

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Herta Baitch
May 10, 2016
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PREFACE

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HERTA BAITCH

May 10, 2016

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mrs. **Herta Griffel Baitch**, on May 10th, 2016, at the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** facilities here in **Washington, D.C.** Thank you very, very much Mrs. **Baitch** for agreeing to meet with us today, to share your story, your experiences, and with that, to allow others to know about what those were, and how that fit into the large mosaic and picture of the tragic time of the Holocaust. So we are very grateful for that.

Answer: Well, I'm grateful to be able to tell what I can –

Q: Thank you.

A: – for you.

Q: We're going to start at the very beginning. I'd like to find out as much as I can about your prewar life. I know that in some cases, with some people, that can present some challenges. The reason why we try to go in as much detail as we can, is that we want to get a sense of the world that you were born into, the forces that shaped you – the first initial ones, and get a picture of what this world was, before it was lost. So, my very first question is, could you tell me the date of your birth?

A: March 10th, 1933.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

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A: **Herta Griffel.**

Q: And where were you born?

A: **Vienna, Austria.**

Q: **Austria.** What was your father's name?

A: My father was **Wolf**, and my mother was **Berta.**

Q: Mm-hm. And what was her maiden name?

A: **Nagel.**

Q: **Nagel**, okay.

A: **N-a-g-e-l.**

Q: Were they both from **Vienna**?

A: No, they were both from **Kraków.**

Q: I see.

A: And my father was living in **Vienna**, and as I understand it, my mother was taken from her small town to **Vienna** to find a husband.

Q: Did she find him then?

A: She found him, yes.

Q: And so, if they were both from **Kraków**, did you have extended family in **Vienna**, or was it just the – the three of you?

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A: There was no other family, except for an aunt who was my mother's sister-in-law. In other words, she was married to my f – my mother's brother.

Q: I see. Okay.

A: And her name was **Lotte(ph)**.

Q: **Lotte(ph)**.

A: **Lotte(ph) Nagel**.

Q: And, so you had an uncle as well, in **Vienna**, or just the aunt?

A: No, no, she was a widow.

Q: Oh, I see. Did they come from large families, your parents?

A: Yeah, I don't know, I don't think so.

Q: Okay.

A: I – I just have the sense that there were no large amount of relatives at all.

Q: Did you ever visit **Kraków** –

A: No. Now? Recently?

Q: – to visit the family?

A: No, no, never

Q: Never.

A: Never.

Q: Okay.

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A: They never spoke about it.

Q: Okay. And did they – did they ever speak Polish with one another?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Never.

Q: And what language did they communicate in?

A: As far as I know, it – it was German.

Q: Okay.

A: Sometimes Yiddish.

Q: Okay.

A: But mostly German.

Q: Okay, so they spoke both?

A: Yes.

Q: They spoke both.

A: Yes.

Q: And do you know what their citizenship was?

A: Well, it wasn't Austrian.

Q: Okay.

A: So –

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Q: So it must have been Polish?

A: It must have been, but –

Q: But you don't know for sure.

A: – they didn't have any papers.

Q: Okay.

A: They had no papers.

Q: I ask these questions because very often, that made a difference.

A: It did.

Q: Yeah.

A: As I – as I found out later.

Q: Yeah.

A: It did make a difference.

Q: And – and another interview that I've recently done, also illustrates – you know, there are pieces of the puzzle that you don't realize until somebody life story is put out in front of you. It has to do with **Poland** having been – part of it having been part of the Russian empire, part of it being sal – Austro-Hungarian, and part of it having gone to **Prussia** since, you know, in the 19th century. So, when it became **Poland**, many of the people who were part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, who were born in **Poland**, then went to **Vienna**.

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A: My mother was not born in **Poland** – in ru – in **Kraków**, I'm sorry. She was born in **Madian(ph) Sredny(ph)**, a small town, very small town. I'm sorry about that.

Q: That's okay.

A: She was – she is not from **Kraków**, she's from **Poland**. And –

Q: But she is from **Poland**.

A: Yes.

Q: She is from this little town.

A: Yes. My father was born in **Kraków**, I'm s – I – I –

Q: That's okay.

A: – made a mistake.

Q: That's okay. Do you know anything about your grandparents lives?

A: None.

Q: Okay.

A: None.

Q: Do you think they are – okay?

A: I want to ask **[break]**

Q: Okay, so you – you have no real knowledge of the larger family that your parents came from, other than they were not from **Vienna**.

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A: I didn't know that my mother was born in this small town, until I got the paper from **Yad Vashem** that she was taken to **Maly Trostinec** and died there.

Q: I see.

A: That had her city of birth on there. I thought she was from **Kraków**, but she was from **Madian(ph) Sredny(ph)**.

Q: And what year did you get this document from **Yad Vashem**?

A: It must have been about 12 years ago.

Q: So that would mean 2004 –

A: Approximately.

Q: – which is 50 – over 50 years – at that point 60 years –

A: Yes.

Q: – from the end of the war, which, you know, such a – such a small detail, but it's an important detail when you don't know it.

A: I never knew that. I never knew that.

Q: Yeah.

A: We looked it up, and it's a tiny little town, lots of farmland around it. So –

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: No, no. I was the only child. I was an only child, yeah, yeah.

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Q: Okay. It's – if someone were to ask me the questions that I am asking you, I'd find them hard to answer, but I'm going to ask them anyway.

A: Okay.

Q: Can you tell me, in your – in your memory, what your earliest memory might be, from childhood? What kind of image comes to your mind?

A: I – the image that – that I think of when I think of my childhood, is one of secrecy, shushing, rumors, and sadness, and fear.

Q: Okay.

A: That's – that's the kind of overall feel that I have from my small years.

Q: How sad.

A: That – yes. Well, I didn't – I didn't know any different.

Q: Of course.

A: But I – I tried to make sense of it, but –

Q: But you know that a small child's life is based on a feeling –

A: Yes, and that's –

Q: – you know, is based on emotion.

A: – that's – that's what I remember. The only nice remembrance that I have, is of singing Yiddish songs with my father.

Q: Really?

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A: Yes.

Q: Did he have a nice voice?

A: I don't remember his voice, but he loved to sing. So I – I even have that book that my mother packed for me, with –

Q: Those songs?

A: – those songs, yes, she didn't want me to forget them.

Q: And was there any one song in particular that he sang that you remember?

A: Well, the one that I am most familiar with was “**Oyfn Pripetshik.**” So – “**Oyfn Pripetshik.**”

Q: “**Oyfn Pripetshik?**”

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Tell us what does that mean?

A: I think **oyfn pripetshik** means, o-on a fire of some side.

Q: Okay.

A: I really don't – it's **fayerl**, is a **fayerl**.

Q: Okay.

A: It's – it's in the words, **oyfn pripetshik, brent a fayerl**.

Q: Okay.

A: So, there was a fire, **oyfn pripetshik**.

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Q: And that – that's what stays.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: That's what stays.

A: And that's the one that's the most popular in this country, so –

Q: Can you – do you have any memory of your father as, you know, doing something? Do you have memory of him working, do you have memory of him at home?

A: I th – I don't have a memory of my father in a grocery store. He was – he was not a well person, and I wa – recognize that. And it was my mother that was a strong – seemed to me the strong person at home.

Q: So let's step back a little bit. Can you tell me that – one of the questions I usually ask is, how did your parents support the family, that is, and you kind of answered it now. So what was your father's business? What did he do?

A: They had a small grocery.

Q: Was it a neighborhood grocery store?

A: I – I don't know, but I had – I have a feeling that it was not too far away.

Q: Okay. And, did your mother work with him there?

A: Yes.

Q: All right. Do you have any memory of your neighborhood in **Vienna**?

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A: No. I have very little memory of my childhood, of friends, of school.

Q: What about the place you lived, your –

A: That's a question mark in my mind. My mother's letters had an address that she wrote letters to me from. But, in later years, we went to that address in **Vienna**, and it did not seem like the same place – I – I did not relate to it in any way.

Q: It might have been that she had to move.

A: Yes. Yes, I learned that, yes.

Q: Yeah. So –

A: And I don't know what the address was on my records, because I had no – my records were private with the agency.

Q: Okay.

A: So I never found out much information about where I lived, and so forth.

Q: So again, in your mind's eye, you – do you have any image of a particular room from your childhood, a bedroom, a living room, a kitchen?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Okay. Do –

A: My – my most vivid memory is of my mother and me going to the streets for a parade. And it was an immense parade, and all the Nazi banners were – and bunting, were all over the place. And I remember the sound of the boots of the

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soldiers, and loud music, and a lot of **sieg heils**. And I didn't know anything about what was going on, and my mother just held – I remember her squeezing my hand, and I said, what is this? And she said, it's going to be very bad. That is the only vivid memory that I have.

Q: Wow.

A: I remember the pounding on the pavement, on the street, and –

Q: What can you tell me about your mother? Is she someone who is more in your memory than your father?

A: Yes, yes, but not as much as I would – I would think. Not as much as I would think I – I would remember of my mother. She did embroidery, and she worked in the store. And I think I was taken care of by another woman when she went to the store. I don't remember the store. I don't – I don't know whether I'm protecting myself, or – I have no memories of hugging my mother, kissing my mother. I don't have those memories.

Q: Or of the reverse, of her kissing you and hugging you?

A: Yes, yes, I – I don't – I don't have those memories. I don't have any memories of my schooling, of friends. That's – that's been a blank. That's bi – the whole – that – until I came to the **United States**, and even for about a week or so, until I went into my first foster home, that has all been a blank.

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Q: And to this day?

A: And to this day, I don't have a memory of being in my mother's arms, and there is one memory that I do remember. We were sitting in a chair at the end of Shabbat, and waiting for the stars to come out. That is a memory. That's a – that – that is a good memory. And, we were waiting for the stars to come out, and my mother said that there's a moment just after Shabbat ends, and the stars come out, something like that, she said, you can see God.

Q: Oh.

A: And I remember being in a chair with her. That – that – that's about the closest memory that I have. Even leaving, I – I remember that she told me I was coming to the **United States**, and that another Jewish mother would take care of me, and – and that I had to be very healthy. And these – these are the things that I – I remember being in a shul. I think it was a shul, and people were crying, and she made me leave. My father was holding a Torah, and I just assume now that that must have been a **Yizkor** service, because people were crying, and she wanted me to leave.

Q: For those people, and myself included, who don't know what a **Yizkor** service is, could you tell us?

