUT TELLING SOMEONE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

A It seems, you know, now so many years later rather childish, but it wasn't then. It was my whole life. I also developed epilepsy at the age of seven which somehow they felt was -- had some connection with the Hitler time. I don't know that. But it added to my misery due to the fact that my parents felt that I could never discuss that with anyone. That is sort of a shame.

So I had another secret to carry, and frankly, when things got extremely bad and we were kicked out, obviously, I was glad. I was glad to get out of there. There were no tears for feeling sorry for myself or

anything like that. I couldn't wait to get out.

Ready for more questions?

Q YOU SAID YOU WERE KICKED OUT.

YOUR FAMILY DID NOT VOLUNTARILY LEAVE?

A Oh, no. Oh, goodness no. My father was in a concentration camp for six weeks, Buchenwald, and when they let him out, they gave us two weeks to get out. As you can see, made it so that wasn't much time to think.

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD?

A No. None whatsoever. I did have a couple of cousins and highlight of my life is when we saw each other twice a year. But that really wasn't quite enough for a child as an outlet.

Q HOW DID THE TEACHERS TREAT YOU?

A As I said before, some of the teachers felt a lot of compassion, and although I was more or less left to my own devices, there wasn't any, they were good to me. Except the gym teachers. Someone I will never forget. They truly hated me and I never did understand what I ever did to create this kind of hatred.

Now looking back, I can sort of understand. She hated weakness, which is what I portrayed. She hated everything we stood for, although I didn't hardly know that

being Jewish is so terrible. But it really brought all of that hatred home to me and some things you just don't forget. That's one of them.

I still picture myself in the huge gymnastic room with all of those kids standing around me laughing, giggling, kicking, screaming and I had no place to turn. There was no place to go.

So I hope I didn't repeat myself, but that was rough.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN RECALL ABOUT SCHOOL?

A I was kicked out of school in 1938, taken to the principal's office shaking like a leaf, and he very gently put his arm around my neck and said, "Hey, I just can't help it, kiddo, you just can't come back tomorrow."

So I could not make myself sitting at home and doing absolutely nothing. My mother was kind enough to send me to a private English teacher in the next town, and I got some lessons there until we left for Shanghai, which was better than nothing.

So for about eight months, I took these lessons twice a week. Not very beneficial, I have to admit because I couldn't speak a word of English when I came, but it made my parents feel good. At that time we could not,



as you probably know, go into a park, use a pool, go into any public place, so that was the only highlight I have, twice a week, an hour in someone else's house. That was about it.

Any other questions?

Q YOU WERE EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL BEFORE KRISTALLNACHT?

A If you want to hear a little bit about Kristallnacht, I will tell you.

Q I VERY MUCH WANT TO HEAR ABOUT KRISTALLNACHT, BUT I WANT TO FOCUS RIGHT NOW JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE ON YOUR CHILDHOOD, ON A DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN, THE SIZE, HOW THE PEOPLE TREATED YOU.

A All right.

Very small town, as I mentioned before, extremely beautiful. Probably one of the reasons my folks never felt like leaving. It was like a little bit of Switzerland so my memories of the people is disgusting, but memory of the beauty of the town truly one doesn't forget.

We had a business, with a very large building that belonged to us, and I sort of roamed around there like a ghost. I hated really everything about it so I guess my memories are not, you know -- I don't deviate. It's just been miserable, period.

What else can I tell you about the town? We had no friends of obviously non-Jewish friends. I did see -- didn't see my aunt and uncle very often. There were no other children, so there isn't much to add.

Q HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE IN YOUR TOWN, APPROXIMATELY?

A 10,000.

My grandfather had started the business so we were, unfortunately or fortunately, however you want to look at it, rather well known. And I have to admit, I was never physically ever beaten or anything like that. That never really happened.

The town itself -- I can only judge from a ten year old's point of view, I don't think they were the famous Nazis that we all talked about. There must have been some, obviously, but all in all they must have left us alone. We even had a few people that fed us during the Kristallnacht time. So it wasn't completely horrible, but I -- As a child, I didn't care what I ate or what clothes I wore. All I really wanted was friends, which I couldn't get.

What else would you like me to --

Q WHERE DID YOUR FAMILY FIT IN IN THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE IN THE TOWN? ONE OF THE LEADING FAMILIES

ECONOMICALLY OR --

A Upper middle class, I would say. I really can't judge that too well because financial problems were never discussed in front of me. So we were very comfortable. I do admit that.

And also, I have to -- to my dying shame, no one ever knew what was coming up or even wanted to know. Realize, I was very little. I must have been about seven, sitting in the living room and one of my uncles came in and said, "It's time to get out of here. The writing is on the wall," and Papa said, "Are you kidding? We never did better in our lives. Why would we ever go anywhere?"

Then I remember faintly that Mein Kampf was in somebody's possession and Papa was sort of talked into reading it, and he said, "that kind of trash, who would want to read that?"

And that was one of the biggest problems that looking back now, we had. We didn't realize what was happening. Didn't want to realize what was happening, although I can't speak for myself, and that narrow-mindedness is a terrible tragedy. Of course, I do admit we personally all made it, but I have quite a few relatives that absolutely refused to see the writing on the wall, and they did not make it and didn't even want to.

So that's something I feel that maybe in my own little way we can prevent something like this from ever happening again. If you don't know, you can't fight it.

I would like to add something a little happier, on a happier note.

We did not have a Temple in our little town so we took a train to the next town, (Gratz), which is now a glass company, I think. And I got my Jewish and Hebrew education that, you know, was pretty good considering that I was the only Jewish kid. I was the only audience and that, the highlight of our religious life once a year we went to that other little town, Yom Kippur. I also attended services on Purim, and so from that point of view, I felt that nothing was neglected.

Q On Purim you went, too? You went to the other town?

A Yes, I used to go on Purim. There was no Sunday school. I don't think anyone ever heard of such a thing, but I did get some Hebrew and Bible studies -- I mean, once a week I saw this -- I can't quite remember. He must have been a teacher, quote, "Cantor," and he was nice enough to give me office time once a week.

Q I AM SORRY.

YOU SAID THAT YOU SAW HIM EVERY WEEK?

1

2

A Uh-huh.

3

Q FOR AN HOUR?

4

5

A Yes. That lasted for approximately a year and-a-half.

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Q OKAY. BUT OTHERWISE, YOU ONLY WANT OVER TO THE TEMPLE A COUPLE OF TIMES A YEAR?

8

A That's all.

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My folks worked, obviously, and very small congregation. No other children. It was very uncomfortable, really, to take a train or bus or whatever we did in those days. So I had very little affiliation with a Temple, but I felt very strongly about learning possibly as much Hebrew as possible and I really liked that. So I picked up a little bit.

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What else would you like to know?

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Q THE ADJACENT TOWN YOU WENT TO, HOW LARGE WAS IT?

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A Well, it was a big town, let me tell you. It must have been about twenty thousand people and there were some Jewish people there, but for whatever reason, we hardly ever saw them. I guess I can't really judge how difficult the life was for my parents because they must have felt anti-Semitism in their own way. There is no question about it. It's just, I was so involved with my

own problems that I don't know, you know, their reaction.  
I know it now, but I didn't know it then.

Q DID YOUR FATHER EMPLOY ANY OTHER TOWNSPEOPLE?

A Yes. When I was a little girl we had about  
three or four employees and a maid which lasted to 1937.  
Then we were not allowed to have any employees but Jewish  
people so we had two Jewish employees who were also taken  
to Buchenwald that famous night.

That was pretty bad, let me tell you. It was  
a horrible night.

Q WERE YOU ABLE TO OBSERVE IT ALL? THE  
INTERACTION BETWEEN YOUR FATHER AND HIS NON-JEWISH  
EMPLOYEES?

A I was a little too young to be able to judge  
that. I did have quite a bit of contact with one who might  
have -- our former maids who turned out to be a horrible,  
horrible Nazi. She tried to cause an awful lot of trouble,  
but being such a little girl I didn't quite realize what  
she was up to.

Anyway, Papa realized she was trying to get us  
into more trouble than we already were and he did kick her  
out just before 1938. Then we didn't have anyone else,  
which was just fine.

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November 9th, 1939, I was sitting in my uncle's shoe store when the S.S. walked in and picked up my uncle, my cousin and said we are "going" and completely unexpected. I mean, nobody knew what they were talking about.

So I went home, which was practically next door, and there was my father standing there and our employee who was a decorator of a window -- store windows. He had no shoes, oh, poor guy. He was getting a window ready and the S.S. guy says, "You don't need any shoes where you are going." Believe it or not, I can still remember that.

Anyway, he went over to Papa and said, "Get your coat and take some money and let's go."

So obviously, the reaction was unbelief. Completely unbelief. My mother went completely off her normal rocker which is understandable. I tried to follow Papa and they wouldn't let me do that. So we all settled down a little bit and my mother decided to make some calls to some of our relatives, and we realized that all of the men had been taken in the morning.

The mood was -- I guess it was plain disbelief. Nobody could understand what happened. So the next day we were told that Papa was in jail, which made

absolutely no sense to us whatsoever, and then, of course, I do admit, we all realized what was happening.

So the synagogue, the one I was telling you about, was demolished completely that night and they burned it and everyone was very frightened, especially in a little town where it was just my mother, my grandmother and my aunt. So obviously we were terribly frightened and I just remember sitting on my bed and crying because that's what everybody else was doing. It seems the normal thing to do. And that lasted for about three weeks, and then they closed our store and they took everything we had and told us to stay upstairs until further notice and we got a letter from Papa saying, "I am just fine. Don't you worry about anything," which was obviously nonsense and it was signed by him which made us feel a little better; and lo and behold, six weeks later he walked in.

