Irene Lewis

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born on Dec. 7 in Kassel, Germany in 1920.

Q: Did you grow up in Kassel?

A: Yes, until I was 18. I went to nursing school in Frankfurt.

Q: Till you were 18 you went all through school in Kassel. Can you tell me a little about your education?

A: Yes. First I went to grade school and then my father wanted me to, I had a professional education so I went to a commercial high school, and there was a lot of anti – Semitism there already. And he died when I was 15, and for instance they wanted to fail me for my exam because I was sitting shiva. Well that was straightened out, but it was different to be in that school as a Jewish girl.

Q: This was the professional school?

A: No this was the commercial high school.

Q: This was about 1935, because you said you were about 15. Before Hitler came to power how would you describe your relationship with your non – Jewish friends?

A: Oh, fine. We were absolutely all one, highly integrated and I had a very happy childhood. Everything was fine.

Q: How did you first notice things beginning to change?

A: Oh in school. We heard about it, we read it, we were aware of it. For instance my brother looks very (word missing in original transcript) and he was always presented as an example of Aryan ways. That was ridiculous. My mother looked very Christian. She was stopped in the street, why she doesn’t buy? The Fuehrer and she said she’s Jewish and they said everyone says that. In my town per se, Kassel, anti – Semitism wasn’t too great compared to other towns in various areas, particularly the north, but later on some crazy thing. For instance after my father died, we always had a maid, she had to leave because we had a man in the house, who was all of 12. Knew from nothing.

Q: This was your brother?

A: This was my brother. We couldn’t have a maid anymore.

Q: This was after 1935, after the Nuremberg Laws?

A: No, this was after 1938. Also in 1938 my brother, when they lined up all the people to go to Dachau, of course we had no men in the house, but they looked for my brother who was working as an apprentice nearby, and my mother called up and told them to hide him. He was a little boy. But since our family had no male they looked for some male. And then the question arose whether we could get a visa to America and that was after ’38. My uncle was sent away shortly after I believe. And a friend of my mother immigrated to go to America, and he was taken away, so we took her in.

Q: Let me backtrack just for a minute. We were talking about when you were in the commercial high school. What types of things did you notice as a girl of about 13, 14, about, am I right?

A: Well the teachers, there were several teachers who were just anti – Semitic. They promoted Hitler and they pointed out that we were Jews and we should all be done away with, and they made these anti – Semitic remarks that all Jews are crooks and that sort of thing.

Q: For a 13 or 14 year old girl that must be very difficult to understand.

A: I don’t, you know I had totally forgotten about that. I don’t know if it mattered so awfully much, because we lived with it. It wasn’t an isolated case. You know?

Q: What happened to the Christian friendships you had up to that time?

A: Some withdrew and others stayed. My father had a business friend who was very loyal to us, you know. You know frankly I don’t remember that so much anymore, because that was so long ago and I had so much later on, that there’s so much more stuck in my mind. I can’t remember that it affected me all that much, but children don’t take that too hard, but don’t quote me on that because I really don’t know, but I do know one thing, that after ’38 my mother tried desperately for somewhere for us to go out, and I had an uncle who went overnight to Argentina. She didn’t want to send me there and my grandmother lived with us, and what else. Then I had a boss who wanted to take me to France. My mother wasn’t for any of this. She really wanted us to be together.

Q: Were you ever stopped at all from going to school, from finishing this commercial high school?

A: No. No.

Q: And then you said that when you finished you went to Frankfurt, to pursue nursing?

A: Yes.

Q: Had you always wanted to be a nurse?

A: Yes.

Q: Was this a Jewish school in Frankfurt?

A: Yes it was. No it was the only Jewish hospital in Frankfurt, and the only reason that my mother gave permission for me to go there was that I have a profession in the event that we emigrate somewheres. And I was rather persistent on the subject. It was hard to get in, so many girls wanted to get in. In fact I had to wait from’38 for about six months.

Q: You were in Kassel during Crystal Night? Or in Frankfurt?

A: Yes. In Kassel.

Q: You mentioned that they were looking for men and your father wasn’t there. Did they find your brother?

A: No. He was hidden.

Q: Did anything happen to your family?

A: No. My uncle was taken I believe, or was he hiding, I don’t know.

Q: In the nursing school in Frankfurt did you notice things getting worse as far as...?

A: Yes, but that is later. First it is fine. It was pretty good, but later of course they had food rations all through Germany. Ours were a little stricter. By the time I went there many girls, every day another girl emigrated. It was very sad. And for a little while they had Shabbos? which I didn’t like, not coming from a Jewish home, I mean an orthodox home, that didn’t appeal to me and under the circumstances already, and me not believing in it, that sort of thing, in fact I didn’t know what milching and fleishing was.

Q: You say you didn’t come from an orthodox home, how did you feel about, what were your feelings about being Jewish under these circumstances in Germany?

A: Not rebellious at all. I never thought about it. In a derogative way we went to shul, same shul we had here in the Hebrew Tabernacle, and I never thought I should be something else as far as I can remember. At that time.

Q: Was there any discussion, this goes back a little way, before your father passed away, of emigrating?

A: No, due to the fact that my father was a real German, in the German army, and he committed suicide as a result of this persecution, which we were never told, we children. We were told he had a heart attack, but he shot himself. I only heard after I got here.

Q: What type of business was he in?

A: He dealt in rawhides.

Q: He was importing them?

A: No, from the farmers. Before the revolution in Russia he went as far as Russia.

Q: Do you know even hearing afterwards how the Nazis affected his business?

A: I don’t think it affected his business too much. I think the ideology of the whole thing, or maybe facing emigration, I don’t know. As I said it wasn’t talked about, but I think I remember that he was quite depressed, but his brother, his older brother who was the head of the family in many ways, kept saying it will never last, we don’t have to leave, and he too was such a devout German. They believed in milk and honey. They had absolutely no foresight, which I can’t even say derogatively. They had no place to go, they were established, they were not that young, probably not that flexible, and really he was one of those people like many of us when somebody came from Poland, you know, he was a strict army German, it was a religion. That was how I was brought up. Like his generation. I could not believe, like when I came here that being Jewish was not just a religion, but that I learned it the hard way. I can’t remember too much of the time.

Q: How did your mother after your father passed away, how did your mother react to the growing, you know the strengthening of the Nazis?

A: She had nothing to say because my uncle had that in his mind, you understand. I still hear him saying that terrible thing and he had us all brainwashed. Then in ’38 she didn’t listen anymore and they had these children transports going to England and she registered my brother and myself and my grandmother and her were still home. So my brother could leave, but I was one week, you know they had a set date how old you could be or how young, and I was one week too old. The deadline was the fifteenth of December and I was born on the 7th. And she didn’t really push it hard nor did I because I didn’t want her to be left alone. So the next time I would go, that was our idea. But then the war started. My husband went to England under the same auspices, and his sister.

Q: So then your brother then went to England on a kinder transport.

A: Right.

Q: how did you get the information about this kinder transport, do you remember?

A: No.

Q: Okay, I was just.

A: I guess it was the Judegemeinde. I don’t remember. And then I was still registered for Frankfurt, so I said okay, let me get a profession first, and then I can get out. And that’s how I got to Frankfurt and she was home with my grandmother and as I remember we had some life insurance, and my mother wasn’t financially too well off, not destitute or anything, and I had relatives in Frankfurt, and I saw her. And I graduated in ’40, the last class that graduated. I made it. In fact I made it in a year and a half just to make it, and in order to get papers I had to work first.

Q: Wait a minute, was this the Jude (word missing in original transcript) haus?

A: Most people from Frankfurt will tell you about it, it was a very well known hospital. So was the training school. You mentioned Dagon – strasse here in the U.S. you did not have to make up courses, whereas the English girls had to make up courses, I did not have to make up one course. So it was a good hospital, very well known, strictly kosher.

Q: Were you at all restricted in that hospital?

A: Oh yes, now we start cooking. Of course later on it was restricted and we had to wear a stern and a Jude on it, and we had curfews and we weren’t allowed to go anyplace, and then it really began. We were in a compound and again I was young, and we had to work hard.

Q: Did you have to wear the stern, it was only mandated in 1942, no before, I believe it was mandated in ’40. Yes it must have been.

Q: Do you remember the day that you got it? The star?

A: No.

Q: Did you have to wear it on your uniform?

A: No, only out of the compound, but therefore with young chutzpah I did not let that stop me. I had star made that I could take off and I went anyplace I wanted to. And I always loved swimming, and I didn’t have much time off, but one day I said I’m going swimming. So I went swimming out in the river and somebody almost drowned and I pulled him in and saved his life. Everyone wondered where is the girl who saved his life, that was the end, I swam underneath and got out before anybody could see me because in spite of that I would have been arrested. I had no business being there, and that’s the last time I did something like that. I was scared. I would have been arrested. If you were caught not wearing the stern, in another area where you were not supposed to be, you were going to be arrested. As I said, being young and foolish, that didn’t stop me. I always had a bit of the rebel in me as far as that was concerned.

Q: Speaking of being a bit of a rebel, when you were confronted by all these restricting things like a curfew and a star, as things got worse, how were you coping with this? Were you able as a family to make any plans about emigration by then?

A: My mother tried, but she, now you mention Crystal Night, you see how far this was away, I was already in Frankfurt where she said I have already arranged, you go to Stuttgart where there was the consulate and you write sister, and I went to Stuttgart and that was the day of Crystal Night come to think of it.

Q: Were you in Stuttgart for Crystal Night?

