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# Marianne Dennis Interview

## November 28, 1999

Okay. Here we start. This is November 28th, 1999 and we're having an interview with ... and how do you pronounce your first name?

**Marianne**

Marianne Dennis. Okay. Let's start. I'm going to go down this list of questions and we might stray a little bit and if we stray we need to get back. Or if you stray and you ... I need to get you back on subject. Okay? Usually it's me that strays. Okay. What was your name at birth?

**My maiden name was Latter.**

Can you spell that?

**L-a-t-t-e-r.**

Okay. And was Marianne your first name? That's, They didn't change your name?

**Well, it really is Gisela ... G-i-s-e-l-a Marian, Marianne. And then when I became a citizen, I've changed it because I was always called Marianne. I changed it to Marianne then Gisela.**

Okay. So ... but nobody changed your name? Like when you came ...

**No.**

Okay.

**No.**

And, and when were you...

**Well, I was married then when I came over. Yeah.**

Right, but I ... some people's last names are changed or they Americanized ... been Americanized by...

**No. No.**

At Ellis Island or something. Okay. And when and where were you born?

**I was born April 1931 in Berlin, Germany.**

Okay. And were you born at home? Were you born at a hospital?

**No. I, I was born at home. That's what my mother always told me.**

Yeah. And do you have other brothers and sisters?

**I have one sister.**

And is she ... is she a survivor?

**Yes.**

Wow! That's great. And what were your parents' names?

**First name?**

Uh-huh.

**My father's name was Willie Latter and my mother's name was Margaret.**

Okay. Were both of them Jewish?

**Yes.**

Okay. And what was the role of your mother and father in the household? Did, did your mom work? Did ... was your father ... you know did he work and your mom stayed home?

**When I was little you mean or ...**

Uh-huh. Yeah. When you were a child.

**Well, when ... no. When I was real little my mother did not work. My father was totally blind since the age of 13.**

Oh, my!

**And studied music in a conservatory and was a concert pianist.**

And blind?

**Uh-huh.**

Oh, my gosh!

**Before my mother met him and during courtship and she was an actress and I don't know too much when I was real little.**

So did they teach ... your father teach you to play the piano?

**No. Neither my sister or I were interested in learning and I regret it now.**

I'm sure. Are you musical?

**Oh, I love music. Yeah.**

And did your mom ... did you ever see your mom act?

**No. No.**

Did you ever have, you know, that would have ...

**Just pictures I have and, and programs.**

And did you ever hear your father play concerts?

**Oh, yeah. Yeah. He ... well he played and then we had a lot of house music where they invited artist and house concerts.**

Was he well-known? Was he famous?

**Hmm, that I don't know.**

Did he play ...

**If he was famous.**

Outside Berlin?

**Well, when ... that was before my time. Yes. He took tours.**

He toured?

**He played in resorts. Yeah.**

But he didn't ... he didn't tour while ... as you ... after you were born?

No.

And so your mom was just a ... just. We don't say just. Your mother was a homemaker?

**Well, yeah. She worked for the, that was ... I don't know really ... the years before my time, for the telephone company.**

What did she do?

**And a ... well, she always worked in accounting so I would imagine that's what it was. I'm not sure.**

And did she have help? Do you have people who work for ... in your home? Servants or cleaning people?

**I think there was some help but I really don't remember because she used to talk about like a young lady, you know, who helped and ...**

So you had one other sister. Is she older or younger?

**Older. She's two years older.**

And did anybody else live with you? Other family members, grandparents or anything?

**No. I had grandparents in Berlin, you know.**

Were both of your parents' families living? Did they ... did you have ... did you have grandparents and extended families living around you?

**Yeah. And then my father had a sister and a sister-in-law in Berlin and I remember my grandmother. I don't remember my, from my father's side grandfather. He passed away I guess before I was born. Oh, no. When I was real little, I guess.**

So ... and when you would have family dinners, was ... were there a lot of family there?

**Yeah. Family and friends.**

In what kind of neighborhood did you live in? Was it a Jewish neighborhood? Did you live in a house, an apartment?

**Apartment. Yeah. We lived ... I don't know or remember when I was born and real small we lived in one part of building and then moved into a suburb. Amore ... a little bit outside Berlin in a large apartment.**

And is it ... was it a Jewish neighborhood?

