United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Eva Cooper
June 22, 1999
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Eva Cooper conducted by Karen Michelle on June 22, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Manhattan, NY and 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.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

Interview with Eva Cooper
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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: Okay, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection, this is an interview with Eva Cooper, conducted by Karen Michelle, on the date we decided was the 22nd of June, 1999, in her apartment at 1100 Park Avenue, near 80th Street, in -- 88th Street --

Answer: 90th --

Q: -- excuse me, 90th Street -- I got lost getting here -- in Manhattan. This is a follow up interview to a USHMM videotaped interview conducted with Eva Cooper some time ago, I don't know what the date was. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A. Whoa. A: [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: Were you asking questions?

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh, okay.

Q: This -- As you know, a follow up interview, it's looking at really, the kind of post Holocaust years.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: I was curious, you said that you're going to Disney World tomorrow.

A: Yes, I am, for the third and last time, with my grandchildren.

Q: What did -- When you were a little kid in Budapest, could you have imagined that now, this many years later, this is what you'd be doing?

A: No, I certainly did not. But I think that's probably true of a non-Holocaust person, too, that you don't really think what you're going to do as an adult, or even the fact that you're going to be grandparents. I mean, that's very old people, and it's very hard to think about. But I spent a lot of wonderful years, when I was in Budapest with my father, going to, not Disneyland, but to playgrounds, and theme parks, in a very small way, that -- with roller coasters, and all that kind of stuff, so I have very fond memories of that.

Q: [inaudible] . . . Is having a good time important to you?

A: Well, i -- when you say important, yes it certainly is, I'd rather have a good time than a bad time, you know. Important, I think at this point, health, and having my family remain healthy, and around me, is more important, but yeah, having a good time certainly is important.

Q: Did the -- the going to the amusement park with your family as a child --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- how did that stay with you during all of these quite un-amusing times you've had --

A: That always stayed with me. It's really strange, because I know we're going to talk about the Hidden Children a little bit later, but the very first meeting I went to after our Hungarian group was formed, we sort of introduced each other, and everybody gave a little blurb of -- of the -- the war years, and I kind of ended up, not meaningly, sounding

like a Pollyanna, because everybody was telling not just horror stories, but of how terribly it affected them afterwards. Everybody blamed their misfortune, divorces, and everything else on the Holocaust, and I've -- not a matter of having gotten beyond it, but in many ways I have nice memories of certainly the -- the pre-war years, and my memories of the Holocaust, with all the horror, and being terribly afraid of many things, it was also a nurturing time. I was very conscious of -- of my parents taking care of me, and protecting me. Of providing me with food when there wasn't any to be had. I was a very finicky eater, it was a pain in the neck, you know, providing me with -- with anything I would eat. And during the time that we were hidden, I had a -- a boyfriend who was a year older than I, so we were 10 and 11, and we had a wonderful time. So, I think because my parents protected me, and made up majorly fictional, nonsensical thing in retrospect, but it helped me, I think, come out sort of a healthier person, without any of the post-war trauma that a lot of my friends, who are my contemporaries, still have.

Q: You said they made up a fiction, what do you mean?

A: Did you see the movie, "Life is Beautiful"? The Italian film that won all the awards? A lot of my friends thought the movie fictionalized, and trivialized the Holocaust, and I think you would have had to see the movie to know what I'm talking about, but it's -- when you see the movie, knowing it's about the Holocaust -- when I first went to the movies, for the first 20 minutes I thought I was in the wrong movie, because there was a comedy. It was silly, it was Marcelle Marceau and Chaplin all put into one, before the Holocaust theme takes place. And it was basically about a father protecting his child. I

didn't think it was trivialized at all. I really related to it, because the whole process, in some ways, my parents made up stories that I was able to accept. So I never had their fear, I always had their very positive attitude that my grandmother who had died in the United States, previous to the war, was a butterfly, and every time there was a butterfly flying around, it was my grandmother up there watching out for us. And to this day, you know, butterflies are kind of a meaningful thing. And there was always a positive thing, that things would be okay. So, I never had the fear that my parents had, but they wanted to be sure that I wouldn't, and I guess I didn't. I don't know if that makes any sense.

Q: Sure. I -- Yo-You had said that you previously had been able -- your -- your mother had instructed you that if she said it was black, it was black, and you were not to question.

A: Right. That's absolutely true. That was probably the -- the only time that she spoke to me in very strong language, because I think somebody stopped us on the street, and asked us about our religion, and my mother said we were Catholic, and I kind of pulled at her, and disagreed, and aft-after that, my mother said that at any time, that our lives depended on it, and it's very important that I not question anything she says, and if she says it's one thing, it's -- if it's -- yes, that's absolutely -- that's the truth, but -- no, no, I mean that -- that was -- and I think -- you know, I think the European children are sort of brought up that way, so it wasn't quite as difficult for me to deal with. You know, your -- you speak when you're spoken to, and you don't question a lot, and I don't think today's generation would get away with that.

Q: Were there other instances where your mother -- where you had to comply with your mother when you knew she was not telling the truth?

A: I think I -- well, the only other time, and it wasn't a ma -- even a matter of complying, but she -- she stole an egg, and I think I did tell that story in my video, and I remember that very clearly, cause everybody said where did you get the egg, and she said she ran into a farmhouse, and chicken was laying an egg, and she took the egg because she made me a cake, and it needed an egg. A little yellow cake thing, and I -- I asked her about stealing, and I think she sort of -- gee, I don't remember all that well, but I don't think it was a major discussion, but she said that when you're hungry, sometimes -- it was there, she didn't think she was taking it from anybody else, so whatever. I was 10 years old, so I didn't go into it, in major, you know, depth.

Q: Was it primarily your mother then, who shaped you?

A: I think so. My father and I had a wonderful relationship. He was a very quiet and very loving man, very successful in business. My father -- I think the reason for that during the war years, is that by -- my mother did not look Jewish, and I was a little girl, and I -- I don't know what -- what it looks like, but I guess I didn't look obviously Jewish, I had blue eyes, and -- my father definitely looked Jewish. He had a no -- you know, a nose that was more obviously Jewish, and not only that, but what they were doing is -- had men just drop their pants, and that was certainly easy to identify. So, I think my father, during situations where we were questioned, or had to negotiate to stay at someone's house, or were stopped on the street, my father always stayed in the background. In -- You know,

during -- during the time of hiding, and also my father had a kidney stone problem, so my mother was very protective of his health. During -- Before the hiding, during the -- oi -- the bombing, the air raids, my mother was in charge of the building, and we went down to the cellar, and all that kind of stuff, so she had more mobility, and was able to accomplish more, we stayed more in the background.

Q: When you were growing up, though, before you were 10, before all of this happened, was he a strong presence?

A: Oh yes, definitely. Every Sunday we went to the zoo, we went to the playground, we went to the amusement park, and he would come -- I had this huge world map on the closet, or the wall of my room, and every evening after he came home from the office, we would play a game of identifying capitals. Countries all over the world, and eventually rivers, and oceans, and stuff, and it was -- it was a different kind of life than today. The fathers came home at the end of the day, mothers kind of took care of all the bathing and getting you to bed, and all that kind of stuff, but I had a very, very close relationship with my father, and a -- a very loving relationship. In some ways, I think I was probably closer to him.

Q: Is he still alive?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Is he still alive?

A: No. He died when I was pregnant with my daughter, yeah. He was -- Actually, I was the last person that he saw. I went up to his office, in 1957, to show him my first batch of

maternity clothes, and he died on the way home. He got on the Fifth Avenue bus to go home, lived on Riverside Drive, my mother's still there, and he got off the bus, and he died.

Q: Was he ill?

A: He had a heart condition. I was really not even aware of how serious it was, I mean, he was in the office that day, he wasn't home.

Q: Are you still close to your mother?

A: Yes, my mother is having a very hard time right now, actually. My mother is 87, and she has dementia. So, up to two years ago, she was in better health than most of my contemporaries, and actually, she still is, except for the fact that she gets very confused, she's getting depressed. She still goes to the Philharmonic, she still goes to the opera. She lives at home, in the same apartment on Riverside Drive, but she's aware that she's not as well as she was, not physically, but mentally. They say -- I don't know what the difference is, but they say it's not Alzheimer's, it's dementia, she has aortic stenosis, which is a clogging of the main artery. Blood doesn't flow to the brain too well, and she's really scared, and it's -- it's really rough right now.

Q: The cake that you talked about, where she stole the egg. Do you eat cake today?

A: Yeah, I love cake, yeah.

Q: Yellow cake?

A: Yellow cake, chocolate cake preferably, but when desperate, I'll eat yellow cake. And I love apricot jam, that was -- that went in it, and one of the other things we used to do,

since food was scarce, we used to have these -- you know these kielbasa, it's like a hot dog, but it's like a salami texture, and it's very long and skinny, and I don't know how we acquired a piece, and my mother would cut one tiny, tiny little wedge, or circle, and cut it up into many, many, many pay -- many pieces, and pretend that that was a sandwich, or a piece of bread with it on. But instead of like eating the whole thing, it was rationed.

Q: You still eat that?

A: Yeah. The only thing that I don't eat, which really was sent to us after the war by my grandfather when they would send us care packages, is Spam. And I had -- We had no clue. They would send us Spam, and they sent nail polish, that they -- we would sell, and I don't know what other food product, but I adored ham, and the Spam had that kind of a taste. And we had, you know, never seen canned products before, so that was my very favorite, and I must tell you, when we came here, and I said Spam, everybody looked at me like thi -- and I always meant to buy Spam, and it's sort of like buying the "Enquirer," you're embarrassed to buy it, but you look at -- over somebody's shoulder at the checkout counter. But I've never bought it, and I always wondered if I bought it, what it would taste like today, but that was the only thing that I ate then, and I have not eaten since.

Q: So clearly you didn't keep kosher.

A: No. No, we were definitely -- I guess by Stateside standards, we would be Reform, but there it was Conservative. We sat separately, but it was -- we were not kosher, we did not

speak Yiddish, my grandparents didn't speak Yiddish. We were definitely assimilated upper middle class Hungarian Jews.

Q: Do you think that helped you when you came to this country?

A: You know, it's very hard to say. You -- You know, children fall into a lifestyle that they're in, and they don't say what would it have been like if I had been kosher, or -- or lived in -- I don't know, the lower east side, or somewhere else. I mean, the very first thing my parents did when we got here, is got tickets to Metropolitan Opera, cause that was their food. You know, we did bring some money, not a great deal, but we certainly weren't poor. But we probably spent more money on the opera than we did on food, because food we ate, but I had a very close friend, and I think I told that story, in high school, whose father was a hairdresser, and they lived in Jackson Heights, and every Sunday, they had roast beef, and this really expensive dinner. And we didn't. We had hot dogs, and beans, and I don't know, chicken or whatever, I mean, we didn't starve, but the quantity of food was not a major importance, but cultural activities were. So, you know, I don't know what it would have been like. I think I assimilated very quickly. We got here in the spring of '47, and I went to a very fancy girl's camp in Maine, that my daughter subsequently went to, that's still there, and if I had granddaughters, they'd be going there. And then I went to public schools, I went to Hunter High School, and Hunter College. And I never had any Hungarian friends, except for my parents and their friends. I spoke English, had no reason to speak anything else, and as I grew older, I started speaking English and Hungarian, kind of half and half. I started with one language and finished

with the other with my parents. I mean, they spoke English with an accent, but they certainly spoke it well enough. And I married an American, and I had absolutely no reason, so I definitely assimilated, and I think maybe if I had been more religious, I would have assimilated differently, or not as easily.

Q: Do you think of yourself as Jewish now?

A: Absolutely, I always have. We converted for a short time, strictly for acquiring papers that they -- they thought may have saved our lives. It probably wouldn't have, but in those days you did everything that you could to -- just in case. Several of my parents friends, when they came here, remained whatever religion they converted to, and raised their children, whatever they were. I --I'm -- You know, I know them, but I -- they weren't -- I was not friendly with them, so I don't know if they were Catholic, or Protestant, or what they converted to, I really don't know, but one of my mother's friend's son is a minister. So -- And a lot of them intermarried. I married twice, both Jewish. I've always belonged to a synagogue, we always observed the holidays -- holy days. My daughter was Confirmed, and married by a rabbi, and they are really quite -- well they're -- they belong to a Reform synagogue also, but they are a very traditional Jewish family.

