

# **Evelyn Bergl Interview**

## **October 21, 1999**

**Evelyn Bergl**

Hi Sukie!

**This is Sukie.**

Hi. He's sweet. I love dogs. Hi, sweetie! Hi!

**Okay. Okay. [unclear]**

This is pretty good, pretty simple. Okay.... Evelyn, can you tell me your parents' names?

**Yeah. My mother was Hermine.**

Hermine.

**H-e-r-m-i-n-e. Last name?**

Uh-huh.

**A-r-z-t.**

And that's pronounced Arzt?

**Arzt.**

Arzt? And your father's name?

**Edward.**

And where ... when were you born?

**I was born in 1931, August. 8-4-31.**

August 4 of 1931. In what city?

**Vienna.**

And can you tell me anything about the circumstances of your birth? Um, Hospital? Home? Nothing that you've heard from your mother? That's hard for us to know. I don't know anything about ...

**Well, I know I was born on my aunt's birthday, which was the youngest sister of my dad. So that was the only event, you know, special event that they said.**

She was born also on the 4th of August?

**The 4th. But, you know, she was obviously older. Her name was Stella.**

Stella. Can you tell me something about what roles your mother and father had in the house? What your father did?

**Well, my father was, I would say, a salesman for a big factory of material and fabrics.**

Fabric?

**It was very well known.**

And this was in Vienna?

**Uh-huh. Everything in Vienna.**

And did your mother work outside the home?

**For a while. She worked just to help out, you know, even then you needed to. She was a shoe saleslady for Bally, for the Bally shoes.**

Ahh, yes.

**My father always said, "I don't understand how a salesperson always buys the wrong shoes."**

She didn't buy the right shoes?

**Never bought the right shoes.**

Not comfortable or ...

**Always in pain.**

And so....

**That's what I know.**

You had clothing from ... did he, or was he a fabric salesman for clothing?

**No, just fabrics.**

Just fabric?

**Just fabric and he brought home samples and was ... I was very little. So it was enough for mom to have a lot of dresses made for me.**

So you had dresses made from the fabric?

**From the fabric. You know, just samples, which he brought home because I was very short then already.**

Did she ... and she sewed?

**No.**

You had them made?

**Yeah. At that time, we just had everything made.**

Can you tell me the members of your family, other than your parents, sisters and brothers?

**I have one brother.**

And his name?

**Heinz ... Henry ... Heinz ... Heinz was the original name.**

And how old was Heinz?

**Heinz is four years ... four and a fourth year older than I am. He was born in '27, 1927.**

And is that his whole name, Heinz?

**Uh-huh. Heinz Arzt.**

Heinz Arzt? No middle name?

**No.**

Can you describe the street that you lived in Vienna, where you lived?

**It was a average street and ...**

Trees?

**Oh, some trees, yeah. But it was the city. And my mother took us to the park always for fresh air and, you know *schpatzieren*, she'd put you in and we'd go for walks, you know.**

And did you have pets in your house?

**No.**

Dogs, cats, birds?

**No. No, we couldn't.**

No pets?

**No pets. Didn't even think of pets.**

Yeah. Did you have floors to your apartment? Was it a separate house or apartment?

**Apartment. Apartment.**

Upstairs and down?

**Yeah. There were quite a few apartments actually.**

Do you have any memory of the rooms or what you saw when you walked in the door?

**Well, it was pretty nice. But I tell you, since ... when Hitler came to Vienna in '38, we mostly stayed with our grandparents. My mother left us with them because she felt like they were older they wouldn't bother them. You understand? So to protect us she took us to our grandparents.**

And where were your grandparents?

**Also in the same area.**

In Vienna?

**In Vienna, yeah. They were my mother's parents where we stayed.**

What were their names?

**Okay. My grandfather was Marcus.**

Also Arzt?

**No.**

No.

**It was Lehr, L-e-h-r, and my grandmother was Rosie. And then I had another set, you know, of grandparents. My father's, which were Arzt.**

So these were your mother's?

**Yeah, this is mother's.**

And so you spent how much time with your grandparents? A lot?

**A lot of times because I went to school from their house and I just remember there was a lot of commotion, a lot of commotion. And at that time, it was a time in life that parents did not tell everything to the children. So I really didn't ... I was seven. I really didn't know exactly. Only I know that I was afraid. I didn't know why, but I was afraid. I went to school just one year and I knew when I got out of school that the children were very mean and I just rushed home, running to my grandparents' home because my parents were working you know. So ...**

So your brother was in the same school or he was older?

**Yeah, he was older. And uh, no I don't know whether he was ... he must have been in the same school but I didn't come home with him. I don't know what it was.**

And are we talking still about 1938?

**Yeah.**

Yeah? And when you say commotion, you could sense something underneath ...

**Sense that there was ...**

... that your parents and grandparents were ...

**... my parents were afraid and I didn't know exactly what. They said, you know, Hitler came and I didn't ... I couldn't ... you see, at that time, if someone even died in the family or a friend, they would not tell the children. They were protecting the children from all of that. Anything bad they tried not to tell the children. I know. I was there.**

Yeah. Yeah.

**It was their idea. And... so I, you know, I don't know what was happening, but I know I saw on the way home ... on the way home from school [sounds like she is crying] I saw the synagogue burning. That was the last time I went to school when I saw that. There was a lot of shouting and a lot of commotion, and then I was really scared. So I came home and, I guess just a little bit after that, I was upstairs. My grandparents lived like ... I would say second or third floor. I don't remember exactly. But it was one of those, you know, stairs that were going around and around and I was waiting for mom and dad, you know. I would look down into the foyer downstairs to see if they were coming. So I bent down and here came my mother by herself, hysterical. "They took Papa!" "They took Papa!"**

And you never saw your father again?

**Yes, I did.**

You did?

**I did. When he was in Dachau, we both were there one year. But from, you see, I don't remember anything much before. I don't remember when I was four or five or anything. That kind of cut me off from my memory when they took him. It was so traumatic that I just don't remember anything.**

Do you have any pictures or old photos that survived from your family?

**A few. A few.**

Yeah?

**Yeah. I have a few pictures. A lot of pictures, I will tell you later what happened to them.**

Okay. What, you have to help me a little bit here because I want to know all, everything that happened during the war. For this project, they want us really to deal with pre-war things that you remember about your life in Vienna pre-war, and then after coming to Kansas City also. You know, your life after the war and some of what happened ...

**They don't want to know.**

... you know, in the middle ...

**In between then.**

I want to know and, you know, I want to hear. But for this project, it's strictly ...

**Well, they got the wrong person because I don't remember much...**

Yeah...

**before.**

Yeah. But that's good, though. I mean whatever you can remember and if there's big, blank spaces, that's fine. You know, that's okay.

**Well, I remember, like I said, for six weeks we didn't know where Papa was... at all. So finally we found out that they took him to Dachau, you know. And my mother tried to ... at that time you were able to take out if you found someplace where he could leave immediately when he came out. So she spent night, nights and days in line to get those papers, you know. And finally she got some papers to Uruguay or Paraguay, some country like that. But they took all the money they could and the papers were not worth a dime. You couldn't go anyplace with those. But, let me tell you, the only country that let us in without much ado, just with a passport, was Italy. Great, great Italy. Mussolini let us in. So that was a lifesaver.**

So you and your mother and your father?

**No, because my father, when he came out, he had 24 hours to be in Vienna and then he had to leave. If he wouldn't leave, they would take him back in camp and he would not have a second chance. So, you know, this was like heaven sent when Italy opened up. And we had a passport ready because we had them all ready that other fake, you know, thing. So my mother took care of that. And right away we sent him away into the, you know, darkness and he left. In the morning at 5 o'clock they came. If he was there, he would have been through.**

Yeah. So he was able to go to Italy first?

**He was able to go to Italy first. And then we said we would follow him and he said, "Well, let me see how things are." He still didn't get into his head. And he wrote and he said, "Well, I can't find a job. I have a hard time with the language. I found one room." You know, because whatever money, you know, loose that we had we gave him. And he said, "I don't know what's going to be. Maybe you'd better wait." Stupid! So my mother said, "You know what? I'm not waiting for anybody." She packed us both up, my brother and**

me, and sent him a telegram, "Wait at the railroad station at this and this time and we'll be there." She saved us because all the rest of the family was gone.

So she knew that you needed to get out?

**She just had a feeling, see?**

Yeah.