**No. I don't ... I, I really don't remember whether there were even any like Jewish neighbors.**

Did you ...

**Now there were some, after times got bad, you know, and then we were thrown out of the apartment and put into not too nice of a neighborhood and a lot of Jewish people were there and close to the synagouge ...**

Did ... so were you ...

**... in school.**

... living ... were you living and when you moved to this house in the suburbs, the apartment in the suburbs were you near a synagogue?

**Yeah. There was the Jewish school where I went to.**

You when to a Jewish school?

**Yes. Oh, yeah.**

Did all the Jewish kids go to Jewish schools?

**Yes.**

Nobody went to a public school? Jewish kids didn't go to public schools?

**No. We had our own school.**

So it was a close knit Jewish community?

**Yes. Yeah.**

Did you ... did you have ... did you know very many non-Jewish people?

**Uh-huh. Some.**

But not your friends that you went to school with and things like that?

**No. They were all Jewish.**

And your ... did you have your own bedroom? What was the inside of your house like?

**I don't know.**

Too long ago?

**Yeah. I think at that time, I think we just had our own bedroom.**

So you have ... this would be a ... do you think this would be a three-bedroom apartment? That would be ...

**Yeah.**

... really a big apartment?

**Yeah. Yeah. It was a big apartment.**

Yeah. And ... did your mother ... and it was totally furnished with, you know ... did your mom collect antiques or anything like that that you recall?

**No. I don't recall. Yeah. It was furnished by my parents.**

Did you have ... okay. I asked you before about that. Did, did you ... did you take vacations?

**Yeah. We took vacations I think once a year into the country and stayed with what you would call a farmer and spend with friends. Therefore, I don't know how long but it was a week, two weeks or three weeks and ...**

Were you considered well off?

**No. I would say we were more of middle-class, lower middle-class family. And then at that time I mean when I remember my father worked for a big textile company. He was a secretary.**

After he ... when he stopped touring? When he stopped paying the piano ...

**Yeah.**

... or when ...

**Which was ... stopped touring ... I don't know whether I was even born yet when he stopped.**

Oh, okay. But he would still occasionally for house parties or things like that?

**Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.**

But then he went to work for this textile company ...

**Yes.**

... as a secretary? Is that what you know him going off to work doing?

**Well, yeah into ... let's see. He also worked as a secretary to a lawyer and then when we were thrown out of our apartment there, he worked for the Jewish Community Center.**

When did you get thrown out of your apartment?

**It must have been in our eighth ... soon after the *Kristallnacht*... *Kristallnacht***

That was ...

**39 ...**

.39.

**40.**

So this is ... this is very ... you're very young age. You were seven, eight?

**Yeah. Right.**

... something like that?

**Eight.**

Were your family ...

**Nine.**

Was your family affiliated politically? Did they have any strong feelings? Were they activists at all?

**I could not tell you. I knew that secretly my father listened a lot to the radio to the BBC.**

Secretly?

**Well, yeah. You wouldn't allowed to listen.**

You mean after you were thrown out of apartment? Or ...

**Yeah.**

Before then ...

**As far as I know before ... I don't know for sure that you were even allowed to listen to different countries or America or England.**

Did you ... when ... so since you were so young you went to school. You probably went about four years of school to this Jewish school?

**Well, I went ... the school wasn't too far, too awful far away. I mean now it would be called too far and we walked to school and ... then we go thrown out of the apartment then we had to change schools because it was too far away. Also a Jewish school. Yeah.**

But you still went to school?

**Yeah. Until 19 ... let's see. When was it? 1941-42. I don't remember. I still got my last report card ...**

Really?

**When they closed ...**

How did you do?

**... closed the schools. Pretty good. When they closed the schools, you know.**

So you didn't graduate from high school or from even grade school?

**No. Jewish school were all closed. You could not ... you weren't allowed to go to school nor were your parents allowed to teach you anything.**

So did you ... once when the Jewish schools were closed, did you have in the ... did you move into a ghetto?

**No. We lived in an apartment where they put us, which was a real bad apartment and my parents both worked.**

Did they have a ... did they have any kind of ... what did you do? Did they have a school for you? Was it a formal school or anything? So you just ...