Q: What kind of synagogue do you belong to?

A: Here? Temple Emmanuel.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah, right. But you know, it's interesting, because my grandfather, and grandmother, who came here in 1939 joined Temple Emmanuel, because it was very much like the synagogue we belonged to in Budapest. Have you ever been?

Q: To Budapest? No.

A: No.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Well, the synagogue, it's not a shul, I mean it's -- you know, everybody always things eastern Europe has these little Orthodox shuls. This is the biggest synagogue in Europe, and I think the second biggest in the world, it is huge. It's very impressive looking, it's probably not all that different looking than Emmanuel, maybe a little bit smaller. You do sit separately, and it is Conservative, so they do wear talisses, it's -- you know, I don't think they do at Emmanuel. But it's not by any means Orthodox, or -- and as I said, I left when I was 13, so I didn't go to Hebrew school or anything there. And my grandfather joined Temple Emmanuel, so when we came here, he started taking us to services there. And as I got o -- you know, older, and I was married, I got my own membership, and I was Confirmed. No, my -- my parents were there also, and I was Confirmed there. And -- And my daughter was raised there, went through Hebrew school, and was Confirmed there, so --

Q: Was it important to you that she [indecipherable]

A: Absolutely. I would have been very upset if hadn't married one.

Q: Why?

A: Sounds like “Fiddler on the Roof,” but tradition.

Q: Was it important to your family that you marry a Jew?

A: I don’t think it ever came up. I don’t think I ever dated anyone who wasn’t, and except for one young man who was absolutely gorgeous, that my daughter dated, a very, very bright young man, she only dated Jewish boys, too. So, I really don’t -- I don’t know if it was just the circle of friends that I traveled with was limited, I don’t know, I mean I -- I never dated anyone who wasn’t.

Q: I want to get to that -- that part in a little bit. I want to go over some of the things from the -- the past story, and then come up closer to the present. Yo-You -- You just talked recently about how you always did what you were told, that you’d -- you’d been told not to question. Is that still something that you do, did you --

A: Mm-hm, yes, probably. I mean, not to that extent, but yes. And I really get annoyed with it sometimes, cause I still -- I think I was brought up that way. I mean, it had nothing to do with the war, I was brought up, you know, parents, teachers, God, you know, all that is up there, and you don’t question, and you do, and -- and respect, and when your parents tell you something, you do. You stand up when older people come into the room, I still do, even though I’m older. And very often, with older people, I find that I talk to them like I was a child. So I think there’s a little bit, you know, of that still in me.

Q: What do you mean talk to them like [indecipherable] child?

A: With that kind of respect. That when I do, I realize that, you know, I’m -- I’m a grown-up. And I think it’s interesting, because I’ve been married twice, and I -- I think I

imposed the role on myself, of the t -- the traditional wife. Make breakfast, cut the bananas, put out the cereal, you know, kind of stuff, and it just the way it was, and just the way I did it. I -- I think at some point I questioned it. Sometimes I get annoyed with the fact that I'm still doing it, but I do anyhow. And it's okay, you know.

Q: What about your daughter?

A: Oh my -- It's -- It's interesting, you know, I was going to give you a quick answer. She really is a traditional wife, much more so -- my daughter is very, very bright. She and her husband met in law school. She practiced for about 10 years, and she has three children. She worked part time after the first one was born, at the law firm, and went back after a second child, and then she realized that she really didn't want to be doing this, and she really wanted to be with her children. And even though she does work part time now, sh -- it just happens -- she lives in Connecticut, and she works for Yankelovich Group, which is a big market research firm, they happened to be in Westport, and she just kind of lucked out with a good offer. But she works part time, strictly at her own hours, and she's definitely a homemaker.

Q: What's your daughter's name?

A: Lisa.

Q: Lisa. Did you raise Lisa to do -- to agree with you, and not to question you?

A: No. I don't think so. I don't know if she would agree. Actually, in many ways, even though her children are very different -- well, first of all they're three boys, which is a very different thing than one daughter, and times are different, and what fashionable is

different. I don't mean fashionable clothes-wise, but behavior-wise. But I think in many ways, she still is quite traditional, but not to the extent I -- when they were first married, and I saw my son-in-law taking his shirts to the laundry, I was appalled, and I was -- I just say, w -- you know, this is what you're supposed to be doing, and she gave me a look like, you know, they're his shirts. And you know, so -- but it was a very small thing, and I think my son-in-law's a wonderful father, and I think with the children it's definitely more of a joint venture than it was . My ex-husband was a very good father, but i-it -- it was more the roles, you know, I was at home, and had dinner ready, and the baby bathed, and all that, and he did a lot of stuff with her, because I think in our generation, I think that was becoming more of the thing, but they were the -- th -- they made the money, and I mean, you know, they had to go to work. Somebody had to go to work, and somebody had to stay home.

Q: You went to college.

A: I went to college, and I taught -- I -- I was a teacher. I was home for the first six or seven years. And I must tell you, I wouldn't have traded it for the world.

Q: What did you teach?

A: Well, I started out with elementary school, and -- and I went back to school -- I went back for my Master's when I was 40, and got a degree in special education. That was a fairly new degree they were giving, and I just kind of fell into it in public school. I substituted in a couple of special ed classes, and I didn't have a clue what I was doing, but I really liked it, and I went back for my Master's, and then I taught special ed. But I

truly and truly believe that when you have children, when they're little, you're missing out on a great deal if you're not with them. And so are the children. And it was interesting, this has nothing to do with the Holocaust, but I was watching Larry King yesterday, and Mary Tyler Moore was interviewed, and she said that was the one thing, if she had to do it all over again, she would have been home. I think she lost her child. There were a lot of tragedies there. I don't even know if she has any now, but I think her child either OD'd, or something bad happened. I don't know, I don't remember what it was, but she was very adamant about it, and almost teary, that you owe your children, if you have them, to spend time with them. And you can't have it all, and I think that's really true.

Q: It certainly seems like your parents did that with you.

A: Well, my parents it was dif -- first of all, it was different. This was in Europe, I mean, that was a whole different world. Yes, the mothers were home. I mean, I had a nanny, and I had a housekeeper, and I had a cook. Not I, but my family, but my parents were always there, I was -- no question in my mind who -- you know, who was the help, and who were my parents, those -- al-although I loved all my -- most of my nannies. But that was, you know, like playtime stuff. But then my mother, after the war, took over my grandfather's business, and after my father died -- my mother's a very competent woman, I mean she -- she was not a career person, but she's extremely bright and capable, when she had to run the business she did. I mean, when the war broke out, my mother didn't know how to cook or clean or do any of those things, but that's not how proper young ladies were

raised. But let me tell you, within a very short time, she became a very good cook, she's bi -- very good laundress. I don't know how to iron, she does. So, some people just, you know, when you have to, you do.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: [indecipherable] this puppy. Okay.

A: Are you -- Are you comfortable?

Q: I'm fine, thanks. This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Eva Cooper. This is tape number one, side B. Okay. Still a finicky eater?

A: Yes. But I love chocolate. Yeah, I've always been a finicky eater, really was terrible. I don't know how I stayed alive during the war, cause I used to have a stupid habit of smelling things before I would eat it, when I wasn't sure what it was, cause there was -- there was a lot of yucky stuff being served, is the understatement. But there were a lot of dead animals on the -- on the streets, and people would get meat from horses and dogs, and that did not appeal to me, so I would only eat what I like, and I still only eat what I like. Course, I like a lot of things now, but --

Q: Did it turn you into a vegetarian?

A: No, no. And I like pork, too. I don't know if I should mention that for the Holocaust museum. But you see again, interesting, I mean, in Europe, in eastern Europe, we ate ham, we ate pork. It was -- you know, I never really realized any of that til I came here. I

didn't know about bagels, I didn't know about Yiddish. This was all, you know, new to me, when we came here. And neither did my parents.

Q: Wasn't that partly a class thing?

A: In Europe?

Q: The Yiddish?

A: The English?

Q: Yiddish.

A: I don't know. You know, I don't know. I mean, I just know how I was raised, and I -- I don't think I even knew anybody that was Orthodox there, you know, I really don't. W-W-We belonged to this one Temple that's -- everybody goes to visit now when they're in -- in Budapest, I didn't know anybody from anywhere else. And it -- the other thing that was interesting is I went to a public school, and before the war, religious education was part of the public school education, and during that period you had English, whatever, geography, history, math, whatever, and then it was religion, and the Catholic kids went to their class, and Jewish kids went to their class, and it was, you know, history of -- of the religion. Actually, my very closest friend in Hungary was a Catholic girl, who I tried very hard to get out here. I wrote to the Cardinal and all that, but then I lost track of her.

Q: Have you been back to Budapest?

A: Yes, actually, I've been back to Budapest oh, many, many years ago the first time, second time 20 years ago, and last year it was the best of all, my husband and I took our

oldest grandson, that's my daughter's oldest son, who had just been Bar Mitzvahed, and we took him to London and Budapest. And it was really great.

Q: Did you show him where Grandma grew up?

A: I certainly did. We went to the synagogue, we went to, you know, all the places I used to visit. We went out to the playgrounds, and where I used to ice skate, and went to hear Gypsy music, we went to the opera. We didn't stay there too long, it was ballet, and a 13 year old boy is not heavy into ballet. But I just wanted him to see it. The music was lovely, and we -- actually I said, let's go, and we can leave at intermission, which we did. And we went to hear -- went to see folk dancing, Hungarian folk dancing, and so it was wonderful.

Q: What emotions did that bring up for you?

A: Oh, it was just -- I mean, it's hard to describe, it was -- and he really enjoyed it. Just before it was time to go, I thought to myself, I must be out of my mind, I mean here we are grandparents, he's 13, he's going to want to watch basketball game, and you know, look for his friends, and here I'm schlepping him, you know -- actually Budapest was his idea, and since we had like eight days, I thought, you know, that's a bit much, and it was a great combination. He of all my grandchildren, was the only one that's really been interested in my history, and the Holocaust. I've taken him several times to Washington. We were there for the opening. We've been there f -- at the capital, where they have the ceremony for the Holocaust, and he's asked me many times to tell my story. When he was quite little, he invited me to Holocaust week at his public school, first grade class,

and second grade class, as well as his Sunday school class. So I have gone and spoken to the kids, and stuff, and I bought him books on the Holocaust. So he's read a lot, and is quite interested. The other two are not particularly interested. Actually, my daughter took them to see "Life is Beautiful," and -- and after that, my other two grandchildren sort of said, you know, what was it like for me, but it was -- took a -- s -- one sentence to answer, and that was it.

Q: How old are your grandchildren?

A: The oldest one is now 14, and the next one is 12. The little one's nine. And my husband has three children, and tho -- and they're five -- five more on that side, but they were all born since we're married, so we really -- they're -- call them my grandchildren as well. So they're eight all together.

Q: It seems like you really identify yourself as a Holocaust survivor.

A: Oh yeah. But probably more so since the Hidden Children conference. And, of course, the museum. I always -- I -- oh, this was years ago, when they were planning -- building the initial plans to build the Holocaust Museum, there was also one built in New York, and I know this sounds silly, but I wanted to give a major contribution, and I sort of went and interviewed both the Washington people, and New York people, and -- and made a decision, because I support the one in New York a bit, but there was something about the Washington. I thought if I was going to give one chunk of money, I'd rather g -- do it one place. And so we went -- we went to Washington to see the original plans, and they were in the office, and I went with my mother, and then I went back with my daughter, we

went to the hard hat -- th -- walkthrough when the museum was being built. And so that's -- was sort of -- I mean, I've never had a problem, or thought about not being Jewish, but somehow the Holocaust was a long time ago. I didn't remain in contact with any of the Hungarians, or Holocaust survivors, so that my life kind of went on it's own merry way. Every once in a while, people will ask me -- the first year that I went to camp -- and I told this on my video, I was like the token refugee, and it's really funny, cause I'm friendly with a lot of my bunkmates, and they always tease me about my accent, and -- at the time, and about being a -- the token refugee in camp. That was -- I thought it would be harder than it turned out to be, and I was very lucky, because I was literally shipped from having just arrived here at the age of 13, to this very American camp, with baseball, and I asked them what those pillows were doing on the baseball field. And I was different, you know. I wore hand en -- embroidered undershirts, and I wrote home that they immediately should send me a bra. And that was definitely European kid, and there's a very big difference. But I was very lucky, I had some nice friends, and I somehow fit in. I think they picked on somebody else.

