

Interview with RITA KUHN  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
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Q GOOD MORNING. WE ARE AT THE HOLOCAUST CENTER IN SAN FRANCISCO. I'M EVELYN FIELDER INTERVIEWING RITA KUHN. IT IS AUGUST THE 7TH, 1989.

GOOD MORNING, RITA.

A Morning.

Q WOULD YOU TELL US WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN?

A All right. I was born in Berlin on November 29th, 1927.

Q AND DO YOU HAVE ANY SISTERS AND BROTHERS?

A I have a brother, one brother, and he's still in Berlin.

Q OH, HE'S STILL IN BERLIN. AND WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL IN BERLIN?

A Well, at first -- I mean I was about five years old when Hitler came into power, so I wasn't going to school then. But in 1934 I went to a neighborhood school. As far as I know it was a German school.

Q PRESCHOOL?

*Spelling* A No, it was a regular what they called a (fortshooler). I don't remember the name. It was very close to where we lived at the time. And there I think I went until 1937.

Now Jewish children were not supposed to go to school; right? You remember. And I think it started around 1937, maybe even earlier.

Q WERE BOTH YOUR PARENTS JEWISH?

A No. My mother was not Jewish before she married my father, but then she converted. So, on my birth certificate it says my parents' name, and at that time we have to give religion. My mother's, father's, both (modaje), *spelling* I mean Jewish. So I was registered -- my brother later, two years later -- in the Jewish community, Jewish Commando Community Center. So we were registered as Jews, all four of us.

Q BUT UNDER THE GERMAN LAW AT THAT TIME YOU WERE A FULL JEW OR --

A Well, we were considered Jews by law according to the Nuremburg Laws, and my mother, even though she was Jewish then by religion, was still considered an Arian by the Nazis. You know, quote, unquote, "Arian."

Q WERE YOU AT ALL RELIGIOUS? WERE YOU BROUGHT UP UNDER THE JEWISH FAITH?

A Yeah. We went to the synagogue and we celebrated the Jewish holidays and --as a matter of fact, later on I'll talk about the synagogue --

we went to the synagogue right across from where my grandmother used to live on -- I don't know whether you know it -- (Fritzanstrazer).

Q YES.

A It's a reform --

Q A SYNAGOGUE.

A A liberal synagogue. One of the biggest, yes.

Q WHEN HITLER CAME TO POWER, HOW DID YOU FIRST NOTICE?

A I noticed right away. I noticed right away and --

Q DID YOU TALK ABOUT IT AT HOME AT ALL WITH YOUR PARENTS?

A I don't remember that. But what I remember very distinctly very early childhood, I think I was even five -- I wasn't even in school yet -- I noticed that neighborhood children would tease us and call us (udenswine) and "Go away Jewish pig" and "Go back to where you come from." And my brother even remembers little ditties they had, you know. And then -- and I remember one incident very early -- I'm not even sure I went to school then -- by that time I had gone to school. In school I did notice the school children were all right.

But one incident I remember on the street. I used to play on the street with other children and some boys asked me to say something in Hebrew. And all I knew in

spelling

spelling

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spelling  
Hebrew was (schma) and a few blessings that I picked up, and I didn't want to say them. I said, "I can't, you know, they're sacred." And they pushed me into a corner and said, "We'll beat you up if you don't." So I did.

Q DID YOU GO TO SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE CENTER?

A I believe I did. I don't remember that either. I mean there's so much. I believe I did because I remember that I used to follow the service in Hebrew. I could read Hebrew well enough when I was little and still going to the synagogue that in fact the rabbi told my father once, "Isn't she amazing how she can follow," you know. So I must have learned to read. I probably went to Sunday school.

Q WHERE WERE YOU ON KRISTALLNACHT 1939?

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spelling  
spelling  
A Well, by that time I was going to (fradenstrazer), to Jewish school. I had, I think, started in 1937 and I was on my way to school, and I remember this very --I have this memory very clearly that I walked a few blocks from my home and I couldn't notice anything cause there were no stores. It was very quiet, so I thought it was like any other day, but then I turned into a main street --you may know it -- (constrazer) and there's a lot of Jewish stores. On (Constrazer), it was a main store. And I noticed the

*spelling*

minute I turned into the (constrazer) that stores --the windows were smashed. The glass was lying on the street. Some of the goods were lying on the street and --but what I remember almost visually still was that the writing on the --

Q ON THE GLASS?

*spelling*

A -- on the glass that was not broken yet or on the walls next to the store was "Jew" and then the star. Sometimes (uder) written out and the stars and what I -- what struck me then, I was ten then. I was ten years old. What struck me then and really impressed me was that they were written in red letters, and it was like dripping still, the red was being like blood and --

Q WHAT DID YOU DO?

*spelling*  
*spelling*

A I walked on, and I saw more and more stars on both sides of street. And I guess I was frightened and bewildered. I didn't know what -- I was used to seeing some of that already but that meant I didn't know there were that many Jewish stores. I walked on as I had to go to school, I had to get to school. And I had to walk all together maybe 14 blocks to school and 10 blocks around (constrazer) until I got to (stanwazer).

Q THAT'S QUITE A WAYS.

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*spelling*  
A Yeah, and I walked on and I think just before I came to  
(fitzantazer), maybe a couple of blocks before I came there  
two of my classmates came running over towards me and said  
that, "Don't go on.  
Don't go any further." There sort of was talks in hushed  
voices and our synagogue is burning. I said, "Our  
synagogue is burning." And I said, "Our synagogue is  
burning." And I couldn't understand it at first. I  
thought it must me an accident. Then all of a sudden --  
then it dawned on me that there was a connection between  
the scenes I had just witnessed and the synagogue burning.  
Something in me snapped at the point --

Q WHAT DID YOU DO?

A -- and I saw there were only a few people on the street and  
I just started yelling to everybody. I said, "Our  
synagogue is burning, our synagogue is burning." And of  
course they all looked away. They all looked down on the  
street and --

Q WHERE DID YOU GO?

A -- and then I went home. I turned around and went home.

Q YOU DISCUSSED IT WITH YOUR PARENTS?

A I don't remember that. I don't remember that. I think  
that the only thing I'm sure I discussed it -- I'm sure I

told them what happened. My father was at that time working for the Jewish Community Center. He had been without work since 1933.

Q WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO?

*spelling*  
A He was a banker. He was or worked in the main -- in the (bilzer) and stockmarkets but he had lost his job as soon as Hitler came into power. So for four years he had no work, no money. Those were very difficult years. My mother had TB, got TB in 1934 because we were living in an apartment that was very damp. She caught cold and got worse.

*spelling*  
And in 1937 he got the job at the Jewish Community Center. I'm not sure where it was. I think maybe there was only one at the time in (robnibobastat). So he was at work, and when I came home I must have told my mother and --

Q DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOUR PARENTS TO EMMIGRATE?

A Yes, of course. I remember talking about it. Again as I say, you know, as a child you don't pay attention to your whole world except when you are immediately involved and I remember that -- let's see. When they probably started after Kristallnacht after November '38. You know in Germany they don't like to call it Kristallnacht anymore

because it was a name given to it by the Nazis. So they don't call --

But anyway after Kristallnacht I think we started talking about it and I think even before that my parents considered leaving. And the reason that my father did not want to leave Germany was because of his mother. She was old. She was very ill and she died in 1936. So, I think after that then we didn't have any money, of course, he had no work. In 1937 he worked -- he found work. But there was not enough money, and it was sort of irony that my father worked in the emmigration department. I mean helping Jews to get out of Berlin and he helped a lot.

And I remember talks about most of the people whom he could help were lawyers, doctors, or people with money who all had connection in America and England. And those, I remember, were the most, the main. And I remember him bringing home gifts people had given him as a token of their gratitude.

Q DID YOU HAVE RELATIVES ANYWHERE ABROAD?

A He didn't have anyone -- well, we had an aunt who left for England. Most of my father's relatives -- he had a small family. My grandparents had died on my father's side, and he had about 12 relatives left that he could account for.

They were all died except for one aunt who came back from (therazenstat). But we had one aunt in England. I don't think she had enough money or she couldn't sponser us so and I remember talks about Shanghai. Shanghai's doors were open and you needed less money. Isreal -- I don't remember any talks about possibly going to Isreal. My father -- if there was talks, it was, "Well what can we do there?"

Q ALSO, THE IRONY AT THAT TIME, CHILDREN WERE REALLY NOT INCLUDED IN DISCUSSIONS. WERE THEY IN YOUR CASE? WERE THEY IN YOUR HOUSE THE SAME WAY --

A Yeah.

Q -- THAT THE PARENTS MADE THE DECISION --

A Right.

Q -- AND DID NOT CONSULT THE CHILDREN? IT WAS A VERY GERMAN WAY OF DOING IT.

A Well, we always talked about it openly in my family. I mean I don't -- you know, I don't think -- I don't know whether we were asked, but I want to talk about one episode where I wasn't asked about something else. But anyway, Shanghi was the only place some money or there was just no money and no connection. So we were stuck. In 1939 we were --

Q SO YOU WERE STOPPED GOING TO SCHOOL?

spelling  
A No, no. After (fizanstrazer) I went to another Jewish school. Don't ask me the names, I don't remember the names.

Q THAT'S OKAY.

A I know, but it's important to me because then I won't forget.

Q YOU HAVE NO WRITTEN RECORD OF IT IN ANY WAY?

spelling  
A No. The only think I can figure out from books that I had gotten from Berlin was possibly -- I think I was in the (lords of laymanshooler) and maybe one school before that turned out to be not very good. Especially in the wintertime.

Q YOUR FATHER DOES NOT REMEMBER EITHER?

A No. I asked him. He thinks he remembers vaguely.

Q YOU WERE ALL STILL TOGETHER, YOU BROTHER AND YOUR PARENTS?

spelling  
A My brother and I went to the same school together, but I think it was after (fitzanstad). I think I went to an all girls' school. He went to an all boys' school. Cause I remember only girls in my classes.

Q SO HOW LONG DID YOU GO?

A So I went till '42, until '42. My brother was not able to finish school and I finished.

Q YOUR BROTHER WAS NOT --

A Yeah, and by '42 Jewish children -- all schools were closed, too.

Q AND YOUR PARENTS STILL LIVED IN THE SAME PLACE OR DID THEY HAVE TO MOVE?

A Yeah, we have --

Q LET'S START A BIT AFTER THE WAR BROKE OUT.

A Well, yeah. I don't know. See, after Kristallnacht, after everything sort of started. Anyway, there were other what laws against Jews and the confiscation of goods, and jobs, people leaving jobs. But after '38 I felt it more and more that, you know, I remember we were still living -- it was before 19 -- before the war. I remember listening to footsteps on the stairs, heavy footsteps or boots because sometimes police officers -- sometimes the SAA would come and ask for radios. And that must have been 1939, actually the beginning of the war so --

Q YOU LIVED IN AN APARTMENT HOUSE; RIGHT?

A We lived in an apartment house.

Q WERE THERE ANY JEWS IN THE APARTMENT HOUSE THAT YOU REMEMBER?

A Yeah, and we had to move from there. We had to move out because Jews were only supposed to live in what they called (Newdenhizer), Jewish houses for Jews.

spelling

So we moved and we were very, very fortunate to find an apartment two doors away from where my mother's mother lived and her sister who were the Arian part. So that was in (Jufiskizer) and we found an apartment. And the house was owned by a Jew who lived in America. And we were the only Jews in that whole apartment complex, at that time the only Jewish family and --

Q AND YOUR FATHER KEPT ON WORKING FOR THE JEWISH AGENCY?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q AND YOUR MOTHER, DID SHE WORK?

A No, no.

Q OR DID SHE STAY AT HOME?

A No, no.

Q AND SO WHEN THE WAR BROKE OUT, CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT?

A Yeah. Well, the only memory I have that the war breaking out as far as being entrapped in Berlin because any probability of emmigration was (nil) although people still left Germany after the war. My father was still working for them but we knew that it was getting -- and they had to pay high prices to the government to -- I don't remember.

And the only other memorable incident, it must have been in 1939 because I was 12. My parents got panicked. I

mean really panicked. They felt that how to save us at least the children, and the plan that they hit on was to have us baptized. They thought that might help. I fought it tooth and nail at that time and my father told me, "Well, there is no guarantee, but it's only an attempt and perhaps they will consider it. And especially because of Mama." I said, "Mama is Jewish." I always considered myself Jewish completely, and I fought it tooth and nail. I said, "I will not become a Christian."

For me at that age, Christian and Nazis were synonymus. And I didn't want -- I thought of betrayal and -- but there was one instance when you had to do what your parents asked you to do. Now, my father was not -- he was adamant about -- I mean he tried to persuade me in a very loving way.

I remember that and I remember his saying, "I understand how you feel and I honor it, you know. But we want you to do it for your good."

Q SO DID YOU FINALLY --

A And I went to Sunday school. I learned all about the New Testament and --

Q PROTESTANT RELIGION?

A Protestant. My mother was a Lutheran. So -- and I still

argued, you know, with my father and especially as I started reading the New Testament. I started questioning everything and I said, "I cannot accept it in my heart or ever." Not just because I always followed the Jewish faith.

And I said to my father, I said, "You know, God will not forgive me." He said, "Well, he will understand. You don't have to accept it in your heart. God knows what's going on." And eventually I accepted it and, yeah, I was baptized. My brother and I were baptized.

Q YOUR BROTHER?

A Yeah.

Q DID YOUR BROTHER FIGHT IT LIKE YOU DID?

A I don't remember it. I don't think he did as much.

He was younger, and I don't think he ever felt that --

Q STRONGLY?

A -- strongly about -- he felt Jewish but he didn't fight so much with --

Q NOW THAT HAPPENED AFTER THE WAR STARTED?

A Uh-huh.

Q AND DO YOU REMEMBER THE YEAR YOU WERE BAPTIZED?

A No, I don't.

Q WHEN YOU FINISHED SCHOOL, WAS IT UNINTERRUPTED SCHOOLING?

DID YOU FEEL YOU HAD GOOD SCHOOLING?

A Yeah, in fact the school -- the schools that I went to was was the one bright moment. I mean we were children, and we knew what was going on.

Q DID YOU FINISH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL? DID YOU MAKE A HIGH SCHOOL CERTIFICATE?

A Yeah.

Q WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER YOU FINISHED SCHOOL?

A All right. Then that was, of course, then before I finished school we had to wear the yellow star.

Q WHEN DID THAT START?

A That was September 1st, 1941.

(Gets book and starts reading from it.)

Q WHEN DID THAT START?

A That was September 1st, 1941. Right.

Q WHY DON'T YOU SHOW THE PICTURE?

A The only thing I kept from that time that was my own so that (shows yellow star) so that my mother lined it. I remember we had many of them. We had to pay for them, too. So that we had to wear them.

Q AND YOU SEWED THAT ON EVERY GARMENT?

A Every garment. In fact you can still see where it was sewn on to one garment and we had to wear it on the jacket, on

blouses, anything like -- and my mother -- I don't remember about this particular one, but -- well, I always sewn on mine.