**Nothing. No.**

Didn't do ... what did you do for fun when you were a little girl before *Kristallnacht*? before you were forced to ...

**Oh, I had a quite a lot of friends and we played games and I loved to ride a bicycle. I didn't have one. And roller-skate and there were activities. There was a center not too far from the school, a Jewish ... kind of small center where we met and had lots of friends.**

Did you have any particular hobbies or anything like that? Did you collect anything? Or you still have the ...

**No, because then already the bad time started and we had to wear the Star of David, and ...**

Yeah. You were so ... yeah, such a little kid. So then ... so then after *Kristallnacht*, you were ... *Kristallnacht*, you were...

**Yeah. I vividly remember that because they came up to our apartment and painted a big Star of David on there, with the word Jew in the middle and then already soon after that we weren't allowed to use any transportations. Grocery shopping was like for one hour from four to five o'clock.**

We're talking a matter of weeks that that happened?

**Huh?**

A matter of weeks later?

**Yeah.**

So, so what did you do with your teenage years? So say you were nine, nine-years-old?

**Not too much other than whatever friends we had had come to the apartment or we go to them and they already started and ... oh, trying to think. Was it '42, '41, '42 they already started with the transport to pick up.**

So when they, they moved you out ... when did they move your apart- ...you said '41 or '42 they moved you out of that apartment?

**Yeah. I think it was '41 probably.**

And where did you go?

**I'm not sure.**

You went to another ...

**Right. They, they ...**

They stayed in Berlin?

**Yes. They assigned an apartment, you know.**

But were you, you ... were you still in the suburb or were you back in the ...

**No. It was closer to the city more on the east side of Berlin. It was on the east Side of Berlin.**

Did more then one person ... family live in your apartment?

**No. Just ...**

Just you?

**... my mother, father and my sister and I.**

And how long were you there?

**Till about '43, I believe, '42 ...**

And then ...

**... until it wasn't safe anymore and my parents worked and we had, you know, in the apartment I was safe and, of course, told you not to be real quiet because already in the street we lived on they started picking up people and ...**

Just taking them away?

**... coming ... Yeah. Taking them away. And we walked the streets a lot even with my father, my mother then worked some under a different name and, of course, we all of the bombing in Berlin.**

Now what did you say about a different name?

**My mother under a different name, she worked because otherwise she wouldn't have gotten work and what she did was like false labor.**

She was, was she assigned to this? Or she just went to get this job?

**No. She was assigned to it and like cleaning up bricks from the buildings which was bombed.**

So why did she have to change her name?

**Well, she just gave them a different name because they would not have had her as a Jewish person.**

Okay. Oh, okay. So that's the only job ...

**I don't know what to ...**

... she could get? They didn't force her? It wasn't like Jewish forced labor?

**Right. And my father he, well, he got, for a little while, a job assigned to a company who makes bombs.**

Really? So your father being blind was still a pretty industrious guy?

**Oh, very much. Yeah. He knew Berlin inside out.**

Yeah. To get a job as a secretary in a couple of different companies when he was blind must have been very capable?

**Oh, yeah.**

So you never worked? You never ... they never ... you were never put to work before you ... while you were in this ...

**No. There would have been no way.**

Was ... they put some kid ... young kids ... didn't make some young kids work? You're too young.

**I guess I was too young.**

Yeah, 11, 12 something like that. Did you get along with your parents?

**Did what?**

Did you get along with your parents?

**Oh, yeah, yeah. They were very strict.**

They were strict?

**Very strict. Yeah.**

What wouldn't they let you do?

**Oh, I can't say. Well, of course, we knew, you know, that we couldn't and like in '41, '42, you know, there wasn't much. I mean we still went to school then, there to a Jewish school and ... it was very difficult because ... and a lot of the ... he'll tell you to turn on ... there were many times we were beat up going to school, coming from school, put in cellars and beat up. I was ...**

You were beat up?

**Yes.**

Did you get along with your sister?

**Yeah.**

You were friends?

**Oh, yeah. I would guess. We were totally different.**

Why, why?

**Totally different.**

How were you different?

**I mean different in character and different in ... I don't know. Of course, no two children are alike but ...**

That's right.

**... we were just totally opposite.**

But you didn't fight?

