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Interview with Phyllis Mattson

Holocaust Oral History Project

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1 Q THIS IS FEBRUARY 25, 1992. HOLOCAUST ORAL
2 HISTORY PROJECT IS INTERVIEWING PHYLLIS MATTSON.

3 A I live in Carpinteria, California, right
4 now. And I was born in Vienna in 1929. My parents were
5 immigrants to Vienna. They came from Poland. Or what was
6 then Poland. My father came to Vienna to study. And he was at
7 the university there. My mother came in 1928 to find work.
8 And they met in the apartment house of her aunt where my
9 father was renting a room. And so this is how they met and
10 got married. And they continued to live in Vienna. What I
11 remember of my parents and of Vienna is very very little, in
12 part because I was separated from my parents when I was nine
13 and ten years old, nine from my father and ten from my
14 mother. And so many of the things that children remember that
15 parents tell them I never heard, so I do not remember very
16 much about many details of my story. What I do remember is
17 that we lived in a two room apartment in Vienna in a very
18 busy street, New Stauffer Strasser, in the Ninth District. It
19 was a very simple apartment. We did not have any running
20 water. There was some in the building, but not in our
21 apartment. We did not have our own bathroom. My mother worked
22 as a seamstress, so part of the room was taken up with her
23 work. As long as I can remember, my father never had a job
24 because it was depression time in Vienna. I think we were
25 very very poor. But I really never felt that poverty. I

1 never worried about when I was going to eat again or
2 anything.

3 I had a pretty quiet childhood. Very simple, but
4 relatively secure in the sense that I really did not worry
5 about the next meal or even losing our place to live or
6 anything like that. And part of my childhood was spent in
7 Poland. My parents would send me to my grandmother's or great
8 grandmother's house in (Lufoshna) or Streij. Those are now
9 in Russia, but they were in Poland. And I would spend summers
10 there. But I went to school in Vienna. And I went to public
11 school. It was uneventful. I do not remember any particular
12 outbursts of anti-semitism directed at me. My family was not
13 religious, at least I do not remember going to the temple.
14 But my mother was good friends with a rabbi. And I think he
15 was influential in helping me to leave the country. But he
16 was a family friend. My father never said prayers. We were
17 not a religious family, although I did go to Hebrew school.
18 And I started learning Hebrew when I was maybe six or seven.

19 Well, in 1938 when Hitler came to Vienna the troops
20 came through New Stauffer Strasser, I witnessed it from our
21 apartment building, from the windows looking over the street.
22 It was frightening. All the noise and the soldiers and the
23 people were yelling things about Jews. I do not really
24 remember what it was, but it was a very terrifying display of
25 power. And my parents were quite upset. But nothing much

1 happened as a result of that particular night. Within the
2 next few months there was a lot of activity for all Jews, I
3 think, trying to get out of Vienna or trying to find visas
4 and relatives, and getting quota numbers from the American or
5 English consulates. But I wasn't really told very much about
6 what was happening. My mother was a seamstress. And one
7 thing I do remember is that her gentile clients decided--
8 some of them, anyway -- not to pay her anymore, so that there
9 was a terrible crisis in terms of money, about how we would
10 live without her income. And I do not know how that was
11 settled either. My father and my mother's assistant, they
12 wanted to get tough, and my mother did not want to have any
13 part of it. But I do not really know how that all got
14 settled.

15 Some other things that happened to me during that
16 time was that-- this was sort of in the early days-- one day
17 coming home from school a bunch of young boys, maybe 14,
18 surrounded me. And they were the Hitler youth group. They
19 had special uniforms on. And they started yelling at me and
20 spitting on me. And there I was in the center of this circle
21 and frightened to death and unable to get away. But they did
22 not harm me any other way. The emotional trauma, and the
23 spitting was not very wonderful. It was terrible. But
24 physically, otherwise I did not get in any trouble.

25 Another thing that happened, and I do not exactly

1 know how soon afterward, but one night late at night there
2 was a very loud knock on our door, and the SS men were at the
3 door. And they told us to gather our things together, we
4 would have to leave the apartment. And so I was awakened and
5 dressed. And it was at night, maybe 12 o'clock. I'm not sure
6 about the time. And we were told to go to another family that
7 lived a few blocks from where we did, another Jewish family
8 who also had been awakened and told that another family was
9 coming to live with them. Of course, we did not know each
10 other, and they did not want us there. And, I do not know, I
11 cannot remember how long we stayed there. But eventually we
12 were able to go back to our apartment. It was almost a year
13 after the onslaught that my father was taken prisoner. A part
14 of a round-up of many men. He was not singled out. He was not
15 politically active. He was not rich. We had no money
16 whatsoever. So he was not singled out. But he was taken
17 prisoner as a part of a group. And I remember visiting him in
18 the prison. I think he might have been there for two months.
19 I'm not sure about the dates. But it was something like that.
20 He was okay in the jail. He was not mistreated. Because of
21 his secretarial skills and business skills he was given a job
22 to perform. And so he did not particularly suffer except to
23 be away from the family at that time. And afterward they
24 released these men with the dictum that they must leave
25 Vienna. Now, he had no place to go. Neither did most of the

1 other men. And Britain agreed to take these men to Britain.
2 And so in August of 1939 my father went to England. It was
3 his plan, and, I guess, our plan, that once he was in England
4 he would be able to find a foster home for me and that my
5 mother would then be able to come and work in a family,
6 something like that. But that did not happen for many
7 reasons. Because all the men were trying to do the same
8 thing. But, more than that, Britain declared war on Germany
9 almost a month later, so that ended our communication.

10 Meanwhile, my mother and I had to move from our
11 apartment. We went to live with another woman. And we shared
12 a room. I don't think my mother was doing anymore sewing at
13 that time. I do not know how we lived and on what we lived.
14 But I, again, still don't remember any time of being hungry.
15 I think I stopped going to school at that time, although I'm
16 not really sure about that. Maybe I went to a different
17 school. I just don't have any memory of it. And it was after
18 this time that my mother began to do something about trying
19 to get me out of the country. And she had a relative in San
20 Francisco. This relative had been contacted before to give us
21 a visa. But she was a poor person, and so she did not have
22 enough strength to give us, the family, a visa. So now my
23 mother wrote and asked if she would be willing just to take
24 me, and she agreed to do that.

