United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Simone Weil Lipman
August 4, 1998
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Simone Weil Lipman, conducted on August 4, 1998 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

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.

Interview with Simone Weil Lipman
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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: -- it's -- it's very upsetting.

Answer: It is -- it is.

Q: And --

A: And it has to do with also, relationships, the son and --

Q: Yeah.

A: father relationship.

Q: And -- and I just took a trip in April, I was in Poland.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And I wet -- I went there for a radio conference in Warsaw.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And then when it was done, I didn't really have plans and -- and all of a sudden, somebody said, "You want to drive to Auschwitz?" And at f -- I wa -- I hadn't thought about it, really. Cause I didn't think I would have time. And I -- so I went and it was extremely upsetting.

A: [inaudible]

Q: No, it was [indecipherable]

A: Last year we went to Prague. And we want to go to Theresienstadt and my husband's -- well, we talk about that. Are -- are we on already?

Q: I'm just starting now.

A: Because I'll tell you some of that too, because this is part of what we've gone through here.

Q: Yeah. Th-Those things I think are important to talk about. I mean, I [inaudible]. One -- one perspective, which is a very removed and kind of naive perspective. I mean, to -- to hear your feelings about these things is very important to [indecipherable]

A: It was an extremely intra -- important trip. But that's no where you want to start.

Q: Well, we can start -- if you want, we can start there.

A: [inaudible]

Q: But -- it doesn't mean the see -- I don't think the sequence is -- is too important. Well, if we want to do it from the beginning -- if you could start and just give me the -- tell me a little bit more about your family -- about your parents and aunts and uncles, so the -- the previous generation. And tell me their names.

A: Okay. My family's name is Weil, W-e-i-l, which is a very common Jewish name in Alsace, where -- in -- where I grew up. My fam -- my immediate family consisted of my father, my mother, my paternal grandmother and my brother, who's 13 months younger than I am. My parents came all from rural -- from villages. Ba -- And I was

born in a little village outside of Strasbourg, right -- very tiny community of farmers. But it had a synagogue in the days I was born, because I remember as a little girl going to visit the Hassan there [indecipherable] because he had -- his wife had a little grocery store and -- and that's all I remember, I was three years old and we moved to the city. My parents had --

Q: Which -- which city?

A: Strasbourg.

Q: Oh, I see, okay.

A: Strasbourg. I grew up in Strasbourg for all practical purposes because I don't remember anything from before I was three years old. My father had a very unusual profession for a Jew. His father had been a butcher. They -- usually the Jewish butcher was also the butcher for the other population. In other words, he served the whole community. Of course, the Jews ate the kosher parts and so on. I had never known my grandfather because he died of some gangrene he had of his leg -- he had a leg amputated, because I'm told that he had diabetes, but I -- I really never knew him. And my father had only one sister, who died when she was probably about 18 or so, of complication of probably appendicitis, which know how to treat. But her name was Margaret. So, my middle name is Margaret. I'm -- I'm Simone Margaret. And also Heb-Hebrew name would mean Esther, so I'm Esther too, in my Hebrew name. The interesting thing is, is that I'd always thought that I was named Simone

because it's a real French name and Alsace had just returned to France in 1918. My parents were married in 1919 and I was born in 1920. And then I found out when -- more recently I've been studying genealogy and I have the genealogy of the Weils all the way back to way before the French revolution, I have investigated that. And I found out that -- lost my train of thought --

Q: You were talking about your name.

A: My na -- yeah, that there was between my father and Margaret, a boy named Simon who died as an infant. I mean, which was very common in those day. So was I named after some -- I had never heard of him until we dug up that genealogy. So that --

Q: This was one of your uncles?

A: No, no, my fa -- my father's -- my father's br -- well, it would have been an uncle

Q: Yeah.

A: would have been an uncle, but he died as an infant. Never knew him, ne-never heard of him. He was just was important to talk it's neither here nor there, but it was just interesting, was I named because of a Francophile sentiment or was I named because there was a Simon that died as an infant. So, that's it. My father did not -- at first -- I don't think my father had more than a sixth grade education. They were a very poor family in the village and he used to help his father in -- in the butcher shop, but he eventually developed an interest in sheep and sheep raising and sheep

breeding and for the meat and for the and developed a big, big business. He became the most important sheep breeder in the east of France and although we lived in the city, he had these herds of sheep, I guess that's what they are, in the various places where he went and then he supervised all this -- this big business. I had very little interest in that. My mother also had very little education, although probably more than my father.

Q: And her name?

A: Jeanne.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: J-e-a-n-n-e, which would be pronounced Jean, I guess, here. She was the oldest of eight children. I knew my -- mat-maternal grandparents quite well, because from the earliest age on, even before I was a year old, I would spend a lot of time with my grandparent. And with all the unmarried uncles and sister -- uncle and aunts, because I was the first grandchild -- and little by little, the siblings -- my mother's siblings got married and I -- but I always went to my grandparents. I must have been eight years old, when both of them died, at -- at the very close interval. They were they lived in the village, called Mummenheim, which -- which today is almost a suburb of Strasbourg, but in those days was a trip to go there. And I spent a lot of time there. There were a very rigid, stern family. But my grandmother was sweet and kind and she taught me a lot of songs and little girls ditties, you know, that kind of things. And

I -- I remember her very fondly. But my mother being the oldest of eight sibling and probably better off than the others, she became, over all the years that I have known her, the family caretaker. She was -- our house was always Grand Central Station and her brothers and sisters would always come

Q: And what was their profession, your mother's parents?

A: My grandfather, well, had a little grocery store with his brother. He also was a peddler and he carried his ware to another little grocery store across the Lake and that's -- that's what he did. Nobody on my mother's side either had -- nobody went through high school.

Q: Now, when you say he was a peddler, just -- did he peddle things house to house, or just to another store?

A: Gee, I really don't know. I know I seen him with his thing on his back and maybe he went -- there was a store in Mummenheim with his brother -- his brother Neftilly, who was deported during the war and hi-his -- they had another store in Wagdenheim and I don't know whether he just schlepped it over there or whether he -- whether he peddled. I -- I really don't know.

Q: Let me interrupt one second, I forgot to -- had to put a special slate at the beginning of the interview and I will read that now. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Mrs. Simone Weil-Lipman, conducted by Steve Roland, on August fourth, 1998, in her

home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. This is a follow up interview to the USHMM videotaped interview conducted with Mrs. Lipman on July third, 1990. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible.

A: I'm reacting to the fact that's already eight years. Can't believe it.

Q: Does it seem like that?

A: No, no, no .

Q: You know, one thing that -- that you mentioned during lunch is that -- that there were things that you read in the transcription of the interview, that you -- that surprised you.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Does anything particular come to mind?

A: N -- Only the one thing that was really not correct that somehow in my -- although I think my English is pretty good, so once in awhile I express myself a little awkwardly and I think something didn't quite come across. You see, when the war started, I was li -- I was 19 years old, but the year before, really, we -- Munich was happening and we were very worried, because Strasbourg is the most exposed city. And so my parents asked me to take my grandmother away from Strasbourg and in transcript -- in -- I -- I read that I took my -- I went to safety with my grandmother and the interpretation was that I went to be safe with my grandmother. What really

happened is that I took responsibility for my grandmother and I took a train and I went to some kind of resort, to wait until things were settling down in -- in the whole world situation and then brought my grandmother back to Strassber -- the following year, when the war really was going to get started, same thing happened. I was away, my father brought me back home. This is end of August, 1939 and again I took my grandmother, we took a train. We went to the center of France where we stayed in a hotel and I took my grandmother to safety, I didn't go to safety with my grandmother. So, this is one of the things that, as I say, I took responsibility for my grandmother and we waited out [indecipherable]. And so this is one of the detail that are -- other things, they don't come to my mind right now. [indecipherable] clarifying [indecipherable].

Q: Okay.

A: So that's the information I can gi-give you about my parents.

Q: Tell me -- tell me a little bit about -- about your fe -- your family, in regard to the -- the climate in the house, about the way things were done in the house, about the religion, about the ethics.

A: Well, we were very observant family. My mother came, obviously, from a very observant family. Both my parents came, but my mother -- of the two -- of my parents, my mother was the more knowledgeable. She -- really amazingly, for a woman in those days, could understand the prayer book, could understand the

Biblical text. My father could read -- with a lot of mistakes -- he could lead a service even, but he made lot of mistakes, because he didn't have the intellectual stuff that goes with it. He had just learned it by rote and by heart and so on. But the climate was one of observance. Judaism was certainly central to our lives. There was not an intellectual climate. There was not a interest in music, in books. My parents read, but probably -- well, I don't know what you'd call them har -- here. Romantic stuff that --

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Q: What -- what language did you speak at home?

A: Oh, at -- at home we spoke Alsatian, which is a dialect, based on German and my mother spoke French, obviously I spoke French and went to French school and in my teenage, rebellious years, I pretended I couldn't understand anything but French, which my father didn't speak. Don't forget, that Alsace moved back and forth between France and Germany, which meant that my grandmother, who lived with us, was born in the French period, to -- became German in 1871, when France lost the Prussian war. So both my parents were born under a German regime and went to German schools. Spoke German fluently. In 1918, France reverted to fran -- Al- Alsace reverted to France. Now, my mother came from a very Francophile, somewhat more educated family and all the daughters were sent to Paris, at least for some time, to be with an aunt, whom I know -- whom I knew too, and there they perfected their French. So my mother spoke and wrote perfect French. No spelling

mistake, no nothing, she didn't -- but she also could do it in German. My father -- whose business was with the peasants, the farmers, the -- the rural community, never bothered to learn French. So he could understand somewhat. So as I said, in my rebellious teenage years, when he and I collided, I couldn't understand Alsatian. I should like to add something that -- very pa -- I don't know how interesting it is to this particular interview, but Alsatian Jews speak not -- sp-speak what is called in French, le Judeo Alsatian, or in their own parlance, they call it Yiddish dige. It's not Yiddish, because God forbid an Alsatian Jew should speak Yiddish. The Alsatian Jews look down on eastern European Jews, whom they all called Polacks, that's -- was the n-nomination, so just like the German Jews in this country look down on the immigrants that came after them from the eastern European countries. Exactly the same situation. My father is probably turning around in his grave, as I have discovered that this Judeo Alsatian, which they spoke, is really similar to Yiddish. It's not -- does not have -- it's -- doesn't have a written language, it doesn't have a literature. It was just a spoken language -- is dying out, but it's being retrieved and I happen -- I -- where as when I grew up, I thought of it as very crude and very common and I walked two miles behind my parents when they spoke it. Today, I'm very interested in it and I have read a number of books. There -- I find out there is -- I have been communicating with people who are studying it and there is very few of us who still ha-have a feel for it. It's a very rich language, very different from Yiddish

in it's pronunciation and it's formation of words, and is very much tied into Hebrew, which also intrigues me very much. So, this is how that beca --

Q: Can -- can you give us a short example of how it sounds?

A: Yes, I can give you one that I always use when people ask me. In Germany you say, "Eashe harbor gie gessen." I have eaten. In Yiddish, you say, "Ay chobe gessen." In Alsatian, you say, "Shop gessa." In Yiddish dige, le Judeo Alsatian, "Ishap ger archult." I don't if you know Hebrew, but ochell in Hebrew is to eat. So they -- they use the Hebrew word, they conjugate it in germaway and they say, Ishap. The big difference, eehope and ishap, that's the big different. Ishap ger archult and that's the way my father would speak, using Hebrew words, conjugating them and distorting them, so that in order to trace back what it really means, you really have to do a little research. And it's -- has intrigued enough people. There is a chair of Judeo Alsatian [indecipherable] at the university now. And it's a non-Jewish person who is studying it. So it's interesting [indecipherable]. But anyway, this is what we spoke at home. And coming back to this, the atmosphere, you know, my parents had no social life. They didn't go out, they didn't travel. My vacations were -- m-my grandparents house, maybe at an aunt, my -- once -- one aunt got married and lived in another village and she married a -- a cattle peddler. J-Jews were a lot of cattle peddlers or became merchants and grain merchants, cattle merchants and that kind of thing. So I went -- I went to spend some vacation with them. The only time my -- I remember

taking a vacation was my mother and we went to Luxembourg in a Jewish hotel, was that -- there was an epidemic of polio and my mother took us there for several weeks. Is --

Q: For what -- for what reason?

A: Because there was an epidemic of polio -- to be away from Strasbourg and to go somewhere where it wouldn't affect us. Because in these days, you went into an iron lung and all this kind of thing. So twice I remember going there. But what really became my -- well, even before I go to that, let me say, my -- the focus of my life was school. For two reasons. One -- number one, I was interested. But number two, had a brother who's 13 months younger and my father made no bones about the fact he would have liked to have a boy first or maybe even two boys and no girl, because he needed one for the busine -- he needed two boys for the business. And I was an only -- only a girl. But I was very interested in school and did very well in school. So this mar -- the teachers and -- and I also went very unusually so for those days, I also went to what you'd call here, Hebrew school and got a very solid Jewish education. An education which I continue throughout the years so that I'm familiar and comfortable with the Hebrew -- of the service and I'm comfortable with the Biblical text and I have continued studying. And so my goodies came not so much from my parents as it came from teachers and rabbis and educators. And also, when I was 12 years old, my parents permitted me to join the Jewish girl scout -- German -- and that

really became the center of my life. Now, I'm not unique in this. Of course, it took even more importance, because my parents, when -- couldn't give me the -- the cultural stuff that they didn't have. I mean, they -- they -- they -- they were not educated to -- to have this and so I got -- I got very involved and a total commitment to the Jewish girl scouts. Not the --when I -- when I say girl scout -- and the equivalent, I mean there is no comparison to the scouting movement today in the United Sta -- don't know what it was like 50 years ago, but that was a -- a total commitment to service, to -- to -- I'm -- I -- to Jewish learning. There was a boy's movement and a girl's movement. I -- now, in back -- in looking back on it, I must have been an organizers from very early on, because by the time I was 13, I was already one of the leaders. You know, the movement at that time, unlike in the United State, no parent involvement. It was -- we called it leading through youth. We didn't have any parent involvement. So we got leadership training and we got all kinds of stuff. I took these kids hiking in the mountains every Sunday, or practically every Sunday and we roughed it up, we went camping, we dig out trenches. We kept kosher at camp and we -- we cooked on -- we didn't have any of the equipments that you have today, we really roughed it out. But it was and it is an indi -- it -- we have a -- still today, we -- we have a bound, a -- a tie between us that is the s-something that is difficult to describe. And the Jewish youth movement became a very active movement in the resistance in France during the war and then eventually after the

war, some of them found a kibbutzim in Israel. And I am still not in correspondence, because [indecipherable] because our -- our what we call the commissaire, the -- the big leader over the whole region there, there's a man who is now in his 90's, he is deaf, he is blind, and -- but I'm -- I still get news from him or about him. And all to rees --

Q: Where does he live?

A: In Israel.

Q: In Israel.

A: And he founded a kibbutz there and his wife is still living.

Q: What's his name?

A: Pardon?

Q: His name?

A: Well, his real name is now Shimon Hamel, but in -- oh, this -- this is going to ex -- ask for a lot of explanation. We call him Shamu. Shamu in French means camel. But it also means somebody who's very rough. And he was a very tough leader. If you take the Jewish encyclopedia, and I have it in there, the library there and you look under scouting and you'll find his name there in quotation mark and his wife is a very busy lady, so we called her Fumi, which in French means ants. We all had names like that which we called [indecipherable]. But it creates a tru -- an -- you know, I've often wondered -- you know, people have asked me, in this country, what

made you do what you did during the war? And, although I have really no answer to it and I have read books and I've tried -- people have been pondering, why did some people become rescuers and why did some stand by? And actually participated here, at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in a workshop led by somebody from Germany and -- on rescue and resistance. And I also have connected in the last few years, with some of my co-workers in the camps and in the underground and we pondered this, too, because we [indecipherable] ask, why did you did what you do -- did? And the only answer that everybody [indecipherable], we ha -- there was a job to be done and we did it. Now, why did we do it and not somebody el -- the -- I have been pondering and I really don't know, except that maybe in this deep involvement in this youth movement, I took on a sense of responsibility and caring and duty, sort of. And more recently I have been thinking about it and my mother, who was not an educated woman, but sh -- and she was a very gentle and rather passive woman, yet, she was a caretaker. She took care of all her siblings. Or -- and of not only siblings, of -- of relatives in need and that kind of thing. And of her mother-in-law, who didn't give her an easy time either, but she was there and I'm wondering whether I unconsciously, you know, had some -- some model there. Be -- and my father, who was really a -- a very -- man with a very high temper and really a tyrant, but nevertheless, he let my mother do all this helping. In other words, he opened his pocketbook and there was never any problem. So I wasn't a deprived child in a sense

of physical [indecipherable] thing. We lived simply, not luxuriously, but I didn't have this -- I -- I really got my goodies from the scouting movement.

Q: Right.

A: And from my teachers, rabbis, etcetera.

Q: Well, ec -- explain one thing to me. In growing up in the Jewish community here, in this country, I'm used to families in which the parents are very involved in kind of laying out a path for the children. And particularly with regard to education. Ver- Very keen on pushing children through education and setting up things. And from what you're telling me, it seems to me that for you particularly and maybe for your -- your friends, that thi -- that -- that your interest in education and in the scouting movement and in -- and even in promoting Judaism, w-was more self motivated. Is -- is that correct?

A: Yeah. Well, th-th -- your statement is correct except for one thing is that is this is true uniquely for me. Has nothing to do with my generation. It's my family, my friends. And -- in -- in the Lycee, which I attended -- in the Lycee which I attended, I had friends who were of different religions. I had the daughter of a minister. I had a -- I had Jewish friends and their parents had this kind of -- in fact the -- the -- one of my girlfriend's mothers was a writer of children's book. And to me, that was kind of a discovery, that there were mothers who were writing --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number one, side B.

A: -- and their parents had this kind of -- in fact, the -- the -- one of my girlfriend's mothers was a writer of children's book. And to me, that was kind of a discovery, that there were mothers who were writing books? I mean, in my family, there were very limited people, so I cannot universalize for -- for my generation. It certainly wasn't in my family. And my family was very -- I -- I wa -- I grew up with a sense of my family was very different from the families of the other kids, my friends who had record players and -- and pi -- well, we had a piano, I played piano, but who had record players and whose parents went to the theater and who entertained. And we didn't -- my parents had that limitation.

Q: But they're -- from what you told me about your father, my impression was that y -- that he was fairly well-to-do.

A: Not well-to-do, no. He [indecipherable] up the na -- good business, so we were living comfortably. We had large apartment, but on the wr-wrong side of town, let's say. All my friends lived in a different neighborhood. We lived across from the railroad station, which meant the -- I always had the feeling that they came from the little village and they found a place across the railroad station and that's where they went. And when I went to the Lycee and wherever I went, my friends lived closer to

that place. But you know, that's -- it wasn't well-to-do, we didn't lack of anything. And there was -- had a maid full time. But then, everybody had maids with -- and --

Q: Now were they -- what -- what background was the maid?

A: The maid was one of his shepherd's daughters, I guess, from one of the villages and when --

Q: Not Jewish?

A: Oh, no, mm-mm. No, not Jewish, no.

Q: What were the -- can you tell me a little bit about the relationship between the -- the Jewish people who lived there and the non-Jews?

A: Well, as you -- as I told you just now, you have to look at different levels. When I was in the village with my grandparents, where I spend, as I said, all my summers until I was 10 - 11 and had outgrown that and I was with the girl scouts at camp. I went camping with them at the south of France and all over the [indecipherable].

