

Interview with TRUDE PLACK

Holocaust Oral History Project

December 12, 1990, San Francisco, California

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[Begin Tape 1]

MS. BACKOVER: Today's Wednesday, December 12th, 1990. I'm Judith Backover of the Holocaust Oral History Project. I'm talking today to Trude Plack. We're at the Holocaust Center in San Francisco.

Q. GOOD MORNING, TRUDE.

A. Good morning.

Q. I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU TO BEGIN BY TELLING US WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN.

A. I was born in Frankfurt on the Main on December 7th, 1924. I was my parents' first child. My maiden name was Rosenthal. My father's name was Albert; my mother's Melanie. I have a brother who is two years younger than I.

My first recollection of things changing or things to come, strangely enough, is of my parents going to the poll to vote and that there was some discussion and that they were disappointed that the election turned out as it did, but there wasn't too much else that -- they seemed to think that things would turn around, would be all right after all; and of course, that was the rise of Hitler to power in

1933, I believe it was.

After that, I remember that we had to move from our very nice, comfortable apartment house to a definitely inferior place, and I think the reason for it was -- it was never discussed, my parents didn't tell us why these things happened; but my father lost his business, as many people did at that time, and I'm not sure just how that came about, I really don't know. He had a mattress manufacturing business and had, I thought, always been fairly successful.

And after that, he decided he would be a representative of furniture, wholesale furniture manufacturers, and traveled a great deal. Of course, by today's standards the travels weren't very far, but at that time I know he used to be gone from Monday, when he took the train, until perhaps Thursday night or even -- Thursday night I believe he was always home.

I was brought up in a conservative home, fairly observant, and have some very happy memories about that. We shared holidays with a brother of my father's and his family who lived in Frankfurt also.

Both my parents came from very large families. My father was the youngest of 12; my mother was the youngest of nine. Not all the children lived. My father's -- I'm really not sure, I think there was one child who didn't live at a very young age. My mother had two siblings who didn't live. My father

subsequently lost two brothers in World War I. He also fought in that war. My mother also lost a brother directly after the war in 1918; he came home with influenza, which was then very prevalent, and died very shortly thereafter, and it left a lasting mark on my mother, I'm quite sure. She was very close to this brother, and this was the first time that she had had a nervous breakdown; I think at the time she was in her 20s. It's not the last time; she had many of those.

The interim years sort of -- I don't remember too much. We then moved to a better place and lived there until I left in 1939.

In, I guess it must have been '37, late '37, my mother asked me if I would be interested in leaving on a children's transport to the United States, and I remember no lead into this. I remember standing in the hall and that she told me -- she asked me that, and I said no, I wouldn't leave. And my brother, who was very adventuresome, younger than I, said he would go. And sure enough, in February of '38, he was put on a train and left for the United States on the kinder transport.

Although I remember nothing about my own leaving, I remember his distinctly. I remember that my father cried very hard, and I don't think I'd seen my father cry more than once before when his father died. And my mother could never cry, which was one of her

problems, I'm sure. And we left the station, and it seemed like there had been a death in the family. All the sudden my ten-year-old brother was no longer there; it was just dreadful.

I remember my mother not cleaning the bathroom mirror. I don't know if you want to hear this because it seems so trivial, but she was very fastidious, she was very, very clean, and she would have normally cleaned the mirror very quickly; but my brother had taken his hand and splashed it, as children will, and she would not remove those splashes for quite a long time, I don't remember how long, but maybe it was only three or four days, I don't remember; but I remember that she didn't touch that mirror.

And he went directly from Frankfurt to -- I have no idea where he left from, to New York, where my father had family, sisters who had left Germany a year before, or even within the same year, I'm not sure anymore; and he stayed there for a few days. Then he was put on a train to San Francisco.

He arrived in San Francisco, he was placed with a family who did not treat him well at all. He actually had his 11th birthday on that train between New York and San Francisco, so he was a child.

And within probably three months, I don't remember that time frame too well either, through Jewish Family Service, or its equivalent, I guess it was HIAS at the time, took him away from that family

and put him into -- what was the orphanage here? It's slipped my mind now. [Homoteris], and he was in Homoteris for a few months until another family was found.

Another family was found, and he did live with that family until my parents arrived here. It was reasonably happy, I think. He was bar mitzvahed when my parents were still in Germany, so there was absolutely no one of the family here, but it was at Beth-Sholom here in the city. This is one of my earliest memories of that period.

Of course that was the year that Kristallnacht happened in November, and I remember going to school, as I did every morning. I went to the Jewish school because the non-Jewish schools or the public schools were no longer available to Jewish children; happened to be a very good school, [Philanthropine], I'm sure you've heard of it before.

That particular morning was a Thursday morning. I remember being in the class and somebody coming in and mentioning that one of the synagogues in Frankfurt was burning, and those of us who were in the classroom already were upset about that, but we really didn't give it any thought. I mean, fires do happen and one didn't think about that, especially not at 13.

And then another person came in and mentioned that another synagogue was burning, and at that point I was being very smart-alecky, and I said why don't

you see if they're all burning; you know, I was being very facetious. Well, within a very short period of time, we knew that they were all indeed burning.

I remember one of the teachers coming in -- the teacher being there, and that the principal coming in and saying we're dismissing the school, you are to go home immediately, you are not to go to anyone's house, you are to go to your own home as quickly as possible, and I remember feeling that something very serious had happened.

And I came home, and the son of a friend of my father's walked home with me. And for some reason, that whole episode is somewhat dim, I can't remember, but for some reason or other, my father was hiding, because by that time people were being picked up off the streets; and this boy's parents' home had an attic, I don't know, but he did not come home.

And then the next day my mother sent word, again through this boy, that there was no sense in my father staying away, that the SS had come and looked for my father. And he did come home that Friday afternoon, and I remember sitting down, Sabbath dinner, I remember the candles burning, my mother always made her own challah, as I do to this day also, and we had had our soup, and there was a knock on the door. And I went to the door, and there were these two SS men who came in, and my father stood up. Having been a military man, he stood up very straight, and he said gentlemen,

you are looking for me; and they said yes.

And they allowed my mother to pack my father a small bag. And I remember she put in a small salami that -- whatever, and challah; and for many, many years the thought that my father had had that one plate of hot soup made me feel good; I felt that would sustain him. Don't ask me why one plate of soup would do that, but at that time I felt comforted by that fact.

Of course they took him away, and he went to Buchenwald that night, I guess. That night I went into my father's bed, and my mother said that she thought we should go to the Main and jump in. She was not saying that idly; she really meant it. And I said no, we can't do that. If father comes home, he's not going to find us. My brother Harry was in the United States. I just -- well, talked her out of it, and the next three weeks are sort of a blur. I'm not sure that we went to school during that time. I don't remember, I just don't remember.

My father did come home. The reason that he was released was that he supposedly, quote, had served honorably in the German army in World War I, you've heard that before too; and I mean, the insidiousness of the way Hitler went about making people feel that perhaps something was in that other person's background that we didn't know about, I mean one became suspicious of everyone. Maybe this person did

something dishonorably, maybe that's why he was taken away. It was a terrible time, a terrible way to make people knuckle under.

My father came home, and one of my uncles came either with him or within a few hours, and I remember distinctly my mother taking them both in the bathroom and that I wanted to come in, and my mother yelled at me that I was not to come in; very out of character for my mother, she didn't do that. What she was actually doing was delousing them. They both had their hair of course totally shorn.

And my father came home on December 1st in '38. And within a week or two, I guess the kinder transport thing took off with a vengeance. People were really opening their homes, and this whole thing went very quickly.

I remember that I had to have a passport picture taken and that these pictures were sent to England, and that within three weeks my mother asked me would I now go to England, and because my father was home with her again and I realized how desperate she was to have me leave, I agreed to it.

And in March of '39, I was put on a train to England, but I must mention one other thing. We were allowed to take -- it seems to me it was 200 gram of silver, that's what the Nazis allowed each person to take out of the country. I remember she picked up a few tiny little things out of her china closet to give

me that had meaning to her, and that of course was checked and found to be okay.

So we put it in the suitcase, and I remember being in this -- it must have been at the railway station in this great big hall, everybody had their suitcases -- all the children had their suitcases opened, and parents were standing around. And when the silver that I had that was okay was put in and the man had turned his back, my father took out two candlesticks from under his coat, which he had given my mother when they became engaged. To this day, of course I treasure the candlesticks. I have, with my mother's instructions, given them to my younger daughter, who knows the story about it and who appreciates them. My father took a terrible risk, and I'm not sure it was worth it; but to him obviously it was, and it's amazing how a material object can mean so much to you; it does, it really...

