United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Amy Zahl Gottlieb
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Amy Zahl Gottlieb, conducted by Joan Ringelheim on June 9,1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and 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.

AMY ZAHL GOTTLIEB
June 9, 1999

Q: Good morning, Amy.

A: Good morning.

Q: Nice to have you in Washington.

A: Thank you.

Q: Can you please tell us your full name? Your name at birth, and your name now, and when you were born, and where?

A: I was born Amy Zahl, that's Z-a-h-l, in London. I was born in 1919 on Holy Innocence Day, December the 28th.

Q: What is Holy Innocence Day?

A: December the 28th.

Q: Does it mean something?

A: In the Christian church it does.

Q: Can you tell us what it means?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: Oh, you don't know.

A: Sorry.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about your childhood and your parents and your siblings if you have any?

A: Oh, yes. I was born into a family of two sisters and four brothers. Two of the brothers and one sister were half-brothers. They were children of a first husband of my mother's. My parents were originally from Lithuania, as was my mother's first husband. In fact, I still possess her Ketuba from Lithuania, and her permit to travel in the pale (ph) of Russia, and she came as immigrant as many people did at the time of the turn of the century when everybody seemed to be leaving for the United States, and she was one of those immigrants that got stuck in Britain. As you probably know, almost all of them – particularly the Jews – intended to come to America where the streets were supposed to

be lined with gold, but my mother got left behind, and eventually met my father who married her, and I grew up in this large family as the youngest child, and it was rather nice.

Q: What was your mother's name and your dad's name?

A: My mother's name was Kravitz, which is, I think, is a common name. She was married – her first marriage was to a cousin. She was an orphan, according to what she told me – I'm sure she spoke the truth – and was married to a cousin, and the grandfather – her grandfather who brought her up – felt it was important for her, also, to leave. I think she loved Lithuania and would've liked to have stayed. You know, this story that people tell of pogroms are not always true. A lot of them left for economic reasons, just as everybody else left Europe for economic reasons.

Q: And your dad?

A: My father came from Russia, I think from Minsk, he told me. Some of his family went to Harbin in China, and eventually ended up in the United States, and they live in New York. One of their sons has gone to Israel. My mother's relatives came to – I don't know if it's the midwest – they came to Ohio, and I know that as a child, they used to write me and send me dollars for candy, but I never met them, and I think, as happened in other families, correspondence was sparse and eventually contact was lost.

Q: And What was your father's name?

A: My father was Nathan Zahl, Z-a-h-l. He had relatives in England who were on the stage, and they were in theater, and they were nice family.

Q: So, what was it like growing up in this family with all these children?

A: Well, they weren't children to me. They were all adults. I was a child growing up in a family of adults, and since ostensibly I was a weak child, I was always being sent away to recuperate. So, I didn't grow up close to this family, close emotionally to this family. I did to my eldest sister, who is really a half-sister, but I was very much, I think, a lone child because everybody else was older than I. The next one in the family was five years older than I.

Q: And are there any particular characteristics of this family? Were you religious in the family? Not religious?

A: We were not religious. My father was, I would say, a-religious.

[Technical difficulty; asked to start over preceding part]

A: Oh, I'm sorry. From where?

Q: Well, tell me about your family and in terms of are you a religious family? Were you not a religious family?

A: We were not a religious family in the sense we didn't attend synagogue. My father did take me to the synagogue on all the holidays. He explained to me what was going on, but he was not a religious man. The nice thing I remember about being Jewish, I suppose, was the wonderful Friday evenings when we all gathered together, and on the holidays when friends would also come, and for the Passover when they would invite people who didn't have family. My mother was a very generous, warm, and kind person, and she was always inviting people into the house. She was very forward-looking, I think. I hope, that I have some of her characteristics.

Q: What kind of political consciousness was there? You grew up at a time when there was a lot of upheaval in western Europe. Were you very conscious of it as you grew up in the late '20s, in the early '30s in terms of what was going on in Germany?

A: In the late '20s, I would say no. In England, we had, as you had, a tremendous depression, economic depression. There was a lot of employment even – not even, but in my family, too. I began to be aware that things were happening in Germany when I was 14 or 15, a settlement house, of which I was member, began to have youngsters from Germany come to learn English, to help pass the time. They were builted (ph) locally, and I got to know some of them and felt awful that they had been sent to Britain, let's say in '35-'36, without their parents – to a foreign country where most of them had no relatives, and I felt very deeply about this. I think this is what affected me when eventually the British asked for volunteers to go overseas. I felt it was important that I must go.

Q: Could you please explain what a settlement house is?

A: A settlement house – we had them also in the United States – A settlement house is a community center run usually by a voluntary agency, where youngsters and older people come. They have classes, educational classes, classes for mothers, in the old days, I suppose, they had classes teaching people English. It's a real community center.

Q: So, tell me what these kids told you. I mean, I know you were conscious that they were orphans – not orphans, but they were without their parents, without their family. Did they tell you about what had happened in Germany?

A: No, they didn't. They just – they didn't talk about it. One didn't ask. Firstly, being British, you're rather reticent, anyway, but one had a sense that these kids were alone, terribly alone. There was no family. There were no cousins. Occasionally, one would have an aunt in the country, and that would be rather nice because she had family to

relate to, but in the ’30s, many German parents – rather, not many, but a number of German parents who could afford it were sending their children to school in England because German law prohibited them from attending school. Very early on in, I think, 1933, the first law came in which limited the number of Jewish children who could attend school. And so, a number of them came to England to school, and they were taken in by families. There was an organization called B’nai B’rith, which still exists, and they helped a lot of these children, particularly the Orthodox Jewish children.

Q: So, at what point do you think – was it after the war, or in 1939 that you became very conscious of what was happening? What drew you in 1943 to join the relief effort?

A: Well, firstly the war came in ’39. I remember we had the bombing in London, and 90 days of bombing constantly is not very pleasant.

Q: What was that like?

A: That was pretty awful. Very often, I would be scared and I’d sit under a table, or I would like people to think that I was brave and so I took tea to the shelters wearing my tin hat until I was going out one day with a young friend, and a piece of shrapnel went through his tin hat, and he was no longer. It was frightening and yet, you didn’t like to appear a coward. We did things that we would never do. We went into the streets and put out incendiary bombs because, since the government, I suppose, wanted to know how many incendiaries had been dropped, they would pay us a half a crown which was about half a dollar in those days, to bring in the ends of incendiary bombs. So, we’d go out and we’d pick these things up once the bomb had gone off. And, yet, we used to sit on the doorstep occasionally in an air raid, and say, “What will we tell our children of the war?” And, you know, we were eating peanuts and we’d say, “Well, we’ll tell them that we sat on the doorstep eating peanuts.” But, it was an interesting period because we never saw a fruit. If anybody brought in an orange, if an American soldier gave somebody an orange or a banana, we raffled it to the Red Cross. We didn’t go hungry. We were never short of the most awful bread you can ever imagine, and the American powdered egg, which we even thought made good cakes, you know, we had forgotten what a good cake tasted like. But, as I say, we were never hungry, and interestingly, we always knew we were going to win the war. Don’t ask me why, perhaps this was a moral booster, perhaps this was Churchill’s speeches, but we never thought the Germans would overrun us. Of course, we always suspected that we would be invaded, and this influenced, of course, the British attitude toward the refugees. We suspected everybody with a German accent of being a spy. It was a very difficult period for them, much more so than for us.

Q: So, then, 90 days of bombing straight?

A: Ninety days of bombing on London.

Q: Was your house ever hit?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: It was?

A: Yeah, but my mother was okay, you know, the heck with the house.

Q: So, where did you go? Did you stay in the house?

A: I met recently a woman, she called me as a result of my book. She called me and she said, "Do you remember, after the air raids when you'd done all your rounds, you used to come into our house and sleep on a bed or a mat or anywhere?" No, I went to stay with friends, and after the house was hit, we got my mother to leave London and go into the country. I wouldn't go. I felt safest in London, believe it or not. I couldn't bear the thought of being outside of London and seeing the bombs falling, because you could see the fires.

Q: And your mother was okay with your staying?

A: My mother was okay. We were all okay. It's very interesting. There was no counseling in those days, and I sometimes wonder if we have too much counseling when a child goes through a small trauma, true, a trauma, but in the old days going through this bombing, nobody came and counseled us and very often we were helping to dig bodies out of the Anderson shelters and finding people who were wounded badly, but we carried on. You know, this was life.

Q: So, you were then how old, 13?

A: I was – no, I was older in 1939, I was 18, and in 1940, I was 19, but we had no prior experience of this. The most wonderful thing to happen to us was when Hitler invaded Russia because then the bombing began to let up. And it was extraordinary because we all felt so guilty that here the Russians were taking what we had been having, and in those days, Russia was our friend. The Cold War that came later seemed so – so different, so difficult a period when we think of, we knew what the Russians were going through, that millions were being killed by the Germans, millions and millions of them. I don't think people even today realize how many millions of people were killed during that war outside of concentration camps. I mean, we talk of six million Jews dying, and that number, you can't imagine what six million is, and it was dreadful. There isn't a Jewish family, I think, worldwide, which didn't lose a relative, but in Russia, about 25 million people died.

Q: After 1941, when Russia was attacked, did you learn what was going on in terms of the killing of Jews and did you know what had gone on in Germany in the '30s, rounding up

political opponents and Jehovah's Witnesses? Was there much knowledge that you had at that point?

A: If we read *The Press* and *The Times* published a lot of material. We knew. I'm not saying I was very well-versed in what was happening. I knew Jews were being killed. I knew they were being put in concentration camps because sometimes a friend would have a cousin who was 15, who'd been brought out whose head was shaven, and he'd been incarcerated in a concentration camp. We knew that people were being killed. We knew that the Nazis were very nasty people, but when the killing really started, when the Final Solution started in 1942, I don't think we, as individuals, I don't remember, but I don't think I knew this. We didn't trust the Germans. We knew they'd kill every Jew they could get their fingers on. So, from that point of view, we knew we had to be very careful. For example, if you would walk along the country lane in England, or even an ordinary street, and ask somebody directions, they'd never tell you in case you were a spy. The sign posts were taken down. So, unless you knew the area in which you were visiting, there was nothing you could do. We were terribly afraid of being invaded. Ostens- you know, not ostensibly, obviously because we were 21 miles from the French coast, not very far, and not too far across the North Sea to get to England, and attempts were made to bring spies in. So, it was a very difficult period because, if you met somebody you didn't know, you didn't discuss anything that might in some way give them information.

Q: Did you feel it was important when the Americans joined in the war effort? Was that a good sign for you, or did you actually feel before then, "We'll win anyway."?

A: I think before the Americans came, we thought we'd win, but when the Americans came, Hallelujah! Now, it was wonderful. It was wonderful because now we had an ally. Can you imagine, in 1940, we were alone, totally alone, and many of us were making plans to try to escape somewhere because we knew that, as Jews, we, too, would be taken by the Germans. But when the Americans, with the vast machinery for production, came into the war, somehow we really knew we might win.

Q: Did you also make plans to leave?

A: Oh, yes – made plans, not really. Where could we go to? But, we dreamed of going up maybe to Sweden, finding our way up there, but what would do with our parents? We're a group of kids talking. You don't leave parents behind. But we thought we might find roots. We daydreamed. We daydreamed, but we really knew that if the Germans came to England, our lot was sealed. It was quite frightening.

Q: So, what did you do after 1941? What happened between 1941 and '43, before you joined? What sort of a track? Had you gone to school? Had you finished high school?

A: Yes, I was taking a course in social administration, and when I finished that course, I went up to Birmingham during the course, actually to work at a settlement house in Birmingham, and then I went up to one in Nottingham where conditions were very different from London. And it was there that I heard that the British government, being the British government that it is, it always works closely with voluntary agencies, was asking for volunteers who would go overseas to any country to which they were sent with no prejudice, to help to save survivors both Jews and non-Jews, and I thought that was a marvelous idea, but I was terrified of getting on a ship because ships could be sunk. You know, we were losing so many ships during that war, but many people older than I were volunteering, and, what the heck? I must say, at that time I talked to my mother because I was her baby, and I told her what was happening and that it would be wonderful if we would find Jews who survived because even in the '30s, as young as I was, I had some daydream that I could go to Germany and rescue Jews. At least help them to get their jewelry out so they could have some money when they came to England. My mother said, "They would never let you out." Or, "They'd never let you in. You're Jewish." I said, "But, Mother, they would never know." Of course, nobody would take me at age 16, but when this call came, I did volunteer. There were some people I respected who had volunteered, and the nice thing was I was chosen to go originally to Casablanca with a man called Friedman I think his name was. He was from Manchester. An American went as well. We were going to take care of Jews in a camp, but the French at that time were having trouble in Lebanon, so I learned, and so the British wouldn't allow any women out of the country. So, Morris Friedman went for Britain, and I waited for the next unit. He went alone, and the next unit – each unit was ten persons. The first British-Jewish unit was seven Jews and three Quakers, and there were units of the Red Cross, of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, and all of the voluntary agencies that you know so well today. I think hundreds of people volunteered, and when I say volunteered, by the way, we volunteered to go without salary, just to go wherever the government sent us to help survivors. And I knew we were going somewhere where it was warm because we were issued with a summer kit. I couldn't tell my mother where I was going. My father, by the way, died when I was 14. So, I – my father wasn't there to tell. But I knew we must be going somewhere where it was warm, but where? You know, one had no idea, and I must say, I lied to my mother. I said I was going to a camp in Scotland for about a month, and when we came out of the camp, I would call her. And, of course, on February the 19th, 1944, we got aboard a ship and sailed, and about a month later in convoy, landed in Egypt in Port Said.

Q: Can we go back for a moment?

A: Yes.

Q: What sort of – when you signed up to do this? Was there training for all of you? Did you all meet together?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: All 200 people? So, could you describe that?

A: Not all of us. The two of age groups met individually, and we had training camps at one of the Rothschild estates. I was a cook in one of them. So, the people would not only eat decently, but be able to attend the various sessions. There was some very good people who came and talked about what we might find, but who would know what we would find? Nobody had any experience. What happened in these training sessions is that we got to know each other, and we were all as different as chalk from cheese. Many of us didn't know each other, and it was a way of getting to know each other, getting to know the people who were doing the training. We were absolutely green when we arrived in Egypt, and as we took the train from Port Said down to Cairo, there were men on horseback along the train shooting at us, just for fun. And, we were under the seats. You know, and when I think of it, I don't think we were really scared. Who expected to be shot at? You know, you're coming to do relief work. We were in a camp in Maadi, M-a-a-d-i, in Cairo for a while. We were allowed to read army records of what was happening, and that's when we really got to know what was happening in Germany. The British were brining in Yugoslavs from the coast of Dalmatia. There was one camp that held about 20,000 people, and there was another camp which we – we, the new units – were sent up to take care of on the Suez Canal, a place called Khataba, K-h-a-t-a-b-a, and when these people came in, they were emaciated. They had women who were breastfeeding children of four and two. Their breasts were like envelopes. They had suffered tremendous malnutrition. The British had taken them from Dalmatia to southern Italy, which was liberated, and then brought them into Egypt, but I must say the food that was provided for them was excellent. The sun didn't hurt. They lived in tents. There were very few men. They were mostly women and children, boys of 14 who had been in the army, who had lost limbs. And gradually they recovered. And my job at that time was to set up schools. Well, how do you set up schools for children when you have – there were two trained teachers, in fact, but no books, no pencils. We had learned some Yugoslav, and some of us were better at it than others. The army was wonderful. You could always get around the quartermaster. And I discovered that there were little white stones in the sand in the desert on which we were. So, we gathered the stones, and this how we taught them to write. We had – we were given a couple of tents, and then the ladies from Alexandria, as there are always ladies who want to do good, came to the camp with shoes, and most of these children hadn't worn shoes in their life, and they were afraid of these things. But we say to them, "Look, these ladies really are very kind. They're also bringing clothing. While they are here, please wear the shoes. When they're gone, you can take them off." It was rather nice. I remember that instant.

Q: How did you use the stones for writing?

A: Oh, you formed letters with them. Later on, we were able to get some paper, and the ladies from Alexandria actually were very good. When we told them what we needed, they began to send paper and pencils in, and what we did, we sent some people from our

camp over to the larger camp of refugees, where they were trained to be teachers. They were trained in one month to be schoolteachers and came back. They did a remarkable job. There was a war on, and everything was possible during the war. I think also because most – well, I think almost all of us in Britain had suffered the bombing and suffered the war. We could compromise, we could change things around, we learned very quickly to put up tents, we were sleeping four of us in a tent. I remember the dreadful latrines, which were seemed to me a mile long, and with hession, a sort of canvas in between, and you lived like this. We ate fairly well. I was never sick. Some people got dysentery. I didn't. Everything we ate on our own, which we weren't sure of, we put potassium tablets in the water to disinfect any nasty creatures, and we lived that way until October of '44.

Q: I know you're going to move the next site, but let me ask you, when you saw these folks from Yugoslavia, what was your first impression? Were they telling the stories of what had happened?

