

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Erika Tamar December 18, 2015 RG-50.030*0863

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

PREFACE

The following interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

ERIKA TAMAR

December 18, 2015

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. **Erika Tamar**, on December 18th, 2015, in **Manhattan, New York**. Thank you very, very much to – for agreeing to speak with us today, to share your experiences, your early years, and to acquaint some of the people who will be watching this interview about what the circumstances were of your leaving **Europe** and coming to the **United States**. I'm going to start with the most basic questions, and then we'll go from there, okay?

Answer: Sure.

Q: So, can you tell me what was the date of your birth?

A: June 10th, 1934.

Q: Okay.

A: In **Vienna**.

Q: That was my second question, where were you born?

A: **Vienna, Austria**.

Q: Okay. And what was your name at birth?

A: **Erika Tamar**.

Q: **Erika Tamar**.

A: I reverted back to my maiden name.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay. Tell me – tell me a little bit about your family. What were your father's name – what was your father's name, and your mother's name?

A: My father's name is **Julius Tamar**, my mother is **Pauline Hutterer Tamar**. My father was a physician, and he practiced in **Vienna**. He graduated from University of **Vienna** Medical School. But both my parents were originally from **Poland**, which explains a little bit why my brother and I had to come separately, because we were Viennese born, which was one quota system. Polish born was a whole different quota system.

Q: We'll get there. We'll –

A: My – my parents –

Q: Yeah.

A: Much harder –

Q: Yeah.

A: – to, you know, get –

Q: To come to the **United St** –

A: – to come to the **United States**. Almost hopeless because there was a long waiting list. Am I going on too long, or –

Q: No, no, no, no, I will ask questions.

A: Yeah.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: What we're going to start with though is, rather than the trip to the **United States**, I want to find out as much as I can about the years before then.

A: Okay.

Q: About your family's situation. Can you repeat again your mother's maiden name?

A: **Hutterer**.

Q: **Hutterer**?

A: **Hutterer, h-u-t-t-e-r-e-r**.

Q: Okay, and –

A: And both my parents born in **Poland**, my father came to **Vienna** to go to medical school, and remained in **Vienna**. And my mother had met him in **Poland**, th-then joined him at the university.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know if she was a serious student, or she was following my father, frankly.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then they lived in **Vienna**, though they still had families in **Poland**.

Q: Do you know what part of **Poland**?

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: What part of **Poland**? That – it was more than one town, but the one that my mother was from, and talked about the most was, if I pronounce this, **Przemyśl**.

Q: **Przemyśl**.

A: **Przemyśl**.

Q: Okay.

A: But they also had a lumber mill, which I believe was in **Katowice**. This was her parents.

Q: Her parents, okay. Did she have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, she did. She had two brothers, one sister. My father had brothers and sisters. I know less about his family than I do about my mother's, because she talked more –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know, about her history.

Q: Did these – did these brothers and sisters remain in **Poland**?

A: Yes.

Q: And – from both sides of the family?

A: Yes.

Q: The same with grandparents?

A: Yes.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: There was one surviving member of my mother's family, my cousin **George**, who at that time was **Ludzic(ph) Saltman(ph)**, who was interviewed by the museum, and wrote a book, and you know, it – it's easy to research him. He went through camps from the time he was 12 to the time he was 17.

Q: Oh my.

A: And when my mother heard that he had survived, of course, you know, she brought him over. On my father's side, his brother survived, because he went into **Russia** with the Red Army.

Q: I see.

A: But his wife and 18 month old baby did not. The baby was lost, because apparently they had arranged with Christian neighbors to take the baby, and could never find the neighbors, never found the baby. So, big question mark.

Q: Oh.

A: And he would have been too young to know his name or background, if he had survived.

Q: Yeah.

A: But those were the only survivors of what were rather large families.

Q: I me – I mean, huge, huge, as far as losses go, just huge.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: Yes.

Q: And it also illustrates just how much on the edge your situation was. That is, your parents' situation and your own, how close your nuclear family was to the same fate.

A: Oh, of course.

Q: Yeah.

A: My cousin **George's** family and mine had many, many similarities, and it could have – **George's** story could have been my story, and his – you know. I mean it did – we were the – the same type of people, the same type of family, and th – it's just fate.

Q: Yeah.

A: Do you want to hear more about life in **Vienna**, or –

Q: Yes, I do, I do.

A: Remember that I was four years old.

Q: Yes, I know.

A: So my memory is a little hazy. I'm going to tell you some things that I do remember.

Q: Please.

A: But they may be colored by things that my parents told me.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: I understand.

A: So I don't know if everything is really clear a memory.

Q: All right.

A: I do remember the Nazis coming in.

Q: Okay.

A: I remember my father and brother, who was nine at the time, and my mother too, of course, avidly listening to the radio and **Hitler** shouting, but I didn't necessarily understand what he said, I just knew he was a bad man, shouting all the time. On **Kristallnacht**, the morning after, my father took me for a walk, and we saw the broken glass, and the broken store windows, and I knew it was very sad, but I did not entirely understand what had happened. But I do want to tell you something about **Kristallnacht**, because –

Q: Yeah, do tell me.

A: – it was – you know, they said it was a spontaneous outpouring of rage, and that is simply not true, it was preplanned. My father had a patient, we don't know who it was, my father never knew, who was apparently very high up in the Nazi party. And very often a Nazi had a favor due. And the day before **Kristallnacht**, th-the day before, my father got an anonymous phone call that said, stay at home, you and your wife, don't leave the apartment tomorrow. Stay at home. And of course that

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

day was the day when they were yanking Jewish men off the street, and arresting them, and humiliating Jewish women, and making them wash the sidewalks with toothbrushes, but my father had that really strange protection, and he didn't know from whom, but getting in a call like that –

Q: Of course.

A: – he, you know, paid attention to it.

Q: And it does tell you it's preplanned.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Ye-Yeah –

A: I mean, it –

Q: It tells you, yeah.

A: Of course, because whoever made the call knew the day before that it was going to happen, exactly what was going to happen.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I think that's historically interesting. But that's less in my memory, and more my parents' story.

Q: Yeah. Now, do you – your father takes you out the next day, and you're a four year old girl.

A: I don't know if it was the next day.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay, but –

A: I –

Q: – he takes you out soon after.

A: We took a walk, and there was a lot of broken store windows. Whether it was the next day or not, I really don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: But I do remember that, I do, taking a walk with him, and a – a sense of sadness, even if I didn't know exactly why.

Q: But did you also have a sense of fear, or – or not?

A: I did. Not all the time, and not in terms of broken shop windows. Where my sense of fear showed itself – and I don't remember any other incidents where I was really afraid, because I was very secure in my family, and I was very young. My mother sent me to the bakery, which was in our building, so it wasn't very far for me to go, to pick up some bread, and I went, and there was a soldier with the big, black boots, and I forgot about asking for the bread, and I ran home. And my mother asked me what had happened, I said there was a Nazi soldier and I was afraid he was going to arrest me, so I ran home.

Q: Oh. Okay.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: Now, part of that is clearer memory of mine, part of it is my mother's memory, so –

Q: I understand.

A: – everything I'm telling you is a little bit mixed.

Q: Well, I – I – I appreciate that you're making those – those comments, because – because it's important. It's important for us to realize when someone is relating an episode, how much of it is direct memory, and how much of it can be influenced by what you're told.

A: Right. The direct memories, I remember feeling afraid and running home.

Q: Yeah.

A: The conversation with my mother afterwards of what I was afraid of, I don't remember, that – that's my –

Q: That was told, yeah.

A: That was told to me.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Describe your home a little bit, in **Vienna**. What did it look like?

Were you in apartment building, or single family house?

A: It was an apartment. I don't remember details. There was a park across the street.

