

Interview with Mrs. Margaret Lipton
March 27, 1992
Briarcliff Manor, New York.

Q: Good morning, Mrs. Lipton.

A: Good morning, nice to meet you.

Q: Same here. Perhaps we could begin by telling us where you were born.

A: I was born in Vienna, in December, 1911.

Q: And the date, do you remember the date?

A: Yes, 24th December, Christmas Eve, 1911.

Q: And your parents, do you remember your parents?

A: My parents, my mother came from _____, Eisenstadt, and my father was a salesman and he lived in Vienna and he traveled all over Austria and he came to the store of my mother's parents and he met her there. In Eisenstadt.

Q: So your father, where was he born?

A: He was born in Poland. In Dublivitch. But when he was young his parents moved to Vienna because in Poland was also pogroms in those days and when he was a young man, his parents moved to Vienna with all his family and my father was a salesman.

Q: What did he sell?

A: He sold, you know in those days. The stores had everything, you know. Materials _____. He went from place to place, he had a little, you know in those days there were no cars, he had a little wagon with a horse. I remember he used to tell us the story when we were children, and he met my mother and my mother's parents in the store in Eisenstadt and they sold everything there and he went there to sell figs and there he met my mother and she was a young girl and they fell in love and they moved to Vienna.

Q: After getting married?

A: After getting married.

Q: What was your mother's name?

A: My mother's name was Judith Abnier and her parents had a store there in Eisenstadt in Vienna.

Q: Was it a grocery store?

A: No, it wasn't a grocery store. In those days they sold everything in a store like _____,

materials and cotton and buttons.

Q: A general store?

A: A general store, right.

Q: So your mother grew up in this small town in Austria, how many brothers and sisters did she have?

A: She had a twin sister and another sister and three brothers.

A: Two brothers?

A: Two brothers.

Q: Two brothers, one twin sister and one other sister?

A: Yes.

Q: Was she the oldest or the youngest?

A: She was in between. And the two brothers and one sister, they were never married. And they lived in Eisenstadt and had vineyards and had great, great fields and they made their own wine and this was their profession. And my mother was married in Vienna and she had three children.

Q: When did she get married, do you know?

A: I have to figure out; my brother was born in 1906. She got married 1902.

Q: So you had an older brother?

A: Yes, he was born in 1906 and an older sister. She was born in 1909 and I was the youngest. I was born 1911.

Q: You were the youngest, born in Vienna?

A: Born in Vienna. And in Vienna, my father later on, he had a store on a main street, like, it was like it was a pharmacy but he didn't have prescriptions.

Q: Like an American drug store?

A: Yes, on a main street in Vienna. The street was called Berginger Strasse.

Q: Berginger?

A: When I was a teenager, I worked in the store and my sister worked there too. We were selling things. And it was a very busy street. The reason I tell you this because when the Nazis came to Vienna, when they marched in, all the soldiers they marched on the street and they came to our

store, a few of the German soldiers came to our store and they wanted to buy razor blades and they looked at my sister, they looked at me and they said “are you Jewish?” and we said yes. And they screamed at us “don’t you know we aren’t allowed to buy by Jews” and they walked out.

Q: Without buying?

A: Oh, yes, without buying anything.

Q: Did they take? Did they take anything?

A: No, they didn’t take. But it was my first encounter with the Nazis passing me and soon afterwards the people were standing outside our store and they wrote down in big yellow letters “Jude” and they wouldn’t let anybody come in our store. They blockaded it. And a few months later, the SS men came in our store and we had to walk out he said and we were not allowed to take the cash or anything from our store. My sister and I were there and we had to just walk out and leave everything behind. We had no more rights because we were Jews.

Q: So this was a few months after the _____?

A: Yes, a few months after.

Q: And you lost the store?

