

INTERVIEW WITH MARGOT KRISCH

MARCH 6, 1995

**Transcending Trauma Project
Council for Relationships
4025 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104**

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INT: I am sitting with Margot and her daughter Nancy and we just signed the permission slips and we're going to start talking about...well, the reason we wanted to talk immediately is because the two of you have just come back from Berlin, the city of your origin. Before I start anything, let me just ask you both, from your different perspectives, because it's so new, I don't want to lose the freshness of having you just return. But the truth is we're going to be exhausted later. I don't want to lose the freshness of hearing your reactions. Each one, mother and daughter, what this was like for each of you.

MARGOT: Who would like to begin?

INT: Why don't we start with you.

MARGOT: Okay. First of all I have to start with the beginning, how this all happened. Nancy went to see the Holocaust museum in Washington with her congregation, Beth Am Israel in Philadelphia. And she came to visit me in Larchmont and we had dinner, and during the dinner she suddenly mentioned that she would love to go and see where I was born, where my husband, her father, spent part of his life there, in Berlin, and she thinks that she would be ready now. And simply why she said now was because my husband and I, we were invited to come to Berlin like so many people in Germany these days are invited, in 1984, and Nancy then was kind of at an age where she was not only almost too young, but also a little rebellious. And that was in 1984. So she did not really feel that she wanted to come along. I think deep down simply was because my husband was very, very sensitive to the feelings and himself wasn't even ready to go to Germany at this particular point. And I talked him into it, because I came to the United States after the war, so I had gone through all this during the war, but he...I felt that he was really...it was the right time for him to see Germany built up again. And I wanted him really to feel a little bit different about it, mainly for Nancy's sake, because he was very bitter and very guilty that he stayed alive himself and his whole entire family was gone. So I think Nancy had a little idea that her father might break down and might not feel right about it, and she didn't want to witness it. We understood that.

NANCY: I didn't, at that point, have an appreciation of going back there. I was like anti-I think. Why would you want to go to Germany? You lost your entire family?

MARGOT: Yes, I think that had also something to do with it. But we felt...when we arrived in Germany and spent this week there, I really felt it was good that she did not come along because simply we would have to translate everything into English because even though my mother lived with me, which I will mention about later on during the interview, anyhow, but my husband was so bitter against German happenings and Germans themselves, that he didn't even allow my mother or myself to speak German to Nancy. And I think, in the long run, she did lose something, which we see now, but at this point I agreed with them. And so she never really learned how to speak the German language. But deep down, which I found out now at this visit, she really does understand a little bit more than I thought she would, but speaking, still, is not too good.

INT: Let me ask Nancy a minute, because you're talking about the first trip. Nancy, you said that eleven years ago you not only weren't ready to go, but you were anti...these feelings. Do you remember how you felt? I mean what-

NANCY: About their trip? I couldn't understand...well-

INT: How old were you then?

NANCY: Twenty-two, twenty-one. I just had no...you know it's funny. I went through this period in college where I just was like I in a vacuum in terms of Judaism and I think I hadn't really like come out of that vacuum yet and I was really being very assimilated at that point. I couldn't understand why they wanted to go.

INT: So part of it was assimilation, part of it might have been anger.

NANCY: Yeah, you know, I had taken a few courses, the war against the Jews, a whole bunch of stuff in college. I was very pumped up about what had happened there and I don't really think I could let myself really see backwards into my own heritage, at that point. It was just a very...like an observer's point of view. Like why would you want to go back there. How could you go back there? Look what they did to us. But the us really wasn't formulated at that point.

INT: And then like your mom just said something changed.

NANCY: Well, actually, that's interesting, because I remember how this all came about a little differently than she reports it. (Laughter)

INT: Go ahead.

NANCY: I remember-

INT: Normally, I talk to people completely separately. The daughters are talking in their own time and the mothers, or the parents. But because you're from out of town, we're going to do something really different. But I'm really glad that you expressed how you saw it.

NANCY: There's never a lack of that.

INT: Great. Because it's very good to get both perspectives, and you two have such a clearly comfortable relationship that you're not threatened if she says, well I remember it a little differently. So that's great.

NANCY: Not threatened yet. (Laughter)

MARGOT: No. That was years ago. No more at this point. She's thirty-four.

NANCY: Thirty-three. I remember being there...I had gone to the Holocaust museum in early December and I think that the thing that was like so startling to me about being

there was just like that first room on the left where Hitler is talking, and the rise of Nazi Germany and all that stuff. I just stood there for the eighteen minutes the tape played and I was like, this is really wild. I'm hearing German. I'm understanding most of it, and I'm feeling very differently from the people there in the room with me.

INT: You could feel that.

NANCY: Oh, yes. Well, you know, the rabbi had sort of briefed us that this was a museum for the American public, but there was definitely an awareness on my part, that like I felt like I knew the story, you know, and other people were hearing it for the first time. In any case, the woman next to me...they give out the cards that describe who you are, you know, who your identity is or whatever, the person that you're sort of going to be following throughout the museum, and my card was of somebody who, I don't know, it was like ridiculous, but the person next to me had this card from this man that was from Berlin. So I said, you have to let me have your card. (Laughter) And I convinced her to give me the card, because, here this guy was born in Berlin and you know, during the period that my mother had lived there...really, I focused more on my mother's end of Berlin, I guess, because I heard much more about that than my father's. In any case, later in December we were at my mother's home and we were sitting there and eating, and she said, you know, we might like to go to Berlin this summer. And I said, oh, you know, that's nice. And after we left there...this is why I think it's a little different, I said to my husband, you know, I want to go with her. All of a sudden I had this like I need to go there, you know. And so I said, you know, would you consider me coming along. And then soon after that it had totally changed and no longer was it anybody else going with her, but now it was just me going with her.

INT: Did you tell your husband not to come?

MARGOT: Yes. I told him. Because when Nancy really...

NANCY: As lovely as he is, there was no way that he could-

MARGOT: He's American born. He has great, great feelings toward all this, because simply he was the first American born in his family because they came from Russia. But he understands everything, and he's very sympathetic with everything. But when he said, you know, maybe I should come along. I mentioned to him...I said, no, sweetheart, I'm sorry. I said this is something very sacred between Nancy and myself, and I don't really think...I feel this is not a trip to Berlin. I feel this is a mission. This is so sacred to me, and for her too, that I feel that I want to experience this with her myself, and he understood.

INT: Thank goodness.

NANCY: You know, it's funny, because my mother and I have talked about this a little and my husband sort of laughs when I say this but you know, I have this...I have two children. The first was born four years ago. The other one was born a year and a half ago. And the second, who's a boy, has just very strong physical characteristics of my father. He resembles him a lot. And I think that that sort of said to me, as crazy as this may sound, the bloodline just continues. And because Jared has this like such strong physical

presence to my father, it really started me to think, G-d, you know, when they say I look like his sister, or when they say I look like...there started to be this reflective nature, almost, toward the physical.

INT: That is amazing.

NANCY: And then from the moment we decided to go I was really on edge. I just couldn't contain myself. It was very exciting.

MARGOT: Well, her husband said to me, Margot, I tell you, I have never seen Nancy so excited.

NANCY: It's been a long time.

MARGOT: ...ever during my whole married life. I had taken the two, Nancy and Barry, to Israel in 1990, it was. And he said, then she was excited, but this...I have never seen her like this. This surpassed it.

NANCY: Well, for obvious reasons, I think.

INT: And this is in the anticipation. This isn't even in the...it's in advance.

NANCY: I think that...I mean I could say this like sort of hindsight now. The anticipation and actually being there was very different from what I'm experiencing now, having been there.

INT: In what way?

NANCY: I mean, at first it was like wonderment and euphoria. You know, wow! Anticipation and what's it going to be like, and oh my G-d, I have to leave my children and my husband and I'm scared about that. But I'm going, I'm going with my mother and I'm going to see like the place where my grandparents walked. I mean, that to me was like...just the fact that I could walk on the same street as them.

INT: That's very powerful.

NANCY: Very, very powerful. So we went and I walked. (Laughter) And I ate, you know, in the same places that they eat. Some of the places are still there. And coming back, I mean, I was so...it really was enriching for me and really sacred. Very, very sacred. Taught me a little bit more about myself maybe than I thought it would. But now, here we are two weeks back, the more emotional aspect is starting to sort of come to the surface. I don't know. I guess maybe I expected this to happen there, but it's good that it didn't because what's coming is like an integration of being a Jewish person in the United States, having a heritage overseas, having been there, you know, having a mother who's still alive to help me share this kind of a thing. And sort of a little upset that the father isn't there to share it with anymore, and that there's a little guilt in that maybe we didn't pursue his family's history as much when we were there as ours. And the need to go back. I feel like I need to go back again. I learned a lot about my mother's side of the

family when we were there, and a little bit about my father's side, but there's still, I think, room for that. Things that pop into my head, like, this woman that knew him when he lived there gave us this address, but she didn't give us the address, it was like a subway stop or something.

MARGOT: She knew.

NANCY: And this morning I said to myself, well, you know, maybe Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse, is it, the subway stop, maybe the Kaiser Wilhelm street that we don't know where it is, is right at Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse, but we didn't pursue it.

MARGOT: No, it wasn't there. But also the time was limited, don't forget, Nancy.

NANCY: Very limited. I mean it was way too short.

MARGOT: I had to make certain short parts of this trip because I knew how much involved it will be and how much she wanted to see certain things, but I had to make sure that she will see it in the short time we had.

NANCY: I mean, it was like a smattering.

MARGOT: This was not even a week. It was called a Delta Vacation Lands.

NANCY: Dreaming.

MARGOT: Dreaming or something. For us it was a different kind of a dream.

INT: Excuse me, you say this was actually called Delta Dream Vacation.

MARGOT: Delta Dream Vacation. Yes, that's what it was called, because it was a discount flight. (Laughter) But because I knew Berlin so well and I knew the hotels in Berlin, so I choose the finest hotel that came with the Delta Discount Vacation, Dreamland, or whatever it was.

INT: That's interesting.

MARGOT: But the time was limited. But it fitted into our schedule. It fitted in financially. It fitted in with having her mother-in-law come and take care of the children and Nancy's husband is now in medical school, and fitted into his schedule too. So that's why we had to go at this particular time. And it was just enough. I didn't even have to write it down. In my mind, I knew exactly what I wanted to do with her, because unfortunately, like she says, I was not even too familiar with her father's area where he lived, simply because that was not my part of town where I used to live. And my husband was twelve years older than I am, so he did travel in different circles also, so therefore I knew where he lived. I knew, I mean, street-wise, but these names have been changed. It was in the Russian sector of Berlin and some of the names remained after the Russians-

INT: Occupied?

MARGOT: After the occupation was over. So therefore it was a different story. So I wished I could have shown her a little bit more about her father's side, but I was also limited about that. I listened a lot for what he had to say, but then...and I understand Nancy's feelings, because I many times said to him, do not harp on this continuously because-

NANCY: He was obsessive.

MARGOT: He used to look at every picture on television about the concentration camps and I finally broke down. He broke down, I mean. I finally confronted him with this, years later in our marriage. And I said, you know, I'd like to ask you a question, honey. Do you look at this continuous pictures of the concentration camps to find your family? And he said, yes, that's what I'm looking for. But I mean he made it a little bit hard for her, because at this point we didn't have three televisions, we had one when she grew up in the beginning. When this Auschwitz or Theirenstadt film came on, he had to see this, regardless what it was. So therefore, I mean, I didn't learn too much at this particular time either, because I tried to keep it away from her, because I wanted her to grow up not to feel guilty in addition to it, because that does harm to children too. And in general, as much as I loved my husband and always will, but there we were completely...that part we were completely different. I mean, I saw the good sides and he saw, for a long time, only the bad side. But therefore he was older, and he had experienced more, I think.

NANCY: He was already an adult when he-

MARGOT: He was an adult when he came to the United States. He came here when he was twenty-seven years old and I think...probably you will ask me about this later.

INT: Unless you want to say something else about the feelings of the trip right now, because I want to give you a chance to do that, I want to go back to that point as soon as we finish with your feelings about what it was like to go back. When you went back this time, because you just told us that you've been back with your husband in '84. What was it like for you now going back with your daughter? Was it as scary? Was it?

NANCY: She had been back another time also.

MARGOT: I went back in 1990 on my own, without my husband. I went with some girlfriends who came over to America after the war, also. So that was, again, a different experience. It was in 1990.

INT: So you've been back to Germany three times now. Once with your husband, once as a new widow, pretty new widow, and once with your daughter.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: What were these three times like?

MARGOT: Well, in plain Jewish saying, the last one was a mechaya, (laughter) because I had a very light, a very, very comfortable feeling, which I always had when I went back

to Germany, by the way. I never really felt...but also it had something to do because I was there after the war. I was during the war, and after the war I immigrated to the United States in 1948, so I had still two and a quarter years after the war there. So I wasn't that completely...I don't know how to express myself. I didn't come out of the war directly and into another country.

NANCY: You saw post-war Berlin.

MARGOT: Yes, I saw post-war Berlin, and already a little building up and a little different feelings. At this time I was a little bit more bitter, before I came to the United States, because otherwise I would not have emigrated, but when we visited I felt really it was my duty to show my husband, at this particular point in '84 that he has to stop to just not buy anything out of Germany and he has to learn that you cannot blame the sons for the crimes the fathers committed. And I felt very strongly about that, because I wanted to convey this to Nancy.

INT: So that was the reason you felt that you had to show him?

MARGOT: That's why I wanted to show him.

INT: For your daughter's sake.

MARGOT: So he will finally make peace with himself, because what his problem was, he had never had a grave. He never had a cemetery to go to visit and identify with. My mother's grave was for him his mother's grave, here in the United States. I mean, he found another mother in my mother because we had a very close and loving relationship. We lived together, all of us. He never had...what he had was this wonderful uncle who died in 1934, so I went with him to the cemetery in Berlin and I walked three hours through the cemetery and pushed rose bushes, all torn things...I mean it was all dilapidated and overgrown, away, until I finally found this huge memorial stone of Bernhard Krisch. And we took a picture of it and he said his Kaddish there and he was like in seventh heaven there. He had something to identify with. And I think that made our whole trip worth it, in 1984. I mean, when he came back nobody could say anything about it anymore. Our Rabbi had forewarned us to be careful, to go there, and when we came back Gerhard spoke up, and he said, I'm really happy now, because I finally could identify with something. And he was overseas during the war in the American army, but that's when he found out that his parents perished in Thieresenstadt and his sister and brother-in-law were killed in Auschwitz. I'm only bringing this up with my husband because simply that was the first trip, around in '84. And I did this also deep-down really for Nancy because I wanted him to have different feelings about things.

NANCY: Can I say something?

MARGOT: Yeah, sure.

NANCY: I think also it was that the government of Berlin was like inviting people back as an all-expense paid trip, and I think there was some of the, gee, you know, why shouldn't they pay for us to come back and see.

MARGOT: That's right.

NANCY: Why shouldn't we take advantage of that.

MARGOT: Right. Absolutely.

NANCY: I mean, really, so that was part of the impetus also.

MARGOT: Yes, but this also. I mean, you must admit when-

NANCY: And there were also several other friends that were going on the trip, right?

MARGOT: Well, there was one friend, but we didn't do it because of friends, we did it for ourselves.

NANCY: No, I know. But I think to make him more comfortable, I think that was-

INT: It probably helped.

MARGOT: Yes, but also, I don't know...you're probably familiar with the trips that German cities invite people and the Senate invites...especially Berlin does a wonderful job in reference to this. And these people who worked for the Senate are very, very dedicated Christian people who feel...I wouldn't say that they feel guilty. They do not feel guilty about what happened, because they didn't do it. But they do feel this to be an inner sensation, or what shall I say, to make good what they felt was done bad to other people, and it's a real committed group of people. And they are wonderful people. And you can see it and feel it. They are not just superficial talks. They do have a lot of depth to them and the things they say to you it's not anything superficial. They really mean what they're saying. But it's a different generation.

INT: Right. It's a post-war generation.

MARGOT: It's a post-war generation already.

INT: Did they invite you? They found you in Larchmont?

MARGOT: No, you have to apply for it.

INT: I see.

MARGOT: But, you know, it's by word of mouth.

NANCY: There's also a German Jewish newspaper.

MARGOT: In the Aufbau. I receive that. And that's a German-Jewish newspaper that comes out of New York from who-knows-when, when the first Jewish immigrants came here or something.

INT: Right. In the 1800's, I think.

MARGOT: And it still exists. So I still continue subscribing to it, because there are sometimes things in there which still remind you a little bit of your past.

NANCY: Was that trip in the Aufbau or the Jewish Week, or both?

MARGOT: When they interviewed us was in the Jewish Week, but the Aufbau, you know, gave you the information that these certain cities are inviting people to come back, and if you'd like to...not everybody liked to. I mean, there were a lot of people, we have a lot of friends who were a hundred percent against it. I think in the long run they will lose because of that. What they did afterwards.

INT: They are their families, you know, their children and grandchildren.

MARGOT: Yes. But not everybody feels the same way. I mean, everybody has different opinions about it.

INT: So your husband had a transformation when he went and could pray at his uncle's grave?

MARGOT: Yes. Definitely. And I have a part of the Jewish News, because my husband was interviewed, just by coincidence, and it was just like the good Lord meant it to be like that. A gentleman by the name of Littman from the United States somehow was overseas at this particular time, and represented the Jewish Week. And he interviewed my husband because it was a group of two hundred fifty two people who arrived in Berlin that day. And they took us around the whole week, you know, to a show and for dinners. The mayor of Berlin spoke to us. It was a very lovely week, I must say. When he was interviewed he said, actually, exactly, that he was happy he came. That he...I mean I cannot give it word by word back, but it is all in the English. I'll give it to you. I'll bring it along to you next time I'm here.

INT: I'd love to read it next time.

MARGOT: And already in the airplane, I think, he felt already that he was doing the right thing.

INT: Going over.

MARGOT: Going over, yes.

INT: Oh, so he already had it even before anything happened?

MARGOT: He had somehow a feeling that it was the right decision he made.

INT: Wonderful. So you were right. You knew this was-

MARGOT: I knew him very well. I knew what-

NANCY: One interesting little thing that happened after this article was written, that they interviewed him, this woman from Queens came forth. She was like a distant relative or something. She had this whole family tree to give him. So we have now this whole family tree of his side of the family.

INT: Tremendous.

NANCY: I mean it's incredible.

MARGOT: Yes. A little old lady in her nineties. She was a distant, distant relative of his mother.

INT: Amazing.

MARGOT: And she called and she asked if Gerhard Krisch was Herman Krisch-

INT: The son.

NANCY: Regina.

MARGOT: Regina Krisch's son. So I said, yes. And she said, I would like for you to come and visit me someday but I'd like to have my niece with me because she will xerox something for you. I have a family tree, which is probably of great interest to your husband.

INT: Incredible.

MARGOT: So we went there, and it was very, very lovely. It's hanging in my hallway.

NANCY: We've added me and Barry.

INT: The children?

NANCY: Yes. I mean, it's incredible.

INT: The fact that he was interviewed, the fact that out of the whole two hundred and fifty, this story about him got in, the fact that the lady happened to read it, is unbelievable. But it's all bashert.

MARGOT: All bashert.

NANCY: It's incredible. It's really incredible.

MARGOT: I always say, it's just bashert. That's true.

INT: Then the next time you went with your friends.

MARGOT: My friends, yes. But there was a different reason for that, because we all survived at the Jewish Hospital Berlin, which was a ghetto during the war. And not even

on any trips of a senate of Berlin was ever the Jewish Hospital mentioned. No place, ever. And we felt very strongly about that, because we were really kept alive in this place because it was there and we were living in there. And what we found out after the war, why we were not deported, there were...three-quarter of the people were deported from this hospital, but by the grace of the good Lord, my friends, with whom I'm still in touch with here in the United States and myself were not deported. We survived the war in this hospital. So we went there, three of us, and visited, and wanted to exactly see what was going on there. We were very happy to see they had recently, before we arrived there, I think a year before, they had some kind of an anniversary reunion.

INT: Oh, really? Of the people who'd been saved?

MARGOT: Yes. And I didn't go at this point. I don't know what the reason was. I think I had an operation or something. I couldn't go. So we saw the pictures hanging on the wall about what they called Opfer Des Faschismus-overseas...

INT: What is that word?

MARGOT: Opfer Des Faschismus means people who were-

INT: Hidden?

MARGOT: No. People who survived. Who are the survivors.

INT: Do you know how to spell that word? (Discussion about the spelling of Opfer and Faschismus)

NANCY: Faschismus is the war.

MARGOT: No, Faschismus is the Nazi period and Opfer is...what is Opfer. We honor the-

INT: Oh, fascism.

MARGOT: Fascism, yes.

NANCY: Honor the dead of fascism?

INT: The victims.

MARGOT: The victims, yes, that's the word.

INT: I know what I would put in if I was writing that sentence. Let me just spell it.

MARGOT: No, victims is the right-

INT: And it's victims of fascism is spelled Opfer Des Faschismus. And in this photo, maybe I'll make a copy of it, it says, in the Krankenhaus, which is the hospital of Berlin,

that we honor the Jewish-The Jewish Hospital of Berlin honors the Jewish Victims of Facism.

NANCY: This was some kind of a march or something.

MARGOT: Yes, it was a march after the war. The picture you have in your hand is a picture of some kind of a demonstration after the war where some of the people who were left in this hospital were asked to walk, participate in it.

INT: And the people in the picture are the people who were being hidden in the Jewish-

MARGOT: No, not hidden. They had to work there. We took care of the-

NANCY: They were nurses.

MARGOT: But I might want to give you this whole part of the Jewish Hospital Berlin later on, because it's a very interesting topic.

INT: We'll do it as a separate piece, right. All by itself. (Tape shuts here as interviewer answers the phone.) Now we're going to talk about this trip, the one you just came back from. Why was this one so different from the other two?

MARGOT: Well, first of all it was with my daughter, and it was, as I said before, a very sacred thing for me to experience. I felt that I now, not only that she can walk on the ground of where I was born and her father was raised, my husband was born in Posnan, in an area which belonged partially to Germany and to Poland all the time, years ago. But he was raised in Berlin. And then her Omi, who was my mother, who lived with us and who raised her too. I mean, she had told her many stories about Berlin, so she knew about my relatives, she knew about my aunt who came over here after the war to visit us too. Nancy was three years old, so she knew that she was living in Berlin and is buried in Berlin now, because she never came over here and stayed with us in the United States. And that we have friends, Christian friends, overseas, who helped us during the war, who came to Nancy's wedding. So she was all enthused to really meet all these people over there. And that, I think, gave me such a wonderful feeling, because I was able to make her realize and really show her the areas which were only history at this particular point for her, and the things I told her when she was a child about the nice part of Germany at the time when I was little, until Hitler really started to grow strong in Berlin. As I now recall from friends of mine here in America, in smaller towns in Germany, everything started already to turn bad in 1936, which did not happen in Berlin, really. The real hard times for us Jews in Berlin started the end of '39, beginning of '40, when we had to wear the star of David on our clothing and the mark on our doors, on our apartment. So that was really the bad time, and that was 1941. So ever since then everything went, of course, downhill. But according to my friends here who lived in small towns in Germany, the bad times started much earlier. But what I had told Nancy about Berlin was mainly also something happy. There were happy times. My childhood was a beautiful childhood which I will go into later on when you ask me about it. But these happy times were until my father passed away in '33.

INT: Why don't we start talking about it now, unless you wanted to say something before we started, Nancy, about this trip. What it was like for you to go with your mom now.

NANCY: It was just great.

MARGOT: Realizations.

NANCY: Just great. I remember the first time she went to Berlin she said she stood on the balcony of her hotel and she said, oh. She was filled with pride that she was from this beautiful city. And for me, you know, I also feel that sense of pride now. That this heritage was really born in this beautiful city and that it's very cosmopolitan and very culturally oriented, and I know it was like that then too. I don't know. I guess I just had a really hard time looking around there and just thinking, I guess, about the same question that some of the people who are now my age or a little older ask themselves. How could this happen here? Trying to visualize like what everything looked like when it was destroyed. I found myself...like if I saw a bullet hole in a building, I'd say, is that a bullet hole? Like I wanted to grab onto that. Like I wanted to see. I don't know. Like part of me almost wanted to like be able to do a time warp and like step into immediately post-war Berlin, and then come back into now. But I couldn't. And I realized that that was also like the fifty year period hadn't really (laughter)-

INT: Yes, there is a gap in the fifty years.

NANCY: And I really didn't...I don't know. You know, my image of Berlin was like ruins, and it's just beautiful and polished.

MARGOT: The reason why you thought it was ruins was because I told you about it. The way I lived through the war, and everything was really one big ruin, most of the parts of Berlin, and then, of course, the Russian army came in. And what was not destroyed by air, which we were waiting for desperately to free us, we received from the Russians. I mean, it was from one street to the other one, fighting. But even that, us few Jewish people surviving the war, we were looking forward to that too, until it was finally finished.

INT: That's right. Now. We're going to start the actual interview with you and a little bit about your family. First of all, very simple. These are the very short questions. Your name is...tell me your name when you were a little girl. Tell me when you were born, where you were born, and then I'll ask you about your family.

MARGOT: My name at the time that I was born was Margot Redlich. And I was born on the 27th of February, 1925 in Berlin.