I remember people who were very ingenious. They put the star on a piece of metal, and then I pin --they we would pin it on and take it off. Now I never did that. What I did often was to put it -- I don't know. It's got towards the end of the war. I would cover it often with a book, with a book or pocketbook. And it was very dangerous, so --

Q SO, YOU WERE WEARING THAT WHEN YOU WERE WALKING?

A I remember the first day when we have to do that in 1940 after September 1941, I think that I remember I was going with my brother together. I didn't want to go alone on the street.

Q DO YOU WANT TO SHOW A PICTURE OF THAT?

A (Holds up book.)

Okay.

Q OF THIS STAR?

A I don't have that. This is the star from the book, but that is what it looks like.

Q AND YOU WERE HOW OLD?

A That's not a picture of me.

Q OH, THAT'S NOT YOU. OH, I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU.

A Yeah.

Q IT COULD HAVE BEEN YOU.

A I show that when I was in school, but no, I don't have a picture. You know, in fact, that's an interesting phenomenon. I don't have any pictures of myself since 1930 -- from 1939 to 1945. We had no camera.

I SEE YOU HAVE A PICTURE OF THE (FAZENSHY).

A Yeah, and here's the synagogue in Berlin. That's the synagogue and then the interior of it.

Q AND IT WAS THE BIGGEST SYNAGOGUE IN BERLIN; RIGHT?

A I guess it was. I don't know whether it was the biggest, but it was one of the biggest. And then when it was burned down and now in its place -- now this is a picture I took when I was in Berlin last November. I went there for -- that was my grandmother's house right across from the synagogue; see?

IN (FIZANSHARD)?

In (Fizanshard), No. 15, and this is where the Jewish Community Center is now instead of the synagogue.

Q I SEE. THEY LEFT PART OF THE SYNAGOGUE HERE.

A Right. That's part of that and then there is another -- I don't know -- here, this part. See, this arch here and

one --

Q WAS THE ONLY THING LEFT STANDING AT THE TIME?

A One -- no. That was the last thing.

Q THE SKELETON?

A The skeleton, yeah. And then they, I think, sometime in the mid-50s they --

Q THEY DEMOLISHED IT AND --

A In that Jewish Community Center now where I spoke last November.

Q AND CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT?

A Okay. Now that's in 1939, that came out already. Wait a minute. I think this one is from March 1939. That's the Jewish identity card.

Q WHICH YOU HAD TO CARRY?

A And before that, let's see. 1938 already we had to add Isreal and (Zara) to our name. So I became Rita (Zara) Kuhn; my brother, Hans Isreal Kuhn.

*spelling*

Q THE SECOND NAME WAS ISREAL OR (ZARA)?

A No. That was actually the first identification that's the first thing.

*spelling*

Q YOU MEAN YOU WERE CALLED (ZARA) RITA KUHN OR RITA (ZARA) KUHN?

A Rita (Zara) Kuhn. It was always after the first name.

*spelling*

Q AS A SECOND NAME?

A Right. As a matter of fact, so that anytime anybody called her, asked you something you had to sign your name and then came the Jewish identification card. That's a "J" outside and "J" inside, and then two years later came -- that was enough for them cause you could still see My family, who did not look Jewish -- in fact here's my parents at their engagement. That's their engagement picture; my father, my mother, and --

Q VERY GOOD LOOKING PARENTS.

A And that's the whole family after my brother was born. And you see my father does not look Jewish. The whole family did not look Jewish. And so after then -- after the yellow star, there was no hiding at all anymore.

Q SO YOU LIVED IN YOUR NEW APARTMENT AT THAT TIME?

A Then we left. We moved there I think it was '41. In '41 we lived --

Q AND THEN YOU GOT OUT OF SCHOOL. WHAT DID YOU DO?

A Then after in 1942, I don't remember the exact date, Jewish schools were closed.

Q YOU ALREADY -- BERLIN WAS ALREADY BOMBED; WASN'T IT?

A Oh, yeah. About 1940 I have pictures of it. Not so heavily in 1940. Occasional bombing, but by '42 --my

father -- I think in 1941 when the Jewish Community Center was also completely dissolved -- I think that was in '43. my father was, in 1941 he was drafted for forced labor. So he started in 1941. He became a forced laborer.

Q IN BERLIN?

A Uh-huh.

Q AND HE COULD STILL LIVE AT HOME?

A We all lived at home throughout the whole war. Another --

Q SO NONE OF YOU WERE DEPORTED OUT OF BERLIN?

A No.

Q YOU STAYED IN BERLIN?

A Yeah. So in 1941 my father became a forced laborer. In 1942 right after a few weeks, I don't remember how long after I finished school I was drafted. I was 14 at the time. I was drafted for forced labor. I went to -- my father worked in railroad station somewhere. I'm not sure which station.

Q YOUR MOTHER STAYED AT HOME?

A My mother was always at home. My brother was not -- he had to quit school in 1942, and he was home the whole time. He was never drafted because he was younger, and then they just forgot about him. But in '41 -- in '42 I worked in the factory in (stateslits) I think it was.

*spelling*

Q WHAT SORT OF FACTORY WAS IT?

A Ammunition factory.

Q WHEN THE AIR RAID ALARM WENT OFF AND THE BOMBING STARTED, WERE YOU ALLOWED TO GO AND HIDE?

A That's another amazing thing. I mean, yeah. We were living as I say we were the only Jewish family in our huge apartment building and we were allowed to go down into the main, whatever, room they had and that was sort of a room that was fortified. We were allowed to join them until -- I don't remember now what year it was. Maybe it was 1942. That's all when all those other strange paradoxs and inexplicable things -- a Gestapo woman moved next door to us and she came down to the cellar during one of the air raids.

Q LET ME INTERRUPT YOU ONE MINUTE.

A Yeah.

Q WERE YOU PERMITTED TO GO OUT WITH THE STAR INTO THE CELLAR?

A Huh-uh.

Q YOU HAD TO WEAR YOUR STAR IN THE CELLAR?

A We had to wear the star at all times.

Q SO EVERYONE KNEW YOU WERE JEWISH?

A Yes. We had one person, one man in the apartment building had the little button. He belonged to the --

Q PARTY?

A Party.

Q BUT THAT WAS THE --

A Oh, yeah. He had a gold button and he never objected to our being there until the Gestapo woman moved in next door to us. Smack next door. She came down to the cellar with her daughter. She saw our star and she said, "I will not be with Jews in the same cellar. Get out." And I remember that. I was here with the bombs were falling and I said, "Where we were" -- we had no place to go.

Q AND YOU HAD TO LEAVE OR DID YOU STAY?

A No, we had to leave. I burst -- I broke down, I cried, I screamed. And mostly from fear and from shock and again, you know, there was on woman in the apartment building who was befriended us throughout the whole time. It was a doctor's wife. And she put her arms around me and she said, "Don't worry. We'll find you a place."

And in front of the Gestapo woman she put her arms around me and she took us out and some other people in the cellar too took us out and there was a room right next door where we stayed for the rest. And then we always went there. Actually, there was one other Jewish woman in our apartment building.

Q NOW, THIS IS 1942 AND YOU LEFT SCHOOL?

A Yeah, and I'm now working in the factory.

Q YOU'RE WORKING IN THE FACTORY. HOW LONG DID YOU WORK IN THE FACTORY? HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU HAVE TO PUT IN?

A Well, I worked from 7 until 6. That's 11 hours with half an hour break.

Q DID YOU GET ENOUGH TO EAT?

A No, no. That's another whole story. How rations cards --I have a picture of it cause I -- I have several pictures but here, this summerizes it all.

(Holds up book.)

How much in carbohydrates, protein, fat. These were allowed for Germans and that's for the Jews. You can see there was --

Q THERE WAS NO FAT.

A There was no fat and there were other things we didn't get. The ration card -- we got no vegetable, no eggs, milks, cheese, nothing like that. What I remember is potato soups and black bread and my mother sometimes had barley soup. I can't eat barley to this day. But because of barley soup -- but this was a proportion. Then I have other cards that show how much --what Jews were completed. Also, we did not get any ration cards for textiles. So we had no clothes.

And by 1941 it got pretty --

Q DID YOU GET HELP FROM ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS OR NEIGHBORS?

A Well, everybody had my father's -- mother's family helped as much as they could. But they had ration cards too. They were being rationed.

Q I WAS THINKING MORE OF YOUR FRIENDS WHO WERE NOT JEWISH.

A No, not that much. Mostly the family.

Q NOW, LET ME GO BACK A LITTLE BIT. NOW THAT YOU WERE BAPTIZED, HOW DID YOUR FATHER THINK THAT WOULD HELP YOU AT ALL IN THE WAY OF LEAVING? DID HE THINK YOU WERE GETTING MORE IN HIGHER RATION CARDS OR YOUR RATIONS WOULD CHANGE?

A No, he thought we would just be -- you see, now he knew more than I did at that time and there is -- there was, according to the Nuremburg Laws, people who had been baptized were considered privileged Jews. Now, he knew about these laws, I didn't. They were considered (mislingestengarders), whatever, high-bred first. They had different things.

*spelling*

You know, they were --what it was was privileged Jews or simple marriages. And we were simple. I have it somewhere here. They were complicated laws because how many grandparents and whether you were baptized, whether your father was Jewish, your mother was Jewish. Since my

father was Jewish, I was even more Jewish than if my mother had been in a patriotic.

Q JEWISH ROLE?

A Right. So the religion did not matter. See, my mother was Jewish as far as she converted and she was still considered an Arion by the blood. There was blood --

Q HER MOTHER AND FATHER--

A Right.

Q -- BEING NON-JEWISH?

A It was the blood that --

Q SO, ALL YOUR BAPTISM WAS REALLY --

A No.

Q FOR NIL, FOR NOTHING?

A Right, which I sort of --

Q DID YOU EVER DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR FATHER, TALK ABOUT IT?

A No, no.

Q SO YOU WORKING NOW IN THE FACTORY?

A Yeah.

Q HOW LONG DID THAT GO ON?

A As I say, that was 11 hours a day and we work on huge machines and, again, it was very hard work and frightening. To this day I'm afraid of machines.

Q YOU WERE 14?

A Fourteen and --

Q BUT YOU COULD NOT -- AT 14 YOU LEFT HIGH SCHOOL; RIGHT?

A Uh-huh.

Q COULD YOU AT THAT TIME MAKE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CERTIFICATE AT 14?

*spelling* A

It wasn't high school. It was (fortshooler). My parents never have enough money to send us to a private -- you know, we went to primary school, right. So yeah, I was, as I say, I finished. My brother did not and so then in the -- I remember the first days in the factory. I worked on a hugh machine. I think we made batteries, as far as I know. And I used big pieces of metal and I had to push them through the machine for some part.

Q DID YOUR CO-WORKERS KNOW THAT YOU WERE JEWISH?

A Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We had to --

Q DID THEY TREAT YOU WELL --

A Yes.

Q YOU NEVER HAD ANY INCIDENTS?

A No, not in that factory. That was -- there was nothing in the apartment house. The co-workers were very, very sympathetic. If I might almost call it that, there was one incident that happened while I was there. The factory was owned by Swedes and that may have had something to do with

it. I never felt they were Nazi people in the factory.

There was one incident when I made a minor mistake -- I don't remember what it was -- on one of the machines and any mistake that a Jew -- just things can go wrong -- you make was considered sabotage. And I remember I made that minor mistake and the -- one of the -- I don't remember, but I think he was a foreman. You know, one of the -- came at me with a hammer, came and cussed me out and he was going to hit me with a hammer. Again, that's the only time I sort of lost it. I started screaming and I lost consciousness and when I came to, well, I think all the built up fear had finally broke up, out. I felt personally threatened. I lost consciousness and I came to. Everybody was around me.

My best friend, who was the deported, was working with me. We had gone to school together. We ended up in the same factory together. She was an epileptic and I'd always been with her during her seizures. And that's a whole other sad story. But everyone was standing around me and the man eventually apologized.

Q OH, HE DID.

A He said, "I didn't mean to do this." And then I was working for seven months when in 1943 the big pogrom --

Q ROUND-UP?

A -- round-up of Jews took place in Berlin and --

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE MONTH AT ALL?

A I remember it was the 27th of February, 1943.

Q IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER?

A The middle of winter and I'd like to talk more about that because -- so --

Q SO, TELL US WHEN YOU FIRST -- WHEN YOU FIRST --

A Okay. No. They did. I was at work. It was called  
*spelling* factory action, (fabrique accion), because Hitler decided then he wanted Berlin free of Jews. He wanted to present Hitler with a birthday present. And so they started and the article I have and I knew it too that everyone was mobilized for that. Pogrom --

Q ALL THE GESTAPO PEOPLE?

A The Gestapo, the police, the SS, the personal life guard of Hitler, the elite, were mobilized and it was a huge round-up. It started with the factories, but also people went to the apartments, yeah. So it was 7:00 in the morning when I had to start and I was at my machine working, not expect-  
*spelling* in anything and ten minutes later the room where I was working in filled up with (rufenezes), men in their green uniforms.

Q TRANSLATED SS.

A They had green uniforms instead of black uniforms, heavily armed.

Q THE BROWN SHIRT?

A Uh-huh. Right. They were heavily armed and everyone, they all yelled (Udenaut), "Jews out." So we left. There were only the two of us in our room, my girl friend wasn't in there that day. I don't remember now. I think I was the only one in that room. Other people were working somewhere else.

Q YOUR GIRL FRIEND WAS JEWISH, TOO?

A Yeah, and so I dropped everything. They would not allow us to take our lunches we brought, whatever, and they wouldn't allow us to take our coats or anything. But I think because I went obviously I was released. I must have had money with me. I don't know what I grabbed, my purse, what I grabbed. Whether I grabbed -- whether I --that I don't remember. I know that they did not allow us to wear overcoats and no lunches, that I know. That I remember. And so we had -- I left the room and we gathered outside and I saw everyone else in the factory already in the yard and there I saw the truck.

Q WERE THEY LOADED WITH JEWS OR --

A Not that many. It was a small factory. It was a very small one. There were not that many, maybe 15 altogether. No more than that. And they waited until everybody was collected and then they loaded us onto the truck.

Q WERE THEY MISHANDLING YOU OR --

A No. I know it happened. I know it happened, but I wasn't in personal misery. None of the people, the verbal abuse, you know, "Quick, quick." But we weren't pushed on to the truck. And then as we were all on the truck, they closed the back of the truck with canvas, and we drove. We couldn't look out. We didn't know.

Q YOU COULDN'T LOOK OUT?

A That's right. Although there were, I'm sure, that people knew there were lots of trucks.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER AT ALL YOUR CO-WORKERS AND NON-JEWISH CO-WORKERS AT THE FACTORY?

A They just looked aghast. I mean I remember that. And I remember especially the man who worked right across from me. He was always very friendly to us and he just shook his head and, of course, nobody dare say anything. I remember that the owner of the factory was also there and I remember that he talked very gently to us. He said, you know, sort of encouraging, "Be quiet," or something. I

don't remember what he said but everybody was just stood like frozen and -- so when we were on the truck at one point I, again, I was afraid I was frightened and I said to one of my co-workers, an older woman, I said, "They're going to --" I was sure they were going to explode the truck. They were going to take us somewhere and you know.