A: It's usually on **Yom Kippur**, and it's a – it's a part of the service that remem – where you remember your parents, and you say a memorial prayer for – for those

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who've – you've left behind. And in the old days, they didn't want children around.

And I – I remember my mother telling me to go outside. So I – I – I think those three – three things. I don't remember singing with my father, but I – I know I did. I know I did, but I don't remember it. The chair, sitting in the chair, watching the stars, the me – the shul, and the parade. The parade is the most vivid –

Q: Vivid.

A: – thing that I have.

Q: Do you have any memory of their personalities?

A: No. I have a feeling that my father might have been more outgoing than my mother. I think my mother was very quiet. I'm really not sure.

Q: So, I have a few questions that probably, if you know the answers they would not be from memory, but from things you found out. But you can let me know. Do you know what happened to your father, and to the grocery store, once there was an **anschluss** of aus – of **Austria** to **Germany**, and the Nazis took control? How your family was affected.

A: I understand. I don't remember **Kristallnacht**.

Q: Okay.

A: But we did lose our grocery store.

Q: Okay.

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A: And my father was taken by a truck to some sort of labor camp.

Q: Do you remember seeing a truck?

A: There – there were trucks in the neighborhood that took men back and forth.

Q: Okay.

A: They came back at night, and they were rounded up in the morning. And this went on for a time, and one night my father came home, and he died.

Q: At home?

A: At home, yes. He was not well to begin with, and –

Q: Do you remember anything about that?

A: We had a – I guess we had a funeral, we have – I remember being in the cemetery, and I know my father had a grave. It was bigger than I was, and it was – I remember it being green, and I remember my mother putting my – a hat – hat on me, and she always tried to hide my – my braids. And I remember that I felt like a boy when she did that. Also during the parade, she put a hat on me and stuck my braids – I don't know why, but I – I do remember that we – that she seemed to be protected of – protective of my long braids that I had. So –

Q: Okay. Any – are there any feelings that you associate, any emotions? I mean, there are the ones that we would normally think when a child loses a parent.

A: I don't have that –

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Q: Okay.

A: – emotional knowledge. I – I just have these – these memories of school, of friends, of neighbors. I don't –

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: I just – thinking I do remember that he had a large gravestone. I don't know how my mother arranged it, but she did.

Q: Do you remember ever feeling hungry?

A: No. No.

Q: Okay. So even when the store was lost, you don't remember hunger, as a result of that?

A: I think – I think – I think my mother came home with some sort of a pot. And now that I'm older, I would assume that it was – could it have been through – from a – some sort of a soup kitchen? I remember her coming home with a – a pot.

Q: Okay.

A: So I guess I have more memories than I think I do.

Q: Well –

A: I just don't have the emotional memories at all.

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Q: Yeah. We often find, you know, when we start an interview, and we start a process that – one thought comes up, and it triggers another thought, and it triggers a third thought –

A: Yes, yes.

Q: – and so on. And so –

A: Because I don't – I don't speak about this very –

Q: Of course.

A: – very often.

Q: Of course.

A: So –

Q: So it's not surprising.

A: – I do remember her coming home with a – it had sort of a pot with a – a tight lid on it. And at that time, after my – after we lost the store, we went to live with my **Tante Lotte**(ph), who was my mother's sister-in-law.

Q: So this is very interesting, you just anticipated the next question I was going to ask. Because it sounds – the picture I'm getting, first of all, is, from what you tell me, is vague. You know, it's sort of like through a mist.

A: Yes.

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Q: And there are episodes. One here, one here. But they're also episodes that feature your mother and your father and yourself, and nobody else by name.

A: No.

Q: Not even the lady who takes care of you.

A: No.

Q: And so then I wanted to ask about, how do you know **Tante Lotte**(ph)? How – how does she figure in the story?

A: We went to live with her.

Q: Okay.

A: And then it was the three of us. It must have been an apartment. And I remember one night we heard people with boots, and they came into our apartment. I think it wasn't the first apartment they were – we – we heard it, we heard it. And they came in the apartment, and they were shouting and – and they were looking at things and throwing things around. I don't know what they were looking for.

Q: Were – were there men – were these men?

A: These were Nazis, and they were in uniform, with beautiful, black high boots, and hats, and – so that they were not the – the Brownshirts that we saw in the parade, they were much more well-dressed. And there were two or three of them, I don't remember. And after they looked to see what they needed to see, we were sort

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of cowering in the cent – in the c – in the corner. And when they left, my mother went to this little stove, it had a little ashtray in it, for ashes from the woodstove, and she had put some – some dol – some money in there, wrapped – wrapped around into a tight bundle.

Q: Like in a cloth, or something?

A: I don't know –

Q: Okay.

A: – but she – I remember her looking in this little drawer, and the money was there, they didn't find it. And I remember us being very happy at that time.

Q: Relieved.

A: Relieved, yes.

Q: Relieved, yeah.

A: And it was shortly after that, that my mother tried to find a way to get me out.

Q: Do you have any memories of **Tante Lotte**(ph), what she looked like?

A: Only from her picture. She – I don't remember her much at all. I don't remember her much, just from –

Q: Was she much older than your mother?

A: She was older, that I know. She was – she was – she was older.

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Q: And your own parents – I mean, I know that you have some photographs of them.

A: Yes.

Q: But is your knowledge of how they looked, from the photographs, or from something else in your mind's eye? Or is it even possible to tell?

A: M-My – yes, my – **Tante Lotte**(ph) looks like herself. My father, I remember him looking like that, and my mother, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So it's not like you look at the – the photographs, and you say, I guess these must have been my parents. You recognize them.

A: I recognize them, cause I always had them with me.

Q: Okay.

A: I always had those with me, and –

Q: Is there anything that you remember your father ever saying, that was like a – a special saying he had, like you said your mother did, when you know, you find the stars come out, and if you look very carefully, there you might see God. Did you ever remember your father saying something?

A: I guess I remember more than I thought I did.

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Q: It's okay.

A: I know that there was a time that we were going, I thought, to **America**.

Q: Okay.

A: But I th – I found out later that it was never to **America**, it was to **Shanghai**.

Q: Oh, to **China**, okay.

A: And my father was sick, and we couldn't go. And it – I always thought that it was **America**, but I found out later that it was to **Shanghai**.

Q: Okay. So there was talk of him – of leaving.

A: Yes.

Q: There was talk between your parents of leaving?

A: I ver – I think – I – I think that was the feeling.

Q: Okay.

A: In – in – with everyone. But I don't remember anyone specifically at all.

Q: And – and you – did you attend school?

A: I must have. I don't remember attending school at all. I always had my passport, and my handwriting was beautiful. It really was. For seven years old, it was very good. And when I came to the **United States** and was put into a classroom, the teacher tried to make me copy the American **ABC**, because I used the German

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script. And the **H** was different, and the **G** in my name was different, and I had to try to copy what was on the top of the blackboard.

Q: And it had – it was different from what you had learned, so obviously you must have been at school to be – to learn.

A: Obviously I mu – exactly th – I – I looked at my handwriting, and I – and I said, I had to learn this somewhere.

Q: So when you're talking about passport, do you really mean report card?

A: No, my passport.

Q: No, no, there was a passport. And you wrote inside the passport?

A: Yes, yes, under my picture.

Q: Ah, you signed your name.

A: Yes.

Q: I see. I see.

A: In script.

Q: And what kind of passport was it? Did you have citizenship of any kind?

A: No, I was **staatlos**(ph).

Q: **Staatlos**(ph), mm-hm. So, stateless.

A: Yes. And it was a – it was not a passport, it was a – I gave it to the museum, and I – I don't remem –

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Q: An I.D. card or something?

A: No, it was a passport, but it had something else written on it.

Q: Yeah.

A: Can't remember.

Q: That's okay. That's okay. Those are things that we can find out about by looking at the document. What is – what – what we're doing now is – is seeing what – what was taken from you, basically, and how much of this world that you were born into, you still were able to retain, and how much was lost. And so, that's part of the story.

A: I think the emotional part was lost. Any kind of – I don't have any emotional feeling about seeing my father's gravestone, or – I ha – the parade was – is most abi – the most vivid memory that I have, and the second one was looking for the stars.

Q: Well, the interesting thing is also, when we started talking, you said that the very first memory is an overall one of fear, of shushing, of you know, some secrets of some kind.

A: It was not a happy – it was a very unhappy, not nice –

Q: Yeah.

A: – feeling everywhere, that I remember. No one – I don't remember laughter, I don't remember – I don't remember going places, you know.

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Q: Mm-hm. Soon after those, you know, the – the – the place where you were living with your Aunt **Lotte**(ph) and your mother was kind of violated by – violated by these well-dressed –

A: With the – I thought they were officers.

Q: Yeah. Nazis, I guess. And your mother says okay, now she's going to look for a way for you to get out. What is the next thing that you remember?

A: I remember her telling me that I was going to **America**, and that another Jewish mother would take care of me.

Q: And do you have any feeling from that?

A: I didn't understand it. I don't think I understood it.

Q: Okay.

A: But I remember her saying it, and also that I had to be very healthy.

Q: Yeah. You spoke with her in German, or in Yiddish?

A: I think it was German.

Q: Okay, okay. Do you still speak ger – can you still understand it?

A: I've forgotten everything.

Q: Okay.

A: I've forgotten Yiddish – well – yes, I forgot the German completely.

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Q: Yeah. And – I mean, it's hard to imagine what must have been going through her mind.

A: I can't imagine. I can't imagine it. I've had seven year olds.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I can't imagine –

Q: Yeah.

A: – what she must have gone through.

Q: So, what's the next memory?

A: I rem –

Q: Do you remember leaving **Vienna**? Do you remember leaving **Vienna**?

A: I do, but my next memory was, I was being examined.

Q: Okay.

A: And I have a vaccination scar on my thigh, but I didn't know what it was. And that was the only mark that I had. And I remember keeping my arm up against my thigh so that nobody would see it.

Q: During the examination?

A: During the examination. And the next thing I remember is my mother packing a suitcase, and we went to the train station.

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Q: Do you remember anything about that trip to the train station from where you lived?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: I just remember being at the train station.

Q: Do you remember how your mother – what kind of – was your mother crying, was she –

A: I don't remember. I don't remember whether I was crying. I assume I was.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I remember that at the train station it – there was a lot of commotion. And I really don't – I'm not sure, but I think there were other people there besides the children that got on the train. Maybe they were hoping that their children would, at the last minute, be able to come. But that – that's the sense that I had.