INT: To what kind of family? Tell me about your family.

MARGOT: My father was an agent, a commodity broker. A grain broker. And was quite well-to-do. I was born into a quite well-to-do family.

INT: What was his name?

MARGOT: My father's name was Konrad Redlich.

INT: And when was he born?

MARGOT: He was born on the 29th of June, 1886.

INT: And your mother?

MARGOT: My mother was born also in Berlin, no, excuse me, she was born in Stargard in Pommern but moved to Berlin. My father was also not born in Berlin. My father was born in, it was...but I think in English it's Silesia. In Bralin. I think it was near Cracow and Gleiwitz, around the area, which belonged to Germany at the time. Now it's Poland. But my mother was born in Stargard, and Stargard is in Pommern. In English it's...I really don't know how to pronounce this in English.

INT: Where is it?

MARGOT: It's also Polish now, but it's north of Berlin. But it's now a Polish area after the war. It was Pommern.

INT: And the name of the littler place?

MARGOT: Stargard. And she was born on the eve of June 1889.

INT: What was her family like, that you know, and what was his family like?

MARGOT: Well, my mother was non-Jewish, and therefore I will only really remember the direct family who was very close to us. It was her father, my grandfather, who was absolutely a wonderful, wonderful grandfather, by the name of August Seek, and her mother was her step-mother, so we never really had that much to do with her, because her mother died many, many years prior to my birth. And then she had a wonderful sister who lived with us, it's a story which cannot be repeated so quickly, all during the war, and she was of non-Jewish descent, of course.

INT: The sister.

MARGOT: My sister.

INT: Your aunt.

MARGOT: My aunt. And how she ever survived to support my mother during the war, because my father died in 1933, and in 1934 my aunt moved in with us, and how they allowed, the Nazis allowed her somehow to remain in our apartment, it's beyond my understanding when I think of the fact.

INT: Why is that?

MARGOT: I have no idea how that worked. They just never really caught up with it, I believe.

INT: You mean because your mother...your father was Jewish.

MARGOT: My father was Jewish, yes.

INT: And your mother wasn't. And when you say how she was allowed to remain in the apartment-

MARGOT: How my aunt was allowed to be in the apartment, because our family was...we were Jews, because we were raised in the Jewish religion, my brother and myself, so therefore it was a Jewish family. And she had a room in our apartment and never moved out of there, never hesitated to help my mother, and was never in any way bothered by the Nazis. How that happened we have never understood that. Because we had to mark the names on the door from 1941 on. We had to have a star of David on the outside of our door, which was above my brother's name and my name. So therefore it said Gerhard Redlich and Margot Redlich and a star of David and it said Jude in there was on this side. On the other side a lot of people did this and it was really comical, but nobody even looked at it. My aunt put on her name and my mother put on her name underneath that and my aunt's name Lisle and Greta Redlich, and they put underneath Arish, which was Aryan, in big letters, and nobody ever bothered even to ask. Nobody bothered. I mean it was an apartment house.

INT: So on the apartment house, outside the door, it had all these-

MARGOT: Marks.

INT: Had the names...these two Aryan and you and your brother with the Jewish.

MARGOT: Yes, because we were considered to be Geltungsjuden, and these were-

INT: Mishlings.

MARGOT: Mishlings. That's children of mixed marriages who were raised in a Jewish religion. And we never knew anything different. We were raised as Jews, and my brother was bar mitzvahed, and that was our life. I mean, we were Jewish.

INT: Now you said your father...well, this is a whole big story, but we were talking about your parents first. But before we leave this point, before we return to the point we left a little bit, your father died, you said, in 1933.

MARGOT: Yes. I was eight years old, my brother was twelve years old. And my mother raised both of us in the Jewish religion, because she promised that to my father that she will always do this. Unfortunately, if you ask me about my family from my father's side, I can only tell you that I remember two uncles coming to visit us, because unfortunately, as in many mixed marriages, the Jewish part declares their son as dead when they marry out of faith. So therefore I really never saw my grandmother or my grandfather from my

father's part of the family. I saw one uncle who lived in Berlin, and the aunt and my cousins, and I saw...and remembered well his brother. Two brothers who came to visit us every so often. But I was really much more close to my mother's family. But also only to her brother, to her sister and her father. So my grandfather and my aunt and my uncle. Because my uncle was married to a woman who hated Jews, and she didn't allow him even to come to visit us, but he came anyhow, and I have nine cousins from that family whom I never met, except one.

NANCY: Such a tragedy.

MARGOT: So therefore my daughter has absolutely no family.

INT: Even though they exist.

NANCY: They exist, and they probably live within miles of where we were two weeks ago. You know, it's amazing.

MARGOT: But I have no contact and never had contact with them. (End of tape, 1, side 1) ...a German soldier. He died during the war. But he was also, because of my uncle who was very much close to my mother and his sister, his other sister who loved with us, Lisle. He used to come many times to visit us, against his wife's wishes, but he never made any big deal about that. And he used to bring this one boy who got killed later on along. So therefore I knew, out of nine, I knew one of the boys. One of the cousins.

INT: Do you know why he just brought one? Was it because that one boy was-

MARGOT: Because he could cover up to come to Berlin because he brought him along to do some business work or something, and he brought him along. And he swore to his father that he will never tell the mother about that he's visiting his cousin.

INT: This is incredible. That he had to lie to his anti-Semitic mother to visit his Jewish cousins.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: I mean, this is a very big thing. One family. One generation.

MARGOT: But also if you take it...my uncle-

INT: What was his name, the uncle?

MARGOT: Reinhold. ...to survive and to keep his family together had to join the Nazi party, because he was working for the railroad, the German railroad. And he absolutely had nothing to do with them, but he did this just to pacify his wife and to remain part of the family. And he used to come to our apartment with the Jewish star outside, hanging there, with my coat hanging there with a yellow Jewish star of David on the clothing, and he used to hang his coat next to it with the Nazi party swastika thing in there, and then the cousin who came along belonged to what was called-

INT: Hitler youth.

MARGOT: No, it was not Hitler youth, but it was the Organisation Todt, which was a labor force which Germans put all the young people into, to build the Autobahn and things like that, and he belonged to that, but it was also a uniform. So he didn't care. He just came up there and everything...it was the most comical thing. And we laughed many times about it, because right next to it was my Jewish star and he didn't mind. He just came. It was his family, and that's what he wanted to do, so that teaches you that there were also a lot of good Germans. But that was family. But even in his own family he had a horrible situation with his wife, because of the Hitler time.

INT: Did she seem different as far as you know before Hitler times?

MARGOT: I have no idea. I never met this lady.

INT: She just hated Jews.

MARGOT: She hated Jews, and therefore she never...because my mother was married to a Jewish man, she didn't even ever enter out house or anything. But unfortunately, the other way around was the same thing.

INT: It was terrible there too.

MARGOT: So it was really, in the long run, very discouraging, when you look at it today in my old age, that things like that have to happen. Both ways.

INT: Well, how did your mother and father come together in the first place, with two families who, you know-

MARGOT: I wouldn't be able to tell you. It was 1918. They loved each other, I believe. Somehow, somebody must have introduced them. I really never questioned that, I must say. I only know that my mother, I think, was a manager in a very fancy Kaufhaus in Berlin.

INT: Coffee house?

MARGOT: Kaufhaus.

INT: What is a Kaufhaus?

NANCY: Department store.

MARGOT: Not department store, really. A very fine...well, how shall I say, it was a very refined store. You know, a very different type of-

NANCY: Upscale?

MARGOT: Yes, an upscale store. And if he met her in there or not, I have no idea. But they were very much in love and she never worked a day after she married my father,

because he was well-to-do already at this point. So I had, until I was eight years old, I had a very wonderful memory of Berlin and Germany because-

INT: What was your life like then?

MARGOT: My life was...what shall I say?

INT: What did you like to do?

MARGOT: What I liked to do? What an eight year old child is doing. We had a chauffeur. We had a car, which other kids did not have. We had a wonderful life. I had clothing which other people didn't have, but it's not that I made any big deals out of it, because I accepted it the way it came, and I was never a person that liked to be, you know, showing off or anything like that. But I must say our life before Hitler, before my father died I should say because my father died in 1933, was pleasant. Very pleasant. I remember my mother telling me, of course, even things before I was born how wonderful things were and how he lived in big circles and traveled around with...they traveled around in circles of actresses. It was just a beautiful life. They went to the spas, down to Czechoslovakia. I have pictures of it at home.

INT: Do you know which spas?

MARGOT: Yes, it was Marienbad. And there was another one. I already forgot the name now. I forget it. But that was quite...you know, I have a picture hanging in my hallway at home of the two of them and my uncle, my father's brother. So-

INT: Your father was one of how many children?

MARGOT: I believe there were five children in his family?

INT: And do you know anything about his-

MARGOT: Not the girls. I only know about Uncle Arthur who was a lawyer who lived in Berlin, who had a dysfunctional family, so called today. Had a wife who was not very honest with him and cheated, in plain English. Declared him for insane so she could have her own way of dealing with her lover. So the poor man had to go a certain way, where he was never, never ill, was never insane, but was just a good, like you say in Jewish, a good shnook who had his eyes closed to everything. He appeared at our door even during the war, the beginning of the war, when they closed up the Jewish home where he was. But it was not really a...it was rather more like a-how do you call it?

NANCY: Sanatorium?

MARGOT: Sanatorium type where he was, yes. So we didn't know what to do with him, because my mother was a widow already at this point, but I don't want to get far into the family problems, but somehow we had to contact his wife, and she was still there. And the wife and my cousins, because my mother couldn't deal with him. I mean she had enough on her mind with two Jewish children, and so she got in touch with the other

Greta Redlich, because both of them were Greta Redlich. My mother was Margot Greta Redlich and the other one was Greta Redlich. No, excuse me, it was the other way around. My mother was Greta Redlich and the other one was Margot Greta Redlich.

INT: That was the wife?

MARGOT: That was Uncle Arthur's wife, yes. So finally then she took him back, I believe, but when on this trip with Nancy now when we went to Berlin, we went through the book in the Jewish community house there, I found her name, and she died. I knew about that she died in Thieresenstadt, but Uncle Arthur, somehow I have no idea. It has a different name and I cannot recall it right now. I don't believe it was a concentration camp, but it was something else and it might have been another sanatorium or something where he passed away, because it showed the place of his residence at the same place where he died, and it didn't look to me like a concentration camp. But his name was in the list of...

INT: Who else was in your-

MARGOT: Uncle Richard. Uncle Richard was my father's brother, and he saw him maybe twice in my life. And then there was a cousin who emigrated to South Africa, to Kenya, and came back after the war, by the name of Walter Zweig. And he came back from Africa after the war, and he told me not to emigrate because it's horrible to go away from Germany, and I did not follow his advice. I have no idea what happened to him. But this is my mishpocha. I don't have anybody else.

INT: Did you ever meet your grandparents? Your father's parents?

MARGOT: Never, never.

INT: So they said Kaddish after him?

MARGOT: Yes. They did not want to have anything to do with him anymore after he married my mother, who happened to be the most wonderful, wonderful person anybody could have met, who was an outstanding, outstanding not only mother, but an outstanding human being who was loved by everyone. But who would have made probably the most wonderful daughter-in-law for these people, but they never, never saw us, never...unfortunately in our religion we have that sometimes, which is not the right thing to do, because it only reflects on the following generations in a miserable way, as you can see in our family.

INT: It's a terrible loss.

MARGOT: Yes, it is.

INT: Because they could have known their grandchildren. They could have had their son, who only made the crime of falling in love. This shouldn't be such a crime.

MARGOT: That's right. And on top of it, I mean, if he would have converted or anything it would have been a different story, but not only did he remain a Jew and raised...his wife had to promise him to raise his children as Jews and did so and suffered.

INT: Not only did so, did so in Nazi times. This is just unbelievable.

MARGOT: That's right. That's right. That is a story which I don't believe can be repeated too many times. But thank G-d of our wonderful personalities and our stamina, my mother's and myself, we survived that all because thank the good Lord we have an excellent sense of humor, and that comes also from Berlin, because Berlin people survived a lot of things because of their sense of humor.

INT: You think so? You think the humor did it?

MARGOT: Oh, yes. Definitely. Oh yes, oh yes.

INT: Tell me what you mean. Give me an example of this sense of humor.

MARGOT: The sense of humor is that you take things light. You don't...I don't know if I should really say sense of humor. It's just a personality trait.

NANCY: Coping skill.

MARGOT: It's a continuous hoping skill, you're right Nancy.

NANCY: Coping.

MARGOT: A coping and hoping skill. Because you just don't let yourself to be destroyed or...you just have to live, and I mean there is life after too. And we just never really felt that...it's hard to explain. I really have to think a little bit more. See, if you pin me down and you ask me-

NANCY: Like living for the moment?

MARGOT: It's not living for the moment, no, that's not true, because it is rather a...you don't take things to heart too much. You try to make it as light as possible, even though you have a lot of depth, you still don't let it get you down. You try to overcome things and make a light-

INT: It's almost making it bearable.

MARGOT: Bearable, yes. But-

INT: It's more than that.

MARGOT: It's more than that because there were so many horrible situations.

NANCY: It's not really allowing it to penetrate.

MARGOT: Yes, that's right. After all, my daughter is American born so she has to help me out. There are still sometimes things missing in my language.

INT: Although your language is beautiful.

MARGOT: Yes, but there are still things missing occasionally.

INT: So you agree with what Nancy said.

MARGOT: I agree with what Nancy said.

INT: Now allowing it to penetrate.

MARGOT: Exactly. Not allowing it to penetrate is the right explanation. And just you don't wipe anything away because it is there, but you don't let it penetrate too deeply to destroy you, because otherwise your insides will be destroyed if you think only of horrible things happening.

INT: But how do you do that? How did you learn to do that from your mother?

MARGOT: I think it was just a family trait or trend or whatever it's called. It's just something that is in me which I was born with. In my own profession, even, I helped a lot of people because of my sense of humor and because of my way of dealing with people. My personality. And I'm not putting a halo around my head, which is not very Jewish to say, but it's true.

INT: You said you're not putting a halo, so that's very Jewish. (Laughter) If you're putting a halo that would not be Jewish.

MARGOT: But I must say you just have to have that within you. Nobody can teach you anything like that. And I, fortunately, inherited this from my mother, who was just a very strong personality and a very wonderful person.

INT: Was she a happy person?

MARGOT: She was a very happy person, and she went through hell in her life, and still came up always on top, and always made us feel that we should always look up, never look down, never go to the bottom of anything, always go to the top. And she was just a plain wonderful mother.

INT: Did she say things like that to you?

MARGOT: Yes, she did say that to us.

INT: Because that sounds like something-

MARGOT: She used to say, all human beings are alike. Just remember. You can go to the president just as much as you could go to the janitor. But you talk to the president and

you're going to become somebody, but if you talk only with the janitor, you will be like the janitor, so therefore-

INT: Now did she talk to both of you, you and your brother, the same way?

MARGOT: Yeah, yeah. She did.

INT: She didn't make it more important that he was a boy-

MARGOT: I could not really connect too much with what she said to my brother, because he was four and a half years older than I am, so at this point of my life, which was a hard time of all our lives, I did not pay too much attention to what she said to my brother, because he was already in a different age group. And she was concentrating on my brother's life very much and I think I will tell you later on in our interview about what happened to him and how strong she was then to continue to support him and everything.

INT: You know, we'll finish the section on what you know of the families that your mother and father came from a little bit and anything you know about their beliefs, but then we should talk about your life and the four of you. What did your mother's father do for a living? Do you know?

MARGOT: My mother's father?

INT: Your grandfather.

MARGOT: I know he was with the fire department, I think, way back, but I don't know. I think it was...of course when I grew up he was a retired person, and he built beautiful, what is it called, whittling?

INT: Yes, little carvings.

MARGOT: He did carvings, and he made beautiful doll houses for me. I mean, he was just a wonderful grandpa. No, Nancy would not remember him at all, because-

NANCY: No, I didn't know him, but I knew my grandmother.

MARGOT: Oh yes, and he made...I mean it was just concentrating on my brother and myself an awful lot. I mean, he was just a wonderful father.

INT: Was your mother the only one with...oh, no.

MARGOT: No, no.

INT: Other people had children.

MARGOT: My aunt had no children. My aunt was single.

INT: Because she came to live with you.

MARGOT: Yes, but it's not only that she lived with us. My aunt was also engaged to a Jewish gentleman, but unfortunately he died during the First World War, so she never fell in love again, and I think it was meant by the good Lord to be like that. It was also bashert, because she was probably meant to be my mother's support all during her life.

INT: How did your grandparents, your mother's family, handle the fact that their two daughters were both in love with Jewish men? Did this-

MARGOT: They didn't seem to mind that at all. In fact, my grandpa, my mother's father, was very fond of my father. Very fond of my father. And it didn't seem to bother him at all. It didn't seem to bother him that my mother raised both of us in the Jewish religion or anything, even after my father died.

INT: This is so exceptional.

MARGOT: He only lived another year after my father passed away, until 1934, but we were constantly with him. I don't even think there was ever anything said about being Jewish or not.

INT: That's really exceptional.

MARGOT: My father tried very hard during my young years. We had servants in our home, too, so he tried very much to please, for instance, at Christmas time. Let's say, Chanukah time first, we celebrated Chanukah, but then he would get a kick out of it to have a tree and they kept on saying to us at this point already, this is not meant for you. This is meant for Grandpa, for his wife, and for your aunt Lisle and for the servants. And he said, I tell you that right now, do not expect anything great. All you get is a little plate of cookies and things like that. Presents I give to you at Chanukah. So for us it was always a special time when Grandpa came, and he appreciated that very much, because my father always wanted to make sure that the two of us realized that there was also an honor given to the other part of the family, and since he had lost his part completely, and still kept up the Jewish religion, he still felt that we should also honor our grandparents on my mother's side, and should see, you know, that there are other things. He was a very good man, my father.

INT: They are such exceptional people that you're talking about. The way he respected and honored the other side, the way your mother respected and honored his side, I mean, his religion and his wishes. The way he made it clear. The Christmas tree, which could be very confusing for children, has nothing to do with you. It's to make your grandfather feel more comfortable and the servants and that side of the family. His generosity of spirit to his wife's side of the family and the servant was quite...everybody in this story goes way beyond what normal people do. You know, they become abnormally humane, abnormally respectful. Until you said that, it almost sounded like, well, your mother went to it an unbelievable length to honor the wishes of her Jewish husband and her family had to put up with it, but it didn't...I didn't hear a piece from your father's side of something he did. And this is such a beautiful point, because if he did this, I could imagine how much they both did on both sides. This is very...and that point you made about the loss of

his own Jewish, his own religious Jewish family. That he maintained being Jewish even though he was thrown out of the family for marrying a non-Jewish woman, and his children were Jewish. His children were raised as Jews, and pretty soon we'll probably hear how his children suffered as Jews. That they could have been-

MARGOT: Could have been completely different...

INT: That's right.

MARGOT: ...if my mother wouldn't have honored my father's wishes, because so many people somehow bought themselves out and changed their religions like they changed a shirt.

INT: Even Jews tried to do that.

MARGOT: Yes, and you could somehow-I'll be very honest, you couldn't blame them either.

INT: No.

MARGOT: Because it was-

NANCY: Escape route.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: It's a matter of life and death right now.

MARGOT: That's right, just to make themselves stay alive.

INT: Well, what do you think of what your mother did? Would you rather she had done the other?

MARGOT: No. I'll tell you the truth. I was so young that I many times resented really to be different, because my friends were partially Gentile people, and when they had their confirmations, I couldn't understand why I couldn't be confirmed. But my brother, who was four and a half years older than I was, and very, very Jewish, I mean, in his ways and in his beliefs and everything. He set me straight immediately when I had my funny ideas about certain things.

INT: What did he say to you?

MARGOT: He said, you cannot do this and you're Jewish, and you just forget about it. You're too young to understand. I cannot get into any big conversations with you, but forget about it. Because there was an organization, which just recently when we were in Berlin the lady, the Christian lady who we visited who knows me when I was a little girl. She said many times we laughed about this. There used to be a group. It's called

Faurdiar. It was a group of people who were working for the Germans in foreign countries.

INT: What is the word?

MARGOT: F.D.A. Verein Fuer Deutsche in Ausland, it's called. It means Organization for Germans in Foreign Countries. And they wore a navy blue skirt and a white blouse and a red tie, and I was crazy to put this thing on because everybody else was in there before they became the B.D.M., the Nazi uniforms and all this. But that I didn't care about, but the F.D.A. I was in love with this. I wanted to do this too, and I was told you can't do it because you're Jewish. When I grew up a little bit-

NANCY: Tell that little story that you said your mother said something like one child wants to do this and one child-

MARGOT: Well, because my brother immediately put me in the right place. I had no chance to even go any further.

NANCY: But what was that story? That she said something like, she said I have one child who wants to wear a uniform and one child who doesn't.

INT: Do you remember that?

NANCY: You told me the story two weeks ago.

MARGOT: Yes, but that was Frieda who told you that, Nancy, that wasn't I. I didn't tell that.

INT: Okay, you say the story.

NANCY: I don't remember it.

INT: But this was an association with this organization. You wanted to wear...

MARGOT: That's what it was. Because my mother said-

NANCY: One child she couldn't keep out of a uniform and one...or something like that.

MARGOT: Yes, because I was young. How old was I? Twelve years old or something like that, and Gerhard was already sixteen and a half. So he was in Jewish organizations at this point and everything, but I was still running around with everybody. Nobody in Berlin at this point really separated us a lot, and there was never anything said to me, I was Jewish, and I didn't have to wear a star of David until '41, so I was always still accepted in my group of girls, so I wanted to be as they were at their age. But he put me straight many times. And that's when my mother-I think that's what you meant, Nancy, when I said to you she used to say one goes the other direction and drives me crazy with his-

INT: Zionist.

NANCY: Liberal.

MARGOT: Liberal feelings and his socialistic...and the other one wants to wear uniforms. But it was mainly really a silly thing, because it was an age difference, and I learned very quickly that I wasn't allowed to do certain things. But very trying time for young people.

INT: When you were going to school before you had to wear a star, the school you went to was a private school or a public school?

MARGOT: No, it was a public school.

INT: And so were there other Jews at the school?

MARGOT: Yes. There were, I think, three or four Jewish children in the class.

INT: In your class?

MARGOT: In my class.

INT: But most of your friends were not Jewish.

MARGOT: I would say most of my friends were not Jewish at this particular time.

INT: Sure, because most of the kids in the class were-

MARGOT: Yeah, most of the kids. As you say, it's true.

INT: But they treated you fine.

MARGOT: There was until really, until the later years, I would say in 1939, '38, something like that, when people started to call us Jews. But in general, until that time...you see, the only thing I could not enter the what we used to call the lyceum.

INT: And that would be like the exclusive high school.

MARGOT: Exclusive high school, right. Where you had to pay tuition and everything. We could not enter anymore as Jews. My brother was still able to go through school, you know, until his what we call Ein Jaehriges, which was almost equal to two years of college. He was still able to continue this, but I wasn't even allowed to get in there anymore, so I had to complete my school years in a public school, and we went to school from six years of age until fourteen years. And then people who graduated from public school went usually as apprentices or different vocational schools from there, on which I was not accepted either. But because I was an excellent student, I was accepted in...then there was still a Jewish school in Berlin.

INT: What was the name of the school?

MARGOT: The August Lehman Schuller. And therefore there-

INT: Who was August Lehman?

MARGOT: August Lehman?

INT: I mean did you know who he was that the school was named after him?

MARGOT: No, it was too short that I had to go there, because I was already finishing off my later years. I was fifteen years old at this point. And then I was accepted in the Hoehere Handelsschule Joseph Schule, which was a commercial college, and I went a year to the commercial college.

INT: What were you going to study there?

MARGOT: What I wanted to study was shorthand and English and Spanish, and English I never made, but Spanish I learned, which I don't remember one word, and it was important to have the English language, really, which I learned later. And typing. What you learn in a commercial college. But this school was closed after just about a year when I went there, which was in 1940. I was sixteen years old so it was just before we had to wear the star of David.

INT: In '41?

MARGOT: They closed. No, I think we still...I have to remember now. Yes, just in the beginning of '41 the school closed, and we were not allowed to go there anymore. And we had to go to the how do you call these things now? The employment agency. And we had to be...they sent us to forced labor, which for me was a telephone company called Deutsche Telephone Werke. And I worked there from the middle of '41 until, it happened to be my birthday, the 27th of February, 1943, when everyone of the Jewish citizens of Berlin were, it was called a Fabrik Aktion, which was a collection of all Jewish inhabitants of Berlin directly from their place of work, without even taking them out of their homes. We were all sent to a collection area which was called a Sammellager. And we were brought in there. And I met my girlfriend in there, thank the good Lord, who was coming from another factory who was also...there was a big, big...it's very well known in Berlin to this day. The 27th of February, 1943, where everybody was collected out of these forced labor working places. And all what we used to call Volljuden, everybody who was not of mixed marriages, right away had to go to one part of this place, never were allowed to go home, and were taken away from there directly. The other part of the people who were from mixed marriages were sent to the right side, and we were let go after about a whole day spending in this place. It was a horrible situation. But I must say, when they took us out of this factory-

NANCY: Is it that Rosenthaler Strasse?

MARGOT: No, that was later on. It was Hamburger Strasse. It came later. Because we have pictures of them.

