

Ilsa Cole Interview

February 2000

I'm here with Ilsa Cole in her home at 6212 Ward Parkway in Kansas City, Missouri. And we're going to be talking today about her life before and after the Holocaust. She's going to be talking to us about her experiences and her family. Good afternoon.

Good afternoon.

What ... let me go through again what we talked about a little bit. What I'd like to do is, I've got an outline of some different kinds of subjects that we'd like to cover, and I'll start by asking you some questions. And, as I said earlier, if something comes to mind that may not fit with the specific question I've asked, feel free to go ahead and tell me whatever comes to mind. We're going to talk about your experiences from birth up to the war. We will skip over what happened during the war itself. And then we'll talk about what happened when the war ended. And I'd like to ask for your help. We're going to try to keep this to about two hours or so, give or take. I'd like to ask for your help, if you could help keep me on track because sometimes I get a little bit excited about some of what we're talking about and, so if you can help me keep track of what we're talking about, I'd appreciate that too. Okay?

Uh-huh.

Okay. First of all, let's start with what was your given name at birth?

Ilse. I-l-s-e.

I-l-s-e?

Uh-huh.

Okay. And what was your last name?

Dahl. D-a-h-l.

Okay. Did you have a middle name?

No.

No middle name.

No.

Okay. Where were you born?

I was born in Hamm, H-a-m-m, Germany. It's a village actually on the ... in the ... in an area that's called Westerwald, not too far from Cologne. There's another Hamm, but that's a bigger city. That's farther north. I was born there because it was 1916, and my father had been drafted in the army, and he was fighting World War I. And my mother and my sister, who was a year and a half older than I, were living in a place called Geilenkirchen.

Do you know how to spell that?

Yeah. G-e-i-l-e-n-k-i-r-c-h-e-n.

Thank you.

And that's very close to the Dutch border, near Aachen, actually 25 kilometers from Aachen. That was not a very safe place for a young woman. My mother was about 20. I think she was 21 or 22 when I was born. And so my grandfather asked her to come back home and stay with them until my father would return from the army.

So she was pregnant with you at the time that he went into the army, and then she moved with your older sister?

Right. Right. I don't know exactly when she, when she moved to my grandparents, or whether it was actually planned. I mean, she went there and maybe she ... they just decided while she was there that she would stay there. And it turned out to be two years. So, you see this was '16 and the war was ... actually more than two years. The war was over in, for Germany, in 1918 in November, I believe.

What is the date of your birth?

May the 8th, 1916.

1916?

Yeah.

And do you ... were you born in a hospital? Were you born at home?

No, I was born at home. I was ...

Okay.

I was born ... actually there was a midwife and every time when we ... when we saw her when I was a little child, they would tell me that she brought me, you know. I remember ...

Did you know what that meant, that she ...

Well, I don't know whether I was too concerned about that at that age.

Yeah.

I don't think I knew.

Okay.

Yeah.

Okay. And was the midwife somebody that your family had known before your birth?

Well, that's what she did. And, she was a midwife for the whole town, for Hamm, and so, they knew her, you know [her?]

Yeah. If your father was away in the army at the time, do you know how old you were before he was able to come home and meet you?

My father, how old he was?

No. How ... I'm sorry. How old ... how long you had been?

Oh. Oh. I was several weeks old. But you see, I didn't know. When I was a child, there was a ... that, for girls, the Germans didn't let the soldiers come home. For boys, they did. But, I don't know whether that was true because I learned later on there was a very terrible battle going on. I think it was in Verdun in France, and my father was in that. And so they didn't give any leave to anybody. I think I was just a few weeks old when he came, yeah.

Okay. What was your mother's name?

Klara David. D-a-v-i-d.

David was her maiden name?

Uh-huh.

And what was your father's name?

Emil Dahl.

Okay. What are your first memories of when your father was home from the war, from the war? You were a little bit older. What are your memories of your parents when you were very young?

Well, I, I didn't realize it when I was a child, but it must have been a little bit difficult for my sister and for me to go away from my grandparent. And in my grandparents' house, there were two aunts. One of them died on the, of the influenza, you know, that was. And she was 21-years-old. It must have been a terrible experience for my grandparents; just terrible. I remember her, her grave in the cemetery. Actually, when I was back ... when I was in Germany a few years ago, it was still in the same place.

Really?

Yeah. Yeah.

This was one of your mother's sisters?

My mother's sister. Yeah. My mother was ...

How many other siblings did your mother have?

My mother was the oldest and she was one of five. And I just saw of her such a pretty picture. It's very old.

Oh, how beautiful.

She's the oldest one.

That's wonderful.

And ...

What were the ... let's see. We've got ... tell me ... go ahead and tell me the other siblings' names.

This is [Tinkla?]. She's the one who died. This here is Aunt Millie, and she is the one who was in Kansas City and got papers for me to come here. And this is my Uncle Heinrich, my

mother's oldest brother, and he died in a concentration camp. And this one here is Karl, and he came to Kansas City also a little bit later than I in 1938. He died quite a few years ago.

Okay. What about your father? Did you have aunts and uncles that your ... on your father's side?

Oh, my father was one of eleven. And they, I'll show you this one here first. This is my mother, my sister, my grandmother and my great grandmother. You see, my great grandmother lived in the same small town, and she was a widow.

And you were named after your great grandmother it looks like. Yeah?

No. Her name was Fanny Baer.

Oh, well it says ...

She's the great grandmother of Ilsa.

Oh, great grandmother of Ilsa. I'm sorry. Okay.

And my grandmother there, her name was Henrietta David. This one. And I was looking for ... you asked me about my father.

Yeah, your father's siblings.

Yeah. Wait a minute. I had ... this is the cemetery in Geilenkirchen. This is my grandmother, my father's mother.

And what was your father's mother's name?

Helena Dahl.

Helena?

Yeah.

Okay.

This is the house of my grandparents. We photographed it. It was still standing when we went to visit in Germany.

The same home that your father ...

The same home ... this is where I was born.

That your mother or your father?

My mother.

That your mother grew up in?

That's right.

Okay. And tell me the names of your father's siblings, again, if you could?

My father?

Yeah.

There are too many. Wait a minute.

Okay. [Laughs] You need a visual reminder here.

This is my grandmother. This is the same woman.

Okay.

Here. These are just the sons. This is my grandmother, see? And these are all her sons. This is ... which one is my father? This was my father in the middle. You want to know their names?

Yeah. Tell me your ... tell me the siblings' names.

This was the oldest one. His name was Isidore. This was Otto, number two. Robert, Karl Rugow, and Max and Emil.

And then what about the girls? What were the girls' names?

Yeah. Well, the girls. Jenny was the oldest. Next one was Rosa. Her name was Baer, Rosa Baer. The next one was Augusta Franken and Liesel Kapell. Four.

Where was your father's family from?

They lived in Geilenkirchen, in the same house that we lived in. He bought the family house when he got married. And, I'm going to show you. It's a very old house. But I had just yesterday I came across some pictures. Who is this? Oh, this is Walter's family? I came across some pictures of the house. Actually, I have put out a book. My brother gave

it to me. I have a brother in St. Louis. And he, otherwise, I wouldn't know. This was the synagogue in Geilenkirchen where I grew up.

So you grew up with a lot of aunts and uncles, an extended family all around you?

Oh, yeah. Very big family, yeah. And most of them died in the concentration camps.

Okay.

Oh, this is also. Somebody must have sent that to him.

Tell me a little bit about the neighborhood that you grew up in.

This is the house.

That's where you grew up?

Yeah. But this is a very old picture. They put out a book, Geilenkirchen. Well, anyway, in the meantime, there's a river here.

Your house faced the river, yeah?

Yeah. There was the street. There was the river. Now there is no more river. They did something to make the street wider and covered the river. And the house was modernized and was not like this. This is 1800, maybe, the picture. You know?

How many, tell me, how many people, how many family members grew up in your home with you? Did you have extended family living in the home with you?

No. No. No.

Okay. So it was just you, your father, your mother, your sisters?

My, my father, my mother, my sister and my brother, and a maid and a man who worked for my father.

Tell me your sister and your brother's names again, please?

My sister was Hilda.

And she was a year and a half older than you?

Right. And my brother is Erich. He lives in St. Louis.

That's who's in St. Louis. Okay.

Yeah.

So you had a maid and a manservant who helped out around the house?

Yeah.

What do you remember about day-to-day life? When your father came home from the war, what kind of work did he do?

My father was in the cattle business. And he bought and sold cattle, and raised some. And, they had, great, I don't know what you call that, meadows where they would keep the cattle and take it to the market.

Was it close to your home so you would see ... so he would be at home every night? Or did he have to go someplace else to ...

Oh, he used to ... he would be home every night. Yeah.

What was your mother's life like? What you do remember about your mother and her role in your home growing up?

Oh, my mother see... in my mother's generation, girls were trained to be good housekeepers and actually they, it was customary for girls to go to finishing school where they learned how to cook and set a table and entertain and all these things that ... and embroider, that were necessary for girls. But that's, you know ...

So did your mother ... did the maid help take care of you or did she help with housework and helped you mother out, but your mother was still there with you as you were growing up more often than the maid was?

Yeah, my mother was there.

She was?

Yeah. Yeah.

She was your main caretaker then?

Right. Right.

Did the maid help like with baby-sitting? Did you play with her?

Oh, yeah, yeah. And actually, there was, we usually had the same one for a number of years and they would take us, when they went home on Sundays ... most of the time they were from small villages around our town and when they went home, they took either my sister or me with them to visit their family.

Oh.

Oh, yeah.

So you knew their family too?

Yeah.

Okay. What about the gentleman who you said was the servant in the home? What kind of work did he do?