Now she had one sister only and the parents, of course, and cousins and uncles. And they said, "What are they going to do to us? They're not going to do any, we're old." Okay? And my aunt didn't want to leave with the parents. Yeah, and I forgot to tell you, the mother ... as much she had to be in line and what they did is if you were the last in line, they put you in front and the one in front they put in the back. You know what I mean? So your time in line in the cold was double just to harass you. But she had to go with a pail and a brush because whenever, you've probably heard of it, whenever it hit them, they had to stop and wash the streets underneath, you know.

Yeah, even while they were in line or walking?

**She had to have that pail.**

And this was your Aunt Stella that ...

**No. It was my father's sister, Estella.**

Okay. That didn't see the need to go?

Well, she saw a need but she wouldn't leave the parents. She wasn't married and she just wouldn't leave them. My grandmother at that time ... I think we didn't know. That's what mother told me. She was always sitting, you know, and she was hurting and we didn't know what it was. It was arthritis but, you know, we didn't know. I mean, they didn't know. I certainly wouldn't know. They didn't know what this woman had. She was just suffering in silence, you know, and we were so sad. But they didn't care. They *schlepped* her away. And I didn't even know to where. I finally found out what camp. I didn't ever heard of those camps. You know they have names of camps, but then later I found out they had like 250, 300 camps and that's where they perished ...

Yeah.

**... in these strange camps, you know? So ...**

Getting back a little bit, if you remember, any teachers in school that you liked? Do you have any recollection of them in school?



**Huh-uh.**

No? Subjects?

**The only recollection I have is that being I was very short, the teacher was picking on me. You see, when the teacher walked in the room in Vienna, probably in all Europe, you had to stand up, you know, respect for her. Here they don't even look at them. [Laughs]**

[Laughs] True.

**And so I stood up and she told me why don't I stand up? So I came home crying that I was standing up. So, anyway, that's the only thing I remember about the teacher.**

Were there other shorter students?

**I guess not. [Laughs] I must have been pretty short.**

I was short too at that time. Do you have a memory of favorite subjects in school?

**We went the first year.**

Yeah. You were very young.

**I was very young. I was seven. And then they, you know, I wouldn't go and my mother wouldn't let me, and, be on the street even. But ...**

Did you have close girlfriends or school friends?

**No. In my family, you know, I had a cousin and ... no.**

Do you remember any hobbies or things that you did after school, maybe movies or ...

**No. No movies.**

Plays or opera?

**No.**

No?

**Nothing, because I don't know. I don't know.**

Yeah.

**I don't remember any of that. I remember that they told me that I was five years old, my grandmother thought I should learn to do something, you know, with my hands. So my mother taught me to knit. And I understand I was five years old. That's what they told me. I sure don't remember. I was sitting at this big table by other grandparents and knitting and knitting and looking around to see that everybody should see that I'm knitting, you know. Stuff like that. Or I made my uncle ... my father's brother, bought me a little sewing machine. You know a toy sewing machine? And I had all this material from my dad so I made for my doll, clothes, you know, whatever. I'm stuck with that profession I was in so I did that.**

You still knit or make doll clothing now?

**Not doll clothing.**

No. Real clothing.

**Real clothing.**

Real people clothing.

**Real people. And I only had one doll. I didn't have a hundred dolls, you know.**

You only had one? Do you remember what she was like?

**She was ... well, I wouldn't maybe remember but when I came to this country, a friend had the same doll. It was a friend of my mother and she was like two years older or four years older than me - '36, she was older, and she had the same doll. So when my mother knitted something, she knitted for her doll and for mine. We both had the same doll. When I came to this country there on the bed was that doll.**

Oh, my goodness.

**And I ...**

Yours?

**No. Hers.**

Hers? Yeah, and it brought back all the memories of yours.

**Because mine was, mine was gone. And then before we left, I couldn't take that doll so mother ... there was a doll that was in style and her name was Mouschi and it was like a soft doll. This one had arms and the head was moving, you know, but just small and her**

**eyes were up and down, but this was small. So that's the only doll, you know, that I took with me to Italy.**

Did you name her or did you just call her Mouschi

**No. No. That was the ...**

That was the name?

**... name of the doll was Mouschi.**

What color hair? Remember that?

**I don't know. I know she was soft and, you know, and she was nice.**

A big doll? I mean ...

**Yeah, bigger than what I had. It probably was about so big. That was a little bigger than the one I had before, was like that.**

Yeah...

**And uh...**

But not porcelain?

**No. No.**

Did she have a porcelain face? She was ...

**I don't think she had a porcelain face.**

She was rubber or plastic?

**Not plastic. Something. She was very soft. But then later I had to exchange it for some food. I had to give that, the last doll away too. That I know. So that was my doll, Mouschi.**

Do you ... well, you were too little then so you don't remember family vacations of any kind where you went somewhere with your family? By train or buggy?

**I remember we went to see an aunt that lived a little bit outside Vienna. She was a very aristocratic aunt... she had a house, which we all lived in apartments, my grandparents and us, but she had a house. That I remember. Green all around, you know, like a house should be, like a villa they would call it.**

Right. Right.

**And she lived in a villa. So we went to her but we had to be on our best behavior, you know. It was like ... of course, we were taught to be very respectful. When I went to my grandparents, you know, I was always ... in German you say, "Kiss the hand." They kiss your hand. You know, you don't say, Hey, you or ... "**

Formal?

**... or something formal. They kiss the hand and then you kiss your grandparents or aunt or whatever. But that was instilled in you and it bugs me to this day when I see children walking in and they don't say "hello."**

Yeah. Yeah.

**I just don't understand it. The only answer I get is they all do that.**

Yeah. But that's not right.

**They all don't do that. So ...**

It's a ...

**It's not right. When you walk in somebody's house ...**

... a disrespect for age that's of ...

**... they don't have to say, "I kiss your hand," but say "hello."**

Greeting.

**But they don't. They don't.**

Were you close with your brother, Evelyn?

**Yeah.**

You were?

**Yes.**

You had a good relationship?

**A good relationship.**

How about with your parents?

**Yes, I did.**

Were they strict?

**Uh-huh. My mother was pretty strict I would say. Yes. She kept a very close eye on me. [Laughs] She didn't let me live, of course I was would got very angry, you know, because when I went on a date in New York ... "You know I can't sleep if you're ... until you're home." You know? So I had to hurry home because she couldn't sleep. And I begged her. We lived in a cold flat. Oh, and then when we moved already to a place where they had heat, but at night they shut it off. My mother, poor thing, she was so hot all the time. Not only that it was no heat, she opened the window. So I begged her, "Mom, tonight please don't." She says, "I can't breathe. I'm sorry but I can't breathe." So I came home many times and I didn't get undressed.**

Because you were so cold?

**I just crawl in my bed, you know, until the morning. Then I got undressed.**

Yeah. She was always hot.

**Yeah. She was hot. But she always made me feel guilty. She wanted me to go but don't come home too late. [Laughs]**

Were your parents observant of Jewish holidays, or...?

**Yeah.**

Do you remember holidays at all?

**Well, at home in Vienna, I know they were religious and kosher and the whole thing. My mother never believed too much in the kosher business, okay? She was observant and went to synagogue and, you know, all that. But, somehow, she didn't believe in the kosher stuff. And me, I remember that much, that on Saturday we couldn't do anything. Okay? But that's the day that I wanted to. That's the day I wanted to knit. That's the day I wanted to ride. You know? We even tore the toilet paper the day before ...**

The day before.

**... because you couldn't do that. That's how exaggerated they were. But it was done naturally. Okay? But mother kind of ... I guess she was a rebel. She did not believe in all that. But holidays and, you know, the cooking was great and ...**

What kinds of things do you ... were your favorite things to eat? Do you remember what you had for the holidays?

**Well, my, one of my grandmothers always made *pierogi*, which I loved. She made them in a homemade, not here like you can buy them. And we didn't live with her but she always knew I liked them so she always saved them. She opened up the oven and there was my *pierogi* you know, and I felt so honored that she always did that. The love was there, you know. I was very sad to leave them.**

Yeah.

**And anyway. What else do you want to know? Because there's so many little things.**

Do you remember anything that you or your brother did for fun as youngsters? Games outside or board games and stuff?

**Okay. I got a ... I remember I got a baby carriage, you know, to put my doll in, which was pretty nice, also from my uncle or aunt. I don't remember exactly who. And the carriage had rubber on the wheel, rubber around it and my brother said, "You don't need that. Let's take the rubber off and why don't you sit in there and I'll push you around and there will be more noise and be more exciting." I let him ...**

Talk you into it?