Anyway, I went to England. I dimly remember going through Rotterdam on the train. I just found out when I went to this meeting in New York of the kinder transport people that I must have arrived in Harwich in England and gone by train to London.

Again I remember being in a huge, huge hall in London with a lot of other children who had a string and a name tag on, and that my guardian and her son-in-law, who happened to be a German Jew who had come over to England many years before then, met me

(and they took me to what was really a lovely home, very comfortable home, and very kind to me; until later in the evening, when my guardian's son came, he lived right next door -- or two houses down the street, and he said it's all right to speak German now, my guardian spoke Yiddish, he didn't speak German, as of tomorrow morning, there will be no more German; and I hated the man with a passion.

Turned out that I learned to love him dearly in subsequent months and years, but at that moment I was 14, I was very scared, I didn't speak English, I'd had four years of French but only about a year of English, school English, and one doesn't learn all that much in a year. But anyway, that was that.

(So the next morning I came downstairs and undoubtedly had breakfast. I wanted to ask my guardian what I could do to help her; I'm mentioning all these things because I'm sure it formed my life in a lot of ways, and she said I could dust. She lived alone, she was separated from her husband, and I thought she was an old lady at the time, I think she was 53, which I've since learned is not that old, it's only in the eyes of the beholder; at 14 I thought she was old.

(Anyway, I didn't know what the word "dust" meant, small word, four letter word, didn't know; and I all of a sudden remembered my mother had given me a very thick [Longenshide] dictionary, and a very small one,

also very complete, for the purse, so I would be able to look up what I needed to know.

And I ran upstairs. I see myself running up those stairs, bringing it down and handing it to her thinking she would look up the word dust and I would know what she wanted. She said oh, no, we're not going to use that. I couldn't understand why we couldn't use it. I'm definitely a visual learner, and any time I have seen something in print, I will remember it and I will remember how to spell it. So this would have helped me a great deal. She wouldn't do it. So she showed me, she took a duster and she showed me, and I did that.

She treated me very much as a member of the family, I must say. I always had enough to eat, I was always warm, I always had clothes, as needed. She treated me as a companion. In retrospect, I think that's what it really would have -- what I represented to her, which was fine.

Her son and daughter-in-law lived, as I said, two doors down. Daughter-in-law was an American who'd gotten her teacher's certification in the United States, came to England on a trip and met her English husband. They were Jewish, the whole family was Jewish, and quite nonobservant, actually; but nonetheless they were Jewish.

The daughter-in-law had two children, was pregnant with a third, and I spent a great deal of

time at her house. I helped her with the children; I enjoyed doing that. And she corrected me from morning to night; I mean without letup. She repeated -- it was wonderful. It was a wonderful experience. I learned to speak English, I learned to speak English quite well, I think. Any time I didn't know how to spell it, she would write it out for me, because she realized that that's how I would learn. And I'm extremely grateful to her.

I'm in touch with her now. She lives in the United States. She and her husband moved, I think in the '60s. Her husband has since died, but I did see him in New York some years ago. And as I said, I really learned to love him after that first night when I absolutely hated him. I was so upset because -- I never did speak German again when I was in England, never, with anyone. So that was my experience in England.

She did send me to school for a brief period. Actually, I suppose from March, when I arrived, I think I started within a week or two, that was a very difficult experience. I was perfectly happy to go to school, but there was one teacher in particular, whom I remembered very negatively, of course, who asked me -- this was geography class -- geography or history, I guess, history class, asked me to name a European democracy, not a monarchy; and what he wanted me to say is Germany. And by the time I translated it

he had lost patience and he had gone on to somebody else; never called on me again and flunked me. That was the end of that.

Well, it so happened that my school career came to an end in the summertime when school was out because in September, when Hitler marched on Poland on September 3rd, the whole family evacuated. They evacuated to a very strange place, Kent. This was right on the coast, which was not the best possible place to be evacuated; but they rented a house and it was right at the beach and it was sort of fun.

Nothing happened that first year of the war, and everybody got tired of that. When war broke out, everyone ran around like chickens with their heads cut off, you know, tapes on all the windows and bathtubs that were filled with water just in case of an emergency. It taught me one thing, you have to be sensible about what you do in an emergency and use common sense, don't just do things at the spur of the moment without thinking about it.

We came back to London I think probably the end of the year, end of 1939, and of course there was nothing happening until 1940, when Hitler started to bomb England. And the family did build an air raid shelter in the backyard of the son's home. And when the bombs started to fall, we were in that shelter, there were eight of us; Bill's family, plus a live-in maid, my guardian and I. So there were eight of us

every night.

I don't have any really negative feelings about it consciously, but I have learned not too many years ago that the reason that I have to have space around me undoubtedly dates back to that period when there was very little space. The shelter was perhaps, I don't know, eight-by-six, eight-by-eight, perhaps, with bunk beds, very close quarters.

And I will say that we laughed, we told stories, I remember knitting a lot. We went there when it got dark at night and stayed until morning, and this was for a good nine months. I know the time frame because I happened to have a diary that I kept, and it was a full nine months, every single night. And to this day, which my husband can bear out, if I have too many things in front of me on the table when I'm eating breakfast or whatever, I need to move them, I feel crowded. I can't stand to have someone very, very close. Some people feel they have to inch toward you more and more; I find that very distressing, so I suppose that is a minor negative result from that period.

I did go to night school and I learned typing, and I think that was in 1941; but when the bombing intensified, my guardian was uneasy about my doing that. I did go to work during the day. I did finally get a job. I was 15 years old then. So my formal schooling ended at that point.

I'm fortunate that the school I did attend in Germany was a very good one, and I regret not having had some of the privileges that my children have had in being able to go on to college. And I probably could have, had I really set my mind to it, but I didn't. When I came here, I went to work also. That was that.

I was in England until late 1943, November 17th, 1943, I left, but that wasn't so easy either. Well, I'm sort of confused here. I'm not confused, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Of course, my parents were to come and pick me up in England, that was the original premise, and they thought it would be a few months, possibly a few weeks. They had a visa to come to the United States, and they were set to actually leave on May 10th, 1940 via Holland; come to England, pick me up, and go on to the states.

Well, that was not meant to be because Hitler marched on Holland on May 10th, the very day that they were to leave. And for a very long time I didn't know if they had made it out, whether they were caught in Holland, whether they were in Germany; I didn't hear from them at all.

My brother managed to get a letter to me, they finally did write. This was before the United States got into the war, and so he was able to write; but don't forget, he was a very young child and there

wasn't all that much communication, and the people who were his guardians probably made him write once in a while, but there wasn't the communication we probably could have had had they been more alert to this particular problem.

I think in October of that year, on Yom Kippur, I received a telegram that my parents had arrived in Seattle, but it wasn't until that first letter came that I found out my parents actually took one of the last boats to Russia -- by train to Russia, from Russia by boat to Japan, and from Japan to the United States. So they were extremely fortunate in being able to get out.

They had had some horrible experiences. My father was not ever interned again, fortunately, but they certainly didn't have enough to eat. They were living in one very small room. My father was conscripted to work in a cemetery, and unfortunately I don't know too much about that. My mother was not willing to talk too much about it; my father never did, probably in order to save me the heartache of hearing about it.

Anyway, they came to Seattle; and because they had a child living in San Francisco, the Jewish agency, I think it was still HIAS at that time, put them on a train to San Francisco immediately. And there I guess the HIAS representative met them, and they rented a room from a family here in the city and

immediately took custody of my brother again. They weren't really ready, either financially or in any way. My brother was at that time 11, so this was in 1940, my brother had just been bar mitzvahed that year, so they had just missed that; they came in October, he was bar mitzvahed in February, so it was very difficult. He was 13, he considered himself an American, didn't want to speak German, couldn't speak German, they didn't know what to do with this teenager who was really a stranger; it was difficult, but they worked it out.

But my mother immediately went to work as a domestic and was the breadwinner. My father found a job -- don't forget, this was the end of the depression in the United States too, so he found a job at an upholstery place on Geary at five dollars a week sorting nails, and he was so upset -- it wasn't that he wasn't willing to work, but it was such a menial job and he was nervous about the years past, that my mother used to say he'd lie in her arms and cry at night, and she made him quit after about three weeks, she just couldn't see his doing that.

Subsequently he did get a job, and that was much better, it was twenty-five dollars a week, it was as a general cleanup, warehouseman -- then he became a warehouseman, The Dorman Office Furniture Company, which was then owned by a man by the name of Moore Dorman. And subsequently many years later my father

and my husband bought the firm; my husband still owns the firm, so that in itself was a success story.