A: They didn't have to tell stories. You looked at them. You looked at the babies with big stomachs and big heads, and some women were breastfeeding children of two and children of four. She was feeding two babies, because they had had no real food for so long. In our units, by the way, there were many doctors who volunteered, women, and they immediately set up a hospital, but we got a measles epidemic, and in eight weeks, I think, we buried – no, six weeks, we buried over a hundred children, and that was dreadful because we lived within the hospital compound, and they crying of these women was absolutely dreadful, dreadful. To lose a child, no parent should bury a child. It was awful for them.

Q: So, you were in that camp for how long?

A: Ten months.

Q: Ten months?

A: Yes.

Q: So, did you consider yourself now a seasoned relief worker at the end of the ten months?

A: I never even thought of it that way. We had a job to do. We did our job. The Yugoslavs, as they got well, entertained us. They had beautiful singing voices, and they would sing in four, five parts. There were some others who were musicians, and they were very nice people, very nice. They were very clean people. A lot of them, I would say for the most part, were peasant people, but, you know, they were human beings.

Q: And so then, why did you – why were you sent away from that situation to another situation?

A: Oh, because southern Italy was liberated, and the allies were getting ready for the liberation of Yugoslavia, which we had been trained to enter. Trained in the sense that we learned the language, we knew where we were going, we knew the kinds of jobs we would do, and because of the work we had done in Egypt, we were trained to take care of Yugoslavs who had gone through hell in this war. When we got to Italy, I happened to have been in the first unit of ten people who were sent over to Italy in preparation for going into Yugoslavia, and Teeter was approached by the British American armies. I'm not quite sure of the chain of command. He said, "We'll do the job ourselves. Send us the goods." And they did. They did a very good job. So, here we were, the rest of the unit had come into Italy, we were sitting there. The Italians were very pleased to see us. The Italians were very nice actually. They were living under appalling conditions, having suffered German occupation and British occupation, and they would have liked us to have stayed, but we really had no job to do in Italy. And then we heard one organization working in southern Italy called the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. They had, I think it was one representative at the time, a man called Reuben Resnick, working there, and we thought it would be an excellent idea if we could be seconded or loaned to this outfit so that we could help them. We had been given by the army, as had all the units, a three hundred weight truck, and a three ton truck. We all learned to drive that Dodge which was double the clutch. It was terrifying, but we could all drive them, and we had lots of supplies. And so in talking to the army, and the heads of the units did so, we asked if we could join the American organization and they said, "Certainly, and take all your supplies with you." It was a lot of give and take in those days. They're much more difficult today. I don't know why. And so we loaned ourselves to the Joint. We went up to Rome to start with. Florence was still occupied, I remember, because as it was liberated, some of our boys took matzohs up to Florence for the first Passover of the liberation. I was helping to get ready the first legal transport going to Palestine after the war. I think it left on April the 12th, if my memory serves me, and I remember Moshe Shertock - I think, yes, that was his name – went with us, and I and somebody from the Joint, Israel, or Gaynor Israel Jacobson, worked on that transport and got that going, and it was very interesting because there were "X" number of certificates. People still had to have certificates from the British government to enter Palestine, and let's assume that we had 300, and they were all numbered. As people got on, the cards of those in front were taken and given to others at the back. So, although 300 were supposed to be on the ship, probably there were 400 or 500. I never did know how many got on, and that ship went off. That was one of the things we did. We also, which were helping people who would come in from Yugoslavia in small boats. I remember, the women would come in with hand grenades around their waists, great big burly women, very nice, but terrifying. And we met a lot of people, and then, of course, the Germans were still trying to bomb us, and I know, I remember very distinctly, when the Germans came over, of course, the Americans – the American civilians who hadn't seen any of this stuff, any of the bombing, would rush to the windows, and we Britishers would rush under the beds because we knew what shattered glass could do. It was an interesting time. When – yes, it was an interesting time, and as Italy began to be liberated, some of our people were going up north. When Greece was liberated, I was asked by the European director of the Joint

Distribution Committee, a very wonderful man called Dr. Joseph Schwartz. He was a rabbi by training, and really a very, very wonderful human being, one of my heroes. He asked me if, when Greece was liberated, I would go into Greece with their director, and of course, who would refuse? And, I was in Greece – well, the war was still on – when the camps were liberated, and people, I think, don't realize that so many thousands of people had been incarcerated in concentration camps and labor camps, and the army had no place for them once they were liberated, and the only thing they thought of doing was sending these people home. So, being in Greece at the time of the end of the war, suddenly the trains began to come in with these young men and women, many of them spitting blood from tuberculosis, no families. Out of a total, I think, of 70,000 Jews in Greece, there were about a total of 10,000 who survived all together, both in hiding and among those who came back, and I remember some of them having to sleep in the street. It was summer. It was June when they got back. They had to sleep in the street because there were no sanitarium – no sanitarium beds for them, and it was very, very difficult because none of them family. There were girls with no sisters or brothers. There were boys with no family. Occasionally, you'd see an adult who son or daughters had been killed, and this organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, set up a hostel in Athens with a very wonderful local Greek lady called Mrs. Mossieri. I'm sure her children are still alive. She was a go-getter, and she helped to set up this hostel. I went with Israel Jacobson to Palestine at that time to meet with Golda Meir and Mr. Sheretz Shatok (ph), and I can't think of the other gentleman's name at the moment, to talk to them about supplies that we would need and also people were beginning to go through Athens to Palestine illegally. It was very easy. Perez was next to Athens. They sent in some of their units of workers. There were people, ostensibly press agents. All the marvelous people, and one of the things that we asked at that time was that you slow down the movement because the British would come to what was known as a Hachshara, a camp, at Perez, and count the individuals there. And I remember the one day they came and they said, "Where is everybody?" And we said, "They've gone home." That was nice.

Q: So, who were you working for then?

A: I was working as a volunteer with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Q: So, you had left the British.

A: Yes, we all split up. That whole unit of ten persons was split up. Some people went into Austria. Most of them stayed in Italy. There was a lot of work to do in Italy because people were coming into Italy to try and go either to Palestine or to register with a consulate, if an American consulate was open, to join family in the United States or to leave Europe – one thing people wanted to do was to leave Europe at this time.

Q: Were you considered – I'm not going to use the word traitor, because that is obviously much too extreme, but British policy was one thing about illegal immigration. You were

now working for an American organization. Did you feel as if you were in some sense working against the policy of the Brits?

A: No.

Q: You didn't?

A: No, I was working to help refugees, survivors. And that's all I was doing, and whenever or wherever I could do it best was all that matter to me. It never occurred to me. I don't think I'm a political animal, actually, but no, that never occurred to me, and the Americans had supplies. You see, after the war, I suppose, the Americans realized a) they might have done more before the war, and b) they had money. The British were bankrupt by now. The British had nothing. They had no foreign currency. Everything was bombed. They had no housing. I know how my family was living. No, I never felt disloyal at all. I was only working to help survivors.

Q: So, what was this trip? You went to Palestine by boat from Athens.

A: No, we flew.

Q: You flew?

A: Yes, we flew.

Q: Was that your first plane trip?

A: Yes, it was my first plane ride.

Q: Was that scary?

A: I don't think I had time to be scared. No, it wasn't. That's not true. It wasn't my first plane ride. In 1943, no, I beg your pardon, at the end of 1944, I was – I received word that my mother was ill, and I managed to hitchhike on a plane to London, to Croyden Airport, and it was interesting because when I got to Croyden there was a big loud thump as a bomb, and I thought that the bombing was finished, and I said to the porter who was helping me off, I said, "What on earth is that?" "Oh," he said, "that's a doodlebug, lady." Doodlebug would be bombs which were unmanned that they were sending from Holland into Britain and they suddenly stopped and dropped. I saw my mother. She was delighted, of course, to see me. She did survive that illness, and I managed to get back on a ship that was going to Italy. And, so, I arrived back about a month later. That was my – sorry, that was my first – the trip to England was my first plan trip.

Q: So, let me ask you something. You had told your mother that you were going to Scotland for a month to a camp, right? Well, obviously, you had been away for more than a month.

A: Oh.

Q: Had you been writing to her so she finally knew what it was?

A: No, she only heard from me once I landed in Egypt. The mail was so bad, very few people had access to telephones, and they were often not working. I don't think it even worried her. My older brother, who actually was 21 years older than I, when I told him I was going to volunteer, he said, "Mother will be terribly upset." I said, "I have talked to her. She thinks it's a wonderful idea." Absolutely true. And I didn't tell him, either. I didn't tell anybody in the family because you were sworn to secrecy. The ship could be sunk. And so they only heard from me after I arrived in Egypt.

Q: Before we talk a little bit more about Greece, are there any particular people, incidents, that you remember in Egypt or in Italy that really matter to you that you think might be important for people to know about?

A: Initially, there weren't individuals that one would single out. Everybody who I knew was doing a tremendous job. As I say, living in tents in the desert. We didn't feel that we were suffering in any way. I guess we weren't being bombed, which was rather nice. We had a job to do. So, Egypt was okay. Occasionally, we could get into Cairo and see where normal people lived and had normal facilities. No, Egypt was okay.

Q: You are referring to the loo?

A: Yes, yes, which, you know, we were using trenches in the desert. When we got to Italy, conditions there, in a sense, were not as good as in Egypt because the Italians had no heating in the houses in which were builted (ph) and there were little fires in the rooms with pipes going out of the window. Fortunately, there was no carbon monoxide coming out of them. The Italians were suffering very badly. So, and we had no gripes. I mean, we were well taken care of. By now, we had winter uniforms. We were dressed, by the way, as American army officers. We had PX facilities, which, to us, were fantastic. You know, we hadn't seen some of the things we saw in the PX since before the war. We had very little money, but that didn't matter, you know.

Q: Did they give you spending money?

A: We had ten shillings, which at that time was, I suppose, something near two dollars. That paid for the dobe, the laundry, and whatever was left over.

Q: Ten shillings per what? Per month? Per week?

A: I think it was – it must have been a week because there was lots of laundry – yes, it was ten shillings a week, I think. It would've have had to been. Maybe it was a month. I don't

remember. Money never bothered me. There was nowhere to spend it, anyway, and when we were in the desert in Egypt, there certainly was no PX. The only time we met the PX was when we arrived in Italy because the Americans were there, and they had the PX and they were very generous. The American boys in the army were quite extraordinary. They would give away their bomber jackets when they thought we were cold. You know, they'd pass them over to us. They'd offer to buy anything they could for us in the PX, and those who had money were able to take care of themselves, and people were nice. You know, they'd buy stuff that we all could share. There were foodstuffs available in the PX which we hadn't seen in a long time.

Q: Can you give us an idea of what?

A: Well, there were canned nuts. I remember loving peanuts, which we hadn't seen in years and years and years. The only thing we had that was cheap was we could buy liquor at seven and sixpence, I remember, for a bottle of scotch, and it was very good, I gather, for bribing people. I didn't drink, so, you know, I lost out there, but you know, these things in a sense didn't bother one. We were fed but we were doing a job. We weren't concerned. I must be honest there.

Q: So, what was the difference between the kind of food that the refugees would get that you met in Yugoslavia?

A: In Italy.

Q: I mean, in Italy, and what you had?

A: Or in Egypt.

Q: Or in Egypt.

A: Well, they cooked Yugoslav food, and they cooked very well, and occasionally they would invite us to come and enjoy a meal with them because our food was cooked by the Arab cooks, and it was okay. There was nothing wrong with it, but Yugoslavs are very good cooks. It was heavier food than we were used to.

Q: Who provided them with food?

A: The army, and I suppose at that time it was the British army since the British were in Egypt, in control.

Q: And then what happened in Italy? Who provided them? The same thing – the army provided…

A: The army provided the food for the refugees. Camps were immediately set up. One in Santa Maria di Bari, which is down on the heel of Italy. That was a Jewish DP camp. Then, there was another one in Cine Citta in Rome, which was the movie studio in Rome. That was set up as a displaced persons camp because a lot of people were released who didn't belong in Italy. There were Romanians, Hungarians, they were all nationalities, and no house to go to, or they couldn't go because those places weren't liberated yet. So…

Q: So, there were a lot of holding actions?

A: Yeah, lots of holding actions for these people, and for others, they were sent home. I don't know to what homes they were sent. I'm talking not only of Jews at this point. A lot of the Russians were sent back, as you probably know, and I don't think a lot of them lasted. A lot of them had been volunteer workers with the Germans. Some of them were slave laborers. It was a very, very difficult stage for the army because, for the most part, they were still flushing out the Nazis, and yet they had this civilian population whom they didn't understand, by the way. They tried to treat them when the camps were liberated as though they were former Nazis. They locked them up in other camps until, you know, the army came to understand who these people were and until there was communication with the voluntary agencies like the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Q: When was the first time that you saw Jews? Was that in Italy?

A: There were very few – there were three or four or five or six in among the Yugoslavs, but I think they didn't stay long in the camp. I think they were able to cross the Suez into Palestine.

Q: And was the same true in Italy?

A: No, in Italy, it was different. Firstly, there were the displaced people. They were Yugoslav Jews. They were Russian Jews. They were all kinds of Jews. They were Italian Jews. In Rome, there was quite a community of Jews who had been in hiding. There was a Jewish orphanage in Rome, for example, which had been taken over by the Catholics. The Catholics had taken the Jewish children from the orphanage and had hidden them in their orphanage out of town, and then they'd hidden them again, and when the Catholic orphanage was bombed, the one that was out of town, the American Joint Distribution Committee rebuilt it for them as a thank you for having saved the Jewish children, and then our units – because we had volunteers – the Joint had administrators who, we had volunteers who set up the orphanages again. They had experience in working in orphanages. It was quite an exciting time in a way to do positive things – to see children smiling, children who hadn't been incarcerated, because we'd seen firstly the Yugoslav children who had been starving, and we began to get pictures of what was happening in Germany. We used to occasionally get shown German film that had been captured of the Nazis throwing children over the balcony, you know, it was ghastly, ghastly.

Q: Did you travel around Italy or did you stay primarily in Rome?

A: No, I traveled around. I traveled around Italy.

Q: So, what was your job, then, in terms of traveling around? What was your task?

A: Right, for example, if I went down, let's say to Santa Maria di Bari, I would go there, first you'd see how the camp was running. It was amazing how, without any experience, one became an expert. I did have something kind of social administration training, and I think I was instinctively an administrator. I would see what was needed in that camp. For example, we had one of our unit members in charge of a search bureau which we set up immediately because the important thing was to try to reunite families. We had no baby clothes because once people – the camps were liberated and people began to lead normal lives, women began to menstruate again. They hadn't menstruated all through the war, and being normal human beings they began to get pregnant and have babies. We needed sanitary napkins for the women. We needed baby clothing. We needed special food for pregnant women. There were some older people who survived. We needed special food for them. We needed doctors. We needed more social workers. And one could assess this, and gradually these people came in to work in the camps. It was exciting in the sense that you felt you could do something positive, and then the most important thing, I think, at that time was the search bureaus that we set up. And they were interesting because, for example, you had to very quickly learn that the name "Schwartz", for example, S-c-h-w-a-r-t-z, can be spelled 30 different ways, and how do you distinguish? How do you find Ivan Schwartz from Belgrade, for example? You then knew you had to have his birthdays, his parents' names, their birthdays, where they were born, and you set up a very good system internationally. The headquarters, at one point after Germany was liberated, was Arolsen in Germany. There was a big unit in London set up by the World Jewish Congress and there was a big unit also in New York, and I think they were right. The most important thing was to help people find family. This went on for years. It still goes on. People are still finding relatives, close relatives.

Q: Could you describe how people – there were no computers,

A: Absolutely not.

Q: So-

A: And, no typewriters.

Q: Right, so how did people find these lists? Where were the lists placed?

A: Okay, I'll give you an example. If we were in Vienna, and you came and you said, "My name is Joan Koppelbaum. I come from Warsaw. I had a mother and father and three

sisters and four brothers, and I managed to escape. I don't know what happened to them. My parents, I think, were taken to a camp. I think my brothers and sisters may have escaped." What we would do, we would send these lists of people who are asking for relatives to each office, and each office would contact the next office to see if they had any of these people registered with them. We did use the Red Cross, but we found we were more efficient, I must be honest, than the Red Cross. Firstly, the Red Cross took much longer than we did. We knew that time was of the essence. These lists were passed around, and we all got copies of these lists. So, if we were looking for your relatives, we could look and say, "Hey! Your aunt, we haven't found your parents yet, but your aunt is in Salzburg." And very often, of course, when these people came to our offices, all the walls had their names written on them, and one would write, "I'm Ivan Schwartz. I'm going to Rome." Or "I'm Ivan Schwartz. I'm going to Munich. You will find me. I will be with so-and-so." It was like the tom-toms working. And in the beginning, this is how people found each other.

Q: So, people would leave little messages about -

A: Oh, they'd scribble on our walls.

Q: On your walls?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Not on paper?

A: Oh, on the walls. And we had, let's say – we had five or six rooms, and these messages were on the walls. We would also take notes from them, but – and, sometimes, a father would find a son in the office, and I can't tell you the emotion of that moment. Everybody was so thrilled, and everybody cried. You know, I still get emotional because I saw so much of this. It was wonderful, wonderful, and then you would hear the sadness. You know, "Your mother got killed." Or "I don't know where your mother is." And sometimes it would take months and months to trace a family member, and as I say, they are still tracing family members. I hear stories from Poland today where they are still finding people alive in the States who they thought had died. You know, in the old days, where we had immigration at the turn of the century, relatives lost touch with each other, and after this calamity, they certainly lost contact.

