

This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Susie Schwarz. This is taped number two, side A.

The Montessori school.

The Montessori school-- there was one other Jewish girl there, her name was Marishka. I think she was Hungarian. And I really don't know anything about her background. Either she had been in hiding too, or perhaps she came-- I don't think she survived the camp.

And all of the other children that were there were children of I guess some of the Dutch, either aristocracy-- because there were some-- a few girls, they were vaguely connected to the royal family-- and a lot of children whose parents were still in Indonesia. And the parents being in Indonesia, they sent the children to school. But it was all very democratic, and really very nice.

Was that quite a sacrifice for your parents to send you there? Or did the school give scholarships? Or--

I don't know-- the school definitely, definitely did not give scholarships. And it must have been a sacrifice, because I cannot imagine that it was very inexpensive. It was, as I said, it was a very small school, it was a very exclusive setting. And the type of children that were sent there, I think, it must have been fairly expensive, and I really don't know where the money came from-- if my father had, indeed, done that well again, or if someone lent them the money, I don't know.

But I do think it was a wonderful thing that they did for me, having sent me to that school. Instead of suffering through another school.

Yes, I wonder if you have any memories about the attitudes of the other children there? Were they at all antisemitic? Did you talk openly about what had happened? Not just to the Jews, but really do you remember discussions about the war and what they'd all gone through?

I remember one specific incidence-- because this is interesting-- I'm sure I must have talked about it. And I had one friend who, well, who roomed with me. As a matter of fact, there were two girls-- there were three of us in one room.

And one of whom I became good friends with-- she visited me in the United States. I think she immigrated here, eventually, herself. And no feeling of antisemitism, whatsoever.

I think the headmaster was Jewish. I'm fairly sure. However, one of the roommates was a young woman who had come from Curacao, and asked me home for a weekend. And I accepted, and I went home with her in a neighboring town.

And I remember a remark she made-- oh, her family really liked me, although, in general, they were not too keen on Jews. And that was fortunately the one and only remark that was made, and I don't even remember how I responded to it, or how I handled it. I do know I never did invite her to my house, nor did I ever go with her again. But we stayed on very good terms.

You know, I am remembering that when I was first told your story in just brief details, in my mind, of course, was Anne Frank and her diary. But do you think that there are any things in Anne Frank's story or experiences that you share in common with her? Superficially, your experiences were very similar.

The experiences were very similar. As a matter of fact, I think age-wise we were fairly close. Interestingly, she came from Frankfurt, which was not that far from Schluchtern. No, I really don't think so. I always think having, of course, read her diary several times, she was a much more introspective, much more thinking person at that age than I was, ergo, her diary.

When I wrote my so-called cookbook diary, which I interspersed with little things, they were never very thoughtful or significant, other than what was going on with the war, what the family-- meaning the farmers-- were doing, and what

my mother and I were doing. Whereas, I think Anne Frank led a more-- maybe more profound life, a more thinking life.

I think she came from a very different environment than I did, too. So do I have anything in common with her, other than that we were hidden? No, I don't think so.

I saw her hiding place this summer, and of course, compared to my hiding place, they were living in luxurious quarters. But those luxurious quarters were not that good for them.

Yes. It does-- it seems to me, too, that she may have been more living a life of the mind. When you were also so bonded with your mother, who may have been discouraging that, you may have survived emotionally unscathed, as you said you had, partly because you were keeping in the present. Maybe remaining a child longer than you would have, otherwise.

I think I did remain a child much longer than I would have under normal circumstances-- or even, if we are comparing or trying to see if there's any connection, or whatever with Anne Frank-- I think I was more connected with my mother than Anne was with both her parents. And yes, I was kept a child, and that may have helped me, too.

I think I was not yet a real adolescent, and Anne Frank was, even beyond that. And perhaps that is why I consider I came out of there relatively unscathed, because I still came out as a child. I was a child at 14. I think I was still a child at 16.

And perhaps that was to my good.

And it may have been a blessing.

Yes, perhaps it was to the good, I think.

Yes, and what about physically? The physical aftermath of the years of fighting?