My father was hesitant to get on the bus because the bus driver -- he didn't speak English. My mother spoke English better than he and was not afraid. My mother really had a better education than my father did. She went to high school, which of course was optional in Germany, and paid for by the family, so my father went to what was called the Fach Schule, which meant he finished at 14, and he went into an apprenticeship, he learned textiles quite well. He was an excellent businessman, he certainly managed to hold his own very well, but he did not have the privilege of learning languages, which my mother did. My mother learned Latin and French, spoke French fluently, and English, and so that came to her in very good stead.

My father was afraid to get on the bus to go downtown, didn't know where he had to get off; he didn't really have the extra five cents to take the streetcar down. And the bus driver wore a uniform; big, big factor.

And so when he finally did get this job, I think they were here about three months at Moore Dorman, it had taken a tremendous effort and walk from -- all the way from 26th and Geary, my parents found an apartment at 26th and Geary, walked all the way downtown to 4th and Mission, to apply for this job, and did get it.

My father learned to speak English quite well, considering his age at the time; he learned extremely well, and he made himself understood very well with his customers. He became sales manager at Moore Dorman & Company some years later. And for many years after he died, he died in '61, June '61, people would come in, customers would come in and say where's that man -- Albert, the German salesman you had, asking for him. And he really made a lot of friends despite his not so great English.

He loved life in the United States. My parents were quite comfortable, never had a lot of money, but they made a lot of friends, and my mother made friends with just about all the people for whom she cleaned house on a very social basis after she retired from that job.

My mother was an unusual woman and has given us a great deal, not materially, but in a lot of other ways. She died ten years ago and I still miss her. I was almost relieved, because she was so sick when she died, for her because this was not the kind of life she would have wanted to live, but not a day goes by that I don't think about her or my father.

[Brief interruption.]

Something I just thought about. While I was still living in Germany, I mentioned that my father had a brother and family there. His brother had a butcher shop, and my aunt used to help in the shop,

and one day my aunt was arrested. The reason that she was arrested is that she employed a non-Jewish maid. Having a maid in Europe was not anything extraordinary, it's not like it is here, just about everybody has a maid or girls from the country come to get experience and living in the city and that sort of thing. Anyway, my aunt had this non-Jewish maid; and because her husband was living in the house, she had to go to jail.

My mother is the one who took her to jail, and I remember my mother coming home and being totally, totally wiped out by that experience. And it was just so dreadful, but mother had such fortitude, and I can't think of anybody else who would have done it and been able to put everything in its proper perspective. I don't know if I'm saying this right, she was just -- it was just so terrible, and I don't remember how long my aunt was in jail. Of course, needless to say she immediately -- the girl left, and there was no rhyme or reason why she should be punished in such a ridiculous way. I think she was there for several months. My mother was the one who picked her up again too.

My aunt subsequently went to New York and then to Israel. She had a son in New York and a daughter in Israel, and she went to Israel and died there. But oh, that was such an awful experience, terrible experience. I remember how devastated we all felt by

that, and it was the sort of thing that unbalanced everyone; you know, these things that you heard and you weren't quite sure about and nobody ever came right out and said this is what is happening. I guess nobody either wanted to know or actually didn't know; I think we just didn't know what was going on, but this was one of those dreadful experiences I remember quite vividly to this day.

In fact, I just saw my cousin, the son of this woman, this aunt, and he said my mother had written a very emotional letter to him about this; and I was thinking last night that perhaps if he still has the letter I could get that for you, that this might be something worthwhile, because my mother wrote quite well. I'm not sure that it's still in existence; it may not be. That was one of those things.

This uncle was also in Buchenwald. Two of my -- my mother's brother, one brother, was the one who was released when my father was and the one who was being deloused when I walked into the bathroom, was released also because he had served the Fatherland and later gave his life in Auschwitz; anyway, with his wife and his two children. So, so much for serving for your Fatherland.

Two of my father's brothers died, with some family; where I don't know, but certainly in a concentration camp.

I was telling you that I came here in 1943, late

1943. Before that was possible, my mother had to go to Washington and appear before a senate subcommittee to get permission for me to leave England -- not to leave England, for me to enter the United States, because technically I was an enemy alien. I was no longer a German citizen, but I was also not a British subject. And it was war, there was a serious war going on, and a lot of people asked my mother then and many years later how did she have the courage to have me come over at that time, because there were ships being sunk on the Atlantic, and she said she felt that the bombs were falling in England, that I was certainly in a great deal of danger there also, and she felt we needed to be together.

And so in November, everything was cleared and I was able to leave England and zigzagged ten days across the Atlantic to New York, so that was that. I don't have any real memories of that trip. I remember skipping rope and that I was never seasick; everybody else around me was.

But I do remember that incident that I mentioned before we started the interview where this cabin mate of mine, a young woman who was also a kinder transport person, left England under protest, her own protest; her mother wanted her to come also but she didn't want to leave because she had fallen in love with the son of the family she was staying with, she was actually a domestic in the house, and didn't want to leave him;

and she literally flipped.

I don't remember any of what led up to it, but I remember waking up at night and here she was standing with a knife above my head. And whether I talked to her and calmed her down, I don't know what I did; I just know that she no longer slept in the bunk next to me or above me for the rest of the trip, that she was in a holding cell on the ship. And I heard later -- these things I never talked about; you know, when you're there they don't tell you anything. I mean, no one on the ship talked about it. I heard later from her aunt, who happened to live in the same building as the aunt that I was talking about, the one who was in jail, that she went to Ellis Island, and I don't know what happened to her after that; and Ellis Island was no longer being used as it was in earlier years at that time, but she did go there. So hopefully she got some psychiatric help.

That was the only thing I remember about the trip. Other than that, I know it was a luxury ship before the war, was used as a troop ship during the war, went to England with American troops and came back with not too many passengers. I was one of them.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE SHIP?

A. No. I don't remember anything about it.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR ACCOMMODATIONS, THE FOOD OR THE PASSENGERS, THINGS LIKE THAT?

A. I think we got enough to eat. It was

certainly not a luxury ship at that point. The swimming pool was empty, and of course this was during the winter anyway. No, I don't, I don't; and I doubt that I wrote that in my diary. I must get the diary out and look and see what possibly I might have forgotten to mention.

It was an English ship, I'm pretty sure. It was a British ship, I'm pretty sure. No, I don't know. I'm telling you, I have very selective memory.

I remember that my brother, who was younger, he was about nine or so, was beaten up a couple times by some kids on the street, and I think that's what made him decide he really wanted to get out. I had no such really personal negative experiences. I mean, my father's being hauled off to concentration camp was certainly negative enough, but I personally cannot recall anything that happened to me. So I don't know. I told you it wasn't that interesting a story.

Q. WAS THERE ANY SENSE WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD IN FRANKFURT OF BEING -- WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE A JEW THERE FOR YOU AS A CHILD?

A. I think it was -- it was quite natural. I mentioned that we belonged to a conservative synagogue. My brother sang in the boys choir there. I felt good about being a Jew. I had no negative feelings. When I went to Philanthropine, all the kids were Jewish, of course, all the teachers were -- no, they were not all Jewish. The gymnastics teacher was

not. He was married to a Jewish woman. And interestingly enough, we used to -- I guess equivalent of jogging, we sort of marched around the gymnasium, and I remember that he had a record of The Stars and Stripes Forever, Sousa march; and to this day, when I hear that, I flash back to that time when we were marching around; very nice man who also lost his life in concentration camp, I found out subsequently, but he was not Jewish. But other than that, I think all the teachers were.

I think the emphasis at the time was to shelter the children as much as possible. We weren't told things the way they were. I don't remember being told that my parents had tremendous financial reverses.

I do remember one time a man coming in and putting stamps on the furniture, on the back of the furniture, which meant it was no longer my parents'. I don't know what happened to the furniture, I don't remember whether it was taken or not.

I remember that the piano was removed, but I think that that was sold, that my mother cried. And it sticks in my mind because my mother did not cry, my mother could never cry. She didn't cry when my father died, she just didn't; it was unfortunate. It would have been a release for her to be able to do that. She cried when that piano left because that was the piano that had belonged to her parents. It's the piano that she learned to play on, which she enjoyed

using; and that's a very vivid memory.

I think in retrospect that my father must have really been bankrupt at that point, but I can't say for sure because I don't know. I mean, things were definitely bad. I don't ever remember going hungry, and it was never told, never.