25 And then ten children were sent to the United

1 States, and I was one of the ten children. I have no idea how
2 I was chosen to go. But I was the youngest. And the ten of us
3 went together. There was a woman who sort of took care of us
4 as we left the country. As I remember it, all of us had some
5 place to go when we came to the United States. And so in
6 March, March 20 of 1940, I left Vienna to come to the United
7 States. The journey took about ten days. We went through
8 Italy, very crowded trains. Went on a ship. I was seasick
9 the whole time. I arrived in New York City. And a Jewish
10 welfare committee was there to welcome us. And they put us up
11 in a hotel. And we stayed in New York for a couple of days.
12 And then all of us went our separate ways. So they put me on
13 a train by myself to go to San Francisco. And it took five
14 days to go cross country. I did not speak any English. But I
15 somehow felt that somebody was taking care of me. Somebody
16 was taking care of me, whether it was the conductor on the
17 train or somebody else. But there was nobody sitting next to
18 me or actually guiding me. So it was all very exciting,
19 actually. Very interesting. And comfortable. And not afraid
20 anymore. No soldiers on the trains. Lots of food, good food.
21 A place to sleep on the train. It was a very very pleasant
22 experience. And then I arrived in San Francisco on April 1,
23 1940. And I lived with my aunt. As I say, she was not a close
24 relative. In fact, I'm not sure how she was related. I think
25 she may have been my mother's aunt's husband. So, not really

1 related at all. Aunt Laura had two children. They a daughter
2 and a son. And she had a millinery store in the mission. And
3 I lived there with them. And they were very nice to me,
4 especially the daughter. She was very very nice to me. And I
5 started school right away. Still did not know any English.
6 And quickly became assimilated. But after six months time one
7 day a social worker came and said, "Pack your things. You are
8 leaving. You are going to go to a foster home." And I to
9 this day don't really know what, why that had happened, why
10 that happened. But I have some theories about it. But,
11 anyway, I left her home. And for the next six years I was in
12 and out of foster homes and an orphanage in San Francisco
13 called Home with Territz. I still heard from my mother. But
14 shortly after I left she was sent to Germany to Nordhausen.
15 She wrote to my aunt. And I still have her letters. She said
16 she was working in a tobacco factory, but I'm not sure that
17 was really what she was doing. But that is what it said in
18 the letter, so I'm taking it very literally. In 1942, in
19 January of 1942 I received a letter from her asking for money
20 for passage on a ship to go to Cuba. And, of course, I passed
21 this letter on to my foster parents, but, you know, nothing
22 was done. Nothing could be done, I think. And that was the
23 very last time that I heard from my mother. Unfortunately, my
24 father-- I will come back to his story in a minute. But my
25 father and I never talked about my mother afterward. And so

1 if he knew anything else, I do not know it because we never
2 talked about it. But I have recently found out that she died
3 in Minsk. And how she got to Minsk I do not know. But in the
4 letter before she asked for this money to go to Cuba she also
5 mentioned that she would be going to Poland. And so that is
6 all I know about what happened to my mother.

7 My father had another story, or really a horrible
8 story. When he went to England he went to Kichener camp which
9 was in Kent in the south of England, an old army camp from
10 World War One. And many of these men were together, perhaps
11 two thousand of them. I'm not too sure about the number, but
12 it was a very large number. And I do not know how they spent
13 their time. There was a magazine that I found in his things
14 that in British had printed about how good they were being to
15 the refugees. So it showed them working in the fields and
16 doing other things. But, let's see, after England declared
17 war on Germany there was a big round-up of Jewish men from
18 the east and south of England. And it wasn't just the ones
19 who were already new refugees, but it was all Jewish men,
20 even some who had come there 20 years after, that were young
21 children and had never known any other country. And they were
22 classified according to some kind of a system, as enemy
23 alien, or friendly alien, or okay. And they were rounded up
24 and sent to a camp. Now they were called prisoners of war and
25 they were in barbed wire floors on the Isle of Man, which is

1 a little island off the coast of northern England. And
2 sometime in the spring of that year they were told that they
3 would be leaving this camp and would be going to Canada. And
4 they asked for volunteers. I'm not sure that my father was a
5 volunteer. But, at any rate, they all had to go whether they
6 were volunteered or not. Ultimately they did go. They went on
7 a ship called the Dunera. D-U-N-E-R-A. And this has become a
8 very famous war criminals case, so I have read about this.
9 And my information comes from this. On this ship there were
10 two thousand men. They left from Liverpool. Actually have to
11 go back a little bit. A week before, or two weeks before,
12 another ship had been sent to Canada, and on that ship were
13 actual Nazis and Italian prisoners and some other refugees on
14 the same ship. And the ship was torpedoed and half the people
15 drowned. But those that survived were put on this other ship,
16 the Dunera. So that included many of the Nazis and Italian
17 prisoners. When the Jewish refugees got on the ship the
18 captain erroneously assumed that they were all soldier
19 enemies and they were treated as such. And in the two months
20 on the ship going from England to Australia they were
21 brutalized, absolutely everything was taken away from them.
22 They were treated very very badly on the ship. And when they
23 got to Australia they were sent way out into the country,
24 again into an old abandoned army camp. And though the
25 refugees complained to the officers about what the soldiers

1 and sailors were doing to them, the captain paid no
2 attention, said this was the way it was to be done and they
3 had the right to do that.

4 Now, Australia really did not want these Jewish
5 refugees either. And so they did not release them from this
6 infirmary camp, and they were considered POW. And that is
7 where they stayed until 1943.

8 I was in communication with my father. He was able
9 to write to me. He knew I was in San Francisco. So we had a
10 communication. And in 1943 he was released from this camp to
11 be able to work, because there was such a big man shortage,
12 manpower shortage in Australia, and they needed the workers.
13 And also in the meantime this case of the ship and the bad
14 treatment of the prisoners had come up in Parliament. And
15 the British government apologized to all the men and offered
16 them passage back to England. Nobody wanted to go, or few
17 wanted to go back to England because there were battles in
18 the ocean and it was not very safe to go. Some wanted to go
19 to Israel, and some of them were allowed to go. And, of
20 course, my father, he only wanted to come to America because
21 I was here. And, although some other friend had made a visa
22 for him, the American government would not take him because
23 he was a POW. So it was a little bit like a Catch 22 where
24 you could not win because of the bureaucracy. In 1946 he came
25 to the United States. And so we were united at that time.

1 And that is my story, essentially.

2 Q WHAT WERE THE NAMES OF YOUR PARENTS, YOUR
3 FATHER'S, MOTHER'S, AND THE NAMES OF YOUR PARENTS AND
4 GRANDMOTHER?

5 A Okay. Okay. My father is Samuel Finkel.
6 And he was born in Leipzig. His mother came from Tatra, his
7 father came from Landshut. And he grew up in Landshut.
8 Although this brother, Max, well, I do not know if he grew up
9 in Leipzig, but he worked in Leipzig. So there was a close
10 communication between Germany or Leipzig and the two parts of
11 his family. My father had a brother and a sister. The sister
12 did not survive the war. The brother, Max, went from Germany
13 to Spain, from Spain to Algiers or Morocco. I can't remember
14 which one. But somewhere in the North Africa. And from there
15 he immigrated to Canada. And he continued to live in Canada
16 the rest of his life. My grandfather, I do not know his name.
17 And I do not know my mother's name. I have very little
18 memory of them. I met them, but I really don't know anything
19 more about them. My mother came from Streij. I'm not sure if
20 she was born there or not. Her name was Laura Herman before
21 she was married. She had two brothers. And they lived in
22 Streij. And her mother, who was a widow, she lived in Streij.
23 Streij is spelled S-T-R-E-I-J. But her mother's family
24 came from a farming community called Lofoten and Galitia in
25 the Carpathian Mountains. I don't know exactly where it is. I