Q: Amy, you say that it was so wonderful to be able to do good things for people. That's clear. In these first two settings, in Egypt and Italy, it must also have been difficult. There must have been hard times because people are not coming out of this whole. There's so much loss.

A: But we hadn't suffered. They had suffered. This was the difference. We were there to help them. I don't think we ever thought of ourselves in this – I'm being honest, I don't

think I ever felt that I had suffered anything at all. You know, it was just so wonderful when you found a relative for somebody or when you were able to find a house for somebody to live in. I don't think, and I'm not saying we weren't selfish people, we were normal human beings, but the job was so in a sense exciting. Can you imagine going up to a town that's been liberated and the Jews there finding – there were Jews, mostly we were British or the American in charge of the Joint would come up, and they'd see us in uniform or they'd see us, members of the Jewish Relief Units with the Shield of David on our shoulders and, you know, the Star of David on our berets. It was so hard for them to believe that Jews had survived as Jews without being taken prisoner or had come to help them. I don't think – I can't imagine anybody that I know of, and we were all very different people, being concerned for ourselves in that sense. I don't think we could've been because we might eventually have gone home more quickly. I mean, some of us stayed on for years to help until the displaced persons camps were liberated.

Q: And, describe again – you wore an American army uniform.

A: Yes, I was an American army officer in uniform. My papers said I had the status of a lieutenant colonel, and it said, in fact, on my identity card that if I were taken prisoner by the Germans, I was to be treated as an officer. I still have those documents.

Q: And you wore the American army uniform in Egypt also?

A: No, in Egypt, I was in British army officer's uniform.

Q: And you wore skirts, or you wore-?

A: We wore skirts. Women didn't wear trousers at that time. We wore skirts, and some of the American women had nylon stockings. They must have been an inch thick, now that I remember, but of course, they got them at the PX and they gave us some. No, I think they gave us, I don't think they sold them to us, and it was wonderful to wear a decent pair of hose. You know, we hadn't had them in years. The Americans were very generous, I must say, very generous.

Q: How did you clean your clothes?

A: That's a very good question, isn't it? When it was warm, of course, everything was washed. I think the army had a cleaning service. I remember, in Vienna, there was an American cleaners, and I met somebody who worked in Vienna with me, and she said, "You used to come around every week and ask if anybody had cleaning, and you would take it to the cleaners for us." I don't remember it, but she told me this was so.

Q: I was wondering because uniforms are fairly heavy.

A: Yeah.

Q: Except in the summer.

A: Right, no, we had, through the Red Cross, I think, or through the PX, we had a cleaning system. Funny, those things I don't even recall because I suppose that wasn't important to us.

Q: Was there any difference in status between the women who went over in the relief group and the men who went over? Were the men not lieutenant colonels, but higher than that?

A: No. We all had the same status. Everybody had the same status. We had one unit leader, a woman who ran our unit was Phyllis Gerson, who after the war, the British government gave what's known as a MB, a Master- a Member, rather, of the British Empire award to her for having served in this unit, and the British government was very interesting. They so valued our work, I think, that after the war they presented us with the same medals they gave to fighting servicemen. I have mine. I would never use them, even the decorative ones, because I didn't think we earned them. You know, we weren't fighting, but I thought it was a very generous gesture.

Q: Okay, I think we'll take a break now.

A: Excellent. How's it going?

Q: Fine.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: Amy, let's go onto Greece. You were describing circumstances in Greece which sounded much worse in some ways than what you found in Egypt and Italy, and these were mainly Greek Jews who were coming back?

A: Yes, these were Greek Jews. The situation was worse because in – firstly, in Egypt, we had many volunteers working with the people who the British were bringing in from the coast of Dalmatia. In Greece, we were two foreigners, there was the head of the Joint Distribution Committee and I, and some local workers, and in Egypt, they hadn't been in concentration camp, and no matter how much people had suffered, they hadn't suffered the brutality, the inhumanity of the Germans in the sense of the people who came back from concentration camps had. We had girls who came back who had tattooed across their stomachs, "*Nur fuer ofitserin*" "Only for officers". They were used in brothels. The boys, very many of them, had been castrated. So, in addition to all their suffering, in one sense, the suffering was even worse than others, and yet, none of them had families to come back to. There wasn't a mother and a father. If there was a brother, there was nobody else. If there was a sister, there was nobody else. There were no complete families left in Greece. As I mentioned earlier, I remember very clearly, the population among Jews in Greece had been 70,000 before the war, and after the war there were 10,000. That's a tremendous percentage of Jews who were killed.

Q: Were most of the people who came back from the concentration camps from Auschwitz, or from labor camps that they had been sent to on death marches?

A: They were from different concentration camps. I don't think any of them had been in labor camps. I think they were in concentration camps, which were death camps.

Q: This young girl that you said had a tattoo on her that said, "Only for officers", was she a Jewish girl?

A: Oh, yes, I'm talking about the Jews. There were some non-Jews who came back to Greece. I must say we helped them, too, where we could, that we didn't differentiate. For the most part, it was Jews who were deported.

Q: What was the most difficult thing for you in helping these people?

A: That we couldn't help them enough. They were so ill, so many of them. They were suffering from TB, and there were no sanitaria where you could put them and nurse them back to health. You had, you know, we had to set up places extempore and put them in beds. You didn't have the medical facilities. You didn't have the medicines, and at that time, streptomycin wasn't yet available. So, you know, these people were really suffering. They were very, very ill. They suffered tremendously, and it was very difficult to see it.

Q: So, you – tuberculosis is very catching, so did you separate all with people who had tuberculosis, or couldn't you even know who had tuberculosis?

A: One didn't know who had tuberculosis. Some were obviously tubercular because they were spitting blood. We were not concerned for ourselves. It's an interesting question you ask, because it never occurred to me that this was a contagious disease that I might get. It had never occurred to me. I'm sure none of the other workers had thought of it in that sense. The main concern was to get these people treated, and Greece had very few beds available. Greece had suffered tremendously anyway under the Germans, you see. They were occupied. And that was a very difficult time.

Q: Did many die?

A: Of our people-

Q: No, I mean of the survivors who were coming back?

A: No, I don't remember them dying. I don't remember them dying. Maybe they had survived because they were so strong. Don't forget, they come out of camps, had been put onto trains, I'm sure without any nursing facilities, and sent across Europe back to Athens. They had to have been strong to start with. I'm sure the weak ones hadn't survived in the first instance.

Q: You know, I think it's interesting, people don't necessarily think about how difficult it is after a war, what it means to clean up and repair and at the same time take care of individuals, so the picture is very graphic when you describe it this way, and you describe people sleeping in the streets because there were not enough beds.

A: There weren't – they were sleeping – I remember, I saw it, sleeping on benches in Constitution Square in Athens. As I say, it was a warm summer, but there were no places to put them. Eventually, gradually, we managed to find places, but some of those men who had been through absolute hell were now sitting – sleeping in the square. And some of them were very angry. I remember, one came into the office once – it sounds funny at this point – but, again, he was going to shoot Israel Jacobson, and I sort of stood between, the brave one yet stupid, and he said, "Hey that's a Mauser. I always wanted a Mauser. What do you want for it?" And this boy, I know this instinct so clearly, and Israel Jacobson is alive – he can tell you the story, too – he said, "I want 25 greenbacks." And I don't remember whether he wanted them with the yellow seal or the red seal. They thought the different seals had different values, and we bought it from him, and I remember, we got a friend to row us out to the Aegian and we threw the gun into the water. That was just – I remember that particularly, because when I stood between them, this wrist was flicked out that way, and this one this way. Eventually my wrists were put back, I had terribly swollen hands. So, that was all right.

Q: Why did that happen?

A: Well, they went for me. You know, they were angry. It was all our fault, wasn't it? No, no, you can understand these men, for heaven's sake. They came back, there were no families, and they wanted money and they knew we had, but not in the office. But, he came – he was going to kill anybody, he thought. Maybe he didn't, but, you know, this was a gesture.

Q: It was a loaded gun?

A: I don't remember. It probably was, yes. It probably was. He must have taken it from a German he had killed.

Q: Did you get scared afterwards?

A: There was no time, no. No, you can't be scared just because somebody is threatening to kill somebody else. You know, and you got in between. I had very sore hands for a bit, but that was life.

Q: Were there more women than men also in these circumstances, coming back to Greece, or was this a case of where there were more men than women? Do you remember?

A: I seem to remember more men. There were some young girls who came back, a number of them from the island of Rhodes, and we couldn't send them to Rhodes because there families had been killed. There were no families, and that's when we decided together with this wonderful woman, Mrs. Mossieri, to set up this hostel to house these girls, and we helped them, of course, immediately, also to join families. So, some of them came to the States. Some went to Canada. Some of them stayed in Greece. Some went to Israel. We tried to help them join families wherever we could because what is life without family?

Q: How did the non-Jewish Greek population feel when these folks came back? I mean, they also had suffered during the war. So, I don't know, were they able to help? Did they want to help? Or were they simply trying to get through it themselves?

A: I don't remember the Greek hierarchy being interested. Now, maybe that's because I was so busy and never contacted them, but we were in contact with Mr. McVeigh who was the American ambassador there because there was a change of currency at one point, which we tried to fight successfully. Spiros Sikuros was there. I went with him on a plane from Italy to Greece, and he was very nice because he helped us to get the Nuremburg laws rescinded. They were still in effect in Greece after the war.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, and I remember there was a man, a major called, Moish Perlman (ph), who later became, I think, the press attaché for the Israeli government, if my memory serves me, I think that's right. Spiros Sikuros, whose son was in the army. I traveled with him and his son on the plane to Athens, and he was very nice, and he helped to get the laws rescinded. It was appalling that they were still in effect, but Greece was still trying to recover itself. I don't think they intended to keep them going, but they didn't of themselves suggest that these laws be rescinded or the property laws be rescinded. It required this outside pressure to get them done.

Q: Now, even though people came back and there were no families, was there property, like houses or apartments that they tried to take over?

A: That's a good question. There were houses, but there were people living in them, and you can't just walk into a house when somebody else has taken over your home, and this required legal procedures, and it took time, and you had to have proof, and these people had to find their papers. These things were not easy, but there were lawyers employed by the Joint Distribution Committee to help these people to get property back, but it was difficult. It took time, especially when you had a country like Greece where they themselves had suffered so much under the Germans. They were still trying to provide restitution to all the Greeks, let's say, in addition to the Jews. We were interested in helping the remnants of the Jewish community, but the Greeks were interested in helping all Greeks. It worked slowly.

Q: Excuse me, I'm sorry.

A: It worked very slowly.

Q: In Eastern Europe, the Joint Distribution Committee often went around to the families who were taken care of Jewish children, non-Jewish families, and sometimes kidnapped them away. Was anything like that happening in Italy or in Greece? Had there been children in hiding who people wanted to keep?

A: You're thinking particularly of Poland. That is a very interesting story. Not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge. I didn't come across it. If it existed, I didn't know of it. But the sad thing in Poland, of course, was the fact that many of these people never told the children who they kept that they were Jewish children until they were dying themselves. And, of course, you know, you now have this Jewish school in Warsaw where those children's children attend. It's very – tough, tough questions. It's very hard to take in a baby of six weeks and four years later, when you've loved it and nurtured it, to give it up.

Q: How long were you in Greece?

A: I was in Greece from April ’45 until August ’46.

Q: A long time, April ’45 to August ’46.

A: I didn’t think of it in that sense. I was working.

Q: So, were you traveling around Greece in the same way you were traveling around Italy?

A: Not as much because you couldn’t – in the beginning, you couldn’t travel around Greece. The only way to travel that’s safe from Athens to Salonica was by boat. There were no bridges. They had to be built. There were no roads. That’s what I’m saying. Yes, we traveled a little to see communities that we could. We’d go up to – I’m trying to remember – Yanina, which was north of Athens, or to the south, but you couldn’t travel around much.

Q: How did you travel when you did?

A: To Salonica, by boat.

Q: And on the roads, how did you go?

A: We had Jeeps, army Jeeps.

Q: So, you didn’t go with a cart and a donkey?

A: No, I didn’t. No, nobody had carts and stuff.

Q: And was your work in Greece very similar to what you did in Italy? You were setting up-?

A: I set up a welfare agency in Athens. These people needed money to buy, and my feeling was you didn’t hand out money to people. It was degrading to them to have to receive charity in that sense. And I set up a system of relief whereby they came to the office, if it was one person, there was that set amount. If it was two people, or a family, there were different amounts, and we gave them checks, and they went to the bank and cashed their checks. This was my feeling, and always has been that the only thing that people often have left for themselves is their dignity, and this to me was one way of giving it back to them. It worked very well.

Q: And how did they cash a check if they didn’t have an account?

A: It was a Joint check, and we had an arrangement with the bank, of course. The bank knew us. Our money was coming in through the Bank of Greece. I think Varvaresso was the president, and we knew him quite well. I remember on one occasion, when we had

deposited quite a large sum of money, and had been assured that that money would not be devalued, because Greece was constantly devaluing, and one day when Israel Jacobson was on his way by plane, I remember, up to Salonica, I heard that the bank that morning had devalued the drachma, which meant that the $150,000 we had changed was now worth about $15. I sent somebody immediately to the airport to bring him back, stop him going, which we did, and then we got in touch with the American ambassador – I think he was an ambassador, I'm not sure already. I don't think he was consul. I think he was an ambassador, Mr. McVeigh, and they said, "Well, we just have to accept this." And Spiros Sikuros of Fox Films, I think he was, said, "Well, have to accept this." And, I said – and I said to Israel Jacobson, "We don't accept this. This is Jewish money that is hard to come by. It's voluntary donations. We've got to fight this." And I remember we fought it, and we got our money back. I felt very good about it.

Q: How does one fight a general devaluation of currency?

A: Well, you go to the president who has assured you two days before there would be no devaluation, and you face him with his promise. I mean, you're not scared. You can't have 150,000 then the next day have 15, and you're trying to feed people who've been starving. It's amazing how much courage you get when, you know, there's something really important here.

Q: Was there a lot of black market in these places where you were, that you remember?

A: I'm sure there was. It wasn't talked about. In a sense, it wasn't black market. If they got, let's say, cheese given them in cans, you got sick of that cheese. I've tasted. So, you changed it for eggs. If that's black market, there was black market. And there were people were very glad to get it. Or there would be chocolate, which was very nutritious, horrible stuff, and you could swap that for something else, for a can of bully beef or something. The black market never bothered me. Firstly, it was people getting foods that they wanted, and foods they felt they needed, and they were trading. I don't see that that was such – they weren't stealing anything. They were just exchanging, and since it wasn't an official exchange, it was known as a black market. This happened in Austria. It certainly happened in Germany. I didn't see it as anything bad.

Q: You seem to be describing barter, which I think may be somewhat different than black market, where people do make money, and-

A: Oh, you're talking of jewelry and stuff like that. That happened, yes. I didn't see it in Greece, by the way. The first time I really came across it was in Germany.

Q: Now, when you gave people money, or checks so they could have some money, was this sufficient so they could rent an apartment, perhaps, or was this really to enable them to get food and sustain themselves.

A: Well, it was to help them more so to find places to live, and there was a group in the community who was finding places. They weren't all Athenians. So, they didn't all own property in Athens, and they were able to, if they had money, they could rent a room and they could buy food, and eventually we got food in through the American Joint Distribution Committee, which we could contribute both to individuals and through the synagogue. The rabbi was there, Rabbi Basel, I think his name was. They were taken care of, minimally, I must say, because this is all we could do. The war had just finished. It was hard to get stuff put aboard a ship. Money was the thing that you could get. So, we would go into, or sent to Palestine for goods, for clothing, or to Egypt for goods and clothing. We were fortunate enough that we had – there was Mr. Charles Passman in Palestine, who was with the American Joint Distribution committee also, a wonderful character. I knew him, and he would send us food and send us clothing, and I think we did it also through the Jewish Community in Cairo. You bring back memories.

Q: I'm going to go back to something because I'm going to forget it if I don't remind you and me. You said you met Golda Meir on a trip from Italy to Palestine. What was she doing and what were you meeting about?

A: Well, she was a member of, I suppose, the hierarchy in the British – no, sorry, beg your pardon – in the Palestine Jewish community. She was one of the political animals as well as Sharett, and I can't think of the others at the moment who I also met. We went to see her essentially because people were coming into Athens from the north, escapees. I think the war was still on, and coming down to the hachshara (ph) that was in Perez, and there wasn't enough space. They weren't moving out quickly enough on the leaderships. I must say the Joint wasn't arranging illegal movement. I know that.

Q: It wasn't?

A: No. It had a very clean nose in that sense. I think they were scared in the sense that if they did anything illegally, and the American government discovered it, they wouldn't trust them. I know when I was working on immigration, we were terribly careful. But the Palestinians were working their ships. We were feeding the people, and-

Q: I was asking you about what the meeting was about with Golda Meir.

A: Right, we went to see her because they were coming down rather quickly, and there wasn't enough space in the hachshara to house them, and we really went to ask her to slow down the movement a bit so that people came in more slowly, and could be shipped out, because the hachshara was rather small, and I guess she did her stuff. It was interesting meeting these people.