My mother found it much easier to talk to my children. Periodically when they were in Sunday school and they'd hear about the Holocaust and they would ask her things, they never asked me; I think they're very eager for me to write the story of my life. I think they would probably be very interested in seeing this video. But I think they found it easier to ask my mother because I was very reticent to talk about it, and I found out at this kinder transport meeting just a month ago that everybody else had that same feeling, that they couldn't talk about it, or the majority of people; that sometimes the memories were so painful that they just either didn't want to burden their children or didn't want to bring it up themselves, that they just shoved it in the back of their subconscious and didn't consciously wish to be reminded.

I think the first time that I found that I was able to think about any of it was when I saw that film, the Holocaust, which I recognized as being strictly Hollywood; it was really very superficial and made things glossed over an awful lot. I mean, it was

a little bit unreal. Nonetheless it served a purpose.

And I've thought about it, I'm not sure just what it did do, I think it brought it out into the open. It made the public see, even in Hollywood fashion, what it was like to have a concentration camp, to live in a concentration camp, or to be -- I did not, fortunately, live in a concentration camp, but to have the memories of what happened to those classmates or friends or family who never made it out; or, if they did make it, have such horrendous memories. I think it brought it to the forefront in a way that was sort of a release for a lot of people.

I've talked about that with a few other people who agree with that. Fifteen years ago when we were -- the year my school friends who lived in the United States and I were 50, there are three friends, I suggested that we all meet; one lives in the New York area, the other lives in Texas, one lives here in the East Bay, that we all get together, just the four of us, no husbands, no family, and not in anyone's hometown, but away so that we wouldn't have to make beds, so we wouldn't have to think about making dinner at night or had no obligations to be hostesses; and everybody jumped on it immediately.

And the first meeting that we've had was in New Orleans, where we laughed and cried in equal amount. It was a catharsis, to be sure. We all knew each other's families, we all knew where we started

out, where we came from. Our points of view as adults and our approaches to raising our families were very similar, interestingly enough. This is the first time that all four of us had been together in many, many years, and it was absolutely wonderful.

My husband called one time during that -- we were only together three and a half to four days, called one time and we had just all been on a terrible crying jag; and you know how often this happens, it turned around and we were laughing, we were hysterical we were laughing so hard, that I could not get a word in -- out at all, I couldn't speak to him. And he finally said all right, when you calm down, call me back. But it was that kind of a weekend, and the whole weekend was like that. We had a wonderful time together.

And we also had a -- can't say "wonderful," but we had a good time remembering the good and the bad, and it was -- I can't explain it to you.

We've since met again. We've just met. When I knew I was going to New York for this meeting in New York, in the Catskills, I called everybody and said all right, time for us to meet again; Laura, my friend in the East Bay, and I are going to be there, let's meet in Boston this time if it's agreeable to everybody, and everybody said fine; nobody lives in Boston. And unfortunately my friend Laura couldn't come because she had an accident the week before, but

the three of us had a wonderful time and plan not to wait too long to do it again. I mean, it's not the same thing anymore; the second time it wasn't the same thing either. The first time it was strictly remembering a lot of things and catching up with each other. The second time we had caught up and it was fun to be together, and this time it was fun to be together too, so we plan to do it again. That's about it.

I came here in '43. I found a job very quickly at Koret of California, brought me a lot of friends, and they employed a lot of German Jewish young women, a few men too. And that was in -- I think I started on the 3rd of January; got the job in December.

I arrived in San Francisco on the 24th of December, a very memorable day, a gorgeous, gorgeous day. I arrived by train from New York. I'd stopped in Cleveland to visit an aunt and her family, and in South Bend, Indiana to visit a childhood friend, and arrived here on the 24th, very clear, sparkling, beautiful day. Having come across the country in the deep winter, everything was -- the snow was really high everywhere.

And my parents and my brother met me at the Oakland mall, the train station there, and we came by ferry across the bay, when the ferry building was not dwarfed by all the highrises, and it looked very lovely and nice. And my brother had an old jalopy.

He was then -- this was in '43, or in '44, he would have been 17, so he was 16, drove me through the Golden Gate Park, and it was a magnificent day, everything was so green and so beautiful, and took me to the apartment on 26th Avenue, where my mother actually stayed until she went into a boarding home. And my parents had given up their room and moved into the Murphy bed into the living room in order to give me my own room. My father had painted some unfinished furniture in a lovely light blue, and I'd had this lovely room and my parents and my brother whom I -- my brother I hadn't seen for almost six years, my parents I hadn't seen for five, almost five, and it was on a Friday, and the next morning my parents took me to the synagogue that they didn't attend usually, but it was the most like a European synagogue, and that's the one that burned down, Beth Israel, on Geary and Fillmore; and I was so overwhelmed by everything, I started to cry in the synagogue and I did not stop crying for four days. My mother took me home, put me to bed, and that's where I stayed for four days. I could not -- just everything that had happened, all those years, came out in those four days. It was an incredible experience.

That's about it. Three years later I met my husband at the tennis court. My husband is American-born. His father was Russian, his mother was Polish. And we met on his 25th birthday, which was

October 12th, 1946, and got engaged on my birthday, which was December 7th, also that was '46, and were married on March 30th in 1947 here in San Francisco at Beth-Sholom; Rabbi White married us.

And we are still fortunately having a good marriage. We have four children and at the moment five grandsons. That's about it.

Do you have any questions that might jog my memory? I'm sure there were a few things in between that I forgot.

Q. WHAT BECAME OF THE FEW SMALL SILVER ITEMS THAT WERE IN THAT KINDER TRANSPORT?

A. They're in my possession.

Q. YOU STILL HAVE THEM.

A. Yes. I gave one to my brother's daughter, and I hope she treasures it as I treasure the ones that I still have.

My daughter, Debbie, who's my third child, married an Australian and lived in Australia for eight years, eight years of her marriage. They've just recently moved to California and have set up shop here, and home, in Santa Rosa.

She didn't want to take the silver candlesticks to Australia because she was afraid that if anything were to happen en route or somehow they would be damaged, she wanted me to keep them, and I did. And the first time I went up to visit her in her new home after she had moved in, I handed them to her.

When I had given them to her when they were married, my mother had already died, my mother was very specific that she wanted those to go to Debbie. The ones that I had from my grandparents, her parents, were to go to my older daughter, something else; a spice box to my son, one son, and an [etruch] box, silver, to my youngest son. So I followed her instructions very explicitly.

Anyway, when I gave them to Debbie I wrote a note explaining to her and her husband how these candlesticks happened to be in my possession, that my father took great risk, and my son-in-law made a very nice comment. He said that these candlesticks not only meant a great deal to Debbie but also to him because of what they meant to our family, and I was very appreciative of that. He's a very nice man who's not Jewish but about to convert, and he's bringing up his children in a way that I very much approve; not that they need my approval, but it's nice that the children are being raised as Jews, and I'm very grateful for that. So are my other daughter's children, whose father's also not Jewish, my other son-in-law, who's also very, very supportive, and perfectly happy to support my daughter in her upbringing of the children. So that's it.

Q. CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE REUNION OF YOUR FAMILY IN SAN FRANCISCO PERHAPS AFTER YOU --

A. Stopped crying? It was not difficult. I think it was less difficult for me than it was for my brother when my parents came. My father thought that the sun rose and set in me. Very rarely did I do anything wrong in his eyes; and when I did, he would tell my mother your daughter did such and such. He took no responsibility for that at all.

I had a relatively easy time adjusting to -- for one thing I spoke the language, which helped. And he felt that I would be able to get a job pretty quick, which I did. And I didn't ever have to contribute to the household; I think I did in small ways. I did not have a difficult time.

I must say that when my husband and I bought our first house, which was on the other side of the park, my parents living in the Richmond District and this was the Mira Loma area, my mother said you're moving awfully far away. We felt this was the right house for us. It was in the neighborhood we thought we'd like to raise our children, and so we did buy it. And certainly it's not that far away; it wasn't Australia, that's for sure.

However, when my husband -- my husband got out of the army in '46, before I met him he was in the Pacific, he had planned to go to optometry school, and at the time there were limited spaces available, and he was accepted at the University of Chicago; and I was not able to do that, I said I could not move. He

has always been extremely supportive and didn't ask me any questions. He just said fine, I won't go. And I think the reason was that I simply could not bear to be separated from my parents again. I don't know. I don't think I rationalized it at the time; I just said I didn't want to move to Chicago. But I think that was probably the underlying reason.