Q: There's that -- there's -- just let -- for the record, there's construction taking place next door.

A: There are three houses being built right now. We lucked out. The -- I -- there was still a perceived fear of anti-Semitism in the village. I never experienced this in the city. And what I remember very well is, on Christmas eve, my grandparents would close all the shutters of the house. They -- just up -- they lived in the street called Rue de les gliese, Church Street. Which means the church was right -- just at the end of

the street there, and there was this fear -- I'm sure they had never experienced this personally, but maybe it came down through the family history that coming out from the midnight mass, there would be some -- something happening to Jews. And so they closed the shutters on -- [indecipherable] they probably closed them other nights, too. But there was a fear there.

Q: These are your mother's or father's parents?

A: My -- my mother, you know, my -- my -- my mothers. My maternal grandparents, because my paternal grandmother lived with us and my grandfather had died. And also, I remember in the village, as a little girl -- and I played with little kids there -- whether they were Jewish kids or not, I don't remember. But I remember hearing some little -- what would you call it, little -- oh, nasty things, like, you know, what you -- some derogatory statements. I remember it very well. If you want to hear it enunciation, I can tell it to you.

Q: Yes. I think --

A: Yout -- yout chasit dout. And I don't remember the rest of it. J-Jew -- Jew, shit into the bag -- and then I don't remember. Anyway, there was a derogatory kind of thing. But I don't remember it bothering me, so -- but their relationship with non-Jews was perfectly good, there in the village. I remember in Passover, spending Passover with my grandparents and since they were very observant and I went literally across the street to the farm with a -- with a pottery container and they would

milk the cow directly into that. And was very acceptable that Jews at this time of the year, couldn't put the milk in another kind of vessel because of the Passover observance. And so there was that. My father worked with non-Jews in the countryside. I would ass -- and he -- he did business with non Jews all the time. As for me, I -- of course my -- the -- the -- the center of my life was the family, the school and -- and -- and religious school and this very active Jewish youth movement. But I also -- I excelled in school. And --

Q: Now, did you go to school with non-Jews, or only --

A: Oh yes, sure, sure. Because my brother and I were so close in age, we started school at the same time. Speak of psychology, my parents didn't quite have that kind of training. And lo and behold, how these unsophisticated parents managed to get me in an all boy's school, I don't know, but it saved them a trip to take me to an all girl's school. So we started school at the same time. And I excelled in the boy's school. And because I wasn't a boy, I had to do better than the boys, and so -- and these were -- this was a -- a gr -- a Lycee, it was a public school, so it wasn't Jewish kids, it was kids of all -- of all faith and all [indecipherable]. And then, by the time I went into third grade, then I was able to walk by myself and so I walked to a girl's school, a Lycee -- I mean, a French school. And it's very interesting that wh-when I left there, then my brother really -- he -- he became -- he blossomed more. But the thing --

Q: What's his name?

A: Hogere, Roger.

Q: And how do you spell Hogere?

A: Like Roger.

Q: Oh.

A: My brother is dead. He died at age 55 in Israel, after losing his youngest son in the Yom Kippur.

Q: And how did your brother die?

A: Heart attack.

Q: Mm. Then his -- his -- your nephew was killed in a battle?

A: He was killed in a battle in a Yom Kippur wawl in 1973. So, he had already had a heart attack before, so this is -- this did him in and he died, years later. So the rest of his family is in Israel and that's -- and that's where my nephews and nieces and great-nephew [indecipherable] are and my sister-in-law and her family.

Q: Do -- do you travel there often?

A: N-Not often, but I've been there a total of seven times already, so that's not too bad. And I'm very close to that side of the family. But in the Lycee, I ex -- had, personally, a very good relationship with my -- with students of all faith and I was in this -- what should you call it? The [indecipherable] of the -- of the high school. We took not only Latin and a foreign language and Greek and -- and math and philosophy. You know, we -- there was a group of us and there were Protestant, there

were Catholic, there were Jews, we were all, there were -- I have pictures of us going on outings together into the mountains or [indecipherable]. Had one limitation, is that we kept kosher. So I certainly didn't go out with them to eat, you know, with this group. But I had them over to ha -- to my house and we made -- well I had my own room, where I could entertain. This was very unfrequent. It was -- it was very unfreq -- I had a very good relationship with my -- teachers were all non-Jewish and I -- in my -- in my leadership positions in the Jewish youth movement, I went to international camps and you know, f-from scoutings from all over the world. And so I really never experienced personally, any anti-Semitism or any friction in my relationship with non-Jews.

Q: Now that -- that -- to me, that's very important.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: [indecipherable] that. I want to ask you be -- one other question. In this country, in the Jewish community here, you have this extraordinary range of people's relationship to Judaism and how observant or non-observant they are, now to Jews who were not observant at all. In your youth -- and -- and you've -- and you've said several times that -- that you were fact -- very observant and your grandparents were observant. Was there such a thing as Jews who were not observant?

A: Oh yes, indef -- a -- that -- the -- lots of them. My closest Jewish friends were not observant, did not come from observant families, did not go t -- the girls did not go to

Hebrew school, they did not have that education. It was something that came both from my family and from me personally. I've always had that interest and I continue, here today in Chapel Hill.

Q: But those people consider themselves Jewish?

A: Absolutely. But there was -- now, when I said we were observant, I'm -- you know, I hate the word Orthodox. You use the word Orthodox today because you have to separate Conservative, Reform, Orthodox. There was no such a thing in France. It was traditional Judaism. It -- Orthodox only had to define itself with the rise of the -- of Reform and then the Conservative movement. So it was traditional Judaism. And to label ourselves Orthodox, I don't want you to feel that we wearing black coats or anything like that. We were perfectly modern Jews. And so is my family in Israel today. They are very observant Jews and except for the boys wearing the knitted kippah, th-they are of this world, you know? So I -- I don't like the label Orthodox. But sure, my friends -- my friends didn't have that education, you know, I -- I -- in a way my family was -- it -- and interestingly enough, my cousins, who -- we have the same grandparents, practically none of my cousin have remained even Jewish. They have all intermarried. Practically all of them. Or if they haven't intermarried, their kids have intermarried.

Q: And these are cousins who live where?

A: Some in Strasbourg and some in the village in -- in -- in -- in -- in where my grandparents lived in s -- [indecipherable] in the village Sovalza, so in Strasbourg, these cousins -- now, I must say, there are -- the next cousin -- I was the oldest of all the cousins, because my mother is the oldest of all of them. And there is eight of us. My brother, m-myself are the oldest and then there is eight years until the next cousin. And she didn't marry a Jew. The children are -- have retained no tie to Judaism. Of the whole family of cousins, there is only my brother who went to -- made alia to Israel and his whole family has remained very committed to Judaism. Myself here and my family -- I'm -- I'm all children and grandchildren who are -- have remained very ha -- observant -- very -- I should say Jewishly committed. And amongst my cousins, the-there is one -- there is two who have remained -- no-not the cousins, the children of the cousins, there is only two that have remained Jewishly committed. All the other -- the children are completely -- have left Judaism, totally. So that answers your question. You'll have to go to see my schoolmates or others and even in the family, it's been, the commitment has been -- there was something unique in my family, I don't know what it was, but both my brother and I got that somewhere. They were never -- now, to say something on their behalf is, their families were never quite as committed as we were to Juda -- although they were, on the surface, observant. I mean, they didn't travel on Shabbat and they did -- they ate kosher. Everybody had a kosher upbringing, no question about it. They didn't -- they

were younger and so the war hit them at a different stage of their lives. They also -- they a -- it also hit them in -- in very personal kinds of way. Two of them lost their parents -- four of them lost their parents. And -- during the war and so it affected them in many different ways. So I had wa -- this advantage of eight years before the war, which they didn't have. They were little kids, they were -- so --

Q: Well, this is -- there's so many directions --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- that I feel that we could talk now, but le -- I was going to ask you about this later, but let me ask you now. D-Do you find with -- with these --

A: Did I fi --

Q: Do you find with these relatives that you are saying, who have become less religious and -- and have intermarried, that the war affected their belief in God?

A: It affected them very deeply, whether it's their belief in God or whether there is their attachment to Judaism. I haven't discussed to believe in God with them. But I know it affected them very deeply. Can I give you one example?

Q: Absolutely.

A: I think my next oldest cousin is eight years younger than I and then she has a sister who is three years younger than I. They grew up at Strasbourg like I did, but it's interesting, I cannot remember our family getting together for holidays so very rarely [indecipherable]. My parents were very limited this way, socially. But I

remember their coming and I -- I -- I remember going to their house and so on. They must have gotten some kind of Jewish education somewhere, although I really cannot swear, but they must have gone to Talmator like we all did. You see sc -- in France, school is as -- five days of school, but unlike here, where Saturday and Sunday are off, you have a day in the middle of the week that's off. You went to school s -- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, were off on Thursday and you went to school on -- on Friday and Saturday. Big dilemma for an observant girl. So what did I do? I went to school, but I didn't write. I attended -- this was the compromise, because there were no day schools and I had to go to school. So I -- I t -- I sat through classes without writing. So you distinguish between the Jews who wrote and Jews who didn't write on Shabbat. This was the big thing. And I was one of the few who didn't write. But on Thursday, on Sunday, we went to Hebrew school. And whether my cousins stayed or not, I don't remember. But what happened is, when the war started, there were obviously -- I was 19, so one of them was 11 and the other one was nine. They lived in the south of France and the father -- they lost their mother to cancer very early on during the war. And their father worked with the Jewish agency, you know, the -- there was an official Jewish agency functioning in France -- in the --

Q: Now just so I'm clear, their -- their mother was your mother's younger sister?

A: One of them -- one of my mother's sisters, yeah.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: And she -- she died of natural causes and the father put them in a -- into a boarding school while he was working for the Jewish agency. There was a -- an official Jewish agency that was responsible to the [indecipherable] forces, but -- and my uncle worked for them. He had been a civil servant in Strasbourg, some -- some very low government pencil pusher kind of job. I -- I don't know exactly what he did. And he was killed in that position because they took the whole office as hostages -- as hostage and he was killed. At that time I was working in the underground and my -- I think I talk about this in my -- in my oral history. And the head of our network came to Chatahou where I was functioning and told me that Mr. So and So had been killed and we better go and rescue the daughters. Well, he didn't know it was my uncle and I indeed got my two cousins out of the boarding school. They have recently told me that they didn't know whether it was a trap or whether it was really me that had called them. And they only told me this about 10 years ago.

Q: And wh-where do they live now?

A: In France. [indecipherable] me get back to that.

Q: Okay.

A: So they both survived because I placed them in a safe place. I remember exactly how we changed the name and all that, that's not relevant. And the war was over, they were left without any parents, deeply affected by what happened to their parents. And in addition, the young one of the two got TB and so she had to be isolated in

some treatment kind of -- an-and they lived with my very bitter uncles and aunts to -- who never married. And to escape, they went into 180 degree turn and not only with my oldest cousin -- I mean, the older of the two cousins, become a professor of German. Yes, it's really incredible, she studied German. She became a Communist. She married a non-Jew in the same kind of political orientation.

Q: French?

A: French. He became a very -- they -- they -- they dropped their Communism in -- very soon in ba -- but they have remained very Socialist oriented, very Leftist kind of thing. And he achieved a very, very high position in the French government , in -- an incredibly important position. But --

Q: Do you want to mention what it is, or no?

A: I'd rather not.

Q: Okay.

A: And he -- they -- the -- he's not Jewish and she's severed all her relationship to family. This is how she's been af -- to -- to the -- to the -- the extended family, she really severed all her relationship.

Q: How -- and how-- how s -- how much severed? I mean, you don't speak to her any more?

A: Oh, I do. But th-the uncles and aunts, she s-separated her -- I mean I was in the cou -- in this country, you know, so I -- she didn't sever herself from me. After the

war, I -- I still was in touch with her, but she married this non-Jew and she cut herself off from the fam -- from -- there were uncles and aunts and my parents. She just separated herself [indecipherable].

Q: For what reason? I don't -- I'm not sure if I understand.

A: Well, she didn't want to have anything to do with Judaism. My family was the traditional Jew -- my family and -- I mean, extended family, that the ones that were left represented. They also represented the war, they represented the loss of her father, of her mother. They -- they represented -- I have never asked her what made her do all these things, but I see a -- a complete lose -- wanting to loosen herself up from the things Jewish, totally. And I've stayed with her and I've talked with her for a long time, but that's something else I'll talk to you about you later. I -- I really have had ver -- little relationship with my family in France and it's only in recent years that I have -- well, recent -- not quite -- not -- maybe the last 20 years or so that I have really intensively reconnected and with a great deal of pleasure. But so, when you say, did they lose their belief in God? I don't know what belief they lost, bu -- la -- they certainly lost their -- any belief in -- in things Jewish. Her sister married a Jewish man eventually. Somebody much older than herself and sh -- he died of Parkinson's disease very young, and she -- and she also last -- lost all contact -- she ha -- c-continued the contact with the family, but Judaism she completely put aside. And her son married a non-Jewish person and her ch -- grandchildren are not Jewish.

Interesting enough, now that she's retired -- and she became a social worker -- now that she's retired, she has, in a very -- how shall I say? Intellectual, secular way, reconnected to -- to things Jewish. She studies and she's interest in groups. Not for observers -- observance as much as for unders -- of -- of thinking, you know, [indecipherable]. My other two -- I mean and I -- air -- I can go down the line, I have six cousins like that and their ties to Judaism have loosened a great deal. And if they haven't, I have two male cousins and they have married Jewish girls, but their own children, except for one, are -- no longer have any tie with -- but you know, I don't know whether the effect of the war, or whatever it is, but whatever I have read about statistics is that they -- this is very typical of the Jewish population in France. So, whether the war had -- o-of the old Jewish population, now there is an influx of observance brought in by the Sephardic Jews from North Africa.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I -- I don't know if I answer your question, why my brother and I remained very committed Jews, I don't know, except that probably it has more to do with the intensity with -- and maybe also my mother brought a great deal of knowledge to what we were doing. Because I was always an inquisitive kind of kid, I'd say. When my mother said, "You can't do this," or "you can't do that." I'd say, "Why?" And if she couldn't the answer, I would go to the rabbi. And it was very funny. Last -- last Friday night we had some friends here who -- from -- dear old friends from

Cleveland, who came through here and something came up at Kiddush time and I -- this -- this friend of mine, gen -- this is an American friend, said, “Will you tell me why some women put -- make such s -- gestures, some incantation kinds of gestures before you light the candle?” And I knew the answer, you know, because the whys go back, early on.

Q: Because what -- because what?

A: Because why -- asking why --

Q: Oh.

A: I always ask my mother what --

Q: So what is the answer?

A: Oh, you want to know?

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: When -- in Judaism, you always say a blessing before you do something. So, before you drink wine, you say a blessing. Before you eat bread, you say a blessing. When you light the candles, you do the thing first, because -- and then you do the blessing, right? Right? This is the [indecipherable], because you cannot do the blessing and then light the candle, because it would be Shabbat already and you cannot -- and you cannot do -- light the candles on Shabbat. So you use a little fiction. You light the candle first, you close your eyes, you haven’t seen the flame yet. You say the blessing and lo and behold, here is the flame. All you have to do is

close your eye. But, I think it has become like a -- a -- I don't know what. My mother didn't do that, she just closed her eyes and said the blessing. But in eastern European tradition, it has become putting a shawl over your head and closing your eyes and doing a -- which I don't do, because I understand why it's -- I'm -- I'm a very literal girl.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So, going back to early child -- to my early years, I've always wanted to know. And I guess this is a personal kind of thing and I -- my cousin may not have had that. But whatever reason it is, they have cut themself off from -- from things Jewish. I have another cousin and -- and I -- I love them dearly and we get along very well.

Q: H-How does it affect you personally, to see this -- these -- these elements in the Jewish population?

A: In -- in general?

Q: Yeah. And -- and within your family also.

A: In my family here, in -- in [indecipherable] amongst my peers now, there is hardly a grandparent who doesn't have a non-Jewish grandchild. It is -- it is the norm here. I'm rather the exception, I should say. It makes me very sad. It makes me sad, but at the same time, I feel the Jewish people's going to survive. I mean, there has been -- the only worry I have is that the other Orthodox are going to make it survive and I --

this is not where -- that's not where my heart is and that's not where my beliefs is, for a v -- a variety of reasons, whi --

Q: Well, let's talk about that. That's an interesting point.

A: I -- I -- I --

Q: I think.

A: I don't know whether that's relevant to what -- what I can bring to you about m- my post-war experiences, but I do not believe that their search for authentic Judaism is relevant to me. What they consider authentic, which is the Judaism of the ghetto of the 14th, 15th century, I do not consider that the authentic Judaism and that's what worries me and all the -- the -- the fences and the adding of -- of the prescriptions [indecipherable] Judaism. To me that's not authentic Juda -- whatever authentic Judaism is, I'm sure that Moses today would not recognize the ultra Orthodox in Jerusalem. He wouldn't rec --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number two, side A.

A: -- prescriptions [indecipherable] Judaism. To me that's not authentic Juda -- whatever authentic Judaism is, I'm sure that Moses today would not recognize the ultra Orthodox in Jerusalem. He wouldn't recognize them as Jews, you know, if he went -- coming down to earth today. And so this is what -- I'm just only worried that -- that the Judaism would be changed into something that is a Judaism of the ghettos, the Judaism of -- o-of -- of -- not of this world. I mean, they isolate themself. To me, my Judaism has to be lived in.

Q: Now which -- which groups of Jewish people are you specifically talking about when you say the ul-ultra Orthodox?

A: I'm talking about th-the ultra Orthodox in Israel, the -- I'm talking about the Orthodox in this countries, who -- who -- who distinguish themselves by the way of dressing, by their -- th-their [indecipherable] life. They are not of this world. I want to -- have to stop, may I?

Q: Sure, yeah. Let's take a little break.

A: Now, it's not so much the break, I have to go to the bathroom.

Q: Yeah, well I do too.

A: Okay. [indecipherable][break]. The important thing is, I want to re-rethink the way I have approached this, but I -- I'm -- I'm -- I'm ready to continue.

Q: Wh-What do you mean?

A: Well, this whole question about Judaism and I -- because it's been very im -- an important search for me, here.

Q: Okay.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Can you tell me?

A: Oh, are we on?

Q: Yeah. [indecipherable]

A: Oh, I didn't know I was on.

Q: No, no, I just turned it back on.

A: Well, coming from this very traditional -- coming from this very traditional background, and marrying here, in this country, Jewish man, who'd rai -- been raised fairly traditionally in Germany, there's no question that I was going to have a Jewish home. But I was searching and of course, when I came here as a student, I had discovered Reform Judaism and Conservative Judaism, all kinds of formulas which -- which I was not familiar. And don't forget, I had had five years of war -- of really living as a Catholic as well and cut off -- although I do remember even living as a Catholic, we had a very clandestine seder and -- and a -- and all kinds of -- I have

never really been away from Judaism, even when I was living as a Catholic. And as soon as the war was over, I was back into a l -- being the head of a Jewish children's home and instilling a love of Judaism and teaching and training the kids and so forth and so on. When I came to this country, I discovered this other formulas and I just observed, I wasn't really becoming a part of any of this. And I got married in a traditional Jewish ceremony in Strasbourg. My parents -- I -- small apartment, because after the war they had lost everything and they were sharing apartment with somebody else, as a matter of fact. But we got married in a synagogue and came back here and we joined a Conservative synagogue. Our home -- I did not keep a kosher home, but kept a -- oh, a very traditional oriented ka -- ya -- obs -- nee -- at least observing Friday night and attending services on and off. It was not a same commitment that I had before, until about almost 50 years ago. Well, I'll be married 50 years next year, so it's about 48 or 49 years ago. I heard a lecture by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism and he really expressed for me a direction for me to go into. It was a very revealing kind of lecture. I still have the notes that I took. He defined -- as you know, Reconstruction, it defines Judaism as a dynamic, religious civilization. God as the power that makes for salvation. And I began to read Rabbi Kaplan. I began to subscribe to Reconstructionist magazine. And it opened to me a whole m -- way of living my Judaism in a more creative and in a more -- in a happier way. My childhood was full of don't, and it's a sin and all the

forbidding kinds of thing. One of the strongest phrases that remains in my memory, is in Kaplan's writing, he talks about reading into the Torah, or reading out of it. And I grew up where everybody read into the Torah because -- this is repeated three times and this is -- were -- this is -- has a meaning and usually the meaning ended up in some forbidden to do this and forbidden to do that, etcetera. [indecipherable] Rabbi Kaplan talks about reading into the Torah, reading into the teaching of the Torah itself, the text itself. And doing things in a more creative ways. And so after that, this is -- this has been my -- my direction. And especially with our children. We -- we -- they all -- they all attended Conservative synagogues. They all went to Jewish camps. They went to Camp Ramah, they went to --

Q: What's it called, Camp what?

