

FLORA FRANK  
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION  
RECORDED 2/16/87

SF: You wrote to your parents. How often did they write back to you?

FF: Well, you could still write there. That was 38. When I told them. I told them what wonderful jobs I had. I didn't tell them what work I did. They sent me people to visit me when they came over here. Gretl Weil used to send me all the people who sold things. Some of those German people who came here, they were a lot of doctors and lawyers and they had to start school again and they had no money so they sold canned stuff and stockings and everybody who she knew she sent to me. I bought all that stuff because I couldn't say 'no' and then I gave it all to her. What was I going to do with canned stuff? I worked for people. I worked for some people they didn't give me enough to eat.

SF: So then you had to spend your own money to eat?

FF: Yeah. I left. They had very terrible underwear. I couldn't stand that. I had to wash it. They had such torn, dirty underwear and I got sick over it. I couldn't... I had to sleep in the.... They had one child, they were teachers, and I had to wait till they were in bed and then I could sleep in the hall. The hall had no light, and no window. No nothing. They just put a cot up. They had like a paper closet. You know, one of those brown paper things. That's where then hung my clothes in and I had nothing for my underwear and this I dropped in the bottom of the closet. I said I can't. Then I had to do the wash and then one day she brought a lot of wash and I had to drip this all in the kitchen. I said to myself "This is funny. They don't wear this kind of underwear. Flannel long nightshirts and this." She brought her parents to me too to wash. So I said to her "No. I can't. You're too tricky for me." I said "What do you think I am, a slave?" She says "You ought to be glad you have something to eat." I said "I'm not that hungry that I have to make a slave for you." I slammed the door and walked out. Oh they were so tricky, you have no idea.

Then I got another job as a cook. Then they never paid us in time. They had no money. They lived above their means. They lived on the East Side (Note: Of New York City). Then they claimed that a lot of stuff was stolen. Plates and linen and things. They wanted to get some money somehow. Then they came, the detectives came and they questioned us. There was a chamber maid and me and I couldn't believe it. I said "Why do you ask us such questions? I never took a handkerchief or a piece of paper which didn't belong to me." They said "Well, it was stolen." I said "I don't steal anything. I don't need that kind of stuff. I have more stuff than I need." So then I left too because I was hurt. Then I went to Proskauer.

No. Then I took a job with an old couple. It was opposite the Museum of, what was the museum, the one you look into the skies and the stars? The Planetarium. There was my room, was a small room that went off the kitchen. I couldn't lock it at night so I put the chair on to keep the door closed. All of a sudden I woke up and I said to myself "I see this door moving" and that old fuzzy duddy comes marching in and wants to touch me all over. I hit him on the hand and got up 3 o'clock in the morning and packed my suitcase. When she got up I said "I'm leaving." She says "Why are you leaving. I'm so satisfied and all this." I said "I don't want to hurt you. I can't tell you the truth." I said "Just let me leave." I dragged my suitcases on 81<sup>st</sup> Street to the subway and went up to the Weils. Brought my stuff and she said "What

happened?" I said "That old guy came and he wanted to fool around." Oh, God, I tell you. You think he couldn't hold a cup himself. Starts fooling around we me. So I left there too.

Then I went to Proskauer. I saw it advertised in the paper that they needed a kitchen maid for Lake Placid. So I went there. Gretl says to me "How do you expect to do this?" I said "I don't know, I just got to do something. I got to make more money." In the meantime was Ruth and Bianca (Note: FF's nieces, the daughters of her two sisters, who escaped to England on the kindertransport) in England and I signed up that I send every month \$20. With those teachers you didn't make more than \$40, how could you send \$20. (SF: What do you mean those teachers? Oh, the ones you worked for? FF: Yah, \$40 a month.) I went around that building a few times and then I went into the service entrance. That bothered me though. Then I went up and they called Mrs. Proskauer. She says "Can I help you?" I said "Yes, I saw your advertisement in the paper and I'd like the job." So she looked at me and said "You want to be a kitchen maid? Do you realize what that consists of?" I said "No." She says "You have to wash, you have to do all the dishes." There were no dishwashers. "You have to wash all the towels and you have to do the chauffeur's and the gardener's bungalow and then we have an extra bungalow where my daughter and her family live for the summer. They come from Boston and you have to do the dining room and the bedroom there too. You don't have to do anything for the children." So I said "I'm willing to do it." She said "You're very thin and you're very young. Do you think you can do it?" I said "I can do it. I have no other choice." She says "Well, we try you out here. We have to come for a month here to the house. 57<sup>th</sup> Street. You have to see how to wait on the table. You have to help the chambermaid, you have to..." So I did everything good. I washed the dishes and I washed...she soaked it with Clorox and my fingers they were all red and hurting but I did it. I think I got \$75 a month. You got tips and everything and I didn't take the tips. I left them laying there till they said "You better take the tips. In (this) country they tip you so I run and got the tips. (SF: Who tipped you?) They had a lot of visitors. So I made about \$1000 in the summer. So that's what happened.

SF: You stopped working for them after the summer?

FF: No. I got...then they had a chambermaid who was a terrible Nazi. An Irish woman. She was such a Nazi. Oh, she was terrible. I fought with her. She used to say "What do you have to work for those rich Jews. You're Jewish yourself." I said "What is your husband? The chauffeur for Vanderbilt, and they are good Catholics and so are you." I said "Answer me. You answer me and I answer you." She hated the Proskauers. She just was terrible. She hated the Jews. She didn't hate me she said, because I didn't have anything either, but the rich ones she hated. Mrs. Proskauer heard that. There was a small bathroom near the kitchen where we always fought. She called me in once and she said to me "This can't keep on anymore. She hurts you so." I said "Yah, I answer her back." So she said there is no necessity that you have to run away from and get the same thing here." She said "She's going to go." She went in and she says "Mary. Here is your ticket. Leave tomorrow. I've had enough of you." She wanted to say goodbye to me so I said "You must be crazy. You must be crazy. You want to say goodbye to me. The hell, I don't care where you go. For my part you go to hell but don't you put your hand out for me." So I became the chambermaid. (SF: Which was easier?) Oh yeah, was much easier. Then you got a lot of tips.

SF: You were essentially responsible for making up all the beds?