Q: Did you speak any English when you came?

A: Yeah, mm-hm. And I tur -- I turned out awhile later, that the director of the camp gave my bunk a speech on how to be nice to me, because I might be different, and may not speak English so well, I may not know everything they know. And 13 is late to start camp, they had all been there before, they -- some of them had had friends, and -- but I didn't know about that til later, so --

Q: Why did your parents decide to send you to camp right away?

A: Well, we had relatives here, and tha -- actually, these people had honeymooned in -- in Budapest, and looked up my parents because they were related somehow or other. And they had a daughter who was couple of years younger than I, and they spoke to them, and they said, “Well, what -- what do you do here during the summer?” And they said, “Well, New York gets pretty hot, and most kids do something, or have a ha -- something.” I don’t really know exactly what the conversation was all about, but next thing they were -- this lady came over and showed us pictures of a camp, and I got camp clothes, and went off to cam, that’s how. And the cousin, whose daughter went to this camp that I was sent to, had nothing to do with me, and she was two years younger than I, and at that age it’s like a generation. I mean, even nine months, 10 months, is -- is a big deal. But, that she was in a different bunk, and she wasn’t going to have anything to do with me, so -- I’m friendly with her now, but we weren’t for a long time.

Q: Given the -- the time that you and your -- your parents were kind of camping out as it -- as it -- in -- in effect, when you were fleeing --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- [indecipherable] you were with lots of other families and stuff, why would your family send you away?

A: Hm. I don’t know. I hadn’t really thought about it. The war ended in ’45, this was in ’47. I think my parents wanted me to assimilate, and I think they thought this would be a good way for me to become an American teenager. I don’t know. I have no clue. I -- I

had no problem going. I had a wonderful time, I went back two years. I still have a lot of close friends from camp. My daughter went to the same camp. So, I -- I don't know. I mean, somebody else might have handled it differently, I don't know. My parents had the opportunity to send me to a monastery to be taken care of by nuns, during the war time, and then they made the decision to stay together. So --

Q: How important -- It -- It seems like that was so key to your family, that the three of you --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- stay together. Has that been important to you, when you had a child too, that you stay [indecipherable]

A: Mm-hm, yeah. Yeah, and we did, I mean, until -- until she went off to college, and then subsequently got married.

Q: You talk on the previous tape about your 10th birthday.

A: Oh yes, my 10th birthday. That's when the Germans marched in, yeah, that was quite a birthday. I still like hot dogs, that's what we had then. That's what we had for my birthday party, hot dogs, frankfurters. Not served on buns. And we had a -- an apartment in the city, kind of a wide boulevard kind of a street, and we were all sitting around, lot of nannies, and mothers, and daughters, and we heard noises, like marching noises. And we looked out the window, and the Nazis were marching into Budapest. Hungary was the last country to be taken over, and I remember everybody very quietly saying, "It's time to go home." And I was not happy, cause they messed up my party. And it -- you know,

also, interestingly enough in those days, parents did not find it necessary to explain everything to their children. I mean, they were going home, that's it, you know. That's -- Was nothing to question, and you didn't, so --

Q: How do you feel about birthdays now?

A: Oh, I love birthdays, I just had my husband's 70th birthday, and surprised him, we took the whole family to Las Vegas for the weekend. So that answers your question. Yeah, I like birthdays.

Q: You don't have any baggage about your birthday?

A: No, no.

Q: Still eat hot dogs on your birthday?

A: No, but I still eat hot dogs. Actually, I've stopped because of cholesterol, but my favorite lunch is a [indecipherable] hot dog and fresh orange juice on the street.

Q: It sounds like you were pretty enterprising when you were a little kid, with the -- taking the cigarette butts, and --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: -- [indecipherable] things.

A: But I don't smoke.

Q: You don't?

A: No, no, I never did actually. I smoked one evening with -- with a friend of mine that I went to junior high school with, that was my next closest friend, right after camp, I went to junior high school, eighth grade, on the west side, and -- and she's still -- we're still

very good friends. We were in her parents bedroom, and we smoked a cigarette. This was, I think 14. Her mother came in and pretended she didn't know, cause we stuck the cigarettes under the bed, but the room was filled with smoke. And I hated it, I was like choking, and my eyes were bothering me. I said, "This is a stupid thing to do." But it was grown up, which is I think what a lot of young people s -- got hooked on it now.

Q: But when you did that as a -- as a small child, when you and your -- your boyfriend, I guess it was --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did that --

A: I have to call him.

Q: -- i-in -- in New York, as you know, we would call that working the angles.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that something that you carried over as an adult?

A: No, I don't think so, I don't think so. I mean, I think that's probably -- most of it was his idea, and I kind of went along with it. He's a year older, he lives in Toronto. I don't know, it just seemed like a fun thing to do, it kept us busy. We all were aware of the fact that our fathers weren't working. We thought that this would be an income situation, and everybody was delighted. I mean, they were very -- there were no cigarettes to be had, a lot of people smoked, my parents did not. And it was fun.

Q: Were your parents worried about money at that time?

A: I have no idea.

Q: But you just had a sense that you needed to do this?

A: Yeah. I was never worried about money, I mean, I was never worried about money when we didn't have any, and I was never worried about it when we did, you know, it all -- and it was -- it was never really a major issue. My parents were very good about -- I -- I don't know, i-it's hard to explain. I think, for my mother, it was very important to have proper appearances, and contrary to a lot of people during the war, who had holes and stuff in their clothes, and I'd -- I al -- I remember that very clearly, there was -- there were never any holes in anything, it was always mended. When I outgrew the dress, my mother would take from another dress, and lengthen it. This is when the war was going on, and shortly after when there -- first there was nothing to buy, and no material, no money, you know, and all that, but I remember always looking clean and neat, and you know, the war was not a reason to not behave properly, and not to look nice. And it's funny, because I said that to my husband just recently, and it sort of -- you look at some of these old war pictures, how people were going to concentration camp with suits and ties and hats. It's funny, I was watching -- we were watching "Roman Holiday," -- oh, "Three Coins in a Fountain" last night, and I said to my husband that I think I was in the wrong generation because Louis Jordan looks so wonderful, and here they're walking around in ridiculous places, and he's in double breasted suits, and a tie, and she has gloves on, and a hat. And, you know, he opens doors, and I said, you know, always walking around now in jeans and khakis, sort of, you know, casual, because that's the world we live in, but I think I kind of like that.

Q: So if you could, you would -- you would wear gloves to go out, and hats, and --

A: Well, maybe not gloves, but yeah, I mean I kind of like -- I can go either way, I've always said that. I mean, I'd have no problem having tea with the queen, or camping out in jeans. You know, I -- I'm fairly comfortable wherever you -- you put me, and so --

Q: One of the things that you said in the previous tape was that you need to know where you're sleeping.

A: Yes, that I still do. I don't like going anywhere, and not having a reservation, I really don't. And I mean it's -- it -- it's -- I'm not scared the way I was, and I know where it's coming from, and if I didn't, I probably wouldn't, you know, have a nervous breakdown, but I know a couple of years ago, we were coming back, I don't know, from Boston or someplace, and we couldn't get in somewhere, you know, just at a hotel, a motel, whatever on the road, because it was getting late. And I really was -- it made me uncomfortable. So, that should be the worst thing, you know. I still like traveling with my pillow. I still do, really. Actually, I was just thinking, tomorrow with the two children, with carry-ons, if I've got room for my pillow, but I'm going to see.

Q: Why the pillow?

A: Because that's the one thing I took with me. You know, like little children have blankies and all these things, I had my pillow. And I had that same pillow for many, many years. It's gone, I mean the feathers, or whatever was in there is gone, but I always liked having my own pillow. I think it's not for the reasons any more, I -- I don't sleep so -- as well as I did, and most hotels have these awful foam rubber things, so I d -- I don't

think it's anything to do with the war, I just -- I don't sleep well, and if I -- if I have a bad pillow, I'm really up all night, so I like to take my soft, cuddly pillow.

Q: Down pillow?

A: Yeah. Yeah, and it really mooshes up sort of small, so I can, you know, stick in into a duffel, and carry it.

Q: Do you have the pillowcase from your childhood pillow?

A: No. No, I don't, no.

Q: Did you take it with you to America?

A: No. Well, I didn't do any of the packing, so no. Actually, my grandson was Bar Mitzv -- was -- when he was born and -- and circumcised, he wore my grandfather's little dress that my mother had saved. I have no clue how we got through a war, and my mother brought stuff. I mean, it's mind boggling now that I'm going over a lot of the things, it's just amazing, the pictures and things that she has, that you think would have stayed there. So -- But she has a lot -- you know, a lot of stuff, pre-war. She has calendars and date books from 50 - 60 years ago, that she sent here after the war, so -- I mean, they all came on a boat or something.

Q: So she had put things aside for when you got here?

A: Mm-hm. It all got shipped, we shipped all our furniture, and dishes, and all that kind of stuff, so whatever was packed, is here.

Q: So, in a sense you've created part, at least, of your physical life.

A: Mm-hm. Oh yeah, I mean some of the furniture my parents had to sell, because it didn't fit into any apartments here, because the rooms were big, the ceilings were high, and you know, all that. But my mother's bedroom, dining room, living room, is all the European furniture. And it's very European looking, except it has wall to wall carpets, instead of rugs.

Q: So when you go visit your mother, you see part of your childhood?

A: Oh yeah. And actually, my father had a beautiful desk that my mother sold after he died, and I was always sorry. It was a beautiful desk, I never -- I really don't know why she sold it.

Q: When you go see that furniture, do you then ever go back in your mind to when you were a little girl? [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, I sort of remember our old apartment, but you know, it's -- it's -- I think it's fading a little. Sometimes I don't know if I remember the real thing, or if I remember stories or pictures, you know. I mean, as I told you, I've been married twice, and I would have been married 44 years all together, and every time I bought new dishes, I've always bought it kind of half-heartedly, because my favorite dishes, my mother has. And I always sort of in back of my head, knew that one of these days, hopefully the far away, those would be mine, so why should I bother? I mean, I've perfectly nice dishes, but I -- I just love her Haron dishes, which is Hungarian. And she has all, I think place setting for 24, and the whole thing, so -- and that all was sent over, crystal and all that kind of stuff.

Q: [indecipherable] nice things is important to you?

A: Yeah. I mean, it's funny, cause now that my mother is not well, you sort of think about what happens if, and you know, I've thought about some of the things that she has, and you know, it's a different lifestyle, and I don't know how -- if I'd have any room, but there's a grandfather's clock that I really love, and that's sort of my -- the only thing that's really my childhood. I mean, otherwise it's just nice furniture, but -- and it's old and it's beautiful, but it's not something -- but the clock is like, sort of my childhood. It's a grandfather's clock, drives you nuts, chimes every 15 minutes.

Q: When you were in hiding, did time take on a different meaning for you?

A: Did time take on a different meaning? I don't know. I mean, had days and nights, you know, and they were long. I don't know. I really can't answer that. I know I -- I don't -- we didn't have beds, we usually slept on the floor on things, and I was always in the middle, between my parents. I'm an only child. We had to go to the bathroom outside, so that was a big deal. I don't know, I -- I think they all -- there was always something to a-amuse me. The -- Sometimes there were other children, depending on where we were. I don't know, I -- I don't really remember.

Q: When you came to this country, when your parents decided to come, did they tell you?

