

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HARDY W. KUPFERBERG

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher

Date: September 23, 1981

© 2012

Holocaust Oral History Archive

Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

HK - Hardy W. Kupferberg [interviewee]

JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]

Date: September 23, 1981

Tape one, side one:

JF: Mrs. Kupferberg, can you tell us where and when you were born, and a little bit about your childhood?

HK: I was born September 15, 1922. My father had...

JF: Where were you born?

HK: In Berlin.

JF: In Berlin.

HK: My father had a lamp factory and I was a very happy child until I was three years old, then my mother passed away.

JF: What caused her death?

HK: She was-- she had an operation and she died. And, after this, I had, I think I had before already a governess, I'm not sure, but I remember I had a governess and a house lady and a cook. We had four or five employees in the house, because my father was a big businessman and only nights at home. And he had to give parties so there was somebody else who made it, and I had aunts and uncles and cousins. They were all a little bit older than I, but it was a wonderful family.

JF: Did you have any brothers or sisters of your own?

HK: I had no brothers or sisters, thank God, otherwise I would have had even more to mourn. And, after four-- of course many things happened during this time which I don't remember but was often told to me. We had many burglaries since the woman of the house was missing, and at one time I was even poisoned in order to take the carpets out of the house, of the large apartment. I was born in a villa. We had a villa outside of Berlin and as my mother died we moved into a large apartment in the Tiergartenviertel of Berlin. And because my mother-- my father made this house for my mother. Inside it had 13 rooms and my father was an architect, an engineer, he was a wonderful man. Besides being very knowledgeable he was also very humble. And he always let me know and many other people know there's nobody is more than himself and nobody is less than himself.

JF: What kind of education did you have?

HK: I, my father married after he was four years a widow. I went to school; I began school in 1927 and at this time the schools, the, how you say, first schools, first schooling, we had Jewish hours as the Christian children has their, their Christian religion.

JF: So this was a public school?

HK: It was a public school, this is what I wanted to say, in public schools the

first four years were public schooling and we had in this public schooling in Berlin Jewish religion. These were always the first-- not every day-- but these were the first two hours in the morning and the Christian children went to their particular religions, and we went to, to Jewish ones.

JF: Did you [unclear]?

HK: We were taught not Yiddish. We were taught Hebrew, and of course the Bible and at this time I did not know anything about antisemitism. Maybe it was there, but we were really too happy children-- didn't really know about it. Also in Berlin in this neighborhood we lived we did not call it Jewish neighborhoods. We did not have like here personal sectors where Jewish or mixed or not Jewish, it was always mixed. In Germany it was so that there were only Germans with different kinds of religions, and Jews, but we lived together in very large apartment houses and really nobody knows who this person, what religion this person had. It was not like a Jewish sector. Of course the poorer ones lived in the poor section, but this has nothing to do with Jewish, with Jewish people.

JF: Did you...

HK: Poor people went to poor sections. But in my school, in my public school, happened to be very many Jewish children.

JF: Did you have friends who were non-Jews?

HK: Yes.

JF: And did you experience at any time any kind of trouble?

HK: At this time in 1927 until 1931 I did not experience anything, any antisemitism, not at all, not in the house and not in school. We were, we, it could be this, I was, that my friends were Jewish. I don't remember any more that they were but I guess there were many Christian children also. I also remember we had my, my parents had many friends, and there may have been many gentile friends also. Until 1931.

JF: Before we get to 1931, was your father or any other man in your family in the army in Germany?

HK: My father, oh yes. All brothers of my father, but my father were eleven sisters and brothers-- were eight brothers and three sisters. The brothers were all in the army except the smallest one, I think. My father had the Iron Cross and the *Orden Pour le Mérite*¹. The *Orden Pour le Mérite* it is only given very seldom. It is one of the highest medals what soldiers could get. I had an uncle by marriage who also had it. But I think all the brothers had the Iron Cross. My father had both. I remember this very well, because later on I will tell you what I did with those two *Ordens* [Ger: medals].

JF: What role did he play in the army?

HK: This I don't know. He did not talk too much about it. My father did not say very much about his being what he was in the military because there were so many

¹*Orden Pour le Mérite*: highest Prussian décoration - distinguished service medal.

different other things to say when he came home at night. I always, since I was a small child every Friday night I got a book. And since many years I realized how, what a wonderful man my father was. He was so busy with his business, and still he had time to question me about the book what I got the Friday before, and told me that I should tell him what I think about it. And he must have read it at least a little bit, because sometimes his opinion was different. I'm talking now about children's books. His opinion was a little bit different, but he wanted me to know that I should always have my own opinion and not his. I took it for granted, of course, but since I have my own child I cannot begin to marvel what a wonderful man he was.

JF: What was the religious nature of your home?

