

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Doriane Kurz
May 13, 1997
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Doriane Kurz, conducted on May 13, 1997 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Answer: Well, I'm Dorian Kurz and I came to this country in 1946, after the war, with my brother, we were orphaned during the war and we were brought over here to America by family that was living here and the first part of my history was recorded by the Holocaust Museum a few years ago.

Question: And your brother's name?

A: My brother's name is Alfred Kurz and we call him Freddy and I will probably be calling him that in the course of this interview. And he lives in New Jersey.

Q: So later on we're very interested in your relationship with your brother and in general your relationship with your brother seems to have been the factor that still exists in your life, that brought you through that experience, so if we start at, arriving in Amsterdam after the war, just in general, the climate of Amsterdam and the environment there, in your community, how could you describe it?

A: Let's see, I can't answer that specifically. I'm going to drop back from that a little bit. At the end of the war, we were liberated from a train that took us out of Bergen-Belsen and the aim of the Nazis was to destroy the train, but we were liberated before that could happen, by the Russians. And that happened in a town which later on was in East Germany. It was in the spring, in April and eventually, it took three months

USHMM Archives RG-50.549.02*0001

2

for the Red Cross to bring us back to Amsterdam, along with the other survivors. My mother was still alive and in the course of our train ride, she got typhus, which I had had before that. And she was not well, even before the typhus. She survived the crisis of the typhus in that little town in East Germany and when she was up and about again, the Red Cross made contact with us and brought us through Lypeseig(ph), which city still exists, back eventually into Holland. Now, a couple of recollections of that time stick out very sharply. In Lypeseig(ph) my, there was a, we stayed in an armory of some sort, or a compound that had an armory and outside of that armory, there was a machine, like a clothes wringer in appearance, except there were knives in the middle. You turned some wheel, some lever and there were knives inside. And Freddy, my brother, who always had had investigative leanings, stuck his finger in there and turned the, turned the lever and cut off the tops of his fingers. I remember that because it was a lot of blood and a lot of hoopla and my mother very upset and very aggravated and they got him bandaged up and he has little bumps on three of his fingers, to the, at the top of his finger cause he cut off the top of his fingers, so certainly do remember that. I remember waiting along the way somewhere, in , with lots of other people, waiting for truck transport to move us from one place to another. I had found in that little town where we were liberated, a doll somebody had left behind. And for that doll, which was really my first toy in a very

long time and I was nine, I made little clothing out of little pieces of material and I made a little cradle out of shoe box type of things and I was very attached to that little doll. I put it down somewhere in the midst of that great mass of people waiting to be transported and somebody took it and I cried and cried. It was a great blow. Eventually we got back into Amsterdam, into a large barracks, I don't know where it was, but you know, it's a child's recollection and I remember being in that large place like, sort of like the barracks we'd had in the camps, but large and lying down and taking a nap and when I woke up, at the foot of my bunk, was my oldest girlfriend, Nomi(ph) Moskovitz(ph), with whom I grown up and whom I had not seen during the intervening years. And she also, with her family, was in that displaced persons facility and my mother had found her. So, a couple of those things that really stand up very sharply. Eventually we were out of those barracks and into our old apartment.

Q: I just wanted to ask before we went...

A: I can tell you what, what happened with Nomi(ph), I mean that's fine. I didn't, I saw Nomi(ph) for a few times in the following year. She and her family also moved back to Amsterdam. She had two brothers, one brother and at the time before the war and after the war she had some more siblings, her parents had some more children and it was quite remarkable because her father was sent to a separate place, separate

concentration camp from Nomi(ph) and her mother and miraculously that family survived and was reunited after the war. I will come back, I will tell you more about Nomi(ph) in a while. She remained in Amsterdam, eventually she was married and she moved to Israel and the last time I saw Nomi(ph) was in March of 1946 and then did not see her again until 1959, which was my first trip to Israel and I had that trip, on that trip I started out going to Europe first and went through Holland and saw her parents and they gave me her address in Israel and I am a blonde and blue eyed and Nomi(ph) has a dark complexion, very dark eyes and black hair and we have, we were friends from the time we were in nursery school, four and I always felt, I guess because it was in Holland and I was blonde and blue eyed, that I was ordinary and looked like everyone else and that she was beautiful because she was so different looking, so dark and she had long black hair and I was envious of her. In 1959 when I had not seen her for 13 years and in that time we had both gone from being girls to being women. She had been married, I was not and I visited her in Israel, there, I got such a shock because there was this big, fat woman, very large and it was Nomi(ph) and we were unable to communicate on any level, almost entirely, there was some inanities just that went, were between us and totally, you know, but we had been sort of like sisters, we slept in each others house _____, it was exactly like two people from other planets and I have not been in touch with her since, so that's about it. I

will, I will go back now to my time in, in Amsterdam. So eventually, and I don't know how my mother accomplished that, we got back our apartment. At the time we were arrested in the middle of the night and we moved, the apartment was taken from us and our furniture was done away with and I suppose there must have been some resettlement commission and my mother got back our apartment and we went back into it, but she, my mother was really quite sick at that time already and we lived in that apartment a very short time and my mother was hospitalized and...

Q: None of the furniture was there, none of the same?

A: None of the furniture was there, no, not at all. The furniture my parents had had was made in Vienna, custom made to order for my parents by a well known architect and none of that was there. But, my, there was some simple furniture that my mother had. We were not there very long before it was impossible for my mother to continue as she was and she was moved to the hospital, the apartment was still ours and she underwent some surgery and Freddy and I went to live with friends of my parents, I will allude briefly, I mentioned those people when I made the visual tape because those were the people who were in our apartment the night the Gestapo came. Those were, that was the family that my mother was hiding and they had resettled after the war, they were all hidden, the members of that family whose name was Roos, R-o-o-s. They had been in, separately under hadoken(ph) and they were reassembled after

the war and they were living in a little town called Rainin(ph) in Holland, about an hour and a half outside of Amsterdam and they lived in a house on a dike, it was a small farming town and Freddy and I went to live with them while my mother was not well. Eventually my mother was brought back to the apartment and she did linger until March of 1946, when she died. So for those nine months that she was ill, we were most of time living with the family Roos in Rainin(ph) on the dike and I therefore am not really, I, there's not a whole lot I can say about Amsterdam and what happened to it. The only times we were brought in was to visit my mother and that not very often, once every couple of months, she...

Q: She was far away?

A: She was in Amsterdam and... [ringing phone]

Q: So, we've been interrupted, but we have been discussing how you and your brother coped together with the loss of your mother.

A: That, that answer is really on so many different levels. I would tell you from today's point of view, looking back as an adult person, that I'm not, I think I'm pretty mentally stable, fairly so, I mean no worse than most people, but I attribute that in very large part to the, to two facts. The most important is that I have a brother. I think I would not really have managed without, because he was my root. In general I, I think today that children can survive almost anything as long as they are confident

in the care and love of a parent. And although, I mean obviously my history, my childhood was not a very good childhood, looked at it from that point of view. Still, if I compare myself to the children I read about in the paper who suffer abuse at the hands of their parents, I had a rosy childhood in comparison. Because even looking back from here, surely there were moments of fear and lots of horrible things that I, I looked at, but I never doubted my survival and I always felt secure when my mommy was there and I was fortunate in that, that mother was not an hysterical sort. She made it, it seem okay and I came through the war never doubting that we'd come through, in fact I remember lots of talk about, you know, with my mother about after the war, when my father, whom we called Poppy, would be back and we never doubted that. And after the war, directly after the war, while my mother was still alive, we talked a great deal about when she would get better and in that year it certainly began to dawn on me that she was not getting better, but it was in conceivable because that was grounded in my security. Now we were very lucky because we knew, Freddy and I, from a very early age on, that we had lots of family elsewhere, in America and my mother drilled us consistently in addresses, in Palestine, where her brother lived and in America, where my father's family was and so I guess she figured if she wasn't going to make it through, she wanted us to have a place that we would go to. It was a very close family and directly after the war, of