A: Oh, yes, we lost the store and everything. We never saw it anymore. We couldn’t take a _____ out or anything,, the cash register, nothing. We just had to walk out. It was one of our first experiences. We didn’t know how bad it was going to be but everybody tried to escape. Only Jewish people went to escape elsewhere. And everybody tried another way. And my brother gave me advice and told me, why don’t you look in the phone book and write to some people and they will sponsor us because no country would let you in anymore. We could leave Vienna if anybody would let you in but no country wanted to leave the refugees in. So we took a English phone book and I wrote five names from the alphabet. The first five names. I wrote to Abbot was his name Abbot and four more names and my sister wrote to a few B’s and her name was Bell. And a few weeks later, I got an answer from a man named Abbot and my sister from the name Benn and he said he would sponsor us and be able to help a human life. And he wrote all the documents and this is the way I came to England. And he was a complete stranger. It was in 1939. And when I came to England, he was a furrier and right in the heart of Oldgate he was situated. And I went to thank him and we were not allowed to take any money, of course, only 30 shillings we were allowed to take from Vienna and we were not supposed to _____ in England because he guaranteed for us but he asked me and asked _____ of course, because no money or nothing, and asked, can you keep a needle in your hand. And are you good at sewing and I say of course. So he gave me a job off the books. He paid me in cash and I was sewing and I was happy and I had a job there in his factory. I was sewing lining in fur coats and he was very nice. He save my life. And my sister. She was married at that time.

Q: In Austria?

A: In Austria. And she went, her sponsor was a judge in Scotland. His name was Bell. He was

not Jewish.

Q: Was your sponsor Jewish?

A: My sponsor was Jewish, yes. He was not Jewish, he was a judge. And he was very well off and they were so good to my sister and her husband. They had a beautiful house there in Scotland and with butlers and they treated them wonderful. But after a few months, the war broke out in the meantime, my sister and her husband went to London. And after the war, it was easier. You got a permit. My brother in law got a job with _____ something, officer, he was a lawyer in Vienna and when the Nazis came to Vienna, he had a car and in the first week they took away his car. And they took away everything from the Jews.

Q: Were you interned in England, when the war broke out?

A: Oh, no. They didn't intern us, no.

Q: So you got a work permit and you were able to work legally, after the war?

A: During the war.

Q: After the war broke out.

A: In London, it was very bad when the war broke out. Bombs were falling and everybody was running to the shelters. And everybody tried to save your life. And the district where my job was where Mr. Abbot was, it was all bombed with incendiary bombs and overnight and over weekends, everything was on fire, it was right in the heart of London. And I went to the country to escape, you know. I was working in a factory and was sewing goggles for the army.

Q: You spent the entire war in England?

A: In England. I lived in England for 13 years. My sister too. I was married in England, my daughter was born but my husband died when she was a baby. I took her to the nursery and everything. I got another job in London. This was already after the war.

Q: You married an Englishman? Lipton?

A: Yes. My brother was still in Vienna. He was three years ...

Q: I was going to ask about your brother. You had a sponsor from Abbot, your sister was sponsored by Bell, what was your brother, did he try to?

A: No, the Austrian quota, everybody was trying to come to America. But the Austrian quota was very small and when all this happened with the Jews in Austria, everybody wanted to go to America but it was too late to be registered because the quota was so small but my brother was lucky. He stayed in Vienna two years after Hitler occupied Vienna and in the meantime his quota was ready to go to America and on the last boat what came from Austria to America he was on it and he came to America. When we were living in England, my sister and I, my brother wrote to us, of course, he said what are you doing in England. America is the best country in the world so you better come to America. It was in 1952.

Q: When you finally came to America?

A: When I finally came to America.

Q: Now, during the war, you were not able to correspond with your brother?

A: Not during the war, no. But after. And we lost all contact, of course, with my mother and father in Vienna. And my brother, when he left Vienna, he saw my parents, he saw them there and my mother's brother lived with them, one of her brother's lived with them that I told you before.

Q: So your mother's brother lived with your mother and father?

A: But I still don't know what happened to him. So far, the Red Cross couldn't find out what happened to him. I wrote, you know, all those forms for them to --his name was Adolph Gabler.

Q: When did your brother leave Austria, do you know?

A: He left just when the war broke out.

Q: 1939? Or?

A: I think 1940.

Q: Or the United States entered the war in 1941. England entered the war in September of 1939.

A: It must have been.

Q: It was after you settled in England. Did you have the work permit when your brother left Austria?

A: I know he left on the last boat that went to America. So it must have been -- Hitler was at war with England and America was in 1941, so it must have been in 1940 before the United States.

Q: What was it like in Vienna, when you grew up in Vienna?

A: Before the war? Oh, it was beautiful there, before the war. But the people got anti-Semitic, all this stuff, anti-Semitic, there, but you didn't feel it. They didn't let you know. But as soon as the Germans came, they had an easy field there. The Austrian people welcomed them.

