Interview with Eva Edmands
[Date not labeled on audio tapes]

Q: Okay, so this is basically starting with liberation, but why don't we go back a little bit before you were liberated and talk about how old you were, where you were living, that type of thing.

A: At liberation we were still living with Father Longiree(ph) and we were free to leave at that point, but he had gotten attached to us and wouldn't let us go and he also realized that we didn't really have a place to go back to, so we wound up staying with him for another year until 1945. I was 14 at the time and eventually my father went back to Paris by himself and found us a place to live and it was actually very same furnished room that we had occupied at the outset of World War 2.

Q: When you were still with the priest, tell me where that was?

A: That was in Saint Marten(ph) in French Alps.

Q: So when you found out that it was liberation, do you remember the day that you found out or what, what activities were starting right before that.

A: Well the liberation, the Normandy landing was of course June 6, 1944, but where we were, in southeastern France, we were not liberated until the middle, August 15th, because we were liberated by Navy coming in from the Mediterranean. And that period between Normandy landing and that time that we were actually liberated was a very difficult one because the German troops were being pushed back by the troops in Normandy and they went on a rampage and burning towns and taking hostages, so actually, that period, that interim period between the two liberations, exact, almost the most dangerous one for us. We had originally found out about the Normandy landing on the BBC, but then the, when we actually liberated, in August, we just found

out somehow, I don't really exactly know how we found out, but we, the troops came, the French troops and told us that we were free.

Q: Free. _____. How did you feel then?

A: Oh, I was elated and at that point, you know, we were free to move, we were no longer confined to a little boiler room where we had been hidden for three years, during that worst period of the war. But then at this point, I need, we needed help. I did not have any clothes, all the clothes that I had, I had outgrown. And somehow, a social worker from the organization called OZSOE, which in French is called Organization _____ enfant and it's a Jewish agency to help children and they got some clothes to me and they also arranged for me to attend a high school in a nearby town of Antsee(ph) and since it was too far for me to commute, they arranged to board me with a Jewish family in town, so I stayed with the family and went to the College Technique and Moderne _____ and it would have been about sixth grade. Sixth grade? No, ninth grade, I'm sorry, ninth grade.

Q: How many years of school had you missed?

A: Oh, the only formal schooling I've had was maybe two, two years of elementary in Paris and maybe what would correspond to junior high, one year in southern France and then this would have been ninth grade and that was it and I didn't even finish, finish that because then we had to go back to, to Paris, so really my education stopped, my formal education stopped at the ninth grade level.

Q: So when you went back to Paris, did you go into school?

A: No, no.

Q: All right, talk about that.

A: Okay, so we went...

Q: Your, now when you were boarding somewhere, your parents weren't with you?

A: No, no, they remained up on the mountaintop and I was all by myself and then sometimes I'd come home on the weekend. But I was very unhappy in school and in boarding with strangers because I had actually never been separated from my parents. And I was homesick and I was crying all the time and it just wasn't working out. So we finally, my father had gone ahead and finally found us one room, just very, very primitive and we went back to Paris and when we left the priest, though, I had kind of made a vow to myself that someday I wanted the world to know what he had done for us. And that wish didn't get fulfilled until 1987, when I, I found out about the _____ and recommended him and finally got the designation of the _____ the nations and a medal which was posthumously awarded, because he died in 1959, but in that way I felt that he had gotten the recognition that he deserved, but at the point, you know, in 1945, I didn't know, I just knew that I wanted people to know, but I didn't know anything about, _____ didn't exist then. So we went back to Paris and we found that circumstances were really very bad because even though the war was over, everything was devastated, there was no coal to heat apartments with. There was very little food and so our circumstances didn't appreciably improve when we went back to Paris. We were not sure what to do at this point, but my parents gave me a choice, because they felt that I was still so young, just barely 14 and 15 and I had my whole life in front of me

and I should decide whether we should remain in France or whether we should go to the United States. And I had this very romantic idea, the United States, by that time I had seen a couple of war movies and I just, you know, I had thought everything American was just wonderful so I said, "I want to go the United States." And so we had to put our name on a list and they had a quota and we had to wait until our name reached the top the list and that took two years. So we actually didn't get to leave until 1948. In the meantime we were in Paris and I became ill because you know, lack of nourishment and you know, being run down from the war and I contracted pleurisy and I was very ill for three months. There were no, of course no antibiotics in those days and I was, there was _____ not much help available and it just took me forever to recover from that illness and I had to stay in bed for three months and then when it was over I found out I had lost the ability to walk, I was so weak my legs just wouldn't, wouldn't cooperate and my parents had to support me and I had to learn to walk all over again.

Q: How about your parents, what was their health like?

A: Not great, I mean my mother had always been in poor health and my father had a heart condition, but they kind of managed, but I was the one who, you know, who came down with this thing.

Q: How old, what were their ages?

A: Well they would have been in their early 50's at the time. And so, by some miracle, I got over this very dangerous illness and then my father had found a job working for some movie company because before the war he worked for MGM and

he was writing subtitles, German subtitles for American movies. And somehow, I don't know exactly who was involved, but he had gotten a contract for one year and we were actually able to go to the French Riviera and live there for a year in a _____ villa. And well he did whatever it was that he was supposed to do and that probably was one of the happiest years of my life, because we were living in a gorgeous place and my health improved and that was a very good time for me. And we had met another couple who had been in Auschwitz and they still had the numbers tattoo and they had met there and they were just a few years older, so they were friends that remained when we came to New York. And then after a year we went back to Paris and went through another year there and I didn't do much of anything cause couldn't figure out quite, you know, we were going to leave anyway, there was no point in my doing anything else.

Q: How old were you at this time?

A: Well, then I was 17, just a little over 17. And then finally we got word the word that our name had reached the top of the list, the quota and we could go the United States.

Q: Before you talk about that, talk a little bit about how aware you were of the world at that time, I mean were you, the whole time you were in hiding, did you know that, what was going on?

A: Not much. We had very little news from the outside world because we were just dependent on the clandestine BBC news and we really didn't know very much, but you know, we did find out after, afterward, I mean we had all newspapers and...

Q: Do you remember how, how you felt when you found out what had been going on during the war?

A: No, I just, you know there are, there're gaps in my memory, you know, certain things that I remember vividly and others I don't. So I don't know really, what I thought. I guess, you know we're all so wrapped up in our personal problems and being ill, any kind of, you know, major things are less important probably, that they should have been.

Q: What about religion, you said your family was agnostic.

A: That's right, never was given any religious training and this is something that I very much regretted later on because I felt that if they had given me some type of religious training, whatever, it, it would have reinforced a sense of identity which is something that I lacked, I really didn't know who I was. But as young as I was, all these years you know and even in Vienna was a very little girl, I had an awareness of the existence of God and I don't know how because nobody told me because my parents had a tendency to kind of downplay it and say oh well, you know, it's all myth. And I knew there was a God and I kept searching for God, and...

Q: So at this time, when you were still in France, you still didn't have any real religion?

A: No, nothing, I didn't, you know, I mean here we were supposedly Jewish but my parents had been so assimilated into the dominant culture in Austria that they considered themselves Austrian and not really Jewish at all. As a matter of fact they were almost anti-Jewish because they had formally left the Jewish religion, you know, you can do that and it was just because they were, you know, my father considered

himself to be an intellectual and they just did not believe in anything. And so I didn't know anything about the religion of my ancestors. My grandparents weren't that observant, although probably more than my parents were, but each generation was more observant and that was the irony, that we were persecuted for a faith that we really didn't believe in. But the Nazis didn't make such distinctions. I didn't know anything about Judaism, I didn't know anything about Christianity, I didn't know anything about anything. So, you know, we were told that our name had reached the top of the quota and we had, we have to have a sponsor on this country. Somebody who, in America, somebody who would make sure that you didn't go on welfare when you came here and so. And my uncle and aunt on, my mother's brother and his wife had managed to escape the war and go to America and my uncle was a doctor and he was doing quite well, they were settled and so they said they would sponsor us and so we were able to leave and we had to go by boat and it took nine days to get over there and I remember that we were all deathly ill, I didn't eat anything for nine days, I was terribly seasick and we finally, finally landed in New York on my, in 1948, May, 1948, I was just about 17 and a half at the time and my uncle and aunt were there at the port to meet us and my aunt's first words to us were, "I didn't really want you to come." Because she was that kind of person, she very much, you know her, she did because her husband said, "Well this my sister and her family, we have to." But we were always, as far as they were concerned, the poor relations and she didn't have much respect for us and she didn't want us to come. So this is how we were greeted after Holocaust and all we went through and not only

that but they had a lovely home in Queens, New York, but they didn't put us, they didn't take us there, they took us to a shelter run by the Hius(ph), which was the Hebrew Immigrant Society, downtown New York and so we spent our first night in the new country in a shelter with hundreds of other people on cots. It was not a very good first impression. And then, somehow, my father found us a place to live, just a, you know, a room somewhere and that's how we started. But my aunt was so afraid that, you know, we'd wind up costing her money that she got my mother and me a job in a factory and it was a real sweatshop downtown. It was some friend of hers was owning a factory and, it was a bead factory and we were made to string beads all day long, you know, that kind of thing. It was just horrible and it was very hot. It was May and it was very hot. So this, we were just kind of, is this America? We had this glorified picture and it just didn't turn out at all the way we thought it would be. And my mother and I didn't last very long in the factory. We were fired because we didn't work fast enough. And so we lasted only about two, three days and that was the end of that and then we found a place to live, it was, what in those days they call a railroad apartment, on the very edge of Spanish Harlem, on 98th, East 98th Street. And they were just, you know, one room going to another and it was very primitive, we didn't have any furniture and we went, remember we went to Goodwill Industries and got, just a few pieced of furniture and my father had a really hard time getting work. You know, he was in his 50's and he spoke English somewhat but you know, when you first come here and you're immigrant, nobody's going to hire you and he had to, for a first, I don't know how long, but he, he washed

dishes, he did all those things, you know, just to get some money so we could survive. And the other thing was, you know, as far as I was concerned, I did not speak English. And English is now my third language because I had to learn French first, when we came to France. And so I didn't speak a word of English and yet I knew that it was very important for me to learn if I was ever going to get some work. And I wound up really supporting the family, but I guess I have a, you know, it's easy for me to learn languages and I did learn pretty quickly. So it wasn't that big a problem for me to, to learn a language. And then things got kind of bad because my mother became very ill. She was only in her 50's and she had a stroke, which left her permanently disabled. She had contracted TB during World War 1. And then from that she got a rheumatic heart, so her heart was not very good and she was just a tiny little woman, she was five feet and the most she ever weighed in her life was 90 pounds. And she had the stroke and so she was almost unable to, one side was paralyzed and she had trouble walking, so she was more or less homebound after that.

Q: What about medical care?

A: Well she had a, we went to a doctor that we had known in Vienna, but they didn't have things for people like, you know, as they do now _____. You know, there was no talk of physical rehabilitation, any of those things, we didn't have the money. I mean we would just, basically _____ people. We never did go on welfare but we had no money, we couldn't afford any of those things.

Q: Was she hospitalized?

A: Briefly and then she was just sent home and she managed as well as she could at home. And of course you know we had to, couldn't leave her, we had to take care of her, take turns. So that was, that was kind of really unfortunate. She was really young and she, she really never had a life after that.

Q: Was she aware of what was going on around her?