**Still. Oh, oh we had our fights, you know.**

But I mean not, you know, not as ...

**No. No.**

Like kids fight, yeah.

**Right.**

Did you ... did your parents have certain values or standards that were really important to them?  
Like, you know ...

**Oh, yeah. I would say. I mean as far as striving always to do your best. And like I said they were very strict. I mean you didn't dare talk back one word, you know ...**

Right.

**... or couldn't even voice your opinion and ...**

And were they both that way? It was more one than the other?

**No. I think my mother more so than my father. He was a little easier going and ...**

Did, did you have ... did you ... was religion part of your life? Were you ...

**Oh, yeah, yeah.**

You were an observant family?

**Went to Hebrew school and doing synagogue, yeah.**

And were ... in your general community like especially when you were freer before you were ... before Kristallnacht, was your general community a fairly religious community?

**The Jewish people?**

Uh-huh.

**Yeah. I would say so.**

And you went to the ...

**Yeah.**

... synagogue every week?

**Yeah.**

Did you ... okay. So you celebrate all the holidays and ...

**Oh, yeah.**

Were there certain holidays that were more important that, for you as a child, that you remember beside from Hanukkah?

**I was going to say Hanukkah was the biggest one. Purim maybe.**

It was always the biggest one ...

**Yeah.**

... right? Yeah, even today. Did you celebrate ... did they have holidays in Germany? Secular holidays? Like we have Thanksgiving. Did you have holi- ... did they have holidays that you celebrated as well?

**Now what they have? Myfest, Mayfest and I was trying to sing this. There's a holiday close to Thanksgiving. I can't remember now anyway, you know.**

Did you celebrate that in your family?

**I don't know whether you can really call it celebrating such.**

Okay. Did you have any difficulty in your community maintaining your Jewish identity? Was the secular culture part of your life at all? Like here you know you have to fight to be Jewish here or almost.

**Yeah. Yeah.**

But in ... you know we didn't live in a ...

**Well, yeah. Well, the difference is that you were mistreated, you were stones thrown at and ... because you were identified by wearing the Star of David. You know, so ...**

Well, how about before that? Was it ... when did it first ... when did you ... did you notice anything, any antisemitic feelings before *Kristallnacht*.

**I was too young I'm sure.**

Okay. Were your ... did your parents have non-Jewish friends?

**Uh-huh.**

So they didn't have ... they didn't discourage you from having or associating ...

**Oh, no.**

... with non ...

**No. No.**

Okay. Okay, So you didn't really experience any anti-Semitism before crystal *Kristallnacht*? Okay.

**Not that I remember.**

Yeah. That was such a ...

**I mean it was maybe soon before that. You know? But ...**

Did you ... were there things that when you were a little girl that you want to grow up and be? Did you have, I want to be a concert pianist? I want to be ...

**No. I always ...**

Obviously did not ...

**... wanted to be a ballerina.**

A ballerina?

**Uh-huh.**

Were you ... did you do anything about that?

**No.**

Did you take ...

**My parents wouldn't let me.**

Oh. Your mom wouldn't let you? The actress ...

**Huh-uh.**

... wouldn't let you?

**Yeah. No.**

Okay. So when did you know about ... why I asked you this? I guess when you first became aware of the nazis, was that *Kristallnacht*?

**Well yeah we were told told before this, you know, that about the antsemit.**

Semitism?

**Uh-huh.**

But you didn't see any of that? It's just that you heard about it and maybe BBC radio and things?

**From our parents, yeah. We were told, you know.**

Okay. So what happened after *Kristallnacht*... after you moved to your apartment and you were there until like '41 then what happened?

**'42.**

42.

**Uh-huh.**

And then what happened?

**And, you know, it was all the bombings and ...**

How did you ... when they were rounding the people up, how did you escape them?

**We mostly walked the streets with our father.**

And they didn't see you walk, so you had to wear a star of David.

**No. We ...**

You didn't wear it?

**... didn't wear it anymore. No.**

Did you ...

**'40's, '42 ...**

You just decided ...

**'43.**

Your father just decided you wouldn't do that and maybe you could escape detection that way?

**I don't know. We were now on the streets. He then worked for the Jewish Community Center, for the Gestapo. He had to fill out papers, right the papers which say send to the different families when there going to be picked up.**

Oh, he did?