They let him go for a very stupid reason that I can think of, but it saved his life. He had his Silver Cross from the first World War in his pocket. I don't know if someone told him to take it along or not. This I don't know. There was so much confusion, but somehow because of that, they gave him two weeks to get out of the country, take us, and we were extremely lucky.

One of my uncles had escaped the -- what do



1  
2 you call it -- when they took everyone into concentration  
3 camp, he escaped. He somehow was very bright and he  
4 realized what was happening and he was the one who bought  
5 the tickets for us, the ship tickets.

6 We left for Italy, from Italy we went to  
7 Shanghai. If it wouldn't be for him I wouldn't be talking  
8 to you today. So we were very lucky. I had my teddy bear  
9 and \$4.00, and I thought that was pretty good  
10 considering.

11 So that sounds like it all went very smoothly,  
12 but it really didn't because no one was allowed to come  
13 into our building or we weren't allowed to leave; so  
14 although we escaped Buchenwald, we were prisoners in our  
15 own house. In those days there were no refrigerators, so  
16 we had hardly any food. Although nobody really cared very  
17 much, but some of our non-Jewish friends did feed us and  
18 they passed the corner -- they had all of these Nazis  
19 standing around with arm bands. So they were very brave.  
20 They crossed the street and brought us food.

21 Thinking back now, I think -- I don't know if  
22 I would have done it. Amazing, we were not hungry.

23 When Papa came back six weeks later, nobody  
24 recognized him. Really. Believe it or not, we could not  
25 recognize him. He looked like a skeleton. No hair and

extremely quiet. Hardly said anything at all. So we took him to a Jewish doctor who -- somehow he wasn't sick. I mean, he was awfully hungry, but he wasn't really sick and we fed him again, I suppose, and then we left.

He never, ever, discussed what happened in Buchenwald, ever. They told him that if he would they would kill us. He was one of those people that he believed them. I never heard anything from him except I heard quite a bit from my cousin, and if you don't mind, I would rather not talk about that unless you want me to.

Q I DON'T WANT TO FORCE YOU TO DO ANYTHING YOU DON'T WANT TO DO.

A That is hearsay, obviously, and I was a little girl.

Q I UNDERSTAND.

A So the stories I heard were so terribly frightening that I don't know how well I will do, but I will try.

Ask me. If you ask me, it will be a little easier.

Q HOW LONG WAS YOUR COUSIN IN BUCHENWALD?

A He was in a little longer. He was in about eight to nine weeks. As you know, the Germans were very corrected. They did everything by the book. So they let

1  
2 the older men out a little bit earlier at that time and my  
3 cousin, obviously being much earlier, was left out a little  
4 bit later. He was able to talk about it for whatever  
5 reason, I don't know. Papa never did. They were beaten.  
6 They were sitting on their knees in the winter for three to  
7 four nights without any clothes on; so obviously a lot of  
8 them died.

9 I guess they were lucky. Papa was a very  
10 strong, healthy man and I imagine that the coat he took  
11 along practically saved his life. Most people had no  
12 clothes, and that probably did them in. The other  
13 atrocities, there might have been many more, but I  
14 personally haven't -- in my family -- my uncle was beaten  
15 very badly and when he came home he was not coherent at  
16 all. It took him quite a while to get back. Although I  
17 don't think he ever did. So of course I don't know.

18 If you can imagine, everyone was so terribly  
19 glad to be alive, that all of these things didn't really  
20 matter, you know. Because it must have been an instinct.  
21 Everyone wants to live even under those conditions. So we  
22 walked, the minute Papa came home and got on that ship and  
23 out we went. I probably would have made a fool of myself  
24 right now, but that's really hard to talk about. That's  
25 very difficult to think back of the mood that we were all

in. So --

Q THE STORY IS NOT UNUSUAL.

A I am sure it isn't.

Q THIS HAPPENED IN 1938?

A Uh-huh.

Q KRISTALLNACHT?

A that's right.

Q OKAY. WHEN YOUR FATHER WAS RELEASED, DID HE HAVE TO PROMISE OR SIGN A DOCUMENT THAT THE FAMILY WOULD LEAVE?

A We would leave within the next two weeks and of course all of our possessions had already been taken. So they really had nothing else to take from us, but I think they did come in one more time to watch us pack, and that was kind of a hairy situation due to the fact that they said, "If you want to, you can take your clothes along and nothing else."

So knowing that we were going to go to Shanghai, very far away from what my folks were used to, was a big adventure as you can imagine, but they were terribly frightened. I remember their faces and knowing that we had nothing. We did have \$4.00. The nice Germans let us all have \$4.00 which we had to sign for. We did

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take some clothes, and I remember my mom saying, "Go buy a camera, I will give you some money."

To me, only 10, it was very important and I was on the way out and I heard Papa say, "Don't you ever dare. I am not going to lose my life for something like that."

It made a tremendous impression on me because here it never even occurred to me that Papa had been, you know, practically killed where he was. I didn't know that. All I could see was this poor emaciated man who seemed thrilled to death that he was alive. So it never ever occurred. I must have been awfully stupid. I didn't think that these people went around killing anyone. I really didn't.

So when Papa says, "Don't you dare," I said, "Oh, my God, I could have been the cause of whatever can happen." Obviously, a child doesn't realize what is happening, and my parents did a very good job of hiding it.

But being on the train, I do admit that there were some people who had hidden some jewelry and I did see someone getting killed. They found the jewelry and I realized how smart Papa really was. That camera wouldn't have made any difference in Shanghai, I assure you. I

don't know how I remembered it, but I really just did. It seems so trivial today, but it didn't then.

What else would you like to know?

Q YOU SAID YOUR FATHER HAD A SILVER CROSS AND HE SERVED IN THE GERMAN ARMY DURING WORLD WAR I?

A Yes, he did.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER HOW LONG HE WAS IN THE ARMY --

A He was in the army --

Q -- AND WHAT HE WAS AWARDED THE SILVER CROSS FOR?

A It must have been four years. Don't you think? I mean, he never did ever discuss that, but I imagine it must have been four years and he, whatever he got it for, he never talked about it. So I don't know if that was a story or not. But somehow I was told that really helped him to get out of that horrible Buchenwald.

I guess I was extremely fortunate. I never saw Buchenwald. So things could have been much worse.

Oh, I did want to tell you something. I was supposed to go to England. I was about eight and-a-half years old. At that time, they took some Jewish children on a children's transport to save some lives, and my cousin was supposed to go with me who was 10, so we were supposed to take care of each other and I absolutely refused, and

1  
2 looking back now, I must have been completely crazy; and  
3 there again, I had no idea what was really going on. I  
4 refused because I had never left my parents before and I  
5 was too frightened to go, and I know a lot of young kids  
6 who didn't leave and none of them saw their parents again.  
7 So maybe the good Lord looked out for me. Whatever reason,  
8 I didn't leave.

9 Q ISN'T THAT CURRENTLY THE WAY YOUR PARENTS  
10 TREATED YOU, TELLING YOU -- LIKE YOUR MOTHER TELLING YOU TO  
11 GO BACK TO SCHOOL, IF THEY WERE WILLING TO LET YOU LEAVE,  
12 TO SEND YOU AWAY WHEN YOU WERE EIGHT AND-A-HALF, BUT THEN  
13 LATER ON TELL YOU THAT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG YOU SHOULD GO  
14 BACK TO SCHOOL?

15 A It's not very consistent, is it? But they  
16 must have known a lot more than I was ever aware of.  
17 Naturally, they had some relatives that lived in Berlin and  
18 bigger towns where the general mood was much more aware of  
19 what was going on in this town, and I guess I can see that  
20 they weren't about to fight me. That's very nice.

21 But I absolutely refused. And thinking of  
22 what a timid, quiet little girl I was, it's quite amazing  
23 what I did. I put on a good fight. I said, "I am not  
24 going. I absolutely will not."

25 And in my case, it was good. It was very good

that I did that, but obviously I didn't know.

Q YOU HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED A LITTLE BIT OF YOUR FAMILY LIFE, YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS.

IS THERE ANYTHING MORE YOU CAN ADD TO THAT, YOU KNOW, WHAT TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WAS IT OVER ALL? HOW DID YOU GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER?

A Extremely well. Extremely well. I was a little bit -- there is no word like oversheltered, is there? Overprotected. And I think now, although I didn't realize it then, it must have been due to the fact that being Jewish, my mother was very frightened. They never let me go anywhere by myself, and then, of course, as I mentioned before, I wasn't well. So that added to their feelings of overprotectiveness which was not very good for me because I never even dared to ever talk back to them.

So that didn't help me any. It really didn't at all, and to this very day I am rather shy and I don't think I will ever overcome that.

But, aside from that, there was an awful lot of love and very good feelings, but what a child truly needs is the interaction with other children, and that I didn't have and maybe they could have changed it, maybe they couldn't. I don't know. But I am quite bitter about that.



Q WHAT WERE YOU QUITE BITTER ABOUT?

A I am very bitter that I really didn't have a childhood. You can never really claim that. That's finished. That's over. If you compare it to what my cousin's experience in Auschwitz, so this was pretty good. I lost a lot of relatives and there is a lot of guilt that I feel and I probably always will.

Why? I am sure you heard that many times but it's true. It's truly so. One feels, why was I spared? What did I ever do to deserve this?

So a lot of questions, but that makes life interesting.