A: Oh yeah, I mean her mind was never affected, her speech was not affected, her mind, she died at 83 and her mind was clear as a bell, right to the end. And she was never one to feel sorry for herself, she always, you know, managed to ___ herself and you know, keep herself neat. And she had interests, she read, she listened to the radio and she had a lot of friends, so she was very remarkable that way. But her life was just taken away from her basically, at that point. So really my father was still having a lot of problems getting work and it was up to me to support the family. And soon as I learned English, then I started, you know, getting, looking at the classifieds in the paper and I don't know why, to this day I don't know why, but I answered an ad for somebody who wanted a bookkeeper and I'd never done any bookkeeping and math was my worst subject. But I went and it was a company called Home Craftsman in downtown New York. It was a magazine for hobbyists, people who like to putter around, do jigsaws at home and do all those things. And for some inexplicable reason I was hired, but after a few days they realized that I was not a bookkeeper. And the boss said to me, I don't know what you did, you know, in your and of course I had fudged, it was a matter of survival. I didn't like having to do that but it was a matter of survival. I had to pretend that I had experience because I had

to start somewhere. And somehow, I don't know if he felt sorry for me or what but they realized that, you know, I had not quite told the truth, but they kept me and they made me into a mail clerk and so for five years I opened mail, because they had a mail order business and I, and I just separated the orders in neat piles and count the money and the checks at the end of the day. And so I wound up staying with that company for, for five years.

Q: And where were you living?

A: We were still living in, really a tenement on East 98th Street, we still.

Q: And so how would you commute?

A: Subway, take the subway?

Q: Were you making friends at this time?

A: Well, slowly, you know, very slowly. But here, one thing is that we had, we thought that we had left anti-Semitism in the old country and when we came to New York, the first thing that there was some friends that had come, you know, my father's friend and the first thing they told us was to me, you know I was looking for work, don't bother applying to any banks or any insurance companies or IBM because they don't hire Jews. And there were certain places in New York where you couldn't live, because they didn't rent to Jews. And certain resorts where you couldn't go, that were not, that were, so I thought, "Oh, you know, here I thought we left all this behind" and a, so a strange thing happened at this point, I was really almost ashamed of having a Jewish background and so I didn't tell anybody. I told them I was French but I didn't tell them about my background of being a survivor or anything like that

because the Germans had done such a good job of propagandizing and making you feel like you were the scum of that earth, that so, it is so insidious that after a while, you're being told, you know, over these years, you're scum, you're scum, you wind up believing. I said, "Well maybe I am inferior, maybe I'm not good as anybody else." And so I just determined I wasn't going to tell people and you know. And at work nobody knew. The friends, I deliberately went to the YWCA and made friends there, Protestants, Catholics and nobody knew. And I kept this up for a very long, I buried, I buried the past and just forced myself not to think about it and thinking that this would be okay. Of course it didn't work that way, but...

Q: What about your father, did he do the same thing?

A: No, I don't, I don't think, well, cause he never considered himself Jewish. You know, he had friends who knew but I don't think he made a big deal about it, you know, I don't think he went out telling people, you know I'm, no, no, he, he, he was the same way, he kind of downplayed it. And that's, you know, that's what you had to do to be accepted. I didn't really know any Jewish young people my age, all the people I knew, knew Jewish were more or less my father's age, you know, so I didn't have anybody, any connections there. So I worked at this job for five years and then when I felt confident enough, you know, with the English language and everything, I decided I was going to look for something better and I got a job with Kodak, _____ corporation. I don't exactly remember what it was, but it was a step up in salary. I had started, I'd started at, the Home Craftsman and I remember it was 37 dollars a week I was making there. So it was whatever I was getting, it

must have been 45 dollars, but it was a step up. And then, you know, I was just, I still didn't have any formal education but I went to night school, to business school and I learned typing and shorthand and some business English and so that, you know, gave me some type of foundation and then I had some minor jobs but the really, you know, significant job that I eventually had, after a lot of clerical jobs was with the magazine Outdoor Life. And I was doing advertising production there, keeping track of the, the ads that people send and you know the dates that this would appear in a... It was an interesting job and I had, you know, friends there and it was a nice, kind of a nice, it was really a step up at that point. My parents then managed to, my father finally got some work , although it wasn't at all in his line of business. He had, was doing some freelance writing articles for foreign magazines and writing some, you know, just potboiler novels, just, you know, really to pay the rent, they were not at all what he was used to doing. But, you know, we were surviving. Not, not very well, but we were surviving and he managed to upgrade our living quarters. We finally moved to a place on, still on the East Side, on 89th Street. It was another railroad flat and of course in those days you didn't have air conditioning or, you just had plumbing, but that's about it. And heat.

Q: 89th and where?

A: 89th...

Q: Do you remember the address?

A: 418 East 89th Street?

Q: So that's in the German, that's the German neighborhood.

A: Yeah, it was in the, it was called Yorkville, right. And so we lived there for quite, quite a long time. And I was still going to the, to the Y and I made friends there, friends that I have to this day and...

Q: And none of them knew about your hiding during the war?

A: No, no, none of them knew.

Q: Did anybody ask, since they knew you were French, or you told them you were French, what you had done during the war, were they curious or was it just not talked about?

A: No, I just said I was a refugee, you know. And then when I made the kind of friends that I felt I could trust, you know, after I've known them for a long time, then I would tell them and the curious thing is one, one friend was actually German. But he was not, you know, prejudiced or anything. She was a little worried about telling her mother that she had made a Jewish friend and her mother said, "So what?" you know, so that was good. So little by little, you know, it's like I came out. But I was very cautious who I told, you know and I was, I had to be absolutely sure that those people weren't going to turn around, because I had this bad experience, I was traumatized in Vienna, when the Nazis passed, when the Nazis took over Austria, 1938 and passed the racial laws and I was in public school at the time and I saw how these kids, just from one day to the next, turn against me. People who had been my friends, my classmates outside of school and then suddenly they started calling me names, dirty Jew and they'd spit when I walked by and you know, to me a seven year old, was so hard to understand why kids would be that way, from one day to the next.

Just because their parents were Nazi sympathizers and they told them, you know, you don't want to have anything to do with Jews. And as young as I was, I must have realized some, on some level, that prejudice is not something that, you know, you're not born with it, it's something that is acquired, it is learned, it's a learned behavior and it can be unlearned. But I saw _____ stare where suddenly friends turned into enemies, so that's why I think I'm so careful. Cause I didn't want to be rejected again. It was very normal, I was a young girl and I had great hopes for my future and I wanted to put everything behind me and I wanted to be so desperately...[end of side 1, tape 1]. I was very careful about what, who I told, because I did not want to face the rejection I had faced as a child in Vienna and a, because at that point I wanted to put the past behind me and I desperately just wanted to find some happiness.

Q: Now what about the relatives, did you ever see them again? Your aunt and uncle and didn't you also have grandparents?

A: Yes, well, I was going to come to that, you know, where we were still in France and it was actually after the liberation, that a gentile friend of ours who had remained in Vienna, somehow got word that my father's mother had been deported, that they had the Nazis, the Gestapo had come to our house in Vienna looking for my father and when they realized that we had already fled, as a reprisal I suppose, they went to his parents house in, on the outskirts of Vienna and took my grandmother away, she was 76 years old and they took her to the camp of Theresienstadt where, we were told, that she had died and when they came, my, my, when they came to take

her, my grandfather, who was about the same age, had a stroke and he eventually died. And I remember that this was a terrible thing for my father, the day we got the news, the letter, he just walked out by himself into the woods and he stayed there for many hours because he felt he had to be alone with his thoughts and it was just, it was just a terrible, terrible experience. And then, you know, in the time that I was in New York and I had managed, you know, to improve my living _____ with the various jobs I have and at one point I was able to go back there to, to Austria. And my aunt and cousin were still living in Vienna and they had somehow escaped deportation because my aunt had been married, if only very briefly, to a gentile, whom she divorced. But in those days, if you were just half, you know, married to a gentile and your child, my cousin, was two years older than I, was half Jewish, that protected you. And they were made to do, you know, forced labor, in Vienna itself, you know, cleaning streets, doing that kind of thing, but they were not deported. And so I went, I went to see them and then she told me the circumstances of how my grandmother was taken away and how she, she begged the Nazis not to take her because she said, you know, she had a bad heart and she was 76 years old and said please, she begged and pleaded and of course they didn't pay any attention. And she told me how my grandmother was screaming when they took her away and that was just, to me it was just like somebody stabbed me in the heart. And that picture stayed with me and so then, when I got back to New York, this was haunting me, I kept thinking about my grandmother screaming and that's all, I was, became an obsession. And then I got the feeling that I wasn't entitled to be happy. And I actually came up with,

you know what later has been identified by psychologists as survivors guilt. I actually felt guilty for having survived when my grandmother didn't. And I thought, I have no right to be happy. And so any time a little bit of happiness came my way, I felt bad about it, I said, "I don't, I don't have any right to feel that." And this took a long time and you know I, I didn't know that this was a psychological problem or this was a syndrome, I mean this is how I felt and it took me years and years to get over that. I finally did and nobody helped me with it, I just finally came to realization that it wasn't my fault. But I think that that was the start of it. And you know, it leaves, the whole years leave psychological scars. I had an anxiety syndrome, you know, when we were already in New York and I would see, you know, policemen in the street, anything, a uniform, you know, you get, you startle, you just freeze because you're so used to seeing uniforms as belonging to the SR, the SS, as a menace. And it's a reaction that you can't help and also if we were at home and somebody unexpectedly rang a doorbell or knocked on a door, I would start shaking and my heart would pound like crazy, I just froze. Because you know, there's that knock on the door and even though we knew we were now in America and we were safe, you retain that and it doesn't leave that quickly.

Q: Did your parents also have the same reaction?

A: Probably but maybe not, because I was lot more impressionable and a lot younger, you know.

Q: Did you verbalize what you were feeling or did you keep it to yourself?

A: No, I think I told them, they knew, you know, what was going on. And then, unfortunately, some bad things happened when we were still living in our first tenement, because of course we didn't have any air conditioning or fans and we had to leave the windows open at night in the summertime and one night I was in my, in my bedroom and a man came in and I don't know, he crawled into, to the courtyard and I just woke up with a hand around my throat and a hand on my mouth. And I managed to wrench it free and scream and my parents came running. The man fled, but that was just another thing that shook me up, right after, you know, all this business, so I steadily, you know, went downhill after that. Psychologically, I went really, you know, I had these terrible anxiety attacks and I had to force myself to, just to function. You know, that took a very long time.

Q: Meanwhile, the people at your office, they didn't, were they aware of what was happening?

A: No, because I did, I was a pretty good actress, you know, I managed to, to keep things and I managed to function and then I'd fall apart, you know. Then, let's see, then I got another, oh yeah, I was working for Outdoor Life, okay and...

Q: Where were those offices, do you remember?

A: It was midtown and I don't exactly know where. It was in the 30's I think, midtown.

Q: During this time, were you taking advantage of the culture in New York? Were your parents, your father was definitely a cultured person.

A: Right, right. Well, you know, as much as I could, you know, I went to movies and, but you know, I still didn't have any money because I wasn't making that much, you

know, women especially weren't paid very well, office people. And whatever I made, whatever extra, I had to give to my parents, you know, for food and _____. Cause I still was, was living with them so I had very little spare money and of course there were free concerts sometimes and in those days you could still go out at night and ride the subways, which you can't do now. And I, I suppose, yes, I, but you know, I couldn't go to Broadway or anything like that, it was...

Q: But what about museums?

A: Museums yes, you know, I went to museums and went to some little trips with the YWCA, they had a camp in Pauling(ph) and so we went _____. The only trip that I did take is the one in 1956 where I just saved and saved and saved, you know from, like basically from 1948 til, til I got the money together for the trip and that was the big thing and I wanted to go back but when I did go back to Vienna, I didn't want to see the place where we had lived and I just, you know, visited my cousin and I felt really a stranger in Vienna, it was, to me was like a dead city. I didn't feel any emotional connection with it any more.

Q: What about the aunt that lived in Queens, your, did you have anything _____ with them?

A: Well, we had very little contact because they had treated us so badly and they didn't help us in any way, I mean they knew we were hard up and we didn't have any furniture and we didn't have clothes and we didn't have money and they never offered to do anything. They felt they did their job, they sponsored us, they got us here and that was the end of it. And then they wind up treating my grandfather the same way.