And subsequently my husband said he'd like to move down the peninsula, and I always felt that I really didn't want to do that. And later on when my mother was widowed, my mother was widowed in June of '61, she went to the hospital in September, for a hysterectomy, of that year; and three days later had a stroke, and that really changed our lives considerably.

Fortunately she was able, with tremendous -- well, first of all, because the stroke was not that devastating, but with tremendous will to be independent, she managed to -- she did a tremendous amount of therapy, and she managed to be pretty much on her own after that.

But nonetheless I could not justify moving away. This way it would only take me 15 or 20 minutes to come across the park, if that, and I could be there -- and I was there a lot. I was there very often. We at that time bought another house with four bedrooms, thinking that she might have to come live with us since we could not afford to keep a full-time person

to help her; but fortunately she didn't want it, and I'm saying fortunately because she knew that this was not a good thing for us to do. And she also fortunately managed to get well enough to be able to manage pretty well on her own. She was handicapped but managed it quite well. And so I never did move. We haven't moved yet, probably won't at this point.

But I think that was a factor, that I could not leave my parents. I was lucky to have them. So many people never saw their parents again. I don't know whether it was guilt on my part for having left them at one time, although certainly there shouldn't have been any guilt. I just found it difficult to be separated from them again, which doesn't mean that they weren't totally independent; they were very independent, they had a lot of friends and there was no such thing as being dependent on us for their entertainment or livelihood or any of that. They were totally independent; nonetheless I felt I needed to be close by, probably as much for myself.

So that actually those were very good days when I first came here, once I got over the crying jag. A lot of my mother's friends, parents' friends, had sons and daughters of my age, and I know that I arrived on the train the 24th of December and on the 31st of December I went to a New Year's party, so it didn't take me long to put down roots.

Walter Wohlfeiler is one of the people that I met

very shortly after that. So I met -- actually his sister came to work there a little after I did, within a few months, and we became friends very quickly, so that was that.

I would have liked to have found out what happened to my favorite uncle and his family, but I doubt that I ever will. The other two, we know they died in Auschwitz. I presume he might have also. So I don't know how much of a story you have here.

Q. YOU'D BE SURPRISED.

A. I don't know. Yeah.

Q. WHAT SORT OF WORK DID YOU DO IN KORET?

A. Clerical, clerical. I worked for five years until I had my first child. Just before he was born I quit. Not quite five years, four and a half years. And I've been -- you're not interested in the post-era, are you?

Well, after I got married -- married into a very nice family. My husband has a sister with whom I'm very close who lives down the peninsula, and he has a brother also living in the peninsula and another brother back east, and it's a very, very close-knit family, which is good.

My son was born in '49, my eldest, Jeff; and then I had a daughter in '51, Karen; and Debbie was born in May '54; and then I had another little one in '67, who is now in law school, and we're happy to have him; happy to have all of them. They all celebrated

Chanukah with us last night, except the one who is in law school, who couldn't justify the several hours to come home because he's in the middle of finals, but it was nice. The rest were all there, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law, five grandsons; it was nice. The Australian grandsons are happy to be here to celebrate these things with us. So that's about it.

And so in my career as a mother I organized a nursery school, which is still in existence, some, oh, 38 years later. I've done a fair amount of volunteer work. I don't know, I'm sure that isn't terribly interesting to anybody.

So I've been very lucky in my life, lucky in my marriage, been lucky with my kids, and lucky to be here to tell it all when so many did not make that, and I think this is something that we who did survive it are very conscious of. Why me, you know, why were we saved and not the others. I think this is something that we don't give voice to every day, but I think it's something that's in the back of our minds that we are certainly very much conscious of, by the grace of God. So that's it.

Q. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER OF THE BEGINNING PART OF THE TRIP AFTER YOU LEFT THE TRAIN STATION WHEN YOU WERE ON THE TRAIN, ON THE --

A. Crossing the channel?

Q. YES.

A. Very little. I wish I could tell you. I

don't know. I didn't even know I had arrived in Harwich until just a month ago and decided just by process of elimination that that had to be it. I don't even know where I left from when I came to the United States. I think it was Liverpool, but I'm not sure. I'm pretty sure it was Liverpool, but I can't say with absolute certainty. And I don't know what makes my memory so bad. I have perfectly good memory for other things.

I remember having mixed feelings about leaving. I felt very much part of the family there, and yet there was never a doubt that I wanted to leave. As a matter of fact, my guardian came to visit here -- did I ever finish the story about the dusting, as to why -- I'm really backtracking here -- as to why she didn't look up the word dust or any other word after that?

Q. NO, YOU DIDN'T.

A. She was illiterate. The first time in my life that I ever met anyone who was illiterate. In fact, I haven't met too many people since who are -- she didn't know how to spell. Wonderful woman. I mean, she was a wonderful woman, she was wonderful to me. She really loved me, she loved having me in the house with her. She in no way made me feel that I was not part of the family. I mean, if she asked me to dust, it was something that you would ask your own child to do, certainly, or anyone who lived in your

house, to help a little; and certainly my mother had told me before I left, now you be sure to make yourself useful. I mean, this was something that was drilled into me. I knew I had to make myself useful. But it wasn't something that I was being punished for, certainly not like my brother who, I described before, at the age of 11, for the rest of the family, you know, nothing like that. And from the stories that I heard in New York, some of these kids were really, really treated very badly, to the point where they didn't have enough to eat and all kinds of really terrible things. None of that applied to me.

But she had come from Rumania at the turn of the century. Let's see, I got there in '43 -- what am I talking about -- '39, yes, around probably 1890. Let me make sure that my arithmetic is right, or closer to 1900, I suppose. She was a very young girl when she married her Rumanian husband, whom she had met in Rumania, and she had her first child -- I think she might have been 17. I'm going to have to go home and figure out all this arithmetic because I don't want to give you the wrong ideas, but I know she was extremely young when she had her first child.

Her husband became a very, very successful businessman and learned to speak English flawlessly. I met him a few times. She simply stood still; she probably didn't know how to read and write Rumanian either, I'm not sure about that, but I suspect that

she might not have. She knew how to write -- she would copy painfully letters out of a book when she wanted to write. I have a few letters of hers, I'm sure, still that she wrote to me, and I know that she took -- I guess she wasn't totally illiterate but certainly close to it. She took a letter that she thought might be applicable and she would copy it and it would take her hours to write a little paragraph, yet she was very smart. This was just something that was totally lacking in her education. She dressed well, she knew what was going on in the world, she listened to the radio, she listened to the news, she did a fine job in raising her kids; she just didn't know how to read and write.

But fortunately, again, very fortunately, Harriet, her daughter-in-law, was very close by and made sure that I wasn't going to learn to speak English the way her mother-in-law did because she mispronounced words terribly, but of course that I didn't know until several months after I first got there.

Interesting woman. Never divorced her husband at all. Her husband lived with her best friend at a time when this was not done, I'm not sure it's done now; but I mean, it's certainly more prevalent today than it would have been in that time frame. Never to her dying day, not until -- he died first, did she give him a divorce. But he took care of her; he supported

her, quite well, I'm sure. So it was an interesting experience.

She had a very warped point of view about men, which could have warped my point of view considerably, I think, but fortunately it didn't. But other than that, she was a wonderful person. So I have only positive things to say about her, really.

Q. WHAT'S HER NAME?

A. Her name was Betsy Stainer, S-t-a-i-n-e-r, and she lived in a lovely home in Palmers Green, which is on the Piccadilly Line in England, in London. And she had a lovely room for me, I was perfectly comfortable there. I mean, the war years were miserable, but that was certainly not her doing.

She taught me how to drink tea without sugar, and at the time I wasn't quite sure just why, but then I realized that she got sugar rationing and she liked to bake, and she needed all the sugar she could get. So the three teaspoons of sugar per day probably added up to a bit here and there. And to this day I drink tea without sugar, which is fine.

So she was a nice woman, very nice woman. I'm in touch with her daughter-in-law in New York. And one of her granddaughters lived in San Luis Obispo until quite recently, actually was born after I went to England; this was another daughter-in-law, not the one in New York, I mean the daughter of the -- the other daughter-in-law.

And not so long ago, about maybe five, six years, it's at least that, I got a telephone call from someone who had a distinctly English accent and she identified herself and said she was looking for Trude Rosenthal Plack, and I said yes, that was I; and she said you probably don't remember me but I'm Cynthia Stainer; and I said yes, I do remember you, Cynthia, I remember you very well.

Anyway, she was just thrilled. I told her things about her family that she absolutely did not know. Both her parents had died. She's now a woman -- I think she was 50 last year, yeah, '89 she was -- she was born in '39, yes -- no, she was born in -- well, it doesn't matter. Anyway, she was born in early '40 and she was 50 in the early part of this year.