A: Oh yes, there was a lot of packing going on. We were -- It was sort of on again, off again. My grandparents were here, and my grandmother died. My uncle, my mother's brother, also had come, in 1941 to visit his parents, and stayed, and actually joined the American army, and came to see us in Budapest after the war, part of the liberation. So we were coming as vi -- on a visitor visa, but sort of planning to stay, and so we pa --

they packed, I mean, we had packers, and marked things, and all that. So that's how come all the furniture. Not everything we packed came, cause they confiscated stuff. My father's paintings, library paintings, we had a Steinway Baby Grand, that didn't show up, it's just as well. But all the, you know, dishes, and personal stuff, and furniture came. So I was definitely aware wi -- this boy -- my boyfriend who's in Toronto, he gave me a charm that I still have, went to the train to see us off, and another -- my other friend gave me a charm, and it was an adventure. I don't remember being terribly sad about the whole thing, we -- we were traveling. After the war, my mother and I went to Switzerland and met my grandfather, and then came back, and we came -- we went to Liverpool, and we took a beautiful Cuinard boat, the Mauritania, which doesn't exist any more, but it's -- it was a beautiful boat, was very fancy. I had a wonderful time calling for room service, and running around. My mother was quite ill, she got seasick and she didn't wear all the nice clothes that she had planned to wear. And so I spent a lot of time with my father. Saw lots of good movies, Joan Crawford. And then when we got here, my grandfather was here, and my uncle, who had married, and I'm very, very close to -- well, she was at the time nine -- 20 years old, so -- but I was 13, but we, you know, really very close friends. And as I said, I assimilated very, very quickly.

Q: What charms did your fr -- did your friends give you?

A: One little gold charm -- charm -- well, I had a charm bracelet, and it just says, Thomas -- to Eva, and Tommy, that was his name. And we talk occasionally, because his mother and my mother were best friends. So were our fathers, but they all -- they died, and his

mother is -- is in a nursing home. She -- Her mind is fine, and physically she's a disaster, with my mother it's the other way around. But my mother is very, very close to Tom. Actually, throughout all these years, they stayed closer. We talk, but it's usually about our mothers, because his life sort of went in a different direction. He's married, but he's separated, he's -- doesn't have any children. He's very European. And -- And I'm really beca -- you know, assimilated, much more so.

Q: Are you an American citizen?

A: Me?

Q: Yeah.

A: Of course.

Q: So what was the other charm that you were given?

A: The other charm was from -- that was silver, this one was gold, was just a little -- plain, little silver charm from my friend, the Catholic girl, actually, that I told you about, Gloria was her name.

Q: Do you look at these charms?

A: Oh yeah. I don't wear them, but yes I do.

Q: What kinds of memories does that bring up for you?

A: Oh, wonderful memories. And actually, with my Hidden Children group, a number of years ago, this woman walks into my apartment -- and most of the woman are from the New York area, and she was in -- oh, that's my husband, I didn't tell him you were coming. Oh, that's all right, he's going that way. Came from Boston, so she was like

visiting our group, and she looked at me, she said, “What was your maiden name?” So I said, “Brust.” She says, “You don’t remember me?” I said, “I haven’t got a clue.” Well, I think she may have known in advance. Anyhow, we went to grade school together, and I found my -- what do you call that thing you sign in school? Not a memory --

Q: A yearbook?

A: No, it’s not a yearbook, it’s, you know, roses are red, violets are blue, you sign this little autograph -- isn’t it an autograph book? It’s got a name. It’s not a yearbook, it’s just blanks, and --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is tape two, side A, interview with Eva Cooper. Okay, so you saw this autograph book.

A: Yeah, and she had written in it. It was really bizarre. And then, of course, we went through the whole thing, and there were a lot of, you know, it wa -- I mean, this Tommy from Toronto is in there, too. [indecipherable]

Q: Okay, so you came -- you were on this luxury liner, coming to the United States.

A: Right.

Q: What did you think you would find here? Do you remember, back then?

A: My grandfather, my uncle. I don't -- I didn't really, you know, think about it all that much.

Q: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

A: Yes, saw the Statue of Liberty.

Q: What was that like?

A: I don't -- Everybody was sort of making a big fuss about it, I don't think I really knew too much about what it was. I remember getting up early, and -- as the boat came in. We went to -- My grandfather and grandmother, when they first came here -- she died, but he stayed there, stayed at a residential hotel on 96th Street and West End Avenue, called the Marcy. The place is still there, but it's not a residential hotel any more, and so my grandfather took a small apartment for us there. So that's where we started out. I didn't think that was so great. I mean, you know, it was a small apartment, and -- but there was

an ice skating ring across the street, and a tennis court. It was a city thing, but it changed, you know, winter and summer. And then, as I said, I -- within a month or two, I was gone, in camp, and then I started junior high school. That apartment was really very small, was like a one bedroom apartment, and then we moved into a -- another residential hotel k-kind of a thing on 86th Street. That's still there, it's called the Brewster Hotel, and that's when I started junior high school [indecipherable]. And my parents were looking for an apartment, and waiting for the furniture to come out. Oh no, the furniture went to Manhattan storage, but we didn't have an apartment, and was very hard to find one. I don't know if it had to do with size or money, but you know, we was definitely staying in Manhattan, in a nice neighborhood, so -- but I -- you know, I didn't know where one would go, or anything like that.

Q: Did your uncle and grandfather meet you at the boat?

A: Yeah, oh yes, I was very close to my uncle. He was already married, and then he brought his young and very beautiful wife along. And they had a baby shortly after, so I became cousin.

Q: Do you remember what the landing was like when you arrived here?

A: Exciting. Lot of people, lot of people waiting. I mean, I didn't go through Ellis Island, or one of those things, you know, we were coming out first class, so it was a perfectly nice landing, and everybody was very happy, and we, every Sunday went to some Hungarian restaurant, cause that's where my grandfather liked to go, and there were a lot of people that my parents knew from Europe, so they very quickly ended up with a

nucleus of friends. My parents, I don't quite know why, but I was like the oldest child, so even though they all had children, they were all younger, and I was never -- I knew of them, and knew them, but wi -- I was never friendly with any of those Hungarian children. And I made friends at camp, I made friends at junior high school, and I made my own friends. I was occasionally embarrassed by my parent's accent, in the beginning. I wa -- But, it wa -- it was funny, I mean, it's -- it's -- it's ver -- kind of a snotty, childish kind of a thing, because our apartment once we moved, was very nice. And it was in a very nice building, and by that time I guess I was a little older, so I was conscious of neighborhoods and stuff, and so the accent, and the apartment kind of, you know, evened out. I mean, my parents spoke with an accent, but with an educated accent, and -- but I was definitely aware of it. When they came to visit in camp, you know it was a little -- but they were young. I mean, I was 21 -- my mother was 21when I was -- 21 when she was married, and 22 when I was born, or something. My father was 12 years older, but that was customary in Europe, to have the man established before he takes a bride.

Q: How soon before you felt more American than Hungarian?

A: You know, I've thought about that a lot. I don't know. I think very quickly. And I think that's because of the circles I got thrown into. My only connection to the past, really, was my parents, and the a -- and their -- their accent, which was definitely European. But I became American, you know, really very quickly. It's interesting, my -- my son-in-law has an associate at his firm, and they adopted a Hungarian orphan, just recently, maybe four or five years ago. And they were a little older, they couldn't have

children, they gave up on adoption here. I guess they heard about eastern European children, they went there several times, then, make a very long story short, adopted a little girl, who they went to Europe to get. And -- And my daughter mentioned to this woman about me, and would that be a good -- well, she thought that was a great idea, cause this child did not speak English, she was five years old, and petrified. And so I went up to Connecticut, and I met with her. Well, I tell you, by the time that day was over, my daughter and I both wanted to adopt this child, and -- and tell this other lady to go away, because she had just no clue. I mean, she wanted to give the kid pizza, this kid didn't know from pizza. Whatever she was offering her were all -- all the wrong things. And she meant well, but she came from a different mindset, and -- so I was trying to explain to both of them. And she was perfectly happy in the orphanage. I mean, that was her world. These were her friends, and her language, and she was totally uprooted from her home, and sent here, and was told that she should appreciate the color TV, and the -- and the pizza. She is now as American as apple pie. I don't know, maybe she's 10 years old. I don't -- I think she's going through a stage, cause I saw her, I think, the summer before last, and I said something to her in Hungarian, she didn't respond. And I picked up on it immediately, and then I just switched to English, and told her I was happy to see her. I don't know if she was embarrassed about it, or what, but I got the message. And I think it'll be a while before she's able to look back. But her circumstances were different. And I s -- I -- when I met the mother, she said someday they were going to plan a trip to Europe, and -- but I'm not sure going back to some orphanage is the same thing. I mean,

when I go back, and have gone back, I have very fond memories, including the war. I certainly wouldn't want to move back. But it's -- it -- you know, it's -- I sometimes dream in Hungarian, and I some -- and I count in Hungarian. If I just want to count, you know, a small column in my head or something, which is really weird, cause I don't speak Hungarian unless I ha -- unless I have to. Well, that's not true, a taxi driver, if I see his name's Hungarian, I'll -- my hairdresser's Hungarian, so I do fall into that.

Q: Do you collect the work of any Hungarian artists?

A: No, no. And not for any reason, I -- no, no.

Q: Cause there are, you know, I mean, in this --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- I was thinking of a photographer I know, and he's Hungarian. [indecipherable]

A: I mean, there's some very famous ones that are Hungarian, that I would like to collect, but those are very expensive. Actually, for the first time about a -- a month ago, I went to the Hungarian consulate, which is a gorgeous, gorgeous brownstone in the east 60's, because this friend of mine from Boston, that I went to school with, is a wonderful photographer. That's not what she does to earn her living, and she would love to become an -- you know, more established, and she just hasn't found -- she does some wonderful, wonderful things. It'd be great for corporate art, and I was trying to see if I could help her, but I haven't done too well. She had an exhibit there, but that's a dead end thing. I mean, who was going to go there, a lot of her Hungarian friends? Nothing much happened.

Q: So, dreaming -- dreaming in Hungarian, counting in Hungarian --

A: Mostly counting, the dreaming is mixed, but every once in awhile, I wake up and realize that I was -- yeah, I'm sorry, did I interrupt you?

Q: No, no, I mean, this is about you [indecipherable] question.

A: Oh.

Q: Are you -- you think of yourself -- yourself now as Hungarian, American, Hungarian-American, American-Hungarian, Jewish-American-Hungarian, how do you --

A: Oh, God. Well, definitely not Hungarian first. I would definitely -- probably American Jewish Hungarian.

Q: Hungarian last?

A: I think so, yeah. I mean, do you realize, I'm 65 years old, and I've been here 52 years, you know? And I haven't had -- I mean, some of my Hidden Children friends are -- speak Hungarian all the time with each other. This one in Boston is -- she wrote to me in Hungarian once. I mean, I was able to read it, but with a great deal of difficulty. I said, don't do this to me again, cause I -- you know, I speak it, but with difficulty. But some of them are definitely living more in a Hungarian world than I. I don't really live in a Hungarian world, and it's only because of the Hidden Children that I've even had contact, and became very friendly with some of them, just because I like them, not because they're Hungarian, which is very interesting in our group. And I think the group is kind of changing focus a little, because in the beginning, when we first met at the conference, there was this bond, Hungarian Jewish. We formed the group Hidden, not a

concentration camp, so a very different -- you know, who you could be in order to belong to this group. And we meet in New York, and there are a handful of people who have apartments in New York, I -- everybody else outside of New York, nobody wants to go to Forest Hills, New Jersey, Brooklyn, so the New Yorkers have been, you know having the meetings, which is fine. And there's some very, very nice people. But the fact that you're Hungarian and Jewish is not enough to have a relationship. I mean, there are other things in your life that have to work, interests, and what -- what has happened to your life? How are you living, you know, and all that. And -- I mean, there are some really, really nice ladies, who live in Brooklyn, who are very Orthodox, I have absolutely nothing in common with them. So --

Q: The notion of -- of hidden children, are there still parts of you that are in hiding?