Physically, of course, when I was in hiding, I started menstruating, and became aware that I was a woman. But even that was taken very much as-- it was a non-event. It was, matter of fact, it was a nuisance, because given the circumstances we were in, it was not very pleasant.

But I never thought, all right, now, you have passed a threshold and now you are entering womanhood. These things never occurred to me. I also did not have romantic fantasies as, again, as Anne Frank did. I think I became aware of boys when I went to boarding school, where I did have my little flirtations with the boys.

Because by the way, I think I didn't mention, it was the first co-ed Montessori school, too. And we all had our little fantasies and so-called romances. But I was a child, and my family in Baltimore, they confirmed that, too. They said when they picked me up and brought me to their home, they were very surprised what a young child I was at 16.

Because after all, in the United States, even then at 16, the girls and the boys are more forward, more developed. And of course, not as sheltered. I was a very, very sheltered child before the war, and even somewhat after the war.

It's actually a funny term to use-- you'd been literally captive.

Right, I was sheltered in more ways than one. I was emotionally sheltered and physically sheltered.

Now, what about-- do you have any physical problems that resulted from your rheumatic fever, and from those years of little movement, and--

Well, physical problems were just that I developed-- because of the rheumatic fever, they think that was the cause of a mitral valve, or a heart murmur. But it did not hinder me in any way as a young woman. I participated in the swimming, and the tennis, and everything else. That only manifested itself in later years, because this valve had seepage or leaking.

And as I got older, it became a little bit more debilitating, until finally, in 1988, it got so debilitating that the decision was made to repair that valve. So as I like to say, in 1988, I had a valve job, and in 1998, it is still holding up. So the warranty ran out, and it's still going strong.

And I don't think I have-- other than a brief period of time when it was somewhat incapacitating with shortness of breath, things like that, rapid heartbeat-- it has not really kept me from doing all the things that I've always enjoyed doing, such as hiking, tennis, and all the other fun activities.

Let's move on to that story now of coming to Baltimore. How did you come? Where did you live? What did you begin to do, and so on?

I came to Baltimore, as I said, supposedly for one year. How did I come to Baltimore? In '47, it was still very difficult to move around. And my family managed to book passage for me on the SS Ernie Pyle. You know, Ernie Pyle was a war correspondent, and this troop ship was named after him. And then it was converted to transport people.

But I had to pick up that ship in Le Havre, and my parents could not go. By the way, they never got their Dutch citizenship. They kept their German-- well, we were stateless. I came on a stateless passport to the United States.

But again, a friend of the Pagrachs said he would accompany me as far as Paris. And then in Paris, we connected with another young woman who was also going to board that ship. So my parents took me to the train in Amsterdam, and we said goodbye. And I think--

Tell me about that goodbye.

That must have been difficult, but again, it's hazy, and I don't remember a thing other than going to the train, getting on the train. And it must have been a sleeper, I would think. And getting off in Paris with this man who was a cousin of the family Pagrach-- who, incidentally, was a survivor from a camp, had dreadful, dreadful stories to tell. Wonderful person.

And he came with me to Paris. And then, in Paris, we met this woman-- her name was Margot Falk, I remember her name. And I remember also the first evening we were there-- this man and this woman wanted to go to the Moulin Rouge, or one of these clubs. And they didn't know what to do with me, and decided to take me along.

Oh, it was called the Casino de Paris. And for me, that was big adventure.

You were 16?

I was 16-- sweet 16. And I don't even remember the hotel we stayed in. I only do remember we went to this Casino de Paris, and must have then, the next day, said goodbye to this man, and went by train to Le Havre, where we boarded this-- what looked to me, enormous ship. And there were thousands-- I don't know how many people on the ship.

And we didn't have cabins. We were in sort of dormitories. And there was a dormitory for men and a dormitory for women.

A lot of farmers were going on that ship. And my guess is there were a lot of Dutch, and maybe Belgian, French, who could not make it anymore in Europe, and went either to the United States or to Canada. Which, actually, several of our farm families' children did-- they moved to Toronto and neighboring areas.

Because it was-- life was hard in Europe?

Yeah. So we got on this ship. This woman, this Margot, and I-- and I was mighty glad to have her, because I would have been totally lost. And I was rather timid and not very happy at that point. Now, that, I remember very well.