A: Camp Ramah. These are the -- the camps of the Conservative movement.

Q: Mm-hm. How do you spell that?

A: R-a-m-a-h.

Q: And where is it?

A: Oh, they're all over.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Happened to be -- this one happened to be in Canada, but -- and it's -- to this day -- to this day I am looking for ways to enhance Judaism in this world, by blending in with all life here today. I don't know how to say it, but I'm always looking for ways

of making my Judaism more meaningful and more joyous, happy with -- with creative things. So we were very fortunate because -- well, in c -- we first lived in Cleveland, my husband and I. I -- I graduated from Western Reserve and my husband was still attending school at Case. We settled in Cleveland after we got married, which is 1949 and I'm -- my first job was as a director of a Jewish day nursery, which was Jewish day care center, affiliated with the Jewish [indecipherable] in Cleveland, which was a top notch agency. And this is where, eventually, I got my training, also in child therapy. M-My degree is in social work. I had gotten my degree at Western Reserve. But I specialized in early childhood, because in France I already had a degree in early childhood, so I combined the two and I specialized in that. And little by little, I developed my skills in -- in working for, or in behalf, or with young children. And we joined a synagogue, a Conservative synagogue and I think I have taken -- so have -- adult -- my husband, too, we have taken adult education classes all our lives, in -- in the various synagogues and I learned more about Reconstructionism. I've -- I have -- I have read a great deal about this. In Cleveland, we belonged to such a huge congregation, like 2,000 families, that it was very difficult to form any meaningful relationships. And although -- I was working, raising kids and we had a real struggle when we first started here. I didn't have a penny to my name, my husband had not a penny to his name. We lived in two rooms -- not two room apartment, a -- a -- not two bedroom apartment, two room apartment,

upstairs, raising a kid. We eventually got a house. It -- the financial struggle was -- was rough and after I had my first child, I stayed home for four years, although I worked part time on the side. But what I did was, I worked as a Sunday school teacher on Sundays, just to get away from the house and leave a child to daddy. And I taught second grade Sunday school, which I'd never done before, but it provided me also with a tie to the Temple and that kind of thing. We left Cleveland at the time our oldest son was ready to be Bar Mitzvah and my husband was transferred to Syracuse. And had to join the existing Conservative synagogue there, because he had to be Bar Mitzvah -- I mean, that was his [indecipherable] and -- but we were very unhappy with the establishment synagogue, with -- with -- we -- it was so rote -- it was so uncreative, but we went, you see? I -- we schlepped our kids there and we went and we made no exception to this kind of thing, until we discovered that in the suburb of Syracuse called Dewitt, they were creating a new Conservative synagogue. We were younger in those days, although we were much older than the general age of the congregation, we just -- I -- I have to tell you that story. I read about this congregation, then I found out what time their Friday night service are and we went with our kids on Friday night. And the rabbi, though very rigidly observant, nevertheless, he had a -- a way of teaching, a way of making the service interesting. But he had passed mimeographed sheets with some special readings or discussion point or whatever it was that Friday night and I was ecstatic about something.

Q: What year was this, roughly?

A: ‘66?

Q: Hm.

A: ‘66. And I was ecstatic about that. My son always tells me, “Mom was converted by a mimeographed sheet.” Because I wanted -- I -- I -- I didn’t want this road service, this -- this dead service and I wanted something creative in there. And [indecipherable] we joined, because by then they -- you see, when we came first, I couldn’t join, because my son had to have his Bar Mitzvah and they -- they had just created -- they only had a fir -- kindergarten or a first grade in religious school. But that was okay for our second son, because they are six years apart.

Q: What -- what are their names, the boys?

A: The -- the synagogue is called --

Q: No, no, your children.

A: Oh, the oldest is Peter and the second one is Robert.

Q: And you have a daughter?

A: No.

Q: Just two boys?

A: Two boys. They are six years apart. And among them they have five children. And the oldest has two girls and the second one has two girls and a boy.

Q: And tell me the names.

A: Hm?

Q: Tell me the names of the grandchildren.

A: The grandchildren -- the older -- the -- the oldest -- Peter's daughters are Abigail and Rebecca and Robert's kid --

Q: And ho-how old are they now?

A: Abby is 11. She already has a Bat Mitzvah date for the year 2000.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Rebecca is eight and then in ro -- Robby has Elanna, who's going to be 11 in October. David, who is eight and Amy, who is f-five half. But anyway, we left the big synagogue where our oldest son had been. He is a high achiever and so he had won every prize in there and every scholarship and every da-da. He was the head of -- president of the class or whatever it was and it was a great big shock that we left. But we were so happy at this new synagogue. They -- they were meeting and the little building and -- it -- it -- they were living on shoestring, but my husband volunteered to work on an architectural search committee and before he knew it he was the h-head of the building committee and before he knew it, he built a synagogue and I got involved with children, with the education committee, with the richman commit -- education enrichment has always been my -- my thing.

Q: Education enrichment?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Adult education particularly, but in those days also education, so I always [indecipherable] of education and then I -- I did everything, including dusting and everything in that syn -- it was our synagogue, it was our -- it -- it -- it was ours and the -- the rabbi, a-as I said, he was bul -- in spite of his rigidity, but he was a teacher. He enhanced the service with -- with things that were meaningful to us and we -- our -- our involvement with the congregation really blossomed during these 19 years we lived in Syracuse. And we miss it tremendously. But this has given my Judaism it's -- wh-what it is today, this search for -- for meaningful ways of -- of -- of -- of living my -- my Jewish life. Now, it's no longer the Judaism that my parents had. I'm not limited by the don'ts of the Shabbat. I'm not limited, I'm -- I know there is one inconsistency with me, I don't keep kosher. And it's been a little struggle for me.

Q: Can you tell me about it? Wh-Wh-Why did you make that decision?

A: It -- originally it was my rebellion against the -- the things at home and I just have never had the strength and courage to go back [indecipherable] was some -- it -- it's very difficult to define my position, but it's just --

Q: And how -- how does your husband feel about it?

A: Oh he's -- he -- it's okay with -- he is by far not -- by far not -- doesn't have the education that I've had, because he grew up as a -- the only Jewish child in his German village. His brother was 10 years older than he was, he had left. He lost his

father when he was four. His mother was left a widow very young and he was the baby child at home. His sister was married already.

Q: What happened to his father?

A: His father died when he was four. His brother had left, his sister had married, he was alone, he was at school, he was victimized. Couldn't get a Jewish education. But he has very emotional tie to his Judaism, but he doesn't have the -- what shall I say, the -- the intellectual knowledge that goes with it, so he -- he d -- he doesn't have the fluency that I have. But we do things together and as a family. I mean, I never go to services alone, we go together and we have made that commitment together and we have taken classes together, but he certainly -- he doesn't have the Hebrew knowledge or the -- the knowledge that I -- that was given to me when I was a kid. So, no, that's not as important to him. But we -- but he certainly was devoted and dedicated to that synagogue and we attended service on a totally regular basis and we were -- we were -- this was our extended family. This was our -- we have no family in this country. I have no one. Now, my husband has a sister and he had a brother who died. He's 10 years older than my husband, he died a few years ago. But the sister lives in New York, the brother never -- had [indecipherable] such a close relationship and so for all practical purposes, we don't have family here. My children don't have grandparents here -- don't have grandpare -- I mean, I took -- I took them to France to see my paren -- my parents were able to pay our trip, because we didn't

have a penny to our name. And so, between my brother and my parents, they send for us so they could meet the grandchildren.

Q: Mm-hm. Well, le-let me ask you a question. I'm not sure if -- if this is really an answerable question. But this evolution of your Judaism and your relationship to the religion may have taken the course it took anyway, but can you identify or can you discuss at all how some of the experiences you had during the war might have affected this?

A: I don't think it's re -- it's related to the experiences I had during the war. It's much more a personal journey and a -- and -- and a personal course, coming from -- actually I was even more observant than my parents at one time during my teenage years. You know, teenagers can go one way or the other. And I was, you know, I was even more observant than my parents and I -- I threw away the rigidity and -- so it's -- I -- I think it's more of a personal j-journey, a personal search to be as Jewish as my parents, but in a different kind of way. I don't believe it is related to the ho -- if anything, I was exposed during -- particularly during my camp experience, my early on -- as you recall, I was a volunteer internee social worker in one of the camps.

Q: In Rivesaltes?

A: In Rivesaltes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I was very young. I ha-had no life experien -- I was 21 years old when I got there. And here were adults, interned in a camp. They already -- some of them had already been interned for a year by the time I got there. I met them. So I had lived in these inhuman conditions, which I describe in my early interview. And there was a rabbi -- I remember vividly, there were teachers. There were very observant [indecipherable] they were non-observant people. But, from the people who remained committed to their Judaism in some way -- I remember holiday celebrations in the camp, or Shabbat celebration, that I remember having a very positive kind of affect on me, that these people, under the circumstance on which they live, they remained Jewish. And maybe so it had -- could have had a positive affect on me, rather than the opposite. And I -- as far as throwing away some of the -- the shackles of religion, I -- I was try to replace them by something more meaningful to me and more positive. And I th -- and I'm still doing it right now, every minute, thinking of moving from one congregation to another, because a new one is being created right here, in Chapel Hill. And there are young people and I don't even know if we'll belong, because they haven't gelled yet. But they're searching for something creative. They're searching for a service that is gender sensitive, which is very important to me. Because in Syracuse, too, when the -- when Conservative Judaism made it permissible for women to be included and the minyan to be counted and to put this in the service, I -- I was at the head of that movement in my congregation. I

was the first woman to lead services in our congregation. And so I -- we are looking into this new congregation and next Shabbat I'm doing the service there, because they don't have anybody. And I thought I would never do it again. But it is exciting to help a group of --

Q: You thought you would never do what again?

A: Pardon?

Q: You thought you would never do what?

A: Leading services, I -- I don't even have a voice to speak of, but it is nice to be able to provide some help of some people who are seeking to create their own thing and to live their Judaism in -- in a way that is meaningful to them. And so at first when they -- when I showed an interest and I said, "I want my -- I want something ready made. At my age -- I'm 78 years old, I'm wa -- I don't want to create things any more." And we've attended their services and they were willing to -- to understand things and to learn and particularly -- and I'm very, very -- what's very important to me is that the services -- the Hebrew text, not just the English text -- be gender sensitive. [indecipherable] a big issue for me. Um -- a big issue, it's an important issue. And -- and also that service -- that we have time for meaningful discussion during the service and that -- on the Torah reading, that kind of thing is important to me. And so here I am, still as excited at 78 as I was in earlier years as a girl scout, to find ways of doing things at a camp. This has remained -- this has kept young in me

and important to me. So, next Saturday, in that new congregation, I will participate. Th-This is not a program I had -- I can just stand up and do it, you know, I don't have to prepare, or read or anything, this has been part of me.

Q: Right. And this is a Conservative congregation [indecipherable]

A: Mm-hm. Ah, they don't know yet exactly what they're going --

Q: They don't know?

A: They -- they're si -- they're neutral as is -- [indecipherable] seek an identity, but I think it's going in to a very liberal kind of Conservative Judaism.

Q: There's a -- a few things I want to go back -- I mean, it has kind of an unusual shape, I think, of this interview [indecipherable]

A: Yes it is, I --

Q: But I -- but I'm enjoying it.

A: Be-Because this is the last of the things that I would have expected to talk about.

Q: But all of them are important and there are a few more things I want to ask you about. Well, there's one question I want to ask you that -- which was -- we started to get to about before the war. And -- I think one of the most important things that you brought up -- to me, anyway, was the question that you said you've been asked many times, which is -- wh-why did you -- yourself and the others who -- who did what you did, do it? And I think all of these things are related. I think that the relationship

that you had with your parents and the relationship that you had with your religion. I mean your relationship with the scouting movement.

A: Oh.

Q: I think all of those things are part of it and I -- so I -- I don't think that I'm going the wrong direction by asking you these things. But one of the things that's really, really difficult for me to understand -- I'm 43 -- is to understand -- and I don't know if you can help me with this or not; wh-when I -- I asked you about the relationship between the Jews and the non-Jews in your city and you said ba-basically it wasn't --

A: For me personally, I --

Q: Was -- everybody got along pretty well?

A: Oh, I heard about -- I heard about -- talk about the big word and -- we used in my family for anti-Semitism is called rischous. Now, I don't know the origin of that word, ec-except rusha means a bad guy. So rischous, maybe it come from -- I -- I don't know, but this is the word that my family used in -- in Judeo Alsatian [indecipherable]. And I heard a lot about it and -- and my family had -- my parents knew about the affaire Dreyfuss and -- you know, the very famous anti-Semitic thing. And they had lived through that and they were exposed to that and -- and I heard about it, but personally, I didn't read the newspapers, so I didn't know what was going on. I was so focused on -- on my school and on my activities and this was not the -- the youth of today dating and going out on Saturda --

Q: But -- but -- well, I -- I gue -- the thing that's -- that's -- that's -- seems impossible for me to comprehend is, what was the progression in the pre-war and the early years of the war, in your understanding of what was exactly taking place and why it was taking place?

A: You know, I think when you're faced with a matter of life and death -- and it was a matter of survival, you don't think about why the things are happening, you are -- you're doing something to survive and you see people as -- either you're helping or aga -- or they're against you, you know, and I -- there was the people in the Resistance, the people who helped you with the papers, the people who help you with the thing and the others. And that's the way it was. So you worked with those who helped and you tried to defend yourself against the others. You didn't think why did he and why did she do tha --

Q: That's not what I'm asking you. What I'm a -- what I'm asking you is even a harder question to answer, I think, which is what was your perception about why the Jews were being singled out and rounded up and -- and put in camps?

A: You know, I lived on the border of Germany. You had to just cross the Rhine and you were in Germany. I could spit across if -- if the Rhine was too wide. Never [indecipherable] there on th -- never went into Germany. But part of my background is this his-historical thing that Jews were always persecuted. And this is what Holocaust Museum is showing us. And th-this is why -- actually, I don't want to lose

my train of thought, but I'm rebelling against this a little bit, at this stage of my life. I feel that we need to teach people -- and our children, particularly, the achievement of the Jews, before we talk about the persecutions. And that's why -- we talked early, at what age do you tell a child about the Holocaust? Well, that child has to be grounded in what Jews -- what Judaism is all about and what they have achieved, before you tell them about all the persecutions through the centuries and particularly the last one. So, but that's a different kind of thing.

Q: But -- but that's an important issue, because one of the things that I -- that I want you to share, is that -- is that perception, what you think of the hol -- is another whole topic that I want to bring up, which is, what do you think of the general approach to dealing with the Holocaust?

A: Well, I -- on that I have some specific thoughts, because I've been very much involved in that --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number two, side B.

A: -- before we talk about the persecutions. And that's why -- we talked early, at what age do you tell a child about the Holocaust? Well, that child has to be grounded in what Jews -- what Judaism is all about and what they have achieved, before you

tell them about all the persecutions through the centuries and particularly the last one. So, but that's a different kind of thing.

Q: But -- but that's an important issue, because one of the things that I -- that I want you to share, is that -- is that perception, what you think of the hol -- is another whole topic that I want to bring up, which is, what do you think of the general approach to dealing with the Holocaust?

A: Well, I -- on that I have some specific thoughts, because I've been very much involved in that. And I -- indeed, coming back to your earlier question, I lived -- I lived next door to Germany, so what was happening in Germany, from the late 20's on, from the rise of Hitler, it was part of my growing up years. I remember April -- was it April first, 1933, when we had a -- a solemn service in our synagogue in Strasbourg, because -- exactly what the date was that Hitler was starting the Nuremberg laws or whatever it was. I mean the restrictions on Jew and Hitler being installed. And we began to have lot of Jewish refugees come into the city and all of that. So, it was not happening overnight. It was something that -- although I thought it would never happen in France -- French people don't do things like that. My parents probably thought differently, bu -- although they took absolutely no presh -- measures to protect themself from anything. My father, confident in his status of a loyal French citizen, n -- continued his business to the last day, never put a penny aside, never -- never did anything. But I grew up with the awareness that indeed, it

can happen to the Jews. And I know the history of the Jew. So, it just was one -- it just crossed the Rhine. It just came gradually. So '33 -- this is '39, six years, it came gradually. And then after that, it was just fighting for your survival, you know, it just -- and fighting for the survival of others, for some of us who got involved in that.

Q: Yeah. Did tho -- how there -- there's one -- I want you to clarify something for me, because I didn't quite understand it in your -- your interview, about the camp in -- how do you pronounce it? Rivesaltes?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: That -- this was a -- this was a camp for foreign Jews who had immigrated to France?

A: In France there were many Jews who had come from eastern Europe, many. Because France was very -- always been very easy -- France was always a country for refugees. The literature is full of the refugees who came from fra -- the White Russians, the -- you know? For ev -- all countries. And from the French colonies and so on. But mostly there were lots -- lots of Jews from eastern Europe who came. It's very easy to get into France. That's never been a problem. But to become a citizen, that's the pro -- and even if you're born in France, at least in those days -- I don't know what the law is today, it's changed over the years, but I don't know what it is today. You were not a citizen, being born in France. If your parents had not acquired citizenship, you were a foreign Jew. So as soon as the war started, the authorities --

no, nos -- no, not as -- when the war started, as soon as France lost the war and was occupied by Germany, they rounded up all the Jews who had not French citizenship. Now, that includes people like my sister-in-law, who was born in France, of Polish parents. She and her entire family were in Rivesaltes, because her parents had not acquired citizenship. She spoke French. She was born in France. Her par -- her father was deported as forced labor, whatever that meant. He may have been sent to Auschwitz directly, we don't know. Her brother joined the French underground. He escaped the camp, he went into French underground. He was killed in the French underground, on that [indecipherable]. He was born in France. The mother survived and she and her younger brother survived, because we placed them with ame -- ame -- in hiding and my sister-in-law was placed with my family. That's how she came to marry my brother. And -- but she was foreign born. Who were the other forei -- who were the other foreign Jews? There were the Jews from the Rhineland, in Germany. There's the whole -- the -- the whole Jewery that lived along the Rhine, which were in -- in -- in earlier days very prominent Jewish communities. They were all deported to France. Is this the only westward deportation in the history of World War Two. All the deportations were east. The Jews from Rhineland were deported into the south of France and promptly picked up by the French whatever -- police or militia or whatever and put into these camps.

Q: How many camps were there?