FF: Yah. Then I ate all that Ex-lax. Didn't I ever tell you. I wanted chocolate. I needed

chocolate so bad. They didn't have any chocolate. In every night table there was Ex-lax. It looked like chocolate. Tasted like chocolate. So everywhere I broke a piece off. In every night table. I had about six rooms and Jeanne had about six rooms. I said to her "Jeanne could you get me a little chocolate. She said "There's no chocolate." I said "Ex-lax." She said "That's not chocolate." I said "Well I like it. I need some chocolate." I said that I'm a chocoholic. So she got me chocolate and I got me chocolate and I just couldn't leave the bathroom. I was supposed to serve on the table at night and I got such cramps and I just couldn't work. Oh, it was terrible.

I went there three times to Lake Placid. Every time I went there I cried. I was so homesick. The chauffeur went after me. He threw me once over...not the chauffeur. No, he was nice. They had a Canadian gardener and he threw me once over his bed. He wanted to fall over me and I went back like this and he had glasses. He couldn't see without glasses and the glasses went in the corner. He said "Get me my glasses!" I said "For my part you can lay there day and night. I wouldn't get you your glasses." Then I went to Mrs. Proskauer and told her what happened.

SF: How do you spell Proskauer? FF: P-r-o-s-k-a-u-e-r.

SF: When you were up at Lake Placid there was an accident when you hit your head on the rock?

FF: You mean on the swimming. Oh God, I nearly drowned. That's why I can't swim anymore. I have pictures of it. I took the daughter's bathing suit because I didn't have a nice one. I had a European one. I couldn't afford to buy one here. I said "Ooh Francis had such a beautiful bathing suit" so the chauffeur was a very nice man. He had two married daughters. He says to me "Toots, go ahead. Put the bathing suit on. I take pictures." So I went to put the bathing suit on and he says "Go up on that rock. It's nicer when up there." I went up on that rock and those rocks were kind of loose, for some reason or other. You know, the water hit against them all the time. I held like this and the rock loosened and the rock and me went into the water. They thought that I was joking. They told me I came up the third time and my eyes were all like this. Then the chauffeur who was dressed in his uniform, he went in with a big stick and got me out and threw me on the floor and I threw up water for hours and I was all night.

Then Jeanne slept with me because I threw up all night and I was like delirious. I was just worried about the bathing suit. If I would drowned and have Francis's bathing suit on then they think I stole the bathing suit. So I wouldn't go across. See we were on an island Camp Highwall was on an island. Whenever we had a day off I wouldn't go because I wouldn't go on the boat. I couldn't smell water. I had to do above where the water was, where the boathouse was, there was this man's room on top. You know, where the men came together and they had this, what you had (Note: Pool table) and all this and that was my place to clean, to keep in order. Not vacuum or anything, just to keep in order. It was above the water. It was a beautiful room with leather chairs and this. I couldn't go so I made out with Jeanne who was a chambermaid. I said "Jeanne do me a favor." No, Jeanne was the waitress. I was the chambermaid. I said "I do anything for you, but go down and do the boatroom. I can't go. I can't smell it." She says "I understand. I do it" and she did it.

SF: Did you ever hear from her afterwards?

FF: Oh yeah. She came very often with her husband and her children. She had a half a dozen

children. On the end it got too much for me and then she gambled(?). He name was Jeanne Gristman. She lived in New Jersey. So, oh God, I tell you that was terrible. Oh was it terrible.

SF: Then what did you do after the Proskauers?

FF: I got married. Daddy called me every day. When he said four o'clock, then he called me four o'clock. Mrs. Proskauer knew something happened so she called me in once and she said "Flora I hope you're not going to leave us. I hope you're not going to leave us." I said "What do you mean?" She said "I understand you get calls every day and it looks like serious." I said "Mrs. Proskauer, you have two daughters. Don't you want them to be married? I'm sure my mother would want me the same thing to do." So she says "Well if you leave, we wish you the best. We hate to see you go." Then when I told her she says "Don't go to your relatives. Take the room upstairs. Stay in the room." They had a triple apartment. She says "Stay here until you get married. You go to your relatives, you never have peace for a minute. Stay here. The room is yours." But I promised the Weils to go so I went.

SF: What did you do at the Weils?

FF: They went to Florida. A week before I got married. Two weeks before I got married. They thought that...then tante was there, Gretl's mother was there you know. She was sick. She had cancer in the stomach. I came there and they left for Florida. In the morning the doorbell rang and I go on and the painter stands there. I said "What do you think you're doing?" He says "I'm ordered to start painting today." I said "You're not painting here. I said I am here with my aunt and that's a handful."

Oh, the Mrs. Weil extra gave me a tip." I said "I don't care what she gave you, you're not going to paint while I'm here." They thought they go to Florida and I do their house painting. When they come back they come in a clean house. (SF: They were wrong.) FF: You bet they were wrong. You have no idea what I went through. You have no idea. Yah, and then we got married.

SF: Once while we were on vacation at Lake Placid you saw Mrs. Proskauer again.

FF: Yeah but she didn't...she was blind then. Yah, she didn't know anybody anymore. I think they had to take her to a home.

SF: I thought she invited you to the island. FF: No. She didn't. I said "Ooo, this is Mrs. Proskauer" but they told me later on, somebody who knew them, that she was blind. SF: What was the name of the island. FF: Camp Highwall. Well the camp was the name Camp Highwall but the island had no specific name. Kate Smith was there too on that island.

SF: So they owned a house there, not the whole island. FF: No, they owned a house and a boathouse, and he had his horses in the city.

SF: He was a judge?

FF: Yeah. He was a crooked judge. That's what they said. I don't know how he made it (the money). She had it. Naumberg, you know Naumberg. Naumberg was her maiden name. They have those concerts in Central Park, the Naumberg Concerts. She came from... he wanted to become a rabbi. He came from Mobile, Alabama and he wanted to become a rabbi. They weren't happily married.

SF: How long did you write before the letters got answered.