He is my mother's father, he had managed to go to London, just at the outset of war and then came here and they wound up putting him in a nursing home, in one of the worst nursing homes in New York City, so, and he was a person who had done so much for them. And so they were just bad people, you know and we had very little, very little contact with them. I went, I joined a, I've, you know I went into, I was meeting some people but, you know, I had dates, but there wasn't anything, you know, spectacular. And I wound up going to the Unitarian church, All Souls Unitarian Church, New York City. They had a young people's group and I just went there to have a little more intellectual atmosphere and that's where I met my future husband. They had, this was just before Thanksgiving, they had a dance and I met him there. And that was in November of 1958. And his story was just so totally different from mine, I mean, we, we had come really, literally from the ends of the world, opposite ends of the world and met. It was very, very strange. He had, his name was William. Bill, we called him Bill and he had been raised in the Philippine Islands, he was actually born in San Francisco but he was raised in the Philippines because his father was an officer in the army there. He was a lieutenant colonel in the Philippine Scouts, he was in charge of native troops there in the Philippines, you know and this the time of MacArthur and so on, Eisenhower _____. And so my husband had a sister who was a year older, his mother and father all lived in the Philippines and he lived there until Pearl Harbor, he was about 17 at the time. And then when, at Pearl Harbor the family was evacuated back to the States, mother had a, was originally from Kansas, she was from Wichita and so my husband, my

future husband and his sister and mother came back to the United States while his father remained in the Philippines and then later the family got word that he had been made prisoner of war of the Japanese and he wound up dying in Japanese prison of war camp. So my husband had a, you know, traumatic experiences in his life, very, very, at a very young age too. And then when they went back to Wichita he, he joined the service, he went in first in the Army Air Corps and then in the Marines, he kept enlisting, just so that, you know, he just wanted to do something for his country and he wanted to get away from this, you know, memory of this father, you know, he didn't want to deal with it. And then somehow he wound up in, in New York City where, where we met. But his family were as WASP as you can get. His father had traced an ancestor who had actually come over on the Mayflower. They were, you know, Episcopalian, Republicans and very anti-Semitic, because of one incident in the camp, one Jewish officer they'd had some fight with and they decide all Jewish people were bad, so he had come from this environment but then, he inherited some money from when his mother died in 50's, in Wichita and he was able to travel around the world, literally around the world and he was able to broaden his mind and to meet all different cultures and, and then he just shed all those prejudices that he had when he was younger so by the time he met me, you know, he didn't have any prejudice and he went to the Unitarian place because he thought, well he was very liberal, by that time he'd become liberal in his politics and so on. This is the place to be. But you know, I was afraid to tell him about my background because here was a man that I really cared about and I was afraid again that if he'd found out I was Jewish he

would drop me like a hot potato, so I didn't say anything. And it wasn't, so that was November, we got engaged in May of '59.

Q: You still hadn't told him about yourself?

A: No and we got married on August eighth, in New York, in the Unitarian church and just a few people, friends and you know, my mother and father _____. And it wasn't til we were married for several months that I finally told him.

Q: Was this something that was worrying you a lot the whole time?

A: Yeah, yeah. And I finally told him and he said, and I figured, well now he's married me, he can't just divorce me for _____. And he said, "I know. I've known all along." Because there was one person there, it was a young man my age, you know, we had grown up together in Vienna and he was the only one from the other side that I knew. And I had introduced Bill to him and at some point he told Bill about my background. But Bill never said anything to me about it, he figured well when I was ready, I would say so. So then, when I thought was a big surprise, he said, "I know. Tom told me."

Q: Now this is someone that he had met at the wedding or even before that?

A: No, even before that. You know, when we were engaged, I introduced him to a few friends that I had. So he wasn't at all surprised and that was the end of it, that was the end of it. And so after that, you know, I started being much more open about it, although his sister, who still lived in, she had moved to Liberal(ph) Kansas at that time and she was still not crazy about, you know, he didn't want to, he didn't want to tell his sister he'd married a Jewish girl, and...

Q: What, what about his parents or his mom?

A: Well his mom had died before he ever met me, so she was gone, yeah. So we got married in '59 and...

Q: And you were living where? In New York?

A: I was living New York and I was still working for Outdoor Life and he had just, he was out of work at the moment and so _____ supporting the two _____, two of us. And then we finally, he got some work and we finally were able to, I moved into his apartment, he had an apartment in the Bronx, which, a five floor walk-up which very, you know, very primitive.

Q: Did you have to continue to support your parents?

A: No, at this point, not. They had, my father was making sufficient money at the time. He had gradually worked his way up and to the point where he wound up going into partnership with some guy and they have little advertising agencies, agency and they were doing publicity for movies, something like that. So, by no means, you know, doing very well, but enough to, to support themselves and so. And so my husband and I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't have been able to support them because we had just, we weren't making that much money between us, just enough for us to get a little place, so the first place, nicer place we had was again, it was on 88th Street, 88th, well 84th Street, close to the East River in New York City. Just a one room apartment, that was it. And this went on for awhile and then we got, restless. We were dissatisfied with our jobs, we felt they were dead end jobs.

Q: This is in 1959?

A: Well this would be now going in the 60's already and we just felt, you know, there was no future and we wanted to go somewhere else. We never did like living in a big city and so we thought we would try our luck elsewhere and we sent for different folders and wound up going west and it turned out to be a disaster because there was no work there.

Q: Where?

A: Where we, we, for some reason we decided to go to the state of Washington. Spokane and Seattle and there was no work there. So that was sort of a disastrous move because we had given up our apartment in New York. But you know, we were still fairly young. My husband was six years older than I was, so. But we were still resilient enough to cope with whatever came our way. We wound up, in this trek, in San Francisco and couldn't find work there because they didn't want to hire somebody just arrived, you know. And so finally, what we wind up doing is my husband had gone to the University of Kansas, in Lawrence and he had, he was only shy a few credits to get a BA. and so he decided we'd go back to the University, get, to try to get readmitted and if he had his BA., he felt he would improve his chances of getting a better job and so that's what we did. That was 1962 and we came to Lawrence and he enrolled at the University. I worked at the library, Watson Library at the University of Kansas and again we lived under very precarious circumstance. We didn't have much money and we were living in a rooming house. Before one year and he got his degree.

Q: When, what year?

A: That was in 1962. And then we went back to New York, we figured okay, now he has a BA., maybe we can find something else and by some fluke, he found work in a private school in New York city, that dealt with emotionally disturbed youngsters.

Q: What school?

A: Searing(ph) School. And he was teaching history and math there. And I was working at the time, I'd gotten another job at Harold Orum(ph) corporation, incorporated, it was a public relations firm, but it was just something to tide us over because I was on the switchboard, you know, nothing really great. And this Searing(ph) School had a boarding school in upstate New York, in Westchester County, for boys. And then one day the principal called him, my husband in and said, "Your wife is from, from Europe, isn't she?" And he said, "Yes." "Well we need somebody in our boarding school, we need some teachers in our boarding school and in Soamers(ph) New York and we need a Latin teacher and your wife's from Europe, she knows Latin, doesn't she?" And he said, "Oh, sure." Never, never learned Latin, nothing, cause with that, that one year that was in Unsee(ph), you know, right after the war, in the ninth grade, I took English, not that it helped any, but I was more interested in Latin, so he said, "Oh, yeah." So he came home and told me this and I said, "Are you crazy?" I said, "I don't know Latin." He said, "Oh, well I brought you some books, you can learn." And he brought me some grammar books and I sat there night after night teaching myself the verbs and the conjugations and so. And I taught myself two years of Latin, just be myself. And I was hired, the woman never asked to see any papers. We wound up in the boarding school for

boys and I taught Latin. And then I wound up teaching, because it was more a tutorial school, so it was very one on one or at the most, two or three and then here I am, an Austrian, you know, English is my third language, but what do I teach? English. Because I was good in grammar. Because you know, you have to have all these languages, so grammar was a cinch for me. And that's what they needed. And I had to get kids ready for the SATs and the grammar was an important thing and composition, I was good at that, I could always write. So that was fine. So I did quite well and we did, we stayed there for two years.

Q: Now you had no degree?

A: No, nothing.

Q: At all? And you were teaching Latin and then English.

A: Right.

Q: It's incredible.

A: And really making out, I mean my reputation was made. The kids were passing the tests with flying colors. And these were emotionally disturbed kids who had a learning, they had learning disabilities, they had dyslexia, you name it.

Q: And back in those days, it wasn't even defined yet.

A: No. And yet those kids were doing okay, so.

Q: Did you enjoy this?

A: Oh yeah, very much, I mean this was something that, you know, I didn't know I had it in me to be a teacher, but I identified with the kids because I was pretty messed up myself psychologically and you know, it was something I could identify with and I

guess it takes a lot of patience to do this. You know, I mean, if you make very, very slow progress. But I enjoyed it, yes, it was...

Q: Now you were in your 40's?

A: Yeah, 30's, my...

Q: Had you and your husband decided at that point about children?

A: No, we talked about it and then, you know, I was always very nervous and my husband was nervous and we said, "No, we too nervous to have kids." And you know, I was already 29 when we got married and then of course, finances were so tight that we couldn't afford to have it, you know, would have been a catastrophe. And then it got to be too late, you know, in your middle 30's it gets a little risky so we kind of, you know, decided that was not, that was not for us.

Q: So was working with children, was that a good feeling for you, to have that experience?

A: Yeah, it was a good feeling, it would, you know, there were, you know, high school age, I mean I had some that were a little younger than that but they were basically between 13 and 18 boys and girls too, later on, so. And we were given our quarters in the boarding school, then we were house parents and I enjoyed that, it was good experience. And then, then somehow, you know there are some gaps, but somehow we decided we, after two years, we'd had enough of this, you know, scene and my husband decided to go back to Kansas to get a degree in education, cause he...

Q: And your parents are still living in New York?

A: My parents are still living in New York. And so in 1965, we came back to Lawrence, Kansas. My husband enrolled for his, gets his education degree, I went back to work at the library. And that's at the point where, you know, people always ask me, "Why did you come to Lawrence?" You know, and I said, because we had ties here, we liked Lawrence and I always, you know, I'd lived in a lot of great capitals of the world, Paris, Vienna, New York and yet I never was comfortable living in a big city because I think from the days when I lived with, at the priest's house, you know, in the mountaintops and I got used to being close to nature and I always felt like a fish out of water in the big city and the noise, I became extra, extra sensitive to noise. Everything just bothered me, I couldn't sleep at night and I just wanted away, I just wanted a quiet life so Lawrence was perfect. Even though we didn't have any money and we lived in a rooming house, but we could walk everywhere and we read a lot and you know, it was, it was pretty good. But then unfortunately we got the news from New York that my father was dying of lung cancer, because he had been a smoker all his life, from the time he was 15 and the only time he couldn't smoke was during the war, but he started right after and he got lung cancer and he was hopeless and then we got word he was dying. So we had to go back to New York, temporarily and get my mother, cause my mother was totally helpless by that time because of a stroke and we had to liquidate the apartment and then bring my mother back with us. She didn't have heat, he, he left nothing. He had never, there was hardly, a little bit of Social Security but otherwise, he didn't have his savings or anything so she was just basically left destitute. And so we took her back on the

plane with us and here we were in two tiny rooms and, and you know, three people and a cat, we had to bring the cat, too. So we lived that way for awhile and then my husband got his education degree and he got a job in New Mexico in a place called Alimagordo(ph) and teaching history in high school and it was a strange thing because he had been stationed there when he was in the army air corps, training on a missile base there. So it was...

Q: _____ not hit the, this part, because _____.

A: Yeah. So we, somehow he, he got a job at teaching high school in New Mexico, so we went New Mexico and lived there for a year.

Q: With your mother?

A: With my mother.

Q: But then we couldn't stay there because the climate didn't agree with my husband. He was coughing all the time _____, probably the sand, there was a lot of sand, dust storms and he just couldn't take that and also at school it was very, very conservative terrain there and he was never one who could keep his thoughts about history to himself, his liberal thoughts so he got in trouble and actually his life was threatened and you know, and we decided we couldn't stay there. And so again at this point, we didn't know what to do. And I was working at the public library in New Mexico in Alimagordo(ph).