Q: So you –

A: Because there were a lot of people there, more than just the mothers of the children that left. And it – I understand that the children were chosen because we didn't have a father, that our fathers were –

Q: Had died.

A: – either killed, or were – had died during that time.

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Q: Okay. Right now we've been, you know, talking along one line, which is, what do you remember. Let's stop and pause and fill in the gaps of what was actually taking place, that you found out later. So, do you know the name of the organization that helped you get the paperwork done and what country, you know, gave the visa, and where you were going. Things like that. Can you tell me –

A: I found –

Q: – what is behind al – all this?

A: I found this out in 2006 –

Q: Okay.

A: – when I met one of the children I – I k – I – I found – someone found and gave me, the list of the nine children who came.

Q: So you were one of nine children?

A: One of nine.

Q: And you don't remember those children?

A: No.

Q: Okay, so you – your mother was not on the train, but you were.

A: No, the m – the – no, just the children. Just the children were on the train. And my friend that I met through that list, **Stella**, was 13, I was seven. So she remembered everything, and told me how the whole process was – was put into

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place. The agency that bought us was the German Jewish Children's Aid Society. And that's the agency that I – when I got to the **United States**, there was a – there was a social worker from that agency in **Baltimore**, that brought me to **Baltimore**, to my first foster home.

Q: So thi – this agency, was it based in the **United States**, or was it based in **Germany**?

A: I think it was based in the **United States**.

Q: Okay, but it was called the German Jewish –

A: German Jewish Children's Aid Society.

Q: Children's Aid Society, okay. And why wasn't your mother able to accompany you?

A: Adults could not come. I – I think the immigration was very tight. I don't know how we – we got out, but no adults were allowed to leave at that time, 19 – November, 1940.

Q: This is quite late, the war has started.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any memories of a militarized **Vienna**, aside from the parade that you already told me about, but you know, tanks and soldiers and things like that?

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A: Outside of the parade, no, because I – I don't think that I was in – I don't think I was in the streets. I don't remember being in the streets.

Q: Okay. But nu – I'm just surprised, because 1940, and November 1940 –

A: Very.

Q: – you know, that's – the war started.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: You know? They're already in **Poland**.

A: And people were not coming at the – were not allowed to come here any more.

So I always thought it was kind of a miracle that –

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And I-I – I – I received the – the list of names from a woman – well, it's – it's a long story.

Q: We'll talk about that –

A: Okay.

Q: – a little bit later.

A: Okay.

Q: But, for right now, when you – I take it you never saw your mother again.

A: No.

Q: Did you know at that time, that you may not see her again?

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A: She to – she did tell me that she was going to try to find me. She was – her plan was to go to **Cuba** – I didn't know where that was – and then to **United States**, and that we would be – that we'd be reunited.

Q: Mm-hm. So it wasn't – it wasn't that she was saying, I may not see you again?

A: No, I – I remember her saying that was her plan.

Q: Okay.

A: That was her plan. She didn't know when, but that was her plan.

Q: Did you ever hear from her after that?

A: I received letters for about six months, and I wrote to her. And after about six months, the letters stopped, and my foster mother told me that something must have happened to her, because obviously she knew where I was.

Q: She had your address.

A: She had the address.

Q: Okay. This was already in **Baltimore**? She would have had an al – **Baltimore** address.

A: Yes, she had the address of my first foster home.

Q: Okay. Do you remember what she packed in your suitcase?

A: I remember what I brought here. There was a – there was a picture of my mother and me, and I was wearing a dress that she had packed in the suitcase, a very pretty

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dress. She packed a doll, and when I look at the doll, I don't remember – I don't have any connection to this doll. I don't know whether it was a doll that I played with, or that maybe she put in there for later. I – I don't have a connection with this doll. And she packed em – other embroidered nightgowns.

Q: That she embroidered?

A: That she embroidered. The doll, books, prayer books that people gave me. The ga – the – the little blue songbook, she packed.

Q: That – from the – that you would sing with your father from that.

A: Yes, th-the Yiddish songs. What else did – that's – that's basically what I have. I have a picture of the two of them, a marriage picture.

Q: Was that also in the suitcase?

A: In the suitcase, and my – my Auntie **Lotte's**(ph) picture.

Q: Okay.

A: A picture of me when I was a little bit younger, and a picture of her and my father.

Q: Is that – is that aside from the document that you found in yad – you got from **Yad Vashem**, of the detail of where she was born? Is that what you have?

A: That's – that's what I brought with me.

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Q: Okay. Were you ever able to find out any other – anything else about your family, about your parents, later?

A: I – when – when I was – when we were settled in **Baltimore**, my husband and I, we had two boys, I got a letter from **HIAS**.

Q: Okay. And that is the – what's that?

A: That's Hebrew Immigrant Association –

Q: Aid Society.

A: Aid Society. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, **HIAS**. And they – it was a letter, and they said that there was someone looking for me. It – she said that she was a cousin to my mother, and she lived in **London**, and she just found – she found out through **HIAS**, and they gave her my address, and there was a letter from her. And they gave me the letter, and evidently, my mother had packed a package and sent it to her. I don't know how it got out of **Vienna**, I think a non-Jewish person must have sent the package to a non-Jewish person that my aunt – my cousin lived with. I think she was a domestic. She – she came to **London** from the – in – on a **Kindertransport**, and she worked as a domestic.

Q: This cousin?

A: This cousin. And someone picked up the package for her, and she wrote to me at my first address, my fir – first foster home address, but the letters were returned to

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her, no one at this address. And it was addressed to me. So she nev – I never got those letters, when I was at the first foster home. I never got the letters, they were returned to her, and she couldn't reach my mother by then, and she assumed that I never made it. And she had this package that she just kept. And we did meet her around 1964 or 60 – '64. And she had this package that had not been opened all those years. She says she prayed that someday she would find me.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: And it was a very strange story as to how she got to **HIAS** to find me, if you want hear this sto –

Q: Yeah, I do, I do.

A: My cousin **Adela(ph) Dulah(ph)** –

Q: This is the lady from **London**.

A: This is the lady, her name was **Adela(ph) Dulah(ph)**, and she lived in **London**, and she went to **Israel** to see relatives, and their bus broke down, and they were in a gas station of some sort, with other passengers. And she started talking to a woman from the **United States**, and she said, I always hoped that I would find a – my – my cousin's child, **Herta**. And she was saying this to this woman that she was sitting with, and this woman was from **Detroit**, or something like that. And she said she had just been to **Baltimore**, and she had seen a newspaper article, and she

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remembered the name **Herta**. And she said, why don't you contact **HIAS**, maybe they have her address. And so she contacted **HIAS** in **Baltimore**. And that's how I found her, she found me.

Q: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh.

A: It was an amazing, amazing story.

Q: What was in the package?

A: We – my husband and I went to her house, and she li-lived in a very small house, and we sat in her kitchen. There was one light hanging from the ceiling, and some sort of a stove. And she showed me the box, and when we opened it, it had a tablecloth that my mother had, she said, never finished. My – my cousin said my mother said it was never finished. And it had silver candlesticks, that she said were obviously from my grandmother. And it had some spoons in it, and some knives and forks. And it had some earrings that she thought were not good. She thought that they were paste. And what else did it have in it? It had – that's base – it had – oh, it had my mother's rings that she wore, and her – the earrings, I remembered her – her wearing.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: She had packed those in a little box inside the big box.

Q: So you remember your mother wearing certain earrings.

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A: I do remember her wer – wearing earrings all the time.

Q: And this package comes into your life in the 60s.

A: Y-Yes.

Q: The 1960s.

A: 1960 f – 19 sic – in 1962, I got a check from the Austrian government for my mother, and the check was for about 162 dollars.

Q: For what?

A: For my mother.

Q: For your mother?

A: For restitution for my mother.

Q: A hundred sixty-two dollars?

A: And some cents. And I turned that check over to the associate Jewish charities, and it was the beginning of their yearly campaign, so they – they made a – they made a newspaper story out of it, and it had my picture and my name in it, and that's what this woman in the gas station remembered. She remembered –

Q: It's cosmic. It's cosmic.

A: She remembered that there was a story about a **Herta** in the newspaper when she was in **Baltimore**, and that's why she told her to –

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Q: Can you – I mean, but when I think of this, you get a check from – for your mother in this amount, which is – there's a German word called **lächerlich**, you know, it's – it's ridiculous, 162 dollars for a life.

A: I thought s – I thought so, I thought so.

Q: Yeah. And it's for your mother, and you turn it over to a charity –

A: I didn't know what to do with it, I turned it –

Q: – that makes a story, and as –

A: That brought me here.

Q: – that brought you here – how were you brought here, but as a result of it, you get a package from your mother, you know?

A: Yes, in 19 s – about 19 si – the following year maybe –

Q: Yeah.

A: – it's like '63.

Q: It's like there's karma.

A: Yes.

Q: There's something out there.

A: It was amazing, and **Adela**(ph) told me what she knew of my family, my mother's side.

Q: So you also get a gift of knowledge of –

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A: She told me about my mother's family, and about my mother. She evidently lived with us for a few months, and I don't remember her. I don't remember her at all.

Q: So what did she tell you that was new for you, that was news to you?

A: Well, she told me that my mother's family was evidently very educated. And that there was someone in the family who – who was a – a treasurer for some duke, and that his picture was in some palace. And –

Q: In **Poland**?

A: In **Poland**. And –

Q: So from this little n-nothing village, there was some – there was an educated family.

A: Evi – yes, evidently they – I learned afterwards, I learned more recently that this person who was a treasurer to the duke, must have been a – must have been someone who collected taxes. Someone explained to me, when I told them the story, that it must have been someone who was – was like a treasurer for the – for the duke, and he must have been a tax collector.

Q: Yeah, collected his taxes, yeah.

A: So –

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Q: And do you – the i – I mean, another amazing thing is that this cousin kept an unopened package.

A: She was a – she must have been about 10 years older than me, and she seemed – she seemed rather poor, and she had married a – a man who was also a survi – was a survivor, and he had died. And they had a child who was – he was very religious, but he – I – I think he had – he – he was not – he was – he had a disability, a mental disability. And – and I wrote to her. I wrote to her, we kept up a correspondence, and then I stopped hearing from her, and her son wrote a small letter, saying that she died of breast cancer.

Q: Oh, and this was how – how many years did you have a contact with her?

A: About two years, not – not very long.

Q: Not very long

A: Not very long.

Q: And the items that were in the package, are they still with you today?

A: Yes. I've turned over most of them.

Q: Yeah.