Q EARLIER YOU DESCRIBED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS. I BELIEVE I AM ACCURATE IN SAYING YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE SORT OF A LITTLE BIT INSENSITIVE TO WHAT YOU WERE GOING THROUGH?

A Yes, I really felt that. Yes, very strongly.

Q BUT OVER ALL, YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS YOU THOUGHT WAS PRETTY CLOSE?

A Oh, God, yes. I couldn't ask for better parents. I mean, no question about it. I think it was due to their own narrow-mindedness they didn't realize, as I said before, what was happening, what was going to happen. They lived in their own little world and there wasn't any

1  
2 physical violence towards them at all. There was mental  
3 violence.

4 I don't know if you have heard of the famous  
5 newspaper, the (Schatomer). You might have heard of that.  
6 Well, there was weekly articles of anti-Jewish with the  
7 horrible caricatures that they put in and I am sure they  
8 suffered, but then they had sort of a different attitude.  
9 There was anti-Semitism in Germany forever when you think  
10 about. It was the usual attitude. If you are nice and  
11 quiet, it will go away. It didn't work that way, but they  
12 felt fairly safe until about 1936 or so. That's when  
13 things got pretty hairy. Up to that time, they felt fine.

14 I am afraid I can't add terribly much about my  
15 relations with my folks. It was a very quiet childhood.  
16 Spent a lot of time hiking, talking, talking, talking  
17 because that was the only one I had -- I was there to talk  
18 to, and when you don't know any better I guess you don't  
19 really realize it, how bad it can really be, but looking  
20 back now, I can see I missed out terribly. Maybe it wasn't  
21 each their fault. Who knows. I leave it up to someone  
22 else to make that judgment.

23 Q HOW RELIGIOUS WAS YOUR FAMILY? HOW OBSERVANT  
24 WAS IT?

25 A I would kind of -- what we would consider a

1  
2 good reformed Jew. In Germany, liberal Judiasm is what  
3 they call it, adhere to. But as we didn't have a Temple in  
4 our town, they observed the holidays, but really, there  
5 wasn't any contact that I would think we should have had as  
6 a child or especially for them. Maybe they didn't need  
7 it. Who knows. I wouldn't be satisfied with this kind of  
8 a life. But they seemed comfortable. It wasn't a very  
9 important issue, I have to admit.

10 Maybe that had a lot to do with my anger when  
11 people yelled at me, "You damned dirty Jew, you Christ  
12 killer," and I couldn't understand why. What did I do? I  
13 hardly know that I am Jewish. It's so ridiculous.

14 And I remember going back to my mom and  
15 saying, "Did I ever kill anybody? You know I didn't. What  
16 did I ever do?"

17 And she says, "Shh, Shh, let's not discuss  
18 it. It will go away." And all of those years, "Let's be  
19 quiet. Let's not discuss it. It will go away," and I truly  
20 believe that we better not do that to our children and I  
21 haven't.

22 They are very proud Jews and I think that's  
23 very important. When somebody attacks you, at least you  
24 know why. That helps. I didn't even know why. That might  
25 have been nonsense what I just said, but it's very, very

important. It's just, you know, one of the few things that I am pushing, I really am. A lot of people couldn't care less, but I certainly believe that there could be open anti-Semitism right here and if you are attacked, you don't even know why, you can't fight back.

I did digress. I am sorry.

Q THAT'S FINE. WE CAN COVER MORE OF THAT LATER ON. I WANT TO COVER YOUR PRESENT FAMILY LIFE.

One final question on how religious your family was. Did it observe the Sabbath? Did you keep Kosher?

A We observed the Sabbath, but we did not keep Kosher. It was practically impossible. I mean, financially and location-wise, it could not be done.

Q WAS THE STORE OPEN ON THE SABBATH?

A Yes.

Q WITH YOUR FATHER WORKING ON THE SABBATH?

A Oh, yes. We wouldn't have lasted very long if we closed the shop on Shabbots. That wouldn't have been possible.

Q WOULD YOU STILL HAVE CONSIDERED YOURSELF TO HAVE BEEN OBSERVING THE SABBATH?

A Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It's hard for me to judge, but I do feel that we always considered ourselves observant

Jews, but of course that can be stretched, you know, pretty far. There was never any question. No intermarriage in the family or any of that.

Q STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY?

A Uh-huh. At least for me. It seemed very important to me. Maybe due to the fact that I knew so little about it and what little Jewish education I got, I got a very good one in Shanghai and made up for what I had missed.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER ANY SPECIFIC TIMES, SITUATIONS, DATES, WHEN YOUR FAMILY FELT THE PERSECUTION WAS GETTING WORSE?

A I can't place a special date, but I do remember some friends leaving for Israel. I must have been about seven and sitting down with these people and they tried to push Papa into joining them.

At that time, it would have been wonderful due to the fact that we could have taken nearly everything we owned, sell it and leave, which is what they did, and Papa saying, "Why would I leave a perfectly good business and a lovely home? Why would I do that?" And Mama at that time seemed to be a little bit more aware of what was going on and so there was good argument going on, and of course Papa won because a man, you know, their opinion is what

1  
2     mattered.

3                 So I just sat there and I thought, "Gee,  
4     wouldn't it be fun to go to Israel. What a treat." And  
5     nothing ever came of it, as you can see. That's one of the  
6     things I remember. But what really did us in was our  
7     business was going extremely well, and the stronger Hitler  
8     got, the better the business was, which was absolutely  
9     crazy, but that's exactly what happened. And I can see why  
10    a middle-aged man wouldn't want to give it all up for some  
11    lofty idea.

12                It's really at that time sounded pretty  
13    frightening to them, as you know. People lived in tents  
14    and stuff like that. So I really can't blame them. I truly  
15    couldn't blame them. That was the only place we could have  
16    gone.

17                At that time, I knew of some American  
18    relatives who didn't want to have anything to do with us.  
19    There was no other place to go but Israel at that time and  
20    I guess Papa was much too frightened to leave.

21                But otherwise, anything about my own feelings  
22    at that time, is that what you want? Yeah, I do remember  
23    something. I went to see my girlfriend who lived, oh,  
24    within a mile or so and I went into the store and said,  
25    "Let's play." I must have been about six, six and-a-half,

and she said, "I can't play with you."

I said, "What do you mean you can't play with me? What did I ever do to you?"

And she said, "Don't you know that my Papa will have to close his business if we play together?"

And, you know, the concept was absolutely impossible for me to understand. This is the little girl that I had gone to kindergarten with and did not understand it. So I left and went home and said, "Mama, Leisel said we can't play anymore."

And she said, "So what? You got me."

And that was about the understanding that I got. It might very well be that Mama was not able to explain, it might have been too emotional for her, but I felt extremely hurt and I kept figuring, what did I ever do that I can't play with this little girl anymore? It took me a long time to finally see that I had committed the crime of being Jewish. There wasn't any other. That was extremely hard, very, very hard. I was angry, but never discussed it with my folks, ever. I was afraid. Very uneventful life, I must say, until all hell broke loose.

Q THE MORE WE TALK, THE MORE YOU ARE REMEMBERING.

ANY OTHER EPISODES LIKE THAT WHERE IT HIT

HOME, THAT YOU WERE BEING PERSECUTED BEFORE KRISTALLNACHT?

A Hit home -- I guess not. I am not about to make up any stories. It was bad enough, but anything -- No. Not really.

Wait a minute. From the religious point of view, there was something very, very unsettling. A Jewish child could not attend their, quote, "religious class." In Germany, you have religion. They teach it right in school. I was always told to leave the classroom and in the beginning it sort of -- I felt sort of big shot, you know. I didn't have to learn all of this and I could sit outside and play a game.

But when things got very uncomfortable, the mood changed very drastically because I was, you know, the dirty Jew who had caused all of their problems and at that time, the anti-Semitism that I felt was a religious one. We had killed Christ and we were really the cause of all that.

So that turned very ugly when I waited outside. I was very frightened. I was told to stand outside the classroom for an hour when they learned all about Christ. I remember all of the feelings that went through my head. One of them was, I wasn't part of this anymore, that I was, you know, didn't have to learn



anything. I more or less wanted to join in very, very badly and thinking of that now I am very ashamed for that. That's exactly how I felt. Why couldn't I join in there and sing their hymns, whatever it was.

It was like, you know, I had committed the crime and I was pretty sure that I had done something. I had convinced myself that somewhere in the background, I must have done something.

Well, you must be a very good interviewer because I hadn't thought of that in 45 years.

Q IT'S JUST A MATTER OF YOUR BEING FREE TO TALK, FEELING FREE TO TALK ABOUT --

A Well, I have been free for years, but in front of your own family you sometimes think you make a fool of yourself. And here I really feel that whatever I say, means something to you, you write it down, and if it doesn't, that's fine.

Q YOUR FEELINGS ARE NOT UNUSUAL AT ALL.

A Good. I must be part of the human race then.

Q YOU MENTIONED WHEN THINGS GOT REALLY BAD -- OKAY. WHEN WAS THAT? WAS IT JUST BECAUSE YOUR SCHOOLMATES WERE CALLING YOU A CHRIST KILLER OR WAS IT THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE COMMUNITY GETTING WORSE? WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

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2           A       You are right. It was a combination of  
3 things. Being kicked out of school was about the worst  
4 thing that ever happened in my own life. If I would have  
5 attended a Jewish school with other Jewish children, I  
6 wouldn't have had to endure anything like that and I would  
7 have had someone to talk to. There was no one there so I  
8 felt obviously I had committed something. I wasn't as good  
9 as all of the others. I can't go to school anymore. And  
10 it sounds a little silly today, but I loved going to  
11 school, I enjoyed it. They took that away from me, too.