Q BLOW YOU UP?

A Blow us up and I don't think I was far from the truth. I had no idea, I did not know at that time that that was actually done, that people were gassed in the trucks. You know, the other parts of Europe. I don't know that, but the feel was there and I remember her, she sort of took a mother's place and said, "They're not going to do that. They wouldn't do that. We're right in the middle of the city. They wouldn't do that."

Anyway, we drove on and I didn't know where we were going and when we stopped, you know, they asked us to get out and I remember the sight then when I stepped off the truck, they were just -- I walked through a -- what do you *spelling* call it? -- like a (spalia). I don't know. Both sides were --

Q THREE LINES, THE ENTRANCE?

A We were in front of a big building.

*spelling*  
Q THERE WAS RIGHT IN THE (FRIDEN)?

A I had to walk through the line of SS and I was sure they going to shoot me in the back before I even got to the entrance, and the only -- and I just marched on not looking at them. I was told when I was a little girl, and I forgot to mention that. 1934, when I started school, my father said, "When you walk to school, when you walk on the street, be quiet. Don't look right or left, and don't look at the men in the brown uniforms. And just don't draw attention to yourself."

Q MAKE A LASTING IMPRESSION.

A And I remember that as I walked through. I didn't look at them. I looked to the floor, and then when I entered the building, I felt reassured. Now that was still early in the morning. I felt reassured because there were some people in there, the other Jews. Not many and I remember I didn't know where I was. The one thing I remember, it was a huge hall like a -- almost like a Greek amphitheater. And with seats going up on both sides.

And we were --but I saw some people already there. And then there were tables on the platform that other SS sitting at desks and so, you know, you had to show your identification card. And they separated men and women. So

the women were going as I remember to the left and men to the right. So I went to the left.

Q AND YOUR GIRL FRIEND WITH YOU?

A No. She was not at home. I mean not at work.

Q THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID.

A The only way I can figure it out is she had another seizure that morning. She usually got them very early in the morning, and in school I was always with her sometimes I would take her home or in the factory I would always be with her in the infirmiry. But, I know that she was taken from home that day, and I heard later where she was incarcerated in (Humruingenstizer), one of the hugh, former --what do you call it?-- old-age homes, I think.

Q THAT WAS ALSO AN ASSEMBLY --

A They had several. (Gerbils) offered his --

Q STABLE?

A Stable to have Jews collected there. Everybody was --

Q ON HIS ESTATE?

A Everyone wanted to help (Gerbils) make Berlin -- free the Jews. And I think she must have been -- they must have gotten her that day because I heard later that in one week in the collection center she had almost 80 attacks, 80 seizures, epileptic seizures. And I don't even know

whether she was alive to transport.

Q YOU NEVER HEARD FROM HER AGAIN?

A I never herd from her again.

Q NOW YOUR IN --

A No, no. Now, where I was and this is how I got out. I can only happen in one place and this (encluensisia), that's an old entertainment center in the --

Q A DANCE HALL; WASN'T IT?

A A dance hall, something in (Muerstrizer). So that's where I was -- and I just was -- was there all day. And they didn't give us anything to eat or drink, and gradually the place filled up with more and more people. I mean thousands of people in there. Literally thousands. It was so huge, and I remember now in the article here it talks about that pogrom. It says that many, many Jews were mistreated. I don't remember any incidents immediately. I remember only one transport coming in sometime during the day, and I heard a woman screaming.

Q WERE THE CHILDREN WITH YOU SMALL CHILDREN?

A I didn't see any. I did not see any. That's a good point. Actually, I don't remember anything, any children.

Q YOU PROBABLY BLOCKED IT OUT.

A Either I blocked it out or they took them somewhere else

where there were others because they might have just --  
where we may have been, the factory workers, they may have  
*spelling* taken families to the former (gamestatzi), though there  
were some there or other places that some synagogue  
in the I don't remember any.

I just remember that I was with women and I don't  
remember too much. Actually, what we did remember, we were  
all very quiet, and we were all very courageous. I don't  
remember anyone breaking down. I don't remember anyone,  
any of the people. And there was a lot of moaning, many  
people. No one panicked.

Q THERE WERE NOT VERY OLD ONES THERE?

A That's right.

Q SO MORE --

A Well, there was people in their 40's, I would say.

Q YEAH, BUT NOT VERY OLD.

A No, no. And we talked. We gave each other encouragement.  
And at one point, the women -- somebody, some of the older  
women decided to get rid of their jewelery. They threw  
them down the toilet rather than have the SS have them. I  
didn't have anything to throw down the toilet. I had a few  
pennies. I, fortunately, saved them because I needed them  
later.

And they told me, "We're not going to send you away. You're not going to be deported." I said, "Why not? What makes you think so? How do you know?" "Well, because of your mother. If you have an Arion mother, she's your protector." I don't believe them. I didn't know whether to believe them. I didn't know whether I wanted to believe them at that point. I had a real conflict. I said, "I don't want to be saved because of that. I don't want to be different. I want to be with them."

I mean, we had a -- it was just an amazing sense of solidarity.

Q YOU, OF COURSE, NOT HEARING ANYTHING FROM YOUR PARENTS?

A No. Of course I was that's where the conflict was. I had no idea where my parents were. I had, also, I thought if he sent me away, you know, what's going to happen. I was more worried about my mother because I knew if they sent me away, they would send my father and brother away too. So I really was concerned more about her. And -- but I also had no idea what happened to my parents.

You know, I didn't know that my father had not gone to work that day and, of course, that was true for all the women there. Some of them had children at home, small

children at home or husbands. Everyone was just separated. Families were separated.

Q SO YOU SPENT THE NIGHT THERE?

A No, I did not. I -- sometime around 10:00 at night or maybe even earlier, I don't know when it started exactly, but we were way up. I'm trying to still picture the down view. I still see it somehow. There were these tables with the SS there. Sometime during the evening, I don't know exactly when, they had them all collected and they were sure they had filled the hall they started calling people by name and people had to go down, downstairs, down to the tables. And sometime, it must have been 9:30 or 10:00, I don't remember exactly, I heard my name.

Q EXCUSE ME. TO INTERRUPT YOU, HOW DID THEY KNOW YOUR NAME?

A Oh, they had all the papers there.

Q BUT WHEN YOU HEARD WHEN THEY FIRST ROUNDED YOU UP AND PUT YOU IN THE BUILDING, DID YOU HAVE TO PUT DOWN YOUR NAME? DID THEY TAKE YOUR NAME ON A SHEET OF PAPER? HOW DID THEY GO ABOUT THAT? DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

A I don't remember it. I'm not sure whether they took the I.D. from us. I don't remember that, Evelyn. No, but what I do remember is that they had everyone's papers there. They didn't have just my I.D. They had all our papers

there.

Q WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY PAPERS?

A When I went down and they called my name. Then I went down, I stood in line, and I could see all the SS with, you know, people giving their names and they look at papers. They had bundles of papers.

Q FILES?

A Files.

Q ON PEOPLE?

A Yeah, on people. And they had files and they looked through them so that I remember and I also remember very vividly that at -- that's a moment I'll never forget -- that people were told to go right or left. And most people went left. That is from where I was standing. They went somewhere else, and then my turn came. And I was sure I was going to be going left. Then my turn came. There was a young woman a little older than I was. I was about 15 at the time. The S -- whatever, the SS man looked through her papers and he told her to go right. She can go right. She can go home. And I thought, "Oh, she was lucky. That's not going to happen twice, it can't happen twice." I had no idea what he was -- why.

Q BUT YOU KNEW SHE WAS FREED TO GO HOME?

A Yeah.

Q THE DIRECTION WAS --

A Right out of the building. She left. She went past me to the right. Then came my turn and he said, "Rita Zara Kuhn," you know, to all the my address. I don't know what else he asked me. He asked me my mother's name is, maybe my grandparents', I don't remember. And I remember that he asked me, "Is your mother living with you in the same household?" And I said, "Yes." And he looked again. He was quiet and he looked through all his files again. Then he looked up and he says, "You can go home." And I didn't believe him. He said, "Go home. Get out. I'm not going to say it again." He said, "Just out."

So I left and I went outside the building and I couldn't believe it. I was just so dazed. And I felt really in conflict. I was sad, of course. So I left and I had no idea, as I said, I had no idea what part of Berlin I was. But outside on the street there was this young woman was there. She looked around. Still she was just as dazed as I was.

Q SHE DIDN'T KNOW EITHER WHERE SHE WAS?

A She didn't know either where she was. We couldn't believe we were free. We still thought they made -- they made a

mistake. So we wispered quietly. And she said, "Where are we?" And, I don't know. We somehow decided to go in one direction and found a subway station. And we did --we found a subway station. Once we found that, we went our separate ways. And so I went home and I remember it was late at night. It must have been close to 11:00.

Q YOU HAD MONEY WITH YOU?

A I had some money with me.

Q JUST THAT YOU KEPT?

A That I don't know. I had some money. Maybe I had a -- I don't remember. So I went on the subway. I remember in those moments I think I grew 20 years. I remember looking at people and telling them, "Don't you know what's happening?" You know, they were all sitting there coming home from work tired. I wanted to let them know and I felt the gulf between us. That these people that they don't know what's happening in their own city. And that's when I got off at my stop, and I walked home. And fortunately there was no air raids that evening.

I walked home and I rang the bell and the apartment we had to live in, very small quarters. We had one room.

Q THE FOUR OF YOU?

A The four of us had one room and then one bedroom we all --

Q DID YOU HAVE A BATHROOM TO YOURSELF?

A And a bathroom to ourselves. No. We had to share our bathroom, we had to let our room to another Jewish woman. And we lived in --our apartment was a German woman, a Gentile woman had one room, and we shared the same kitchen.

And another German, when I came home she opened the door. And she cried out my name, and it just complete surprise and said, "Is it really -- it's you." And I said, "Yeah." And I didn't know what to expect whe she opened the door. I thought, "I'm not going to see my family again." Then, they all came out of the kitchen. My father first, my brother, then my mother, and my father was so --I've never seen him, you know, he practically collapsed on me.

Q VERY EMOTIONAL.

A He didn't -- first of all, I found out later they were sitting in the kitchen when the doorbell rang and they didn't expect me.

Q NOT KNOWING WHO MAY BE AT THE DOOR.

A They didn't expect me. They expected the Gestapo, the SS because we had an old Jewish woman living with us who was over 80 in one room. It used to be her apartment. She had to give it all up. She lived in one room. I remember that the room was cramped. She could hardly walk in there. It

was all her furniture in there. She was old and bend and they had gotten her. They came for her and they did not come for my father for some -- again, one of those, you know.

And so when I rang they didn't expect me, and then they saw me. I -- that was a very fearful reunion, and I had to tell my story. And I got something to eat after all day without food. So, I remember, I think, that when they released me and that, "You can go home," I think the SS meant, "Wait until you're called to work." So he must have said that, I don't know. And I found out my father had not gone to work and I don't remember the next week. Sort of a blank, a complete blank to me. I was home. I remember that I was not called into work which made us very suspicious cause they needed, you know.

Q THE TELEPHONE WAS STILL WORKING?

A We had no telephone. Jews were not allowed telephones.

Q HOW DID THEY CALL YOU TO WORK?

A Sent us a notice.

Q NOW, JEWS DID NOT HAVE --

A No. Yeah. No radios, no camera, nothing. I mean there's a whole list of things. We had no telephone. They sent notices, I suppose. I didn't get any notice. And I don't

remember whether my father was home and whether he had just gone back to work -- but a whole week went by and we were always waiting. We knew that there were people. It was going on all week, the program.

Q YOU NEVER FELT LIKE HIDING? DID THAT OCCUR?

A That was no --

Q NOT TO YOUR PARENTS?

A No. If it was discussed, I have no memory of it, where we would hide, I mean. Well, we had my mother's family, but I don't think that subject ever came up.

Q I MEAN PEOPLE DID --

A I know that subject never came up.

Q I WAS JUST WONDERING WHETHER IT CAME UP OR MAYBE THEY DID NOT DISCUSS IT WITH YOU.

A No. So --

Q SO THE WEEK WENT BY. YOU SAID YOU SPENT A WEEK AT HOME.

A So anyway, the day we were on the 27th of February the --  
*spelling* it was the 10th anniversary of (istoxpan).

Q THE BURNING OF THE RICE HOUSE.

A The rice house, the parliment. So that was the 27th of November -- February. It was Saturday. It was also (sabath). That was planned. That was planned by the Gestapo.

Q SOME OF THE ROUND UP THE NAZI PURPOSELY DID ON A SATURDAY.

A Right. Right. And now I remember the week we -- I was hom the week and nothing happened. I was not called to work and my father was concerned because Jewish workers were in great demand. In fact, so much in demand many of industrialists who that owned factory in (stackspare) was one of the men in charge of the industry and whatnot asked Hitler personally not to the deport the Jewish workers. But they were invaluable.

*spelling*

Q BECAUSE THEY WERE SO GOOD?

A Very. They were so good they were better than the German workers and then (Gerbils) and all the others said, "You always find you are the (Udenfinder). You always find a reason to --

*spelling*  
*spelling*

Q TO PROTECT THE JEWS.

A That was a big tado. That was a big discussion. So what we felt that since they didn't call me, that was suspect that they could do without us as they in fact did. After the factory action, there weren't that many Jews left for the factory and they got in foreign workers.

Q SLAVE LABOR.

A Slave labor, right. So it must have been another Saturday.

Q I WANT TO ASK YOU ONE QUESTION. DID YOU EVER GET PAID FOR

YOUR WORK?

A Very, very little.

Q BUT THEY DID PAY YOU?

A Pennies.

Q PITANCE.

A Pitance. I don't remember my father and I don't have a letter anymore cause he said we could not live on our combined salary. We could barely pay rent and buy food with it. I don't remember how much it was. Maybe how much a day or a month. I don't remember.

Q WHO DID YOU HAVE TO PAY RENT TO IF THAT APARTMENT YOU LIVED IN BELONGED TO A JEW?

A You had to pay rent.

Q TO WHO?

A To the owner, to the Jew. I don't know. We had, you know, *spelling* we paid it to the (portiae), the manager of the apartment.

Q THE CARETAKER.

A The caretaker. Our rent, yeah, who was not a Jewish and now another interesting -- something I wanted to bring up was with food. We didn't cause there was not much food to be bought. Food was -- was not that expensive. Potatos mostly. I remember eating potatos that were frozen. We had to eat them in the winter.

Q DID ANYBODY HELP YOU AT ALL GETTING OTHER STUFF?

A As I say, very little. Maybe once in a while my mother got a bone for meat. Maybe once a month. I really don't remember much meat, hardly. And very undernourished and I was still and my brother and I, the growing years and we had very little oil. I remember we got some margarine and it never lasted a whole, whatever, week or so. I think every week we had to get the ration card. I don't remember. My mother used to get the ration cards but one thing that kept us somewhat, what, a --

Q AFLOAT.