Q: Were you afraid then, when, when that happened?

A: Yeah, we were afraid, yeah we were afraid.

Q: Do you want to talk about that at all?

A: Yeah, we were just scared all the time, they had come and during the night and let the air out of the tires our car and...

Q: Because of his political beliefs?

A: Yeah, right.

Q: Was, it was a very conservative area?

A: Very John Birch, yeah. And in, you know and they just, there, they were just, their minds are closed and we knew that we weren't safe there.

Q: Did they know your background?

A: No. No, because there was, my husband, you know, that's. And so then somehow, when I was working at the library, I found out that...

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

Q: And then you were working in the library?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Go ahead.

A: While I was working at the public library in Alimagordo(ph), New Mexico, I found out that New York City was looking for social workers in the welfare department and all that was required was a BA. degree. So I told my husband about it and he thought it sounded good, it was certainly worth taking a chance, so we left New Mexico at the end of the school year and drove back to New York City. My husband went to the Department of Welfare and got hired immediately as a social worker. And this, this was a very, very good move, because just shortly after that, the city of New York froze all new hiring and he got in just under the wire and he wound up working for the department for 19 years. First he worked in welfare centers and then he worked as a case worker, he became a supervisor and worked with, in, in hotels, welfare hotels where they put families who had been burned out and he saw to their, their need, whatever, you know, they required, he would get for them and he enjoyed this type of work, it's like, we were very, very much alike in that respect, that he, he was happy when he was with people, he was very outgoing, he liked the idea of helping people, it appealed to his sense of altruism and so for him it was a good move, the benefits were good and finally for the first time in our married lives, we were able to live a little better than we had heretofore and as for me, I, of course my

mother was still with us and we were all, at that point we were living in Greenwich Village and we had two apartments side by side on Sullivan Street.

Q: What year was this?

A: This would have been 1967. I went back to the Searing(ph) School in New York City and asked them if they would rehire me and they said yes and so I wound up going with not Latin, but I taught French and German and English there. And...

Q: And they still never, did they know at the time that you had no degrees?

A: No.

Q: But it wasn't an issue?

A: It wasn't an issue because all they cared about, since they were a private school, they didn't have to, you know, there was no certification and they knew I was qualified, probably better than some people who did have degrees and that's all they cared about, that I could do the work. And I wound up staying there for 10 years, in that school. Just, again, just doing the same thing, working with emotionally disturbed kids. And we were able then to get, with two salaries coming in, steady work coming in, we were able to get a better apartment and we moved to the Bronx, to a very nice building on the Grand Concourse, which was really a step. Even though it wasn't Manhattan, we could not have afforded the rents for a decent apartment in Manhattan and at the time, Bronx was still pretty nice and we had a two bedroom apartment, my mother had her own room and her own bathroom and it was, it was, it was a nice and we were comfortable there. So that's how things went on, my husband working at the welfare department. Sometimes it was, it was

dangerous work because he'd sometimes, he'd be called away at night. And I was, I was, I was worried about him a lot of times, that who knows what might happen. And then in, so this went all through the, nothing really, you know, special happened. We were able to make a couple trips together back to, to Austria and to France and to England.

Q: What was it like going to France? Did you go to the countryside _____ in southern France?

A: Yes, well I wanted, it was very important for me to show my husband all the places where I had lived during the war and so we wound up really retracing all this. And I had remained friends and in correspondence all these years with a man and his wife who were the school teacher in the little one room school house in San Marten(ph) on top of the mountaintop. And he was just 10 years older than I was. And meanwhile they had moved to the town of Antsee(ph) and so we had been in correspondence and my husband and I looked them up and we stayed with them and were received very well. Of course the priest had died by then and we met the new priest, who really didn't know that much about us. And we went to Vienna and my cousin, my, my husband met my cousin and we went to Paris where I just had a couple friends, no relatives and we went down to southern France and we went where we never did go to the village where we, we stayed during the war, we just, it was, we had picked the wrong time of year and it was so death, really hot, that we just couldn't take the heat and so that's one place we didn't go to but we traced all the other places I had lived and it was very important. I couldn't go back to the

Philippines to see where he had lived but at least he could see where I had lived, so that, that kind of helped.

Q: What did it feel like seeing this place again?

A: Well it was, it was very emotional and you know when you, whenever we've been back to the mountaintop, things are not quite the same as I had remembered them. You know, things change and, but you, it was an emotional meeting with all those people and I had occasion to make more of these trips and each time, you know, the old feelings were there, they all came back.

Q: Your mom, she stayed at home?

A: Yeah, she stayed at home. She was able to make one trip back, in the 70's, I don't recall exactly what date, but I managed to get her back to Vienna because I knew my aunt was pretty elderly by that time and ill with emphysema and my mother was of course not in good shape either and we thought this would probably the very last time that these two women would, sisters-in-law would get to see each other. So somehow I managed, my mother and I went and my husband stayed behind in New York, you know I, by means of getting wheel chairs for her at airports, I got her there and it was a very emotional reunion in Vienna with her sister-in-law and we wound up staying in a little resort, a mountain in Austria and had a really nice time and my aunt died just about maybe a year later, so they had just, you know, able to see each other. Then in, in 1983, my mother died. She, her health had been _____, she'd been seeing a doctor regularly and she was taking medication. She had high blood pressure, which had caused her, her stroke in the

first place. She had been taking medication for heart _____ blood pressure, but after all, she was 82 and her health had deteriorated, she had congestive heart failure, she was hospitalized briefly and then just, the eve before my birthday, on October 26, 1983, I walked in her room, as I did every morning to say goodbye to her before I went to work and I found her dead in her bed. And so she was 82 in '83, so that was, that was a shock, because we had, we had always been rather close and you know, the whole circumstances of her death, which is pretty traumatic. And so we had a little, you know, memorial service, invited her friends and, and she was cremated and so my husband and I were just the only ones left. And then after that things started going downhill for me, I had always suffered from anxieties and sometimes they were so severe I had the feeling I was choking in the middle of the night and couldn't breathe and he'd have to rush me to the emergency and I was put on tranquilizers, but then I started getting more and more depressed and I realized that, really afterward I realized that I'd always had a tendency, it tend to run in our family on my mother's side, but that I had never really been totally happy no matter what the circumstances were but I thought that was normal because I had no, I had no gauge. But I know that, the first thing was, I was, I couldn't sleep at night and the less I could sleep the worse it got and was really hard for me to function and work. Oh, I have to backtrack a little bit, I worked at the Searing(ph) School as I said, for 10 years and then something else very bad happened. The owner died and the school was sold and all the teachers, everybody was out the street. We had no place to go, we were jobless...

Q: When was this?

A: This would have been in 1975. And so this was a shock, as I had liked the job and suddenly here we were, all out without jobs on the street and so at this point, I decided I need to upgrade my, my office skills and I went and took a course in speedwriting and passed that and then I, I saw a job that was advertised at Smithsonian Magazine, which was, they had their offices in New York City, they had their advertising, promotional services and circulation offices in New York City. The main office, editorial was in Washington D.C., but they were putting out the Smithsonian Magazine in New York. So I applied, the job was for an executive secretary and I got the job. And so I became secretary to the associate publisher and I was also in, they also put me in charge of customer service and I was conducting all the correspondence of the, client correspondence for Smithsonian Magazine and in a way it was probably the best job I ever had, the money was good, benefits were good, it was semi, semi-civil service. But the atmosphere, the working atmosphere was the best I had had because everybody was educated and it was a mix, you know and there were a lot of gay people there and Orientals and it was just, it was just a great, stimulating atmosphere. And I wound up working there from 1976 to 1985. But...

Q: So you were working there when your mom passed away?

A: Yeah, right. But as I said, I started getting more and more depressed, I couldn't sleep and we went to see all kinds of doctors and started getting anti-depressants, which just didn't work. And I was going downhill. I wouldn't eat, my weight dropped

and finally had to be hospitalized for depression and you know, I'd often thought, why was it, it's so easy, would be very easy to say well the war did it. I think that probably I had it in my jeans because I said I had depression on, on, on my mother's side, some relatives, but I think it probably needed a trigger and it probably, that the war, you know, acted as a trigger and brought it all out. And I always had a tendency to react to things many months after the event, you know. So it's hard to say and I know that in my case it was a chemical imbalance, you know, hormonal imbalance, but I was not responding to the, to the drugs and I was just doing worse.

Q: What about therapy?

A: Well, like psychotherapy or something? I was seeing this guy who was supposed to be a psychiatrist but he never helped me that I could see it, you know, I mean he just didn't do anything, it just kept getting worse and worse and worse.

Q: Was he going back to your past or?

A: Not really, he was not, he was not of the, the school, the analytical school of Freud where you go back to your past, he wasn't really interested in my past, he was just interested in dealing with the present, you know. And he, he was just not very effective, I don't think. And...

Q: How was your husband during all this time, was he understanding?

A: Well, yeah, but he had, unfortunately he had problems of his own, he had become an alcoholic and he was in his world and I think that probably also triggered it because as long as my mother was alive, I felt I had an ally there, I had a friend, somebody I could talk to and when she died I felt all alone. He was in his alcoholic haze, he

managed to function but then he would just drink throughout the weekend and things, you know, our marriage started to go downhill. We had had a very close marriage and things just started disintegrating. And I reached a point, you know, together with the depression where I felt that there was nothing more for me to live for. I had, we didn't have many friends because then, the Bronx became sort of bad area. People were afraid to visit us at night and we were isolated. We were just really isolated. The only contact I had with the outside world was people at work and then you got home and _____.

Q: Did the people at work know what was going on?

A: Yeah. And my boss was very understanding. She tried to get help for my husband and she, she really, she was just absolutely wonderful, she, I must say, she was just the most understanding boss I ever had. But things were just, I mean they were just so, so bad, cause my husband couldn't deal with my illness because of his own addiction.

Q: Was he working?

A: He was working and at one point he was sent for, away, you know, to try to get alcohol rehabilitation and it didn't work. It didn't work. He was carrying some emotional baggage on his end because of his father having been killed and it, it came out in him too. So we were both living in our own miserable worlds. And so you know, they reached a point where I couldn't work any more and they told me that, you know, you just can't work any more and I had to leave my job because it was impossible for me to concentrated because I couldn't sleep at night so I was of course

totally zonked out during the day. And I just had, and the job was getting more demanding because of customer service, I would deal with angry people all day long and the pressure, I couldn't take pressure, that's one thing I've never been able to take is pressure, any kind of pressure, since the war. So this didn't work out and my boss was very understanding, she managed to get me on disability and so then, that was in 1985 and so then I remained alone at home, my husband went to work, I had lost a job I liked, I had no contact with anybody, was all alone on the 10th floor in an apartment all day and, and I, and I was constantly thinking about doing away with myself which I now realize is one of the classic symptoms of a major depression. And one day I actually did, I, I and I have to say, I wrestled with that because somehow I felt, well if there was a God, he wouldn't be very happy and I felt it was like throwing my life back at Him and that I would pay for it but I was and in such a state that I just didn't think I could live the way I did. So one day while my husband was work, I went in the bathtub and slit my wrists. And he found me there when he came home and of course I had left the apartment, left and hid in the stairwell and the police found me there and took me to the hospital and it was after that that I was taken to the hospital and got shock treatments but they were not effective. They were using and for a hospital was, Mount, no, Beth Israel Hospital in New York City and for a New York Hospital they used really antiquated methods.

Q: This was in 198-?

A: Oh this was, would have been in '85, mm-hm. They didn't treat me like a human being, they strapped me on a metal slab and they and they used no injections, nothing, I was aware what was going on, it was just horrible, it was like the snake pit.

Q: Was there an over, a doctor overseeing your treatment?