FF: I could write because I got a, the last letter I got, when you were born (1942) because my father said to me once "If we can't write to you anymore direct, we write through the Red Cross." See he knew everything. He just didn't want to know. So one day I was nursing you

and Mr. Levy was our mailman. He called up "Mrs. Frank, you got a European letter." I went down and he handed me this Red Cross letter and I fainted. Hit my neck against the steps. Do you remember on Parkside Avenue (Note: apartment was at 260 Parkside Avenue, Brooklyn, NY) upstairs where we lived. (SF: on the third floor?) FF: Second floor. I hit my neck like this and I had no more blood..no more milk. You screamed day and night and I couldn't figure out what happened. When I went to Dr. Wesley he says "You have no more milk. What happened?" I told him and he says "That's what happened. You were scared. The child is hungry."

SF: So you wrote to each other for close to four years.

FF: Yah.

SF: From '38 to '42. It was only at the very end that the letters were censored?

FF: They were censored for a long time. Even the letters they wrote. They were sometimes... I have the letters. I have a lot of letters. Some of them were crossed out and some of them were over taped. Taped over. But that letter I got from the Red Cross. That was '42 when you were born. Well my mother couldn't get over it when I told her I'm gonna marry. You know my mother and daddy's mother came from the same town. Years ago when I was in Munich and my mother came to visit us, so I said "Momma, don't you have anybody from home who you could visit?" She said "Well there is an elderly couple and they very old fashioned," meaning the Hamburgers. Remember the Hamburgers? Then there is another people she says, they live near Augsburg." I said "You're here in Munich. Why can't you visit them?" She said "They have a lot of children. They come from the other side of the tracks." I said "What's their name?" so she says "Frank." I said "Are they Jewish?" because we had Frank home who were not Jewish. She said "Yah, they're Jewish. In fact the mother was a Frank when she was single and she married a Frank." So she...

SF: Did your family use code words or secrets? FF: No. (SF: Just wrote regular and they were censored.) FF: Yah.

SF: Did you ever write to your sisters?

FF: Sure I wrote to my sisters. Well my parents lived with Ruth's parents on the end. They took them. See I don't even know those things. They took my parents from home to a prison, and Herta's parents too. She Paula knows more. Paula came later to England, but you can't ask her(SF: Paula Seligman?. Note: Paula Seligman was Herta's sister.) She lived in Munich. she lived above my sister. My sister got them an apartment. But you can't ask her anything. She can't talk about it.

SF: Did my father ever write home?

FF: Sure he wrote home. We all wrote home. I got letters from his family. Sure we always wrote. Every week we wrote. His parents they were in a concentration camp, Bialek (Note: Belzec? Bergen-Belgsen?) something near this Poland and there some distant, distant, distant relative of theirs, their name was Wolf and they lived in Switzerland. We used to send money to Switzerland. I said once, I said "Daddy, believe me I would like to go out and make money so you could send to your parents but they never gonna get it. This is gonna stay in Switzerland with that Wolf as sure as I sit here." That's what happened. They never got it. They made money those. There were plenty of people who made money on those.

SF: They were doing what they had to, to survive.

FF: Well, in Switzerland. You couldn't be in Switzerland unless you had money there ahead of time. That Wolf, I knew him from Stuttgart. I never liked him.

SF: Do youere any of the sons sent to America? FF: Yah. Simon who was in Detroit, Irving

who you knew, Aunt Maler, and Aunt Elsie. Those were the five living children of Aunt Regina.

SDF: Which one was your mother of the 12?

FF: She was the youngest. Oh, Tante Lorsian (sp?) that was too. Tante Lorien (sp?) She was one of the sisters too.

SF: Where do Ruth and Marian come from?

FF: From Uncle, I think his name was Uncle Sy. I don't know, Seymour or whatever it would be. They (are) related like Aunt Salerave the dates and the numbers. I got some answer back. Yah. I got some answer back. They told me when my mother died. May 18. And they told me when my father died. Somehow or another they found that out.

SF: They didn't have any records of your sisters?

FF: No. No.

SF: Is it possible they survived.

FF: No. No.

SF: You never checked any further?

FF: I did. With certain Jewish organizations. I think its enough now.

SF: Ruth came on Thanksgiving. How did you keep track of Ruth and Bianca and how did they get out of Germany?

FF: They sent me...when the kids came to England. Well Bianca was first in England. Then she asked for Ruth. When they came to England they gave some address of relatives in America.

SF: Wasn't Ruth on the last children's boat to leave?

FF: I don't know. Could be. Could not be. I've forgotten. (Note: was not.)

SF: That was in what year? FF: I couldn't tell you that either. Then, let me see, Ruth came here what year? (SF: Ruth came here when I was two so it was '44). FF: '44, and she was 12 years old. She was 6 when she came to England so she was six years in England. SF: 1938.

FF: I think '39 they left. That's what I think. Then they had to give some addresses from whoever is in America and my sisters gave my address and they sent me a letter from Blumsberry (sp?) House which I signed, that I would support the children. That's what I had to do. Support the children.

SF: You did what? Send \$10 each?

FF: \$10 each.

SF: How was it determined after six years for them to come here?

FF: They asked for so many things. The people she stood with. The one Ruth stood with in London, they wanted parfum and nylons and all..I used to stand on line. I didn't get nylons for myself but I got nylons for them. Then the color wasn't right. Then they wanted parfum. They wanted all this kind of business. Bianca was with very, very nice people. They had no children. They must have been wonderful people. Then Ruth..they were bombed out in London. Then they sent them to the country and then Ruth was with this woman. No first she was with the young woman whose husband was in the army and she was sleeping with a lot of soldiers. Then Ruth had to go in other peoples gardens and pull down the diapers to steal diapers and she couldn't do it so the woman threw her out. Then she was taken to another woman, an elderly woman who was a spiritualist who told her that she has to become a spiritualist and she has to change her religion. She wouldn't do it so she locked her in a chicken coop, and Ruth nearly crawled up the wall. For days she locked her in a chicken coop so, when

she let her out, she run away. Then the mayor took her and he went through town with her. He say's "I have a child here. Can anybody use a child?. Can you have a child?" So this man was outside, Mr. Youth, and he fixed his wood shed and he says "Oh, give her to me. I have 11 so I might as well as 12" and he took her in. They were very good to her, but she used to have to go at night and get beer in the pubs and then she had frostbitten feet and frostbitten hands. But they were very good otherwise to her.

SF: Are those the people from Edinburgh?

FF: No they are from Windsor. I used to send them things. God, I tell you how I used to cry. I went to the post office, I packed the package and we didn't have much ourselves. Then I came to the post office and then the package was an inch too big on this side and a half an inch too small on this side and they had to send you home and you had to repack the whole thing. You had to send so many things along, paperwork and ooooooo.