A: I was on the train, some man was sitting next to me and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and I was sitting there and I still remember I had a little pin from a foreign country and I didn’t say a word, and I was petrified, how an I going to get home. But I did get home, and I made it and my mother was petrified, her child was on the train someplace, but with my usual luck I made it. No ill effects.

Q: Had you registered in Stuttgart?

A: Yes, but it was a number that I would have gotten here just about when I did get here.

Q: Did you realize that?

A: Yes, but at least I made some provisions. I should have registered much earlier than I did. That’s how they start.

Q: While you were in the Common House in Frankfurt were you able to treat non – Jewish patients?

As: No, in fact my license was made out when I finally got to it, that I was not to practice nursing except in a Jewish environment. In fact I still have it I think in the drawer. And then after the war, of course a lot happened in between, when I wanted my license again, they gave me the regular license.

Q: When you were in the Judes (word missing in original transcript) haus? And treating only the Jewish patients were these mostly older people?

A: Any age.

Q: Were they covered by (word missing in original transcript) ?

A: I guess so.

Q: Were the doctors all Jewish?

A: I guess so.

Q: Sure, everybody. Except the night nurses. They had some Christian nurses. Some of them left voluntarily and others were really very sad for leaving.

Q: How long were you able to stay with this hospital?

A: Till ’42. I left with the last group. You see being young, and we were all giggly geese, we made our own good time. I even had a boy – friend who came from Aufenbach. He wanted to marry, but I said no, because the transports had already started and I said no. And he brought me all the rations and all the goodies and everything. Things got tough then, you couldn’t get anything. I had money, but I couldn’t spend it.

Q: Were you paid in the hospital?

A: Very little, but I didn’t need. I had money of my own.

Q: When you say you couldn’t spend it, what do you mean?

A: There was nothing. I couldn’t go out and I think there were restrictions in purchasing too. I don’t remember anymore, but I remember then, I graduated in ’40 and my mother came, and I got my license only practicing for Jews, but I didn’t care, I was glad I had it, and a week later she called me and she was deported with my grandmother. She called me in Frankfurt and she told me.

Q: What did she tell you?

A: We have to leave and oh yeah I know what she said, one of her girls, her parents came from Steteen and they were deported in ’39 and evidently she was watched when she called me and she said remember the parents of so and so, that’s where I am going.

Q: Did you know where they were going?

A: I think they were all going to Eastern Europe at one time or another, but then, no they went to France, to (word missing in original transcript) . Oh I was just paralyzed.

Q: That was the fall of 1940?

A: That was in October ‘1940 and she said goodbye to me and I still remember my aunt lived there with my uncle, and my uncle was a war veteran, in the first World War. He was an amputee. And he was told he was safe.

Q: This was your father’s brother?

A: My mother’s brother in law. That was my mother’s sister. And I still remember getting on the bus to go to my aunt and people around me laughed, and I said how can you laugh, the world has come to an end. I remember that so well. To me my world had come to an end and I talked to my aunt.

Q: This was on the way going to Frankfurt?

A: I was in Frankfurt.

Q: Going to (word missing in original transcript) ?

A: No, no, only Frankfurt. And I went back home and we all cried and we were so desperate, and I went back to the hospital and drank half a cup of opium. Eventually I told someone and obviously everything was alright. Then as a punishment I had to work in an area where I didn’t like to work.

Q: As a punishment from?

A: For having done this, because they knew this was a childish thing to do, whatever the reason may be, but they were worried.

Q: Did you know at the time when your mother had told you about Contaguer that that meant an internment camp?

A: Yes, and I knew that I couldn’t be with her, that I couldn’t get there.

Q: And your grandmother as well?

A: Yes. She was old, (word missing in original transcript) she didn’t know where she was going. It was a terrible thing for my mother.

Q: Did you see your mother before she left?

A: A week before, because she was there for my graduation.

Q: But I mean after the phone call?

A: She was sent away that day. And then I finally heard via Switzerland, where she was, and as I said I was always a good swimmer and I had made arrangements to swim across the Rhine and make my way to Contaguer. And everything was arranged and then it fell through, I don’t know why. And I got letters from her via Switzerland and she was alright. My grandmother had by then died, about half a year later. And she had written from Contaguer to America and they still wouldn’t take her in. Relatives who were already overloaded with affidavits and what not. We had no close relatives there.

Q: All this time you were working in the hospital in Frankfurt?

A: Oh yes.

Q: After you graduated you were able to get a job there?

A: Oh yeah, in fact you had to promise that after graduation you would work at least two years there. You had to work. There was no other choice, but if I had gone before, you had to promise to work two more years. The girls were released from that promise in the event they could emigrate, of course. I mean I didn’t want for a job or anything.

Q: How did things get worse as you were in the hospital?

A: Well first of all there were the air raids, we were bombed, and food was less and I guess supplies too.

Q: The Nazis, were you in fear of them? Did they come into the hospital?

A: (word missing in original transcript). But then in ’42 they started to transport people from Frankfurt, systematically every two weeks, and we had a lot of disabled, we had a nursing home, and by that time we were the only district hospital and we had everybody there, and they wanted to take everybody, stretcher cases. They just wanted to (sentence incomplete) so we gave them shots.

Q: You were aware at that time of where they were going?

A: Oh yes. Oh yes. The doctors told us to give them shots and we did. I was 19 years old or 20 with that responsibility, but we knew we were doing the right thing, and then we had constantly suicides from these people, attempted suicides.

Q: In the hospital?

A: No, brought in from Frankfurt. A young girl I remember she took so much seconal, and we had to save her. The Nazis came in and they wanted every suicide monitored and they wanted to have a report, and the minute they were well, they were on the next transport. A terrible thing.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Nazis on the outside? I mean contact in the sense that they would give orders?

A: No. They came at the time of the transports and checked if relatives were hiding there, but I don’t remember any, you know it was part of life, it’s all gone. It’s the first time I’ve talked about it, since I don’t know when.

Q: That must have been a very fearful, just from myself listening, that must have been a very fearful atmosphere.

A: A terrible atmosphere, and then one day people brought us pictures from the ghetto, Riga, that were hanging and I said I don’t believe this, we all said we don’t believe it. There was just no escape. And then my aunt and uncle who were promised they wouldn’t be transported, oh yeah, there was a fortune teller and the whole Jewish congregation went to him and he predicted that might aunt and uncle, they were never going, oh yeah they had a son in Australia.

Q: Who had emigrated to Australia?

A: Who had gone to Australia and somehow they botched it and they couldn’t get out, and my uncle was promised immunity because after all he had lost his leg for the fatherland, and he went to that fortune teller and he said yeah, and me too, I went to that fortune teller and he said oh yeah I’ll see my mother, that’s why I didn’t make that swim also, because he said I would see her anyhow.

Q: What made you go to the fortune teller?

A: Oh everybody did because we were holding onto a straw. The reason that this man didn’t charge me anything, he wanted cocaine from me. He was an addict, but I believed him. I could have gone with my relatives then I could have stayed on the train, but I believed that I would see my mother.

Q: You could have gone with your relatives where?

A: When they were sent to Theresienstadt. As a nurse I was allowed on the train (sentence incomplete).They were not at all prepared. Everyone in Frankfurt knew that if it was not this week then in two weeks you’ll be gone, so they prepared themselves. They packed blankets, they packed suitcases. Not my relatives. My family, my elders, they were so naive it was pathetic.

Q: Now this was your mother’s sister and brother in law? Now they were deported to Theresienstadt?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have an option? You said you were allowed on the train?

A: Yes, I could have snuck in. I don’t know how far. I could have made it. But I believed that man, a terrible thing, but we all held onto straws. Later on I found out my mother was dead then already. I shiver. If you want to believe it can affect your life terribly. I mean in retrospect, after all is well, I came out and my relatives came out. The end result is what counts. I don’t know what would have happened to me otherwise, but that was a terrible time. That was one of the most dramatic times. Before I went away the influx of suicides and the score of killing people for their own benefit. I don’t know how I could live with it. I strongly believe this was not wrong.

Q: The first time you were given the instructions to do this...?

A: I didn’t sleep all night. We all did it. I mean there was nobody who didn’t participate.

Q: What cases, I mean was there any priority as far as to give the shots to?

A: You go to (word missing in original transcript) Home and you see these vegetables. That’s the ones. You know these very old dilapidated people who were incontinent, who weren’t alive really.

Q: What happens if there was a question, I mean some people are just old and there’s a question mark?

A: For somebody whose alive...

Q: For a 19 year old girl that is a horrible responsibility.

A: Horrible, for anybody. In fact I would go further. I think I would hate it more there now than I did then. You see in these years, I, That’s a psychological observation your upbringing had a great deal to do with it. We were spoiled, but we were loved, and we were not overly indulged. We were taught right from wrong, but then after this comes onto you your animal instinct takes over. Your survival instinct and everything and I will tell you at a later time (word missing in original transcript) will take precedent over everything else and I can truthfully say when all is said and done young as I was, I have never, never done anything I was sorry for. I had many opportunities to do something that would have harmed my co – prisoners, not once, nothing I ever did, and that’s what I can live with. That other thing we did in Frankfurt we did as a mitzvah. Believe me, believe me, it was a mitzvah.

Q: Were the people in Frankfurt, was there ever a choice given between Thereseienstadt and staying?

A: No. The only reason we were protected, the nurses, was because we still took care of the hospital, and Sept. 22, that’s the last one, we left then, and the next day the whole hospital was bombed. England knew all about it.

Q: So it was Sept. 22?

A: Sept. 22, 1942 that I was deported.

Q: To where were you deported?