In the summertime before – y-you know, when life was good and prosperous, we usually went away somewhere in the country in the summertime.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Mm-hm. And – and you had one sibling, an older brother?

A: I had an older brother.

Q: What was his name?

A: **Henry** – **Hein** – in German, **Heinzie**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: But when he came to the **United States**, **Heinz** became **Henry**. He was, when we left, I was going on five, he was nine.

Q: Okay.

A: And I think the only reason the **Krauses**(ph) could take me, because I was so young, is because I would be traveling with an older sibling.

Q: I see.

A: Alone, I think I would have just been too young.

Q: I see. A-And what language did you speak at home?

A: German.

Q: German? Uh-huh.

A: If my parents didn't want us to understand something, which went on forever, they spoke Polish.

Q: Okay.

A: But I didn't understand Polish, we spoke German.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Did either of them speak Yiddish?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, I think maybe my grandparents might have. But my parents were very assimilated.

Q: That's what I was su – that's what it suggested, is that – that they would have been – were you a religious family?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Not religious at all, definitely secular, but with a strong sense of being Jewish.

Q: Yeah.

A: Which I may not have known when I was young, but you know later, I mean, there – there was a sense of being part of the Jewish nation –

Q: Yeah.

A: – if not the religion.

Q: Got it. And I get the impression also that since your father went to **Vienna** to go to medical school, he must have come from a family that could have afford to send him there.

A: I'm not sure of that.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: I don't think so. I – I don't think he came from wealth. I think his father might have been a grocer. He spoke much less about his background and his family. My mother seemed to come from a – happier circumstances, and talked a lot about her family.

Q: Was her family well-to-do?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: Was her family well-to-do?

A: Comparatively, yes, because they owned a sawmill.

Q: A sawmill, that's right.

A: I don't know how well-to-do that is, but they were a more prominent family than my father's family.

Q: Okay. Were either of your parents storytellers?

A: My mother.

Q: She was?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: She told wonderful stories, and my oldest son is a historian and had tried so hard to tape her stories, and the minute he put a microphone in front of her, or had a tape running, she froze.

Q: Oh, that happens with so many people.

A: So, you know –

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes, she was a great storyteller and she made her life in **Poland** and her life in **Vienna** very vivid for all of us.

Q: Uh-huh. And what kind – do you remember any particular stories she told you about her own childhood, her own growing up years?

A: Yeah, a lot of stories.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know if this is relevant, this – we're talking about way –

Q: Yeah, that's okay.

A: – back in **Poland**.

Q: That's okay.

A: Because they lived in a small town, she was boarded out to go to school to get a better education, which she hated. And at some point her father gave her a violin. I don't think my mother was musical, but her father did give her a violin. And

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

the maid in the house that she was living in got angry about something, took the violin and smashed it. Not even angry at my mother, she was just –

Q: Angry.

A: – had an argument with s-somebody else, and this was the object that she smashed. I also know that my mother hated being away from home.

Q: Did she?

A: You know, sh-she was young, she was maybe nine, 10, I'm not sure, and she really didn't like being away from home. My mother's father, for that time and that period, was, I think something of an original. My mother was very bright, and did well in school, and he appreciated that, and he was interested in furthering her education, even over the sons in the family.

Q: Wow.

A: You know, though she was a girl –

Q: Yeah.

A: – she had – he felt she had promise, and he was very interested in furthering her education. Which is, I think for that time period was a little bit unusual.

Q: Yeah, I would agree, I would agree. Did you ever visit your grandparents in

Poland?

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: No, no. My brother did. I was still too young, I stayed home in **Vienna**, and the following year I was going to, but then of course everything changed when **Hitler** came in.

Q: Yeah.

A: I will tell you that my mother, when she sent us, heard from the Polish family, and they said, how can you do this? How can you send your children away? He just wants German speaking lands. Come home to **Poland**.

Q: Oh my. Oh my.

A: But my mother was in **Vienna** and had a different picture of what was happening.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: It was today **Germany**, tomorrow the world, and she took that seriously. I do remember seeing the **Hitlerjugend**, the girls –

Q: Did you –

A: – marching down the street with, you know, pretty blonde braids, teenagers, and I thought they looked so wonderful and I so admired them. And I told my mother, when I'm a teenager, I want to join the **Hitlerjugend** girls, and my mother explained that I couldn't. But when I came to the **United States**, I could join the Girl Scouts.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: She said that at the time in **Vienna**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: This was –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you know, shortly when –

Q: Before.

A: – she knew I was going to be leaving. Fast forward, once I actually came to **New York**, I had no interest in the Girl Scouts, but at that time, you know, the

Hitlerjugend girls –

Q: Of course.

A: – teenagers, pretty, blonde, with – looked so – that's what I wanted to be when I grew up.

Q: Well, you know, little girls admire older girls, and latch onto them, and – and look up to them.

A: Especially when they're parading, with music –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and, you know –

Q: Sure.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – I mean, I – I wasn't admiring one girl, I was admiring a whole –

Q: All of them.

A: – marching column. So –

Q: Yeah, yeah. Did your parents live in the center of **Vienna**, or in a residential area?

A: I think it – within **Vienna** the city, but not in the very center.

Q: Okay.

A: If I'm – **Goldschlagstrasser** –

Q: **Goldschlagstrasser**?

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: Which is what I remember. And I don't remember which [**indecipherable**] I have it written down somewhere, but I don't remember. I think it was a neighborhood of **Vienna**, but not the, you know, center of **Vienna** where the opera is.

Q: Okay.

A: That was, you know, a side area, but still part of the city limits.

Q: And your father, did he have a specialty?

A: No, he was a general practitioner.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: De – general practitioner. Do you have any other – you were too young to start any schooling I would take it.

A: No, I didn't go to school.

Q: Okay.

A: My brother did, but then at – during the **Hitler** time, he stopped going to school. But I ne – I never went to school, I was too young.

Q: Did – do you have any other memories of coming into contact with any of the authorities, the – the Nazi authorities that took over?

A: I really – I – you know, I was sheltered and protected as a little girl, so I really didn't come into contact with authorities. I – we did have an au pair named **Shteffie**(ph), who was a girl from the country who came to live with us and became one of the family and I loved her, and I know she loved me. And during the **Hitler** time, her father had to come from the country and take her home because she wasn't allowed to work for us.

Q: So that was huge in your life.

A: I don't know if I understood all the reasons why she left, I just – you know, I – she was wa – one of our family, and I –

Q: Right.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – you know, I was an – to this day that I can remember her name, **Shteffie**(ph), you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because she was part of my life, of course.

Q: Yeah. When was the idea broached with you that maybe it – you will be leaving your parents in **Vienna** and going someplace?

A: I can't tell you exactly when. I drop – you know, in terms of the –

Q: The time,

A: – time frame.

Q: Okay.

A: I would think shortly before. Before **Henry** and I left, we all took English lessons.

Q: Excuse me for a second. There is some noise here. **[break]**

A: You had asked me about when my parents, you know – I – again, I don't know when, but shortly before, we all took English lessons.

Q: Okay.

A: My mother and father separately, on an adult level, while **Henry** and I waited, and then **Henry** and I took English lessons. And we learned English from the book, “**Winnie the Pooh.**”

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Did you really?

A: Yes, which I've always loved, and you know, though we didn't really speak English, we called each other **Heffalumps** and **Piglets**, etcetera. The lady that taught us English, was British. And I went into foster care in **Texas**, I came into **Texas** talking about a frock and a lift and a pram. But you know, I – because I was so young –

Q: Yeah.

A: – I learned English almost by osmosis.

Q: Yeah.

A: I – I mean I don't – I'm sure there was a time when I had an accent, and didn't know the words, but I don't –

Q: Of – cause you don't recall –

A: – it was so easy.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was so easy.