A: I'd have to be in analysis to answer you, and I've never been, so I don't know. Probably, but again, you know, I'm never quite sure -- and we've had this discussion with the Hidden Children, how much of -- of one's being can be blamed on the war. A-As I mentioned to you before, at one point, everybody said, everyone that was divorced had to do with the Holocaust. I was divorced, I don't think it had anything whatsoever to do with the Holocaust. One woman said she purposely married a non-Jew, to avoid possibility of this happening again. She has a daughter who is a teacher, [indecipherable] shalum, which is a synagogue affiliated school. She did get divorced, if it had anything to do with anything, I don't know. I don't know.

Q: How did you meet your first husband?

A: My neighbor on Riverside Drive, where we lived, said she had a nice Jewish boy she'd like me to meet. I know, what can I tell you? I was 20 years old, and -- and that's how we met.

Q: What was his name?

A: Elihu, E-l-i-h-u Tergel, that's my daughter's maiden name. And -- And you know, it was just a regular boy meets girl, we went out, we, you know, fell in love, we got married, we had a nice wedding at the Hampshire House, and we moved from a one bedroom, to a two bedroom, to a six room, you know, with a upward mobility, and then we, you know, started out working, and you know, did a little better along the way, and we had a daughter, we have a daughter. We didn't have more children, which was stupid. I was pregnant at 40 and decided I was too old. If I had this generation now, it'd be just starting out. I think about that, and at some point, which has nothing whatsoever to do with the Holocaust, we just fell apart, which makes me sad. I mean, I'm -- was very lucky to meet my husband, married over 20 years, but I think it would have been kind of nice to be married 44 years, happily, to the same person. You know, it's a -- it's an upheaval, and I felt badly, you know, for my daughter, but she handled it very well, and I think she was definitely more for it than against it. But I think it's -- I think in any divorce, you know, children tend to -- are formed by it somewhat, you know.

Q: What did your ex-husband do?

A: He was an engineer, was in air conditioning, he installed -- I'm always looking up when I say that -- commercial ducts, for the air to go through.

Q: How old was he when you met him?

A: I was 21 when I was married, I must -- I remember, I was 19 - 20, and he was like four years older.

Q: And how long til you had th -- had Lisa?

A: Within two years. Yeah, I was 23.

Q: That's [indecipherable] like your mom.

A: Yeah, except I was born nine months after she was married, so she was a year younger. And actually, Lisa was pretty young by today's standards. She'll be 42 on July first. And so she was 27, going on -- you know, when Adam was -- which is still pretty young by today's standards. But she, of course, has three. I think she's trying to tell me something about only children.

Q: Did -- Do you -- How do you feel that being an only child affected both your chances for survival as a child, and the way you [indecipherable] as you've grown up?

A: Well, I don't know about survival, but probably -- it's probably easier than if there had been more of us, you know, I don't know. I never really had a problem about being an only child, I was -- again, I don't know what it would have been like, I mean, all these wonderful people that have siblings hate each other's guts, don't talk to each other, fight, I don't know. I think at some point, be -- you know, when I was a little older, when everybo -- in Europe a lot of my friends were only children, so I don't think I -- this Tom in Toronto is an only child. A lot of my friends that I grew up with there were only

children, so I didn't really give it much thought. Once we came here, you know, I was 13 years old, so, it's just the way it was.

Q: Were you confirmed or Bat Mitzvahed?

A: Yeah, I was confirmed at Emmanuel. They didn't have Bat Mitzvah then, they do now. The rabbi then thought there was too much emphasis on the Bar, and not enough on the Mitzvah. This is probably true. But they did -- that rabbi retired, and a new rabbi [inaudible] Bat Mitzvahed now. But I was confirmed, and Lisa was confirmed, too.

Q: Same Temple?

A: Same Temple. They didn't have them then, either. Actually, my daughter was Bat Mitzvahed a couple years ago, at her synagogue in Connecticut. Yeah, she just went a- adult education [indecipherable]

Q: So [indecipherable] and then that fell apart.

A: Yeah.

Q: Then how old would [indecipherable]

A: She was in -- just before she graduated college.

Q: So, she was an adult.

A: So she was an adult, yeah. And we -- we really stayed in the apartment she grew up in, right around the corner from here. It's really weird, I mean, it's so weird, cause I -- my kitchen window, you can see my old apartment, and we go to Connecticut, to exactly the same place I went to when she was little, and she's moved there permanently, so it's like, I don't know what that'll tell you.

Q: How -- How'd you meet your second husband?

A: I met my second husband in Acapulco, quite by accident [indecipherable] and as I said, we've been married for 20 -- it was 20 years in September, and all the children have been -- grandchildren have been born since we're married, so even though there's mine and his, we really refer to the children as collectively ours, sometimes.

Q: When they behave?

A: Yeah.

Q: You -- You said that it was just kind of almost natural that you're very [indecipherable]. Why is that important? Why is it --

A: I -- You know, I -- I didn't say it was important, I just said it happened. I didn't date anybody, I didn't know anybody that wasn't Jewish, and it's really weird, because it's not that -- I mean, New York is a big city, and I don't live in a Jewish community. But I remember one year, and that made an impression on me, I went to -- after I finished with my camp, the one I started out with, my parents thought that was enough of that already, and they thought I should brush up on my French, which I knew when I left Europe, and I don't any more, either. But I went to another camp in Maine, that was a French camp. And you were supposed to speak French for the summer. And there were a bunch of girls, I don't remember I bi -- I remember it was an odd number, and I've no idea how, and I had no idea who anybody was, I didn't know anybody there, but it turned out that by the end of the summer, the way the pairing off went with friends, I was friendly with a Jewish girl, two Catholic girls were friendly with each other, two Protestants were

friendly, and I don't even know who the other one was. And nobody said my name is, I am Jewish. And, I mean Brust was my last name, you know, it wasn't like Cohn or something, Goldstein. I don't know.

Q: And now, are most of your friends, are they Jewish?

A: Yeah. There are intermarriages, and there -- you know, a couple of exceptions. And it's not by choice, you know, I don't mean -- I don't go around again, interviewing people. I don't know.

Q: Cooper is your last name from?

A: My husband. It used to be Cohn, but he changed it, and nothing to do with me. It's interesting. He -- He has two brothers and a sister, well the sister has her own married name, but one brother stayed Cohn, and his older brother became Cooper, and my husband joined him in the Cooper part.

Q: What does your husband do?

A: My husband's in real estate. Their -- The family before was Cohn even, I think was Piadagorsky, because they came from Russia, and when they came through Ellis Island, or wherever, I think they became Cohn, because it was just to pick the name that was easy, or some such thing, I'm not sure.

Q: Do you feel that the -- given your history, that just you have some more commonality with Jews than you might with other people that [indecipherable] level, or --

A: You know, I -- I -- I -- I really don't know. I -- I wonder about that. One of my husband's -- my husband has three children. His two sons, they're married to Jewish

girls, his daughter's married to a non-Jewish, very nice young man. I find that there's a difference in culture. I remember when we first met his parents, there were two incidents that made such an impression on me, and they're married, I don't know, 16 - 17 years. This young man's stepfather was telling a story about some incident, and how he was so lucky to have met up with Mussolini's doctor in Europe. I wasn't so excited by that story. And then we were talking about some -- something else at dinner, and they were talking about, you know, that Jewish lady comedian on TV. And I was going to say, what is this Jewish lady comedian. She has a name, she has a profession, but what's this with the Jewish lady? And I was very uncomfortable with that. And I don't think I carry religion, you know, on my shoulder. I'm probably less religious than some of my friends. Some people say I belong to the church on Fifth Avenue, and all that kind of stuff. But there is sort of a -- you know, a different way of looking at things, and we have a whole bunch of friends who have either Gentile wives or husbands. I think most of them sort of assimilated more into being Jewish than not, you know? So, I -- I mean -- I don't know.

Q: Y-You had talked on the -- indicated about your father meeting Eichmann.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Do you remember when he was on trial?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What did that -- How did that affect you?

A: Oh, I've a terrible -- I'm really bad, I mean I -- I -- I don't buy German products, I will not go to Germany. It has nothing to do with forgive, forget, all these cliches, I just -- I

don't like them, I don't want to have anything to do with them. I think they would do it all over again if they had the first opportunity. I know it's a terrible thing to say, it's a prejudice, I try very hard not to do that. I saw a wonderful bag on sale, and I turned it over, and it said it's made in Germany, and I -- I love bargains, I love sales, I put it down, I walked out. It's my -- for lack of a good English word, mishigos, you know, it's -- that's it.

Q: How about listening to Wagner? You said you ha -- you like to go to the symphony opera --

A: Yeah, actually I don't go to the opera that much, and no, I haven't listened to Wagner. I just -- The other day on the radio, there was this whole thing -- I wasn't quite sure who was being interviewed, but this guy was saying about he has a big problem with people that object to Wagner because of his political views, and that people should really listen to the music, and forget about. I don't know. It depends on how argumentative, or who I want to argue with. It's like Vanessa Redgrave. She's a wonderful actress. I don't like her political views. On the other hand, I don't have to force my political views on anyone, nor do they have to, so I can separate the two. My problem is with the whole German concept, and when I took Adam, my oldest grandson, and his brother -- the little one wasn't around the first time -- no, wasn't the first time, was the second time to Disney, wi -- no, with all three, we took all three boys to Disney a couple of years ago, and we didn't have dinner reservations, and we were dragging, and it was hot, and we stayed -- we were going through Epcot, and we walked into a couple of places, and they just couldn't take

us, there were five of us. Ended up in a German brauhaus restaurant. I hated it. I mean they did the oompa pa and the whole thing, and they had the knockwurst and the this wurst and the that wurst. And Adam was the only one who said, “Grandma, I can’t believe we’re having dinner here.” And I said, “Adam, I can’t believe we’re having dinner here either, but you guys were all hungry, so here we are.” But I definitely did not like eating there.

Q: How about when you hear the German language?

A: I hate the German language. I hate listening to it. I spoke it fluently as a child, I spoke it pat -- when I learned how to speak it, Hungarian, I l -- I spoke German. Not Yiddish, German. I had a German fräulein when I was very little. Then I had an English nanny, and then I had a French mademoiselle, and I was very smart, and now I’m not so smart any more, cause I really don’t speak any other lang -- I mean, I -- when I’m in France, I can fake French a little, but it’s really a shame because I -- I did speak it fluently. I also was able to read and write Hebrew. I was very smart when I was young. This aging process is not so good.

Q: [indecipherable]

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the Holocaust Museum interview with Eva Cooper, this is tape two, side B. Okay, how about political events in this country, other than the

Eichmann trial, as you were growing up, like McCarthy? Were you aware of that sort of --

A: McCarthy?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That was -- I was very young, I really was not -- I mean, I knew what was going on, but that was -- when was that? What year was that?

Q: Oh, 50's and 60's, too. I mean, the House un-American Activities Committee was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- certainly into the 60's.

A: Yeah. I mean, I was aware of it, but I don't think it played it a great role in my life at the time.

Q: Civil Rights Movement?

A: Hm?

Q: Civil Rights Movement?

A: Yeah, the Civil Rights Mo -- yeah, you know what played a -- a bigger part in my life? The Rosenberg trial. I remember that very vividly. Actually, I was in Washington with two of my friends. It was one of the first times my parents let me go, and I think I must have been either the end of high school, or the beginning of college, because I remember one friend, but I went to high school and college with her, so I don't remember where -- what school we were at at the time. But I was quite upset with that whole thing. I don't know if it was because they were Jewish, or the whole process of being executed, and --

there was a whole different sense of being an American, so I had kind of mixed feelings about, you know, capital punishment, and -- and all that kind of stuff. I've changed back and forth a number of times on that issue. I remember seeing a movie called "Death Wish," there were several -- I think it was called "Death Wish." There were several after. One of them was filmed in my mother's building, and the -- what's his name was a vigilante.

Q: Charles Bronson.