12                   Then, of course, the mood at home got much,  
13 much worse. Naturally, the Nazis were running up and down  
14 the street all the time yelling, "Heil Hitler," and usually  
15 when they did that with their parades, usually I hid in  
16 some closet. I didn't even know why I was hiding. No one  
17 told me that they were out there to kill. When you are a  
18 little girl and somebody walks up and down the streets,  
19 "You God damned dirty Jew, I wish you all were dead," it's  
20 not exactly pleasant.

21           Q       WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

22           A       19 -- from about 1936 on. It was an every day  
23 affair. It's hard for any American to realize the frenzy  
24 that people felt. They weren't normal. When these Nazis  
25 walked up and down the street, everybody screamed, "Heil

Hitler." And Momma always said, "You better not do that."

I said, "Why not? Why can't I say that? It sounds good to me." Because everyone wore the uniforms of the Nazis, which of course I was not given and the need to be accepted is so unbelievably strong for a child that I hated my parents for not letting me out there and march up and down the street when everybody else did.

Again, you know, being an adult, it sounds absolutely asinine, but that's exactly how I felt. I had committed all of these crimes so I wasn't allowed to join the fun. That's enough.

Q WERE THESE CHILDREN WHO WERE DRESSED UP IN UNIFORMS?

A Oh, yes. Of course. Yes. That was the Hitler unit. The Hitler unit. Little ones. Ages from eight on. You had your -- what do you call it -- brown shirt, black skirt -- what do you call that thing? You know what I am talking about. It's like a tie. They all have a little flag, and they walk up and down the street and they scream and they yell. It was fun. For a child, that's fun. Singing and marching. At that time, I didn't hate anybody. I just hated my parents because they wouldn't let me join.

Q WERE THESE ALL OF THE TOWN CHILDREN?

A Anyone who joined the Hitler unit and I think the majority did. Very few who did that and they better or they lost their livelihood. So I didn't know of anyone who hadn't joined.

Q THE PARENTS WOULD LOSE THEIR LIVELIHOOD IF THE CHILDREN DID NOT JOIN?

A Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Definitely. It was completely crazy. Crazy world. No one, you know, in their sane mind new what they were doing. They just didn't. It was marching, screaming, yelling, "Let's kill the Jews." And you know, one should have gotten used to that, but one didn't. It's not anything you get used to. Okay?

Q WERE THEY DIRECTING IT SPECIFICALLY AT YOUR HOUSE? THERE WERE VERY FEW JEWS IN TOWN. WERE THEY JUST WALKING AROUND TOWN YELLING THAT OUT?

A It was part of their songs. (Inaudible). Stuff like that. There is a lot of nice German songs that specify the Jewish problem, and I don't know what to add to this because it was part of their life. Walking up and down the streets and screaming, yelling.

So I would think the normal attitude would have been very defiance. My parents should have been angry or should have packed their clothes and left. I don't know. I know what I would have done, but being a kid, I

just felt, you know, not part of it. Angry most of the time. Very angry.

Q IT WAS YOUR FEELINGS AT THE TIME THE CHILDREN WERE ONLY MARCHING AROUND WITH THEIR SONGS BECAUSE THEY WERE TAKING IT OUT ON YOU, TREATING YOU POORLY?

A I don't think so. I think they were just children like I was. They were taught the songs and they were going to sing them. I had a feeling that they barely knew what they were saying. But the children weren't -- children don't hate. They are taught to hate. They don't walk around hating anyone. Little kids? Nah. They are just like any other child. I don't think so. The adults, that's another story. But children don't really hate.

Q BUT IN SCHOOL THEY STILL DID NOT --

A Pardon me?

Q IN SCHOOL THEY STILL DIDN'T TREAT YOU WELL? YOU DID NOT HAVE ANY FRIENDS?

A They didn't treat me well because the parents told them, "There is a Jewish kid there. If you want to have some fun, you can do anything you please," but from the children's point of view, I have my doubts that anyone really walked around hating anyone else.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT BEFORE KRISTALLNACHT OCCURRED? ANY OTHER EVENTS THAT

COME TO MIND?

A Just a personal one and I don't mind talking about it. My mother was divorced from my real father when I was nine months old. I had never met him for whatever reason, and she remarried the man who brought me up who I consider my father. He also adopted me, and what I meant to bring out is they were both in Buchenwald in the same unit which I was told later on, and that's rather amazing. Apparently, they must have discussed their former life and I was told that they even made friends, which is, you know, in those days, practically impossible. You know, divorce was not a very common thing. There was a lot of bitterness and a lot of bad feelings. But in Buchenwald, the only thing that mattered was just to make it. So they helped each other. I think that's nice. That makes me feel good.

Anyway, my real father went to Argentina. He also escaped.

Q DID YOU EVER MEET HIM?

A Yes, I did. 40 years later. But that's another story.

Q WHICH TOWN WAS HE FROM? WAS HE FROM A CLOSE BY TOWN?

A (Valdes) -- Oh, dear. You got me there.

(Valdes), something like that. A tiny little town and somehow there were no more enemies or anything. They were just trying to make it. There were some pretty good heroic stories from Buchenwald, but I myself, you know, it's only hearsay. I couldn't tell you any more than that.

Q WAS THAT THE ONLY TIME THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF THAT YOUR BIOLOGICAL FATHER?

A Yes.

Q -- WANTED TO WRITE YOU OFF?

A I, myself, didn't hear any of that until I was about 12, 13, in Shanghai. I opened the Pandora's box. But as I said before, it's another story.

Q EARLIER YOU SPOKE ABOUT KRISTALLNACHT. YOU SAID THE MEN WERE ROUNDED UP IN THE MORNING?

A That's right.

Q OF THE 9TH?

A Uh-huh.

Q THE MEN WERE ROUNDED UP BEFORE THE VIOLENCE BROKE OUT THAT NIGHT, OR THAT AFTERNOON?

A Well, let's see. I hope I do this correct, but I think the synagogue was burned in the late afternoon. So Papa was picked up around 2:00 in the afternoon and our employee and my cousin was picked up early in the morning.

1  
2 So we were already in a state of shock anyway,  
3 and we were told that the synagogues were burning in the  
4 evening so they did not take any ladies at that time. I do  
5 know that women were taken later on, but I guess we had  
6 just left at that time. No one was ever let out after  
7 that, you know, that search. Once they were let out after  
8 Buchenwald, no one was let out after that. Once any more  
9 than -- once they were taken again, that was the end of  
10 it. So I guess we are extremely fortunate, but the day  
11 itself was a horror, absolute horror. The realization of  
12 possibly being killed -- just hate that particular day in  
13 my home -- in my household. I am sure many other Jews were  
14 very aware of what was going on, but in our house it was  
15 like the heavens had opened. It was pretty crazy.

16 Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU REMEMBER ABOUT WHAT  
17 HAPPENED WHEN THE GERMANS CAME TO TAKE YOUR FATHER?

18 A I will try. There was a tall S.S. fellow who  
19 somehow seemed a little apologetic, which is rather amazing.  
20 I wonder if he knew my father, business or whatever. It's  
21 possible. I don't know that.

22 But he seemed -- "Max, take your coat", like I  
23 mentioned before. And the coat, I am convinced that saved  
24 his life -- and all of the money you can find. And at  
25 least we didn't have a lot of money in our business. It



1 was not accustomed to have a lot of cash, but Papa took  
2 everything that he could find, and in Buchenwald I was told  
3 that whatever they wanted to eat, they had to pay for, like  
4 ten times as much as the regular price.  
5

6 So Papa was able to feed himself and a few  
7 relatives for quite a while with that money and it makes me  
8 really throw up knowing that we had absolutely nothing left  
9 after all of those years of hard work and there was just  
10 enough to buy some bread. I know it's not unusual, but  
11 it's just disgusting. It's unfair, and if anyone says the  
12 Germans deserve everything they can get now because they  
13 are our buddies, don't talk to me about that. I don't  
14 think I can ever overcome the disgust with everything. It  
15 isn't just killing someone, to me that's obviously a  
16 horrible crime, but that's not so difficult; but to degrade  
17 people for so many years at the end, they believe that they  
18 are animals. There is no excuse for that. None.

19 That's how people really felt. All of that  
20 guilt and all of that, it's certainly not right.

21 Q DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ELSE FROM THAT  
22 AFTERNOON OR THAT EVENING? DID YOU HEAR ANYTHING GOING ON  
23 IN THE STREETS? DID YOU GO OUT AT ALL?

24 A No, we didn't go out. We certainly didn't go  
25 out. But when we heard that the synagogues were all

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burning, we -- oh, wait a minute. Books. They took books. Of course they burned our Torah and all of the books and it was a lot of fright and confusion as you can imagine. My mother cried all night and my grandmother she started praying to God and I remember saying "I don't think He is listening" and she got mad at that.

So as you can imagine, a lot of confusion, lots of anger. Nothing you can do about it. You feel so helpless. I think that's one of the worst feelings a human being can feel. You just sit there and take it. So that's bad. That's really bad. I can't add anymore. I really can't remember much more.

Q WERE YOU THE ONE WHO TOLD YOUR MOTHER THAT YOUR FATHER HAD BEEN TAKEN?

A No. It was the other way around. I think if you remember, I told you I was sitting in my uncle's business and he was taken and I ran home and Mama said, "Papa is not home anymore. He is gone."