It's interesting-- I don't remember saying goodbye to my parents. And don't remember details of the Paris stay, but I do remember being overwhelmed by that big boat. And then, we were assigned a bunk bed-- I think there were triple bunks. And I remember we had to eat in the cafeteria.

And this Margot and I amused ourselves-- we were sort of left to our own devices. And it was a 10-day journey. I was a little bit seasick, and I think I was quite homesick already then, too.

But she was very wonderful. I think she ended up going to Panama, but I'm not too sure.

What language would you speak?

She spoke Dutch.

Yes, so that was--

Yes, and incidentally, yes, so she spoke Dutch. And a lot of the people on the boat were Dutch, but we did not have too much contact with them.

Were many of them Jews? Or were they a mixture?

I don't think so. I don't know, I don't think so. I only remembered all these women in that huge dormitory. And then, in the morning, the men would come and say, well, it's time to get up. And again, most of the journey was fairly vague, obviously, it was quite uneventful. But as Margot and I became good friends, and remained in touch with one another for a couple of years afterwards.

So the 10 days-- after the 10 days passed, we approached New York Harbor. And I knew my father's oldest brother and his wife would meet us. Now--

Well, did you-- you'd come into New York Harbor, you'd see the Statue of Liberty?

Yes, I saw--

Where would you--

I was quite impressed and overwhelmed. And I saw the skyscrapers, and I found it all to be very, very interesting. But of course, I was also very frightened and intimidated by it all.

So we were standing on the top deck, and I recognized my father's brother, because he looked exactly like him. Of course, I had seen photographs. And incidentally, the family, after they heard that we survived the war, they sprang into action and sent us lots of care packages, together with clothes, together with food. And my uncle's son was in the American Army and visited us there.

And I think I may have mentioned that. That was quite wonderful. So--

How long would they have gone not knowing whether you were all right or not?

For the duration of the war. Oh, no-- my parents managed to get word to them through the Red Cross, in code language, letting them know that we were all right, that we were not deported.

In hiding?

They didn't-- yeah, well, they didn't know that, but they knew we did not-- we were not sent away to concentration camps. And after the war was over, the son, who was in the American Army found us, and that was a beautiful-- that was one of these memorable incidents which I think I spoke about.

You spoke-- but tell me about it again.

That was so lovely because we were staying in makeshift quarters. I think we had two rooms on the farm. And my father was taking a walk on a Sunday morning, or whenever, and we were surrounded by a lot of the Canadians who had liberated us. And they were very nice, and they would always bring us food and good things to eat.

So my father was taking this walk, and he sees a soldier, thinking it was another Canadian. The soldier looked at him and smiled. And my father smiled. And must have made a little chit chat with him. And suddenly the soldier said, well, Uncle Max, don't you recognize me?

And my father looked at him and recognized him because he had a little scar here where a chicken had once attacked him.

By his eyebrow?

Yes, and it was his nephew, Martin. And he took him home with him. And I remember, I was so embarrassed, because I was still wearing my slip. And I ran away.

And he spent the day with us and told us about the family. And he was also saying, I should come to the United States. And it was really a wonderful get together.

And I think he came back once or twice more when he was on leave. So that was a wonderful, big thing. And we connected again.

Anyhow, when I arrived in New York, and I saw them standing there, there were also some others. And then I realized, they were my mother's cousin.

And of course, because of our being together so much, I had a very good knowledge of who was what and what they looked like, practically down to their size and shape.

More information than they had, probably.

Right, exactly. And they, too, were standing there, and they were all frantically waving. And then I got off the boat. And after I went through the Immigration.

And Margot was must have been met by someone, too. And then, I met them, and it was very emotional. My uncle was crying, and my aunt was crying. And then it was my mother's cousin and her husband and an aunt who were also there.

And we first went to someone's house-- it was my aunt sister-- where we were probably given a meal. And then, we drove to Baltimore from New York in my-- what I thought my uncle's enormous big car. And I was really awed by all the cars, by all the buildings. It was just vast, it was very impressive, as well as intimidating.