INT: It's so great that you know this.

MARGOT: But when we were taken out of this factory, I was always a big, healthy looking girl. And there were some older people who worked with us. It was called a Jew bunker, where we were away from everybody, put into a closed area with one horrible Nazi man in there who directed us to make relays, I think it's called, for telephones. We were working there for a year and a half for minimum, minimum money. And when we were taken out of this place, big army trucks came to pick us up from there to bring us to what I mentioned before, this Sammellager, the collection place, and I jumped down from the truck and I put my hands out and I let an old lady step into my folded hands to lift her up on the truck, and one of these horrible S.S. guys came and he hit me with the back of his gun, his rifle, right across the back. And then he told me, now you beautiful German Yudensau, get on that truck before I shoot you. So I jumped on the truck. I was only how old? In '41 I was seventeen, no sixteen years old. So that was it. And then from there on we were sent home as I said before.

INT: You with the group of half-Jewish. That's the group that was sent home.

MARGOT: Yes, that was sent home.

INT: About how many people were in your group and how many in the other?

MARGOT: I would say about a hundred, maybe.

INT: And in the other group that was kept?

MARGOT: Thousands, thousands.

INT: So that's when most of the Jews from Berlin were taken out. That was the big-

MARGOT: And we felt terrible because these were all our friends we worked with, and it was a horrible, horrible sight. So we went...we were also not allowed to use mass transportation after certain hours, which was nine o'clock at night, so when they let us go it was about ten thirty in the evening, and a little group of us, we jumped on the trolley car, but holding something over our star of David, of course. (Laughter)

NANCY: Only a seventeen year old can do that.

MARGOT: And we turned around, and there was one of the Gestapo people jumping on the end of the trolley car, and he took one look at us and he didn't say a word but he just showed us with his finger to remove ourselves immediately from this trolley car. And of course we all did, and then we walked home from there, and we found our parents, I mean, my mother, others had still parents there, in a horrible condition because fortunately, I must say, the lady who was my supervisor, so called, in the factory, was a deep-down probably communist, but didn't let anybody know. And she made me stick a piece of paper through a little...what shall I say on this truck when I was taken away from there.

NANCY: Opening.

MARGOT: Opening, with my mother's telephone number on there. So she called my mother and told her that I was taken away. She didn't know where to, but she knew that I was taken away. So my mother, of course, waited until I came home.

INT: Was your brother picked up at that time too?

MARGOT: No, my brother was already living underground at this particular point, because my brother-

INT: Now would be a good time to talk about your brother.

MARGOT: My brother was very, very Jewishly involved in all different areas, and he had a great circle of friends. One of them was the famous Stella Krugler. You probably know of her.

INT: From the book Stella?

MARGOT: From the book Stella, yes.

INT: Oh, G-d.

MARGOT: Who was, at this point, a very nice girl. When all these young people met at the time, they were a group of Jewish teenagers who were very nicely doing their own thing, going to their...or whatever it was, dancing, etc., etc. And Stella at this time was Stella Kuebler, a very nice girl.

INT: The Marilyn Monroe of that school. The book-

NANCY: The Peter Wyden book.

INT: Peter Wyden wrote this pretty best-selling book called Stella, about the famous Stella Kuebler.

MARGOT: Stella Kuebler Jacobson. The reason why I bring her into this statement I'm making here is because she appears later on in my brother's life again. When my brother...we had no relatives in any foreign country, and money-wise it was also limited at this particular point, so my mother was not able to pay any large amounts of money for us to emigrate out of Germany. So we had to stay there. But there was something coming up, usually, from a youth Aliyah to England at this point, and apparently, as far as I can remember, the king of England allowed certain young Jewish kids to come over there, men mainly, to work in factories in England. My brother applied for that and finally succeeded and he got a notice from the House of Royalty there or whatever you call it that he would have a position in I think it was either Liverpool or Birmingham, in a factory. And he was very happy about it, but it was 1941, and he couldn't get out anymore. Apparently the correspondence between the Koenigs Haus or the royal residence and my brother was picked up by the Gestapo in the long run somewhere,

because they knew exactly about it later on when he was caught. So in 1941, one evening appeared a Gestapo man outside our door, and they wanted to pick my brother up. And he was not at home at this particular point. So my mother said, my son is not here. I cannot give him to you. He wanted to interview him. So he said, well, when he comes back he has to report to a certain area there to the Gestapo. Well, he came back and my mother told him that, and he said, well, that was the last time he was going to remain at home. He packed himself a suitcase and he left, because he knew what would happen to him probably, because at this point I was not at all aware what he was connected with it.

INT: He was now about twenty?

MARGOT: He was twenty years old. Nineteen years old, maybe. Nineteen years old. No, wait a minute. He was older. Twenty-one years old. Because he was born in 1920 on the 14th of August, 1920. His name was Gerhard Redlich. He was a wonderful brother.

INT: I wanted to ask you what he was like for you.

MARGOT: An overpowering, intelligent and just a complete opposite to myself. Very, very sensitive. I must say I'm very sensitive, too, but he was very studious, very quiet, while I was a very noisy child. It should have been the opposite. He should have been the girl and I should have been the boy, but I think in the long run for my survival it was better I had the stamina that he had it. We had a, I would say, a very trying relationship, because we used to fight a lot like brothers and sisters do. And he was always telling me, you know, I was wrong about this and that.

INT: Big brother.

MARGOT: Yes. And I should listen to him. To make a long story short, he got involved with a group of young people which belonged to the same group which Stella was in there too in the beginning. And one of them was a son of my mother's best friend, who my mother could see was not going in the right direction, somehow. Not only was he also Jewish, I mean from a mixed marriage, raised in the Jewish religion, but in addition I think tried to be a little bit communistically influenced. And my mother felt that my brother should draw away from this relationship, simply it's enough already to be Jewish, but to be in addition to it involved in something which is so against everything, he should not do this. What I learned on this trip with my Nancy now when we went, which I never saw before when I went to Germany, and I looked for my brother's...really, reasons for his death later on, I found out because of my intelligent daughter who knows how to use computers or whatever.

NANCY: Card catalog.

MARGOT: Card catalog or whatever in libraries which I have absolutely no patience for, and she found something in reference to him, which I had never known before.

INT: What did she find?

MARGOT: Well, this is coming. I really have to say first what happened to him. So he escaped and lived underground in Berlin, but he spoke five languages, so he hooked up with some kind of a French speaking group of people.

INT: He spoke German-

MARGOT: French, English, Latin and, I mean Latin in a way, but he could make himself understood. And there was another language. What was it?

INT: Was it a Slavic language?

MARGOT: Hebrew.

INT: Oh, Hebrew.

MARGOT: Hebrew, of course. He learned, he was a very studious and intelligent boy. And it's a shame that a human being like this had to be destroyed the way he was. He could have been a great asset to this world, even to this day. So he lived underground in Berlin, and my mother had a certain way of getting together with him. Of course, he could not call, because everything at home with us was watched. They came back again and my mother said he's not here. I told you he's not here. I don't know where he is. He never came home. So the reason for it also, I must admit because otherwise you might get confused was that my mother just stayed the way she was. Never rocked the boat. Never said that she was converted or anything. So she was able to keep us, keep me at least, safe. So she, in fact, had a sign with him somehow that he went into a telephone booth on...which is in the midst of Berlin. And she used to watch this telephone booth. And then he used to put his suitcase down there with his dirty clothing and things. (End of tape 1, side 2)

INT: And it's so great to have you here. This is really different.

MARGOT: Well, at least she can also give you something.

INT: She helps.

MARGOT: So I wanted to say...he used to bring his dirty clothing and things into this telephone booth. Made believe that he was making a telephone call, left the suitcase there and then my mother used to go in there and pick it up, put her suitcase in there, and then he made believe that he forgot something, came back and picked up his clean clothing. And she used to put food and everything in there too, of course. So that went on for over, I would say, about a year, that they did this.

INT: How did she know when to go to the phone booth?

MARGOT: I have no idea. She kept everything away from me. She did not...she told me this later what she did. During the time when she did it, she never told me.

INT: You didn't know anything.

MARGOT: She never mentioned to me where he was. She never mentioned to me what he did, and I realized then, and now even more than ever, that she wanted to keep me completely free of everything because the Gestapo interrogated everybody and I would not have been able with a clear mind to say I don't know.

INT: That's right.

MARGOT: And she was just a great lady. She was a great lady. And so when...I wanted to say something now about this...okay. One day he had really felt very much that he had not seen me for a year and he wanted to see me, and at this point we had the, what is it called during the air raids?

INT: Oh, the shelters.

MARGOT: No, no. When you had to make everything dark.

INT: The blackout shades.

MARGOT: Blackout, yes. So there were no street lamps or anything on either because of the air raids. My mother said to me I should go downstairs and go shopping somewhere, and I kind of resented that. I said, no, I'm not going down in the dark, no. And she said, I want you to go to the store on the Inselstrasses because I want you to walk out here and get me something. I can not recall, it's so many years back, to buy something there. So I walked out and suddenly I heard a voice behind me, Margot, don't turn around.

NANCY: Well tell her what he called you.

MARGOT: Rigshin he used to call me.

NANCY: What does it mean?

MARGOT: Rigshin. It's like a nickname. It's a cute little nickname. Because Ricka is somebody who's wild. So ever since I was small he used to say to me...Rigshin, it's me. Keep on walking. Do not turn around. But when you come to a certain area, don't even go into the store what mother told you. You turn around, you come toward me and I want to see you. And that was the last time I saw him. I never saw him again. Never saw him again.

INT: Did you spend time there with him?

MARGOT: No, no.

NANCY: She was just passing by.

MARGOT: All I did was-

INT: Oh, G-d.

MARGOT: He just wanted to pass by. He only talked behind me. You know, he was walking behind me and he was telling me not to turn around even, just to listen to him, and when I come to the corner that I should turn around and go toward him. He wanted to see me. And that's what I did. We didn't touch and I just looked at him, and that was it. But I guess my youth and everything helped me to overcome. So then my mother never asked a word when I came home. I just said to her, you know whom I saw. I saw Gerhard. And she said, oh, you did. And that was all. She had set up everything. She told me that later, in years to come that she had that set up, but she never said anything. So then my mother, shortly after that, when she met him one day she realized that he had a gun with him, and she said to him Gerhard, please do not...she talked to him at times. In fact, she called him. He was living in what we call a Pension, overseas, but it is a...like a rooming house.

INT: Like a pension?

MARGOT: Pension, exactly. And a lady answered the telephone, the lady that was in charge of it, and she called him and he came to the telephone and she told him that she doesn't want to see that in his hand again, ever, because he's going to run into more problems, and he said leave that up to me. I know what I'm doing, because if I ever get caught, they will go with me.

INT: They will-

MARGOT: They're going to go with me. He'll kill them first, he said.

INT: Not being such a good revolutionary, I didn't know what that meant. I see.

MARGOT: But my mother was terribly scared of him carrying this gun along. And-

INT: Did she know much about his group?

MARGOT: She didn't know anything about the group. She didn't absolutely know anything about the group. So then she called one day and she had...this woman answered the telephone again. And she said is this you. Are you his girlfriend again who called here. So she said, yes, I am. She said, well you better get away from that guy. He's a Jew and his name is not Monsieur so and so, he is a German Jew and you leave him alone. She said they caught him and she didn't know anything about it at this point.

INT: That's how your mother heard?

MARGOT: That's how my mother found out, yes. And then she was of course notified to come. Of course in the meanwhile, in the beginning-oh, I forgot to say something. He was taken into custody to Lewetzow Strasse Sammellager to go into a concentration camp because of that correspondence which was caught with the king. They said that he was already politically involved but he ran away from that. So they had him double now. It was two fold crimes already at this point.

INT: One was in making plans to leave Germany to go to be a Zionist-

MARGOT: To have a correspondence with a-

INT: Oh, with an enemy.

MARGOT: Yes, with an enemy, sure. England was an enemy.

INT: Right, I forgot.

MARGOT: And in addition to it, that he ran away from the transport to the concentration camp. So that was even...that was after I had seen him, so it was in between this time when my mother found out that he caught.

INT: And this is '43, you think.

MARGOT: No, that was in '42. Beginning of '42. And he was caught. Now comes the story with Stella Krugler. Isaacson at this point.

INT: Who was Isaacson?

MARGOT: That was Ralph. That was her husband. You know, she wasn't Stella Kuebler anymore. She was the woman who went around catching Jewish people, and he was sitting in a restaurant on Ulanstrasser in Berlin.

INT: Your son- I mean, your brother.

MARGOT: My brother, right. And she came in with the Gestapo, and at this point, the Gestapo used to go around and look also for young people, young Germans who were not in the army. You know, who were-

INT: AWOL.

MARGOT: AWOL, that's right. So they looked at my brother, and of course he had these foreign papers. Anyhow, he wouldn't speak German. He only spoke French with his comrades there. And she went over there and she said you can take these guys along too because they're three German Jews. They are not foreigners. And that's how they were caught.

INT: She identified your brother-

MARGOT: She identified my brother and the two other guys.

INT: -from when they had been friends before.

MARGOT: The two other guys now I realize what is true. Must have been former friends also.

INT: Horrible. She picked him out?

MARGOT: Yes, and she was a friend.

INT: Well, that's what she did. She picked-

MARGOT: That's how he was caught. And of course, then they didn't let him go at all anymore, because in the meanwhile they found out that he was otherwise politically involved and to my mother's regret if he would not have continued to do what he did with this gun, and being involved with this other gentlemen who was in the Communistic-

NANCY: Party.

MARGOT: Not the Party, he wasn't. But he was involved with activities, Communistic activities. I guess he got involved with this, and being young and being stubborn and being Jewish on top of it, and fighting for his Judaism, he got into wrong hands and wrong ideas, and unfortunately was at this point probably marked as a political prisoner and put into Ploetzensee and executed by guillotine.

INT: By guillotine?

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: I didn't realize guillotine was still used. I thought it was a historical-

MARGOT: No, the guillotine was taken away by the Russian soldiers when they came into Berlin. I don't think they are there anymore.

NANCY: I've been doing some reading since we got back. And the Baum Group, the White Rose Group-

INT: The White Rose Group were the young German resistance, like they were fighting the Nazis.

MARGOT: Resistance fighters, yes.

INT: They were high school kids.

MARGOT: The judge at the time, Freisler, Roland Freisler, that was the judge who-

INT: In your brother's trial?

MARGOT: In my brother's trial, yes.

NANCY: He was the judge for like they called it the Monster's Court. I just started to do some reading on this now, because now, of course, it becomes more interesting.

INT: Tell me what you found out.

MARGOT: Well, you must say that my brother was not connected with this. He was a separate case.

INT: He wasn't part-

MARGOT: Freisler just-

NANCY: It was the people's court, and he judged political dissidents. That was his job.

INT: How do you spell Freisler?

MARGOT: F-R-E-I-S-L-E-R. Freisler.

INT: When you say it's called the Monster Court?

NANCY: I mean, that's the way it was described in this book. I recently took a book out of the library called Germans against Hitler, because I became like acutely interested in seeing what was happening there. Not as much what was happening Jewishly, but what was happening in Germany. And he presided over the court that sentenced all those people, the people you hear about, the Baum Group, Stauffenberg.

INT: He did that one too, von Stauffenberg?

NANCY: Yes, all of them. All of them. Anything that was politically against the Nazi party he presided over. And the man that took us on the tour of Berlin when we were there said that some of the information that they have leads them to believe that he destroyed records of people who were killed, because my uncle wasn't on any list. That's like what really made me pursue looking for him in this library, because we couldn't find...there was a register at Ploetzensee Prison. There's a log there of people who were killed, and he wasn't on it. But the whole day that he was executed on was not in it. So that's when I first put in for this book which we're going to get. I ordered it from Berlin. It's called The Dead of Ploetzensee. And he's still not-if this is really interesting, it almost may make me write the author, because he's not in the register in the back of the book, but then I'm about to put the book back on the shelf. I've had enough of this book. It's not giving me the information. I turn to the index in the back and there's not only a reference to that instance, or that day, but his name in the index of the book, which gives us this paragraph and describes that they were killed on July 8, 1943. But if they have that information, why isn't he in the log? I don't understand. It's a little murky.

INT: Could be because they weren't doing it by computer it might have just slipped.

MARGOT: Yes, but the information in this book is a confusing, completely confusing information.

INT: Why is that?

MARGOT: Because what it says is that he and the other two young men pretended to be Gestapo men...it's really hard for me to express myself in English because it is so confusing in German even, that it might sound all together different than what it is supposed to be. Everything has a question mark behind it. It says that they also-

NANCY: Could this have possibly been this-

MARGOT: It says it could have been that they took-

NANCY: Like what could have happened to these three people.

MARGOT: If they pretended to be Gestapo, that they were dealing with Jewish people and did take away things from Jewish people. Were the Jewish people aware of who they were?

NANCY: Were they doing this so that the Gestapo wouldn't get it?

MARGOT: That's right.

INT: Say that again.

NANCY: Were these three young men, including my uncle, doing, like robbing quote on quote from fellow Jews so that the Gestapo wouldn't get the goods, like with the thought that they would return it to them later or something. It's all very unclear.

INT: That's how the author writes?

MARGOT: Yes. Everything is a question.

NANCY: Was it like the motive of the Baum Group? What was it?

MARGOT: Was it the same motive of the Baum Group? It's all speculation. The whole thing is speculation. There's nothing really in there that shows anything, and underneath it says the thesis of the motive was never really clear, and they were just plain killed. There was nothing that was ever coming out, so whatever it was and the more I think about it now and the more...isolated words in German and in English is that he was connected with some kind of a Communistic group.

NANCY: I feel like I need to pursue it more, because to me it seems sort of strange, although maybe it's not, that this author would dedicate a paragraph to these three guys out of the blue. Was it just an interesting sort of insert or entry into a record somewhere. I, for myself, need to pursue it. Why did he question? What was it that motivated the author to question the actions of these three people, apart from other people? You know what I mean? There's something about it that hit him.

INT: And also where he got his information.

NANCY: Right. Well, it was impossible to find that out when we were there and really, really frustrating to me. I mean, it's a footnoted paragraph, and no one could tell me what this other register is. The footnote. So that's why I ordered the book, because I need to be able to really get into it.

MARGOT: I'll tell you. It upset me terribly. It did not upset me terribly because to read something about my brother there which I was not aware of. That upset me, yes, to a certain extent, but not as much as that my mother kept these things away from me. That she was so strong. And it's not that I said she kept it away from me intentionally, yes intentionally, but she kept it away from me so my mind would always be free. That I don't have to lie about anything. And when we, of course, came to this country later on, and everything, I never questioned it any more.

INT: See, that would be a different time. She could have told you then.

MARGOT: But she didn't. I also think, now really categorizing everything in the right direction, that she was ashamed of what he did, because she had numerous times made contact with other people to hide him in different areas with German people who accepted that and wanted to do it. And he said, no-

INT: Accepted what?

MARGOT: That she should bring him in there and they would-like, for instance, one man said he would put him on one of these freight barges that go from one town to the other one, and he would have to work on there. But he was standing up for his Jewishness. He will not do that. He will fight for his rights. He was a rebellion in this particular point.

INT: So you're saying she had different plans for how to get him away.

MARGOT: She had completely different plans for him, and even after she saw him with this gun, she had different plans for him, to save him. And these people, for instance we visited in Berlin at this time, Nancy and I, the father of this lady wanted to save him also, and wanted to kind of hide him somewhere, but he did not accept that. I can only explain it, and living now through seventy years of my life, that it was in addition to this Jewish situation it was a rebellious feeling in him. And a very Jewish feeling. And whatever it's written in this book, even with question marks, and that he did somehow, how shall I say, what it says, robberies, was it done with knowledge of the Jewish people or something like that. It doesn't connect with me. There is something missing in this whole thing. What he did, I'm sure, was not a crime to the Jewish people. What it was, the crime was self-preservation and I think his ideals at this point might have been Communistic ideals that he had.

INT: Well, you know that a lot of the leaders of the Communist Party were Jewish. But they weren't so religious the way you've described your brother as so proud of being Jewish.

MARGOT: Well, I don't really think that...he must have known what he was doing, but I think that he was plain brainwashed by some other groups of people. My brother was a follower. My brother was not a leader. I'm the leader, but he was not a leader. He was a follower.

NANCY: It's amazing to me because when you hear the story, I visualize this man. This was like a twenty two year old boy. In a time, like we've spoken, youth was different than it is now. Now we expect people to be older for their years. I guess he was.

MARGOT: I must admit I'm happy that I read this, even though it upset me, but I found at least something about my brother, somewhere written down, and it's not that somebody disappeared, because my mother, at this point, even had to take a Jewish lawyer. What the Jewish lawyer was supposed to do is beyond my understanding, had to witness the execution. And this Jewish lawyer, of course, was also from a mixed marriage, because otherwise no Jewish lawyer would have been able to. And this man had a nervous breakdown after my brother was executed and his wife never forgave my mother for taking him as a lawyer to witness my brother's death. It was a whole *famishte eingeleideinheit*, so called.

INT: Your mother wanted somebody there-

MARGOT: They had to. Had to. The court-

NANCY: It was the whole lunacy of the Nazis.

MARGOT: The court, the court.

INT: I didn't understand why she had a lawyer to watch.

MARGOT: The court. The court called Mr. Freisler. He had to bring a lawyer. He had to be represented by a lawyer while he was sitting in prison.

INT: You know, they call these...it's like fake trials. Mock trials.

MARGOT: Mock trials. Right, exactly.

INT: But I didn't know they even had to supply lawyers.

MARGOT: Yes, they had to supply a lawyer and my mother had to pay the lawyer, and this lawyer had to be present at the execution. And the man was Jewish himself, so he told my mother he was so in love with my brother, because, you know, he spent time with him. A year almost in prison there.

INT: Oh, he was in prison a year.

MARGOT: Oh, yeah. He was killed on the 8th of July 1943, and he was in prison since '42, I think, exactly a year before. So he was sitting there. I mean that's what they did at this point. That my mother told me. All these things she told me.

NANCY: Tell her what she told you what your brother said as he was-

MARGOT: Yeah, so when he said I can only tell you one thing-

INT: This is what the lawyer told your mother?

MARGOT: What the lawyer told my mother, yes. And then he took ill. He had a nervous breakdown. He told my mother that when my brother was walking down toward the guillotine, he screamed at Freisler, and he told him now you can see how Jews die and so that's all I know.

NANCY: The thing that's unbelievable to me is see this is where like I always feel, I don't know, you know, when people question me about my past and stuff, the fact is that the reports that I have are not from the camps, because those people did not survive. But this is so tragic, you know, and it's so painful. It's exactly why I wanted to be here with you and talk to you about it, because it needs to be documented, and people need to understand that this sort of thing took place, and that tragedy and trauma...I mean, I don't know how else to express it either. Clearly, obviously people know that there was tragedy outside of the camps, but the emphasis is always on the camps, and I'm not trying to detract from the camps at all, because that was at very best horrific. And I also lost family in the camps. But I think that this is like a very special, unique-

INT: It is. It's a very different situation, and it's a story really unlike anything I've ever heard. That first your parents whole story. Their love and the price that they had to pay for loving each other in terms of family ties, broke a number of them. And then this dimension about your brother. As if your mother didn't suffer enough losing-

MARGOT: A child.

INT: Well, losing a husband, and then raising her children in the Nazi regime of Jews. Even more, to lose a child is just unbelievable.

MARGOT: ...ration cards, the Jewish ones. And then my aunt and her German friends gave us additional food from theirs, usually, so I don't know if that-

INT: That would be very interesting.

MARGOT: And fit in there too, because that fits into the family setting too, because-

INT: Because I'm interested in day to day life of the family. So do you remember...you were too little to know what the ration cards were for Jews, but they were very small.

MARGOT: They were very, very small. We had a J written on it, you know Jew, Juden, all over, and you could only go shopping between, I think it was, three to five in the afternoon or something like that.

INT: So very restricted hours for Jews to shop.

MARGOT: Restricted hours for shopping and restricted meals.

INT: So the rations were much smaller and the hours that you could even use the rations.

MARGOT: And no extras. No salami or anything like that, was never.

INT: What kinds of things were the rations for?

MARGOT: There was potatoes. It was vegetables, usually turnips and very seldom anything great on vegetable. Then there was meat, but very, very small portions, very small portions. And bread and milk. Very small amount of butter. I don't think there ever really was any butter and margarine.

INT: When did this start that you remember?

MARGOT: When did it start, in '41, because otherwise they had no way of checking us.

INT: I see. So before the start they couldn't know automatically.

MARGOT: They couldn't know when we walked into the store. We wouldn't be able to be identified.

INT: And your mother's sister, that's who gave her extra rations?

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: The non-Jewish relatives helped to supplement your food.

MARGOT: Not only non-Jewish relatives. In addition to it, also her friends tried to support us and gave. Because everybody had food rations, you know. But Christian people, I'd say the gentile people had much more of rations than we were allowed to get, and so they sometimes cut their own and gave it to us, because we were growing children.

INT: That's wonderful. That's not a story that we hear so much.