1 hope to go there this year to see. But I do not know exactly
2 where it is. On this farm compound, my great grandfather and
3 great grandmother, they had six children. And at least four
4 of them lived on the farm. And very often when I was sent to
5 them in the summers I remember some of the other relatives at
6 the farm. Some of them did not survive the war. But some of
7 them did. These would have all been aunts and uncles of my
8 mother's, not mine. So, one aunt survived. And she actually
9 came to the United States with her husband and her two
10 children. And then later on they went back to Europe, to
11 Vienna. One of the daughters, she lives in Vienna now, and
12 the son lives in New York. And they are in their '60's. Yes.
13 They are my age, in the '60's. They spent the war years in
14 Hungary, in hiding in a room in Budapest. And that is as much
15 as I know what happened to them. Another family was a brother
16 of my mother's. Well, I do not know what happened to him. But
17 two of his children, I know one of them lives in New York,
18 and one lives in Vienna. And his second wife is still alive.
19 She is 90 or some years old now, and she still lives in
20 Vienna. I think they also came out through Hungary, went to
21 Vienna, came to the United States, and then went back to
22 Vienna. I do not know about the other two. I do not know what
23 happened to them. I do not know their names. Well, I do know
24 some names. The one had two children about my age, their
25 family name was Schliffer. And Eva and Arthur were the

1 children. And they are still alive. And the other family, I
2 do not know their names. Yes, I do. It was Cerney.
3 C-E-R-N-E-Y, something like that. And the son is in New York,
4 and the daughter, Susie, is in Vienna. And her married name I
5 do not know.

6 Any other questions about that?

7 Q WHEN WERE YOUR PARENTS BORN?

8 A My father was born in 1901 and my mother
9 was born in 1904. My father lived to be 70 years old.

10 Any other questions?

11 Q DID YOU KNOW ABOUT HITLER'S ACTIVITIES IN
12 GERMANY?

13 A I heard some things. I don't know know
14 that they made any real impression on me. I think maybe I was
15 shielded from them. I think maybe my parents did not tell me
16 very much. And I knew something was going on. Well, I have
17 some recollections. There was a time when people had to, I
18 was told, or I heard my parents speaking that Jews had to
19 walk in the gutter. They could not walk on the sidewalk. Or
20 that all the stores had Stars of David put on them and that
21 meant that other people would either, you know, not buy there
22 or, worse yet, go in and take what they wanted to without
23 paying for it. And there was the breaking of windows. And I
24 want to say (Crystalnacht), but I'm not sure that I know that
25 from my own experience or whether I have just read about it

1 and have tried to put the pieces together. So the real
2 trouble with my memory is that nobody ever talked to me about
3 these things, either at the time or later on. So I do not
4 have much of a recollection of it.

5 Q YOU WENT TO SCHOOL. WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL
6 MEMBERS, TEACHERS, CHILDREN? DID YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS? WERE
7 THEY JEWISH FRIENDS OR WERE THEY JUST FRIENDS?

8 A I had Jewish friends. But it was not a
9 Jewish school. But I do remember some comments about my being
10 Jewish, but I do not remember any lack of attention or any
11 punishment as a result of that. I really don't remember any
12 prejudice as a result of my being Jewish when I was growing
13 up, except after Hitler came. Now, maybe I just did not want
14 to remember it. I just don't remember it.

15 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE MOMENT THAT YOU
16 WATCHED OUT THE WINDOW WHEN THE TROOPS MOVED IN?

17 A Yes.

18 Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE? DO YOU REMEMBER THE
19 COLOR OF THE UNIFORMS? WHAT?

20 A I think black. Black is what I think of.
21 Of course, it was nighttime, so it was nighttime. And, at
22 least, that is what I remember, that it was nighttime. And
23 lots of lights shining. And maybe it was in the daytime. But
24 I somehow remember it as being the nighttime, nighttime
25 thing. And I do not remember very much. It is a pity. Really

1 it is a pity. I wish it for myself that I would have a
2 better memory of these things. What it left me with was a
3 terrible fear of crowds of people, so that in my lifetime I
4 try not to be any place where there are parades or big groups
5 of people. That, I know, comes from that time.

6 We were afraid to go out in the streets. I think
7 we stayed home a lot after that happened so as not to get
8 into any kind of trouble. I said I did go to school because I
9 remember those boys. And I do not know exactly when that
10 happened. I think we went out as little as possible after
11 that. And we stayed in the house, at least I did. Or I was
12 kept inside.

13 Q When you were looking through the window
14 at the troops who was there? Were you standing with your
15 mother or was your father also home?

16 A Yes. Yes, both.

17 Q The three of you?

18 A Yes. Yes. And I think also my mother's
19 helper was there. Her name was Annie. And she did not live
20 with us, but she spent a lot of time at our place working
21 with my mother. And she may have been there that day and that
22 night.

23 Q Was she Australian, was she Jewish?

24 A She was Jewish, yes. I do not know if she
25 was Australian. But she also immigrated to the United States.

1 In fact, she and the man she married gave my father the visa
2 to come to the United States. And they must have left Vienna
3 before I did. I'm pretty sure about that. She was no longer
4 there. I can remember some of my parents' friends. They all
5 got out and came to the United States. Or many of them,
6 anyway. So it seemed like it was our family that did not have
7 any place to go. During that time there was a flurry one time
8 I can remember. My father was going to the Jewish community
9 center to learn how to get a job in another country. He
10 learned how to make jam. Now, in my older years, I think what
11 a ridiculous thing to learn how to do. But this is what he
12 was learning how to do. My father spoke English. My father
13 was educated in universities, and he was a natural linguist.
14 He spoke several languages, and he spoke English and French.
15 And I think that he spent some time during this time
16 practicing his English and refreshing what he knew about it.
17 But he was also the kind of a man that did not believe that
18 this was going to be permanent. He really could not believe
19 what was happening. And he loved Vienna so much that it was
20 just unthinkable that it was not going to revert and be the
21 same old thing that he knew before. So I think he did not try
22 very hard to stand in line, to get a quota number, to do the
23 things that many other men may have done to get their
24 families out. And maybe it was just luck. It is really hard
25 to know. But I know from his personality that he was not a

1 go-getter. And he always was an optimist. He always thought
2 everything was going to turn out for the best. And so my
3 mother, I think, was more anxious. And I think they had some
4 arguments about this. And she was frightened. And I do not
5 think he was. And, as it turned out, of course, he survived
6 and she didn't. And that is the sad part. I personally did
7 not. Well, I certainly suffered to this experience, but I
8 gained much more from it than I lost from it. I think, in
9 looking back at my life, because coming to the United States
10 and finding the opportunities that I did here, and the
11 freedom made my life very good. I have had a really good
12 life. I have been able to accomplish a lot of things in my
13 life. And I haven't spent a lot of time thinking about my
14 childhood and the terror of that period because it did not
15 leave a big imprint on my life. I wondered about whether I
16 should even come to this interview because I did not suffer
17 like so many other people did. But it is another story that
18 is a true one anyway.