course contact was made with them again and in fact, one of my father's brothers came to Amsterdam not long after the war and he got, he got a passport, he got a visa and he was able to come and to arrange for my mother's care and also to start to arrange for our coming to America and so by the time I was told that my mother had not long to live and by the time I, we internalized that, we knew that we were not going to be in an orphanage, for example, we knew that we were going to America and so we were looking forward to that. So the fact that we survived emotionally, fairly, fairly emotionally stable, both of us, certainly is due to the type of person my mother was, the fact that we had a loving relationship and the fact that we were confident in that close family that we had overseas. Now, for me, I think the importance of my brother really happens after that, it's after we come here. Once, once my mother died and my own roots were gone, in that sense, you know my, my parents were gone and, and Holland was gone, even though I was here with loving aunt and uncle, still, it and, and a loving aunt and uncle who had been very close to my parents so, my parents were talked about, it wasn't like, you know, I was with strange people who had no idea about my background, but still it was the fact that I had a brother that gave me a feeling of belonging. With my own history, belonging to something that had started when I started, when I was born. And that has increased in importance, or that did increase in importance to me, in the years that we

were growing up in America. I say that despite the fact that we entered a wonderful home and you know, that we were cared for and loved, but, but children don't give up what's theirs easily and my background was mine. And my brother was the only one who had really shared it and who, you know, we'd had the same experiences, we had seen the same things, the bad stuff and we were very close. Now, besides that, I was the older of the two of us by 16 months and my mother would always, you know, blame me when we had fights, cause I was the older one, I should know better and she had always made me be responsible when, when we were, for some reason, you know, it was up to me, so when she died, I felt definitely a responsibility for him and for us as a brother-sister team and for values such as religious observance, that we had learned there, I mean I jealously guarded those parts of our background that I thought were important for us and that would have been important for my parents. And I spun them into a little private thing between us. And because we were very close in age, we really were close personally as well, we related well. To this day there's certainly no one in the world with whom I fight as much as I do with him. We, we can barely be in each other's company for 10 minutes without one of us screaming at the other. We certainly don't have the same points of view and we see life differently and he's a man, I'm a woman, so that already is different and, but underlying it, there is a very deep love and respect that goes both ways. For my 60th

birthday my brother gave me a surprise party in a restaurant here in New York and he made a speech, I, he never, he never says anything nice, he never gives a compliment to anyone's face, he'll never say you look nice, or that's great, what you did, never. But that man got up there and made a speech about me which was unbelievable. He's a kind, he's a more closed person than I am and that was one of the few times in his life ever, that the window was opened. And I didn't, I never needed those words, you know, to kind of let me know that it is a two way street because he's done much more me in my life. We've tried to do for each other. But he's always been there for me and I know and I've said it many times, that if God forbid I had lost him, I, I wouldn't have made it, I am sure of that.

Q: Thinking of you and your brother and going back to the time between your mother died, when you actually got on the boat and then the trip over to America, you mentioned your being vehement about your little secrets and religious observances, was your faith, were you able to practice it together with the community during that time, or was it important at all?

A: I'm sorry, I don't know which time you mean now?

Q: The time from, between your mother's passing and your getting to America, that transition of time before you were with your family.

A: See again, this is not an easy answer. My mother was a very observant women in

terms of the practice of Judaism, but she was never dogmatic. And she was very clever about the way she, she tried to instill that into Freddy and me. I never remember her saying you cannot do this on, on, on Shabbas(ph) or you can't eat this and that together, I never remember her saying that, but I read from a very early age and one day, for example, I found, I loved books, and I found a book lying around, I looked at it and there were pictures in it and, and I tried to read it but some of the words were too big and I asked about it and she said, "Oh, well, if you want me to, I'll read you story." And you know, that was a book of bible stories. Well she did everything in that way, she tried to make things likable and fun, so whatever practice we did, it was never onerous in any way, it was always in a good context, so I can't even tell you that I knew about the laws of Kashrut or the laws of, of Saturday as such, I don't know that I could have verbalized them, but I knew what we did and didn't do with my mother and tried to continue to do that. Well, we grew up in, after the war, first in the house of those people in, in Rainin(ph) and they were also observant to a degree, but I know there was no kosher food to be had, or kosher meat to be had in Holland at that time, especially where we were. I cannot imagine that the food that we ate after the war was, was kosher, but I don't remember being in agony or anything of the sort. So I know there was no meat served at the table with butter or milk, for example, but I don't remember ever questioning like where did, there

wasn't that much meat, but I don't remember questioning where the meat came from, we were just happy to have any sort of food. And so the people with whom we stayed certainly were not against observing because they had come from an observant background as well. And when I came to America, my aunt and uncle, my uncle was my father's brother and my aunt, the lady who we grew up with, Lillian, she came from a very observant house, probably more so than the house that my parents had grown up in and so there was no problem about observance. In the interim, between the time we left Holland and the time we came to America, well, okay, I'll talk about that for a little bit. I already mentioned that one of my father's brothers came over to Holland, and that was my Uncle Charlie and my father's, my father and his brother had world wide optical business before the war and we had an office in Amsterdam and so he came over both to take, look after my mother and Freddy and me and also I think, to see what was left from a business point of view. And he spent many, several months actually, in Holland. He was there when my mother died. And he came to visit us, also stay with us in Rainin(ph), in that little town where we were, just a quick little aside there, I mean, this little town in Holland was not up to the minute in technology and the house we had really, literally was on a dike. A dike, a dike is really a road, it's like the river ran below and then on the, as you know Holland is very flat, so from the river to the land next to the river is just a flat continuation and

then a dike was built up high, like a wall and at the top of the wall they paved it and that was a road. And then on the other side of the road there were houses, so that's where we lived. And, but there was no central heating for example and there was a big pot-bellied stove in the living room, one of those black things and we fed it coal and wood and it heated up the living room, but the bedrooms, which were up on the second floor, didn't have any heat and anyone who's ever been in the low countries or in Germany in the wintertime, you know that things are very cold there, but this is what we were used to and it certainly didn't bother us, but when my Uncle Charlie came to stay with us, see, that was in the middle of the winter and he, there was, it was a little house and the family Roos had two boys and there was Freddy and me and so there were only a certain number of bedrooms and so my Uncle Charlie shared our bed, in a big large bed and I remember trying to sleep all night and couldn't because my poor Uncle Charlie was just trying to hold onto us for warmth, he was literally all night, you could hear his teeth rattling and he was physically shaking. And so, anyway, but he was there when my mother died and then it was very hard to get, get visas to move people, including children from western Europe to America, because everybody was trying to come to America. And my uncle with whom I was going to live when I came to America, my Uncle Benjamin, who was another brother of my father, in order to get Freddy and me to have a visa to come to

America, went to Washington to see President Truman and he got for us a special permit, read into the Congress of the United States, to give us priority to come in, which is how we managed to get in by the following August, August of '46 and while my Uncle Benjamin was trying for that and my Uncle Charlie was in Europe, it was arranged that after my mother died, that Freddy and I, in order to get a visa, should be, should go to Sweden to establish residency there and from there, once we had our visa, to come to the United States and eventually that is what happened. We left, we left...

Q: Why Sweden?

A: I think the American consulate was open in Sweden, but the American consulate was not yet open in Amsterdam and maybe because Sweden was a neutral country, I, I, I don't know the politics of the thing, but apparently something like that. It was possible to get the visa from Sweden and we got a priority because we were orphaned and because my Uncle Benjamin never took no for an answer on anything and just went straight to the head man. He got to the outer office of President Truman and got to his aide and arranged for that. So my mother died in March and March of '46 and Freddy and I were brought to Amsterdam for the funeral and after the funeral they took me to see Nomi(ph), to say good-bye to her because we knew we were going to go to America and then shortly thereafter we flew to Sweden and we were taken to

Sweden by our Uncle Roos, the man whom we had been living with, he was not really an uncle, he was just friends, but we called him, his name was Abraham, Ab(ph) Roos, so he flew with us to, to Sweden, where my Uncle Charlie was and so we hooked up with my Uncle Charlie there. That plane trip, going to Sweden, I remember very vividly because I...