A: There were -- I don't know, between 12 - 15 camps.

Q: And how many people you think were in each one?

A: Very bad at statistics, but in the thousands. And I -- I have books to show you and --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- whatev -- the figures are. But then there are the Jews. You know, France was invaded by the com -- the Germans came through Belgium and Holland to invade France in 1940 -- in May of 1940. We got caught up in that, because we were living up there. And the Jews fled Belgium and Holland. And they arrived in the south of France. My brother-in-l -- mart -- my husband's sister and her husband lived in Belgian. They were caught in that. H -- the brother-in-law was in a camp in the south of France. He was able to get out and meet his wife in Marseilles -- she had been going all the way through -- from Belgium, all the way to the south of France, they were able to escape to Cuba and spend the war in Cuba. You get family sagas you wouldn't believe when some of us get together. And so all these people were in camps, some on -- early on, were able to get out with all kinds of papers and all kinds of visas, all kinds of thing. But the majority were trapped. They had -- they had no papers.

Q: And at the beginning, your role was as a bona fide French Jew --

A: As a --

Q: -- so you were allowed to be free?

A: As a bona fide French born Jew, I was relatively free to move. That doesn't mean that all Jews in the south of France, because France was divided, we were -- lived in the south -- didn't have to rig -- register. My parents had to regi -- everybody had to register with the special o-office of Jewish affairs. Whether I registered or not, I don't remember.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I don't have any recollection and nobody asked, so I never know. I doubt that I did, but I may be wrong. I don't know. Or my parents registered me as a member of the family, I don't remember. But Jews were registered and I had an uncle who was deported from Paris, a French born citizen who was deported from Paris in the very first convoy, arrested in 1941. But not because he was -- because of his status, particularly, it was more because some-somebody had attacked some German in Paris or something and they rounded up all the male Jews in this one particular neighborhood and he was among them, he and his father-in-law. He is on the list of the first convoy to leave for Auschwitz from Drancy in 1942. So, we didn't know at the time, but I -- I know now. I -- he is on the list. Where were we? I lost my train of thought.

Q: Well, you were just explaining to me the set up of the -- of the camp.

A: Oh, so in the camp, so this is -- these are the people who ran the camps.

Q: And the un -- the general understanding of what happened to people who went to a place like Rivesaltes --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- or a camp like that, was it -- were -- were they going go get out or they were going to stay there for the whole war, or --

A: Th-They didn't go into the camp, they were picked up and put into the camp.

Q: Yeah.

A: And these camps were not prepared for human beings. They were abandoned army barracks, overrun with bugs and vermin. There was no running water, there were -- I mean, the most horrible hygienic condition, as I say in my early interview. And so these people were there in these c-camps, awaiting that some govern -- authority would decide their fate. Some escaped. So, they were able to escape, some were able to escape.

Q: If someone was caught running from the camp, would they be shot?

A: No, not -- th-they wouldn't be shot, they -- these -- they would be arrested and they would be turned over to the authorities, the Vichy authority, the German authority. Who -- who -- I mean, they were all working together. To some authority and they would probably be deported to the --

Q: To where? To Germany? To Auschwitz?

A: To -- to the east. We didn't know, in 1942 what that meant. The human mind couldn't fathom death machines. At first we thought they were put to forced labor. Or resettled in the east. Resettlement in the east was the -- the euphemism. We had no idea. Death camp? I mean, how can the human mind even fathom such a thing? So these -- so does that answer your que -- and these were the Jews that were in these camps. And I -- and there they stayed, until they were deported. And indeed, as I sa -- reported earlier, in 19 -- the summer of 1942, they start just rounding up people. And it was to send them to the east. Some for forced labor, some for -- whatever that meant and some for resettlement. They were creating communities for Jews there. I had no idea what it meant. All I know -- my mind should have been working a little bit better when they took elderly, handicapped people. You don't take people to work in the east in that condition. So, what we didn't know, that they were gassed right away, upon arrival in Auschwitz and [indecipherable]. So, those are the people were in Rivesaltes. And in Gersin and in other camps.

Q: I just want to ask you a few more things, so I understand your own path. So -- so your role in Rivesaltes was you were working to try to get children out, is that right?

A: Well, not originally. You see, there were several agencies with international status that had a conference in Nîmes and they -- there was an agreement that the govern -- would -- would permit social workers [indecipherable] social workers to be in these camp to help the popula -- to -- to make life a little easier for them. They -- they had

nothing to do. The men and women were separated, the wer -- children were with the women, the men were separated. They lived in filth. They lived -- they had very little to eat, because the guards took the food and people died of dysentery, died of -- I mean, there are 3000 people died just of malnutrition. Was a study of malnutrition in the camps. And the original intent was to improve the conditions in the camps. ORT, if you know it, is a Jewish organization, brought sewing machines for the women, organized workshops. I have pictures of, and my -- my sister-in-law's younger brother worked in one -- in the kitchen. I mean, they did all -- they did some -- her father, who was a shoemaker, organized a shoe repair shop, and -- and with the -- je -- with the organization, there were non-Jewish organization as well of Jewish ones. There were very few Jewish ones, allowed us to -- to live in the camp. And I was in a farm with my parents and one of my scouting leaders got a hold of me -- and I don't know how she got my address.

Q: This was Andre Solomon?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And since she's dead, I will never know. And I never asked her how she got ahold of me, now I don't -- will never know, but she found me and I left and I went to the camp, and --

Q: So you had known her a long time?

A: Oh, yes. I -- she was one of my leaders in camp. She was the leader of the older girl's club. In those days, there were -- the -- the older ones started at 18. Can you imagine today 18 year old girls, girl scouts, you know? But this was the commitment we had and she was -- she was one of our leaders. And I knew her and she got ahold of me and so I went to live in the camp. I was 21 years old when I first started and we -- we tr -- I was in charge originally, to do something on behalf of the kids. So the first Shabbat I was there, I had, in this big empty barrack, I -- we announced that all -- there would be a program for the kids, a program with nothing. I mean, nothing -- I mean, nothing. Singing, what we could do and maybe something like -- and I had 280 kids in that barrack, all ages. But here again, I had the support of that internee population. There were teachers, there were rabbi's, there were professionals of all kinds, doctors. And they helped. And they were internee themselves and they had been already in this camp, we -- and this was a tremendous lesson in human values and in -- in -- in human strengths, internal strengths. I mean, it was incredible for me to see people had lived in these conditions all the -- for all this length and time. The dignity with which they continue to live, under the very c-condition in which they lived. They'd had no water to wash, they had no -- I mean, it was awful. And this is -- this is originally what I did, and I was part of a team that delivered extra rations. We got, through all the agency, we delivered rations into the ca -- into the barracks and then eventually in a s -- paralleled another -- another part of the team of Ose worked

on the liberation of the kids from camp. And then I participated in taking kids out and -- and helped in that process as well. They overlapped, kind of thing. But a book has recently been published by one -- the -- the -- the worker with whom I worked in that camp, and -- but she left before the deportations started, but she set that whole liberation process into movement. And is very interesting as she -- she wrote the book, she quotes me in the book. It's in French, I don't know how your French is, and she quotes me. There's a picture of me in the book and it's a pre -- the book got a -- an award in France. And it's very interesting, she recalls things that I did and said and I have no recollection of them at all. We all have very selective memories, so I -- I was interesting to read. And at a later date, I would like to tell you a little bit about my reuniting with my coworkers. Is this a good time?

Q: Yeah. I think this would be a great time.

A: Well, you know, but it entails a whole other kind of thing. I-It's a whole other chapter of my life in the United States. And this reconnecting with the past has been a tremendous thing for me in the last 20 years. When I first came here -- well, I came as a student, I went back and then I came, because I'd met my husband, and I really wanted to put everything -- everything behind me. I didn't even speak French to my kids. Today I think it was stupid. They could be bilingual so easily, but my husband doesn't speak French and I certainly didn't want to speak German and my husband doesn't -- has even forgotten his German. He doesn't want anything to do with

anything German. So I had worked for the Joint Distribution Committee in Paris for a year, in between my -- getting my degree here and then coming back eventually, because I had to work for my scholarship for -- to repay my scholarship. So, I n- never wrote back to anybody, in any of the agencies, not -- I -- I mean, with very few exceptions. There are a few people I may have sent a Rosh Hashanah card or something like that. And I did go back when -- the first time I went back is in 1952, because my parents made it possible for us to bring their first grandchild -- not their first grandchild, they had already a whole bunch of grandchildren. My brother married much younger than I did. But bring the American grandchild over. And we went over. And yes, I saw maybe one or two friends. One, I worked with during the -- in -- after the war and she was from my hometown and maybe we met in Paris, and another one, but it was a very social kind of thing. I didn't see any -- or didn't make a point of seeing any of my worker from the Joint Distribution Committee. I always went to see -- no, I didn -- I must correct that. All went -- went to see that one person who was the director of a children's home, with whom I worked during the war and who after the war became the director of Ose. And I continue, even today. He's dead, but his wife is in a nursing home and I still write to her a card on the holiday.

Q: What was his name?

A: Monsieur Jobe.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I'm still in touch with her, which is -- and every time we went to Paris, I went to see her. But it wasn't so much to reminisce, it was just because we had -- we're good friends, you know? And so I had -- it's on the level of friendship, not to talk about the war, or not to talk about anything. And other than that, I never talked about my experiences. And as a matter of fact, to make sure, I asked my friend from Cleveland, the one who came to visit this [indecipherable] and we -- we -- I was going to say we grew up -- no, we grew our children at the same time. We had children the same age and she was a concert scholarship student too, from Italy, who came after me, to Cleveland. And I barely knew what she did during the war, or -- I -- I sort of know. And when we went to visit them a few years ago, in Florida, she says, "What did you actually do during the war?" I said, "Oh, come on. You know. I mean, you've known me all these years." She said we never talked about it. So I had confirmation of the fact that I never talked about it. And I entered into a community of German Jews, because my husband is from Germany and through -- because he lived with a German family when I met him, he had room with a German -- German Jewish family and we entered this whole German Jewish community, with which I really had -- with whom I had very little in common -- but you didn't have to explain things to them, they knew what the score was. I didn't have to tell them about these things. They had -- they had not lived -- they had escaped. So -- did I tell my children? Yes, I'm sure I talked about it. They know about it. But their dad went

through -- but when -- what I went through, I've talked to them about these things. They knew about it, but I -- other than that, I never, in public talked about it.

Q: So would you -- would you describe this as a conscious decision that you made or was it just a kind of natural evolution?

A: Well, it is such a natural evolution that it's universal. And when I talk -- and I thought maybe [indecipherable] in America. But when I talked to my friends, my contemporaries and friends, they did the same thing. They needed -- as it was a need to -- to forget. There was a need to put behind. And then there is a change. You really need to -- to -- to fill out your past again and to -- to fill out these detail. But I -- it is a -- but with me, there was one more thing. That was in fran -- my friends in France told me, "Silonce for 30 years." Silence for 30 years. And this is -- this is true. For 30 years. And I think there was something else here. There was -- when -- when in it -- when I made an attempt to ac -- to, yeah, explain something sometimes, about the war, or about the war [indecipherable] -- there was such lack of comprehension on the part of people I was talking to, that it shut me off. Sometimes very stupid questions. I still get them today, these stupid questions.

Q: Mm-hm, you mentioned them in the other interview.

A: And there was a difficult -- and I -- and I -- I -- it -- it's amazing, I still do get them occasionally, I mean -- what right -- what rights did they have to arrest you? What rights do you have during a war? You know, I mean, a teacher asked me those

question in front of the students. What am I saying, what a stupid ques -- you know? It's this kind of thing that I still get, and there was also -- you have to explain and explain, and if I say -- if in France I say, heevsall, everybody knows what I'm talking. If I say AEF, [indecipherable] de France, everybody knows. You don't even say AEF, you say [indecipherable] and everybody knows that is the Jewish scouting movement.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And here I have to go into explanation.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And I -- I just couldn't -- couldn't cope with that. And -- but coming to this country was a tremendous change for me in every aspect, as -- as you heard, about Judaism, it was different, it was entering a real professional life, because I had a -- a degree. Before that I worked, but I didn't have a real, professional degree. That doesn't mean I did better or worse, it just meant that -- and it was starting a career. And frankly and truly, it was a -- a struggle to get ahead and my parents had lost everything, weren't able to give me any money coming over. I think we spend everything they gave me on just buying enough stuff to -- to have a kitchen and a -- and a room and stuff like that. So, my husband didn't have his degree yet. He went to school at night. I had a job on the weekend, a job during the week and -- and I just didn't dwell on that. So -- some of the --

Q: So what changed? What -- what made you want to start talking?

A: I know exactly when it happened. It was in the late -- in the mid 70's or early seven -- mid 70's, I cannot quite peg it. The council of Jewish women in clee -- in Syracuse, where we lived -- well, people knew that I was from France, that I had done some underground work, or had worked in camp and -- I mean, th-there was some general knowledge, but I had never, sort of really going a -- I think that once sisterhood asked me to participate in a program -- they will have other people who had lived in Europe and I -- I must have sa-said a few word. But then, the Council of Jewish women was working with the educators in Syracuse to introduce the Holocaust in their curriculum. And now we're going to a very touchy subject. And I was asked to participate. This is the first time where I really did something officially, as a witness of the Holocaust, if you wish. That's the best definition I can come, because I don't view myself as a survivor, I don't view myself as -- I -- I was a rescuer, but at the same time was also a victim. So I always say I'm a witness of the Holocaust. And so I participated in that. And then something fantastic happened. We separated in two groups. One group was younger women, was -- they were mostly women, who wanted to create a group of children of survivors. And the other group wanted to meet with teachers and talk about curriculum. And I went with the children of survivors. And all of a sudden, I find myself much older than these people. They were actually mostly professional women, whom I had known in the professional --

my professional li -- had no idea they were Jewish and certainly no idea they were children of survivors. And they -- each one of them were talking about their experience -- I'm sure you know the syndrome of children of survivors and how the books have been written about them and I had read the book -- Epstein's book, "The Children of the Holocaust." And, as I listened to them and they asked me where I fit in out of it, I began to tell them of my experience. And I cried and I cried. I'm still crying today. And all of a sudden, the floodgates opened. I had never done that before. It was like yay, you have a lot of grieving to do. You have a lot of unfinished business. And they created -- there's a group, I helped them create it and -- but I didn't become a part of it, because I was too close to them. Although I'm a therapist and I'm a psychiatric social worker. And I -- they wanted somebody -- a professional, to lead their group. I -- I was -- I was -- I couldn't. I was too close to that kind of thing. But it told me that I had a lot of work to do. Now, I didn't start the next day with task one, two and three, but I allowed myself to -- to let the -- all these memories get into me. And I was aware of having been affected by -- by -- by all of these experiences, in very strange ways. I would see a program of refugees on the road in Bangladesh or wherever and I'd burst in tears. So I know that -- I mean, we were expelled, we fled, we were on the road for -- for days and nights and all of this -- so I knew I had that in me, unresolved. And so -- and little by little, I began to talk more about this. I accepted. I didn't really do much in Syracuse. This was more in the

70's. Maybe I gave a talk or two, maybe at the synago -- I don't know pr-precisely, but I was able to talk about it. And then -- oh, there's something else happened. Since my husband traveled, as he told you, a great deal, internationally, I had the opportunity at one point -- he was working for two weeks in Paris and I must have been able to take two weeks off. And I went with him to Paris and for the first time I reconnected with my cousins in Paris, I have four cousins in Paris. And I had been --

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number three, side A.

A: -- weeks in Paris and I must have been able to take two weeks off. And I went with him to Paris and for the first time I reconnected with my cousins in Paris, I have four cousins in Paris. And I had been totally cut off from them and two of them were the girls I had hidden and two of them were other cousins and all of them, in some way were connected to me, because after the war they were -- I -- they were in the institutions --

Q: It's okay.

A: Can go on?

Q: Yeah.

A: They were in the institution and the children's home where I trained -- they -- they were -- they were part of the staff, they wen -- and in later years I found out they always looked up to me because I was older and because also their parents told -- they also hated me, because their parents say, "Why can't you do what Simone did?" You know, that kind. So, a mixed feeling. But I really connected. We visited. In these two weeks, I remember vividly, staying with one of my cousins and all five of us sitting on the floor in this upstairs room and talking about our families. The two girls who had loved their parents, my -- they have a perception of my parents, I have a

perception of their parents. And so family stuff, also. The skeletons. I remember we had -- they re -- had a perception of my father, I had a perception of their parent and we talked about that. And it was therapeutic.

Q: Hold on one second, I have to change the tape…this is the beginning of tape two, it's an interview with Simone Weil Lipman and today is August fourth, 1998. And we were talking about some of the -- the way that you began to change your ability and interest in talking about your experiences.

A: Well, I -- in -- in these trips to France, I remember allowing myself to reconnect with some of -- not only the relatives, but with the people I had worked with during the war, those who were still living. And -- and then sharing our memories, on a very one to one basis, the re -- one or the other, one I'd worked in camp with or one I'd worked in the children's home with and -- and it became -- I became aware that all of a sudden, I wanted to -- to -- to -- to check out my memories and to share them. And it felt wonderful, because there I didn't have the lack of understanding. I had instant comprehension, you know, it was -- we were on the same wavelength. And we talked and -- now I cannot say that we stayed in touch, because none of us are really corresponding. But I fairly frequently went to France, but mostly what happened was that I was able to talk about my experiences here. Now, it's a universal phenomenon for survival, is to not have talked about their experiences for 30 years and it is shared by the people in France and it's shared by people here. It's a -- it's -- it's a universal

thing. And I had read about the Holocaust, I had read Elie Wiesel's book. Elie Wiesel, by the way, was a kid of Ose, who had been coming to France to -- to -- in 19 -- ever -- I'd -- and I'd -- the end of the war, and he was rescued by Ose, whe -- in one of the children's homes. And the director of that children's home is one of my very good friends, and so we've talked about him. And every time I go to Paris I see her and we talk about these kids, we talk about -- we talk about all these things of the past. And I think that enabled me to begin to talk about my experiences. I'm not sure exactly when, exactly, and with what group, but I had to go through that journey of reconnecting and it really d -- the -- the -- the cath -- the cathartic point was when I had that meeting with this -- this [indecipherable] of survival, when I became aware that -- that all that grieving that I hadn't done -- nobody had time to grieve, you had to -- you had to go on and that I -- I had to -- to go back in all this experience and talk about them. And then, in 1982, we moved to France -- 1983, we moved to France. I retired from -- I -- at that time I was on the faculty of the Upstate Medical Center in the Department of Pediatrics and Child Psychiatry. And I was in private practice, working with families of young children. And I was ready to retire, to say the least. And in France, I became very active in the Jewish community in which we lived. We lived in Lyon, in -- outside of Lyon, we live in -- in a suburb of Lyon. But we became very active again, in creating a Jewish community, but that's another kind of

story. Although it's the same story, but again we were at a nucleus of creating something there.

Q: I -- I think that's very significant, you know.

A: Well, we've seen in --

Q: I don't want you to gloss over it, I think it's important.