Well, he actually helped my father more with his business.

More with the business?

Yeah. Uh-huh.

Okay. You've shown me ... this is a wonderful picture of your home. Tell me a little bit about your neighborhood. Did you have neighbors? Were your neighbors Jewish? Were they Christian?

No. In our town, there lived only about 10 or 15 Jewish families. But, you see ...

Do you know how big? I mean that sounds like very few, but how big was the ... do you know how big the town was? Was it a ...

There were 4,000 people and this is the synagogue in that town. You know it's amazing that they ... I guess it didn't cost all that much because they all had very beautiful synagogues. You know they don't cost all that much. I mean, not like today, that they could maintain a building and have a rabbi there and it was all, because there was some from surrounding areas that would come.

That would come in also?

Yeah.

So if there weren't a lot of other Jewish families in your community, how do you recall being ... what kind of traditions and how did Judaism play a part in your family life?

Well, it was kind of, let's see. My mother kept a kosher house, you know. But we went to a Catholic school, and the Catholic school was run by the nuns. And when the children, the other children, had religious instruction, which was usually once a day, the Jewish children and the Lutheran children would go in a separate room and do their homework or whatever they wanted to. And so, we really didn't think anything of that, you know?

There was no big deal made about it?

No.

It wasn't such an issue? It was just ...

No. No. Not at all.

... different types of instruction?

It was ... that's right. Yeah. So, we were ... you see, the school would put on plays and if they put on something that had, usually religious plays because they were nuns. And my sister and I and also I had a cousin who attended the same, two cousins who attended the same school while we were there. If they had a play that had angels in it, we would be angels, you see. But if they ... we would not be Jesus or Mary or, or whatever. None of those. But you could be angels. I remember my mother making white nightgowns, so it was like a nightgown. A gown that we all wore. Had to be embroidered. Was real fancy for a school production.

I think I forgot to ask you. How old is your ... how much younger or older than you is your brother? When was he born?

Three and a half years. He has his 80th birthday on the 29th of February this month.

So he's younger?

Three and a half years younger.

Three and a half years younger than you. Okay. What kinds of ... did your mother do the cooking in the home or did the maid do that?

Yeah. No.

Are there any special memories you have of favorite meals or types of food or ... did she do anything differently for special holidays?

Yeah. Well, sure. But there ... it was a little different food than ... well ... Friday nights she always cooked the same thing. Friday night.

What did she cook for you for Shabbat?

For Shabbat she cooked the soup. And then, very good soup, always. And had a *challah* which she, I think she, she baked. She made it but she had it baked at the baker next door. And ...

There was a bakery next door to your home?

Next door. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Yeah.

Well, there was an area. We were on the main street and there were a number of stores; one next to the other. And my parents were very friendly with all the neighbors. They ... see they have peculiar holidays in Germany, like they have, they celebrate the days of the Saints and the city has ... the church has a certain saint. And so they have festivities that are connected to that. And then, once a year, they have a shooting. I mean, this was in my day. I don't know what it's like today. And, well, the winner of the shooting match has to invite people for a coronation, you know. And so they invited my parents. I mean, they were ...

They were included as part of the ...

That's right. Part of the community. I mean, they ... my mother had a friend. We were a little bit mixed up as far as religion was concerned, not as far as we were keeping it. But, let's say, we ... well, we would visit neighbors who had ... or friends, also, who had a beautiful Christmas tree at Christmas time and they'd give us cookies and things. And, but they celebrate a day that's called St. Nicholas. It's actually where the Santa Claus comes from. And they would ... my mother had a friend who would go and visit the children as St. Nicholas. She had the uniforms of a priest, a cardinal, I think, with a high hat and very fancy, whatever they wear, the cardinals. So then she ... so this was my mother's friend. And one year she came to visit us, you see. And when I saw her, I was so overwhelmed. She was so marvelously looking, and I was scared, you know. [Laughs] But we did, you see we put out slippers for St. Martin. That sounds crazy to you, probably.

No, I understand.

But for St. Nicholas we put out slippers. And in the morning we'd find cookies and candies and little goodies in there. So we were kind of a little bit mixed up. We did participate. And then the school, for instance, would celebrate. There was a holiday, St. Martin's. You know who's St. Martin? You probably don't know who that was.

No, I don't.

St. Martin was a man who gave his coat to a poor man, and he was celebrated for being such a generous and good person. And the whole town would make ... they would make lanterns. I mean, the children all would make lanterns and with candles and then we start out at our school and we walked through the town. Very, all through town. At the end of the walk, we would receive a St. Martin that was made out of gingerbread. We took ... we participated in all of that.

Yet at the same time, you participated in your Jewish religion at the house.

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. That was ...

So there was a separation?

They didn't bother us at all, you know. We would ...

Did you have ... when you had Shabbat dinner or for any special Jewish holidays, did you have other people over who weren't Jewish so they could share with you?

No. No.

No?

No, We didn't. We had my uncle and aunt and their family over for Pesach. I remember we used to have Passover two nights and one night they would come to us, and the second night we would go to them, or the other way around. Oh, you asked me what my mother cooked?

Yeah, do you have any favorite foods that you remember or ...

Yeah, but you know my children didn't like any of that. So I've given up cooking this. Like my mother used to make.

What have you given up cooking? What did you like?

Potato kugel.

Your children don't like potato kugel?

No. No.

Oh. Okay.

No, they don't. Well, they don't like anything that they think could be fattening, you know, so ...

Oh, okay.

I gave up cooking that.

Okay.

Right. So every Friday night, and my mother, once, she was going to stop making it because she had gall bladder trouble and she was not supposed to eat anything that was ... had fat in it. So ... but we, the whole family, persuaded her to keep on making it because we liked it. That and applesauce and roast beef. And it was good.

It sounds wonderful.

Yeah.

Let's go back to the school a little bit. You talked ... you explained to me that when the Catholic children had their religious instruction, you would go into a different area with the Jewish and the Lutheran children and study your lessons. How ... were the classes mixed? Do you have boys and girls in the same classes?

No, just girls.

Just girls? What were some of the other subjects that you remember? Did you have a favorite subject in school growing up?

Oh, it was an excellent school, and I was a very good student. I was the valedictorian when I graduated. And they ... like I had six years of French and four years of English and math and chemistry, and we would have ... I mean, this is 19- ... I started in 1922, I think, '23? Oh, I even went to kindergarten before, also to the nuns, because they had a very good school, and it was a girls' school, and it was ...

So when you graduated, did you feel that you could speak French and English at that point?

Yeah, I could. French, I could speak fair enough and read well enough that I could read books and all. But I have forgotten. You know, it's a ... I don't know. It may come back if I would be there. But I used to speak quite well.

How old were you when you graduated from this school?

16.

At age 16?

Yeah.

And did you have education beyond that? Did you ...

No.

No higher education beyond that?

No.

Did they offer ... was it something that was available at that point in time?

Higher education?

For girls, or was there a separation?

Well, well, you see, when I graduated, was 1932. That was ... Hitler was already there, you see.

Oh, okay.

And so I knew that I had to do something that would make it possible for me to make a living somewhere outside of the country, Germany. I was thinking about that, you know.

Okay.

Not that we did anything about it, really. I mean, we should have left then, but we didn't.

Tell me a little bit ... let's go back to some of your early school ... earlier school years. Did you participate in group activities? Were there clubs and groups and things that you did?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Tell me a little bit about what you did for fun. Tell me about that.

Oh, we ... of course, there was no dating in my days, like the kids do today. The girls were separate from the boys. Boys were raised to play football and play with boys. And girls were, until they got old enough to be married, they were more or less kept with girls, you know. I had lots of girlfriends, but, but ...

What did you do when you got together with your girlfriends outside of school? What did you do? Or maybe within school. Were there groups and club activities within school too?

Yeah. Yeah. Well, not like you have here, no. No very separate clubs. We had a group of friends that would stick together, you know, and meet, but there were no clubs.

What kind of things did you do when you got together with your friends?

What did we do? I don't know, We played. See you have to remember, I was only 16 when I graduated. We probably played ball and we ... what kids do.

But no organized activities like sometimes ... I ... you know, I guess like Girl Scouts or that kind of thing ...

No.

... that kids get involved with here.

No. No. But, you see, there wasn't really that much time. I would go to school at 8:00 in the morning and then I'd come home at about 1:00. And then I had a bunch of homework and I did that. First, we had main meal at noon. So then after ...

Would your father come home for the main meal of the day or was he ...

No. No. No.

He was busy working.

But then I would do my homework, and by the time I got through with that, it was about 4:00 maybe. We did get lots of homework. And So I'd go play ball with the kids outside and, you know, I had one very close friend. I do remember that she was, she was Lutheran. I remember I used to spend a little time with her. And my mother did say once to me that she thought I was ... I wouldn't have this girl as a friend when I grew up because there was a great difference because I was Jewish and she... But, at that time, I said, Oh, mother. That was in your day. Not today anymore. You know. Who would expect things to happen the way they did?

Did you play ... were you friends with some of the other Jewish children in your community also, or were most of your friends from school?

No, not really because there weren't any in my class and there weren't too many in town either ...

Yeah.

... that were about the same age as I was.

What about ... did your family attend synagogue? Did you go?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. My mother went every week. And they had ... it was actually what you would call orthodox. They would have a *minyán* every night, and if my father was home, sometimes he'd go.

Was there religious instruction in the synagogue for the children?

We had Sunday.

You had Sunday school?

Sunday school. Yeah.

And what age range did that involve?

Well, that started when I started school at age six. And so we had Sunday school every Sunday and one time, see, the teacher in... our rabbi there, he was trained to prepare boys for bar mitzvahs. He was not prepared to teach older children. And so when we were 13, we stopped the religious education.