But it was more intimidating when we got to Baltimore. We didn't immediately go to my uncle's home, we went to my aunt-- that was my father's oldest sister-- with whom I was supposed to stay. And we get into the house-- she was a remarkable lady, my aunt Eva.

And by the way, they all spoke German, of course, and English, but my German was almost non-existent because I remembered a little bit from my grandmother, who spoke German, but I always spoke Dutch. So my German was not very good. But I managed, and my English was fairly poor, too.

So I get-- I arrive in my aunt's house, and the house was full of people. Well, they wanted to all be there and give me a big welcome. And there was another aunt and her husband, and lots of cousins and cousins' children. It was really overwhelming. And I was very, very intimidated, frightened.

And then, my cousin, who was my aunt's daughter still living with her, could see that I was close to tears. And she said to me, come with me to the kitchen. There is some mail here for you from-- I think from friends in Holland. And I remember, she took me to the kitchen, and she gave me a banana.

And I looked at that mail-- I think I'm getting very sentimental about it. And there were letters from all my friends from school, you know, oh, you must be in the United States now, and how wonderful, and how anxious they are to hear from me.

But it was very smart of my cousin to have done that, to have removed me from all these people that were sort of standing over me and wanting to know everything. So she must have gone back into the living room and told them to disperse. And they did.

And then, eventually, it was just my cousin-- her name was Irma-- and my aunt and I who were left. And well, they said I have to share the bedroom with my aunt and my cousin, because my aunt was a widow. She came to the United States with her two daughters. She was widowed.

And she had a fairly big house, but she rented rooms. So the three of us all slept in the same room. And my cousin was getting ready to get married shortly after I arrived. So it was just my aunt I that were left behind.

But she was a very forceful woman. Now, I arrived in July, and she said, well, in September, you're going to go to the high school here. And I will arrange it.

And in the meantime, the summer was there, and we visited another aunt whose daughter had lived in Cumberland. So the family really took a tremendous interest in me, and tried very hard to--

Be kind.

--be kind, yes. Most of them did. They were very wonderful.

But your links, your letters back to your parents and friends, would be what really kept you going? Is that right?

I don't know if that's correct, if that really kept me going. I think, probably-- yes, it could be that kept me going. And thinking also, well, I only have to stay a year. I will be able to go home again. That, I think, was the key to it, too.

In the meantime, my aunt had decided to really bring Susie into American life, and started to teach me the right things to say in English-- thank you, you're welcome, and so forth and so on. And you have to be more assertive, and you shouldn't be so shy, and we have to make friends.

And she was-- I think she probably was with me and for me at the right time. And after the summer was over, she enrolled me in the local high school. And this is what I think is interesting, because I was 16, and she managed to place me in the 11th grade-- which I could never have been in had I stayed in Holland.

So I realized, well, that was good, because that would mean I would graduate at age 18, as all normal children would. Had I stayed in Holland, I would have probably been 20 or 21 before I would have gotten that diploma.

And she took me to the school-- I remember very well. And she took me to the counselor, and she said, she is supposed to get the easiest classes because her English is very poor. And the counselor was very understanding and said, there are lots of-- not lots of-- there are a number of other immigrant children, and don't worry, they'll take care of her.

And then she had a young girl go with me to school, because after I didn't know my way-- and she was also the daughter of immigrants. And the German Jewish immigrants, they stuck very much together. So this young woman, Ellen, took me to school. And when I came on the first day, the counselor said, you know, there is a young girl here who speaks Dutch.

Well, I thought I died and landed in heaven. And he introduced me to the girl, who was really from Germany, from Berlin, but she had spent the war years with her family in Bangkok and was sent to a Dutch school there. And her name was Marian.

And incidentally, Marian was my first friend, and she still is my very dearest friend. She still lives in Baltimore. And we see each other, oh, at least once or twice a month. And she and I became inseparable, and that was very, very good for both of us because she was shy and I was shy, and we did not fit in too well.

And neither were we too comfortable with our American peer group. We did meet also some other young immigrant girls and became friends with them. And slowly, we developed a nice group.

As a matter of fact, we even had a little social group, boy-girl, which would meet every weekend, and we'd dance and have a good time. And my aunt Eva was always prodding-- now, you have to do this, and you have to do that. And you have to become more social.