A: Yeah, that, supposedly that doctor that I was seeing, but it was not and, and the funny thing, one recollection I have, because by that time I was getting paranoid too, I mean everybody was out to get me and I remember when I was going for these in the hospital, one doctor came up to me and said to me, "I hear that you're a holocaust survivor" and I imagined that he said it as a, in an accusing way, you know and I kind of just pulled back and didn't say anything and I don't know why he said that, guess he was trying to probably find out whether that had anything, get me to talk, but I clammed up and, because I was so paranoid, I thought, "Oh this man is, you know, he's going to kill me, he's like Hitler." So I didn't say anything. And so the shock treatments didn't work, I was sent home.

Q: How many, you remember the shock treatments?

A: Yeah, oh golly yes, I had 10 and 10, you know. And I was in and out of the hospitals and then, so I came home and I was worse off than before.

Q: Did you have any friends from work that were visiting you?

A: No, they would call but I wouldn't answer anybody. I would take the phone off the hook and the few friends that I had finally gave up because they couldn't get ahold of me, I did not want to talk to anybody. I was totally, totally paranoid. And then, you know, here I was back at home, all by myself, totally isolate, my husband was getting

worse, of course because that of course, must have been a terrible shock for him, I mean. So he had more excuse. And so I thought, well didn't work the first time, got to try again. So I made another attempt. And this time I decided I would do it out of the house, so I had saved up sleeping pills, I had carefully saved them up til I thought I had enough to kill myself and I took a bottle of sherry, checked myself into a hotel in downtown Manhattan, under an assumed name. Took the whole bottle of pills, drank the bottle of sherry and was absolutely convinced that this had to do it. Well I woke up in Belleview Hospital in the emergency room again and I don't know, it's a miracle, not only that I'm alive, but my mind is intact. It's just absolutely a miracle. And I'm, the only thing I remember is the doctors there were trying to tell me to say who I was, so they could contact somebody and I wouldn't tell them. And he finally wormed it out of me, a phone number and he called my husband, he came over and, so I was hospitalized, I got aspiration pneumonia, you know, from this old stuff. And then of course I had, when I got home, I had to go back for shock treatments again, they didn't work. So...

Q: How did your husband deal with this?

A: Not well, I mean he just, he kind of fell apart, he really, he just totally fell apart and he, he was begging me, he said, "Eva, I can't deal with this." And when I wouldn't eat, I mean he was so totally, he had no comprehension really, when I wouldn't eat, because I couldn't eat, he would go to balcony and threaten to jump, you know, things like that. I mean he would just respond totally inappropriately because he didn't know, he didn't know how to deal with it. He had no

_____ and he had his own problem and it was just a terrible mess. And so finally we decided we couldn't stay in New York any more, that it was killing us. Because I wasn't making any money any more, I was just getting this little disability check, but that didn't come for I think six months, you know, so. And so we decided that our only salvation was to move out of New York and go back to Lawrence, Kansas, where we felt safe. And my husband by that time, you know, he had worked for the welfare for 19 years and he took early retirement, he was 62 at the time, so he took early retirement. And we just, you know, got rid of our furniture and took what we could and packed up things and he had a book collection cause he was, history, military history was his passion and we had 3,000 books, history books, so he all packed and sent out. And somehow, you know, I was just out of the hospital, it was in June of '86 and we managed to, to come back, to go back to Kansas and we found a place, an apartment for rent. But when I was here already, then things went even farther, deteriorated with me, cause I didn't know anybody here.

Q: Well you had never resolved...

A: No, no.

Q: You were going through the death of your mother...

A: Right, right.

Q: ...and all that stuff, that you had never resolved that.

A: No. And all the other stuff. And then the added pressure of living with an alcoholic, which is enough to test anybody's sanity, somebody who, whom you loved

and who you watched destroy himself day after day after day. It was just, there were too many pressures building up that I couldn't deal with. And so here we were in Lawrence and I started getting worse, I was hospitalized again and then I was totally, totally, I mean, I think another one of the symptoms is inability to make decisions. I could not make the simplest decisions, what, what to wear or what to eat. I couldn't go to a supermarket and pick out a single item, I mean it was just impossible, because you couldn't concentrate. And you know, you wake up in the morning and you feel like you have this huge, like a stone on your chest and you can't get up.

Q: You weren't taking any medication?

A: No, by that time I wasn't taking any medication and I got to be, I mean my normal weight is like 145 or so, I was down to 80 pounds, cause I couldn't eat and I was so weak and I was, everybody was out to kill me. If my, if we went to a fast food store, I was, I was convinced that they were putting rat poison in my hamburgers, you know, so.

Q: Were you seeing doctors here?

A: Not at first, no. Until it got so bad and my husband felt I was going to die and I was hospitalized and that didn't, they didn't do anything for me here in Lawrence. I mean they were not equipped and then finally on my husband's insistence, I was transferred to the Kansas City Medical Center, KU- Med(ph) and finally, there, they started shock treatments again and this time they were state of the art, they gave you muscle relaxant, they put you out and they worked. And I started coming around, it was like a miracle. After 10, 10 shots or so, I was coming around and I had some

very good doctors, very understanding people. So I was coming out of depression and, but then, you know, my legs had swelled up terribly when I was in _____ hospital, he had never caught it. And so when they thought I could take it, they told me that I had a deep venous thrombosis, which is a blood clot in my leg and they were so afraid it was going to go to my lung, so I had to be, remain the hospital although the depression was waning and I would have been able, but I was immobilized for another three weeks and given blood clot dissolvers and, and then, if that wasn't enough, then the doctor came to me one day and then kept taking blood and I thought, why are they taking so much blood and the doctor said I had a hemolytic anemia and I didn't know what that was, but two of my uncles on my mother's side had died of leukemia when they were in their 30's and I was absolutely sure that's what I had and they weren't telling me the truth. So I said, "Is it leukemia?" No, but they said it's a disease that causes the destruction of red blood cells, there was no, it was either acquired or inherited and there was no cure. So I thought, fine, you know, this is great. Got a blood clot, I got a fatal disease, this is just what I needed, you know. And so at this point I said, okay, is the first time I think I said, "All right, I am not in control," and I talked to God, really and I said, "I'm put myself in your hands and do what you will, I, you know I mainly, I give up, it's your turn." And so they kept taking blood and then one day they came in they were shaking their heads, they said, we can't understand it, because your blood pictures is returning to normal. Your red cells are increasing and we don't know why. They just couldn't understand. And after a week I got well enough to leave and they

wanted me to come back and have blood tests, you know, to make sure, because they, they thought oh, this is a fluke and I came back a month later and there was no evidence of the disease, it was gone. And meanwhile, I had to have follow up for the blood clot, you know, here in Lawrence, but that was, that was okay, and eventually that was kind of all right and then they wanted me to have follow up therapy, psycho-therapy for the depression and I went a couple times and I thought, "I don't need this, I'm fine." You know?

[end of side 1 of tape 2]

Q: All this time...

A: Yeah.

Q: You said that you didn't need the psychotherapy.

A: I didn't need the psychotherapy, I felt that I could deal with, with things, I had to deal with things on my own and you know, this has been, we're now, in 1996 and this was 1986, I have not taken any medication since, no tranquilizer, no anti-depressant, I have not had any psychotherapy and I have been fine for 10 years. They didn't think that this would happen, they thought, you know, it might come back in two years. They never gave me a guarantee that there would be a total remission, but I been in this remission for 10 years and I expect fully that I will remain so, because I made up my mind that it was going to happen, that I...

Q: What about your husband also, _____?

A: Well he was, he was going steadily downhill because I think retiring was really the worst thing that could have happened because now he had, he had no interest

outside of his books. I encouraged him to volunteer, to maybe teach or, just on a volunteer basis or get just his mind busy and he wouldn't do this, he just absolutely sunk into his alcoholic stupor and his health started deteriorating, his liver was going and then he was showing early signs of dementia. So it was a very, very difficult time and I had to you know, cope with the whole thing, cause he was totally, I had to take over all the finances, all the managing the household. He had been driving when we first came here and then I realized that he couldn't drive any more, it was too dangerous. But I didn't drive because we never had to have a car in New York City and so at age 56, I had to take driving lessons and passed and got my license and started driving, which was, you know, it took a lot of courage for me to do this because I was really scared, but something strange happened when I left the Med Center in 1986. First of all I decided, I don't know what happened actually, something happened there, but all my priorities changed. All the things that had seemed so important to me before, you know, exterior things, appearance, whatever, what people thought of me, this didn't matter any more, it was a total reversal of priorities. All I thought was what really mattered now was to make my life count for something, cause I didn't know at that point, you know, how much time I had left, but I decided that I would conquer my inner demons my own way and I would be successful at it. And so I wrote some rules for myself and I even pasted it on the mirror in my bedroom and it said, whatever these difficult tasks that I had to do, I'll say, I can do it, I must do it, I will do it. And this helped me enormously when I had to take driving lessons, I was scared stiff and I had to pass the test, but I did that.

Then, when we first, when I first came out of the hospital in '86 in Lawrence, I suddenly found that I had acquired a fear of going, agoraphobia, fear of going outside because probably because I had been cooped up in hospitals for so long and I had this absolute fear of going outside and, even you know, just in front of the house and if my husband _____ was still driving at that time and we'd go to a supermarket and I would cling to him and I would beg him not to leave me _____ because I would be absolutely panic stricken, so this was this lingering thing, but it was a new thing which I never had before, which I had to conquer. So I decided that I wasn't going to be, you know, home bound and because of this and so I decided I would go down, because we lived on the third floor, I would go downstairs and I would set a goal, I would walk as far as the street and then boy if I could do that, that was fine. Then the next day I set a goal that was a little farther. And so little by little, over a period of some weeks, I got to the point where I could walk to a supermarket, which was about a half a mile each way, to my house and when I could do that, then I knew I'd gotten over my phobia and I would be fine, but...

Q: Did your husband realize how you were improving yourself so much?

A: I don't think so, because what, what happens with alcoholics, that they're totally self-centered. This is not criticism, you know, it's not a criticism, but he was so wrapped up in his world that he, he could not realize what was going on, he just couldn't.

Q: So you were completely alone in this?

A: Completely alone. And so that's why I knew that, who, he, to whom I always looked to in the beginning, you know, in the early years he was my rock and my security and I suddenly realized that I couldn't count on him for support for anything and that I was really on my own and I had to do everything on my own. And it was, I guess in a way, I had to take over the finance as I said and I guess in a way it was a good thing because when he died, I was just totally, you know, at a lost, know what to do, I mean I had prepared myself psychologically for this event, cause the doctor had told me at one point he had six months to live because his liver's going and exactly six months later he was dead. But well, you know, this was in 1993, he died, he was 69 years old, but in the meantime, I decided that you know, I had to do something with my life, I wasn't just going to, I was never one that could just sit home and do nothing and so first I went and signed up to teach reading in an adult literacy course to people, adults who couldn't read and I did that for awhile and then I went to the public library and volunteered my services here in Lawrence, cause I told them I had worked at the University Library and so I would be volunteering there once a week and then I thought I should put my language knowledge to some use and so I went to the senior center and they didn't have any language classes and I told them that I taught French and German and offered to teach classes and they were very glad to have somebody there who could do this. And so over the years I built up a, you know, a membership and it's been going since, oh 1987, we have two classes that meet regularly at the, French classes. I had German classes on and off, but they didn't take off as well as the French classes, but all told I had about 15 people

and they'll be University, retired University professors from all, people really from all walks of life, but it's been, this has been my salvation, to, to have this and to get back into teaching again, which is what I really liked best of all, of all the jobs I've had.

Q: You think you would have studied teaching?

A: Yeah, I mean, if I had been able to, the other thing I always regretted, I wanted to be a librarian, but of course you know, _____ college degree, going to library school, it's all these dreams that I could never fulfill. But that, yeah I probably would have gone quite a way if I, if I'd had the opportunity for the education, but in this way I felt I could make a contribution to the community. And then...

Q: And your husband was still alive during those?