HK: My father was in the *Vorstand* [Ger.: board of directors] what do you say, in the, in his temple at VetzerStrasse. His factory was closed on Passover, on Rosh Hashanah, on Yom Kippur. He went to temple, he had a high hat, a certain high hat which was in the temple and he put it on. He was sitting in front near the *bima* in synagogue. It was a Liberal synagogue which would you ca-, which would mean here Conservative, leaning towards the Orthodox. Men and women were sitting apart. The women were sitting upstairs, but it was a large synagogue, beautiful one, and I will tell later how big a role the temple was playing in our terrible youth. In 1931 I remember about *Jude*, being called all of a sudden being called *Juden*. *Juden* this one, *Juden* that. And I came home. At first I couldn't understand it. But I couldn't, I always knew I was a Jew, of course, I always went to temple from my earliest years on, and having beautiful holidays. I always know I was Jewish, and I was always very proud of, but I was not used all of a sudden being called by my friends in school in such a terrible way. Then I, as I was 10 years old, I was in a hospital. I had a appendix operation, which was, my appendix broke because my father was away and I was complaining about having pain, but my mother didn't care so much because my second mother was a very educated woman but I think she was not up to having right away a ready-made at the time, seven-year-old girl. And she, her explaining we are not too bright, and I went to my aunt's very often also later. She was at first very, very nice, but probably not up to it, and then with the Hitler time she had her own things which were terrible for her. All right, about this later. In 1932, I came in the, four years I was in public school, and then I came to the *Lyzeum*. The *Lyzeum* right away, it was a *Lyzeum*, it was of course what you call here high school or even a little bit more, it was an *Oberlyzeum*, it was a *Königin Louise Oberlyzeum*. *Oberlyzeum* was a little higher than *Lyzeum*. It was the highest school what, what they had. But I don't remember being tested for it. Schooling, higher schooling had to be paid in Germany. It was not free. *Lyzeum* was not free. Only public school was free.

JF: This was still open to the Jewish population.

HK: Yes, I'm talking about now in the 30s, *ja*, '31, '32, I began school in 1927, so I came to the *Lyzeum* in '31. In *Lyzeum* already like I said before in 1931, it was

not nice any more.

JF: What do you mean by that?

HK: The children were extremely mean to us and we had in Germany much snow in the winter, during the winter. It was not like here, once or twice and talked about, it was once a week maybe or, or even more. So we got, we Jewish children, we got many snowballs even with nails in it. It was, it was terrible. And in 1932 also at one time my father came to school, my father came to school, and not my mother, and complained that I was bloodied, as I came home completely bloody, and if he could not take care of this. And, he turned his lapel around and he showed my father his swastika.

JF: This was who?

HK: This was in 1932, or even the end of 1931.

JF: Was this, this was the teacher or the principal?

HK: This was the teacher.

JF: The teacher.

HK: I do not think it wa-, no, it was the teacher. My father came to the teacher and complained to her I came home all bloody, and how children sometimes came home, but I was a girl, not a boy, you know, who got into fights. Girls usually did not go into fights.

JF: Did the teacher say something as well besides showing her swastika?

HK: I do not remember this anymore, but my father was very distressed and he said, "We hope it will get better." In 1933 Hitler came to power. I was in a hospital about this time. I was 10 years old. And in a hospital I had my first really horrible experience. In school, I think at this time I was still too much a happy and outgoing child, 'cause I took this, I took this so seriously. But, as I came to the hospital, as I was being operated, the same night the head doctor of this very big well-known hospital was then, *Krankenhaus* Westend was then, the chief doctor took his life. He was asked to resign and he took his life. This was the same night as I was being operated. The nurses probably did not take good care of me, because as I was operated they were, during the night, I went over the bed, over the bed, the fence around, I went over it, and fell to the floor, which made the whole thing terrible because I was operated again, and I was very, very sick. There were two very large rooms. One room was for girls, little girls, and the other room there was a French door, separated for a French door was for boys. And I was the only Jewish girl, and there was another Jewish boy in the other room. We got our medicine, of course, but the food was taken away from us. The nurses gave us the food and the children who could walk took our food away. The same thing, this was again, the same thing happened to the boy. It...

JF: Did this happen to any of the other children in the room?

HK: It happened to the other Jewish boy, yes. The same thing what happened to me happened to the other Jewish boy who had a foot broken.

JF: It did not happen to any of the other Christian children in the room.

HK: Absolutely not. No, they made a game. Those children who were up and not in bed, it was a game to take the food away from the two Jewish children. I do not remember any nurse stopping this game. I also not remember complaining about it, because we were afraid. Both of us were afraid. These were two very large rooms. I mean, I could see this other little Jewish boy, but we could not really talk to one another because it was too far away. I remember that this little boy got every day from his mother food, *Würstchen* [Ger.: sausages], you know, a whole string of *Würstchen*, you know, and then he ate everything up, and he wanted it and got terribly sick. I had the same thing. I wanted to have, you know, rolls with cheese. I was always a very big cheese eater, even though-, but by me again something happened. My father, who was at the time I came to the hospital, I was brought to the hospital, he was out of town, and since this was such a dangerous operation, and more even dangerous because my appendix broke, and this happened during the night, he was called home by the hospital, and not only by my mother. And he was so excited having lost his young wife which he loved very, very much, and now with his daughter he got a gall bladder attack and he was brought to the same hospital, but of course a completely different house. So my mother went first to my father, and me, it, it was, there was only hour she could see us. And she did not have time for either of us because she had to divide it between my father and myself. I could not eat the three rolls all in one time. I only eat one. So they stole the other one. I was six weeks in this terrible, terrible hospital, and everybody explained, you know, what a good hospital this is. And later on when my father could visit me, he could visit me very earlier than I could visit him because I really was very sick, and he saw this, he helped me, and it was better because he could bring me food that he could buy anyplace at all. And but still he couldn't do anything about the children, what they did to us. And I realized this will really, we're in for much trouble. By this time Hitler was already in power, just in power. It was just the beginning of 1933.