I was still homesick, but I think it started-- oh, and a big event was-- after I was perhaps a month or two, they said, we will call your parents. And making a transoceanic call at that time was a big event. And I called and talked to my mother and father. And of course, that was bittersweet because after I hung up, I felt worse, I think, than I did before.

But I thought that was, too, very wonderful. In any case, life at Aunt Eva's was very, very good because she took such a tremendous interest in me, trying to get me socially, emotionally, socially, and intellectually up to snuff-- no small task. And--

This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Susie Schwarz. This is tape number two, side B.

Well, life at Aunt Eva's was quite good, and I think I benefited from it very, very much. I remember, when I got my first report card, and I got a near failing grade in French, she marched herself to school and said to the French teacher, that won't do. She's not going to accept that. And transferred me out of the French class into a German class.

Which was very smart, because of course, I did very well there. And it helped my German.

But I could not stay at Aunt Eva, because her married daughter had to move back in, because they were going to remodel a house. And then I was shipped off to my uncle Meyer, who was my father's oldest brother. That was the father of my cousin Martin.

There, I was not that happy, because Uncle Meyer's wife-- whereas I'm sure she was happy to take me, was not used to having a young girl around. And was accepting of having me there, but did not like-- but was not as encouraging as Aunt Eva. Ergo, she did not like it when I would invite people over.

Was that also in Baltimore?

Oh, yes.

So your school, everything else--

Everything was in Baltimore. But my friendships stayed the same, but life at my uncle Meyer and Aunt Ida's was not quite as wonderful as life at Aunt Eva. Although, I continued to see Aunt Eva all the time, but I had to stay there because--

So after the year was over, my mother came with the idea to take me back. And at that point, I was quite well settled, very happy. Oh, and I had gotten babysitting jobs, so I learned how wonderful it is to make money-- \$0.50 an hour babysitting every Saturday, I would babysit.

And that was a pretty good feeling. However, Uncle Meyer made me turn most of the money over. Later on-- and I resented it, and he only allowed me to keep a small amount-- and much later on, I learned that he had put that money in an account for me, but he didn't say that.

So the year was over, my mother came with the idea of taking me back. And at that point, I think there were two reasons-- I felt very comfortable, I liked school, I liked my life. And my uncle Meyer and aunt Eva, and aunt Honey, they all said, we think your parents should come here, and it would be much better.

And they were very close, the siblings.

And that had been their plan all along?

Of course. So my mother came, and I let it be known I was not going back.

Do you remember what it was like, the reunion with your mother?

Well, I was very happy that she came. But there were some things-- the first thing she saw, I had very bad acne. And said, well, why isn't anything being done about that? She was a little bit critical.

But I was happy to see her. But I think I was very ambivalent. Well, here she is, and she wants to take me back. And here she is, and the first thing she was saying, well, you need to do something about this and that.

It was a mixed thing. And I think I let it be known very early on that I wanted to stay, and she must have been agreeable to it. So she stayed, I believe, for three or four months. And went back without me.

And I continued doing what I did, living with Uncle Meyer and Aunt Ida, babysitting. As a matter of fact, I think I even got an office job at that time, because I took a commercial course in the high school knowing full well that I could not qualify for higher level courses, not having had any preparation whatsoever.

So in '49, my father came. And that was also the time I was due to graduate from high school. So he was there for my graduation, which was very important to me. And I was so happy to see him.

That must have been-- he must have been so moved and proud.

He was, yes, he was moved, A, to see me, and me doing as well as I was. And in particular, to see his siblings again-- he hadn't seen them since the mid-'30s. And they enveloped him-- they just didn't want to let him go. And he didn't go. He stayed.

And must have said to my mother that he was not going to come back, and that she should close up, finish up, whatever, and come. Which she then did in 1950. So he stayed for one year with my uncle, also.

And it was wonderful. And he and I actually became very close, because remember, I said I was very, very close to my mother, very attached to her. But that year was very good for my father and me. And we really bonded. And I think it was very wonderful.

So I graduated in '49, and I went to work. And interestingly, I went to work for a physician who was there for-- he came from Detroit. And he was working on a book of diseases of-- I don't know whether it was lung disease or stomach disease-- and I was doing some work for him at Hopkins.