A: Yeah. And I was having actually, this discussion with my daughter, who was also very liberal at the time. She used to work for Geraldo Rivera when he was very young, and doing all sorts of good stuff, wore clogs and stuff. And when she saw that movie, she said, "You know what? Maybe there is something to capital punishment." Because that was a mother being raped, and a daughter witnessing, and all that kind of stuff, so I can -- I can go back and forth on that issue.

Q: Were you a strong mother, just as your mother was?

A: Strong?

Q: Mother, yeah.

A: Was I as strong as mother as my --

Q: Were you a strong mother?

A: I think so. In so many ways, I -- it was a different generation. You know, I was more courteous and respectful with my mother. I mean, we -- you know, I -- I was a hands on mom, very differently, without -- without the staff, you know. So there is a difference, I

think. The dress code does make a difference, too. I don't know. It's hard to say, you know, you sort of have to -- you'd have to ask Lisa, you know, her perception. My perception was, I mean I -- I loved -- she was a wonderful child, the -- I never had any problems with her, you know, any difficulties. I guess, you know, she probably will agree that she was probably the model child, she always rubs that in, that I didn't give her -- she didn't give me any aggrava -- she really didn't give me any aggravation.

Q: Did you have a nanny for her?

A: Hm?

Q: Did you have a nanny for her?

A: No, I had a housekeeper. I mean, yo -- you know, a housekeeper who babysat and stuff like that, but I was -- I was home and when I went back to school, she was in first grade, and I was home when she was home, so her school stuff all -- you know, always came first.

Q: Education very important for you?

A: Yes. For me, or --

Q: For you?

A: Yeah, it was very important for me, and it was very important for my daughter.

Q: Why was it important for you?

A: Personally?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Well, I was brought up that way. I wa -- It was important to my parents, and -- well, there was not a question of was I or was I not going to college, it was a given to begin with, and I would have liked to go out of town, but we were still fairly new at it, and my parents said that college is something that you go to to learn, not to go to some campus, and whatever. And it was costly then, too. And Hunter was a very fine school, it was available, and didn't cost anything. That was probably a big disappointment, because a lot of my friends were going, you know, out of town. I had a lot of private school friends by that time, because of camp, and -- and Sunday school. And everybody was going to these nice schools, and stuff, so I had dates, and was invited to football games, and stuff like that, so that was good. And my father said that he doesn't care what I graduate with, but I have to have a tool, that if something happens, and I have to take care of myself, that I have to be able to do that, which was sort of a very smart thing, because my mother's generation were raised to be ladies, and entertain. They learned, most of them, some had more trouble than others. But my father said that he didn't care what I did, as long as when I get that degree, it enables me to do something. So, I majored in English, I minored in ed-education. I liked working with children, so --

Q: What year did you graduate?

A: I graduated the year we were -- we were married. No, I graduated the year after. We were married in '55, graduated in '56. I -- I went to summer school, and I graduated six months before. I spent that whole summer -- we were married in August -- I spent that whole summer getting this ridiculous amount of credits, and cramming stupid courses.

And then I student taught the pers -- semester that we were married. And actually, I -- I had a hard time getting a job, because they wanted to put me into the worst schools, and I really -- I wouldn't have survived there. I ended up in the worst schools later, but -- so I got a wonderful job. We lived in Murray Hill, and I got a kwi -- sort of a -- I don't even know how I got it, but it was really nice, sort of a Girl Friday job in a wholesale drapery and bedspread manufacturing company on Fifth Avenue in the 30's. And I kind of ran the office. I didn't have a clue what I was doing. My husband used to come up and help me file, cause there were too many S's. So I used to file all the other letters, except the S's. And there were no computers, I was perfectly happy answering the telephone, you know, and I looked nice, and my boss borrowed my husband's tuxedo, and so you know, we just all kind of worked, and then I became pregnant, not that far after -- w-was also -- also was very nice, cause it was in the neighborhood, and I used to run home, and [indecipherable]. And then after Lisa was born, when she was little, I used to get these market research jobs. I used to interview people on the street with a baby, and then -- and my elevator man got me this nice lady who ended up working for us for 14 years, who used to come in to clean twice a week. And when she came, I left, and -- for about three hours, at nap time. And she was wonderful, and I used to do these market research things, so I kind of liked that. And then we moved up here f -- in order for Lisa to go to PS six, which was a very good public school, and those were the rent control days, and got a rent controlled apartment, and I started looking around in schools, and I went -- I taught at a

school on 108th and Madison Avenue. Kind of lower Harlem, I guess, whatever you call it, and I stayed there for many years.

Q: Check the tape again.

A: What do you mean, transcribe it?

Q: The -- Just as they did with the previous interview of yours, they --

A: Oh, they --

Q: -- write it out verbatim, and keep it in the archives for people who want to study.

A: Mm.

Q: You talked about how you look good at your filing job, it's -- i-is --

A: I'm sorry, what?

Q: You talked about your appearance.

A: Mm.

Q: If I remember. Is looking good important to you? Having go -- nice clothes, nice things?

A: Is it important? Yeah, I mean, as opposed to I don't care what I look like?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know.

Q: Well, you talked about how, during the war, your mother would, you know, lengthen your dresses, and things --

A: Yeah, I think -- I don't think it was looking good, I think it's a question of -- if a button's missing, there's no reason not to sew it on. If something is torn, sew it. Comb

your hair in the morning, you know, those kind of things. So it's really neatness, and a certain appearance, you know. I don't know. I think it's more that than, you know, clothes stuff. I don't know.

Q: Cause you're not wearing just any loafers.

A: What am I wearing? Oh. I bought these loafers, and they told me would go with everything, doesn't go with anything, but they're so comfortable. It's a weird color.

Q: For the tape you want to describe them so the transcriber --

A: Yeah, they're -- they're kind of funny looking suede loafers. I don't know what -- what color would you call these? It's supposed to be -- it's not beige, but it's almost bordering on a dull orange kind of thing. And when I bought them, I thought they would be sort of like -- go with everything. Every time I put them on, I think to myself, doesn't really go with anything. But they're very comfortable.

Q: They look very nice.

A: Thank you.

Q: When did you start collecting art?

A: Way before I could afford it. When I was quite young, I must have been in my 30's, and we co-couldn't really afford it, and a lot of my friends were starting to buy mink stoles, and whatever those awful things were. And some jewelry, you know, and things. The next level of -- you know, when your husband does well, that next level of luxury. And I've always loved going to museums and galleries. And I was involved with Brandeis University National Women's Committee. And the National Women's

Committee was the sole supporter of the library, because it was a fairly new school, and they didn't have the alumni money coming in for a library, so the women, when the school was first formed, non-sectarian Jewish school, because education was very important, we supported the library. We had a very active chapter -- junior chapter in New York, young. There was an older -- our parent's generation, they formed a younger chapter, and I was very much involved with that. And we did a lot of book reviews, and art classes, and I guess intellectually stimulating things, as opposed to a lot of other people were playing -- younger people, that had some free time were starting to play Mah Jongg, or Canasta, and all that kind of stuff, so this was -- we had a stock group, we were learning about that, so whatever was interesting, and I was always interested in that. We went to look at the Barnes collection. And there were a lot of artists popping up that were contemporary, unknown. Galleries that were appearing in Soho, that were new. Andy Warhol was becoming, O.K Harris Gallery was -- he used to give ladies art classes, before he opened the gallery. And they would donate stuff, and we would auction it off, or sell it, or whatever. And I was just really interested. Some of the galleries would give us cocktail parties, and fundraisers, and stuff, and that's how that Picasso lino cut back there, it was the first thing that I bought, that was an independent thing, and it was a lot of money at the time. And we did it.

Q: You and your --

A: My husband, my fir --

Q: -- first husband?

A: First husband, yeah. And then a lot of the little things that you see around like that Nevillson, and multiple -- they were all multiples, and somebody asked me the other day what a multiple is. I said it's a sa -- it's like -- it's like a lithograph, except in sculptures, and I was -- such a funny question. But a lot of artists did that in order to raise money. Louise Nevillson was very supportive of Brandeis, and some museums were. And that was a very -- a less expensive way of acquiring things, because they were multiples, they were one of 50, one of a hundred, whatever. And they certainly have, you know, done well along the years. So I'm happy. I mean, I didn't buy it at the time, because I thought it was going to wor -- be worth it, cause I'm not selling anything. But I just liked it. And it was all -- always -- I kind of like a little bit of the cutting edge stuff, although every once in awhile -- I went to see the new exhibit at the Metropolitan, I said, you know, I could get rid of some of this, acquire one of those, but I can't. It's just -- gives me pleasure, I -- I just like it. We have some stuff really, and actually it's in the closets, that are very angry, and -- stuff I wouldn't want to hang. Nan Golden, do you know Nan Golden? We have a cookie portfolio, I mean, it's not something I would hang, but I really like it, I think they're wonderful photographs, and they're very meaningful, I mean, that's the generation of the drugs, and the OD's and stuff. I absolutely can't think of the young man who did that. I thought it was -- the paintings were just spectacular. I absolu -- I'm blanking out on his name, he's Italian. But I thought they were all AIDS victims, turned out he had a brain tumor, and he's alive and well, but they all look -- they really all look

like concentration camp survivors. So -- But of all the things to spend money on, in the luxury category, I think art would be my -- top of my list.

Q: Were your parents collectors?

A: Not really. Y -- I mean, in Europe they had a wonderful -- I remember lots of paintings, and they were supposed to have been good paintings, but they never came out, and I have -- I don't really even know who they were, or how valuable they were. That was not something they continued to do. They have a couple of Hungarian painters, that were very well known in the Hungarian circles. Freid -- I don't know if you ever heard of -- kind of impressionists, faux impressionists, but they were, you know, very good friends, and actually I tried to talk my mother once, to buy a Chagall lithograph, and I think she was sorry she didn't. But no, not here.

Q: Well you have so-some really interesting pieces. And you're not afraid of collecting German artists.

A: That's -- It's -- It's interesting, that was the only one that's definitely German, and I had mixed feelings about it. And the other -- the one that they're really famous for, the water tanks, that's -- it's -- it's fu -- a very good friend of mine, who I went to a college with, are major collectors, I mean really major, and she's also an art dealer, and I've gone with her a few times, and bought things, you know, through her and with her, and I think somebody had bought this, and they couldn't pay the last payment, or something, and she -- she said, you know, if I don't buy this, I'm crazy, and it was really a good buy. And I

liked it, and I -- I don't even think I was paying attention to the German part, to tell you the truth. If I had, I probably wouldn't have bought it.

Q: You want to explain for the tape, what we're talking about?

A: Yeah, this is a series of nine photographs taken -- what these -- it's a husband and wife, Bescher. I can't think of their first name, Hannah, and -- I can't think of his name, Bescher, but they're probably one of the most predominant photographers, and they take multiple shots of the same thing. They're very well known for their water tanks, and these are houses in Germany, and it's -- they're no -- I mean, they're sold as a unit. There are nine, aren't there?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. And they're kind of hung as a series.

Q: Yeah, cause after you were talking about, you know, nothing German --

A: I know.

Q: -- and I'm sitting here looking at those.

A: Yeah, i-i-it's funny, you're absolutely right, yeah.

Q: But then, most people wouldn't know that.

A: Yeah. No, but it's not because most people, I mean, like the bag I didn't buy, I didn't buy not because anybody would have known it, but I mean, I have turned like dishes or things upside down to look, so I don't know how this kind of major thing snuck in, but it certainly did.

Q: When you were married both times, were they religious ceremonies?

A: Yes, both times. I've been married by a rabbi, does that mean -- yeah. First time it was at the hotel, the Hampshire House, by a rabbi, actually a Hungarian rabbi, who had come here after the war, and had his congregation in New Haven. And he used to tutor my mother and her brother, to earn extra money, to go through school. And the second time we were married at Temple Emmanuel, in the study, of my rabbi, and my husband's rabbi, who happened to have been classmates, so they were good friends, and it just worked out well.

Q: This was im-important to you, to be married by a rabbi?

A: You know, it's another one of those things I just didn't think about. I mean, I -- I don't know, it just -- I didn't even think about who else could marry you, like a Justice of the Peace, I -- yeah, I don't know. I mean, if I answered you, it wouldn't really be -- I just didn't think about it.