JF: Did your father talk at all...

HK: Yes, he did.

JF: ...at that time about leaving Germany?

HK: No, absolutely not. He explained to me that we have a new Vice Chancellor and he is very much against the Jews. And we hope that he won't be long in power. My father never spoke to me like you speak to children. Since we were very much by ourselves, I mean, during those four years I didn't have a mother, I-- many things happened who made me more mature than usually children are. And those burglaries and everything. My father always talked to me like it was, not quite what I found out later on. Later on I also read the paper. I was always used to reading the paper as a 10, 11, 12-year-old child, but I found out later on that the main part of the newspaper was taken away when I got it.

JF: So he was protecting you from most of the news?

HK: Yes, he was protecting me, but I knew many things.

JF: Did you know anything about the boycott in 1933?

HK: I'm still not there. I'm still in 1933, being, coming home from the hospital. Going to school, I was very good in school, which was also not too good for me personally. I skipped, and to be skipping is a terrible thing. I didn't let my daughters skip. The teacher wanted to skip her; I did not, because I was always the youngest in class and too much to work really to keep up. I was 10 weeks out of school, nine weeks out of school at this particular hospital stay, and I was three weeks in school and had to go to the hospital, had, had, had to be operated again. At the same time, because it absolutely was not good. I didn't want to go, I put up a fight, and I think I was very nasty. I was not a nasty child, but, but, but I didn't, absolutely want to go to the hospital. My father was trying to get me a private room, which he didn't get. And the second time in the hospital it was not as bad as the first time. The children still wanted to do something to me. At this time I was not with the children anymore. I was taken with other people. I got, I was in a room together with four people, but they were, they were much older than I. This was what my father could do for me, not to be with the children together. I did not have it bad, but the nurses also called me "Jew." The second time I was not as long in the hospital. I don't remember how long anymore, and it was not this important because it was not as traumatic anymore. And I came back to school and it was a little bit hard, because I had to, I didn't all during the summer didn't have any schooling but I, I was all right. Then it was the custom in Germany in school, this, on Christmas when the, the Christmas play was, before the Christmas play began, on Christmas, the best report cards were written, were read aloud and given out. I don't know if it was the first five or the first 10, I don't remember anymore, but I was under the first five. And the teacher, it was not the home teacher, it was the principal who gave it out. He said in spite of being hospitalized, I still made it, not first place, if it was, or second place, I made it third place. I still remember this so good, because I was very proud getting this particular report card being so long out of school. And it was winter time, Christmas, before the Christmas play, and as I went down the aisle and took my report card, the whole room was [she makes a noise].

JF: Whistling?

HK: Whistling, whistling is in Germany a bad sign. Over here it is a good sign. Over there it was a bad sign. The whole room, the whole *Aula* [Ger.: auditorium], the whole big room was whistling, "*Jude, Jude, Jude, Jude, Jude.*" And I got hysterical. I ran out in the cold and my father behind me and my mother and I don't know who else, I don't remember any more, I was crying and crying and crying, until I got home. And over there the girls, you know, the maids, helped me, and my father was very much for getting when you have some certain things, in hot towels and cold towels, and hot towels and cold towels, this was what they did with me, in order to stop my hysteria. And probably it stopped after a while and I went back to school after the vacation. I had time to rest because it was the Christmas vacation, and as I-- later on as I was back in school

he took me to a doctor. I probably, I don't remember any more if I had pain or something, and the doctor contacted a heart.

JF: Specialist?

HK: Something with the heart. At this time my heart trouble began. I have a heart condition. I don't know if it was right away heart *Erweiterung* [Ger.: enlargement of the heart] with the heart, I don't know how it's cal-- I don't know how it's called in English. It's something with the heart. My, at this time I connected something, I contracted some, my first heart, something with the heart. And it was terrible in school. It got from bad to worse. It was really was in the *Lyzeum*, in the *Oberlyzeum* it really was never good. At the time we moved to Charlottenburg, and it was just, Charlottenburg we went from the Tiergartenviertel to Charlottenburg. And this is where...

JF: This is a section?

HK: It's a section of Berlin. This is also a very good section. But in Charlottenburg, only an insider would now this, there were many parades by the Nazis. And a few times we saw Hitler. At this time Hitler was already in power. We saw from our balconies Hitler going, I, I mean, Hitler in his car, standing up in his car, in front of our street you know, [unclear] in Charlottenburg.

JF: Wha...

HK: There were many parades.

JF: Excuse me.

HK: This was in '33, '34, all of us Jews were suffering. We, we had-- we children were suffering terrible and we talked. We were all pretty much mature. I don't remember really being a dumb child. I really don't remember this. Not at home, not in our...

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two of an interview with Mrs. Hardy Kupferberg, September 23, 1981. Before we get to 1934, was your father's business at all affected by the boycott in 1933?