Q: Your first?

A: It was my first plane trip, but I was, I had a terrible case of car sickness as a child, I, I couldn't even get into a car without throwing up. And this was a fairly small plane, not a very nice day and, and, and it put me off flying for decades. That was a three hour trip. All I remember is that that plane kept going up and falling down, going up and falling down. Must have hit, you know, it was a prop plane, it flew under the clouds, it hit all those air pockets and went down and even though we had not seen an orange in our recollection, Freddy and I, they gave out oranges on that plane, I filled up every little bag, just threw up that entire trip. Sat next to the man who was taking us, you know, Mr. Roos and Freddy was sitting in a jump seat and at some point they found Freddy trying to open up the door next to him, I remember that and they rushed, they rushed him away from that little, it was like a parachute seat they had him sitting in and he was fooling around with the door. We got to Stockholm at the end of the day, stayed in a hotel which we called the

contenant alb(ph), this is Hotel Continental, across from the railroad station, we got there late at night and my Uncle Charlie was there and we, we, we both remember this first meal that we had there because Holland was still pretty bare after the war, you certainly couldn't get a whole lot of exotic food products and for us exotic was pretty well everything, like oranges, you know, were very exotic. And so eggs were hard to come by and so on, so we got in there pretty late at night, I guess about 10 o'clock we, we were taken into the dining room to have a meal because we hadn't eaten very much and so Freddy immediately ordered eggs and so we ate supper and then went to bed, where Freddy threw up all night. I mean, they'd said it was because he ate too much rich food after not having had rich food for a long time, but I don't know. Anyway he was sick all night. Two men, my Uncle Charlie and Ab(ph) Roos, trying to comfort a little boy who was throwing up all night and I'm sure they were wishing that there was some woman with them who knew what to do better. I stayed in Stockholm for awhile. We lived with a family whose last name escapes me for a couple of weeks and then my uncle, my, Ab(ph) Roos went back to Holland and my Uncle Charlie arranged for Freddy and me to be moved to a boarding school for the summer because he had to go back to America, my Uncle Charlie and somebody had to look after us, so they put us into some boarding school in the country, in the woods outside of Stockholm and we spent the summer there. The caretaker, of

course all the boys were gone from that boarding school, the caretaking family was paid to look after us and by some stroke of fortune, they spoke German and of course my, I had, I mean my parents spoke German, that was there native language so that was my first language and Dutch was my second language. And so they had a daughter my age, so that summer was spent, her name was Marisha(ph), Mousey and so that summer was spent in, in the company of that little girl. Oh, lots of things about that summer, first of all my Uncle Charlie...

Q: Let's go to the other side while we go, can you...

A: Sure.

Q: Can you hold that thought a moment? Okay, we're moving to side two.

[end of side one, tape 1]

A: I was speaking about the things in Stockholm. Most noteworthy was, still while both men were with us, my Uncle Charlie and Ab(ph) Roos, they, we all went walking, I, I just remember rivers and bridges in the city of Stockholm and sunshine and most of all what I remember, I, what I, I guess I consider today to be supermarket, there was stores that just had racks and racks of food, fruit and food, which just boggled our minds. And I must say that even today when I think about it, I'm amazed at that, that in, in Europe after the war, there were countries that were bare of all those things and countries that just, just had it up the kazoo. I mean, we

just hadn't seen fruit for, all over, the stores, by, by the late spring and summer of 1946 in Sweden, perhaps they'd always had it, I don't know, but they were just full of it and we, we couldn't imagine that. It was an upbeat time for us, even though we spoke a lot about my mother and the fact that she'd died and that made us sad, but we were, Freddy and I, looking forward a lot to America. And so then they moved us to that boarding school. Somewhere in the course of that summer I got my first taste of bubble gum, tried to learn how to blow bubbles. It must have been a pretty austere boarding school because the shock was the first morning when we got up, we went to breakfast and they served us, what seemed to me to be sour milk and what I now know to be rye crisps and I couldn't eat it. By the end of the summer I liked it quite a lot, but it's, I, I've, I've talked to people since and that was a fairly standard Swedish breakfast, which is yogurt and rye crisp but I considered it sour milk and crackers, I thought it was awful.

Q: Your friend, who you were mentioning, who you spent the whole summer with, is this beyond the boarding, before the boarding school, or?

A: That was in the boarding school, her family were caretakers there. Maybe while all the teachers and the children were gone, they were caretakers and we spent a lot of time playing make believe. My Uncle Charlie had taken us on a shopping binge and I had noticed in a store, nightgowns, long nightgowns and you know I was 10 years

old and they were long nightgowns with pretty little puffy sleeves and I made him buy me a pink and a blue and they became princess gowns, I wore one and Mousey wore the other and we made Freddy be the prince. Spent a lot of time running through the woods, make believe like that. Anyway, in the course of that summer, our visa came through and the, Mousey's mother, the lady who spoke German and with whom we were able to communicate to, brought us to Gurtaberg(ph), from where the ship we were to sail on, sailed. And the ship was the Grippsholm(ph), Grippsholm(ph) and so Freddy and I set sail. It was a two week trip from Sweden to America, I don't know why it should have taken that long. We were put into separate state rooms, I shared mine with three women, two upper bunks, two lower bunks and Freddy shared his with three men on a different deck. And that made me very anxious. The lady who took us to the ship had arranged for a single maiden lady to eat her meals with us. Somewhere around the third day out there was a drill, you know, in case something happened to the ship, but everybody forgot to tell me it was a drill and so in the middle of the sirens and the whistles blowing, we were told to get on deck and, and we were assigned to lifeboats and to my horror, we were assigned to different lifeboats. And I wouldn't let go of him, I was just screaming and crying. Nobody told me that the ship wasn't going down. It was only afterwards that I learned that. I, I...

Q: Did they end up letting you be together? Stay together?

A: I don't remember. Somewhere I found out it wasn't for real, I guess. But I just remember screaming and crying a lot. I contracted a skin condition which I, _____, we knew it was called impetigo, it's very painful and extremely contagious and the fear was that I would not be allowed into America, because they, they weren't allowing anything contagious in. Penicillin had come on the scene not long before and the ship's doctor decided to give me a regimen of penicillin every three hours, morning and night, so four times a day and four times at night, they would come to my bunk in the ship and give me shot in my rear end. It didn't help. By the time we came to America, I was still full of impetigo and eventually, unfortunately gave it to the whole family in America, including the two year old child, but in order to hide the condition, I was put into gloves. I mean the lady who was eating meals with us and who looked after to make sure that we didn't fall off the ship I guess, took care to put me into a pair of gloves and when we arrived in America, I guess that we, this was now August fifth, 1946. We were still among the first wave of orphaned children that were allowed in after the war and I guess the, the newspapers got lists of celebrities that were expected on these various ships and then would go to meet the ship and try to get a story and so at some point that, first of all, the morning of our arrival, lots of hoopla, everybody was saying, oh, you've got to look, there is Long

Island, so some people were saying they were going to live on that long island, cause you could see the land mass sticking out and Freddy and I, we said, no, no, we, we're not going to live on Long Island, we're living at 503 Fifth Avenue, which was the address my mother had hammered into our heads, cause that was where the optical office was, Kurz Optical was there, so we told everybody we were going to be living at 503 Fifth Avenue. Some man came up, who turned out to be a reporter and who wanted to take our pictures, so he cast about for an interesting shot and found the lifeboy, the round lifeboy that says Grippesholm(ph) on it and posed Freddy and me with our faces through it and took pictures which later appeared in the New York Times and which I have copies. And me wearing one glove on the impetigo hand, yes. My hair, which was still very short because of the lice and all, it hadn't grown back completely yet. I was very small, I, you know, the difference in heights, Freddy and me and what we were and where we got to be shortly afterward is quite dramatic as we, we grew a lot. When my Uncle Benjamin was allowed on board, which was pretty early on because we were alone, two children alone, traveling, he found us perched on top of the railing of the ship. I mean that reporter has, had sat us the top of the railing of the ship, without any regard for our safety and Uncle Benjamin came up, gave that man a real piece of his mind. So lots of hoopla, we had a suitcase, we came down off the gangplank, through that big pier, where my, two of my aunts were

waiting for me.