**And so he knew more or less what neighborhood they were going to be in.**

So he had a little inside information about ...

**Yeah.**

...how to, how to, how to avoid them?

**Well avoided and warn people. I mean I ... we went with my father many times to warn friends and different ... had a lot of friends.**

So did you stay in that apartment or did you move apartments?

**No. We stayed in there as long as we could which was, oh, '42, '43 before we went into hiding and our, there were many times our parents would send us away to different friends for sometimes ...**

Different friends that weren't ... different parts of the city?

**Yes.**

Okay. So when you were walking the streets, do you see the Nazi's ...

**Uh Huh.**

... walking around?

**The SS. Yeah, sure.**

The SS.

**Sure, I've seen ... and they came with the big army trucks and took people away.**

Was that ... when you just saw them, was it frightening just seeing them?

**Yes. It was very frightening.**

Did you ...

**I especially have a ... remember ... I don't ... I don't even know whether my sister was with us or she was somewhere else. I walked with my father in the streets and he wanted to go and warn some friends. I guess my sister was there. And we went to a neighborhood where the friends lived. The man was also blind. He was a blind [?] and they had children and they lived all in there like a big apartment on third floor. It wasn't an apartment which when they're all like this on the corner, you can go in from this side or this side and the middle was a, oh, what would you call it? Not a ... like a atrium. And he had asked me to go up and ... that was they were quite a few blocks away yet. But he had asked my father asked me to go upstairs and warn them and I did and as I came up on the first floor ... third floor the SS men was standing there at two apartments. One on this side, I mean as you come up the stairs, a door here and a door here and they lived on this side and the SS men were standing in front of their door and pounding. And to this day I don't know how I didn't give myself away. I ... direction was terrible. I came up so I went to this one and they had a door on the ... I mean a bed on the outside just like apartment and I held my hand over the doorbell acting like I'm ringing the other peoples' doorbell. And I know that as man turn around and he said, "Do you know where these people live or where those people are?" I said, "No, I don't." And I dashed down the stairway. I mean it would have been seconds I would have given myself away.**

Did he get those guys?

**And I told my ... no. They were hiding up in the attic. They heard all this going on and told us later that they heard me and ...**

Good. And you told your father ... you went down and told your father?

**Uh-huh.**

Wow! That's scary. Did you talk ... when your family talked about seeing the Nazi's and the SS, did they talk about it with you?

**To an extent they talked about and I know in ... what was it in '38? In '38 and I think beginning '39 they had used transports to ... then Palestine and Australia and England and our parents would not part with us and send us off. Said if we parish, we parish together. And my father's sister, who lived in another part of the Berlin, she was a cook in a senior home. She sent her daughter to Israel and that's the one cousin I have there and another sent her daughter to Australia. And...**

Well, did you make plans about what you might do? Did your parents think ... talk about, "We're going to go into hiding or we're going to this?"

**A little bit. Yeah, just not too much. Anyhow our mother [?] in a concentration camp and I remember that when we came to her apartment and different friends what they did is after they picked the people up they sealed the door. And you knew that they were picked up.**

Okay. After ...

**Yeah. I, I thought weren't going to talk about that. I said you said we were just going to talk about afterwards.**

Yeah. Well, we're going ... I ... we wanted to find out what happened up until ... up to and now we're ... and then you ... and then you went into hiding, right?

**Yes. We just here and there and in the streets and mostly at nights we were on the streets. My sister and I, many times, of course, we didn't have hardly any food, we went into garbage cans to pick up potato peels or whatever was in there.**

So how ... where did you hide? I mean during the war. That's how you hid throughout the whole ...

**In basements ...**

The whole war ...

**... and cellars and sometimes ...**

... you did that?

**... we were sent away to friends and stayed there.**

In Berlin through the whole war you ...

**Yes.**

... without protection? Okay.

**We did ... I mean thank G-d to non-Jewish friends who helped us.**

And are you still in contact with them?

**They're not alive anymore.**

Okay. In your tape you've talked about why you were in hiding during the war. We've all ready talked about this, right?

**Uh-huh**

Okay. We're going to go now to post-war. So how did you know there were ... that it was ... liberation had come? How did you know that the war was over?