She went to South Africa for reasons that weren't quite clear to me, but she was a reporter and interviewed what was then to become her husband, Neville Romaine, and they were married in South Africa and then moved to California and lived in San Luis Obispo for a number of years; and then finally last year she called and informed me they were moving to Portugal, which they have done since. They've lived in Portugal now for the last four or five months, and I've had several communications with her. So I had a couple of -- a letter and a card, and I'm in touch with her, so the connection hasn't totally died down.

Actually there's only one daughter that's left,

and she was the only one in the family -- one daughter of my guardian, it's the only one in the family with whom I had no particular rapport. I mean, she was all right, she was nice enough to me, but she was the one whose husband was a German and I think they had a bad marriage and I think she probably blamed it on me. No, I'm being silly. I'm trying to explain why she and I never quite hit it off.

The other daughter-in-law and Harriet and I got along very well. They were only really a few years older than I. Harriet is 12 years older than I, which at that time made a big difference, because I was a young girl and she was a married woman with three little kids; but Tilly, for some reason or other, and I never hit it off, so I've not stayed in touch with her; she's still alive. Her two brothers have died. But as I said, I'm in touch with Cynthia and Harriet in New York. So that's it.

I really don't know how else I can elaborate. I'm quite sure I'll walk out of here and say oh, why didn't I think of that.

Q. WELL, CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT -- YOU'VE ALLUDED TO THE KINDER TRANSPORT SURVIVORS.

A. Yes.

Q. CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT WENT ON THERE AND HOW IT AFFECTED YOU?

A. Yes, although I think that I haven't quite sorted it all out yet, very frankly.

It was a very busy trip. I started in Boston with the reunion with my friends, and I went with one friend to New York and stayed at her house and the next day left for the Catskills, took the bus up there.

I walked into -- well, my first encounter with anyone was on the bus. I heard these people, who obviously did not know each other, talk to each other, they were all headed in the same direction, and so --

[Brief interruption.]

You asked me about my impressions in the Catskills. Well, we're on the bus and there were these people talking to each other, and I finally made some comment to indicate that I was a part of this group also. And as it turned out, there might have been 15 people on the bus, and at least 11 of them were headed in the same direction.

They were discussing politics, I think, current politics, as I recall. At first I wasn't paying that much attention to it. And this one man who was obviously by himself mentioned -- put it in perspective of the days that we remember as children. And my first impression of him was he has had some horrible experiences.

And it was interesting to me because I happened to be in a group with him the following day, we met in small groups, and I'll explain that system to you a little bit, and some of the history is horrendous, I

mean just awful. He escaped, he was in a boarding home in England where he was extremely unhappy. He then went to -- he went to Israel at one point, which was then Palestine, and fought; he's had some terrible experiences.

And the only reason I'm mentioning it now, I don't even remember the man's name, if I ever knew it, is that my listening to him on the bus made me think -- nothing he said would indicate what he had gone through, made me think this man's had some terrible experiences; something about his speech or his manner, or very animated, I don't know what it was, so that was my very first impression.

We then arrived at our destination, and we had been told to contact the hotel, they would send somebody down to pick us up, to make arrangements ahead of time, and I tried to do that. They had an 800 number, I called from home to say I would be on such and such a bus; oh, you'll have to call when you get in, so that's what we had planned to do, except that the phone right at the bus stop, you know how these bus stops are, was out of working order.

So finally one of the group went into the restaurant and used that phone, and then they sent a very old, dilapidated car down that could only take four passengers. So something I normally don't do, I sort of saw what was happening and I sort of maneuvered myself and I got on to the first carload;

the others were all brought in too, but it was very, very cold at that point. It was really chilly, after coming from California, where we've had nothing but sunshine lately.

We went into this hotel, and I'd heard a lot about the Catskills and had absolutely no idea of what to expect. The hotel was very old and really quite seedy, had undoubtedly seen much better days. The scenery around it was magnificent, absolutely gorgeous, and we were told to check into the hotel first and were assigned our rooms. I had a room to myself, since -- just wanted a room to myself. And there it was fairly disorganized, that part of it, the hotel was fairly disorganized.

But then they had tables set up for the kinder transport people, and I checked in with them and was given a packet where everything was explained, the schedule for the day was -- was actually a day and a half, set out pretty well, in fact very well.

And I had offered to help. I talked to someone from New York, and I said if there's anything I can do from here, thinking that I could help from here, with anyone coming; and she said no, but we could use help at the desk the day that everyone checks in. And so I made myself available and did help a little bit, not very long. Met some of the people I'd spoken to on the phone over the past couple of months, and that was pleasant.

Then we went in to dinner, I think that was first, and there was a short address; and after dinner there was another address, I have to look at the -- things sort of fall together.

But anyway, I found absolutely no one that I knew, not a soul; but about 300 people in toto, I'd say at least a little bit better than half were people who were actually the children, children transport, the rest were spouses, and there were a few children, I mean adult children of those kinder transport people.

The funny thing is that when we were walking -- when I was walking into the dining room and found myself a place, there were not assigned seats, which was marvelous strategy, because that way you were forced to sit with people that -- there happened to be a seat available. You didn't have to -- I mean, if you were with people that you knew, you could sit with them, but also -- we had greater exposure to the whole group, because that's the way it was done for all the meals.

And what I found is that it was not in the least bit difficult to talk to strangers. I don't have much trouble talking to strangers in general, but here they were from all over the country, mainly I'd say from New York or the New York area, Vermont, that part of the country. But we all came -- I had the feeling we were all coming from the same place. We all

started out as children, we were all put on trains by our parents; we have that definitely in common. There were many variations on that theme, of course, but I had the feeling that I was glad I was there, that this was something I shared with all these people. And I had one experience that was particularly meaningful to me, and I'm sure even more so to the man to whom I spoke.

I was overhearing a conversation -- it was actually at the table -- I keep jumping around here. We all had little name tags, maiden name, place of origin and where we were from now; and in addition to that, there were little colored dots put on each of these name plates, and on the dots were letters; mine happened to be an L, which stood for nothing except that I was to get together with the L people, that's all it really meant. The blue dots were for those people who were children, who were part of the kinder transport movement, the orange dot was for their spouses, and yet another color was for the children.

The reason that they did that is so that these different groups could get together, meet only among themselves so that all the children would be together, all the spouses would be together; and then they broke them into small groups, and the L was -- happened to be in the small group that I was to be in. That was on the next day.

But anyway, we also were asked to come to various

tables where different localities were -- people who came from Frankfurt would be at this one table, or from the surrounding area. There were very few, it so happened, and I knew no one; but we were all within a few years of each other in age. I think most of the kids were probably between eight and 14, there were some who were 17 who barely made it, but most of them were about -- so we were all, you know, in our 60s.

I overheard this man talking, and he mentioned that he was from [Gaden]. Gaden is in Oberhausen. I don't know if you know anything about German geography, but my father was born in [Vanings], which is Oberhausen. And when he finished talking to the person that he was talking to, I went up to him and I introduced myself, and I said I overheard you say that you're from Gaden; my father was born in Vanings. Well, you would have thought I had just handed this man a present. He did everything but hug me. What was my maiden name, who was my father; and he said of course I know all the Rosenthals from Vanings. He said my father used to go there once a week and teach -- he walked from Gaden to Vanings, which he said was about an hour's walk, so maybe three miles or four miles, and he used to teach Hebrew and religion to all the boys in Vanings. So his father was actually my father's teacher.

I just wrote him a letter and sent him the pictures I took of him, and I said I would also tell

my cousin; one of my cousins was born there too, whom I was going to see the next day or the day after. And as soon as I mentioned it to my cousin, he said oh, yes, the lehreh, teacher, Bauer, I remember him. So hopefully my cousin will get in touch with this man, who lives in Michigan.

This is the kind of thing that happened over and over again, and it was -- I don't know what it gave me, why it made it meaningful for me, but it did. I guess it's touching basis with my father's past or whatever. You know, I don't know.

I feel good about having gone and I would certainly go to subsequent ones. I was going originally -- oh, darn, I forgot the book I meant to bring you. I'll bring it another time.

I told you and you knew that there was such a reunion in London, happened to be the week that my youngest son graduated from college and I decided I just -- we tried to figure out if I went from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles, my husband drove me to Los Angeles, I could get on a plane and be there and have about four hours before the first session would start. I decided I was too old for that, I couldn't do that, so I chose not to go.