Q: This was at Ellis Island?

A: No, it was no more Ellis Island, straight into the docks in New York?

Q: It would have been then, Battery Park?

A: No, I think it was not, I think it was in the 20's or the teens, it was on one of the lower slips, one of the lower berths. And my father's sister, my Aunt Lola was there to meet us and as well as Charlie's wife Karola(ph), the three had come to meet us on the ship and vividly I remember that as soon as I left that large pier, that building, my first step to the outside, I bumped into somebody who cursed me out very roundly. I must have stepped on her toe or something, but. And so then we took a taxi to Brighton(ph) Beach, Brooklyn, where my Uncle Benjamin and my Aunt Lillian, whom we call Aunt Leah, where they lived, in Brighton(ph) Beach, they lived in a two room apartment, living room and a bedroom. They had two children, Diana, who's my age and Vivian who was two. And Diana was in camp, this was August the fifth, she was in camp for the summer and Vivian was home, she was a little girl.

Q: Were these people who you had not yet met, except for your Uncle Benjamin?

A: I had not met my Uncle Benjamin, that is to say, now within my recollection, actually they had met me, but I was very small, then by the time they went to America, I was, last time I saw them I was two and a half or something, so they knew

me, but I didn't know them. So this was, my Uncle Benjamin had not been to Europe, it was my Uncle Charlie who came to Europe. My Uncle Benjamin and my Aunt Leah, whom I lived with, who I was to live with, I had not met them. So this was my first meeting with them.

Q: So your connection with your brother, as you've mentioned many times before, at this point was crucial to your feeling at home?

A: Very much so, very much so. And then you know how it is when you, when you enter a new family, there are, if children are especially children who are the same age and Diana and I are three months apart, there are lots of adjustments and accommodations that children have to make and there are, there is lots of power play that goes on and where before Diana was queen in her own castle, except for a two year old sister and you know, there were eight years between her and her sister, she came back from camp to find two siblings of the same age and it was a very rough adjustment and there was a lot of politicking among the three of us as alliances got pushed and pulled. And so certainly my, my feeling of needing my brother were, or using him in alliances certainly, that was intensified.

Q: And the language?

A: Well, yes, that, lots of things to be said about that. To our great good fortune, my Aunt Leah had spent some years of her young womanhood in Holland, so she spoke

Dutch. I spoke German pretty fluently and indeed still do, it's a children's German. If you want to engage me in a conversation about genetics, I won't do so well, but if you want to talk about the ordinary, every day things, I'm pretty fluent. You know, what children tend to talk about I can do pretty well and so I didn't have a problem communicating because both Benjamin and Leah spoke German, Leah spoke Dutch. And I want to tell you that a child left to his or her own devices picks up a language very quickly. I arrived here on August the fifth, I went to school at the beginning of September and by that time I spoke English. And it's true, I mean, they got a lady to come in and teach us something, but that didn't do a whole lot, the truth is...

Q: Did you also study in Sweden?

A: No. The truth is, a child that goes, it's one of the reasons I feel so very strongly against what is happening in the school system to allow children to stay in their native language. A child left to his own devices picks up a language, a young child, very quickly. English was my third language. I had started school in Brighton(ph) Beach, Brooklyn, at PS 225, with Mrs. Field, in class 5A. I will say that in the course of that first term, I, I got to speak English fluently. I didn't get to write it perfectly well, in fact I have compositions from that first half year and the English is funny, cause I write what I hear. All of a sudden I wrote as A-l-f-e-r-s-u-d-d-e-n, all of a sudden. And lots of my compositions which were kept from that time are funny

because you can see that I spoke it all right, I just didn't know what I was saying and so I wrote it. By the way, Dutch is a very exact language, you write exactly what you hear, so I tried doing that in English and of course that, it's amusing to read now. But anyway by the time it became apparent it was impossible in two rooms for six people to live, we moved to Kew Gardens and into a little house and then the second half of my fifth grade I had in, I started Kew Gardens in a new school.

Q: So you came and you started in what grade?

A: In 5A. I was just going to say something about that, I, before we were deported to, to concentration camps, I had only had the first grade. And that was it. I think I had a couple of weeks of the second grade and then after the war, after we came back in Rainin(ph), I, they, they kind of, I mean lots of children had, had not had proper schooling and I kind of had the third grade, sort of. And then we left that in the middle, see and then we came to America and in Sweden I didn't go to school of course and then, it was only over the summer, was only a few months. And then I came here and they tested me and I went into the fifth grade, which was the proper grade for a 10 year old to go into. And of course, education in Europe is a little different. In first grade we had learned addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and so by the time after the war, when I was trying to play catch up in the third grade, other children also did that. When I came to America, children in the

fifth grade were about to learn long division, which I knew how to do, so they put me into the fifth grade and the truth is I learned English very quickly. I mean the part of the curriculum that I was backwards on was history because in America they only learn history of the United States in the early grades and I knew nothing. Geography of the United States, course I didn't know anything about that and literature because I had not read children's books, but I was a voracious reader and loved reading. So, what I'm, what I'm ending up with here, so when we moved to Kew Gardens and we were registered in PS 99, I vividly remember that first morning after the, my Aunt Leah took us in and registered us and the principal called for some young girl who brought us to our classrooms. I was brought into my 5B classroom feeling very self-conscious, school was more formal in those days, everybody was sitting at their seat with their hands clasped and the little girl brought me in to the class and my teacher turned to the class and said, "Now this is a little orphan girl from Europe. She doesn't speak any English and I want you all to be very nice to her." And of course I spoke English quite as well as anyone else, possibly with a little bit of an accent, but I had a dilemma because I didn't know whether to make her into a liar or whether I should just keep my mouth shut and not let her know that I spoke pretty fluently.

Q: I assume that she was not Jewish?

A: No, she was not Jewish, but I, but I mean she, she didn't mean this badly, she

really thought that I was not able to converse and she was going to try to make my transition easier, but of course I spoke it fluently and I had a problem afterwards with how to, how to handle that. So I went to school sketchily in my early years but it didn't do me any harm and I graduated valedictorian in the eighth grade.

Q: Did the, did the students and teachers have any idea about your past, about where you had come from, what you had been through?

A: I, I don't think the students certainly did. At some point my teacher did, she, my teacher also was the quote, sewing teacher for the school and so one afternoon when we had sewing, she got me aside and had me tell her the story and so I know she was curious and she had me talk about it. But listen, it isn't just that those children didn't know about it, people didn't talk about it here, nobody talked about it.

Q: Your family neither?

A: In my family, my parents were part of the conversation because my father was my Uncle Benjamin's brother and my mother and my Aunt Leah had been best friends in the time they were young wives and they'd had their children together and spent a lot of time in each other's company, so the conversation was much about the times gone by. But not, they did not try to draw me out on the experiences during the war. Once in awhile they got into the conversation or I would mention something, but they didn't try to make me talk about it. And certainly, other people, outsiders of the

family, this was not a subject of conversation, first of all, many Jewish people who we knew had similar histories. Everybody, I guess, had lost people. It was a subject very painful for a lot of people, it was raw, it was part of their own lives, or else they had lost people to these kind of things and there was I think also a feeling that they've been through enough, why should we make them talk about it. It's only really in the 1980's that this became a subject for general conversation, it was not done. And there was also a feeling, certainly in the 50's, 40's and 50's that one tried to shield children from hearing bad things, it wasn't like now when violence is an every day thing on the TV. It would not, you, one would not have put a child in the position of telling other children about these experiences, it would have been deemed not proper.