And he and his wife were awfully nice. They didn't have children, and they sort of adopted me. They were very interested and very helpful.

And he said, you know what, I think you need to go to university. And I said, I don't think I can make it, because I don't

have the credentials. And he said, we'll help you. And I said, and I don't have the money. And he said, we'll fund you.

And I want you to discuss it with your family. But the family felt I should not accept it. It was too much of a responsibility and a burden, which, in retrospect, was a bad mistake.

And I stayed with that man, I think, for a year or so.

They didn't want you to be indebted?

I think really that's what it was.

Was he Jewish, the doctor and his wife?

Yes, yes, he was. I think that's what it was.

What a mistake.

It was. I think that was one of the biggest mistakes that could have been made-- my family, I think they were not academically-oriented. And I think that's sad.

And my father was not strong enough, I think, either, to make a case for it. My uncle was very, very strong, and he felt it's better if I continue to help support go to work. And if I wanted to take night courses, which I did for a while, I could. But he was-- there was no encouragement.

It would have been different if you'd been a boy?

Not necessarily. I don't think-- I think it was not a sexist thing, no, I don't think so. So when I declined, the doctor was very disappointed. But he said he understood, and that was that. And I was crushed.

I think, if I had been stronger, or more willful, I could have probably made a case for putting myself through school. But I don't know why I didn't. But I didn't.

And then, in 1950, my mother came. And she went to work-- she had never worked in her life. And she went to work in a slipcover factory where she did piecework. And she immediately said, well, the harder she worked and the longer she worked, the more money she had.

And she worked very hard. And my father worked in a-- well, it was an installment business, clothing and things like that, not very challenging. And we lived in an apartment in Baltimore, on our own.

So all three of us worked-- my father, my mother, and I-- I worked in an office for a small Jewish department store. And then-- and my mother was very unhappy the first few years she was here. She was utterly miserable and very homesick for Holland. And threatened to go back.

But my father also did not want to go back. I didn't want to go back. So she stayed.

Two against one.

Yes, exactly, she stayed. And as time went on, I continued to take a lot of courses-- either at the business school or at Hopkins, where I went at night and took English and literature and history. I don't know why I never signed up for a credit or a degree. I didn't.

But I was--

Nobody there to push you--

Nobody to push me. It's really-- and it used to bother me in my younger-- not at that time, but much later years-- that I felt deprived from the point of view of intellectual challenges and education, as I thought education should have been. So I did a lot to educate myself, and I think I did quite adequately.

But what I really would have liked, I did not get. And I think part of it is I wasn't encouraged. And the other part of it is I probably wasn't motivated enough, either. So you can't put the blame on anything or anybody.

And I worked hard, and then I got a job at Johns Hopkins, also in the secretarial area. And I was promoted and became supervisor of their outpatient clinic. And that was very nice work, and very challenging and interesting.

And I developed quite a few friendships. It was very nice. And I met a young man, who was not Jewish, and thought that he was the right one. Became engaged to him.

And then, shortly-- much later-- found out that he, too, was a little antisemitic. And broke off the engagement. And--

Tell me about that. He obviously felt it didn't matter at first.

Right, I met him. And at first, it didn't matter. And then, I think when he sensed I was losing interest in him, because I realized he was not the right person for me, I broke off. I broke off, as a matter of fact, it was very traumatic.

I cared for him, and I guess I really-- he had a vile temper, and that worried me. And I think he drank too much, and that worried me. When I broke up with him, I was very unhappy.

Your first big decision--

And, right, and I went to Canada. And we had very good friends in Montreal, and I stayed with them for a little while. And then, got a job and worked in a children's hospital there. And I was there on my own for a year.

And it was a pretty good year. It was bittersweet, because it was difficult-- I was still mourning the break-off. But I realized, too, I did the right thing. And I stayed for a year.

And then, I came back to Baltimore. And I saw he was still around, and I saw him. He was almost like you could almost call it stalking me. He would sometimes show up after work, and I didn't like it. And eventually, I think he just left.

And right, and I had that very nice job at Hopkins, which was very, very good. And then, one fine day, I get a telephone call. Oh, and of course, I continued to live with my parents. I guess that's what one did in those days, I continued to live with them.