But I heard they were going to meet in New York, then I decided right then that I would. And there is one man who is from Berkeley, said he thought he might try to get a group together here in Northern

California; haven't heard from him yet, but I might give him a call, and he would like to put the emphasis on not only the kinder but also the next generation, our children. And I think that my children would be quite receptive to such an idea. I think they would be interested. So we'll see what happens.

I think it was a good meeting. People were very friendly. It was an unusual experience for me in that I'm not accustomed to going too far afield without my husband. I mean, usually we go together when we go anywhere. But because I wanted to get all these other things in on my trip, he decided -- and also other reasons why he at this time didn't want to go, I didn't find it difficult at all. There were other people who were by themselves, I didn't know anyone, I had no friends there, but I felt I made a few friends by the time I'd left.

I sat with a couple on Saturday night at dinner, these were tables for eight, and we were talking, and I said I had to leave very early the next morning and that I wouldn't be there for the end of the session because I had an opportunity to see my first cousins in New York at a bat mitzvah celebration on Sunday at noon and that I would have to -- in order to do that and get to New York in time and get back to where I was going, take a bus or a cab, I would need to leave with the 8:00 o'clock bus in the morning, so I would have to leave the hotel by 7:30. And he said where

are you going; I said I'm going to Riverdale. And he looked at his wife and his wife looked at him, and then he said we'll take you, which was wonderful. I didn't have to go all the way down to the Port Authority in New York. And you know, everybody said oh, be careful, don't wear any jewelry, don't do this, don't do that; and I had a suitcase, and I'm not normally scared, but they made me uneasy. And none of my family in New York could meet me, because my cousin whose granddaughter was being bat mitzvahed had to be at the synagogue early, and she felt terrible, but she couldn't pick me up. And I said don't worry, I'll find my way.

Because my parents were -- my father was the youngest, my cousins are all a fair amount older than I. I'm actually the youngest girl in the family; my brother's the youngest man. So it's a little bit difficult for them to do these things. And I decided I would just be on my own, I could manage very well.

Well, when this man said he would take me, I said leave me off somewhere, I can take a cab where it's not quite so far; and he said he wouldn't think of it, takes us ten minutes out of our way, whether -- even if it took them an hour he probably wouldn't have said any differently; he was very charming and we had a lovely trip home. We got to know each other a little bit, and he is the next person I'm going to write to. I've been very busy on my computer writing letters.

So that was it.

There was one woman who was one of the speakers, whose name I've forgotten, I should have had a pad with me and written these things down as they happened. It might be on the agenda, I'm not sure. She is a designer of costumes for some of the very prestigious movies. She designed costumes for Dustin Hoffman in Tootsie, and she mentioned some other -- or in the introduction I think they mentioned some other really top-rated movies that she designs for.

She was a child, the kinder transport, and she said that for years she would not even think about it by herself or share it with anyone else; her children didn't even know about it, and that she had just recently, very recently, decided that she had to come to grips with this part of her past. And this is a woman who I would guess has very little connection to the organized Jewish community, but obviously she needed to feel that she could talk about it and come to grips with it. I found that a very moving story.

There was a man who was put on the children's -- was handed to an adult companion or -- the people who took the kids, and I have no recollection of that either, to England, handed by his mother to one of these adults accompanying the kids; he was two years old, never saw his parents again.

When I talk about it, when I think about it, I've thought about it a lot, I get such goose bumps. You

know, this is one of the things that was brought out over and over again, that we've thought about ourselves as being almost the victims of having to leave our parents, but what a tremendous sacrifice that was made by the parents to do this. And how could you take a young child -- I mean, even when I think back of my father and his crying so hard when my brother left and my mother not wiping the mirror, that's such a small thing, really, when you think about it, but what it must have taken for these parents to say yes, we are going to send our children where they have a chance of having a free life. I mean, I think we have not thought about it -- I've thought about it, of course, I've thought about it when my children were -- when my son was ten and the fact that my mother sent her son when he was ten, I've thought about it when I was 14, when my girls were 14; of course you think about it, but I think it was brought home because it was reiterated over and over again the tremendous sacrifice that these parents made, all of them.

So you asked me the other day on the phone if I felt I had any scars, and I think I said to you that I don't think anyone lived through this period without scars, and I really -- as much as my life has been relatively tranquil, it has left its scars. I know I don't laugh as easily as a lot of people do. I think I have a fairly good sense of humor, but I do not

laugh readily; I'm sure it's part of it.

There's just things that you carry that you don't necessarily show, but you carry them. It was a horrendous time, and I think these parents are to be commended on what they've done. So as a parent and grandparent I guess I'm appreciating it more and more as I get older.

And I think that everyone felt much as I did, and I think it's a good thing that you're doing what you're doing, because with my generation that phase of history will pass into oblivion.

So it was a time that I found out better to forget and don't keep reminding yourself, why are there so many war movies, why are there so many things that hark back to such a horrible time, but I've changed my mind about that also; not so long ago, I felt very differently about it.

So I don't know what else to talk to you about.

Q. WHAT AND WHEN HAVE YOU TOLD YOUR CHILDREN? HAS IT BEEN RELATIVELY RECENTLY?

A. No. In fact, my children know very little. I haven't, because I have been "threatening" to write my memoirs. And my Australian son-in-law gave me a gift of a computer, which he bought especially for me when I was in Australia last time, and then proceeded to teach me how to use it. All that came about, because I wrote to them at one time that I had taken a very, very preliminary computer class, it was given

to -- part of a senior citizen program, and actually I went for five weeks for an hour each time, which was -- I got into the program a little bit late because I wasn't part of that particular group and I had to wait to see if they had room for me, and in 20 minutes he had taught me more than I'd learned in those five hours of going to class, because it was a one-on-one thing and I picked up on it I think fairly quickly.

But anyway, I had written to them that I had taken this class, and so when he went to Hong Kong he bought me a computer. And when I was in Australia in June for the birth of my youngest grandson, he said here, this is yours, I'm going to teach you how to use it. And it's been an absolute wonderful gift for me. I enjoy it thoroughly. And I'm planning to use it for just that purpose. I mean, not just that purpose; I'm planning to write down a lot of things and family history, et cetera, et cetera, for my children.

I've not really told them a lot. It's very hard. You have to -- first of all, you have to be in the right frame of mind, then you can't have kind of a tremendous amount of commotion around you; I mean, there can't be a lot of people around at the same time, I don't think; I guess it could be done. But I think I can put my thoughts on paper very well, almost better than I can speaking, and I think it might be a good thing to have for them. I'm not writing the

greatest book on earth, I'm just -- I think I'd like to do this so that my kids and my grandchildren will have something to -- you know, some frame of reference.

No, I haven't talked to them much about it at all. I think they'll be surprised to see this paper, which I plan to show them, if I don't come out too awful on it. So that's about it.

Q. WHAT'S YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY OF ANTI-SEMITISM?

A. One of the most vivid memories is seeing a newspaper -- a cartoon newspaper, Streicher, who portrayed Jews -- mostly men, actually, in my memory, in the most despicable way. And I mean, speaking of pornography, this was real pornography at its worst, I think. And seeing that at every corner, it's like a newsstand, and it was on -- as I recall, we used to have these kiosks, and you see them a lot in Europe, where you have, you know, notices, announcements and all that sort of thing, and they were on there; they were everywhere, and so nasty and so horrible, and the Semitic features portrayed in such ugly, ugly caricatures.

That's one of the earliest memories I have, and I can't put a year or time on it. I don't know when that was. I just thought -- I just remember feeling degraded by having seen it and probably not really understanding what they were.

I remember going to the Jewish museum in Berkeley, the Magnes, I was a docent there for a short while, and they had -- I haven't been there, I'm sorry to say, for some time, but they had a Holocaust room; and one of those newspapers were on display, and I remember the absolute revulsion I had when I saw that again and this really early gut feeling of the horrible things that this man did.

And I also, now that I really am thinking back, remember seeing people standing there and laughing at it. I think that probably is part of it too, looking at it and laughing. I think that's the earliest.

My brother once came home and he was beaten up and called the equivalent in German of a dirty Jew. I remember that leaving a big impression on me, and I think it was one of the reasons that my mother was willing to let him go so early, because she knew that he wouldn't stand still for this kind of treatment and that he might get hurt.

My brother was very adventuresome. To this day he is a reporter for the Associated Press in Washington; he's covered all the space shots. And at a very early age showed signs of liking adventure, being at the scene of where things were happening.

I remember once he was very young, nobody knew where he had gone.

[Brief interruption.]