Q: Did you have any memories of going to school in Vienna? What kind of school did you attend?

A: Oh, yes. I went to a commercial school for four years. _____. I had a job there in Vienna, too, in an office.

Q: So you attended grade school. Did you go to gymnasium as well?

A: No. The _____ shuler.

- Q: And from there you went to the _____. It was for four years. My sister did the same. We learned languages there. We got French in the school and a little bit of English but when I came to England, I could hardly speak anywhere. It was terrible. It was the biggest handicap when you don't speak the language.
- Q: Did you have any bad experiences in school, were there any anti-Semitic incidents?
- A: No, no, it was before Hitler.
- Q: So before Hitler came in, did you have any anti-Semitic experience?
- A: No, not personally, no.
- Q: How your father's business, the store. Did he have any problems before the time of Hitler?
- A: Before the time of Hitler, no, not before the time. The only thing I remember is when you were Jewish, even before Hitler, you couldn't get a high job like a judge or a professor in the university. They didn't give those high jobs to Jews, you know big jobs for the government. This was even before Hitler.
- Q: Now regarding your religious life. How would you describe your family's religious activities?
- A: My parents were orthodox Jewish.
- Q: Both?
- A: Both parents.
- Q: From Poland and from Eisenstadt?
- A: Yes. You know kosher. And my brother when he came to America, he was also very religious. He married a woman, she was so religious, he wouldn't pick up the phone on Saturday. But we were not religious in England, me and my sister.
- Q: But your parents and your brother were religious? And the languages that you spoke.
- A: German.
- Q: German, until you went to school.
- A: Yes, but I spoke very little. In school I didn't learn too much.
- Q: You weren't the great student?
- A: I was studious but languages was a weak spot.
- Q: Do you recall talking about politics during these years, either with your friends or your sister or your parents?

A: I remember before Hitler when I was a young girl, there was Shushnick and Dorfus, I remember the night when Dorfus was killed and they were shooting in the streets and it was like a civil war, but it didn't last too long and then Shushnick came and in a few years, Hitler came, right? And the _____ and I remember in the most households when Hitler came, they came to the door (they know exactly where to find the Jewish people, by their name and everything, the Austrians) and they came to the door, they took all the men away to the concentration camps. And some of them came back and some of them went to Dachau concentration camp and some of them never came back. This was in the very beginning when Hitler came. And I remember we used to live in an apartment in Vienna.

Q: Do you remember the street that you lived in, what section?

A: Yes, sure. Haborstrasser.

Q: Haborstrasser?

A: Haborstrasser. It was in the second _____, the Leiperstadt, the most Jewish people lived there.

Q: This was a Jewish neighborhood?

A: Jewish neighborhood. Haborstrasser, that's where my mother used to live and we used to live when we were children. And when the Nazis came and they knocked at our door and it was an apartment building and they wanted to take my brother and my father. And we didn't open the door and a neighbor from the same floor, she came out, she was not Jewish. And she said "what do you want from those people, they're not at home. And they are very nice Jewish people, what do you want from them. Leave them alone". A neighbor said that. And they walked away. But it was first week when the Nazis occupied. But they, of course, didn't leave the Jewish people alone.

Q: Did you know anybody personally that was taken away by the Nazis?

A: Oh, yes. My cousins. They took my cousins away. They took them first to Dachau. But, they let them go. In the beginning they let some of them go, but later on it was worse. They wouldn't let any Jewish people survive. It was terrible. But the worst part was you had no rights anymore. You couldn't go anywhere to complain. You couldn't go to the police or to anywhere. They took all your rights away and there was not place you could go to fight for your rights. This is the worst thing of all.

Q: When you went to England, what kind of passport did you have?

A: I had a German passport and it was written as Margaret Sarah. All the Jewish women they called Sarah.

Q: What did they call the men?

A: Israel.

Q: So you had a German passport. You were no longer Austrian but German. Did you have a "J"

on your passport?

A: Oh, yes. The “Jude” was the main thing. It was the worst crime you could have had, to be a Jude, a Jew.

Q: What did your mother and father think of the Nazis?

A: Oh, terrible. You know, when they came for us and they had been singing in the street, “Juden brut offen messer”, terrible always against the Jews singing those words and my mother and my father were shaking, you know, they couldn’t believe it, suddenly we were such enemies without any reason. It was terrible the propaganda. Hitler, the speeches, I thought screaming like a mad man.