And my mother was her usual controlling self. Very-- where are you going, when are you going, when are you coming back? And so forth and so on. She was not very happy about that young man, neither was my father. So, oh, and the antisemitism surfaced when I broke off with him the second time when I saw him again.

And then, he-- I was out with him one night, one evening, and he was very down on my father because my father had said to him, please don't trouble us anymore, don't bother us. And then he said, well, the world would have lost nothing if your father had died in a concentration camp.

So I got out of his car, and I remember exactly where it was, it was late. And that was it.

Yes.

And then, one fine day, my telephone rang, and this man's voice identified himself as Max Schwarz. And he said, he's Dutch. And I said, wonderful. He said, I got your name from my sister. And I said, well, who's your sister?

And he said, Shelley Fried. I said, never heard of her. Where does she live? In Israel. I said, I wouldn't know.

But well, could he come anyhow and take me out? And I said, yes. And after I hung up I said to my mother, imagine this man? Oh, she said, I know what this is about.

She had been in Israel to visit her sister, and her niece said, I have a girlfriend who has two brothers in the United States. One of whom was what is now my husband. So we went out.

And that was in 1955. And in 1956, we married. So it was a very quick courtship, I guess. And--

Was it sort of love at first sight?

Oh, I think it was, yes. It felt right. And it was interesting, because I always laugh about it-- when I left boarding school, I said to-- oh, they said, oh, you're going to marry an American, and this and this. I said, no, you just wait, I will marry a Dutchman.

And Max and I, of course, come from totally different backgrounds-- his family, his father was born in St. Petersburg, and his mother in Memel, which is on the German border. And his father came from St. Petersburg to Amsterdam. He was in the diamond business. And--

So you'd both gone to Holland as children?

No, no, no, no, my husband was born in Holland.

Ah, he was born there.

His father came to Holland as a young man and got married in the Holland, from Russia, got married in Holland. And--

His whole life had been-- that was his country.

Right, exactly. And he had two brothers and two sisters. My brother-- my husband. And he lived in Amsterdam. And they were a very, very religious-- his father was the founder of the Russian shul, Russian synagogue in Amsterdam. And very, very Orthodox.

The boys had Talmud lessons after school, and the mother was very intellectual, wrote poetry. And the sister, one studied languages, one studied and became a very good pianist. So it's a very different environment, background.

His parents were deported, my husband's parents. They were sent to Sobibor.

In what year?

I guess in '43, '42, '43, was when all the masses left. But in '42, they had sent the children to Switzerland-- they went through the underground, and ended up in Switzerland, in Geneva. And the two girls, they were able to pursue whatever it is they wanted to pursue.

I think my sister-in-law, one of them, went to study music, and the other one-- don't know exactly what she did. And my husband was sent to a work camp, I think, for the first year or two, and then went to the University of Geneva, where he got his PhD in chemistry.

And then, ultimately, he came to Florida State University on a postdoctoral. One sister immigrated to Israel, met her future husband on the boat. And the other sister and brother both came to New York. And the brother now is in Dallas, and he is also in the diamond business.

The oldest sister still lives in Israel with her husband. And the younger sister lives in Colorado with her husband.

And so, we met and we married. And-- married in 1956-- and moved to Washington DC, because my husband was working for the government. And we lived in-- almost at the edge of Georgetown for the first year. And then, in 1957, our daughter was born.

And before she was born, we moved to Montgomery County. And I had worked a little bit before our daughter was born. Then after she was born, I did not work, and stayed home. Did a little freelance work here and there, took some courses here and there.

And then, in 1960, our son was born. And in-- then I went with him to-- and this is interesting-- I enrolled him in a cooperative nursery school, and met very nice women, very nice people. And I was always very much aware of my lack of education, because there were all these American women with all their degrees and this, that, and the other.

And what did I have--

In this area, especially.

Oh, and what did I have a degree in? Surviving. And I always had to think of my grandmother, whom I once asked, what kind of schooling did you have, Oma? And she said in German, [SPEAKING GERMAN]-- and the school, I have visited the School of Life.