19 Q TELL ME, WHAT LANGUAGE DID YOU SPEAK
20 DURING THIS PERIOD?

21 A I think I spoke German. But I must have
22 known Polish because when I went to the country in the
23 summers I spoke Polish. And the family story is that I forgot
24 all the German when I went to Poland and I forgot all the
25 Polish when I went back to Vienna. So I think my major

1 language was German. I have no recollection of Polish. I do
2 not have much recollection of German either. But that seems
3 like it was my major language.

4 Q WHAT DID YOUR MOTHER LOOK LIKE?

5 A My mother, she was a small woman. She had
6 very beautiful black wavy hair. I think I look a lot like
7 her. My hair was her color when I was younger. But I'm a
8 bigger person than she was. And she had a very pale
9 complexion. And she always worried about her freckles. And
10 she used a lot of creams in order not to have the freckles
11 show. I think she was pretty. I think she was considered
12 pretty, not only that I as a child found her pretty, but I
13 think she was considered pretty. My father was a big man,
14 five foot ten. He was stocky, big bones. And he was bald. He
15 was bald when I was born. I have a picture of him holding me,
16 and he was bald even at that time. I would not call him a
17 good-looking man. But he had a very pleasing personality
18 because of his optimism. He always saw the best in everything
19 and looked to the future and enjoyed the present. And he
20 never looked to the past. His terrible experiences in
21 Australia, for example, he never once mentioned them. So all
22 that I know about it is what I have read that has now become
23 a historical incident. Six books have been written about
24 that boat. And there is an organization of men who were on
25 that ship. The unfortunate thing about that ship was that the

1 Jewish refugees were treated as badly by the English as they
2 were by the Nazis. So that is there as part of history.

3 Q WHEN YOUR MOTHER AND YOURSELF LEARNED
4 THAT YOU WERE TO LEAVE WHAT DID YOU DO? DID YOU TALK TO EACH
5 OTHER? DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU SAID GOODBYE TO EACH OTHER?
6 HOW WAS IT?

7 A You bring up a part of my life that I
8 hardly remember at all. And I think think I must have
9 repressed it so that I cannot imagine why I wouldn't remember
10 it any other way. But I think it was, because I had been sent
11 away from my parents in my early childhood to go to the
12 relatives, that perhaps I perceived this as the same kind of
13 thing, that my mother would be coming soon. That was, of
14 course, the idea, that she would soon be able to get a visa
15 and she would be able to join me. So we did not leave like,
16 in my mind, that I would not ever see her again. Now, what
17 she had on her mind I do not really know. She did not cry,
18 and I didn't cry. So our parting was not sad, although I
19 cannot imagine that. I think it must have been terribly sad
20 for her after I left, but she never showed it to me. And I
21 don't think I felt sad, because I really expected that I
22 would see her soon. I think the saddest part for me was when
23 my father went away because I was much closer to my father
24 than I was to my mother. And so, I really don't remember a
25 tearful fairwell. I can't imagine that it was not. But I do

1 not remember it as much.

2 Q BUT DID SHE TAKE YOU TO --

3 A She took me to the train, yes. She took
4 me to the train. But I do not remember much of that either.
5 I know I went by train, but I do not remember getting on the
6 train. I remember having some baggage with me. I had some
7 clothes. I had some lunch, or some food to go, because it was
8 a long journey to Italy. I have a real block. I just don't
9 remember.

10 Q DID YOUR MOTHER MAKE DRESSES HERSELF? SHE
11 WAS A SEAMSTRESS?

12 A She made dresses. And she made some
13 dresses for me to take. And I have at least two of them. I
14 have two of these dresses. They were very very special
15 dresses. But, you know, when I think about the journey and
16 taking care of myself, and washing my clothes, or how I did
17 this, I have no memory of it. But I must have done that
18 because of before when I lived with my mother I never washed
19 my clothes. I'm sure I never washed my clothes. I'm sure she
20 did it for me, and yet, I must have done something in this
21 two week journey from Vienna to San Francisco to do something
22 with my clothes, I think. I must have done that. She must
23 have had things for me to wear, to change clothes. But when I
24 came to San Francisco and I went to Home with Territz, which
25 is a Jewish orphanage here, and there were some other new

1 children who were coming to the home that day, and we were
2 standing on a veranda. And, Mr. Bonaparte, who was the head
3 of the orphanage, he looked at me and he said, "You have to
4 get some new clothes." So I remember that was the first
5 thing. I did not even understand him because I did not speak
6 English, but I knew by how he pulled on my dress and how he
7 spoke to me that that is what was going to happen. And they
8 had a room, somebody had some clothes there, and they gave me
9 some new clothes to take to my foster home where I was with
10 my aunt.

11 My mother's letters to me are very very touching.
12 I had them translated. They don't say very much. She gives me
13 advice about how to be a good girl, how to study hard. She
14 scolds me for my bad German, poor spelling. More advice
15 about how I must be nice to my aunt, that I must be grateful
16 to her for saving my life, such things. But she said almost
17 nothing about what was happening to her. So I really don't
18 know. When I read the letters, the tone of them is desperate.
19 And I'm sure she was desperate. And I'm sure that I could not
20 handle reading them, and have sort of forgotten that whole
21 part. Also I had a lot to do to learn the language and to get
22 along and to figure out what was happening to me. And still
23 expecting that anytime she would still be coming. But always
24 next time, next time. Maybe next time I can get a ticket.
25 Maybe next time I can get a visa. Maybe next time something

1 will happen. So whatever was in my mind about that last six
2 months with my mother after my father left, I just don't
3 remember very much of it.

4 Q DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER'S SMELL, HER
5 BODY SMELL? DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

6 A No.

7 Q DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOUR HOUSE SMELLED,
8 OR THE APARTMENT?

9 A Musty. Yes, musty. It was a very, very
10 old house, and it smelled bad. I visited it in 1955. And I
11 thought, oh, it smells just the same. In fact, I think all
12 the apartment houses in Vienna smell like that. Old, old
13 buildings. Damaged. Not very good. In our apartment we had
14 bed bugs. And after the SS made us move out of our apartment,
15 and then we came back, they had fumigated the whole apartment
16 house. So finally we were not troubled with the bugs. So it
17 smelled better after that. But before that it was musty-
18 smelling. We had very little furniture. We had very little.
19 We were really very poor. But I never felt poor, and that is
20 a miracle to me because when I hear my friends talking about
21 their poor childhoods I realize that I was much poorer than
22 anybody I know, but I never felt just discriminated against
23 or felt the poverty myself. So I have never thought of myself
24 as poor, even though we were really very, very poor.

25 My mother was a very gentle person. I think this I

1 remember about her. But because she was busy doing her work
2 and my father was taking care of me, and because my father
3 and I met again, I have a much more vivid memory than I do of
4 her. And, unfortunately, we never talked about her. He did
5 not mention it. I didn't mention it. I do not know why, but
6 that is how it was.