Q: Of course.

A: I just sort of fell into English.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Well, you know, it's like two nations divided by a common language, is what I've heard about the British and the Americans, as far as American English and British English.

A: Well, the words were different, obviously.

Q: That's right, those words were different.

A: I don't think I ever had a British accent, either –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you know, I am sure I had an Austrian accent at first.

Q: Yeah.

A: I have no idea.

Q: But what a lovely way for a child to be introduced to the language, is through **“Winnie the Pooh.”**

A: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A: Lovely book, right?

Q: Yeah.

A: My parents did everything they could to prepare us. I don't think I – I knew we were going, I don't think I knew the ramifications of it as clearly as my brother at

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

age nine. I just assumed that my parents would come. My brother had the burden of knowing that they might never come.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, so I was very sheltered in that way, too. I came from a very easygoing family. We were European, we had good manners, **dankeschön**, **bitteschön**, you know, was very important. But my parents were basically quite easygoing, and for instance eating – this – peas are a –

Q: Sure.

A: – memory to me. Eating peas when I was a little girl, you know, they roll around –

Q: Right.

A: – and I was perfectly free to pick them up with my fingers and eat them. Once we were ready to go to the **United States**, my mother gave me pea eating lessons, where I had to learn to eat them with a fork, so that wherever we went, I would make a good impression.

Q: Impression, yeah.

A: You know, an-and I remember the peas specifically –

Q: Okay.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – because it was so annoying. But I'm sure there were other things where she tried to prepare me, you know, to be a –

Q: Sure.

A: – a little bit independent, or on my own, or, you know, eat with very good manners, or you know, whatever.

Q: It must have been very hard for her, you know, a little girl, a li – you know, either child, but –

A: For my parents it had to be unbearable, and I really understood that when I had children of my own. When I had a four year old and I thought, how did they do this? But they w – they didn't know that they had a good chance of coming to the **States**. They wanted us to live.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, however. But I – it had to be unbearable for them. My mother has said that she divided her life by, you know, the benchmark moment of when she sent her children away, before and after.

Q: Really?

A: Well –

Q: Yeah.

A: – what could be more memorable than that?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Well, truly. I mean, truly, it is – it is – yeah, yeah.

A: Conditions in **Vienna** na – again not – this is not personal knowledge –

Q: Okay.

A: – at all, this is something that my parents told me, because my mother is certainly a storyteller. From the time that **Hitler** came into power, every border imaginable closed. And I'm really angry when I read that, you know, the Jews didn't want to leave their jobs, they – none of this is true. They wanted to leave, there was no place to go. Every border closed. The American consul made it as difficult as could be. My father was a practicing physician, a graduate of the University of **Vienna**. When he applied for American visa, or whatever, they insisted they needed his elementary school records from **Poland**.

Q: No kidding.

A: Ye – I – it's like –

Q: No kidding.

A: – things to delay, to stall, to make it more difficult. Also, when he we – came to talk to the American consul – for a European this was insulting beyond belief, maybe not for an American – he, the consul sat there with his feet u-up on the desk, and for a European man, that – you know, that's the epitome of rudeness. There were very, very few places that took Jews. The Polish quota for the **United States**

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

was horrible, though my father signed up as early as he could. **Trujillo** was, you know, considered a horrible dictator, but the **Dominican Republic** took as many refugees as they possibly could. Maybe with self-interest, feeling they were ed – getting educated people, or you know, who knows what. At the time that my father was trying to get in **United States**, the only place open to us was **Haiti**.

Q: No kidding.

A: And he hesitated because at that point he felt that his number was getting close, and he thought, what future would we have in **Haiti**, I – you know, h-he took a huge risk. Maybe we would have all been better off going to **Haiti** as a family. But yes, my parents prepared me as well as they could. They tried to make it, you know, like a very positive, like I'm going to leave this bare place and go to this wonderful place. I do remember that there was an air raid in **Vienna** with, you know, sirens, a blackout, and I said – this I really remember, this I – because I was so puzzled by it. I asked my father, are the bad men coming to bomb us? And my father said, if anyone comes to bomb us, it's the good men. And I – I had a real problem figuring that out.

Q: Yeah, exactly, because it's – you know, there's a contradiction in logic.

A: Right. But it – I –

Q: But there's logic.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: Yeah.

Q: But it's the truth.

A: Another way of preparing me in terms of – my father had an original way of talking to me sometimes, to try to make me understand what freedom meant.

Q: Okay.

A: Like in **United States** we would be free. He said that freedom meant that I could go up to President **Roosevelt**, and call him a **dummkopf**, and nothing would happen to me. And of course that stuck in my mind –

Q: Yeah.

A: – because it was amazing to me that I could say something an adult – of course, you know, I –

Q: Of course.

A: But it – it was a way of telling me that you could say what you want, without fear.

Q: Yeah.

A: And speak to whoever you want without fear. And that stayed with me, so I had a very positive image of going. I – I – though th – I think the reality was a little bit different, but –

Q: Yeah.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – being prepared sa – you know, to go to this wonderful place – they really tried very, very hard to prepare me and my brother. Much harder for my brother because he knew that the chances were very good that they would never come, and he had to take responsibility for me, and he did.

Q: Well, for a nine year old those are big things –

A: He –

Q: – those are huge bare – burdens on the shoulder –

A: He totally rose to the occasion. If you want to he – I'm trying to think what else I can tell you about Viennese background, because I'm almost about to jump –

Q: That's right, that's right.

A: – to the transport. I don't know what else I can tell you.

Q: Well, tell me a little bit about your brother, and what your relationship was like in **Vienna**.

A: In **Vienna** it was a normal, you know, brother –

Q: Did he have his friends and you had your friends, or –

A: I was so young, I mean, my friends were like, in the American terms, play dates with mother –

Q: That's right.

A: – mother's friends, some of whom I'm still in touch with, after all these years.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, one of my very close friends was a little girl that I played with in **Vienna**, but it was through the parents. I – I wasn't having independent friendships.

Q: Right.

A: I'm sure my brother had friends in school, I don't know details of it at all. We had a normal brother-sister relationship, you know. I – I was enough younger than – than there really wasn't sibling rivalry and I think he was protective of me. Our relationship changed extremely when we were on the Kindertransport.

Q: How? Tell me.

A: He was nine years old, and he rose to the occasion of taking care of me as if he was an adult. And what saved me from the emotional trauma was that he became my mother, my father, my hero. And he really was – took w-way beyond a nine year old.

Q: Can you give me any examples of – of how you felt safe because he was there?

A: Well, he wa – well, he was my family.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, I – I wasn't alone. I mean, that was major that –

Q: That's right, he was there.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – I wa – I was – I was with family. Years later I met some people who had been on the ship. You may know that there was a conference in 2002 in **Chicago** of 1,000 children who'd come unaccompanied, and I went to that, and some of the 50 children were there. I'm digressing now, but –

Q: It's okay – it's okay, we can do that.

A: My three children went with me, because they thought it would be emotionally horrendous for me. Actually, when we got there, it was very triumphant.

Q: Was it?

A: Oh, for all of us, it's like we're here, we made it.

Q: Okay.

A: So I met other people who'd been on the ship with me, and one of them was a lady named **Helga Milgram**(ph), who I serd – unfortunately has since passed away, and she remembered me. I was the baby of the group, so I was more noticeable, and she was maybe nine or 10, and she and a bunch of other eight, nine, 10 year old little girls sort of took over caring for me, and you know, being extra nice to me, and when we talked about it later she said she was working through her own pain by, you know, giving to me. And I didn't remember it clearly until I met her.