**... talk me into it. Well, we had parquet floors, my grandparents. Don't ask what he did to that floor. It was a disaster! But not any big things, except that he took me to ... and that was in the ... is it still going?**

Yeah. It's fine.

**When dad was still in concentration camp, we went to see my grandfather's brother and his daughter that lived, that lived a little bit farther. And he just took me. "Let's go." Didn't tell anything to anybody. I didn't know. So we got in the streetcar, train, some kind of transportation, and he took me there and I was so glad to see them and he looked so much like my grandfather. We had a good visit because they were nervous already that you can imagine. And then he said, "Let's go to the Prater. The Prater is where they have ... they still have it today. The ferris wheel and ...**

Like an amusement park?

**Amusement park. Okay. So I said, Are you sure? "Yeah. Yeah. Let's go. Let's go." So we went there and then he wanted to go on the ...**

Roller coaster?

... roller coaster and I said, "No, I am not going on that. I'm afraid." "No. You have to go. You have to go." To this day, he's almost 70, he still likes that!

Oh! [Laughs]

So I said, "No, I'm afraid and I'm going to get sick." He says to me, "I cannot leave you here by yourself and I have to go on it." I said, "I'll stay here in the corner. Just go." So you know what that son of a gun did? He says, "I swear on our dad's life that you have to go." And you know there was nothing more important at that point. [Crying] So I went and that I remember ...

Yeah.

... because I was so scared.

Yeah.

I was so scared.

But you made it? You didn't get sick?

Well ...

A little nauseous?

I was scared. I was afraid. I cannot even tell you how afraid I was. But I did because he put that thing on me. I had to go, you know?

Have you been on one since?

No! No.

They scare me too!

No.

Do you remember what religious life was like in your community? I know you have the bad memory of the synagogue ...

Well, we were not separated like in Poland, you know. The ghettos, not even ghettos then but Jewish people lived in one neighborhood and no other people lived there. Well, we were ... in our neighborhood was mixed. Definitely mixed.

And did you have ... was your father have dealings with Jewish people and non-Jewish people in his business?

**Yeah, Yeah.**

And your community was ...

**Yeah. Both. In fact, you know, we couldn't speak Yiddish at all because my parents made sure that ... they had five children ... to be sure that none of them used Jewish words because you used them you cannot get a job. You understand? So they had to speak strictly German.**

So you spoke German in the house?

**German. Yeah.**

Yeah.

**Because they were afraid to say anything in any ... to make them, you know, feel that way.**

Yeah. You say five children. You had sisters also, I assume?

**No, not me.**

Your ...

**My father's.**

Oh.

**My father's. My father's had two brothers and two sisters and him. That's five.**

Okay. But you were just, you and Heinz? Okay.

**Yeah, just the two of us.**

Do you have memories, Evelyn, of antisemitism after school? You said when you came home?

**Only that time. Only that.**

Only that one time and you didn't go back?

**Right.**



So you were accepted pretty well in the neighborhood up to that time?

**Yeah. Up until Hitler came. Yeah.**

You were too young. You didn't have jobs or anything like that? You were too little.... So when you went, tell me what happened after Italy.

**After Italy? I was nine years in Italy.**

You were nine years? Wow!

**That was a long time in Italy.**

So you were ... the duration of the war in Italy?

**Yes. Yes definitely.**

And what was life like there?

**Well, at the beginning it was okay. I mean we struggled and we ... you know, I couldn't go to school and you know...**

Did you have lessons at home?

**Yeah. My father always made sure of that. It was a friend, you know, taught me. I learned to read, you know, right away and write and all that. But I was doing that when my brother went to school. I picked it up from him.**

He still went? He was allowed to go to school?

**Well, he went because he was four years older. So before Hitler ever came, I remember that I knew certain things right away and he was writing. I wanted to write too. Okay? So I learned to read and write before I ever went to school through him.**

He'd help teach you?

**No. [Laughs]**

So you took his lessons? You took his lessons?

**I took ... I just picked up. I just wanted to know. So I did that. When we went to Italy, they helped. See, the government gave each of us some money. Where did you ever hear that?**

Wow.

**I don't know was fifty cents a day for a child, and one dollar, you know, comparison. It would be a dollar or two for grown-ups. But it was not enough to live but you didn't starve. You understand? So we went first to Milan and then they said, then they said if there's a chance we should go to France. It's a better survival thing. Go to France. So we paid someone. I think it was like our last penny, to take us across mountains and hills and whatever. So we had to come to another city, which was close to France. You could see France across the water. You could see Nice. And the place where we were was called Ventimiglia. So we went there and waited, you know, until they could take us across.**

And this is all four of you? Your father, brother, mother?

**They tried to ... in fact, they ... you know, certain children went to England. And we just ... my brother and I didn't want to go with that number. We just didn't want to go. So then we just stuck with them. So we went there and nothing happened. They couldn't. They closed ... I mean, they were in the mountains, the Germans, and I don't know. They just couldn't take us. So here was a bunch of us, a bunch of Jews, just stuck without money and stuff. So I think somebody helped us to get on a train to go to Genoa, which is another city. So we spent the whole night in the train station. But I remembered one girl came back from ... she didn't make it across and this one impressed me more than anybody in the bunch. She was scratched from top to bottom from the ... where she was going, you know. The mountains was so treacherous that her face, her body, all of that. And the poor thing, we were sitting in a restaurant and all we could have was a, a plate of soup, you know. That's it, which was fine. So we were eating and here comes this girl, just like in a daze and she stands in front of the door and she pees.**

In the restaurant?

**Completely lost all sense. A young woman, and so scratched, and so ... I cannot tell you what shape she was in. That impressed me, you know.**

She was all alone?

**She was all alone.**

And never made it?

**No. She never made it across. And, of course, we didn't. So then we went to Genoa which was our next stop. And my dad always had a good head. He was an educated man and he took things in his hand. He says, "Okay. We do this. Let's all stick together." And, somehow, he became the chief. [Laughs]**

The manager?

The manager of the whole bunch there. So he organized that we should all be together, you know, and blah, blah and we went on the train. He pushed everybody. "Go! Go! Go!" And he's left out. The train takes off but my dad is not on it. Do I have to tell you who was hysterical? Little me. [Laughs] I was. I was. I was beside myself. The train was full of soldiers and they saw this little girl -you know Italian people are so wonderful - saw this little girl crying. They all came. "Don't worry. He's going to be at the next station." But I saw him gone, you know, for the second time.

Right.

And nobody understood what I was going through. So, anyway, then when we get to Genoa they said, "Wait for the next train. He'll be on the next train." Well, it was like reliving the same thing again.

Sure.

But there he was and that was good. So we lived a little bit in Genoa and then the war broke out because I know there were bombs all over and it was bad. And then they said ...

Now was Mussolini ... he was in ... at that time?

**He was in power.**

Yeah.

Yeah. He was great, you know. He was a big help to us until he didn't join up with Hitler and then, you know, everything stopped. And then they said that they had to separate us. The women and children had to go to one place and the men had to go to another place. So again, you know, again this thing. So what can you do? So they separated us. We were down south and Papa was a little bit higher up, and we wrote to each other constantly and all kinds of ... when are we going to see him and why did they do that? It was again tragedies, you know. So we made a ... in Italian, *reqiesta*. We wrote to the government too - please couldn't they either send Papa to us? There was another family with us with two men and they were in the same place. Couldn't they either send us there or bring them to us? Why did they separate us?

He was still in Genoa but it was a different part?

**No. He was not in Genoa. He got us out of Genoa.**

Oh.

**And so they sent us to Italian concentration camp where we could be together.**

What was the name of the camp?

**Ferramonti. It was down in Calabria. And he said ... and when we got there it was early in the morning. There was no one in the street because they are counting, you know, just like a camp. My brother didn't want to go. He saw the barbed wire. He says, "This is a camp. I'm not going in." So don't ask what we had. The scenes that he was doing. And finally, you know, men came out. People came out of there after they were counted. So then he saw, you know, that he's going to see his father. So finally we got him convinced to go in. He went in. So we got in. We came... and there my mother got quite ill and I had to do all the chores. I think I was nine, ten years old maybe. I had to do the washing and carry the water, you know. We just had little rooms like barracks. You had ... in the daytime you couldn't go out because it was so hot and at night it was cold. It was malaria weather. Malaria. So we took a lot of medicine. Quinine, you know? Everyday we had to... Are we running out?**

No, you're fine. Keep talking.