A Satisfied was that my father stole cheese from the railroad *spelling* where he worked. He worked in (Peterport), it was the freight.

Q FREIGHT TRAIN.

A Freight train.

Q WAS IT THE FREIGHT TRAIN OR DEPOT?

A He loaded and unloaded freight. So they had imported -- they got cheese that they unloaded for Berliners, sometimes and butter, other things too.

Q HOW FORTUNATE FOR YOU.

A But how risky. That's another amazing thing. That all his co-workers and he was practically the only Jew at that time.

And his co-workers helped him. They kept it a secret and one time he was caught and then one of the co-workers defended him because if you were caught even they got punished. If you were caught as a Jew and my father was a Jew, a full Jew and whatever immediately.

And I had one other humorous incident that my brother told me. My father had my mother had sewn special pockets in his coats where he could hide the cheese or the butter and one time when he came home and he always had to -- never was sure that he could pass through the patrol, you know, when he left work. I mean, he always did but one time he went home on the subway station and he had his cheese in his pockets and was very smelly cheese and you noticed that we weren't supposed to sit down in subways either. We were always standing. He had to stand. That was pretty hard sometimes after 11 hours of work. But in this incident my father sat down. People let him sit down. He noticed eventually that people just went away from him. They left him. He was --

Q BECAUSE HE SMELT.

A Oh, they must think a dirty Jew and he was probably smelly and the whole place was. And there was even there the seat next to him was empty. He said, "They don't like me. They

don't want -- they must think this Jew smells."

But it was really the cheese. But anyway, he made it home but, as I say that kept us and I was called when I was working after the war I was called (Casa) eater, cheese eater because I brought cheese to work, sandwiches.

*spelling*

Q WHEN YOU WENT TO WORK?

A Well, after know I want to come to that. But I'm jumping ahead a little bit. Anyway, so we waited the week and then my mother was -- I said it must have been a Saturday. So it must have been around maybe March 5th. So that was a week later because of what I'd like to point out. My mother went to get our ration cards and it was right next to (rightna) school. Not far from us on (sebelstrazer).

*spelling*

There was a school and she came back and she said they won't give them to me. You have to go get them yourself.

Q YOUR RATION CARDS?

A My father and my brother were home that day and I was home. And my father and I still remember. He said, "This is it." He said, "Put on --" I don't know double or triple layer of clothes. And he said, "I think they found out that they made a mistake when they released you." So he fully expected to be deported and we went to the school and the minute we came in showed our --

Q RATION CARDS?

A No. I.D.'s. As one woman called it, that was the  
*spelling* (paseishine), whatever.

Q OH, PASS TO LET YOU THROUGH.

A Pass to let us through. But also told them that --

Q WHO YOU WERE?

A Who we were because there was a big "J" and we went into a room and there were the SS sitting at tables. And we showed our I.D. again, name again and all four of us were there.

Q YOUR WHOLE FAMILY?

A Yeah. And he said to other SS man he said, "Take them away." And he meant my father, my brother and myself. And then my mother wanted to follow us. He said, "No. Not you. You stay here." And they took us down the hall somewhere and locked us in a room. We were the only ones there at first. And the minute I remember I hear the click of the door still. I still did not believe what was happening. But as they took us into the room and he took us to the room, it was empty. The SS man left and locked the door I knew. We were all very quiet my father cause he had warned us. So and we sat down and pretty soon, you know, other people came from the neighborhood. And again,

the room filled up. And there was a woman came who we knew who was -- had been married although she was a widow --had been married to an Arian. I mean to a non-Jew Arian and she had children.

Interview with RITA KUHN  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
Date: 8/7/89  
Place: Northern California Holocaust Center  
Interviewer: Evelyn Fielden  
Transcriber: Kathleen Keen  
Tape 1 Part 2

A But I saw people already there and there were tables on the platform with other SS, sitting at desks and so you had to show your identification card and they separated men and women, so the women were going as I remember to the left and men to the right, so I went to the left.

Q WAS YOUR GIRLFRIEND WITH YOU?

A No, she was not at home, I mean at work.

Q THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID.

A The only way I can figure it out was that she had another seizure that morning. She usually got them very early in the morning at school, I was always with her and sometimes I would take her home or at the factory I would be with her in the infirmary. But I know that she was taken from home that day and I heard later were she was incarcerated (Humbergerstrazen) one of the huge it was a former, what do you call it old age home, I think.

A It had several offered to have his fair stable to have Jews collect there everyone wanted to help (gesher) make Berlin free of Jews and I think she must have been; they must have gotten her that day because I heard later that in one week in the collection center she had almost 80 attacks, 80

seizures epileptic seizures and I don't even know if she survived the transport.

Q YOU NEVER HEARD FROM HER?

A I never heard from her again.

Q SO NOW, YOU ARE IN THE --

A No, no now where I was and just as I found out I could have only been in one place it's the (clu). It says here that's an old entertainment center, in the dance hall or something, in (Masistrova). So that's where I was, and I was there all day and I didn't get anything to eat or drink and gradually the place filled up with more and more people. There were literally thousands of people and I remember now in the article here that talks about the pogrom it says that many, many Jews were mistreated. I don't remember any incidents immediately. I remember only one transport coming in sometime during the day and I heard a woman screaming.

Q WERE THERE CHILDREN WITH YOU?

A No, I didn't see any. I did not see any. That's a good point actually. I don't remember seeing any children.

Q YOU PROBABLY BLOCKED IT OUT.

A Either I blocked it out or they took me somewhere else. There were other because they might have just -- we were, might just have been the factory workers they may have taken families to the (Strozohumbergerstrouzer) I know there were some there or other places.

There were -- I don't remember any I just remember that

Kuhn--

I was with women and I don't remember too much actually what we did. I remember we were all very quiet and we were all very courageous. I don't remember anyone breaking down. I don't remember anyone, any of the people, and I was among many people, and there were a lot of them, no one panicked.

Q THERE WERE NOT MANY OLD ONES THERE THEN, MOSTLY FACTORY PEOPLE?

A That's right.

Q SO MORE OR LESS --

A Well, there were people in their 40's, I would say.

Q YES, NOT VERY OLD.

A No, no. And we talked, we gave each other encouragement and at one point the women, somebody, some of the older women, decided to get rid of their jewelry. They threw them down the toilet rather than have the SS have them. I didn't have anything to throw down the toilet. I had a few pennies. I fortunately saved them because I needed them later. They told me, "Oh, you're not going. They are not going to send you away. You're not going to be deported." And I said, "Why not? What makes you think, how do you know?" And they said, "Well, your mother, if you have an Aryan mother, she's your protection." I didn't believe them. I didn't know that I could believe them. I didn't know that. I wanted to believe them. At that point I had a real

Kuhn--

conflict, I remember that I said, "I don't want to be saved because of that." I don't want to be different I want to be with them. I mean it was just an amazing sense of solidarity.

Q BUT YOU, OF COURSE, COULD NOT HEAR ANYTHING FROM YOUR PARENTS?

A No. No, of course, I would that's where the conflict was. I had no idea where my parents were. I had also, I said, if they sent me away, you know, what's going to happen. I was more worried about my mother because I knew if they sent me away -- they had sent my father and brother away too, so she would be left. So I was more concerned about her, but I also had no idea what happened to my parents. I didn't know that my father had not gone to work that day and, of course, that was true for all women there. Some of them had children at home, small children at home or husbands. Everyone was just separated, families were separated.

Q SO YOU SPENT THE NIGHT THERE?

A No, I did not. I some time around 10:00 at night or maybe even earlier, I don't know when it started exactly, but we were way up and I'm trying to still picture it down below. I still see it somehow. There were the tables with the SS men and some time during the evening, I don't know exactly when, they had them all collected and they were sure that they had filled the hall they started calling people by name. And

people had to go down, downstairs, down to the tables and some time, it must have been 9:30 or 10, I don't remember exactly, I heard my name.

Q HOW DID THEY KNOW YOUR NAME?

A They had all the papers there.

Q WHEN YOU ENTERED, WHEN THEY FIRST ROUNDED YOU UP AND PUT YOU IN, DID THEY TAKE YOUR NAME ON A SHEET OF PAPER?

A I don't remember, I'm not sure if they took the I.D. from us I don't remember that Evelyn. No. But, what I do remember is that they had everyone's papers there. They didn't have just my I.D., they had our -- all our papers there.

Q WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY PAPERS?

A When I went down, when they called my name, then I went down. I stood in line and I could see all the SS with, you know, people giving their names and they look at papers they had bundles of papers --

Q FILES?

A Yeah, files on people. They had files and they would look through them and that I remember and I also remember very vividly that -- and at that moment I'll never forget -- that people were told to go right or left and most people went left. They were -- from me, I was standing somewhere else and then my turn came and I was sure I was

going to be going left. There was a young woman a little older than I was, I was about 15 at the time, the SS man looked through her papers and he told her to go right, "Go home" and I thought she was lucky. That can't happen twice. I had no idea what he was, why --

Q BUT YOU KNOW THAT SHE WAS FREE TO GO HOME, RIGHT?

A Right. Right. Out of the building. So, she left. She went past me to the right and then it was my turn and he said L.D. Kuhn and to all my address. I don't know what else he asked me. He asked me what my mother's name is, my grandparents, I don't remember and I remember that he asked me, "Is your mother living with you in the same household?" And I said yes and he looked again he was quiet and he looked through all his files again and then he looked up and he said, "You can go home." And I didn't believe him and he said, "Go home. Get out." You know, I'm not going to say it again, just out, so I left and I went outside the building and I couldn't believe it. I was just so dazed and I was still having the conflict, I was sad. So, I left and I had no idea what part of Berlin I was but outside on the street there was this young woman was there she looked around so she was just as dazed as I was.

Q SHE DIDN'T KNOW --

A She didn't know either where she was. We couldn't

believe we were free. We still thought they had made a mistake, so we whispered quietly and she said, "Where are we?" So we decided to go in one direction to find a subway station and we did and once we reached that we went our separate ways. So, I went home and I remember it was late at night it must have been close to 11:00.

Q YOU HAD MONEY WITH YOU?

A I had some money with me. I had some money, maybe -- I had a -- I don't remember but I went on the subway station. I remember in those moments I think I grew 20 years. I remember looking at the people and telling them, "Don't you know what's happening?" And they were all sitting there coming home from work, tired and I wanted to tell them. I wanted to let them know and I felt, I felt the gulf, you know, between us, that these people don't know what's happening in their own city. I got off my stop and I walked home and fortunately there were no air raids that evening and I walked home and I rang the bell and the apartment we lived in, very small quarters, we had one room --

Q THE FOUR OF YOU?

A The four of us had one room and one bedroom.

Q YOU HAD A BATHROOM TO YOURSELF?

A Bathrooms? No, we had to share a bathroom. We had to let out a room to another Jewish woman, and we lived in our

apartment, was a German woman, a Gentile woman had one room we shared the same kitchen. Well, when I came home she opened the door and she cried out my name and it was a complete surprise and "It is really, it's you!" And I said, "Yeah." And I didn't know what to expect. When she opened the door I thought I wouldn't see my family again. Then they all came out of the kitchen, my father first, my brother and my mother and my father was so -- I've never seen him, I mean, you know, he practically collapsed on me.

Q VERY EMOTIONAL?

A Yeah. He didn't -- first of all I found out later, they were sitting in the kitchen and the doorbell rang and they didn't expect me.

Q NOT KNOWING WHO MAY BE --

A They didn't expect me, they expected the SS because we had an old Jewish woman living with us who was over 80 in one room. It used to be her apartment and she had to give it all up. She lived in one room. I remember that and the room was cramped, you could hardly walk in there, she had all her furniture in there. She was old and bent and they had gotten her they came for her, but they did not come for my father for some, again, one of those, you know --

When I rang they didn't expect me and then they saw me, well I was a very tearful reunion and I had to tell my

story and I got something to eat after all day without food. So, I remember I think that when they released me and the, "you can go home", and the SS men said wait until you are called to work. So, he must have said that and I don't know. I found out my father had not gone to work and I don't remember the next week it's sort of a blank, a complete blank to me. I was home I remember that. I was not called in to work which made us very suspicious because they needed us.

Q THE TELEPHONE WAS STILL WORKING?

A We didn't have telephones. Jews had no --

Q HOW DID THEY CALL YOU TO WORK?

A Sent us a notice.

Q JEWS DID NOT HAVE --

A No. No camera, nothing. I mean they had a whole list of things. No telephone. They send notices I suppose I didn't get any notice and I don't remember whether my father was home or not or if he had gone back to work but a whole week went and we were always waiting. You know, we knew that there were people and it was going on all week, the pogrom.

Q YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF HIDING? DID THAT OCCUR?

A That was not -- No.

Q NOT TO YOUR PARENTS EITHER?

A No. That is, I mean if it was discussed I have no memory or it. Where would we hide? I mean, well, we had my

mothers family but, no, I don't think that subject ever came up.

Q I MEAN PEOPLE DID, YOU KNOW.

A Yeah, I know, that subject never came up.

Q YOU DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS BROUGHT UP OR YOU CAN'T REMEMBER? MAYBE THEY DID NOT DISCUSS IT WITH YOU?

A No, no. So --

Q SO, THE WEEK WENT BY, YOU SAID YOU SPENT A WEEK AT HOME?

A So, anyway, the day that we were on, the 27th of February, it was the 10th anniversary of (ice tax bond).

Q THE BURNING OF THE (ICE...)?

A The burning of the ice house parliament so that was the 27th of February. That was also the Sabbath. That was also Saturday, that was planned.

Q I UNDERSTAND THE ROUND-UPS, SOME OF THE ROUND-UPS, THE NATZI'S PURPOSELY DID ON THE SABBATH?

A Right. Right and now I, I remember the week, I was home the week and nothing happened. I was not called to work and my father was concerned because Jewish workers were in great demand, in fact, so much in demand that many of the industrialists who owned factories in fact, (Couldn't understand at all) was one of the men in charge of the industry, asked Hitler personally not to deport the Jewish

workers because they were invaluable.

Q BECAUSE THEY WERE SO GOOD?

A They were so good, they are better than the German workers and, of course, and all the others said, "Oh, you will always find, you always find a reason to free" --

Q TO PROTECT THE JEWS?

A Yes. It was always a big todo, a big discussion, so we felt, you know, since they didn't call me that was suspect that they could do without us. In fact, they did after -- there were not many Jews left for the factories and they got in the foreign workers.

Q SLAVE LABOR?

A Slave labor, right. And so it must have been another Saturday --

Q DID YOU EVER GET PAID?

A Very, very little.

Q BUT THEY DID PAY YOU?

A A penance, yeah.

Q A PITTANCE?

A A pittance. I don't remember. My father, and I don't have the letter anymore, because he said he could not live on it, we could not live on our combined salaries and buy food with it. I don't remember how much it was maybe; how much a day or a month, I don't remember.

Q WHO DID YOU HAVE TO PAY RENT TO IF THIS APARTMENT YOU LIVED IN BELONGED TO A JEW?

A We had to pay rent.