MARGOT: Yes. But that's why I say and that's why I always felt I wanted Nancy to know about this. That there was not...the majority of the German people were not nice to us at all, to Jewish people, but there was a small group of people who did support us. And that's when I took her to Germany now, with this feeling she had, and it was told as a small child by her grandmother, by myself and by her father also, even though he was not quite as secure about feelings, but he did have also some friends who helped him. She saw, of course, the positive side, and she did not go to Germany with a feeling that she was facing only evil. That she was also facing something which was nice about it, and I think that made her whole experience in Berlin this past two weeks-

INT: Two weeks ago.

MARGOT: ...really positive.

INT: I think also your attitude all through her growing up prepared her in a way that was much more positive than if she had only heard such dreadful stories.

MARGOT: Right. Well, I always felt-

INT: It's very important.

MARGOT: I had gone through this and we have lost so much and why? This is a new generation and the same as I have started a new generation and it was an overpowering happening between my husband and myself that we even had this child to continue a family, because we were both up in age already. I was thirty-six and a half when Nancy was born, and he was forty-eight years old. So we really never thought that we would have a child, and then having her was such a wonderful experience, to continue a family, that I felt I didn't want only negative things to be placed into her head, because there was a good past too, and not only all this bad time. But I think it really, I can see now since she's a mother herself, that it made an impression on her, and that she is so sensitive to so many feelings, but on the other hand this has no hatred in her bones, let's say, in her body, because I don't think, as I said before, you cannot blame the sons for the crimes the fathers committed. You cannot live and hate. It's impossible. Otherwise you really eat yourself up from within. It's not the right thing to do.

INT: It's an extraordinary attitude that you have. Coming out of such a terrible experience, and feeling hopeful, as you seem to do, and feeling this line that you just said. You cannot live and hate. Some people do, but they're not living.

MARGOT: Yes. Exactly.

INT: It's as if you chose life over hatred.

MARGOT: Well, I think when you look into my face you will see that I love life. That I never had the fortune, but I lived, because to me I feel if G-d gave me the opportunity to continue to live then I make the best out of it. And you don't need enormous wealth. You need happiness and health. That's most important to me.

INT: How did you get that perspective? How did you learn-

MARGOT: My mother, I think, instilled that into me. Not that I even-I think it was subconsciously that I absorbed all this, because she never made a great effort to explain to me that I should do this and that. I just picked it up and that was my attitude. I can see more and more even when I look into the mirror. I look more like my mother now than I ever did, and my attitude is very much like hers. It's always uplifting, uplifting. And I think that's what I tried to instill into my daughter too.

INT: You said that you were only eight years old when your father died.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: Do you remember anything about him?

MARGOT: Yes, very much so.

INT: What?

MARGOT: He was a heavysset, very happy person. Always laughing. And always taking us to nice places.

INT: What kind of places?

MARGOT: Well, he liked soccer games. And my mother dressed us up to go with him to a nice restaurant, to go out to eat, but we ended up not only eating, we ended up in a sports stadium and had to watch soccer games with him. He visited friends and he took us shopping and bought things for us. That was mostly with my mother together, but otherwise...he was a businessman. He was not home that frequently, but when he was home it was a happy home life. It was rather more sheltered, because as you probably...today children are more, parents are more involved with their kids. When I grew up, we had...at this point we had a governess and she took care of us, but my parents were always around. It was not that they were not visible at all. But they did travel quite frequently, and we were always well taken care of.

INT: What kinds of things do you remember as some of your happiest memories from when you were a little girl? Where there any special times that stand out in your mind?

MARGOT: Standing out was a place where we used to live, and that's what I tried to take Nancy to. Unfortunately, the building we lived in...we didn't have our private home. We always lived in large, very beautiful apartment houses, which was mostly in Berlin. There was an outskirts of Berlin, had to this day also suburban area where there are lots of private homes. But we never lived in private homes. We always had very exclusive, lovely apartments. And one of them, I must say, was in an area which was not the west, the fancy area, but it was in a very well-to-do area. They had estates there too, but it had expensive apartment buildings, and one of them was Am Stadt Park it was called. And there was a big park right across from there.

INT: What was it called?

MARGOT: Am Stadt Park. And this was the only...maybe there were two apartment houses on that street. And everything across from there was the park. It was equal to the Central Park in New York City. A large park. And so I spent most of my childhood, because until I was about ten years old...we continued to live after my father died we continued to live there for another, I would say, good three, four years, until I was about twelve years old, something like that. So I spent lots of time in that park. On a bicycle and with my friends. So it was a wonderful time to remember. And also what I remember from when my father was still alive. We used to go to the Baltic Sea for vacation spots. He used to rent a home there and we had our own cleaning lady. Whatever there was, you know, a service, and we spent sometimes four, five weeks at the seashore out there. And that I remember. But otherwise, I would say, as I told you, the Christmas time when, I told you that before the other time you interviewed me in reference, which was always a wonderful time to experience, between Chanukah and then from my mother's side, when her family came and we had very lovely times together. We didn't, of course, the Jewish holidays were special for us, but there was mostly very close family, which was at this point just ourselves, because otherwise there was nobody there to come to visit us, and

my aunt, who was not Jewish. She was always invited. My father always had here for Rosh Hashana and for Passover, but it was mostly in a small circle of family. Maybe my Aunt Gretel and Uncle Arthur used to come with my two cousins.

INT: These were your father's-

MARGOT: That was my father's family, as I mentioned before, his brother and sister-in-law, and the wife and two cousins.

INT: So they did come sometimes for holidays?

MARGOT: They came occasionally, yes. The cousins, my younger cousin by the name of Susie Redlich, she was sent to Holland by my aunt and uncle at the time, when she was very young, and unfortunately when Hitler got into Holland she was deported from there. One never knows. No, I would not say one never knows, because it's true. She did not even die in a concentration camp. She stayed with a family in Holland and she had leukemia. That's what it was. And was then deported, but where she went, if she went into a hospital or something, we're really not quite sure. We never heard of anything, only heard from my uncle that she died. So she died of illness or she was being killed I really don't know. My cousin Ursala Redlich came to New York. She was hear prior to-

INT: Ursala was whose child?

MARGOT: That was Arthur's. And she is, I would say, a good five, six years older than I am. She came to the United States prior to my arrival here. I saw her about twice. She married and we did never hear anything of her anymore so I don't know what happened to her.

INT: Did she come to the United States after the war?

MARGOT: Yes, she came after the war. She was in Thieresenstadt during the war, but lost her mother there. I think her mother went to Auschwitz, but Ursala was rescued from Thieresenstadt and came...liberated, I should say. And I don't even know if she came- I don't think she came to Berlin ever again. I think she went into the DP camp in Munich or something and was sent to the United States from there.

INT: Of your father's family, all the siblings, parents, anybody you know from your father's family. What do you know of their fate?

MARGOT: Nothing. I know about one cousin whom I never met but my mother used to tell me, because when I became a nurse my mother told me, well, there was one other person in our family, in your father's family, who I've heard, she said, through Aunt Gretel and Uncle Arthur that she became a midwife and she emigrated to, at this time, Palestine. I tried, when I was in Israel in-was it '91 or '90-whatever, whenever we went, it was around at that time. I tried to look into the telephone book to find somebody by the name of Redlich, but I could not find her name. So it's possible that she got married.

INT: She got married and she went on to the other name.

MARGOT: Yes. So I don't know.

INT: I bet if you bring Nancy she'll help you find it in immigration records, because there must be-

MARGOT: We tried. We tried because Nancy was with me at the time. I took Nancy. I'm sorry.

INT: I feel like Nancy can do everything now, after she did so well in Germany with your brother.

MARGOT: No, she tried. We went to the Yad Vashem and we looked up everything there. All three of us. Her lovely husband and myself. I took the kids to Israel because I knew-I try to do these things while I'm alive, so I enjoy and see if they enjoy something.

INT: That's a wonderful idea.

MARGOT: At this point I thought they didn't have enough time because he wanted to go to medical school and all this, so I felt it was something nice.

INT: That's great. Was he just about to start medical school then?

MARGOT: He was thinking of it, yes.

INT: What had he been doing before?

MARGOT: Barry was in the technical part of research in neurology, because he worked in the, it's called New England Center for Headaches. He did brain-mapping and all technical things, but I think the physicians who worked with him realized that he was really better material just to stay on the same level and they advised him to go to medical school and that's what he did, and I'm very proud of him.

INT: How far is he now?

MARGOT: He's finishing this year. In June.

INT: How wonderful. So it's really something. During his four years of medical school he has two children now. So probably when Becca was born he was just beginning.

MARGOT: Yes. Right. They just moved here to Philadelphia at that time.

INT: Oh, my G-d. Right. I didn't realize they moved here for his school.

MARGOT: Yes. That's why Nancy had this lovely job here at Beth Am Israel. She found this position and it was just made for her, because she's very happy and feels very-

INT: Oh, well we're thrilled.

MARGOT: She feels very, very happy here.

INT: She's part of everything.

MARGOT: She's part of everything and she's very proud of her Jewish heritage and so she's very happy. I'm proud of her.

INT: You've done a beautiful job.

MARGOT: Thank you very much. I think I did.

INT: I think you did. You know you did.

MARGOT: I should say we did.

INT: We did. Right.

MARGOT: It was my husband too.

INT: Your husband was involved.

MARGOT: He would be pleased. I wish he would be here now and see what Nancy-

INT: How she turned out.

MARGOT: Yes. How she turned out to be. A real mother. He was, thank G-d, at the time-I don't know if I should put this in at this time-

INT: Yes, that's fine.

MARGOT: But when Nancy got married 1988 my husband was already dying of cancer, and since I'm a registered nurse and it was very well known in the hospital where I was working as a director of employees and everybody prayed for this man to be alive when Nancy gets married, and G-d gave him that pleasure. And even so, we brought him in a wheelchair to the Temple in Larchmont. He stood up, walked out of his wheelchair, and walked his daughter down the aisle. And to see the tape these days and to see him standing there...and I had asked the rabbi to please put two chairs for us there, because I tell you the truth, I wasn't quite sure if I'm strong enough to face this all either, and he did. And I said to my husband, honey, please sit down. You don't have to stand now. The rabbi gave us two chairs. And he said, when my daughter gets married, I will pull all my strength together and I'm standing here. For a half hour, until the rabbi said, I think we're trying to prove a little bit too much here. We shall make the sermon a little bit shorter. And it's beautiful to see on our tape at home now, you know, and Nancy is very, very proud of this. We both are very, very proud.

INT: That's so beautiful.

MARGOT: It's a wonderful feeling to see that. And he loved her very, very much. Thank G-d that he was still able to see all of this. It was really the culmination of his life was his daughter's wedding, because he never came out of the hospital again, and I mean

I don't want to sound sad in any way, but this child has some power somehow, I must say, because she sat on his bed...he died on the 10th of August 1988, and on the 9th of August was her birthday, and on the 8th she sat on his bed and she said, Daddy, please, please, don't die on my birthday. Please don't die on my birthday. And he didn't. He died on the tenth in the evening. I think it was just...he tried very hard to give her-

INT: Her birthday.

MARGOT: Her birthday. So she would not always see that that's the outside of what she has to remember it.

INT: Exactly. One of the things I'd like to do, but not in the middle of your story, is have you tell me as much as you know about your husband's life. His family, his birth. But I don't want to do it in the middle of yours. Having this story, about Nancy's father, is different.

MARGOT: Yes, I will tell you about his life.

INT: That would be wonderful because you're the only one now who could preserve his memory.

MARGOT: No, no. I will do that.

INT: And then when I talk with Nancy about what it means to her to be who she is we'll have both sides. Not in his own voice, but thank G-d through the words of the women who he loved. (End of tape 2, side 1)

INT: This is the third tape and it's March 7th now, 1995. Before we continue with where we had just left off, I want to ask you some information that I forgot to ask in the beginning.

MARGOT: Sure.

INT: All right. I have your name. I have your age and I have your place of birth, Berlin. How many years were you married to your first husband?

MARGOT: Thirty-three years.

INT: And you were married when?

MARGOT: On the 27th of August, 1955 in New York City.

INT: And then you said he died in August-

MARGOT: He died in August, on August 10th 1988.

INT: And you're now married to an American, and his name is what and when did you marry him?

MARGOT: His name is Alex Wendrow, but I remained Margot Krisch, and never changed my name to Wendrow. But he is another very, very lovely person, and I think it's just unusual for one person to have two lovely husbands, where so many-

INT: Don't have one.

MARGOT: People I know don't have one, or sometimes not such nice people.

INT: That's true. Well, I'm glad that you did.

MARGOT: Yes. I must say I'm always saying I'm blessed. Knock on wood, kinahara.

INT: You knocked on your head, but it's not so wood type. Actually the next question I want to ask you is what your level-you said you were a nurse. The level of education and where did you study?

MARGOT: I studied in Berlin. I became a registered nurse in Berlin. But when I came to the United States I came across not speaking the language one hundred percent. One hundred percent I shouldn't even say. I didn't speak the language. Period. I thought I did but I did not really understand it. So I had to continue, because of my upcoming nursing education, I had to go to school again and take English and American History, Biology in English and I don't know what was the name, some other, but I was on the nurse's training again. And I had to have my state boards taken here in the United States, which I did in 1954.

INT: Oh, just before you got married. How about your husband?

MARGOT: My husband was a Realtor, and he was-

INT: So in Berlin he finished gymnasium.

MARGOT: He finished his gymnasium. He had his complete education because he was twenty-seven years old when he came to the United States. And he worked already in his uncle's business. The Uncle Bernard I had mentioned before, whom we finally found memorials to in...cemetery, and he came to the United States and volunteered into the American army a year after he came here because he wanted to fight Hitler. And everybody said to him, Krisch, they will never send you to Germany because you have a German accent and they will not send you there.

INT: It's too dangerous.

MARGOT: They'll probably send you to the Pacific somewhere. Well, he ended up in Germany with General Patton's third army. And if there ever was an American soldier that was a hundred fifty percent, it was Gerhard Krisch who loved this country, and to him, besides his Uncle Bernard, his best uncle was Uncle Sam. America was good to him and he made that very clear with Nancy all the time. That his love for America was just very, very unusual. But I think it came also from not having any parents anymore or anything else. He came here to his second cousin, who had absolutely, to be honest, not

any understanding about what happened overseas. And my husband was very lonesome in that house. They had no children and they felt that he was too overcome by the death of his parents and his sister and brother-in-law, and they told him that other people went through the same thing. They had just absolutely no feeling toward him. So he was very much on his own after the war. He took his money together. Mr. Krisch had a real estate office and he worked for him first, but when Mr. Krisch passed away in 1952, he did not feel that he wanted to continue to work there and he build up his own business, and thank the good Lord, for about thirty-four years, something like that, he had his own real estate business. And that was in Larchmont where I still live, and where the name Krisch still means something, because he was just an unusual, beautiful person. Yes, that I must say.

INT: This is a wonderful legacy to have, to pass on to your child.

MARGOT: Oh yes.

INT: I just want to ask you a couple of very quick questions, and then we'll do more details because the poor woman who transcribes this always sees how I get off the track, because the stories are much more important to me than the outline. But this is one little part. So I have...your husband, he worked until he was sick?

MARGOT: He worked until the last moment, until he could not function anymore he worked in his office. He never retired. He was seventy-five years old when he passed away, but he never retired.

INT: We've already done one child, Nancy. When you were affiliated with the synagogue-you were affiliated?

MARGOT: Yes. Larchmont Temple in Larchmont.

INT: What kind of synagogue?

MARGOT: A reform synagogue we went to. I still belong there with my second husband now, and we were very in regard and we had a close relationship with Rabbi Poller and his wife, so it was... One day, Anne, I will show you the eulogy this man wrote when Gerhard passed away.

INT: I would like to see that.

MARGOT: It will give you a whole idea about what a man he was. I think Nancy has a tape.

INT: We'll do that.

MARGOT: Beautiful, just the way the man was, that's the way the Rabbi knew him.

INT: It's so different when somebody who really knows a person speaks the eulogy.

MARGOT: Yes. Oh yes.

INT: That's the way it should be.

MARGOT: Very much so. He was a very, very kind man, my Gerhard, really. Very unusual human being.

INT: That's wonderful. Do you mind if we talk about him in a separate time?

MARGOT: No, not at all.

INT: In it we'll have the eulogy and then I'll hear all about him, because I really would love to hear that.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: What kind of organizations did you and... you and or you or your husband belong to before and after the war? Well, during the war you were-

MARGOT: Gerhard belonged to the-I think it was Social Democratic Party, whatever it was. I didn't belong to any organizations, because I wasn't allowed to be in any organizations. I mean, there were not even any Jewish organizations any more I could belong to.

INT: How about in your life here in America. What kinds of things did you like to join?

MARGOT: Here in America? Gerhard, for instance, was a great...first of all, the army meant a lot to him, so he became the commander of a very unusual setting which a lot of people don't even believe that Jewish people are really-

INT: In the army.

MARGOT: Not only in the army, but in the American Legion.

INT: Oh, he's in the American Legion?

MARGOT: He was in the American Legion. Not Jewish war veterans. He was a member of the American Legion and became the commander.

INT: That is amazing.

MARGOT: Yes, that is amazing. And when he was installed as the commander, he had Rabbi-at the time it wasn't Rabbi Poller, it was Rabbi Shofar, I think, at Larchmont Temple, who did the installation and everything. He insisted very much and everybody knew, I mean, we never held back about our Judaism. And he was one of the best commanders they ever had at the American Legion.

INT: It's so amazing. And so the American Legion watched with Jewish blessing the Jew installed as the commander.

MARGOT: Oh yes.

INT: That must have been some event.

MARGOT: Yes. It's not only that, but also when he was buried the American Legion members were standing right there and they said their part, which was ecumenical. There was nothing...I checked first if there was anything in there which was contradictive to a temple, but no, nothing at all.

INT: That's wonderful.

MARGOT: And did the highest honors of them, also. He was buried with the American flag on his casket, which was very important to him. Very important to him. And...here, through organizations here in America. I belong to Hadassah. I'm a life member of Hadassah. And I was a member of the American Nurses Association and the Occupational Health Nurses Association, but that was before I retired, of course.

INT: When did you retire, by the way?

MARGOT: In 1990. I thought when I was sixty five years old I deserve a little bit Sabbatical myself. And Nancy had moved to Philadelphia already, and I wanted to have a little bit more time for my children, my grandchildren, I should say.

INT: That's how my mother used to talk about my children. She would get confused whose children they really were because she loved them so much.

MARGOT: Yes. Right.

INT: Very sweet.

MARGOT: So I felt it was time for me to hang up my coat there.

INT: Look at the difference that you just told me in these last few minutes. Your husband worked until the very last moment. He was seventy five when he died and he was still working until the minute that he couldn't go into the office, and you knew that life has other purposes besides working.

MARGOT: But don't forget, Anna, I also became a widow during the time when I was still working. And for a year and a half I needed this job just to keep my mind occupied. But then I adjusted. I would say I was never really lonely, because I made sure that I wasn't lonely.

INT: How did you do that?

MARGOT: I had friends and plenty of friends, but the hospital was my second family, because I worked in the hospital for thirty one years, so everybody knew Gerhard. He died in this hospital. Everybody knew when he was admitted. Everybody knew when I was ill or whenever, because I had cancer myself too in 1981.

INT: Everybody knew everything.

MARGOT: He had breast cancer first. You wouldn't believe it, as a male.

INT: He had breast cancer.

MARGOT: Breast cancer, yes. And I had breast cancer the following year in '81, so my daughter, our daughter went through, pardon me for saying hell, in her life.

INT: Sure.

MARGOT: Experiencing this trauma in addition to everything else. But thank the good Lord, I mean he lived eight years and I hope to live to be a hundred.

INT: A hundred and twenty.

MARGOT: A hundred and twenty, right. Hopefully.

INT: Go for the gold.

MARGOT: Knock on wood please, again. So I felt...what were we talking about?

INT: Why you had a different perspective about retiring?

MARGOT: Oh, yes. So I felt at this point, after I continued for another year and a half after Gerhard passed away that I deserve a little bit more in life than just to keep on working. And since I was free as a bird at this point, and I had friends who were already retired, I felt there was time for me to travel, and I'm not going to put everything into the bank and miss up on life. I think this is a very logical feeling a lot of widows have. I think more widows than widowers have that feeling. And I just took off and I saw the world. I went traveling. I went back to Europe. I went to Israel as I said with the kids already before I stopped working. I went to California and I went to Alaska. And I went back to Europe again.

INT: And during this time this is when you went with your women friends?

MARGOT: Yes. In 1990 we made a trip to England and Wales and Scotland. And back to Berlin again the same time too. And now I continue with Alex. We're not going to far at this time because he's still working, but we make the best out of our lives. That's all I can say.

INT: You have fun.

MARGOT: We have fun, the two of us, yes. He has three boys who are very, very close to us. Love Nancy. If you would see the tape we had at our wedding, when Alex got up and he said, well boys, you wanted a sister all your life, here you got it. (Laughter) And I got up and I said the same thing. You wanted siblings. You always complained. Now you got three brothers.

INT: This is amazing. So that's wonderful.

MARGOT: It's a lovely, lovely family. And Alex, of course, now, is Rebecca's and Gerald's grandpa.

INT: Do the boys that he has, do they have families?

MARGOT: They have families, yes. I have now six grandchildren, not only two of my own.

INT: Great.

MARGOT: I have a thirteen year old. Sarah will be bat mitzvahed this month and I'm very honored because I have an aliyah with Alex together, and I also was just told last week if I please would bless the candles on Friday night.

INT: Lovely.

MARGOT: And they accept me completely as her replacement of their mom, of which I told them I will never be, but I will try my best to be a grandma or oma, like I say it in German, to their children too. And the other children in Florida, down there, they are older already. College age and high school age. So that's a little bit different. But the little ones are quite frequently with us and they are very close to Nancy's children too.

INT: Beautiful. These two families have really blended so well.

MARGOT: Very lovely, yes. And really, we didn't know each other at all until-

INT: Until you did.

MARGOT: Until we finally got together. Suddenly. But very, very lovely.

INT: And when did you marry Alex?

MARGOT: On the 12th of September a year and a half ago.

INT: So you're still a newlywed.

MARGOT: Yes, '53 when we got married.

INT: '93.

MARGOT: No, '93. (Laughter)

INT: No wonder he's sorry that you leave town so...well, not so often, but you had to come now.

MARGOT: Well, I had to come here, Anne, now, because I wanted you to interview me, because when Nancy told me...when I read your note today...I felt this was very professional and I was looking forward to meet you and to talk to you, because I had it in

mind a long time to do something like this, but it never really came to it because it was not the right time and the right place.

INT: Now is the right time.

MARGOT: But now is the right time. And especially since we just came back from such a wonderful experience and Nancy knows you well, so everything fitted in nicely.

INT: It's just right. It feels very good to me, because I've liked Nancy for such a long time, and we had a very important talk.

MARGOT: You have things in common, too.

INT: Once we began to talk. Then it became clear. You wanted it. I wanted it. Nancy wanted it, and it all feels great.

MARGOT: Very nice.

INT: I'm going to ask you just one more thing about the present, and then we're going to go just where we were, because there are a few very important things as you've said when we were off tape, that we never even touched yet. I wanted to ask, have you or your husband, Gerhard, not Alex, ever been involved in any Holocaust related activities?

MARGOT: Yes. We went to meetings. I must say, I would not have gone there, because for some reason...maybe I'm kidding myself, but I didn't need it as much as Gerhard did, but I accompanied him. There is a group in our area. It's called the Holocaust Survivors and it's run by a very lovely lady who is a psychologist by the name of Annalise Herzl. And Gerhard was very much in need of sharing his feelings with other people, so we went there almost on a monthly basis. And Nancy joined the second generation of Holocaust survivors-

INT: Right. She told me.

MARGOT: ...also with that same lady, which was very good. But after Gerhard passed away I did not continue this. But I must honestly say, because the lady was a psychologist right about three offices down from my own office at the hospital, so I saw her quite frequently on a friendly basis, so I had my own little psychologist as a friendship with her.

INT: Right. As you wanted it.

MARGOT: Yes, and in fact I had Nancy ask me if I had contacted her. I will contact her now because I want her to know what I'm doing with you, and also about all our travels.

INT: That would be great.

MARGOT: She doesn't know about that.

INT: Why do you think...what do you think the difference was between...do you have any idea why your husband needed to tell his story as much as he did?

MARGOT: Well first of all he was a completely different person. He had a completely different personality than I have. He was very deep thinking, and had a lot of guilt feelings. Guilt feelings that he stayed alive, because his sister was supposed to come here to these second cousins. She was the one who was really sponsored by these people. And then she got married, and these people said that they did not want her and her husband to come together. In my opinion they wanted a maid and not two people. So when his sister heard that, she said, Gerhard, if they don't want me to come with Otto together, then you go. And he was really a mama boy, and his mother was very unhappy that she would lose her son, but little did she know that she really saved him.

INT: When did he come?

MARGOT: He came in 1941. The last ship that came over to the United States. 1940, excuse me, because 1941 he joined the American Army already.

INT: You know, I didn't realize how he could join the army. Now I understand. He came with the invitation that was intended for his sister.

MARGOT: He immigrated legally into the United States and then became an American citizen, of course, after three years of being in the American army. I think, at this point-

INT: They accelerate it.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: So this sister Gretel-

MARGOT: No, that sister-

INT: Gretel was the-

MARGOT: Oh, there's another thing. The name of his sister and my name Margot.

INT: And your name. Gretel was the sister-in-law. My mother's.