A: Well we first went to, you know there was only cattle trains, and then we went to Berlin, and then we went to Riga, and they were overcrowded there. And then we went up to Telen which was Estonia.

Q: When they announced the closing of the (word missing in original transcript) haus, the deportation, were you at that point, what were your thoughts?

A: My thoughts were thank God. You know that, because I knew what was ahead of me, and I didn’t know what was ahead of me, I simply couldn’t fathom, but we all felt at this moment, thank God. We couldn’t go nowhere. Germany at this moment was closed, my family was gone, my brother was in England. I just felt okay. The uncertainty was worse than not knowing what was really..

Q: Were you able to take anything with you?

A: Yes. I was very heavy. I was so fat. This was all arranged, we all put on layers of clothes and put a few things in bags.

Q: What was the rationale? to putting on layers of clothes?

A: So they couldn’t take it from us. You know a suitcase you could lose, but at least you had some change, and valuables we sewed up in the hem of our clothes, and money, that we put in our star. Everything had to have a star, so that we put valuables in.

Q: Where did you think you were going?

A: I had no idea.

Q: They didn’t tell you anything?

A: No. Riga. And we were lucky because they needed some people in Estonia to rebuild the city, otherwise we would have been slaughtered right there I suppose. Because it was full. Full of Jews. They didn’t know what to do.

Q: When you got to these cattle cars, into these trains?

A: Oh terrible. Awful. You know we had food rations, and then imagine a whole bunch of stinking people, no washing, there was a water shortage. And then as we ate up the food, we used the can in which to urinate and then we threw it out of the train. It was a very complicated situation and the screaming going on and we had to go. I don’t even like to relate it. It was animalistic and difficult.

Q: In that transport were you all from Frankfurt?

A: Yes, and then we were, and some came from Berlin. I don’t remember how many there were. It took a week. A whole week, and it was getting colder and colder.

Q: During that whole week were you ever out of that car?

A: Yes. For a little while, but we were closely guarded, with machine guns all around.

Q: How were you able to sleep?

A: Straw mats, but there was no room and the stink. I don’t know anymore.

Q: And so you went to Riga. When you got to Riga did you find out right away that there was no room?

A: I don’t know anymore. We heard later on. They needed people up in Estonia.

Q: So you didn’t stay in Riga?

A: No. And cold. And then we were let out in Estonia. No. There was an expression called Scloissencamp, you were taken there and everything was taken away from you except what you had on your body, and then after you showered you could get things back, I don’t know anymore.

Q: This was in Telen?

A: Yes. It was in the country someplace. And it was winter and then they made us shovel snow, from one side to another, just so we could do something.

Q: Who was in charge of this? The S.S.? They had come with you all the way?

A: I don’t know.

Q: I mean they were German S.S. rather than...?

A: Oh sure. All the way up. They were in Estonia. And in order to wash we melted a big pot of snow and that was divided among all of us.

Q: You were living in barracks?

A: Yes. On straw mats. And then we learned that when you come in you take your coat off and cover yourself, and that is warmer than when you keep your coat on. You are much warmer when you cover yourself with something than to wear it.

Q: You were still allowed to keep the clothes that you had on?

A: The ones that we had on, yes. And your period became such a problem.

Q: There was no...?

A: Well we took along.

Q: But that was used up. Eventually.

A: Yes. Eventually.

Q: The only thing I can think of is rags.

A: Yes of course. And later on they supplied us with these fisherboots and in order to keep from freezing we used rags around our feet which I found was very warm.

Q: Who supplied you with these fisherboots?

A: The S.S. They needed us for some work.

Q: What work were you doing?

A: Shoveling snow. Altogether, I’ll go into more details, for a year and a half I was in Telen in the prison for political prisoners, and from there, we stayed there a year and a half, and a German construction firm from Frankfurt employed us to do some labor.

Q: What kind of labor were you doing?

A: I’ll tell you. With the exception of this I was altogether in eleven different camps. We were always transported, never knowing, and in Telen we lived in a cell with cots and one toilet.

Q: How many people?

A: Ten, it was very funny, most of us were young, and some of us were Sedeutsch and some of us were Nordeutsch and there was a vast difference in mentality like here the southerner and the northerner. Very different.

Q: When you say they were Nordeutsch?

A: Other people. We were all Jews. But there were two people and they were in my barracks and they didn’t know they were Jews and they suffered even more than we did, because they figured why me. We knew why, you know? And there was one woman and she was from Berlin and she was really a very lovely person and she gave us such a business as young girls, you know. Here we are stuffed like sardines and she gave us such a business when we pushed, you should say excuse me you pushed, everybody pushed, and you go to the bathroom too long or you used the sink too long, and this perpetual checking in. You know the prison guards were women, and they were worse than men and they checked us in and out and I’ll tell you later. We did brick laying for this construction firm and we had German civilians as foremen, and they knew, some of them were nice I must say, and they knew that in order to get any work out of us they have to teach us how, beating alone doesn’t help.

Q: Were you in fact beaten, not you yourself, but?

A: Yes I was. There was once, I don’t know if it was there, but in Estonia, it was so cold there. You see today they have these big barrels with a fire, that’s where we could warm ourselves up and one day one of those S.S. guys took a coal and poked me in the eye.

Q: A hot coal?

A: A hot coal. One of my lids I have a real hole. And once we were with this construction firm, first the man came, he was a civilian, not an S.S. man and his name was Mr. Hamlish and I will tell you the story because it’s very interesting for you later on. He greeted us by saying you girls are hired by my firm and anybody who escapes I’ll shoot the whole lot of you and that prevented all of us from escaping. You see they were smart, we had a chance to escape. They didn’t give us numbers, they only shaved our hair, because of lice I suppose and this way we really could be identified and we were lucky. I didn’t have a number and I’m glad. I guess it was too far away with Russia there and I guess they didn’t have time. I don’t know why. I never asked.

Q: When they shaved your hair, I once heard somebody say that when you get the medication for radiation therapy, for cancer patients, very often you lose your hair, and it’s very traumatic for people, so for a nineteen year old girl...

A: We were all in the same boat. And we had some Czech girls who were extremely talented in sewing and everything and we all made up new turbans and we got along.

Q: When you say you made up new turbans, what did you...?

A: We had some scarves or something. You see we kept some things that were most necessary back.

Q: You mentioned that there were some opportunities to escape, even though the fear...

A: Of course we wore labels and the Estonian people were very sympathetic towards us. I had a man bring me food every day, two big sandwiches, hiding in the (word missing in original transcript) pile of dirt, and toothpaste. I shared it with my friends.

Q: How did you meet this man, how did you know...?

A: We couldn’t speak to each other, it was the most interesting thing. The girls all laughed at me because many had a little friend like that but mine, we couldn’t talk to each other, but he had my food there every day, and he once had somebody write in German, if I want to escape, he will help me, but first of all I couldn’t leave if my friends were going to be shot and secondly, where was I going to go. There was Russia next door, and I knew enough about Russia then that that was no picnic. I said what am I going to do in Estonia. I don’t speak the language. I can’t, where am I going to go, it’s all Russia.

Q: How did you meet these...?

A: They saw us building and they knew what was behind it and they felt sorry for us, and every few girls they had these sugar daddies and they brought us the necessities. For instance later on...

Q: The S.S. didn’t...?

A: They didn’t see that. As we got picked up to go, you learned they just brought the fresh bread on the wheel wagon. Oh it smelled so good, and we were obsessed by the idea of how we would get that fresh bread. Stealing became a fun game. You know a way of survival, and wherever we were we found out a way of stealing. Once we were stealing sauerkraut and I was elected to get to the bottom of the barrel and whoever was supposed to hold me didn’t hold me tight enough and I fell in the sauerkraut. Oh did I stink. And once we fell in the herring tub. I mean stealing became a fun game.

Q: How did you arrange the stealing so you wouldn’t be?

A: We were on the outside and the builders away, and then I found out later on that in prison itself the hardened prisoners, just like here, they were the king of the prison. That was in another camper later on, not in this camp.

Q: What was the name of this one near Telen?

A: Prison.

Q: Oh okay.

A: And we were only there because this company needed our labor, and then after that we were sent someplace else and we had to do bricklaying, not bricklaying, railroad building. Now imagine girls lifting that.

Q: How were you able to do that?

A: The foreman was smart, they weren’t consumed by hate. They taught us how to work. They were excellent in that.

Q: The foremen were German civilians?

A: Yes, and they were good at it, and they felt sorry for us of course.

Q: When you say they felt sorry for you, how did you feel that, how did you know that?

A: They were nice to us, they didn’t whip us. They didn’t whip us any time, they were nice, and they thought of their children.

Q: Did they ever try and make the work load easier?

A: Oh yes. But it still had to be done, and the S.S. was around someplace. It had to be done tactfully, and I remember once, one of the foremen, I was so hungry and he brought me his left over dinner, and I almost vomited by the thought of it, but I ate it. I remember that that bothered me terribly to be so low to eat from somebody else’s leftovers.

Q: What was the daily food?

A: We got some. I guess it was lard and a little bit of bread and once a day soup. Once we worked we got two soups a day. One was supplied by them.

Q: You mean by the company?

A: Yes. Chicken soup, and on Christmas they gave us some sturdier mush. And I don’t remember where it was we stole potatoes from a field and we made a grate and we made (word missing in original transcript) in the fire. We burned potatoes in the fire. That was vegetables, whatever we could find. I don’t know how it came, but we stole. We couldn’t exist on what we got, really not. We got horse meat which didn’t matter, but we never got rotten food I must say, at least I never saw it. In fact we had far from a well balanced diet.

Q: You mentioned before that you were heavy.