Q: Did you learn to speak Greek since you were there for so long, or at least, over a year?

A: I had kitchen Greek. That's what I would say. It wasn't very good Greek, but I had an ear for language, and could understand what was being said. No, I used English. I also began to learn German. I had no idea I was to eventually going to end up in German speaking countries, but that I found easier. And the boys, many of them spoke, or the girls also spoke German. They spoke English, too, a number of them, and we, of course, operated with interpreters.

Q: Did you interview some of these survivors that had come back? Did you sit down and talk with them or was work so overwhelming that that was not part of what you were doing?

A: Do you mean about their experiences in the camps?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't think they were ready to talk about it. It never occurred to me at that time, when somebody came back, to talk about it experience in a concentration camp. When you sat down with somebody, you talked to them about how many members of his family were there? Did he know where they were? You talked for the future, not for the past. I must say, in all my experience, I never consciously asked them to talk about their experience in concentration camp. Firstly, for them it was very difficult, especially since they had gone in sometimes as a family – a father and two sons, and this was the only son who survived, and purely by the grace of God, no other reason. We never asked them to. Some of them did tell you of their experiences, and you listened. We didn't ask questions. They had a need to talk, and you had to have a good ear and listen. Some of it was horrific. Some of it was horrific, but no, I never remember asking about the experience in a camp.

Q: Did you ever notice that the spoke with each other?

A: No, I don't think they did. They had certain codes, I think. They hadn't all been in the same camp, and those that had, the fact that they were together meant that they had comfort. They were lucky. They had other people they could talk to about what they went through who would understand. I think they might also have thought we couldn't possibly understand, and how could we? How could we understand the brutality and the killings and the horrific things that they had to do? No, you didn't ask.

Q: As you heard some of this from people, I mean, since some people did speak with you, did you – you seem to have an extremely positive outlook on life. I mean, it just shows in you. Did this depress you and make you wonder about the capacity of human beings to commit horrific acts like this that you had never thought of before? Did you think this was just aberrant?

A: No, I never thought it was aberrant. This was very intentional by many, many people. I think when people would tell me their stories, I used to think, "And they survived this."

And the important thing was to get them away from this. I mean, how could people go through the kind of thing they had? The bombing in London was nothing compared to this, and that horrified me. I was terrified. No, I seem to remember also when people would come and tell some horrific stories that you couldn't cry with them. You were there to help them. I used to say to some of the people who work for me, particularly when I went into Austria and then Germany, "We can't cry with them. We can cry for them afterwards, but we have to help them." I don't know where this attitude came from, frankly. I think it's always been there.

Q: So, did you sometimes cry alone?

A: Oh, when we got home and we would talk. We were a group living in the same apartment building, and I remember Hannah Kisch, who was a wonderful woman, originally from Lithuanian who immigrated to South Africa and came up to help us, and she would tell a story and be sobbing, you know, and we would share stories that we'd heard, but it didn't last for long. We didn't have time to do this. You know, when we were working, we started, I suppose, at seven or eight in the morning, and who knows what time at night we'd finish. There were no days off. There was no closing the office because it was dark or something. You were working all the time. Sometimes, some of the people were in the office all night. I don't remember being, except once or twice in Salonica, working late into the night, or in Italy when we were working on this transport to Palestine, working I think all night through. I don't remember it, but you just did it, and it wasn't work, you see, you were helping people. And I think we were lucky and a number of people who volunteered to go overseas were of similar ilk, and if they weren't – some of them went home after the year's contract was up, which was just as well.

Q: I can see you're seeing somebody in your head. Yes?

A: Yes. But that was all right. That was all right.

Q: Did a number of people get sent home because they were not right for this kind of work? Or did people generally just go home on their own?

A: I know of one person who was sent home. I think people left on their own. Some of them couldn't take this kind of work. Remember, except for those in Britain who'd been throw the Blitz, so we'd had some kind of upheaval in our lives, the average American who came later to work, had had no upheaval. I remember one of the survivors writing to me after he got to the States saying – we sent him to his aunt – and he was telling me he said how terrible the food rationing was. Sugar was rationed she said during the war, and he said eventually he just had to pick-up and move out of her house. He said she was a lovely woman, but she had no understanding, and I think that's partly answer to the question of why did it take so long for people to start talking because nobody in a sense was interested.

Q: Did you mainly socialize with each other? Did you sometimes socialize with the survivors who would come?

A: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We socialized with each other. We weren't very many. When we had time to socialize. We ate in a different place, obviously. We ate in the billets that we were put in, and some of these people were people I'd normally in normal life have as friends, and we could socialize. But we were on different levels. We were – we were foreigners. We were help that came in to help them. We socialized with the people we employed to work with us, and that – most of them were wonderful people. You know, if you give people a chance, they will. Some of them were *gazlonim*, gangsters in English, but a lot of them were wonderful people. You couldn't socialize with everybody, obviously, but the people we worked with, we socialized with. We would have dinner with them. Invite them to our mess, you know, we were eating in an army mess, and that food was different from theirs. There wasn't very much socialization in the sense that we use that word. At night, we were quite often very tired, and were glad to put our feet up. Some of them would come and put their feet up with us and have a drink maybe and then go home. So, it wasn't socialization in the general sense of the word.

Q: Did you sleep okay?

A: Most of the time, yes, I think, under mosquito nets in Greece. It was malaria, still. And there's a very nice instant I must tell you of. We were taking an antimalarial drug, which made us yellow, and somebody came in, I think, from Palestine, and cabled to Paris that we were looking very ill. We were very yellow, and so we were sent for two weeks to Palestine on vacation. How did you tell people this was a result of – I don't know if it was attaprin (ph), or something we were taking at the time that made us look very yellow.

Q: So, what was that like to be in Palestine for two weeks?

A: It was lovely.

Q: Where were you?

A: Well, we went to Jerusalem, and we went up to Rosh Pina, and met some friends who'd been working in Greece, and went into Kibbutzim, and it was lovely. It was lovely to see normal people leading normal lives. We were in Jerusalem, which was really a lovely, lovely city, a lovely city. It was very nice.

Q: Did you meet up with some of the folks who had been in the camps and had -

A: No, they hadn't gone yet.

Q: They hadn't gone yet?

A: No, I'm talking of '45. No, they hadn't gone yet.

Q: So, you at least had in these few years a two week vacation.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: And all ten of you went?

A: Two of us.

Q: Two of you?

A: Oh, you're talking of the Jewish Relief Unit, no, when I talk of Greece, I was there alone with a representative of the Joint Distribution Committee. Two of us went. No, the others were either in Italy still, or had gone into Austria, but in terms of vacation, you never thought of vacation. I'm not saying we were self-sacrificing. That never occurred to us. You worked, and the work wasn't work. It didn't feel like work. It's very difficult to explain. You were helping people who needed help desperately, and I guess we took days off occasionally. I don't remember, but I'm sure we did, or we went – yes, we did, of course. We'd go up and see one of the Greek ruins somewhere. You know, drive, take the Jeep where you could drive to and have lunch at the seaside taverno, which was very nice. Oh, yes.

Q: You were in Greece from April '45 to August '46, yes? So, in the beginning, it must have been much tougher, because the war is just over, or not quite over.

A: In June.

Q: In June, right.

A: The Greeks were shooting up people reading the Communist newspapers in Constitutional Square, I remember. That was how they celebrated the end of the war. Our office overlooked the Square.

Q: You can see people being shot?

A: Oh, yeah. You know, all in a days work, kind of thing. At a very early age, you got used to seeing this kind of thing, and it was horrible, horrible.

Q: What was it like a year later? Were there sort of incremental changes, like every three months you could see a real difference?

A: No, supplies began to come in. For example, we were very indiscriminate still at that time in using DDT to disinfest people. You know, in Egypt, we disinfested the Arabs, poor

souls. God knows how much we got up our own nostrils. Who knew it was such a poison? And we stopped using DDT at one point, but I remember puffing it into the Arabs galobiers (ph), you know? Things began to change as people began to get a place to live, found family, decided they would immigrate, registered with a consulate, had family members contact them. Nobody would come in, and there was very little civilian traffic between Europe and the United States or Australia, and they still couldn't go to Palestine except legally – if they were going legally on a certificate. So, movement was slow, but gradually things began to get a bit better, and as I say, as people began to find relatives, things were better. It was very slow, very slow, and people were ill for a long time, a long time, and to get property back took years. You couldn't see it in increments. It didn't happen quickly. Look how long it took to get reparations from Germany. They started in '45 and the reparations began to come through at the end of the '40s, and these were with all the great powers working together and Germany willing to give back in part.

Q: How was it that you came to go to Austria?

A: In August of 1946, Dr. Joseph Schwartz, my hero, a blessing really – he really was a wonderful man with a wonderful sense of humor and a marvelous administrator – asked me if I would go up into Austria. He said President Truman in December of 1945, on the 22nd of December, had passed – had issued a directive which enabled people who were displaced persons to get priority for American visas under the quota system. In other words, they still had to go through the quota, but they would get visas rather than people, let's say, who'd lived in England or South America, and he said they'd had somebody there working, but who hadn't panned out, and would I do this? Well, I would have done anything this man asked me, and so I went up into Athens, but I knew nothing of American immigration law, and I must say, I sat down for four days with this American immigration law from 1924, I think it was, and then with the Truman Directive, and gradually began to get things together, and it didn't take too long. Firstly, here was something very positive. We were going to be able to help people to leave Austria – displaced persons and Austrian Jews. And the first problem we had was that those Jews from Austria who had returned to Vienna from camps were not considered displaced persons by the consuls, but the International Refugee Organization had registered them as displaced persons, which they were. They didn't have their homes. They didn't have their jobs. Some of their family members had been killed, and so, we set up a test case. When I say we, I was very brazen, I must confess, and I established a precedent case showing how this man – I won't give you his name, he lives in the States today – how this man had lost family, had lost his home, had come back, had no where to live, was being housed by the American voluntary agency, and essentially he was still a displaced person, and we won the case. So, he could get a visa and go to the United States. When this happened, we could put through other Austrian Jews. There weren't too many left, and get them visas, and then we could help the others to get visas. And the interesting thing was we began to work rather swiftly. My thought was firstly we must get young people out because the young people are the future of any community. Secondly, we must get all

those people out who have relatives who will help them. That meant they would not be a charge on the voluntary agency's funds, which really had to harness its money, and also it would give them back a normal life, and so these people began to move rather swiftly through the pipeline, and it worked very well until the first Displaced Persons Act, American Displaced Persons Act of 1948. This in a sense sounds like a mythical story, but I was in Vienna and some members of the Displaced Persons Commission, I'll think of their names in a moment – Carrousi (ph) and some other people, came into Vienna, I think it was on a Saturday, maybe it was a Friday, and said, "We're ready to issue visas under the Displaced Persons Act. Where are your job and housing assurances? On the basis of those, we can give visas." Frankly, I'd never seen a job and housing assurance. I didn't know what it was. I knew we were going to have some, but we were waiting for our American agency to send the stuff over, and I said to these men, "Our job and housing assurances are at the printers, at the *Allianz gebaude*," which is the office where we took all our mimeographing. If you would write one out for me, I'll go over there and get it mimeographed. I was lying. I'd never seen one. They were very nice, these gentlemen. They wrote it out. I went over to the *Allianz gebaude*. I mimeographed about 50. I had all the cases which I knew were okay. I issued a job and housing assurance for, and these went to the consulate and these people gave them visas. I called Munich and told the director of immigration there what I had done and what the wording was on this thing so when these men eventually got to Salz – I beg your pardon – to Munich in a few days, they were ready. Now, our people began to get visas, and I must say within about ten days a cable came through to the director of the Joint in Austria, Harold Trobe, telling him that was Amy Zahl was doing was illegal and please stop her at once. And he called me on the phone and told me this, and so I went to the consulate, I picked up every Jewish case I could find whether we would have been working with them or not, issued them job and housing assurances, and then stopped. Now, what happened was as the ships began to take passengers to the States, and we were using army transports, there were a lot of Jews in the first ship – ship, one ship, two ships, about four ships, and the press in the United States, of course, "Only Jews are getting visas." There were lots of anti-Semitic comments in the press, and I'm sure if you look at the press at that time, you'll find it was only because we were on the ball. What we did do, of course, was tell the other agencies what they needed and how to go about it. We didn't have a counsel of voluntary agencies in Vienna. We did when I got to Germany, but that was very interesting. I felt as though I was doing sort of some really dirty work, but we were helping people to get out.

Q: Can you explain what a job and housing assurance is?

A: Yes. In order to get a visa, you no longer needed an affidavit from an individual. What you needed was instead an assurance that you would have a job when you got to the United States and that you would have housing. And voluntary agencies were allowed to give these out because ostensibly, the voluntary agencies in the United States were going into communities and asking them, and they were very good for all displaced persons, Jewish and non-Jewish, to give job and housing assurances which they did. The Jewish

and all the other agencies were very cooperative, and many displaced persons did get to the United States on the basis of those job and housing assurances.

Q: Amy, was the assurance of a particular job?

A: A particular job.

Q: For this particular person.

A: For this particular person in a particular spot in the United States, in a particular town.

Q: So, then, how did you do it?

A: Okay. If, Ivan Schwartz came to me, and he had met the other provisions of the Truman Directive was – which were that you had to have been in the American, British or French zones of Austria or Germany or the British, French or American zones of Vienna or Berlin on December the 22nd, 1945, you were eligible. If you were eligible, we could get a job – we would contact the States and we would get – this is under normal circumstances – a job and housing assurance for Ivan Schwartz to go to Seattle to be a tailor, which he had been before, and on the basis of that, providing he passed his medical with the consulate, providing he passed his security with the CIC, the Counter Intelligence Corp, he would get a visa. Those were the only people who were eligible. So, what I did, since I had job and housing assurances already for people, I just had to sign a name to them. In a sense, I did it without authority.

Q: And did you do it thinking this person could do this job?

A: No.

Q: You just did it to -

A: I had no idea what job they did. I wanted to get these people out, and it worked.

Q: Were these mainly men?

A: Families.

Q: Families?

A: Oh, it was families and individuals. It was whoever was eligible under the provisions of the directive.

Q: But you know why I'm asking? Because are these jobs that are assured mainly jobs for men?

A: Mostly, I would think they were jobs for men because women weren't a large part of the labor force in '45. They were a very small part of the labor force except in munitions factories and things like that, but in Europe women hadn't been part of the labor force before the war, and we're talking of people who hadn't worked since the war.

Q: And may not have finished school…

A: May not have finished school.

Q: Was this and added burden for women then, unless they got married and were part of a family?

A: We didn't – I don't seem to remember many individual women, and maybe as many women didn't survive. I don't remember as many women alone coming and trying to get out under the Displaced Persons Act. That's a fascinating question because, when I think, I always think of families or husband and wives or single men. I don't remember many single women.

Q: Because one might wonder whether some of the women married sooner than they might have, knowing that they might be able to get out if they were married, but not if they were single.

A: Right, and by the same token, some of the men might have married women they might not otherwise have married because they were born in Germany, let's say, where the quota was good. They were still working on the quota system, remember. So, people married each other for different reasons, apart from the fact that they were fond of each other.

Q: So, how long did you work in Austria?

A: I worked in Austria from August '46 to October '48.

Q: That's a long period. Could you describe, I mean, you were doing these visas, were you going around and explaining to people how they could get visas?

A: Yes, I used to go into the camps and explain what the law was, how they could become eligible. I had offices in Salzburg, in Linz, in Innsbruck, and I would call these people together who run the offices. So, we all ran on the same system. It was a tiring job in a way. You had to be on the ball all the time, and you had to have good people, but the system worked very well, and then, when in 1948, the Displaced Persons Act was passed, I was asked, again, by Dr. Schwartz to go into Germany.

Q: I don't want you to get to Germany so fast.

A: Okay.

Q: I want to talk about Austria a little bit. What was it like to – did you lecture? I mean, did you get into a hall and lecture to a group of DPs to say this is what you-

A: No, I learned German very quickly. I learned it because I didn't trust interpreters. I didn't know if they were working for the Russians or for the French or for the British or for the Americans, trying to catch me out. You learned to be very wary living in Vienna. For example, we couldn't leave Vienna without a *propesk*, a permit, from the Russians. I still have one as a matter of fact. And what we, I would do when I was going up to Salzburg or to Linz, the other side of the Russian zone, I would get on – there was an American army train known as the Mozart, and we would get on that and that was not inspected by the Russians, but you still had to have a permit to leave Austria. What was the rest of your question?

Q: I was asking whether you would get in front of a large group of DPs and lecture to them?