A: Along with my suitcase, and –

Q: But that is amazing.

A: Because they started to deteriorate, and I didn't really –

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Q: The tablecloth, was that yo – when you say it's not finished, was she embroidering it?

A: It's embroidered, and it really seems finished, except for the edging. The edges are not – it seems to be a very soft, inexpensive material, and the edges were rough.

Q: Was the re –

A: But the embroidery was finished, as far as I can tell.

Q: And was the – was there any kind of note with this, or – or your mother's handwriting on an address label, or anything like that? No. No. And you recognized the earrings that were in there?

A: Yes.

Q: I think that's just amazing.

A: It's –

Q: It's an amazing story.

A: There are a couple of amazing stories, and they are all fairly recent. And meeting – meeting these two women that I was able to contact, from the list of nine.

Q: That you were on the train with.

A: That I was – I came to the **United States** with, to **New York**.

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Q: Do you remember anything of the journey? We kind of stopped your story there.

You get on a train, your mother says goodbye, she hopes to reunite with you via

Cuba, and then what happens? What do –

A: As far as I remember –

Q: Okay.

A: – we were in **Lisbon**, and we were tal – walking to the – to a boat.

Q: Were you accompanied by an adult?

A: I didn't know. I – I – I didn't know.

Q: Do you –

A: I just remember the children, there were – there were children.

Q: All girls? Boys in there?

A: They weren't all girls.

Q: I mean, there were no girls, there was all boys, except for you?

A: No, no, was two – two boys, and the rest were girls.

Q: Okay.

A: There were nine of us.

Q: Okay.

A: And I – the only thing I remember of the trip was the cobblestones in **Lisbon**,
going up to the boat. And I saw water that I had never seen before. And I remember

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the boat had – was black, black side. It had a huge American flag painted on it. And of the voyage itself, I don't remember where we slept or ate.

Q: You don't remember if you were seasick?

A: I – it was cold, it was December, I don't remember being cold, I don't remember being seasick. I've never gotten seasick. And I remember being on a deck, and some sailors were trying to teach me some English words. And then I remember one morning everyone was running to the railing, and they were pointing, and it was – they told me that it was the Statue of Liberty, and that we were in **America**.

Q: Do you remember seeing her?

A: No, I didn't see the statue, because it was very misty and – and raining. And I didn't see it. I couldn't even get to the railing, But I – I think I asked what was going on, and –

Q: And then –

A: – that's what it was.

Q: – when you landed, any memories, first memories of landing?

A: My first memory was of Mrs. **Beazer**(ph).

Q: Who is Mrs. **Beazer**(ph)?

A: **Rose Beazer**(ph) was social worker from **Baltimore**, came to get me and take me to my first foster home.

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Q: Just you, or the other children, too?

A: Just me. Just me.

Q: And the other children, did they go to **Baltimore** too, or did they go to other places?

A: No, I – I – I understood that some of them had relatives, and some were going to foster homes.

Q: Okay.

A: And –

Q: Did you ever see those kids again?

A: I only – I met the two women in – I c – I should say about 2008.

Q: So we're talking –

A: Through the computer, I got a list of this – these – the women who f – who was doing some research in **Vienna**.

Q: Okay.

A: And I got a list of these names.

Q: Until then you didn't know?

A: I didn't know who I came with. I know that there were eight other children.

Q: So we're talking 60 years later – no, more than that.

A: More than that.

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Q: We-We're talking 68 years later.

A: Yes. And that's how I found out what – what the process was, how we were chosen, how we were examined, and – and how we got our papers, and – and she told us – she told me about – about a boat, and how some of the kids were sick, and where we slept. We slept in a – in a – on the floor of a ballroom, with other children from **France**. And she filled in all these questions that I had. She had so much information. And we met in her home, about – I think it was around 20 – 2008. So that was just a few years ago.

Q: Yeah, it's eight years ago.

A: And we had such a wonderful meeting. It was **Stella** and her husband, and her daughter in – daughter and son-in-law. And we brought my son and my husband, so it was around –

Q: A family thing.

A: Yes. And it was just so amazing when we met each other.

Q: What made it amazing?

A: Well –

Q: Was there a connection or sa – I mean, of course, the information.

A: I had no idea what she looked like, and I only spoke to her on the phone, she had an accent. And I didn't know what to expect when I phoned her. I dialed her n – a

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number that I got – found, and I said – I said, is this **Stella**? And she said yes. And I said, I hope I'm not going to disturb you, but we have a history together. We came to the **United States** together, and I just found your name. And she said, **Herta**, **Herta**, I remember your braids. I helped to braid your hair.

Q: Oh my goodness, oh my goodness.

A: So we – we arranged to meet, and we went to **Scarsdale** where she lived, and my husband and I – and – and our son **Dan**. And he took m – this tape, he took this – he taped our meeting, the whole – the whole meeting, for about an hour and a half.

Q: Oh my goodness. It's like you ga – you have a gift of your own history.

A: I – I – that – that was emotional and amazing. It was also amazing to meet my cousin, of course.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: But to see one of the children that I came with, well – so between my cousin and **Stella**, they filled in a lot of –

Q: Had you been searching all the time? Did you always want to know, or was it something – some people close the door and say, I don't want to know.

A: I didn't close the door, and I didn't mind talking about it, but it was very little reason to talk about it. No one really asked me about it. I mean, my – my family

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knew that I was from **Vienna**, and that – they knew – they knew what I – you know, what I was about. And they knew about the things that I brought with me, but there was a – the Jewish Museum of **Maryland** decided to – to do a program on people from **Germany**, mainly, and via – and **Austria** –

Q: **Austria**.

A: – who came to **Baltimore** to settle. And they asked me to – to bring anything that I had, and so I brought my suitcase, and the doll, and – and they had a –

Q: An exhibition?

A: – an exhibition and – of about 20, 25 people, and their li – you know, their small stories. And shortly after that, I was called by the museum, and they said there was a woman in **Vienna**, she lived in **Salzburg**, but she was doing research for a paper on children who left **Austria** during the war years.

Q: So the **Maryland** exhibition was not exclusive to **Austria**, it was to anybody who –

A: No, it was only German.

Q: Oh, only German, mm-hm.

A: It had to do with German Jewish –

Q: Children, okay.

A: – children. German Jewish people who –

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Q: Okay.

A: – settled in **Baltimore**.

Q: Okay.

A: So this woman was – contacted the museum to see if there was anyone she could speak to that would be a contact for her to do her paper. And they called me and asked me if I would speak to her. So this was all through the computer. I was just learning the computer.

Q: And the internet.

A: And the internet. And we had this wonderful correspondence, and I told her everything that I remembered, and she did a book. I was not the only child that she

–

Q: Featured.

A: – featured, there were others. None of – none of the nine. None of the nine children I came with. Most of them were older, and they came before me. And she ha – she did all this research, and she found the lists of the nine children.

Q: So even though you were the only one she featured, she's the one through whom you got the list of the others?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

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A: So when I got the list, I'd – I had –

Q: Did you contact the others on the list?

A: I tried.

Q: Okay.

A: The first – first person I was able to contact, I spoke to his wife, and she said he would not speak to me. She was very interested, but she said he was ill, and he did not like to talk about his past.

Q: Okay.

A: So – but he said that he knew that one of the boys was deceased.

Q: Oh.

A: So that was two people.

Q: Okay.

A: And then I reached **Stella**, that was three, and shortly after that I reached **Melanie**, and she also lived in the **New York** area, and she was very interested.

And so that was four.

Q: You're five.

A: I'm five.

Q: There are four more.

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A: My daughter found an obituary somehow, of one of the children, in some newspaper, I – I've forgotten where. But she found the obituary. It wasn't in **Baltimore**, it was – I c – I can't remember where it was. But she had died only a few months after I got the list. I was – I could have – I could have found her.

Q: You didn't. It's – you know.

A: I could have found her. So my daughter found her obit.

Q: Okay.

A: So that was –

Q: Now you're down to three.

A: Three. The other three, two were sisters, and one I c – I could not ever locate those.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: So that was the nine of us.

Q: Can we cut for a second? **[break]** So before lunch, we were talking – before lunch we were talking about many different things, and it – but we – I think we brought your story up until the point where you got to **Baltimore**.

A: Yes.

Q: And because we have – we have, as a museum, many different collections, and sometimes we're able to find pieces of a person's story through some of the other

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collections that we've got. And just recently, by coincidence, one of my colleagues, who has been very involved with documenting your story, was able to find this.

And this is **Anatol Steck**, so I'm going to pass on the microphone to him.

[technical interruption] So before our break, we had talked about your story in many different ways, going back to your cousin, that – where you found that amazing package from your mother. And I think chronologically we brought it up to the point where you got to **Baltimore**.

A: Yes.

Q: And now I want to turn, briefly, this part of our interview over to my colleague **Anatol Steck**, because he has something else that he'd like to share with you, that we think is relevant to your story, that he found just a little while ago.

Q2: The museum recently acquired the research collection of **Leonard** and **Edith Ehrlich**, two survivors from **Vienna**, who spend a good 40 years researching the history of the Jewish community **Vienna** during the Holocaust. And having emigrated to the **United States**, they spent many years interviewing survivors from **Vienna** who were in the **United States**. And those survivors, and these interviews were done in the 1970s, so the survivors whom they interviewed were often individuals who had a role within the administration of the Jewish community **Vienna**. The research collection includes dozens of these audio cassette tapes,

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which the museum only recently digitized, and we still have not gone through all of the cassette tapes, but we started to do so just only recently, and we came across one interview that was conducted in December 27th, 1974, in **New York**, in the office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and it is an interview with **Margaret Feiler**, the name who – who you will recognize. She is the only adult chaperone who was on your transport. And the interview is, all in all, it's about three hours long, and – and she recounts everything that she did for the Jewish community. And at one point in the interview, she starts to mention an American committee for children, which arranged for originally 30 children to be brought to the **United States**, and then in the end, eight or nine children ended up being on the transport.

A: Oh my God.