So I myself did not see them leave because it was somebody else's house. I saw my uncle. I saw my cousin and I will never forget their faces -- You don't forget that. They looked like "This is it." And I guess even the Germans weren't sure what to do with anyone. They had no idea. There were so many Jews they didn't know what

to do with them.

So at that time I guess it was very important for them to get everything we owned, meaning all of the Jews, and that helped them quite a bit and they weren't ready to kill anyone at that time, I don't think so. It was too much trouble. I never knew there was so much hatred in the world. I had no idea and nobody else did, as far as I know. It's a little hard to believe. Don't you think? I am going to can get my coat, okay. Excuse me.

Would you get it for me? I am freezing. It's a little emotional I guess.

Any other questions?

Q MANY.

A Okay, I am fine. Go ahead. I am fine. I am not the only one, huh? Good. All of these horror stories -- (inaudible.)

Q MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE A BREAK AND --

SPEAKER: WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE?

INGE ROSENTHAL: I would rather continue.

MIKE ASKINAZA: THEN LET'S CONTINUE.

Q KRISTALLNACHT, THE FINAL TIME AND THEN WE WILL MOVE ON.

WHEN YOU WERE IN YOUR APARTMENT, DID YOU HEAR ANYTHING GOING ON?

A The outside?

Q IN THE TOWN, RIGHT.

A I don't think so. They were fairly decent about it. They took Papa real quickly. There weren't any -- There wasn't any audience for that matter, and, no, not really. I don't think the townspeople were even aware of what was going on. That was rather decent of them, I think. They could have done it in a different way, but as I said before, this particular fellow who picked Papa up seemed to have some kind of feelings of what he was doing.

Q YOUR MOTHER DESCRIBED HIM TO YOU, THAT'S HOW YOU KNEW ABOUT HIM?

A I saw him. He was the same fellow that picked my uncle up. He was a person like anyone else. I doubt very much if he knew where those people were going. As I mentioned, they kept them in the jail for one night and then took them to Buchenwald. So that's just a little officer or something. I don't think he was a big shot.

And in the little town there was an entirely different mood than in Berlin or Breslau, any of those places. It wasn't as well organized and part of the job is --

Q DID YOUR OTHER RELATIVES IN THE TOWNS, DID THEY HAVE BUSINESSES, TOO?

A Yes. They had a shoe store.

Q WAS EITHER THE SHOE STORE OR YOUR PARENTS' DEPARTMENT STORE BROKEN INTO THAT NIGHT OR VANDALIZED?

A That particular night, no. And oddly enough, I never did find out why they never broke our place up. Maybe they weren't given the orders. A German wouldn't do anything without an order and they are a little slow in these towns, you know. Our place was demolished in 1933 where I was too young to remember. But there was serious problems at that time.

Q IN 1933?

A When Hitler took over.

Q COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT?

A Oh, man, I was really young, but let me try.

We were told to leave the town and we had a whole bunch of Nazis standing around the house. No one went in and no one went out. There was the usual screaming and yelling, and my folks and I went to Berlin for a week and I don't know if they were, you know, contacted, we can come back. I really can't tell. But we went back and just went on. The Nazis had left and business as usual. You would think at that time, you know, they had enough of it, but they didn't. Talking about my folks. That was -- I was a very small child.

All I remember is going to Berlin and enjoying it thoroughly. It didn't hit me. I must have been five. I don't realize it. So I can tell you that.

Q THE STORE WAS BROKEN INTO OR VANDALIZED AT THAT POINT?

A I don't think so. It was just a lot of fear and the usual feelings that one has when you are kicked out. But I don't remember any -- not broken. I don't think so.

I think 1938, it was a matter of orders. They either didn't get the order because there were only two Jewish stores or it wasn't worth it for them or whatever. We were very surprised they didn't demolish the place, but they took it anyway.

Anyway, it was much smarter that they didn't demolish it. It made more money for them that way. So maybe they weren't so stupid after all.

Q AFTER KRISTALLNACHT, YOU DID NOT LEAVE THE APARTMENT UNTIL YOU --

A Oh, no, not for a few days. We were scared stiff.

Q WHAT HAPPENED AFTER A FEW DAYS?

A Well, we had to go out and do some shopping. No maid. There was no one there. So I think the brave one

1  
2 was my grandmother who was always the brave one. She went  
3 to the market and got some food. No incident. And we just  
4 stayed in the house, naturally, because we were much too  
5 frightened to go anywhere. Waiting for the phone to ring,  
6 which it never did. It was just kind of a very abnormal  
7 life style. You felt like a mole. At least I did. So  
8 that lasted about six weeks, until Papa came back, and we  
9 left as soon as possible.

10 Q DID YOU GO OUT AT ALL DURING THAT SIX WEEKS?

11 A A little bit here and there, but only with my  
12 mother, never alone. She wouldn't even let me walk across  
13 the street. And we heard that all of the other Jews were  
14 more or less living the same life style. So all of the men  
15 were gone. Nobody really wanted to do anything. Nobody  
16 felt like discussing it with anyone, obviously. They  
17 wouldn't discuss it with a German so there was no one else  
18 to talk to. I do remember my grandmother sitting in a  
19 little room with a German prayer book praying to, you know,  
20 to the Almighty and asking questions, "why is this all  
21 happening?" It made an unbelievable impression on me being  
22 a little girl, because the Almighty just didn't answer and  
23 at that time I must admit I lost what little faith I had.  
24 It took me many years to get it back.

25 It was very eerie to see an old lady begging

1  
2 the good Lord to do something about it. Now, this probably  
3 has nothing to do with the Holocaust, but it meant  
4 something because here I was barely understanding what was  
5 happening all around and then she asks questions.  
6 Interesting, I would say. My grandmother had a very  
7 personal God. She discussed things with him and they must  
8 have had a very good relationship because she always knew  
9 what he was talking about. It's interesting.

10 Q WAS SHE MORE RELIGIOUS THAN YOUR PARENTS?

11 A Oh, yes. Definitely. Oh, yes. But as many  
12 Jews do, she made up her own little religion. I don't mean  
13 she didn't follow the prayers or the holidays, but she had  
14 her own idea of how to discuss things with God, and it was  
15 a very simple relationship, and boy, I wish I could find  
16 it. It would be nice.

17 Q SIX WEEKS LATER, YOUR FATHER TURNED UP AT THE  
18 DOOR. WAS THAT UNEXPECTED?

19 A Completely. We had no idea.

20 Q WERE YOU THERE WHEN THAT HAPPENED?

21 A Yes, I was right there.

22 And, you know, it was so marvelous to have  
23 him there alive, although he barely looked alive, that  
24 there were no questions asked. It was quite amazing. No  
25 one asked any questions and he had all of these millions of



things I wanted to ask him. And I said, "Papa, where have you been?"

He said, "Don't worry about it. It's all over now."

He was a very brave person. He never, ever talked about it. He is not alive anymore so we can't ask him any questions.

Q DID YOU KNOW HE WAS STILL ALIVE BEFORE HE TURNED UP AT THE DOOR?

A We had no idea if he was alive or not.

Was that your question?

Q YES.

A Oh, we didn't know. We did get that little postcard, and of course I had a feeling that someone told him what to write, which was true. We had no idea where he was.

Oh, yes, of course we knew that he was there at Buchenwald, but we didn't know what Buchenwald was. That made no sense anyway. We had never heard of a concentration camp. The word had never been used in our vocabulary. We didn't know from anything.

Q NO DISCUSSION OF DACHAU AT ALL?

A No, not at that time. People were taken to Dachau, but maybe they too were told never to mention it

for the few that might have escaped or whatever. So we had absolutely no idea. If we would have talked about the moon, it would have been just as important.

Q AFTER YOUR FATHER RETURNED, WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

A Well, as we had nothing to do, you know -- no business, no nothing -- it was just a frenzy to get out. So Mama started to pack and went to the cemetery to say good-bye to who was there and time went by very, very quickly, and to say good-bye to a few relatives who couldn't get out, and off we went. It seemed quite unreal, those two weeks. I can barely remember it. I wanted to get out. You can imagine. So I was -- seemed quite relieved. I can't speak for my parents. I don't think they were, but I was.

Q YOU DON'T THINK THEY WERE RELIEVED TO GET OUT of --

A They were so frightened that I think there was no feeling of relief. It was too much fear.

Q YOU MEAN DURING THE TRIP OUT?

A Yeah. Because, you see, we had, of course -- What do you call it -- visas and papers and all of that. It was difficult to get all of that and also we were very frightened to go to the different stations, and we were

also afraid that some S.S. guy said you could not leave. These stories surfaced everywhere.

So once we sat in the train from Vienna to Italy, there was a little bit of a relief, and the minute we got into Italy, I could feel there was some kind of attempt to enjoy some of the moments of trips and trains. But most parents -- most adults, I can't say parents. Most adults cried through the whole thing. Many had left their old parents there and some people went to concentration camps, some relatives. It was far from a festive mood, you can imagine. To me, it was great. I had never been out of the country so it was very exciting.

Oh, I did meet the first Jewish friend I ever had on the train. We looked at each other and I didn't know what to do with that. I never had a Jewish friend in my life. It was a very exciting experience. We went to Shanghai together.

Q HOW WAS A DECISION MADE TO GO TO SHANGHAI?

A How was it made? Papa only got two weeks to get out and if I am correct there was no other country that let us in at that time. So my uncle bribed people who sold the tickets for the ship. If you didn't have money, you didn't get out. There was some money left so he bribed them and we got the tickets to get out to Shanghai. I do

know that Papa went to see some Jewish official in a bigger town for advice, should we go. And he did tell me that.