A: No, I'm sorry. I would go up, let's say, to Linz, and talk to the people in the office, and then I'd go into a camp and talk to them. I learned Yiddish, also, and I learned to speak with a Polish accent. There's a different accent if you're a Russian Jew or Lithuanian Jew. You have a softer accent. I would talk to them in German or in Yiddish about what they had to do, and why it was taking so long from their point of view, that there was no need to try and come, let's say, to the office in Vienna, which some of them would try to do or to go to Salzburg. We didn't have the staff to cope with large numbers, but what was happening and what we were doing and I think the fact that we kept them informed of what we were doing helped to stop any rioting that we might have had. I don't remember any rioting at all, actually. We had people who would be very irate and come in and bang the table and make all kinds of threats, but I think it helped having offices where, you may laugh at this, where we set up chairs where they could sit and wait, because when I first came in, there were no chairs for visitors. They lined up, and one by one they went in and stood by a desk. Well, this whole thing of dignity which I'd learned at a very early age. People – you don't give them dignity by making them stand and you sit. I remember, what we did in Vienna and I did it again in Germany. We got a great big urn, and made coffee, and the nicest person I could find, usually a nice Hungarian boy, I would put in charge of the waiting room, and he'd offer people coffee. They were unused to this. A lot of people wouldn't drink our coffee because they were ultra-orthodox, but other people would, and we would have newspapers in the office, and as I told you, they'd go along the walls scribbling their names and where they were going to or leaving notes with somebody and they'd meet each other. It became a meeting place. It worked. It worked. Sometimes, they had to wait a long time in order to get seen because we didn't have colossal staff. The work was tedious. For the consuls, you had to have everything in order, and we weren't only working on American immigration. We were working on immigration to Palestine. No, we weren't doing the Palestine immigration now. Palestine

was being handled by the Jewish agency. We were not working on Palestine. That's an error. We were working on South America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the paperwork was very slow, but people did begin to move out. But the Truman Directive was wonderful because, for the first time, numbers of people began to leave, numbers, and the Rothschild Hospital, which was housing so many of these people, began gradually to get – to lessen in number its occupants. But it was hard work.

Q: Amy, in '46, there are still people in DP camps who were not technically survivors, who had left the country because of the war and they were accumulated in DP camps. Did you have criteria for who you would give visas to?

A: We didn't give visas. We were not judges. The people who in the DP camps, there were very few survivors of concentration camps – I'm thinking of Vienna – no, there were. There were people who'd survived camps. No, we made no criteria. How can you decide that this need is greater than that need? You know, because he has a new baby and these don't have a baby and they've both been through hell and only one of that couple had been through hell. No, no, no, you couldn't afford to be judgmental. You couldn't afford it. But, as long as they met the criteria, and not a great number did, but a fair number met the criteria, we did everything we could to help them get in. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, I must say, were not very kindly disposed toward these people, and did everything they could to find some fault where they could deny them entry to the United States, and then you would have to appeal. This happened occasionally and somebody was absolutely heartbroken when you knew that they were genuine and they were refused entry by the INS having gone through all the medicals and all the other checks, and had been given visas and had written to relatives that they were coming. They suddenly found that Immigration and Naturalization Services found their papers were not in order, let's say. Those were very hard times, very hard times.

Q: And would you appeal for them?

A: We had somebody with legal experience who appealed to the INS, and very often we won our case, very often.

Q: And what do you think the INS was doing? Were they being genuine? Were they simply not wanting these folks to come in because they-?

A: Well, I remember one of the – I know – I remember the name of the man who was in charge of the INS in Munich. When he told Dorothea Green, who headed up the ORT, Organization for Rehabilitation and Training, who is a very lovely lady, very handsome, and she was fighting for a case, and he said to her, "Lady, you're here to get these people in. We're here to keep them out." And she didn't lie. And I'm sure this was their attitude. They didn't like these people. After all, they didn't speak English. They weren't well dressed by a long shot, and these men didn't like them, and maybe they'd been given instructions to try and keep them out. I don't know. No, that was pretty tough, but the – in

the first instance, these people didn't go to the INS until they got to Bremen. So, they were held back in Bremen. Later on, when the Displaced Persons Act came into being, they sent the INS into different regions so people didn't accumulate in Bremen, but rather went to Bremen knowing they were going to board a ship.

Q: Did you sometimes take the information? Or were you sort of the administrative head of your staff?

A: What do you mean, did I take information?

Q: Well, did you see with clients?

A: I was in charge of the administration, but I handled what I considered to be difficult cases. For example, if one of my workers said to me, "Amy, you know, I'm not sure that this man's papers are really genuine." Because I must say, the Joint was very, very careful. It would've been foolish for us to sponsor cases of people whose documents were false, because we might have ruined for everybody. I would then take on that case. Firstly, it was very time consuming, and there were plenty of people lined up, and I developed a means of questioning people where, if they could pass my surveillance, I would think that their papers were genuine. If it became apparent to me that really these papers were false, I would say to this person, "You know, we can get you into Canada as either a furrier or a tailor or this or that. So, you could – excuse me – you could meet your relatives in the United States. Or, if you would like to take your family to Australia, we'll try and get you there." But, I would not sponsor that case. That case became a no-no in our office. No, we were very careful in that sense.

Q: Can you give me a sense of what it would mean to have a false paper? What is that kind of documentation people had to have?

A: Okay. It was sad. These people had to prove that they were in Austria, Germany or Italy on December the 22nd, 1945. Now, some of them had gone back to Poland to look for family and not found them. So, on December the 22nd,1945, they were in Poland rather than in Germany, and they would make false papers to say they were in a Germany town on that date, so that they could pass. Now, it sound became apparent, for example, the Immigration and Naturalization Service would say to them, "What color were the streetcars in the town?" because they knew. And very soon, of course, the survivors knew what color the streetcars were. When you think back, it was horrid to treat people with such indignity, people who had suffered so much and who had gone to look for relatives and this was their crime because, because of that, they couldn't get visas to the United States. It was horrible.

Q: You must have gotten angry at times, no?

A: You couldn't afford to be angry. You had to find ways to overcome this stupidity. You got angry for your clients because you knew they were decent and fine people who perhaps been in concentration camp, or they'd be in Koraganda, in Russia because they had fled to Russia from Poland, and then come back, and they worked in the mines. They suffered, and here are these people treating them like gangsters because – criminals rather, because they hadn't been in a certain place on a certain date. They may have come over three days later, by the way, and that was awful. That made you very sad, very sad because sometimes a mother would get a visa and her adult son wouldn't. And then what we try and do is help the adult son get to Canada because we knew that through Canada and the United States, they could work something out where the two relatives could be joined again. It was hard to watch.

Q: Let's take a break.

A: Excellent. Don't tell me an hour's gone through again!

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Amy, give me some idea. You were in Austria for a rather long time, close to two years.

A: More than two years.

Q: More than two years. What was it like to be in Austria during that time? Did you meet with Austrians as well as the refugees and the survivors that you were helping?

A: We didn't meet with Austrians. It was a very difficult situation in the sense that Vienna was occupied by the Americans, the French, the British and the Germans. Each had a sector, and there was an international sector, and one had to be very careful not to go into the Russian sector at this time, because you could be arrested. So, it was a bit difficult. Also, Vienna had been bombed, and the only accommodation they had for people like us was in hotels and what were formerly known as *studen* (ph) hotels. Those were hotels where somebody came for an hour, and the rooms were very tiny, and that, I found, very difficult to live with, and so I got myself a billet in a private home of some Austrians and had at least a room and a bathroom that I could move around in to myself, and it was a bit further out from the center. So, it was fairly pleasant. But they had no heating and I had to supply coal to heat my room. But it wasn't bad. You know, I'd come from England, remember, not too long ago, and we didn't have homes to heat after the bombing. So, that was okay.

Q: And were these older Austrians?

A: No, these were younger people. The husband had been a Nazi, but as he said, if he weren't a member of the Nazi party, you couldn't run a business, and I must say, I believed him also that he was a decent man because, when I was there, he was often sent packages from Jews who he'd help to get the Argentine, and they were sending him food packages. So, he couldn't have been all bad.

Q: Is that your main association with Austrian citizens?

A: I beg your pardon.

Q: Is that your main association with Austrian citizens?

A: With Austrian citizens, well, I had Austrians working in my office, Austrian Jews, but I didn't – I had very little contact or almost no contact with Austrians per se.

Q: Did other members – actually, how many members of your staff were there?

A: In the immigration office? I had another person from England who was my secretary and confidant, there was a man who originally had been from – had been Austrian, he now

lived in Britain, and he helped. And then there must have been eight other local staff, and they were Jewish, essentially because we wanted to give Jews employment, and so we were about a dozen people in my office alone.

Q: But, you had – you administered a number of offices?

A: Yes, this was the Viennese office, which I worked in as well as administrating. Then I administered the office in Salzburg, the one in Linz, which was the other side of the Russian zone, and the one in the French zone in Innsbruck, and then we had representatives in all the displaced persons camps because we would go out to them to save people having to travel to Vienna, which they couldn't do unless they had permits to go through the Russian zone, and that, nobody was keen to do at this time. We would go into the camps, and tell them things which were necessary for them to know, or collect papers, or bring them papers for signature. It was a bit of an awkward program, although it worked very well. Or they could go into Salzburg, where there papers were held. It was not an easy situation actually because we were always worried that there might be Russians around trying to pick up people because sometimes we had Russian army officers who were Jewish. For example, a woman came to me one day dressed almost in rags with dyed hair looking very ugly, and she said her husband and daughter were in Palestine. She was a doctor in the Russian army, and there was a certificate for Palestine for her at the British consulate, could we help her? Well, the first thing you think is, "A ha! She's a spy. She wants to see what we're doing." And I took all her particulars and I went across to the British consulate, and sure enough there was a certificate, but that wasn't enough as far as I was concerned. I contacted friends who were working with the Jewish agency for Palestine, told them the story, and asked them to check in Palestine that she did indeed have a husband and a daughter there, because one never knew how honest these people were. There were many ways by which you could trick somebody, and the answer eventually came back that yes, her husband and daughter were there and they confirmed her story. Now, how was I to get her out? She had to come at times when very few people were around. I had to try and do everything so that she wouldn't be seen, and eventually I got her certificate, and how to send her to the airport which was in the Russian zone? And the only way to do it was to take her myself, and don't think I wasn't scared. I'm not so brave, but she sat in the car with me and we handed in her papers, and my *propesk*, my permit to go into the Russian zone, and we put her on a plane. And there were others. I had a young woman who was working at the Polish consulate, who had a brother in Canada. My goodness, my memory's going back, and she said she had a visa to go to Canada, and again, I was suspicious, and checked her out in the same way. I checked through the consulate and then I checked with the agency, the Jewish agency working in Montreal, and they confirmed her story, and she told the Poles at that time she was going on vacation, and off she went to Canada. It was tricky doing this because you were always suspicious that perhaps these people were not genuine, and that you might be picked up yourself on the street because people were being picked up, particularly by the Russians. People would be walking along and suddenly a car would stop, and like a

gangster film, people would be whisked off and not seen again. It never happened to any of us. I'm just adding drama to the story, I guess.

Q: Who were they picking up? Who were they looking for?

A: I have no idea.

Q: You don't know?

A: No idea, perhaps they were Russians who'd defected, could be.

Q: Now, this Russian woman who had been a doctor in the army, why did you have to bring her into your offices when very few people were there?

A: I didn't want her to be seen. Maybe I was scared, but I thought the less people who knew of her or who saw her, the better. I remember her name. Her name was Hasia Rapaport, and I remember it very distinctly.

Q: Did you ever meet her later on?

A: No, no.

Q: Were you also nervous that people who would see her might denounce her to somebody? I mean, that there was-

A: Well, they couldn't because they didn't – she liked look any other poor person in Vienna. She had dyed red hair, and very – dressed very ordinarily, and heaven knows where she got her clothes from. She wasn't in uniform when she came to my office. She was too sensible for that, and she had guts actually to come to the office, but her story was true. And I remember the Polish person, and often when we go to – out in the evening in Vienna, we would meet Russian officers who were Jews in the Russian army who were not going to defect. They were Russians, but when you had a husband and a daughter in Palestine, of course, you were going to defect if you could.

Q: How did the husband and the daughter get to Palestine? Do you know?

A: They must have gone when war started, or before war started. I have no idea. I didn't ask her that question, but they probably went – that's right, they couldn't have gone legally. They must have gone the long way around – the land route as we call it, go through Siberia, and then make their way down.

Q: Did you ever have a circumstance where the story was really not true and you had to say no to somebody?

A: No, I don't remember such a story. I don't think they would've had the guts to come to us because they didn't know how we respond, I think. They may have been – we had Germans who tried to pass themselves off as displaced persons, as Jews, in order to get to the United States, and sometimes somebody, let's say, at Bremen when they'd pass and they had their visa, would recognize them as having been in a concentration camp, had been one of the workers there, and of course they had to be imprisoned for their own safety, but we discovered very early on that when a German held up his arms, his blood group number was tattooed under his arm. So, if we were suspicious, we could ask the doctor or somebody to examine him, but I'm sure Germans got through as Jewish displaced persons and probably lived a life as Jews. People try all kinds of things and get away with it.

Q: Are there any other situations in Austria you would like to tell us about before we move to your next?

A: Well, some of the things we did in Austria, we had to use our wits. I think that's essentially the thing. For example, I don't know if I had told you earlier about the people who had visas for Uruguay?

Q: No, tell us.

A: And I knew that their relatives actually were living in Para—I beg your pardon in the Argentine. Well, obviously, the Argentine at that time was not giving visas to Jews, and so the relatives over there were sensible or smart, they got visas for Paraguay and we would get transit visas for the Argentine that one could get, and when they got to the Argentine, they had ways of whisking them off. So, I remember I would sometimes have to go up to Prague because that's where the consulate was, and I remember having a large family of about 13 people – Schmuck Lieberman and another name. I don't remember them now. And I went into the consulate, and they weren't very ready to give visas because they consuls made their living, in a way, from the visa fees they charged. You know, they were honorary consuls; they weren't civil servants. And so I would go in and very brazenly say, "Of course, I know your secretary will have to work extra time, and if there's anything we could do to compensate for that we would be very happy." My way of offering a bribe, which was gladly accepted, and I would get these visas, and very discreetly in an envelope leave my payment and walk out. But, you see, people who hadn't been used to having to – what's the word? – find their way, wouldn't do this kind of thing, and I remember the very nice woman who was running the Prague office for the American Joint was astounded that I could come to her within one day and show her that I had 13 visas. "You must have paid," she said. I said, "Who would dream of paying?" You couldn't even tell your own what you were doing because if they didn't know themselves how to do it, you could never teach them how.

Q: How do you think you picked this up? Knowing how to arrange things, because you're right, people say, "I don't pay for things. I don't barter for things. I simply do-"

A: Well, you had to know. I think you knew you had to do something. You had to get these visas. You had to get these people out, and if you couldn't do it by being honest, since the Argentineans weren't offering visas, you had to do it dishonestly. I didn't think I was doing anything dishonest because I was helping people to join relatives, and you thought of a thousand ways. How did people survive who didn't land in concentration camp, if they didn't think of a thousand ruses to survive? And I suppose this is part of it.

Q: So, but there is a difference because you said a number of times that you didn't want to do anything that was illegal.

A: Not if I could help it.

Q: Right.

A: But, when I had to get visas for the Argentine, transit visas, and I knew that the only way to get them was for the relatives to get the Paraguayan visas, there was no problem, and if I knew, as I did, that the consul was not anxious even to give transit visas to Jews, then you had to get them by other means. I mean, look at the people who landed up in Shanghai, before and during the war. They had no more intention of staying in Shanghai then you or I would have had, but this was their way of getting out of Germany.

Q: How did you distinguish between what was illegal and what was just sort of pushing the envelope?

A: I never even thought about what was legal or illegal. I did everything to my knowledge legally, but when I had to help families get to a country that didn't want them, but I knew they relatives could help them to stay there, and the general community wasn't against them coming in, why not?

Q: Amy, when you took this job – actually, did you start to get paid at any point?

A: Yes, I did. After three years, Dr. Schwartz asked me if I'd like to come on to the American Joint's payroll, and I said I thought that would be nice because by then I mean, I was very broke. I had no money, and he offered me a salary at that time. It wasn't very high, but it was much more than I'd been getting as a volunteer, and I felt, "Well, three years of voluntary service, I had paid my way."

Q: So, does that mean, was it '46 or '47?

A: This was in forty – toward the end of '46, I came on to the JDC payroll.

Q: That was nice.

A: No, I had to. I had no money.

Q: But let me ask you something. You were in 1945, 26?

A: No, no, 25.

Q: Twenty-five years old, and you had this job of bringing-

A: Helping people to-

Q: Helping people to get-

A: To the United States.

Q: Did you think about yourself at this very young person doing this wonderful-?

A: No, never. I take it for granted that I could do it. I didn't even think of it as – I didn't think that I took it for granted. This was a job, and this was something I could do. I knew that I had administrative ability. I knew that I knew how to work with people, and – but I never thought of myself as doing anything special. I was always very pleased, for example, when I could do something like I did for these people going to Paraguay ostensibly and get their visas, because I helped them. I've got pictures at home of them at the railroad station. I took them to the station. We always gave flowers when people left. That was quite European. You always presented people with flowers when they left.

Q: Was that your idea?

A: No, no, no, this was generally done, and I've got, you know, the father with the beard, and they would have many kids with them, and I'm sure many of those children were not their own, but how could you prove it. They had no original documents with them. They probably were children of relatives, and why should I ask questions? We were saving young lives. It was something one took for granted, one did. During the war, the kinds of things we did in Britain, you never thought of yourself as being anything special. You just did it.