Q2: And that is the ex – the excerpt that we would like to play for you now. It's about nine minutes long. **[technical problem]**

[The following is from the 1974 interview with **Margaret Feiler**. For the full audio recording, see Oral history interview with Margaret Feiler, RG-50.862.0001, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum collection]

“M: ...for a group of children, I think it was 30-odd children. There must be something on file on this. Probably not on this file, but she has the file. Children

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*whose fathers had died in some concentration camp, either **Buchenwald** or **Dachau**, and whose mother had a quota which didn't come up; Hungarian or Romanian or Polish. Such children – they made a group of such children, of 30-odd children, and they arranged for foster parents, here in the **United States**. The community intended to send, I think it was two social workers, who also wanted to emigrate, who had the affidavits, sent them with the children to the **United States**. They all required for visa around August – September. And of the children, only nine got visas, for reasons which we never knew. And none of the two social workers got visa. And nobody else got visa, not in September. Not in August, not in September, I don't know how far back, but not in August, not in September, and not before I got my visa. Now, I started talking to anybo – I [indecipherable] when I got the visa, they asked me whether I would take those nine children, and that's what I did. And that's how **JDC** even paid for my fare, because I was the escort. They paid for those nine children's fare, and my own, and we came here. I went via **Berlin**, where I picked up the 10th child, that also wasn't [indecipherable] and I brought them to the **United States**, via **Lisbon**. It was the first transport via **Lisbon**, through occupied **France** [indecipherable]. Now, to come back to the visa, I asked the people who had gone to the consulate, two social workers, and everybody else to whom I could talk, because most of them came to the community in order to*

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*communicate to their relatives here that they couldn't come because they didn't get the vi – the visa. I asked them, what were you asked, because they were asked questions. And there was one thing that they all had in common, all of them. There must have been 20 people. They had been asked how they had voted in the last election, in the last free election that **Austria** had, which was some time in spring – I don't know when it was. The last thing – I asked that question, how –*

I: Is that before or – before –

*M: Before **Hitler**.*

I: 1934?

M: Right.

I: There was not election –

M: No, no, no, no, no, we had elections to –

I: Was there election between '34 and '38?

M: Oh yes, yes, there was. Was [indecipherable] But they have asked them – I can't re – I can't really tell you what year it was, because I know only the question. But they asked, how did you vote during the last three elections? And all of them, every one of them had said, either a social democrat or a Christian socialist. Well, there was no other party. Very few said Christian socialist, but I know that the very few who had said that, and one had said social democrat. None of them had gotten a

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visa. And the other questions, I didn't find any other question that could be [indecipherable]. So I started thinking. And I was asked the same question. Well, I didn't know what [indecipherable], but there was a so-called democratic [indecipherable] which I think [indecipherable] in all of – of Vienna. Well, it was a hopeless affair. It was somebody who really – I can't – I can't think why anybody would spend money on something like that, but it was idealism. Now don't ask me whether I quor – voted for that, because I won't admit anything. But when I was asked, that's what I said. And all I can tell you is that I got the visa.

I: [inaudible]

M: That's – that was my [indecipherable]. So anyway, I got the visa, and when I came for the examination, you know, you had a medical examination, this is the second point for the American consulate [indecipherable] whatever you want to say, they asked me two questions. One said – one question was, what is your true hair color – implying that it was dyed, which it never was, and the second was, in what month are you [indecipherable]

I: It was what?

M: In what month are you [indecipherable]. These were the two questions. So – I mean, you can imagine the atmosphere, this was the atmosphere. So anyway, I got the visa in October, I got the – I left on November 30th, I brought the children out.

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*There are some – I don't think it's here on file, and I don't think I have it. I had written a column for that newspaper that the community [indecipherable] was called in those days, and I wrote about how I brought back the children, and it was very interesting for the people [inaudible]. So that was the story of, in those days, of the immigration. Now, of course, this is what I know myself. Now one other thing. **Murmelstein** had over [indecipherable] was very anxious [indecipherable] but he also [indecipherable]. And so the only hope was that a job offer would come from the **United States**. And he was afraid – first of all, he didn't want to stay. [indecipherable] to stay, but I was so optimistic, he didn't want to stay. Number two, he was afraid that the more he knew, and the more he was involved with the Gestapo, they may, in the end, not let him go, not let him even survive. He was always afraid for his life. He said he's getting deeper and deeper into this, and he is not going to survive. So when I went to the **United States**, I promised [indecipherable] when I come here, that I would see Rabbi **Young**, and that I would talk to Rabbi **Young**, and ask him to get him a job offer as a rabbi.*

*I: Who is Rabbi **Young**?*

*M: Rabbi **Young** is – has a – a community, a – a – a synagogue on the west side. I can get you details from [indecipherable]. He is of German extraction. He's not a refugee, but he is – when you talk to him, you can hear he is German. That the first*

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thing I did – I – I don't know whether it was the first week or the second week. But you see, as [indecipherable] in New Rochelle in jan – the end of January. So it must – all this was the end – the last few days in December, the first two days in January. Before I did anything, I went to Rabbi Young. I was admitted to his study, and I started to talk, and he cut me short and he said, not a word about Marmelstein. Don't mention the name to me. I know all about him. I said, now, wait a minute. I've been working with him. Don't tell me, I know all about it. There is not a thing I'm going to do, he should be happy his name isn't mentioned in the United States. And he practically threw me out, I mean it's – he – he – he was polite enough to say goodbye, but you know [indecipherable]. So I wrote it. I wrote to Marmelstein about it, and this what I want to tell you, because you see, I don't know how Marmelstein behaved in Theresienstadt. I can imagine that all sorts of things happened. It could be, because the atmosphere in Theresienstadt was quite different from the atmosphere in Vienna, and I don't know what people do to survive [indecipherable]. All sorts of things can have happened. But I do know what happened when I was still in Vienna, and I know that there was nothing that he did [indecipherable] because I was [indecipherable] all night. I went home to have a shower, you know, that was it. And nevertheless, that rumor had reached already the United States, at that time. People there are convinced already ...”

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Q: Is this the end? Okay. So this is the end of the clip that we wanted to share with you about **Margarita Feiler**, who was your adult lady who accompanied you. And I am assuming this is the first time you hear her voice in decades.

A: I knew nothing about her until I met **Stella** –

Q: Okay.

A: **Buchenstein**(ph), and she told me all about it. I remember a nice American lady that took good care of us.

Q: On the ship?

A: No, I didn't know where. I just remembered – one person I remembered was this wonderful American lady.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, it couldn't have been her.

Q: Okay.

A: What I – what I think, it was mar – it was **Margaret Marcus – Marcusy**(ph).

Q: Another lady then.

A: She was the intake person for the children. She accepted us, and I'm – I'm telling you this from **Stella's** information that she gave me. When we got to united – to **New York**, Mrs. **Feiler** – Miss **Feiler** gave all of our papers to Mrs. – I think it's **M. Marcusy**(ph).

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Q: Okay.

A: I'm not sure of the first –

Q: To another lady.

A: To another lady, and she was a social worker, in this temporary home that we stayed until we were dispersed.

Q: Do you have any remembrance of how long you were in this temporary home?

A: I did not know anything, that I was even in the home. I didn't remember that at all. I only remember going to the foster home with Mrs. **Beazer**(ph), my social worker. But when I read the transcript that I have, of her accepting us – it's about a one and a half page transcript – seems like she was the nice lady that I remember.

Q: Okay.

A: Because she was American, or –

Q: And is there something that you learned from this tape, this interview, thinking that again, this took place over 40 years ago, this interview, in 1974. Is there something that you hear that it's new, that is, something you weren't aware of?

A: She di – she only spoke very shortly about the children.

Q: Yeah.

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A: This is what I learned from **Stella**, that – that we were chosen, only nine children, and that somehow Rabbi **Murmelstein** said to the community, we've got to get these children out.

Q: And was Rabbi **Murmelstein** the head of the Viennese Jewish community? Was –

A: As far as I know. There was a meeting of the Jewish community, and I – I'm only telling you this because **Stella** told me.

Q: Okay.

A: That he – they have to get the children out, if they can.

Q: So he was involved in – in liberation.

A: He was involved in that.

Q: I see. I see. How did it – when you first heard that we had her voice on tape –

A: I – I – I mean, she is such a – on the trip, according to **Stella** – I hate, you know, I have to keep mentioning her name – she mentioned **Margaret Feiler** as such a very uncaring woman, who was really not with us very much. It seemed that the children were by themselves, and that the 15 – two 15 year olds sort of took upon themselves to take care of – of us, while we were en route.

Q: Mm-hm. It's interesting that – first of all, it's interesting, and it's not surprising that people have different memories of a same event. Or, as in you have said over

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and over again in your case, you don't have a memory of it. And that – that how **Margaret Feiler**, 35 years after she brings these children over, is remembering in her own mind what are the things that were salient for her, as she's telling the **Ehrlichs** about how she leaves **Vienna**, how she answers a question that has nothing to do with anything, you know, that is – deals with who did you vote for in the last free elections, you know. And why that would be significant.

A: Is that what they asked people, to get a visa?

Q: That's what she is saying, that the social workers –

A: Well, my mother was not an Austrian citizen, so this – this would have been a moot point.

Q: Yeah. I – I don't know, but it could be that she was referring to the people who were supposed to accompany the children.

A: Yes, maybe so. Now, did she say there was more than one?

Q: It made – it sounded like that, that others were supposed to come with more children, but that they answered in the wrong way, and didn't get a visa. She is leaving it – this is her supposition.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And she is leaving it up to the **Ehrlichs** to make of it what they will. The people that she's talking to.

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A: Well, I understand it was only her, with us.

Q: Okay.

A: And all this I learned from my –

Q: Okay.

A: – interview with – with my – my meeting with **Stella**.

Q: **Stella**, okay. Can we cut for a second? **[break]** So, as my colleague **Anatol** mentioned, we have – this interview with **Margaret Feiler**, done in 1974, is actually several hours long. And we will make a **CD** copy of it for you to be able to listen to in quiet, in peace, you know, at your leisure. And there may be more information on there that you will find of interest and relevance.

A: Right.

Q: This is only a nine minute clip. But was also thought, you know, we get information from so many sources, and it's not often that it – but it's not rare either, where they dovetail. And sometimes we'll find something from one person –

A: Yes.

Q: – that is very relevant to another person's story. And when – when we discovered this, we wanted to share it with you.

A: Amazed, I – I don't remember her voice, I don't remember her, what she looked like, or anything.

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Q: But her name was familiar to you.

A: The name was – well, I learned it from **Stella**. I learned all this from – from –

Q: Okay.

A: – from my meeting with her.

Q: Okay. Well now we're going to go forward. And what I'd like to do is talk a little bit about your first years here in the **United States**. The times when you do – from – from the times where you do have some memories, and what your experiences were. So the last we really left your story was when you are with your social worker, Mrs. **Beazer**(ph), you said?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: In **New York**. And she brings you to **Baltimore**.

A: Yes.