Q: Do you remember your parents talking about the Nazis before they came in, when they were in power in Germany in 1933?

A: Oh yes. They said it’s terrible. But as terrible as it was, they didn’t realize that that mad man would take the Jews and kill them like that. Nobody realized what really could happen because that never happened before in our time, if you remember. So nobody knew he was sending them to the gas chambers when we were living there. He kept it a secret too. I don’t know if you ever saw in the movies, when he takes all those Jewish people and puts them in those trains and the women, they were so vain, they wanted to look nice, they took the suitcase and everything, they didn’t know where they were going. You saw the movies. And as soon as they went, as soon as the trains arrived in the concentration camps, they took their luggage away and they were sorted out who was going to live a little longer and who was going to the gas chambers. As soon as the train arrived. You saw the movies, those things. Terrible.

Q: Now your parents, in Vienna. Your father continued to run the store after the Anschluss?

A: Oh, no. they took away our store.

Q: I remember, you explained that.

A: Oh, no, it was the end.

Q: How long after did that happen?

A: We were still there, maybe two or three months after the anschluss, we could keep it and then they took it away, until they got organized the Nazis, they found all the Jewish stores. And I had an uncle, my father’s brother, he was very wealthy in Vienna. He had a big warehouse, like Macy’s. These people, they went first to those people because they had most money. He was very, very organized. First, he went to all the rich people and they took everything away. And then he went to the people who were not that rich. But everybody got it in the end. You couldn’t keep anything.

Q: When you were planning to leave, you were writing to people in phone book addresses, were your parents thinking about leaving Vienna as well?

A: No, my mother, she always said he would leave, he would realize it. She always was optimistic

and she said, he would leave the old people, what can old people do for him, he would leave the old people alone. It was very hard for young people to escape so old people it was much harder to escape because nobody would sponsor them because they are getting sick and old. So it was very hard to get out.

Q: So your mother didn't want to leave?

A: She wanted to leave.

Q: She wanted to leave but

A: She wanted to leave but she was optimistic. She thought he would leave the old people alone. But there was no chance she could leave. Nowhere to go. The only country where we could go was Shanghai and I've got a few friends who escaped to Shanghai. And to Israel was also very bad to go. I had a cousin she went on a boat to Israel and the English people, they were just fighting with Israel. They sunk her boat and she was killed by the British. Her mother was on the boat and her husband and the baby. And they all got killed. The boat was bombed by the British. It was near Israel and it was sunk by the British. Did you know that?

Q: I didn't know about this boat.

A: Because I had two cousins, her brothers, my cousins two brothers. I met them before we went to America, we went back to Vienna to see if I could find out anything from my parents. And met those two cousins accidentally and they told me what happened to their sister. They were killed on the boat to Israel.

Q: So your mother

A: When I went back to Vienna, I wanted to find out about my parents. So, I had a good friend, a family friend, and he was blind. I looked him up and he told me he was together with my parents in Theresientadt with his wife and he was together and one day they took my parents away from Theresienstadt and his wife too but the Nazis left him alone because he was blind. And this is the way he survived. And after the war he went back to Vienna.

Q: Did he tell any stories about your parents in Theresienstadt?

A: He told me that they were together, all together. One day, they didn't come back anymore. They disappeared. They sent them to the gas chamber.

Q: But he didn't describe any stories about how they lived or what they did while they were in Theresienstadt?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: Did he tell you what it was like living in Vienna before they were sent to Theresienstadt?

A: It was terrible. Everybody was living in fear because it was terrible. _____ { couldn't understand } to find all the Jewish people to have them killed.

Q: Did your parents continue living in the apartment?

A: No.

Q: What happened?

A: We used to live in Haborstrasser and here it says _____.

Q: So what happened?

A: They were forced to move together with other families that were there.

Q: But we don't know when they were forced to move. Your friend, the blind man, he didn't remember when?

A: No, no.

Q: So, even though they were living in the _____, they were forced to move.

A: Yes, it was more people together. Or maybe in the Haborstrasser they didn't want Jews anymore.

Q: The landlord was not Jewish?

A: We didn't know, it was a big building, a big apartment building.

Q: The apartment that you had in the _____, was that a bigger apartment?