A: Well, what was very important, is that in Judaism is very sterile -- th-the kind -- the kind we encountered in France was very sterile and there was a -- th-there is a tradition of Judaism and people belong, but they don't go, you know, because there is no alternative. And I have two cousins in Lyon and th-they were o-of that branch of totally -- of not knowing what they were doing and having really no significant Jewish life, but belonging to something that is so traditional, that God forbid you don't change it, kind of thing. And there are some -- there is a liberal community in France, it's called the j -- l-liberal Judaism. There's two -- two -- two flavors. But there was nothing in Lyon and somebody found out that we were, quote, not -- I mean, liberal Jews. I don't know what that means in -- in their definition, that we -- that we were welcoming, you know, another form of Judaism. I don't know how it got spread. I became very active with the equivalent of Hadassah, I'm a member here of Hadassah, but I have never been a -- that women's organization kind of -- first of all I was working full time -- not full time, I was working all my life and I just haven't had -- gave all my extra energy to the synagogue and to it's various

programs. I have done so many program. A -- that I had nothing left for women's organization. I'm a life member of the National Council of Jewish Women, because I owe them, and -- but I have not been active. But in France I became active with the veetsu. I ba -- I devised their programs and still today, they are following in my footsteps. I managed t-to -- their programs and became very f -- brought somebody to -- to their meetings who became a very dear friend and she's still active in bringing a program [indecipherable]. But I was a program whatever -- chair or whatever there -- not such ti -- but I activated that very -- that kind of thing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And they're following in my way of doing thing. And also in -- in the -- in this Jewish community -- see, France --

Q: Let me ask you a question, ha -- wh-when you refer to yourself or other people refer to you as a -- a liberal Jew --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: In -- I ma -- to -- to what -- what aspects are you referring to? Is this -- is this a political liberalism?

A: It -- it -- it has to do with -- with regard to law -- Jewish law -- I'm not strict with Jewish law --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I'm all -- well, th-the political implication, I don't know [indecipherable], so I'm talking much more about [indecipherable] about dus -- ame -- observing the fine points of -- of Jewish law, that's what I'm talking about. But for me, it's also much more being -- since I view Judaism as having evolved over the centuries, I do not view it as fixed, I view it as a historical Judaism, Conservative Judaism is historical Judaism. It views that Judaism has changed over -- over the centuries, according to the ages in which it lived. The Judaism of Moses is not the Judaism of Miamanidis and is not the ju -- and is not the Judaism of Rabbi Kaplan or of whoever the chief rabbi in Israel is. It's -- it's -- it's evolves constantly and to me that is the important. It has to be dynamic, it has to change with the days. And in France, it was so rigid when we came back to France. The women sitting upstairs, that sits very well with me. And the women downs -- the men downstairs and I upstairs and they didn't even have -- when the Torah reading came, they didn't have a hamas -- a -- a book to read the Torah reading. So I went downstairs and asked one of the men if I could have a hama -- he looked at me as if I were from another planet, you know? A women who can follow the Torah reading. So, you know, it's this kind of attitude that say I can't worship here. So, you know, we tried the -- the -- North African community in which we lived, I mean they were even more rigid. And then they -- Judaism in France, traditional Judaism does not accept conversions that are not made by Orthodox rabbi -- it's a little bit like in Israel. So there were many converts in -- who had no place to

go, so they formed their own liberal mo -- le mouvement liberale juivre de France. And -- but they had nobody to lead it. So some -- they wanted us to help them and we met at people's houses. And who carried the burden [indecipherable]. So they asked me to become the president. I said, "I'm not a citizen. I'm an American citizen. You can't have a president who is not a citizen and incorporate this group. I don't -- and I don't want to be and I'm leaving again. I'm not staying here." And they were totally on the wrong tracks. But we -- we participated and whatever.

Q: What was the general age of this congregation?

A: It wasn't a -- it was a group of people and we were the only -- I mean, oh, in -- in their 40's, 50's.

Q: Young-Younger than you? [indecipherable]

A: Eee, oh, nobody as old as we were. Oh, although my -- we were still working -- no, more 50ish, meta -- the oldest maybe in their 50's, late 50's, 60.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, I was younger then, too. I was only har -- I was only in my 60's too, at the time, so yeah, and --

Q: And is there a re -- a relationship -- in your belief, in your perception of this interpretation of Jewish law, with -- with being a liberal person and -- and with integrating -- with integrating one's Judaism and religion with the rest of your life and -- and your neighbors?

A: Never thought about it. I think -- I don't know. I hadn't thought about that. I want -- it's -- it's interesting, because this new group we are trying to participate with, they want to be all inclusive, t -- and -- and I would like to include them, but also I want -- at the same time I want some -- I want my tradition to remain, s-see what I mean, a -- the things that are important to me. To me, the core of -- of thing like -- we have traveled a great deal. I have attended service in Istanbul and I've attended service in Stockholm and I have attended services all over. And to me, this is fantastic, that I can walk in there and I know enough of the service that I can open whatever prayer book they give me. It's always Hebrew. The Hebrew is the Hebrew. The service is the same, bu -- it's a -- this -- this -- this fantastic thing that binds Jews from all over the world. T-To me this is -- and I -- and I'm very grateful that I have the Jewish knowledge to be able to enjoy this. To -- you know, I -- we went with a group of people to istan -- service at Istanbul and of course the women were upstairs. What else is new? And so I -- I listen, I listen and it's a different pronunciation and all that, but I know where I am. There was a -- one other woman, she was a rabbi's wife and she found her place too. And they all said, "How do you know?" But you know, for a lifelong attendance at service and it's -- it's -- so, what a -- I don't want this to be destroyed by rigidity. I want it to be alive with variety. I don't know what else to say. I -- I haven't put it in words. And that's to me is exciting. So, getting into a new group, that's -- wants to be inclusive and yet at the same time maintain some

tradition, that's what's important to me, so we tried that, we were not very successful in France, because we were the only ones who really were with any contin -- no, people were floating in and out. Eventually, for the high holidays, we went to Geneva, Switzerland, which was an hour and a half away and spent the high holidays there. Ah, because they had a very interesting international community there, with a rabbi who was trained in Cincinnati and so we had a very interesting service there and we felt very welcome and they included a lot of English -- English and French in the service. And they -- and it was okay. See, even though I do understand the -- the -- the Hebrew, I want the -- the secular language to be included. To -- to include more people. This is too important to me, is to include people. So, anyway, so we lived in France and there I all -- there I really connected. First of all, Ose, the agency for which I worked, was doing their archives and they send a interviewer to Lyon and I did an oral tape for them, of course in French. And the woman with whom I worked in Rivesaltes, who was already at Rivesaltes when I got there -- she was a philosophy student from a completely assimilated family who didn't even know what Hanukkah was --and, so I don't know what brought her to the camp, but that's her problem, not mine. And she became the director of Ose. And so we got in touch with her, because she read my report and she related to it. And that --

Q: Want to tell me her name?

A: Vivette Samuel. She's the one who wrote the book, by the way.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then, we were there when she got the Chevalier de la legion d'honor. The Legion of Honor in France, a big ceremony, which I attended.

Q: That was for OSE?

A: Pardon?

Q: The honor was for who?

A: For her -- for her.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And so I attended that in Paris and while I was in Paris attending that, I met people who told me, "Don't you remember? Yo -- we met here and you slept in my room there and --" I don't remember these things. But it was wonderful, because all these people were part of my past. I -- it was almost like reclaiming a piece of myself. And so allowed myself to open up and to -- to hear all these things, to talk about all these things, to cry about these thing. So these three years in France, I -- I did that oral history and I -- and I -- I really was able to -- to share a great deal. And at the same time, I really reconnected with my cousins. And Jew -- they were not -- they -- they be not -- that doesn't -- I ma -- I -- it was family and we talked about our -- we -- we filled all our holes in our memories about our parents and grandparents and that. In the meanwhile, th -- since then, I've done a lot of genealogical work out -- one of our sons is very interested in that and he is on the computer and doing all kinds of

stuff. And so, I have send them all this stuff too and I found a cousin on my father's side and all this kind of thing has hap -- I mean, he found me, I didn't find him, he found me. And so, all of this has been very, very beneficial to -- to me. And so when I came back from France and we settled down here and we joined a congregation, a Conservative one. And I joined the educa -- adult education committee, what else? And the [indecipherable] committee. It was not as satisfactory, because the memories of our congregation in Syracuse are such that we can never duplicate that. It was -- you cannot recreate an extended family like that when you're older than the rest of the peop -- you can no longer move in the same -- in the same way. So we, sadly we -- we have not connected in our congregation. But, coming back to my work there, I gave several talks. I offered to -- because I was part of adult education, I gave a talk about my experiences. And this led to my being the Holocaust speaker, maybe about six years ago, seven years ago, I was -- on Yom HaShoah, there is Holocaust day, I was the speaker for this -- the whole Chapel Hill community. It was extremely well attended and I was able to di -- I -- I wrote a paper, a -- you know, based on my experience and I mostly talked about what we alluding to before, how do you talk about the Holocaust. And I had read an article by Rabbi Shulweiss. He's a rabbi in Encino Valley in -- in -- in California. And he's always been one of my gurus, one of the people I like to read. He's very liberal minded and he is -- we actually -- when we were in California -- we took a trip to California about 11 years ago and we made it a

point to be, on Saturday, in -- in that area, so we could attend services. Well, he -- he is such a personal person. I mean, he comes and shakes your hand and where are you from? And I know somebody in Chapel Hill and this -- this kind of thing. But he is liberal, he is -- he writes beautifully, he is -- he is my kind of rabbi. I've never had one like that. And he had written about telling his children about the Holocaust and how do you tell them about it and how he had great deal of difficulties dealing with this and telling his children about the Holocaust, until he found about -- found out about the Righteous Gentiles and about the people who have helped, during the -- during the war in -- in all countries. And that not, quote, everybody was against the Jews, unquote. There were people helping. And by looking at that aspect of the -- what happened during the war, he was able to then talk to his children about the other things that happened.

Q: Now, can you elabo -- can you elaborate on that distinction and why -- why that was so important for him?

A: Because it -- it puts -- number one, a posit af -- a positive aspect on the -- on what seems like a ca -- total inhumanity of man against man and that's all you hear about. But there was a humane aspect, at least in some of the people. And the second thing is, in talking to the children about these horrible things that happened, from time immorial whether it's from Haman down to all the generations of the Crusades and what have you, all our kids hear is about the persecution. But when you can tell them

about people who've helped the Jews and are still helping the Jews, you can m-modify that message. And when you -- and to me there is one more point, if you can talk about things that Jews have achieved, they're -- next to the Holocaust Museum, there should be a museum of the -- learning through the ages, the -- I'm not talking about the Nobel Prizes, the Jewish Nobel Prizes or the Jewish basketball players. I'm talking about the wisdom of -- of the ages, of the si -- of the -- the learning that took place, the contributions to -- to everything. And you have to balance it all. And so, this was the gist of my talk. I talked about -- I didn't talk about what I did -- I can never talk about what I did during the war. This, to me, is -- number one it's too personal and number two, it's I focus -- I want to focus on the children and -- and what happened to them. But I also wanted to -- with this -- this reading of -- this thing about -- that Rabbi Shulweiss wrote, I was able to focus also on the rescue aspect. And then I can wean myself into that whole rescuing effort. But I'm a Jew, rescuing my own. You know, it's not quite the same as non-Jew rescuing.

Q: Right.

A: And this is -- so this is my talk that I gave and from then on I have been in demand. And at first I was not very selective and I accepted all the offers, feeling that I had a duty, a responsibility, and -- and becoming aware that indeed, you have to talk in the first person. You -- this is the real stuff, that can touch you. And this summer, I feel very virtuous, I cleaned out my files, because I was home so much.

And I have stacks and stacks of letters from kids in schools where I talked about. And I keep those. I have thrown out a lot of stuff in my life, but I'm keeping these. I hope my children and grandchildren would see them, because they've been touched by -- by the real thing and so, although I usually tell them I don't -- that -- that other people have known what I have done and that kind of thing. I said, I have to tell them specifically what I did, otherwise not real to them. So I have learned to do that in various, different ways. And of course I have -- I've talked. I give a li -- different emphasis whether I talk at the university or whether I talk at the church youth group and you know, it's different, focus is different, [indecipherable] is different, pattern. But I've been able to do it as a berd -- on -- as I told you earlier. And just last year, I did so many that it was really exhausting and then I -- I'm doing -- handling it very well, while I'm -- my audience -- and I don't need any notes, I don't need any papers and I just talk and I -- I love to talk in public. This is -- by the way, is -- I don't write. I have never been able to write and even in my very successful schooling, writing was always a problem. And my teachers tore out their hair and they didn't know why I was so good in everything else, and not in writing. So writing is something I don't do. But I make an outline -- I make myself an outline, once I know I have to have a beginning and a middle and an end and I have to clearly define in my introduction what I'm going to cover and then I zoom and I talk. And that's how -- like I said, I don't have my written talks, except for the one that I gave at this conference at UNC,

where they were supposed to be published in a book. They never were, but I really wrote out something on rescue and resistance. And so until last year, I found out that I had this after reaction of arrhythmia -- of irregular heartbeat. When it happened the first time, I didn't quite relate, but it happened the second time, after I gave a talk, and then I went to see a doctor and I'm on medication. So I have been slowing down on this a little bit. And I heard a speaker from England, a wonderful person, a non-Jew, who has devoted his life to teaching the Holocaust -- in -- in England, Steven Smith, who created the one and only teaching Holocaust museum in England and he -- after hi -- an experience in Israel, when he went to Yad Vashem and came back to devote his life to this and I heard him talk here, in a small group. Somebody brought him over and then I told him about, you know, my difficulty to continue talking. He says, "But then, don't do it. Let somebody else do it." And I have to accept the fact that I'm not going to do as much of that any more. But I must go and tell you about something else that has given me back so much in the last few years. About five -- it'll be five years this December, Ose had, in celebration, I believe of the 80th anniversary of the creation of Ose in -- in Russia, a reunion in Paris of the hidden children. The children they had hidden during the war. And of course I went. And to me, this has been the highlight of my last few years here and a tremendously important experience. Because, when I -- as I have given these interviews, as I'm doing with you today. Or as I'm being -- talk and s -- people ask me for specifics, I

don't remember specifics. I don't remember names of kids, I don't remember specific facts. Is it because in the early years here, I really so blocked out everything that it's blocked away totally? I don't know. Or did I just not invest myself enough in these kids that I don't remember them? I felt a guilt --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number three, side B.

A: -- years here, I really so blocked out everything that it's blocked away totally? I don't know. Or did I just not invest myself enough in these kids that I don't remember them? I felt a guilt that I maybe didn't put enough of myself into them. Well, little by little, I reconne -- first of all, I reconnected -- a woman who lives in Richmond tried to find me, because I had been her social worker and her counselor and what have you -- and --

Q: Where -- where was she then?

A: She was living in Richmond, but she was only sip --

Q: No, when you were her counselor?

A: Oh, well, there's -- the story is that she was in Rivesaltes, her parents both died in Rivesaltes, of dysentery. She was left an orphan. Got her out the camp and she was with the Jewish scouts and then in another --

Q: How -- how old was she, about?

A: Oh, teen-ager, 16? 14 - 15 - 16? And then, apparently, when I was in the underground, I hid her in a convent. I say apparently, because I don't remember. And when the war was over and I reopened the first children's home, I took her into that children's home and she was in the sewing room and she showed me pictures of her with me and all that. I don't remember. And she found me where we were living in France. She happened to be on sabbatical with her husband, who is at the university in Richmond and she's an artist. She had come to this country to unite with family and it didn't work out, as so often it didn't, but she made a life for herself. Had no children. And so she told me all that story and then we have -- now, whenever we go through Richmond, I see her. Whenever she comes down here -- she was here recently and she did a lot of beautiful artwork and have it in -- and she gave me a lot of her work. And she has such a positive memory of the things I did on behalf of her family and herself, that I was astounded. I was -- I mean, anybody thinks that much. You know, I had just sort of -- because I -- I couldn't remember these things, I thought maybe I hadn't put anything into it. And then there was this reunion in France. And here I was with my husband and there were 500 children between the ages of 55 and 70, I would say, coming from all over the world. Of course, the majority from France, but they were from Israel, they were from Argentina, they were from the United States, from England, from all over. And they were looking for

pieces of themselves in -- in other's memories. And pictures were plastered all over, for people looking each other. Be -- I stayed with my cousin, so I didn't stay there the whole time, but I attended all the meeting. And some people were looking for me. Some kids were looking for me. There was particularly one woman, I mean th-this one had phoned me already. She had gone to Paris seeking -- looking for anybody she had been connected with during the war, because she had lost all her family. And she lived in Toronto and she had, through somebody at the information center on the Holocaust, she had ga -- f -- happened to meet somebody whom I worked with during the war, and gave her my addre -- and she wrote to me and I found out that I was the director of the children's home, after the war, where she was. And she told me any number of stories about me and the things I did. Including serving these kids breakfast in bed on Shabbat morning, because I don't remember it. She told me ab -- that -- the stories I told on Friday night, that she had kept with her all her life. I don't remember. But it must have been me and then it must have have happened. And then in Paris, the most fantastic thing that happened wa -- there was Friday evening service -- there were Friday evening of wet -- at four o'clock in the afternoon, because sundown is at four o'clock and it's winter and this December. So we had services, maybe five o'clock, it was dark and women upstairs, men downstairs. And I'm -- we all had now name tags and on the name tags we had put down where we had been with children's homes and the name of children home, the camps and so on.

But nothing distinguished the social workers from -- the workers from the -- the children, the counselor, and we all had the same nametag. So I had the Rivesaltes and Moultanta and Polousa -- the names of place -- the name. And --

Q: Te-Tell me, I'm just curious, how many places did you work?

A: Oh well, I -- I have to count. First Rivesaltes and then I worked in a children's home called Polousa and then I worked in the underground and then I worked -- I opened a children's home in Moultanta and then one outside of Paris. So, for this agency, I worked in four different places. And so -- and of course there were workers there and I knew many of the workers and it was wonderful to talk with the workers. Some came from Israel, some came from elsewhere and, "Do you remember, you slept in my room that night when you were arrested?" "I did? I don't remember." And that kind of thing. But up -- up in that service on Friday afternoon, next to me sits a very elegant woman in her fur coat and she jerks around and says in French to me, "Where you from?" And I said, "From America." And she says, "Oh, you look so French. I thought you were from France." So I says, "I'm a little bit from both." And then she looks at my tags. "Oh, you were in Rivesaltes?" All the way -- all the time thinking that I'm one of the kids, too, you know, because it doesn't say social worker or worker or any -- or counselor or anything like that. And she said, "When were you there?" And I s -- told her. And then she says, "I was in Rivesaltes. My parents were in Rivesaltes, they were deported. My brother was in Rivesaltes. And a

social worker took me out of the camp, although I was over 16, she faked my papers. And I shall all remember her, she took me out and took me to such and such a pla --." And I said, "What was -- what was the name of the social worker?" And she said, "Simone Weil." And it was just absolutely incredible. We just fell into each other's arms and -- and then she happens to know my sister-in-law and all the store -- that -- she survived, obviously, in hiding. And she married a Jewish -- French Jewish man who knew my family and so that's why she knew about my family, about my brother. And we talked and when the service was over, we went downstairs, we met the men and we've -- and then she's been writing to me -- you know, not much, but -- but through her, somebody else got in touch with me and then there was the woman in -- in Toronto who got somebody else in touch with me. And these kids, in quotation mark, have given me back so much in -- of my own memories. And validating someone, myself or my work, which I had completely devaluated, because of my lack of memory, that maybe that's what has enabled me to give all these talks. And to -- to really talk about the children, because they have enriched my memories tremenda -- it's -- it's just been incredible. And then books have been written, books that describe experiences that have been mine and I have read them and so this has been my latest journey, as of the last five years. And we've gone back to France. In fact, next year would be our 50th wedding anniversary and we plan to go back to Strasbourg, where I still have a cousin. And so we -- each time I go now, we

reconnect and so, at that conference, I had another fantastic experience. We met -- wh-when I say we, I mean we, all retired social workers -- not social worker -- all professional workers of the same vintage, within a year or two, who had all worked for Ose during the war, either in the camp -- three of us -- four of us were from the camp and had worked in Rivesaltes. One was the wife of the -- the widow of the -- the head of our underground team and another one w-was the worker who was in the children's home, but we all, in one capacity or another had been connected to this work. We met together after the conference. And it was the most wonderful thing that happened to me. Something that doesn't exist for me in this country. There's no one I can talk like that. And my husband wasn't part of that. He -- he -- he -- he [indecipherable] went up the Eiffel Tower or something, but anyway, we had this wonderful sharing and I needed it. Maybe they needed me too, there, but --

Q: I -- I want to ask you a question about your husband and if you don't want to talk about it -- but I know that you mentioned in the interview -- the video interview, that he's not able to talk about any experiences?