Anyway, he disappeared for the afternoon, my

mother had no idea where he'd gone. When he came home rather sheepishly toward evening, and maybe it was already dark, which was definitely a sign that he had to be home, he was very young, I think seven or eight, he had gone clear across town, Frankfurt, took the streetcar partway, walked partway; and he was telling my mother all about the things that he'd seen that he hadn't seen before. He was very curious than my mother knew. I think that he would get in serious trouble if he stayed around much longer.

And so she was -- it's funny that I should remember standing in the hall of our apartment having this conversation, that when she asked me if I wanted to go to the United States, I said no, without thinking about it very long; and he said I'll go. I remember it distinctly.

I talked to him about it. I went to see him in Washington. After the Catskills, I went on to Washington, and we talked about that. I told him that I thought he should have come to this meeting, that's how all this came about, and one thing leads to another. And we talked about how he wanted to go instead of me and otherwise I would have gone to the United States instead of England.

So those were the earliest remembrances. I think my mother was really concerned about him, that he might get himself into trouble. So he wasn't there by the time Kristallnacht came around, he was in

San Francisco.

Did I mention that my parents, this was after I left, evidently were so rationed for food, if they got any at all, that an old business friend of my father's, actually his wife, came every night and left small packages of food outside their door, non-Jews, at great risk to themselves. And in fact, my husband and I went to Germany in '72 on our way back from Israel because I wanted to visit my grandparents' graves, and the one person my mother said I want you to go see were these people, who were still alive, [Elleny], who said that yes, they were at tremendous risk at the time, but she said the Rosenthals, they were our friends, we couldn't have them starve. I mean, there were some like that, few and far between, but they were there. So I was very, very pleased to see them again.

She also said when the Jews left Germany, the culture in Germany left with them; interesting comment.

I had an interesting experience, I don't know how it fits -- of course it all fits in together. My husband and I landed in Zurich, we went to Switzerland from Israel, and rented a car with the idea of going through part of Switzerland and into Germany from Basel to Freiburg, which is on the other side of the border. We got to the border, that entire week -- we spent a week in Switzerland, that entire week it

poured; it didn't just rain, it came down in buckets, no let-up, I mean just -- it was May, it came down so hard that it was difficult to really see anything. We could see the gorgeous hills, and I think on one part of the trip we went to the -- where was that? Grunwald. Grunwald, I think, yes, Jungfrau. We wanted to go up, and it was too late already, and the girl at the hotel desk said it's too late to go up there now, it was 2:30 and it was getting dark at 3:30 or 4:00, and she said you better do it in the morning. And of course in the morning it was so fogged in, that was the only day where it didn't rain on that whole trip.

But anyway, we get to the border and it's pouring there, and there is the German border guard, which I understand is no longer there now, in uniform; and as far as I was concerned, he could have been an SS man. I saw these high boots part of the uniform, and he asked in German to see our passports. By the time I had translated it to my husband, the guard had already repeated it in English, perfect English. It was that moment my stomach turned. You've heard the expression your stomach turning; well, that's the way it felt. I did not shake it until I was on that TWA plane back to Washington.

We went to Washington after Germany. We actually left three days earlier than -- we had planned to go there I think six days; we left after three, we never

did see my father's parents' graves; we did see my mother's, only because my husband was determined. He said look, we've come all this way, you didn't want to come to Germany in the first place, we've made the trip, let's find it.

It's hard to find. Finally we did. It was in a very -- it was behind a play field, a football field or something like that, a small cemetery; and we were able to find the man, a Jewish man who was in charge of restoring the cemetery. He had actually put himself in charge. He was the only one from that general area to come out of the concentration camp. He was married to a non-Jew; now whether they were married before or after, I'm not sure.

But anyway, this man had just had major surgery and he could not take us to the cemetery, but his wife did. She and he had made it their life goal to restore the cemetery to the way -- to as best they could. There were pictures available and there were diagrams available. Now this was a relatively small, somewhat rural area, it was not a big cemetery; I'm sure the whole area wasn't bigger than this building in the width, that was the extent of it, and maybe 15 to 20 feet wide; it was just not a big area.

Well, we found her -- and I think we asked at the city hall and they said to go to see this man. Well, he could not physically take us there, but she did. And the cemetery was in pretty good shape, actually.

The stones were obviously broken, all of them; but they had restored as best they could, certainly righted them, you know, put them up where they belonged. The only thing -- and she was obviously very sad about that.

There was a large memorial, a marble memorial, to the Jewish young men who died in the First World War on this cemetery from the area, and my uncle's name would have been among them. She said that that was so smashed that they could not restore it. But she took us back to her house and showed us a picture of this memorial, and I saw my uncle's name on it, so at least I was able to tell my mother that we had seen that.

I felt good that we had done that. I felt sad that we hadn't made it because I was really beside myself; I had the strangest feelings of unease, so we didn't even see my school. I mean, I would have certainly wanted to show my husband that. There was a demonstration that day, and these German people, these friends of my parents, suggested that we not go downtown. I think they were probably embarrassed by it. When I think about it now, I think we should have just stayed another night and gone in the next day when there wouldn't have been a demonstration. I was so ready to get out of there that I didn't see half the things that I should have seen, so so much for that.

But my reaction to that guard was very

interesting. I haven't put this together, but now I understand how my father felt about the muni man in uniform, not being able to take the bus, or the streetcar.

So I guess if you keep me here another 24 hours I'll come up with other stories, but I think my mind is empty at the moment.

Q. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO COME UP WITH OTHER STORIES AND ANOTHER INTERVIEW? WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO DO THAT?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. TO SHOW US YOUR BOOK? AND YOU MENTIONED THAT IF YOU HAD AN ADEQUATE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND PHOTOGRAPHS AND PAPERS AND SO FORTH.

A. Yes, yes, I will do that.

Q. Good.

[End of Tape 1]

Dear Karen

I've enclosed Gloria's interview
& videotapes. Also, I printed a
sheet which shows the pages
I used the parens on for
Spelling- it should be of help to
whoever puts in the correct
spellings. When corrections are
made, please mail the pages
back to me - I'll make
them on the computer & reprint
the interview. I'll then be
able to make the floppy in
ASCII format for you
Also - the correction can be made
on the page.

Marjorie Forman
142 Sandpiper Circle
Corte Madera, CA 94925

the selection by	(Mag 11,) by (Magalenan)	6	26
by (Mag 11,) by	(Magalenan) and, I was	6	26
buildings. I was in	(Irca Squella), and that was	7	20
was called in Swedish	(Eckabor) pensionat for	11	9
a handkerchief?	(Brief pause in taping.)	17	12
that is came back to	(Nuberik) that is, came home	19	17
the Swedish steamship	(Druchnik) home to New York	25	2
-- sure, they said,	(Tantlaylie) and Fabrur.	27	25
And I revisited the	(Barrygloons) in 1962 and	28	4
Michael, and when	(Shandor) heard them coming,	30	11
so they sent him to	(Ootsbakistan) on a job, and	30	15
yet been back to my	(Toniteabareg,) which is	32	14
nine kilometers from	(Barakas), which is the	32	15
one. I called him	(Opu) and my mother (Union).	32	28
(Opu) and my mother	(Union). So	32	28
So	(Opu) came to America in	33	1
mother-in-law, Pepe	(Crisman) whose picture hung	33	13
were brought out by	(Hias) and they went by way	34	12
born with the name of	(Zoira,) Z-o-i-r-a,	39	15
(Zoira,) Z-o-i-r-a,	(Holendaria). That was my	39	15
nobody ever called me	(Zoira). In	39	16
certificate that said	(Zoira Holendaria)."	39	25
miles from the famous	(Tokay) wine. It's a lot of	42	17
and had -- and the	(Parnass) family, and had	43	8
So on a picnic at	(Squarrel) Park in Kansas	48	13
Headroyce School,	(holding up plaque).	53	24
The students asked me	(showing certificate) how --	54	2
Family Inn.	(END TAPE 1)	62	27
(END TAPE 1)	(BEGIN TAPE 2)	62	28
which is called the	(Continental Gume	67	25
the territory of the	(Continental Gume America),	68	15
-- for example, the	(Continental Gume America),	69	5
of directors of the	(Continental Gume America)	69	28
when I worked for the	(Continental Gume America),	75	3
fence of the	(Continental Gume America.)	77	17
paper, the Hanover	(Ishoceitan).	79	22
have to talk to Dr.	(Fonharts)."	79	27
his youngest brother,	(Farkash) Hollander. My	84	9
War I. And my Uncle	(Farkash) had seven sons.	84	13
to end tape two.	(End of Tape 2.)	85	2