A: Enormous. I was not then anymore, but when I came here I was 180 pounds.

Q: No I meant when you left Frankfurt.

A: I was always fat.

Q: And during this time that you were...?

A: I got thinner. Of course fat girls they beat us up too much, you’re too fat. I got a knock on my head once, you know you couldn’t get on those trains fast enough or a bus or whatever.

Q: In Telen you were bricklaying, why did this assignment end?

A: I don’t know anymore.

Q: In other words one day you were just told you have to go on?

A: Yes.

Q: Where did they send you from there?

A: Somewhere in Estonia, in the woods someplace. No the railroads were later on, oh I don’t know.

Q: Was this group always together?

A: Yes. It was such mindless kind of work, for instance they knew I was a nurse, but I was too young, so for a short while I worked as a nurse.

Q: In the hospital?

A: No in the camp. In the infirmary. And then this constant fear of what’s a shower and what’s gas.

Q: Did you know that at the time?

A: Oh sure. When we got there and checked in there was something like that done.

Q: When you checked into this prison in Telen?

A: Yes. I don’t know where I was anymore. Once I was sick and I checked into this infirmary and they came around for collection, you know, and I hid.

Q: What do you mean by collection?

A: To pick them out and put them away. Whoever couldn’t work was useless. And I hid in the latrine for twelve hours, in the shit, and you know I am so squeamish I can’t smell anything and I couldn’t feel nothing. Just to stay alive. That’s where your animal instinct. And once again I jumped out of a window. I don’t know where it was, from the second floor and I didn’t even hurt myself, and I escaped then.

Q: When this time was that you hid in the latrine, was this in Telen yet?

A: No, in Estonia someplace.

Q: When they came to see if someone was useless, were there gas chambers there or did they deport them?

A: They took them somewhere else, the collection agent or they shot them, I don’t know anymore.

Q: How were you able to stay hidden for twelve hours? How big a group were you? What I’m really asking is, could they pinpoint that you were missing?

A: No, no they didn’t count, they just looked around.

Q: How did you know when to come out?

A: My friends told me, but there was one very bad thing, like everywhere else there’s a bad apple. Of course the Nazis liked some of the young girls and they wanted to become friends and they promised them the sky and I never did and they didn’t force them.

Q: Weren’t you afraid not to?

A: No, no. They could have, you know if not me somebody else, and these stupid girls, they had it better for a little while, but they also were spying on us, and ultimately they (sentence incomplete) certain death, for sure certain death. That’s where my remark came in that I did nothing to be ashamed of.

Q: When you said certain death why, you would think that this would help them?

A: No it didn’t. I don’t know anymore where it was so prevalent, several of them, particularly the Hungarian girls were very dangerous. I must truthfully say, and some of the girls had to be watched and some of the Czech, the German girls were more...

Q: Were you afraid, I’ll call it of a fifth column in your midst, of spies?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you deal with that?

A: Well we just watched out for instance once, and then the stealing that went on, and you couldn’t leave, the little you had was stolen from you, bread or anything, and I remember my only winter coat one day was missing. What am I going to do? And I had a girl in mind, in Estonia garlic grows in the fields and she ate garlic like apples. Many of the girls did, you know, it’s a good vitamin source if you can eat it and she stank of garlic something fierce and it exudes through the skin. You know all those people who eat garlic, you can smell it through their clothes, and I knew and I said okay, I don’t want to know who took it, but I want it back. You could report that to the guards and you got another one, I said I don’t want to have to ask for another one, and my coat was back, and my coat smelled from garlic and my assumption was right.

Q: When you say you could ask the guards for another one, was that possible?

A: Well they had plenty. They had a whole slew of things from...

Q: But did they give them?

A: Yes they did. Somehow they had a way of, they couldn’t strip us. We had to have some sort of bare necessities. But of course the things that happened, while we were working with the construction we had to insulate (word missing in original transcript), and they gave you something like I would call it today fiberglass,and one of our stupid girls said I have an idea, it’s cotton wool and she used it for her period. It’s non – absorbable in the first place and all the glass, she was very sick, she almost died.

Q: Sure she must have gotten glass through her skin.

A: What a mess. I cut myself and they had no gauze bandages. I was excused from labor. What was I to do instead with an infected hand? Clean the latrine. Well God was with me all the way. All the way.

Q: when you had to clean the latrine were you given any chemicals?

A: Lye.

Q: Were you also given gloves?

A: Brushes, you know like floor brushes.

Q: Were you able to keep the latrines clean?

A: Yes. They were pretty clean. First you have to learn the trick to go in them.

Q: What do you mean the trick to go in them?

A: It’s a hole. It’s like a crate with a hole. If you were not careful you could slip in. They were kept pretty clean. They assigned people you know.

Q: When you said before that you hid in one of those latrines, those holes were they emptied?

A: Once in a while, yes. I took one of the half empty spots. And oh many things happened.

Q: Do you remember the progression of where you went from Telen from this?

A: No there were so many and then the Russians came in and we were put on this boat from Telen to what is it called, oh yes, Danzig, and in between I once was assigned to deep sea dive because they wanted to build something that put.....(sentence incomplete). They were joined, they didn’t join us we were joined by them. There was a tremendous difference between us. They hated us because we were Germans. They really didn’t trust us and we had to pay for what our fathers did. They treated us like they were treated, but they had one great thing, they had a greater ability to survive and they had more experience because for us it was the first time with our people. The men fell over like flies. The women were much stronger.

Q: when you say the men, were you together with the men?

A: Yes. Not in the barracks.

Q: No, I mean in the group.

A: Yes, when we were shipped they died in front of our eyes. It was impossible.

Q: You mentioned, can you approximate the size of your group? I mean like would it be a thousand?

A: Oh no. 500.

Q: How did you make yourself understood with the other nationalities, the Czechs...?

A: Well they all spoke Yiddish and eventually we all spoke Yiddish. The Czechs speak beautiful German, no problem, and the Vilna, it was very funny, even (word missing in original transcript) sometimes mentions there was a tremendous friction between Vilna and what’s the other one (word missing in original transcript), and they hate each other. So everybody hated each other, but they all had the same goal, but we did learn a lot from the Polish people because they had more experience and they were more adept and they are more mechanical. We made a good team once we overcame the fear of each other.

Q: How did you overcome that?

A: We were all in the same boat and they finally realized that we were treated as miserably as they were.

Q: So you are saying that it was essentially in the beginning. How did those differences make themselves...?

A: Oh they ((word missing in original transcript) us. They really gave us the business.

Q: You mean how do you know you are not one of them?

A: No. Our fathers were not treated right by you now we do not treat you right. They knew the ropes better than we did.. Ultimately we learned Yiddish and we got along. I had a boyfriend in Pugno? Someplace. Oh he sang so beautifully.

Q: Were you able to mix with the men?

A: Yes, but I was so naive, that I didn’t do any more than mixing, you know, I was very naive. I never did anything then because everybody was afraid of getting pregnant. One girl was pregnant and you know.

Q: One girl was pregnant? Was she able to get an abortion?

A: No.

Q: She had the baby?

A: No. When you were pregnant that was it.

Q: You mean they shipped you out?

A: You know it was beautiful to be naive and another thing, but you don’t have it in this. The married women who were separated from their husbands, they went wild. Us naive kids didn’t even know why they went so wild, and I kept it all through the time, and I had many friends, real good friends never took advantage of me. You see in these times what you couldn’t get you didn’t ask for because you get it elsewhere. I was immensely naive.

Q: When you way you were able to mix you mean you were able to get together in terms of...?

A: Recreation.

Q: What types of recreation?

A: We sang together, bull sessions. I don’t remember anymore, but we were together, we ate together, they stole food for us, we stole food for them. That was a game.

Q: Was that under guard?

A: In a way. I don’t know anymore, don’t ask me. But we did have times together, not, of course there was hanky – panky going on, but as I said thank God I was naive.

Q: Just in terms of hanky – panky, how did people find places?

A: Where there’s a will there’s a way. And as I said there are ways and means I’m sure, and under the most stringent of circumstances, hanky – panky goes on. As I was telling you later on when we were shipped to Danzig then we didn’t know if we would get there in the first place. The fear, and I was seasick and I decided that I would stay on the deck and really it was a nice ride. I didn’t get sick.

Q: You went from Telen to Danzig?

A: And the sea was fine and I didn’t get seasick. Oh yes and I told you that I went deep sea diving in a machine.

Q: Who taught you?

A: I was elected. I could swim, I was elected, you do this, you go down. I did. I hoped my friends would pump properly and I came up. And once we were swimming.

Q: Why did you do this deep sea diving?

A: I was told.

Q: I know, but for what purpose? They wanted to ram in some long poles.

A: I don’t know. They wanted to build something. Very often they had no work for us and they made work and in the process we saw a German ship outside the harbor, not near us, and then the S.S said you can go out to see them and we were hungry, and would you like to have some food, oh yes, and they threw it in the sea right in front of our eyes, the whole, like seafood, right in front of our eyes.

Q: This was in Danzig?

A: No this was before. That’s why the S.S permitted us to go out, because they knew and very often the army and the navy were for us and they very often sent us food. We were observed but there were ways and means where we could get food.

Q: When you say the army or the navy you mean the old military establishment from before?

A: Yes, there was a friction between them and very often that was our source of income food wise and that’s all that mattered.

Q: How did they get it to you?

A: I don’t know anymore, but they put it someplace, it was a hanky – panky. We weren’t observed that strict like you see in a prison because there was no need to, where were we going to go. They know we wouldn’t go anyplace and we couldn’t. Psychologically they observed us in the first place and we were a closely knit group and they observed us to some extent, but there was plenty of freedom.