7 One of the interesting things about my father is
8 that after Australia he became very religious. When he came
9 to San Francisco he was orthodox, and went to a temple in
10 downtown San Francisco that was the most orthodox at that
11 time. In his later years he went to this temple here. Where I
12 lived at the home at the orphanage I was confirmed, and I had
13 religious education. But I have never been a religious
14 person, and I have never followed the faith since that time.
15 And so my father and I used to argue a lot about religion.
16 And that was a surprise to me because I do not remember that
17 as being an important part of my life before -- I came to the
18 United States.

19 I do not really have a lot of memory. I keep
20 coming back to that. I welcome your questions because they
21 might trigger something.

22 Q IN VIENNA WHEN THE BOYS SURROUNDED YOU
23 AND HITTING YOU HOW DID THEY KNOW THAT YOU WERE JEWISH?

24 A I think they must have been able to tell
25 from my looks. I'm not too sure about that. But later on we

1 had to wear some identification that we were Jewish. I think
2 it was maybe a yellow arm band. And then I vaguely remember
3 this. But I do not think that was what was happening at that
4 time. Maybe they just took a chance and asked, and I didn't
5 say one way or the other. I really don't know. I really don't
6 know. So it is useless to speculate on that. Maybe I wore a
7 Star of David. I don't remember having one, but maybe I did.
8 Maybe that is how they knew.

9 Q WAS THERE ANYBODY WHO KNEW YOU AMONG THE
10 BOYS?

11 A No. They were all strangers. They were
12 all strangers, yes. Maybe I was coming from Hebrew school. I
13 was doing that at some time in my life. I do not really
14 remember what time segment it was. But it seemed to me that I
15 was not close to home. So maybe I was coming from some place
16 else, and that is how they knew. That is a good question. I
17 just don't really remember. I do not know how my teachers
18 would have known either. But I know that they knew I was
19 Jewish because I remember some comments about it.

20 You know, part of my problem with my memory is that
21 I also don't know German anymore. So what I might have
22 remembered in another language, I just don't have that
23 recall. But, even though she knew that, she was not mean to
24 me or I was not specially treated differently from the other
25 children. I was a good girl, I did my studies. I was

1 acceptable by those standards, I think.

2 Q BUT THE COMMENTS, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT
3 THEY WERE LIKE?

4 A I remember they were not derogatory. They
5 were like an identification: "Well, that Jewish girl," or
6 something like that. But I do not really remember more than
7 that. But I had such things also in the United States. So
8 there were teachers who would say-- my sewing teacher in
9 junior high school would say, "It is very strange these
10 Jewish girls don't know how to sew." And I thought that was a
11 very strange thing for her to say. And I thought, my mother
12 was a seamstress. What do you mean, I do not know how to
13 sew? But that is what came out. And I remember such comments.
14 But they were something like that, I think, in my experience
15 then as well. I do not remember it as anything more
16 traumatic.

17 Let's see, you talked about smell. My father smoked
18 a lot. So I remember we had a lot of smoke in the house.

19 Q WHAT DID HE SMOKE?

20 A He smoked cigarettes. And he rolled them
21 himself. He smoked a lot. So he was always smoking. And my
22 father also did the cooking. And my mother was busy working
23 so my father did the housework and took care of me and did
24 the cooking.

25 Q WHAT DID HE COOK?

1 A You know, I have been thinking about that
2 lately. I do not remember very much. I remember that often I
3 would be asked to go next door to a restaurant and buy some
4 bouillon or chicken soup and then maybe they had some
5 noodles, and that would be our meal. Sometimes he would cook
6 weiner schnitzel. He must have cooked tomatoes or tomato
7 sauce and spinach because those were the two things I refuse
8 to eat. And for the rest of his life he reminded me how I
9 would not eat those things. So he must have cooked those. My
10 guess is we did not have meat very often because we really
11 did not have very much money. But he considered himself to be
12 a good cook. And when we lived together in San Francisco he
13 often did the cooking. And he was a good cook.

14 When he came here he met some Jewish men from
15 Vienna and some other people from Vienna who knew other
16 people. And they had a little social group, and they would
17 do things together. So, most of his friends, I guess all of
18 his friends in the United States, were Viennese maintained
19 that. But his friends were not religious. They did not
20 participate in the religious, as far as I know, and he would
21 have arguments with them about that.

22 In the last year of my father's life I knew he was
23 dying. I sent him on a journey. He had always wanted to go to
24 Israel. And I pushed him into going at this time. And he
25 went. And then he went to Vienna. And he went to Frankfurt

1 where my mother's brother lived. And this journey of
2 remembrance was a very important thing for the end of his
3 life. And I'm really glad I pushed him to do that. When he
4 met with my mother's brother in Frankfurt he was very
5 cordially received. And I think it must have relieved him of
6 some of the guilt he might have felt about having escaped and
7 my mother not having escaped, and perhaps some guilt that you
8 know, fear that her family would be angry with him. But that
9 was never the occasion.

10 My uncle, mother's brother, I should say some other
11 things about her family which I have forgotten to mention.
12 The two brothers lived in Streij. They each had a wife and
13 two children. Or three children. I'm not too sure. I think
14 maybe two children. And this one uncle, Juno, he did a lot of
15 traveling. He was in the lumber business. And one day he
16 came home, and the whole family was dead. Just had been
17 shot. So he escaped. Ran away. Went to Hungary through the
18 mountains and joined the Resistance. And he fought. And he
19 was captured three times. And he escaped three times. And he
20 ended up, after the war he went to Israel and he married
21 another woman and he had another child. And, after Israel,
22 for many years then he came to Frankfurt to start a new
23 business. That uncle found us in San Francisco. I do not
24 really know how he found us. But he wrote to us, we to him.
25 And so I think that he never had any bad feelings toward my

1 father about what happened to my mother. But my father, as I
2 say, he was not very anxious to go back to Europe. But in the
3 last year of his life he did go. And it sort of completed the
4 cycle. And then he went to visit his brothers in Montreal,
5 and so on.

6 Another thing about my father -- this is the last
7 ten years of his life -- he went to live in Korea. He worked
8 for the army. And he lived there for nine years until he
9 became ill and he had to come back to the United States. I
10 went back to see my relatives in 1955. And I went to Vienna.
11 It was just after Russia abandoned, or left Vienna. So it was
12 free. And I saw my uncle. And, as happy as I was to see him,
13 he was not a very happy man. He was in an unhappy marriage.
14 He and his wife did not get along at all. And, of course, he
15 did not speak any English and I did not speak any German, and
16 nobody found anybody who could translate. It was a very poor
17 visit. It was very unfulfilling. Only that I saw them, and
18 that was it.