Was the religious education, since the boys were being prepared for their bar mitzvah, were they in a separate class from the girls?

Well, for the bar mitzvah training, they had to come during the week, yeah.

But, other than that, were the girls and boys ...

Were together. Together.

Studied together?

Yeah. Yeah. But, anyway, so my sister and I didn't have any more religious instruction. And and we would have ... what we would have to do is when we got a report card from the school, we had to have a grade from the religious teacher. And so that year, we didn't have a grade because we didn't go anymore. And so the Mother Superior called, called us to come up to her office, she wanted to talk to us. And then she told us that she didn't care what religion people had, but they didn't want any atheists in the school. And so we had to have, as long as we were attending the school there, we had to have religious instruction. So we had to go back to, to continue with religious education, which was all right, you know, until we graduated.

Where did your brother attend school, since this was just a girl's school?

Well, they had a boy's school. Gymnasium was what they called it. It's a boy's high school.

And was it also run by the same group of nuns that ...

No. Men. Priests or whoever, you know.

Okay.

I don't know what order they were in, but they were priests.

Were you close to your brother and sister? Did you all do things together and ...

Yeah. Uh-huh Uh-huh.

... play together and share friends?

Well, my, no. My brother is three and a half years younger. That's tremendous age difference when you're children, you know. I'm very close to my brother now, but I mean, as kids, we ... he played football and he, you know, as boys do.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay. You mentioned that your father had some land, a meadow, where he kept the cattle that he raised.

Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Did he own that land? Was that his property?

Some of it.

Some of it was?

Uh-huh. Yeah.

And the rest of it was owned by others?

Well, yeah. It was owned by people and he rented it.

He rented it?

Owned by ... you see, in that area, there were a lot of barons. You know what they are?

Yeah.

And they owned a lot of land there.

Land barons, sure.

Yeah. So, he would rent some.

So he owned some and he rented the rest ...

Right.

... to take care of his cows? Did you have a place ... did you own any other property like someplace you'd go for vacations, or did your family take vacations?

My mother sometimes would go to a resort, you know, to take bath. And my grandmother went every single year for, oh, I don't know, as long as I can remember. My sister and I would go in the summer to my grandparents. The moment school closed, my mother would pack us up and ship us to my grandparents because that was ... [Laughs]

Which ... her parents or your father's parents?

Her parents. My father's father died when my father was five-years-old. The youngest child ...

So you never knew ...

No. The youngest child was 3 days and the oldest was 13. And my grandmother raised all these children, all of those boys, all by herself. She was quite a remarkable and very strong woman.

Yeah.

And when they grew ... after they were grown up and did well financially, they really spoiled her. There was nothing that she didn't have.

That's wonderful.

Yeah, that was.

That's wonderful.

Well, it was and it wasn't. You see she lived to be 94-years-old, and if it hadn't been for her, maybe some of them would have gotten out. See most of my family got killed in the concentration camps, but they didn't want to leave her...

To leave with her or...

And she was too old to take. And so that's the way it happened.

Yeah. Yeah. What about your ... you've talked a little bit about you had a lot of friends. Your family had a lot of friends in the community and participated in community activities. What about politics? Do you remember politics being a part of your family life at all growing up? Were your parents involved with any political organizations or city government or ...

No. No.

Not at all?

Uh-Uh. Well, not really, not really. No, especially not in our town. Maybe in the bigger cities there were more Jewish people involved in that, but ...

Do you remember any of your extended family being involved with any political issues?

No. No. We were not.

Okay. You mentioned that boys and girls were kept separate and there really wasn't dating. At what age, your sister was a year and a half older than you, at what age do you remember maybe seeing your sister ...

Going out?

Being introduced, and ... yeah. How did that process work?

Well, well, it actually ... you see, by the time ...when, when you become 16, under normal circumstances ... I mean, like I said, when I graduated, Hitler was already taking over Germany. But you could have gone on three more years of college and then go on to university.

Okay.

But that wasn't possible.

That wasn't an option for you?

No. No. Not ... you see, not at my particular age. Because I was, I was too old to, you know, not to be touched by the terrible situation in Germany.

Okay. What do you remember about your parents disciplining you? Do you ... were they strong disciplinarians? Were they easy going? Did you feel that ...

No, they were strong disciplinarians. They had absolute control over the children, and especially my father. He was the boss of the house. And if he raised his voice, he didn't have to do anything else. He just raised his voice and we would ...

What kind of things created tension, created the tension in the home that would cause your parents to ...

Oh, I don't know. I remember one ... my brother would go out to play after school, you know, and then he wouldn't come home for dinner. And we would get ready to eat dinner, and he wasn't there. And so we ... my mother said, "Go look for Erich." That's his name. Erich. And my sister went one way and I went another and the maid went another. And, you know, sometimes ... usually we did find him. And my mother was so angry. And she said to my father, "You never say anything to him."

You know, my father was so happy to have this son. He had two daughters first. Anyway, he ... she got him all mad really, and when my brother came home, she, he spanked him. I mean, really spanked him. I don't think it hurts children. I really don't, because they learn to respect. I never was spanked that I recall.

Did you feel that your father let your brother get away with things because he was the son?

The boy?

Were you aware of what your mother was feeling at that point?

Well, yeah. Yeah. I remember those things, you know.

Yeah.

My brother, see, they had every ... they had rules for everything. Like when you get up out in the morning, you had to take your bedding and turn it back, and you opened the window, fresh air, and so on. And my brother ... my mother wanted my brother to do that too. And he didn't do it. And so she complained about it to my father and my father said, "That's women's work." [Laughs]

Okay. We understand that attitude. Were there ... did you have household responsibilities? Did you and your siblings have to do certain things around the house?

Yeah. Yeah. We had to help, like after lunch, we had to take turns. I think I did one week and my sister the next.

Just you and your sister?

Yeah. Right. My brother didn't do that. We dried the dishes when the maid washed the dishes and then sweep, well, I don't know. Yeah, sweep too. You know, help.

What about outside the home? Did you ever work outside of the home when you were growing up?

No. No.

Just helped your mom around the house?

Yeah.

Okay.

Well, in those days, everything had to be done by hand, you know. We didn't have machinery like we have today. And everything was, well, work.

Do you ever remember feeling rebellious against the rules in your home?

Yeah.

Did you challenge it?

Yeah. No, I didn't. I didn't, wouldn't have dared to say anything.

You felt it but you wouldn't act on it.

I felt, yeah, pretty soon, I'm growing up and then I can do what I want to. [Laughs]

Okay. If I ask you what values were most important to your parents, would that bring anything to mind? I mean, in terms of just basic religious values or ethical and moral values, of any type. Do you remember anything in particular that your parents were particularly ... felt strongly about?

Yeah, my ... they were very ... how should I say that? Very conscious of being honest and being honorable and being respected and all those values were very important to them. They would've never done anything that would have ruined their reputation or ... I mean, they were very honor conscious.

How do you feel that that affected your life growing up? Was that part of the discipline package?

Oh. Oh, yeah. Yeah. I was ... I feel that the way I was raised that that had a great influence on all my life. You know, what you do and what you don't do, and there were rules about everything.

You said that you did go to Sunday school. You went to ... for religious instruction on Sundays. Do you have ... tell me about your memories of going to the synagogue. What do you recall about your life as part of the synagogue?

Well, we went every Sunday morning and there was a room in the synagogue that had benches in it and there was a big potbellied stove that was fired by somebody. There was a person living ... a couple, I think, was living in the synagogue, and they kept everything. They kept the fire going and they kept the place clean and so on. And, so we went there every Sunday morning and had our lessons. And there were ... the boys and the girls were together in that. But, you know, it was maybe ten kids altogether. Something like that.

And you said that that was not only the few families that lived in your community, but also some children, perhaps from outlying areas?

Yeah. Not even many because that rabbi would have to go during the week and teach those children in those small towns.

And you also already mentioned that even though you finished your religious education at age 13 ...

I had to go on.

Right. That you had to continue going.

Yeah. Yeah.

Because of the requirements of the nuns.

Right. Right.

How did that work? Did you have to go back and just sit through the same class every year?

No. No.

Or did they ...

We then ... we ... or maybe the teacher, picked out one afternoon a week and we would come to his house.

Oh, so you did not go on Sundays after that? You had ...

No. No. And would read about all the important Jewish people. Maimonides or whatever, you know, and learn about those, because as far as the Hebrew was concerned, the girls weren't taught that much. And we were finished at that.

Do you remember how you felt about your lessons? Did you like it? Did you dislike it? Did you feel you were getting something out of it? Did you feel like you wished you were some place else? How did that ... how did that strike you at that point, knowing that you had to get, to continue religious instruction when the others didn't?

Well, I ... no, I didn't. I didn't rebel. I felt that if they wanted me to do that, I had to do that. You know. I really didn't have a choice. If I wanted to continue in the school, and I wanted to graduate, then I had to take the religious instructions. So, I ... not that I did all that much about it, you know. I just went there and I ... we read whatever we had to read and report on that and so on.

Okay. Let's see. Well, we talked a little bit about how the broader community all participated with some of the ... I guess, well, were they secular celebrations or was it religious celebrations that the broader community celebrated that you all learned about and participated in?

A lot of it was religious.

Religious?

Religious. Even though the religion was more or less in the background, it was a basic of it all.

Okay. Did your, did you have cousins who also participated in this way?

I had ... yeah, I had ... it was three cousins. My father's ... this one's, this one's children. They had a son who was maybe five years older than I; and then they had a daughter a year and a half older than I; and then they had another daughter who was maybe five years younger than I. She lives ... this is the only one who lives now, and she lives in Washington, D.C.