HK: Well, he, absolutely yes. Of course he didn't tell me his trouble, but very often I went to the factory. It was my pleasure to go to the factory, and also monkey around, not really monkey around with the machines, this is so, but looking, looking always looking. But later on he didn't let me go any more. Also we had, you know, we had, my father I told you already he was in the *Gemeinde*, he was very Jewish. We had a Jewish home. We were kosher, but still it was called Liberal, Liberal/Conservative. Like here, Liberal it is here Conservative, was leaning towards the Orthodox. And temple for us was the most beautiful thing. We loved to go, all of us. We went Friday, we went Saturday, Friday with my father, of course, Saturday with my friends, and it was already very important to us at this time. Also there was Hitler on, Hitler, Hitler was in power. My, my family, my father's brothers and sisters, many lived outside of Berlin and to the holidays they came in. More or less we're together. We all were together in synagogue in the VetzerStrasse. They all had their tickets there. The tickets, I think, were like lifetime tickets. You paid for this probably every year. I'm not, I didn't, wasn't concerned with this paying them, but we always had the same seats. My uncles, my father had always the same seat and we were *erste Empore, erste Reihe* [Ger.: first level, first row] I mean, there were two *Empores* [levels]. This was a large temple, and we, I always remember having the same seat in synagogue and also use-- the neighbors I mean who were sitting next to my family, next to my mother, these were like, like family. We were always, you know, we knew them very well. We, of course, were always the same people.

JF: You mentioned that your father was in the *Gemeinde*.

HK: Yes. He was in the temple. I don't know how it was called. He was like a *Vorsteher* [Ger.: director]. He was, I don't know, he was always active in synagogue, very active.

JF: He was also involved in the community, the Jewish community?

HK: In the community, yes, very, very much.

JF: The *Gemeinde*?

HK: Yes, very much so. Not, he was never of course a fanatic, he was never in the, in the, in the, he was-- he did not-- I never heard Yiddish spoken, but my father talked Hebrew. To his friends, my father had very many friends in Poland, in Russia. When his Russian friends came, they were talking the whole night.

JF: Did he have non-Jewish friends as well?

HK: He also had non-Jewish friends. And, at one of those parades, in one of those parades at one time I saw this from the balcony and my father just came from work,

from his factory, it must have been in 1934. My father just wanted to cross the street, and the parade came, the SA came with boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and everyone was standing there with their heads up. And my father wanted to run into the house but he couldn't make it any more. But we were on the balcony. My mother and the maid said I should not be on the balcony this time. I don't know if there was Hitler in this, in this particular parade, but I did not want to leave, because I saw my father. One SA man, it was not the SS, SS was black, black uniforms, it was SA at this particular time. One SA man ran to my father and put his arms around him. This man was taken away and very brutally hit.

JF: Why did he do that?

HK: I do not know. It was a friend of my father's. My father came home. He saw me also on the balcony. He did not want to talk in front of me, but I went in and I heard my father talk. I did not know what he talked, but this was a very good friend, and I knew him too, but I could not recognize him. I know it was a friend of my father's whom I know, but I could not at this time recognize him. I saw for the first time being an SA man hit. Later on I saw many, many Jews hit. By this time they took already the factory away.

JF: This was at what time?

HK: At this particular parade I'm just mention must have been in 1934. It was not, I don't think it was 1935.

JF: When did they take the factory away?

HK: In 1935.

JF: This was at the beginning of the Nuremberg time.

HK: Yes. This was the beginning. We were so very, very happy. As the Nürnberger Laws came out, I was the happiest girl on earth. At this time, I guess many of the girls, I'm talking now about the children, I'm not talking about the parents. I was so very, very happy because I did not have to school, I have not, did not have to go to school any more. I loved to go to school. But it was practically impossible by the children, made by the children, and sometimes the teachers.

JF: When did you stop school?

HK: In 1935. Like overnight Jewish schools opened up.

JF: Is this when you stopped and transferred?

HK: Yes, this is when we all stopped, all on one day, in 1935.

JF: And this is when you were happy again, when you were in the Jewish school?

HK: This is when we were very, very happy. The schools were marvelous. I remember as our schools, as I came into the schools, as I came from an *Oberlyzeum* which was at the time the tops. I did not do so well in Jewish school, because we learned much, much more than we did in Christian school. Our teachers were all Jewish teachers. We had the best teachers we could have. They all said to us, "This, however

bad it will come, but education nobody can take away from us.” They were wrong, but we found it out much later. I found it out. The others could not, because they weren’t there anymore. At this time, one after another, people went to America or England or South America or what it was, but it was a wonderful time going to Jewish school. Later on I transferred to an English school, English-owned school, in Grünewald, it was a Jewish school, but English-owned.

JF: Now how did that transfer occur?

HK: It occurred. My father thought it is a better school since it was a better school. But at this time I think my father did not have any more the power of his own money. The Jews got a *Sperrkonto* [Ger.: restricted or blocked account] and everything was taken out of the *Sperrkonto*. My parents did not have any money. I think this came much later. I think this came later. I don’t know when this came. There is a book by Nora Levin and all the dates are, are in it.

JF: When did you transfer to this English-owned school?