A: Yeah, right. And then, we joined a local Unitarian fellowship here. And my husband went for awhile, but not very long, he got tired of that and he wouldn't go and I went by myself. Made some friends there and slowly I started telling them about my background again, you know, during the Holocaust and I was a little leery because, in the midwest, you know, I always, you had this feeling, misconception that people are narrow minded and you know, you know, I was still afraid of rejection and discrimination but I found that people were so interested because in New York, Holocaust survivors are a dime a dozen, but here really, they don't have this access and I found out that they were very interested. And so this encouraged me and so at the fellowship on Sunday, they have programs on Sunday mornings, they have outside speakers and speakers from their own group and so they encouraged me to give a talk. And this is the very first time that I talked publicly about what happened.

And it was a great success and of course I was very nervous, I've never done, and there's another thing that I had. I had of course, terrible stage fright all my life, even just on the, in very small groups, if I had to get up in a group of four people and make a brief announcement, I was just, my knee turned to jelly and so I thought, oh, you know, how can I face all these people? And then again, I put this thing to work and I said, I have to do it and I'm going to conquer this and I made up my mind I wasn't going to be afraid and then I wasn't. And from the first talk after that, I could go up there and it wouldn't matter whether there were 500 people, 100, I was not scared any more. And some people heard me, local teachers and they ask me to speak to their students and so I built up a reputation, it was all word of mouth and at times I myself went out and contacted different groups, primarily church groups and other organizations and little by little, you know, I acquired a reputation as a Holocaust speaker and now I've been doing this since basically 1987 and to date I've kept a log but I haven't really added it up but at last count, which was last year, I'd given over 130 talks. And now I concentrate primarily on children from grades six to 12 and I'm, you know, a registered speaker with the, our local school system, I go to all the secondary schools and I also get calls from vicinities outside of Lawrence, you know, in the state of Kansas. And I have, I have written the book that I had written during the war, which is translated into English, I had given to every, copies to every secondary school in Lawrence, so that the kids can access it in the public library as well. And so this, during the school year, I'm very busy, going from school to school and giving talks.

Q: The book, you said this book that you wrote?

A: Mm-hm?

Q: This is about your war experiences?

A: This is about, it's called Childhood Memoirs of World War 2, and as I said, it's from a diary I kept as a child when I was 14 and eventually translated to English so that my husband and my friend here could read it. And I have found that, of course I've gotten other invitations from civic groups, church groups, just a variety of groups and I've always been amazed how great the desire for knowledge is, cause people really know very little about what happened during that period. And how warmly I am received and I have hundreds and hundreds of letters from school children, handwritten little notes to say how much they appreciated my talking and it's been my *raison d'être*. It's been a catharsis for me and I have, you know, my speech totally memorized, never refer to notes, I have visuals, I collect things out of the paper, anything having to do with the Holocaust and I keep adding to that. And so I feel that, you know, because before I was ashamed to speak and now I'm, I'm kind of, you know, making up for that and I always tell people when I give the talks that there are some reasons why I do this, because sometimes people say, you know, "Why do you do this?" And why you put, they think it's really difficult for me and emotional and I said, "Well, in the beginning it was, but after awhile you manage to get a certain distance, emotional distance from your subject, because if I were emotionally, you know, involved, every time I give a talk, I couldn't do it. And so I've had to learn to disassociate myself as though it were really not my story, it's the only way I, I can do

it. And I found out that's a coping mechanism that you learn instinctively during the war is you kind of put away things that you don't want to deal with and that's a self-preservation thing. So I tell them there are three reasons why I give this talk, is, one is to keep alive the memory of the six million victims of Hitler, including my grandparents. And two is to counter the, the revisionist lies of people who would say that, you know, there was no Holocaust, oh it was exaggerated, it wasn't as bad and then third is so it wouldn't ever happen again and in the end I ask the kids, I said, "I need your help in keeping the story alive, because we are called the last witnesses and my fear is that once, once we're gone, my generation, there won't be anyone left to keep the story alive, so I'm counting on you." And, and you know, I've gotten these darling little letters, they said, "Don't worry Mrs. Edmands, we won't ever forget you, what you said," and you know, it was very, very, very gratifying and I've never encountered any hostility, I've talked to all different kinds of groups and they've always been most friendly, there's never any hostile comments or anything like that. But the one wonderful experience I had, well one good experience was in 1990, when Father Longiree(ph), the priest who had really hidden us and saved our lives had been awarded the Medal of the Just, from Yahdvashem(ph) and then organizers in his hometown of Antsee(ph), which is the town closest to where his parish was, decided to have a commemorative ceremony for him and from some other priests who had helped people like us. And I was invited to the ceremonies, which were held in 1990, in May 1990 and I stayed with my friend there and it was just a wonderful, wonderful ceremony, they had dignitaries from Yahdvashem(ph), from

Israel they had the Grand Rabbi of the region, they had priests and ministers and people from the French government and some 600 invited guests and I was able to again tell, talk, tell these people, in French this time, about the priest and what he had done for us and then since he had died, his medal was awarded to him posthumously and it was given to me and I asked that the medal be put in a glass case and put in his former church so that everybody would, would see it. So this was one of the high points. And then I found out about other priests and their heroic deeds and all the wonderful things they had done, so I came back with a whole collection of stories of just, you know, sheer heroism and what I was pointing out is, the heroes during World War 2 were not the generals, you know, and who won the war, like MacArthur and so on, because that was their job. It was the little people, the little people were the true heroes. And you, you met, you know, instances of altruism which you would never think possible. People risking their lives and their families lives to help strangers. At the risk of their own lives, see. So that was, that was just a unique experience. Then a year later, in 1991, I found out that there was a new organization formed called, for people who had been hidden as children during World War 2. Now there already have been organizations for Holocaust survivors and they've had regular meetings but they're mostly for people who had been in the camps. And we were a breed apart, and you know, and somebody finally recognized that, because and we were sort of a little bit disparaged by the people who'd been in camps, they say, "Oh well, you know, you didn't go through what we did." And that's true. But, on the other hand, we had a very unique problems as

children being hidden, having to live day after day with the terror of being discovered, being separated from your loved ones. It was situation all by itself and it deserved some recognition. So the Hidden Children was formed. They had the first international reunion of Hidden Children in New York City at the Marriott Hotel in 1991, three day and they had workshops and _____ sessions. And they had originally expected some 500 people and 1600 showed up. From all, literally all parts of _____. People came from Australia, Poland, you know, Germany, Great Britain, just all over the world. And in addition to the former hidden children, they also had rescuers who came and for some, some were very, very elderly, some were on crutches or in wheelchairs and for some it was their very first reunion with the, the children that they had rescued, so it was very emotional. And I had, you know, I wanted to go, but I had mixed feelings about it. I thought I knew all there was to know about the Holocaust, I said, oh well, you know. And I, I was afraid in a way, stirring up all those memories, cause I said okay I talk about it, that's fine, but emotionally I'm detached, why stir up this? But in the end, I went and I was so glad I did. Because the minute I walked in there, I suddenly, you know, here, I who had never been raised Jewish and now all these people, all Jewish and that was such a bond, there's just immediate bond. You felt that all these people, after just a few hours, that they were your brothers and sisters. It was the most wonderful feeling. A lot of them were my age, some were older. The age ranged from 50's to you know, 70's and 80's. First woman I met there was a woman, I mean she was a prototype of an Aryan, she was blonde hair, blue eyes, porcelain skin, Jewish, had

been abandoned, not really abandoned, but left by her mother in Poland when she was two years old. Her mother had dropped her on doorstep of a convent to save her and her mother didn't make it and she was raised by gentiles. And so she and I met and she was very, she still had a lot of bitterness towards, you know, the Germans and cause she had then somehow found, an uncle found her and she'd found her true roots and she moved to Arizona, married a Jewish man, now she's very active. But she was very, she had a lot of bitterness about, you know, German people and, and really not knowing that much about her background cause she was so young. But you know, there were just million stories there and we had some very inspirational speakers, we had Elie Wiesel(ph) and Serge Klaufeld(ph), the famous French Nazi hunter there. And then we had workshops, _____ workshops and we had a list of things we could choose, for instance, the issue of guilt. People who felt guilty, as I did and then there were workshops for people who didn't know who they were, whether they were Christian or Jewish because they had been raised by Christians and they had this kind of schizophrenic attitude to weather. So I went to several of workshops and I was listening to the people talking and then I thought, this can't be, they're telling my story. And in so many instances the stories they told were so similar to mine, they were rescued by a priest, you know _____. I mean it was almost like they'd taken pages out of my book, I could not believe this, it was, it was spooky, you know, it was really spooky.

Q: Who sponsored this whole thing?

A: Well, it was called the Hidden Children which was an organization that had been formed by former hidden children.

Q: Did it have anything to do with the Holocaust Museum, or?

A: No, nothing at all, no, it was just all independent.

Q: Had you already done your testimony?

A: At the Holocaust Museum yes, uh-huh, but this was something that just came up and then since then they've had other reunions every two years on Israel and Los Angeles, but I haven't gone to any others. And then you know, they have workshops for people say, who had been very young, rescued by Christians and raised as Christians and they were totally divided in their allegiance because they, they felt they owed some allegiance to the Christians who rescued them and yet they felt they also had an allegiance to their Jewish and they were, they had conflicts that they couldn't resolve and those conflicts resolved it in psychological problems and, and I could really identify with them because this is the way I felt, even though I was never raised Jewish, I felt more Christian than I felt Jewish, cause that's the only thing I knew. When yet I have guilt feelings because I'm not practicing the Jewish religion, but I really, I only learned about the Jewish religion when I made contact with Christianity. It's the first time I ever read the old testament. So I don't have any emotional bond with Judaism.

Q: Are you a religion now, are you practicing religion?

A: Yes, now I consider myself a, you know, a Protestant, I have joined a Lutheran church because of the fact that it is the closest to me to Old Testament, you know,

religion, that, more so than others. Cause I had become somewhat of a Bible scholar and read a lot, you know, read the whole Old Testament and New Testament and I feel that in a way, Christianity has enabled me to find my Jewish roots and yet I cannot be Jewish. I cannot be Jewish because there are things that, you know, just are foreign to me.

Q: Like what?

A: And I feel, you know, it's the same God, you know, it's, it's the same thing.

Q: Well when you were in the hospital and you talked to God that first time, was that...

A: Yeah, he didn't have any religion.

Q: That was just God?

A: Yeah. That was just, yeah, right. Which this is, I mean there is no, God doesn't know how to have a religion.

Q: When you were, when you had your, the testimony, the video that I saw, you had just or you were still kind of, well I guess you had just come out of a real hell. None of that came out in the video. Was that your own decision, that you didn't, or is it just because they didn't ask you the questions?

A: No, cause I was just, it was just talking about my life during, you know, the Holocaust and that's what I did.

Q: So what you've been through in the...

A: Since?

Q: Well all that, everything that you went through, the suicide attempts and your shock treatments, have you spoken with other Holocaust survivors and children like at that conference?

A: Yeah, a little bit, you know, you could only do it very peripherally but there were others who had come to this thing, same thing, who had been hospitalized and there were some who were still in treatment, they had been in treatment for the last 20 years. And still going to psychiatrists and still trying to resolve these issues and I felt a lot more fortunate, you know, that I had been able, cause some people, I think they use it as a crutch and they don't move on. There were people who, who kept living in the past, that's, you know, that's the thing. And I determined that that didn't do any good. The past is past, now is now and you have to make your life count. You can't, you know, what if and the same thing that, is business of bitterness, you know, profound bitterness, I can never forgive the Nazis. Well I heard something very interesting, at the, when we went to commemorative ceremony _____ priest about this business of not being able to forgive and said, "It is not up to the living to forgive, only the dead can forgive and they can't, you know and they're dead." But it's not up to us to either, you know, hate or forgive and I do not have any bitterness to anyone, because bitterness and hate, in this context is a self-destructive emotion. It really doesn't hurt anyone else, doesn't hurt the Nazis, it only hurts yourself, it can destroy you. And I realized that I couldn't let that destroy me and that love was a much more powerful emotion than hate. You know, that love could accomplish things that hate couldn't and so therefore I have no bitterness in my heart

toward anyone. Not even to the people who killed my grandparents because it's, it's not a concrete thing, you know.