Q: Were there other people – were most of the people working for you your age? Were they much older? Were they younger?

A: Some were older. Some were younger.

Q: So, it was mixed?

A: Mixed. Some of the men were older, quite a bit older, but it's interesting. I never thought of age in those days. I never thought that somebody was older or younger. Occasionally,

you would find you came into an office like when I came into Vienna, and there was a man working there much older than I who was very entrepreneurial, and I didn't trust him any further than I could throw a grand piano, and I knew I had to get rid of him. And it took a little time, but very graciously, we paid him off and got him out because he was dishonest. He was taking money from people to get them visas, and that, to me, was anathema. So, I won't tell you his name. I remember it.

Q: You do, but you won't tell right? So, what happened in 1948? You then got -

A: Oh, in 1948, this was an interesting year. The Americans passed the Displaced Persons Act, the first one where displaced persons if they had job and housing assurances, could get visas for the United States. It didn't depend on which country they had lived. In other words, it wasn't a quota system. And this was fascinating because, one day, I don't know if it was a Friday or a Saturday, we were in the office – I must say we didn't know whether it was Monday or Tuesday or Saturday or Sunday when we worked – Mr. Gruzo and Henry Rosenfeld and some others from the Displaced Persons Commission in Washington appeared in my office, charming gentleman. They were ready to issue visas under the Displaced Persons Act. Well, I assure you that none of the voluntary agency personnel of all the agencies knew the first thing about what we were supposed to have had, but they were ready to issue visas. And so, I said to them, "Unfortunately, my job and housing assurances are at the printers, but if you'd write one out for me. I'll take it over to the *allianz gebaude*," which was the American building where they had mimeograph machines, "I'll get some printed out, and you can start work." And so they were very nice gentlemen. They wrote it down. I took it over, and came back with 50 or 60, and we took the cases in my office and everyone they thought was eligible, I gave a job and housing assurance to, and *pumps!*, a few days later they were issuing the visas. The next day, or perhaps that evening, I called our Munich office of the American Joint and told the man who was director there what we were doing and gave him the wording so that when these people arrived in Munich, they would be ready, and quite a number of people got visas. In about ten days, a message came through from the United States from the United Service for New Americans, which was our cooperating agency. They contacted all the communities in the United States where there were relatives and actually arranged the immigration of relatives to relatives or of people without relatives to people who were offering them jobs and housing. They were very efficient. But they cabled our Paris office saying, "What Amy Zahl is doing is illegal. Tell her to stop immediately." And Harold Trobe who was director of the joint operation in Austria called me and said, "Amy, I've had this cable." And I said, "Hmm, very interesting. We will stop." And, of course, what I did, I went into the American Consulate where they were very cooperative, let me put it that way, it was a very nice consul. Sometimes the consuls were not at all cooperative. In times when life was a stake before the war, the consuls were not very cooperative, but these people were very helpful. I looked through all the Jewish cases I could find whether they were registered with the Joint Distribution Committee or with HIAS (ph), or not registered with an agency, and gave them all job and housing assurances, and then I stopped. Now, what happened as a result was these people got

visas. They were sent up to Bremen, and they were on the ships going to the States in larger numbers than non-Jews sponsored by non-Jewish agencies because they hadn't had this first encounter with the Displaced Persons Commission, and the press in New York was rather anti-Semitic, you know, "only Jews are getting visas." You can look up the press at the time and see these notices. What we did, of course, was to tell the Christian agencies what we had done, told them what the wording was so they could get started, but I think we had more support from our agency than they had from theirs. I know when it came to children, for example, I was always horrified both when I was in Austria and later in Germany to find children – and, when I say children, I mean youngsters under 18 – still either in hostels or in camps. Although the American – I've got the name of the agency, the refugee agency taking care of orphans – was working, they were working very slowly, and I just couldn't bear the thought that there were kids without families still sitting in Austria and this is what? 18 months after the war ended. And so, what we would do is take these children and take them away from the other agency, and get them visas to go to the States. It was exciting in that you thought you were helping people, and because we could work so efficiently, we saw the results in a very short time. When I finished the first batch in Austria, Dr. Schwartz came to me again in the October of '46, and said would I go into Germany and take over the operation there? With working very successfully in Austria and I had very good assistance working in the Vienna office. Everybody was strained. I always worked as though I was leaving tomorrow. It was a good way to work because it meant if I wanted to take time off, the office would function, the files would be working, and I felt that none of us should try to make ourselves indispensable. We, after all, were working to save people's lives. I always felt that. And so, on October the 28th, 1948, I came up into Munich, which was the head office for the German operation, and there was chaos. The staff there were on strike. About 200 letters a day were coming in from the States because the American operations, as I mentioned earlier, were very efficient, and there was nobody working. They were on strike. They wanted better pay. I was horrified. I came into the office and a young woman, an American, Gladys Roth, was running the office at that time, and I wanted her to take over the *volkcaserna* (ph), where people went in order to get processed for America. She was a very efficient worker, very sympathetic, spoke excellent Hungarian, spoke some German, and was a good worker. She too felt you had to help these people to get out – a wonderful sense of humor, by the way. She was a lifesaver. And I called these people together who were on strike, and I said I would look into their salary claims, but not unless they came back to work because what they were doing was stopping people leaving and they themselves were being stopped from leaving. So, this doesn't make sense to me. And I said, "I'll expect you all in the office tomorrow morning." I went to the office in the morning and there was some staff, and the next morning there were a few more, and I let word out that if the rest didn't come back to work by the end of the week I was going to employ new people. They were all back. There were some troublemakers. For example, the way they had been operating was if people had to go to Paris to pick up transit visas, they would hire coaches on the trains, and two of the boys who worked in the office would go on the train to Paris. Well, you know what this leaves them open to. They could take cigarettes. They could do bribes. I don't know what they did, but I knew

this had to stop, and I let it go on for a little while. You don't change things immediately, and one day I said, "You know, we have to let these people really go out on their own so that they face the world for the first time. So, let's try one train without you on it." Well, no, they found a thousand reasons, but I was very firm and the first train went off, and was successful. And then I announced that no more would we have to accompany these people. That was my way of handling that, and then in December, they decided to go on strike again. I was in trouble because I didn't know what I could offer. Sam Haber was running the operation. He was a tough guy to cope with, and I said I would see them the next day, and talk to them. I came to the office, and there was not a soul in sight. And I felt, "I have failed." I was so horrified, and what could I do, and my office was on the third floor of this building, and I went up to the office and I opened the door and there was a great big shout, "Happy Birthday!" I had forgotten it was my birthday, and they were all up there. I wept. I was so astounded to find them all there, and friends, obviously they were now my friends. I've still got the birthday card they made me out of a manila folder, that big and they'd all signed it, and that was wonderful. From then on, we got along very well. The men who had accompanied the people to Paris, I helped to immigrate very quickly. I thought that was the best thing for them. And I tried not to employ people who would have to immigrate now. The Czechs – you may not know this historically, you may know it better than I – had thrown out the *volksdeutsch*, and there were some lovely young people amongst those who came into Germany who, through no fault of their own, were thrown out as revenge, and I employed some of these girls. I made sure they hadn't been members of the BDM, the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, and by the way, it was easy to check it because the Germans were so methodical, they had lists. So, I employed these people, but then the rabbis were insulted. I was employing non-Jews when Jews needed jobs, and I met with them, and I said, "My job is to get the Jews out of here who don't belong here, and the only way I can do that is to employ non-Jews who are clean and let the others get out." Some of these girls married Jewish boys. They were lovely girls, and they worked very efficiently, but these were some of the hurdles one had to cope with. The rabbis were always watching that we did the right thing. For example, I had permission to send what we called "highly pregnant women", women in their eighth month, by air to the States because if they couldn't leave and they had babies, they couldn't go on these cargo – not cargo, these military ships and the visa might expire. It was only good for four months. I had an arrangement with Air France. For every ten people I put on a plane, I got one free seat. And so these women would come to me, you know, "I'm in my ninth month." "I'm in my eighth month." And I got to the stage when I could look at a woman, and say, "You're seven and a half months pregnant. You have time." It was very funny because we played jokes together. I'm just remembering this. We sent a lot of people by air. Now, some of the ships sailed on a Saturday and the Orthodox Jews would not sail on Saturday. Some of the planes went on Friday evening. We made arrangements with the captains of the planes and the captains of the ships. On the planes, the passengers were allowed to embark before the Sabbath came in, therefore it was their home. They were allowed to get onto the ship the day before the Sabbath, so that this already was their home, and there was no problem. But, you had to think of all kinds of things to stop people from staying behind. Occasionally, you'd have somebody

who was having a pair of trousers made, and therefore he couldn't leave. It wasn't that he was having trousers made. In a sense, a lot of these people were scared to leave. I think that's what I thought about them, and so I would call his tailor and if he was having trousers made, I used to tell him, "You have to have them by tonight because otherwise he's going to lose his visa." The tailors were usually pretty good. They were either displaced pers- mostly displaced persons or Germans, and they knew what was happening and they would finish the pants, and these people would go on. I only once met a man in New York when I was there who at some kind of gathering, he looked at me and said, "*Zie haben mae swandon heir sukammen*." (ph) He was a German Jew who said I forced him to come to America, and his wife said, "Ignore him." But, he was a man who was having pants made. It was fascinating working with those people. People had all kinds of excuses for not going, and I really felt they were scared. After all, some of them were coming to relatives they haven't seen since before the war or they had never seen. A mother's relative who had come a generation ago. I can understand it. I would be horrified to have to go to a relative who was going to support me who I didn't know, or my mother had told me stories they didn't like. It was fascinating, fascinating, but you had to get – firstly, you had to get these people out of Germany. They were not wanted in Germany. There was no future for them in Germany. And secondly, one knew that once they got to the States, they could begin to rebuild for themselves and the new children they had. It was fortunate that so many of them did have children because this gave them a future. They were concerned for their children, and that was one of the reasons for leaving. We also had situations where non-Jews had helped Jews in hiding, and I remember Andre Bulova's sister, Bulova watch company, his sister was a Mrs. Godem (ph) came to see me, and for some reason, she liked me. She said, "Do you have people you would like to help and you can't." I said, "Yes, I've got heads of families who are non-Jews." And we essentially helped families where the head of the family was a Jew because they would fit into a new community. She said, "I will give you affidavits worth a million dollars each, and you send them to my brother and we will find jobs for them." And there was one man who had hidden his wife through the war, and he did beautiful work, enamel on silver, and he brought in several – I shall never forget this – several small dishes in a way to show me of work he did. It was all very beautiful, and when I told Mrs. Godem, because she would come back and forth, she said, "He can do watch covers. My brother would be very pleased to see him." And this man said to me, "Which one do you like the best?" Well, I knew he was saying to me, "I will give you that one." I said, "They're all beautiful." I wouldn't admire any, and the only gift I ever have or had from a survivor or from a refugee was a dish he sent to me. He knew I wouldn't take it. We allowed them to bring flowers to the office, and sometimes it looked like a mortuary, there were so many flowers, but gifts were forbidden because gifts lead to bribes. But I have at home still this lovely tray he gave me. It's a dish about six inches in diameter, St. George and the Dragon. I think he must have made it for me. And, they did very well in the States. We had some wonderful people, we really did, who immigrated to the States, and America is richer for them. It really is. The operation in Germany went quite successfully, I would say, because we got all the offices to work in the same fashion. We set up some of the filing systems. When we had people from Austria who came into

Germany, we had the same system for handing them. There was one case of a young man who I sent ostensibly to the States via Germany. His name was Miklaus Rezmowitz. He was Hungarian. I had found him on the streets in Vienna, and what I did, I got the Joint office to set up a small hostel for me where if I put kids there, they had a whole sheet to themselves on the bed, and I tried to find them jobs, and I tried to get them out of the country as soon as possible. And I sent Mickey through Germany to the States. When I came to Germany 18 months later, somebody told me – because there always was a grapevine – that Mickey was working in a garage in Munich and I was horrified. This sweet little boy, to me he was a baby. And I got him to come to my office and he told me when he got to Munich, for some reason something happened and the visa wasn't picked up and nobody helped him, and he didn't want to write and tell me because I'd been so kind to him, and so he let his visa lapse. Well, I started immediately to work on his visa, and discovered he had a brother in Sweden. I may have mentioned to you that even to this day, people are finding relatives. His brother had escaped to Sweden and was there, and I decided when I eventually got Mickey's visa, I would bring the brother in from Sweden. Eventually, we got a visa for Mickey, and I got his brother to come and we put him up in our apartment – I was sharing an apartment with three, two other girls, and the next morning we brought the brother to the office – I've got pictures of him – and where was Mickey? He was no where to be found. He was out philandering somewhere, and when I brought him to the office, and he met his brother for the first time since they were both taken away, you can imagine the scene. It was wonderful. I then met Mickey again in New York, and he told me he was so appreciative of what America did for him, he was joining the army. It was the Korean war, and I've never heard from him since. So, I'm going to the museum in Washington tomorrow to see if I, hopefully, don't find him on the list that I should look at. But there were some wonderful stories. As I say, I've got pictures of these two brothers in my office. There were some wonderful stories, and the older men I employed in the office, some of them had come back from Shanghai, took care of these youngsters for me, and behaved like fathers, you know, made sure they were in on time. It just was a very nice atmosphere in that place and made it easy to work.

Q: Was this a much bigger operation that you had in Austria?

A: A much, much bigger. Most of the displaced persons in Germany were in the American zone of Germany. It was a much bigger operation. I can tell you some interesting stories of things that happened because people think the camps were liberated and suddenly there were no more camps, but there were the displaced persons camps, and let's say people wanted to get to Canada, but how? They were ineligible for the United States because they didn't fit in with the criterion which was necessary to immigrate to the United States, and Canada would be offering a scheme to bring in tailors, or furriers. Well, the ORT organization was wonderful in Germany. We got doctors and lawyers to train as furriers. They could operate the same machines and they passed the exam, and came to Canada, and they worked as doctors and as lawyers. They took their exams again, and they were of benefit to Canada. Canada was foolish in many instances because they were looking for brawn. They weren't looking for brain. America was much more

aware of what was available because of the kinds of refugees they had taken in at the beginning or before the war, and so America got all kinds, but Canada took a long time to wake up. But what we would do again – we wanted it to help these people get out and if all they were taken was furriers, well you train these people as furriers, and they came to Canada. I don't think the consuls knew. I'm sure that the people in Canada knew what we were doing, but you know, you'd get out 25 families at a time. It was wonderful.

Q: So, who would do this training? Did you say to the DP camp personnel, "In order to get this people out, train them as such and such"? How would that work?

A: Okay, good question. If we heard, because we all were constantly being fed information that the Canadian government was looking for 50 furriers. We would pass word to the representative of the Joint in the camp that the Canadians were looking for 50 furriers. He knew through discussion with us that what these people had to be able to show the representatives of the government was that they knew how to operate the sewing machine that took fur, that they knew how to cut fur, or they knew how to stitch, and by golly, the ORT representative in the camp really showed them how. They trained very quickly, and when they came for the exams, they passed perfectly.

Q: So, how were these people chosen do you think? Do you have any idea?

A: They volunteered.

Q: I see.

A: If a doctor was hoping that he could go somewhere and work as a doctor, but saw that it was useless, he'd go anywhere because he knew once he got to that new country, he could take exams again and work in his profession. People were not afraid to do the dirtiest menial work in order to get out of Germany, number one, and secondly, they wanted to set up a new life and start life again. So, they were very ready to do anything that they could do to get out.

Q: Now, was ORT the major or the only organization in the DP camps training people or were there a number of different kinds?

A: In the Jewish camps, and it was mainly ORT, I don't know of another organization that was working. ORT trained people in mechanics. They trained – they still work today, by the way. That organization was started in Russia, I think, after the First World War. It's an extraordinary organization. It still works around the world. It was the ORT which had many, many training centers set up. They had good people. Very often they were displaced persons who were experts in their field training other displaced persons. They were very well organized and they did a beautiful job.

Q: Because a lot of the people who were in the DP camps were too young to have even gotten a profession. Right? They had gone through their teenage years sometimes, late teenage years, and hadn't finished.

A: People who were in displaced persons camps, there were very few who were teenagers.

Q: No, but their teenage years may have been through the war. So, they may have lost their last couple of years of school.

A: They may have. Yes, they may have been in their twenties. They certainly had lost schooling. They didn't have formal education. There weren't too many individual young people. There weren't too many families with children who were in their twenties. Families were decimated, you have to remember, totally decimated, and if there – excuse me – if there were young people, they were individuals, and you're quite right, they had lost their schooling. They had no training. Firstly, they hadn't been to college. They hadn't gone to technical school, and they had no training in occupations. ORT was a Godsend. ORT was a Godsend to them.

Q: Let me ask you something about the young women who were having babies. There was a letter written by Kaufman who was the head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine who apparently visited the DP camps, and wrote, whether rightly or wrongly, that these young women who were having babies don't know how to be mothers, we have to send women here to train these young women because these babies are coming and they don't know what to do or they don't even want to. Did you find in the DP camps where you were visiting that this was not an easy time?