SF: Who decided to bring Ruth and Bianca over here?

FF: Well, we wanted them for the longest time but they didn't let them go. It was too dangerous. Then they wrote that they can go on a freighter. Before we could answer that they can go on the freighter they sent us a telegram, the Council of Jewish Women, that the kids are, that Ruth is coming and she came on Thanksgiving.

SF: How about Bianca?

FF: She came later. I don't know really know for sure.

SF: How come Ruth came to you and Bianca went to the relatives in New Jersey?

FF: Well, Ruth had me only as relatives and Bianca had the ones in Jersey. Beatrice was the same age as she was. Then Ida helped along right away.

SF: What was the relation with the people in Jersey to Bianca?

FF: It was her uncle, and she had an uncle in New York which she didn't get along with. An uncle and aunt she fought with them in New York. (SF: On her father's side?) FF: Yah, yah. So she went to Newark, to Jersey, to them.

SF: What was your reaction when Ruth came?

FF: I don't know anymore, Steven. I was scared to death to get a big girl like this.

SF: What was my reaction?

FF: I wouldn't know either. She just..er...she didn't know a banana, she didn't know an egg, she didn't know an apple. (SF: She must have know what an egg was. She was locked up in a chicken coop.) They never got eggs to eat. They didn't give them to her to eat. They sold everything. They put everything into money, those people. It isn't that those people that they didn't give her to eat. They didn't have enough themselves. They all got it on the black market and if you had no connection you got nothing. So it was bad.

SF: Were we living on Parkside Avenue at the time?

FF: We moved downstairs. Before she came. (SF: Why did we move downstairs?) FF: We needed another room. Where are you going to put a 12-year old? (SF: So you moved because you knew she was coming?) FF: Well we wanted to move anyhow to give you a room. (SF: Then Ruth and I shared the room, in the front?) Yeah. Yeah.

SF: How did Ruth's coming affect the family?

FF: Everybody was happy. We were happy. What I had the trouble with her. You know she was all crippled up. You remember that. Then I had to have braces made for her. (Braces to) straighten her out. She was like this. She was undernourished from not getting the food. Her teeth were bad, and she was like this. Sometimes when you spoke to her she had to look up like

this. See her bones were all different. They were all so soft from getting the wrong food. (SF: But she was happy to be in America?) Yeah, she was happy. I'm sure she missed England too, but who worried about that.

SF: The War was on and there were no bombings here.

FF: Yah. Oh she used to scream bloody murder when an ambulance went through to Kings County (Note: name of main local hospital). God, what I went through with her. I tell you. It was terrible.

SF: What clothing did Ruth have?

FF: Not much. Daddy gave me money and I went to Macy's and I bought her a dress. I didn't ask her which one she liked, I just bought what I liked. Come to think of it years later, how wrong could be...

SF: Then she started going to school?

FF: They put her right away in the right class. (SF: 12 years old, she would have gone to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Did she go to PS 92 then?) Sure. (SF: Then she went to Erasmus.) That's right.

SF: Did she do a lot of babysitting?

FF: Yeah. She did babysitting.

SF: Did she go out a lot?

FF: Yeah. She had nice boyfriends. The girls went out and got boyfriends. I don't know. You ask me things that are 30 years ago. That's a little old. 25 she's married. You know, you better send something on her anniversary.

SDF: These are what Jewish grandmothers say and you need to keep it there so her great, great grandchildren can see what she was like.

## SIDE TWO

SF: Your mother had twelve siblings, including Saler and some others. What were their names.

FF: Aunt Regina, Aunt Saler, Aunt Maler, Aunt Elsie, Aunt Sophie, Uncle Emmanuel, Uncle Sy, a sister and a brother died when they were young. I don't know. I really don't know. I never met them. SF: How many of those do we know other than Saler?

FF: Maler, Elsie.

SF: Did they come to America? FF: Yeah. They came to America. Er, Irving...That's right.

SF: Did anyone else come to America?

FF: Not from those sisters. They died before. Normal death.

SF: W was related. (SF: So they're from one of the 12?) Yah. The uncles were sent to America. They were all sent to America when they were 13. (SF: These were your mother's brothers?) My mother's brothers. After they were 13 years old, after their bar mitzvah they all went to America. That was Uncle Emanuel, and Ruth and Marian's father, and another uncle, I forgot his name. There were three brothers. Emanuel had two sons, one who died and one...two died but one died when he was young and the other died as long as I am in America. Then Marian's father, they had the two girls, and then there was Aunt Gussie and her husband. I forgot her husband's name. I forgot. I never...

SF: And they didn't have any children?

FF: Well, I just told you the children. Marian's father and Uncle Emanuel had two sons. They died. I just told you that. (SF: Did they have any children?) I don't think so. One was young when he died and the other one I don't think he was ever married. I really don't know to much about that.



SF: Irving and Saler and all those were from Tante Regina? FF: Yah.

SF: She was the only one who sent all her children here?

FF: No. She was dead already when they went here. Well Simon, who went to Detroit as an engineer, he studied in the Mercedes Benz, in Gargenau (sp?) in Germany he studied. He came here as a young man and then he had Irving come but they never got along, so Irving went to Portland, Oregon and he didn't get along there either so then he just went around from city to city and (to Scott—take your finger out) and then finally came to New York and that's where he got a job with relatives, Baer, Sterns and Company.

SF: Did Simon bring the others in?

FF: Yah. They came in through Hitler's times, they came in.

SF: Was Saler married to Uncle Hugo at the time?

FF: Oh yeah. Trudy was there already. She was married many, many years.

SF: Were all your relatives in Germany orthodox? You said your parents were.

FF: None of them. None of them.

SF: We were the most.

SF: Did my father ever talk about the inflation in Germany?

FF: No. He was young yet.

SF: My father studied Hebrew under the father of the woman in Israel?

FF: He went to Hebrew school like I went to Hebrew school.

SF: Did he ever study Talmud or things like that?

FF: (laughing) No, no. Daddy was far removed from Talmud.

SF: Did he ever talk about Israel?