**Well, because we, we felt, and my parents, you know, as allies came closer to Berlin, when the ... on foot and they talked about it and we could tell because they were bombing not just the buildings but they were flying low and shooting at people.**

So you're right in the middle of it? It's not just like you were hiding in a farm site? I interviewed someone and she was hiding underground for ... and so they didn't know anything that was going on.

**In the basement, no, in basement no because we went, always at night, out to try and find food and I, I ... in one incident I did lose my sister and it was not too far from where we were a field and we heard ... as a people that there was a bundle of food from the SS and so as the people also went to look and I went with my sister there and we walked the field and the plane came down shooting and the grenade went right through her leg and cut her leg open.**

Oh, my God! Did you get to the food?

**No.**

So what ... so where were you? You were in Berlin wondering liberation.

**Yeah.**

What did you do the moment you knew it was over? Was there a moment ...

**Well, the Russians, we were liberated by the Russians. We lived on the east side, I mean stayed on the east side and we were liberated by the Russians and it was wonderful. I mean by then you know being older and knowing what was going on that was one of the happiest days of my life ...**

And you were all ...

**... and my parents, you know.**

And still together. So you're ... so you just see some Russians walking down the street? Or did...

**Oh, it wasn't just some. It was an army and just ...**

Like a battalion or something?

**Yeah. I guess that's what you would call it.**

And did you go running out?

**Some of them spoke German and ... yeah.**

Wow! Wow! And so they treated you well?

**Oh, very well. Yeah.**

What, what did ...

**Brought us food and we're very protective and ... because we told them we knew then who some of the big Nazi's were, you know, and even living on in Berlin and they went after them.**

Really?

**It wasn't long you see them hanging from the light poles.**

So where did they take you after liberation? The Russians? Did they take you somewhere? Did they ... what did you do after?

**No. They set us up in an apartment and they didn't really take us any, any place, you know.**

But they got you an apartment to stay?

**And food and clothing. Some ... very little clothing but some and there was one officer who was especially protective and caring and looked after us.**

Were they ... were you in good condition? Good health? Were you and your family ...

**Thin.**

But you weren't sick or ...

**I'd say maybe more mentally than ...**

Yeah.

**... physically ,of course ...**

I mean ...

**... my parents.**

Yes, yes, yes. But your mental state was crazy?

**Yeah. But I was only what? 14-years-old then.**

Yeah. So when ... so you were liberated and you lived in this apartment and then what happened to your life? What did you do? How did ... did your father go to work? Did he ... did you try to get out of there? What went on from there?

**No. My parents didn't work then and it wasn't too long when they organized the Jewish Community Center. We also had a Jewish hospital which had children a really ... oh, I don't know what you call it. They were taken by the Nazi's and put there, you know, and couldn't get out and some weren't sent off to concentration camps and had a Jewish orphan's home. It was a pretty big building. Two buildings. One was an old age home one was an orphan's home. They also had an old age home by the hospital close by. Which they filled up and a lot of survivors came and housed them. In the orphans' home, I also wanted to be an infant's nurse always. I went and ... to apply for a job and I got it and the director of this orphan's home used to be a teacher of mine. He was in a concentration camp and came back and they made him director.**

So you worked at this orphan's home for how long? How long were you there?

**Oh, about two years I'd say. That was in about '47, '46, '47 just for a couple of years. I worked there until I met my first husband. He was British, worked for the United Jewish Relief Organization.**

And then what happened?

**Married him at '49 in Berlin and then my first son was born in '50 and then he was done with his duty and we had to leave to go back to England. We had to go back to England.**

And your family's still ... and your family at that time was still...

**They lived here. My family was here. Yeah. They had also put themselves on a list to come to America. My sister and from the Joint [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, called "the Joint"] was adjoined.**

And how old were you when you got married?

**I was what? 18?**

18? And was ... did you sister ... was your sister single or had she married?

**No. She married and soon after the war and had one child before I did and also, of course, they put themselves on a list to come over here and just had to wait till you were called. You couldn't chose when you want to go.**

But you went to England? You and your...

**I went to England then, yeah.**

And your husband was Jewish?

**Uh-huh.**

And so then where ...

**Lived there two years.**

Where did you leave in England?