Q: Oh, and so it came back.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: And – and the memory came back to me. I – I didn't remember the faces, or names, but I did know that on board ship all these older girls, you know, were very nice to me, and favored me. I asked her if she remembered my brother, and she said her only memory of my brother was, he was this hand –

Q: Okay.

A: – that I was forever holding. My brother wrote home to my parents that sometimes I really embarrassed him because sometimes I didn't see him, and I had a panic attack and I cried, where's **Henry**, where's – or **Heinzie(ph)** at that –

Q: Yeah.

A: Where's **Heinzie(ph)**, where's **Heinzie(ph)**? And maybe he was going to the bathroom, and people were calling him, your sister needs you, she just wants you. So he – he wrote home that sometimes it was embarrassing. In terms of taking care of me, as a little girl I tended to be carsick on long trips. When we went to **Texas**, my memory that I don't think was by car, I think it was by bus, I'm not a hundred percent sure, but he did write to my mother, and I had seen the letters at one time or another, that the whole way, he told me stories so that I would forget about being carsick.

Q: Oh.

A: Now that is over and beyond a nine year old.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

A: Are we on the ship, or sh –

Q: No, we're gonna come back. We're gonna come back –

A: Do wi – we –

Q: – to **Vienna**.

A: – do we want to go back to **Vienna**?

Q: We're gonna go back to **Vienna** because I want to come to the moment – did you meet the **Krauses**(ph) in **Vienna**?

A: I have no memory of them.

Q: I see.

A: None at all.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm sorry that I don't.

Q: That's okay, that's okay.

A: They were wonderful people I know, but I don't remember them at all.

Q: Do you remember saying goodbye to your own parents?

A: I remember going on a train –

Q: Okay.

A: – and my mother and father seeing us off.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay. So it would have been you and your brother on the train, and them at the pla – on the platform.

A: They were on the platform, we went on the train. And a – my parents made such an effort to make this positive for me, they certainly – my mother didn't cry in front of me, you know, they made this extreme effort to say oh, this is an exciting train ride adventure, you're going to **United States**, you know.

Q: So whatever you saw, it was enthusiasm and excitement, rather than pain and tears.

A: Well a – I think other children cried. Older children perhaps, who understood more. I did not.

Q: Okay.

A: I – I mean – I don't know if enthusiasm –

Q: Okay.

A: – is the proper word, because I was leaving my parents. But I don't think I was as upset as you would imagine, because they made it such a positive thing [**coughs**] – excuse me – and they did lead me to believe that they would –

Q: Come.

A: – come.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah. And what about your brother, do you remember how he was reacting, or being at that point?

A: Well he – I know that he knew that there was a good chance that he wouldn't come – that they wouldn't come, and I think there was much more sadness for him, and also he had the responsibility of me.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, he was **[indecipherable]**

Q: That's huge for a nine year old to have the knowledge that there – that your parents may not come, you know, tha-tha-that they may not ar – go to the **United States**.

A: Well, you know, it was a – at that time in **Vienna**, there was a lot of talk about getting a visa, getting an affidavit. We knew no one in the **United States** at all. It was part of family conversation. We wound up getting, I think, the affidavit from a comparative stranger, yes. Actually somebody – a Christian who worked for **Sears Roebuck**. A distant relative of my mother's couldn't do an affidavit because he – he wasn't well positioned enough, he wasn't making enough money. He went to his boss at **Sears Roebuck** and said that, you know, these people will not be a burden, the man is a doctor, he'll come to **United States**, he'll practice medicine here, but

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

he needs this affidavit. And this absolute Christian stranger, who had some position at **Sears Roebuck** gave us the affidavit.

Q: As a – from the relative, from your mother's relative. In other words, he himself could not, but someone else he worked for could.

A: His – his boss, or –

Q: Oh, I see.

A: – somebody who – who worked –

Q: I see.

A: – who he worked for. I don't know who – the man's name, I have no idea. I wish I knew.

Q: So it was the basis of that that you – the **Krauses**(ph) could accept you and take you?

A: I – from my parents.

Q: Oh, for your parents, excuse me.

A: My parents had to have the affidavit to come over.

Q: Okay.

A: Now, I don't know that the **Krauses**(ph) needed it – an affidavit. What the **Krauses**(ph) did, and again, I know this from **Steve Pressman's**(ph) book –

Q: Okay.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – and not personal knowledge at all.

Q: Okay.

A: They had visas that would go in – to waste in **[indecipherable]** they were able to collect 50 visas for the 50 children. If I remember correctly, Mr. **Kraus**(ph), where the children were concerned, made himself legally and financially responsible.

Q: I see, okay, okay.

A: So that was –

Q: That was one set –

A: You know.

Q: – and the oth –

A: For my parents, they needed affidavit.

Q: Okay.

A: Which they got from a stranger.

Q: So, do you remember more about – let's go back to the transport over. You leave by train, where do you go after that?

A: At the time I didn't know – I didn't find out until the conference in 2002, where I got a lot of information. We stopped in **Berlin**. I did remember that we stayed somewhere. I didn't know it was **Berlin** at the time, and it was my first taste of what it was like to be institutionalized, where we stood on line for a towel, and we

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

stood on – you know. Not that we were mistreated, it was just for the first time in my life, it was like this institutional thing, and that stayed with me. I didn't know it was **Berlin**.

Q: Okay. And from then on – from there, another train?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: I – I – I know the traveling was by train. I know there was an overnight stop at – in **Berlin**. If there was more than one overnight stop, I don't know. I sort of doubt it, I think maybe it was just one.

Q: Okay.

A: But my next memory is being on the ship.

Q: Okay. Do you now know the name of the ship?

A: Yes, well I found out.

Q: Yeah.

A: I didn't know at the time, the President **Harding**.

Q: Okay. Do you have any memories, any vision in your mind of what the ship looked like?

A: I do remember that it was very large. I remember the – the tone of when meals were served, which I – I – I have no – you know, I – I'm tone deaf, but there's like

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

three notes for meals being served. And I heard that much later on radio about something else, and I immediately perked up –

Q: Perked up.

A: – and got the familiarity. I do remember being onboard ship.

Q: Okay.

A: I had an adventure onboard ship.

Q: Tell me.

A: There was a young woman, I think quite young, from **Chicago**, an American, traveling from **Germany** with her birds. She went by ship because she ha – she was bringing birds home. She was an American, but she had lived in **Germany** for a while. One day on deck I was swamped by a wave, and my leggings, or whatever I wore, were soaked, and I was just standing there by myself helplessly, and I didn't know what to do. And this young woman saw me, and took me to her stateroom, and got me out of my wet leggings and gave me something dry to wear. And I remember a stateroom full of colorful birds. Now, this is a four year old's memory. It's perfectly possible that there were three birds. I just remember all these birds, ma – I have no idea. And I believe she spoke German, so – because she had lived in **Germany**, so we communicated easily. And now here's the mystery. I slept in her stateroom, and I don't know how that came to be, whether she talked to the people

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

who were supervising me, or if she just had me there. I know I spent time there, and I do know I slept there at least once, and that it wasn't my imagination because she sent a letter to my mother, she got my mother's address. She put me to sleep, and she says, sweet dreams, and I said, I'm going to dream about my mother. And she wrote that to my mother. So that clarifies that I really did sleep in her stateroom.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know how much time I spent there. I know I was very, very fond of her, and fascinated by these wonderful, colorful birds. And that's a major shipboard –

Q: Sure.

A: – memory for me.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I – I –

Q: It's very exotic for a child.

A: Well, and also she was young, and she spoke German and she was very warm and generous, you know, she appreciated that I was a little girl traveling alone.

Otherwise I – you know, I spent a lot of time hanging onto my brother at all times.

Q: Yeah.