HK: I transferred from this English-owned school after two years, around, I think in 1937. It was also very wonderful, very, very wonderful. We had some wonderful teachers. We even had a different kind of seating arrangement. You must remember, in Germany was everything very, very disciplined. The teacher was a-- our classrooms were 50 children and sometimes even 60, but it was completely quiet in school because you just didn’t talk in school. In Jewish schools it was already a little bit different. The seating arrangements was done in a completely different sty-, different way. The teachers were sitting in the middle, and we were sitting around the teachers. It was, everything was made different. I think pretty much from the beginning on, maybe not right away the first half a year, but later on it was completely, and the teacher was not any more such a high-- what shall I say, we loved our teacher, we are not afraid of our teachers. We loved them, they loved us. We could tell them everything, they told us everything. My, now comes something which I have now to fight a little bit. My Jewish teacher was Rabbiner Doctor Regina Jonas.² She was the first rabbi, the first woman rabbi.

JF: Her name again?

HK: Regina Jonas.

JF: Regina Jonas.

HK: Doctor Regina Jonas.

JF: She was a rabbi at the time that she taught you?

HK: She was a rabbi, and she was the first Jewish rabbi. Well, later on I’ll tell you more, maybe private or on tape what it is, but this was my teacher. She was a wonderful person, of course at this time I didn’t have an inkling that I had to fight

²Regina Jonas: the first woman rabbi, she was ordained in Berlin In 1935. From 1942 – 1944 she performed rabbinical functions in Theresienstadt. On October 12, 1944, she and her mother were deported to Auschwitz and probably killed the same day. (Jewish Women’s Archive)

something sometimes because of her, because she was the first woman rabbi. She did not have a congregation, but she was a teacher, a wonderful teacher. She was not married. I know exactly how she looks. She had her hair, black hair, black eyes, she *scheitel* [parted] in the middle, it was parted in the middle, and it do it. She was, she explained everything in a very personal way, she brought Judaism personally to us lovingly, but we left it anyhow, because we were, I was like-- to be a Jew, I mean we suffered terrible much when we were also part of it. It was told to us, I mean, we ourselves, but in Jewish school *Mischlinge*³ were also by us in Jewish school who were not proud to be Jews.

JF: Can you tell me about these people?

HK: There is a big thing about the *Mischlinge* at this time. One part was Jewish and one part was Christian. Those girls and boys-- we were girls and boys together in school which we were not in *Lyzeum*; *Gymnasium* was for boys; *Lyzeum* was only for girls-- this is in Germany. And in Jewish school, right away from 1935 on, boys and girls were together. The problem with the *Mischlinge* was a very, very big problems, problem even for us in school. Of course in school we were happy but we also knew our parents went through an awful time because all business were taken away, the stores were painted "Jude" on everything, and we were named, we all, all of us had a different, had next, we all had a Jewish name, but it was not always on our birth certificates. It was on my certificate, but later on I know it was not on every Jewish child's certificate. But every child had a Jewish name. We had to take another name on, Sarah and the men, Israel. The man's, the Jewish name was Israel, and the girls' name was Sarah. Of course we children did not think it was this terrible, but our parents, it was, it was terrible. My mother suffered extremely much. She, she, extremely much. My father suffered terrible. It was absolutely terrible. But in school we were really happy since many years because we had such horrible years behind us in school, and we did not tell always our children, this is what I wanted to bring out, we talked among ourselves of course, and we wanted to let our parents not know how terrible it was in school in, in the *Lyzeum*. And later on in Jewish school we wanted to tell them how happy we were, but then we came out, the, the other children were already waiting for us. With stones, with everything, with-- it was horrible. It was absolutely horrible. Little Jewish school, little Jewish schools, also the big synagogues were opened to us children. From school, if we wanted, we could go to synagogue, where later on in the wintertime we began to get hot soups, which was most important for us, because we were constantly hungry. We did not get the food rations. Food rations were given out in Germany before the war already. Not as rigorous as during the war, but it was already, we got already food rations before the war.

JF: About what year was that?

HK: I really don't know really when this was. Since what child is concerned with food?

³*Mischling*: a person with one or two Jewish grandparents were classified as *Mischling* (Holocaust project.org)

JF: You were then living, it sounds, on a much different level economically than you had been before.

HK: Yes, but we still had a maid. But then came a time when we can only, I think it was in '35, we only had one maid, and it had to be a Jewish maid over 60 years old. She was like an aunt, she was not like a maid, she was like an aunt. It was not my aunt. It was a strange person, a very nice person, an elderly person, and we loved her. And she of course ate with us. And we had to move also to a different house, to a different apartment. We had a smaller apartment. In Charlottenburg in the, we, we also had a big one, but not as big as the first apartment, and now we had to go back again to more [unclear] to a different one.

JF: Did you have any positive experiences with German Christians during this time?

HK: Besides with children, yes. Even the grownups were sometimes spying at us. I mean, were even grownups, mature people went so far down that they called us children names.

JF: Any positive experiences? Did any Christians try to help in any way?

HK: I don't have those experiences now. Maybe my father had. But I don't. I can, I am sorry this question was put to me. Often about the good Germans, I'm sorry, I don't know too much about good Germans. I really, absolutely know very terrible things about the Germans. I do, I like to say, but I can't.