A: Not very big. Two bedrooms and it was old fashioned. _____, the bathroom, _____, it was outside and we shared with the other neighbors. Very old house. We looked at the house and it was still there. _____ {couldn't understand}. I was born there.

Q: You were born right in the apartment?

A: Yes.

Q: But after your brother left for America, your parents were alone in that apartment and when they moved to Lesingasser, they were alone.

A: Yes.

Q: Does your brother ever describe to you how and when he left your parents, what he said and what he said to them, when he said goodbye?

A: They were heartbroken, of course. We had no contact anymore. As soon as I left, we couldn't write a letter or anything anymore because the war was on and nothing went smooth anymore.

Q: Were your parents happy when you and your sister went to England?

- A: They were heartbroken but they were happy we saved our lives. These two men they saved our lives. I wouldn't be here. My whole family wouldn't be here. I would be caught in that holocaust. And a lot of people weren't that lucky. Other people who tried to escape to different countries, my mother's sister, one of my mother's sister, she had a friend in Yugoslavia. When Hitler came, she went to her friend in Yugoslavia and a few months later she was caught in Yugoslavia with the friends of Hitler.
- Q: When the Germans invaded Yugoslavia?
- A: When the Germans came. So there was no escape. The only country where really the Jews could escape but they couldn't get in was England. Because Hitler never came to England. And Switzerland was _____ too.
- Q: But it was difficult to get into Switzerland.
- A: Yes. Everything was difficult. Or Italy or France but later they got caught in these other countries. There was no escape for the Jews.
- Q: This man that you know, the blind man. Did he tell you any specific stories about life in Vienna before they were deported to Theresienstadt?
- A: There was chaos, of course. Nobody could make a living anymore. I don't know what they were living on, what they were eating.
- Q: No work?
- A: Oh, no, for Jews, work? Oh, no.
- Q: How about walking on the streets or wearing yellow stars? Did that happen?
- A: Oh, yes. They put paint on the pavements in Vienna, yellow paints, and the Jews had to kneel down and scrub it and _____ on top of the Jews, the people who were scrubbing the floors. They were terrible, the Nazis, such beasts, terrible.
- Q: Would you know what they were doing when they were in Theresienstadt, those three months that they were there?
- A: I don't know, just surviving. They gave them soup to eat or something. And the other people, they had to work. Terrible.
- Q: But as far as you know, your parents remained healthy until they were deported.
- A: Yes, they were healthy people.
- Q: Of course, eventually, you came to know what happened to your parents. How was that, that you found out?
- A: Well, the blind man, first of all. But then, I wasn't sure because he didn't know where they

were sent. He only was in Theresienstadt with them. And the reason that Hitler left him alone was he would have been a headache for them. He was blind and they ordered to go there and go there to the chambers, you know.

Q: When his wife and your parents were taken away, where did they think they were going? When the Nazis said we are going to

A: To different tents.

Q: To different tents. But they didn't say where.

A: Oh, no. They didn't know they were going to a death camp.

Q: And did they say what they were going to do in this camp?

A: No, they didn't say, oh no. They _____ people up to the end, they _____ what's going to happen to them. Was in the movie.

Q: They went by train.

A: Yes. And then, just after 50 years, I saw an ad in the local paper and there was a phone number from the Red Cross and they say they could find some Holocaust victims and you could call a number. When I called the number from the Red Cross and they sent me a form because I was always wondering what really happened. It never left my mind. I sent out the application and a few months later they say they have an answer, they found my parents. I was so surprised. I thought "how could they find two names from so many million people." I guess when they really found out when and where they died and what happened.

Q: Now we have the certificates in front of us, they were deported to Theresienstadt on June 20, 1942 and then they were deported from Theresienstadt on September 19, 1942, to Mole-Prostanetz.

A: Three months later.

Q: Yes, an extermination camp in Belarus outside of Minsk where over 200,000 people were killed. And that's how you found out.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, do you have, still I'm sure, strong memories of your parents in Vienna; Vienna was the only place where you ever

A: Vienna was such a happy place always. All the time we had music. My mother was always singing at home.

Q: Your mother liked to sing?

A: Yes.

Q: What else did she like to do?

A: Cook.

Q: She was a good cook?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of schooling did she have before she married your father?

A: She had good schooling.

Q: Where did she go?

A: Her mother language was really Hungarian.

Q: So your mother knew Hungarian?

A: Yes.

Q: Was she Hungarian?