Q: The years that you were really growing and prospering and I take it your husband was really falling apart, was he aware of what was happening with you, of how much you were growing and getting better? I know I asked you that before, you said that, from the time that he started getting really sick, was he able to comprehend that you were actually finally coming out of this hell that you were in?

A: Just maybe on one level, but only on one very elementary level. He was proud of what I was doing, yes, he was always proud and he always encouraged me, but on the other hand, he resented my being away from home so much. You know, he felt I should be there with him all the time, night and day. And he came to resent, he was really of two minds about it. In one way he was proud of me and the other one he resented my success. Because he always regarded himself as a failure, you know. He had this terrible inferiority complex. I don't know why, cause he was a brilliant man. But that's part of the syndrome, so as I say, he was always of two minds about it.

Q: When, when you look back at this now and you look back at the time that your, when your mom died, can you kind of piece together, has it been long enough so that you can piece together what happened to you exactly, that her loss really kind of triggered all this stuff?

A: Yeah, I think it triggered it because I really had no one to talk to but her and when she was gone, I had no one to express my feelings of frustration and fear and anger and resentment that I had bottled up inside of me.

Q: She was your best friend...

A: She was my best friend and she was very understanding, I could talk to her about anything. So, and I know she was suffering a lot.

End of Tape 2.

Tape 3

A: It was, she was suffering a lot because she saw how, you know, my husband's alcoholism was destroying the marriage and destroying us. And so when she was gone, it's though as somebody just pulled the rug out from under me, I had lost every support that I've ever had.

Q: Talk about your life now. Now, now that you're, you have friends, you have a full life. When did you move into your house?

A: I moved into my house three years ago and it was the very first time that I had ever owned a house, we had always lived in apartments and it was a lifelong dream to own something that was really mine and to have a little garden and to grow stuff. I feel blessed in so many ways, cause I, I can truly say, I don't have, you know, that much money, I have a small pension to live on, but I can pay my mortgage and I can pay my bills and I feel blessed because I have everything now that I have ever wanted. I have peace of mind and I don't really have any worries, I take care of myself. My husband died in 1993 as I said and that was, that was a hard blow, but it wasn't unexpected because he had been so ill and he was just absolutely determined to kill himself. He had, he did have a death wish, which for reasons that, you know, I will never know and he was just absolutely determined to do away with himself. And, and I figure, well he finally got his wish and then, but I realized that life had to go one and so going on with my life and buying the house was, was the first step and I had already quite a circle of friends too, my volunteer work and to other organizations, so I just really kept doing what, what I was doing before, only now I

didn't feel guilty about it for being away from home. And during the school year as I said, I give talks and I still volunteer at the public library and otherwise I keep busy. There's always housework to be done, garden work. I go, I take walks, I read a lot, I'm trying to learn more about history, especially during the pre-Nazi period to find out what happened, that what were the circumstances that led to the rise of Nazis in Germany. I have a lot of, lot of different interests, I've interest in linguistics and history, geology, so many different things, that I'll probably never be able in a lifetime to satisfy them all, but I'm fortunate that I have a nice library and it keeps me busy. And I try, you know, I take some trips. And, oh, one of the main things that I wanted to relate is I had a very unusual experience last year in October. I had, during the war, after we left Paris, in 1940 or so, we wound up in a little village in southern France, called Kalvisol(ph) and there we stayed for a year when my father was in the labor camp there and then, this was at the time, the free zone, the rest of France being occupied by Germany. And then when the Germans broke their pact with France to, to leave part of France free and occupied the southern zone, my father's life was again in danger. And so due to a local partisan pastor, who was also the town doctor, we were able to get away cause he had made a certificate saying my father had a dangerous illness and couldn't be moved and he also arranged for my family to get fake ID's that enabled us, with fake names that enabled us to finally leave this village and the rest is recorded, you know, what followed after that is recorded in the original video I made for the Holocaust Museum in Washington. But we had never, none of us had ever gone back, except for my father, he made a trip

back to that little village and among other places, somewhere in the, you know, I don't know, 60's or so, I'm not sure, early 70's, but he went on his own. And he did see this pastor and his wife and then this pastor died at age 90 in 1974. So I, for my part, had lost all contact with the village. And then a strange thing happened, I had given a copy of my book to the people in the town of Antsee(ph). The Archbishop wanted a copy because you know, it was about a priest and so on and then the organizers of the commemorative ceremony for the priest, with whom I had become very good friends and we'd been corresponding and they had come and visit us here, so we were really good friends by then. And they had lent my book to a friend of theirs who was a priest and of course, he knew Father Longiree(ph), but then, when he came to the chapter that dealt with the one year that we spent in southern France, the name of the town, Kavisol(ph) rang a bell. He said, "Oh, I know that town, I know somebody who lives there." And you know, it was such a coincidence because of all the places in France it could have been, this particular one he knew. And it was just a tiny hamlet. And what happened, this man named Marcel Coulier(ph), was a young man during the war and he was hiding from, he didn't want, all young Frenchmen have to do forced labor in Germany and those who didn't want to do that went underground. And this priest that helped this young man hide, and they had stayed in contact and then many, many years later, you know this man had moved to Paris, gotten married and then in his retirement he came back to the town of Kalvisol(ph) and where he was living. And so this priest copied my chapter that dealt with our lives in southern France and send it to his friends, hey look you know, this

talks about your town. And of course then, oh this is just extraordinary cause this friend shared it with, he had made some very good friends in the village and he shared it with all them. And they were just so thrilled, because not only here's somebody had written about their village, so long ago and they said everything was accurate, the names, everything was accurate in every detail. And of course they didn't know that their pastor had done all this cause he wasn't one to, to brag about it. So they were terribly excited and they got in contact with me and we started correspondence and we talked on the phone and it just so happened that just at the time when they discovered my existence in America, they were planning a ceremony for the pastor because there was a new part of town that was street that needed a name and so they decided to name the street after this pastor, so everything was in place and then they found out about me and what this pastor had done, which they didn't even know, you know. They just named the street because he was a good man and as doctor he had brought many of them to life, so they want to honor him, but they had no idea what he done during the war. So then of course they wanted me to come to the ceremony and there was just too short notice, you know, amount. I said I can't, you know, I just can't pick up and go in April, in the middle of my busiest time. So I said, well I tell you what, they said, "Well could you write something and we could read?" So I said I'd do that. So I wrote a little speech in French and mailed it to them and it was read at the ceremony and they had other dignitaries and of course they told the whole story. The newspaper picked it up and it was such a big deal and they send me the articles and it was almost comical because it said,

"Jewish girl, former resident of Kavisol(ph)," you know, "found living in America." So you know, I was like, ha, it was so funny, it was the biggest thing that ever happened to them, in that _____ of the village, maybe. And so, and I was in contact basically with this one man who had been the organizer of the family and there were three families that were friends besides Marcel Coulier(ph) and his wife and then two other couples and they were, they had form an organization as the friends of Dr. Bonet(ph), which is the name of this pastor priest. So all my correspondence was with them and we just became really good friends and then I started remembering names of people I'd gone to school with. And I wrote it to them and he said, "Yeah that's true and they remember you." You know, things started coming back. And then those darling people made a video tape, not only of the ceremony, where I could just watch myself where they, while they read the speech I'd written, but they made a videotape of the town and sort of going around and saying, this is school you went to and this is that abandoned house you lived in, it's always just wonderful. But then of course they kept putting the pressure on me, they wanted to meet me and I had to promise them that I would come, you know and visit them. And the following year I finally decided okay, it's now or nothing, you know. And I mean, they were so nice, you know, in letters so cordial, but I didn't know them. You know, you go to a strange place, you don't know anybody, I felt a little bit, but I said, "This is something I have to do." Because I felt that I had honored the priest but there was still a page that had to be written in this book. It's closure, you know. So then I turned out that my friends in Antsee(ph), knew this other couple, the

Couliers(ph), they had become friends and so my friend in Antsee(ph) said, "If you come, come stay with us and then we will take you by car to this village." Cause otherwise I said, you know, "How am I going to get there, it's like in the middle of nowhere." And so that's what I wound up doing and originally I just was planning when I planned my trip, I planned, you know, two or three days because I said, "I don't know these people." I didn't even know where I was going to stay. And then when I wrote my dates, they said, "Oh, this will never do, this'll never do, you're going to have to stay with us for a week at least, cause we have all these plans." And you know, you have, so I had to change all my flights, everything. Finally went to Antsee(ph) and then they drove me there. I come there and the three family met me and I mean, I mean, I felt like a rock star. I mean, it was just the most wonderful welcome and it turned out that of the three couples, I knew the husband and wife cause I'd gone to school with them. And then of course they called in the media, they had a reporter from a local paper come and interview me and they had more articles in the paper and I mean, this was big deal and they took me around and the next day to the village to show me all the places where I'd grown up and they were so thrilled, I mean they took more pleasure and maybe even more than I did, but it was weird for me to see it, abandoned house where my family had lived. And you know, it all looked really, basically, I mean it was upgraded, but you know, all these memories keep coming back, but they were not bad memories, you know, even though they were bad times, but it was just so good and to see the people that were so wonderful. And then they had, when I first and I stayed with one of the couples

and my goodness, I had a whole, practically a whole house to myself, my own quarters, they were pretty well off, you know it was wonderful. And then the first day I was there he pulled out a long list of things and complete, complete schedule, itinerary. Every day, every hour planned, what they were going to do with me. And they had realized that when I lived there during the war, you know, I didn't have time, I mean there was no time to go sightseeing and there are a lot of beautiful things, so they determined they're going to take me to the seashore, they're going to take me to the mountain, surrounding towns, you know, the whole bit. So in one week we were constantly on the way, we got in the van in the morning, came home at night and just went all around the countryside and I saw all these things I just had heard about and they were just, I mean of course, I was totally their guest, never pay a cent for anything and I got charming gifts, I couldn't go to a gift shop they want to buy me everything in the store. It was, it was so wonderful and then they had organized two ceremonies, one was at the little, little village where my father had been in the labor camp. There was an official reception at City Hall, I was received by the mayor, speeches, you know, the whole bit. And then there was another ceremonies, very similar one, in that little village itself. Again with the mayor, the City Council, the whole bit, you know, the people coming up to me and I got a medal. And I got a plaque and flowers and oh! And I kept saying to them, I don't know why they're doing all this, I didn't do anything to deserve this, all I did was live there for a year. And they said, "Oh, but you don't understand." And then you know, sort of talking to people later, it came to me that it was more about them than it was about me. It

made them feel good. It showed them that there had been good people in their town, because you see, anyone of them, they knew we were living there, anyone of them could have denounced us and nobody talked, which is remarkable. Nobody talked. And I guess that made them feel good and it made them _____ and some of them were too young to even remember the war and they learned something and they actually met somebody, you know, who had lived among them and it was just a great experience for them and for me. So it was just probably the most, the best experience of my life.

Q: That's amazing. Do you have future plans? Anything happening that you want to, that you can talk about? What do you want to do, I mean you're still relatively young, what do you want to do with your life?

A: No, I don't because I have learned not to plan ahead to far. I just take each day as it comes and I don't really plan that far. I don't, I don't have any, any immediate plans. What I hope to do is that, I got a letter, last year, from the Austrian government saying that after all these years they're recognizing that they did us all a big, great wrong and they were going to make financial restitution just for the fact that, you know, we were forced to leave a country and I was deprived an education and so on and so they finally, Germany has done this a long time ago, but Austria's been dragging their feet and there's supposed to be a lump sum given to people like me, not enormous you know, under 10,000. But first they're getting the very old people, people in their 80's and their 70's, so my turn probably won't come for a year or two and I thought, well, if that were the case, I'd like to just kind of go back to

Austria and just stay there for a month or two months, you know and just, instead of going back and forth and really, you know, just stay there, because I do love Austria, it's a beautiful country, but I couldn't do this unless I had this, so this is really the only plan I have.