Q: You've talked -- Several times you've mentioned the Hidden Children gathering.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: It sounds like that was kind of a focal point for you, kind of coming out as a survivor?

A: Yes, yeah. Somebody said that, it's like coming out of the closet. I think what happened, and I don't know how accurate this is, but I think the period of assimilation had passed. I assimilated, I grew up, I was an American teenager, I was married, you know. It is now at the point in time, where with my generation, it's all over, except these tapes. I didn't think about that 20 or 30 years ago. I wanted to go on with my life, and my parents wanted to go on with their lives. I mean, we were all very happy to be here, and

still today, when people criticize this country, my European side comes out, and I always want to say, go away. If you don't like it here, go wherever it's better. Cause with all the problems here, with all the horrible things, what -- whether it's -- from the politicians and the -- the crookedness, and th -- all that, I'd still rather live here than anywhere else. And we had a choice, and I get very annoyed with Americans that are critical. And I don't like the American flag being burned, I don't like this freedom of choice business. I don't mean the abortion issue, I mean freedom of choice of doing things that I -- I don't think the right thing to do, because I don't think you have to burn anything to make a statement, but that's my own opinion. But I am very conscious of the fact that historically, I wouldn't like it not to be remembered. Not me, because I've been very lucky. Even through the war I was lucky, I survived with my parents. A tremen -- All of my aunts, and uncles, and cousins were killed in Auschwitz. I have one cousin, who's 77, who's here, who has got his Auschwitz numbers on his arm. He's married, he has a son, a nice Jewish doctor, and has two nice Jewish grandchildren. And he's assimilated, totally, sometimes excessively, and it's really interesting, cause I asked him to donate his Auschwitz uniform, and he said he wasn't ready to part with it. On the other hand, he lived next door to some people who had a swastika hanging in their house. So -- And he also went overboard joining -- I probably shouldn't say this on tape, case he listens to it -- a very non-Jewish club, who now has been kind enough to admit some Jews, but I wouldn't deal too well with that, if I'm not welcome, it's okay. I mean, it's not okay, but I wouldn't want to make a statement. But that's how he's dealt with it. He's got his own

demons, probably much worse than mine, cause his mother died in Auschwitz. So, you can't really be critical of what other people, you know, do, and how people deal with it. But I think -- Well first of all, this Hidden Children thing just happened, so --

Q: Yeah, when was that?

A: I guess about five years ago, and there was an article in a New York magazine, and it was getting a lot of publicity, it was going to be like maybe a couple of hundred people or something, were going to gather at the Marriott Marquis Hotel, and my daughter called me and told me about it. And she said, how come I'm not going? I said, "Well, I really hadn't thought about it, what am I going to do there?" And it was Memorial Day weekend, and we were invited out to the Hamptons, which sounded like a much better thing to do. Then the more I read about it, and the more I thought about it, I said, you know, I think I'm going to go. And I said to my husband, "Let's go out to the Hamptons, and I'll come back for the one day out of the two, and you stay, and that's that." Well, he came back with me, and I only went for one day. And I went early in the morning, and by lunchtime I called him, and I said, "Come. Elie Wiesel is speaking in the evening," and you know, and he did. And it was really a very interesting experience for me. And one of my friends who, at that first meeting, said I was like the Pollyanna of the group, saying the war was wonderful, and I had a lovely childho -- and all of a sudden, you know, some things that weren't so wonderful came out somewhere along the way, which I wasn't even aware of. So I guess, you know, something is definitely there, and I -- I don't know if it's my personality or what, that likes to think the glass is half full, as opposed to half

empty. But it is definitely important that the museum is there. We went to the one in South Beach, which is really a wonderful -- a-and then, you know, sometimes, people have said an awful lot of money is going to all these buildings, and all of this stuff, you know, isn't there better ways of spending the money, and sometimes I'm not sure. But I think the only way to possibly avoid it, or to teach children in this crazy world, when you hear about all these shootings at schools, and stuff, it's a nightmare. But I'm not sure that it's -- goes to the right people. You know, it's -- I remember years ago, having meetings, and chairing a meeting, and giving a lecture to the people that are there, about not being late. But the people that were there, were there. The people that were that late, didn't hear my complaining, so I'm not sure that the people who are going to do terrible things, are going to go to the Holocaust Museum, listen to these tapes, and say, "Well, you know, we did terrible things to these people, maybe we won't do this." So, I don't know.

Q: Change tape aga --

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is tape three, side A, Holocaust Museum interview with Eva Cooper, on Tuesday, June 22nd, 1999. Did you always talk to your daughter about your experiences?

A: She claims I didn't in the beginning, and it's really interesting, cause that's something that's come up a lot at these Hidden Children meetings, about some daughters who said their parents talked too much, and other daughters who said their parents didn't. I didn't for a long time, and she teases me about it. I had all these pictures, after the war, that were taken, and I don't know why, but it was just sort of something that came up from time to time, and I always told her that when she was older, I would show it to her. There were all these dead bodies, all over the place, that were being shoveled up to be buried i- in the back of the synagogue, cause they couldn't be identified, and -- and there were just a lot of bodies all over the place that -- when we came back into Budapest, cause we were in hiding outside, and so I remember all these bodies and stuff, and shortly after we came back, they were hanging people. And you know, this -- these were all documented, and no, I didn't want to show her the pictures, for a long time. I'm not sure whether they were upsetting for me, or whether I thought that she'd be upset. I don't know. I did take her to a couple of movies, when she was like a young teenager, that were, I guess I thought age appropriate, and that she could handle. And it's interesting, because my -- I've changed. You know, now I feel if the people that were victims could handle it, you know, children should be able to handle it, too. I certainly started younger with my grandson. I don't -- you know, I don't know. I guess timing. With my grandson, I was at the train station,

waiting for somebody, and he put out his right hand like Heil, Hitler, and it really freaked me out, totally. And so -- I mean, he was little, maybe four, five years old. So I kind of kneeled -- you know, bent down, at his level, I said, “Adam, why did you do that?” And he said, “Well, I just had seen that in “The Sound of Music.” So I said, “Well, yeah, that’s what they did,” I said, “but I have to tell you a story.” And I said, “If you remember the story, some of those soldiers were the bad guys. And this was this guy, Adolf,” anyhow, and I said, you know, “I don’t really want you to do that, that’s not a salute that is appropriate.” I don’t know what words I used, I was really kind of emotional about it. So then he said, “Will you tell me other stories about what happened to you?” And I did, and actually at the Hidden Children, there was some wonderful books, and I had gotten some. And I read some to him, and then, subsequently he, you know, read “Anne Frank” and all the other Holocaust related stories. But now, it’s become like a joke, every time I give him a book, I say, “No, it’s not about the Holocaust.”

Q: And what’s your relationship to Israel?

A: That’s an interesting question. I’m very glad it’s there. I wouldn’t want to live there, and it has nothing -- it has -- I was going to say it has nothing to do with me, but that’s not quite right, that’s a flip answer. I’m not as committed to it being my homeland as some people. I think we’re very lucky, as American Jews, that Israel is there, it’s -- to lean on. But it’s not a place I want to live in. I don’t feel that because I’m Jewish, I have to be there. It’s not a place, certainly, my parents chose, like a lot of people after the war, that -- I don’t -- I don’t think of it in terms of my homeland. Maybe I should. Maybe

that's where all the Jews belong, I don't know. I mean, we were perfectly happy being Hungarian Jews. Did you ever see a movie called, "Ship of Fools"? He said, "After all, I'm a German." Well, right now I'm saying, "After all, I'm an American." Could it happen here? Probably. I don't know.

Q: Do you feel at this point, that it's important to talk about your experiences?

A: To talk about --

Q: Your experiences. Do you tend to tell people more now than you did before the Hidden Children conference?

A: It's -- It's strange, I have had friends for 40 some years, they all knew that I was born in Europe. They all knew that I came, when I came, and all that. And I cannot tell you how many -- and I mean, this is my -- a handful of people that I've known, you know, from camp, junior high school, says, "By the way, I knew you came from Europe, were you," -- I said, "You know, where have you been all of this time?" "Well, you never talked about it." I said, "You never asked me." I mean, I don't go sit down at a dinner party, and say, "Would you like to hear my war stories?" Some people do that, but I don't. I -- I don't do it or not do it, I mean, if you ask me. People will say, "Do you mind talking about it?" No, I don't mind talking about it at all. But some people will ask, and then I have a sense that they're trying to change the subject. They don't really want to know. And some people are curious, so --

Q: How about with your husbands, did you talk about it with them?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Did they want to know, or did you want to tell them?

A: Both. Yeah, but I mean I'm -- you know, I can't honestly say we sat down and had, you know -- yeah, but I mean, as -- as much as you can talk about it, or you know. I mean, my husband -- my present husband --

Q: What's his name?

A: Leslie, which really, interesting enough, is a very European name, it's Lazlo. And my uncle, my mother's brother, was Leslie -- was Lazlo there. His son -- which is a very un-Jewish thing to do, is an only child also, is Leslie junior. And at the time my daughter had a very good female friend whose name was Leslie, so we're loaded with Leslies. But, I mean, it was with him that we, you know, gave a very nice contribution, and -- he gets very emotional about hearing or seeing things about the Holocaust. So --

Q: Is your daughter named after anyone?

A: My grandmother. I mean, it was sort of a -- you know, make believe after, but I mean, we just liked the name Lisa, and her middle name is Robin, which was sort of -- my grandmother's name was Serena, so I'm not exactly sure how we did all that, but it's really weird, because my father -- I was pregnant with Lisa when my father died, so if anything, I probably should have -- I didn't -- I don't know -- I mean, I don't know why. I think we just named her Lisa right away, before she was born, so it just --

Q: Do you have any fears now that stem from you childhood experiences?

A: I have probably more fears now than I did before, but I don't think it's anything to do with my childhood, I think it's the process of aging, you know, there's a lot of sickness, and illness, and you know.

Q: What about sirens?

A: Oh, I hate sirens. I don't like sirens, but I'm not as -- I mean, I used to really be bad about it, but I just -- you know, I just don't like the noise. I'm not a noisy person, I don't like noise.

Q: It's not that it reminds you of --

A: It did for a long time, and cor -- yeah -- no, it really doesn't.

Q: How about being cold?

A: Oh yes. I -- My -- All my fingers were frozen during the war, and I still -- talk about gloves, not white gloves during the summer, but I -- I'd rather wear gloves than anything else in the winter, because my hands and feet tend to get very cold, and that always is from that original freezing thing, and I don't like to be cold. Course, I don't like to be very hot, either, so --

Q: [inaudible] Photographs you have on the piano.

A: Oh.

Q: You've got the Bushes in front of everybody else.

A: I -- That's -- That's just a -- a coincident, it's really funny, because I'm not a Republican, but when we were in Washington with Adam and Peter -- this was a cut out, and when we went back, we were trying to find a Clinton cut out, but we couldn't find it.

But it looks so realistic that people actually have come and said, “What are you doing with the Bushes?” And I say it was just, you know, the kids got a kick out of it, and it’s amazing how real it is. There’s one picture on the piano, it’s right up front, near the Bushes. That’s my mother, my father, my Uncle Leslie and me as a baby. Do you see it? Yeah, that old fashioned one, yeah. And that was in Europe in our living room. Yeah, that was my Uncle Leslie, who came here in ’41, and he was 20 something, and immediately joined the American army, and was in Italy during the invasion, and then came to Budapest before he headed back. And it’s his wife -- well, he died, my uncle died about five years ago, that was my mother’s brother. And his wife is the one I’m very friendly with.

Q: Do you play piano?

A: No, I did. That’s another thing I did when I used to be smart. I -- I’ve thought about actually taking lessons again. But we just had two couples over for dinner the other night, and we played the piano, it was just wonderful. My grandchildren play the piano. And when we got the apartment -- a very good friend of mine sold us the apartment, and she said, “This living room is so big, what are you going to do?” I said, “I haven’t got a clue,” cause I had all this furniture from my other apartment that I used, and she, being a good real estate lady says, you know, she was just selling an apartment, a woman who was moving out of a big apartment, she wants to sell her piano. That’s how I got the piano, so I could put my grandchildren’s pictures on it.