A: No.

Q: What's the fundamental difference between you and him?

A: He's a very introverted person. A very private person. Also he -- he was a -- a very lonely child when he grew up. His siblings were much older and he was really

left to his own devices. And has very traumatic memories of his childhood, but he has made contact --

Q: That were related to the war, or --

A: Oh yes, all related to the war, and then he was alone in boarding school in England and then he came here and -- but finally -- we've talked about this a great deal. Finally he has made contact with the Speedwerk Foundation to do an interview. Now, they -- they called him, they said yes, we will work you [indecipherable] and I hope it's going to happen, because I wish he would. We did take one trip with our grown -- before our children got married, our sons, when we were living in France, we all went to Germany, to his house and to his village. And there he -- while we were there he was able to talk to the children a little bit about -- in the cemeteries full of Lipmans and all that. Can we stop for a minute?

Q: Sure [indecipherable]

A: I want to put the air conditioner on.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm getting very -- is that [inaudible]

Q: [indecipherable] I want to spend a little bit of time talking about just th-the -- the pattern of your -- of your life, some of your personal development, your -- your marriage and your family. One of the thing that struck me in -- in -- in the video interview that I watched, you said -- I -- I -- I -- I could look it up, but you said

something about -- and it was related, I think even -- in fact, when you were speaking about your -- the gaps in your memory and the things that you blocked out, that you didn't remember a lot of the children, because you were afraid to get too close. And I was wondering how -- how that played out in your own family? Did -- did you continue to be a person who was afraid to get close to people? Or were -- were you the opposite?

A: Now that I know that, it probably was not a failure to get close to the children that broke off my memory, but rather a -- a whole blocking out of -- of -- of feeling related to these memories. I -- I don't think it interfered with my relationships with my children at all. I don't think so. We have a very -- we have a close relationship. We -- it did not interfere with my work. I -- as I told you, I -- I worked in a variety of setting, dealing with children. I started out by being the director of a day care center, where I chose not to remain the director, but to become the case worker, because I wanted to learn to work directly with children. I interrupted my career for four years to be alone at home, you know, one child in two rooms upstairs. Peter sometime ask, "How did you do it?" He ask in his multiple room, multiple bathroom house that everybody has these day. And somehow it must have worked out, because I remember incidents where I was getting cl-claustrophobic and with one child at home and I remember vividly -- it's just a little incident and I spanked him and I was enraged and wha -- you know, on the verge of being abusive mother and I'm joking,

but you know, when you're at -- at home with a kid all the time. And many years later, when he was at college, he was filling out these papers and some -- some kind of study where he ask whether he was ever spanked when he was a kid and he answered no and I said, "But Peter, don't you remember I spanked you?" I had such guilt about it. And --

Q: You spank him once or many times?

A: I don't -- no, I'm not a spanking mothe -- but that day I remember so vivid, I can see myself. I don't know what he had done or what drove me nuts. And then he said he was never spanked and I said, "But don't you remember that day?" You know, "I don't remember." And then it occurred to me that when the climate is good, a little bit of bad weather doesn't matter. So the climate must have been good and that was just a little bout of bad weather. So, on the whole the climate's been good and so I must have done something right about that. I worked with children, I -- I went back to work in foster care. I went, eventually, when we left Cleveland and my husband was transferred to Syracuse, I interrupted for awhile, because we had just made an -- hit a new city and Robby was just entering school and I floundered around for awhile, not knowing what I wanted to do and Syracuse was -- looked to me like to be in the dark ages as compared to Cleveland. Eventually it turned out to be really our highlight in our life. And eventually I went to work for child guidance clinic. And there, for a variety of reason, was able to develop my own style of work, because we

had very poor leadership. So, there was one of the benefits of poor leadership, I [indecipherable] was able to give papers -- not writing, give paper. And became a consultant to early childhood programs. I became a consultant to preschool, to pre-K, to daycare, to nurse -- private nursery school. While I was still on the staff of the -- of the mental health department, the child guidance clinic. And developed all kinds of workshops for all the staff -- the staffs of the various early childhood programs in Syracuse, I did any number of training and workshops and stuff like that. So I always dealt with children and I have all these wonderful letters of people thanking me.

Q: Let me get back to your own children now. Your -- you mentioned before that book, “Children of the Holocaust”?

A: Pardon?

Q: That -- the book, “Children of the Holocaust”?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you have a -- have a first account with other families of -- of Holocaust survivors or people from your own position? You know, where you’ve seen relationships between the parents and the children and -- and that’s part one and then part two is -- ha-has there been any entrance in your own family, of these issues?

A: No. It’s interesting, a -- you know, as I said earlier, neither my husband and I view our -- because we’re parents, both of us are parenting our children, we view ourselves as survivors, but the children of survivors and children of the Holocaust,

talk more about their parents who have been in -- in the death camps. And that's very different from having [indecipherable] so we are quite a large step removed from that. And particularly my husband who was not -- I mean he left Germany at -- when he was 17 and was in England. So, he was interned in England, you know, J-Jews were interned -- I mean, Germans were interned in Eng-England, so he was in the [indecipherable] he was in a camp, but that camp was a country club compared to what people in France had to go through. So I don't think my children considered themselves as children of survivors. They consider -- th-they know their parents have a history and they have shown some interest in it. I can only compare my family, for instance, to this other woman who w-was a witness in Italy and -- and went through that -- who came, also as a counseled student. And she has the same relationship that we have with their three children, we -- we have same age children, with one in between. And I don't see any difficulties in these relationships. And interesting enough, my husband has a sister in New York, there's a big age gap and she got married youn -- married very young and s -- and he got married very late, so the -- the generations are very skewed, you know, so she's already a great grandmother, you know, and we, our grandch-children are not even Bar Mitzvah, you know, so it's a big, big gap there. And they have two daughters -- my sister-in-law, they have two daughters and one is in her 60's already, my niece and her sister. And her sister is a few years younger and her sister considers herself as a chil -- a child of survivors and

attended all these meetings of a group as child of survivors. And the older sister doesn't understand it, why does she have that need? So it is something entirely perceived by the child, for God knows -- a variety of individual reasons, a pass -- this -- place in the family, self perception, I don't know what. But I don't feel -- the only thing that -- both boys married, of course, women born in this country. Have no connection -- I mean, they're American born women and -- so sometimes I feel there is a -- there is a -- a little gap there. Just a little gap there, just like this -- we are -- we are not the old generation from the old countries, but we are different. But I cannot quantify it or qua -- even qualify it. It's -- it's something that I perceive, but I don't think our children ever felt themself to be any different for having parents who were survi --except from having parents who mispronounce names [indecipherable] my sons made any numbers of -- of jokes about their mother putting the accent on -- on syllable -- on being more strict than most parent. I have a -- you know -- we were strict with our children and I'm not sorry at all about it. And maybe they view that as being part of our European background, I don't know. Never talked about it. I don't view that as having been in the way with our children.

Q: Mm-hm. What -- what fields did the boys go into?

A: They're both engineers. Their father is an engineer.

Q: Like their father.

A: They're both in computers. And when the three of them get together, I go to the kitchen -- no. No, I -- we have a computer and I know how to handle it. So --

Q: What about your ola -- I know what I wanted to ask you. Is there a point at which you can recall where you began to feel that you were an American?

A: I wanted so badly to put everything behind me, that I think it -- it's -- it came instantly. First of all, I spoke the eng -- I spoke the language, quite comfortably. And --

Q: How did you come to learn English so well?

A: Well, I was a good student at school. I had six years of English, not like the United States where you have one year of French and then you drop it all. When we had a language, we had it for six years. I had six years of English, I had -- this -- to that, we were bilingual at home, or trilinguals. F -- Alsatian and French and I couldn't understand German and I study at home. I learned Hebrew in Hebrew school. I learned Latin, English and Greek simultaneously. I had six years of Latin and six years of English. And I'm not totally mixed up, but I am -- I'm doing fairly well with language and so when I got my scholarship, my coworker was just -- if not more qualified than I was, to get a scholarship, but she had no English. And I had not spoken English since I left school. This is 1946 and I left school in '38. I had not spoken English. And I was -- my English was good enough to make straight A's in graduate school at Tulane. But it was lousy to go and -- every day living. I never

raised my hand in class. I could write, but I couldn't really express myself. And I couldn't order anything in a c -- restaurant or anything, for a long time. But when I came back and we were married, there was not a problem. I remember kids in daycare laughing at me because in saying -- saying Bobby, I said booby. You know, and they laughed because an O is an O and not a R, you know? It's not Bobby, it's booby. And I learned to disregard French phonetics and -- little by little. How did I feel -- I remember -- I don't even remember being sworn in, but I remember I became a citizen after five years. That's technical. And it's interesting that while we lived in France for three years, recently -- I mean, that's 15 years ago. Gosh, it's 17 years ago. And I was very happy to be there. I enjoyed it, however, as an American. It was not -- I loved to go there, but boy I -- this is home. Oh, totally. And --

Q: And ho-how do you account for that?

A: My life's been here, the majority of my life, all -- I mean, I was 26 when I came and I'm 78 now. Many more years here. My kids are here, but mostly my grandchildren are here. My profession is here. My -- I don't even have the professional language to discuss anything in French, you know? I -- I couldn't -- my -- my French is -- is very good and when we lived near France I had a ball, because I confused everybody by saying that I was American and speaking French very well. You know, that kind of jo -- but -- and I enjoyed every moment we were there. I missed a lot of the co -- house ease and comfort that we have in America because

everything is -- was a little more complicated there. Although we had everything we needed. But home is here, coming back to my kids and to m -- I mean, my kids live miles away, but this is where I c-can express my thoughts, my feelings. I'm -- I'm not much a student any more in France, you know?

Q: Yeah. D-Do you feel safer here? I-Is that an element at all?

A: No, mm-mm. I felt just as safe in Israel, at midnight in Jerusalem. I do -- I mean, oh, I feel safe in France, it was just as well -- as safe. In France --

Q: Now I'm not referring to personal street crime.

A: Oh.

Q: I'm referring to safety as a Jew.

A: Oh, no. I'm --

Q: Do you feel -- I mean, do you feel like a -- it's possible something like that could happen again in Europe and not here?

A: No. Mm-mm. Mm-mm. No, I -- I -- I don't think so. But there is something that -- that gets in the way in France or in -- in European countries and -- and everywhere. I'd have to tell you an experience that I had last year. When I am in France and of course in Germany, and -- but in Germany we only have gone because of this cathartic trip for my husband, to go back to his hometown and ex -- w-we went -- I went with him once first to the cemetery and it was a very important trip for him to reconnect. He wa -- his family was a very prominent family there and their house still

exists. It's divided in four apartments, so it was a very substantial place and father was very prominent there. When I am --

Q: Wh-What happened to his father? Oh, his father died [indecipherable]

A: His father died and his mother was deported. His mother died, we found out just about three years ago, through the Holocaust Museum, where she died. She was deported from the village in which she grew up, into Hanover. She never made it out of Germany. She finally got the papers to leave. We don't know why she waited so long. By the time she decided, it was too late to get papers and she was eventually put in the Riga ghetto in Latvia and then from Riga, she was then put into labor camp in Stutthof and through the Holocaust Museum's library, we were able to get in touch with a place in Stutthof, a -- a museum that they erected on the camp, that Stutthof camp and they sent us copy of a page of a ledger which shows her name and her date of death in Stutthof, in a camp. In December, 1944, the war was over in France and she still died there. She was in her 50 -- must have been a very strong --

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Museum Me -- this is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number four, side A.

A: -- in December, 1944, the war was over in France and she still died there. She was in her 50 -- must have been a very strong woman to last that long. For the longest time we thought that she had been -- we knew that Stutthof camp had put all their still alive internees on barges and drowned them at sea when the Russians advanced. And so we had always been tha -- under that impression that's what happened to her. But the stutta -- the camp museum sent us a book, all in Polish, which somebody translated for us -- not translate, but read for us and then came to the conclusion that she must have died of a typhoid breakout at that time, in December 23, where most of the people died. So, why am I telling you all of this? Oh, going to Europe -- when I deal with people my age, and that has been true -- they were my age 50 years ago -- I mean, 30 year ago and I went to France. My -- my unspoken question is, where were you during the war? Now, that's a question I don't ask here. And so that's -- that's something that exists a little bit less now, because I've gone back to Europe more often. And I had an interesting experience, we went back -- when we lived in France, between '83 and '86, I went back to the farm my parents had lived in during the war and where I lived with them for not quite a year [indecipherable]. And found

the place and the people were very nice, let us come into the farm and we were there. But, prior to that, I -- I have to backtrack, we stayed in a hotel. It's one of these chateaux that put up tourists. And in the very place where my father had been in a camp, in Teeveeai blast, my father had been in a camp for a brief period. And all the time I'm there, I'm saying to myself -- th-the owner of the -- the owner of the camp was my age, I said, where was he when my father was in camp, in Teeveeai, right here? Was he in the chateau, where was he -- doing? And I'm uncomfortable. And then the next morning we were on -- on -- on the way to -- on the farm, the next morning, you know, what I just described to you, going back to the farm where my parents had lived, and so the owner there said to me -- no, the wife s -- the owner's wife said to me, "Where you off to today?" You know, just chat. I said, "We're going on a pilgrimage." And she says, "Oh, you're going to Oradure." Oradure siran is a village which is very famous in that terrible thing that happened in the end of the war, when France -- the Germans took the whole population of Oradure, put them in a church and put a match to it. And that's become a pilgrimage place. I said, "No, I'm going to the place where my parents were hiding during the war." I said -- well, you know, just kind of spill it out. And she said, "Oh. They were -- my husband was in the resistance and he was in camp so and so as a member of the resistance." Well, everything cleared, you know? No more -- but until I know where --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- where were you. It happened to me once in the States, when there was -- in a -- in a group, the French speaking group in Cleveland, which I -- or in Syracuse, I forget where, which I joined for a very brief period, there was one woman who was from Germany and she talked about being in Strasbourg during the war -- where? In my house? Where? I couldn't connect. I couldn't. It was a very brief kind of thing. So I have this in Europe, which I don't have when I'm here.

Q: Yeah.

A: And last year I had an incredible experience. We went -- usually we go on -- we don't travel on our own, but we thought we could handle tha -- we go on tours or we go in elder hostels or things like that, but I -- I wanted to see Prague and Budapest and we did it on our own. And with a lot of soul searching, we decided to include Vienna, which ain't so easy for us. Well, we only spend a night or two there and after all, you know, the war is over, you can't hold it forever and you know, the whole reasoning. And so, in Prague, and in order to be understood, you speak German, because I don't do Czech and -- so we spoke German. And it's run over with German tourists and in the hotel you s -- you use German. And it didn't bother me and -- and you know, this is a practical thing to do. Then we took a train to Vienna and we had this very comfortable compartment, with -- and a woman from South Africa or Australia. Anyway, it was a very pleasant first class compartment. We never travel first class, but our travel agent said, "You stay in a Eastern Euro-European country,

you better upgrade yourself. So we are there, we arrive at the border of Austria, the train stops and there is passport control. And this border guy -- I don't know what you call it -- officer, comes in, very innocuous looking young man, with a khaki shirt and a khaki pants and some -- some -- something on him and in German asks us for our papers. And I broke down. I handed him -- I handed him my passport and I felt my tears running down. This was a German, speaking German, asking me for my papers. Were they going to be fake? Was I going to be arrested? Was I going to make it? I surprised myself totally, my having tears running down my sh -- so it's still there. In spite of all the talking, reading, doing, I ma -- I couldn't believe it. I -- I -- I just couldn't believe it. It wasn't just one thing, it -- the -- the Gestalt of the whole thing.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, being in Europe is, in this way, different from being in America. Not safer, just different. [inaudible]

Q: No, I think that's a very -- a --a very good description.

A: Yeah.

Q: And I think it's an important distinction.

A: Yeah, oh, I -- I have to think about -- it -- it's something that -- that's there. I mean, it -- as I'm getting older, there are fewer people of my age there, so they only choo --

Q: But I'll tell -- I -- I -- I -- just to share something with you, you know, I -- as I -- I mentioned to you before, to --

A: You went to Poland?

Q: To Poland in April and that's the first time I ever went to Europe, anywhere.

A: Oh.

Q: I never went to Europe before. And -- and I had some mixed feelings about going to Poland. As it happens, my father has a very close associate, a fr -- an old -- an old friend who was from -- from Warsaw, Jewish doctor, a woman who survived the war, whose parents did not. And she was out of Warsaw when the war came.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And she lives there now, she committed herself to staying and living there. And so I've been in touch with her and she's invited me to come many times, but I've never gone. And so I was intrigued about going there and I -- and I just want to go to this particular conference because they were people who do what I do on radio, from all over Europe.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Meeting that just happened to be meeting there. But th-there was this -- I had a similar reaction, which is I'm looking around at everybody, I'm looking at the few Jews that are left in Poland -- and I went and did an interview with a -- a young man

a little bit older than me, in his late 40's, who runs the only Jewish magazine published in Poland.

A: Yeah, Jewish what?

Q: Jewish magazine.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: That was started just a couple of years ago, after Communists --

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: -- were out of power, that he was allowed to form a -- a magazine.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And I met a German conductor, who was a -- who was a protégé of Leonard Bernstein's --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- who happened to be conducting a concert in -- in Warsaw that week. But I was asking the same questions everywhere I went. And then loo -- and then we were standing, looking at all these older peasants from around Warsaw and I'm thi -- the whole time, I was wondering the same thing. You know, well what were they -- where were they and what were they doing? And --

A: You know, when we went to Germany, we -- this while we were in France, it was, well, our 35th anniversary and we invited our kids to come on over, too. And -- our sons with their wives. They were -- was married, but had no children. I would like to

duplicate it with the kids, but it's getting too big and I'm getting too -- I can't handle that many people at a time. But anyway, we went into Germany -- I mean first we went Alsace, I showed them where my parents lived, where I went when I went to school, where my grandparents lived. We showed them all of that. Also went to the cemetery and saw the monument to the Holocaust, all that kind of thing. And went into Germany and Mart-Martin was very determined, we're just going to go. I don't want to talk to anybody and we're going to go just to see the place and show the children where my house was, the cemetery, the school and synagogue and so on -- which doesn't exist any more. And then we're going -- we're driving back, I had [indecipherable] the whole itinerary, I had all the reservations. We were going to just breathe as little of the air as we could and speak a little German as we could and just do it, because it -- it was an ex -- valid -- valid experience for our children, to see where their father grew up. And then -- w-we went two cars and our son flagged us down and said, "You know, this has been a long drive, we -- I don't think we can make it back to France today. We are very tired." And then he asked, "Do you think Dad would mind if we spend another night in Germany?" They were so aware of that. And we said, "No, what's -- that's okay, if we can get a room," -- we were in Heidelberg. And we got a hotel, we needed three rooms and we got three rooms and we went there and the kids went of their own way. We just wanted each our own space a little bit and they wanted to do their thing. And Martin and I walked around

in Heidelberg. But the kids were conscious of the fact that another night in Germany was maybe more that their father could countenance. And you know what, we said, "Gee, this is a beautiful city, darn it." And so we have transmitted our children this, they are aware of it. But it doesn't stop them from -- I don't know, maybe buying something German or -- which is -- I'm -- I'm -- I'm very aware of that, I cannot buy something German. But, it doesn't make sense. Israel buys stuff from Germany. In Europe you cannot separate things -- Germany or Belgium or anywhere else, it's the European stuff, why can't you do it? But here, I could no more buy a bottle of German wine than I could fly to the moon. I mean, it's just, I can't do it. It -- It's -- it's not from the head, it comes from below, you know? So -- so th-that's the difference in -- when I'm in Europe. It's not the safety, it's the awareness of the history, I think.