Okay.

And ...

Did you see your cousins on a regular basis? Did you see them? Did they go to school with you also? Did you see them on Shabbat or...

Well, the one was much younger. She was younger. My brother was three years. She was probably five years younger than I, so by the time that I was in the high school, she may have started then. I... I, I don't remember her much from school because she was that much younger.

Yeah.

You know, that's a lot of difference in age for children.

Give me a sense, if you would ... I think I have an understanding that within your home, it was a very Jewish home. It sounds like a very religious home.

Yeah, but ...

You kept kosher. Your mother went to synagogue, your father went to *minyan*. You lit Shabbat candles?

Yeah.

Do you have the sense, or do you recall, was it something that your neighbors knew about your family, that you practiced your religion? Or was it something that was kept kind of quiet? Was there any sense of ...

No. No.

... having to hide at that point?

No. They knew. No. We didn't have to hide anything. They knew that we were Jewish. And there was a Jewish butcher in town where my mother bought the meat, and she didn't buy any from anybody else. Then, later on, the butcher went out of business under Hitler. I don't remember the details of that. But, then, one of my parent's neighbors, who was a widow, she offered ... then Jews couldn't buy any meat, you know. They wouldn't ... they couldn't buy from the butcher, from the kosher butcher because he wasn't ...

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1 / BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2]

... for her and bring it to her at night, and this was a widow. And so she did that a few times and then the butcher reported her and told the SS or SA or whoever, that she had bought an unusually large amount of meat and they were thinking that she was buying for us. And so they called her and they told her that they would cut off her pension. I don't

know what all they would do to her if she wouldn't stop buying meat for the Jews. So she did. She stopped.

What year was this? Do you recall, roughly?

Let's see. Could have been '37.

Okay. Okay. But up until you were ... up until the time that you graduated, then, from school, did you ... you never really felt any sense of antisemitism or anything like that in your community?

No. No.

Tell me how that changed?

Well, of course, you have to remember that ... I mean, I ... when I ... after graduation, I started an apprenticeship in Aachen, which was nearby, 25 kilometers...

Spell that ... spell that for me if you will?

A-a-c-h-e-n.

Aachen. Okay. Thank you.

That's right on the border where Poland, Belgium and Germany come together. And ... but it is ... it's a German city. But from there you can walk through the forest and you are in Belgium or you are in Holland.

Tell me about your apprenticeship. What was that like?

So, well ... I went to ... as an apprentice to a dressmaker who was French. And she was very excellent. And I learned to design and to make dresses. And one day a week, we had to go to a school that ... that it's a German system that you have to get schooling while you have an apprenticeship. I went there for three years. Worked there for three years. Then I took an exam, which I passed. And then I worked for two years as this woman's assistant.

So this started, the apprenticeship began when you were 16?

At 16. Yeah, in 1932, after graduation from high school.

Was this something that you personally wanted to do, or was it something that was just available or that you had to do?

Well, well, no. What I wanted to do is study archeology. I had a cousin ...

Really?

... who was an archeologist. She went to Paris and then she was caught by the Nazis there, and she didn't survive. But, no, but here you do what you have to do. You know I had to somehow figure out how I was going to make a living.

Do you know how this opportunity came to be? Did it ... did your parents find someone for you to apprentice with?

Oh, no. This one ... this woman was ... she was ... she had several of my family as customers.

Was she Jewish?

No.

She was not Jewish.

She was French. She was French. Her husband was German.

Okay.

And, she was very excellent. She had quite a large group, maybe, maybe 30 people working there.

Did you enjoy it?

Yeah. I learned to sew and make dresses and cut and to design and all of that. And after I was through with ... see, I would take the train in the morning at 7:00 and it took about an hour to get there. And, it was a five-minute walk from the train to the studio. And then I spent the day there. And for lunch, I would go twice a week to this uncle's house there. People had dinner at noon, you know, in Germany.

Right.

And, he had a beautiful house. He was a very wealthy man.

So you were able to see some of your family when ...

I was ... that's right. And then, this one ... wait a minute. This one. No. Yeah, this one, was Adolph Dahl. He lived in Aachen also. And I would spend some time there. And so I was really kind of in between the two places. And on a normal day, when I got home, it was about a quarter to eight. So then I had dinner and I went to bed, pretty soon there, so there wasn't ... only on weekends I had time.

You mentioned that there were about 30 girls that were taking classes and doing the apprenticeship. Is that ... did I understand that correctly?

No. No. About 30 people worked there.

30 people worked there.

Yeah.

How many apprentices were there?

Maybe five.

Do you recall, was anybody else Jewish? Did you...

No. No.

You were the only Jew?

Yeah.

With Hitler starting to have such ... have a greater influence, how did that affect you? Were you ...

Well, it wasn't right. See, they would have ... this woman would have ... she had her own Jewish customers and some of them were, some people were smart. They just ... they left Germany early. They had her make beautiful dresses and so they had their wardrobe ready, which they wouldn't have needed anyway, I mean, but that's what they did. And then they would leave the country, some of them. And then she would get some of the wives of Nazis who had come into money, because she was expensive, you know. And it went ... oh, I would be ... I had become her assistant after my apprenticeship. I would help her help people pick out the material and so on, and the styles. And she ... and then she would ask me to go take something to the work room to the people, and she said, "I'll call you when I, when I want you to come back." See then, she would talk to the Nazis about the Jews, you see.

So she was protecting you?

No. No. She was protecting herself. She didn't want me to tell anybody else what she was saying.

So she was protecting herself. Okay.

But she was very nice to me. I can't, I couldn't complain about that.

You never felt any type of ... of ...

Oh yeah, I felt. You see, what happened then is the ... Hitler would make all these big speeches and they would have loudspeakers and have the speeches. They were asked to do that. There was an organization, *Arbeitsfund*, I think it was called.

I'm sorry. Say that again.

***Arbeitsfund*. That means group of organized working people. And they would ... they were obligated to deliver the Fuhrer's speech to the people.**

To the workers? Okay.

That's right. So she'd say to me, "You can take off that time." See she didn't want me to be there. And I would go into town and do some shopping or whatever.

How did the other workers treat you? I mean, if you were her assistant, I'm assuming that had held some level of authority. How did the others treat you?

Well, they were ... no, no, they were nice. They were nice. Because, you know, I was there for 5 years and I started out right after school and stayed. I was 20, I think, when I left.

So is it ... it is correct for me to say that the people that you worked with really had no feelings towards you one way or the other because you were Jewish?

Right.

What you felt was coming from the outside?

Right. Right. Well, I mean... see. They would all sit in that place and listen to the Fuhrer's speech, you know. And he'll talk about the Jews and the enemies and so on. And I was glad not to be there.

But you didn't feel that they treated you any differently after this started. Or did you?

Well ...

In small ways, perhaps?

It was kind of a strange, very unpleasant situation. Yeah. Yeah.

Just kind of a general feeling.

Discomfort.

It was changing.

Discomfort. Yeah. And, it just, I just really ... then I tried to figure out what I was going to do. How I get out, you know. And so I was there five years, and then I decided that, oh, one of my uncles was living in Berlin, and he said that he would help me if I were going to go to school there. And, by that time, my father couldn't work at all anymore. You know, he couldn't.

What was happening with your father at that point?

Well, the Nazis stopped him. Stopped him from working.

He lost all of his cattle?

Well, he lost his cattle. He lost his customers and he couldn't buy... They threatened the people that would do business with him. They would threaten.

How did your parents support themselves at that point?

Well, I wonder about that sometimes too.

Were they still in the home that you had grown up in?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean, they owned the house. They stayed there until, until the 9th of November when they ... I had come home. Oh, see, I have to go on where I was. So after five years, I went to Berlin, and I was going to a school there for dress designing to perfect my education.

This would have been '37, '38?

That would ... yeah, '37. And so I came there and I had a cousin who was an attorney. And he happened to be on vacation and I stayed at his place while he wasn't there until I found a place to live. And I went to that school. And then I think they closed ... the Nazis closed the school after I had been there for just a few days. And it was ... all this was '37 and '38. It was all breaking down already, you know. And every day they arrested people and they would come. When I first came to Berlin, it was ... I think it was the time of the Olympiad. And they tried to keep everything nice for the foreigners, you know. But after that was over, then they would come into... the, the groups of SA and SS people would come into the restaurants along Kurfurstendamm, which was like, I guess if you'd say, like the Plaza, where popular restaurants were and so on. And they would arrest all the Jewish people who were there. And so it was ... it was getting pretty terrible.

Were Jews at this point ... how else were Jews separated? How were the Jewish ... how was the Jewish community separated at that point in time?

At that time?

Yeah, in Berlin.

Oh, God. That was already pretty terrible because they couldn't work anymore. I rented a room in a house a beauti - an apartment really. They had these huge apartments in Berlin. I guess they used to have them here too, but they don't have anymore. But, anyway, I rented a room from an attorney who couldn't practice law anymore, you see. He couldn't. So, I guess his wife tried to make a little money by renting rooms. That's what people did. They did the best they could.

And since the school closed right after you started, what did you do?

So, so, so ... well, then I did go and get a job. I got a job designing and so on and what I could do and I worked there, I mean. Then they closed these places, one after the other. They were ... either the owner would leave, go to Holland, go to Belgium, go to England or wherever they could go. At first, it wasn't all that terrible. Later on, all the borders were closed and these countries didn't take anybody, you know.

Do you recall how you felt at the time, seeing what was ... seeing the arrests, seeing what was going on around you? Did you feel like you wanted to leave or was it still a sense of it can't be?

Well, you see, leaving ... you're always ... you know, my father always said, "Hitler isn't going to last." And that's true. But he outlasted him, you see...