Q: How long were you around Estonia?

A: ’42 till ’44. Two years.

Q: Did you know when you were shipped to Danzig that the war was going badly for the Germans?

A: Yes. We heard the shooting in St. Petersburg. Oh we heard the shooting, we knew it, and then in Danzig we were greeted and everything was taken from us and we had (sentence incomplete). You know the stripes. That’s what we had then.

Q: Where did you go in Danzig?

A: There was a camp Stuttle. And again that was a prisoner camp, and that’s where I learned that hardened criminals, they had the run of the camp.

Q: How do you mean that?

A: Like here in America the hardened criminals, they rule the prisons. They get champagne, caviar and everything. These people they probably had champagne, and caviar too, and liquor, but they had food, they had toothpaste, they had luxuries.

Q: Who were the hardened...?

A: They were murderers.

Q: You mean the S.S. who were in charge of the camp?

A: The S.S. was in charge, but the real criminals were felons, I mean murderers, killers, whatever. They treated us with tender loving care. That’s where we really got what we needed. But the Nazis couldn’t do a thing with them. They ran the camp.

Q: How was it that you were able to get such good care?

A: You saw the gates, the men were standing here the women there and the discussion came up what do you need and they felt sorry for us.

Q: Now who were these, they were German criminals?

A: It was Danzig, they were German criminals, but they didn’t like what they saw, but we got toothpaste and a little more food.

Q: What was your work in Stuttle?

A: Railroad building.

Q” Outside the camp?

A: Oh yes, and some other work very often, I don’t remember.

Q: What were the conditions in Stuttle like?

A: (sentence missing). That’s where I once jumped out to escape. That’s where we showered when we came in. Every month we had a shower.

Q: Who determined who goes to the gas chamber?

A: I really don’t know, it was just a matter of luck and at that time our group from Estonia was divided and there were only two of my former friends and myself in this particular block, the others went (word missing in original transcript) We were all separated.

Q: When you came to Stuttle or when you came to Danzig?

A: This was all the same thing. We were all divided and many of them, one girl I knew well she died of pleurisy and some were put away.

Q: In Stuthof what were the actual camp conditions, were you in barracks? Were you able to keep yourselves clean?

A: Oh yes you would be amazed. First of all some place in Estonia we were working with Russians and we got lice, body lice and we got scabies and oh it was unbelievable. In the ice cold barracks we couldn’t stand the itch and the body lice in the seams of your clothes, and so we ((word missing in original transcript) all night we (word missing in original transcript) and head lice too.

Q: It also carries typhus.

A: Body lice, not head lice.

Q: Was there typhus in Stuthof?

A: Afterwards, I’ll get to that. You see for their own protection, sanitary, I think it was in Stuthof they give us shots. They experiment with fertility, in birth control pill then.

Q: Did you know?

A: I had no idea, but my period stopped which was very good for my cleanliness, not for my physical health, but I didn’t care. It’s amazing you don’t care. You don’t care for nothing. You care where your next food comes from and how you stay alive, and you talk about your family and your last (word missing in original transcript).

Q: When you say you talk about your family did you know at that time?

A: Nothing. You talk about how you were brought up, and you know. Nothing I knew. I knew that my brother was in England.

Q: When you came to Stuthof did you know what was going on in Auschwitz and other places?

A: Oh yes. Before that. We were always on guard.

Q: How did you get the information?

A: It was constant, and some of the Nazis as I said they did not want to go to bed with us but they were sympathetic to us. The women were bad, the women were bad.

Q: When you say they were sympathetic, was there ever a conversation about how did things get so bad, and isn’t there anything they could do about it or something like that?

A: No, no. They were under orders. It’s hard to explain and I don’t remember all the details, but as I said at Eleanor’s there are several girls here and we were all liberated from various areas but we originally started out together, and I could not associate with them, I just couldn’t because I didn’t want to talk about it any more. Also when we got back to normal life in Frankfurt,( sentence incomplete) I was and I just didn’t want any, there’s one girl here in the neighborhood who I sometimes talk to, but other than that...

Q: You were liberated from Stuthof?

A: In Stuthof things got bad for the Germans and we were put on what is commonly known as the death march and that was rough.

Q: Where did you have to march?

A: West.

Q: Further into Germany?

A: Yes. And that was rough. March, drink from the gutter, eat garbage, I mean that was it.

Q: When you were told that you had to leave Stuthof did you realize that it was because the Russians were closing in?

A: Yes, but then we were all put in a terrible place like a barn, typhus like you mentioned, everything was there. Dead and alive were next to each other, and the death march was about four or five days I don’t remember, but it was rough.

Q: Food?

A: No food, nothing, no water, cold.

Q: This was in the winter 194...?

A: No it was March and it was near (illegible) East Germany and it was just, you just existed. It was (word missing in original transcript).

Q: Did you have shoes to walk?

A: Yes, but they had holes and they were wet and dirty and you were hungry. I don’t know anymore. And I’d just as soon not know. And then we were put in this horrible place. Dead and alive together, the doors were locked, the guards were outside, and one morning we got up and there were no guards and that was it, the Russians were there and that was it. On March 10, 1945, that was it, and then, we didn’t know what to do.

Q: How did you feel about it?

A: We didn’t know what to do by ourselves. Our lives had been dictated all these years. We were still afraid. And I’ll never forget one of the Russian soldiers found some Nazis and he gave me a gun and said here, you can shoot them.

Q: You couldn’t?

A: No I couldn’t. Not only didn’t I know how to operate a gun, I couldn’t do it, and then I met this Russian officer who was a nice man, a gentleman, and he said look I’d like to take you to Russia, we need nurses, but I know you wouldn’t be happy, but watch out for the other Russian soldiers, they’ll all rape you, they’ll consider you as German, and they are animals, and how right he was. I was raped over and over again and then I got sick. My friend and I, the only one I had left, we finally came to Warsaw, and again (word missing in original transcript) and what not.

Q: I just have to interrupt for a minute. It just occurs to me that after you had gone through all of that under the Germans, to be liberated by the Russians like that.

A: I didn’t know who I hated more I’ll tell you the truth. Oh yes and then the first orgy we had was eating. We found this gentleman’s farm and we ate ourselves sick.

Q: This was outside?

A: This was outside, and then I got typhus and then I really was sick. It came from all ends.

Q: When you say you ate yourself sick...?

A: When you are starved and you start eating normally with all the fat and all the meat that’s the end of you and we were told...

Q: Did you know that?

A: Well we were warned, but who could stop us, and that’s when I really got sick.

Q: How did you find the food?

A: There was a farm that was left and I was elected to cut the chicken, the Jewish housewives they cooked the chicken, I never cooked a chicken in my life, and we ate and they found a goose liver, and it was ridiculous. If we had sense, and that’s really a breeding ground for getting sick, if not for dysentery, everything else.

Q: Did the Russian give you any advice at all?

A: No, they were starved themselves. At this point they were starved almost as much as we were, and that’s when I had my first hard liquor. They made vodka in the fields and they drank and they got so sad, the vodka really drips out of their eyes, disgusting and speaking of fire water, and this of course protects you, this vodka from the fat. In fact they say before you drink you should eat fat so your stomach can take it, but one time vodka, that’s all I ever needed, I never drank it again. I don’t know anymore. Ultimately we ended up in (word missing in original transcript) and I ended up in a hospital unconscious.

Q: You had typhus as you were going?

A: Yes, and for days I was unconscious.

Q: You were with these two other girls?

A: Yes, and in the meantime they got better and they left me. They left me all alone. So when I got better, I was in a hospital for venereal disease, and every day they checked me for syphilis. These girls had syphilis, but if I didn’t have it I would get it there. From all that raping I got nothing, no pregnancy, no syphilis, nothing.

Q: You mentioned that you lost your period, did that have anything to do with...?

A: No I got it back, but I had nothing, nothing, a miracle. And then I went to the Jewish congregation, oh no that was before I got sick, and they, you had no papers just a number, and we vouched for each other. And that paper had (word missing in original transcript) but they neglected to put Frankfurt on mine, and everything was Russian by now and here I was with my paper. I wanted Frankfurt on mine because I knew that my relatives would come back if they came back, my brother would look for me. I could have also gone to Israel.

Q: You are talking about the Judeshagemeinde now in Poland, Lu ?

A: And after I got out of the hospital these (word missing in original transcript) felt sorry for me, where am I going to go so she said come home with me. And even then I didn’t know what (word missing in original transcript) was and of course it was a (word missing in original transcript) and she knew me, and she had to make a living and in the middle of the night I walked out of there and spent the night in a room and then I marched myself to the Jewish congregation,

Q: These were professional (word missing in original transcript)?

A: Yes, and there were a lot of (word missing in original transcript) in Poland because even the nuns did not take care of me and they refused to speak German to me and I was so sick. Even when I woke up and I was unconscious, I don’t know.

Q: Where did you come across nuns?

A: In that hospital, it was all Catholic, and when the bell rang for prayers you could drop dead, they ran for the prayers.

Q: They realized where you had come from?

A: I suppose so, I had no hair you know. Then I decided okay, Frankfurt under order I’m not safe there and that forged the mind.

Q: Who brought Frankfurt under order, did you suspect that was a possibility or...?