Q: And do you have a first impression of what **Baltimore** looked like to you? Was it very strange, was it very different?

A: I don't have a first impression, I don't.

Q: Okay. What about the family you came to? Who were they?

A: **Clara** and **Joe Beazer**(ph), **Joseph beez** – **Joseph Baer**(ph), I'm sorry. **Rose Beazer**(ph) was my social worker. **Clara** and **Joseph Baer**(ph) were my first foster parents. I wo – when I walked into the house – we walked up the steps of this row

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house, they were just lighting Hanukkah candles, and they asked me if I would like to light them too. So, there were three other children in the family; a baby, a very young child, and – and **Beverly**, who was – I was seven, she was five – four or five. And – probably five. And I lit the ca – helped light the candles, and I said the **brachah**. Well that – they were so amazed, they were – and their reaction to me was, where have you been all this time? It was very, very wonderful, and loving and reassuring to me, because –

Q: You were a seven year old girl.

A: I was seven and a half, and I – nobody, except the American lady, not even Mrs. **Beazer**(ph), that I had an emotional reaction to. And after we lit the candles, the kids and I got a **Hershey** bar. And that was amazing. That – that – that – coming into their home was just amazing to me. It was – it was so loving, I couldn't believe, you know – and they spoke Yiddish to me.

Q: Ah, that was my question, my next question.

A: They spoke Yiddish to me.

Q: Okay.

A: So I felt like I was in –

Q: You were in a familiar place.

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A: I felt like I was being understood, and – well, Mrs. **Beazer**(ph), my social worker, also spoke either German or Yiddish to me, I don't remember which. But the – coming from the **Baers**(ph), she was a very rotund, kind of a fat lady, and he was very skinny. And they were just so nice to me, and the kids – I don't remember the small children, but – but the five year old, **Beverly**, seemed interested. She didn't – you know, she just seemed interested. I don't know – I don't know how much she knew about me, or was told.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it was a good first meeting. It was a wonderful first meeting, and –

Q: Mm-hm, go ahead.

A: – I stayed in that home. I was put into second grade in a school not far from there. And when I got into the classroom, the teacher didn't know what to do with me, cause I spoke Yiddish. And so she decided to put me at the blackboard, and I copied these big let – these large letters, that she – she saw my handwriting, and she wanted me to change the **H** and the **G**, so I practiced the **H** and the **G** on the blackboard. And there were one or two other children in the class that spoke Yiddish, and they helped me to understand what to do, and what the different bells meant, and when it was recess, and when it was –

Q: All these things that are strange.

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A: Yes, I didn't – I didn't really – it was as if I'd never been in school before, in a school situation before. And I stayed in that school as long as I was with the **Baer(ph)** family.

Q: How long were you with the **Baer(ph)** family?

A: I was there from just the end of December –

Q: 1940.

A: – 1940 to about the end of July, 1941.

Q: So about a year and a half.

A: No, only a half of a year.

Q: Oh. Oh, you're right, only half of a year.

A: Only about six months.

Q: Okay.

A: Seven months.

Q: So, what happened?

A: The associated – the organization that took care of me, sent me to summer camp, Camp **Louise** in **Baltimore**. They thought this would be good for me. I remember being very lonely at camp, and I missed the family. I missed the family very, very much, and I really didn't have a good time. And when I came home – I don't remember how I got back and forth, but when I came home, Mrs. **Baer(ph)** and Mr.

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Baer(ph) were standing at the door waiting for me, and when I went into the house, my suitcase was there.

Q: This suitcase that we have here.

A: This suitcase was all packed up. And he told me that I was going to another foster home. What happened was that Mrs. **Baer**(ph), unbeknownst to anybody, had another baby. She was pregnant, and she was rotund, and nobody knew that she was pregnant, not even her husband or her family. I think she left a note in a milk bottle, or something like that. But she went to **Sinai** Hospital, to have a baby.

Q: Oh my.

A: So that was her fourth child. And the – Mrs. **Beazer**(ph) and the agency did not think it was appropriate for me to stay in this home with the new baby, and that it was too much for Mrs. **Baer**(ph).

Q: It was quite a loss for you, though.

A: It was very sudden, very sudden. And – and I – thank you – I went to a – my second foster home. I think that day, I – I don't know –

Q: Did you keep in touch with the **Baers**(ph) afterwards?

A: Oh yes, oh yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh yes, and – and even today I'm in touch with –

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Q: The children?

A: The two that are in **Baltimore**, yes, and their families, and they had a reunion a couple of years ago of the whole family, they've got a very large extended family, and they invited my husband and myself, and – and I spoke to them. And there was nobody there, except for the girl that upstaged me.

Q: The new baby.

A: Th-The baby, the new baby was there, and the oldest – the oldest daughter **Beverly**.

Q: **Beverly**.

A: So they asked me to tell the story to the – to the family. And I – I keep in touch with the two girls. The others are out of town. There were seven children that Mrs. **Baer**(ph) had of her own, all together.

Q: Wow.

A: And evidently, they were – I was their first foster child. And after I left – I guess, after some time, the agency – the associated, used her as an interim home for short periods of time for children that were in – families were in trouble, or something like that, until they were able to place them elsewhere. So, as I understand it, she had about a hundred foster children –

Q: Wow.

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A: – after me –

Q: Wow.

A: – through the years, according to the girls.

Q: [indecipherable] yeah.

A: It was that kind of a home, a – a warm, very unusual people.

Q: Did you feel like an orphan?

A: There, no.

Q: Did you ever feel like an orphan?

A: Not then.

Q: But you did later?

A: Mm-hm. There's one time that I remember, I – I – I was waiting for Mrs.

Baer(ph) outside the school, and somebody said, who are you waiting for? And I said my mother. And then Mrs. **Baer**(ph) came up, and she said, you're the mother? And I realized that I had sort of told a – a fib, I didn't want to go into the whole story.

Q: Yeah.

A: And everybody laughed, you know, the one laughed about it, and – but it was that kind of a thing. I didn't feel like an orphan. At that time I just felt like –

Q: This is another place, and I'm at home. Maybe I'm putting the wrong words to it.

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A: I – I – I felt like I said I was part of the family, but I wasn't. So it was a little –

Q: It's an awkward situation.

A: I-It's something I remember.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's something I remember. Mrs. **Baer**(ph) laughed about it.

Q: It's a compliment.

A: It was, it was.

Q: You know. What about the next family, who were they?

A: The next family lived in a more affluent part of the city, and there were lawns and gardens and single houses. And Mrs. **Baer**(ph) took me over there, and I met my foster mother, she was in the garden, pulling weeds or something. And, you know, I met her, and then my new foster sister, **Beverly** –

Q: Another **Beverly**?

A: – another **Beverly** – came out, and I really felt like, for the first time, I looked like a refugee. I still had my high top shoes, and the clothes m-my mother sent with me. None of that had been replaced, and I had my braids. And they really looked at me as if I was from outer space. She didn't know what to make of me. First of all, she was not very prepared for – for me.

Q: Another child?

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A: She was not prepared. It must have been a very fast – I got the impression that it was a very fast exchange. And **Beverly** was two and a half years older than me. But she didn't look like a 11 or 12 year old. She – I was, by that time, eight and a half. She must have been about 11 and a half. She looked like a woman. She was completely developed, and she looked much older than her years. And she was not pleased. She was not pleased that somebody was coming into the house, and certainly not me.

Q: Was she a sibling – she – was she the only child?

A: She was an only child, but she had been adopted by the **Freilanders**(ph) from the associated Jewish charities when she was six months old.

Q: Oh.

A: So, I guess the – the organization knew about her, and I guess that they thought that it would be a good thing for **Beverly** to have a sister. I – I – I don't know, and I never found out what motivated them to step forth. So, the next door neighbor came down, Mrs. **Fine**(ph), my – and – and her daughter **Phyllis**. And they thought I was adorable. But I didn't get that impression from **Beverly**. And for the first time, I felt like a stranger. It was a bad time for me, very bad time. Everybody seemed to think I was so cute, but I didn't feel that way at home.

Q: What about your foster parents?

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A: **Mary**, shortly after I came into the home, **Mary** li – **Mary** got ill, and she suffered from high blood pressure, and headaches, and she was not a well person.

Harry, my foster father, had a grocery store, it was a – a nice size grocery store, and **Beverly** and I helped out in the grocery store. He was very soft spoken. He would come home and – and have dinner, and go be-behind his newspaper. And **Beverly** and I – she had to make room for me in her drawers. We ha – slept in a single bed, because the bed hadn't been delivered yet – a second bed hadn't delivered yet. So I really, really stepped on her. I really came in – I can't imagine how she felt. I mean, how – how – how could I feel – how could she feel?

Q: Well, how could – well, you know, in – in many different ways, that it was the way – she felt the way she felt, and you were who you were. And it was, you know, too –

A: It was very strange, it was – it was – seemed like it was so sudden. And there wasn't even a place for me to sleep, we slept together. We slept together in a single bed, and shared a room.

Q: Did that ever change?

A: We shared a room until we were both married.

Q: So you stayed with this family?

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A: I stayed with this family from 1941 to 1952 when my husband and I were married.

Q: Oh my.

A: And **Beverly** was married first, about a year before.

Q: Oh my goodness. So, did **Beverly's** attitude ever change?

A: Sure it changed. I don't think that – we were so different. We were so different. Yeah, well, so-somehow we had to make peace with each other, cause we shared a room all those years. I – I – I – looking back I can't even envision how – how we managed, but we did. M – Aunt **Mary**, that I call – I called them Aunt **Mary** and Uncle **Harry**, she took me to get my braids cut, because she couldn't handle my – my long hair. And I mean, I looked, after a while, with new shoes and new clothes, I looked like anybody, and I did not have an accent, and I spoke perfect English, better than I do now. And so **Beverly** and I sort of made a – a peace. We were never like – we were never close, but we had – you know, we – there were lots of times where **Mary** was very ill and she was hospitalized, that we had to take care of the house, and we did.

Q: Okay.

A: And it was – we had to cooperate, and we did. And as we got older, and **Beverly** started to date, and – and we would babysit together and i-it got – it got a lot – a lot

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better. And by the time that my husband and I were married, we were good friends, for the for – you know, for si – for the first time, because we were both almost adults at that time, and we had things in common. For the first time we had marriage in common. It was different, it was not like being –

Q: And you had years in common, you had a shared history of a –

A: We – we had a shared history and we were both older, and it was different, very different. By the time I left **Baltimore** to go into the service with my husband, we were very, very good friends. We were fre – we were girlfriends.