Q: Yeah. [indecipherable] the memory of -- I -- I -- one of my first cars that I bought was a -- an old Peugeot and I was -- it was -- needed to be repaired all the time. And once I was -- it was really old, I mean it wa -- had like about a hundred thousand miles when I bought it. But I was in the shop once, waiting for it to get repaired and was a man sitting next to me and he looked at me, he says, "So you're in for another repair, huh?" And I said, "Yeah." And he says, "Yeah, me too," he says, "but I'll never buy a Mercedes." And then he looked at me and he rolled up his sleeve and showed me his tattoo. And that was all he had to say, you know, was just --

A: Mm-hm. But you know, the streets in Israel -- have you been to Israel?

Q: No, I've never been there. I'd like to go there.

A: There are plenty of German cars and Israel has -- has given Israel a lot of money. I mean, it's a very personal kind of thing.

Q: Yeah, it's complicated.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: It's hard. How -- how would you say -- well, what we did is, on the list of things that they suggest that we -- there are thing -- I mean w-wh-what -- what they're interested in is your perception of political events that are taking place over the -- you know, the past 40 or 50 years. And when -- wha -- I mean, there's like a million things to talk about. But one thing, if there are things from your experience that would have affected the way that you -- you know, I mean this -- I can show you the list, it's the atomic bomb, the war -- war -- I just -- I guess war in general.

A: I -- I remember very vividly, I couldn't vote then, but I do remember when I -- when Eisenhower was elected, what was that, '50? '51? Something like that. Anyway, I'm not very good at history. And here we're getting a Republican after all these Democratic thing. I thought that everything was going to change. And McCarthy was interviewing, I mean the -- the anti-American kind of hearings were going on. That scared me. I thought that with a new president who was going to be a Republican, versus all -- we had FDR, Truman, all that before. And then I found out

life went on and nothing changed very much. But I was scared at the time. As for the bomb, I was very involved at the time, the atomic bomb. I was very involved in the ban the bomb kind of thing, because -- I remember marching in the -- in the marches with my son in the -- in the -- a stroller. And Dr. Spock was in Cleveland and Dr. Spock -- actually, I consulted with him once, in my professional work and he used the same car repair dealer as we did and so my sons knew that this was the doctor who had written the book that I looked at when he was sick, so he -- he knew who Dr. Spock was. But, anyway, he was -- was, this woman called Sane, it was a -- became active in that. I'm not a very -- and my husband isn't either, we are not the demonstration kind of people, marching kind of thing. But that I mi -- I mean, we don -- we tend to support causes by giving money or even by writing letters and now by e-mail. My husband does more of that than I do. But we are not the -- the demonstration kind of thing. Is that the English word or is it manifesti -- in French it's manifestation. Yeah, it's demonstration.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And so -- but that -- that -- I -- I du -- at the time of the bomb, since I was also involved with young children and I had all this fall-out kind of thing, so I -- I did -- I did march.

Q: Yeah. You mentioned something interesting before that -- that struck me, which was your empathy or sympathetic reaction to seeing other refugees.

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Which is not -- I -- I don't know, I mean what -- I me -- my perception's not always the case with people that have gone through the Holocaust. I mean there are some --

A: See, this has -- has nothing to do so much with the Holoc -- people in the Holocaust, the-they were sent to camps. I -- what I'm talking about is we were expelled -- this is the other piece in the experien -- we lived in the border of France and then almost at the border of Belgium, Holland. You know, Belgium and France. My parents had left Strasbourg and the whole popul -- if you remember my early paper -- my early recording, Strasbourg had been evacuated.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then -- and my parents didn't go with the mobs down in the south side of France. They found their own place, probably a hundred miles west of Strasbourg -- in -- in Lorraine, in a place called Glammer. And so when the war came -- when the -- not when the war came, when the invasion came, we were in the war, but nothing was going, it was the phony war and in the phony war, nothing was going on and we were waiting for something to happen. And what happened is that the Germans went around the maginno line and they invaded Belgium and Holland and poured into France. And we had to leave. People were taking to the roads. I don't know if I sa -- recorded this, but we -- it was a Shabbat morning, my mother had cooked all the

meals for Shabbat. They had never been in a car on a Shabbat and we had a car. And whatever we could, we loaded on top of the car. Couple of mattresses, whatever food we had which was already prepared. And we left in the great [indecipherable] just like the people you see on the roads.

Q: Yeah.

A: Except that we had a car. So that's a piece of my personal experience in France, which may not be at all related to experience of people who went into concentration camp. That's different.

Q: But there's a -- I think you're -- you're -- th-that's a very important distinction. But there's something else that I -- in a more general way --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: I think that there are some Jews who are more able to -- I'm not -- I don't have the -- the words aren't coming. There are some Jews who are able to empathize with other peoples --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- and other struggles, and other people --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- who are suffering. And there are some Jews who are more inward and say, "I have to worry only about Jews."

A: Yeah, is it good for the Jews?

Q: Right.

A: Mm-hm. Yeah, I guess there are two, I don't know. Do you want to ask me where I fit in between?

Q: Yeah.

A: I think actu -- I think I'm more open to suffering in general, I think. Yeah, I really think so, when I think of all the causes we support. But I think the main -- but also, we also do a great deal to support our own. Probably -- probably our main -- I think of our charities, for instance.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It starts with home, it starts with our own community, where we see our needs. Because what we haven't touched upon, and it probably doesn't fit in your questions, but I'm going to touch upon it now. Retirement started in Chapel Hill, here. And we literally touched the ground running and became active immediately in community work. And when I mean community, I mean the Jewish community. This is a very small Jewish community of no business -- no Jewish businesses, it's all academic or research or it's university or the research, Triangle Park and there's literally no Jewish businesses here. So when we came, there was a volunt -- a group of volunteers raising funds for the UJ and a bunch of volunteers having a program for some elderly people. That's all -- well, there was a Hillel on the campus and that kind of thing, was a Haddassah. But there's no organized communit -- there were two

synagogue. And I've been part, from the beginning, of a creation of a Jewish family server. So, what I'm saying is my -- this was my -- although at first I didn't know where to put my volunteer energies, it became -- I'm what -- 60 -- 66 years old and of course I can take classes and I can do -- which we did, right away from the beginning. But I wanted to -- I wanted to be active and I wa -- vare -- I didn't know where to start. I went to Red Cross and I went -- and I went to the research [indecipherable] to the -- because I speak a few languages, maybe I could help them. But none of this was satisfactory. And then by chance I had met somebody who said, "Oh, there is a group that's trying to hire a social worker to get started with the elderly, because it can no longer be done on a voluntary basis and one thing leading to the other, before I knew it, a few years late -- a few years later I was chairman of the Jewish Family Service and I'm still active on this committee. I was charge of the Russian resettlement program here and I'm still in charge of that. We don't resettle anybody any more, but I'm still active in that. And I am still immersed 100% in this. So, yeah, if you wish charit -- my empathy -- I was much -- it was much more satisfactory to -- first of all, it's my professional background that -- my skills came in handy in there -- than to go to Red Cross and when people donate blood to, you know, give them a cookie or something like that. I couldn't relate to that. And I was doing Meals on Wheels. I continued Meals on Wheels, which is not a Jewish program, for the longest time. But then it -- the schedule interfered with something

else and I dropped -- but for five years I was delivering meals to the general community here. So I don't limit it to the Jewish community.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But then, as the community activities became more important -- and they have been, it's been absolutely wonderful, because I work not only -- I work with younger people, instead of being with my peers all the time and my experience is given some validation and my community's help. And so both my husband and I -- he spent the whole day today at Hillel, because of some kind -- but thank God it's only 12 minutes from here, so he can go running back and forth. And that morning, the first thing I talked with the social worker and at Jewish Family Service -- number one I hired her, so I know her very well. Number two, she asked me to do a -- to take care of some difficult situation on a voluntary basis and I report [indecipherable]. And so we're constantly involved with this kind of thing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And this is so -- yeah, I'm -- I mean I empathize with problems mi -- in -- in -- in the -- the -- outside the Jewish community, but I think my emphasis is inside the Jewish community. So, does that answer your question?

Q: Yeah, in general, but I -- I mean -- but I -- but I -- my -- na -- lik-like where -- what were your -- nawa -- d-do you think that your -- that your experiences shaped your general reaction and general ideas about war?

A: Oh yes, definitely.

Q: And could you describe -- talk about that?

A: A-And this is what I -- I think one of the messages that I give the kids when I talk to -- especially the younger children -- I talk to them mostly about not speaking up when there is injustice or prejudice. You know, for evil to -- for evil to flourish, it just -- just take one good man not to talk or sa -- I'm misquoting it, but you know what I'm talking about, not speaking up and -- now, of course they cannot write to their senators, but they can be aware of injustice, even in their school situations. And they can be aware of prejudice and that kind of thing and then that's what I talk to them about and then that's not a Jewish notion, it's -- it's a general, universal no -- so I -- and when people say it can happen here, I really don't believe it, but theoretically, it could happen anywhere. And so this is the message I -- I gave the children. But I'm not sitting at home worrying about war.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I'm -- I think it's dreadful, what's happening in the world nowadays. Again, it started all over again today in -- in Rwanda and in -- in Bosnia it continues, it's so wrong. And one feels totally helpless and then the univer -- and the world community is totally helpless.

Q: Does this -- does it -- it's funny, my own perception is -- I mean, first of all, when I think about the -- the Jewish Holocaust and the number of people that were

executed and the way it was done and there's the -- the whole -- I -- the only thing that I can think is hi -- i-is -- and a -- and it was one of the questions I asked you earlier, which was h-how did -- how did it escalate in -- in people's minds -- y-you know, from the victim's minds, how it escalated?

A: Yeah. I -- I -- I don't know. It -- I -- I don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: I -- I really don't know how. I think that there are s -- maybe people have this -- there is this -- all these hidden revenges and hidden thoughts and hidden blaming and -- that are -- are given -- given ventilation, I mean are able to -- they're able to ventilate, they come out.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know. One of the messages -- something you said remind me of another message that I always give the children. They always say, you know, it's a bat -- or is a genocide here, you know, there is a Holocaust there and it's true, there are -- there are genocides and -- going on and there are mass murders going on all over the world these day, whether it's Bosnia or Rwanda or ethnic cleansing anywhere. But never -- I tell them, remember, never has there been a plan made to systematically destroy a whole people. It was done in Germany. I don't have to tell them about the Wannsee Conference or whatever they -- their -- their history isn't that --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- they don't know that -- that [indecipherable]. But it happens elsewhere that whole ethnic groups are being destroyed and being eliminated. But it happens in sort of a spontaneous and on a different kind of internal war kind of thing. But this was an industrial plan of elimination, with industrial weapons to do it. And in -- I -- I've seen a reenactment of the Wannsee conference on television. It is absolutely unbearable. And so they -- I want to give that message, that this -- in this way, the Holocaust is different. And I don't usually use the word Holocaust, I use the word Shoah. Which they do in France, by the way, they always talk about the Shoah, never about the Holocaust. Because it's -- makes a difference. It makes -- it makes it special.

Q: Which is what? What is -- what is the difference?

A: Shoah?

Q: No, what is the -- what's the -- I just want you to [indecipherable]

A: The different is that this -- the Shoah is this -- this specific plan that was made to -- to destroy a people.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And in a systematic way. And that -- that's unique in the history of mankind.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number four, side B.

A: -- Shoah?

Q: No, what is the -- what's the -- I just want you to [indecipherable]

A: The different is that this -- the Shoah is this -- this specific plan that was made to -- to destroy a people.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And in a systematic way. And that -- that's unique in the history of mankind. What have we not covered?

Q: Let me take a look. Lots of things, I think we did.

A: We have covered things that you probably don't have, even, in there.

Q: [indecipherable] I have so many lists. I -- I do have to ask you this, this is -- over -- over the years, did -- were -- well, let me ask you this, were you aware that -- that Leonard Bernstein -- did you have any -- any interest in Leonard Bernstein?

A: I have no -- had no -- no particular interest in him, no, but I know who he is, that's all.

Q: And were you aware that he was one of the first -- excuse me, the first Jewish musicians to go and work in Germany after the war?

A: No, I didn't know that.

Q: He made a co -- I'm -- one of the things that I find interesting about him is that he was very religious.

A: He was?

Q: Very religious.

A: He was very religious.

Q: Yeah. And he made a commitment to go and work with German musicians after the war and to help build the symphonic system in Israel.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And he would take these trips where he would go from one to the other.

A: Oh, Germany to Israel, mm-hm.

Q: Yeah. Very early and when he started collecting --

A: I didn't know he was religious.

Q: Yeah. Very -- it was a key to his whole psyche.

A: He?

Q: It was a key element in hi -- in his whole psyche.

A: Oh. Mm-hm. I don't have my hearing aid on, so --

Q: Yeah, yeah. I was curious, I'm all -- I'm -- I'm -- I'm -- I -- my perception is, or was that he was in important figure in American Jewry, that people thought of him as someone who was very important. But when I ask the question to people, people usually say, "Well, he wasn't very important."

A: No, I don't perceive him as a pers -- I -- I know he was Jewish, but if you th -- ask me, and I'm -- I'm thinking of a musician rather than a --

Q: Yeah.

A: [indecipherable] you know.

Q: I'm just curious. You know -- oh, I want to -- do you still keep in touch with your friend, Charlotte?

A: Did I talk about having met her in Paris?

Q: No.

A: Oh, that is another fantastic story. And that -- you know, ilch -- my friend Charlotte, who was arrested when I was freed, I never been in touch with her. I didn't have -- I once asked for her address, when a -- a mutual friend and I wrote to her and I never heard from her. So I said -- part of me said she's mad at me because I was liber -- freed and she was arrested. But I let -- dropped the thing, I mean it didn't -- it -- it just disappeared from my memory. And then we went and had that reunion. I said, "Can anybody tell me if Charlotte is here? How would I recognize her?" And we met. And the f -- we hugged and the first thing she said, "Now we can have that piece of pastry together. We never had it, because we were arrested together." I said, "What do you mean? We first had the pastry and it's when we walked out of the pastry shop that we were arrested." And here we were arguing about that. Secondly she said, "You know, I felt very guilty. We had no business being seen together."

Because she looked very Jewish and she said, “We had no --” she was not on our underground network, she was doing some other kind of work. She said, “We had no business being seen together. It -- I was compromising you.” And I compromised myself by being with her. And this is how our reunion took place, arguing over pastry. But then she told me how she got liberated. She was put into jail and knew that in the infirmary of that jail, there was a nurse who worked with the resistance. So her goal was to get into that ner -- infirmary. So she pretended to have a toothache, very bad toothache and she had two teeth pulled, two perfectly good teeth pulled and -- you know, because she complained about it and all the treatment they had was to pull the teeth. And the nurse helped her escape. That’s how it happened. So it took me almost 50 years to find out -- exactly 50 years to find out.

Q: And where did she go after?

A: Oh, th -- she was -- she was part of a -- working with Ose and different kind of thing. When the war was over she worked as a social worker with one of the Jewish agencies in Paris. And so we aged paralleling. And -- but that was the reunion, so that was the first time, took us 50 years to reconnect.

Q: Wow.

A: And I tell that story to the kids and they -- they love that story. Makes it real, you know?

Q: Yeah. Do you still talk -- keep in touch?

A: No. Mm-mm, mm-mm. No. We -- we chatted, but --

Q: Yeah.

A: It's too many people -- too many thing and then our lives have taken so many different courses, I mean it's just im-impossible to do that.

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm not a very good corresponder. Pick up the phone easier, but -- so I had never seen her before, no.

Q: [indecipherable] There was one thing on your interview I wa -- two things I wanted you to -- [indecipherable] I mean, to see if they're still pertinent. I just wrote the pages down.

A: I guess we haven't gone according to any plan. We have just -- it has just emerged, right?

Q: Well, yeah, more or less. I -- well, I had some of a plan [inaudible]

A: Had to get me back on track.

Q: I -- I have found -- I mean, I -- I don't know how it appears to you, that it -- that appears completely discombobulated and random, I apologize. But I have found that it's better to try to initiate conversations and for me to listen --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- than to follow a strict order of questions.

A: Mm-hm. Be -- things are interconnected, it's very difficult to put it in categories.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And every time -- because now I have a whole series of general themes about what to ask you about and every time you start talking about one, I was thinking about another one [indecipherable]

A: And other things came into my mind as I was talking to you, mm-hm.

Q: Yeah. No, the funny thing is, I look over the -- the things that Arwin asked me to make sure we touched about and we've talked about almost all of them. Oh yeah, I -- I just want -- there's -- there's -- take a look at this. This was -- I just wanted you to elaborate on this and this is almost a professional question for when you're [indecipherable]. Y-You were talking about the -- coaching children and giving them new identities.

A: Yeah. Oh, this is interesting, what you underlined was when I did my -- when I did my interview in France with Ose, my oral history, in French and I -- the director of Ose, who was the woman I had worked with in camp, colleague of mine, she immedi -- wrote to me and said, "I read your -- I read your interview and you say exactly the same thing that I have always felt." She became a professional social worker, I developed more professionally. And all we had to do -- all -- all we could do is produce the cards, look at the suitcases, empty the profe -- th -- th -- the personal things to make a child safe, in order to survive. And we had no time to prepare them, to ask them how they feel. The kind of things I would do as a professional therapist, to avoid the trauma of going into a new situation without

having say good-bye to their parents, without knowing where their parents were. With leaving behind everything? I mean, these are traumatic situations which, under normal circumstance, I would take weeks to prepare a child for. I didn't have 24 hours. And I couldn't let these thoughts even -- if -- even if they had existed and I was not professional enough to have these thou -- even if they had existed, I couldn't have had -- let them intrude upon me in my mind. I had to tell a child, "You are no longer so and so, you are so and so. Remember now, give me your name." No, I had to -- "I have to take your suitcase away, because it has your name on it." I didn't say, "How do you feel about my taking your suit --" I mean, that's what I'm talking about.

Q: Yeah.

A: The -- the profe -- I'm -- I'm glad I didn't know enough about -- about how to deal with trauma, otherwise I would have been hampered in -- in my moving fast and so we saved kids life. And on the whole, I think that in many ways, when I read -- there have been some studies made on the children, the hidden children. More and more there has been. It's interesting. The -- the first people to speak after the Holocaust were the survivors. It took them a long time to talk and they began to talk about their experiences. And then the children of survivors talked of their -- what they had in common. And it -- and other groups at different times. Now, for instance, there were also the children of deportees, that's more in Europe, that's not here,

because we don't have that many children here, of people who were deported. And then, only very recently, the -- the children who were hidden, sort of felt -- there's a whole group of them, they have something in common. And they didn't speak and I ask -- I know -- there's one here -- I mean, there are several here in Chapel Hill, but there is one I know fairly well. And she only recently came out of the closet and she say, "I'm talking about it." And she said, "Quite often this was painful." Of course, she lost her parents while she was in hiding and then she stayed with some relatives and well -- came to this country, whatever, I don't know all the details. But she says also, "Since we survived, we didn't feel that we had a voice in all of this. I mean, we were not victims, we survived." And now, all of a sudden, they feel they have something to talk about, because they indeed were victims and they have a lot in common. And so now there are the hidden children coming out of the woodwork. They have -- they had a big meeting of the hi -- children hidden by Ose in Miami two years ago. I didn't go to that one. And there is a newsletter and I'm on the mailing list and I -- there is one -- a huge one in Israel. And these kids find they have something in common, because they were hidden and they had their losses and so forth and so on. And -- why am I telling you that, I lost my train of thought. Where we are at?