A: I knew, I knew that was all pressured by them, my instinct, and then we got on the train with other prisoners of war, not only us, but men too and we go to Berlin, and in Berlin there is the camp, the displaced person camp in a former hospital, and we all got there. The Arangostrasse. And then we all got very happily together and in the meantime, that was all Russian, and then the English came in, and the Americans were supposed to, that was the time when Berlin was supposed to be divided, and I stayed in Berlin until the Americans came in, to get a transfer to Frankfurt, and we stayed there in the Arangostrasse and the English came in and everybody asked us and the Russian soldiers were marching about again. My friend and I we were walking and we all had watches you know and, whatever you found you had then.

Q: Whatever you found where?

A: You liberated things, whatever was lying around you picked it up. She had a watch and we had an alarm clock in our bag, in our room there, whatever it was, and one day the alarm rang and the Russian was in there and he shot at the alarm bell, he had never seen an alarm clock. Animals I’m telling you. So then we were walking down the street one day and a Russian comes towards us and whips the watch off her arm, not mine and she said oh my God what now, and I said nothing, and he gave her a diamond watch, he didn’t know that you wind a watch, so she had a diamond watch, you can’t imagine. And then I met an English soldier.

Q: He didn’t know, he just exchanged watches...?

A: Because he didn’t know you have to wind a watch. And I’ll never forget that Russian officer, he told me exactly what would happen, the majority of the troops they are animals, and he was right.

Q: The one who called you oranka?

A: Animals and indeed they were..

Q: Even in Berlin?

A: Oh yes, all over. The Americans did their own share I’m sure. So the English came to me and he was Jewish and he said is there any message I can send for you and I said yes, I have a brother in England and the last address was (word missing in original transcript) minster something, he was on a children’s transport, but they had their own office in London where they registered all these kids and I would appreciate it if you could tell him that I’m alive and well, more or less well and that I’m in Berlin and will go to Frankfurt and that was that. And ultimately the Americans came in and I had my papers stamped Frankfurt on Meind and everybody wanted to know how I had Frankfurt on Meind in the first place coming from the east zone, but I did, and we proceeded French soldiers and everybody on a bus towards the western zone, and we get to the Russian checkpoint and the soldier said want to have the girls, but by that time they couldn’t do their hanky – panky so they said well you can’t cross, so the French soldiers they were talking about swimming across the Elbe and they did, and they said can you swim and I said yes. They contacted the English Red Cross in Hemsted which is near the Elbe and in the night we swam across the Elbe.

Q: The Russians would not let you cross?

A: No. They wanted a girl. They looked for some (word missing in original transcript) and we said no, and the French and ourselves we put the bundles on our head and we swam across in the night across the Elbe and the moment we landed the English were standing there with blankets and tea, and that’s how I got across, and from there there was a tremendous mob and tremendous destruction, and I made my way to Frankfurt.

QL: In terms of meeting Germans even when you came back to the Organisher camp there, how did you feel toward the Germans that you...?

A: Terrified. Didn’t want to talk to them, but then again the treatment from the Russians, you know I didn’t know who to hate more, and then I went to the gardenstrasse which was erected again for the purpose of collecting Jews and I said I’m looking for my relatives and they said oh yes Mr. and Mrs.(word missing in original transcript) live there and there.

Q: You mean they had come back from Theresienstadt?

A: Yes.........And I had a turban around my hair and I looked a mess, but I had eaten already and I looked kind of filled out and I walked towards, I knew Frankfurt, and walking was no problem at that time, I was so used to it, and I find my aunt’s house and I ring the bell and she’s not home, and just then she walks down the street and says oh my God look at the gypsy in front of my house, and she saw me and I can’t describe, it was absolutely horrifying, and she couldn’t get over it, so after the preliminary greetings, and my uncle almost, he couldn’t speak.

Q: He’s the one who was an amputee, and he was able to survive Theresienstadt?

A: Yes, and she had a maid already you know. She was settled already in Frankfurt, and he had extra rations and now everything was forgotten, you know.

Q: Were these rations obtained through the Judeshegemeinde?

A: No, through the government, everything.

Q: By the government you mean the occupation government?

A: No, the German government, the German government gave us everything. We had everything double, everything. There wasn’t enough, but we had everything double, and then after that and everything and we settled down, and of course eventually I had a bed, for at least a week every morning she found me on the floor. I couldn’t get used to it, and we didn’t have central heating so we had to light the oven, the stove and she had to (word missing in original transcript) everything back by then, you know the maid, and one morning she starts screaming what are you doing, for me it was nothing you used to ((word missing in original transcript) the knife to cut wood, why not, it’s a knife. I had lost contact with the work, with living, but I would say within a month I was back.

Q: Just speaking of a knife, those thoughts never occurred to me, but during this whole time any food that you got, did you ever get silverware?

A: Oh yes. A spoon, a knife, there was no worry that, in fact there was no suicide. In all these years there was not one suicide. Isn’t that strange. Not one. No suicide whatsoever.

Q: I wasn’t even thinking in terms of suicide.

A: They didn’t have to be afraid of us, a knife, they had ten machine guns versus a knife. They were not afraid of us one bit. Warsaw was the only uprising anywhere so they...

Q: No I was thinking in terms of human things, you know, a fork and a knife.

A: We had the implement of sewing things, sometimes they took a needle away from us so we hid them in a toothbrush we were allowed to keep.

Q: How did you get them, the needles?

A: From people. I had an elephant given to me when I was a young girl and I kept that in my garter. I kept that everywhere and in Stuthof I lost it, and that meant so much to me that when I lost it I was petrified. That was my good luck charm.

Q: When you came back to Frankfurt it must have been difficult to walk around and see what the intervening years had done.

A: I was thrilled, everything was bombed. I was rather pleased.

Q: Any contact with the Germans when you started to go out shopping, just in the streets, what were your feelings about them?

A: Fear, but then I can imagine that some didn’t know, they were nice and said they didn’t know. For instance my aunt had a maid and after a few days (sentence incomplete)), I guess I don’t do anything good enough for you, I wasn’t thinking of picking up my underwear or brushing my shoes or hanging up my clothes. Really I had lost complete contact with anything like that and she was offended, so my aunt explained to her to give me time.

Q: How did you...

A: Readjust? With love.

Q: Mainly from your aunt and uncle?

A: And everybody around me. Oh it wasn’t long, but then the final blow, oh yes then all the way back from Berlin and everywhere I looked for my mother. Everybody looked for everybody. It was terrible. And my aunt and I when we were still in Frankfurt, when we saw a blond woman we ran. That was the hardest for both of us to accept that my mother was gone. We couldn’t accept it.

Q: When you say you walked back even through Poland, how did you...?

A: Oh the roads were full of prisoners.

Q: So you went up to...?

A: The roads were full of prisoners, it was just one mad conglomeration from everywhere. Of course we all had the same problem.

Q: You all had

A: Oh sure. But the best thing was the Germans who couldn’t escape they all shaved their hair and put on prisoner garb, and they said down with your pants. Nobody was circumcised in Germany unless they were Jewish. They caught many.

Q: They did? When you say the men, who was it that did the catching, all these prisoners on the roads, all these people on the roads coming home?

A: No, what happened was there were still Russians around and suddenly there were Germans who were with us who we didn’t know or maybe who looked too healthy, and the men would report the to the Russians. Once we were free we had the upper hand. Down with your pants, suddenly they discovered in the men’s room no circumcision.

Q: The same in reverse.

A: The same wouldn’t work today.

Q: No, but what I meant was very often they caught Jews in the early years that way. What was the mood, I mean there must have been a tremendous amount of bitterness.

A: Bitterness beyond belief, but I don’t know anymore, my aunt and uncle had many old friends who came back, Germans who knew (word missing in original transcript) so I don’t know. I wanted to get out for sure, and I was immediately contacted when I asked for my license, please start working immediately. No I won’t my license was issued for Jews only, so I worked in an office. I worked for the father of Rabbi Nulhaus.

Q: He had come back?

A: Back from Theresienstadt. He was the only rabbi in this whole district and I had unfortunately the unique ability of knowing who went where because I went last, also I was blessed with a very good memory. Also I helped him with statistics, and soldiers came in and asked about their relatives and many times, why are you alive, I had to excuse myself for being alive.

Q: I’ve heard that and I’ve read that in various places that must be a very difficult feeling to...

A: Horrible, in the mountains, why are you alive, you must have been an S.S. girlfriend. That’s hard to take, why are you alive.

Q: You definitely didn’t want to stay in Germany?

A: No.

Q: Were you able then to find out what happened to your mother?

A: Yes, we heard then, but the best part comes now, my uncle after a month, worked in the Judeshegemeinde and he couldn’t wear his (word missing in original transcript) so he used a cane and I brought him lunch every day, so while I was there while he had lunch, and also he spoke English fluently because he was educated in England as a young man, so his presence was very much needed, so I sit in his office while I brought lunches and a messenger comes in, Mr. Stern there is an English soldier to see you, okay fine (word missing in original transcript) because I still felt very self conscious with my turban and everything, no stay here, it won’t take long, and in comes this English soldier grinning from ear to ear, giving me a hello, God here comes another one, my brother.

Q: It must have been quite a reunion.

A: My brother. In fact he had walked to my aunt’s house and she told me where we are and he had a car right there.

Q: He was with the British army?

A: Yes, a car with a driver. I couldn’t believe it, my little brother.

Q: When was the last time you had seen him?

A: in ’38.

Q: How old was he then?

A: He was 14. My knees gave way. He didn’t hear then in Berlin that I was alive, you know the message I had sent, and I can’t tell you the feeling, and I didn’t know him, and he knew me in spite of my terrible get up, and the first thing, I don’t want you to see me that way. I always said that was a mishugass. I didn’t want anybody to see me that way.

Q: That’s interesting, you said before when they first shaved your head you were all in the same boat and now.