FF: Well at the time, I tell you, Steven, at the time we had enough to talk about ourselves and getting along and making a living and working hard. Israel was very far away. It was that time, when did Israel become it's own state? (SF: '48). '48. Daddy was still alive then. We never talked too much about Israel. (SF: Not even about the idea?) Oh yeah. We...Daddy used to say "If I would have gone to Israel then I probably would have a farm and God knows what" so I used to say "You would have to go alone because I wouldn't want to be a farmer's wife. I had enough farming home." We never really had the things to go. I mean to visit, yes, but it was too far away. You know you still had to work with your hands and get where you were. Don't forget when daddy died (Note: 1953) you were 11, Ruth was 21, a few months later Ruth got sick, you had to go to public school, to high school, to college. So those kinds of ideas to go somewhere were too far removed.

SF: Did he philosophically agree with Israel?

FF: Oh yah, yah. We used to read about it and he said many times "What those people do, I wish we could do more for them."

SF: Did he have any relatives or friends there?

FF: Yah, he had cousins there and we wrote once to..but the letter came back and nobody could find them. I don't remember their name. That was all.

SF: How about our relatives in Israel? Do we have any?

FF: No.

SF: Didn't you buy some bonds?

FF: Not bonds. We gave to the Kerem Kayemet. That was this organization where you planted the trees. My father gave a lot to that. We helped in every way we could with money.

SF: Did you father help with Israel too? What other things did he do?

FF: Well that was the only thing at that time to do. Planting trees.

SF: There were groups sending young pioneers to Israel.

FF: Yeah, we did help. He gave me money once. There was one near Munich in Wolfratshausen. They trained people to go to Israel. You know, young people they trained them there. They had like farming things and they need money and so, whenever I came home, he says to me "Give them some money." So he used to give me some money and then I bought meat for them or whatever, when I went to visit. There was another one near Bamberg and I went there too and visit and brought them something.

SF: So you knew some of the people who were going?

FF: Oh yeah. They wanted me the worst way to go with them. Oh they wanted me. How they wanted me to go to Israel but I just didn't want to go.

SF: Were these people you grew up with?

FF: No. I had this boyfriend who went to Bamberg to this Hecha...they called it Hechalutz and so they invited me. I even have pictures of...I wonder where they are...and I went there and visited and the one who owned the house, where they had this Hechalutz in, used to go to school with my father. He had a small hotel while the others we all, ten of them, in one room. You know how those camps are, those things are. I was always there. So my papa always said "You don't go. You just stay home with us." I used to say "Papa, you don't have to warn me. I wouldn't go." I just didn't like that life.

SF: Who gave you the picture of the old man?

FF: He painted it himself. He was a professor, Zeigler, in Nürnberg. He gave it to me. He liked me. (SF: When you were leaving?) Before. Before I left. He said to me, before I graduated, he said to me "I want you to have something of mine." When he gave it to me I couldn't believe it because he painted months and months and whenever we came in the room he laid over like this, nobody should see it. Then he gave it to me in a roll, scroll, and he said to me "I don't want you to open it now" he says. "When you go home, you open it." He wrote a note to it too. (SF: What did the note say?) That he liked me a lot and that I was very attentive, and very accurate in my answers. He just liked me. He was a wonderful man.

SF: What was he a teacher of?

FF: English. Not English. Literature or something. To speak right. To you know, poems and things like that. (SF: What we call English?) FF: Yah. I wanted to say English but it wasn't English.

SF: Who is it a picture of, did he say?

FF: No. He just said a Jew prayer. I tell you something. For years I didn't want it because it looked to me like a Polish Jew, a Russian Jew. It didn't look like a German Jew and I couldn't say it. When I opened it up once, oh, my father loved it. It's a Mizrach. It should be hung east. But I wouldn't even know where east is here (Note: she did have it hanging on the eastern wall of her apartment.) I never know which side is east. Is east. East is where Israel is. That's what we were taught. If it's wrong then I was taught wrong.

SF: If you are here then you pray toward Israel. If you are in Israel you pray toward Jerusalem, and if you are in Jerusalem you pray toward where the Sanctuary was.

FF: Yah. Did you read this week in the paper (about) Goldie Hawn? Wasn't that interesting? She's a lovely girl.

SF: Did my father ever talk about his parents?

FF: He loved his mother dearly. His father, he didn't have too much love for his father because he was the one who supported the family from almost childhood on. Everybody who came from Bittenwiesen used to say to me "You got the best. He worked and worked and worked to

support the family and never got anything.” He always wanted a motorcycle and whenever he had the money ready for a motorcycle, his father started building more towards the house. They had the most beautiful house in town and every time he had \$150, mark ready for a motorcycle his father invested it in the house. Then he had this other brother who was in Munich which I knew. He was very good looking. He went to school, he went to like real schul, business school, and he paid for everything. Daddy paid for everything. He married his sister out and he gave along 10,000 marks. He made it all, as a cattle dealer more than a butcher. He used to ride on his bicycle from morning till night and he just wanted a motorcycle. But he loved his mother. When I was pregnant with you he said “I don’t want you to lay on the floor and do the floor” so I said “Who should do it?” He said “I do it. I did it for my mother.” I said “You’re not doing it for me.” See he was spoiled. He was kind of like you, like sloppy because he worked all day so when he came home at night his mother did everything for him. The others sat around, didn’t do a darn thing. They were spoiled rotten. I can’t understand that. That one person had to work for everybody.

SF: How did he feel about his brothers and sisters?

FF: Well he liked them. He liked them a lot. But they were not as ambitious as he was. One became a baker, in the Hitler time, and one became a businessman, Ludwig I think. Karl and Ernst, I don’t know what the other one became. They had to do whatever there was to do. They couldn’t do anything else anymore. They told them you do this and you do that, and if you didn’t do it.... You don’t know how lucky you are Scott, that you can pick what you want to pick.

SF: You don’t know what the brothers did for a living?

FF: One became a baker. I don’t know what the other (SF: Which one?) I think it was Ludwig, no Karl, Karl. I’m not quite sure Steven. I don’t know for sure.

SF: Did they go away from home?

FF: No, they never went away from home. In fact, when they were supposed to go to concentration camp, the mother and father went with them. They weren’t even told to go then, but they went. But Ludwig, the younger, youngest, he was married and he had a wife and a beautiful boy, Paul.

SF: What was his wife’s name?

FF: Irene.

SF: They all went to the camps?