Q: Mm-hm. You wouldn't say sisters.

A: I don't think we really approached that subject. I don't think we talked about the old days, and how we felt about each other. We never did that. We talked about where we were at at that time. And of course, **Mary** was very, very sick by then. And **Beverly** was diagnosed with lupus. And well, the lupus came a few years after that. When we came back to **Baltimore**, she wu – developed luka – lupus. And we were fren – we were – we were tight. We were – we were girlfriends. It was not like it was before.

Q: Yeah.

A: We – bev – **Beverly** played the piano by ear, and we would play the piano with our – our children, with our kids.

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Q: What about Uncle **Harry**?

A: Uncle **Harry** was very quiet. I remember him being very quiet throughout the – he was very soft-spoken and very quiet. And we went to the store, to the grocery store one – on Saturdays together, in the morning. And I always wanted him to talk to me, to tell me something about himself, or to share something. But he was very to himself. I really think he was fond of me, he just couldn't – couldn't share, he couldn't share. I always wanted him – I needed a conversation with him, and I – I never got that out of him, even – even in later years, before he died, I never got that out of him.

Q: What about **Mary**? Or was she too distracted?

A: **Mary** was very, very – she was very ill, and it just took over everything.

Q: Was her illness of an emotional kind, or physical?

A: No, no, it was physical.

Q: It was physical.

A: She eventually was diagnosed with **Parkinson's**.

Q: I see.

A: But she had many problems, and she was – she was a sick woman.

Q: So she was overwhelmed in some ways.

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A: She was overwhelmed with her own problems, and **Beverly** and I just a – when she – when **Mary** really, really was sick, **Beverly** and I sort of – we – we corroborated, we really – I think we –

Q: What I'm surprised by is why the agency, or the fe – yi – was it in a – a – the a – Jewish agency?

A: Yes.

Q: Why they wouldn't have found another place for you. If the first home, you know, which was so loving and so kind, okay, has another child, then – and they can't handle it, and then the second home, you know, one half of the pil – one pillar from the family gets sick, that means that – you know, they – they're for the best of will, you know, they still are – they're not able to fully integrate a child. And why you weren't moved again? Or maybe – or do you know anything about – did you ever think about that?

A: I met with Mrs. **Beazer**(ph) my social worker –

Q: Okay.

A: – about probably once a year at her office, and she never asked me.

Q: How you're doing?

A: She never asked about the home situation. She talked to me about school, and she took my loose-leafs, and my books to see what I was doing and how I was

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doing. I did very well in school. She never asked that question. She never – I – I had a feeling that she knew the situation at home, but maybe – maybe there was no place else to put me, or maybe it was just out of the question to move me again. I don't know. She never asked me how things were at home. I think she knew that **Mary** was sick. I – I didn't have the kind of relationship where I could tell her, well, what I really wanted her to know.

Q: Well, what did – what would you have really wanted her to know?

A: Maybe it's something that she knew from the other children that she took care of, that I was – I felt very much alone. And that I had trouble being **Beverly's** sister. You know, it was difficult. **Beverly** and I were very, very different. She was not good in school. She must have had a – a learning difficulty of some sort. And my report cards were so much better than hers, it was almost embarrassing to me. When she was 16, she quit school, and actually, when she quit school, she went to work in a record store. And that's when it changed between her and me. She wasn't in school any more. She was making a small living for herself. She felt very, very much relieved. And I think she – I think our relationship got better at that time, when she quit school and started working at the store – at the record store, and she would bring home records of all kinds, and we would play the records and sing

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together and play the piano and sing together. And I think ji – things changed there.

With Mrs. **Beazer**(ph) I never felt close enough to share with her –

Q: Is there any –

A: – in earlier years, what – what was going on. She never asked, and I never told.

Q: That's quite a lot for a child to carry, all by themselves.

A: I felt very, very much alone, and whenever I went someplace, whether it was shopping with **Mary**, or anything, **Mary** seemed to know everybody, and everyone said to me, what a lucky girl you are. And I always wanted to cry every time I heard that. I knew it was – I knew it was right. I knew they were right, but I – I felt so – I hated that. I hated people telling me how lucky I was. And that was hard for me. I grew up feeling very much alone. I didn't know anybody else who was – was – had my history, and I didn't know any other children that came – came over like I did. So I – I grew up feeling very much alone.

Q: Well, you know, you had so many losses, and there wasn't anybody to acknowledge that you had those losses.

A: I – I – I just was known as a lucky girl.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And –

A: And oh, I hated to hear that.

Q: Of course.

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A: Because I – it made me feel guilty.

Q: Of course, because you –

A: Made me feel – I – I – it made me feel like I wasn't grateful. And when I wrote my little book about my experiences, I wanted to write them down for our kids, because I thought maybe I'd forget, in the future. And when I wrote it – when I wrote it, I called the book, "**Lucky Girl.**"

Q: Oh gosh.

A: It was – it sort of – it sort of – I – I was a lucky girl, but I-I couldn't – I couldn't take it all in when I was younger. Now I realize what happened to me, and th-the times and everything, and –

Q: Well, that's – but you see, here's the – here's the tough part, when you realize that your destiny is a happier one than it could have been, had you stayed in **Vienna**, yes, that's true, which doesn't mean that there wasn't suffering. Because both can exist in the same story. Both can exist in the same life. And losses can – and real losses – you lost your father, you lost your mother, you lost your childhood, and mu – and many –

A: I lost myself.

Q: Yeah. For such a – and that's just as legitimate, and just as real as the luck was real. You know, the – the **[indecipherable]** fortune was real.

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A: I recognize both things.

Q: Yes.

A: I recognized – I recog – I was smart enough to recognize that, but I still – I feel – felt that I wasn't grateful enough. And when I heard that, I – it just –

Q: It would cut.

A: – gave me a lot of guilt.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. No, I – it's fully understandable why, and what a burden it was, because there wasn't anybody you could share this with, from what you're telling me. It might have –

A: I wasn't –

Q: – if there was the first family, maybe in the first family you would have been able to tell them how you were feeling inside yourself.

A: They wanted to know about – all about my – my school, and – and I – there was nothing I could tell them.

Q: Yeah.

A: I told them I just couldn't remember.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

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A: And the same with the **Freidlanders**(ph), they wanted to know, you know, how was the other foster – actually, they didn't really ask that many questions at the beginning, or any time. But –

Q: In what –

A: – they were wonderful, they just weren't huggers like – like the **Baer**(ph) family was. They were not the huggers, and they didn't – maybe it was that they didn't want to show –

Q: Preference?

A: – preference, because of **Beverly**. She was the apple of their eye, there's no doubt about that. But I think they didn't want to show that I was important, too. I – I don't know, I don't know.

Q: Did you feel loved?

A: No, not really. Now, there were other people in the family that I was – felt closer to.

Q: [indecipherable] **Freilander**(ph)?

A: One was her sister. One was her sist – the younger sister and her husband. And they had children, and when I was in – I babysat for them. And when I was in that home –

Q: It was better?

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A: It was good anywhere. I – I just felt at home, I just felt like I was a – an imposter somehow. Maybe not an imposter, but someone who is there, doesn't belong there, and I don't know. I did not feel I belonged. I was a daughter, but I wasn't a daughter. I was – I don't know.

Q: When did the letters stop – with which family did the letters from your own mother stop?

A: They stopped in the **Baers**(ph).

Q: Okay. Did anybody talk much about the war after – after the war, and after it was more known what had happened to people, to the Jews? You know, what the concentration camps –

A: Nobody really knew how – how bad it was. I – I – I don't – I don't know. I don't know. I got the impression that nobody really knew. Obviously there were people who knew. No one talked about it. I remember when we came into the war. I remember **Roosevelt** on the radio, everybody listened to the radio.

Q: So 1944.

A: 1941.

Q: Forty-one [indecipherable]

A: December '41.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And I realized that now we were in the war, too. I knew we were in the war over there. And I knew we were in the war, but I had no idea what **Pearl Harbor** meant, or – but we were at war. And we helped for the war effort. I – I – the neighbors and I collected scrap iron, and – and I – in the grocery store, we – we collected fat from customers that would bring it in. And we had air raids, and **Harry** was an air raid warden. And I loved going out with him. We would write down the name of people whose lights were on. And he had a whistle, and other people had a whistle in the next block, and I would run back and forth with little messages.

Q: Oh wow.

A: And I loved that, I loved being with him. And I felt – I felt very important. But it wasn't until long after the war that everybody realized – that people realized and talked about concentration camps, and losses, and –

Q: When did you start trying to find out things about your own mother?

A: I always had a guilty feeling about not trying to locate my mother, especially when I got older. And I did contact the Red Cross, and they had no information.

When **Arthur** and I were married, about a little over a year, he went into the service.

Q: Mm-hm. This would have been 1953?

A: Nineteen – we were married in '52, and he graduated med school in '54.

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Q: Okay.

A: Fifty-five was his internship, it was '56.

Q: Okay.

A: He was stationed in **Montgomery, Alabama**, and we had a little apartment that was **Harry's**, that he rented to us for 35 dollars a month, and I worked for a pediatrician. And **Art** was just finishing his – his internship and going into the service, and he was stationed at **Montgomery, Alabama** temporarily. And I – **Beverly** was, at that time, living upstairs from **Mary**. Her husband was in the navy, and he was away. She had a baby. And I – when – when the movers came, I moved out of the apartment, and spent a couple of days with **Mary** and **Harry** in their –

Q: Home.

A: – in their home. And all of a sudden I had these overwhelming feelings, that I never tried to contact anybody who might have known my mother. And I felt so badly, that I called Mrs. **Beazer**(ph), and I spoke to her, and she said – it was adults talking to each other, instead of children any more. She said, **Herta**, you're leaving **Baltimore**, and it's another big move for you. She said, I don't think it's about your mother, I think it's – it's about leaving **Baltimore**. And she said I had nothing to be sad about, about what I hadn't researched. And I – I had a good conversation with her. It was really a good conversation.

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Q: Do you think she was right?

A: I think she was right. It was another phase of my life.

Q: Of leaving someplace.

A: It was leaving **Baltimore**, and going to a new place. And she was right, but it was – it was a – it was – it was a good – we had a good – good time in the service. It was good for us. We had – we had our son **Larry** in the service, and we came back to **Baltimore** after two years. **Mary** was dying, **Beverly** was very, very ill. And it was not a very happy time for me. **Beverly** was still living upstairs from **Mary** and **Harry**, and **Mary** was dying. And very suddenly one day, we were in our apartment – no, I don't rem – yes, we were in **Baltimore**, and **Beverly's** husband called one morning and he said, **Beverly** died very suddenly. She had a cardiac arrest of some sort, very suddenly, and she died before **Mary**.