Q TO WHO?

A To the owner. I don't know. We paid to the manager, the caretaker of the apartment building, who was not Jewish. And something I wanted to bring up was food. We didn't, because there was not much food to be bought, food was not that expensive, potatoes mostly. I remember eating potatoes were frozen. We had to eat those in the winter.

Q DID ANYBODY HELP YOU AT ALL?

A Very little. Maybe once in a while my mother got a bone of meat, you know, I mean maybe once a month, I really don't remember.

Q YOU KNEW YOU WERE ALWAYS HUNGRY, RIGHT?

A Yeah, hungry and very undernourished. My brother and I were still in the growing years and we had regular Oleo, I remember some margarine and it never lasted a whole week or so every week we had to get the ration card. My mother used to get the ration cards but one thing that kept us --

Q FULL?

A Satisfied, was my father stole cheese from the railroads where he worked. He worked in the freight trains. He worked the unloading, he unloaded freight so they had

imported, they had got cheese that they unloaded for Berliners, sometimes butter and other things too.

Q FORTUNATELY.

A But how risky. And that's another amazing thing that he, all his co-workers and he was practically the only Jew at that time. And his co-workers defended him, because if he were caught even they got punished, if you were caught as a Jew and my father was a Jew. It would have been immediately and I had one other humorous incident.

My brother told me my father and mother had sewed special pockets in his coat where he could hide the cheese or the butter. And one time when he came home, and he always had to he was never sure that he could pass through the patrol when he left work you always did, but one time he went home on the subway station and he had his cheese in his pockets and it was very smelly cheese and he noticed that -- you weren't supposed to sit down in subways, you had to stand and that was pretty hard after 11 hours of work, but in this instance my father sat down. People let him sit down and you noticed eventually that people just went away from him, they left him.

Q THE SMELL?

A Yes, but he thought they must think I'm a dirty smelly Jew because it was after work and he was, and the whole place was just -- even there was a seat next to him that was

empty and he said, well, they don't like me, they don't want -  
- he said they must think Jews smelled but it was the cheese.  
So, anyway, and that kept us and I was called and I was  
working after the war I was called cheese-feeder because I  
brought cheese to work. Sandwiches.

Q SO YOU WENT BACK TO WORK THEN?

A Well, after but I'm jumping ahead a little bit.  
Anyway, so we waited and then my mother, it must have been a  
Saturday, so it must have been around maybe March 5th so that  
was a week later and that is important because of what I would  
like to point out. My mother went to get our ration cards and  
it was right next to, in a school not far from us there was a  
school and she came back and she said, "They won't give them  
to me, you have to go get them yourselves."

Q YOUR RATION CARDS?

A Uh-huh. My father and my brother were home that day  
and I was home and I still remember he said, "This is it." He  
said, "Put on double or triple layers of clothes." And he  
said, "I think they found out that they made a mistake when  
they released you." So, he fully expected to be deported.  
And we went to the school and the minute we came in, showed  
our I.D.'s as one woman called it, that was the pastishine,  
the whatever --

Q PASS TO LET YOU THROUGH?

A To let us there who we were because there was a big J and we went into a room and there were the SS sitting at tables and we showed our I.D. again, name again and all four of us were there.

Q THE WHOLE FAMILY?

A Yeah. And he said to the -- another SS man, he said, "Take them away." And he meant my father, my brother and myself. And then my mother wanted to follow us but he said, "Not you, you stay here." And they took us down the hall somewhere and locked us in a room. We were the only ones there at first and the minute I remember I hear the click of the door still. I still did not believe what was happening but when they took us into the room and the room was empty the SS men left and locked the door, I knew.

And we were all very quiet. My father he had warned us so we sat down and pretty soon other people came from the neighborhood and again the room filled up and there was a woman came whom we knew who had been married, although she was a widow, who had been married to an Arayan a non-Jew Aryan, of course, and she had children. Her children were half Jews but they were raised as Christians so they were another degree of Jews and they did not have to wear the star. She was called privileged. I'm not sure about that but anyway, she would be if her husband, since her husband was, she was sort of

privileged; marriage considered special. She did not have to wear the star because of her husband was not alive anymore and she came to the room and so we waited again. And at one point as the room was filling up I heard a woman's voice outside and screaming. I didn't recognize the voice and saying, "You can not take my children from me. I want to be with my children. Let me see my children. Let me be with my children." And it went on and on a very hysterical cry and we listened. Everyone in the room listened and my father all of a sudden said --

Q THAT'S OUR MOTHER --

A "That's our mother." And here she was all alone, you know, with all the SS men just screaming at them, screaming at them and I still consider that the One Woman's Protest.

Q SHE WAS VERY COURAGEOUS.

A Well, I didn't consider that that was courageous, it was the only thing she could do I mean. Well, I think it was more her family, I mean we were everything to her. So, anyway, they would not let her see us and my brother remembers and I went over and we talked. He remembers that she could bring us some food. I don't remember but I trust his memory.

And at one point too, while we were there, that occurred for sure. My father had a non-Jewish friend we

called him Uncle (?). He always came to see us and visit us even when it was dangerous. And I remember the door opened at one point I saw his face and said what is he doing here and he had apparently, he told us afterwards, that he had gone down the hall and he just wanted to be sure that we were there and that we were alright. And he had gone opening doors and said, "Oh, wrong door." That's how he had gotten through, but it was very reassuring at that point that there was somebody there.

Anyway, we waited all day and they loaded us onto trucks again and this time it felt, well before actually before we went on the truck I saw my mother, she was very quiet by that time. I saw her next to a wall where all the SS surrounding us and she just looked at us and she was very pale. I remember then she followed us to the truck and as we were being loaded onto the truck we were last or I was last anyway, my father and brother were right behind me. I was on the very edge of the truck and I saw my mother standing there on the street and I saw the two daughters of our friend standing there and two SS men on my side with their guns. One of them very young, I remember that. And my mother was just standing there by that time she was just frozen. She couldn't even lift her arm to wave or say anything and one of the daughters as the truck started moving one of the daughters

fainted when she saw her mother going. Our friend called her name, Helga, I think it was Helga, Helga, and whatever and a very strange thing happened. I mean we couldn't do anything we were driving away. The SS man, the young man next to me was obviously moved and he almost had tears in his eyes when he saw that. That was very odd but it's a memory I still have and we were driving away and again we didn't know where we were going and my brother remembers that we went to one of the very major collection centers in the synagogue. I drove by it last November on my tour. There is a memorial plaque there and he remembers that we stopped there first. And he also remembers that because I asked him did he meet with any kind of abuse or you know, mal treatment and he said no. He said there was only one SS man there who was abusive and I don't remember that either. I blocked it out or it didn't happen. Just because they separated men, women and children. We were considered children.

Q AND YOU WERE STILL CONSIDERED CHILDREN AT 14?

A 15

Q AND YOUR BROTHER WAS WHAT? 13?

A 13. So we were considered children.

Q SO YOU WERE SEPARATED FROM YOUR FATHER?

A Well, not there. Not there. I don't remember.

See, I don't remember, but I know that again we were sorted

out and again this left-right business and we were told to go to the right and I remember that's also why I remember I was together with my father and brother and we were loaded onto another truck and driven to (osenslazen) which was a former Jewish welfare house. And so, in that I had no idea what it was at the time. I thought, "Oh, it's just another collection center." But I did find out that was the place where they gathered people of mixed marriages. When we arrived there I had no idea what time of day it was either. It must have been the middle of the day, mid-afternoon. It was all quiet there except for the SS all around us and we came in and again they separated us and I was separated from my father and brother.

Q YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WERE SEPARATED?

A Oh, yeah. In fact, you know I had no idea my brother told me that he was separated too from his father. And I came into a room where there was only women and there were very few people in the center, I mean lager, at that time.

Q YOU MEAN IN THAT ROOM?

A Yeah. There were, at the beginning of the pogrom, there were close to two thousand in there of mixed marriages. 1500 to 2000 and it was terrible conditions. There were all cramped but I came into this room and I remember there were mattresses on the floors, straw mattresses. There were only

about three or maybe at the most four women in the room. There was one in one corner and maybe two or three in the other and I remember the ones in the right corner didn't speak at all, barely. I mean they barely said anything. They were just, I don't know, and to woman in the left corner when I came in, you know, said something to me and I remember the smell of the mattresses still. And I don't know, sometime during the evening I guess, they brought us something to eat and I remember looking at the soup. It was soup and I remember the smell. I remember the looks and I said, "I can't eat it." I hadn't eaten much all day. I couldn't bring myself to eat the soup. Maybe a piece of black bread and the black bread was real heavy.

Q STALE?

A Not stale, but made with the worst --

(Fixing microphone)

Q SO THEY SERVED THE SOUP AND YOU COULDN'T TOUCH IT?

A I couldn't touch it, no, and I didn't. And I remember the only reason I mention it because this woman who was more talkative said, "You better eat this soup it's all you're going to have." Apparently she had been there all week and she knew that's all you get and a piece of bread. But, I still couldn't. I wasn't all that hungry. I remember often when I was in the other (clu) I wasn't hungry I hadn't eaten

all day.

Q TENSION?

A Tension, right. And I think we started talking, this woman and I, started talking. The other ones were completely quiet.

Q THERE WAS A WOMAN IN THE CORNER YOU SAID, SHE DIDN'T TALK AT ALL?

A Two women that didn't say anything.

Q HOW MANY WERE YOU IN THE ROOM?

A I think there was only about four of five so then there was room for more of course but I remember sometime during the evening the woman to my left told me and I don't remember much else what we were saying what we talked about or what she asked me but she said and that's how I found about the protests in front of (Rosenstrazen) she had been there all week so she was witness to that and so she started telling me about that there had been people protesting. There had been women crying outside give us our men we want our men and now it came as a surprise to me because we didn't see anyone when we arrived there was nobody there.

Q MAYBE YOU CAME THROUGH A DIFFERENT DOOR?

A I don't know if we came in from a different door or the time of day when there weren't any they were there all the time the whole week all they had by that time I'll come to

that later I really don't that is something that still founding out about but what she told me was that while the demonstrations lasted and they increased at first it was like a hundred and fifty women there the first or second day the minute that the Aryan partners found out that their husbands weren't coming home they found out they went to the police found out where their husbands were taken and gathered there. It was all most by word of mouth and it just spread very fast so that almost by a pasid agreement the women all gathered there at first a hundred and fifty and then day by day as word got around more and more women came until it ended up to be about a thousand women. Now I didn't this woman who was inside didn't tell me all the details except that they could hear the cries inside and that the SS man who was in charge of the you know the center the lager came in to the doors and my brother remembers that too he told me actually it happened while he was there came into their room and said do you hear these cries do you hear these people out there these are our Germans we are proud of them that is German loyalty.

Q I WANTED TO KNOW WAS THIS THE ROOM YOU WERE IN DID IT HAVE WINDOWS AT ALL YOU COULD LOOK OUT?

A Good question, yes, yes. It did have a window because I remember yes it did have a window yeah because I remember that night I mean I stayed there over night other

people had been there for nine days I stayed there that night and that night we had an air raid I think we must have gotten there the 5th of March from this article he talks about the first of March was the major air raid it was the day of the (lufafer).

Q     AWAITING THE GERMAN AIR FORCE?

A     Something like that something I guess and the British found out about it and made it a real day so this was and the next day the second of March that the headlines all over Berlin newspapers talked about a terror attack but it was the first major attack. Whole --

Q     FIRST MAJOR AIR RAID ON BERLIN?

A     The first major -- well it was, but it was the first where whole districts were completely eradicated. And that night I think it was that night I remember on the first of March when, as people who were inside said it was a miracle all the surrounding buildings of (Rosenstrazen) in fact, the one right next were destroyed.

Q     YOU REMAINED STANDING?

A     Yeah that's why we came on the 5th of March and I remember there was an air raid and I was always scared of air raids, of course, but we were not allowed to go into the shelter we had to stay in the room and I remember the terror I felt because it was a very heavy air raid.

Q HOW HIGH WERE YOU?

A I don't remember. I think I knew, maybe, I think I knew at the time maybe the women even told me that only a few blocks or a couple of blocks away was the Gestapo headquarters so I knew that they were there and I thought that would be a target and you know when you say the windows I remember that the windows and I was afraid that the windows would break and come into the room.

Q YOU ARE ALWAYS REFERRING TO AN ARTICLE, READING OUT OF IT, COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT WHEN IT APPEARED AND WHERE IT APPEARED?

A Okay. Well as I say that protest the (Rosenstrazen) has not been documented for about 40 years the people knew about it but it's just now that, especially in Germany that this had drawn public attention.

Q AND WHO WROTE THIS ARTICLE?

A This article is written by Nathan Sienicki, who was an American. He introduced me, he is at Harvard doing his dissertation at Harvard on this event and what he called non-violent resistance. He belongs to a group for world peace and non-violent resistance and he's doing his dissertation on non-violent resistance and focusing on the (Rosenstrazen), so he's interviewed people who many of the women or men as the case may be who were demonstrating who are still alive and he came

to interview me too.

Q THIS ARTICLE APPEARED WHERE?

A In the --

Q GERMAN NEWSPAPER?

A Newspaper, yeah. And I was --

Q HOLD IT UP.

A This is a copy and this is the beginning. It's a long article it goes for two pages and as a matter of fact here is the beginning and here on this page let's see oh, here here it is you see now this is a picture, can you see it this is the air raid from the first of March and it shows like an example of the destruction. Of course, we were used to that. And this is a picture of (osenstrauzer).

Q WHEN WAS THAT PICTURE TAKEN?

A After the war.

Q BEFORE THE WAR?

A I don't know the building. It is still standing. It is now in east Berlin. It's still standing and it says here, "Give us our men, give us our men" what these women --

Q IT'S QUITE EXTRAORDINARY THAT THIS BUILDING IS STILL STANDING WHEN THE WHOLE STREET WAS --

A Yeah and it's amazing that some of the people here also were bombed out and we were never hit. We had a hit once on our house just a, what do you call it, one bomb. It was a

small bomb. But in any case, it's just something that, I was in Berlin, when I was in Berlin I went to Berlin last November 1988 to help commemorate --

Q       COMMEMORATE WHAT?

A       They had a 50 year anniversary, the German Berlin government paid for my expenses and I said I'd like to speak to schools, at Berlin schools, to high schools, in the gymnasium. And so they said fine you'd be good you can arrange talks, but while I was there for the month, on the 8th of November shortly after I arrived there we had a silent march in commemoration of synagogue and what for me was an amazing and really perhaps the most, outside of speaking to students which was an extraordinary experience, was taking part in the silent march. We went from now the synagogue (Rosenstrazen) in which is actually you can't see the synagogue it's in the back of the house. We gathered there and then we walked all along (constraza again) and there were 5000 Berliners taking part not just all Jews 5000 Berliners taking part in that silent march and we went from the (inpestalotsestraza) synagogue to the (frazenstraza) and there we stood and listened to three speeches by the mayor of Berlin, Golinski, the leader of the Jewish community and Vile Brant.

Q       THE FORMER MAYOR OF BERLIN.