A: But for sleeping arrangements, girls were separate from boys. I don't remember who I shared a stateroom with, I have no memory of that at all.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Do you remember –

A: I do remember these older girls were nice to me.

Q: Do you ha – do you remember what the staterooms looked like?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Just the one with the birds.

Q: The birds. Just the one with the birds. And the ship itself, was it – well it – for a child it must have been huge.

A: It was large, but I don't have any real geographic memory of it.

Q: Do you remember being rocked? Were you seasick at all?

A: I was not seasick, no. That I – I am sure I was not. I've – you know, I was fine. I do remember, I think when we were getting close to **New York** harbor, we were all on deck, to be taught the worl – words to the "**Star Spangled Banner**." And by that time I knew a little bit English. But I do remember being mystified, oh say, can you see – I thought that was gibberish. It made no logical sense. I don't have a lot of shipboard memories really, except that I – I was – yeah, I hung onto my brother and also there was – there was the lovely lady with the birds.

Q: What about the Statue of Liberty? Do you remember seeing that?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: I've seen photographs of all the children looking at the Statue of Liberty, I don't remember seeing it.

Q: Okay. Do you have a memory of arriving in the **United States**?

A: The immediate arrival, no, no.

Q: Okay. What would be your next memory?

A: The camp. The – in – there was a summer camp outside of **Philadelphia** where we were kept. And from there we were supposed to go to foster care. What I do remember, both onboard ship, and also in the summer camp, there was a real difference, there were the kids who were going to relatives, and the kids who had no one, and who were going to foster care. And the kids who were going to relatives were the lucky ones.

Q: Yes.

A: All right now, here's a memory which may not be true.

Q: Okay.

A: I do remember people coming to look us over, who were potential foster parents.

I do – that is true, but I do also remember that they looked at us through a wire fence. Whether – that seems strange, but that's my memory of it, and –

Q: Okay.

A: – when –

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: So you're not a hundred percent sure of that wire fence part?

A: I'm not, I – this is what I remember, but as a grownup, I think, wouldn't that be strange, to have children on one side of a wire fence, and the people –

Q: Right.

A: – looking them over on the other side? I don't – but I remember this wire fence, but it could be that I imagined it, I don't know. I think I did get that awful sense of being looked over, so maybe I translated into being like an animal in a zoo, with the wire fence. Whether there was a wire fence or not, I can't tell you.

Q: Got it.

A: I do know that I was very, very angry at being looked over. I felt it very extremely, and because of that I wouldn't talk, and I wouldn't smile, and you know, I was – my brother recognized the importance of finding foster family, so he was all charm and smiles and showing his intelligence, you know. So everyone wanted my brother, and who wanted this angry little girl?

Q: Yeah.

A: The camp was not winterized, they had to get rid of all of these kids – I – I don't mean get rid in a bad way –

Q: They had to – yeah.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – but they needed a place for these kids to go. And they couldn't publicize us that much, because the idea of 50 Jewish children being brought to the **States** wasn't that popular. So they had to do things a little quietly. So on one hand they needed foster care for us, but it was difficult for them. And when people kept wanting my brother, they thought it might be harder to place two children, and they were going to separate us. And that is when my brother came into his full nine year old powers, and absolutely refused, and you know, then when someone wanted to take him, like if I don't go with my sister, I'm going to make your life miserable. You won't want me in your house. You know, so – and he also adamantly spoke to whoever, that he – my parents were promised that we will be together, that – whether that – they were or not, I don't know, but also that he was going to be with his sister, he was going to take care of me, we were not to be separated. And really, I do remember him making a scene with someone who wanted him, but wasn't going to take me.

Q: Amazing.

A: And you know, when he got through, they didn't want him any more. If I had been separated, I would have been emotionally devastated. It would – I'd have been traumatized beyond belief. Because we weren't separated, I – my brother carried the burden, and I didn't, because I had my brother.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah. So who eventually agreed to take both of you?

A: We went to a foster family in **Texas**, in **Houston**.

Q: Well, that is a long distance from **Pennsylvania**.

A: Yeah.

Q: And they – was it sight unseen?

A: No. No, they came. They were among the people who looked us over.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: But in spite of my, you know, recalcitrant ways, they took both of us.

Q: Okay.

A: When my mother got word that we went to **Texas**, she was beside herself. She thought oh – you know, she – maybe **New York**, **Philadelphia**, but **Texas**? You know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – cowboys and Indians, the Wild West, where are my children? I'm going on and on, I want to leave you –

Q: Oh please, no, no, no. You're –

A: – no, I want to leave room for you to ask the questions that you need.

Q: Li – you're anticipating so many of my questions –

A: Oh, I'm sorry.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: – that I'm just – that's great.

A: It's just, one thing I say sort of triggers another memory.

Q: That's fine, that's fine.

A: But, you know, go ahead –

Q: So now, my next question is, aside from hearing the stories that your brother tells you on the bus to **Texas**, so that you wouldn't –

A: Be carsick.

Q: – be carsick, do you have any other memories of the – of the journey?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: Tell me about –

A: I do remember being on a bus, or –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know, like a long journey, but vaguely, and no, I don't really.

Q: Okay. Tell me about your foster family. Who were they?

A: Okay. They were not very nice people.

Q: Oh.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: They were very – well, they're dead now, so I can – I guess I can say that. They were very insensitive. They – I don't think they especially liked children. They certainly knew nothing about children. They were, you know, rather cold people. And I think they took us – and there were things that make me believe that – to show their community and their neighborhood how idealistic and charitable they were. But it had nothing to do with flesh and blood real-life children.

Q: Did they have no children of their own?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: And –

Q: How did they come into contact with the **Krauses**(ph)?

A: I think they had a connection in **Philadelphia** with – **Brith Shalom** was the brotherhood that the **Krauses**(ph) were part of, and that ran the camp, and I think they had, at one time had a connection with that, because I think they were originally from **Philadelphia** before they moved to **Texas**. So they would have gotten the newsletter, or you know, what have you. I – I don't know beyond that, but I think there was that connection.

Q: Okay, what – what happened, or what was their behavior like that –

A: Okay.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: – you know, that has this im – you know –

A: You have to understand that I came from a very warm, easygoing family where we had to have good manners, but you know, it was – it was like just really a warm, **laissez-faire** kind of family. Their theory of children was children should be seen but not heard.

Q: Okay.

A: Don't speak unless you're spoken to. That was totally foreign to us. Because I was learning a new language and because I was fairly bright, I also asked her a lot of questions. And she turned to me and said, stop asking questions or I'll wash your mouth out with soap.

Q: Wow.

A: So, you know. She – I don't believe she ever really washed my mouth out with soap. I do remember the taste of soap in my mouth, but I think what that was about was I thought that was so bizarre –

Q: That you went to taste it.

A: – that I took some soap and, you know, put it in my mouth and see how do you wash a mouth out with soap? I'm – you know, it was just soap [**indecipherable**].

They were so – they disparaged my father – because my brother was always protecting me, and –

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: – then they wanted to dose me with some kind of medication, my brother would say, well, my father's a doctor and he never gave that to **Erika**. So they'd say, well, I don't know what kind of doctor your father was. You know, that kind of thing. One night they served breaded veal cutlet and my brother and I both suddenly cheered, **wiener schnitzel**. You know how kids are, something familiar.

Q: Sure.

A: And they s – oh, you think everything good is **Vienna**, you know, and they ranted about that. Which is ridiculous, they wa – it was not a political statement –

Q: It was something familiar.

A: – it was something familiar. Sweet potatoes, which I happen to like now, was – the taste was totally unfamiliar, and I refused to eat them. And she was going to make me sit at the table until I ate them. This is so different from the way my family handled things, you know, we – maybe we were a little spoiled and a little **laissez-faire**. So she was going to make me sit there until I ate them. And when she wasn't looking, my brother tried to eat them for me, and he got caught –

Q: Oh, oh.