JF: You mentioned before about the *Mischlinge*.

HK: The *Mischlinge* problems we suffered in school.

JF: Can you tell me...

HK: Not that they could do something to us like hit us, this came later in slave work in *Zwangsarbeit* [Ger.: forced labor]. In school we had already problems with them because as mean as they were to us out of school, I'm talking now about the times we were already in Jewish schools, we were proud of being Jews just like a mother who has a disabled child. She loves this disabled child more than a normal child. Since we were really the sufferers, I mean really, we did not say many things to our parents, we did not come to them and complain, we wanted to shield them because we know that our parents had a terrible, terrible problems themselves. Those children were very much ashamed of their Jewish parent, and they very often told us how much they hate us and how much they hate being in Jewish school, because they had to work so hard also. We did have to work so hard, but it happened so that I really did not have to work so hard. It came easily to me. Also by the end of the year I had forgotten many things. This was my problem, you know, when you learn very quick you forget very quick. But those *Mischlinge* everything what we found beautiful they found terrible. Only very few so-called "Jewish" *Mischlinge*, they were different. Well, it is maybe hard to understand when I call "Jewish" *Mischlinge* and "other" *Mischlinge*-- well, there were one or two children who were drawn toward Judaism. But most of the, most of the *Mischlinge* were drawn

toward the other part, especially when the parents got divorced. They were called to have a divorce, but some of them did not. From the very early times as I can remember I have to say that the Christian part, the Christian woman married to a Jewish man, had it much harder than the Jewish woman married to a Christian man. Because in Germany-- I mentioned the ration cards-- in Germany you were [unclear] what the *Haushaltvorstand* [Ger.: head of household] was, was the ma-, this was always a man. This was, the man was, this was, is a so-called religion of those people, and they had it worse. When it was a Christian woman married to a Jewish man, they had, they had less to eat than the Jewish woman married to the Christian part. We also found out-- a child very, very quickly found, finds everything out-- much quicker than, than a mature person. We founded out sometimes we were the parents of our children in certain ways, in, in, we were the parents of our parents in certain ways. This, we had to, you know, make good and tell good words to our mothers. I did to my mother, to my second mother, and even sometimes to my father. 'Cause I went on his lap and said, "Oh Daddy, it will get better. It will get better," and so on. Sometimes it was like this because we had this wonderful close feeling in school what our parents not had, you know, and it was reversed sometimes. This is how it was by us and I'm sure many others of my friends.

JF: Were there any other parts of the Nuremberg Laws that affected you personally?

HK: We, absolutely. We had a boat, a motor boat, beautiful motor boat. It was taken away before the cars were taken away. The most awful thing was, the absolutely most awful thing was the law to give up our pets. We always had dogs, always. I was raised with a dog, it was a Great Dane. My father was a great animal lover. My mother had a bird and after 1935, after the Nuremberg Laws, every few months came out a different law. I don't know in what, in which row it came, but every few months there was a different law. I know the boats were taken away earlier than the cars. The cars were taken away in 1935. It's the same time as the businesses were taken away. The pets was absolutely a terrible thing. I don't know if it was in every section of Berlin the same thing, but in our, the law was all over. But, as we had to give up our pets, the person who brought the pet had to see how it was clubbed to death.

JF: Where was this done?

HK: On the police, at the police station.

JF: You had to take the animal to the police station?

HK: Yes. My father had to take the dog and the bird. Well one, one of each family, you know, and it happened to be my father and he was requested to see how it was clubbed to death. Of course, later on we lost the people, but you cannot compare emphasis on this. The pet you also loved. And this was absolutely horrible.

JF: You said that at the same time your father had lost the factory?

HK: Yes.

JF: It was Aryanized?

HK: It was Aryanized.

JF: Did you know any details about that?

HK: Truthfully it was taken away and my father had no income and I had young parents, I had young, very elegant parents. And we had to do, well, this was after '38, I'm still, I'm still not in '38, I'm still going to school. I'm still at the time we went to school, and I was mentioning the beginning problem of the *Mischlinge*. Of course, like I told you before, we were mature children, also was still children. We could understand that you hate the Jewish part, but also we stayed away from them. Later on, the problem was worse. After school-- our school hours were much longer than anywhere, here in America. The schools in Germany are extremely well-off, extremely good. We also had to go six days. The Christian children had to go on Saturday. You see this is what we had in the Aryan school in the *Lyzeum*. In the *Lyzeum* we got on Saturday our Jewish religion day, on Saturday, but in the Jewish school of course we had to go to school on Sunday. We learned in school everything and of course *Chumash* and Hebrew and conversational Hebrew - *Ivrit*. We learned, like I can't tell you enough about the high caliber of those Jewish schools. We had to pay for this. My parents had to pay for this. We also how it was very early on, later on, you know, they didn't have any income anymore the rich people had to pay for the poor ones. I remember this. Also my father never talked about it. We were taught not to talk about the things we do. My father always told me from the very, very small childhood on that the right hand doesn't have to know about the left hand about charity.

JF: Was the Jewish community organization, the *Gemeinde* or any of the other communal groups involved in helping people during this time?