MARGOT: Yes. We had very peculiar things happening in our family. Gerhard, my first husband, had the same name like my brother.

INT: I thought we had talked about another Gerhard, but then I thought I must have imagined that.

MARGOT: No, no. But he had the same name as my brother, so when I met him, I didn't say anything about this right away, but he said to me, I have to tell you something. You have the same name like my sister. So his sister was Margot and my brother was Gerhard. He married a Margot and I married a Gerhard, so my mother always said, I have

my son back, because she had Margot and Gerhard again. It was very, very hard. Very hard.

INT: That's amazing. Not just one but both.

MARGOT: Yes, both. So he came alone to the United States.

INT: Margot?

MARGOT: Margot, of course, perished in the concentration camp.

INT: Do they know where?

MARGOT: Yes, in Auschwitz. We found it also, again, at the Yad Vashem and in Berlin. He felt always very, very guilty about that he stayed alive, and he had this horrible feeling. I mean he would not dwell on it daily, but you could not...I mean, of course you will never, never, never, would have never forgotten his family or anything, but I kept on saying to him, Honey, you cannot make it so hard for your child. You cannot always dwell on the past and what happened to them. You have to learn to overcome this somehow. It's not healthy to you and it's not healthy for her, because that's probably why she occasionally talked a little bit funny to him. She said, Dad, please do me a favor. Don't talk to me about the Holocaust so much, because I know everything. I know more than all the other children do. But don't continuously talk to me. But then I found out, when I was sitting and listening in at the group activity at the Holocaust Survivor's group, there are some people that don't talk at all about it and then there are some people who talk continuously about it. So in the long run, I think maybe it's better to talk continuously about it than to hold it back from children, and they don't know anything. Because we have this in our friendship too. But with me it was always that I wanted, even when I talked about it, I wanted to make it as pleasant as possible, and not...even though I lost my brother and all that, and I had gone through a horrible time, still I wanted to say I lived through it. I'm still here. And look up and live and don't...and he was just the opposite. He was so sad really at many times, at many occasions. I really think he needed some help, but he wouldn't give in to that. He said he was strong enough to overcome that himself.

INT: That was a time when people...they didn't understand that it doesn't mean you're weak, it just means you need some help with so much pain. It makes a lot of sense.

MARGOT: And to him it was very important to go to this group session of the Holocaust Survivors. And I went with him. I made sure that I would not let him go by himself. But I heard more just sitting there and listening in and his reactions and the way he spoke up what he felt like at this group than I've heard many times at home.

INT: Do you have any thoughts about why he would do it there?

MARGOT: Well, I guess maybe...my mother lived with us here in the United States, and he knew what we went through. Either he didn't want to burden us more, or...I have no idea, really. I cannot figure it out, because he did speak a lot.

INT: At home.

MARGOT: At home. And also, as I told you before, looked at the television, at the Holocaust programs until I finally said to him, do you look for your own family on these pictures? You keep on looking and looking. How many times can you look there? So maybe he felt that he burdens us if he talks too much about it. Today I feel a little bit guilty that I did not let him many times continue to talk about it, but I felt there's life after, and you should not only live by these memories. You should try to continue to live. Which he did. I must honestly admit I think he got the right wife in me because I was full of fun and full of life. I was twelve years younger than Gerhard. Somehow I gave him a great lift.

INT: I bet you did.

MARGOT: Yes, I did. That I must say.

INT: This point about looking into the documentaries and looking, and when you said to him are you looking for your relatives. He answered-

MARGOT: He said, yes, I do. Finally he said to me, yes, I think I do look for them. It's true. Because every time I look at it I see something different.

INT: You could understand what it must be like.

MARGOT: But Nancy, of course, used to sit there too. And sometimes he forced her to sit, and she usually answered him, Daddy, leave me alone. I don't want to see it anymore.

INT: It's going to be interesting to hear Nancy's thoughts, because she was the daughter of a man who was obsessed with it, and a woman who felt life is to be lived. So it's two opposite perspectives, and it's an incredible thing, because there's such a contrast. But I think that we can see that Nancy has a very strong life force, just like you do, and even if your husband wanted to talk about it all the time, for the love of his child he was willing to try something different to the best of his ability. You know, he still may have spoken much more than you wished but he had to, but he probably didn't do it as much as he would have if not for Nancy.

MARGOT: But don't forget also that Gerhard was also already up in age, because when Nancy grew up other men already become grandfathers, and grandfathers happen to talk about the past more than regular fathers to begin with.

INT: That's right.

MARGOT: So I made that quite clear to her. That it's because of dad's age that he also will somehow get back in history, because when people are getting a little bit older, that's what they're doing. And I see it on myself now. I'm doing it too, but I didn't do it-

INT: Twenty years ago.

MARGOT: Twenty years ago, because I was twelve years younger than he.

INT: That's right. Developmentally you're right. Grandparents, people of a certain age, look back much more. First, they have much more to look back on and second, it's the time in life when you reflect.

MARGOT: Absolutely. And he used to say this to me too many times when I used to say something. And I realize now what he meant. I mean, not now, I realized for a while already, but he used to say to me, watch until you're coming to my age. You will see that there are different things. You will see that your feelings change, and that you look back to things a lot more than you do now. Which is true.

INT: Life probably does look different.

MARGOT: True.

INT: How did you meet him?

MARGOT: I met him on a blind date, and it's very unusual because I really didn't want to meet anybody. I had some so-called lemons (laughter) before I met him and I said to my mother, no way will I look at another lemon. Leave me alone for a while. I was perfectly happy. I was twenty seven years old and I said leave me alone. I'm still young enough. I have my registered nurse license now. I want to concentrate on my education and on my position and everything. Fortunately I was climbing quite fast into head nurse positions and things like that, so I was very satisfied with my professional life. But my mother, I think, didn't want to have an old maid hanging around her, so she insisted that if it is a nice person and apparently somebody called her and said that there was a very nice gentleman in Larchmont who was of German background and lived in the same city where we came from for many, many years, and he is a little bit older than I am, but it would be really worthwhile. And since I was always a little bit stuck up from this point, I also would not have taken somebody who was not a professional person, so he had a profession too and I should please look at him.

INT: You should please look at him. (Laughter)

MARGOT: They came down to...I lived on Riverside Drive in Manhattan and he lived in Larchmont. So he came to pick me up and I took one look at him and I thought, well, this gentleman is a little bit different than the other ones I had met. And I think he had a lot of depth and that's what interested me. And he said he looked at me and at the first date he heard about my mother, he saw me and saw that I was a very positive person. We had a long, long date, that first date. It was for many, many hours. And he went back to Larchmont to visit a friend the next day in his hometown and he said I met my wife. These people told me this very soon after. And they said, you only had one date with her. And he said, I tell you I met my wife. This lady is going to be my wife.

INT: Amazing.

MARGOT: I didn't have that feeling right away because he was a little bit older than I was and I had to feel my way through first. But very soon I realized that this was a person who was downright my type of a man I would marry. And that's how it came about. So we were a year and a half engaged and we got married in 1955. I met him in '53.

INT: He knew.

MARGOT: Yes. He knew right away. And it was a very happy marriage. Very sound, good marriage.

INT: When you two argued, what was your style of working things out? How would things get resolved when there was a problem?

MARGOT: We never had a problem, to be honest. I mean when I look back...I think he was too good, he was too lenient toward people. I always felt he should be a little bit more strict with people.

INT: In what way?

MARGOT: Because he let people take advantage.

INT: You mean in business?

MARGOT: In his business, yes. In the real estate business. He was new in this business when I married him, but for some reason he realized what I was saying, I think. Maybe because I was working probably before already for quite a while that you have to have a certain limit. You can be very, very friendly, but you can also find out that many people are taking advantage of you. And I think he saw that finally. So then we had little arguments because of that. But it was business-like. Home life, I don't think we really ever had a bad argument in thirty three years. In thirty five years being together, thirty three years of marriage. My mother moved in with us.

INT: Immediately?

MARGOT: Yes, the minute we got married. Because I lived with my mother together, and my mother said if you...because we had to move to Larchmont, of course, where he had his business. And my mother said if we move to Larchmont I would appreciate if you could find me a small apartment in the same area where you move, and he said there is no way that you're going to stay by yourself because I didn't have a mother anymore and you're my mother now and where you belong, and I would never see you being by yourself. You'll live with us until you close your eyes. And that's what happened. She moved in with us, and it was envy of a lot of friends of ours because I never needed a babysitter, I never needed a cook, I never needed anybody. I could go to work when I had to, and there were times when I had to go to work in the beginning, because real estate business is not starting out gung ho in the beginning. We had hard times the two of us, too, but we always worked it out. Always worked it out. And I don't really think, I mean sure in a married life there are some occasional anxieties, but I think we had more little tuffs after Nancy was born, because to me Nancy was my G-d. I just told her that

yesterday. I said sometimes I feel a little bit bad about it that I told Dad, you know Nancy comes first, because she's our only child. And sometimes I told him that he has to sit back a little bit because I had to do things with her. And he felt a little funny about it, but I guess it was also because we were almost seven years by ourselves and he was it. Surrounded by two women who did everything for him.

INT: He could have been very spoiled by this.

MARGOT: He was. He was spoiled. But Nancy was the white of his eye. That was his little girl.

INT: So you didn't...when you two got married and he was, you said, forty eight.

MARGOT: He was forty two when I got married.

INT: Oh, forty eight when she was born.

MARGOT: He was forty eight when she was born, yes.

INT: Did you have any thoughts of children when you got married?

MARGOT: Not really right away. First of all, business-wise we wanted to establish ourselves first. And then, well, when I got to be about thirty five years old I said, well, if we want to have children it's time now, because I don't want to wait any longer. And for some reason, I don't know, we just never even thought of it. I...we felt that if G-d wants us to have a child there will be a time when we have one, and that's what happened.

INT: That is so wonderful.

MARGOT: That's what happened, yes.

INT: How did you feel when you find out you were pregnant?

MARGOT: Anna, don't ask me that question. I didn't know that I was pregnant for five and a half months. (Laughter)

INT: No.

MARGOT: I was told by a physician it's like the psychiatrist's children, you know, they need more help than anybody else, or a shoemaker's has holes in their shoes.

INT: Here's a nurse-

MARGOT: That's right, my dear. I was told...I knew that something was different with me, but it was not really visible or I don't know if I can go into medical terminology here. Menstruation wise, I still was menstruating too, so I did not know that I was pregnant, but I knew that there was something going on with me, and I was told by a physician that I needed dilatation and curettage, which is a D and C, and I said, no, you will not give that to me, because if in case of a pregnancy, I will not lose that, because I watch every little

bit on my body, because I was in gynecology and obstetrics for many, many years. I worked at Women's Hospital in New York City for nine years before I came here to New Rochelle, where I was working for thirty-one years. And I said, absolutely not, sir, I will not allow you to do a D and C on me.

INT: So the doctor was going to do a D and C.

MARGOT: The doctor had already scheduled me and I said I will absolutely not allow that. He said then I have to take the consequences myself, and I said, yes I will.

INT: What was the problem that he thought you needed-

MARGOT: He said that I was already going into change of life, that's what he thought. That there was something wrong with me. And I said, no, I will sit it out and I will see what happens. And lo and behold, suddenly I realized there is something else, so I went back to my old physician in New York City.

INT: I wouldn't go back to this Larchmont doctor.

MARGOT: I never went back there. And I said to my physician I think there's something wrong with me, and if you think there is something wrong with me please tell me. So he examined me and he said there is something wrong with you but it's very happy. Something very happy. Don't you realize that you are pregnant. I said, no, because if you would have been told that you already lost the pregnancy after two months, if there was anything, and you are supposed to go for a D and C, and I refused to do that. I didn't realize that there was anything, because nothing did not fit me. Everything fitted me. It's not like today that people wear these big dresses. In our times they still had skirts that needed to be buttoned, and everything fitted me, but I'm a big woman to begin with. To make a long story short, if it wouldn't have been for my own medical knowledge and my feelings, my little sweetheart who's here now with me would never have been...and I don't think I would ever had had a child.

INT: Amazing.

MARGOT: But for some reason it was G-d's will.

INT: I believe it.

MARGOT: And she was born healthy, happy, nothing wrong with her.

INT: And your new G-d.

MARGOT: Yes. Really, I mean, if it wouldn't have been for my medical knowledge I don't think I would have had this child.

INT: Well, your medical knowledge but not...I mean, when you started this story about the psychiatrist's children are the ones...here you are a nurse working in a hospital and not knowing for five and a half months that you're pregnant.

MARGOT: Yes, but you were told that you had lost the pregnancy, right, as a patient. And that he has to do a D and C to see. And I said, no, I have not seen any specimens. Anything, whenever I examined everything there was nothing there that told me that there was a fetus or that I expelled anything. So I will not, absolutely. I will refuse to go and have a D and C-

INT: Thank goodness.

MARGOT: ...because it is not that. Of course, I could have been wrong too, but for some reason I did not.

INT: Thank goodness.

MARGOT: Thank goodness, right.

INT: So you told your husband, guess what.

MARGOT: Guess what. I told him...I ran into his office and I told him he will be a father and the first thing that came out of his mouth was I'll go and kill the doctor here in Larchmont. (Laughter) Because if he would have done to you...But he would never have done it anyhow, because he was much too-

INT: Too gentle.

MARGOT: But he wanted to tell him off, and I said, no, you don't do that, my dear, because I said I have to work with this gentleman and he will be more ashamed to see my belly growing and seeing the pregnancy.

INT: What did that man say to you?

MARGOT: He apologized.

INT: Well, there was no apology good enough.

MARGOT: No, no. He apologized, because I saw him plenty at the hospital and I didn't make any great effort even to cause attention to...but finally he had to look at me because he used to come on the floors and visit his patients. And one day he called me into the corner and said, I'm sorry, Mrs. Krisch, but you know you could have been wrong too. I said yes, I could have been wrong, but thank G-d I was right. So I told him that I went to somebody else and I found out right away, but I said I didn't find it necessary to tell you because you will see it anyway. You did.

INT: This is a miracle.

MARGOT: Yes. My whole life is a miracle.

INT: You feel that way.

MARGOT: Yes, it is. I really feel that way. I'm blessed, that's all I can say. And I thank G-d every night for that.

INT: Even knowing you for only a day, I met you yesterday, I understand the blessing that you had in your family. Each parent, both parents were exceptional people, and the strength of your mother who was the reason that you lived through these terrible times in Germany, as a Jewish child in Nazi Germany, protected by but raised as a Jew by a non-Jew who was her mother. And then the gentleness of your husband, and then the miracle that you're told to have a D and C and you refused. So now you have a child. Incredible.

MARGOT: And a wonderful child.

INT: And a wonderful child.

MARGOT: Yes, right.

INT: It is a series of miracles.

MARGOT: And the child that honored her grandmother to no extent, that almost, I must say, I shouldn't say preferred because it's not true, but Grandma was always around her from day one, and there were times, of course, grandmother's now I know behave a little bit different than mothers, and I was a very strict mother, because my mother was very strict too, so of course Nancy many times ran to Grandma and got always the open arms and everything. So Grandma spoiled her a little bit more than Mom and Dad.

INT: It's a different job to be a grandparent as a parent. My mother always told me it was so much easier to be the grandmother than to be the mother.

MARGOT: That's true. Yes, it is.

INT: The mother has to discipline. The mother has to teach. The mother has to say no even when it breaks the mother's heart. Grandmother has no responsibility, only to love.

MARGOT: Yes, and can turn around and go home again. But mine couldn't do that because she was home with us. She had to be quiet and she had a pleasant attitude. When she saw that I was doing things wrong she would not say a thing. Or my husband was doing something wrong. She would just be quiet and not mix or mingle with us at all. She would use her own way of telling me-(end of tape 3, side 1) My husband didn't, but that's the way he is. And then she did it the other way around too. She told him too. She was just a wonderful person.

INT: And when she saw you do something right?

MARGOT: Oh, yes. She...oh, you could see it on her face. She was a very kind-looking person too. But, of course, why I'm even mentioning all this is because Nancy was very, very close to her grandmother, and when she died, unfortunately I made one mistake. When she left the apartment she was still in pretty good condition, and Nancy was asleep and I told the doctor, she was picked up by ambulance. At this point she had a coronary.

And I said to the doctor, let me awaken Nancy because I want her to see her grandmother leave here in her nightgown the way I fixed her up, and not in a hospital bed with all the gadgets. And he said, no, you know, Nancy's very close to her grandmother. She's going to be hysterical. And I said, leave it up to me. I know what I'm doing. So I told Gerhard to please come in with me and awaken her and bring her out and tell her that Omi is leaving now for the hospital, because she knew she didn't feel well. So she woke up and she said good-by, and then my mother, for about four days, was on life support but was conscious at this point. And then she had a stroke and she was not able to talk, but she wrote two things, and one thing was Nancy and the other thing was September. In September was that if anything happens to her that I have to send the checks back to Germany. Her pension checks. And I knew that's what she meant. And Nancy, Nancy, Nancy. She wanted to see Nancy. But I always felt that I didn't want Nancy to see her in this condition. Not able to talk, with all the gadgets around her in a hospital bed. Even so, all my friends were around her and knew Nancy well. All my nurses friends. But I felt it was not the place for her to be.

INT: How old was Nancy?

MARGOT: Nancy was thirteen years old. My mom died in 1974. And when she was getting better again and she was transferred into the Progressive Care Unit, and the girls called me and they said that you know Mom wants to see Nancy. Bring her down today. And I said, okay, Saturday I will bring her. But you can wait because visiting hours are at eleven, bring her at eleven o'clock. So I tried telling her that at eleven o'clock...she should get dressed before that and she can come down and lo and behold by nine o'clock I got a call from the hospital that my mother had another coronary and that she was not in very good condition. Of course, we could not take Nancy down there at this point anymore, and little did I know, until about, well, let's say, fifteen years later, when Nancy finally said to me, Mommy, one thing I must say. You are a very good mother, but you never let me see my grandmother again. And I could never really work this out very well. And I didn't realize it. I thought I did the right thing in not showing her her grandmother with all the gadgets around her, but it was the wrong thing. I should have let her see her. And she wanted to see her.

INT: She told you that.

MARGOT: Yes. Nancy told me that.

INT: But did she tell you at the time that she wanted to see Grandma, Omi?

MARGOT: She was thirteen years old. She listened to what we told her. I said to her...well, she said, yes, can I see my Omi? And I said I don't think so, sweetheart, we'll wait until she comes home again, because I said that I don't want you to see her the way she is now. You saw her when she left here, and that's the way I would like for you to remember her in case anything happens to her, but I think I made a mistake.

INT: You could only do the best that you know, and obviously you were trying to protect your child.

MARGOT: Definitely. That's what I was trying to do.

INT: It's a very wonderful thing that your mother and your child had such a relationship.

MARGOT: Oh yes.

INT: It's also incredible that your husband welcomed her into the home so beautifully. Another exceptional circumstance.

MARGOT: Yes, very much so. Very much so. He and I, we sat there. I sat from eleven o'clock in the morning on until seven o'clock at night until she passed away, holding her hand, and I don't think there's anything nicer than for a mother to have her child sitting right there. And I think she deserved every little bit of it. Until she closed her eyes. Thank the good Lord I was used to closing people's eyes, but not my own mother's, of course. Which I didn't do. The girls did that for me. I think if I wouldn't have had the support of all my nurses friends, I don't know if I have the strength to do all that. But they were all with me all the way through. They were with me with my mother when she passed away. The whole group of girls was with me when my husband passed away, and Nancy, of course, had all the support of these great girls too.

INT: That is exceptional. When you were young with your mother, because this sounds like an unusual...more than unusual, an exceptional relationship that you and your mother had. Was it from the time you were young or it changed as you were adults?

MARGOT: Anne, I never saw anything unusual in my behavior toward my mother, and I never really thought that I was doing something different than anybody else. It was just...I think my mother had a certain power over me, which was not powerful in the manner of controlling me with everything I had to do. She left me a lot of freedom. But she had such common sense. And common sense is not so common. That probably I accepted her wishes because I realized it was the right thing what she was doing. And then of course during the Hitler time I had no choice. I had to do what she was telling me. But the funniest thing is now, and I mean analyzing a little bit my own feelings, I dream an awful lot about my mother. To this day. And I was saying to my husband many times already why is that? And really some day I would like to have that analyzed. It's always nice. It's always something nice about her.

INT: Like what?

MARGOT: How shall I say it? It's never anything depressing. It's always we're doing something together or there might be something that is...either I'm calling or something like that and suddenly she will be there and everything will be fine. I swear I said to my husband, I bet this is all from way back in my mind, because there's no reason. I'm a grandmother now. There's no reason that I constantly...and at least, I would say, during a month I must be dreaming about six to eight times about my mother. And it's always in a wonderful setting, somehow.

INT: Is it a setting...is it ever a place you recognize?

MARGOT: No, no.

INT: Some new wonderful place.

MARGOT: It's something...it's just there. I can never really pinpoint what it is. I remember usually my dreams, too, and I dream an awful lot.

INT: Maybe you should start writing them down?

MARGOT: Yes, Barry told me that because that was one of his fields.

INT: Because then they could be analyzed.

MARGOT: But who has the time?

INT: No, it's when you wake up before you go and do anything else you just write it down. You keep a pen right by the bed.

MARGOT: Well, Alex says I have blockbuster, which is a video tape store in our area...a blockbuster mind and I see everything on video tapes in my mind, because I can give back my whole dream.

INT: I bet. Or talk into a tape recorder. You don't have to do anything.

MARGOT: Maybe that's an idea. It's better than writing.

INT: It will be very interesting to just have it when it's fresh.

MARGOT: It's probably easier than writing it down.

INT: I would say that's the easiest. I'd love to hear some of the details, because there's something very deep and something very important about dreams.

MARGOT: That's what I said to Alex. I said, you know, it's funny. I realize it more now than ever before, maybe because I have more time with myself and my mind is much more open now to my own feelings than it was when I was working, and I said, there must have been a tremendous bond between my mother and myself that I have that feeling now, because...

INT: A very strong bond.

MARGOT: Yes, yes. Very, very strong bond.

INT: You said that lately you started to have these dreams.

MARGOT: No, not lately. This is for years already.

INT: Oh.

MARGOT: It's for years already. It's not only lately.

INT: Since she died?

MARGOT: Well, yes. Since she died. I guess, yes, it's since she died, sure.

INT: Well, there is a theory that says that in death, that's how people can communicate with you, to make sure you're okay, to tell you that they still love you. That's one whole separate theory.

MARGOT: Yes, I'm dreaming about Gerhard ever so often too. In fact, when I remarried, it's very funny, I was dreaming a lot about him, and I went to the cemetery-

INT: To talk to him.

MARGOT: To talk to him. And I told him everything. I tell him, anyhow, I go about four, five times a year to the cemetery and I tell him everything. The two of them. Tell them about the kids and about the grandchildren, about Barry, about Nancy.

INT: You tell your mother and your first husband.

MARGOT: Yes. And I took my second husband along to the cemetery too. I went with him to his wife. Yes, we have a good relationship about that.

INT: It's wonderful. That's wonderful. To also be able to include the man who's your husband now in your life and in your feelings about your first husband and your mother, it feels so healthy. It feels so good that you don't have to keep these feelings from him, and also that he's a very supportive man, that he welcomes this.

MARGOT: Yes. Well, I think also with Alex, to him it is new. Not having had the experience in Europe, and he's a very sensitive, very caring person, and often he gets kind of almost weepy, and I say to him, and he was a major in the army. He was another big army man. I seem to attract army people. I say to him, I'm not telling you this so you should be sad. I'm telling you this because I want you to know more about myself, so that's all I can say about it, really.

INT: This is wonderful.

MARGOT: I don't want to put myself into such a wonderful picture with that. It's just the way I am. (Laughter)

INT: No, I mean it's wonderful to hear about this. You are wonderful too, but these are wonderful things to understand your life. There are reasons that you're happy. Some of them are external and some are right from inside. It's obvious. You radiate happiness. The men around you are happy with you, but you're also very clear on what you have in your life, and also you're clear on how to create it when you don't have it.

MARGOT: Exactly. And that's why I'm also very well liked, to this day, by sixteen hundred employees of New Rochelle Hospital, who still like my presence there as a volunteer now, and occasionally I do work in my own position.

INT: Oh, you do?

MARGOT: I relieve the nurses in charge there now. And I tell you, it's such an ego trip I can't believe it. But it is a wonderful, wonderful experience to hear people say, you know, we miss you. We miss you. You were always there for us. It's a wonderful feeling. But that I think...I must say I have experienced that many times that Holocaust survivors, first of all many Holocaust survivors, I mean in my own age group did go into caring positions, either nursing or social work type or anything that is-

INT: The helping positions.

MARGOT: Helping positions, yes. And even so, I was just plain pushed into this profession, which I will go back later on when you interview me more about my past. I picked it up so beautifully that that push into this profession saved my life, and in addition to it gave me a wonderful future, because it was downright the right thing for me to do. We have to-

(There is a ten-minute warning here.)

INT: Oh, okay, great. We have ten more minutes. Great. Thank you. Isn't that cute. Ten minute warning. Your daughter is so sweet.

MARGOT: Thank you.

INT: Now when you say you were pushed into it. How did that happen?

MARGOT: Well, that is, again...do you want me...Do you want to ask me any more questions now?