19 In 1971 I went back to Europe and I saw him again,
20 and again in 1973. And then I wanted to go back later. And
21 this time I went back to school to study German so that I
22 would be able to speak with him. And by the time I got there
23 he had died. So I never really got to go and ask him the
24 things that I wanted to know. So the mystery of my mother and
25 what happened to her is lost. Nobody knows it, as far as I

1 know. I do not know it. I want to go to Vienna this coming
2 year to look up the records at the (Kulteskamanda) and see
3 what information they have, if any. And I have put in a
4 request to the Red Cross to trace her last days. But I have
5 not heard from them either.

6 Q WHEN YOU WERE LEAVING FROM VIENNA WERE
7 YOU LEAVING WITH A GROUP OF CHILDREN OF TEN? WERE YOU ONE OF
8 TEN OR WERE YOU BY YOURSELF?

9 A No. I was one of the ten. We were ten
10 together. And I was the youngest one. Girls and boys.

11 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THEIR NAMES?

12 A No, don't remember any of them. I never
13 had any contact with them afterwards. I know I was the
14 youngest. So I was ten at the time. And I think most of them
15 were 14, 15, 16.

16 Q BUT THEN, TOGETHER AS A GROUP YOU WERE
17 ALL ON THE SHIP?

18 A Yes. Yes.

19 Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE SHIP?

20 A Yes. It was the SS Washington. Yes. We
21 left Genoa on, I think, March 21. Now, I may have said that
22 that is where I left Vienna. So I'm not too sure about the
23 dates. It took about two weeks. It was ten days on the ship.
24 And then it was two days, maybe, in Genoa before we went on
25 the ship. So, all together, maybe two weeks all together. And

1 we had very rough seas. And I was sick a lot.

2 But after that particular journey the ship was
3 turned into a troop ship.

4 Before that time it had been a passenger ship. So
5 in my eyes it was the most luxurious place in the world. It
6 had red velvet chairs and had chandeliers and marvelous food.
7 We had not had much food. Although, again, I never
8 experienced hunger. But I think maybe my mother must have
9 given me her share. And I'm not too sure about this. But
10 maybe we had potatoes or maybe we had bread. But we really
11 did not have bread. I cannot remember, so I shouldn't say
12 that. But I have the feeling that it was minimal kind of
13 food. But I never went hungry. In fact, I gained some weight
14 during this time. When I came to the United States I was not
15 skinny, but I was chubby. And I'm sure it was because I had
16 been indoors for the better part of two years. And my mother
17 must have given me things to eat in order to make me feel
18 better. So I came here a little chubby.

19 Let's see, we were talking about food on the ship.
20 It was so extraordinary to have several courses and waiters.
21 I had never had a waiter in my life. In Vienna I'm sure I
22 never went to a restaurant. And so the whole experience was
23 one that was extraordinary for me, except that I was very
24 seasick. When I was little I was always train sick, or on a
25 street car I would get sick. So, on the ship the first two

1 days was good, but after that I was sick. There was a big
2 storm in April in the Atlantic. It is not a good time. But,
3 even with that, even with being sick all the time, I had a
4 good experience on the ship. And in New York we stayed at the
5 George Washington Hotel. Everything was Washington. Our
6 hotel on 28th street, as far as I know, it still exists. I
7 saw it maybe 20, 30 years ago when I was in New York. And
8 there the surprise of the big building and elevators and
9 black people serving us, that was very new. And the
10 uniforms. And there was a swimming pool. It was paradise.
11 Everything that I could only have dreamed about. And then the
12 Jewish welfare committee took us on a tour of New York. We
13 went to the top of the Rockefeller Center. We went to the
14 Rockettes, the movie. And we saw a movie. And I had my first
15 ice cream soda. And I remember the bubbles coming up in my
16 nose and coming down. And going on the top of Rockefeller
17 Center, 89 stories, and looking down at the cars that looked
18 like toys or ants. It was incredible memory of that. But,
19 again, that was renewed memory because I went there again and
20 I remembered what it was like the time before. And so that
21 part of my life I remember much better than the time before.

22 I'm trying to think of some other things that I
23 can remember from that time. I have been thinking about it a
24 lot because I have been writing my autobiography. And this
25 is about all I can come up with. So I'm sort of searching for

1 my own story as well. I keep reading books about Vienna at
2 that time to try to remember to see if any of it comes into
3 place. And I have read such books. But, even when reading
4 them, it does not ring a memory. So, what I think is that I
5 was really sheltered from that. My parents kept me in the
6 house. And they didn't talk in front of me very much. And
7 somehow I avoided. If you can say avoided, I did not
8 experience in the way that I can really truly remember that
9 period of time very much. The rest of my family, my cousins,
10 all had a much much more difficult time. I mentioned that two
11 of them, Eva and Arthur, they fled to Hungary through the
12 mountains. They walked through the night for several nights
13 and got to Hungary. And I do not know how they managed. But
14 they were with their parents. Well, actually I think the
15 children went first and then the parents came later. And when
16 I tried to talk to them about what happened they don't want
17 to talk about it, so I'm cut off from any information.

18 And there it is. So I think that is about all I
19 have to tell you unless you have some more questions.

20 Q AFTER THE WAR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

21 A To me?

22 Q YES.

23 A Well, during the war I, you know, I lived
24 in three foster homes. I was in and out of a foster home and
25 in and out of an orphanage. I was not a good girl. I gave

1 people trouble. In the foster homes they always put me in
2 foster homes where there were children, and I was expected to
3 be the babysitter. And I did not enjoy having children,
4 brothers and sisters, since I had never had any brothers and
5 sisters. In part, I probably was lazy and did not want to do
6 the work. But, in part, I felt like I was a servant, and I
7 did not like that very much. So they often complained that I
8 wasn't grateful, that I should be more grateful that they
9 were saving my life. But I never felt that way. And then when
10 I was 17 my father came to the United States. And so I left
11 the orphanage a few months later when we could find an
12 apartment, and we moved in together. And by that time I was
13 almost graduating from high school. And I went to college,
14 and I went up to college, and I went to college, and I went
15 to college, and I have two masters degrees and almost a PhD.
16 And I have had a good life and an easy life. I got married.
17 I had two children. I got divorced. My children are 30 and
18 32 right now. I have told them my story many times. I want
19 them to know my histories, as my father did not tell his or
20 mine, and so I have always told them. And I'm writing my
21 memoirs so that they can have this history. As insignificant
22 as it is, I want them to know it. A couple years ago I lived
23 in China for a year. I was teaching English there. And that
24 was very interesting. And I teach in college now. I had a
25 pretty good career. I have published a book. I'm comfortable.

1 I do not have any money worries. Most of all, I feel that I'm
2 a self-made person because I had nothing when I came here,
3 and it was through some diligence and work that I went to
4 college and was able to do that. And I feel proud of that.

5 Q WHEN YOU CAME HERE YOU DID NOT SPEAK
6 ENGLISH. HOW ABOUT THE FIRST WEEKS OR MONTHS. HOW DID YOU
7 LIVE NOT SPEAKING ANY ENGLISH?