Your father always felt that Hitler would not be a problem, ultimately?

Well, no. He said it was not going to be ... it wasn't going to last, you know. And that was true. It only ... it lasted 12 years. It lasted 12 years. That's what it was.

So your father never felt it was necessary for the family to ... ?

Well, that was very unfortunate. They didn't make ... for the longest time, they didn't make any effort to get out. And when they did, they were given a number, you know. And it was years away.

And do you remember what year it was that your father finally applied to emigrate?

It would have been 1938, '37. I don't know.

And you were living in Berlin then at the time.

Uh-huh. Right. Right.

Okay. Did you get back to your home to spend time with your family very often at that point?

Well, I got back there not very often. But it's a long trip. It's ... that was before airplanes, you know. [Laughs]

Yes. [Laughs]

And it was 600 miles in a truck. In a truck.

Oh, okay. I don't think I realized ... I didn't catch that it was that far away.

Yeah, from western Germany to Berlin. That was as far as it was. But, I made some friends in Berlin and I had... my, my ... this uncle's wife, she was from Berlin. And her father was a very prominent man in Germany under the Kaiser, already. He would go hunting with the Kaiser. And he had ... actually, I get these papers from Germany, you know. They have now. They want to keep up good relationships with the Jews that were former Germans. And they, this, her name was ... her maiden ... my aunt's maiden name was [Siemon?].

I'm sorry. Say that again?

[Siemon?].

[Siemon?].

[Siemon?], the last name. And they had a big [unclear], dress material, like silks and so on, store. And he was mentioned in one of the papers.

Really?

Yeah. And he was a ... he was the president of the big synagogue and so on. Very prominent. But anyway, she had family in Berlin, and they would invite me and I made friends. And I really had a very good time there, you know. I was young and I ...

Were you dating? Did you date then at that time?

At that time, yeah. I had a very good time.

How did you meet, once you got to Berlin and started settling in?

How did I meet people?

How did you make friends and how did you meet men to date and go to parties with? How did that happen?

Well, some through work, some through family, some ... I don't know how I met the people. But I did have quite a few friends there. So that was good.

And were your friends at that point Jewish or were they mixed?

No, they were Jewish. No. No. No. At that time, already, the Gentiles and the Jews did not mix anymore. That had all changed, you know.

Do you recall what kind of feeling that brought about? I mean, since you had grown up in a community that had you were completely accepted in, how did that affect you?

I really ... well ... I really didn't mind that so much. See, at first, when the Jews could not go to the theater, they started their own theater. They started ... they called it *Kulturverband. Kulturverein*, I think. Yeah. Where they would brought in very famous musicians and had concerts. That was in Aachen already, before I left. And there were always a lot of young Jewish people there, and it ...

So, this was before you left?

Before I left for Berlin.

Okay.

Before ... yeah. And there were ... they also had there a Jewish youth groups for young people. So I belonged to that. I was very active in sports. And I ... I'll show you. I, I was very good at that.

Let me get an understanding here. You're talking about the time frame before you left Aachen ...

Yeah.

... but after you graduated from school?

Yeah. School. Yeah. Now, I, I was very good in athletics. I don't know if I have ... I was a runner. Let's see if I find one here.

You were a runner? Yeah?

Yeah. Yeah. I don't know, this may go back further than that.

Did your family go to concerts and things a lot when you were growing up?

Uh-huh.

Yeah?

Well, there wasn't too much going on in Geilenkirchen, but ... let's see where I am on this here. See, one of those?

Uh-huh. That's you.

Yeah.

And how old were you here? Must have been 16? 17?

17, about, yeah. See, there we were. See now, this was, this was '34. I guess I have them all mixed. We were ice skating, and that was ... there was an old castle there. Here it's our old group. See, they're all Gentiles. They're not Jews.

So it wasn't so ...

Now, this here, this here ... these were my very good friends. And then when I came back, she lived in Hamm where my grandparents were. We were very close friends. And then the ... well, after Hitler, she didn't know me anymore, see.

How old were you when that happened? When she turned her back on you?

Well, about 16.

Yeah.

Yeah. So, that's kind of hard to ...

So by the time you moved to Berlin, which wasn't too long after this, from what I understand ...

Yeah.

... you already had experienced ...

Oh, antisemitism, yeah. Yeah. Oh, and then ...

What about the neighbors that your family had shared holidays with and gone to the parades with?

Didn't see them anymore.

Everybody cut off contact?

I think the people were also afraid, you see, especially in the small town. In the big city, you could disappear, you know. But in a small town, everybody knows everybody, and they know who goes in whose house and so on. And the people were all afraid.

So, how, do you ...

I always thought like the Catholics, the nuns. I thought that they were afraid too, that Hitler would do away with them.

Yeah. So once the sanctions took place and your family became more isolated, how did you ... do you know how they survived? I mean, how, you weren't ... your mother wasn't allowed to buy meat. Your father couldn't work.

Well, see ... I know. Well, but I wasn't ... I was away from home at that time, so I didn't ...

When it got really bad, that when you were already in Berlin?

Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh. So then I stayed in ... and my husband. My, My... well, at that time ...

When did you meet your husband? Was it before the war?

I met my husband when I was 18, and I had gone with my grandmother. See, my grandmother went away every year to a resort. I don't know. They thought it was beneficial for the health, you know. And while she couldn't go anymore into hotels who wouldn't take Jews, there was a Jewish hotel in, somewhere on the Rhine, and so she was going there. But she needed somebody to go with her. And so she wanted my mother to go and my mother couldn't get away. My mother said I should go. So I went with her, with my grandmother.

And you were about 18 at this time?

About. Yeah.

Okay.

And it was just before I went to Berlin. And ... so my grandmother had relatives who lived nearby where the resort area was. And I came to visit her and this aunt, who used to be married to my grandfather ... grandmother's brother who died, she was remarried and she lived in a place called Sinzig. And her parents had their 50th wedding anniversary, so she invited my grandmother and me to come and be with them at that party.

For the anniversary. How wonderful.

Yeah. And that's where I met my husband. And so ...

When you were on vacation with your grandmother.

Right. Right. And so, then ...

Where ... tell me what your husband's name was? Tell me his name.

His name? Walter Cole was his name.

Okay.

And he ...

And tell me where he lived?

He lived in Koblenz.

How old was he at the time?

He was six years older than I.

Okay.

He went to Berlin. I had already ... I think I was ready to go or whatever. I don't remember that exactly. But anyway, he did go to Berlin also. He went to attend a school for foot, like chiropodist, you know. My ... well he preparing to go abroad, you know, to have a trade of some kind because his father had a very large shoe store in Koblenz, and ...

Do you know how to spell Koblenz?

K-o-b-l-e-n-z.

Okay. Thank you.

It's a big city on the Rhine, south of Cologne.

Okay. So you ... when you moved to Berlin, Walter, that was his name, Walter?

Yeah.

He was on his way there also, at that point then, or soon after?

He either was, he either was there already or he came shortly thereafter. I don't know that exactly.

Okay.

And he stayed a few months.

Tell me about what ... what did you ... what were your dates like? What did you do when you went ... go on a date?

Oh, well ... Berlin is a beautiful city and has lovely surrounding, all lakes and just really very pretty. And we would go out in the morning and get on a boat and ... you'd have to go on the streetcar a certain way, and then you'd catch a boat. And then you'd go on the boat and it was lovely. And have dinner somewhere and they had those country inns where you could have good food and sit in the sun and get a suntan. And also, at that time, you could swim in the, in the lake, in one certain lake, I think, Jewish people could go swimming. But the rest they couldn't. And, see, it all went gradually. It was not as if it had all come at the same time. And so we did have a nice time. We ... as I said, in Berlin, they didn't stop you from going to movies or to ... I don't remember the theater so much. Maybe you couldn't go there. I don't know.

How long did you date before you decided to get married?

Oh, maybe, maybe ... well, then he went back home.

Oh, he left for awhile.

Yeah, he went back home to ... he had been in England before, and his father called him back because he was sick, so he had to go back. But that was a mistake, you see. He should have stayed abroad while he was in work. And then, he came back. Then he came to Berlin. And then, then he went back to Koblenz. And one day ... I, oh ... well, I stayed in Berlin. I did go and get my visa, and I didn't get the visa, but I had an examination from the consul, and they would ... they told me that I would get my visa in September, I think.

What year was this, do you recall?

'38.

Okay.

'38. I would get the visa in September, and they wouldn't give it to me earlier. They just wouldn't. And he got his earlier. So one day, I met him ... oh, then I went home. When I knew I was going to leave in September, I went home, maybe in August, to spend some time with my family. And, so one day I met him in Cologne, and it looked as if the war would

start any moment. The Germans were marching into Sudetenland. I don't know, I've forgot what the situation was, but it was pretty terrible. And we met an uncle of his, and his uncle said, "You know, if I'd be you and I've had [unclear]. If I had my papers and my passport, I'd go. I wouldn't wait because if the war starts, they're going to close the borders and then you can't get out. So he decided then, right then, to leave Germany, and he went across the border and went to Brussels, Belgium where he had a cousin, and then went from there to England. And he never said good-bye to his parents. He hated to leave like that, but it was really a very bad situation. Now, I couldn't get out because I didn't have a visa. And I, I just ... it was impossible for me. So I went home again and we were home on the night of November when the *Kristallnacht* happened, and ...

You were at home with your parents?

I was at home with my parents. And, they ...

Were your brother and sister there also?