Q: Wow. Wow.

A: So, we were still in **Baltimore**, and I felt like I was a daughter, but I didn't feel like a daughter, and I – I didn't know what to do. **Mary** was to the stage where she couldn't speak. You couldn't understand her, she was bedridden. And then we had **Karen**. We had **Karen** before **Mary** died, and I would take **Karen** over there, and put her to sleep in the bed next to – next to **Mary**, and she – **Mary**, I could tell that she – she liked that. And then when **Karen** was four months old, **Mary** died. And –

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Q: What happened to **Harry**?

A: **Harry** – **Harry** was wonderful through this whole thing, to **Mary**. I mean, he did what he could. He wasn't emotional, he was never emotional. **Harry**, after very few months, remarried, a lovely woman. And he ha – he had a good life with her for maybe 10 years or more. Had a good life with her, and then he died. And so, they're all gone. **Clara** and **Joe** died.

Q: Who are **Clara** and **Joe**?

A: And –

Q: Oh, those are the **Baers(ph)**.

A: The –

Q: **Baers(ph)**, yeah.

A: – the first family. And time went on and in 19, I think it was '62, I got this call from **HIAS** that we – I think '62 was before **Mary** died.

Q: Okay.

A: Before **Mary** died, we got this call from **HIAS**, from this cousin, and we went to **London** after a while, and – to meet her. We had the three kids. No, we had two boys at that time, **Karen** hadn't been born yet, **Mary** was ill.

Q: Still alive.

A: Yeah. And so I learned –

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Q: More.

A: – a lot about my family, but not – not about my coming here. All she knew was that she came on the kinderport –

Q: Transport.

A: – **Kindertransport**. And she con – my mother contacted her to give this stuff to me someday.

Q: And someday came.

A: And someday came, and she, through that shaggy dog story, with – with the woman in – from **Detroit**, or wherever she was, that remembered the newspaper article. And she con – so she con – she ti – suggested that **Adela**(ph) contact **HIAS**, and she did. That was before **Mary** died, and we had **Karen**. We had **Karen** – **Karen** was four months old when **Mary** died.

Q: Did you – did your children ask you about your own childhood when they were growing up?

A: I think they knew that I was a foster child, but I'm not – I don't remember when they were young – I don't remember when they were quite young.

Q: Did you talk much about any of this to your kids?

A: I spoke – I told them some.

Q: What –

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A: And they knew who – the boys knew who **Mary** and **Harry** were because they were old enough. They were six and eight when **Karen** was born, so s – they – they knew about **Mary** and **Harry**, and they – they knew where they lived, and they knew – they knew them.

Q: Did you ever speak with anybody about the hard parts, about being a lucky girl?

A: I don't think so. I think – I think that Aunt **Dorothy** and Uncle **Otz**(ph) and – and maybe the rest of **Mary's** family that she was close to, I think they realized that I felt different. They all liked me. It seemed like – I just had this feeling when I was in the home, that I was a foster child. I – I just – I don't know why I – I never felt a part of them, really, really. It wasn't – it wasn't that they didn't make me feel at home, it was a feeling, I think it was my own feeling.

Q: Well, for whatever reason, it was there, it was real. And it was a burden. It was a sorrow that you were carrying.

A: I was. And – and I think I didn't have very much self-esteem growing up. When I met my husband and we got married, I – you know, I started to drive a little bit. I did drive. I – and I went through a very low time. We went into the – no, we went to **Philadelphia** for his residency, and when we came back, that was right before **Mary** died. **Beverly** – **Beverly** had da – died, **Mary** –

Q: Was [indecipherable]

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A: – I was an only child.

Q: Right.

A: And I think I went through a very bad time, and I – I – I got help, and I think it helped a bit, but it – it made a mark.

Q: Yeah. I don't want to deepen those memories now. I never [indecipherable]

A: No, I had a very good life since then. I mean, **Art** and I, and we have wonderful kids, and we have seven grandchildren – three – three children, seven grandchildren. And we've had a good life. We've had a good life. And –

Q: And –

A: – I am a – I am lucky. I am lucky.

Q: I believe you.

A: I'm very, very lucky, believe me. I – I never felt like I – whenever someone calls me a survivor, I – I have to – because I don't feel like a survivor, I was – I was rescued. I'm a refugee. I always thought of myself as a refugee. But **Leo Bretholz**, who was a real survivor, he jumped off of a train to **Auschwitz**, and he became a good friend in the last few years. He – I – I told him that I don't feel like a survivor, and he said you – you absolutely are, because you had papers. You were not a refugee, you had papers when you came to this country, and the government did not take you in as a refugee. And –

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Q: But the feeling of not belonging to anybody, it makes – it makes sense, and it is the price. It was a cost that – that was paid.

A: I just had no one to share it with.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. But I'm very glad that you've shared it with us today.

A: I can't believe I'm here. I feel like it happened to somebody else. I feel like it's somebody else's story that I'm telling. It's – it's sort of unbelievable how things came about. And then I met these – these women who told me about –

Q: Coming over –

A: – the trip over here, and it just made a full circle for me. It – it – it – all the holes were filled as much as they can be.

Q: Are there any that are left? Any gaps that – of things you'd want to know, that you don't know? That you – you don't know if you'll ever be able to find out, but that you'd want to?

A: My relationship with my mother, I think. I don't have that feeling of – I think I probably just put it away, or just forgot it. I – I think I just – maybe it was self re – protection.

Q: Well, it's a – it – it is a huge loss.

A: Yeah, I –

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Q: And when I look at the dress, and I look at the doll, and I think of what she packed, that is somebody who is packing something with love, because somebody who doesn't think of what a child needs, would not pack a doll. They would pack something more practical. And she packed the practical, but she also realized she had a little girl who needed a toy, you know, and – and that was a loss. You lo – you never had a chance to feel it, but you lost it.

A: I – that's – up – that's about the only thing I would love to recapture, my relationship with my mother.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Thank you very much, **Herta**.

A: Oh, thank you for asking me. Thank you.

Q: I appreciate it. I – I see the cost, and I appreciate that you have gone through it, to share this with us.

A: I – I feel like I'm not a survivor like other people are survivors.

Q: Yes, you are. Yes, you are.

A: No, no, my experience, I was – I was – I was sheltered from a lot of horrible stuff that those kids that we left behind – I think of them a lot. They never had a life, they never had children. And when I feel guilty about people telling me how lucky I am, I feel guilty about that, too. I can't help it, it's – I'm sure anybody

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would feel the same way, with mine – with my background. But I – I – there are so many people that must have been involved in – in bringing us over.

Q: They – in –

A: I'll never know.

Q: The – it's what you said before, it is – it's not that you're not grateful, but the whole situation was such that no matter how good, and how much effort was made, there's some things that were beyond anybody's power. They could not cover the things that you lost. They could not cover the grief, the sorrow, the people that – they could only do only a certain amount. Which they did. But they could not take away all of the things that were causing the pain. They cou – you know, it was beyond –

A: They wanted me to be happy, and I thought that I never – I probab – looking back, I think I never really grieved. It was all inside, all these – all this time, and still is.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

A: It was wonderful to meet you, thank you.

Q: Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to say as a final word?

A: I'm – I'm thrilled that I met these two women, and I – I learned a lot from them.

Q: Okay.

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A: And I think I was very lucky to find them.

Q: Okay. Well, with that, I'm going to say that the formal part of our interview – the formal part of the interview with the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**, with **Herta Griffel Baitch – Baitch**, on May 10th, 2016, is over, but we will still talk a little bit about some of the artifacts that you brought today. So we'll pan to now these items, and I'll ask a few questions when the camera's adjusted.

A: Okay.

Q: Thank you. **[technical]** So explain to me first of all, what is the suitcase?

A: Well, the suitcase, my suitcase when I came to this country. I don't know how I was able to carry it.

Q: It's big.

A: It's big, and I think I probably – maybe the older kids helped the younger kids with it. I – I – I don't know how I handled it. My mother packed a lot of things for me, and I think of all the things, this dress is in the best condition.

Q: It's beautiful.

A: And I have a picture of her, my mother and I, and I had this dress on, so it's very meaningful to me –

Q: Of course.

A: – because it's my connection with her.

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Q: And it's her work on it, too.

A: And it's her work, and it's her –

Q: Embroidery.

A: – embroidery, sh – an-and it's **[indecipherable]** it's getting stained.

Q: A little yellowed from the – from – from the age. Did she actually sew the dress?

A: Oh yeah. She did the smocking and everything.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she did embroidery on some of my other things too, nightgowns and things

–

Q: Okay.

A: – that I brought here. And the doll, I don't remember, but she might have packed it for me to have. I – I don't – **Stella** said that she did not remember this doll. She said I had a rag doll with me, of some sort.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah. She said that I – she did not remember this doll. She doesn't think this was a doll I had. She said I was always with the – holding this doll that she remembers me – yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So I might have had another doll. Maybe this was for the future.

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Q: Okay, but you – your mother did put it in the suitcase?

A: Yes, this was in the suitcase, and my mother made this dress. And the slip and the pants that –

Q: That come with it.

A: – that come with it. And she did all this.

Q: Okay, she did all of the – the embellishments.

A: The embellishments for that – she made the dress. She made the dress, and the slip and the panties.

Q: And what other items had she included in **[indecipherable]** you remember?

A: I had – I had prayer books – prayer books that my teachers and other people gave to me when I left. They signed them, and –

Q: And more clothes?

A: More clothes. I think I had a paint set, that somehow got lost. I also had a little photograph album that got lost along the way. It was – there was a lot in it. And the songbook that she wrote the songs in.

Q: Mm-hm. For – that your fa – used to sing with your father.

A: Yes. And she wrote in the songbook the 10 commandments, so that I shouldn't get – forget them.

Q: Oh.

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A: So –

Q: Important things.

A: I remember when I came here, I – I said a morning prayer every morning. And when I did it at the **Freilander's**(ph), **Beverly** thought I was really – she didn't know what to make of me. She just didn't know what to make of me.

Q: Yeah.

A: And –

Q: Well, we're very grateful that you have shared this with the museum, and that you are donating these very precious and personal artifa – artifacts to us, so that we can further tell the story.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you. Okay, that's it.

Conclusion of Interview