Q: Have you ever been to Auschwitz?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Have you ever been to Auschwitz?

A: No, no.

Q: You say that with more finality than almost anything you've said before.

A: No.

Q: [indecipherable] you lost so many relatives there.

A: Mm. I think I would like to go, at some point. I've never been to Prague, which is not the same thing, but a lot of it has to do -- well, choices, and timing, because -- but the last -- when we were in Budapest the last time, we went with Adam, and I didn't want to go to another eastern European country, which is -- I was in -- like in the neighborhood. And then there have been a couple of, you know, Jewish congress, and UJA kind of stuff, that always has that. And I think I've mixed feelings about it. I don't know how I feel about it.

Q: You said that there were a lot of emotions when you went with Adam to Budapest.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Then you just left it at that. What kind of emotions?

A: I felt very -- combination of this is where I'm from, to this is a strange place, all at the same time. Because again, we're talking 50 some years ago, so just like New York, on the west side where I grew up, doesn't look anything like -- Lincoln Center wasn't anywhere near anything, you know, so I mean, just by nature of growth, and -- things change. My apartment looked pretty shabby from the outside. There was still a lot of

bullet -- you know, bomb sh-shrapnel things in the buildings. The city is beautiful, and when we were looking out the window at night, we had a -- we stayed at the intercontinental, overlooking the Danube River, it's a beautiful, beautiful city, and it used to be called the Paris of the Danube. And all the royalty used to visit, and these shopping streets, like Madison Avenue, is -- was a beautiful, beautiful street. It's pretty crummy now. Has a lot of is -- American chain store, McDonalds, you know, and all that kind of stuff. It's -- The city's a little tacky, and sad looking, you know, but it's -- physically it's a beautiful city. I was very moved at the synagogue. The last time we were there, 20 some years ago, you -- it wasn't even opened. So that is changed a lot. And there a lot of Americans, including Tony Curtis, and the Louder family, who have given a lot of money to restore the synagogue. And they've re -- all the furniture has been re-done, you know, all the benches, and pews. And all the names were taken off, in order to re-polish the furniture. So I spoke to the guy who was sort of escorting school groups around. And I said, "My grandfather, and my father, and my uncle, and mother, they all had their nametags -- you know, their nameplates here." So he said, "Give me their names." And he said, "Come to the back," there's a little room in the back. And in old shoeboxes, in alphabetical order, he pulls out my grandfather's, my father's, my mother's, and my uncle. That's whose son is here, as a survivor of Auschwitz. So I made a donation to the synagogue, and they put them on like little wooden plaques -- wooden pieces, they didn't do such a good job, but it was very nice of them to do that. And I brought it home, and I gave my mother's, my father's, my gr-grandfather's to my mother, and I gave my uncle's

to my cousin. We did have a choice of putting it back there. I'm not sure why I bought them with me. They were selling, you know, new people now, raising money for the synagogue. I don't know why, I just wa -- I ge -- I don't know. I mean, I'm not sure whether I shouldn't have just had them put it back, you know, on the -- on the pews, or what they had planned to do. But when they had them in the back, and they said, "Would you like them?" I said, "Yes, I would." So that was quite moving, and Adam was quite impressed, moved, whatever. And we bought some Judaica there. So --

Q: Was it important to you --

A: I would have liked to be there for a Friday night service, but we weren't.

Q: Do you go here, to [indecipherable]

A: No, not regularly. We do, but not, you know -- I mean, not as a regular thing.

Q: Th-The decision to bring the names here, rather than leave them there, was that in any way symbolic of the fact that your whole family came here?

A: I don't know. I didn't really give it a lot of thought. When they found them, I just thought that -- I didn't think my mother would ever go back. I just thought she would like to have them, cause she was -- has all this stuff. And my cousin actually goes back to visit. All those last living relatives just died, and Europeans are very big on cemeteries, so they always go visit cemeteries. I don't know why I brought it back. I really -- I mean, it wasn't something I thought about doing or going to get, or anything else, it was just -- I expected to see them on the s -- on the pews, and my mother sat upstairs. That's --

Q: Anything else you want to say about your experience?

A: About what?

Q: About your experience [indecipherable]

A: I don't know, it's -- it's sort of interesting, and it's a contradiction. Had it not been for the Hidden Children, had it not been for the fact that I'm conscious of this last generation, and probably my grandchildren, it would have been something of the past. But the past is a very important part of your whole being, and you can't just totally file it away. What impact it will have on the future, I no -- I don't know. I think I'm going through a stage, I don't know if because it's my mother, that I feel very vulnerable about it being sort of the last chapter, you know. I used to think I was young, and I used to think I was middle-aged, and now I think, you know, the senior, and AARP, and all that, it's like a whole other chapter, and I've never lied about my age, so it's not a matter of saying I'm younger than I am, but I think I have a little problem acknowledging that I'm not in my 40's, I think I'm stuck in my 40's. But I've had the discussion with my daughter, and she says she's stuck in her 20's, so that kind of works, cause she's having a problem thinking that she's in her 40's. And she's got exactly the same lines that I have. And I guess that's genetic, you know? So, I just would like to think -- not even wish, I don't know, think that the next generation doesn't have any of this to deal with. I think historically, almost every generation has had a horrendous war, or something that's beyond their control. Whether it was a civil war movement, or World War One, or Two, or lost someone in Korea, Vietnam. This was a little different, and my daughter, my grandchildren are quite involved in this Kosovo, which I probably think is as close as you can get. And it-it's so

sad that with all of the talk, and the political statements, that the bottom line is, there's nothing anybody can do, it's like a -- it's like a chain reaction. I mean, thousands of people are dying. And with all the stuff that's going there, it's still going on, and nobody can stop it. So, it's hard to be philosophical, because it's -- it's sort of -- it's empty words, you know. This is what happened. I would like it not to happen. That's not very profound, but I can't think of anything more. I've been lucky, that's -- I guess that's a good way to end, because I think I been lucky because in my life, the war could have been much worse. I had -- could have had more serious losses. I could have been in camps, which were more serious. And I'm also lucky that my life after the war turned out to be a nice, and a good life. And I'm very grateful for that.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Eva Cooper. Is that all? When you came to this country -- we're back again. When you -- When you came to this country, was there a class structure among the immigrants?

A: Yes, there most certainly were. Not -- Not only was there a class of -- a money class, but definitely religion. And -- I mean in -- in the Yorkville section of -- of New York, you can see the Hungarian Catholics, and the Hungarian Jews, and the Hungarian Protestants. And -- And the people that became friendly with each other were the people that were of the same class in Europe, and never the twain shall meet. In Hungarian, there are three -- oh God, I really am losing it now. It's not the -- like in France, there's -- do you speak French?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Tu, and vous?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: What do you call that?

Q: Formal, informal.

A: Formal, informal. In Hungarian there's a third one. It gets very complicated. The informal would be like, to very good friends or children. The formal would be to teachers, and parents, and all of that. Then there's a third one that you would speak to -- with lower class or upper class. I mean, I can't describe it to you, but like a housekeeper would use a different way of speaking to, than -- and so -- and that still exists, and it's very interesting, because people will remain in that category of behavior, and it's not that -- anything that's expected or -- or anything in today's world, but it still exists. And my parents, and a lot of their friends, that -- some people they met here, some people they knew from Europe, they came here -- they came here maybe with a little bit of money because they had visas where there was visitors, or perman -- mostly visitors, and then they applied for a permanent, and eventually became citizens. But 80 or 90 percent of my mother's friends became majorly, majorly successful. Speaking with accents, not speaking very good English, and a lot of them became import, export business, in the toy building, and the gift building. Some attorneys went back to school. There was a Hungarian Jewish doctor's association. Not Hungarian Catholic, Hungarian Jewish. And I'm sure there was another one also. But they were very class conscious on every -- on every level. And then the next group of people that came, it was 1956, and that was

referred to as the 1956, as those people really came with just the clothes on their back, because they were escaping after the revolution. And even some of those people have done extremely well. So, especially the Jews that came to this country, the educated Jews, had a tremendous thirst for success again, and most of -- a businessman is a businessman, if he can sell that, he can sell this. And that's exactly what -- what happened. I mean, historically, even in -- even in government, I mean, there's some Hungarians, and for a little country, that's amazing, to be prominent people on Wall Street, and in business, and politics, that have come out of it, so --

Q: So it was essentially upper class?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Your family was essentially upper class?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you consider yourself a classist now?

A: No. But on the other hand, I'm not poor, you know. I -- It's -- It's a different world today, so it's -- it's -- I was much more aware of it there than I am here. I have friends that are -- have much more than I, and I have friends that have much less. But I think -- and this is probably true everywhere, I mean, people seem to put you in -- into a box, because of where you live, the car you drive, whatever it is you do, you know? So it's sort of hard to get away from it. Do I pick people? No, that way, because of class. But the behavior of the European class system is very different than it is here. And it probably -- maybe not so much now, but I think it probably still exists a little bit.

Q: In your head, when you meet somebody, do you -- do you go through which form of language you should use?

A: No, no. I only speak English.

Q: But I mean, do you do a kind of mental shift?

A: No, no. No, that I definitely don't do.

Q: [indecipherable] that is you -- you work at the Whitney now?

A: Yes. I work there as a volunteer.

Q: What do you do?

A: Yeah, just as a mem -- membership, I try to get people to join. I --

Q: You sit at the desk and [indecipherable]

A: We sit at the desk, yeah, and tell people where to go, have dinner, where to park their car, where the Guggenheim is, how to take the subway, you know. And just schmooze with them, and hope to sell a -- a membership. The difference w -- I was just thinking what you said about class, the big difference is, in Europe, where they came from, and their breeding from before is of equal importance. Here, that's not the case. I -- Maybe to some people, but you meet people usually on an equal footing, and whether they came from a poor background or a rich background is -- doesn't become an issue in the friendship, where as it does in Europe. I think probably where you came from is more important than how much money you have. I think -- maybe this is my generalization, but I think here, money is more important. I think in Europe, at least I had that sense, that your background, or your education was more important than -- money couldn't buy you

into places in Europe. It can here. That's -- So there's a different, I mean, it's probably the same thing, but they come from a different approach.

Q: Do you have both?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Do you have both?

A: Yeah, I mean, I'd like -- I don't like to think I think about it either way, but it exists, because it's -- I was just telling somebody the other day that it's amazing how if you meet somebody, and they go to an Ivy League school -- I mean, we're talking people in their 50's, 60's, and 70's, how, before the end of the evening, somehow or other, they will mention having gone to Harvard or Princeton. And, you know, that was a while back. They don't mention city college. So, it still is important to whoever it's important to.

Q: How long have you been volunteering at the Whitney?

A: Oh, over 10 years.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Actually probably mo -- a little more.

Q: Volunteering -- the idea that you're volunteering important? That notion, that you're giving something?

A: Yes, definitely. I think actually I -- I should be doing more than I am right now. I used to do much more, but I didn't mention, but we spend our winter in the Caribbean, and so we -- we're away so much, that every time I sort of get involved, I don't like to volunteer,

and not take that as seriously as if I had a paying job, so I don't like to pop in and pop out. So, when I started this, it was with the understanding that I can my slot back, and I can be replaced for the three months. But then, I do take it very seriously. Cause we're away during the summer, and I come in for my spot every week. But I think it's -- giving back is -- is important.

Q: Where do you go in the summer?

A: Connecticut.

Q: [indecipherable] where in the Caribbean do you go in winter?

A: Saint Thomas. But that's really -- I mean, it sounds pretty good, and it's not bad, but my husband's business is in Saint Thomas. He used to live there full time, we used to live there full time for awhile. So when we're there, he has an office, and -- and most of his business is in the Caribbean. And it's a nice place, my grandchildren come to visit.

Q: This once again concludes the interview with Eva Cooper, but you never know.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Conclusion of Interview