He said -- This fellow sits there and says "Are you absolutely crazy to go to Shanghai. You will starve to death. What are you going to do in Shanghai?"

And tried very hard to talk him out of leaving. This guy died in Auschwitz and Papa made it. So I have to admit there was a lot of ignorance, unfortunately. People didn't know what was happening, really didn't. That much I know. Papa stood his ground and we left.

Q AFTER KRISTALLNACHT, A LOT OF JEWS WERE AFRAID TO LEAVE?

A Oh, yes. Well, either they were afraid or they didn't want to give up their income. You know, it's really easy to say take your \$4.00 and run.

But now that I am slightly older, I can understand some of their feelings. I don't think they are right. But I can understand them. It's not easy to pack up and just go to another country when you know nothing, I mean nothing. Didn't barely know on a map where Shanghai was. It was very frightening. Not to me, though. To me it was great. I loved it. I loved every minute of it.

Q SOME OF THE JEWS, THEN, STILL HAD THEIR

BUSINESSES, THEIR INCOME, AFTER KRISTALLNACHT?

A No. No.

Q THEY WERE JUST THINKING THEY WOULD SOME DAY  
GET THE BUSINESS BACK AND --

A They were fortunate enough to think it would  
all turn around and Hitler would disappear and everything  
would be fine. But anyone who was a little bit aware of  
what was going on tried to leave or ran out or whatever by  
whatever mode they could make it.

But there were an awful lot who were not aware  
of what was going on. My folks were part of it.

Q WERE YOU AWARE AT THE TIME OF YOUR PARENTS OR  
YOUR UNCLE LOOKING INTO WHICH COUNTRY YOU COULD ESCAPE AND  
THE PROCESS THEY WENT TO AND DECIDING UPON SHANGHAI?

A You are right. There were a couple of letters  
written to these people in New York who either didn't  
realize what kind of stress we were under or didn't want  
us. I can't -- you know -- I really think there was no  
attempt made to help us.

Q RELATIVES?

A Relatives. Distant relatives. So that was  
out. Then I remember my mother writing a letter to a  
cousin in Sidney, who had left earlier, and I remember the  
answer that we got, "We have enough refugees here. We

don't need any more."

That was very, very discouraging; so Shanghai was it.

Q YOUR UNCLE PAID FOR THE TICKETS?

A Yes.

Q WHERE DID HE GET THE MONEY?

A My grandmother had some money.

Q YOUR GRANDMOTHER?

A Uh-huh.

Q DID YOUR UNCLE COME WITH YOU?

A He left earlier than we did. He went to Shanghai, too.

Q WHO WENT TO SHANGHAI IN YOUR FAMILY AND HOW MANY OF THEM WENT WITH YOU?

A Okay. The other family that lived in my little home town, I told you, uncle, aunt, three children who were at that time already adults and my family, my mother and myself. That's the one, we went together.

My -- my uncle the one who really got us out and his wife went to Shanghai, too, and while we were in Shanghai we got another uncle out, too, who was in Germany when we left. So our immediate family more or less made it. My fathers, brothers, sisters and nieces and nephews were all killed. But I guess on my side of the family we

were a little luckier.

Q HOW DID YOU GET THE VISAS TO GET OUT OF GERMANY AND MAKE THE TRIP?

A If I am correct, my uncle did that. In a little town, it was very difficult. Visas were issued in -- I guess it was Breslau, but it could have been Berlin. I was really not aware of how that all worked. But I think in one of the bigger towns they were issued, these visas.

Q DURING YOUR TRAIN TRIP THEN YOU TRAVELED ACROSS ALMOST ALL OF GERMANY?

A Yes, we went from (Noroder) to Vienna, which was an overnight trip.

Q DID YOU GET OFF AT ALL DURING THE TRIP?

A In Vienna we got off -- we stayed in the station and I had my first Wiener schnitzel, which I thought was an important thing in my life, and all I remember is my folks kept saying, "Let's get back on the train. Too many Nazis around here."

It was still that persecution feeling that was still there. Nothing changed. Once we got into Italy, things look good. Very good. Although Italy wasn't exactly heaven either, but it felt better.

Q THIS IS AROUND JANUARY OF 1939?

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A It was around Pasach. It must have been March.

Q MARCH?

A Uh-huh. March. Yes. Definitely March.

Q OKAY?

A We celebrated Pasach on the ship. So I do remember that.

Q YOUR FATHER WAS ARRESTED -- (INAUDIBLE) --

A Uh-huh.

Q WAS IN FOR --

A Six weeks.

Q SIX WEEKS. THAT BRINGS YOU TO MID-DECEMBER?

A Yes.

Q THEN YOU LEFT ABOUT TWO WEEKS LATER?

A Actually, we didn't. We left later, however discussing it, but he must have been given some kind of an extension or something.

Q ORIGINALLY, IT WAS TWO WEEKS?

A Two weeks. But once they saw the tickets -- That was what it was. My uncle had got the ticket and we were able to show proof that we were going to leave. So I guess they did pretty well by us. They got everything we owned, so why not? Now I can say that, but I guess in those days, every day must have been an eternity for my



folks. But you know, I didn't really realize all of that.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR FEELINGS DURING THE TIME, DURING THAT WAIT TO LEAVE?

A All I could think was -- I was just a kid. I am going to go on a big train ride and a ship and things are going to be great.

A child doesn't realize all of the dangers, let alone all of the things that were happening around Germany. I know very little about all of that. I did see the burnt synagogues. We went over there to say good-bye to some relatives and that was extremely shocking to see that big old hole there. But otherwise all I could think of, I am going to get away from all of this. I won't have to endure any of this misery anymore. So I was very happy. I thought it was great.

Q YOU KNEW YOU WERE NOT COMING BACK?

A Yeah. I don't want to go back. I still haven't gone back and I never will.

Q YOUR PARENTS TOLD YOU THAT YOU WERE MOVING FOR GOOD?

A Yes.

Q DID YOU CATCH THE SHIP FROM ITALY?

A Yes.

Q THEN HOW LONG WAS THE TRAIN TRIP TO THE PORT?

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A The train trip itself?

3

Q DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT WAS?

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A Eight hours and -- a day and-a-half. It was a long train trip. And quite emotional. Most of the people on the train were -- most of them cried for all their worldly belongings, and I never did understand that. I guess it's just human nature.

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Q WAS THE TRAIN FULL OF PEOPLE FLEEING?

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A Mostly Jews. I would not -- no. It wasn't the whole train, but we must have had a few compartments of Jewish people there.

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It was the same old story. Everyone had been bribed. Otherwise we wouldn't make it. And that's pretty horrible when you think about it. That people had a little bit of money, got out and the others didn't. That's --

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Q BRIBED TO GET THE VISAS AND THE TICKETS?

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A Everything. Luckily my grandmother had some cash; otherwise, forget it.

20

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Q DURING THE TRAIN TRIP ITSELF, YOU HAD TO BRIBE more people?

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A No. The train trip -- I don't think we bribed everyone, but the ship -- there was a lot of bribery going on or we never would have had the tickets.

25

Q BUT YOU HAD -- BEFORE YOU LEFT GERMANY YOU HAD

TICKETS FOR BOTH THE SHIP AND THE TRAIN?

A     You know, we must have gotten the tickets. The ship tickets I know, because that was a big celebration. But about the train, I never heard of any unusual bribery or something. I couldn't tell. I guess it was a normal train ticket. But we didn't have to get it so early in advance. I just remember very -- I guess I mentioned that before, the fear on the train. There were lots of Nazis on the train and especially at the border. I remember these people, they all turned white and I didn't even know what a border was. I never left my little hometown. I didn't know what they were talking about. They turned white and rigid and the Nazis walk in and out of the train and looked at all of the visas and called everybody a dirty Jew. "We are glad we got rid of all of you," and that was very, very frightening because if they didn't feel like letting us go they didn't have to. That's when they killed a couple of Jews, right on the station. Those bastards. Pardon my French.

Q     WHAT HAPPENED?

A     They found some jewelry. You know, they went through all of our luggage, of course, the usual. And these stupid Jews had put some diamonds in their toothpaste. They found it. That was foolish. Very

foolish.

But I guess --

Q DID YOU SEE THE EXECUTIONS?

A I heard it. I didn't see it. I heard it.

Q THE GUNFIRE?

A Uh-huh.

Q DID YOU SEE THE BODIES?

A No. I personally didn't see the bodies, but I know it happened right there on the train station.

Q DID YOU SEE THE PEOPLE WHEN THEY WERE ARRESTED OR HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

A Well, you know how it is. Immediately everyone knew about it. I am sure somebody saw it. I luckily did not see anything. No, I didn't see it.

It was quite simple. They just pulled them out of the train and shot them. They are very efficient, the Germans, there was no question about that.

But Papa -- that's what I told you. Papa said, "You see, at least we go out clear and no one is going to shoot us." Although that was not the case. If they want to shoot somebody, they did, but at least he felt safe. That was the point. That was very important.

Q DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL SAFE?

A Me? Not really. Not at that time because

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everyone was screaming and yelling and crying and it was complete chaos. Complete chaos. Once the border was passed and the Nazis left, a big sigh of relief. Then we felt good.

Q DID THEY ACTUALLY COME DOWN IN YOUR CAR, COME DOWN THE AISLE?

A Oh, yes.

Q DID THEY CHECK YOUR VISAS?

A Oh, yes. Oh God, yes. I showed them my little stateless passbook.