INT: I just had to do that one little beginning, but we have-

MARGOT: Because that's a whole different story again, about the Jewish Hospital Berlin.

INT: Then we should make that the beginning of when we begin next time, so there's no shorting the details.

MARGOT: This is the place where I was saved during the war. I and a few other Jewish people. I could only say a few because it was only a small percentage of the amount of people who used to be there before the war.

INT: But the story you're going to tell me about the fact that Jews were being protected right in the middle of Berlin by working at the Jewish Hospital is an amazing story.

MARGOT: It was a ghetto. And we didn't know it until the war was over and the Royal Air Force and the American Air Force showed us the maps that this hospital was marked into their maps not to bomb it. And then we found out that the Nazis kept this hospital for the International Red Cross.

INT: To show them?

MARGOT: To show them, yes. And our patients were the Jewish parts of mixed marriages, and also sometimes people who were in between transports who got typhus or any kind of a disease that would have, at this point, infected other people. Probably they cared more about their own people to be infected than the Jewish people who would have been exposed to it.

INT: Sure. Well, because they were sending a lot of the Jews to death, so what difference did it make?

MARGOT: That's right. Because many times when the people got better, that's what I'd like to tell you when we meet again, because it was part of this hospital...I mean, when we nursed these people back to health then they were taken to the concentration camps, including some of our own nurses and doctors who had to go along, so it was a very, very trying, a very overpowering place, and that's why I'm saying a small percentage of the people who used to work there before the war really survived this hospital.

INT: You know, even though we're going to do more detail, we have ten minutes now. Instead of thinking what should I do next, let me...because we had left yesterday with your brother's trial and execution. Let's talk a little bit about this and then I'll get the transcript typed, and then we'll see where we have to pick up the next time we speak. Tell me the name of it. The Jewish Hospital was called in German-

MARGOT: Jewish Hospital Berlin. Juedisches Krankenhaus Berlin.

INT: So it's like a Jewish sick house.

MARGOT: Yes, it's a hospital. Jewish Hospital Berlin.

INT: Where was it located?

MARGOT: It was located and is still located in the northern part of Berlin. It is now still called Juedisches Krankenhaus Berlin, but it is now taken over by the city of Berlin, because the Jewish community does not have enough money to support this big hospital. And they picked the name very wisely of one of our former professors by the name of Herman Strauss, and it's called now Herman Strauss Hospital, but still carries at the same time Jewish Hospital Berlin, and still has the whole history hanging right engraved in stone on the outside of the hospital.

INT: And what is that history?

MARGOT: The history is from the beginning, in 1800 something when they started, when the Jewish Hospital was built until the year 1945. Everything is written in there. I cannot give you word by word back because I have it on a picture. I can show it to you. And I will give you that some other time when we talk about it.

INT: How did you come to go there?

MARGOT: I mentioned to you before that I was working in-

INT: The factory.

MARGOT: The factory. And I was taken into custody and I went back again to this place, stupid. My poor mother, who didn't know any better at this point, told me that when I came back, when I was released from this custody, I have to go back to work, because what am I supposed to do as a sixteen year old girl there. So I went back and they didn't know what to do with me because all Jews were gone. So they sent me out and the chief of police who knew my mother very well told my mother, why did you let Margot go in the street again. You knew that she wears the star of David and she would be picked up again. And he said just keep her at home until you will hear more about it, you know. He was a very, very kind person.

INT: Just a minute. When the factory...when everybody was taken out, just tell me when that was again.

MARGOT: On the 27th of February, 1943, on my birthday. That was a big-

INT: That's right, the biggest action.

MARGOT: The biggest action in Berlin where everybody was collected. And this, what happened to me was a little bit later in '43, and I would say maybe March, when I was picked up again and sent to Grossehamburger Strasser in Berlin, which was also a place, again, where people were collected to and transported away. Today it's a beautiful monument place there. We saw it, Nancy and I, which I had never seen before when I went there because it was in the Russian part of Berlin and we never really investigated too much about it, because it was behind the wall.

INT: So it's a monument to the victims-

MARGOT: It's a monument to the people who were deported from there. It's beautiful and had lots of flowers on. I mean it's heartwarming to see that people, and these are Christian people who put the flowers done there. We asked this gentleman who was our guide. And there are stones on top of it. It looks like a memorial stone with a beautiful inscription in German about, you know, to honor the peace and fight the wars. One has to really translate so they get the gist of the story on there. It's a beautiful monument. A granite part on the bottom and bronze figures up on top. People going into concentration camps. And it is beautifully done.

INT: I'll look at the picture. That will be wonderful.

MARGOT: Yes, we have the pictures. We will show it to you.

INT: But when you were actually living there-

MARGOT: So when I went there, this place where I was placed into was bombed out and they never rebuilt anything there. That's why they put the monument there.

INT: So when you were picked up you were just walking in the street?

MARGOT: Yes. So they picked me up again and I went to this place. And at the same time the only people who were left were people from mixed marriages, like myself. Gertungsjude who wore the star of David but were not working at this time, so there were men and older men, younger men from mixed marriages, and girls, of course, too, and woman.

INT: Can I just ask you...a mishling would be a child from a mixed marriage who was not raised as a Jew or just anybody?

MARGOT: No. There were two types of mishlinger. One was called Geltungrjuden, and these were the people of mixed marriages who were raised in the Jewish religion, and the other mixed marriage children, who were called Priviligerda, which was privileged mishlinger. They didn't have to wear the star of David. These were kids who were either baptized or for some reason, many times people had enough money to buy them out, you know, give money to the Gestapo and they just made them.

INT: They made them that.

MARGOT: That way. You could do anything if you had money. People there. So therefore, all these people were congregated in these...there were hundreds of us in this building for about three, four days, and our mothers and the wives of these mixed marriages, or the husbands, they were walking outside and hollering, give us our spouses back. Give us our children back. And they had to. They had to for some reason, I don't know. And also something to do with International Red Cross or something. Open the doors again.

INT: They opened the doors?

MARGOT: Yes. And we were let out again. So when we were let out again-

INT: It's because those people weren't Jewish.

MARGOT: Yes. Apparently that had something to do with it.

INT: I can't believe it.

MARGOT: Because Mr. Freiger, the gentlemen who took us around...this is all documented. All documented. So I was let go again, and then from there we were...the young people... at this point they had deported lots of nurses from this hospital and there

were not enough people to clean and to do nursing care for people who were in there, and they were not overpowering many. The census were not as high as we would consider to be here, in our hospital, because it was a large hospital, but one part was taken away by the Gestapo, they were sitting in there, which was the pathology building. The other part was a German army hospital. They took that away and put a fence in between us. So we were surrounded by these people. And it was a ghetto. It was an actual ghetto. We were not allowed to get out there, only by pass.

INT: How did you get in?

MARGOT: Well, when we came...the reason why we were placed into this place was because they didn't have enough help there anymore, so we had to always go to this employment center, like I mentioned once before, and they said that they were...people needed to clean the hospital so we were sent there.

INT: You and the other young people?

MARGOT: Yes. We were sent there, and when we got there we had to start working there. But we very soon realized that the few people left, I think there were about five doctors and a very small amount of nurses, about thirty nurses, something like that. And they tried to...we had to clean, yes, we had to clean, but they tried to teach us, like I would say you would call nursing attendants here, to help them with patients too. And for some reason I caught on very nicely, and it interested me what I was seeing, and I had fell into the hands of two wonderful nurses who remained my friends until they died here in New York City, and who became very good friends of my mother. These two ladies. In Germany already.

INT: They were German?

MARGOT: They were Jewish people who worked in the hospital and were also survivors during the war.

INT: What are their names?

MARGOT: Their names were, one of them was Erna Joseph, called Schvester Ella, and the other was Mina Stern, called Schvester Mina.

INT: People called each other sister?

MARGOT: Well, that's what a nurse in Germany is called. You know?

INT: No, I didn't know that.

MARGOT: Here a nun is called sister, but overseas a nurse has the name Schvester, which means sister. It's true still to this day, because when we visited now I heard it again.

INT: That's nice. So these two women took a special interest in helping you?

MARGOT: These two women apparently saw that I was good material for a nursing profession, and they tried to teach me. There were other young people who caught on and we were interested to do something worthwhile, so we tried to help. And I worked in the operating room. I worked on patient's floors, and I picked up very easily and very nicely and I enjoyed working there, even though it was miserable surroundings, and Eichmann was frequently in this place.

INT: You saw him?

MARGOT: Oh yes, we saw him. So it was an unpleasant surroundings but when the doors closed and we were by ourselves we made it as nice as possible for ourselves.

INT: First of all, how long were you at the Krankenhaus?

MARGOT: From June 1943 until the beginning of '46. End of '45, I would say.

INT: Did you go home at night?

MARGOT: No, no. We slept there.

INT: Once you were there you stayed inside.

MARGOT: I showed Nancy when we went there now. It's now a nursing home, where our nurses' residence used to be.

INT: So you didn't see your mother for a couple of years? A year and a half?

MARGOT: We could go out on a pass but it became very dangerous to go out, not only to go out as a Jew-

INT: To go out in the middle of the war.

MARGOT: To go out to begin with, and then also the air raids you must not forget. We were caught many times in places where you had to go into shelters, and if you had the Jewish star then and were amongst strangers-

INT: They could kill you.

MARGOT: You never know what happens so you got scared. So my mother used to occasionally come and visit and we used to go out a little bit around the area and things like that, but I stayed in contact by telephone with her, and so did the others.

INT: Tell me what a day was like at the Krankenhaus when you were working there as a-

MARGOT: Well, we worked from seven o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night. Twelve hours. Our patients, of course, were Jewish parts of mixed marriages. We had all kinds of medical, gynecological, surgical cases. We had five doctors. We had two surgeons. We had one gynecologist, one pathologist, one optomologist and what else was there? I don't think there was anything else. And, of course, obstetrical cases were almost

nil. Nobody wanted to bear a child into this situation. And the kids that were born during the time of the war were almost nil. You could count it on one hand.

INT: And they had no chance even if they-

MARGOT: No. But we also had families living there, like two doctors who had their wives and children there.

INT: In the Krankenhaus?

MARGOT: Yes. They survived the war there too. And it was a very interesting time, I tell you. Very little to eat and I must admit, to bring something comical into this which we made anything comical what could be, we had some of these so-called privilegirda, mixed couples. Where they...people also had to come to the Jewish Hospital because they were the Jewish parts, but they got different rations for their food. So when-I shouldn't even say that. It's not very nice to say. But when one of these people passed on-

INT: You kept their rations.

MARGOT: We kept their rations.

INT: Good.

MARGOT: And so we were always very happy when we got a little bit something extra. (Laughter) I told Nancy all these things. It's not nice to say, really. But when they used to wheel the body out, we all used to get up and say thank you very much for giving us a little bit more food.

INT: Nobody checked to see who-

MARGOT: Oh, yes, they came in frequently, the Gestapo, to check up on us. But there was almost like an-

INT: Understanding?

Interview is interrupted here by somebody saying that the time is up.

INT: Just say the thing about your checking up.

MARGOT: They were constantly being checked up, this hospital. But there was some kind of like a network, because the only gentile person in this hospital was the pharmacist, and the pharmacist had close contact with all of us, so when he...usually when the Gestapo came they came first to him. And when they already announced that they were coming, he used to notify every one of us.

INT: So you had some preparation?

MARGOT: We had some preparation. And the young people were usually sent into the bathrooms to just disappear out of the hallways and leave the older ones there. Therefore,

unfortunately, many times the older ones were sent away. But I think we were of more value at this particular point, because we were young and able to work harder, and that the older ones preferred rather to be... for us to be away when these men came in.

INT: That's right. When we begin next time, we're going to start right here, and I want to talk about the sort of feeling among the people. You know, it was an exceptional thing that the older people were trying to protect the younger people. That they would be out there, even knowing that they were very vulnerable. I want to talk about that. I want to talk about more details about what the day was like.

MARGOT: Yes, I would like to do this because unfortunately, as I said before, not even on the visits, when people come now to Berlin and are being shown by the Senate is this hospital ever included, because it was one of the main places that was in whole Germany that was left during the war knowingly with Jews.

INT: And you said that's how you were saved.

MARGOT: That's right. Otherwise I wouldn't be here anymore.

INT: We're going to emphasize this. And also, the fact that you said Eichmann walked in and out. I want to hear a little bit more about your impressions of Eichmann. So Nancy has to leave. We're going to continue right where we left off.

MARGOT: Yes. Okay. (End of Tape 3, side 2)

INT: Margot Krisch. And we're probably going to conclude our interview today. It's our third part. Now tell me what you brought.

MARGOT: Well, what I brought for you, this is besides my interview which we will do afterwards. Last Yom Hashoah at my synagogue I was asked to present a little program, because Nancy and I, I took my daughter to Berlin. And the topic of our Yom Hashoah program at the Larchmont Temple was Generations Remember Together. And the Rabbi felt that it was very important for the two of us to represent our feelings going together to Berlin, and Nancy's reaction to it, since she was never there before. I had been there already three times. So this was, of course...I have in front of me the typed program and if you'd like me to read it to you I would like to do that, okay?

INT: I'd love that. And this is what you said at Yom Hashoah this year.

MARGOT: Yes. At our temple. I have a tape at home too which is very nice. They made that for me. So that will be in my little Holocaust library forever.

“My life during the Holocaust somehow varied from what so many other Jewish people experienced, namely, I remained living in Berlin until the end of the war. As the children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, my brother and I were raised as Jews. Even after the death of my father in 1933, my mother continued with our religious Jewish education. Unfortunately because of my father's intermarriage, his orthodox family alienated themselves from us and therefore we never met our paternal grandparents and

most other family members. I mentioned this to you to make you aware how wrong this decision can be for future generations. My youth was very pleasant in Berlin until 1938, when I was removed from the public school system. Fortunately some Jewish schools still existed until 1941, and I was able to further my education somehow. With the mandatory wearing of the star of David in 1941 all Jewish establishments were closed. This is my original star of David which I wore for four years to be ridiculed and spat out.” And at this point I picked up the Jewish star I still have in my vault and I showed it to the congregation. “I swore never to depart from this label, and to show this discrimination mark to my children and grandchildren. In 1941 all Jewish inhabitants of Berlin were placed into forced labor, mainly German factories. I worked in a telephone company. On my birthday, February 27th, 1943, thousands of Jews were forcefully removed from these factories by the Gestapo. We were pushed into army trucks and transported to different so-called samalagers, or collection places. By sheer what I could only believe the grace of G-d, some of us young people were let go after two days, and thousands of others were deported from there to what we were told resettlement in the east. Nobody at this time was knowledgeable about the mass killings at Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenbagen, etc. Being released from the samalager did not give us any freedom to walk the street, because of the constant fear to be picked up again by the Gestapo. The use of public transportation was almost impossible for us, because marked with the star of David we had to be last in line to enter the train or trolley cars, and if there was no room we stayed behind and walked. Some of us young people were told to report to the Jewish Hospital Berlin, which was a ghetto surrounded by Gestapo. We had to replace the employees who were previously sent to concentration camps. You might wonder. Why was there a Jewish Hospital left in existence? Well, so did we. After the war we were told that this now historic place was left somehow untouched because of being a showplace for the International Red Cross. Our patients were the Jewish parts of mixed marriages, and people with infectious diseases like TB, typhus, etc. etc, who were removed from the transports to the east. During this time, my brother who lived in hiding as a member of a political resistance group was caught and executed right in Berlin at the age of 23. The Gestapo, including Eichmann, were steady visitors at this hospital. At one time during a two week span we admitted two hundred suicides. It was an impossible situation to handle. Five doctors, about fifteen registered nurses, and about sixty support personnel survived the war in this hospital, but we were always living in fear who will be the next person to go on a transport. In addition to this constant harassment by the Gestapo, we had to survive the daily air raids by the Allied Air Forces, and the massive artillery barrage of the liberating Russian army. I emigrated to the United States in 1948. In 1984, my late husband Gerhard and I returned to Germany on an invitation by the German government. Gerhard had lost his whole family in concentration camps. Our daughter was psychologically not able to accompany us on this journey and we had mixed feelings also, but at our age we were somehow anxious to search for our roots and visit the place of our birth again. Our child was always fully aware of the atrocities that befell our families, but we also told her not to blame the sons for the crimes the fathers committed. We made sure that she was growing with the knowledge that her parents also had a pleasant memory during their early youth prior to the Hitler time in Germany. The topic of this presentation today is called Generations Remember Together. Well, Nancy and I, this past February, visited Berlin together, and she will give you her own

impression of this meaningful and emotional time we spent there.” Now at this point, Nancy was supposed to come with me and speak there, but she will say on her own, which I will read in a minute, feelings about the wonderful research we did in Germany. She was not able to come along with me to the Yom Hashoah program at our Temple because she was with her children and her husband at home. But she will explain this even. I will read now her part, and I must admit, it was an overpowering feeling for the whole congregation, I was told later on, because we placed her...she made a tape, and we placed this tape over the amplifier in the synagogue, and I think it was more meaningful to listen to her voice so calmly saying everything than if she would have been standing there and probably would have gotten a little bit shook up and probably would choke up occasionally. So therefore this whole presentation was very, very meaningful and to this day, which is now a year later, people still can't get over what a program we presented at Yom Hashoah 1995. Now this is the part Nancy said.

“As it is for most Jews, Yom Hashoah has always been a sacred day for me. Truthfully, I must tell you that Yom Hashoah is really an ongoing process for me, one that began some thirty years ago, when I was initially told about the fate of my grandparents and an uncle, and continues to the present. Growing up in Larchmont far away from my family's country of origin, Germany, I used to feel like I could have been raised just about anywhere in the world. It was only chance that my parents immigrated to the United States, met and settled in New York. It could have been Israel, Shanghai or Mexico City. Growing up with only stories and a few picture of people who would have had a significant impact on my life has been difficult. The void of lost extended family has been impossible to fill. On February 15th of this year,” which was 1995, “my mother and I began a journey which has helped me feel the presence of these unknown family members. Our mission to Germany, my first and her third, lasted six short days, but in that time I feel a personal transformation has taken place which helped shed a new light on the struggles and triumphs my family faced during World War II. Walking on the same streets as my relatives once did, seeing my mother's last residence in Berlin, visiting the Jewish Hospital which was my mother's ghetto, spending time with Christian friends who supported my family before, during and after the war all empowered me. We visited the Jewish Community Center on Rosenstrasse, which had an old telephone book. Every Krisch-Redlich family name was there. Also, there were the logs containing deportation information, detailing when each of the same family members were deported, and where they perished. I felt my grandparents, uncles and aunts presence for the first time in my life. I also became keenly aware of how much of a matriarch my maternal grandmother really was. She, a non-Jew, had promised my grandfather at the time of their marriage that they would raise their children as Jews, and kept her promise after his death in 1933. Living as the non-Jewish widow and mother of two Jewish children through Nazi Germany must have been dreadful for her. Her son, my uncle, executed by guillotine at the Ploetzensee Prison, because he was a Jew resisting Hitler in the underground. Her daughter, my mother, a young woman in her late teens with a Jewish star emblazoned on her left breast, trying to experience life in a living Hell. This woman, their mother, my grandmother, how could or did she endure all this misery. Omi, as I called my grandmother, the only grandparent I was actually given the opportunity to love lived with us. She and I shared a bedroom for the first thirteen years of my life. Even after hearing all her stories, only now do I have some capacity to understand what

actually happened to my family in Berlin some fifty years ago. All the stories, good and bad, and there were plenty of the former, took on a new meaning standing there in Berlin. My mother's gift to me early on in life was that she shared many stories of her wonderful childhood. Her many antics during the pre-war years, while I lived each day with the impact of Hitler's years weighing heavily upon my heart. I also am fully aware of how good life once was for my family in Berlin. Being there made me proud. Proud to be of German-Jewish descent. Proud that my parents had the wherewithal to share both sides of their lives in Germany with me, not only the tragic, negative side. Proud that my parents were able to say, despite their massive personal loss, that children should not be held accountable for the actions of their fathers. Proud that my mother was thrilled to accompany me on this journey, to show off her hometown, to share the difficult and painful task of doing research in circumstances surrounding arrests and deportations of family members. As for the impact of this trip on me personally, it's unparalleled by any other experience in my life. Now, on Yom Hashoah, as I remember the six million, I have at least a small grasp of who my relatives were and how they lived before their lives were snuffed out. This small grasp is for me more than I ever dreamt I would have. It has thrust my personal commitment to myself and to my family, to make sure our unknown relatives hold a permanent place in all of our lives to a higher level of priority. It is, however, simply impossible for me to truly articulate the emotional impact of my journey. It has allowed me to reach a place in my own soul where I can now carry happily a small spark of the many lives lost during the Shoah. I continue to feel the incredible responsibility of being a second generation survivor, and how important my very existence is in the realization of the hopes and dreams of those who walked before me on the streets of Berlin."

INT: You two did an amazing job. Both of you.

MARGOT: Yes. I mean it was an overpowering experience for me too.

INT: Was this the first time you ever spoke publicly?

MARGOT: Yes. My...the now Rabbi Emeritus of Larchmont Temple, Rabbi Poller, asked me numerous times before to say something, but it wasn't the right time. I was not able, just like I came to you this year, I wasn't able before really to concentrate on anything like that. But now I have reached a point that I can talk about these things.

INT: What do you think changed?

MARGOT: I don't know. I really don't know. And meanwhile something else came up at the Temple, a lady who's a photographer and this was also a Yom Hashoah program in Westchester County. I don't know where else she takes it. She took a picture of me, a beautiful picture, and she displays these pictures with little explanations of survivors underneath, and I get very, very, how should I say, confide a very small reflection of my life to her, so she's traveling all over the county. She had at least fifty or sixty faces of older people and survivors, and she takes this upon herself. That's her thing to do. But when Rabbi Sirkman, who's now our rabbi saw this, he said he would like to have for the 1995 Yom Hashoah program because of our recent trip to Germany, that the two of us

should say something. And then at the same time there was a gentleman who is also a second generation person from France, and he made a representation at the same time. It was really a very overpowering evening.

INT: Incredible. I think it's a tremendous thing that now after so many years you have shared your experiences. First you shared them privately with me, your first interview, and then publicly with your community. It's really...it's so important.

MARGOT: It's really very heartwarming to see because these people know me for some twenty-five, thirty years, and was fully aware of it because my husband was very outspoken about that, being survivors, but they never really heard our real feelings about it, and I think that's why it was overpowering for them, because there were many, many old-timers there. I didn't expect so many to come for this service, but they did. And it was done beautifully by our cantor and the rabbi.

INT: How would you say your husband was different than you in the way he handled the Holocaust?

MARGOT: Well, first of all he came over before the war, over to the United States. And he had lost his whole family.

INT: How old was he when he came?

MARGOT: Twenty-seven. He had, I mean, terrible guilt feelings. I mentioned that in the beginning of our interview, that he was still alive and everybody else perished. And he carried that along with him to his grave, I should say. He was a happy and a wonderful, wonderful husband and father and a warm, beautiful person, but very, very...he had a lot of depth. He just could not kick this. I tried to get it out of him. I said you cannot live in the past, honey, but certainly in this part of his life he always did live in the past. Always thinking and talking about it.

INT: One of the things you and I wanted to do in this concluding interview was really spend some time talking about the Krankenhaus, the hospital where you really spent the war. First, could you describe what a typical day was like there.

MARGOT: Well, a typical day was like any day in any hospital, because we had our three shifts. Not really three shifts, two shifts. A night shift and a day shift, and we all lived together in this place.

INT: How many of you?

MARGOT: Like I mentioned before, it must have been about I would say all together about a hundred and fifty people in this hospital. Employees. And then the patients, as I mentioned before, were the Jewish parts of mixed marriages, and I brought a book along here for you, Anne, which is of course in German but that describes the hospital really in a very condensed way. The book, which was now published just recently in Germany is called *Des Juedische Krankenhaus Muss Erhalten Bleiben*, and that means the Jewish Krankenhaus, the Jewish Hospital, has to stay alive, because of its past. So it says here

(Margot reads in German) that means, the Jewish Hospital of Berlin between 1938 and '45. So this is really...there was another book that came out a few years ago, but this is really a condensed and a very exact edition.

INT: And it's written by somebody named-

MARGOT: Rifka Elkin. I personally must say have never met this lady, Rifka Elkin.

INT: Did she have something to do with the hospital?

MARGOT: I must see. It says-(tape is shut here)

INT: ...picture of three, you said-

MARGOT: Oh, that was placed by me into this book.

INT: Right. Tell me, your friends who worked with you?

MARGOT: One of them...I mean, this picture here which I placed into this book because we took this picture in 1990, when the three of us visited the hospital and we were re-tracing the past. That's what I called my little note underneath the picture. That was Ruth, used to be Sedlacek, but it's Ruth Zbik now, Zbik, and Helga Mamlok, used to be Helga Mottek, and myself.

INT: And now she's Mamlok?

MARGOT: And myself. Margot Krisch. And I used to be Margot Redlich when I was working at this hospital.

INT: You said all three of you worked there together.

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: What were your jobs?

MARGOT: Well, when we were placed there by the Gestapo we were supposed to be cleaning maids.

INT: How old were you when you went?