Q: Between the fifth and the eighth grade, was the eighth grade where you were valedictorian?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you know other Jewish children?

A: I would venture...

Q: Other than your relatives?

A: I would venture to say that my school in Kew Gardens was 80 percent Jewish. Maybe not 80 perhaps in those years it was 60 percent Jewish. We certainly wouldn't, my aunt and uncle would not have moved into a community that did not

have synagogues and you know and other Jewish children.

Q: Was going to the synagogue an important part of your life?

A: Absolutely, absolutely. I, we were affiliated, I went to the Hebrew school after school, five, four days a week. Went to the synagogue on Saturday morning, did that even when no one else went. Both Freddy and I did that. And Freddy was Bar Mitzvahed at there and I became active when I was old enough to do that, ___ being a leader in the youth center and you know, it was very much a focal point of my existence. I retained the observance as I thought my mother would have wanted me to and Freddy was a little bit more lax about that as boys are wont to do and that caused me some aggravation and it was important enough for me so that when I went to high school, Forest Hills High School, the social life revolved around sororities, which meant Friday nights. I did not join a sorority and I was pretty well an outsider, I was an oddball and I had ambitions for the stage and joined play production and eventually did get a role or two and walked from my house in Kew Gardens to those performances in Forest Hills High School on Friday night and Saturday and did that with a lot of trepidation. And religion has remained to this day, certainly an important thing, important core in my life.

Q: How about being an American, was there a point at which or can you identify a point which you began to feel like an American?

A: I pretty quickly, I pretty quickly internalized some American things that made me feel good about America. For one thing, I want to remind you, that in the 1940's and '50's, children entered school in the morning, stood up and pledged allegiance to the flag every day and stood up when the flag came, when you heard the Star Spangled Banner and those of us, not just those of us who were refugees and came here, but people of that era, to this day, are more patriotic, if such a thing is possible to say, than young people who are growing up today. We tend to honor the flag and all that.

In addition to that, my Uncle Benjamin thought of America as the land of savior, you know, they were, they were also refugees as was all my family, I mean we were all, my whole family, there was nobody really in America, everybody was in Europe. And I have correspondence from my parents to their family and friend, hundreds of letters that got saved and sent and kept with my mother's artifacts, with non-Jews during the war and I, I have possession of those. And I've spent really hours looking at those and what emerges from them is this tremendous feeling of people that are bound up with hundreds, a far flung family, you married and you then acquired your spouse

s family as well and your spouse's spouse's. They drew in their family and then you became family with the spouse's spouse's spouse's. And so I have letters like that, the middle of a tremendous network, it was a very close merging of family and friends, I

mean it was one thing. And so when all of that got stopped one day by that maniac in Germany and everybody tried to get out, those who made it and who made it here and who worked hard and reestablished themselves, my Uncle Benjamin came here with a few dollars in his hands one day, got on the subway from Brooklyn, where he was dropped off after he arrived here, took the subway, which, I mean he didn't even know his way, had heard about 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, got instruction how to go there, found an office on the fifth floor walkup and opened his office and he and he became a successful optical wholesaler again, you know. He considered America as the golden land, the land that had saved him. He considered President Truman somewhere up there with the deities. And there was a lot of talk about that, I mean we respected America as I did as a land that had given us, you know, a chance to come and to, to work and so we were very patriotic. I remind you also that not until 20 years later was there any criticism above the president at the time, President Roosevelt and the Congress for not, you know, opening up the door and saving people, which of course in retrospect we all realize should have happened but at that time, I mean we went, everyone, all the Jewish refugees and the non-Jewish refugees who came to America after the war found this a land of opportunity and equality and you know, place where you could start and didn't matter what you had been, if you wanted to become something you could and we were very patriotic about that and I

internalized that very fast. I became a citizen on my, at my own right, since I had no parents, so you know, I had to and I was, I was old enough so requirements for citizenship for me were until I was 18 I was not a citizen so at the age of 18 I was sworn in, in Abbot's(ph) field, I went with Freddy.

Q: But Freddy couldn't?

A: No, Freddy became a citizen in his own right when he became 18. The ceremony was in Abbot's(ph) field, was crowded, crowded, it was a beautiful day, I was sworn in and somewhere, along with the other 20,000 people who were there, we all stood and we took the oath, I was very proud to do that and some reporter was roaming around saying, "Anybody here have an interesting story?" You know, but I wasn't going to push myself forward on that, but as he went past me, I said to him, "Well, I was interviewed when I came here." He said, "Oh," and he, and he took my story, so I have an article about me on the day I came to the United States with picture and I have an article about me on the day I became a citizen.

Q: Do you remember the date?

A: No. I know it was in the spring and the sun was shining and it was Abbot's(ph) field.

Q: Let's go to the other side. We're moving now to tape two.

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

Q: Not only becoming 18 is a major passage of life, but becoming an American citizen is a major passage of life and how your life proceeded into a new passage and how maybe the past always had some influence on that, from there.

A: Well, after high school, I went to college. For a lot of reasons I did not pursue going out of town. A lot of reasons and I applied to Queens College and I applied to Barnett(ph) here in New York, women's undergraduate part of Columbia University and I was accepted Barnard with a scholarship, a partial scholarship, Freddy was still in Kew Gardens, living there, his last year of high school and so I commuted. In those years it was still possible to put yourself through college, a thing that is no longer possible, but when I started Barnard it was 823 dollars a year. I had a 350 dollar scholarship. I had received something called a general ____ foundation scholarship when I graduated high school, which paid me 25 dollars a semester, which I used toward textbooks, in the plural, cause you could do that cause we went to use, to buy used textbooks, it was possible. I worked at the synagogue youth center and made money that way. I worked summers as drama counselor in camps, so that I got paid more than other counseling jobs. And I took a job every single June with Olsen's(ph) Temporary Service. And it was quite possible to, if you, if you had your living taken care of and I was living in Kew Gardens and eating, for a

young person to go to school and pay their tuition with the help of a scholarship, that was quite possible. Course it would not have been possible if, if I could not have lived at home in, in Kew Gardens, but even the tuition, which is unthinkable today, I mean no young person can possibly do that, but that was possible so I went to Barnard and spent the four years there. Never felt myself to be very pretty...

Q: You're kidding?

A: Certainly in high school I felt odd man out and my friends were oddballs, we, I was not, I tried to belong to the in crowd, I, I never quite could. In Forest Hills High School they took, at the end of our freshman year, they, they culled out of the student body of 800 I think approximately of my year, they took 36 of us whom they tested at the end of the first year, based on our achievement of the first year and they put us together for all the math and science of the balance of the four years, they tried to give us five years in four. And so I kind of traveled with the elite intellects of, of, of the class, for those four years and I was always a studier, school didn't come easy, I, I always had to work very hard, I spent a lot of hours studying, as opposed to my brother. My brother used to come home and complain that every, he had too much work, everything was too much work and then he'd sit down like for 15 or 20 minutes with the pencil writing furiously and then one time I looked up and he was putting on his sneakers and I said, "Where are you going?" And he said, "I'm going to play