A: Also I had it shaved again because of the typhus, so it would grow back and from lice I had terrible boils on my head. It wouldn’t heal because I wouldn’t get rid of the lice. My aunt finally poured peroxide on my head and it healed.

Q: You had it shaved the second time in Lutch?

A: Yes, and then of course my brother brought us all kinds of food, and also my aunt had many friends, that’s how I met my husband’s sister, they all came to us, they were sent to us, and they brought us food, and I ate and I ate, I went up like a yeast cake.

Q: How much did you weigh when you came back to Frankfurt?

A: About 110 or so, which was a lot, I would have been less if I hadn’t always been so fat and my aunt even said to my brother, (sentence incomplete) I always ate, my mouth was never still.

Q: Was there a question of food shortages at all, I mean even before your brother was bringing things?

A: No there was enough, my aunt was an artist, she could fix a gourmet meal out of canned food, K rations, everything she touched, when she finished was a gourmet meal.

Q: K rations were the American...?

A: Yes and the corned beef and everything, when she got through with it it was like beef stroganoff and of course at that time anything was good, and then he disappeared somewhere in thin air, he was stationed somewhere else and didn’t write and then we were worried about him because he left somewhere on an unauthorized leave to Frankfurt and he went to the (word missing in original transcript) strasse and he asked for his sister, and that’s how he found me. And I asked did it ever occur to you that I might not be there anymore, and he said no I knew you would make it. And then he said I don’t want you to come to England because they don’t pay well, because I wanted to get out, Israel was out because I heard what was going on there with the ships and I began to hate to be amongst Jews all the time because there was so much friction.

Q: You mentioned that you had the opportunity to go to Israel when you were in Lutch, had you known then what was going on already with the ships?

A: No, but being integrated most of my life, I didn’t want to be isolated, and I felt that Israel’s the land of hardship without knowing anything and I didn’t want any more hardship. And then my aunt and uncle applied immediately for visas to Australia.

Q: Their son had gone there.

A: Yes, and for me too, but it was easy for him to get his parents over there very quickly, but there is a question about how long I would have to stay and I certainly didn’t want them to wait for me, so then through (word missing in original transcript) I applied for a visa here, and friends of my family saw my name in the aufbrau and they sponsored me, and so what shall I tell you I got my visa and everything and even then the Americans were peculiar on my (word missing in original transcript) there was another anti – Semite there and I had pneumonia and Lord knows what diseases and I had a spot on my lung, you have T.B., I didn’t have T.B., you look like a blimp, you didn’t have T.B. looking like me. I didn’t have a cough or nothing. Okay after three x – rays I got my visa. And the day I left for America my Australian visa came through.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Terrible. I wanted to be with my relatives, But then I was committed. So there I came all by myself.

Q: I was just going to ask, they were going to Australia and your brother was going back to England, did the pay make that much difference?

A: Well he felt that I couldn’t support myself, and then when I got here all Jewish girls from England started to come here, there really was no future there evidently.

Q: How did you feel about coming here all by yourself?

A: Petrified, but I had many friends here. My mother’s friends took me in and other friends, I was alone but I was never, I was used to being alone. Almost from 18 to 27, nine years I was used to being alone, not all alone, but I had no family all this time, except my relatives, but then saying good – bye to my aunt and uncle was very hard, but I went to America and I adjusted very fast, oh my. I learned English one, two, three, I got myself a job, but I was alone and I looked, I was so fat, my gosh, everyone was married, everybody said she’s so pretty, but she’s so fat and I ate, I’d go to (word missing in original transcript) for dinner and pass a delicatessen and say now I’ll go to my furnished room and eat half a pound of (word missing in original transcript) and I ate, and everybody said I was too fat and I couldn’t stop eating and then I started smoking, maybe that will help. And then I met through a nurse, she had a friend a Viennese guy who was an endocrinologist and she sent me to him and he felt sorry for me and didn’t charge me his usual exorbitant fee. Four dollars a week at that time was a lot of money for me and something was wrong with my period too and he was my psychiatrist, my friend, my weight loser and I went down and down .

Q: Was it a result of the shots?

A: No starvation. And this doctor, at that time the drug and food control was not that strict and he imported something from Canada which you couldn’t get here. I didn’t ask questions, he didn’t do it very scientifically either, but he helped me and I stayed thin, he never put me on a crash diet, a moderate diet, and I went down, and stayed down.

Q: When you first came here who met you?

A: Oh my friend of my mother and other people, everybody met me.

Q: She’s the one who sponsored...?

A: No that was another one, she came too. A friend of my mother’s. 161st Street. They all came.

Q: Did you stay with them?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you go about getting a job?

A: Then I went to the (word missing in original transcript) ), stupid idiot, and I had my nurses papers and my uncle had that famous license that said only for Jews and...

Q: Had you given them that?

A: Yes. He was in South America.

Q: He was in South America? Had you mailed it to him?

A: My mother had mailed it to him, with the auspices of maybe sending for me, and then what did you ask now, oh yes how I got the job, oh yes you can’t work as a nurse you can’t speak English, you’d better work as a governess or a nursemaid, and I didn’t want to be a burden to anybody, so I went to the HIAS and I couldn’t get any money from them, I had to work six weeks, and I said what do I do in the meantime, I’ve got no money so I said the hell with you, and in the Times I saw an ad that this family on 77th Street was looking for a nursemaid, I can’t speak English, terrible brats and a shvatzer maid and they said I was to eat with them and when the time came I ate with the shvatzer, and she was so nice and she said I know honey chile you have never seen a black woman before, and she was so good to me, and she said to me after I had one day off, one afternoon off a week, she said you know you are wasting your time if you are a nurse. Go get yourself a job as a nurse, so I looked in the Times and I had many nurse friends here from my school, and I found two jobs, one at Montefiore and one at Memorial and I won’t forget I looked in the paper and I called up my old instructor who two years ago just died and said Mrs. Holzer where should In go, Montefiore, I like the name so much, it sounds so nice, or should I go to Jewish Memorial. She said go to Jewish Memorial because so many of the nurses from Frankfurt are there and especially one nurse, go there. I did, and the job was for the operating room, not knowing the language I thought I have some experience, I can work much easier in the operating room and so I went there and I met this one nurse there who I didn’t know from Frankfurt because she left before I went there and she became my best friend.

Q: When you say that you were with this family on 77th Street how were you able to communicate with this black lady?

A: Oh I knew some English.

Q: Was that a hardship to pick it up, the English?

A: No very easy, at that time I always say that I wasn’t an honor student and nothing especially in school ever and between the time I got here and ‘55 was the height of my mental ability. I could learn just everything at this time. I don’t know why this happened. It was such an unusual thing for me. I could just pick up and learn everything in no time. I had no high school paper, I had to take a high school equivalency test, which I barely passed.

Q: Did you have to pass a certification nursing boards?

A: Oh yes. There was a nurse in Brooklyn who specialized in preparing foreign nurses for the state boards, and every week I traipsed myself from 168th Street to Grand Army Plaza, and walked to her house, it was everything beautiful then, no danger, I started from here to Brooklyn and she had enough time, you know. And I remember there was an old Jewish candy store and I ordered (word missing in original transcript)) because I was so under nourished. I had myself a hot chocolate with ice cream. He waited for me and then I had my lecture and she prepared me and in ’49 I took my state boards.

Q: Let me ask you something, just in terms of eating, lots of people feel that eating helps you to, eating can be a substitute. I eat sometimes when I am very nervous.

A: No, I drink and I smoke.

Q: But when you first came?

A: No it wasn’t nerves, and I was lonesome. And I had a room with two very nice looking girls and they always had dates, and I you can’t help it she’s too fat for me, and I was lonesome, and I met Bernard not as a boyfriend, but as my girlfriend’s brother, and I beat him in ping pong and that fat slob beating me in ping pong, that was no good.

Q: As you lost weight and began to go out did you date American men or the...?

A: Mainly America men.

Q: How did you feel about American men as opposed to the German – Jewish?

A: I liked them better. Because still I felt I had to make excuses for being alive.

Q: How did that, you felt that to American men it was different?

A: No question because they didn’t lose anybody in Germany number one, and number two, I was so eager to assimilate here. In fact that was a psychological copout. I wanted to forget that I ever was German. I thought I could erase it, but you don’t want to forget your heritage.

Q: No, but it’s understandable to want to forget it at that point.

A: Even today, and I didn’t want to be called a refugee because I wasn’t a refugee, I was an immigrant.

Q: Were you ever called a refugee?

A: Yes, and Bernard it was the same, he came after the war, very often people in business would still consider us the refugees, and he said once, he’s not a refugee.........Adding insult to injury.

Q: In terms of that when you called, I don’t know whether it was direct or indirect, called a refugee, didn’t that...?

A: Annoys the hell out of me, absolutely, because I wish I were a refugeee.

Q: In what way did they make you feel a refugee?

A: You know how all Americans, we have a German mentality and we have an accent. They still consider us different, and also when the refugees really came, you know people don’t assimilate. I’ve been told I speak English better than people who have been here a long time because I really made a career out of it, you know, to assimilate, and therefore I felt more comfortable.

Q: When you say you made a career out of it you mean you made a conscious effort. What things did you do?

A: Well I worked all the time. I couldn’t go to school, but I read and I went to the movies and I spoke English as much as I could, even up to this day I correct people when they speak German when it isn’t necessary.

Q: How did you meet these American fellows that you were dating?

A: Here, there, and everywhere.

Q: You lived in Washington Heights and you worked in Jewish Memorial.

A: I met through there, the hospital, and I went to dances, you know, at that time we still had like the singles clubs today and I met then here and there.