A: Well, first thing, we had social workers in the camps. Secondly, this gentleman wasn't aware, perhaps, that these young women had lost their mothers who normally would've helped them through this period, and there were no older women around who'd had babies. They had been killed off. But they soon learned. These women had mother's instinct. They were so thrilled to have babies, to start again. The men who were their husbands, because there was no license there, there weren't women who weren't married having babies. These were young women who were married and having children, starting a life again, starting a family again. They were very careful. I think they all cared. Some of them probably were better than others, but even in our society, we have women who are better than others in rearing children. But it was wonderful for us when they first started to get pregnant, because while they were incarcerated or in hiding, most women didn't even menstruate. They only started to menstruate again when they were free. It's an interesting phenomenon how nature takes care of itself.

Q: Do you know – do we know about how long it took for women to start menstruating again?

A: Yes, I think it must have been more than a year, even up to two years.

Q: That long?

A: Yes. It was more than a year because I remember being in the camps in Germany when there was much rejoicing and we had to order from the States these sanitary napkins for the women and condoms, by the way, because women were getting pregnant.

Q: So, there were not condoms in the beginning?

A: No.

Q: No, right.

A: Where would the condoms come from? They were ordered, which was rather nice. You know, you – I had never thought of that. Who ever thinks of that kind of thing? You know, a single girl brought up properly, but it was wonderful that they were even thinking about planning their families.

Q: So, did they ask for condoms?

A: I would assume so. They didn't ask of me, and I didn't officially know of this. I knew from the other people working in the camps that this was happening.

Q: So, people were trying to be very careful knowing that-

A: Yeah, if they had one baby, they didn't want another baby immediately. After all, they were no grandparents who were going to rejoice in these children. There were no families that were going to help them bring up these children. They were going into a new world all on their own, and a lot of these people in the camps wanted to go to the United States. They did not want to go to Palestine. I'm talking before the State of Israel. They very definitely wanted to go to the United States because a large percentage of them had family in the States, a large percentage, and I think they wanted to get away as far as they could from the Russians and away from Europe and the Middle East. That was another factor. And America still held out the dream for a lot of these people.

Q: Was there – from what you remember as opposed to what you know from history – do you remember a tension between Zionists and non-Zionists, because clearly the Zionists wanted people to say they wanted to go to Palestine.

A: There was a lot of tension. There was a lot of tension between the non-Zionists and the Zionists. Some people were almost forced to go to Palestine. I know I would give people letters to say they were registered with me for the United States so that they could not be forced onto a transport to Palestine. Remember also, at this time, there was a lot of illegal immigration into Palestine and these people didn't want to go. They'd suffered enough

from their point of view. They had not been Zionists because if their parents had been Zionists, they would have left Poland before the war and gone to Palestine. When one thinks of it, very few Jews really were going to Palestine from Poland, where there was tremendous poverty, tremendous anti-Semitism, long before the Hitler regime, and they didn't go. It was a very difficult time for a lot of people, but it was a political situation and they were pushing these people to go. I was never in favor of it, I must say.

Q: Do you remember Ben-Gurion visiting the DP camps?

A: He came. Yes, he came up into the British zone. I didn't see him, but I remember that he came and in certain camps where, for example, Yosele Rosensaft was heading the camp at Belsen. Yosele who was getting everybody to go to Palestine except he. He came to the United States with his wife. Ben-Gurion was up there. What Ben-Gurion did arrange was that some of the children who had survived who the Zionists and Belsen would not allow to come to England, Martin Gilbert has written a book about the boys, well these were some of the boys who might have been. They were not allowing these kids to come but, Ben-Gurion spoke to Yosele and some others in the camp, and we did get a transport out of Belsen of youngsters to England, and these kids had sat there for so long, they were so ill so many of them because they wanted the men to go to Israel because they didn't like going to Spevan (ph), and they didn't like the British Government policy and so the kids suffered. They were used as political pawns. But Ben-Gurion, I must say, helped to ease that situation.

Q: So, these people in obviously – the war ends and life is hard as always.

A: It resumes normally, politically among Jews who are Zionists and Jews who are not Zionists. It resumes as it was before the war. People don't change, situations change.

Q: Were people taught English or were they taught other languages when they were coming to the United States?

A: Yes, there were _____ courses, and there were other courses run for people who were coming to the States or to English-speaking countries and numbers of refugees took advantage of that. Once they knew they were going to get a visa, they were very good about learning to speak the language.

Q: Were there a lot of, or some, breakdowns of people who could not adjust to the loss of not having a family, even if they got married? Did you notice it?

A: Well, there were people who were depressed. There were people who were depressed, very understandably, when you found you had a young man who had seen his parents and brothers taken off and some policeman or another had pushed him to the side because they had known each other on the street, and saved him and he found our none of his family had survived. A tremendous guilt feeling of being alive, and how do you help

people to get over that. Some people never did or never have. I know people who survived who have never gotten over the fact that they are the sole survivors of their family. Sometimes they'll find a person who lived in the same town who went through a similar experience, and they are as close as brother and sister or brothers because they shared similar experience. People are still suffering, and that's why I think, for many, many years, most of the people who survived the war were not able to tell their children of their experiences. People say, "Well, why is it only now this is coming to light?" It's been very hard to talk about it, very hard.

Q: So, why do you think now?

A: Now, because time has passed and the children are asking the right question. The children are adult enough to be kind to their parents in the sense that they will ask the question kindly. The grandchildren ask the questions, and they're gradually loosening up as well. Some people have been for counseling. Some didn't need the counseling. Some needed to tell the story in order to ease their own souls, their own conscience. People felt very guilty about remaining alive.

Q: [Pause.] How many people do you think you got out of Germany and Austria, if you had to put numbers on that?

A: Well, I would think that we helped about 40,000 to get to the United States, and when you think that each one was an individual visa, nothing was en masse. We worked seven days a week, all the hours that were given us, and we never thought of it at that time. I used to skip out sometimes on a Sunday and go fishing, in fact. I love trout fishing, and once I got caught fishing in illegal waters.

Q: Is that your one illegal act?

A: No, but a bottle of scotch handled that quite nicely. We used to be able to buy scotch at seven and sixpence a bottle, which was just over a dollar.

Q: Did you keep the trout and cook it?

A: No, no, when we caught them, we threw them back. That wasn't cricket. You didn't keep the trout. You just caught it and threw it back. I didn't fish to have fish to eat.

Q: You just fished for the-

A: Sometimes we did. No, I'm telling the truth completely. Sometimes we did, but that's right – the guy who drove us out – his mother used to clean them for us, because he used to fish also. But I didn't realize, actually, that we were fishing in illegal waters. This man who was one of our drivers took us there, and he said, "This is where you can fish." So, we fished until a policeman came up. And I was horrified. You know, really, I'm the

director of immigration of the American Joint Distribution Committee. I was petrified also that I might be jailed, but my friend, Gladys Roth, had a way. She was very good. She was a marvelous worker. Unfortunately, she died a few years ago. She would have had wonderful stories to tell. She did a tremendous job and helped a tremendous number of people. We had some very fine people working with us. There was another woman who came up from South Africa, another volunteer. South Africa also had volunteers. A woman called Hannah Kisch who worked in my office in Munich who did a beautiful job. She was from Latvia and spoke beautiful Yiddish, and people loved her. She did a very good job, and despite the fact that she was rather an emotional woman, was able to forget this, and when she had to bawl somebody out because they'd done something that wasn't good, she could do it in the kind of Yiddish that they understood. She was a lovely woman. We did have some wonderful women working with us, and some men, but mostly they were women. They did a tremendous job.

Q: And what was the relationship between the zones with respect to the work? In Germany, were you traveling between the zones more easily?

A: Oh, yes, I didn't – never went into the Russian zone, and I never went into Berlin because I was told my name was on a list, and I didn't know whether this was true or not. After all, I had helped Russians to immigrate, and I was playing safe. Also, I was scared, and so I never went into the Russian zone in Germany or never went into Berlin. To this day, I've not been to Berlin. I hope to go soon. I'm hoping to find papers of the *Reichsfertreitung*, the Jewish community organization, when I get there because none some to have survived, and they did a fantastic job, but-

Q: So, you went into the French zone and the British zone?

A: Oh, yes, constantly up and down, up and down.

Q: And you were obviously sometimes doing work for those people, as well.

A: Oh, yes, and then I would take a group of people, let's say down to Genoa to get on a ship, and I would escort them to the border. The police were wonderful at the Brenna (ph) Pass. The Italians got to know me, and they would tell me, "The train's going to be a half hour, three-quarters of an hour late. Why don't you go to bed, and when we know the train's coming, we'll wake you?" And, so I'd go to the hotel, sometimes the train was an hour late, and somehow I'd hear the police shouting up at me or banging on the door, and I'd get up. I had all the passports for these people, couldn't give passports out, and I would accompany them down to Genoa, and the catabaneri (ph) in Genoa were very good. They'd invite me down to the docks, make sure that I had somebody with me, and take me to the hotel and make sure that I had my room with a side doors locked, because many hotels had rooms adjoining with doors that were unlocked. They always made sure that the doors were locked before they would allow me into the hotels. They were very nice people. I was in Genoa maybe every three or four weeks. There was a wonderful

woman working for the Joint there called Elia Eliaskovitch her name was. She had come to Italy to study Anthropology before the war, got stuck there, and the catabaneri gave her a certificate to say that she was a Catholic. She survived all through the war, Elka Eliaskovitch. I lost touch with her, but she knew every consul in Genoa, and she would just take me. We would get the visas that we needed and then she would take me down to the shipping agents because shipping was very difficult to get, and she would always manage to get shipping. She was a wonderful woman. She landed up I think in California, but I never heard from her after she left. We did have some wonderful characters working in this total program.

Q: So, you had to take all the passports together and put them en masse on the ship?

A: No, no, what I did was I was getting the visas for all these people. So, I needed all the passports together, and I couldn't give them back to the people because I wanted them all together and to go. They only got their passports when they were getting on the ship.

Q: I see. Okay, we're going to take another break.

A: Is this making sense? Yeah?

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

Q: Amy, I wanted to give people a sense of what the 1948 DP Immigration Act brought as opposed to what the Truman Directive was in 1945. What was the difference? I mean, what happened because of the Immigration Act?

A: Well, it was very different from the Truman Directive. That gave the first ray of hope to people that they might get to the United States, but when they passed the DP Act, this was the first time, really, that people could come to the United States outside of a quota number and on the basis of a job and housing assurance which somebody perhaps they didn't know had given them. Whereas, before affidavits were generally given by close relatives who undertook, of course, to ensure that they would not be come a charge on public funds. This was a totally different concept, and the Truman government at the time really is to be congratulated in having shown a humanitarian aspect of US immigration law which until then had really kept people out.

Q: So, this made a big different to your work?

A: It made a tremendous difference because we could offer hope to many more people that they could get to the United States. They didn't have to have visas – I beg your pardon – they didn't have to have affidavits from relatives. Many of them didn't have relatives who wanted to go to the States. This also was important. It meant that people were given a choice to an extent and how often had these people been given a choice after the war? They came out of the camps or if they were Polish Jews who had fled into Russia and worked in the mines, and had gone back to the Poland, what choices had they had? It might interest you, by the way, to know that among the people we took care of, the first complete Jewish families I found after the war were the Polish Jews who had fled to Russia when the Germans marched in. And, although they'd suffered tremendous hardship, we had husbands and wives and children together. It was very interesting to see this. As I said, they had – many of them had suffered. They'd worked in the mines, and when do Jews work in mines, after all? They were tradesmen or employees, but they did survive as families.

Q: Was this a source of resentment with the Jews who had come out of-?

A: No, it wasn't – people weren't even aware. People were concerned for themselves. You have to try and imagine what it was like to be in Germany after the war when either you were a survivor of a camp – and there weren't too many remember – you were somebody who had been encouraged to leave Poland, firstly because the Poles were still anti-Semitic. There had been pogroms in 1946 in Kielce, when Jews were killed again. You were encouraged to leave because you hoped for a better life somewhere else. You didn't want to be among the people you had been with, and everybody in a sense was concerned for himself or herself. And you have to imagine also in these camps there was a total lack of privacy for people. They were sleeping in nissen (ph) huts. There was curtain in

between families to give them some sort of privacy, but very little because it didn't stop voices carrying. It was a very difficult time for these people, and our feeling generally was the sooner we got them out of these – these people out of these conditions, the better. It was a very, very tough time for these people. And although visitors who came to Germany – and there were many – and saw these people and they would talk very bravely, they didn't see how these people were living, what kind of latrine facilities there were, what kind of washing facilities there were. There were no, obviously, there were no washing machines, but what kind of laundry facilities there were, what kind of facilities there were for the Orthodox Jews. It was an extraordinary difficult period, and these people survived it. These are the people who were the survivors. They were amazing people, and if there were occasionally arguments or quarrels, why not? I mean, this too was normal.

Q: So, people who visited did not see the conditions in terms of which people-

A: Oh, yes, they saw the conditions. I'm thinking of people who visited who were interested, let's say, in raising money in the United States, and they came through and they saw the camp. They may have even spent as much as a half a day, but you can't get a feel of a place from that kind of experience.

Q: Do you remember Harrison coming through to write the report for Truman about the conditions in the DP camp? Were you in that?

A: No, he came through, I think, before I came into Germany. I'm trying to think of which year it was. Was it '49 that he came through?

Q: I'm trying to remember, but I can't.

A: I didn't meet him.

Q: There's one person who came to get a visa named Oscar Schindler, can you describe the circumstances in terms of which he came to you, who came with him, how many times you met him, what you did for him, and what you thought of him?

A: He was an interesting character. Again, Dr. Joseph Schwartz, who was the European Director of the JDC, came to me and told me really a fantastic story of a man whom a whole group of survivors in Paris had just given a banquet. Who was this man? His name was Oscar Schindler, and I really knew nothing about him at that time. And Dr. Schwartz told me that Oscar Schindler had saved the lives of at least 1,200 Jews by having them work in his factory in Poland, and Oscar Schindler had come back to Germany, had gone to Frankfurt. I think he had tried to set up a concrete factory, and was not successful. It's interesting, this fantastic character didn't do very well. The Joint was helping to support him at this time because they were so astounded by his efforts to save people who essentially were not of his own kind. They were Jews; he was a Catholic. He was a

member of the Nazi party, as most Germans were. And the fact that he had helped these people, they were ready to do anything they could to help him. So, Dr. Schwartz said to me, "Amy, you know the ropes. He will come to you. Perhaps he won't even come alone. He may come with other people. I want you to try and send him wherever he wants to go." Well, Oscar Schindler appeared in my office one day with his wife and two young Jewish couples, and I sort of couldn't get the hang of what the relationship was, and they explained to me in Yiddish that they always protected him because he looked like any other German Nazi. He had blue eyes and blonde hair, and was very fair, obviously, and they were afraid if he came to my office, which was in the Jewish quarter of Munich, he might be set upon. There were a lot of belligerent Jews at that time. Oscar, as I said, came, and explained to me that what he really wanted to do was to set up a mink farm. Now, what he knew about mink farming, I had no idea, but it wasn't mine to question. And the place he wanted to do it was in the Argentine. The Argentine, I knew the Argentine consuls. I could get a visa for Oscar and his wife, no problem. They were Catholics. But, he said also, he would not go unless the two couples with him also got visas because they were like family to him, and they felt he was family to them. He'd saved their lives, and they were never going to forget this. Well, I set about trying to get the visas. As I say, it was not too difficult for Oscar and his wife. How to get visas for the two couples with him – on the application form for a Argentine visa, they asked religion. They did on many applications at that time, asked the religion of the applicant, but it didn't say explain anything. It didn't say, for example, if somebody was Orthodox, were they Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Jewish Orthodox, "A ha!" I thought. I put Orthodox, and it was no problem. I got the visas, and eventually they went to the States. I'm sorry, they went to the Argentine, but they were lovely people, all of them. Oscar was very soft voiced, very pleasant. Who could imagine that this man – he was diminutive, he wasn't very tall – had the courage to do the kinds of things he did? I don't know if you've seen the film "Schindler's List", but a lot of that – the story in that film – is true. He was an extraordinary man to deal with, and in retrospect, quite a privilege to have met him. It was interesting that we were so busy trying to help people that it never occurred to me that here was somebody who was very, very special.

Q: Did you talk with his wife, as well?

A: Yes, she didn't do much talking, but she also was very nice. She's still alive, you know, living in the Argentine. She was very pleasant, too.

Q: Did he – did you talk to him at all about what he had done during the war, or not?

A: No, you didn't talk to people. I think, firstly, he might have been embarrassed, but that isn't why he came to see me. Firstly, it would not have occurred to me, except to tell him what a wonderful human being he was, but you know, we really had no concept at that time – this is 1949 – of the kinds of things that he had done to save so many people. I mean, he got people out of Auschwitz. Who ever got anybody out of Auschwitz? He was quite an extraordinary man.

Q: Could you put together the man who was portrayed in the film and the man that you met in your office?