basketball in the schoolyard and I said, "Well, you've just, you've just been complaining you have too much work, so what are you doing?" He said, "Well now I've made a schedule and what to do and I know when I'm studying for what, so now this is the schedule for playing ball." See now, I never was able to do that, see I would get nervous and bite my nails and work and study, so, there were some people in that group of thirty-something that they culled out, that really were extremely gifted in math and in science and I didn't have an easy time hanging on, but I did very well in high school, I graduated the 10th, I think in, in, in the 800, I was number 10, I think I had a 92.8 average or something like that, I was fine and so I had been pretty spoiled cause I'd done pretty well, all of my school years, I was, I was always an A student and in fact, I tell you what I remember, in the first grade, my mother made a big fuss, because in Europe their marking system was to 10, I mean 100 was 10. I brought back my report card in first grade, I had a 10 in everything and an eight in penmanship and she wouldn't let me forget that. It was only in later years that I found a copy of my mother's report cards in elementary school, she was definitely a C student all the way, which I thought was quite extraordinary. But anyway, I was spoiled and I had, I had always had an easy time in school. I went into Barnard and I was not happy. I was outclassed by a mile. Barnard had, certainly at that time, a large percentage of its students had come from private schools. I was a product of

the public school system and most of it, Forest Hills High School, was definitely one of the top high schools in the city, but we had done things by rote. ____ you learn something, you memorized it, you took a test and you spewed it back out. I got to college, I had to write a term paper, I had never written a term paper in my life, I didn't even know how to go about it. I mean, what we wrote were more like compositions, but there were no term paper, a research paper? I hadn't the foggiest notion. I had girls in the class who had been doing independent research at Barnard you know, people who really knew what they were doing and I, I was under pressure to maintain my scholarship and I hadn't yet learned how to sift out the important stuff from the unimportant, so I tried very hard to keep up on all of it and you couldn't. So, I had no time while I was in college to learn anything. I, I just spend my time doing, but not learning and I regret that a lot. I don't have good recollections of those four years, they were very tense all the time. When I was growing up and I knew I couldn't be an actress cause it would not work well with my, with my religious inclinations not to work on Saturday, I probably wouldn't have made a go of it anyway, but anyway, I, I, I gave up my pretensions for that, I decided to be a schoolteacher, I had worked with children all of my life when I could have been considered not a child. I'd done the youth service and camps and I really was very good with children and I was going to be a schoolteacher. So when I came out of

Barnard, I, I became a teacher of the fifth grade. I had done my student teaching at the Dalton School and then taught fifth grade at Ridgewood, which is on the Brooklyn-Queens borderline. And somewhere in that first year I decided that all my life I had been in a classroom. I started out on one side of the desk and now I was on the other side of the desk and I was curious to see what life was like in New York as a grown person, not in a classroom. So I decided to take a year off. I took that trip, this was now, I graduated college in '58, so I taught school for '58 to summer '59 and I went to Europe and Israel, that was that, that summer, that trip. Freddy had graduated college that year and he also, he decided not to wait, to work a year, he decided to, to go to Europe that year too, we went separately. He left before me and he took a ship across and then he rented a car on the continent, a little Renault Defeen(ph), which looks like a tin can that you can pick up. But I had already been working for a year and I decided to do it, Freddy was going to stay at youth hostels all over and my mother's mother, my grandmother was alive in Israel still at that time and we decided to combine our trips, individual trips to Europe by meeting in Rome towards the end of the summer and going to Israel together to visit my grandmother, whom we knew, she had come to America in the intervening years to visit with my mother's sister, my Aunt Mary and had gone back to Israel and so we went individually to Europe and Freddy, we, we went to see Freddy off on the ship on the

day that he sailed and he also was seen off by the lady who became my sister-in-law, Rachel and that was really when I first realized that she might very well be, become my sister-in-law. And Freddy and I had agreed to give each other messages whenever we were in a city, by leaving each other messages in the American Express offices, so that whenever we came, because that's where we picked up mail in those years. If you went around with a very loose itinerary, you know, I knew I was going to England and then from England to Holland and from Holland to France and he had his loose schedule, without knowing what hotels we were going to, but so that was how people frequently communicated. And so I did that and he did that and we would find messages from each other. And then I left a message for him when I got to Geneva. I got to Geneva on a Friday and on Saturday he appeared in my, in my hotel because he had gone to American Express, picked up and, and he found my note and he knew where I was staying, so we decided then to travel from Switzerland through Italy to Rome together, since we were supposed to meet in Rome anyway in a matter of two weeks. I didn't have a car and he had the Renault Defeen(ph). We should have never done that, bad mistake. Because we left Geneva the next day and got into a car accident almost immediately. Poor Freddy, he really felt very bad about that. We were driving along on a country lane, there was a tiny little car in front of us and that man suddenly made a left turn, into a field of wheat. I mean we,

we, we, it was just, we didn't know there was a road there, to make a left turn and we banged into him with our little tin can, I was thrown up against the windshield and broke my nose. Actually we didn't know I broke my nose, but I was bleeding and, and I said to Freddy, whose German was not terrific any more, I said, "Don't worry about it, I'll handle it." And out of the car, like a little circus car, came this huge man. And he spoke what is known as SwitzerDutch(ph), which is absolutely not related to the German that I, I mean I couldn't understand him, he couldn't understand me, it was a terrible situation. Anyway we got it sorted out, we were towed and we got into a hotel near Lausanne and had to lay up there for three days while the car was repaired. Some lady doctor came to the hotel, assured me my nose was not broken, but it really was, cause I have the, I can feel it to this day. And in the course of those three days, it was Freddy's birthday. We went to the top of the yungfrau(ph) together and we fought terribly and came evening times, I mean my brother was a 22 year old young man on the loose in Europe and he wanted to have a good time, but he felt responsible for the sister so he started hanging around with me in the evening, it didn't work. At three days we decided this was not good and he went his way and I went my way by train and we met up in Rome, as we were planned to and then went to Israel happily together and then drove back afterwards to Paris and...

Q: Your meeting with your grandmother, was it special?

A: It was very special, my grandmother was actually, whom we had seen a few years before that, my grandmother was living in Israel with her son, my mother's brother and his family, in Tel Aviv. And actually I had never met my, my mother's brother, my uncle Elias(ph) and his family and so it was a very, very special 10 days that we were all together. And it was my first trip to Israel and that was a exciting thing. As I told you, my mother had rehearsed Freddy and me in addresses, in case we were separated during the war and one address was 503 Fifth Avenue and the other one was 108 Benyahuda(ph) Street, which was in Tel Aviv, which was her brother. So of course my mother had told us a lot about her family there and my Uncle Elias(ph), her, her, her brother and his children, one of whom was close in age to Freddy and me. And so it was a very nice experience and the first of my visits to Israel. And when I came back to America after that summer, I told you I had decided to take some time out from teaching and I decided to make myself available to the business world. So, having been an academic students, not what we used to call commercial students in those days, you went to high school, you either got an academic diploma or a commercial diploma, I of course was academic, I had always stuck my nose up at things like typing and shorthand and had a three finger method of typing my papers in college. So when I offered myself to the business world, you see, nobody wanted me. They all wanted to know what I could do. I said, "Well what do you mean, what

I can do, I'm intelligent, I'm a Barnard graduate, I was a teacher." And they would say, "Yes, yes, but what can you do, can you type? Can you do shorthand?" Again I want to tell you, this is the 50's now. Freddy went to Columbia and I went to Barnard. When he graduated, the recruiters came to Columbia and be interviewed by the young men graduating. On my side of Broadway there was no such a thing as a recruiter, our top English graduate got a scholarship to I think, secretarial school. When a girl wanted to go into publishing, she was advised she should go in as a typist or secretary and work her way up. I venture to say not a boy was told that. I think too, even, even at Barnard and Barnard really has a tradition of professional, of women who be, who've entered the professions, but most, most of them did not do that. I mean not very many went to medical school or law school, law school certainly not in those years. It's only in retrospect that I realize I should have gone to law school, a thought that never entered my mind and I probably would have been good as a lawyer, because my mind works that way. But at those, in those years, certainly, there were things women, professions like teaching that women thought about readily and the others you didn't. We concentrated more on working and, and getting married and having children and so we weren't fixated on careers for a lifetime, we were interested in having interesting work experiences, but not necessarily lifetime careers. There was a lot of talk about teaching is a good

profession cause you get the summers off, you know, that kind of thing. Certainly that has been a great thing of the women's movement I think, the fact that women are, are, are encouraged to think about working as a fulfillment of life, perhaps not all good in the sense of what happens to children today, but certainly, if I think back, that it never dawned on my, you know, to go for... And this was from a school where there was a lot of emphasis on that, the president of Barnard at the time was a woman who encouraged that a lot. So...