Q: Did you join any organizations?

A: Yes the American Jewish Women or something like it, Hadassah, something, it was an American group, and I went to an American singles summer resort. It was called a camp. It was like a singles club, and that’s where I met. I never went to a German club,

Q: You wouldn’t go to the New World Club, or things like that?

A; I was tired of excusing myself for being alive, and then of course everyone wanted to fix me up, I have a man for you. One woman, she had two spinsters, one was much older, after all I was still only 29 or so, and she gave the wrong name to the wrong fellow and I ended up with this old guy and the other woman probably ended up with someone younger than her. In the Cafe Paris it was all straightened out, but then I was very often on call as an operating room nurse which interfered with my social life to a great extent. And war came and all these other people could take off, when I wanted it to be a veteran it helped. When I had a blind date and as I said many were blind I said oh I have to call the hospital, I’m on call. I have to go to work and very often I had to go straight to the hospital and then home...How many people had a car?

Q: Are most of your friends today Americans or of the German – Jewish community.

A: German – Jewish.

Q: Why do you think that persisted?

A: Because ultimately I came to peace with myself and my relatives and my friends we have a common interest and we have very good friends in Washington, they used to live here, but I never made it happen that way it just evolved that way, I never made a conscious effort, but that’s how it is. In the Temple most of the people, you know, but I didn’t make a conscious effort. We very often talk about it.

Q: You mean with your husband, or among the group?

A: No, we talk about it. We very often in previous years, we don’t have much of a social life. Bernard isn’t too well, but we very often were invited by our German friends or relatives, had Americans to entertain as a bridge.

Q: Did you feel you were that bridge?

A: Yes.

Q: In what sense?

A: You don’t know us well enough so I can’t explain it to you. I feel both my husband and I are more all around, not more educated, by no means, no smarter, no nothing. I’m not being arrogant.

Q: More international?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you feel that happened to you as a result of the experience with?

A: With Riva, her German roots are much deeper than mine, or Elsa Baum, you know, now they contrast with Eleanor even though she is younger, because she’s more Americanized even though my best friends are all German – Jewish background, we have more thing in common, but I can mix in anywhere..

Q: When you talk about your German roots, we were talking about that yesterday as a matter of fact. How do you feel about your German roots?

A: Well as I said to you in the beginning I am very happy about my childhood. I had a good upbringing, maybe too strict. I don’t know if that is damage, but I wasn’t overindulged. I had the proper values. I didn’t have an orthodox Jewish education, but I had a Jewish background, but the positive things we have like being industrious and being conscientious, in America sometimes being laughed at. I always say we take ourselves too seriously, because American people by and large they get things done the same way ultimately, but that you cannot lose no matter how young you were or how old you were it’s in you. Am I right? I have made a very thorough study of myself and very often I hate myself, very often there are things like my compulsiveness, that’s unterborn.

Q: Well unterborn in the sense that it is a German – Jewish.

A: That’s true with so many things that we have that we can’t change, but I know we are being laughed at, rightly so, we have a certain arrogance. I never talk about (word missing in original transcript), that I really hate, that the Americans were being confronted with at the height of the immigration. And they never forgot it, they never did..

Q: Did you ever go back to Germany after?

A: Yes, what a disaster, ask Bernard.

Q: You went together?

A: Once I went with my brother and he asked me before I crossed the border in ’57, now I know how you feel, I don’t want to have a fist flight because of you, so we get to the border and I can’t speak German. It didn’t come.

Q: Literally you couldn’t say it?

A: It couldn’t come out. In my home town a girl was walking ahead of me and she dropped something. I wanted to tell her you dropped your comb, of course she didn’t pay any attention to me and suddenly my brother grins and he said she can’t understand you, and I tried to get it out in German and I couldn’t, and then we visited our maid.

Q: You went back to Kassel?

A: Yes.

Q: Was that the first time since the war?

A: Yes. We visited our maid and then I could speak, I had to. By that time I had lost my weight also, and she yelled and she still said (sentence incomplete), we had a hard time speaking German, but I could do it then, but I would say among strangers I couldn’t.

Q: How did you feel in ’57 being back in Germany?

A: Uneasy, very uneasy. Then my brother had the gall, these people are different, they didn’t go through what I did, he had a friend, my brother was then an interrogation officer, (sentence incomplete).

Q: With the British army?

A: Yes. This friend ultimately married one of these women who were supposedly being turned over into (word missing in original transcript) whatnot, and they got married and (word missing in original transcript). And my brother (word missing in original transcript). And she was talking about the time she was a prisoner of war and she was so annoyed because these British officers didn’t hold the door open for me. Well I almost threw up. I said to her you know that was nothing compared to the way we were treated. You were treated royally.

Q: Did she comment?

A: I don’t remember. That was a bad experience. I was glad when I was back in England, or in France or anyplace. We drove and then...

Q: Could you go to your house in Kassel?

A: It wasn’t there and I was very uncomfortable. And then I went with Bernard. We only went once to Europe.

Q: Did you have a different experience when you went together?

A: Worse. We went to, oh yes one time Bernard was offered a job where his German language knowledge would help and he was supposed to be stationed somewhere in Munchen and we already figured out I’d stay in London and he’d, the whole thing fell through, so ultimately we went to Germany because Bernard wanted to attend the (word missing in original transcript) and everything, and I said I can’t be a chicken and let him go by himself, I’ll go with him. Well it was a disaster. I was so obnoxious and so frightened I was impossible. Everybody was my enemy, and then in Frankfurt he got, we had ordered special seats in the railroad and Bernard said you stay here, but Frankfurt was just like I had left it. You stay here, I’ll get the seat tickets. So I stand there and everybody who walks by I think a Nazi, and I stay here and Bernard is gone. He doesn’t come back. What have they done to him? By this time I was in a different world. When this man came back I was such a bundle of nerves. I didn’t let go, and we decided from now on Germany for me is taboo. That’s all. I don’t have to go there. It’s not important. I don’t say that I’m right. Don’t misunderstand me. It’s not a question of right or wrong. It’s just something I don’t want anymore as much as I can’t stand when anybody says\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I really applaud.

Q: In terms of that when you saw Germany, I take it the second trip was after ’57?

A: Yes ’69.

Q: When you see the condition of Germany today in terms of it’s being rebuilt, it doesn’t bother you?

A: No, it’s alright with me. I’ve never seen Kassel before the war.

Q: You are from Kassel?

A: Yes. It was beautiful. I enjoyed being there, we went to a little restaurant, everything was fine, but that Frankfurt and that Bauhof, that did it.

Q: Have you ever been to Israel?

A: No, never, simply because we never had enough time and I don’t want to go by myself. They had a special memorial plaque for all the people who had perished. I didn’t much care for that. It’s not that I didn’t care for it, it shook me up, it really did. I mean for me to go to Germany is totally unnecessary, as I say I don’t even want to bother changing it. Let the hate be, and also I had a terrible, now two years ago when I went to St. Elizabeth, of all people there is a German (word missing in original transcript) working there as a nurse, big mouth, a kraut, not a Jewish girl, a real (word missing in original transcript), a big mouth, everything bad, a good worker and many remarks she made in her tactless way, my God what do I need an anti – Semite here, and then I found out she is married to a Jewish man. It’s okay.

Q: But it’s initial reaction.

A: But still she grinds me, but I always say as long as she does her work, it’s all I care.

Q: This reaction in ’69 and ’57 was it different than when you came back after the war in ’45?

A: Oh yes. I felt much more at home then. I had been in America. I didn’t feel that badly then, I wanted to get out, but after all that was it. I didn’t feel half as bad being there then than I did coming back. Maybe it was just a delayed reaction, I don’t know. The mere fact that I didn’t want to go to Israel, I wanted to go back to Germany must mean something, that there was more culture there, there was more normal living there than in Poland where I had been, I don’t know.

Q: Were you also going back to Germany with the hope that maybe you’d find somebody?

A: No.

Q: Not in ’57, I mean originally.

A: No. I knew there wasn’t anybody. There were plenty of people in my camp, I knew. I knew. That wasn’t the idea, no.

Q: I mean in terms of an uncle and aunt.

A: Oh yes, yes. That’s why I went back. I knew if I would find them I had to go there, including my brother. I knew if I found anybody or my mother that has to be the point of meeting them again, absolutely. Oh yes, that’s why I was determined to go to Frankfurt.

Q: One last thing, in terms of the Geidegutmacher, what do you think of the idea? The principle?

A: The principle is alright, but again unfortunately with my extreme hate I didn’t apply for it. I couldn’t get myself to apply for it. I wanted nothing to do with it. I just get the minimum with the least effort I could possibly do. Of course it is an utterly ridiculous thing to even try and make up and I also feel that the German government is being pumped, because this is a life long affair, but I don’t feel sorry for it, I know that many people get Geidegutmacher that they don’t deserve, but good for them, none of my business, but I do find it so sad that everybody says (word missing in original transcript), we have a member of the congregation, he has said repeatedly, we got together socially, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I never, I can’t stand the man, and I said why don’t you go, no more people are there now, go, and very few go to stay, they just rub it in to all these Americans where they come from and all the sermons they have, and all the things they did and all the education and somehow it is not right and that is why we are called refugees, after the war. This is the epitome of a German Jew, a refugee because it is the first generation of refugees where America(illegible) built, there are other refugees from the eastern European.

Q: That’s right. It was a different experience.

A: Everybody came then as they come from Russia now.

Q: Well I think the ones who come from Russia now are a little more like the ones who came from Germany, than like the immigration from Russia at the turn of the century. Did you have children?

A: No.

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