No. My brother had gone. He had ... he had to get his visa in Stuttgart. That's another city in southern Germany. He had gone there. And then from there, he was going to my mother's family in Hamm, to say good-bye to them, and then he was coming home and go to America. And, well, anyway, we didn't know exactly where he was, whether he was still in Stuttgart or where he was. So I was at home, and during the night we were listening to the television ... to the radio. I don't know, television, radio, all day long trying to hear what was going on, and there was this Jewish boy who had killed a Nazi in Paris, you know. And we were kind of scared and very uncomfortable, but didn't know what was going to happen. So we went to bed at night. I was on the third floor in my bedroom. My parents were on the second floor. And, all of a sudden, during the night we hear a lot of noise in front of the house, and I looked out of my window and my father looked out of the window below, and he ... my father said, "What's going on there?" And some fellow from down there said, "Are you a Jew?" And my father said, "Yes." And he said, "In ten minutes we will burn your house down." Well, they couldn't actually do that because it was a row house, you know. Everything else would have burned up too. But that's what they said. So I had started to pack in order to leave Germany. So I finished my packing. I was trembling. I could just barely do it, and I shoved some stuff into my suitcase and then I had one of those big, overseas trunks, and we had a little wagon, and my parents pulled that, pushed the suitcase on that and then they took me to the station. And when we got to the station, there were all the Jews from the small town. You know, they were all there, and didn't know where to go and what to do. And my parents had decided that they would go back to the house and see what would happen. And they did. But the house wasn't burnt down. I went on to Cologne and didn't know where they were. Really, I didn't know whether they could stay in the house or what. So then I go ... I come ... on the train, I was just shaking. It was awful. First, I went and combed my hair and, you know, tried to look halfway ... anyway, I go to Cologne and I get off. And at this time, I thought that what was

going on was only in Geilenkirchen, in my hometown. I didn't know that it was everywhere.

Yeah.

I get off the train in Cologne and I walk out on the street, and they had very beautiful stores all around, close to the railroad station and lots of them were owned by Jews. The windows were smashed in and the merchandise was on the street, and it just looked awful. So then I realized that it wasn't just in my town. But I still had no idea of the extent of all of this. So then there was a traveling agency with whom I had before, I had bought the tickets for my trip. I was supposed to leave Germany on the 18th of November from Hamburg. So I went to the travel agency to find out whether I could exchange that for an earlier ticket or what I could do. And I was standing in line and, all of a sudden, somebody tapped on my shoulder, and there was my brother. He had gone to the same place to ... I, you see, I had no idea where he was.

Oh, my!

And ... so we were so happy to see each other. And then he ... oh, and then we talked to the travel agent and they said that in order to get to Belgium and to Holland, we had to have visas from those countries. And by that time, I did have my American visa so then I ... he and I both went to the consulate and got the visas, because we had American visas. Otherwise, they wouldn't have given them to us.

Oh.

Because they were not ... they didn't want any more Jews. They had enough.

So they would let you come in so you could then go out ...

Just for two days or three days so there it was. They just let us, let us come in come in. And so I got this, and then my brother, and walked up and down in Cologne. They have very lovely streets and stores and all, and restaurants and hotels. And each place had a sign on, "Jews are not wanted," or "Jews are our misfortune." And "No Jews allowed in here!" and so on. So we were looking for a place for hotel to stay over night, and finally we decided we'd just have to go in someplace. And we didn't really look Jewish, what you'd call looked Jewish. They couldn't tell whether we were Jewish or not. So ... our name also was not particularly Jewish.

Right.

And so we stayed, registered in a hotel right near the railway station. And at the big cathedral there, it's a very popular place for foreigners to – a lot of people come there. Anyway, we registered and then we tried to call our family, our parents, and called our

house, and there was no answer. And then we did find them at one of my uncles. By that time, I had three uncles living in Aachen. And they were at one uncle's and they had what they called house arrest there. They were not in prison, but they were ...

Right.

... had to stay in the house. So...

So your parents had been told that they had to leave their home?

Yeah.

So they moved in with one of your uncles?

Well, I don't know whether they were told that they had to leave their house. Probably, they probably felt they had to because it was dangerous there. In Aachen ... you see, in the bigger cities, it was easier to disappear and the people didn't ... they didn't know their neighbors. It's just like here, you know. You don't know who ... I don't know where you live, but in most places, you don't know who your neighbors are.

Yeah.

But in the cities ... but in the country, you do. So, anyway, so that's where my parents went. I was happy to find them, and we then decided that we would get out of Germany, my brother and I, as quickly as we could. And I went back to Aachen the next day, and came to my parents who were staying with my uncle, and he had sent a chauffeur to pick me up, and, chauffeur was a very nice young man who I had known before. I mean, he was not a chauffeur before. He was a young lawyer or something else. But he had now accepted a job as a chauffeur because that was all that was available to him. And he drove me to my parents' house. And then, well, I saw that they were... They were not hurt physically and they didn't know what was going to happen. And my father called the police and got permission for himself to take me to the railway station. Not my mother, she couldn't go. She had to stay. And that's what he did. That's the last time I saw him. He took me to the station. And then, you know, after we ... well, then I went to Brussels that night and I stayed there at Walter's cousin's house. And then from Brussels, the next day, I went to - now, my brother had gone back to Essen where he was working at the time.

What's the name of this place?

Essen.

Essen? Okay.

Essen. E-s-s-e-n. Where he was working. And I didn't know where he ... what he would do, you know. So, in the morning, well, I got on the boat at night to cross the channel. And in the morning, you have to stand in line with your passport. There somebody taps on my shoulder, and there was my brother. He had come on the same ship with me and I didn't know it. And we had cousins in London. And so we stayed in London until the ship came, then Manhattan, and ...

And then both ... you and your brother sailed ... at the same time?

Yeah, and Walter, my future husband too, and a cousin of mine, who is now in New York. I didn't know he was there either. We was all on the same boat.

And this was in November '38?

'38, and the American Ambassador, that was ... that left Germany. Also he was on that ship there too.

When ... do you know when your parents, or what happened, what the progression was, where your parents ended up?

My parents sold the house in Geilenkirchen.

They were able to sell it?

Yeah, but they ... you know.

Yeah, relative. Sure.

For a very small price, you know. They just had to get out there. And then they rented ... I had this one uncle who had a very large house, and he rented. Nobody was working anymore, you know, rented the first floor to my parents and that's where they stayed until they were sent to the concentration camps.

When were they sent to the camps?

Around 1940.

Do you know which camps they were sent to?

Uh-huh.

Where were they sent?

[Unclear]

Both of them together?

Uh-huh. So were Walter's parents. They were sent to the same camp. At a different time, but it seems that from that part of Germany, that's where they sent them. That's district Lublin. And they just picked a day when they were ... where they said they died. You know. December 30, 1942, I think, or '43. I don't know which. I have it written down.

Both of your parents were killed in the camps?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

So once you came to America, did you have ... were you able to communicate with them at all up until the time that they were sent away?

Yes. Yes. I did. I had ... I wrote to them and they wrote to me. And they were hoping to come. And they had kind of a late number. Then we were trying to bring them to Cuba and trying to do this and that. Didn't have any money. Didn't have much of a job.

No.

You know. Couldn't borrow the money either. So it was ... and everybody we knew didn't have anything either.

No.

And ... so it was ... we just ... I really always felt terrible that we couldn't manage to get them out.

What about your sister? Where was she at this point?

Oh, yeah. My sister. She ... now I told you we went to England, my brother and I. And in England I had a cousin. And the cousin made arrangements for my sister to come to England as a domestic, I mean, doing housework or with children or something like that. And so she got out. She lived until five years ago. She died in London.

She lived in England?

Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah.

Okay.

She has two sons, and one, one is in Minneapolis. He works for the Minnesota Mining. And the other one is in England.

Good company, I like that.

Is it?

What about your grandparents that were ... that you ... your father's father had already passed away before you were born.

He died very young. And my grandmother ...

Your grandmother and then your mother's parents, what happened to them?

My grandfather died. He ... my grandfather was a very fortunate man because he had a good life. You see, he lived until 1933, April '33, when they were sitting *shiva*. It was when Hitler took over, and my grandfather had just died. So he didn't experience any of that. And I am grateful for that because he was a very ... I mean, it would have hurt him. Just like it hurt all of us. So he didn't experience that. My grandmother, my mother's mother, lived a few years after that, and then she died also. A natural death.

Before *Kristallnacht*?

Yeah. She died a natural death. And my other grandmother, the one that lived to be 94, she died in Solingen. Well, she was very old and she lived with her daughter and son-in-law there, and she died. She had, well, at 94, she had diabetes in her foot. And...

What year was this, roughly?

Maybe '39, '40. '40, I guess.

Okay.

And the doctor said they'd have to amputate the leg, and so her children got together and they decided not to have her go through that at her age, which would have been terrible. So she never knew that, you know. So then she died a normal, normal death.

What about all of your parents' siblings? How many of them survived?

Very few. I had a picture in here that had the family on ... I have to look. See, some of these things here, I had ... I have one that had the whole family on it. See, this is our house in, here, in Geilenkirchen. This is me and my ...

Such wonderful smiles.

This is when I was active in sports. And this is my, my grandfather, my grandmother. This is our house ...

You brought all of these pictures with you when you left?

No, well ... this is very tiny. I have a big one of that. This is, see, here, this is my ... these are the same grandparents when they were young, and this is my grandfather. I don't know who made the copies. This is ... these are my parents. These are some of the sport activities.

But you did have some aunts and uncles that ...

Survived?

Yeah.

Here. This is my grandmother, the other one. I was looking for one particular picture that had the whole family on it. Maybe I ... oh, here it is. This is my grandmother's 70th birthday, and these are all her children and [unclear] ...

My goodness!

Yeah.

How wonderful!

It was a great family!

There must be 30 people here!