Q: What about plans with dating, meeting other men, is that something you ever even think about?

A: No. No, I have, you know, I have absolutely no interest in meeting men. I feel well, okay, I mean my husband and I had a good marriage except for his alcoholism. I just felt that I could never meet anybody with whom I was as well suited as I was with him. And to me that's not really important because any, I know that any man I would meet would be at least my age or older and I think it's a matter of self-preservation that I don't want to deal with somebody, getting attached to somebody and that person getting sick and dying, you know. I finally at the point where I really only have to worry about myself and I don't want to get emotionally involved with anyone else, ever.

Q: But you feel that you have friends that are like a family to you?

A: Yeah, well yes, you know, I have good friends and I don't really find that I don't really, I mean if I didn't have, it's nice to have friends, but I'm perfectly comfortable with myself, because I think, I think they say that people who don't like being alone, it's that they don't like themselves and this was true at some point in my life, but now I got to the point, I say, I like who I am, you know what, I've accepted that and I'm feel comfortable with who I am. So I don't mind being alone because I have my music,

I listen to records, I read books. I'm never, never lonely and I'm never bored. I feel that my life is rich enough as it is, I don't need a man if I want to go to the movie I can pay myself, you know, pay my way. So it's, it's not, it's not something that's part of my life any more.

Q: And Lawrence is your home?

A: Lawrence is my home, yes, I feel, you know I've always wanted to live in a small town and I would never, you know, I've gone back to New York City a number of times just for a visit, although now I don't have anybody left there and I thought, oh, I would never want to live there any more, never. I'm glad I'm, I'm thankful. You know I, well here's another thing. I feel now that everything that happens in life, happens for a purpose, good or bad, that we may not always know what the purpose is, but it's not all for us to question. But nothing happens for no reason, so I can see a trend to my entire life, that things had happened and there's always worked out for the good at the end and if I hadn't had this depression, we may not have come to Lawrence and then I would have wind up in New York City and maybe my husband would have died in New York and I would have been even more alone because there's nothing like being alone in a big city, you can be surrounded by millions of people and still feel all alone and I've never had this feeling here. So and I would have never had my house and I mean, everything just works out for the good in the end, if you just trust.

Q: Your decision to speak out, a lot, meant, I think what is being learned is that it's common for a lot of people not to talk about what happened...

A: Yes.

Q: ...until they get a little bit older. Did you find that at this conference, did people talk about that?

A: Well, you know, I found that a lot of people, a lot of people this was, the conference was the very first time they ever talked about what happened. This gave them, you know, the venue. A lot of people don't want to deal with it, they want to put it behind them and I think people like me and say Jack Mandelbaum(ph) are, are the exception really. I mean there are some Holocaust speakers in New York, but overall, a lot of people I met, some friends of mine who lost their parents you know, in Auschwitz, they just now starting to talk publicly about it, so.

Q: What about dreams, do you find that you dream anything?

A: I don't have any dreams about the past, no nothing connected with the past.

Q: We really, we've talked about how you feel about God.

A: Yeah, the only thing I want to say is that I don't want people, especially people listening to this interview to, to misunderstand, that I have in no way turned my back on my Jewish heritage, I am proud of my Jewish heritage. I think it's a great, glorious heritage. But on the other hand, I had to do what I felt was best for me, so while I'm not denying ever having had a Jewish background, at the same time one has to realize that since I was not raised in the Jewish faith, I can't find any emotional, otherwise any bond with it and that's why I've chosen to, to, to worship in what seems the right way for me, but that does not mean that I don't have some guilt feelings, that at times I say, "Well, you know, I really ought to have tried to identified with Judaism

and so I'm still pulled and as many people are. And I'll probably be til the day I die. I will always have mixed feelings about it.

Q: Do you have Jewish friends, do you ever go to Temple?

A: I have a few Jewish friends, there is no, there is no Temple here in Lawrence, there's a Jewish community, but I've gone several times to services and you know, it's like totally foreign to me, cause they do Hebrew and I don't know Hebrew. And what has turned me off I think, is because they are terribly divided. They have the Orthodox, the Conservative and the Reformed and they don't get alone each other. On their high holidays they have to keep it in separate rooms. And I don't think, you know, to me this is a, this is a, this is a turn off.

Q: I think that what you had said about what you tell your classmates, I mean not the, the students about the three reasons, that kind of summarizes you right now, you know, what you're doing and you had mentioned something about the deniers, when you hear Holocaust deniers, that must make you just...

A: Yeah. Oh yeah, I mean nothing, I mean they could insult me to my face, they could call me names, but nothing upsets me more than if I hear. Fortunately I have never met anyone in person, but I know that they're on the college campuses and nothing upsets me more than people who say, you know, that try to downplay it or say it didn't happen. And so I feel that I have a duty to speak out. And you know the other reason too, is, which I didn't mention, which I have started telling people now, is that because I have survived and I don't know why my life was spared. You know, one time a woman, that was the only semi-hostile comment I got, it was in

Presbyterian church and this woman and then I said that you know, I feel so fortunate and _____. Well why do you think your life was spared and all these others didn't. So I, and she said it sort of a hostile way and I said, "I don't know why my life was spared, but I know one thing, because my life was spared, I have an obligation to tell other people what happened because maybe that was the reason, I don't know." But that's what I feel very, very strongly right now. But you know, I cannot watch, I cannot watch movies about the Holocaust. I have read Schindler's List, but I cannot watch the movie. I never watch anything on TV. And I remember that there was an Anne Frank exhibit here at KU, shortly after we came and my husband and I went and it had all these pictures of Anne Frank and from her life and after five minutes I had to run out. You see, what I, what I went through doesn't affect me the way that what other people went through. I could not look at Anne Frank. I simply could not do it. And that's why I can't read books or watch movies. It just, you know, I just, it hurts too much.

Q: Even now?

A: Even now.

Q: Even now?

A: Even now. And now people say, "Oh, this is a book about the Holocaust and this is a movie and you ought to see it." So I don't, no I don't want to see it. And I said, you know, I don't need to see this. I mean, you need to see it, I don't need to see it.

Q: In a way it's like you're your own doctor. You've been able to cure yourself in so many ways that you know what you need, you know what's best for Eva.

A: Right and as I said, I have managed to, to detach myself from my own life and sometimes it's really a strange feeling, I feel as though, you know when I speak I see all these images of the past, but it's all as though I were watching this on the screen and the person I was talking about wasn't really me, it was someone else, someone else's life. That's how I have managed to detach myself from it.

Q: And is that how you've been feeling now, today, talking about it, or is it different speaking about after you came over to this country?

A: Not really.

Q: I mean you've said before that from, from the time you came here til now, was almost more difficult in your life than your earlier life in hiding.

A: No, no, no. What was more difficult was during the depression as _____ said, when I was depressed that was, yeah that was worse to bear than what I went through during the war, yeah. Not, not, not, not...

Q: Not now. Not this part of your life.

A: Not now, no, no.

Q: But the, but the, at that time, during the 1980's that that was an unbearable part of your life?

A: Yeah, yeah. Because you know, during the war, I mean, we always had hoped we would come out of it and my father especially, he really kept us going, he was the eternal optimist. I mean every day, no matter how black things looked, he'd say, "Tomorrow will be better" you know and we kept our courage up and our morale up and you know, there's always hope, but in this situation, when you're in a depression,

there is no hope. You know, you just face a wall and there's, there's no exit and so that's a totally different situation.

Q: When you talked about when you first came to this country, in New York and you'd see soldiers, do you still get that same feeling when you see policemen?

A: I don't think so, no. But it lingered for a long, long time. You know, I'm still a little bit afraid of authority, you know. I mean, just a little leery.

Q: Have you ever considered visiting Israel or is that something you don't think about?

A: Well, I would like to do it for, just because of my interest in the Old Testament and the New and that would be, I think it would be wonderful but I don't think it's in the cards cause it's very far away, it's very expensive and I'm a little scared too, I mean I have to admit it, you know, I'm a little scared. Things are too unstable there, but it would have been something that I would have liked to do.

Q: Anything else that you want to talk about?

A: No I, I was just glad to have an opportunity to, to share this part of my life.

Q: We were just talking about the political atmosphere in the country right now.

A: Yes, well when we first came to this country, you know, I think things were so different, we were just after World War 2 and everything was rebuilding, the economy was good. People had hope. We, we, I think everybody felt that all things were possible and this, you know, after all I have to realize I grew up, so to speak, you know, my late teens and early 20's is during the 50's and that is the period which is now idealized almost in movies and so on, you know, where people could still have

their own home and live better than their parents did, it was...[end of side 1 of tape 3]…the political picture was just totally different because the economy was on the upswing and you know, take myself as just an example. As little education I had and little training in business, I was always able to get a job, which would never be the case now, you know, I was never, never without a job and we had anything in those days, you know, we had, what I consider leaders, people that were figures, you know, Roosevelt. Roosevelt was so loved in France, I remember right after the war, I was in the school in Antsee(ph) and teacher came in, tears streaming down her face and said, "Children I just have terrible news, President Roosevelt died." And here we were in this little town in France and everybody burst out crying, that's how loved he was. Even Truman, you know, there, there, there are leaders that we felt had basic integrity and which is, you know, today I'm becoming more apolitical, but I have to say this, that when we came to New York in '48, we immediately, you know, we got our first papers and then we had to wait five years to be American citizens and we really, you know, first opportunity, we became citizens and I remember we had this mass ceremony in Yankee Stadium and it was just a wonderful experience, we felt so proud to be Americans and the first time I was able to vote, I voted and I registered democrat and I've been really a lifelong democrat. I worked on Adlai Stevenson's campaign, but it was I couldn't vote then cause I wasn't citizen. But as I got involved early on, I was married to somebody who was really very liberal, hated the war in Vietnam, hated direction our country was going and I think I absorbed some of that. And today really, I'm, I'm awfully proud to be an American, I even

wrote a letter to the editor which was published, saying that I, I'm distressed at the seeming decline in patriotism, it used to be on the Fourth of July everybody would have a flag out. Now you know, you can go to entire neighborhoods, not ever see a single flag and I always, you know, to me it's such a wonderful privilege to be able to put my flag out on a holiday. And another one is people, you know, don't bother to vote, there's a certain amount of apathy and for me, it is, after having lived under a dictatorship for so long, it's a great privilege for me to be able to participate in the democratic process. And I also have a great debt of gratitude to the, to the heroic Americans who died, fought and died so that people like me could be free. I'll never forget that, I have had the privilege of meeting some World War 2 veterans, some who were in Normandy and I was able to thank them personally, you know, for what they did for me. And I, I, I've always loved, unabashedly, you know, it's just I love America, I love America with all my heart and soul because I felt that it gave us a chance to start our lives afresh and it welcomed us when no other country would really do so. And, you know, I can never forget this and so when I do give talks in schools, I tell the kids how important their American citizenship is and why they should always cherish it, protect it and defend it. Cause that's really, truly, you know I thought, this sounds corny nowadays, but this is really how I feel. You have no idea, it's still, you know, America has a lot of faults, but it's still, I think, the greatest country in the world and when you have lived, you know, under those terrible dictatorships, you really get to appreciate it, you know and you have to, you know, this is it, for better or for worse and we could, I don't think that any, any presidential

candidates today, running in '96 are especially inspirational and I think politics have taken a very negative turn, very nasty turn and I do feel turn off, I'll probably still vote, but I, at this time, I don't know who for, but I'm, I'm discouraged at the, at the direction the country's going with the decline in the family structures, the rising crime, the, and just, the senselessness of some, you know, crimes that are committed, just for the sheer heck of it, it's, I'm not optimistic about the future of this country and at times I think that I'm grateful that we didn't have children, because I would be extremely worried about their future, and not only economically, but drug scene and AIDS and all these things which, you know, we really didn't have to deal with when I was young.

Q: Okay, anything else? That's it?

Conclusion of Interview.