**We had to take pills and then shots against typhus, and which was a blessing that they didn't know. You know, but later on, there was a break out of typhus and we were going right there where it was and if we wouldn't have had the shots, we probably would have gotten it too, you know. So that was good. And then we went to ... we had to choose if you wanted to be here or there in Italy after they closed the camps. All of a sudden, they closed the camps. You know, and I was allowed to go out and buy ... my mother needed a lot of Vitamin C because she was walking and fainting, walking and fainting. So they let me out to buy fruit for her. Lemons and oranges ... I don't know, whatever. So I was, I mean, watched, but they knew I would come back. Everybody was in there, you know.**

Yeah. They were your ...

**Yeah.**

Hold on one second here. So you were going to get her Vitamin C but you were still in Ferramonti?

**Ferramonti, yeah. But I forgot to tell you a little thing in Genoa. There was a lot of Jewish Italian people and my brother was to have *bar mitzvah* then. He was just 13. So they sent the children to families to give them lunch. So I was going to one place and my brother was going to the other. To this day, I don't know. I mean we appreciate it at that time, but when I think about it these people had enough food to feed my whole family. Why would they separate us, you understand, and just take one child? But, okay, that's what they did. So I was going ... I had to ... let's see. I think I was going ... there was like a synagogue in Genoa and I think I was going there for a little schooling. Hebrew, you know, and stuff like that. And then from there I had to walk to this lady's place.**

For lunch?

For lunch. And it was Celestina Rice, a lovely old lady with a maid, full-time maid. Delicious food. And, but I felt bad that my parents don't have it, you understand? I know my brother had his, but, you know, that's okay. I wouldn't say anything. You understand? And I walked all by myself. I was very afraid. I was not so independent. And, all of a sudden, the sirens started. And Genoa is full of tunnels because there's a lot of sirens. So I was running like crazy to get into the tunnel, but all by myself. You know, it was very hard on me, terribly hard. So finally when I got to her home, I told her what ... she says, "Where were you when the alarm?" I said I was sitting in the tunnel. "Oh, you poor thing." You know, blah, blah, blah. But she, you know, gave me a nice lunch and then I left. I was to go home and I had to walk all the way home again and I don't know why. I guess there was no other transportation because I only remember walking. I don't know. So mother was happy that I had a good meal and my brother, they knew that he had to be *bar mitzvah*, so his family helped him and I guess he was going also to sit on [unclear]. And then, for his *bar mitzvah*, after his *bar mitzvah* in the synagogue, they sent the four of us to a restaurant, all four of us to eat, for a celebration. Now to this day I also don't understand why wouldn't a couple come with us? We were strange, whoever ate in a restaurant? We didn't have money to go to a restaurant.

Right.

You know what I mean? Why wouldn't one of them, or why wouldn't they invite all of us to their house? Like, you know, they wanted to help but stay away from ...

Yeah.

... you know? I don't understand. But, anyway, that's what happened. So we went to the restaurant and that was still in Genoa, so I kind of backtracked a little. But, anyway, I'm just telling you little things.

Yeah. Yeah.

You know there's a lot of things to tell. But, okay.

He was ... so he was *bar mitzvahed* in Genoa?

He was *bar mitzvah* in Genoa.

So do you remember the ceremony in the synagogue at all?

Oh, a little bit.

Yeah.

**I was kind of nervous for him but he did fine.**

And your parents were ...

**To this day, he reads Hebrew, you know, which I forgot. I don't anymore and he does. Although, he married out of his faith, but he still knows, you know, that he is Jewish and he follows this.**

Yeah.

**But the war, you know, did a lot of things that shouldn't have been done.**

Where is your brother now?

**In Atlanta.**

And is he married also?

**Uh-huh. He's still married.**

Yeah. You said, obviously.

**Over 50 years now.**

Does he have children?

**Five! Awk! Five! He had them all for me. Yeah, he has five.**

Do you get to see them?

**I saw them this year, yeah.**

Yeah.

**I went to New York to see them.**

Yeah.

**But not often enough, you know. You know everybody is still alive. He still works. I finally retired but ...**

So you're still pretty close with him?

**Oh yeah. We talk to him all the time.**

Yeah.

**At least two or three times a month.**

So after Italy, what brought you to New York?

**Well, we had papers to come to the States already before the war actually and then we got stuck, got stuck. The war broke out.**

You were sponsored or did you have to work to get your own papers?

**Well, we were sponsored once and we were sponsored again. My uncle lived in Long Island. My father's brother and he sponsored, I don't know if he did for David, or I don't know exactly how it worked but we finally. But we were three years in Rome in the displaced person camp there.**

And was this after Ferramonti?

**Uh-huh.**

So you were in Ferramonti for ...

**Ferramonti and then after Ferramonti we went up to, you know, near Siena, near Florence, to Tuscany, in that section. And ...**

To another camp or ...

**No. That's where we spent hiding in the woods.**

For a long time?

**Almost a year.**

Wow! All of you in the woods?

**All of us in the woods. And ...**

How did you survive?

**Again, God bless the Italians! Any other place I don't think we could have made it. They're such wonderful people. People don't even know here how wonderful they were. They saved our lives. See when we were in this town, we went in a little town. And when we arrived there, they had heard about Jews. They had never seen a Jew, never met a Jew, and didn't know what kind of monsters we are. So here comes a bus with ... we were**

two ... I think two families, three families, all three with two children and one couple, coming out of the bus or truck or whatever. They came and they touched us. They wanted to see if our skin was the same or what. And then they told us, "But you look just like we look. What is this?" You know. And they adopted us in that town. We got along. I had girlfriends there and boyfriends and I had more than real because I was 13 and my mother did not believe in that stuff. And I ... you know, just fun stuff.

Were you able to hide places? I mean they took you in to ...

**The woods.**

... houses?

**No. We had a little home.**

They gave you food?

**And then my father was working in the fields. Okay. He was making, my father and my brother both, was making ditches for grapevines to go in. Very difficult work because it's all full of stones down there and you hit them.**

Yeah.

**Anyway, their hands were just in bad shape. In fact, he was doing better than my brother who was younger, but he was more... And then in the summertime, he was getting the grain for them. Grain, you say? *Grano* it is in Italian word. Wheat.**

Wheat.

**Wheat. And with a sickle like that in heat. So I had to go with ... you know, over there you eat lunch. So I had to go over to with the little chest, mother cooked and I had to take them lunch in the heat. I had to walk and my shoes were so bad. And that's why to this day I hate to walk. I walked so much over there.**

Yeah.

**And everyday I had to go and bring them food in that heat but they needed to eat because, you know, drink and eat. So that was what they were doing. Then, I'm going to shorten the story, over there you had to make your own bread. So mother learned how to make the bread because she always made cakes and stuff so it wasn't that hard for her. So the night before, you have to tell your baker, because they had one baker in the town, that you're making bread. So she calls you, the first time, to make the bread. Okay? And then when she's ready to put it in the oven, it's ... you know, open, you know like where they burned people. That's how the ovens were.**



Right.

And then she calls you again. So mother and me prepared the bread and said to her, you know, that in the morning to call us. Says okay. Anyway, the night before that happened, we didn't have any bread already. We got ... somebody knocked on our door and said, "Leave right now because somebody's coming. The Germans are coming at 5 o'clock or maybe earlier to pick you up." So we left everything and we went, you know, to this person that told us and she gave us bread, just enough, you know. I had a little kitty which I named Mouschi, and I gave it to her, "Please take care of my kitty." And just ... we just took ... you know. I took an umbrella. It was pouring rain. Shoes, I had open ... don't ask. Bad shape.

Bad shape?

And it was pouring rain. So we left. Sure enough, they came to pick us up but we didn't know till we were liberated who ... who warned us. We had no idea. You know we just got the warning and it was true and this baker couldn't understand. She said, "She called me to make bread. And what is going on here?" And then she discovered that we were gone because she called, "Mia! Mia!" called her Mia, Mama Mia. "Make bread." And she didn't answer. Of course, we were gone. So, anyway, we were in the open for a long time in the woods. And these Italian people took chances and brought us bread and flour, cornmeal, you know, most of all, and maybe a piece of cheese, you know, very limited but, we didn't starve, you understand? And we were there almost a year in that way. I can't get into everything but believe me it wasn't good. Okay? I got my period there. Didn't have anything.

In the woods?

In the woods. Didn't have anything. My poor mom she took off her slip [crying] and tore it up and I didn't know at first what hit me, you know? Anyway, there wasn't water and I couldn't keep myself as clean as I wanted to. There was like a river but I always thought that somebody was looking at me, you know?