A Right. And he has an extraordinary history too as a nazi resister. And he gave a wonderful speech so did Golenski and during the speech of the mayor there were a lot of hisses and I was scared. I didn't understand what they were saying but apparently they were complaining from all over and they were calling him a hypocrite. They don't like him, he is very conservative. And a lot of people from the communist party took part in the march and, but, in any case, while I was in Berlin and even while I was here still, Dr. Yohan corresponded with me asking if he can interview me, that he was doing a book on the (Rosenstrazen) and he, (Strosfu?) and Yohan know each other and so he came to my brothers house and interviewed me.

Q YOU DIDN'T TELL US YOUR BROTHER WAS STILL THERE.

A My brother is still living in Berlin he never left.

Q WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THAT?

A I'll tell you the reasons for that, but so he interviewed me and asked me to speak at his school and also asked me to take part for an interview on the radio station, SFB, for free Berlin. And he said it's a special program for schools and I would like you to speak about (Rosenstrazen), your experiences so I did that. And then Nathan Sienicki got my name from the Jewish community center in Berlin and interviewed me and came out to Berkeley. It's becoming more

and more people and Dr. Yohan also belongs to this organization of peace and non-violent resistance so they know each other. In fact, I want you to hear the tape sometime. I have the tape from Berlin he and I together have an interview there is a lot more about this whole time on the tape.

Q HOW MANY GERMANS DO YOU THINK KNOW ABOUT THE (ROSENSTRAZEN)?

A I don't know. I don't know. So, anyway but what Nathan and what I found about Nathan, Nathan's article is that it's mostly the --well he talks about this as Joseph (Gerbels) (Hamergeren) and all the people who participated.

In that action who were mobilized and I can't translate it all and they even imported an SS man from Vienna. I can't remember his name, his name is somewhere. He is quite famous, oh yeah, here it is, (Alouie Verna).

Q QUITE A FAMOUS NATZI.

A A fanatic SS man who was in Vienna who had cleaned out Vienna from Jews and they imported him to Berlin to do the job in Berlin for this particular pogrom. So he did and he did his job and he left and the SS took over and it talks about, he talks about how pressure was put on the Aryan partner of those married to Jews to divorce them and to be integrated into the, you know.

Q I UNDERSTAND THAT VERY, VERY FEW CASES --

A Very, very few, very few and that's another, I think that's something that very little know. It's incredible the, in fact in the Jewish cemetery there are graves given to these partners about their loyalty. And it says here, on the first of January 1943 that Hitler was still very annoyed that there were so many Jews still living in the capitol of the Reich.

Q IT DIDN'T GO FAST ENOUGH.

A No, so that's when (Gerbos) decided to give him a birthday present, okay, anyway when (Gerbos) wrote in his diary about these days that he wrote in his diary that, and I have a translation of it somewhere that he himself did not want to see any more yellow stars on the streets of Berlin. He said he wants to, he remembers when he first came to Berlin how many Jews were there and he doesn't want to see any more Jews or yellow stars in Berlin. And so that is how he mobilized all the -- and even that included even people that is the yellow star people from the non-privileged or un-privileged marriages that they called us Jews by law that he wanted them all to be deported. Now as I say that was February 27th when the action started and also it's important to remember in connection with this protest that in 1933 the Germans in May 1933 demonstrations were forbidden, completely forbidden.

Q MAY 1933?

A 1933. A law from 1933 prohibited all demonstrations that were not organized by the Natzi's. The secret police, that is the Gestapo, registered every incident that had anything to do with the hostile demonstrations or gathering of people. And then he tells us that the all-day and all-week, you know, people from mixed marriages came and he gives the number of 1500 to 2000 in the (Rosenstrazen) and it was mostly people like us.

Q NON-JEWISH PARTNERS OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE INCARCERATED IN (ROSENSTRAZEN), THE ONES DEMONSTRATING?

A Yeah, the non-Jews. But, I mean the incarcerated were close to 2000.

Q YES, BUT THEY WERE ALL JEWS, RIGHT?

A Right all people --

Q HALF-JEWS --

A Jews by law, whatever.

Q LEGALLY THEY WERE JEWS?

A Right. Actually they were mostly, it says here it was mostly from simple marriages and non-privileged marriages that we all had to wear the star and Jews by law. Then he talks about the March 1st air raid that I showed the pictures and that was March so that was four days but the demonstrations started already on the --

Q THEY STARTED BEFORE -- ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE YOU CAME?

A No, wait a minute, a week before we came, yeah, right. They started, well, I think it says here on the 27th already and there were only about 150 to 200 people in front of (Rosenstrazen).

Q DID YOU HEAR THESE PEOPLE OUTSIDE?

A I didn't.

Q YOU SAID YOU CAN'T REMEMBER?

A I can't remember, no, I can't remember, because I remember being very surprised when the woman told me about it.

Q LET'S GO ON A LITTLE BIT --

A Or maybe I could hear something and didn't know how to make it out.

Q YEAH.

A Yeah.

Q SO ON YOUR FIRST NIGHT THERE YOU SPOKE TO THE WOMAN, WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

A Well the first night, then the next day we just waited. We didn't know what was going to happen.

Q YOU JUST WAITED IN THE ROOM? WERE THERE BATHROOMS?

A I can't remember, I blocked it all out.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER HOW LONG YOU WERE IN THERE? IN (ROSENSTRAZEN)?

A Well, I think it was about noon the next day so about 24 hour period I guess but as I say I'm trying to reconstruct because the bulk of the demonstration took place while we weren't there with thousands of women. They were all over in the neighborhood they screamed so much that you could hear them from one of the train stations. And the Gestapo two blocks away could hear them and I don't know the article talks about that where the (Gobros) knew about it and some of the Jews from (Rosenstrazen) were sent to another camp another huge collection center and the women went there and not only the women but some of the relatives some of the people from the (Vermakt).

Q THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME JEWISH WOMEN TOO, WITH NON-JEWISH MEN?

A Oh, well, those who were with me in the room must have been either that or they were Jews by law like me, I have no idea. I don't remember it anyway.

Q YOU THINK THERE WERE ONLY WOMEN DEMONSTRATING OUTSIDE?

A Mostly.

Q MOSTLY?

A There were some men and often there were relatives but the article, and everything I hear and read about it are always women and there's a book THE LAST JEWS IN BERLIN that

mentions this too. Well, now, what's interesting here in this article on the 5th of March, that's when we were arrested, it talks about (Ela Gocha) an Aryan lyric, she must have been a poet, went to get the ration cards, you know, so that must have been the day my mother came to get it and her husband was incarcerated. And so and then there is another witness another woman (Sharlotte Israel) was her name and I have her in another book that I got from Berlin she must have been an amazing lady.

Q ONE OF THE DEMONSTRATORS?

A Yeah, and she talks about, here I would like to just summarize the situation in front of the (Zamalga), came to a head, came to a point where the SS aimed their machine guns towards us and now before that they had threatened them and if you don't leave we'll shoot and the women would disperse and go into doorways and disappear but on that day that must have been the 5th of March he said nothing mattered to us anymore and they screamed murderers and he said behind the machine guns one of the men opened his mouth and she said perhaps he gave her an order but then something unexpected happened the machine guns were removed in front of the lager was complete silence only an occasional sobbing could be heard by the women. He said and it says this picture it was in the middle of winter, February, very cold and she talks about it that she

was after this she cried and the tears froze on her face and her husband was released and she never left him alone. So, already all together 7000 more than 7000, 7031 Jews were deported and they went straight to Auschwitz.

Q FROM (ROSENSTRAZEN)?

A No from other places there were a lot of other --

Q THE OTHER ASSEMBLY PLACES.

A The other assembly places, yeah, right. They went from some, I don't know, (Trezan) he gave and a thousand, about a thousand perhaps some of the very old people went to (Terazinstra) but he gives a number but nobody demonstrated on their behalf and so what is interesting here on the 6th of March, that's another one of those little known facts, and I think that it should be known more, that 25 Jews were sent from the (Rosenstrazen) to Auschwitz and (Felix Weiss) was one of them. A Jewish musician, was sent to Auschwitz but he was together with 665 other Jews and they were, what do you call it --

Q PROTECTED.

A I don't remember now what, but anyway, they were sent to (Rosenstrazen) they also married to non-Jews and on the same day on that day when these men were deported to Auschwitz, (Gerbos) gave the order that Jews by law and Jews of mixed highbreeds of first degree were to be released he said

and just at this moment he didn't hear about the demonstration in (Rosenstrazen), he heard about it at (Humbergstrazen), this particular point he said the SD, the what is it, the security service, right or something, all the ones who took care of the evacuation he said, know they hope it's convenient to evacuate to go on with the evacuation of Jews. He said I hear that there have been some rather unpleasant scenes in front of the Jewish old age home where the population had gathered in great masses and had taken the part of the Jews. I give, I'm giving the SD the order not to continue with the evacuation of Jews at such a critical time. We want to save that for later for a few weeks later then we can do it more thoroughly then he says and then (Gerbos) talking and it says, (Gerbos), one of his colleagues commented, must have the commented for that (Gerbos) released the Jews in order to remove protests from the world. He said, we have removed the reasons for the protests and therefore we hope to stop all protests, that they stop so that it wouldn't become known that there were these protests. We want to stop it now so that the population --

Q IN OTHER WORDS THE POPULATION DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT IT?

A Right, so it wouldn't become public knowledge and then he talks, (Gerbos), understood and that what I talked in my interview about that they could not enialate all Jews, whom

he wanted to enialate, he said at some point he was afraid that Germans would know about or would identify themselves with their own and oh, not identify with the Government that was out for mass murder. And then he quotes the Gestapo man who was my, I talked about, who said your relatives out there want you to be free and he also, the same Gestapo man, there was a woman in the camp and her husband, and this woman told me that, too, her husband and son came to inquire about her and he said, yes she's here and she can, she's free and she can go unharmed if you take her home with you she'll be protected by you. And both her husband and the son refused and he says, "You pigs, you don't deserve to be Germans. Get out of here." And I remember him. I remember the way he looked and I also remember him telling me as we were standing in line, he said, I'm strict with the men, I am polite to women that is all Jewish women, and I'm, I don't know, I'm affectionate with children and that he was, he treated us as almost like with a pat on the shoulder, incredible. In any case, so what he concludes is that the Gestapo was really afraid of having the final solution become public knowledge because people really didn't know I mean people often ask me didn't anyone know that's the most favorite question to ask didn't people know what was happening at least in Berlin we didn't know what was happening that there were I mean we could

guess but the deportation started very early and people disappeared.

Q BUT YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHERE THEY DISAPPEARED TO?

A We heard that the first in 1941 people were sent from Berlin to (loots) to (mintz) to (newbling) and then later to Auschwitz and what we were told at first you know the people had little notices I remember that people got notices there were different color notices it was sort of a shiny piece of paper.

Q FROM WHO?

A From the SS the Gestapo to appear at a certain place and I remember they had different colors I don't remember the purpose of the different colors perhaps where they were going but we were told they were going to labor camps but the name concentration camps was already known but we didn't know that they were extermination camps that we had no idea, the only thing we knew at the time and I remember we were still in school and my classmates always talked about the people that just disappeared you know that they had to do hard labor and they had little to eat and so we would gather we would collect clothes and food.

END OF TAPE 1

Interview with RITA KUHN  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
Date: 8/7/89  
Place: Northern California Holocaust Center  
Interviewer: Evelyn Fielden  
Transcriber: Kathleen Keen  
Tape 2

Q SO, IT'S YOUR FIRST DAY IN THE (ROSENSTRAZEN) AND YOU SPENT THE NIGHT THERE AND YOU HAD THAT HORRIBLE SOUP --

A I didn't have it --

Q AND THE WOMAN TOLD YOU, YOU BETTER EAT IT.

A Yeah, right and she also told us what the SS man said to and we had the air raid what other conversation took place I don't remember whether she was married to a non-Jew and the other women were married I know that she was not too old she was in her 20's maybe she could have been like me I don't know.

Q YOU BLANKED A LOT OF IT OUT?

A I blanked a lot of it out.

Q SO YOU SPENT THE FIRST NIGHT THERE?

A Yeah and so the next morning I suppose in the morning maybe they gave us a slice of bread I don't remember that either and we waited again I don't remember anything.

Q YOU DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING FROM OUTSIDE?

A No no that's a strange thing if I did hear anything I didn't know how to interpret it I may have heard something

outside you know that sounded like something but I don't remember.

Q HOW MANY DAYS ALL TOGETHER DID YOU SPEND THERE?

A Just one night we got there I suppose middle of the afternoon spent the night and the next morning we waited and then somebody came and said Rita Kuhn come with me follow me and that must have been about mid day and so I went down I had no idea what to expect that's when we were sort of standing in line I again was in a line and then I heard the SS men say about his treatment, called our name and again I don't know how much time went by and then pretty soon I turned around he asked me to go somewhere else and I saw my father and brother in the same building and I guess the SS men were talking to my father and you know shuffling of papers again and questioning and --

Q DID YOU GO TO YOUR FATHER?

A Not right away I think my father came over and said we've been released we are free to go.

Q WITH YOUR BROTHER?

A Yeah.

Q SO THEY APPARENTLY STAYED TOGETHER, RIGHT?

A No I don't think so my brother told me last November that they didn't they separated him from his father and he was with a bunch of young boys you know and then my father and I

have I don't have a picture of it there is a picture of the release paper.

Q YOU HAVE THE DOCUMENT?

A Yeah they gave it to my father and my father didn't keep it but I have a book where they have a document.

Q SO EACH OF YOU GOT --

A I'm not sure whether each of us got one and we got our ration cards and they gave us ration cards and on the release card I know some of them I have in the book they say Israel Kuhn has been released. And of course the ration cards have been given to us now I don't know whether my father I think my father may have gotten one for all of us but I'm not sure because I haven't seen it and my father didn't keep it.

Q SO YOU WENT HOME THEN?

A Then we went home.

Q THERE WAS YOUR MOTHER.

A Yeah but I remember one thing before we went home you asked me if I heard anything or saw anything when we came out of the building right across the street from that building in Germany you have these huge apartment houses and the entrances all have a there is always lots of room what do you call it entry hall in that kind of a recess there was somebody standing there and I remember seeing people milling around further away in the street and I still like before when I was

released from the other camp I didn't believe that we were really free and there was a man standing across from the (golden striveer) here he is he is going to take us again he had a coat on and looked like a Gestapo man.

Q YOU WERE ALWAYS SUSPICIOUS IN OTHER WORDS?

A Always suspicious never even sure then as we came out he waved to us and gave us a sort of victory sign but very very carefully and smiled and waved at us like good luck and I remember that impressed me so much at the time that I said oh we are not alone I was really you know and then I was some other people down the street and they could have been demonstrators I don't know so we went home and my mother was I think that at the time not at home but with her sister two doors away two houses away and again she didn't expect to see us again but there we were. Then soon after our release I was called to work again.

Q YOU WENT RIGHT BACK TO WORK THEN?