A: Yes, to an extent. I think there's one part of the film where he goes into the basement to get wine, I think, it is Gert's basement and the young lady who works for him, a Jewish prisoner, who Gert is very nasty to, is down there and Oscar, if you remember the film, leans towards her and she thinks he's going to kiss her. And he pats her on the shoulder. He said, "No, I wasn't going to kiss you. I was going to kiss you actually only on the forehead, but to tell you you will be all right. I will take care of you." Now, when you think of this man, he could've abused this girl. He could've abused any of the Jewish women in his care. He could've raped them if he had to. He could've done anything with them because they owed their lives to him. He didn't touch one of them. Although in the film, he is shown as being a womanizer, it helps to sell a film. Let's face it, and he may have been a womanizer, but the important thing about Oscar Schindler is he didn't touch one of the prisoners. I think this tells you essentially the character of this man.

Q: So, how long did it take you to get him the visa? (One second, please.) [Microphone adjusted.] How long did take you to get him out of Argentina? Or get him into Argentina, I'm sorry?

A: I think it took me about five or six weeks. There are all kinds of documents you have to fill in. You have to get passports. I had to get passports, take those passports for the people who were going with him. They were Polish Jews, and they weren't going as Polish citizens. It was all rather complicated, and yet in a sense it was very normal for us to be doing the kind of thing we were doing. So, he came to the office on several occasions, and was always very pleasant, an extraordinary man.

Q: Could we stop the film for just one second? [Tape break.] (Okay, we're rolling.) Are there any other people whose stories you'd like to tell us that you helped? That you haven't told us about?

A: There were some very wonderful survivors, but each story is a different story. The fact that they were survivors, and remained decent human beings and people with a sense of humor, and people with kindness, there are many stories of many kind people, and there were people who survived who weren't kind people. I think people went into the camps – rather, people who went into the camps as kind, decent human beings came out as such, and those who were *gaslonim*, gangsters, when they went in, were gangsters when they came out. People don't change. Their behavior changes, I think. There was some very wonderful people who survived, and very wonderful people, unfortunately, who didn't.

Q: So, how – you were in Germany doing this job until 1952.

A: I stayed in Germany until the Displaced Persons Act came to an end, and then I felt it was time for me to go on. The American Joint wanted me to go down to Morocco where they had a program, but I thought it was about time I started to sample normal life. You have to remember that, since I was a teenager, I'd been working with displaced persons living an expatriate life, an exotic life in a way, but I felt that my biggest job had been done. I'd helped as many people as I could to immigrate to countries outside of Israel. We didn't handle Israel. And it was about time I set myself up. And, so, I waited until the Act came to an end in May of '45, and then decided I would go to the United States and see where some of these Americans with whom I'd work came from.

Q: So, from 1944, February, until 1952, May, you hadn't been back to England but once?

A: Oh, no, no.

Q: Had you been back more?

A: Oh, I had been back. If I got a weekend, while my mother was alive, I would pop over to see her as often as I could, which was perhaps every four months, six months. I'd take a long week. You know, it was a train overnight there, and spend a day with her, and come back. Maybe it was longer periods in between, but I did go and see her. My mother died in 1952, and I had been in London about three months before, and we had gone to the ballet, and had a lovely evening, and that was my last memory of her.

Q: You were very close to your mother.

A: Yes, I liked her tremendously. She was a very kind woman, a very kind woman.

Q: Was she both proud of your work and yet missing you a great deal, wishing that you were in London with her?

A: Oh, I think she would have loved to have had me in London, but she was very proud of the fact that, in a sense, I was giving service, is the way that she would put it, that I was helping other people. I think if she had been younger, she might have done it herself.

Q: What age did she die?

A: She was in her late 60s.

Q: So, she was not such an old woman?

A: No, no. She'd been sick.

Q: And your decision to go to the United States rather than England.

A: Well, I couldn't see myself in England having worked with the Americans for so long. I needed a break, I felt. I had no home in England, anyway, and I thought I would come to the States. I had friends in the States, Gladys Roth, with whom I had worked invited me also to come and stay with her while she was on leave, and so I thought that was a good idea. And, when I came to the States I was invited by William Rosenwald, the son of Julius – was it Julius Rosenwald. Or was that his brother who started Sears Roebuck? – who had met me in Germany, asked me if I'd come and run his philanthropies for him, and I thought I would try that. And I was working for him for about a year when the American Joint again approached me and said they had a problem down in Brazil where the last people who had been displaced persons camps, a lot of whom had been sent down there and they were having a problem. Would I go down to Brazil and sort the situation out? Foolishly, I said yes. The Brazilian community that I dealt with, largely was the refugee community. There were about 20,000 former refugees living in San Paulo, most of them very, very fine people. The people who had been sent in when the displaced persons camps were closing were difficult people, let me put it that way. Some of them were mentally ill. Some of them should never have been sent. Some of them had no desire to be there. It was a very, very difficult situation. I was physically attacked down there for a change. I hadn't been physically attacked since I'd been in Greece, and it was broadcast, by the way, over the radio and some friends, including Norman Bentwich, Professor Bentwich, heard in London, called my aunt, and I got frantic phone calls from London. I got another dislocation from that.

Q: How did they attack you?

A: Physically.

Q: They just started beating you up?

A: Well, they tried, yes, and you know, I'm rather small. I'm only five foot four, and these guys were big guys, and I'm not a fighter, physically or mentally, I think, but after that I worked under police protection. And I used to come back to the hotel in which I lived under police protection, and one of the very nice Swedish boys at the desk asked me, "Why?" Because apparently the only other women who came back to the hotel under police protection where the prostitutes.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. No, I had to explain to him that I'd been attacked, you know. But, the community that was established there, there was a Dr. Lorch, L-o-r-c-h, from Germany, his wife who's actually Brazilian Jewish – she was a Klabin, of the Klabin family. The parents had come to Brazil at the turn of the century from Lithuania, and they were a very, very wealthy family, and very concerned for refugees. They had worked on the refugees committee before the war, and they helped after the war. They were very kind to me, and there were several other families who did a beautiful job down there, but these people

were people they hadn't met before. I hadn't met this kind before, actually. I set up a small loans committee to try and help them. Their visas weren't regular visas, you know, it's coming back to the old story, and I had to legalize them, and the Brazilian government really didn't want to legalize them except for Jeiko (ph). Yes, and it was very difficult. Eventually, the government settled. I must say, and I'll confess now that one or two who were Germans who didn't know what they were letting themselves in for I sent back to Germany. One or two of them, I managed to get into Canada. And we set up a small loans committee so that a lot of these men could become hawkers. They bought goods on credit, and went to outlying villages just as the original Strausses did in the United States. Some of them became very wealthy, and they calmed down. Some of them were pretty awful people, and as with all groups, there was lovely people among them. It was a very tough job. I stayed in Brazil for nine months. It was a tough assignment, a very tough assignment. When I came back to New York, and the British asked me – called me and said would I come to England? Because the British government was now allowing what they called hardcore cases to come into England. Hardcore cases for the British were families where the head of the family could not maintain his family either because of physical illness or even that they might be mentally disturbed, and so I went to England, and went into Austria, Germany, and Italy again to choose hardcore cases to come to England. They were interesting, some of these people. I had one young man who had been shot through the shoulder and had no profession. We brought him to England. He was supposed to have had TB and be cured, but when we got him to England, we discovered he still had TB, and the British were not really taking in TB cases. They had enough illnesses of their own, and so eventually, I took this man who behaved as though he were mentally ill while he was England, eventually I took him back to Germany. We flew, and it was quite surprising. As we got off the plane, you never would have known that he had behavior other than normal behavior. When they x-rayed him, he showed no signs of TB. I'm sure they thought the British were trying to get rid of him. He was quite an extraordinary case. I think he couldn't face being outside the territory in which he was captured. He was one of the strange cases. Others were families with several sons and daughters. Some of them Orthodox Jews who made a very good adjustment to living in England. We moved them into areas where there were Orthodox Jews. The Jewish Refugees Committee did a very good job on those people, and I remember another young – not a young couple, but a young man with older parents who the British brought in, and had him trained as a surveyor. He had no college education, but like many people in England, you could go into a profession and train on the job, and he did very well and his parents adjusted very well. Those families on the whole, except for this young man, who was very sad, were a success. And then, of course, I came back to the States. I became, I suppose, a cosmopolitan in a way in that I felt at home nowhere. I'd worked for so long with displaced persons, in a sense, it was the only thing I knew. But after coming to the States, one of my friends convinced me I ought to work with the National Council of Jewish Women, their headquarters in New York. And I went to see them, and I must say they were very anxious to get me. I don't know why, perhaps my experience meant something to them. And I did work for them for – I'm trying to think how long – several years, until the *wanderlust* got me again, and I decided together with a

friend who was a published author that we'd go off to China and see what the role of women was in the new China. I didn't realize we wouldn't get visas, but I gave up my job. My friend got an advance on a book about China. She was already, as I say, a published author, and we landed in Tokyo – or rather, I landed in Tokyo. She was coming later by ship. I flew in. And the first night that I was in the Frank Lloyd Wright Imperial Hotel, it was a very interesting building. Everything was much too big for me. Everything was high, and the first night I was there, I met charming gentleman in the smorgasbord restaurant who eventually became my husband. We got married in London because my family couldn't think that somebody hat at last got me to say yes, and I ended up on the prairie in Illinois, on the flat, flat prairie, which I found devastating, absolutely devastating. Nobody knew me. Nobody knew of the work that I had done. Nobody was interested, and I decided, "Well, if I'm going to be stuck here" because David was a lovely, lovely man, "I'm going to do something. I'll go back to school," which I had tried to do before I left England. I had gone to university in the evening, but of course couldn't continue because of the Blitz and things like that, and then I went overseas. I said to myself, "I'll get my degree here." And in the time it normally takes a student not having been in school for a thousand years, I maintain a straight average – a straight-A average – got my undergraduate degree, got a Master's degree, and then decided I would do what I always want to do and that was to get a PhD at the London School of Economics, and David thought that was a splendid idea. He was very kind, and I came to London again. The semester was ten weeks. We had three semesters a year, and I had to be there for two years. I managed to skip one while we went on sabbatical to Australia, which is another story, meeting people I'd sent there as refugees, and came back to the States, finished my dissertation, and in 1975, received my PhD from the London School of Economics. And then I decided what one really had to do was to tell this story of what happened during and after the war because, as I say, nobody ever asked. Nobody seemed to be interested. There was one professor at University of Illinois. His name was Winton Solberg. He was an intellectual history, and he asked me to write a course on the Holocaust. I thought this was going to be a great opportunity. I wrote the course, but I was a woman, and the history department wasn't about to make funding available for me to teach the course. But, women's movement was beginning to get going, and Joan Huber, who was head of the department of sociology, said to me, "Amy, you can teach that course in our department." I have to go back and bit and tell you that I had competed for a job as an assistant to the vice president for academic affairs for the university, and there were two positions going. There were 77 applicants, and Edith Terwilliger and I got those positions. The former Vice President, P.T. Yankwich, now lives in Washington, as a matter of fact. So, it was very interesting working for this man. He was very bright. He was an intellectual, and he gave me time off to teach the course, and since I got paid for teaching the course, it meant I could employ a graduate assistant and pay her that money, so she had money during the semester. I gave the course over three or four semesters. It was fascinating because the room which I was assigned filled very quickly, and the computer cut us off, and I found that the students taking the course were children from all ends, or both ends, of the Jewish spectrum. They were children of strictly Orthodox parents, and children of non-Orthodox parents. They were children of survivors. They

were children of Polish immigrants who'd come after the war, and one didn't know what their parents had done during the war, and all of them were interesting because, if I told them, for example, the story of a pastor who had saved some Jews, they wanted proof, and my xeroxing bill was tremendous. I always brought evidence of anything I told them that was positive about non-Jews who'd helped Jews, and I used to say, "There were good Germans. There were good Poles. There just weren't enough of them." They were interesting groups of students because, as I discovered, those whose parents were survivors, they told me their parents told them nothing. And I would tell them, "Perhaps you can tell them something of what you've learned in the class and see what their reaction is. Don't push them, but gently try to get their stories from them because it is still so painful for them – for them to tell you these stories." They were very interesting students, and I kept in touch with them for a long time.

Q: Did they ask you – did you tell them about what you had done after the war or did you not tell them anything?

A: I didn't tell them essentially, but I would – I think my classes were interesting because I would tell them incidents of my experience. I didn't tell them in the sense that I've told you, but I would tell them of incidents and that I knew of these incidents because of this experience. I think they believed me because they felt that I was talking from experience, so they enjoyed taking my course. I made it a difficult course. When I say I made it a difficult course, I didn't make it easy because of my experience. They had to pass the grade, too, but no, I didn't tell them because I – just like with Oscar Schindler, I didn't think people were interested, and also, I find it very hard to talk about myself. I might tell you this is the first time I've ever done it. Nobody has ever asked me before.

Q: Well, I'm really grateful, and so is everybody else who is hearing this.

A: Thank you.

Q: Amy, you were asked to go back to England to create an archive. Can you talk about that, and talk about one of the pieces of information that you had found that really had been lost about the St. Louis?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Can you do that?

A: My pleasure. After my husband died, the head of the World Jewish Fund for Jewish Relief, no sorry, got the name wrong, haven't I?

Q: British Fund-

A: Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief called me one day because she knew of my relationship to the organization. She said they had found a tremendous stack of files in one of the garages at one of the nursing homes, rather, one of the homes for the aged for former refugees. Would I come and look at it? She knew that I came into England fairly often because I did have brothers and sisters there. And so I came and looked at the stack and was amazed. There were a tremendous number of case histories on individuals. They were files on children who'd been brought out from Austria and Germany on *kinder* transports. There were minutes of meetings. And I said to this woman, Ava Mitchell, "You have a treasure trove here. You've got the archives of your agency. Nobody knows their story." And she originally had been a refugee, by the way. She said, "Would you put it together for us?" Well, I wasn't an archivist, and I knew that the agency would never have the money to employ an archivist. We have to remember that after the war, Britain was still very poor. I said I thought I'd like to do this. So, I packed my bags and came to London. They gave me a staff. Somebody had given them some money so that we can work on this archive, and Bill & Howe (ph) did our microfilming for us. They were very helpful, and they asked me to do a booklet on the archive, which I did which was published which was rather nice. It took us about 18 months to put this stuff together, but it has proved invaluable. For example, one of the items we found were all the records of people who had ever registered with the Jewish Refugees Committee from 1933 on, and that would be from May the 18th, 1933, when the organization was started. It would have records of people who'd been inquired about and you would find a card which would say, "Helen Comb – deported through Tiresenstadt (ph)" And it would give the date because somebody had come in and given this information. And, even to this day, those cards are useful. For example, if you want to prove that you came to England as a refugee, and claim your pension or money from Germany or Austria or some funding which was due to you, we could look up your archive and see if your name was there, and it would give the date that you arrived in England. Now, what happened ultimately, as we were working through this archive, I began to see names which said "St. Louis", and that struck me because I knew of the story of the St. Louis, this ghastly story of these people who in high hopes went in party fashion, practically, to Cuba, not knowing that they were going to be refused entry, not knowing that all but about 22 would be refused entry because the 22 had paid the extra money that was required to get a permanent visa. And I start to make cards on them, and I found about 110 of the people who came into England where it was marked St. Louis passengers, and I kept these cards. And then one day I heard from the museum, your museum, that you were going to do an exhibition on the people who sailed on the St. Louis and the face of those who landed up in Europe, but you really didn't have full records of those who landed in Britain, although you had names. And I said, "If you give me all the names, I will be able to trace all of them. And I must say it took me quite a while, I won't tell you how many weeks, to go through these – the microfilm, find these people, and take a picture of these people, and I found all 187 of the people who landed in Britain, and I felt very pleased because it will help complete your archive, and it shows the value of doing what we did and the money we spent on putting that archive together. Archives are terribly, terribly important, and I only hope that people who may look at this film will realize if they have letters from people during

the war, before the war, after the war, which might be useful, to find out from an archivist where they might be useful. The family might not be interested, but an archive will be able to put history together, and without our history we have no future.

Q: Well, Amy Gottlieb, it's been a real pleasure talking to you. Your book, "Men of Vision" is something people should read if they want to know about what Britain did, and the stories that you tell is particularly poignant now when we have 50-80 million refugees in the world, and how difficult it is, and how much care it takes. And the care that you've given these people, I'm sure they all thank you, and we thank you for being here.

A: Thank you. And I must say that there are volunteers today from many countries of the world helping refugees overseas. I only hope they get the kind of the care that the British gave to the refugees from Germany and Austria before the war and during the war, and after the war.

Q: Yes, this history must be a repetition for you over and over again.

A: Yes, you see the same kind of things happening that happened before. If I were younger, I would go out and help.

Q: I'm sure.

A: Thank you for inviting me.

Q: Thank you.

A: [Badge shown.] The badge that you see was given to all members of Jewish Relief Units who volunteered to go overseas during and after the war. For example, when Bergen-Belsen was liberated, more than a 100 people from England – doctors, nurses, lawyers, social workers, teachers, went into Bergen-Belsen to help those people who had survived there. This was the badge that the Central British Fund had set up for us so that we would be recognized as a Jewish team, so that survivors who saw the Shield of David would realize that we were Jews who had come to help them, and perhaps ease their burden somewhat.

Q: And where did you wear this?

A: We wore this badge on the beret that we had. We also wore a Shield of David in blue and white on our sleeves as our insignia. And we wore a British Army uniform at the time, British army officer's uniform, actually.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape #4

Conclusion of Interview