Sure.

And it was terrible. Anyway. Then they liberated us. First the French army came and it was so ... yeah, we were laying for days because we were caught in the middle in the woods. Once I was the enemy. Once I was the German. And they were shooting at each other and we were right in the middle, okay? And we didn't realize how we were caught in there. So my mother was laying on top of my brother and my dad was on top of me [crying] and if they got hit ... they shouldn't get hit [crying] So, anyway, finally we survived that and we, you know, when they came ... the French and they said for us, "Go! Go away! Go away!" And we said, Why are they saying go away? They just came, you know? And then later we discovered why. We went on to that ... to a farm where we had a few things left. Pictures.

**You asked me before, pictures. My dad buried pictures, you know, in sacks and he also had ... he made a book of everyday events. He was able to write shorthand.**

A diary of what you were ...

**Of our lives. Of our daily lives and, you know, about the kids, but we had snakes coming into our ... we had that stinky ... what's it called? The skunk coming into our place, you know. And we almost ... almost the thing fell on us. Anyway, all the things that was happening and how for it was snowing and we didn't have one piece of bread left. I mean nothing. And here comes this guy... [crying] and he knew it... and he brought us bread in the snow and I was so nice, so wonderful.**

Yeah.

**Anyway, that was that. And then we were liberated. And of course, we ran there and we saw somebody must have seen my dad bury that stuff and they thought he buried money or God knows what. And out of anger or something, they ripped a lot of the pictures, you know? So he had a few that we were able to save but the book – gone, you know, which was so important.**

The diary?

**The diary, yeah.**

Yeah.

**You know, stupid! Stupid people! I guess they were angry that there was no money there which they thought something.**

Now this is the French or the ...

**No. This was still in Italy.**

Still in the village?

**In the village. And we started to walk away and here comes the Moroccan, a big mule. I mean it looked to me like he's up to the sky and he wants to take me, me and another woman. The mother of the other two children, the blonde one. No. My mother said, "No. No." And he wanted to take me. And mother was down on her knees begging. I gave her ... she still had her wedding band so she gave him the wedding band. My brother had a watch. That was all that was left. Gave him the watch and he took everything and we were all, the kids, all begging him, begging him please, you know.**

And he didn't speak our language and we didn't speak his, you know. So all of a sudden he said, I don't ... somehow he said okay. And he left on that mule, you know, with all our things, like a wild man and he showed there was some cows on the field and I think he said something like you can take those too or something like that. I don't know. You know, we didn't understand him. So we quickly took all our little things that we had left and started to ... yeah! The first thing ... see, I had only one skirt and I'd grown. So the skirt was up to my poopie, you know? So my mother borrowed quickly the long skirt from the lady that was with us. And then she put a scarf on me, you know, kind of tried to hide me. Okay? And changed my appearance completely because I was, you know, too exposed. So when we started to walk to find the partisans so they could help us to get back in town. And as we were walking, so help me God, here comes the same guy. My mother just faints away. She didn't have anymore strength and I just looked, you know, down. I didn't want to look at him, shaking like a leaf and he just had a great big laugh on us and rode away. And we tried to revive my mother. [Beginning to cry] And then we found another house where the partisans were, you know, where they were and they ... I was... hysterical. They were so nice. That was just one. That was our liberation. Can you believe it? That was our liberation. And I wanted to take my cat with ... my cat walked miles, found us in the woods. So I was so attached to this cat. But when we took her to take her back to town, she got wild because a lot of people were walking in the woods and on the streets and she saw soldiers and all that and somehow she got scared and the first time she scratched me from here to here just to get away from me.

Yeah.

And she ran back to where we were hiding, see? The farmer saw her. But they said they couldn't catch her because she was completely wild. Up the tree, down. You know?

Yeah.

She was just so traumatized. So I always said I'm going to take you to America with me [starts crying] you know I would promise her this, but it didn't work out. Poor Mouschi. So, anyway, this was our liberation. And then from there ...

You went to the displaced persons camp?

We went to the displaced person camp. But at first we had to, you know, again ... you want to go out of here because you want to go to America. So then my dad and my brother walked to the city. See, every city has its surroundings of small towns and they have names. And they belonged to that same *communica*, that same commune ... that same ... how would you say? The same ...

District or ...

**It's in the district of that city, you know, whatever happened. So he went to Grosseto which we were and he went to speak to the Americans, you know. And when my dad and my brother ... they were ... he was asking him questions like quickly, you know. Voom, voom. So my father turns around to my brother and in German he says, "This idiot thinks I'm a spy. You're a spy." And he understood and he started to laugh. Okay? So he knew that, you know, he wasn't telling stories and that's how it was. Anyway, to tell you, later on we found out who warned us, you know. Who was such a person to give us that...**

To want you to get out? Yeah.

**... to get out, yeah. He was a bishop. A bishop.**

And in Italy in that region...

**In the church. In the [unclear].**

Wow.

**He got worried and he quickly let us know.**

Wow.

**And ...**

Did you ... were you ever able to communicate with him at all?

**They didn't, they didn't ... he didn't want to be. He didn't want any acknowledgment. We didn't even know which one. They just said "a bishop said go." So we didn't know.**

So that was pretty high up for ...

**Yeah, that was high up.**

... for resistance.

**Yeah.**

Yeah.

**So, anyway, I'm going back and forth. I'm sorry.**

That's okay.

**But things just come to me a little bit.**

How were you treated by the ... when you say you were liberated, you had to ... did you have dealings with Italian soldiers then?

**Oh, they were no problem.**

Yeah.

**The Italian soldiers, no. The Germans ...**

So they were nice to you when you went to the displaced persons camp?

**Well, displaced person was already run the UNRRA.**

Oh, okay.

**So they were not in charge anymore. It was Eng-, British, Americans, you know.**

Did you get medical help and food and everything there?

**Yes.**

Yeah.

**Big refugee kitchen. In fact, we all worked in the kitchen. I worked for the Red Cross for a while and made mattress covers on the machines, you know. I was sewing on the machine, but not electric machine. You had to peddle. And then they started to say that they would pay, you know, the operators that did that. But they wouldn't pay me because I'm too young. So my mother said, "She's too young to get paid. She's too young to work."**

So you were 12 or 13?

**I was 13. 14, I turned 14... yeah. I was still ... I was 15 when came here so I must been 13 - 14.**

Wow. Do you remember ... you came on a ship then?

**Yeah.**

Do you remember anything about that?

**We came from Rome and we came to Naples. We left from Naples. It was very hard for me to leave my brother for the very first time because he had a family already. He had a wife and a child and his wife to leave and the baby,**

And he was in Rome?

**Yeah, he was still in there. The baby which I just adored, you know [crying]. It was so cute.**

What was her name? Or what is her name?

**No, the baby name was Tommy. It was a boy. The first one was a boy. He was so precious and I had to leave all three of them. And, of course, my brother came with us in Naples. Oh God, it was hard. You know, the first time you separate.**

Now he married and met his wife in Italy?

**Yeah.**

So ...

**Yeah. And then they came. She was also displaced. She was born in Rhodes, Greece, so she was also... displaced**

So did you all have to learn ... backing up a little ... you all learned Italian?

**Yeah.**

In the nine years?

**Yeah.**

And spoke that instead of German?

**We still speak it, yeah.**

Yeah.

**Speak German, you know. When my parents were alive, I always spoke it. Here and there, you know, I find someone that speaks it.**

But you speak Italian now still?

**Oh yeah. With my husband, when he does and we have friends and, in fact, I just heard him make a call to Italy to one of our friends. Yeah, we try to keep it up because it's so important, you know. Italian is such a lovely language. It's so beautiful and we just love it. And, we are so grateful to the Italian people. They saved our life. And my husband too, actually. He was not too far away from me at the time. Of course, I didn't know it, but ...**

Yeah.

**... he was liberated in Florence and I was liberated in Siena.**

So did you meet in the ...

**In camp.**

Displaced persons camps? Wow.

**That's where we met. Of course, you know, he was friends with my brother and that kind of stuff. I never thought of him in that way. But, yes. We met. I was 13 and he was 15, I guess.**

And he was always in Italy? Had he always been in Italy?

**Well, no. He was born in Croatia. Zagreb.**

Oh.

**And then they also, you know, had to leave.**

Had to leave. Right.

**So he was living in Italy also. Yeah...**

That's really something. Okay. So you met there and then you both came over on the ship, or he stayed there?