HK: Absolutely. Yes. I know this from my father.

JF: In what way?

HK: I do not know in what way. I would not, I don't want to say what I know, but I want to say about the plight of the children. How does a child know what really went on in the mature world and the grownup world? Like I told before, I have an experience later on with my father did many things what I did not know about and found out later in slave work, about this *Mischlinge* problem also. Our haven was school and synagogue. We had our first, how you call this, love affairs, not love affairs, love affairs, I mean children's love affairs. They also have little love affairs. We had it in synagogue. I don't remember if it was supervised. I mean we made homework together. When you had an older friend, they helped you with it. They didn't have to help me, but I know I played with them games and everything went on in synagogue. We had a love of synagogue, love of Judaism, because it was absolutely impossible even to be on the street. Needless to say we were not allowed to play on the street or in parks. Berlin had beautiful parks. It was forbidden for Jews and animals, which were placards all over. During the-- going back again, in 1936 was the Olympics in Berlin. We lived near there

where everything happened. All the *StürmerKästen*,⁴ the *StürmerKästen*, *Stürmer*-, it was a newspaper and a terrible, terrible, terrible antisemitic newspaper, news-, Jews were drawn with extremely long noses. This came in such boxes, glass boxes, which were all over on the street against the Jew.

[Tape one, side two ended.]

⁴*Der Stürmer* - the antisemitic propaganda newspaper during the Nazi era was also displayed in a glass-covered wall box in every town for public viewing.

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape two, side one of an interview with Mrs. Hardy Kupferberg, done on September 23, 1981 with Josey Fisher.

HK: I'm sorry, I forgot some very important things. Like I did not make any notes. I should have made some, now I see. I forgot to tell you, in the *Lyzeum*, in the Christian school right away on from 1933 every morning the children were being asked if they heard anything spoken against the new Hitler regime. They had to say this. Every morning the same thing. The first hour it was being told it is the, it is the right thing and the responsibility of each child to listen to what their elder, their aunts and uncles, their parents are saying or if they listen to the radio which has a short wave, if they listen to the *Ausland--Auslandsender*, if they listen to the English radio, to the English Voice it was called-- this went on every day, every morning. And many children got up and told what they heard at home spoken against the new Hitler regime.

JF: Were you aware of any of the Christian children in your class joining any of the youth groups?

HK: Absolutely. Every one. They were required to, and they did.

JF: Do you know anything about...

HK: They had...

JF: ...their experiences in this?

HK: Well, I do not know any of their experiences, but I know that they were very antisemitic and I also know that they had, the girls had the flower, Hitler's favorite flower, the *Alpenveilchen* [cyclamen], the, oh, I cannot say the English name, the, I forgot it.

JF: The *Edelweiss*?

HK: The *Edelweiss*, ja. The *Edelweiss*, the *Alpen* flower. This was the, well, men and women had it also. But they were a little better made, with little diamonds inside and so on and so on. This was, was what everyone was wearing. I'm sorry I forgot to mention this before.

JF: Was that required, or was this something that people were wearing as a part of the times?

HK: This is what most of the people wore, yes. I don't know if it was required. I would not know about this. But I know this, I only know for sure that for six days every morning the first class, first question was being asked, were being asked what their parents or aunts or uncles or friends talked at night against, and the responsibility of every German child is to say if they were against the Hitler regime, which was a crime. What we could not understand, we Jewish children could not understand that children can spy. But I also felt right away it was understood without being talked about that we were more mature than our gentile children in class, probably because we had this trouble. And for me it was a little bit double trouble, because I did not have my right mother, you

know. It was also, it was not, my mother couldn't sometimes handle, then I was very tall, you know, I mean, not as tall as you, but I, I was pretty, I was 11 years as tall as I am now. I grew long.

JF: When you were in the Jewish school, excuse me,

HK: Yeah.

JF: Did you feel any interference from the government then ...

HK: No, we still had ...

JF: ...within your school?

HK: ...we still had our end *Prüfung*, our end test, end of the year test, by the government, by the Christian government, we still, we could not make any more the-- I think the doctors and the lawyers, but I could still make my-- I think I was the last class who made the first grade, I mean the first, what was this called?

JF: The graduation?

HK: The first one, yes. No, the, the, not, the first degree like. But they always said that we were one, and two or even more years ahead, and the teachers should not do it. We are ahead one, two or even more years. We were very proud of our achievement.

JF: Can you tell me about 1938?

HK: Of course. Then, we, this is, this is, this is what I wanted to say now. I mean we had the, we became at this time the parents of our parents, because we had this closed, very close hours in school and in synagogue, which our parents did not have. And then came the 9th of November, 1938, which was absolutely terrible. The burnings of the synagogues, what people here don't even remember, it is such a terrible thing. It, it cannot be put into words, maybe again normal people born in a different country would not understand how mu-, how terrible it is a house burning, a synagogue burning, when there were humans being burned. But it is terrible to see a House of God burning.

JF: Where were you on this day?

HK: Very often we saw the people with the Torahs burning at the stake.

JF: Where were you on that day, Mrs. Kupferberg?