By the way, I wanted to show it to you. I spent all afternoon looking at whatever, what little I have. It's just a few pictures. I couldn't find it. So it's a stateless passport. It said, "Stateless" on it because they took that away from us at the Kristallnacht. They had changed all of our passports. We were not a citizen anymore. We were --

Q SUBJECTS?

A Yeah. Well, that's polite.

And also changed all of our names in the passport. My name was Sara, which was to me -- it's a big compliment, but in those days it was real degradation. What is the word? Degradation? Right?

Q YOUR NAME WAS SARA IN THE PASSPORT?

A Yes. All of the Jewish ladies wore passports and all of the men were -- what was Papa's name? Isaac? Isaac. That's right. Isaac and Sara. So you can tell them "you dirty something or other" and lump us all together.

Q YOU KEPT YOUR LAST NAME?

A Uh-huh.

Q OKAY.

A So I mean, why would anybody do that? You tell me. Who does it benefit? I never did understand that. But their policy was to level us to nothing, dirt. So I kept that passbook for years, but one of my moves I must have lost it. That's really the only thing I have. I have nothing else to show from my life there.

Q THE SOLDIERS -- THE NAZIS THAT CAME into the TRAIN, WERE THEY CARRYING WEAPONS?

A They had these -- I was going to say Uzi, but that's wrong, the tiny little guns. So yeah, with their big arm bands and their high boots and --

Q HOW DID THIS AFFECT A LITTLE GIRL OF 11 OR 12 YEARS OF AGE?

A Those are -- there was a lot of fright there. I always pictured the boots, sooner or later they will kick me in the face and somehow they never did. The symbol of

the boots is something I will probably carry to my grave. The marching sounds of the boots, that was sort of the minute those sounds came close, it was time to hide or run away or go into a hole or something like that. You just didn't -- I certainly didn't feel -- all of that physical violence that I read in this little (Stomer) that I mentioned to you before (inaudible), the boots are a real symbol for me, at least.

Q THE EXECUTIONS TOOK PLACE AT THE BORDER WITH AUSTRIA, LEAVING GERMANY?

A Uh-huh.

Q WAS THERE ANOTHER INSPECTION WHEN YOU LEFT AUSTRIA?

A There was an inspection between Germany and Austria and Austria and Italy.

Q WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

A It wasn't quite as intense, but it was still -- of course we were already geared to -- our mood was geared to being frightened and try to run if you can. There is no place to run, so the mood was awful.

But I don't think the second inspection was as drastic as the first. But that's so many years ago, you know, I am not really sure.

Q YOU SAID WHEN THE TRAIN ENTERED ITALY, THE

MOOD IMPROVED?

A Yes.

Q DRAMATICALLY?

A Drastically.

Q WERE PEOPLE HAPPY OR JUST LESS AFRAID?

A There was no happiness. No. I wouldn't -- but there was some relief in their faces. They didn't look quite as white, and a lot of people said, "Gee, can you imagine, we made it. It's impossible, but we made it."

Those words I remember. It didn't seem real that we had really made it. You know, I think the reality really hit us on the ship because there weren't any Nazis. There were a couple of Italians that hated Jews, but it was sort of -- it was not verbal or anything. Here and there, there was a few remarks, "You damned rich Jews, you get out" and stuff like that under the breath, but all in all it was wonderful. It was heaven.

Q WHAT WERE THE OTHER PEOPLE ON THE TRAIN -- WHERE WAS THEIR DESTINATION, DO YOU KNOW?

A It was all Shanghai.

Q ALL SHANGHAI?

A It was all Shanghai. I don't know how they -- you know, what got out. But on the ship then we met these people who we had only met by sight, you know. But these



were all escapees that went into Shanghai.

Q DID THEY ALL TAKE THE SAME TRAIN?

A I suppose. Maybe there was another one, but I saw a lot of people that I had seen on the train.

Q DID YOU STAY IN ITALY OVER NIGHT?

A No.

Q HOW LONG DID YOU STAY IN ITALY?

A We got there in the morning and the ship left about 4:30 in the afternoon.

Q THE TRAIN TOOK YOU RIGHT CLOSE?

A Uh-huh.

Q RIGHT INTO THE CITY WHERE THE PORT WAS?

A How did we get there? I know we had no money. I know we didn't eat because we had no money. It was kind of funny because we were starved. I remember Papa buying an apple someplace and we walked -- we walked to the ship. We really did. I don't know how far it was. But it didn't matter.

Once the ship took off, then there was this real sigh of relief.

Q WAS THERE CELEBRATION, THEN? WOULD YOU CALL IT A CELEBRATION? WERE PEOPLE SMILING?

A Yeah, they were smiling all right. There was no dancing or shouting, but there was tremendous relief.

No question about that. Because it could never have been as bad anywhere else as what we had just left. It couldn't be. Little did they know. But, no. It certainly was not as bad again.

Q ONE MORE QUESTION ON YOUR TRIP.

A Sure.

Q HOW MUCH LUGGAGE AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS WERE THE PEOPLE ABLE TO TAKE WITH THEM?

A That's an excellent question.

Q ESPECIALLY IN YOUR FAMILY.

A That's a great question. I think each of us had a small suitcase. Yes, we all had a suitcase and I had a teddy bear which my mother threw out the window and I never forgave her for that, either, because she said, "You are too big for that," and she threw it out of the train window and that really did it. That really did it. I said, "Momma" --

Well, you know, in those days psychologists were not very important. I know it sounds very funny that I would tell you that, but that was the biggest disappointment in all of my life that she would throw that teddy bear. It was a rotten old teddy bear. I used it day and night. It looked terrible. But that was my only friend I had.

Q SHE THREW IT OUT WHEN YOU WERE STILL IN THE APARTMENT?

A No, in the train.

Q IN THE TRAIN?

A I guess she was ashamed. Here is a 10-year old girl with a teddy bear. She was so ashamed, she threw it out the window. I know you are supposed to forgive, but that one I can't forgive. Can you imagine? I am stewing about a thing like that now. We have come a long way, haven't we? Anyway --

Q ANY OTHER -- WAS IT BASICALLY, YOU THINK, ONE SUITCASE A PERSON?

A That's about it. Yes. I know that we didn't shop for a trip as we do in these days. There was no money and the thought of buying a dress for the ship was just not -- just never mentioned. Whatever they had, we threw in the suitcase and we left. None of that mattered. It truly didn't matter. It just didn't matter.

Q YOU DIDN'T TAKE ANY VALUABLES OR JEWELRY?

A Are you kidding? We gave that all to the Germans.

Q WHICH GERMANS? TO THE TOWNSPEOPLE?

A No. I think I did mention right after the Kristallnacht, some official came in and said, "We are

1  
2 going to put a lock on your business" which they did. They  
3 gave us a receipt for 25 bucks or some ridiculous amount  
4 because the Germans are correct, and then they came up and  
5 took what little jewelry. We never had a lot of jewelry.  
6 None in my family. But they did take the candlesticks and  
7 the camera, stuff like that, and gave us a receipt for that  
8 which I found absolutely ludicrous and left. So we didn't  
9 have anything. I think my mother did keep her wedding  
10 ring. She did keep that.

11 Q DID SHE WEAR THAT ON THE TRIP?

12 A Yeah, she wore that. I didn't have any  
13 jewelry. I told you, the teddy bear was the only thing  
14 that mattered.

15 Q AND THE TRAIN WAS JUST ONE OPEN COMPARTMENT?

16 A It was a lovely train, by the way.  
17 Beautiful. We didn't have a sleeper, but it was -- in  
18 those days the Germans had beautiful trains, so it was very  
19 comfortable.

20 Q YOU STAYED ON THE ONE TRAIN?

21 A All the way to Vienna.

22 Q DID YOU CHANGE IN VIENNA?

23 A Yes, in Vienna we changed.

24 Q WAS THAT ALSO AN OPEN COMPARTMENT?

25 A Now, you got me there. I suppose. Trains are

famous. They are lovely. Very well kept.

Q IT WASN'T, YOU DIDN'T FEEL, CROWDED IN?

A No. No.

Q WAS EVERY SEAT TAKEN?

A I remember our little compartment was completely taken. And now, looking back -- now you sure opened up something.

I never thought of that train again. I never went anywhere in that train. I must have been stupid. I sat there all the time on my mother's lap. I never moved. So I would imagine it was very crowded. I mean, not uncomfortably crowded just, you know, seats were taken.

Could you imagine a 10 year old child in this day and age sitting on her mama's lap for eight hours straight?

Q NOBODY WAS SITTING IN THE AISLES?

A I don't think so. No. No one left. I know that. No one walked or anything like that. There was too many Nazis on there to take a chance.

Q DURING THE TRAIN RIDE, TOO?

A Uh-huh. Well, Nazis are everywhere in Germany. Everyone was a Nazi. If you weren't, you were either in a concentration camp or you were hiding. There weren't any other people.

Q CIVILIANS WHO WERE SITTING IN YOUR  
COMPARTMENT?

A So nobody said anything or talked about it or whatever. We always had the feeling that everybody knew that we were Jewish and when you think about it, that's pretty crazy, isn't it? Because you didn't look any different than anybody else, but there was this -- they used to say we have horns, we have something on the forehead, and I was always under the impression that it must be there for other people to see because why wouldn't I take a walk on that train or talk to anyone? I wouldn't dare. So it takes a long time to overcome these fears.

Q HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT MOST OF THE TRAIN WAS  
JEWISH THEN?

A Well, I guess to a child's impression, I saw all of these people on the ship there. It could have been only half of the passengers. I really can't say.