**He wasn't ... Manchester. He was not too happy. He just couldn't ... he was I guess all during the war in the army, or in service and had a brother in Hollywood who sponsored us to come to America.**

Did you want ... you wanted to come to America anyway? Or you just ...

**In the meantime, my parents had come to America, yeah.**

Oh, they did?

**But I was in England. Yes.**

So they only wait ... they waited less than two years?

**Uh-huh.**

That's pretty good.

**And, My sister ... my sister came first and they sent her and her family to Lincoln, Nebraska and my parents wanted to and they were supposed to go to Omaha, Nebraska. And, because they had to have sponsors too, more or less, because of my father was being blind. And did you know or knew the Brands?**

Uh-huh.

**Well, they're the ones who sponsored them and they're real good friends with my parents.**

The Brands are a wonderful family.

**Yes.**

A wonderful family.

**Yeah.**

That's lovely. Not surprised. So...

**Yeah. She and Mrs. Brang got a piano for my father and I still have it.**

She got what?

**The piano.**

Oh, really.

**Yeah, because he...**

He brought it with him?

**No. Mrs. Brand ...**

Oh, got him a ...

**... got him a piano.**

Oh, got him a piano. Oh.

**He and my father then, after the war, organized a group of Jewish blind people and older people and he ... they organized parties for holidays and my father played some then.**

Oh, really.

**Over here too in Kansas City ... they were sent to Kansas City and he ... not just Jewish blind people but a...**

My mother worked a long time with ... did parties for the blind.

**Yeah.**

I wonder if that was what it was?

**What is her name?**

It was ... her name was Jeri [Donavitz?]. She's been dead 13 years already but she ... I remember years ago she used to ...

**Yeah. My parents did over here and he played for them and helped ...**

Wow!

**... different people.**

Well, that's ...

**He, he was a very ... what would you call it? I mean in the first place there wasn't anything that he couldn't do.**

Yeah. It sounds like it.

**Whether it was baking, cooking, cleaning, ironing; nothing that he couldn't do. Building things and ...**

And being blind.

**It was ... yeah.**

That's amazing. So ... but they stayed in Omaha? They lived in Omaha?

**No. No. When they came to New York they were told, "No. You're not going to Omaha. You're going to Kansas City."**

Oh, oh. They came to Kansas City.

**Yeah.**

And did they ...

**Brought a seeing eye-dog with them, which they were given over there when in Germany.**

And you went ... and so when you came you went to Hollywood?

**Lived a year out there. Yeah.**

Okay. And then what did you do?

**My other son was born in England and I didn't work or anything. And my husband then he worked as a bookkeeper - accountant at the May Company apartments.**

Sure. And what ... and what was your husband's name?

**Sam Solomons.**

Okay. And worked for the May Company. Yeah.

**And then I lived there and year and left him then because he was very abusive.**

Oh. And you came ... did you come back here?

**Yeah. I came to Kansas City.**

With your two sons?

**Pretended my mother was sick and I had to ... had to come and help.**

Well, good for you!

**Yeah.**

That wasn't done much in those days. Good for you!

**No. No. I mean even getting a divorce was like a disgrace, you know.**

Yeah.

**But I just ...**

Well, good for you.

**... couldn't take it anymore and I raised my two boys by myself for ... because he didn't support them at all or came to see them for, oh, I don't know. Eight years, nine years since ...**

Oh, my goodness.

**... and I worked. I worked three jobs.**

So what did you do?

**I ...**

Did you move in with your folks when you came?

**Well, yeah. When I first came I moved in and then I found a basement apartment and lived with the boys.**

Where did you live?

**I lived on ... let me think. - And I did get some help from the ... here from the Jewish Community Center like baby-sitter or - on Paseo ... 35th and Paseo and then we belonged to Beth Shalom.**

Uh-huh. And where did you ...

**And that's where my boys became Bar Mitzvah.**

And where did ... where did your ... where did your parents live?

**They lived on Linwood and ... by the old synagogue. The ... B'nai Jehuda**

B'nai Jehuda. Linwood, near Linwood...

**Just Linwood and, yeah, just almost Linwood and Woodland. Something like that. They were put in an apartment there.**

My father had a grocery store at 31st and Troost.