MARGOT: I was about nineteen years old. All of us. Because we were all taken out of these factories at the time and placed into the Jewish Hospital, which was, to be very honest, by the grace of G-d, our luck that we were placed in there. We hated the thought of it, but it saved our lives. We would not have stayed alive if we wouldn't have been in this hospital. So I was very pleased to see that finally somebody wrote this book, but apparently the hospital now, when I went with Nancy to visit it is a City Hospital. In 1990, it was still...the hospital still belonged to the Jewish community, but apparently they have so little money in Berlin, the Jewish community there, that they could not keep this hospital. But they made it the City Hospital now and it's, of course, open to

everyone. It's for years already. And it's kind of a big research center. It's beautifully built-up but it still remains...they called it now a different name, but it is one of the-

INT: The City Hospital now has got a different name?

MARGOT: Yeah, it's still the Jewish Hospital Berlin, because it has one big plaque on the side of the entrance door, but I have to look it up here for a minute what it is called now. I'm now...it might take a few-

INT: It doesn't have to be the exact translation. Just give me the idea of what it says.

MARGOT: I will have to translate the...What it says is that during the years 1943 until the liberation in 1945, the Jewish Hospital Berlin was the only leftover, so called, of the official Jewish existence in Germany. The author of this book, Rifka Elkin, writes that this organizational structure, the activities and the changes for the being of the hospital during the years in 1938 until 1945...she did research on it and that's what she brings out in this book. It might be a little discombobulated what I said, you know, but it's very hard for me to translate. Sometimes I don't find the right word for German anymore. She examined the phenomena that this hospital went through from a ghetto for Jewish patients, personnel, and other members of their family during the time of the Hitlerism in Berlin. This book is the first book that came out after 1945 written about this hospital.

INT: Can I ask you a question? How do you suppose it happened that they let a Jewish Hospital even exist, and exist with Jews living there.

MARGOT: She writes that right in here, and that's why...I read it through last night, and I have to give it back, but you have to be patient with me, Anne, because it is not easy for me to bring this all back again in one sentence or something. The question...I'm quoting now from her book here. The question why this hospital stayed in existence during all these years is still open. Nobody really can answer that a hundred percent, because the mass transports during the year 1943 until 1944, at this particular time, left only about thirteen thousand Jews in Berlin. At least that's the way I can see it here. And most of them were the, as I mentioned before, the partners of mixed marriages and their children who were definitely defined as Jews.

INT: Weren't they called haflings?

MARGOT: No, a hafling is a prisoner.

INT: But that's a mixed Jew-

MARGOT: There were also prisoners in there, but she writes this very nicely. But I tell you, I read it last night so I can give you all this all back in one sentence, but it's very hard for me to do.

INT: Do you remember the idea of it? I don't need her words, but your words.

MARGOT: The reason for it was that the Jewish Hospital existed, what she writes here and what we were told anyhow after the war, was that these people who were left over, the Jewish parts, needed to have some kind of a place where they were able to get into when they were ill. Not because of humane feelings of the Nazis but of the fright that we would infect other people and would have a mass epidemic in this area. They threw us back and forth because they did not really know what to do with us at this particular point. Now also she says here, in a very nice way of explaining it in German, that the gentleman, the director of the place, which I would consider maybe the administrator of the hospital-

INT: What was his name?

MARGOT: His name was Walter Lustig. He was later on after the war executed by the Russians, apparently because of misunderstandings. I'm still saying, to this day, that that man did not deserve to be killed. But he had the sad position of sending employees who were still there, patients...since we were surrounded by Gestapo. I had explained that prior in our interview, that one part of this hospital was where the Gestapo lived. They sat right on our premises. And when there was a transport going out of the whole area, whatever Jews they collected they always took a certain amount of people from our hospital along. So he had the terrible position to select people. Of course, when people survived (end of tape 4, side 1)

INT: This idea that he was responsible because he had to make a choice is a very, very difficult one.

MARGOT: Well you could understand definitely, I mean, we all understood the feelings of the people who were sent away. We were just, by the grace of G-d, left. I mean, it had nothing to do with being different than anybody else. It was just that it was not our time yet to be sent anywhere. But what was the reason that he was placed there at this particular time, way back already he was the administrator of the hospital, was that he was familiar with many of the Gestapo people, simply because before the war he had a very high position in the police department.

INT: He was a Jew?

MARGOT: He was a Jew, yes. But was a Jew married to a Gentile woman. But he had a very high position as a physician in the police department, and was apparently before the war very much honored by all people, because he was probably a very just and a very wise person for this position he was in. I remember that he had...he used to tell us he had the unfortunate position like I would say we would call here public health physician. Like a commissioner of public health in New York City or something like this. That was his position. And he had made lots and lots of contacts during these years, of course, and when they placed him into this hospital later on, he had the contacts and could really talk some of these people out of certain things, and push the place off and off and off when there was a...it says here, very well written...there are a lot of things in this book which we really didn't know until somebody really did a lot of research...that there was some kind of an Eichmann...and it was-

INT: An Eichmann what?

MARGOT: An...meant Eichmann had a certain duty to not only get rid of everybody, which he did anyhow, but to eliminate certain different Jewish places in Berlin, and that's why we saw him occasionally at our place anyhow.

INT: When he came, what would he do? Would he-

MARGOT: He walked through the halls.

INT: What was he like?

MARGOT: A miserable louse. Pardon me for saying.

INT: Oh, no. Would I be offended that you called Eichmann a louse?

MARGOT: No. A terrible looking person with his high boots. I mean he was just...in fact, I'd be very honest. The young girls like ourselves, the older nurses used to send us into the bathrooms when...because we were forewarned that he was there. And when the Gestapo...we were frequently checked, and they walked frequently through our halls, but whenever Dr. Lustig happened in his office in the front building, in the administrative area, we used to receive calls in the back hospital to be aware that they're there, so to send the young people.

INT: What did they think would happen with the young girls?

MARGOT: Because they probably would have taken us right away, because they saw, you know, young beautiful girls, and one never knows what they would have done with us, even though they wouldn't have send us to concentration camps, but they might have used us in different ways. So we were then about twenty years old, something like that, so we were always forewarned when they came. All the nurses right away, we had like a little courtyard and we disappeared into the bathrooms. I only personally saw these people once. Otherwise we just kept away.

INT: What was the code word?

MARGOT: The code word was just Dr. Lustig called.

INT: I see.

MARGOT: So that was-

INT: That was all you needed to know.

MARGOT: We knew that this is time now for us to hide.

INT: Did Eichmann have a particular reputation as being very bad with young girls?

MARGOT: Oh, yes. Very bad period. Not with young girls only. But I think it was more we were all in danger, regardless. Old and young. People were taken out...I mean, when there was one person missing of a transport or four persons or ten persons missing, they used to take it from us. And they used to take the nurses or whoever was around. He always felt, Dr. Lustig always felt, that he would like to protect the young person, at least until the end, until he cannot do it any further. But you asked me before what my position used to be, or our position used to be. We were hired as house maids, because they had nobody there to clean anymore, and we were very upset when we were told that we had to clean, but it turned out to be that these few doctors who remained there, the five of them, started to train us as nurses, and whatever little time we could have between fixing our patients, between air raids, to bring the patients down to the basement, between whatever happened, we had like little training hours in a setting almost like a nursing school. Of course, having no education and weren't able to have any other education, at least we had something to hold on to. And I must say, I have to skip now a few years because after the war, when we were supposed to now educate ourselves, we got one year credit for the three years we were at the hospital in addition to the other amount of time we had to complete for our registered nurse license. So we did get a little credit for that time, because we got some knowledge.

INT: That's wonderful.

MARGOT: It was not like everybody else would have had a student nurse education because it was a horrible, horrible situation, but being young and being together, going through miseries left and right and fright, continuous pressure makes you feel like one big family. We were all pulling on the same strength, I should say.

INT: That was a very big factor, that you were together.

MARGOT: The cohesiveness.

INT: You became a family with each other. And what you just said, pulling on the same strength. Each one could draw on the strength of the other and being with the other made strength. Were you with some of your...were any of these people your friends before?

MARGOT: No. Well, yes. Ruth Sedlacek was my friend from the school. I think I mentioned that before during our interview that I went to the Commercial College of Berlin, which was closed in 1941, I think it was, before we were sent to the factories. And Ruth and I, we were friends since we were sixteen years old. And to this day are friends here in America too.

INT: Beautiful. The atmosphere, I want to just talk a little bit more, in this hospital. The staff was... mostly the same staff stayed?

MARGOT: No, no. It was only a fraction. It was a skeleton crew, I would say, of the amount of...It was a big hospital.

INT: No, no, no. I don't mean from before the war. But the people who came in 1943-

MARGOT: When I started there, yeah.

INT: Most of the people were able to stay through the war there?

MARGOT: Some people were selected, unfortunately, to go along to the concentration camps.

INT: When Dr. Lustig had to select, did he usually select from the staff or from the patients.

MARGOT: Yes. He had to. He had to take from the staff, but also, I think I mentioned it prior too. We had what we called the Police Station, which was when people tried to commit suicide when they were in prison, they couldn't send these people to the Christian hospitals, so they had to send them to us to get well, and were then sent to the concentration camp.

INT: These were Jews?

MARGOT: These were Jews, yes. So they had to first get well to be killed. I mean, it was an absurd situation, and they sent these people to us. And then when this group was taken out of this place, usually one of the employees went along with them. So we never knew who was the next person selected. And that went on through all these years.

INT: So it wasn't a complete sense of security there. It was a very-

MARGOT: It was never a sense of security. It was always a hanging in there, I would say. It was never, never a sense of security. The only security we had was to be together with our own little group, because like my mother, for instance, we were all alone there. There were maybe two couples, three couples. The dentist had his wife there, and I think there was one of the physicians, yes, the internist and his wife and daughter lived on the premises. Dr. Cohen, Cohen. And the dentist was Dr. Shapsky. And I can't recall now...and one surgeon, Dr. Wolfson. He lived there with his wife and his daughter and the gynecologist had a mixed marriage and he was there during the day, but he went home at night as long as he could. So there were about I would say five-eight physicians left. And some support personnel.

INT: Did you ever get to talk to these patients?

MARGOT: The patients? Oh, yes. We always talked to the patients. Of course. I mean, when you take care of patients you talk to them. During the years from 1943 to '45 I think I did not experience any more births, actual births, than about ten, if I can recall. That was all, because nobody wanted really to have a baby during that time. So we had numerous abortions of people who...even among the personnel sometimes.

INT: What about these prisoners, the suicide attempts. When you talked to them, what was that talk like?

MARGOT: Well, we were aware that they will not be very long with us. They were sometimes to a point not quite comfortable to be with us, because they didn't know what to make out of us, and we didn't know how else to explain it, because we were placed there, we were of the same faith, have the same experience, had the same fright, but we didn't know what to answer them many times. And then, of course...and some of them, of course, it's a personality situation too. Some of them got very close to us, and it tore our heart out when people were taken away again. We wished we could have been hiding them someplace but it was impossible. Impossible. It was, in the long run, a horrible situation, but if you can save your own skin somehow and remain alive, you just stay put. We had no idea what could happen to us there. In fact, one time, I think, I'm not quite sure now if I didn't tell you that before, Anne, one of the young men who were incarcerated at the pathology building which was then the Gestapo, escaped. And he used to be somebody I used to know from school, way back. And when they, I think when they caught him or something he mentioned my name. And I had absolutely nothing to do with it. The only thing what I did was see him behind the fence occasionally when they were marched around there. And he recognized me. And I had really absolutely nothing else to do with him. But I don't know if he just couldn't, you know, he was the same age, if he could not digest that one was outside and the other one was inside of this Gestapo place. Which we weren't really outside either, but they couldn't picture what we were doing there. And he mentioned my name and I remember I came out of the operating room once after an operation, and I was called to Dr. Lustig's office. Dr. Lustig said to me, Margot, a young man escaped from the part of our hospital that's now under the supervision of the Gestapo, and he was caught and he mentioned your name. Did you help him in any way? And I said, I have no idea. I never even talked to him, really. And he interviewed me quite extensively and I'm telling you, it was G-d with me, because the Gestapo came back again and he said she had absolutely nothing to do with it. She didn't even know. So I was just not even bothered at this particular point. But I was frightened to death that something will happen to me, and I think this is what I say. This man had the unfortunate position to send people away, but if he could help and if he was in any way able to help people to remain, he tried that too. And I was one of them. Really people who were saved by him.

INT: How old was he, Walter?

MARGOT: Dr. Lustig was, I would say at this point, in his early fifties when we were there.

INT: And he had a non-Jewish wife. Any children?

MARGOT: Well, he had a...I have no idea if he had children, but he had a non-Jewish wife, but the wife did not live with him there, and I admit he was quite a ladies man. At this point, I think, a lot happened in this hospital between the personnel. Fortunately I was never exposed to it for some reason, probably because I was forewarned by my mother to be very, very careful with something like that. When you are forced to live together in a situation like that, there was a lot of hanky-panky going on between some of the young men and the young women. But that was really what some people thought only entertainment. I don't know if that belongs on the tape.

INT: Well, it's a part of life.

MARGOT: It's a part of life, right. It's a part of life.

INT: When you weren't working, speaking of entertainment that might be different, what kinds of things did you do when you weren't on your shift?

MARGOT: Well, we read, because the hospital had a library from before. We had, I must admit, even services on Shabbat sometimes. They tried to give us and keep us together the way we wanted to really be in our youth. Then we had to study, of course, because of the physician's teaching us a little bit there. But there wasn't really that much free time, Anne, because it was not like it is our shift here. Don't forget there were bombings in between. There were all different kinds of activities, so we worked a whole day, from morning to night and our entertainment was like young girls would do. Sit together and talk and think of better times, and you know just sometimes being just plain silly, like nineteen, twenty years old girls try to be. And I think that's what made us survive, because we didn't...I don't even think that many times in our age the older nurses would keep us in place sometimes, because in our age we really couldn't digest the force and order of what we could expect could go on. I can't express myself, what would I say? Like youth is in every situation. You think of your future but you didn't realize that there might not have been any future at all, while the older people used to tell us, you better calm down because it's not going to be like this, you know. And sometimes we wouldn't believe them even when they talked to us, because we felt that one of these days this will be over, and with every air raid and every bombing and every bursting of bombs around us which never hit the hospital directly because we found out later on after the war that this hospital was on-the maps the Royal Air Force and the American Air Force showed us-this hospital was protected not to be bombed. So they knew about it. And we had cinder bombs and we had to take care of it ourselves. We had no fire department coming in taking care of our building. But direct bombings we did not have in this place. But the fright and the listening of the detonation of bombs around us and all this, except that we were sitting in our basements thinking the more the Allies throw these things down, the faster the war will be over. And that was our hope. And then, of course, when the Russians entered Berlin and the hospital was liberated-

INT: Was that in May '45?

MARGOT: That was in May '45, yes. And I cannot give you the exact answer to what happened then, because on the 20th of April, 1945, the so-called personnel director, which really was not personnel director but he was one of our office people, told us people who had still parents living in Berlin like myself, my mother, go home. Hurry up, make sure that even if you cannot get a trolley or any kind of transportation walk. Walk home and stay home. Do not come back here anymore, because the Russians had already infiltrated the surroundings of Berlin, and they felt that we were better off to be with our family then being there and not knowing what's happening outside. So I and three young men, we took off. And we had to walk for hours and hours. And I found my mother in an apartment of Christian friends of ours. She was there already, and I knew that when she was not staying away from anything else that she would be with them, because we were

already bombed out. We didn't have a home anymore for years already before. But that would be the place where I would find her.

INT: What contact did you have with your mother during this period of the Krankenhaus?

MARGOT: During the...until the end of the war we were able to go home, whoever had a home, or were able to go out, but we had the star of David, so we were never aware really who would come back again, would anything happen to us. And so therefore, to be honest, many times we covered it up. Sometimes we had little snaps on our star of David and that was, in fact, the one I have in my vault here still has the marks of the little snaps. Young people are like that. You take a chance and we took the damn thing off and we just made believe nobody knows you and tried to get home. And that's what we did. And unfortunately some people got caught and we were frightened. I mean, we were afraid to do that, but you almost could not...toward the end, I would say...the end of 1944, I would say by November or something like that, after that we couldn't even go out anymore because it got to be too dangerous.

INT: When you managed to get home from the Krankenhaus to see your mother, how long would you stay and what would those visits be like?

MARGOT: A good meal. That I must say. And just being with your mother. And sometimes we stayed overnight. We had only one day. Every so often we had what they called a free day and either you could go and do anything you wanted, because you could not work people...I mean we worked and worked and worked hours in night shifts and day shifts, so there had to be one day where you had a little break. Many people slept just that day. But many young people tried to, you know, since we all had parts of our family in Berlin, that we tried to get home occasionally, show our faces occasionally. But we had to come back again. But this time, on the 20th of April, 1945, I personally was told to get out of there and try to go to my mother. Try to get in touch with my mother. And so did a few other young people.

INT: Before this period, when your mother knew that you would have to go somewhere because you were a Jew and she wasn't, did she give you any advice? Did she say something that guided you?

MARGOT: Well, as you well know, my brother was already executed and what she guided me with was live by commands. Whatever they tell you, you must do. Because if you escape, look what happened to your brother. He got caught. Try to be there, stay there, do what they tell you, do not swim against the tide. Try to do whatever they tell you, and that's all I can say. Just like Nancy says now, what went on in her mind is almost unbelievable to picture. To me, of course, it was my mother, and all these years afterwards, to be very honest, after the war we very seldom spoke about all that. We were happy to be alive. She had her sister with whom she tried to live, and lived for many years together, until she came to this country and then she lived with us, with my husband and myself. So rarely that we talked a lot about the past. It was too powerful and too hurting. So we tried to live and tried to look into the future. Of course, with the birth of

Nancy, that was the most wonderful thing that ever happened to all of us, because I never, never thought that my mother would ever have grandchildren.

INT: We've already talked about it, but because we're talking about it now...how old were you when you had Nancy?

MARGOT: I was thirty-six and a half years old.

INT: And it was after a long time of marriage.

MARGOT: Well, we were married close to seven years, my husband and I. And he was forty-eight when Nancy was born.

INT: It was a miracle.

MARGOT: Yes, it was. It was.

INT: What was the atmosphere...you were still very young when your father died. What was the atmosphere in your house between your mother and your father and with the children?

MARGOT: It was a wonderful life. Don't forget at this point it was 1933, it was before '33. It was even before Hitler came to power because my father died on the 6th of January, 1933, and he had a wonderful position, as I mentioned before, and we had a very lovely life. We had enough help at home and fortunately I came from a very nice, not overpoweringly wealthy but well situated home. So it was a nice time of my life which was only for my eight years. But I must say, even after my father died, my mother tried to continue a little while, I would say until I was about ten years old, with the life we had. Not quite because the money did not come in anymore, but then everything fell apart. There was nothing that she could do anymore, and she had to just survive herself.

INT: It fell apart because the money ran out by that time?

MARGOT: Yes.

INT: Your father's work had been what?

MARGOT: My father was a broker in the commodity, I think you call it that.

INT: A commodity broker.

MARGOT: Yes. And he was quite well-to-do. (End of tape 4, side 2)

INT: Let's do this now. Margot Krisch. We are going to do the cope scale right now. And there were two events. Your cancer, and your husband's death.

MARGOT: Yes. Well, stress situations in the recent past which I say now recent was 1980, when my husband had a male mastectomy. He came down with cancer at this particular point and a year later in 1981 I was diagnosed as having breast cancer myself.

And I think the stress situation which would affect any patient with cancer was enormously magnified in our case, because having only one child and confronting this child, who was already very upset about the father's diagnosis in 1980, to confront her with myself having cancer also was I think the most devastating thing I ever did in my life. But thank the good Lord, I always get my strength and my feelings very much into place. I think that is part of my profession as a nurse and just plain my personality. Nancy was very well known to the psychiatrist in her university because she always brought everybody over there for help. I think that is a second generation habit or something. She always tried to help other people. And she mentioned the name Dr. Blau to me numerous times. That she went to see Dr. Blau with this student and with that student. And when this happened to me and I had to confront my husband first with this diagnosis, and he was devastated, I said to him, without even going any further, we're not even going to get home, let's call this gentleman at the university and tell him about the situation right now. Which I did. And Dr. Blau advised me to take my husband and come immediately down to see Nancy. Not even to call her. But it was time before dinner. She was living in the dormitory at the University of Delaware near us. It was only about twenty minutes away from our home. And just to confront her with it. And he made me aware of it. He said, Mrs. Krisch, do not be surprised, because she will probably holler at you or get very, very upset and throw you out. And exactly what the gentleman mentioned was. When we walked in there and we said, Nancy, we have to tell you something. She thought that one of her good friends had an accident or something and she said, what happened? What happened? Did something happen to Jim? And I said, no, not Jim. But I said, you sit down please because we have to tell you something. And she had a dream a half a year prior to this happening that I had come down with a diagnosis of cancer. That was in October of 1980. And I at that time mentioned to her that it's probably some kind of a situation that it was a leftover in her thoughts of her father's experience with cancer. And when this happened to me I made her recall her dream in October. And it just didn't register with her. She said, what do you mean? I said, well, before I go any further, do you remember what you were dreaming in October? And she said, no. I said, yes, because you called me. Think. And she said, I had a dream that you had cancer. I said, well, Nancy, I must tell you bluntly, this is what I was diagnosed with right now. And I said, we will do out utmost thing to get rid of it, but I had to tell you that. And I said, and now we will leave you. And she did exactly what this gentleman told me over the telephone. She said, get out of here and don't come back. Just get out of here. And I said, but why? We're leaving. Both of us were crying, my husband and myself. I said, I'd like to make you aware of it that Dr. Blau is sitting in his office waiting for you. And I said, you go over there now. I said, we're leaving you, but go out. And with this the two of us drove home crying like nobody's business. And about four hours later Nancy called at home, and she said, Mommy, please tell me again what you said to me before. I didn't understand what you were saying. So I told her again what happened to me. That I will have an operation within the following week, because being connected with all the surgeons in my hospital where I was working, I was told to have this done immediately, which I wanted anyhow. So that, I think, was one of the most stressful situations I had to face. But we coped very well with this too, my husband and I. And everything was taken care of, and I'll be very honest. With my husband's personality I was grateful to the good

Lord that he had the diagnosis first of cancer and I had it the following year, because I think the man would have been completely devastated.

INT: If you had had it first.

MARGOT: If I had it first. In fact, when they...of course, I had a wonderful support group at my hospital, since I was the director of employee health, all my employees knew me and everybody in this hospital knew me, because I was dealing with everybody. So when I had my operation there were numerous, numerous nurses who surrounded Nancy and Gerhard in the cafeteria and stayed with them until my operation was over. So it was made easier for them too. But we did cope very well with everything, and I must say, Nancy had a hard, hard time dealing with this, and to this day, is frightened to death when any little thing happens to her that she is, you know, being afflicted with this too. In fact just recently she had a little something which turned out to be benign, but I'm coping very well with all this, and I always did. And I think I mentioned it to so many people to cope well, in my profession, that it finally showed me that I have to cope with my own feelings, too. And I always did and I always will, and I think I'm a great support for my daughter to this day, and she has a good example, and I hope she will carry this through with her own children, too.

INT: When you say that you have to cope with your own feelings, too, it sounds like you have two ways of coping, the actions, how you behave when you have very bad news, and then how it feels inside. Is that-

MARGOT: Well, I think that will be with everyone, that you have two different...don't you think so?

INT: Oh, absolutely.

MARGOT: Because, I mean, one is your own feelings...but I must never...there are a lot of people in the medical profession who hear from their patients that they're angry and why me? Why me with the diagnosis of cancer? I don't think I ever had that feeling. Maybe because I went through so much in my life, but I said, well, this is just another trial, and this is what my husband used to say. Honey, the good Lord is testing us again. And that's the way we accepted it. It was just another test. I guess that's why you can deal with things like that.

INT: Is that how you feel...did you get this idea from Gerhard, or you yourself felt all of these things are tests?

MARGOT: No, I think I got that from Gerhard. Don't forget, my sweetheart was twelve years older than I am, and he used to say many times, you're still a little fuzzy sometimes because you are younger than I am, and you will find out that what I tell you now is coming true when you get a little bit older. I married him when I was thirty and he was already forty-two. And to be very honest, to this day I must say even so I'm now together with my second beloved, there are many times when I think back of Gerhard and live by his model, and really even mention it to Alex these days, what Gerhard used to say. And he accepts that too, because he's in my age group.

INT: Your current husband is your age. More your age.

MARGOT: Yes. He's two years older than I am. But, I mean, we're both no youngsters.

INT: Do you think when you married Gerhard, were there things that reminded...what attracted you about Gerhard?

MARGOT: His gentleness, his open face.

INT: Open face?

MARGOT: I mean he had...he was open about himself, you know. He did not hide anything. To a certain degree I pitied him because he had nobody. But he was not a person that was a loner. He went out to dances in the New York City. He went out to find somebody, but it had to be to his liking, and he said when he met me that he was attracted to me, how shall I say, I was very open just like he was himself. I was funny. I gave him a lot of joy, even talking to him. I did not even...that he lived in the past all the time, I kind of was just the opposite. I always had a very humorous way of expressing myself. I think I really inherited this from my mother, and I think that attracted him. And then when he met my mother, of course, not only he married me but also inherited a mother, my mother, but he didn't have anybody anymore, and my mother was a very, very lovable person. And I think I mentioned once before too that his name was Gerhard and my name is Margot, and his sister's name was Margot and my brother's name was Gerhard, so in the long run, when he met my mother and he saw the way I treated my mother and the way I lived with my mother in New York City, he was very much overcome by that, because he felt that if somebody is so good to a parent, which he was to his own parents too, I'm not putting a big halo around my head here.