A: – and he was hit. We were invited to dinner, friends of theirs, the children,

Henry and I were invited, and it was do not speak un-unless you're spoken to. But

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

we were brought up not to, you know, draw attention to us, but to speak to adults, and not to sit like quiet lumps. So we were quiet for a long, long time, but then ice cream was served. And my brother was being sociable, in nine year old terms, and he said oh, this is as cold as the **North Pole**, you know, on a hot night. And when we left, he was hit. And I couldn't – and I saw this, and I couldn't help him. At some point, they said something to my brother about putting us in an orphanage. Now, I don't know if they meant it or not, or if they were – if that was a way of getting him in line, if you don't do this, we'll do that. But my brother took it very seriously. His aim in **Texas** was to keep both of us out of an orphanage. And he went to school where he had a teacher that liked him very much, and that particular day, he was obviously upset. Now, this is not my memory, this is my brother's memory, and also told to my parents. She recognized that he was obviously upset, and sh-she said **Henry**, what's the matter? And he said, I think my foster parents are going to send me and my sister to an orphanage, you know, I-I – I don't think we can stay there. And the teacher, who had never seen me at all, said, **Henry**, don't worry about it, I'll take you. And **Henry** said, I have a sister. And she said, don't worry about it, I'll take you both. The next time **Henry** was threatened with something, he said, well, my teacher will take us both. At which point they blew sky high because their whole thing was how charitable and idealistic and kindly

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

they were, and the idea of this teacher even thinking of ta – you know, so again, you know, there's punishment.

Q: This sounds horrendous.

A: I – I can't – you know, I may be telling you the worst parts. They fed us, they gave us, you know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – a place to sleep. I don't think they were awful all the time. But being a child, I remember the awful parts. But on the plus side, my brother had the teacher, I had a neighbor down the street. You – if you need – if you're a kid, you need adult nurturing, and I found my adults.

Q: Okay.

A: I called everyone uncle and aunt, so he was Uncle **Irving**, and his wife was Aunt **Reba**. He was an artist who was home all the time, and he liked me and he lived just down the street, so I could go by myself. And he decided he wanted to do a portrait of me. And – but it wasn't about painting me, it was about making little jokes with me, and telling me little stories. And in their house, I felt very, very much at home.

Q: Okay.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: So whenever I could, I was there. You know, I found my adults, **Henry** found the teacher. So you find sort of what you need. There was also a dog next door, who was in the backyard most of the time, a big collie named **Rex**. I remember **Rex**.

Loved that dog, and would spend as much time, you know, with my au – **Henry** took pictures, which I gave to **Fred Wasson**(ph), and I don't –

Q: Okay.

A: – have them here – pictures of me with my arms around this, you know, collie. And I do know that when I left **Texas**, the greatest wrenching part, you know, was leaving the dog. I – I really didn't care about, you know, saying goodbye to anyone else. Ge – may I go on with my horrendous foster parents, or am I going on to –

Q: Yes, please, please – no, no, no, no, please go ahead, go right ahead.

A: – the lovely lady fr – fr – with the birds from the ship apparently got our address in **Texas**. She was caring enough to write to me in **Texas**. When my parents came to the **United States**, this foster mother took it upon herself to write to this young woman and say our parents had just arrived in **New York**, and they're going to be very needy, and ki – what can she do to help them?

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So of course we never heard from her again.

Q: Oh.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: Yeah, who does that?

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, my parents weren't asking –

Q: Right. Is –

A: – for anything from anybody, and how did she take it upon herself, just because she had this lady's address, because this woman wrote to me.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, you know. A – another little fact about my Uncle **Irving**, who I –

Q: Okay.

A: – adored, and you know, spent so much time in his house. When I was 16 he came to **New York** –

Q: No kidding?

A: – and he looked me up, and I was very excited about seeing Uncle **Irving**, and he came. I was this tall 16 year old. He came to maybe this high. A sweet, shy man.

We had nothing to say to – I mean –

Q: Yeah.

A: – disaster, nothing to say to each other. He was a sweet, shy man who was wonderful with children.

Q: Yeah. And he – he was there for you when you needed him.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: Yeah. Da – h-he was wonderful.

Q: Yeah. Do you want to mention the names of those foster parents?

A: Should I? I – I mean, I – it seems unnecessary, hi – they’ve since died, but you know, they –

Q: If you don’t want to, it’s okay.

A: I’d rather not, because there’s no reason –

Q: Okay.

A: Because they did take us.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, they – we were kept together. They did clu – they didn’t clothe us, we had our own clothing.

Q: Yeah.

A: But they did feed us, you know, and – everything wasn’t horrendous. They took us to see “**The Wizard of Oz**,” they took us to see the **Alamo**. I mean, you know, I’m telling you –

Q: The parts.

A: – the parts that were so foreign to me, just because it was so different from my own home.

Q: Yeah, well it’s – it’s – it’s – it-it’s a shock. For a child, it’s a shock.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: They then wound up li-living in **Philadelphia** again afterwards – and my parents felt that they had to be forever grateful. So I could never get rid of these people. My parents always welcomed them because they had to be grateful. They were fore – forever doing favors for these people, you know, because my mother felt, you know, she must be grateful. I didn't feel grateful.

Q: Okay. Yeah. So, how long did you stay there?

A: I'm not a hundred percent sure about when we went to **Texas**, but since the camp was not winterized, I would think we must have gone in August.

Q: Okay.

A: My parents came over some time in November.

Q: Okay, so you were with them for, let's say two or three months.

A: It wasn't that long, it – it seemed that long, but it really wasn't.

Q: Okay.

A: And my brother, of course, was more panicked, like he was writing letters, oh, you have to get out now, the war is about to start, you know.

Q: Oh, the poor boy. You know, when you think of him, nine years old.

A: And also the burden of me, and –

Q: That's right.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – making sure that they didn't infringe upon me, and forever defending me, and you can't do that to my sister. And, you know, feeling that he had to keep us out of an orphanage. The burden on him was huge.

Q: Yeah.

A: And on me was minimal, because I ha – I mean, I didn't like being with this people.

Q: Yeah, but – but he was the one who was taking the brunt.

A: But he – you know, he was like my mother, father, family, hero.

Q: All of it.

A: Well, when we came back to **New York** he reverted back to being a nine year old boy, it was very shocking to me. I mean, nothing bad, but –

Q: Yeah, but – but he was –

A: – nine year olds tease their sisters, you know.

Q: Sure, sure.

A: I hope.

Q: Yeah. So, do you remember hear – getting word that your parents have come over?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, what was that like?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: I know part of it from my point of view and part of it from my mother's point of view; as soon as they arrived, they called.

Q: Okay.

A: And this charming voice that said, oh I'm sorry, I can't wake the children, they're asleep now. At which point my mother said, they're my children, wake them. And we heard that our parents were o – here –

Q: Okay.

A: – and we went wild. And at that point **Henry** was going to be as bad, and disobey – I mean, you know, we weren't terrible, but our parents were coming, we didn't need these people any more. So –

Q: Right.

A: – I'm sure – they put us on the first train to **New York**. They got rid of us quickly.

Q: And you had a train ride up to **New York**.

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you remember seeing your parents again then?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about that.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: I had a very clear emotional image of my mother, like la – as I said to that lady, I'll dream of my mother, I – like golden light, you know, all warmth. But I had lost the physical image. And we got off the train, and there's this woman in a black coat, running to me with her coat flapping, and I was scared. And **Henry** kept pushing me forth saying, it's **Mutti**(ph), it's **Mutti**(ph), it – you know.

Q: Okay.