FF: Yah. He was a beautiful boy. They used to send his pictures here.

SF: Were all the brothers bar mitzvahed?

FF: Oh yah.

SF: Did my father ever talk about his bar mitzvah?

FF: Well I tell you something. They weren’t much made out of bar mitzvahs in Germany. I remember this boy in our town, Josef, who used to be my boyfriend. He had bar mitzvah so I was very generous. I gave him a tie. I still remember, I brought the tie...my mother wrapped it. I said “You don’t have to wrap it up.” She says “Yes, you do.” So she wrapped it up and I went down and I said “That’s your bar mitzvah present.” It was a silk tie. It was one thing. It didn’t even have much shape. But there wasn’t much made for bar mitzvah. You went to the temple and aufgarufen (called up) and you’re a man and maybe you got a piece of chicken extra. There wasn’t a big spiel made.

SF: Did my father ever say what his haftorah portion was?

FF: If he did, I forgot. Tell you the truth. See, I tell you something Steven, the time, when the

time came that you sit down and talk things over and keep on talking about the things, that was when we came to here, to Rockville (MD). Otherwise there was always a struggle or other. You know that yourself. I got up everyday, went to work, came home at 6 o'clock and you were too tired and daddy wasn't there anymore. When daddy was alive, he left the house 3 in the morning. He came home 3 in the afternoon and then he slept. Then we ate and then he went back to bed.

SF: You said other people came from Bittenwiesen.

FF: Yah, yah. I had them once. I surprised him once and had them invited for Thanksgiving.

SF: Who were they? FF: The Klopfers. They died too. Their son is a professor at Pittsburgh University. I kept in touch till Mr. Klopfer died. Hildie was a good friend of daddy's. Oh she really loved him. She told me that she really loved him and that he was so good and so hard working and so decent. I invited them and her mother. Then Hildie worked in Lord and Taylor and I went there very often and then he came in and then we went to eat out. He was a very fine man. Then Hilda died. She went up the steps to go to work and she couldn't catch her breath. When she got to Lord and Taylor she looked so bad they took her to the doctor who said "Take her to the hospital." She never came home. Then he home alone. He was robbed twice. He went to his son, to Pittsburgh, who is married to a Chinese or Japanese girl, very fine girl, they have a lot, I think four or five children. That killed...suffered terrible through that. Then two years ago I sent him always a package to the nursing home in Pittsburgh and I didn't hear from him. He didn't say 'thank you' and I didn't hear from him. Then somebody who lives in Paula's (Note: Seligman) house in Flushing, in that complex, told me that he died. But the son didn't let me know. When Hilda died he let me know. He came here. He called me up here but when his father died he didn't. He probably didn't know anything... His father (probably said) call up Flora but when he died there was no one there. How do you know some of those old friends?

SF: You said your father served in World War I. Did my father's father and family also serve?

FF: Yah. He served also. He served, I think, in France. Your father's father. That's where that little ring came from. Marcie has that ring. Where I had the diamond put in. That's from his father. He brought that home from the War. I think from France.

SF: And then his mother gave it to him when he left?

FF: Yeah. Gave it to daddy and she said he should give it to his wife to be. That's the ring I got. (SF: That was your engagement ring?) Didn't get an engagement ring. Got a watch. He couldn't afford a ring.

SF: Your sister lived in Munich. Did you go to visit her?

FF: I was in Munich all the time. (SF: I thought you were in Nürnberg?) In school, but I was in München for years.

SF: When were you in Nürnberg and when were you in München?

FF: Hm, hm, hm. I don't the years I was in Nürnberg. (SF: Well how old were you?)

Twelve. From 12 to 16 or 17, 18. From 12 to 16. I hated Nürnberg. I hated that city. They were such showy people. They walked around with diamonds and with fur coats. I hated that city, and it was such a dirty city because it...see, they're making a lot of toys there. Nürnberg is known for it. There was a saying "Nürnberger tan gehts durch ganzer land," what they make goes through the whole country. Also the lebküchen, that's a specialty from Nürnberg. Then I went to München and München was entirely different. München was sporty. You didn't go around with all this glitter and all that thing. That was just for me. Not that showoff business.

Oh München was a beautiful city. (SF: How long were you in München?) Five and a half years.

SF: Did you live with your sister there?

FF: No, I worked in München. (SF: From when you were 16?) I think I was 18. I lived with where I worked. With the Bambergers.

SF: You liked München?

FF: Oh I loved Munich. I loved Munich. I loved Munich like I love New York.

SF: What did you do there?

FF: Worked in a butcher store. In a kosher butcher store. Bookkeeping....

SF: What did you do for relaxation.

FF: Skiing and sport events and dancing and hiking and rowing with boats and did all those things which young people do. It was great, München. Oh München was beautiful. I had so many boyfriends. They used to call up and I used to make an appointment with one and then another one called up and then I fell bad that I made it up with them and then I broke it and had an excuse and then we went out to those boats were battling and doing things and there they were and got me. They said "What are you doing here?" Then they didn't speak to me for weeks. You know when you're young you do those kind of things. But Munich was beautiful.

SF: Then you went home afterwards to try to get your papers?

FF: Yah. That was the biggest mistake I ever made. (SF: Why?) I wanted to be together with my parents. Because the Nazis were so bad. They hurt. They hurt and they hit and they broke the windows and they, they just did everything to hurt you.

SF: It wouldn't have been better if you stayed in Munich.

FF: Sure. It would have been better. Munich didn't bother you. People didn't bother you. For me it would have been better but I wanted to be with my parents.

SF: Are there any stories of anti-Semitism before the Nazis?

FF: No. Not really. There weren't. They used to call you some names. They never called me names. They were afraid of me but they used to call Ida names. Don't ever let Ida read those tapes. Don't ever, whatever you do, because she would feel very bad. Because she didn't have it as easy as I had. Don't ever let her read the tapes, or hear the tapes.

SF: So they called Ida names, anti-Semitic names.