A I was at work and this time I had to work in the railroad station (lasfretabonhof) which is now in east Berlin. It's completely destroyed it's non-existent now and I remember the first day I came there I had to quote on quote an interview with the whatever manager there --

Q FOREMAN?

A Yeah in his office and I looked out the window and

I saw all these tracks and the train and he told me that I had to work out there there is no place to walk I couldn't see anything and I am going home with nightmares having the train --

Q ABOUT CLOTHING, WHAT DID YOU DO?

A You know I can't remember. I had frost bite especially in the factory I remember a black, a black uniform sort of thing I wore I don't know how I got it who got it for me maybe they issued it that's possible because everybody the factory provided a black coat kind of a coat that I remember but then this is something I've been trying to remember how did we do it we had no I had my mother's family to help us but they my aunt ever since I was born did the sewing I hardly ever wore any store bought clothes I always had handmade and hand embroidered clothes and dresses but then I was as I say I went to the railroad station and I had to work outside my job was to clean a couple jobs but the main major job was to clean windows from trains outside, the outside windows.

We carried a ladder all day we had to carry a ladder all day and most of the trains that we had cleaned came from the east they were military trains but they were very very dirty they had been on the road for days came mostly from Russia

Q SO HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU WORK?

A Eleven hours.

Q DID YOU GET A BREAK?

A Half an hour 45 minute break for lunch.

Q AND WHERE DID YOUR BROTHER WORK?

A He was never called to work I think he was still I was 15 so he was 13 and they didn't take anyone under 14 I don't think.

Q THAT WAS 1942?

A '43 by know so I was 13 and yeah that was March 1943 so my brother was not called and my father was called back and I don't remember whether he was called whether he continued with the same railroad station or not but he did the same job and got the same cheese or sometimes butter.

Q HOW LONG DID YOU WORK AT THE RAILROAD STATION?

A The duration of the war.

Q ALMOST A YEAR?

A Two years, two years.

Q THE HOUSE YOU LIVED IN, IT WAS NOT BOMBED?

A No not seriously once there was a small fire on top and everyone went upstairs and our again one of those inexplicable things like (ozenstriser) was spared you know there were not many Jews left after February and March of 43 very few 4000 all together maybe in hiding or people like us and I just I mean I went back to Berlin I verified it our

whole district we lived was very little damaged there was one huge there was one what do you call it direct hit in a street not far from us and we felt it shaking the house.

Q DID YOUR BROTHER, COULD HE GO TO SCHOOL?

A No, no after 42 no more Jewish schools no more Jewish community centers everyone was closed.

Q THERE ARE NO SCHOOLS?

A No they were all closed so he stayed home and that's another whole story he was like -- no he stayed home, my mother was home.

Q SO YOU WORKED THERE UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR?

A Uh-huh.

Q WHAT HAPPENED AT THE END?

A Well in also I found out my brother after (Goldenstrouser) he no longer wore the yellow star he just he just threw it away he did not wear it whenever he went out but my father and I kept wearing it and that we have to remember is after (Grobel) said he didn't want to see anymore yellow --

Q WERE YOU EVER ACCOSTED AT ALL?

A No no and not only that I wasn't accosted by the rest of the population but right across from us sort of catty-corner across from us was one of the buildings was the SS was a branch of the headquarters of the SS and there was a building and I had to cross I had to pass them every day there

even though she had TB and once in a while I wanted to bring her home some tobacco and I never succeeded because these women said the same as the SS men said, "Jews out."

Q ANTI-SEMANTICS.

A Very much and then we worked with some frenchmen I remember very good friend who became a friend and some were from Spain and yeah that was and also I remember that we had to go into the station we worked in the railroad yards most of the time and we had to wait for an incoming train in the station we would see soldiers coming out of the cars that had just come from Russia and not I don't remember at least not one of them would make any remark to us on the contrary they sometimes smiled at us as much as they dared it was like they had seen so much they had seen what the SS did in Russia, Hungary and Poland and many of the soldiers were so disgusted, I mean there's enough evidence for that and I always felt a kind of connection with them you know as if to say well we know what you're up against

Q I FIND THAT VERY AMAZING REALLY THAT YOU LIVED WITH YOUR STAR THROUGH THE WHOLE TIME, THE WHOLE WAR IN BERLIN.

A Uh huh. Yeah so you know as I say, the next few years went by without any major incidence.

Q WAS YOUR MOTHER AILING, HAVING TB?

A Sometime I don't remember when it was you know when

you have TB every 7 years you have to go back to a sanitorium it sort of comes in cycles and I remember she had to. I don't remember when it was she went to a sanitorium for a while that sort of revived her no she wasn't ailing no one was during that time she at least not, you know.

Q WAS SHE WEARING A STAR?

A No no and that was also curious you know the irony of it all, I remember we couldn't travel anywhere very early we were not allowed to travel to use public transportation no movies no theaters, nothing. Everything was closed, we had to be in in the summer at 9 o'clock at night in the winter at 8 o'clock at night Jewish women could only shop between 4 and 5 and everything was gone from the stores. My mother did not since she didn't have to wear the star she could but we weren't allowed to travel we had a special pass so did my father to go from home to work and back but when we were sort of still travel before I was even a forced laborer my mother would come with us and we would visit my aunts who lived outside of Berlin and no one ever bothered us except one woman once said to my mother what's the matter with you or something how can you go with Jews.

Q YOU TRAVELED ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION WITH YOUR STAR NOW?

A Uh huh.

Q DID YOU AT THAT TIME AT ALL BESIDE THAT WOMAN YOU WERE TELLING US ABOUT, DID ANYBODY ACCOST YOU OR DID ANYBODY MAKE A REMARK?

A No I don't remember no.

Q YOU WENT TO WORK EVERYDAY, DID YOU HAVE SUNDAY OFF?

A Sunday we had off I think.

Q DID YOU WORK SIX DAYS A WEEK?

A Six days a week I think we had Sundays off or maybe every second Sunday I don't remember.

Q BUT YOU TOOK A TRAIN OR A BUS?

A I took an S-ban elevator train.

Q AND YOU WEREN'T EVER --

A No and we are weren't Jews, Jews were not allowed public transportation if the distance from home to work was what 6 kilometers could that be something like that.

Q BERLIN IS A BIG CITY.

A Yeah, but anyway my railroad was too far away so I took the elevator train which took me right there you know no I was never as I say. I did what I did do I always wore and I always wore it openly when I passed the SS but there were times when I covered it.

I covered it you know and I felt safe and that was a big risk I took because unfortunately and many to the that is one of the sad chapters is that there were people who

worked for the Gestapo Jewish people there were two particularly one woman was I can't remember her name something and other man and I didn't know what she looked like.

They executed her no she wasn't executed she did not wear the star she worked for the Gestapo she would denounce Jews who were either living in Italy she had seen me one day I didn't know that that such people existed even if she had seen me walk with my star the next she could have denounced me and that was subject to death that was a penalty subject to that's what happened to Elenore in our group Elenore was caught that way.

Elenore was caught that way. So anyway I didn't know and I still covered it and my brother didn't travel any distance everyone in the neighborhood knew him you know it was amazing.

I don't know I just began to I can't even believe in that because if I feel that was a miracle or something I don't believe in that why me you know why was I protected I mean not only that but our house even was not even bombed out I had never I was anyway so that was except for the physical hardships and in every respect the hard work the lack of sleep the lack of food but I didn't feel that was my particular fate because everybody else.

Well for a while there was this woman in our no I

could read because I not many I mean my family didn't have a library or it was taken away I don't remember but the non-Jewish woman who lived with us had a library and I would read her books and of course my aunt had a library but I didn't read after work you know when I read during the air raids I always took a book downstairs with me.

I read then and but not much other than that so no I come to the end of the war now the end of the last 1945 when was it that the war ended in may right May 14th, 15th.

Well anyway before that time it was ten days all together I remember now the dates but it was ten days that I know the ten days that is before the Russian the official Russians came to Berlin before Berlin capitulated we lived down in the cellar because we were bombarded continually Russians surrounded Berlin.

There was street fighting again not in our district (sulesinberg) had already capitulated so we were instantly and that's when our street suffered too from artillery fire there was heavy artillery fire and still no bombs in the air but less and less and the we lived down in the basement in our little cubicle we had and my brother told me and I don't remember at all this shows that the Gestapo woman moved in with us she stayed in our part and perhaps she thought we would protect her she sort of had protected us.

Sometime in late April we had that's when the artillery started. Ten days then the artillery fire started there weren't that many allied bombings if you can believe it we had allied bombings hundred planes sometimes in one night there were tons and tons of DDT and I think that stopped when the Russians surrounded Berlin.

I don't know if the Russians sent their planes over but I remember mostly artillery and that went on for days and the only and first it was instant and of course then how can we get food there was after a while there was maybe a hour of rest when there was no fire and eventually we found we some how found out knew that we would rush to the store and get some bread there were still stores open that's a story I wanted to tell next there were some stores open mostly bread I don't remember anything else really maybe there were some other things but it was one of those days my father, brother and I went upstairs to our apartment we thought it was safe and quietly we went upstairs to get something I don't remember what and all of a sudden we heard this enormous noise it sounded like a there were sirens going either at all no more warnings we heard this tremendous noise it came closer and closer we were in our dining room at the time it's coming closer go into the fall way from the windows we rushed into the hall and that thing hit and it was the house was shaking

and my father you know because we were all quiet for a while that was very close I wonder whether it was the only that was quiet after that we went downstairs again after we rushed downstairs because we weren't sure and after a while when things were really quiet and we knew somebody down in the basement said that was a they called it staulen that's a special but it was a special it was very high explosive and it had made this noise it was screeching noise it was a canon a bomb. It was very very noisy as it comes down it's the most frightening sound.

It had this woo woo you know like a it was very very explosive it but it was highly explosive it just shattered things when it came fell down and in any case he told us and then my father after everything were quiet for a while my father told me to get some bread sent me to get some bread and I said alright and I went upstairs on the street and right I could go to the corner and then turn to my left was a bakery not far from us and the minute I came out of the house I couldn't recognize things everybody looked different and I walked down to the corner and there I saw the whole devastation it was so incredible the trees were completely bare of course there was april there wasn't the trees were burned branches were grotesque looking the houses were all full of holes you know on both sides but as I walked on to

find the bakery the trees I could tell there were pieces of cloth hanging from the trees pieces of human flesh hanging from the trees I walked on and I saw a woman lying there dead with her legs cut off and I came closer to the I couldn't find the bakery there was a hole in the wall and right next to the bakery I could hear moaning and people groaning and I knew that the bombs had hit there and people had been waiting in line to get bread they were hit and just torn to shreds so I went home and I told them then something strange happened the daughter of this Gestapo woman told us we became good friends after the war actually we were good friends during the war and she told us that my father had gone to get bread this morning I wonder if she is there waiting in line and nobody wanted to go see and my grandfather my mother's father was is a world war one veteran I'll go and see but he couldn't find her and we never heard from her again no her mother the Gestapo woman we never heard from her again we don't know if she got out with the SS but her daughter never heard from her again but we thought she was killed there and so we waited and then the night before the Russians came we heard German soldiers coming through our basement and telling us the war is over we're not fighting anymore we're capitulating the Russians are right behind us they'll be here tomorrow then we couldn't wait my family couldn't wait for the Russians it was finally the end

but anybody in the house we had a conference my father and the other people in the room I was there too I was included because I overheard the conversation he said you know they feared reprisal and they said but will you put in a good word for us for those and my father assured him yes he would how all of a sudden over night the tables were turned we were the protectors they needed protection it was so you know the tragic irony my father said I will put in a I can't think of anyone in this house whom I would have anything negative to say and then they said well the Russians are coming tomorrow why don't you the three of you put on your stars again because we didn't wear our star while we were living in the cellar nobody cared anymore why don't you put on your yellow star and greet the Germans.

They wanted us to greet the Russians so to just and we said fine we'll do that and I remember the next morning so clear we put on our star it was early in the morning and I don't know how it happened because when I went to the bakery it wasn't there but when we came out of the house there was a huge barricade right in front of our house who put it up I don't know maybe to keep the advancing troops it must have sprung up overnight there it was my father, brother and I climbed on top of the barricade and waited and I ca still see how the street looked it was grey it was the morning it was

grey everything was deserted. The SS was dead silence everybody had left nobody was on the street except the three of us and we waited and pretty soon the same corner where I had turned to go to the bakery a Russian came from what we could tell he was in his 20's and a little boy 14-year-old boy and we waved to them and he came towards the barricade and came on top greeted us and fortunately I knew a few words in Russian picked up from the Ukrainians it turned out that he had been a student in Moscow and we tried to communicate and he saw our star and we also had the Jewish identification card we showed him everything no you are not Jewish and we said yes we are and he wouldn't believe us no Hitler we said not all here we are and he would not believe it then he told us that in his broken German and they liberated the camps the SS men took the yellow stars and I.D.s from their dead victims and disguised themselves and they found out about it the Russians found out about it and now they had to be very very careful with anyone seeing the yellow star and we were just getting really frantic because if he thought we were trying to disguise ourselves as Jews we had it how would we tell I mean we had every proof there you know even a soldier said there is only one way you could prove to me that you are Jewish and we did and he said yes you are Jewish and that happened to a lot of people how did you know.

I think they were instructed to listen to the hebrew and I think they were instructed I read in the book of the last Jews in Berlin the only way one Jew was almost was going to be executed because they thought he was a German Natzi while he was there waiting for his death and they stopped so I think that the Russian troops were informed that if you if that happens that's the only final test because nobody knows the hebrew.

And then he believed us and then he told me that he said the troops were coming we were the fighting troops we are just on our way through Berlin because there is still SS fighting we are after them we are still fighting he said and we're not doing anything to women we are the good guys and you know not only that when the first what do you call it the tanks when the first Russian tanks came through our streets the Russian soldiers threw food to us not just to the whole Berlin and they were very good with the children but they were on their way through but watch out for the occupation troops the soldiers were given permission to do anything they wanted to anyone at any time for 24 hours because it lasted longer than that so they came you know again I never had to hide from the Natzis I had to hide from the Russians they came to our apartment and drunk most of the time three times the first time the Russians came the occupation troops they asked

everyone in the house to gather in somebody's living room it happened all over Berlin it was like a secret agreement I don't know peoples instincts we all some how got the same we made ourselves ugly to hide because it was difficult to hide some women even put charcoal on their faces and I was hiding I don't know I just put my kerchief and covered as much of my face I was but the only young woman in the whole apartment house young girl and there was another woman who was living with us after the Jewish woman was deported and she was a professional prostitute she had SS men coming to her place with us there she was also downstairs and I remember I was sitting here there was a door three Russian officers came to the door and they looked around and I knew that if I had escaped so far they looked through the room they came straight towards me all three of them and the Ludya was her name Ludya saw them coming towards me and she came straight across the room stood in front of the three and said come she took all three of them with her so I had another rescuer a German rescue and then after that he came to our apartment twice and at one point I never know I never know for sure to this day they came and asked I showed my I wore my yellow star for the Russians they came and I said we are Jews and by that time we had learned the Russian word for Jews me too come and my mother wouldn't let him she said no and she went with him and

he took her to the back the bedroom was he took her to the back and I thought of my poor mother and she came back after a while and she assured me afterwards that nothing happened he couldn't perform because he was too drunk so then another day then the third incident that was they came again by that time my parents had found me a hiding place there was a little attic I was hiding in there the doorbell rang again my father and brother opened the door I was waiting and I heard a shot and I didn't know what to do do I wait here and or if I go down because my father had obviously said if I had gone down they would have punished him for lying and but I waited I decided to wait then I just waited there and I heard my fathers voice say Rita you can come down My brother told me the whole incident they were shot at the Russian soldiers because they were too drunk they hit the wall in the hallway my brother and father just rushed down the stairs and my father had enough by then we had 12 years of Natzi and these were our liberators that I'm going to go to the commander and tell him what happened so he did and it was a major you know listen to this story my father told him and he got really really angry because after the one day they had been given to do anything they wanted rape, plunder, kill, whatever they wanted to do they could do and it happened there were just terrible stories but after that one day it was punishable by

death and there were some soldiers who were actually killed so my father complained and he got very angry he got a beautiful Russian this family is Jewish had been persecuted has been victimized and is not to be bother anymore and we had nothing else.