**Yeah.**

And my grandfather ... my great-grandmother started that. So I, in that whole neighborhood likes my stopping grounds. I used to hang around there a lot.

**Yeah.**

Very Jewish neighborhood.

**Yeah, 35th Paseo and I lived there for quite awhile in a basement apartment and then moved to... 47th and Madison in an another basement apartment and made quite a few friends who helped me. Mrs. [Gwen?] helped me a lot. She always came and brought me cloths and I worked for a wholesale jewelry company for nine years. [Stieffer?].**

Oh, [Stieffer?], yeah.

**Yeah.**

Yeah. And what else did you ... you work ... you ... when you first came here what did you do? You said you had three jobs.

**Oh, well. I had this was my first job for [Stieffer?]. I worked on the weekends and some nights as a waitress in a pizza place.**

Oh, really. And so you had help baby, with baby-sitters? Did your parents help and the Center helps ...

**Sometimes ...**

... and...

**... my parents helped. Yeah.**

Wow. Okay, so you were there for, you said you were there for three years and then you moved to Madison?

**Oh, with them, In the apartment?**

Uh-huh.

**God I don't remember. With most...**

*[End of Tape 1 Side 1] [No recording Tape 1 Side 2]*

**When I go out, we, my friends never talked about dying or death or anything. As a matter of fact, I remember my grandmother passed away. We weren't allowed even to go to the funeral. You know, that was I guess a no-no to talk about.**

Try to protect your children always.

**Yeah, right. But ... and when, of course, when my children grow up and you know different complaints, I always say, "Well, you tell everybody else." There are no instruction books, which come when you have a baby. Every parent tries to do their best, you know, and, at that time, I could not understand why my parents ... well, because of the war they were so strict you know and got a lot of spankings and, and ...**

Yeah. You're too young to see that the choices you might make would make ... is a difference between life and death.

**Yeah, right. Right.**

So that's our job.

**Yeah. And still, like I said, I regret much. I never think or even talked about it, you know, because I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for my parents.**

Well, you were pretty loyal to your parents, so don't you think that says thank you?

**Yes. Well ...**

Don't always have to say it. It's more important to show it. I mean you can say it but if you didn't show it, you know?

**Oh, I mean I can truly say I tell you one thing and when they passed away and I stood by their graves, there wasn't one minute of regret. I had a totally clear conscious.**

There you go.

**I wouldn't talk back to them. I wouldn't even, even being older and married. I mean if I said something wrong, my mother would slap my face, you know, and ... but still in ... I don't know why I didn't realize until a lot later that we would never talk about the war and the bad times.**

They probably didn't want you to see their hurt either.

**You know it was a long time after, I mean quite awhile after the war, that we did get food to eat. And I remember I was 14-years-old when we were liberated and we lived close to a railroad yard where they brought in cars with potatoes and then they dumped them and they hired people to sack the potatoes and ... for the days work you know. I carried a hundred pounds of potato bags. You got a bag of potatoes to take home. No money, you know, just bags. I take bags.**

Did what you had to do. Okay. Well, I appreciate you doing this. I know how hard it is to do it. But I know that ...

**It will take me months to recuperate.**

I know.

**You know people don't understand even 50-60 years ago, when I talk about it, it's just like it was yesterday.**

And what's hard is when you can talk about it and you hear this and you see it and there are people who say it didn't happen or people who try to minimize it and compare it to anything else or use the word holocaust any other situation, that's ... I ... so it is so important to have these testimonials from you and doing all over the United States.

**That's why I am doing it.**

Yeah.

**For future generations.**

I know.

**For my children, maybe one day, you know, they'll sit down and listen or watch the tape, which is also just nothing you know. I mean very little.**

I know there were people who will talk about who have said, "There is no way that I can really tell anybody what I did during the war or after the war. It's too horrific." You know the real things are to ...

**You know none of my, and I'm still searching, none of my school friends and classmates survived. I don't know what happened to them and, and ...**

Well, you're a miracle. I mean to think that you survived in Berlin.

**Yeah, that's what many people say.**

A father who was blind and you're a testimonial to ...

**And better the whole family stayed alive, you know.**

The whole family. A whole testimony to will. Well, thank you again so ...

*[End of recording.]*