FF: Yah, oh yah. All kinds of names. She came to me crying so I said "Ok, let's go." Then we went. When we passed she says, she was hiding behind me, I said "That's your whole trouble. You're hiding behind me. Stand in front." I took some sticks along. As soon as they opened their mouth I threw the sticks. I had a very heavy book, book thing you know where you had your books on (SF: Knapsack.) It wasn't a knapsack it was a real book thing. A leather thing. I took my thing off, they came near me and I hit them with my book thing over the head. That guy was laying on the floor. They were all running. They thought he died. I said "I wish he would." When he opened his eyes I said "You call me again Judische stinker." He says "I didn't call you, I called Ida." I said "Doesn't make a difference. You called us, called us a bad name." They never did. They were like this. But nobody else ever did except those. They were really low class people. Poor. Nasty. Lazy. Drinkers.

SF: Germany has a history of anti-Semitism.

FF: We really...well I tell you...no, I shouldn't say. There was the mayor. The mayor told me, when I went there for my..., he was terrible. That came with the Hitler thing. Before, he wasn't. Maybe he had it in him but I never felt. When I went there to get my birth certificate, he says "I don't give Jews birth certificates. I give them only death certificates." So (his wife)

she said to him, whatever his name was, she said "Please give Flora her birth certificate." He said "You open your mouth once more, you're going to get a death certificate together with her." So I had to go out and I went home and I couldn't get it. Then I had to go Stuttgart to go where the consulate is. To scare him. To take a lawyer to get my birth certificate. I tell you something, when I think what hard times that was. It's just heartbreaking.

SF: You talked last time when the Nazis came and threw the soup ladle through the window. How many times did they come?

FF: While I was home they came about three times. I saw them coming up the hill and I stood against the door and I ?? Like this. My mother said "Please come away" and I said "No." So they opened up and they pushed me in. They said "Who was that" and I said "Me." I said "You got no right in our house." He said "You open your mouth once more." I said "I do because you got no right in our house. That's our house." He just pushed me away .... My mother was shivering. She felt terrible. I just couldn't believe. I could not believe that they could do those things. I think if I would have stood home longer they would have killed me. I really think so. I would have killed them. I really would have. There wouldn't have been anything too much for me to do. When they broke our window I said to my mother "I keep a piece of glass. They come in there I cut their throat." My mother looked at me. She says "What are you saying?" I said "Yah, I wouldn't take a knife but that I (would) use." I think I would have done it. You know, they get you so psyched up. For no reason at all they come into your house, open the drawers, turn the drawers around, go through. They didn't even know what they went through and you stand there and watch it. I can't believe it. To this day I can't believe it.

SF: They came three times? FF: When I was there they came three times. As long as I was home. Once they killed the dogs. Yeah, killed the dogs. (SF: Did the dogs do anything?) FF: They just looked. Sure they were hollering. They killed them right there. (SF: How many dogs? Saint Bernards?) Yah. Two big ones. My little one died before. That was terrible.

SF: Did they take anything while you were there? Confiscate anything?

FF: I don't think so. I don't think so. No. I didn't see anything.

SF: So why did they come? Just to mess up the house?

FF: Yah. They wanted to make it miserable for you. Just miserable. They said to my mother "You got nice order in your drawers. I never seen such nice order in drawers." My mother said "Thank you."

SF: So they wanted to scare them, make them leave?

FF: That's what do. They want you to leave. But where were you going to go. You didn't know where to go. "That one" he said once. "That one" meaning me. I said "What's the matter with that one? That one doesn't take your baloney" I said. My mother used to say "Kind (child) you have to go. You bring yourself and us in unglücklich (unhappiness). In schlimmazel. (Bad luck). I just...I couldn't believe it. It was not, none of the ones I knew. They came from a different town. I didn't even know who they were. They just looked like hoodlums.

SF: Uncle Leo was stopped from selling kosher meat. Did they stop your father from dealing in cattle?

FF: Oh yeah. Oh sure. Naturally. Sure they stopped him. I don't even know, I was wondering many times. My parents must have lived just from the money they had in the bank. Because my father couldn't do any more business. I don't know. See, you couldn't say "Papa do you have enough money to live on or do you have a lot or do you have a little." You didn't

ask such questions. I just said once to my father. He told me that once that he has a life insurance or whatever that is for me, and when I am 20-something I'm gonna get the money paid out. But I don't know. When the lawyer wrote back they said they have no papers from my parents except that they don't owe any taxes. So if they have no papers, how do they know that they didn't owe any taxes? Yeah, it was terrible.

Bianca went through a lot. She was there much longer. She went through a lot. She with my parents. She surely did. Oh, what they did to that kid you wouldn't believe. She couldn't go to school anymore in our town. Then my sister took her to the smaller town and it was, you had to go a while, and then she didn't come home. She didn't come home, so my sister was worried so she went to look for her. There was a big thing, Easter where they rolled the Easter eggs, a hill, a big hill and then she heard somebody crying and she went down. There was Bianca laying there all beaten up, her eyes swollen, her face swollen. She really went through a lot. That's really true. She had a terrible, terrible youth. Then my sister sent her to Munich. Then she acted up.

SF: She went to live with your other sister? Yah. She says if you hit me or if you holler at me I going to call Hitler. I'm gonna tell Hitler. She had Kissinger as a teacher. (SF: The father?) No, the uncle. The father was in Nürnberg. The uncles were in Munich. They were such big men, with such big stomachs.

SF: What route did you take to get out of Germany?

FF: Took a train to Paris, because I had a boyfriend there. I promised my father in his hand that I will not stay in Paris. He says "You leave, you have to leave Europe because if its here, it might be tomorrow..." My father was very smart. So I said "Papa, if I tell you." He says "I want you to take my hand and promise me in my hand that you will go to America. That you will not stay in France." He says "Why do you want to go to France?" I said "I want to see my friend once more." They had the papers for me. His uncle was a veterinarian in Paris and they had the papers for me and they were all excited that it took them so...hard job to get the papers and I told them I can't take it. They were religious. (From there) I went to Le Havre . I had so many flowers on the boat. All the friends. Boyfriends sent me flowers. Lebring (?), he sent me flowers from Paris and I had some sent from Germany. Yeah, that was nice. (SF: What was the name of the boat?). Britannia. Britannic. Cunard Lines, because I didn't want to go with a German line. (SF: When did it sail?) I think April to May of '38. I think I came here in May. (SF: How long did it take to get across?) About a week and a half I think. Maybe two weeks. Stopped in Ireland. Took in a lot of those Irish. They all looked like underprivileged. They looked like such poor people. Yah.

SF: When you came to America, who was here to greet you?