So I kept telling myself, well, you went to the School of Life, but it was not really very satisfactory. In that nursery school, though, I met and befriended a young woman who was doing freelance proofreading. And she asked me, would I be interested in doing some-- helping her with it? And of course, I thought that was wonderful, always having been very good in English and in spelling.

And this woman was the one and only one, too, who did not have a college education. So I guess that's the connection. And she found-- she was a single mom, and she found all these wonderful jobs doing editing, proofreading. And we formed a team, and I did it with her.

And then one day, we were doing a fairly big job for a company, and she said, I'm not going to do this anymore. I got a job teaching English at Sandy Spring Friends school, why don't you take it over? And I took it over, and went to deliver the work. And this was a start-up company in Bethesda called Congressional Information Service.

And I took the work back, and I said, I have taken over her job. But I can do a good job for you. They kept me. And they kept me.

And eventually, they offered me a job on a part-time basis doing what they called accuracy-- or accuracy editing, which I did and enjoyed thoroughly about 20 hours a week. And then, little by little, it crept up, and it crept up, and it was 30 hours a week.

In the meantime, of course, the children-- this is after some time-- I started this in 19-- well, '65. So I was associated with that company since '69, something like that. And our children were well ensconced in school. There were the two-- Tanya and David.

And I worked for them. And then, I was made an assistant managing editor. And then I was made the coordinator for the editorial departments. And then in 1970, they offered me the job of human resources director, which I took.

No, that's not true, that was in 1979. I became the director of human resources there, and I ran it until my retirement in 1990. So notwithstanding the fact that I did not have that famous--

Which only you were bothered by.

Which only I was bothered by, I realized that I could achieve. And I did achieve without it. And I think it was a

tremendous boost for me and my self-esteem. So that basically was my life, or has been my life.

And then, when I retired in 1990, of course, I had various and sundry connections here and there. And one of which was-- I knew this young woman who worked for the Jewish Social Service Agency, and she said, wouldn't you come and do some workshops for us as a volunteer for our Russian refugees? Which I did for about four years.

I ran-- I taught the new immigrants how to look for jobs, how to write resumes, and how to do applications, and things like that. So I did that for four years in various-- and then, once in a while, I did some freelance work still for my old company. As a matter of fact, still did it a year ago.

And raised the children. And the children now, some have children. The daughter, our daughter--

Tanya?

Tanya became a psychiatrist. And I think that's what I'll do in my--

That must have made you very proud.

Exactly, yes, in my next life. And she lives in Baltimore and has two children. And our son David became an attorney, and is a partner in a firm in Los Angeles. So yes, that makes me feel very, very good, because they did what I didn't do.

Yes.

And my husband and I continued to live a very full life here, taking care of this place and doing quite a bit of traveling, and being involved in many different activities. So to sum it up, life has been very good to me.

Well, I find--

My mother is living in Baltimore. She will be 95. And we talk every day. We see each other once a week, and we-- once in a while, we reminisce about what was.

She is still very much of sound mind. I think it's been a role reversal-- I think now at this point, I'm more controlling, or more-- she's more dependent on me. And that's fine.

She still drives her car. And she's a very amazing and still very active lady.

And your father died sometime--

And my father died in 1967. And I think-- I think, I know he had lung cancer. He was a very heavy smoker. And fortunately, it was a short illness. But that was very traumatic.

And family-- the cousin who was so wonderful to me when I first came and gave me my mail and my banana, she still lives in Baltimore, she and her sister. And we have always remained very close. And so I have a lot of family. And family in Israel, too-- cousins with whom we are very close, also.

So it's very nice.

Do you go to synagogue regularly? Do you--

No, we are not synagogue goers. And even though my husband came from this very religious-- he said, when he was in Geneva, he was still very observant. And then one day, he decided, well, that doesn't make sense. And he started to smoke on the Shabbat, and no longer wore a [? braid. ?]

And we never affiliated ourselves. We are very Jewish, and very-- well, what? We just do not go to-- we don't belong to

a synagogue. But our grandson-- our son was never bar mitzvahed, our grandson was this past April. And as a present, we took him to Holland.

And we showed him where we both lived-- where my husband lived, and where I lived, and where I was in hiding. And he met the farmer.