Well, she had 11 children, and they were all married and that makes 22. And, well these, this is her brother and his wife, I think. And this is another brother and his wife and these are all her children. Well, most of them died in the concentration camps.

Okay. So you and your husband, then, came to America on the same ship. Where did you first move to when you got here?

Well, he had, you see, we had separate papers.

Yeah, you weren't ... yeah. You weren't married yet at this point.

No. No. He went to St. Louis where he had a friend, and I came to Kansas City where I had my uncle and aunt. The Greens. My cousin ...

What was the ... what was your uncle and aunt's names?

Green. Green, You know Rudy Green?

Rudy Green? Un-huh.

That's my cousin.

Okay. Cousin, okay.

He's still living. My uncle and aunt died.

Okay.

So I came to Kansas City and I stayed here for a while and worked in the garment industry here. And ...

What was your ... what did you do in your first job when you started working?

Oh, work on a machine at sewing. And they didn't want me. They had ... you know, at that time, I didn't even know that. There was a lot of unemployment here in 1938. That's when I came. And ...

Did you experience any antisemitism in the United States when you first got here? Do you recall?

No, I don't know. I really only dealt with Jewish people.

Did you? Okay.

I, yeah. I don't know whose factory I worked in. But, the union is the one that gave me trouble. They didn't want me to work there because I wasn't a union member and they wouldn't let me join the union and they had a ...

Why would they not let you join the union?

Because I think they had unemployed people in the union. But then I did get a job.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2 / BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

So I worked there and then I was laid off. And then I didn't have a job and I couldn't get a job. Then I went to St. Louis where they also have ... in those days, Kansas City and St. Louis were great dressmaking centers. They had all these junior dress manufacturers who were really doing very well. And I got a job in St. Louis with a big company, and I worked there for a number of years.

How long were you in Kansas City before you moved to St. Louis?

About a year.

About a year?

Yeah.

And did you and Walter visit back and forth?

Yeah. Right.

Or did you just correspond?

No. No. He would ... he'd come here.

You were able to visit?

Yeah.

And what was he doing?

He was working in a shoe factory, being an inspector. He had a really hard time because in the first place, you know, you come and you're new and you don't know the ropes. And the people resent to have their merchandise returned to them anyway. And so he made ... had quite a few different jobs. It was, It was not an easy time. And, then came the war and he was drafted in the army. And he was sent to Greeley, Colorado and became an interpreter in the prisoner of war camp. And when he was there ... do you know where Greeley is?

Uh-huh, vaguely.

Yeah. Yeah, not too far from Denver.

Yeah.

When he was there for a while, he called and he said I should come up there. I should come there. And he didn't know how long he would be there, but he thought I should do that. So I subleased my apartment in St. Louis and moved to Denver, to Greeley. And it turned out that we were there for two years and that's where my oldest daughter was born.

When were you all married?

Oh, I forgot about that. 1940 in St. Louis by Rabbi Gordon at Temple Shaare Emeth.

Oh, okay. I've got friends who go there. Yeah.

Oh, is that? It's nice. It's very nice. My brother goes there too, every time when we come.

Did your brother go directly to St. Louis when ...

No. No. He came to Kansas City.

He was here too.

And then, see, when I was in St. Louis, then he decided to come to St. Louis. So, but he then worked for the May Company, for Famous and [unclear]. And ...

So you had only ... you had been in St. Louis then for just about a year or maybe a little bit less when you and Walter got married? Is that ... am I understanding this correctly?

Yeah. Right. Uh-huh. Yeah. And, so anyway, we lived in Greeley for two years and came home.

Tell me about the birth of your daughter. What's her name? Your oldest daughter.

Carol.

Carol?

Carol, Uh-huh.

Okay. And when was she born?

Well, she was born in 1945 on January 24th. She just had her birthday.

Congratulations.

Thank you. She's coming this weekend. She's a psychiatrist in Washington, D.C. She ... well, Greeley was very nice. It was a very peaceful time. We didn't know from one day to the next whether we'd be there the following day, you know, because he could always be transferred or shipped overseas or whatever. You didn't know that.

Were you working at that time before Carol was born?

No.

No?

No.

How did you spend your days? What was Greeley like for you? Was it ...

Oh, I'd ... I ... it was a tiny little apartment. A living room with a ... I think you call it a Murphy bed, one that comes out of the wall. And when Carol was born, we put a crib in there in the corner. And there was a tiny kitchen, and a porch and a bathroom.

What about your neighbors? Were there any Jewish people where you lived?

They were wonderful. No. No.

So, again, you were pretty isolated?

They were no Jewish people. Yeah, they all ... no, not really. Because there was one couple there. Their name was Rumacher and they were from St. Louis. And he was from Vienna originally. And we became very good friends. And we still ... he passed away recently, but I still talk to her and so she just said the other day that when I had a child, she thought, "Well, if we have the nerve to have a child, then they could too."

Really?

So they had a boy. Yeah. Anyway, so we stayed there for two years and it was very nice. The sergeant lived across the street in a house with his family and we all were very friendly and entertained each other and it was fun. It was very nice.

So again ...

It was a very peaceful time in Greeley.

No sense of being made ...

Antisemitism?

... being made to feel different because you were Jewish at that point?

No. No.

And in St. Louis, when you were in St. Louis, were you ... was ... I mean, I know that there's a very large Jewish community there now. Were you ... did you live and participate in the Jewish community for the time you were in St. Louis or were you ...

Well, you see, I wasn't in St. Louis all that long really.

For very long?

And I'd have to admit this, that there was ... there were these German Jewish organizations, you know, and they ... it's just like the New Americans here, you know, the Polish and Russian Jews. Those people were all one group and they became friends and they entertained each other and had dinners, and you know, and became friends.

But that wasn't something that you all participated with?

Yeah, we did. We did.

Oh, you did. You did. Okay.

We did. We enjoyed that very much. Actually, I have some friends. Well, I have one friend in Greeley ... in Palm Springs who I, whom I met on the ship coming over. And she and I couldn't get off the ship because we were single women and we had to be waiting ... we had to wait for somebody to pick us up. So that's where I met her. And we have remained friends ever since. It turned out that she went to St. Louis. She married a man who was a doctor there. And he was an intern, or he wasn't quite finished yet. But anyway, we remained friends and I, I saw her just last year yet, after 60 years or more.

How wonderful.

Yes.

Now, I'm ... I'm forgetting now. Did we talk about when you moved to St. Louis, I know you weren't there for very long now. But did you work while you were there?

Yeah.

You did.

Yeah.

Again in the garment industry?

I did. I did. I did. Yeah.

Okay, now I remembering you mentioned that.

I did get, well, I worked for a big company for Forest City. They made Carol King dresses and Martha Manning and a lot of them. And they were very successful. And I really enjoyed working there. And I stayed there until almost until I went to Greeley.

Once you left Greeley, where did you move to?

Back to St. Louis.

Back to St. Louis?

Yeah. Uh-huh.

Okay.

So then my husband started working for a company that sold floor covering. The man was from Vienna, the owner. And so he worked there for several years. And then they opened a branch in Kansas City, and so I had family here and ...

Was Carol still your only child at that point?

No. Oh, no. No. I had Ann, who is Ann Kaufman, do you know her?

I know the name. Yeah.

Her husband passed away this last year. Herb Kaufman.

I do know the name. Maybe my parents may have known him.

The doctor.

I'm not sure.

She lives right down the street.

When was she born?

She was born on January 1st, 1948.

In St. Louis?

In St. Louis, and then Steve, who was born here in Kansas City. We have him.

Now I know a Steve Cole.

My son?

I don't know if it's your son, but I know a Steve Cole, yeah. I'm trying to remember. I ...

He's married to Beth.

Yeah.

You know her?

Oh, yeah! Actually, I'm taking a class with Beth. The Melton class.

Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Yeah, that's familiar. Okay. Yeah.

Yeah, they have three little kids.

Yeah. Okay.

A houseful. A handful.

When was Steve born?

Steve was born ten years later than Ann, 50 ... she was born in '45. He was born in '55.

Okay.

Yeah, so ... where were we?

Let's see, moving back to Kansas City.

Oh, yeah. Well, then we lived in President Gardens. Everybody lived in President Gardens.

Everybody lived in President Gardens. I used to go visit people's grandparents in President Gardens.

Yeah.

Sure.

And then we built a house at Meadow Lake. You know where that is?

Uh-huh. My aunt and uncle lived there.

Who is your ...

They're not ... they moved away back in the '60s. The name was Stoyer.

No, I don't know them. But there were a lot of young couples who moved from President Gardens into the Meadow Lake. And from there, we moved here. When Steve was born, the house was too small. So we bought this in '40, in '58. And we've been here ever since. Then ... oh, then Walter went in business for himself. And ...

What was his business?

Floor covering. He went into that business. And he worked in that until he retired when he was 65 or 66. And he sold it, and it's still under the same name, W.G. Cole Floor Products Company.

Wonderful.

Well, yeah.

Now during your marriage, did you work outside the home at all?

Well, the first ...

After ... well, after your children were born.

After the children ... well, I helped him in the office, see. Yeah, I worked there. Uh-huh.

And, what ... tell me about when your children were young. Did you have any Jewish family traditions that you brought ... you know, that you started within your own home, or ...

Well, let's see.

Was that something that you remember as being important?

It is important to me. Yeah. I tried to do things the way I had seen them at my house, you know. When we joined Temple ...

B'nai Jehudah.

... B'nai Jehudah, yeah. And that's where our kids went to Sunday school. Now Steve is a and Beth joined Beth Shalom because she, she likes a little more religion than they have at the temple. So, you know, it ... it's okay with me.