FF: Oh God. Herbert Winter. The Weils. Aunt Saler and Uncle Hugo and Trudy. They were all fighting over me, where I go with. So I went with Saler because they wrote to me last. Gretl was standing there so a week after I went to Gretl. I always had to wander, not to hurt anyone. Saler they lived in Flushing at that time. They hardly had any room.

SF: You can with one trunk and the other trunk went on another train?

FF: I never saw it. I had those big trunks. I had one with all coats and suits which I never saw and I had the second one. There was some linen in there and some clothes and then I had a suitcase with me yet. You know, where I needed the clothes on the boat. I still know some dresses I had made, and underwear I had made, all handmade. When you think of it. The ideas

I had. There were all made in a cloister by nuns. They were beautiful. Silk. (SF: Where was the cloister?) Dinkelsbühl. Had to go there. I went there with the bicycle all the time. (SF: So you had clothes made there regularly?). No. The clothes I had made home. We had a woman coming from Nürnberg and she made our clothes for all the years. For all the years. So she came before I left and made...I designed my own clothes the way I wanted. I had really beautiful clothes but I never had a winter coat because the coat was in the trunk which I never got. (SF: What did you wear for a winter coat?) Hah hmm, two blouses. I had an English tweed coat. That's what I wore. So I wore two blouses and some underwear, and then two years later I bought a coat. (SF: How much money did you have when you came over?) I had about 15..\$1800. I think about \$2000 from... (SF: With you?) No, that was sent from the Swiss bank (SF: How much of that did you smuggle into Switzerland?) About \$1500. (SF: How many skiing trips?) Every time I went. Sometimes we went four and five times a winter and sometimes we went three times. That's there for years. That's not there for the last year or two (Note: only). That was there a long time.

(SF: You said you smuggled some out in the skis?) All of it went out like that. For years we did that. I tell you.

SF: Do you remember at all Kristalnacht?

FF: I wasn't there. I wasn't in Germany. (I was) In America. I was there before when they stood guard in front of the Jewish stores and didn't let anyone in, and I went in, in München. I said "I want to go in you better let me go in." He says "You can't go in." I said "I'm going in." I went in and then they said to me "Do me a favor. Go out. You get in trouble and we get in trouble." So the fella said to me "For my part you can go where you want" he says, "but you're gonna get hurt so you better go out. Don't do that. You get in trouble.

SF: Wasn't Ruth's father involved with Kristalnacht.

FF: They all were. They all were.

SF: What happened to the rest of the family?

FF: Steven, I was here. They couldn't tell me. They all were thrown in jail. My parents were thrown in jail. They all were thrown in jail. Ruth's father was in Dachau. They were all....but I was here. When they burned the temples and when they burned all the books, I was here. That was the ninth of November. Daddy was there. That's when they took daddy to a concentration camp. To Dachau. See daddy came a year later than I did.

SF: He went to Dachau after Kristalnacht? FF: Yah, yah. They took him.

FF: I tell you why we didn't talk much about it. When he came here he still had this in him, this fear and this thing, and the man died in his arms. They gave them shoes to wear and the shoes were two numbers too small and some people said "I can't wear the shoes, they too small." But they had to march all day long and the ones that couldn't march they just shot.

SF: Was the man who died in his arms an older man?

FF: He was an older man. He couldn't march so they shot him.

SF: Did my father ever talk about the food or the sanitary conditions or anything?

FF: He couldn't. He couldn't. He used to go at night in his sleep like this. (SF: And flail his arms?) Yeah. He couldn't talk about it. No he couldn't talk about it. He always said that. Somebody wanted to ask...we were once somewhere, I don't know. Yeah, we went once to New York somewhere. Daddy had relatives there. His sister's sister-in-law and they were people there who were in concentration camps and he went out in the bathroom and he didn't come back for an hour. He couldn't hear it. It brought back everything. (SF: He didn't talk about the food or anything?) I don't know if he did or didn't. If he did I forgot. He was in



Dachau, he was I think for three months. Two or three months.

SF: He must have been home for six to nine months before he came (to America.)

FF: Yah. When did daddy come here. I think he came in May. November, December, January, February, March...yah, he was home maybe about six months after that. Sure it took you a long time. They didn't have any relatives here to get the papers so it was very hard. There was a gentile person home who had a brother somewhere, I think in Philadelphia, who also helped daddy with an affidavit. In daddy's town there were the gentiles, they were much, much better than in our town. (SF: Do you know the name of the man who helped get him out of Dachau?). No. He died a long time ago too but I don't know. (SF: Was he the mayor of the town?) No, he was just a good friend of...we were friends with all the gentile people. They were all our friends. We didn't know any different. I went to school with those kids, we didn't even know that...you know, we respected them and they respected us. Then they couldn't talk to us anymore.

SF: Were there other people who I knew when I was growing up who were in the camps? Clothilde Lehman? Sophie?

FF: Yah she (Clothilde Lehman-Bianca's mother-in-law) was. No. Sophie wasn't. Sophie was here long before. Sophie came here in 1934. You mean Sophie Rothberg. No, she came here in 1934. There were the Meyers, the Meyers who daddy...that Larry, no what was his name? I forgot. He lives in Florida now if he is still alive. He and daddy were together in the same group in Dachau and then they met in Prospect Park and then we became good friends again. The Hamburgers weren't there. They were here already. Uncle Leo was here already.

SF: How about the people who owned the tailor shop around the corner?

FF: The Levys? Yah, he was in Dachau too. Mr. Levy was in Dachau too. A lot of them Steven but I shocked it out of my system and now you ask me those kind of things and I don't remember anymore. Yah, the Levys were too. Mr. Levy was in Dachau. He talked many times about it, but he couldn't either for the first few years. Those were very, very hard times and people wanted to forget it, and not remember it.

SF: What sports did my father do?

FF: Football (soccer). He was very good at soccer. (SF: Gymnastics?) Oh yeah. Remember he such a well developed body. (SF: Did his brothers and sisters also do sports?) He only had one sister. I don't know.

SF: Did he do any sports when he came over here?

FF: Yeah, (feigned laughing) he walked from Newkirk Avenue to Atlantic Avenue to save a nickel. That was his sport. How could we do anything. I wrote to Gretl Weil if I should bring my skis and she said "They don't ski in America."