**He went, no. No. He went out of the camp. He went to live in Como, which is near Milan. I didn't, I didn't care, you know, just as a friend, yes. Then he came in '49. He came to the States and looked us up and found us. Then he went into the army, Korean War, from one war into the other.**

Wow.

**Yeah. And my brother and his family came in '48. So I was one year.**

What did you do when you first came to the U.S.?

**When I first came to the U.S. I had to go to school. I was 15½, I was 16 I guess, but they didn't know where to put me. What grade do you put a person who has never been to school and doesn't know the language? So they put me in 7th grade.**

7th?

**7th. I was very, very, very unhappy. And the student, I mean, that's all they could do. I mean, I didn't blame anybody. But, first of all, it was very hard for me to get to school, to go to school when I never had been.**

Right. And you were ... you didn't know English then?

**I didn't know English, you know. So it was very traumatic to go with the little children and I had lived life already. I was not a child anymore. I lost my childhood. And there was a child ...**

You were a young teenager.

**I was too young to, you know, have went through all that and it was hard. So ...**

How could you do lessons in a different language and even know what was going on?

**Yeah, and I slowly learned, you know. I came to Italy, didn't speak Italian, don't forget.**

Yeah.

**I had to learn Italian. And then I had to learn English and it was hard. But the first year I made honor roll. Don't know how, but I did.**

Wow.

**But very unhappily because the, you know, little kids and I were so ... I was too grown-up. I had lived a life and these kids were American children.**

Were they cruel?

**No. They weren't cruel but they were saying like, you know, "What is she doing here?" You know.**

They didn't understand.

**They didn't understand why and I was not able to explain to them exactly what I was doing there. You don't want to tell the kids. They don't understand what you went through and why you're there.**

Was this in New York City or ...

**Brooklyn.**



Brooklyn.

**Brooklyn.**

So you made the honor roll and you were in 7th grade.

**Yeah.**

Did you have any idea what you wanted to do? Or you just wanted to go to school and learn for awhile?

**Learn English, English and certain things. My dad kept up with me with math, you know, without computers. Without you know, I had to do ... and ...**

Were your parents still in fairly good health?

**Yeah.**

Yeah.

**Yeah. And the grandma. But, yeah, they were okay.**

They were okay?

**And, and uh, Papa went to work and it was hard to find a job at that time in '47, but he ... what was he doing at first? He was a busboy. Never did that. He didn't even know where a [unclear] is in the house.**

Yeah.

**But then he got angry at someone in the restaurant. It was cafeteria, a big very famous cafeteria. And he hit that person on the head [laughs] because he was unreasonable.**

Oh gosh.

**So he lost that one. But he didn't wait to be fired. He just said good-bye, you know. Then he lucked in with the ... let's see. It would be pie filling and jellies, they were making in a factory. But you had to be a fairly young to do that because it's very hot there and, you know...**

Yeah.

**So he lied. He lied that he was younger because he wanted that job. That he was younger than he was. And we had to ... nobody knew he was a grandfather or earlier now.**

Yeah.

**Yeah. He was, you know, secret, secret. But he was there and then finally he made manager there. But he was cooking jelly in that heat ... 130°, 140°. He really worked hard.**

Right. And did your mother work?

**And my mother still worked. She was dressing dolls, believe it or not, and at the end of the day, her fingers were falling off because it was so ... they were so little. And you had to ... you know, get all those little things on there. But, you know, she tried, she worked, and then I went to school one more year. I couldn't anymore. I just couldn't. So I just went to English school at night and, you know, I could write and better. But I picked up writing and spelling pretty good. I don't know why but I thought it was easier than German. German is very difficult. So, you know, I quit and I went to work because my brother came and he needed help with a child and my dad wasn't making that much anyway. I started to work with a dressmaker in New York City. Then you had to sew, you know.**

Yeah.

**And that's how it started and then, you know ... but the first one was very bad. So then I just couldn't stand the woman. She was a tyrant. So they all knew that in there, you know the people that make you work and send you there, that she's difficult. So I guess they send newcomers there and then [unclear]... but then I had a job for a long time and it was okay.**

So you stayed in Brooklyn and maybe moved around a little bit there?

**Yeah. I stayed in Brooklyn and worked in Manhattan, always.**

How did you end up in Kansas City?

**My husband came to Kansas City right away. So he always came to see us in New York because my brother, you know, and we were family friends. His parents were friends with my parents.**

And your brother was still in Italy when you ...

**No. No. He came in '48.**

He came to New York too?

**Yeah. He came in '48. And by then he had two children, two boys. And then anyway, he went to Korea. I had my life, he had his, but he want ... he decided he wanted to marry me**

**and was very, you know... So I would say I was so tired of saying no, I finally said yes and that's how I got hooked him.**

Where did you first live when you came here?

**On Truman Road.**

Truman Road?

**That's where they lived and I moved in. You see, his parents ... he came with his parents and that's where the three of them lived and I moved in with them.**

And did you ... were you sewing when you came here? Still a seamstress?

**Uh-huh. My first job was Phil Jacob, maternity clothes. Can I get you something to drink?**

No. I'm fine. I'll get something if you're going to get something.

**There's some ...**

No, I'm fine.

**I should have made some coffee.**

No. That's fine.

**That will be on the recording too!**

Yeah. That's good.

**Now I have a witness that I offered you something.**

That's right. Didn't take up water.

**Yeah, I worked there. But I couldn't stand factories because I had never worked and I worked in very fashionable houses in Manhattan, custom-made clothes. At that time, \$500 - \$600 a dress was pretty expensive, which now is average. [Laughs]**

Yeah. Yeah.

**But at that time it was a lot of money. And that's where I worked, that very fine dressmaker.**

Did you ... was it hard to adjust in New York? Did you feel like you were in a land where people treated you okay? Did you miss Italy a lot?

**I missed Italy in a way but my dream was always coming to the States. See? So my mind was United States. And we tried so hard, you know, to get here that when we finally did, it was okay. It was hard to begin with, very difficult, because my uncle lived in Long Island and my aunt with the one child they had. They picked us up and they wanted us to stay with them for a week or two until we find a place of our own. Well, that was a bad move because then the Jewish welfare thought that he would take care of us. Well, that was not meant to be. We didn't want him to take care of us. We wanted to be on our own. So we had a hard time for them to help us, but finally, you know, we told them to find a job for Papa and my mother too and find apartment and, so they gave us addresses in Brooklyn for the apartment. All cold flats. All cold flats they were giving us. It was so cold. And in '47 it was very cold in New York. It was one of the biggest snowstorms there. Mama and I went to the movies to warm up, you know? And then one night ... the landlord lived downstairs. He wanted to commit suicide so he turned on all the gas faucets, and my dad smoked, and usually when he walked in the door he would light a cigarette, okay? And you know what would have happened if he would have done that? Well, we could smell something wasn't right. So then we called his daughters. He had two daughters. So they came over and thank God! But it was so cold. We had to open all the windows. See there was no 911. No one ever thought of calling any 911, police or anything. We just tried to ... we didn't know. We were green. So we just called and we were glad they had the daughters. So they came over and ... but he survived. That's what he did and it was ... we could have all exploded right there.**

Gosh.

**So my dad was working at nights and he would come home and have that hello. And then we moved to another apartment, which was three flights up. Walk up. But they had steam heat, okay? It was a little nicer than the cold flat. So that was okay except my poor mom had to *schlep* out to the laundry. We didn't have machines, you know. She went to the laundry. They didn't have dryers then. So then the wet clothes she had to bring up again. I didn't know what the poor woman. I couldn't do them at her age what she did at her age, the three flights of grocery, and then she had even a grandchild on each side, you know, too.**

Your brother's kids?

**Yeah.**

How long did you have your mom and dad?

**My mom died in '76. Not long enough. And my dad is already ten years that he died, not long enough. Never long enough.**

Yeah. No. Never.

**That was that...**

How did you lose your mom?

**My mom ... you know it was strange. She fell one day in front of the post office in Long Island and she bruised herself terribly. She was in terrible pain. And since then she was not well anymore. She was 74, something like that, and we couldn't understand. Then she was saying that inside it's shaking her all the time. She had Parkinson's. We didn't realize what it was, you know. And she had trouble breathing and all that stuff and it took her. Then my brother called. Said, "Mother's gone." You know they took her to the hospital the night before and the next ... he stayed with her, in fact, all night. And he didn't want to wake up my dad in the morning to say because he saw it, and you know, she just took her last breath. But he figured dad hadn't slept for so long, he would let him sleep, but yet Papa couldn't sleep. So he came to the hospital like 4 o'clock the morning and, you know, there was no one there in the room, which was not a good thing for him to be alone and go through that. But what he meant well it didn't work out as good, you know. But yes. She was in a wheelchair already and he was *schlepping*. He would *schlep* her down, very bad.**

And your dad? He ...