Q: Well, we were talking about the -- the level of trauma that people ha -- deal with and your perception of the trauma.

A: Yeah, and that -- but -- a-and the studies, yeah, what I wanted to say is that there were studies made of how these children have adjusted. There's one I have from France and you know, they don't do any worse or better than the general population. They have their share of successes and of divorces and of failed businesses and -- and of successes. They -- they really don't differ statistically from the general population, not that the general population is doing that well in -- you know, I mean it's ver -- they doing very normally. And then -- and one -- as one of the surviving -- one of the hidden children in Paris told me, "Hey, we didn't do so badly, you know, considering what we gone through. Why do you think this is so?" And I gave her my interpretation and I said that considering that what is very important is just after the very early years of a child's life, let's say the first -- some say it's the first two, some say it's the first two, whatever it is. Most of these children came from intact, nurturing families. And what happened to them, happened to the whole family and not within the family. So that they survived more psychologically intact, actually. If you understand what I mean? To -- children are -- there are many children today who are dysfunctional because of the pathology within the family. Because of parents who don't get along or -- or whatever it is, or parents who divorce or -- or all kinds of things that happen inside the family. What happened to these kids -- and -- and so they lose their nurturing, their loo -- they lose all the si -- sense of stability, they lose a sense of -- of security and what have you. But what happened to these hidden kids

is that they had good, solid years, early childhood, of nurturing and of -- of -- of -- of -- as -- a stable family situation and they don't perceive their parents as the perpetrators of terrible things. It is -- it happened to the entire family. And, if anything, they become concerned about their parents -- about the fate of their parent. I ha -- when we're finished with this, I want to show you a absolutely devastating book. I have a book, I think it's two telephone books of -- that are the children that were deported from France. The -- this put together by Serge Clarksfeld and his wife. Does the name mean anything? Serge Clarksfeld is a lawyer whose parents were deported and he devoted his life t -- he is the one who bought Barbie to France, he and his wife brought Barbie. His wife is German and not Jewish and they have devoted their life to hunt the perpetrators and war criminals. In the first book he wrote, it was a -- a -- Barbie is -- is very famous for rounding up a whole children's home called Eezure. It was not directly an Ose home, but related to Ose and we had workers in there. And here wa -- this was in spring of 1944, April 1944, it was almost over and he rounded up the staff and the children and except for one boy, who happened to visit there and was left off the truck because he was not Jewish, everybody was sent to Auschwitz. Nobody survived, none of the kids, except one of them -- one of the counselor -- I'm -- I'm not sure. But there is a mother of the children -- two mothers of the children with the Clarksfelds became active, first of all in founding rap -- Barbie and bringing him to trial and he was brought to trial while

we were living in France. And we were in front of the prison with each one of us carrying a name of a child, big, big, big panels. And what his job was -- became -- was to investigate the identity of each of these children and get as much data on them and pictures of them, so we don't say 41 children, you say, Bobby and Suzy and Eddie and -- and give them all a name and an identity and he published this book, "The Children of Eezure". And then he became to study the deportation list from France and cull out the children and try to find an identi -- when he published, all over the world. And he's put together the first of what he thinks is a series of books where he has pictures and stories about each one, and there were 10,000 children deported from France. So he -- it was published in France and there was an exhibit in the new school in New York and it was published by, I think the New York Press and it was available and so I got it. And they are not numbers, they're kids. And there you can see from what loving, nurturing backgrounds they came. And now I think this is what I'm tr -- I'm trying to talk about, what these kids went through, I just couldn't address it, I just couldn't prepare them. I had to move very quickly. Does that answer your question?

Q: Very well, yes. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I have to tell you, one of the most -- there were two things at Auschwitz that I saw that are similar. One -- one is that they have in some of the prison barracks, they have plaques all down the walls, with

photographs and little biographies, so that you see that these are people, that you -- and you can sit there -- you could sit there the whole day and read about it.

A: You go to Yad Vashem and you go into the children's [indecipherable].

Q: And then there's a --

A: It's only names.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Just names. And it goes on and on, it recite the names -- the names, you hear them on -- we went into Prague, into one of the synagogues. There's nothing on the walls but names, tiny little names. That's the one where Madeline Albright went to. I couldn't go in.

Q: Yeah.

A: I just couldn't. I had to stay out. I walked in and out, it was just too much.

Q: Well, the other one tha -- the other thing that they have there at Auschwitz is one of the -- one of the buildings is devoted only to collections of things.

A: Oh.

Q: And they have all these huge piles of shoes and eyeglasses. But the one that really [indecipherable] me is the whole room filled with children's shoes. I mean, the shoes are this big. And it's just un -- completely incomprehensible. I mean, even standing there in the middle of Auschwitz and have to -- having seen all the adult ones, that

people could -- you know. And then, being a father and having two little children, you just can't comprehend it.

A: Nope.

Q: I-It's not -- I -- it's something that I -- that I can't understand and it's -- it's part of this question that I was asking you before, about trying to ope -- to come to grips now with these other world situations, like in Bosnia or in Rwan-Rwanda, because I feel -- those things feel so far away to me.

A: Yeah. Well, they -- they are far away and at the same time you get so angry about being so helpless and that the world community is so helpless, with all the bodies we have created, like NATO, like United Nation and all that. And yet, we still are helpless. It's a little scary.

Q: But you know, there's one more low -- there's one more little thing about you -- in -- in -- in the story here, you said that the -- that -- that the day that you had to leave Strasbourg, your family, that you actually drove your neighbor's car.

A: No, I -- that's not when we left Strasbourg, that's when we left Blamont, the place where my parents had already taken up resi -- we had, oh, they lived [indecipherable]

Q: Oh, that was the second time?

A: Yeah, the second time.

Q: The second --

A: The first time we left -- I mean, we were forced to leave but, it -- it wasn't because it was an inva -- it was still peace, there was no war yet. It was two days before the war, two days. But in --

Q: But that -- but the question I have for you, when you tell that story in the video tape, the -- I was -- my -- the -- the question that came to my mind was -- was that moment a turning point for you? Was this something that was out of character for you to do, drive a car?

A: Well, I -- I ha -- I had just learned to drive, I mean, in those days, we had one car, obviously, it was my father's car for business. I never got a ride to school or anything like that. We walked to everything or take the streetcar. So I never learned to ride it -- my -- and my brother used the car for -- help my father, he knew how to drive. So, my brother would take our car, but the neighbors, as I said in my story, the neighbors had a car. And the male in the family were in the army. There was nobody -- but there was a car. You know, there was -- there was transportation, they get out from under the German. There was nobody to drive it. So, I drove the neighbor's car. And there was a handicapped girl and a grandmother in there. And it was totally in character for me to do that, because I was a girl scout leader. In fact, I drove the car in my girl scout uniform, which in those days, I don't know what it's today, was a khaki uniform, with a khaki hat with all kinds of insignias and badges all over me. And that gave me an official status, because -- I mean, sometimes I -- sometimes

myself, I wa -- I wonder about it, but it was in character for me to do that. And I remember as we were on the road, there were -- there was my brother, there was me and there was two other -- two other Jewish families from bila -- from that town. We all traveled as a convoy, with people on the road and cars and the defeated army -- French army and soldiers and va -- wagons and -- and at one intersection I was going to be separated from my brother. I didn't know where he was going. I don't know where we were going, we were going. We were leaving the Germans behind us. And I stopped the car and I got out on the road, with my khaki official uniform and I stopped all traffic and I went through. You know, was it out of -- I -- I -- I -- I was pretty determined girl or -- alway -- you know, I had already left, actually. When my parents were in Bremel, I went to take a job in Paris as a -- as a early childhood -- in -- in early childhood. I was just 20 and when I got to the school there, outside of Paris, the concierge who opened the door for me, asked me what grade I was in. You know, I was very young. But I took a job in Paris and my mother took very sick and I went home and that's why I was home when the invasion started and it was a good thing I was home, because we were all together leaving. But I was teaching in Paris with the bombing trails and we -- we had -- we -- we -- we were in the shelters and all that kind of stuff. No, it was not out of character for me to do that. I -- I wish I had known how to drive better, but I got there. I got there -- I remember once we were going over some mountain -- there were mountains on the way and my car heating up and I

didn't know what to do. And the soldiers pushed me up the hill, you know, because they were walking alongside. We didn't move farther than -- we didn't move very f -- very fast. And we kept on driving and every night by -- we had my grandmother with me, we -- we found some shelter. We had all the Shabbas food hanging on the car. We had it hanging over the car with -- and we found a bed for my grandmother, we -- and then we slept wherever we could, and we were going and we left everything behind us. And we ended up somewhere where we stopped. And this is where -- this is where my experience is very special, because -- in a sense that the people who were deported, I think didn't have that expulsion and that fleeing kind of experience. And that's the one that early on, kind of gave me that empathy feeling for [inaudible]

Q: Mm-hm.

A: No, it was -- it was something that -- that I assumed, right, because I -- I was a -- I -- that was -- I was the leader of the girl scouts, I was a -- I was -- I did these things and I did some -- but let me such -- say one thing is that when we women, all professionals, all retired, all having worked in similar kinds of situati -- or even together during the war, at -- particularly in Rivesaltes -- when we talked about what we had done, we old ladies really became scared. Our daring and our -- the things we did. There's one word -- French word for it, we all used the same word and I've been trying to render it in English and I don't know exactly what it was -- [indecipherable]

acrousion, you say bit, you were totally unconscious to do some things like that. But it doesn't render. It gets -- you out of your mind to do things like that. We were all on the same wavelength and saying, "My God, did we take risk." And that risk taking scared us at this stage of our lives.

Q: What -- wh -- you know, that was a -- one of the hav -- questions, I wanted to ask you about this little story that you told later in the interview, and I think we'll be done in a moment. It's this story where you -- you met this commissar and you told him that you were working under a false name. I -- I didn't quite understand the --

A: I don't understand it today, either, but --

Q: But I don't understand what your -- what the -- the -- the impulse was of what -- what your -- what your invention was.

A: Well, I was trying to thwart any attempt on his part to have me ar -- to -- to arrest -- to arrest me. He knew I -- who I was.

Q: Mm.

A: He knew I was Jewish.

Q: Right.

A: And obviously I had false papers. I mean, he could have asked any of his policeman in the city to stop me and ask for my paper. That happened all the time. And he knew I had false paper. And so -- in some very daring gesture, I guess -- I don't understand it myself, today, sounds completely crazy, but I -- you see, it was

the end of the war already. It was spring of ‘44 and I guess that was part of it too, the Germans were losing grounds and the collaborators were losing grounds and maybe that was part of it, that he would realize that, you know, himself.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I don’t know. But I said, rath --

End of Tape Four, Side B

Beginning Tape Five, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memor-Memorial Museum interview with Simone Lipman. This is tape number five, side A.

A: -- ready. It was spring of ‘44 and I guess that was part of it too, the Germans were losing grounds and the collaborators were losing grounds and maybe that was part of it, that he would realize that, you know, himself.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I don’t know. But I said, rather than expose myself to the possibility of being arrested and my papers checked -- he could have done it himself in the restaurant. I said, I play on both his knowle -- he -- he knew my father. He was the commandant of the camp. Before he was the commandant of the camp, he was the -- the -- the chief police officer in Strasbourg. So, he knew my family. I didn’t know him then, that was -- my father had some business with him. So I thought I playing -- a part of it was playing on that connection, to leave me alone. And it worked, what can I say? It was -- it -- in retrospect, probably was unnecessary risk taking. On the other hand, it worked, so -- it -- it -- in -- in -- it -- he -- it sounds crazy, totally crazy when I think of it.

Q: No, not necessarily, not if he already knew.

A: Well, it worked.

Q: Right?

A: And my hunches were right, so that's okay.

Q: Well, I think maybe we should stop.

A: If you feel we have covered everything, I'm more than ready to stop. In fa --

Q: I think so. I think this is plenty. I -- I -- I -- I've assumed -- I mean everything here -- let me -- I'll just double check and see. Oh, one -- one short thing, I -- I just wondered, could you explain to me -- this is just for -- for -- really for myself, the movement that you made from Rivesaltes to Limoge?

A: Oh no, here -- about the movement I made? What do you mean?

Q: Oh, you started -- you started the f -- the first -- was in Rivesaltes, right?

A: No, see my parents -- I -- I worked in Rivesaltes, my parents were right here, somewhere right here.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In the -- very close to the demarcation line, right here in the peri -- no, here, Perigure. This is not right, this map is wrong. Perigure was not in -- this is all wrong. Perigure is on this side of the line, not on this side of the line, this is the demarcation line. This is much too far in. Perigure is -- is the area where my parents lived and it was not in the -- in the occupied zone, it was on the unoccupied zone. So this is wrong, here. The -- Perigure should be right here.

Q: But what was it that made you move from working in this camp, to moving to --

A: But Limoge is not a camp.

Q: What wi --

A: Limoge is a city.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And -- and Chatarro is just a city in which I took residence, because that's where we hid kids.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: See, between -- first of all, this camp in Rivesaltes was the -- Rivesaltes was close. And from Rivesaltes, I tried to go to Gerse, which was even a worse camp. And they didn't let me in any more. But they were -- some people were in -- in the -- in a s-supervised residency outside of Gerse, and I stayed there for a very, very short while, because I was really sick. I had jaundice, I was yellow all over. So I went back to my parents farm, and I -- took me a couple of months to recover. I didn't have any medication, I was just wait until it was over. But the farm was here, near Perigure and Perigure is not here, Perigure is down here. Better check it on your maps. So Perigure is somewhere down here. So I stayed the farm. Then, the camp had closed, because all the people had been deported, so -- and they didn't let me come into Gerse and so I went to work in the children's home outside of Limoge. Limoge is not a camp.

Q: Yeah.

A: You have the camps mar-marked in triangles, so Limoge has a circle, that's a city.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And so, outside of Limoge was a children's home called Poulousant and there was a chief counselor until the end of four -- we are in '42 now, until the -- and I worked there f -- until '43 -- for almost a year. And when the children's homes were closed, and I was recruited in this underground network and I asked to be stationed in Chatarro, which is a city.

Q: I see.

A: It's just --

Q: And that -- that was when you changed your name?

A: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, you have all the papers at the Holocaust Museum. I have them all here, but I have copies of them here. So, I didn't make myself change anything, just is -- you know, we traveled the -- in these days. There were trains, but you never know whether you could get on one.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was so mobbed. There was horrible scene, but -- and so this is where I took residence. And the headquarters really, of this whole area here, was in Limoge. Are we still on tape?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Just to tell you how little I was aware of the distance and the dangers, when I -- when -- [break]

Q: -- beginning of tape three. Okay.

A: The -- the leader of our -- or the organizer of our underground network at Ose, George Garell, in 1947 published a book on the -- the work of Ose under the German occupation of France, from 1940-44. And there wa -- it is part of a book on the activity of the Jewish organization in France during the occupation. And in giving me the book, he wrote down, “To Simone Weil, un souvenir des anee difficile e exaltant vicky ensemble. Lette per vrai que da fuess de leve les mountine. Vous l’avez prouve. A mikel d’hommage.” “To Simone Weil, in memory of the exalting and difficult years lived together. Isn’t it true that faith can lift mountains. You have proved it.” Amic -- friendly -- I don’t know -- hommage. And signed by George Garell. He was a fantastic leader.

Q: He -- he was the leader of the OSE?

A: No, he was the leader of the underground network.

Q: Oh.

A: He was an engineer by training and he was so moved by an experience he had in Lyon, when he was part o -- that he was with a group of adults and children, had been arrested and although he was a ver -- Jewishly very fringe and very secular, he felt a need to work with -- to help the Jewish people in France. And he -- he was a very personable guy and he was -- he had the lists of the children and the -- knew the movements of the children, he knew was going on and he -- he traveled around the

country, touching base with all of us workers, pretending to travel, I believe -- I -- I don't have a confirmation -- as a wine salesman and everything being coded and having all his material, on the work of the network in such a way that -- pretending to be a wine salesman made it possible for him. He brought us the money that we needed, he gave us the news. He made the necessary contacts so that we could function. He died quite a number of years ago.

Q: Well let me ask you this big, general question. After having gone through all of this, [indecipherable] the -- the intervening years and looking back on it, does it -- how -- how does it affect your perception of human beings in general you know, mankind?

A: It's a big question. On the one hand, I cannot get over of the inhumanity of man against man. I mean, you see it daily on television. The -- the -- the -- the sheer -- the brutality, the -- the senseless brutality with which people can act towards each other. And yet, on the other hand, the redeeming peace is those who help. Last night on the radio there was an interview with the woman who has sheltered Anne Frank, there is an anniversary, there was something on public radio.

Q: Hm.

A: But -- but an interview with her and you know, there is all these people who -- who have the condition of man at heart and who work to improve the world, wherever it is, when -- whatever it is, so I don't know it's balance, but really the

inhumanity is just -- it's rampant, it's everywhere, it's in our local police, it's in the army, it's everywhere. And it's -- that's -- it's devastating and I -- I don't know what -- but it's -- and you know -- but brutality and enjoying violence has been around for a long time. Go back to the Roman times, when they watched the slaves being thrown to the beasts in the circuses, that was -- that was part of it, so -- I mean, the brutalit -- they were -- how people can -- to-today -- you hear in the news this morning that the Tutus go with machetes to cut up their neighbor. Is there any -- any -- that's human beings. That -- that's -- it's devastating. And then you lee -- read of acts of heroism here and there and I don't know if it balances, but I -- I think it does to a certain degree. Veri -- sometimes [indecipherable]. It's very, very discouraging.

Q: And now, the interview with Barbara Rodbell --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that I watched.

A: I know her.

Q: She said that at the end of the war, she, I guess, fell in love with a German psychiatrist --

A: I don't know that.

Q: -- who had been -- someone who had gi-given tremendous help to the underground --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: In providing pharmaceuticals and --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- drugs and things like that. And that the demise of their relationship was -- as much as she adored him, was that he was so devastated by the war, that he had decided he couldn't have children. That he just couldn't --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- couldn't go on.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And she knew that she had to have children.

A: Mm-hm. She has four, I think. I'm not sure.

Q: I think so. But it's a very interesting.

A: It's very interesting. When I first came to Chapel Hill -- am I still on tape?

Q: It's on. If you want me to turn it off, I can turn it off.

A: Oh, please turn it off.

Q: Turn it off? Okay, let me just close the interview then, formally. [indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable]

Q: I want that paper, where is it?

A: While you do that, I'm going to get one more thing to show you.

Q: Okay. You -- you can go.

A: You -- you --

Q: I'll just -- I'll just read this [indecipherable] microphone. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Simone Weil Lipman and we're seven or eight minutes into tape -- dat tape number three. And it's August fourth, 1998, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, interviewed by Steve Roland. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr -- Herr for making this interview possible…

A: -- they be interested in a follow up, like --

End of Tape Five, Side A

Conclusion of Interview