INT: No, no. I know.

MARGOT: Is it wrong to say halo as a Jew? (Laughter) I'm not doing this. But he felt that this was important to him. And he saw a lot of qualities in me, and I saw a lot of good qualities in him, and that's what brought us together. It was really a blind date.

INT: An excellent one.

MARGOT: My second, of course, stress situation was when he passed away, but I think I had it so well arranged everything, his care, his...don't forget now, I was connected with New Rochelle Hospital for many, many, many years prior to his death. And he was part of that hospital already, being married to me, because a lot of people knew him there. I was able to bring him into the extended care pavilion at the time, because my vice president of human resources said, Margot, do not stay at home. There is no reason for you to do that. You bring him here because I wanted to take a leave of absence when he got into a condition that I really could not handle it too much by myself anymore, and he said, you will destroy your pension, because you're now up in an age that your last few years of your being in our hospital will set the amount of your pension. And he said, you have gone through enough in your life. Don't do this. We give you the freedom here to bring him in. We will admit him. You go in there whenever you want to. You do

whatever you think is the right thing for you. And he said, you are in the position where you can walk away ever so often. And he said, think it over. Do not stay home. Fortunately, Anne, I always came into the hands of really lovely people. I think it has a lot to do with my own personality too, because I do a lot for other people too. So it reflects somehow. It always comes back to you yourself. So I did what I was told at this time. And Gerhard was three weeks in this so-called nursing home. And I had placed help around-the-clock with him. In the beginning I did the afternoon shift myself, but then my own physician said to me, Margot, I do not wish for you to do this anymore, because I want you to be Mrs. Krisch, and not Nurse Krisch, because she saw probably what happened to my physical condition too, because it took a lot out of me to take care of him. And then I placed another person in the afternoon, so I had three weeks, three shifts, taking care of him. It cost a fortune, but I didn't care, because he was worth every nickel to do that, until he passed away. And even then I had about at least ten people around me. Nancy and I were there, and when it came to the last breath the girls sent us out, because they did not want us to witness it. And then they all were with us. It was always...We have wonderful support, and it was my colleagues, and to this day we're a very close-knit group of nurses. And I will never forget that. I will never forget that. Because they knew our past, they knew what was going on with us, and I have a marvelous support group in this hospital. And where I volunteer now. I'm not working anymore, but I still give two days a week, and I cannot be without the place, because they are my support group while I was their support when I was working.

INT: This sounds like a very familiar pattern, that where you go you become part of the group so intrinsically that it becomes almost like another family, and that's very, very important and very beautiful. Does the concept of family itself...is that one of the biggest concepts in your life? That you-

MARGOT: I have no family, you mean. Well, yes, it was, Anne, because for myself I still remembered a few people, at least. At least my mother's relatives. But Nancy had absolutely nobody to remember. Not from Gerhard's family, and not from my family, as she stated in her own Yom Hashoah statement. When she went over there for the first time she felt a little bit more what really happened and her connection to her relatives, and that was such an important mission for the two of us and that was my reason for taking her before her children get older, because now she can transmit this to her children. But I must say, of course, because of Nancy's marriage into a large family, and the acceptance...I mean, I don't see many mother-in-laws who are so close-knit than Nancy's mother-in-law and myself. We are both nurses. We both have things in common and with the minute Nancy and Barry got together Gerhard and I became part of the Gordon family. So it was a wonderful feeling, and it's the first time in my life that I had a family again, and of course now with Alex who has three sons and families. And he himself has a large family. This is again another part of a family I'm exposed to, and if you would come to our home and you would see the pictures we have hanging in our hallway. On the left side is my family and on the right side is his family, so it's a wonderful feeling. And we get together very frequently with his children and Nancy and Barry too, so it gives me now a feeling of fulfillment, and I must say, knock on wood, it is very important in my life now in my age that I have this feeling, because I never really had a family and it's a wonderful feeling. I used to envy people who had a lot of people

around them, cousins and everything, and I didn't have it, but it was more important for me that my Nancy has family around her, because I could live without it. I have learned to live without it, let's say, but she had nothing. And when little Rebecca was born, Nancy has a lot of insight, and I think that has also something to do with the second generation of Holocaust survivors, she made a beautiful little speech. The naming of the child was held at her parents-in-law's house and after the rabbi spoke, Nancy made a little statement and it was beautiful. She spoke, of course, about her father and that she now starts a new tree. I cannot directly give it back, but I should have brought it along maybe because it was very beautiful for you to know too. And she said, Rebecca is the first blossom on this tree, and she hopes that this will continue now. And it was beautifully said, that she compared herself with building a new generation. And that is very important for myself. I wish my Gerhard would have experienced this all, but he was so happy with his Nancy, to know that there was a continuation of the family. In fact, Nancy, when she got married, had the name of his mother as a second name, Regina. And having no boy in our family, of course, Nancy was an only child, she asked her father, would you like for me to continue the name of your mother or do you mind if I take Krisch as my second name. I do not like to make it a dash Gordon, Krisch-Gordon, because it's not fair to her husband. He said, I would like for you to continue the name Krisch. So Nancy is not now Nancy Regina Gordon, she is Nancy Krisch Gordon, and she continues with that, which is nice.

INT: Beautiful.

MARGOT: She has a lot of insight, I must say. Maybe I'm a little partial, but I think.

INT: You might be a little partial, but she also has a lot of insight.

MARGOT: Oh, she has a lot of insight. I'm very happy about that.

INT: What do you know about Gerhard's family?

MARGOT: Very little. Very little.

INT: He came from where?

MARGOT: He came from...originally he was born in Hohensalza, which was in Inovatzlav in Poland.

INT: Could you spell that?

MARGOT: I cannot spell Inovatzlav, impossible, because it's Polish. But Hohensalza was H-O-H-E-N-S-A-L-Z-A and that was a part of Germany where the people opted either for Poland or Germany. It was like a corridor almost. There was always, for years and years, like it was later on after the war of '45, you know, the Second World War, it's now part of Poland. Everything after the First World War that people were able to opt for Germany or Poland, and his parents opted to go to Germany. So he landed in Berlin from Hohensalza. And as a young child he was raised in Berlin.

INT: Do you know anything about Gerhard's parents?

MARGOT: Gerhard's parents? Only what he told me. That his parents had a, I think they had a, how did he say it? Dry goods store? Yes. But Gerhard spoke an enormous amount of his uncle, who happened to be the brother of his father, who was immensely wealthy and had no children. Gerhard was almost fascinated by Uncle Bernard, and he spoke sometimes more of Uncle Bernard than about his own parents, because for some reason it made an enormous impression on him, because they trained him...this man had a very large department store, and I think he wanted eventually to have Gerhard take over. And he trained him from small youth on to be part of his family, even though Gerhard was very much in love with his mother and his father and his sister. But for some reason, he talked a lot about Uncle Bernard all the time. Of course when the companies and everything were taken out of Jewish hands and called...overseas, that was when the Jewish people had to leave their businesses and it was taken into gentile hands, the uncle had the same experience, except that he had a lot of money, and he escaped to Sweden at the time. I think the uncle passed away in 1934, that's right, and the aunt escaped to Sweden. So Tante Hedwig I met in New York after I met Gerhard, but I think she was about the only one. It was the aunt who was very close to his family, and then I met a cousin who are now all passed on, of course, for many years already. Two cousins I met. One from Chile who came here to visit by the name of...I forgot now who it was. Manfred, I think.

INT: Manfred?

MARGOT: I think Manfred, yes. No. I forgot. Mitchell was his last name but I forgot his first name now. It was so many years back. And I met these people and another cousin from Chicago.

INT: But only these few people escaped the war from Gerhard's family?

MARGOT: Yes. They came over to United States before the war.

INT: And does he know where his parents were taken?

MARGOT: Well, he was always under the impression that...we know, because he was...through the hands of a gentile person in Berlin, the father had sent a note from Theresenstadt when his wife passed away, and apparently she died of a natural death.

INT: In Theresenstadt?

MARGOT: Yeah, in Theresenstadt. She had a very bad case of diabetes and she died there on the 2nd of June, 1943. He sent a note to this very good friend of theirs with the knowledge...to give her knowledge to send some kind of notice to his son that the mother passed away, and she did. She sent a letter to Gerhard here to the United States. Of course, he was in the army already, the United States Army. And he got news that his mother passed on. He was always under the impression that his father was sent to Auschwitz and killed in Auschwitz alongside with his sister and brother-in-law, but when I took Nancy and Barry to Israel in 1985, no, not '85, in 1989, because Gerhard has

passed away in '88, we went into the Yad Vashem and I found out that his father died in Theresenstadt too. That he was never transported to Auschwitz. So the poor man who was so guilt-ridden all these years never found out that his father was not killed in Auschwitz, that he also died a natural death in Theresenstadt. It made me feel very sad when I read that, because we never had the opportunity before to know about it. Then Nancy and I, we found out also when we went to Berlin, that both of them went to Thieresenstadt and that he died in Thieresenstadt, because they have all these documents now in the Jewish community house. And what shall I say? Well, that's about all I know about Gerhard's family. He talked a lot about his immediate family. I was, I would say, almost part of it, because we have pictures which he brought over here, all these, and in fact I must say, with our wall Alex and I have in our apartment where one part is my family and on the other side is his, I have numerous pictures of Gerhard and Nancy when she was small, my mother. I mean, it's just a family pictures, but we dug out some pictures the other day about Gerhard's father and mother and a picture just before he left for the United States, and Alex, who's a very warm-hearted and a nice person said to me, you know, honey, for Nancy's sake, do me a favor. Put Gerhard's parents on this wall too, because they belong there too.

INT: Beautiful.

MARGOT: And I said, you know something, it's true. They do belong on there. And that's what we did and she was very happy to see that.

INT: That was wonderful. Not just that you did it, but that your second husband suggested that you put the parents of your first husband.

MARGOT: Well, he's a very deep-thinking and lovely person too, I must say.

INT: What made Gerhard leave and what age was he?

MARGOT: He was twenty-seven years old when he came to the United States.

INT: And that was what year?

MARGOT: 1941, wait a minute, 1940. Because he was born in 1913, so then he was...yes, 1940. He came with the last ship going out of the harbor. At this point he was told already that he might not make it, because all the mines were already placed in the channel at that time. But they made it over here. The reason why Gerhard came here was also...and this is what bothered him an awful lot, was his sister...there was a second cousin living in Larchmont here where I live now, in this area, and this gentleman was a Realtor and his wife, and they were childless. Gerhard's sister had written letters all over the world to find relatives to get out of Germany and had no luck to get anyplace. Finally the Krisch's here from Larchmont decided that they would like to have Margot- (end of tape 5, side 1)

INT: We've done the cope scale, and there's something else I want to talk about. We've been just talking about the issue of G-d and how you prayed every night. Can we have

that on tape? And then tell me the part about Nancy that you just said. Tell me about your idea of G-d.

MARGOT: My idea of G-d is that there is something in the universe which is higher than any human being ever will be. I don't believe that there's a little man sitting there, or a little lady sitting there, what people now say, but to me G-d is something in the universe that is higher than I can imagine. I faithfully believe in that. I would say through situations like we just answered this questionnaire about coping with things, I always had faith in G-d and mostly, I must say, my strength developed long ago already, but I think in later years now, in my older age, I try to be very strong, mostly for my daughter's sake, to show her that one has to cope with things the way they hit you. You cannot escape. Everybody has in their lifetime something to deal with, some a little bit less, some a little bit more, but you do have to cope with things. You cannot let yourself go, because that brings illnesses on and depressions, and there's no reason that one has to do that. You can really learn how to cope with it if you have faith, either in G-d or in yourself too. You have to have faith in yourself.

INT: Where does your strength come from?

MARGOT: My strength? I would say it came from the way I was brought up, because I lived with this type of, how shall I say, values, because my mother instilled them into my life and to be very honest...I think I mentioned also in the beginning of my interview, my mother follows me to this day. I have an awful lot of dreams about my mother, and I talked it over with Alex just not too long ago. He said to me, I think as much as I hear from you, and I came into your life very late, your mother left an enormous impression on your life. And he said that's probably why you continuously dream of her. And I think...whenever there was a situation coming up, I always felt, well, mom was dealing with so many horrible things I must do it too. And I can do it and I do it. And I think Nancy's learning from me now too. She is a little more fine-sighted than I am, because simply she has the genes of her father in her too.

INT: What do you mean?

MARGOT: What I mean is that Gerhard was not as powerful in his actions as I am. He was a very, how shall I say, little bit spoiled by his mother, I would say, and I think...he was a strong person, a soldier and a good soldier, but when it came to certain situations sometimes he would hesitate...not ever falter. He would be thinking it through a lot, but he would dwell on it for a long time. And I think that was his mistake, and Nancy keeps on doing this occasionally and I try to get this out of her, because it's not good. You have to learn to cope with things. He did very well cope with things, but of course it is a horrible thing when you lose your whole family, but I tried so many times to say to him, but you're building up a new family. You have me. You have my mother. You have a child now. You must look into the future, and don't always go back to the past. But sometimes he could not do that. He could not do that. So I'm trying to tell her clearly about all this, and she realizes that too.

INT: It's quite an example that you're giving to Nancy of a very, very strong woman and a woman who handles whatever life gives her. What would you say, in addition to that, is the most important thing you want to pass on to your daughter?

MARGOT: Spontaneously it's very hard to see that right away, but to me, life itself is beautiful, because if you have experienced a time when you almost lost it and you survived and you see now that through seventy-one, almost seventy-one years, you have had lovely experiences in the years after the war and the death or sickness has to be accepted, because that can happen to anybody. My thoughts, I don't know what you mean, Anne. I'm a little bit off-track now. Give me another example again.

INT: Okay. When you think of what you want your daughter to learn from you, what are the most important things that you want her to understand about life from you?

MARGOT: I feel she should be strong. She should not think of monetary involvements all the time, which she never will do anyhow. That there is more to life than just money. That there's a lot of beauty in life. That she should look up and see the sun shining, to see beautiful flowers coming out in spring, to see the leaves falling in the fall, to see the snow even how much it ever will be and look at nature. Look how the animals live. How there is so much beauty around you. Don't look ever back. Try to look forward in your life, and see your children, first of all, the eyes of your children, your beautiful children and your lovely husband. Look where you came from. From coming out of school you now have a husband who's a physician, and I think you're very fortunate. That's what I keep on telling her. But Nancy was brought up that really monetary things do not impress her too much, and to me this is very important, because you can cover up a lot with money, which is unnecessary because, as I said before, there's more beauty in life than just running after a dollar, and that's my...I hope this is what you tried for me to say. A happy family life, to be a good person, to treat your mother the way she deserves (laughter) and which she always does. She's very caring. Just build up a wonderful family, and she's doing that. I can see it and I'm very, very happy that I'm fortunate enough to see her building up her little family.

INT: That's true. And also, when you say treat her mother the way she should, she has this incredible example of the way you treated your mother, and you said she shared a bedroom with your mother until she was thirteen. When I speak with Nancy I'll ask her a bit about her grandmother, because I'm sure they had a very special relationship. Because in the coping scale we were talking about how you handle a problem, you were describing a terrible problem when you were diagnosed with cancer and your husband had been diagnosed a year before and the period of trying to tell your only child and dealing with his death. This was an unbelievably hard description of life. When you have a problem, how do you deal with it? No matter what it is. How do you deal with the problem?

MARGOT: I focus in on the most important things of the problem to begin with, and then I analyze it, and I find out which is the best way to deal with it. I think I do have...I'm blessed with a lot of common sense and unfortunately, common sense is not so common with a lot of people, but I do have that. I think that's what brings me, what tries

to make me cope with things easier, because I use my common sense. I do not wipe anything away. I face it head-on, and if I can cope with it I will do it, if I cannot cope with it, I seek help. I'm not superhuman, I mean, everybody needs a little help occasionally. But I try to deal with it with common sense, and that's what I'm trying to tell Nancy too, and she's doing it. I can see it.

INT: How would you describe your relationship with Nancy?

MARGOT: I think Nancy and I have a wonderful relationship. It is even much better now, since her children were born than before, because a mother and daughter relationship, as everyone knows, sometimes is a little haphazard, during the years of the children's non-conforming ideas, and I have lived through that too, which hurt me occasionally a little bit, but that was the beginning of her college years, when she started to be on her own and felt that she was now free and she wanted to express her own feelings, which she always had the opportunity to do before too, but she felt that that's what she wanted to do. She never disappointed us. Never, never. Never took any drugs or drank or anything like that, but she went through this relationship with me more than with Gerhard. Her father, they had a special relationship. There was not too much closeness many times, because, I think, because of his guilt reactions. He wanted to tell her a lot about what happened and she was overpowered by that and she felt...and I kept on saying don't overpower her, sweetheart, because she is hurting. It's not that she doesn't want to accept what you tell her. She hurts. She cannot see this and she cannot digest it. But they had also a very nice relationship. No question. It was just a little different. And he was an older person already, and he needed his certain freedom, and I was probably the one who really had the most...like all mothers, really, the duty to deal with her. And we had always a wonderful relationship. I was to a certain degree, maybe, in her earlier years a little overprotective, which is also, to be understood I believe, because it's an only child. From the situation where we came from, and I did not have an opportunity to have more children, I must say I might have been a little bit overprotective in the beginning, but later on that left me and she had an awful lot of freedom and did not misuse her freedom. But I must say, and I was told by friends years ago when I used to complain sometimes about and ask them, do your children behave like that too? Oh yes, they do, and wait until they're having their own children that they change altogether. And sure enough that's what it was. I mean, our relationship now is...was always close. It was close from young years, teenage years. We always had a wonderful relationship. Little college years disagreements between mother and daughter, but after that I must say when she got married and everything, everything was always wonderful. No question about it. It is now even closer than ever before because I think age has a lot to do with that too. She is very happy that I remarried again, simply because probably she knows that I'm not alone anymore, which bothered her an awful lot. She's also...my son-in-law, for instance, I had only one child, but to me my son-in-law is my second child. He's very close to me. He was very close to my husband, to Gerhard, and loved him dearly. Gerhard, unfortunately, did not have much time to have his son-in-law with him, because he really only lived through Nancy and Barry's wedding, and after that he went just downhill with his health and died the same year on the 10th of August, the day after Nancy's birthday. So he never had the opportunity, but the way my Barry treated his father-in-law between May and August, before he was in love with her and after the wedding no son could have

handled a father better than Barry handled his father-in-law. And he was not a physician at this point, but he had the ingredients of a medical person in him. I could see it. It was just wonderful, and that's a part of Nancy, of course, an awful lot too.

INT: That's wonderful. You know, it's a very close family you're describing, and the fact that you feel that your son-in-law is a second child is also a very unique thing. It's very wonderful. What would you describe as your happiest moments? When you look over your life, what comes out? It doesn't have to be just one. A few incidents.

MARGOT: My whole life?

INT: Any part of your life. What comes up? When you hear the word happy, what images come to your mind?

MARGOT: Images of happiness. Recently, I would say, the birth of my grandchildren as a continuation of my family. To look into the eyes of my grandchildren, I just kvell. I mean, I cannot...to me, I must say, that is the most happiness anybody can experience, regardless of what you went through in your life healthwise or otherwise. But just recently Rebecca is now at an age-she's almost five years old-where she now comes to us and stays with us overnight. And she had just recently...I will have her with me next week again, but about four weeks ago she was with us, with Alex and myself for the first time. And she asked me to sleep with her on the couch. She didn't want to be alone, and I said, no, I wouldn't let you alone. And the little four and three-quarter year old sweetheart didn't stop talking until three thirty in the morning with me, lying on this couch until I said, Rebecca, we will never be able to go to the theater in the morning because you have to sleep now. And I took her little hand and I fell asleep with her hand in mine. And I tell you, to this day, I cannot get over this, because I think that was one of my happiest moments when I had this child lying next to me. Just the thought of it. To have that little sweetheart with me, and I wished I could get that other little sweetie, that little boy, on the other side, but he's still too young.

INT: No, Jared has to get a little bigger.

MARGOT: Yes. He's only two years old. Nancy would not like for me to have both of them, because she said it's too much.

INT: That's a beautiful moment. Do you-

MARGOT: I mean, there were other happy occasions in my life. I'm trying...Nancy's wedding, my own first wedding, which was different than the second one. Again, I think the second one was bigger than the first one, because this time we had accumulated a few more relatives, but there were happy occasions in my life. The birth of my own child, to begin with. That was number one, of course. I almost forgot about it. Not only grandchildren. The birth of my own child was a very happy occasion.

INT: When you look back over your life, do you...let me just ask you this and then...(tape is shut off here)...What I wanted to ask you. There are one or two more questions. Now

this one is a difficult one. Are there things that you look back on your life that you feel were mistakes or failures? Things you really are sorry you did?

MARGOT: I did? Things I did?

INT: Right. Things that were in your control.

MARGOT: In my control. I don't think I had any failures. No, I really cannot think of any failures. I would say that I would like to have had a little bit more of an education, which was denied because of the Hitler time, which I feel in many ways now, because now I'm at rest and sit quietly, and I can see my Alex having an enormous amount of knowledge which I would love to know about. You know, he's very well educated and even on Jeopardy he can always answer every question. It's true. And there are things which completely have passed me by, and I realize that now that probably was due to my schooling. And I did not have the time here, because I had to continue working, to really do and go to a lot of depth about different types of education. To me every day's living was more important. So I would say that I would have liked to change, but I would say there's a lot of knowledge that you don't learn in college also, and that's life experience.

INT: We were talking a little bit before about your sense of over-protectiveness when Nancy was young. That was probably, as you said, as a result of your experiences. How else do you feel the Holocaust affected the way you raised your child or the way you looked at life?

MARGOT: Well, I would say both of us, Gerhard and myself, left a legacy of a bundle of impressions on this child, which a human being or a child of non-survivors would never have experienced. I mean you can hear alone on the depth of her report she gave about our little trip to Germany last year that she...I don't think anybody who is not a second-generation of survivors would have had an experience expressed the way this young lady did that. And...what was the question?

INT: About how the Holocaust affected the way you raised your child. You mentioned the dreams that you have now about your mother. What kinds of dreams are they? Does she give you advice or do you just see her? What are these dreams like?

MARGOT: They're mostly pleasant experiences. It's always something, I would say, almost protective to me. I do remember most of the dreams, but there is always something that we do things together. It's always we were there together. And it's many times not even another family member with me except my mother and I. And sometimes comes Gerhard in there. Nancy very seldom appears in my dreams. It's mostly my mother, Gerhard and myself. I think because of Nancy this is rather more a recent and continuation, and I have that all the time. And lately, I must say, it's not that Alex comes into my dreams, but there are certain things that I would visualize, could be his influence on my life.

INT: How would you describe yourself as a person? Hopeful, pessimistic, trusting, suspicious?

MARGOT: Oh no. Very optimistic. No, never. I'm suspicious. Suspicious that I would say, not suspicious of what people think about me or ...I couldn't care less about that. But suspicious when, for instance, like Alex would say to me, why do you always get afraid of when somebody...why do you lock the door a few times. Why do you...like the kids gave me mace to take along now. For me this is very important. I will not park my car behind the building at night. I made Nancy aware of that even when she was a teenager, not to park...to walk in the middle of the street. I think that's left over from the Gestapo. I will look into people's faces all the time. I will turn around when somebody walks behind me, for instance. I cannot stand when somebody is very close behind me, and that has nothing to do with today's crime problems. I just cannot stand it. I will turn around and say would you like to pass. So that's...would you like to know something else, Anne?

INT: One last thing. A last question.

MARGOT: Is that answering your question, I mean.

INT: Sure. If you wanted somebody to remember something...what would you want people to remember about the Holocaust if you could determine what they would remember. When there are no more survivors left. What do you want them to know?

MARGOT: I want them to know that there used to be a group or a religion, I wouldn't say a group, a religion that was...no, I have to think more about that. There used to be a, I would say, a group of people who were supposed to be completely wiped out of this life by one human being who was, in my opinion, a mentally ill human being, who fascinated and hypnotized a country, and a world almost, with his ideas. To just get rid of human beings. But in Jewish history that happened a few times before, but never during our lifetime. And it will not stop either, because you see that in Bosnia now it's going on the same way, but to me the Holocaust should never be forgotten, because culturally, how shall I express myself, it's so hard to say it just spontaneously, I would love to think about that a little bit more. And everything what belongs to the Jewish religion, which was known...I speak mostly now of the German Jewish identity. There were enormous amount of scientists and medical people, physicians, professors, technical geniuses, who were so important for the whole world, and these people's ideas were destroyed. These people's lives were just snuffed out for absolutely nothing, for the idea of one human being which was absolutely insane. And I think the world has lost an awful lot because of that, and that should never, never happen again. And I enjoy seeing young Jewish people these days to come up in this world and have the same wonderful ideas and build a new Jewish existence again, and that I think is very important for a survivor to see. That really this man tried to wipe out a whole generation and didn't wipe out the whole generation, but the idea still prevails, and it continues with the second generation of Holocaust survivors, and that to me is very important. That the second generation should continue, spread the word to their own children.

INT: Thank you.