So tell me about what ... what was your family's Seder like when your children were small? Did you have other family that would come and celebrate with you or ... not just Seder, but any of the holidays. Did you have ...

Well, we had, like I said, we started out with a group of people who came from Germany or Austria and spoke German, and even though later on we didn't speak German anymore amongst this group, you know. But, those people, really they made all friends and, of course, we had some family. And when I came to Kansas City, my aunt ... my uncle and aunt ... their relatives were very nice to me. I remember arriving at the Union Station here coming from New York and there was my Aunt Millie and her three cousins, Mrs. Gladstone and Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Liebman, They all came to pick me up at the station. And then that night, they came to the house and they were all very nice, you know.

Okay. Tell me a little bit what ... something that I'm kind of interested in. What was your view of America before you came here? What did you think America was going to be? Did you have expectations, or was it just someplace safe to be at that point?

Well, I don't know that I ... well, I read about America. I remember reading a book. You see, in Germany, if you had a job and they want to fire you or they want to replace you, whatever, they have to give you a certain number of weeks notice. They cannot just say, "We don't want you anymore." And I remember reading a book about ... that somebody wrote who had worked in America and then came back to Germany and wrote about how terribly busy he was. How hard he had worked before Christmas, and then came Christmas Eve and they told them you don't have to come back tomorrow. So the laws were entirely different here than what we had seen for workers over there. So I didn't know what to expect. I really didn't. Actually, I did not know about the Depression, how bad it had been here. I really did not know that.

So once you knew ...

Because, you know, all the ...

I'm sorry.

You know, all the time, the bad times, like even in World War I or during the inflation that they had in Germany ... see, they had an inflation in 1920, a terrible inflation where they devalued all the money, but we never went hungry. See, never. And I, I learned here that people did go hungry, you know. So ... '

What was the biggest challenge for you moving to America, being in Kansas City or, you know, then St. Louis? What do you recall as being the biggest challenge?

Well, in the first place, the weather. I remember the first summer here. The heat was unbearable! Didn't have air conditioning. You know, we are all now spoiled.

Yeah.

Air-conditioned house, air-conditioned car. You know? So we just ...

The weather was a lot different.

The weather was, yeah. I remember Mrs. Glads – and people would just try to ignore the weather. I remember Mrs. Gladstone came to the house. My aunt lived on 42nd and Tracy. And she was going on the ... she was going downtown, Mrs. Gladstone. And she was wearing a big, black hat. And she was wearing hose and gloves and makeup that was running down her face. They didn't pay any attention to the weather. They just dressed as they ...

Go on about her business. Yeah.

Right. Right.

I know that you had ... we already talked about you learned English. You studied English when you were in school and you felt that you knew the language pretty well. Once you got here, did you still feel like you knew it very well?

Well, no. But I tell you, I could speak pretty well. But I couldn't understand very well. It seemed that the people all talked very fast.

Yeah.

When I came to New York.

How long were you in New York before you came to Kansas City?

To Kansas City? I don't know. Three or four days, maybe.

Oh, a very short period of time.

I don't know. I didn't work there at all because I had relatives here, and I do know that the people in New York, the ones that picked me up. They were ... let's see. My grandmother's brothers, my grandmother's brother's children, I think. And I had never met them before. And their name was Mayer. And they picked me up and they took us to their house and I stayed there a few days. And Walter stayed with some friends of his or some relative ... I don't know who it was. But anyway, one of the people where we were staying asked me to speak at a Hadassah meeting that was taking place and she thought that the people would be interested to hear what was going on in Germany. So I could ... I did go there. In the first place, they were surprised that I looked like any person.

Anybody else. Yeah.

You know, yeah. Like everybody else. I came from Berlin, that was a big city, you know. Anyway, I could speak much better then. They listened to what I told them and then they started asking me questions. And that was difficult.

That was a challenge.

Yes. Right. Uh-huh.

Okay. Let me backtrack again a minute. Did you ... you came through Ellis Island when ...

No. No.

You did not go through Ellis Island. How did you ... oh, you came by ...

By ship. Ship.

Okay. So what port did you come in through?

I don't know.

Not Ellis Island? Hmm.

Not Ellis ... certainly, not Ellis Island. I just got on the ship in Southampton and got off in New York. It wasn't Ellis Island.

Okay. Okay.

I don't know who came ... Ellis Island probably was earlier people.

I'm trying to remember the dates. Once you got to Kansas City, and then later to St. Louis, and you were making new friends, the groups that you participated with, did you share your experiences with each other about what your families had been through?

Very little. Very little. Because it was a constant hurt that we were unable to bring our parents out. It is still hard for me to live with that because so many people, so many families, came out together. But it was, in part, also my parents' fault. They would ... my father would say, "Well ... " See, if they didn't have any money, they would have probably gone easier. But they figured even if he wasn't working, they had enough to get by, and then they would come when we were settled. That's the general idea. But they never made it, you see.

What about your children? Did your children ask you questions about your parents and ...

You know, I talked very little to my children about all of this. And one of the reasons that I didn't is because I didn't want them to grow up with that burden that I had carry. To be depressed by the fact that they were Jewish or that they would be endangered because they were Jewish. I didn't want them to feel that way. So I hardly ever ... that may have been a mistake because they may have ... it may have been better if I had talked about it; for them and for me.

Do you feel that this was a presence in your life? I mean, was it something ... I mean, obviously it's a presence in your life on a daily basis. But was it something that you were ... that you consciously thought about on a daily basis for many years after you came here? Or did it ...

That I didn't want to ... that I didn't want them to grow up with this?

Well, that, and ...

Yeah.

... and your memories of ... and the feelings that you had of having had to have left your parents behind. Was it something that ...

It depressed me all my life. Yes. And, and, well, you see, I just didn't want the children to grow up feeling because they were Jews, terrible things could happen to them, like they happened to me and my family.

So this was protecting them?

That's ... in a way. I guess it was. But I don't know whether it was a wise thing to do. I don't know.

When did you become an American citizen?

Oh, I was in Greeley, Colorado.

Greeley, Colorado?

That must have been, oh, '45 or '46.

Did you and your husband do that at the same time? Did you get your citizenship?

No. He became a citizen almost ... I think he became a citizen right quickly when he was up there. I don't know exactly how that ... I forgot the date. I have the papers. But I don't remember.

What about after marriage and your children? You now have three children that you're raising. What other things did you do for fun or for hobbies? What kind of things did you do with your friends?

I played bridge. [Laughs]

I knew there had to be something like that. Okay. Bridge, canasta. Were there canasta clubs? Yeah?

I used to do that. I used to do that. Yeah, we played. You know, for years, we really did. But, you see, my husband had a stroke ten years ago and we were on a ship on a cruise. And he was evacuated to Grand Cayman Island and that was a terrible experience. And then Steve came down there to help us to get home, and he was ... and my son-in-law, Herb Kaufman picked us up with an ambulance and took him to the hospital. He was in the hospital for two months and he never regained his full movements. So for seven years he was paralyzed. And partly, you know, not totally, but partly he was in a wheelchair. And three years ago he passed away. And so it seems just like a very long time that we were confined to the house.

What about today? What do you do with your friends today?

Oh, gosh! I don't know. I go ... yesterday, I went ... I go to water aerobics and ...

Yeah?

And I caught a cold yesterday. I have a little cold. So I'm not going tomorrow. And I'm taking a computer course. I ... this is the second one I'm taking. But I don't really like it. I don't think I'm going to do it.

You never know. Give it a try. Give it a try. Oh, here's an interesting question. Are there sounds or smells or things that you may not think about that will bring back memories?

Sounds? No.

I'm trying to think what some of the other people I've talked to have said.

Have you talked to many?

This is the ... your the fourth person I've been privileged to talk to. This has been a great privilege for me.

Oh, you enjoy doing it?

I learn a lot, yeah.

I know Phyllis Green is doing that too. Phyllis, you know her?

No. There is a bunch of us who are, yeah. Let's see. What about ... let me ... we've passed that. What about God? When we talked about formal religion and tradition, where ... what role has God played in your life?

Well, I don't know.

Do you believe in God?

Yeah, I believe in God. I believe in God. I don't know exactly how much I believe. I mean, I know that there is a God. And ... I don't know. It's hard. It's very hard to put into words.

It's a hard question.

Well, I have ... I have this feeling that somehow you create your own, in a way, you are responsible for the things that happen to you, in most cases, because there's always a reaction to every action that you take, you know. And whether that is God's doing or whose it is, it's just that the good you do and the bad you do, it all comes back to you.

Okay. Do you still attend the synagogue? Do you go to the temple?

Uh-huh.

Yeah?

Uh-huh Yeah.

Still B'nai Jehudah?

Uh-huh.

Okay. What's your favorite Jewish holiday, if you have a favorite?

Yeah, yeah. I guess, I like the high holy days like Rosh Hashanah.

Okay.

Uh-huh. Yeah.

What does being an American mean to you at this point in your life?

Well, I am very happy to be an American citizen and I am very grateful to this country for making my life possible the way it is. And America is a great country.

From what you've seen over your years here, do you feel like many, or most, Americans take these things for granted? Do you see an appreciation from other people?

From other people?

Yeah.

No, I think they take it for granted because they grew up with it. Well, maybe not my generation so much.

Yeah.

Because we have ... I mean people who are as old as I, they have seen, like I was talking about, the heat and the cold, and the ... you know. I think that, for instance, people like my grandfather, when they died, they felt they had lived a long life and it's been hot and it's been cold and it's been drafty and it ... you know. Especially with them, it was in the mountains. It's not always that pleasant. Life isn't ... you know, it's hard. And I think today we are all rather spoiled. You know, life is easy. So, this is a great country.

Yeah. I think that's it.

Okay.