A: It didn't take long, and I realized that I was – the familiarity.

Q: Yeah.

A: But my first reaction was, I was afraid of her. You know, who was this person in a black coat that the va – the coat wa – seemed to be flapping in the breeze, she was running. Whether she was crying, who knows, but it was like, a little bit overwhelming.

Q: Well, that shows just how young you were, because an older child would have recognized.

A: I didn't recognize her physically. I had a mental, emotional image –

Q: Yeah.

A: – which had a lot to do with, you know, a golden light, and all warmth, and all nice things, but the physical image was lo – not for **Henry**, of course.

Q: Yeah.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: And if – again, it was **Henry** that I trusted, so if **Henry** said, this is Mother, okay, you know, because **Henry** said so.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember when it was that you had left **Vienna**? What month it was?

A: Well, ma – I had my – I arrived in the **United States** just before my fifth birthday, which was June.

Q: Okay.

A: So, I probably have records somewhere of when the **Harding** left, but –

Q: Probably May then, some time in May.

A: Probably, depending on how long it takes to make the ocean voyage, probably.

Q: So –

A: I have it written down somewhere, but I ha – you know, I – I didn't think of it.

Q: Okay Now, the reason I'm asking is I want – I want to get a sense of how many months apart you were. So if you left in May, and that would have been in 1938?

A: Thirty-nine.

Q: Thirty-nine?

A: I arrived just before my birthday, my birthday is June 10th –

Q: Okay.

A: – and I arrived some time in June, before my birthday.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay, so it's –

A: It would have been May.

Q: – May '39 to November '39.

A: Right.

Q: Half a year, seven months, something like that: May, June, July, August, September, October, November, yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Six or seven months.

A: Yeah.

Q: That you had been apart from your parents, which is a lifetime for a kid, you know. Time passes very, very slowly for children, and very, very fast for adults. But probably not so fast for –

A: Well, I don't think it went –

Q: – your parents.

A: – that fast for my mother.

Q: No, no, not – I was just gonna say, not for your – not when your children are separated from you. So can you tell me what their ultimate experience was in being able to come over? At first you say the American consul in **Vienna** had given them a great deal of trouble.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: There was a great deal of trouble, my father had signed up early, finally his number came up. The – I looked it up on the internet to find what ship they were passengers on, and they apparently sailed from **Antwerp**.

Q: Okay.

A: I always thought **Lisbon**. It's possible they went from **Lisbon** to **Antwerp**. I – I had really always believed they sailed from **Lisbon**, but they sailed from **Antwerp**.

Q: Okay.

A: And I guess their number came [break]

Q: So yes, you were going to tell me about how it was that your fa – parents finally had their number come up in **Vienna**. And they went over in the boat, I think from **Antwerp**, you said.

A: Fra – they sailed from **Antwerp**. I don't know the details.

Q: Okay.

A: I mean, I assume that it was just luck that their number came up.

Q: Okay. And so when you saw them now, from the train station, and you eventually recognized this is Mama –

A: Oh, it didn't take long.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think the n-non-recognition went very quickly.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah.

A: I think by the time we arrived at the apartment that we were staying at, it wa – it was like family again.

Q: Okay. So where was that? Where was this apartment?

A: **Woodside, Long Island.** Not **Long Island, Queens.**

Q: **Queens, Queens.** And what were the circumstances in that apartment? I mean, did you have your own apartment, was it with somebody?

A: No, we had our own apartment. My parents had their furniture shipped long before they came. It was possible to ship furniture, you couldn't take money out, but you could ship furniture. And a – years after, you know, my mother would see things in antique stores, and think oh, this is, you know Jewish furniture that was shipped, where the owners never came. Which I'm sure happened. But yeah, they shipped furniture, and **Woodside** wasn't too long, it was the first apartment, at I'm sure a low rent, because we had no money to speak of. My father got busy taking the tests to be licensed as a physician again.

Q: And that – did that work?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: But there was a degree of camaraderie, because there was a whole bunch of doctors that had come from **Vienna**, in **Brooklyn**, in **Queens**, the family, friends. And they all gave each other courage, and if somebody failed the test, all the men got together and said, you have to take it again. Actually, the first group of men who took the licensing exam failed, because there were yes and no answers. There was a question to which you should say, true, false, yes, no. In European style, you write down, to show your knowledge, everything that you know, instead of a simple yes or no. And of course, that was marked wrong.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: But then the word got out, you know, the first wave made that mistake, the second wave knew that when they ask yes or no, you don't do anything but –

Q: Yes or no.

A: – yes or no, true, false. A lot of women worked as maids, as whatever they could. My father really didn't want my mother to work because he felt it was really important that she take care of the children so that he could study. He had to review, you know, his whole medical background, medical textbooks. So she did a little bit work at home, it was piece goods. She got fabrics, and she made little pincushions. And I thought they were very cute, and I didn't realize that it was like a horrendous

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

job. But you know, I thought it was cute. We took our final apartment, you know, where we lived for a long time, in **Washington Heights**.

Q: Okay.

A: Three-sixty **Wasworth**(ph) Avenue. And the reason we took that apartment is they didn't ask for extra rent, because we simply didn't have it. I think we could pay for one month, and we had nothing else. And my father was a very confid – he had his license then –

Q: Yeah.

A: – he was going to start practice. He felt also it was in view of the subway, so his doctor sign would show –

Q: Okay.

A: – for people coming from the subway. And he was confident enough that he thought that by the next month's rent, he would be able to make it.

Q: And did he?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And was he able then to reconstitute his practice?

A: He had a very good practice, yeah.

Q: In **Washington Heights**.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: Very good, very successful. He was very respected, and very liked. The super of our building was an ethnic German.

Q: Oh dear.

A: No, not oh dear.

Q: No? Not oh d –

A: Nice lady.

Q: Okay.

A: I think she felt really awful, and she knew our circumstance. So she literally stood in front of the building and said, you know, we're so lucky. We have this prominent doctor from **Vienna**, like he's a celebrity doctor, da, da, you know, none of which was true. I mean, he was a good doctor, but – and was known as a good diagnostician, but he wasn't – you know – but she built it up to help, which was an enormous help.

Q: Well, how sweet.

A: And then there was the neighbor on the third floor, Mr. **Cherny**(ph), who'd – his back had plagued him forever, and he came to see my father, and my father did something that solved whatever the problem was, so this guy stood in front of the building and said, oh, you know, this doctor's good, yo-you know. And it's a neighborhood thing, it's word of mouth.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah.

A: It was a – many nationalities, but predominantly Irish Catholic. Below the hill, there's – in **Washington Heights** there's a big hill. The **Broadway** area is – was lots of Jewish refugees. Up the hill, near **Inwood**, it was very Irish.

Q: I see.

A: And my father had a – a working class Irish –

Q: Clientele.

A: – mixed nationalities –

Q: Yeah.

A: – practice – which is what he had in **Vienna**, he had a working class practice in **Vienna** too.

Q: How interesting. I mean, how interesting that he was able to – well, he was a professional –

A: Well, he ha –

Q: – he was able to reconstitute, and not only that, but in such a – such a demographic, I'll say.

A: He was able to get his license –

Q: Yeah.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – which is – which is why he didn't want my mother to work, even before – you know, we had nothing. I will also say that my mother never let me think that we were poor. If I wanted something that other kids were getting, like oh, give me a nickel for a candy bar, there was always some reason which had nothing to do with lack of money. Oh, it's really bad for your teeth, or you know, oh, because of this or that. There was always some reason, but I never felt that we were poor. I didn't know that we were down to nothing until much later.

Q: Okay.

A: There were Jewish aid agencies –

Q: Okay.