A: Yes. Because Eisenstadt where she was born before the First World War it belonged to Hungary. Only after the First World War this part where mother used to live was called Grungrund when the Austrian people took it. A part of Hungary. That's when it became Austria.

Q: So your mother's native language was Hungarian. She also knew German.

A: Yes. In school she learned German.

Q: She went to school in Eisenstadt. The public school?

A: Yes. The burger school.

Q: She didn't go to any academy or university?

A: No.

Q: Did she have any other job other than working with your father?

A: No.

Q: She wanted to get married?

A: Yes.

(Turned tape over)

- Q: We were talking about your mother and when she was growing up and I was going to ask you, what did she like to do? We talked about cooking and singing and I was going to ask what else she liked to do as she was growing up.
- A: I remember she always used to tell us the people in Austria, they were anti-Semitic, even the kings and the queens, they were all against Jews. The only one that was good to the Jews was the last one, Cata Fransion, I don't know if you ever heard of him.
- Q: Sure.
- A: But how many years ago the Jews in Vienna, they always had problems. Casia Maria Theresa, she was very anti-Semitic and _____ Marie Antoinette back in France, her head was chopped off, you remember this in history?
- Q: Yes.
- A: And my mother always said that it was right for Maria Theresa because she hated Jews so much. And in her time the Jewish people had to go to a certain district in Vienna and all of the Jewish people lived in a certain district in Vienna, the Leiberstein. That's where I was brought up too.
- Q: Where your parents lived?
- A: Yes. But after Kaiser Josef came in Austria, he was very good to the Jews. He made no extinguishing against Jews and non-Jews, they had all the jobs they could have and they all loved him. Kiser Franz Josef of Hapsburg. And she always said if he would have still been in the government, Hitler would never have come to Austria.
- Q: But he was an old man when he was there.
- A: Then _____ was there, that was in my time already. He was the last Kaiser of Hapsburg and then came the republic.
- Q: And what did your parents think of the republic?
- A: They thought it was all right. They were anti-Semitic but not openly. They left the Jews alone, you know.
- Q: Did your parents ever give any thought of moving to Hungary?
- A: No.
- Q: Your father and mother settled in Vienna. Was it mainly because of business reasons, because of the store he ran or other reasons?
- A: I think as you must know that in Poland was also always anti-Semitic. My father's parents, they left Poland because of the anti-Semitic. That's why they settled down in Vienna. His parents settled down in Vienna too.

Q: So your father's parents continued to live in Vienna.

A: Yes.

Q: Were they around during the Holocaust?

A: No, they died before. They were very old.

Q: So although Vienna was anti-Semitic, it wasn't as bad as other places?

A: Oh, no. When Hitler came, it was open up. It was a big difference. But the Jews had all the rights that the other people had. You could go to the police, you could go anywhere. But as soon as Hitler came, all this disappeared. But to most of the people, I think it was welcome.

Q: What did your parents think of Dolfuss?

A: Dolfuss was all right to the Jews.

Q: Your parents thought he was O.K.?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did your parents ever talk about Mussolini?

A: No, no.

Q: How about Germany? Did they ever suspect that Germany would come back?

A: As soon as it happened with Hitler in Germany, all the Jewish people were shivering. They didn't know what is going to happen next. It was terrible.

Q: Did you know any refugees from Germany who came to Austria?

A: No. But I remember when Hitler came to Germany, a lot of German Jews, he let them go and they even could take their money with them. They went to Israel, a lot of them and a lot of them went to South America. At first he wasn't that bad. He let them go with their money. But a few years later, he got worse and worse. He got crazier and crazier. He took everything away from them, including their lives.

Q: Did your parents ever discuss the possibility that the Germans might invade Austria and take it over?

A: No, they didn't know that. When you live there, you don't know what's happening the next day. You don't know. He is such a sick man _____. Who would think of them, that he wants to

Q: Remember he was an Austrian.

A: Yes.

Q: Your parents knew that.

A: Oh, yes, But he was sick, sick like nobody else. And he had an easy field because Germany was so bad there and people couldn't find any work so he blamed everything on the Jews.

Q: How was the economy in Vienna?

A: Not very good. The people were not rich in Vienna, the Jewish people. Very few of them. We all could make a living but nothing like in America, it was much easier.

Q: How was your father's business before the Nazis came?

A: It was good. It was on a main street and we were very well liked. It was very good.