Q: So Freddy was at Columbia and you were at Barnard, still together...

A: Well...

Q: In parallel.

A: Well together in the sense that, you know, if we were not going out of town, if we were not going to be going out of town and staying in New York, then, in terms of Ivy League schools or the top of the heap, there was Columbia and, and since we were not going to be able to dorm, most of the people who graduated with us, if they did not dorm, went on to Queen's College, you know, in their backyards and then, you know, lived at home, if you're going to live at home, that was as close as we came, so, yeah we were together, but that was really not because we were together, it's because we both were able to qualify for top schools and, and that was the top school, certainly within commuting distance, I commuted every day, it was more than

an hour each way.

Q: And he still lived in the home also?

A: He lived at home also.

Q: And after his graduating...

A: Well he took, you see he, he, my mother had, my mother's brother in Israel, Elias(ph) had been trained as an engineer and my mother got it into her head early on, she used to tell, Freddy used to be found with hammers and nails and taking things apart and exploring so she always said he's going to be an engineer just like her brother and I guess that stuck in his mind and he in fact took a five year engineering program at Columbia and, which they were able to do in four years, he came out with a BS instead of a BA, having done two years in the engineering school and he graduated with an engineering degree as, so yes, then he graduated the year after me and he announced that he was going to get married to that young lady, who name is Rachel and she is his wife today, they have three children, live in New Jersey, Cherry Hill, New Jersey and that is where he has lived, really since he graduated, he, at the end of college the recruiters came and Freddy accepted a job with RCA which was in Camden, New Jersey. To my great relief because he had spend time in California and all that and I was terrified that he was going to move to California and I guess I would have moved with him by that time. So when they were married, they moved

in commuting distance to his work in, in, in Camden, so they moved to Haddenfield(ph) in the Cherry Hill area and have moved, you know, from that little garden apartment into a house and then into the home that they still occupy in Cherry Hill. They had, eventually, three children, the oldest, Natalie, who is now 30 years old and the two twins, who were born triplets, and were triplets for a few days and those young ladies are now going to be 28 and the twins are married and Natalie will get married this September. They are the love of my life. My sister-in-law and my brother have been very generous in letting me share in those children's upbringing, I, I did it with malice aforethought, I made them my little dumplings from the time that they recognized me and have spent a lot of time with them, took them on cruises and trips to the Caribbean in their growing up years and in general, you know, have inveigled myself into their hearts and lives, so that to this day, they are my friends and indeed, the oldest one, Natalie, lives in an apartment that I own not far from here, the one that I lived in before I moved here. And she live on 58th Street and since she is now a grown woman, I have been very fortunate in having her not only live near me, but like me enough to make me her friend and so we, we do things together, we go to the opera and the theater together and you know, I, I don't have children of my own, a thing that I mind a lot. And the fact that I've had these three children and my sister-in-law has generously allowed me to really be part of their lives and not

resented me for that. Being an aunt, you know, it, it's like being a grandparent, I guess, it's the best of all possible worlds, you have none of the responsibility for discipline and all the opportunity for bribery by being nice and so, you know, if a mother and father are resentful, it can make that hard. Rachel and Freddy have been very generous and have allowed me to do my bit with them, so that they've been as close as, you know, it is possible for nieces to be.

Q: I have nieces also, I relate, identify with what you're talking about. I, I wanted to ask you something that you had talked about before and that was that there was time when no one talked about these experiences and you, you mentioned the 80's and how, when people started talking. When people started talking, for instance with your nieces, have you talked with them, have they asked you or when did you begin to feel that it was, was all right for you to talk about this?

A: I always thought so, I, I never had a problem talking about it, but you know, it's not something you, you didn't go around playing with your friends and say, oh by the way, do you know that this and this, what happened to me, I mean it was not, you just didn't do that. But when it came up, I, I have always considered the war years a part of my life in the following way, first of all, my recollection of my parents in intimately bound up with that. I mean I can't separate the war years from my recollections of my mother and my father and so I certainly was, I guess I've made

that clear by now that I, I find my, my mother's memory to be a very important thing to me and I had no intention of glossing over her life or my recollection of her life and, and that's part and parcel of those years, so I have never had difficulty thinking back, cause I have always wanted to remember her and that's part of it and I've really not ever had a problem discussing it, I've never found that I broke down or couldn't talk about it in any way. I've always been able to do that, I felt, in the early years, certainly in the 50's, as a child, you don't want to be different so you don't call attention to those kinds of things and as a, as a grown up I always try to make sure that if the subject came up that I didn't bore people to tears with it or you know, had them morbidly interested in me as a freak of some kind, but I never minded talking about it. I always thought, you know, that that was okay.

Q: Was there talk, was there room, was there space, I'm talking about a kind of a intellectual, emotional space within the context of your religious community, the synagogue, to talk about, was this an important...

A: No, again, you asked first about my class, were there other Jews, that I, did know other Jews besides my family? Well, for the most part you know, people tend to move where there are people like them, so I don't know where you're from but certainly Jewish people tend to move to communities, especially observant Jews, tend to move to communities where there are other observant Jews, so we did that, that

was Kew Gardens. There were no other refugees from the war in my school when I went to that school, not children who actually were survivors. There were children of children who were survivors, but not actual children, so Freddy and I were different in that way, but you know, _____ when it came to our synagogue, I guess 80 percent of them had fled Hitler at some point between the 30's and the 40's and so the difference again was that the children in my synagogue, again were not the survivors, but their, but their parents were the survivors so this wasn't strange for anyone. I don't know if you know but in the Jewish religion there is a memorial prayer for the dead that is said on the festival holidays, on the last day of the festival holidays and it is traditional for the people who still have parents to not remain inside the sanctuary at the time that this is said, so they go out and they come back in after that prayer is said. Well I was very conscious of the fact, in the growing up years that there weren't any other children that hung around for that prayer. But in no other way, I think the people, when we first moved in, since everybody was refugees, my family were also refugees and there wasn't much made of that. Some people knew that of course I did not call the adults with me mother and father or mom and dad, but aunt and uncle. And so, but there was a time when that was pretty common among survivors you know, so yeah, there's, it didn't become a commonplace today, you know, when people hear that I am a survivor, I, I notice their pupils dilate and they look at me

with a newfound interest, even people I've known. I got a call about a year ago, from my accountant. I have a business in New York now and I have an accountant. When I started with this accountant he was a young man of no consequence. Now he's the biggest accounting firm on Long Island. And I don't have day to day contact with him, I work with somebody who is employed by him. Well, I got a phone call and it said, "Miss Kurz? Hold the phone for a moment for Mr. Isrelloff(ph)." So I got, I held on the the phone and Bob Isrelloff(ph) came on. "Hey," he said, "Dorian(ph), I just came back from Washington, I visited the Holocaust Museum and I pushed some buttons on an interacting and I was just amazed, there was a name there, Dorian(ph) Kurz and I said to myself, well there can only be one of those and I pressed the button and there you were on the screen, I had no idea." Well, now Bob Isrelloff(ph) hasn't made a call to me in perhaps 20 years, you see, but the fact that I was one of the survivors caught his interest and that has happened to me a couple of times. It is now that people find you interesting or oddball or noteworthy, if you are a survivor. In the 40's and 50's this was not noteworthy, it was more commonplace. You ask about my nieces and whether they were, when they were growing up, were interested. I will tell you that when I was invited to do the, the history for the Holocaust Museum, which I, the visual one that I gave in 1990, one of the reasons that I was keen on doing it was not so much for historical reasons, because I knew there were