Q SO YOU WERE STILL LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE

A Uh huh.

Q SO WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

A Well then after we had Russian headquarters living next to us and it was fine and eventually our building became our the British zone so the Russians left and the British took over and then it was a question of --

My father was the first one to have to make a living and I remember and I have a picture of him he had a newspaper stand on the street newspaper stand I don't know what do you call it when you sell little notions like pencils anything scratchpaper whatever was available but mainly newspapers. It was an open stand and he was right I saw it in one of the ruins not far from the main street the stores that were completely empty for weeks and years even when I left the stores were completely empty and I went to the opera I remember going to the opera to the theater that started right away.

I also remember going to the movie you know I don't

know what I wanted to see and you know this in those days they had news reels before the real show before the main show and I remember we still did not know about concentration camps what really happened there and we had reports actually when I was working at the railroad one of our co-workers also like me Jewish like me and I never know for sure I think she belonged or was in touch with the underground but a man who had escaped and he told stories so we knew people were killed there but not to the full extent but I went to the movie after the war and there was a news reel and they showed the British liberation of and I just sat frozen to my seat and I just could not believe it I believed it but it was so memorable but it was also memorable that people behind me the Germans how they reacted no that can't be true no they can't have done that that's what was staged or something and I left I didn't see the movie and I said I don't only want to leave the movie I want to leave here.

Q I UNDERSTAND YOUR BROTHER DID NOT.

A Right well my family wanted to leave my father didn't have to sell in his little stand anymore he decided to become a police officer he also was I forget to mention when earlier I said he would protect and put in a good word for anyone that he can and the Russians soon after and I never forgot that either and that is some of the when the Russians

came the tanks came they took my father with his yellow star and said we want you to come with us to the (Roo tour) because that's immediately wanted to occupy that and take it out of use it for their own so they took him and I never forgot those soldiers I was screaming and I was crying and they said we'll bring him back don't worry I was so afraid so he came back and they also asked him at one point to identify nazis he said he saw a whole crowd of them lined up in the courtyard and he said he couldn't do it he couldn't you know he said with only one person I knew that he was a rabid nazi fanatic and I gave him away but the others I didn't know but he said that's the hardest thing for him to do after all that so anyway he became a police officer and we had you know by that time the immigration was opened up to people he applied for America and we had our whatever our interviews and health examinations right and I had all kinds of things wrong with me I was undernourished I had a gallbladder infection not no wasn't hepatitis I had that right after the war you see I wasn't sick the whole time there were all kinds of things wrong with me and of course something they didn't know at the time because it was right after 45 but when I came to America it turned out that I had cancer and a very dangerous kind it was called melanoma and the doctors here it was in Boston decided the cost for it was the forced labor the bad shoes that I had wear

because melanoma is often the result of too much pressure and but I survived that too which many people don't do.

So anyway and we waited and then they told my mother that from x-rays that her TB hadn't completely cleared up and the immigration service wouldn't let her in and that was another shock to us and we could understand it and that's the rule but one of the first things the Americans did for my father was to send her to a sanitorium in Germany and the they told her that this proper care this proper nourishment she her TB could clear up and she could get permission to leave so they sent her they also told my brother and me that there is a camp for young people they called it a youth camp and it's un our auspices outside of Munich I don't remember where it was and you could go there and have some rest and get some good food so my brother and I did and you know what it turned out to be was a DP camp and my brother and I were miserable there not miserable I can't say that and that's when I met a lot of people who had survived camps and they only spoke yiddish and we communicated and I was in a room full of women we had barely room to walk one bed after another.

My father was in Berlin and I had to get out I wanted to start school I had heard of a special school for people mixed marriages I wanted to go there and I my brother said well I'll wait for the Americas to get us back because

you know trains were just everything was destroyed in fact there was a train to Munich so but it was all very disordered so I couldn't wait for the Americans to send a train for a ride back and I went illegally over the border with some people who smuggled mostly.

Q     MUNICH WAS UNDER AMERICA.

A     I know I know but I think Berlin was an island Berlin was in east Berlin was in east Germany, we had to cross the Russian right we had to cross a Russian zone near Hanover somewhere and I remember they took me with them I had a suitcase they had their diamonds in their coat pockets and we had to walk for a long long time through snow the snow was this high I walked with my suitcase and anyway we got to hanover and we made it at one point we were near the border we were walking on the street and we saw a car coming and we had to throw ourselves in the snow my father was just furious when he heard about it he was furious he couldn't he had no rest until I came home. I think it was '46, and I just waited for my immigration and then I had a problem with you now I said I want to go ahead I want to leave I just couldn't stay there I had after the war very soon after the war 1945 sometime in may or june it must have been may or june my doorbell rang and I opened it and there was an old friend school of mine standing outside she was a good friend of mine at that time and her

head was still shaven she had just come from Auschwitz with her family was killed and she and I became friends and I'm not sure she went to school with me but I met other people in school, the special school.

I met other but she and I were friends and she had friends of her fathers in America so she left in 47 and she said I'll help you get over there I'll help you anyway I can she well she would help me I came to New York first and --

Q YOU CAME ALL ALONE?

A Yeah that was hard that was very difficult well I said you'll follow I'll just pave the way so to speak I'll prepare your arrival and find out I'll learn English and then I can help you my father my mother was perfectly willing to let me.

By the time I was 20 my mother had put nothing in my way but my father said how can you leave us now we stayed together all those years why can't you had had things all planned for me he wanted me to work in an office and get married or at least wait until my mother got permission to leave and he made it very difficult but eventually he consented.

Q HE STAYED IN GERMANY?

A Yeah he stayed in Germany because and it was another one of those tragic ironies in 1969 I had been in America for

one year I heard news that my mother finally got permission to come to America that her TB had cleared up and that her lungs were all free and she could leave and they had the affidavits they had the date for the departure they started selling some of their things and a couple of days I'm not sure when before the day of departure my mother one day could not get out of bed and she was paralyzed and it turned out she had Parkinson's Disease she had suffered a stroke of some kind and my father telephoned me and I was just I can't be it can't be and also the doctors results of the war and my brother told me last November that the day that we were supposed to leave on the plane two hours before my father had phone called from the airport that said we're waiting for your wife we are holding a machine and for two more hours if you decide that you can make it we'll be here my father called back two hours later and said that she can not move she's bedridden and that was the that's why they never came and my brother decided to stay

Q WHEN DID YOUR MOTHER DIE?

A She died in 58 very difficult very difficult

Q AND YOUR FATHER?

A He died in 82 I visited my mother I had by that time I had 1954 I went back to Berlin I had no money to go back I don't remember my mother asked me did you ever consider going back I said I don't know I can't remember but even if I did

there was no money going back I was dependent then I got married in 52 four years after I came here so and then in 54 sometime in the early 50's the German government gave reparations and by that time I had my cancer I got what you call an interruption of education or or health I got my brother got education and also health and I got health and because -- I still have the papers at home I had 15 things wrong with me by that time and then I got a big lump of money from the government from the German government as a reparation and I had it for life I have a pension for life from the government for the well I've needed it especially since after the operation I have difficulty with the leg I mean I can't be on my feet for very long I am limited to the job I can do but anyway I used that money to go to Germany with my son who was a two years old I saw my mother and she had been in the hospital she was in the hospital just before my arrival and she insisted on being home when I got there and the doctors were reluctant to let her go said she was not in any condition to be out of the hospital and but she did and met me at the airport and I have a picture and through the whole summer she toilet trained my son she took him to the bathroom she tried to do some cooking it really was real bad and she was in the chair most of the time and that was the last time I don't want to live anymore I don't want to be a burden so anyone so this

Kuhn--

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was a all sort of taking away from her she became very dependant.

I am more than surviving the cancer it was over shall I turn the system off we still didn't talk about this you have some of that the protests if you can.

was a guard standing outside the street outside the building and I had to cross him every day and no one ever bothered me or my father.

Q TRULY AMAZING ISN'T IT?

A Yeah and now I have to insert here that my brother wrote to me a long time ago my my right across from the Ss was my grandmothers store that's my mothers mother and my grandmother had died my grandfather was still alive my mothers sister were alive and her son now that's my cousin the only cousin I have we were very close when we were children he was like a brother to me.

Q SO YOU ARE ALL NON-JEWS?

A Yeah yeah and I don't remember what year it was he was two years older than I was he was about 14, 13, 14 might have been as early as 41 or 42 that he joined the Hitler Youth and I remember that in one of our family gatherings I asked him why do you want to join the Hitler Youth and I had a huge argument with him and I said how can you believe in this man don't you know what is happening to us, don't you see it, don't you see what he's doing and I argued with him and he says well he's good for the country whatever his usual argument.

Q HE WAS HOW OLD DID YOU SAY?

A He was no more than 14 or something you know.

Q DID HE FINALLY JOIN?

A Oh yeah he joined he joined and I remember my mother telling me that Rita never talk to him that way again and I said but mom he's my cousin we grew up together we love each other she said well don't talk to him again never never argue and don't ever argue with my sister because if anything happens she'll take his side and that was to me such a revolution I will never forget that my own family should perhaps turn against me, but in any case the SS knew that we were related and my cousin eventually joined the war as a soldier.

Q DO YOU THINK MAYBE IT COULD HAVE TURNED THE OTHER WAY THAT YOUR COUSIN TRIED TO PROTECT YOU?

A I don't know whether he tried to protect me I don't know but he may you see after the demonstration the protests there were some people who had relatives in there who also demonstrated soldiers and some military was involved I think that the SS or Gestapo whoever even Hitler himself decided that if we deport these people we will have trouble with our own people since my cousin was at first Hitler Youth and then a solder.

Q I FIND IT VERY HARD TO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU WALKED PAST THE SS MEN ACROSS THE STREET WITHOUT BEING PUNISHED IN ANY WAY WITH YOUR YELLOW STAR SHOWING AND YOUR FATHER TOO. I

FIND THAT MOST INCREDIBLE.

A Right, right. I also you know this is something I have not been able to confirm and I even asked about it when I went to Berlin, the Gestapo woman that I told you about she didn't want us to be in the air raid shelter but then as she got to know us she befriended us she became befriended if you can call it that but my mother did some sewing for her my brother ran some errands for her, she told my father to his face, that if all Jews were like you we would have nothing to hate or persecute so she liked my father.

She was a very high ranking official in the Gestapo she was right there on top that of course it's just a suspicion that she after our arrest that she perhaps put in a petition for our release which was dangerous for her too that's why I doubt it but you know it's just a suspicion I have and maybe --

Q WELL THAT COULD VERY WELL BE --

A Well I'll come to it when we come to the end of the war because something happened that made me connect that but it's possible that she, you know --

Q DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OTHER INCIDENT BETWEEN TO THE END OF THE WAR ABOUT YOUR LIFE YOU LED?

A Well it got increasingly more difficult to survive simply that not just because and we all survived it wasn't

just the remaining Jews Germans were nothing to eat, you know no homes.

Q IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY COLD TOO.

A Very cold no heater I remember waking up going to bed cold and barely getting warm.

Q DID YOU HAVE WATER TOO?

A I think so I. I think so I think there were times when we didn't you know because our district wasn't that heavily bombed I think there was water I remember no electricity I remember that we had of course blackouts and we had to live with candle lights and we had one room where we always, the dining room, we didn't have a living room anyway but there was a stove the tile from ceiling to where you would put coals or wood and we had barely enough wood maybe what we had we would keep it warm.

Q I READ SOMEWHERE THAT THEY CUT DOWN TREES IN BERLIN.

A Oh furniture everything they could find but that was true see there we didn't feel excluded from the rest of the population the only thing of course that still made us different was the yellow star and the forced labor now at the railroad station where I worked there were only three of us, three Jews. Three girls.

Q WERE YOU FRIENDS WITH OTHER JEWS AT ALL? DID YOU KNOW ANY OTHER JEWS?

A No not except the ones at work there was nobody left all my relatives had been caught in this pogrom I mean we didn't have we had two aunts and an uncle and an aunt I remember my father later on remembered that 12 of his relatives were exterminated of his family members and one aunt was sent to (Terazinstraza), she survived.

Q IS SHE STILL LIVING TODAY?

A No that's another tragic story, she died of blood poisoning soon after the war she had an infection, she was married to a non-Jew oh I don't know in the 20's a count she was she was a countess and she was deported because her son which is I suppose he was a cousin of my fathers so he was a second cousin or something her son refused to live with her and so she was deported and she could very well have died.

Q YOUR SOCIAL LIFE WAS DURING THAT TIME IN BERLIN WAS NON-EXISTENT?

A Was non-existent.

Q YOU WENT TO WORK FOR 11 HOURS, YOU CAME HOME, YOU ATE SOMETHING --

A Yeah yeah and had to go down to the cellar twice a night, very little sleep.

Q WERE YOU SICK AT ALL DURING THAT TIME?

A You know that's another one of those, no.

Q YOU DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO BE SICK?

A No, no my father stayed home a few times because he was older he was in his 40's already I don't know how he did it you know at that hardship, no I was not sick I had frost bite I remember I could barely walk and move my hands sometimes that I remember always being cold of course working outside all the time because we worked with foreign labor and there were lots of Ukrainians and believe it or not Evelyn and I tell you the truth you asked me before if my co-workers my German co-workers were ever mistreated, never we had a foreman who was you know didn't go out of his way but he was polite he gave us our directions what to do but it was the Ukrainians who hated us who --

Q YOU HEAR THAT ALL THE TIME.

A Who would just make life miserable for us and they, one of the ways they made it miserable for us was that they always scrambled to work inside the train cars the wagons whenever anyone of us tried to even get warm to be inside out of the cold for a while they would shoo us out one of the reasons they wanted to work inside was that they were military trains and they would be full of cigarette butts and these Ukrainians, all women, would the minute the train came into the station or we could only do it when they got into the station would mill into the train and pick up the cigarette butts and if anyone my mother was unfortunately was a smoker