Q AND ON THE TRAIN ITSELF, THOUGH, THERE WEREN'T  
ANY UNIFORMED S.S. OR GESTAPO PEOPLE RIDING ON THE TRAIN IN  
YOUR COMPARTMENT?

A I just remember them at the border. It was very possible in another compartment they were. After all, they traveled like everyone else. My own recollection is only at the border.

Q ON THE SHIP, COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE SHIP? HOW BIG WAS IT? WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE, HOW COMFORTABLE?

A Very comfortable.

Q THE ACCOMMODATIONS?

A Extremely. Very beautiful ship. I am trying to think of the name, but (Monte Vadalía). S.S. (Monte Vadalía). It was an Italian ship.

The way it worked in our case, my uncle got tickets for my mother, my grandmother and I in the 1st class, and Papa had to be -- it's not such a terrible thing, but he was in the third class because that's the only tickets they could get. We visited with each other all the time. It was very elegant. Very comfortable and very unusual figuring that we had just escaped the most horrendous time in our life and we are supposed to be sitting in this fancy dining room with the elegant food and dancing every night. It didn't fit at all. It really didn't fit.

The only one who had a really good time was the kids, meaning me and my friends and the other few kids that we met. But the adults certainly never danced or any of that. They weren't able to shake it off as easily as the kids are.

Lovely ship. Very lovely. With a swimming

pool and all ships were as elegant as they are today. It was fun.

Q WAS IT YOUR IMPRESSION THAT MOST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE SHIP WERE JEWS FLEEING?

A The majority of ships were Jews. They made a lot of money on those Jews, let me tell you. They could use a lot of ships for that. They each gave us a piece of Matzo for Pasach. They did.

Q WAS PASACH WHILE YOU WERE ON THE SHIP?

A Yes, it was. One of our co-passengers made a little service for us and we ate Matzo that night.

Q YOU HAD A SEDAR?

A Yeah. Well, you know we didn't have all of the right food or anything, but we were quite impressed that the Italians who gave us a piece of Matzo -- we all had Matzo that night. It was nice.

Q WAS THIS IN THE DINING ROOM THAT YOU HAD IT?

A No. It was in one of the entertainment rooms. It was not in the dining room.

Q HOW MANY PEOPLE PARTICIPATED?

A Gee, it's hard for me to say really. About 100, maybe.

Q MOST OF THE JEWISH PASSENGERS DID NOT HAVE A SEDAR THAT NIGHT?



A I don't know if they chose not to or they didn't know about it. I really -- it's something that I don't quite remember. I remember eating Matzo and feeling very good about it.

Q ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE ON THE SHIP AND WHAT WAS YOUR FEELING ABOUT HOW MANY WERE JEWISH, WHAT PERCENTAGE?

A I would imagine we were between 200 and 300 people on that ship and the majority were Jewish. It was the very first time in my life that I met Jews from all walks of life, and children. Real life Jewish children. It was a real miracle for me. A real miracle. I didn't know what to do with that. I loved every minute of it. I had lived such a secluded life that it was very, very -- it was like a play for me. It was just like a show. I couldn't imagine that I was going to be part of this. Then when we went to Shanghai, it was great. It was neat.

Q WERE THE JEWS FROM ALL OVER?

A Uh-huh.

Q OR MOSTLY FROM GERMANY?

A Just Germany. There were some Austrians that had joined us in Vienna. But I don't think there were any other Jews on the ship.

No -- no, that's right. There weren't any

other.

Q HOW WERE YOU TREATED BY THE CREW?

A Very nice.

Q AND THE JEWISH PASSENGERS?

A No problem at all. They were lovely.

Certainly the children were treated like, you know, real human beings. It was very hard to adjust to that, let me tell you.

Q ANY ANTI-SEMITISM AT ALL?

A On the ship?

Q ON THE SHIP.

A The only thing I remember is we were given some shots when you go on board. I guess we needed typhoid shot and cholera shot and a few other goodies like that, and the ship's doctor was a real Nazi and I remember him saying, "You God damned Jews, you don't deserve these shots, but I have to give them to you because that's the rule."

I said, "I found another one. Mazeltov." He was mean. He was really mean. He gave us shots on the shoulder, but it's not necessary. And it was painful. I remember that. Very distinctly. He could have easily given the shots in the arm which he refused. But that is a small incident, and, you know, figuring he can't do very

much harm anymore.

Q HOW DID A NAZI DOCTOR GET ABOARD AN ITALIAN SHIP?

A They had Italian Nazis, let me tell you. They had Italian Nazis.

Q HE WASN'T GERMAN?

A No, he wasn't German. He was an Italian, but he spoke German because I couldn't speak anything else at that time anyway, so he was not a German. He was an Italian. But, you know, very good money; why not? And that was no big deal.

Q DID THE SHIP GO DIRECTLY TO SHANGHAI? DID IT STOP IN OTHER PORTS?

A It stopped at a few ports.

Q DID YOU GET OFF AT ALL?

A Oh, yes, we got off at a few places. We got off in Singapore. We got off in Columbo. We weren't allowed to get off in Bombay because they wouldn't let you into India, and I found that very strange. To this day I don't know why. Maybe they were afraid we would stay.

That's the ports that I remember getting off, those two. But there might have been more. That's about it that I remember. I am sure there is more. I am sorry.

Q DID ANY JEWS LEAVE THE SHIP BEFORE SHANGHAI?

A Before Shanghai you mean, stowaways, something like that you mean?

Q NO, I JUST MEAN TO RELOCATE.

A Somewhere else?

Q SOMEPLACE OTHER THAN SINGAPORE.

A Not that I know of. They wouldn't let them in there.

Are you kidding? No. I had never heard of it. To get a visa to Singapore would have been like finding a \$100 bill. I don't know of anyone who did that.

Q HOW LONG DID THE TRIP TAKE YOU BEFORE YOU ARRIVED IN SHANGHAI?

A 21 days. It was a slow boat to China, pardon the pun. It was slow, rather uneventful really other than being fed very nicely, and, you know, there wasn't anything out of the ordinary. I am sure my folks were worried enough about the future, but not me.

Q WHAT HAPPENED IN SHANGHAI WHEN YOU ARRIVED?

A What happened? That was interesting.

We were -- the ship arrived and my uncle, who had left a little earlier, came to pick us up and we were all put into a kettle truck because that's the only transportation they had. This wasn't mean. There was no money. I mean, Shanghai is an unbelievably poor place.

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So they put us in this kettle truck and all of us into a completely demolished place because the Japanese were in power and Chinese had burned the whole -- practically the whole town before the Japanese took over.

So naturally, where did we end up, in that section of town, understandably. So we were very lucky. My uncle got a room for us, all of us in one room which is fine. Most of the people went to the camps -- I don't mean concentration camps now. Camps that were run, but the Jewish organization, (hias) and we were lucky enough we didn't have to go to the camp. We had our own room.

I don't know what else to say. We had -- we didn't know the language. We had absolutely no money so I suppose it was pretty frightening, but the fear of being persecuted by Nazis wasn't there anymore. So you know, it wasn't too bad.

Next morning we went to the camp to get some food. We were issued some tickets. So three times a day, we went there to get food, and as you can imagine it was pretty lousy so we lasted for about three weeks and then my grandmother said, "That's enough of that. Let somebody else eat it."

And we managed to sell something. I guess my mother sold a coat and a couple of clothes, and we got our

own food for a while. And things went their own merry way for a little bit.

Did you want to hear about Shanghai?

Q YES.

A Well, first of all I was going to school, the best part of it all. Mother signed me up at school and I adored it. I absolutely adored it. Jewish kids, Jewish teachers -- it was heaven, absolute heaven.

For me everything was great. We didn't have much great food, we didn't have hardly any clothes, but -- and I am not lying -- it didn't matter. Nobody cared. Everybody was in the same boat. So what? It didn't matter at all. We lasted for a little while and then Papa had a brainstorm. He wrote a letter to the relatives in New York, told them we had arrived, we don't want anything from them because we knew they wouldn't give us anything, but we would hope they would have some kind of friends or relatives or someone in China that might give us a hand.

Papa at that time was no baby, about 55. And lo and behold, they contacted some business associate of theirs and we got a call. I don't remember how it happened. No, no, no. They sent us the address of this Chinese man we should go and visit them, which we did. I was the only one who new some English. Can you imagine how

much English I knew?

But anyway, I was the big translator. We went to this very, very nice Chinese person and I said that we are relatives of these people there in New York, could they do something for us? We were completely penniless and really truly penniless.

This guy says, "What would you like to do?"

Papa says, "You know what I would like to do, I would like to open a little business, that's the only thing I am good for."

The guy took out a checkbook and said, "How much do you want?" That's the truth.

Papa said, out of the clear blue sky, "\$300."

This guy says, "\$300? What are you going to do with \$300?"

He said, "That's all I want."

So he gave us \$300 and Papa opened up a little grocery store, about as big as a quarter of this room, and Papa made a living, we gave him the \$300 back and things were great.

Q YOU ARE SAYING ABOUT 10 FEET BY 12 FEET?

A That's about it. Yes.

He opened up a grocery store, which I think was genius, absolute genius, because, you know, he was a

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businessman and customers he had, all of the refugees, had to eat. You can imagine what a meager living it was, but it was a living. We were not hungry. I was never hungry in Shanghai and we fed all of our relatives. So it was fine. It was very good.

By the way, it's 4:00 and my husband is going to pick me up at 4:00. I hope you forgive me. I don't mind another 15 minutes or so.

(Discussion held off the record.)

(The proceedings concluded.)