8 A How was it?

9 Q YES.

10 A Well, it was very difficult. I felt very
11 strange. And I was determined to learn to speak English very
12 very quickly. And my cousin -- I called her my cousin, this
13 daughter of Aunt Laura, her name was Cecille. She was
14 extremely helpful in teaching me English. And we lived across
15 the street from a library. And I went on the library with
16 her, and I got books, books that I had read in Germany, such
17 as Dr. Doolittle, and the Grimm's fairytales, and some other
18 books. And I went to school the first week. And, because I
19 did not know any English, they put me in first grade to learn
20 to read and write with the small children. But even that I
21 did not mind. I was not embarrassed by that because then the
22 other subjects -- I was ahead of the class in mathematics. I
23 was better than the other children. I was put back a half a
24 year, according to my age. And I do remember one time on the
25 playground a girl calling me a Nazi. And when I heard this I

1 was so stunned by it that I really determined I would not
2 have this German accent very long. And so I worked very hard
3 to speak English. And, of course, I could only speak English.
4 There was nobody I could speak any German with. My aunt could
5 speak Yiddish, but I did not speak Yiddish. But we could
6 sometimes make each other understood that way. Otherwise, it
7 was sign language. And I did what I was told to do or pointed
8 at. And very soon I learned English. Young children do this
9 very very quickly. By the time I was here a year and a half I
10 had no more trace of a German accent. And that was really
11 quite astonishing. All the teachers were surprised at that.
12 But it was really gone. In the first few months when I was
13 here somehow or other I was sent to a Girl Scout camp. And
14 that was an extraordinary experience for me: being out in the
15 country, and horses, and swimming, and girls playing. It was
16 an experience and really changed my life in many ways because
17 I'm very much an outdoor person. So, I was lucky. Everything
18 happened that was really very very good. It had some goodness
19 to it.

20 When I was told to leave my aunt's house I was very
21 depressed. I can remember this because I could not imagine
22 why I had to leave there. I was perfectly happy. And I really
23 never understood that until very recently when I looked up
24 the family and tried to understand what had happened. And I
25 think what really happened was that my aunt was contemplating

1 a divorce. She had agreed to have me for a few months. And
2 the few months had come and gone, and my mother wasn't here,
3 and nothing happening. She had a hard time making ends meet
4 with her two children and a business. Wasn't great. So I
5 think I was just a big burden and she wanted to be relieved
6 of that burden. But her daughter told me later that, very
7 recently when I went to look her up, that I was very
8 difficult. I was like a, she said, quote, like a Jewish
9 American princess. I wanted everything my way. But I cannot
10 believe that to be the case because I did not have the
11 experience of being a princess in my life up until that time.
12 Although, being an only child is very different from being in
13 a family with children. So I think I may have gotten more
14 attention than she cared to share, or whatever it was. But I
15 think basically it had to do with this lady getting a
16 divorce. And I was told by the social workers not to make any
17 contact with them anymore; so I didn't. And then I was
18 scolded by this woman that her mother cried all the time, why
19 didn't I come to visit. And I really didn't pay much
20 attention to that at this point because I have been the one
21 who was sent away. So if they wanted to keep in touch it was
22 up to them to do that. But we really never kept in touch. In
23 the first foster home I was very happy. But then I felt this
24 burden of child care. And eventually I became so unbearable
25 that they kicked me out. And then I went to the orphanage.

1 And I liked living in the orphanage for a while. I liked
2 being with all the children. It was a lot of freedom in some
3 ways. And then I got into some arguments with the house
4 mother, and I got kicked out of the house I was living in. So
5 I was a discipline problem. And it is hard for me to think of
6 myself as being a discipline problem because I was always
7 doing this in a very surreptitious way so that it was not
8 very obvious. But I did it anyway. So then after the second
9 cottage at the home I was sent to another foster home. And
10 the same thing happened: two small children. The woman, she
11 was always playing ma jong. She was never home. I was the
12 babysitter. I don't know where her husband was, but he didn't
13 come home very much. And so I finally acted badly enough so I
14 was sent back to the home. Then I went back to the home. And
15 then they sent me to yet another foster home. I wanted a home
16 with no children. But I think the only people who wanted such
17 children were ones who had smaller children and needed a
18 babysitter. I was with that family for about six months. They
19 were very well-to-do. But something funny was going on in
20 that family too. The husband wasn't there, and there was a
21 boyfriend coming in. I'm sure he was having an affair with
22 my foster mother. I was able to recognize that. And finally
23 went back to the home again. And pretty soon my father came,
24 and so I left the home altogether. Those years were not good
25 years. But the good part of it was that I learned to become

1 extremely independent. And I'm my own person all the time,
2 and have been since that time. So I felt in control of my
3 life and that I could do with it what I needed to do. And so
4 that has given me a lot of self-confidence. That gave me the
5 confidence to work my way through school and to accomplish
6 what I did.

7 Q WHEN YOU SAW YOUR FATHER AGAIN WHAT DID
8 YOU THINK ABOUT HIM? AND DID HE SPEAK ENGLISH?

9 A Yes, he spoke English. By that time we
10 were writing in English. And that happened, actually, early
11 on. Because once he got into this internment camp in
12 Australia he had to write in English. They would not send the
13 mail out because it had to be censored, and nobody could read
14 the German. So he started writing in English, and I wrote in
15 English, and so our correspondence was always in English.

16 I'm not sure I would have recognized him. That was
17 very interesting. I had no pictures, so in my memory I
18 thought I remembered what he looked like. But when I went to
19 the ship and all these men were getting off the ship I could
20 not have spotted him. And it was very interesting that the
21 man from Home of Territz, the orphanage, who came with me to
22 the ship, he said "I think that man must be your father." And
23 it was. So it was a little bit strange. My father thought I
24 was ten years old, and I was 17. And I was not a little girl
25 anymore. It was a difficult time to be together because, as

1 much as we wanted to be together, as I had dreamed of my
2 father coming to the United States, I in my letters to him --
3 you know, this is all I spoke of, is that I could hardly wait
4 for him to come so I could be in my own home and not be in
5 foster homes and in the orphanage. But, when the time came
6 and we were living together, I realized that that was not
7 going to be so easy because he thought that I was ten years
8 old and that he could tell me what to do. And at this point
9 nobody could tell me what to do. And he was shocked that I
10 was not more reliable. So we had a lot of arguments about
11 religion. But we also had some very good times. We had a
12 fondness for each other. We liked to do many things together.
13 And I did not stay with him very long. After two years I went
14 away to school. And that was the last that I lived with him
15 for any length of time. I went home occasionally for summers
16 or something like that, but I did not continue to live with
17 him.

18 In the very last year of his life when he came back
19 from Korea he had cancer and he did live with me. And I took
20 care of him for about six months, something like that. We had
21 a good relationship in his last years.