A: – that tended – were there to help in some way, to give loans, or whatever. But there were conditions, and the conditions were ridiculous, and my father had refused help. One condition was that we were to live in a furnished room –

Q: Oh, I see.

A: – to save money. But my father said, but we have furniture, what is the point of that? The other condition would be that he would leave **New York**, and start his practice in **Elmira**, upstate, because there were too many –

Q: That's right, doctors.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: – refugee doctors in **New York**. And my father went up to **Elmira** – I think it was **Elmira**, I may be wrong. It was an upstate town, but I – and I do think it was **Elmira**, I – I could be a little off on that. And he went and looked the place over, and thought, I'll never make it here, I'll never fit in, I'll never make it. If I don't drink with the locals at the country club, there won't be a practice. You know, it wasn't – he recognized that it wasn't his milieu.

Q: Yeah.

A: So he refused aid, and we kept our furniture, and [indecipherable]

Q: And your apartment.

A: – to practice.

Q: Yeah, and your apar – so when did you find out about what had happened to the relatives who stayed behind in **Poland**?

A: At different stages during the war years. At one point there was – I don't remember the name of the town – there was an article in the “**New York Times**,” about a massacre of Jews in my father's town, which was close to **Przemyśl**, but it was another town. And my mother saw it and cut it out of the paper, she didn't want him to see it from reading the paper. And she told me what it was, I was quite young then, and she told me what it was, and she said, if he asks, you cut out a picture of a dress, or you know, whatever.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Something, yeah.

A: I think they – there were news reports, they had a pretty good idea all along that there would not be a surviving family. When my cousin survived, it was a great surprise, you know, great joy. And she found it amazing that he could even remember the name **Tamar** in **New York City**. But when he and his brother were separated from their parents, the last thing his mother said to him, remember, Dr. **Tamar**, **New York City**, you know. His mother and my mother were two years apart, but almost looked like twins, they looked so much alike.

Q: No kidding?

A: And when he saw my mother for the first time, it was very shocking to him, because she looked so much like his own mother. He lived with us when he came, and I became very, very close to him, He was 17, I was 13. And at that stage, I knew more than I maybe should have about all details of the Holocaust, because he talked very freely to me, and I listened. And – but before I was 13, I knew what was ha – I knew why we had left **Vienna**, I mean –

Q: Yeah.

A: – I knew about the Holocaust. And I also, as my parents knew, that it was very likely that no one would have survived.

Q: So when he did come, do you re-recall some of the things he told you?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: I'm sorry?

Q: When he did arrive in the **United States** –

A: My cousin?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, he told me about –

Q: His own experiences?

A: – his years from age 12 to 17, when he went through I don't know how many camps. He wrote a book, which was quite –

Q: Oh, you told me about that, yes.

A: – well received.

Q: That's right.

A: I will say that when he wrote the book – I mean, he wrote it out because his children had asked, and he wrote with great pain and his wife told me that as he was writing, tears were streaming down.

Q: Sure.

A: And he's a sort of a tough guy, you know, but he wrote with tears streaming down. But he, I think as an adult was more mellow. So the book – some things in the book are slightly more mellow than what he felt as a teenager.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: You know.

Q: Did you ever go back to **Vienna**?

A: No.

Q: Did your parents ever go back?

A: No. I've gone to **Europe**, but I – there's no way on earth that I would want to go back to **Vienna**. Actually a close friend of mine, who was one of the original Viennese children from way back when, celebrated a birthday in **Vienna**, and a whole bunch of them went, and I thought, well that would be fun, and I made the reservation, and one of my sons was going to go with me. And then at the last minute I thought, I can't do this. I cancelled. I – I just don't – I mean, I didn't leave under benevolent circumstances. I don't have any relatives there, it's not like there's someone that I need to see, and I have no desire whatsoever to have anything to do with them. I do my European travels in places I love: **France, Italy, Spain**.

Q: Okay. Did – okay, so no one from your family has returned, you have not returned. Did you ever keep in touch with the **Krauses**(ph)? Did any – was there any connection over the years?

A: No, because I really didn't remember them at all. I didn't know anything about what they had done, until that conference in 2002, when one of the children from my ship put together a – which I'm sure is in the museum, a wonderful bunch of

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

pages telling the story of what had happened, and then of course, through **Steve Pressman**(ph). But before that, I knew – I didn't know anything about the **Krauses**(ph).

Q: But your father and mother did keep in touch with your foster family for a while.

A: Yes, beca –well, because they kept appearing and my father and mother had to be forever grateful.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: I don't think they sought them out, but –

Q: They would appear in their lives.

A: We were their good deed.

Q: I see.

A: You know, so they – they really wanted to be in touch.

Q: Okay. Is there something else that you would like to add to what we've talked about today?

A: I ca – I think I've –

Q: I think you've covered a lot of bases.

A: – mostly told you my story.

Q: Yeah. Did you tell your kids?

A: Yes, of course.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Okay.

A: I've written about it, but not directly.

Q: Okay. How have you written about it?

A: I wrote a **YA** about the **New York** years, you know, being a refugee, and the different aspects of the refugee experience, living in **New York**. And it wasn't – it's a fictionalized version of me, and you know, I do write fiction. I tell more truth through fiction. Then I wrote a book about the orphan trains, that in the 20s, they went from **New York City** to the Midwest.

Q: Okay.

A: And I – I saw something about it on television, and I felt an identity with that. So I wrote about the orphan trains, but I put in some of my experience, and some of my feelings, though of course it was a different nationality, different time, I wasn't an orphan, but –

Q: Explain to people who – who – who will not know, what is a **YA**?

A: Young adult.

Q: Okay.

A: A teenage novel.

Q: So you are a writer of –

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: I'm a writer of children's books, and mostly teenage novels, some middle grade.

Two picture books, but words only. Unfortunately, I can't do art.

Q: Okay.

A: Twenty-two books altogether.

Q: That's quite an achievement. Tell me the title of the one that's about the refugee story.

A: The refugee in **New York**. They changed the title, I like my original title. My original title was "**Goodbye Rita Hayworth**."

Q: Okay.

A: Which worked with what my story was about. But **Rita Hayworth** at that time was on the verge of dying, and they said to put out a book with that title would be very bad taste. Of course I didn't mean it that way.

Q: Yeah.

A: They changed it to "**Goodbye Glamor Girl**."

Q: Okay.

A: Which I never absolutely loved, but you know, it's – it's partly the refugee experience, partly me, partly my love of acting, and movie star – you know, it's – it's a mixed bag.

Q: All of it.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

A: The Irish orphan train story was “**The Midnight Train Home**”

Q: Okay.

A: And I’m very fond of that book. You know, I – I do like writing historical, I do like doing the research. And parts of – whole chapters are my story, but a whole lot of it is not at all.

Q: Okay.

A: So –

Q: But this is how you have expressed it. This is how it has come out in your writing.

A: I thought – I did think of writing directly about the Kindertransport, and I really can’t. For one thing, I would have to write it from a four or five year old’s point of view, in order to be authentic. And for what audience, you know, who’s going to read a four year old’s story? Also, I don’t think I really wanted to revisit it. I – I expressed myself in other ways, through fiction.

Q: Okay. Well thank you. Thank you very, very much.

A: Thank you. Thank you so much for your interest.

Q: Okay. It i – it’s a wonderful story that you have shared with us. Sad in the beginning, but happy at the end. And there are very few happy end stories.

A: Happy endings are good.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Erika Tamar
December 18, 2015

Q: Yeah. And –

A: So many of the kids lost their parents, the other kids that –

Q: Yes.

A: – we came here with.

Q: Yes, yes. So I – with that I will say, this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Miss **Erika Tamar**, on December 18th, 2015, here in **Manhattan, New York**.

A: Thank you.

Q: We did it. Great.

Conclusion of Interview

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.