Q: How was your family affected by the depression when it began in the early 30's?

A: It wasn't really a depression. But what I remember it, the money overnight, when I was a child, it was worthless. One day you could buy a house and the next day for the same money you could buy a loaf of bread. If you didn't have a house or property, you better beg of it one day. Overnight it happened. It was after the First World War when I was a small child. The money was worthless.

Q: Did your father own his store?

A: Yes.

Q: So he had property until the Nazis took it away?

A: Yes. Whatever you had. I had an aunt, one of my father's sisters. She had a nice house, a big apartment house. So when the Nazis came she lost it all. Whatever you had, you lost. And my uncle and aunt in Eisenstadt, they had vineyards. Took all the vineyards and the house. The money, you lost. The more you had, you lost everything, the more you lost. All your rights, your property and your money, everything. You're lucky you didn't lose your life. Some people were lucky not to lose their life.

Q: Especially if they left the country.

A: Yes, it is the only way, to leave the country.

Q: I know you already described the apartment your family lived in and it sounds like you had a fairly modest household. Your mother did the cooking. Were there any particular things?

A: No refrigerator.

Q: No refrigerator?

A: Oh, no. When the radio came on, it was a big things. We went out and bought all the parts and we put the radio together with the crystal, with the little

Q: So you had a radio at home?

A: Oh, yes. I remember when we had electric installed. We had only oil lamps.

Q: Did you listen to any foreign radio stations?

A: Couldn't get them. Could get a little music.

Q: Now I was thinking of the music when I think of Vienna and of course I was thinking the reasons why your parents would want to live and stay in Vienna.

A: Everybody was so happy there and there was so many places you could go to, so many theatres and everywhere you went there was music and you went to the _____, the restaurants and you were singing and drinking, everybody was very happy. It was a very easy thing.

Q: Did your parents like to go out?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Did they go to concerts?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Theatres they liked? Operas?

A: Yes. Oh, the Vienna opera was so beautiful.

Q: What was your mother's favorite. She sang. I'm asking, what did she like to sing?

A: The operettas. The Fledermaus _____.

Q: Who was her favorite composer?

A: Johann Strauss. And he was half Jewish too.

Q: Was he? So he was your mother's favorite composer. Did she play the piano?

A: No, she didn't play an instrument.

Q: Did your father play anything?

A: No.

Q: He worked full time?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they like to go to the parks?

- A: Oh, yes _____ They had beautiful parks in there, all flower beds and everywhere you went they had music in the open. It was very nice. It was really a beautiful city, a gay city. Everybody was happy there. They only lived for entertainment. They wanted to be entertained all the time.
- Q: Sounds like you miss Vienna. Your father though, the man who supported the family, he worked all week. Did he work on the weekends as well?
- A: No.
- Q: So he was closed on Saturday and Sunday?
- A: Oh, yes.
- Q: And in addition to you and your sister, you used to help? Did your brother work there too?
- A: In a way he was in the same trade in wholesale, my brother. The blind man I told you about -- he was my brother's boss. He worked for him.
- Q: In another store?
- A: Yes. Wholesale and this was retail.
- Q: Your father was retail?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Did your mother ever work in the store?
- A: No, no. She was always too busy cooking. Taking care of five people in the family.
- Q: Five people in the family. Buying groceries, did she do the shopping?
- A: Oh, every day, every day she had to go because we had no refrigerator and she went to a marketplace and she bought fish, live fish.
- Q: Would she go to the market in the Leopoldstadt?
- A: Yeh, yeh. Comonlipodplatz. I went with her all the time. _____?
- Q: And did you continue going to orthodox synagogue? Your parents, did they go to the orthodox synagogue?
- A: My father was praying every morning you know, there were _____?
- Q: Now, when your mother would sing songs, she would only sing German songs, no Hungarian songs, she stopped?

- A: I remember the songs she was singing was so much sense, you know, they were so nice. Made me happy. I like to think back on my youth because I was a very happy child.
- Q: Do you have any other memories that you would like to share with us, about your parents and about Vienna in your youth?
- A: I can't think of any right now.
- Q: The sky is getting brighter.
- A: It seems like a dream, the whole thing, when I think back of Vienna.
- Q: Well, on behalf of the United States Holocaust Museum, I would like to thank you.
- A: You are very, very kind. I hope you can use it.
- Q: I think we will.