many people who could give their histories, but one of the reasons I wanted to do it was because I was told I would have a copy of that tape and I wanted my brother's children to have that visual story because again, growing up, I mean children are not very interested. You know, when, I was born in the year 1936. When people talk about the first World War, I glaze over a little bit, it's somewhere there before I was born and you know how things are before you were born, they're ancient history, they have no relevance. Well, my nieces were born, not just after World War 2, but a long time after World, World War 2, World War 1, what do they know one from the other or the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, the Crimean War, I mean it's all one to people who weren't living at that time and I want them to know the story and I was anxious for them to have a copy of it. And, so that was definitely one of the reasons that I was keen to do that visual history. And that made me think about other children who maybe didn't have an aunt or a father who were survivors, who should have an opportunity, if they link in, to, to get stories, you know, even in 200 years. We, we hear today, stories about the Revolutionary War and we don't relate to it directly and we don't have George Washington or the soldiers of the continental army to really talk about it. It would make it more immediate, it would make it not so long time ago and what relevance does it have to us and I think those histories are important for that reason. Not just for to counteract the revisionists, but to allow

another generation to make this not be ancient history, but to pull it up into something that happened to another person, who looks just like them, it's real, it happened to that person that I'm looking at. In the case of my nieces, it will be more immediate than that and they are women now and married and they're going to have families of their own very shortly and those children will grow up and hear about the events of World War 2 and what happened to people, the Jews and other in that time. And I want those, I want my brother's grandchildren to look at those visuals and see those visuals as something that happened really to them, because their father almost did not survive, which meant that those children were not going to be. And for other children, who do not have direct contact in a linear way with the events of that time, I think seeing an actual film of a survivor will cause them to have more connection to that than when we hear about the Revolutionary War. So I think that it is important from that point of view.

Q: I do too. I want to move over to the other side.

[end of side one, tape 2]

Q: We're going to have some, just final thoughts and then Dorian has to go to work.

A: She does. Well I don't know, final thoughts are kind of hard. I, I, I have a couple of them, I guess. I notice that both Freddy and I are doers, we're very practical people. I think that that is a direct result of our early lives. We, we are, we tend, we

are survivors in more ways than one. I am not a complainer. I tend to take command, I tend to grab ahold of my life and make things happen. It turned out I couldn't get a job when I, I was always saying, you know, nobody wanted me and all that and eventually I learned how to do some shorthand and _____ around in a couple of jobs for a couple of years and it became apparent to me that I couldn't really work for others, I had to work for myself and I opened up a store. I have been a retailer now, on some scale or other, since 1965 and have a pretty large store right now, takes up about a half a block and I have 13 employees. And I find I become more bossy and more take charge as I go along. I, but I'm very, I am and have been very practical and I tend to, not kind of sit back and let life happen. I notice Freddy is the same way. We are more controlling and definitely tend to manipulate our lives, rather than to be manipulated by it and I think that's very good. In a way, we are both stronger people, I think, than many of the people that I meet. Most certainly there are scars, now I did not marry. I did have a relationship for 30 years with a man whom I could not marry. Consequently I don't have children. He was an older man, almost twice my age when we met and I knew that I should not be in that relationship, but I was unable to help myself, I, I, I had a nervous breakdown a couple of times when I tried, especially in the early years to stop that. I lay that off directly on my early years. I needed to be loved and admired by an older man and I needed that support and that

ego lift. And I, I think, that is, is a direct result of the loss of my parents. My father when I was six and my mother later, I think I needed that. I needed to be the special person in somebody's life again. And that, of course, affected my personal life, even in the fact that, the fact that I'm a retailer, cause you know, I mean, then if you don't have a normal marriage and children, then you do other things and so what I did is I really filled up my life and all the little nooks and crannies so now I don't have any time to myself at all. And Freddy, who does have a family and a lovely wife and wonderful children, well that still, he is a very closed up person. He was not invited to make that original tape at the Holocaust Museum, he came with me that day. His memory of the early years is much more sketchy than mine and sometimes when I talk, he will remember something, it's much more sketchy. He now gives talks, as a survivor, to schools in his area quite frequently. He started doing that since my tape was made. But he is a much more closed person, he is emotionally, I hope he never hears this tape...

Q: I don't think he would.

A: He, he is much more closed person than I am, he, I said, like he never gives out compliments or anything. He, he'll never say that he loves somebody or he, that he, he's not a person who hugs and he's much more emotionally closed up. Partly he's a man, I'm a woman, it's, I'm, I'm, I'm more open than he is, but the fact that he is

closed up like that, that he's not able to express his feelings. Like I said, he did it for me on my 60th birthday, the window opened and I was amazed and then it closed up again, see, so, but he's much more closed up and I, I, I think that's a direct result of our early lives, absolutely. What happens to you as a child always affects, for every one of us and why should it not be so for us? In a way it has made me stronger, certainly more self-reliant. When my mother died, in my heart I took responsibility for my younger brother and maybe he did that in his heart for me too, I don't know, but I did that, I took, I became a grownup and I took responsibility for maintaining my life and my beliefs in a way that my mother would have wanted to and I, I, I took on grownup responsibilities, indeed I had done that even during the war. When my mother got Typhus and sick and I took her out of that train from which we were rescued and carried her to the house and you know, we were called upon as children to be more grown up than children traditionally have been and I've maintained that in the grown up years in a way that has made it more possible for me, let's say, to be an employer than an employee. I, I have not been in the dependent stage, willingly and...

Q: And that might include marriage as well?

A: No, I will say that I always intended to marry when I was 18 and have children by the time I was 20, that was my plan for my life and everything about me, mean to this

day I'm a good cook and I'm a nester. I have had to reconfigure myself into not being that, I've had to squeeze and pull and push myself into begin a career person, I was not made to be that. I really should have been left to be where I was born, a Viennese person, with music and dancing and husband and children, it's really what I started out to be and the rest of me, what I am now, I fashioned, I forced, I, it was not what I was meant to be. I love opera, I subscribe, both to the city opera and to the metropolitan, go a lot, I try to go to the theater. I have still friends from my early years here in this country and my, from my school friends, I still maintain them and in general, I'm pretty content with my life. I have a nice apartment. And the man with whom I had my long relationship has died and, but, I know, I suppose most people have gaps in their lives, certainly my great regret is not having children, but given that as a given, then for the rest of it, I don't have too many complaints, I have had cancer 14 years ago, I survived breast cancer. I had a year of chemotherapy, it had spread, I'm very fortunate to have survived another, another thing besides my early childhood events. I consider these years that I've had since the cancer a gift. If I were to die tomorrow, I would feel no anger, because I think my time was, if it was not up when I was a child, in those conditions, it was up when I had cancer in the end of my 40's. I am 61, I think the years since my cancer are an additional boon, bonus and, and I really enjoy most of my life. And as long as those whom I care and love,

care about and love, are well, you know and as long as I am able to support myself and if I don't become destitute or dependent, in mentally or physically, I will go on being grateful to God for my continued existence. At the moment, my Uncle Benjamin died in 1957 of a heart attack, 1957 of a heart attack, yeah. He was 56 years old when he died. And we, by that time of course we were working and my, his wife, my Lillian, Leah, my aunt Leah, she is today 85 years old, she still lives in Kew Gardens, I spend the weekends with her, usually, in the house in Kew Gardens and I'm here in my apartment mostly, during the week and she's okay, she's doing well mentally and physically, mostly. And her daughters, Diana, who is a painter, has a studio and lives in Soho, here in New York and the other daughter, who was two when I came to this country, Vivian, has great interest in Tibetan Buddhism and has spent a lot of time, both in Nepal in the east and in France and is very much involved with that and Freddy and Rachel and the girls are fine and getting married and the baby's expected this year and so, at the moment, I, I really count my blessings and I will continue to do that, every day that is given to us without major problem.

Q: Thank you so much.

A: I thank you very much too.

Conclusion of Interview.