**My dad was 88 at least. Mom was only 75. They had a 50th wedding anniversary in '76. We went there but she was already pretty sick. That was in May and she died in September of that year. And my father-in-law died that same year, and an aunt died the same year, and my friend's parents died the same year.**

Wow.

**It was '76 and I was rushed to the hospital. I had to have surgery. So it was one of those years that I don't remember ... that I don't forget. [Laughs]**

Yeah.

**But my mother-in-law was with us. She died in '94.**

What were your biggest challenges, Evelyn, when you came here? What do you feel like you had the most difficulty...

**I had trouble communicating with people because I really ... there was like ... I'll give you an example. Second cousin, they lived in Great Neck, which is upscale New York. They had one daughter. Well, they wanted me maybe, you know, to kind of hook up and ... but she was so snobby and I felt like she was knocking me down somehow. You know, I didn't, I said, "I don't need this." And her mother says to me, "Why don't you tell me a little bit**

about, you know, your life and how ... this and that." So I started to tell her just little things, you know, and then all of a sudden she says, "Okay. That's enough." And I was left, you know, like that. She didn't even let me finish like my, the sentence. I never wanted to go back again. So that's what I had, you know, that I can remember. Or I ... when I came here and I stayed my uncle's, I wanted to listen to that Italian station. You know, I didn't speak English so to me that was like, oh! I understand something. You cannot live and listen to the Italian. You'll never ... I'm only here a few days, you know? Give me a chance! Well he thought it was terrible that I would want to listen to an Italian station or a German station. [addressing her husband] Did you find it?

Hi. Nice to meet you.

Mr. Bergl: "I'm Johnnie Bergl."

Nice to meet you. Deborah Jordan.

Mr. Bergl: "Nice to meet you. I found here what would be interesting. See, these your photograph here. Your passport marked 'Jew' with a big 'J.'"

**See that's our old passport. That's ... look.**

Oh, yes.

Mr. Bergl: "And well, there is yours. Yours is right here."

**Okay. Thank you.**

Thank you.

**Close the doors. There's a monster there...**

So this is your father, Edward?

**Yeah. Edward is my father. I didn't know who ... do I have my mother? I was on my mother's, I think. Was I on my mother's passport?**

Yeah, I think so. I don't see you on here. This looks like just him.

**I think you had to ... no, here's the one. Oh, here's mother's. Here's mother's. There is no picture here? Oh, here. Here it is.**

Hermine Lara.

**I was with mother.**

There's Genoa stamped.

**Yeah? Any other stamps on my mother's?**

W-i-e-n? Wien?

**That's Wien. Yeah.**

Wien. Yeah. There's a lot of those stamps.

**I think I asked for my birth ...**

Oh, here's Heinz and Evelyn.

**Yeah, both of us had to be on there.**

So you had the same middle name? Lara? L-a-r-a?

**No. I didn't have a middle name.**

Is that ...

**Sarah.**

Sarah.

**Sarah. And every Jew had to have a middle name Sarah, and the boy Israel.**

Israel. Yeah.

**But it was not our real name. My mother too had to be Hermine Sarah Artz.**

Sarah Artz.

**No, they gave us this nice name to be sure that we are recognized as Jews in case somebody was not sure about that.**

Lovely. Yeah. In case the giant "J" didn't do it.

**Yeah. In case the "J" ... it was a red ... a big red "J."**

Yeah.

**I got my birth certificate ... that I didn't have it, you know. It got lost in the shuffle. I think it was one of those papers that Papa buried, you know. And one of the Roma, see? It's Rome here... and Genoa,...German. Do you know it's mostly Genoa? I don't know why. No, Sukie!**

Sorry, Sukie.

**No, but here is what I wanted to show you... Sukie, get away! His one. I wanted to show you the camp, the camp where our grandparents ... I guess. This was like a Claims thing but it didn't do any good. Austria doesn't pay, doesn't pay. I was looking at ... this is what I... wrote, I think, once and just a little bit, I think, I kind of told you whatever is on this.**

[LONG PAUSE - PAPERS ARE BEING SHUFFLED]

So Austria has never paid any ...

**No. No. No.**

... reparations or ...

**No. Nothing. Nothing. All the Polish people got a lot of money and ...**

Yeah.

**... some Hungarian but I never did. See, from '39 to '40, this is what I kind of remembered. We were in Milano, Italy and escaped from Vienna and we went from Milano to Ventimiglia, okay? And then to Genoa, Italy and we were helped by the local Jewish community in Genoa and then we were confined to another place where I told you.**

In the Province of Potenza?

**In the Province of Potenza which was ... we were separated from Papa there. And then we went into a camp for political and Jewish prisoners in Ferramonti, which was in Calabria. Then we went to Roseto where we spent then in hiding in the woods, in the Province of Siena until liberation.**

[Sukie howls in the background]

**Sukie! Then the refugee camp of Cinecitta in Rome, Italy until departure for the United States, which is kind of what I remember too.**

Do you have friends here who went through similar situations? I mean, how did you meet?

**Well, there were some that we met in ... from Vienna, that we knew from Vienna.**



That you met when you came back here to Kansas City or New York?

**No. We met them all the way in Vienna. One of the sons is still here. There's one that still ... we know each other since we were little, you know?**

From Vienna. That's something.

**Yeah. Well, I had a letter here but it's not in here. It's not in here. It must be someplace. Of my dad when he was writing from camp, from Dachau, I think. There's one letter. My brother just sent me one. He said that's enough. He has more but he didn't want to. That just broke me up when I saw that like, it was so real.**

Did your father talk about ... the time...

**No!**

...he spent there?

**He didn't want to talk about it. He kept ... he didn't want to talk. The only thing for awhile he stayed ... when he couldn't stay anymore in his own place. Get away Sukie! He's ... my niece took him to her house and it was very nice till she could. And she said, "Opa." That's how we call grandfather, Opa. "Opa, you have to take a shower." And he says, "No." He wouldn't take a shower. "Opa, you have to take a shower. You can't go around without a shower." "I don't feel like it today." So she says, "I'm sorry. The guy's going come." And she had somebody to help her. "And give you a shower." He says, "I'm not going in the shower because whenever I go in the shower I smell gas." So that's when she realized why he doesn't like the shower.**

Yeah.

**That came back. But, no, he never wanted to talk about that. The kids, they asked him questions, he didn't want to speak about it, just couldn't speak about it.**

Yeah. So he kept it inside?

**He kept it inside. Yeah.**

So you still are close with some fellow survivors? Do you feel like there's an understanding that you feel with them that you can't find somewhere else? I mean that ...

**Well, I tell you I did with certain people, but they are gone. Okay? And the guy that's left, which we are friends with, but he's also one of those that doesn't want to... remember certain things, so we don't. I don't speak much about it. I mean, I have customers who beg**

**me, please. Why don't you write a book? You know, I mean, I told you a lot but there's a lot of little things that, you know, you can't tell everything.**

Sure.

**A lot of little things, traumatic, which I can hardly repeat. So she always tells me, "I want ... I want to know. You have to tell me." But I said, You know what? A lady's coming to interview me so you'll hear something. "Oh, good! Don't forget me! Don't forget!"**

Did they come and take your picture already?

**Yes, they did. Yeah, Gloria. You know Gloria Feinstein?**

I don't but I've seen some of the pictures at the ...

**Yeah. She took a lot of pictures of me and the little mutt, like my husband says. My little poodlie.**

He's a sweetie. Let's see. When did you become an American citizen?

**Five years after.**

Five years after.

**Oh, yes, in Brooklyn.**

So ... '40 ... or...

**I came in '47. Want to add ... '49 ...**

'52.

**'50, '51, '52.**

Have you told ... talked to your grandchildren about ...

**I don't have any children.**

I mean your brother's children?

**My nephews? Well, see, they always kind of wanted to know but never had time to really know. So now my brother made this tape, visual. I haven't seen it. I forgot when I was in New York because I was kind of curious to see what he remembered and I didn't or, you**

**know, visa versa. So, they were there. Not all of them, but some of them were there and they listened to that and they had no idea, you know, of half of it. So it was a good thing.**

The kids were there when ...

**While they were interviewing.**

They don't have any more kids anymore then?