22 Q THE FAMILY THAT GAVE YOUR FATHER THAT
23 VISA, DO YOU REMEMBER HER NAME? AND HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

24 A Okay. Their last name was Bick. And his
25 name was Arnold. B-I-C-K. And they went to Baltimore. And I

1 do not know how they got to Baltimore. But obviously he had
2 some connections there because he found a job. And I cannot
3 remember what he did. But she continued to do her
4 seamstressing. I'm not too sure about that. We corresponded
5 some. But they corresponded with my father. And they could
6 not give him a visa. But they found somebody who was willing
7 to do that for him. And I think it is one of the more awful
8 things of my father, is that he never contacted them. He
9 wrote to them once in a while. But he never made the effort
10 to see them or to somehow thank them for what they had done
11 for him. So our communication was minimal. I did go one time
12 and I visited them. So I did see them again. But not my
13 father. And I thought that that was a very bad thing, for him
14 not to continue the relationship, considering what they had
15 done for him. And, actually, I thought that was bad that my
16 father also did not get in touch with Aunt Laura, who had
17 taken me on and established a relationship. But he didn't do
18 that either. So, that was sort of typical, I think, of his
19 behavior, is that he let things go and go and go, and then it
20 was too late, and then he felt bad, and then he didn't do
21 anything anymore.

22 And I do not know what has happened to them. I have
23 lost contact with them as well. I had contact with my aunt
24 and uncle in Montreal. I visited them several times. My
25 father visited them several times. My aunt just died two

1 years ago. She was 90 years old. And they had no children.
2 So, in a sense there are only two children out of the few
3 families that carry on. I'm one. I have one cousin who is
4 about 40 years old now. He has two daughters. He is the son
5 of my mother's brother. Of the second marriage. The one
6 that got married in Israel. So they had a son.

7 Q WHAT IS THEIR NAME?

8 A Well, their real name would be Herman.
9 But he changed his name in order to get passports or
10 something. So this name is Nowakowski. And my cousin's name
11 is Hinie. And he lives in Frankfurt. And he married maybe ten
12 years ago. Maybe more now. But he has two girls. So we are
13 the only descendants of both sides of the family. On my
14 father's side I'm the only descendant. On my mother's side
15 Hinie and I are the only ones, and now his girls, and, of
16 course, my children.

17 Q THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

18 YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR FATHER HAD A GOOD
19 EDUCATION. WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION?

20 A Good point.

21 He had an education in business. And it wasn't the
22 University of Vienna, but it was institute of some kind for
23 business. And I read in some of his papers that he had a job
24 in a company when he first finished with his schooling as a
25 bookkeeper, I think. But after that he lost his job and never

1 got one again. When he worked in Australia he worked in a
2 woolen mill, I think. Just in the shipping, receiving. And
3 when he came to the United States he got a job at a Royal
4 Typewriter Company packing typewriters and sending them. And
5 he stayed in that job for quite a few years. He always said
6 he could not get another job, he was too old, he was too
7 this, he was too that. But after I got married he went to
8 school and he learned computers. In those days it was very
9 minimal, primitive computers. But, anyway, he did learn
10 computers and he got a job in the civil service and rose very
11 rapidly in the ranks and started a career in his '60's. And
12 when he went to Korea he was in charge of the whole system of
13 bookkeeping for the army there. Really high position. It was
14 incredible switch in his life at a very late age.

15 I suppose I have mentioned something that I must
16 mention. I married a nonJew; and my father did not recognize
17 this. And he didn't talk to me for two years. But eventually
18 he did come around again and we had very good relations, and
19 he liked my husband, and everything was fine. But it was in
20 that two year time when he was miserable about my marriage
21 that he went to school and then he began his new career. So
22 something good comes out of something bad always.

23 Q AND, IF I MAY RETURN TO YOUR CHILDHOOD.
24 DO YOU REMEMBER SOME FAMILY HOLIDAYS? YOUR BIRTHDAYS, OR
25 THINGS LIKE THAT? YOUR FRIENDS COMING INTO YOUR HOME?

1 A My friends almost never came to my home.
2 I used to go to my friends' house to play. And I think it may
3 have been because my mother was working, and maybe there were
4 customers. I do not know. One friend I went to visit and
5 played with all the time, her name was Litsy Minkes. And her
6 parents were both working, so there was never anybody at
7 home. And so the two of us were on our own and alone. And,
8 another friend, her mother was at home. So I often went
9 there. And we would read or knit and play ches. I remember
10 those kind of things. For my birthday I think my father would
11 take me out for an ice cream cone, which was a very big
12 luxury in those days. Or maybe a special pastry. But I do
13 not remember much else. I do not remember any toys either. I
14 do not remember any dolls. I cannot imagine that they did not
15 give me a doll. But I do not remember any dolls, you know. I
16 think somewhere they would have found the money to give me a
17 doll. But I do not remember any dolls.

18 Q YOU DIDN'T HAVE MANY BOOKS?

19 A I do not remember any books. But I think
20 I must have read a lot because I was a good reader. And I
21 remember when I came to the United States that I had read
22 these Dr. Doolittle books, all of them. And then I got them
23 in English. And that helped me to read through them. So I
24 think that was an important part of my life. But I do not
25 think we owned any books, so I do not know what I read. From

1 the school maybe. I do not really remember.

2 My father was very patient about teaching me. I
3 know he taught me how to play chess, and I know I knew how to
4 play. Then I forgot how to play. And one day in my 20's or
5 '30's my husband and I were some place, and they had a chess
6 set, and we started playing. And it was like I knew how to
7 play, but I had not played for 20 years. So that is somewhere
8 in my childhood, but I do not remember it.

9 Q AND YOU REMEMBER MOST OF YOUR FRIENDS OR
10 FRIENDS OF YOUR PARENTS WERE JEWISH?

11 A I think all of my friends were Jewish.
12 And my parents' friends were Jewish. I don't think there was
13 anybody else. The one girl that was my best friend, she
14 escaped to France. But I never knew whether my mother wrote
15 it, or how I know this, but I just remember it.

16 Q YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR MOTHER'S LETTERS WITH
17 YOU, DO YOU?

18 A Here?

19 Q YES.

20 A No, today I do not. I do have them. I
21 want to give them to some archive. My cousin asked me to
22 bring them to Vienna, and I thought I would do this. I have
23 had many of them translated, but not all of them. And I want
24 all of them translated before I give them up. I can't read
25 them. The German, and very very thin paper, and it is written

1 on both sides of the paper, and I cannot read it.

2 Would those letters be of interest to you?

3 Q YES. DO YOU HAVE A COPY SO WE COULD APPLY
4 TO YOUR FILM?

5 A Okay. Okay. Okay. I will try to get that
6 for you. It may take a while to do that, to get copies of it.

7 Q NO RUSH.

8 AND CAN YOU SPELL YOUR NAME AGAIN? BOTH YOUR
9 MAIDEN NAME--

10 A My maiden name actually was Felicitas,
11 F-E-L-I-C-I-T-A-S, Finkel. And the Felicitas was changed to
12 Phyllis when I came to the United States. And my maiden name
13 was F-I-N-K-E-L. My present name is Mattson, M-A-T-T-S-O-N.

14 Q THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH.

15 AND INTERVIEWERS TODAY WERE RITA GOPSTEIN AND
16 MARIA OGJINSKAYA.

17 THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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