**No, they're grown kids. Married. Grandparents already and all that.**

Yeah. Are there sounds or smells that bring back memories to you that haunt you in some way, either, you know, maybe happy ones as well as sad?

**I hate holidays. Absolutely hate holidays because I can see my parents, okay? And now there's just the two of us and it's sad. It's just so sad. I remember for Passover ... *Pesach*, we're all in the table, you know, all around and then the cooking in the kitchen and *shvitsing*, you know, and the whole thing. And my dad with his book, you know and he was praying, with glasses on so he could see who was behaving, who wasn't. You know? And my mother, after awhile, said, "Eddie." She called him Eddie. "Everything is getting cold. How long are you going to pray?" [Laughs] "Until I'm finished." [Laughs]**

[Laughs] And this memory is from New York?

**From New York, yeah. Well, in Italy we didn't have that. And, you know, it was so nice. I was ... every time the same thing. "Everything is getting cold."**

How long are you going to pray?

**How long are you going to pray? [Laughs]**

Did you ever ...

**And he didn't skip anything. He was terrible. He wouldn't skip a thing.**

That's so sweet. Did you ever, in your experiences, have trouble believing in God or stop believing in God?

**Well, I have to be honest with you. I don't know how to pray. I don't know how to pray. I try. I fail. God willing or with God's help ... I say that. But to really pray, I ... I don't know.**

And you go to synagogue today still?

Well, we belong to B'nai Jehudah, you know because we felt like we have to belong someplace. Like when my in-laws died, they belonged there. So ... they're buried there and we figure that's probably where we're going to wind up. And if you don't have any ... anything, you know, where they going to put you? I mean, not that it makes any difference to you because nobody's going to visit our grave. Nobody left and the kids from Long Island are not going to come here. They hardly go to see their grandparents in New York who were better to them than their parents. You understand? But that's how ... that's life. Okay? So we know that's where we're probably going to wind up and if a friend once in a while comes, we're going to be lucky.

Yeah. How do you ... what do you attribute your ability to adjust to life in the U.S. and, you know, be able to come through what you've come through?

Well, it's not hard to get used to the United States. It's a wonderful country. It gives you all our opportunities. I never got rich here, but, thank God for what I have, and I do. See, I can say thank God for this. When it comes to real praying, so far I haven't been able to, just one of those things.

Do you feel happy ... have a measure of happiness in your life now?

A small ... some measure, you know. Some measure, but I just ... and that's such a ... I should be happy and grateful for what I have.

Yeah.

But I lived seven years on Truman Road, you know. In a room without a window even and finally we built this house, which is something, you know, I never had and wanted badly. And my in-laws lived with me for 40 years, my mother-in-law and her sister, Papa also. His father died also in '76. But he lived with us, which was good and bad. They were very good to me. They were wonderful. But still you don't have your privacy. They were great helps. I didn't have to cook. Mother cooked, you know, and I came home. I just had to do the dishes after dinner. If I was very tired, she would even do that for me. Very good to me. My father-in-law too. So I have no complaints about that. Of course, she didn't complain about me either. We always got along. We never had a fight in 40 years. Might have had a misunderstanding like ... they hated the dishwasher. They couldn't understand why I need a dishwasher. Well, I wanted a dishwasher because I didn't trust them to do a good enough job. [Laughs]

Cleaning the dishes, yeah.

Cleaning the dishes. So what they did many times ... not many times, a few times, after I put the dishes in they took them out and washed them by hand. And that drove me up the wall. So I strictly forbid them to ever do that. That's all. And, you know, I'm nothing ... I

**was there for them, they were there for me and my husband always said that he's the stepson. [Laughs]**

[Laughs] Yeah. You were their favorite daughter?

**Yeah. Yeah. She was 96 when mom died.**

Wow.

**So we were glad to have her. And the house has been kind of ... you know, I have these little pains around. My fifth poodle, but that's about all. And that's ...**

Sukie's number five poodle?

**Number five poodle, yeah.**

Wow. You've had dogs all along then?

**Yeah. We had dogs all along. We usually have two at a time, but this time we're too old to run after two of them. [Laughs]**

Do you like ... what do you do in your spare time, Evelyn? Do you like reading? Do you go to movies or concerts?

**You know ...**

T.V.?

**I loved to read. All of a sudden, I cannot concentrate on a book. My mind has left me somewhere. I have to read one page so many times that I stop reading. I can read, you know, the paper ... short subjects and stuff, but to read a book, I don't know what it is. I even asked my doctor why. "Michael, do I have Alzheimer's or something like that?" He said, "Don't be silly, just your mind is too occupied with other things and you cannot concentrate on that." So I said, "Well, I don't know." But it makes me very unhappy that I don't ...**

Maybe it's a phase. Maybe you'll get back into it.

**Maybe. I hope so because there are a lot of books that I would like to read and I bought them and I just ... I had to put them all away because I get too depressed from not being able to read, you know? And I was so passionate about reading. So that's one thing. My husband is not that well. He's got angina. He's got bad knees so we cannot do as much as we used to do. I have gained too much weight. I don't why, I'm hungry more times than I should be, I think. I don't exercise enough. I know that. I have arthritis. But, you know,**

**most older people do get that son of a gun and he's given me pills. Some agree with me and some don't. So I'm trying to, you know, find the right one and still trying to find that. And my doctor wanted to give me tranquilizers and I take them for awhile and then somehow they don't agree with me. I don't feel it's me and then I don't like to take them. So then he gets angry with me why don't I take them? You know. What can I tell you?**

You'd rather be ...

**Yeah.**

... have your whole mind ...

**Mind, yeah. Anyway, one of my nephews is a psychologist. So he gave me three new that he thought I should be instead of Prozac, is it? Yeah, Prozac. So I haven't gone back to the doctor because I've gained weight since then. Instead of losing, I've gained. I went to New York and I got a rash from top to bottom. So they put me on Cortisone. That was a nervous reaction, which I didn't know what was hitting me. So that didn't help my weight and then I have three colds in a row.**

I know you had the flu in October.

**I had the flu.**

I had it too.

**I had stomach poisoning in New York. We went to a restaurant and I got deadly ill, just deadly ... I didn't think I would see the morning.**

Oh, dear.

**So there was my trip, you know. It should have been just great. And ... I don't know. Those things kind of depress me a little, but ...**

Have you ever been back to ...

**Vienna?**

... Italy?

**Yes.**

You have?

**Yes.**

To Genoa?

**I've been to Vienna one time and I don't think I could handle another time. The mistake that I made, which I didn't realize, that we left by train. We came by plane and we left Vienna by train going to Hungary because my husband has family in Budapest. And that was ... I didn't realize how bad that was because that's the last time I saw my aunt. They took us to the train. I could see everything, you know.**

Yeah.

**I mean from my eyes. So I said if I will go, I will not go by train because that was the worst nightmare ...**

Flashback?

**Flashback that there was. So, and, yeah, to Italy we went to Vienna just one time and to Italy we went a few times because we had lots of friends.**

Yeah.

**And Johnnie's aunt lived in Genoa, it just so happened. Then she became widowed and she also didn't have children, so we brought her here. It was mother's ... my mother-in-law's sister. So she was here and then she was with us 15 years, but then we finally had to put her in a home. We just could not handle her. She just lost it, which is very hard too. And I took my husband, you take her. He couldn't handle certain things. His father was ill. He had cancer, I had to take him to the doctor every Monday. He never took him [Sounds like she is crying].**

Yeah.

**He couldn't. He just couldn't.**

Yeah.

**I know certain things. Men are different, and he's European and he's got stubborn ways. He's a good guy. He's very goodhearted and all that but certain ideas, you know, he has different than mine. So, but that's okay. We've been married 45 years so I'm not going to change him now.**

You can still ... you can be independent and be married too.

**Yeah. Right.**

So being in America and being an American has been ...

**A blessing.**

... wonderful for you?

**Yes. Yes. Definitely.**

Do you still ... do you listen to Italian music still on the radio?

**Uh-huh.**

Good. I know there's the ... is it Saturday night the show on XTR?

**It's Sunday morning.**

Yeah, Sunday morning.

**I don't have cable. I have to listen to her on the radio. I don't know who.**

Gina [unclear]

**Gina [unclear]. Yeah, we went down there to see her too in Cultural Center and she always asks us to come more often. It's so far away. We just don't get to go there as often as we want to. And, yeah, I listen to that and I have a bunch of tapes, Italian tapes. [LAUGHS]**

Do you socialize with people ...

*[END OF RECORDING]*