HK: I was right there. I was right there. I went to the, I went through the streets like a crazy woman. We had many synagogues in Berlin, one more beautiful than the others, and all these small ones, small ones also, we saw them burning. We saw the people burning with the Torahs.⁵

JF: You mean holding the Torahs?

HK: Holding the Torahs, shlepping the Torahs, it-- especially, of course, our synagogue was the most terrible thing for us to see. And I ran all around. We had the Fasanenstrasse was our biggest synagogue. I think the Vetzerstrasse was in third place. I don't know how this is graded and it's not important at all, but we were not allowed to use public transportation, but we used the public transportation. I went up to the, where

⁵Mrs. Kupferberg is speaking about Torahs and other holy books burned by the mob.

you went on the ele-, on the elevator. You could right away see the Fasanenstrasse, you know, from the air. And I went up there two times at this day and on the day later to see the synagogue burning, the Fasanenstrasse. This is, these were huge synagogues. Also, all the stores, the smaller stores, they were all vandalized. I was absolutely walking on golden watches in the, in the Friedrichstrasse and in the Unter den Linden. I went all over, like a crazy kid, I was 16 at the time. And everything was on the, the, people just went in those, in those stores and took them by the arm load and it was on the street and it was in their hands and, and nobody said anything. Where were those, I don't understand where all those good Germans, where were they all? I haven't seen them.

JF: Did you have any idea of why this was occurring on that day?

HK: Yes, of course, it was because of the, of the-- there were so many things, of the, Grynspan, that he, that he, of the *Reichstag's* burning⁶, yes.

JF: Did you know that day?

HK: Yes, we did know this.

JF: You knew...

HK: Yes.

JF: ...before it happened that there was to be a reprisal?

HK: No, but not this. We knew they will come. There were always reprisals. All of a sudden there were 100 men taken and shot, then there were 150 men taken and shot, then there were women shot. There were always reprisals, one reprisal came after another. But we all had still the close, I didn't have sisters and brothers, but I had cousins who were older. They also went to their synagogue. I had one cousin who had-- they're all not there anymore. One cousin was supposed to be a rabbi. He started to study to be a rabbi, but he couldn't get his *Smichah* [ordination] because he was 19 years old, and he was such a good, he was brilliant and also, like my father was, humble also. He went to the Jewish hospitals and helped and, you know, he helped sick people and everything. He could not be a rabbi, but he was helping a rabbi. And we also had, I also forgot this-- we had two rabbis who were like our gods. Of course they were not our gods. Let's say they were our heroes. This was Dr. Prinz⁷, who was very well-known here, and who was Dr. Nussbaum⁸, who converted Elizabeth Taylor and David, Sammy Davis Jr. These were our rabbis in Berlin and they were our heroes and they disappointed us very much. Not going to Eretz Yisrael at this time-- they were the biggest Zionists. But they disappointed us not being with us together, they went to America instead. We were disappointed by our rabbis. We loved our synagogues and everything which was connected with, but in the end we were disappointed by our rabbis and I think

⁶Mrs. Kupferberg is referring to Herschel Grynszpan, whose assassination of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath was used by the Nazis to launch the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom. The burning of the Reichstag, another prompt for Nazi reprisals, occurred February 27, 1933.

⁷Rabbi Joachim Prinz, outspoken Berlin rabbi and Zionist leader, emigrated to the U. S. in 1937.

⁸Rabbi Max Nussbaum, Berlin rabbi and Zionist leader, imprisoned by the Nazis, emigrated to the U. S. in 1941.

I'm disappointed now by our rabbis here too.

JF: Did you know Leo Baeck?

HK: I know Leo Baeck, and I'm very, very much against him. I posthumously hate him.

JF: Why?

HK: I hate everything about him. He was the biggest rabbi in Berlin. Later on he was on the *Judenrat*. He was-- he put his name under the list of the people who were sent to Auschwitz, his nieces, under them. He did not save the young people. Like I said before, I know that you don't have to be in the *Judenrat*. He was already famous, loved, honored over the whole world. His life could have been over in a time where life means nothing, he does not have to save his life and put so many names on the list, names of young people. All right, all of those young people would have been murdered anyhow, but he put his name under it. I despise anyone who was in the *Judenrat*. I despise anyone who put any Jewish name on any list.

JF: Did you have a personal experience with the *Judenrat*?

HK: No, but I have a personal experience being asked to be a foreman, and I said no, and I am still living. Sometimes you were shot, so what? In a time where life is so cheap that everyone was murdered, where everyone was being killed, so what is your life? You're not more, not less than anyone. This is what I was taught from the very, very beginning under my father.

JF: During this time, before the war actually started, how was your father supporting the family? Did he tell you?

HK: Yes. My father was very good with his hands. They came into our house. First of all, I have pictures to show you from, Gentiles gave me later on some pictures from our house, our, our furniture, some of our rooms, had the first prize because my father designed. They came into our house, they put under every piece of furniture a, like a stamp, that this belongs to the state. I know this. Like I said before, the Jewish money was being confiscated. It came, it was, it was called *Sperrkonto* [blocked account]. The rent was being paid from the *Sperrkonto* but not by you. Nothing in your house really belonged to you, belonged to you. Well, we were talking about the different kinds of laws, with the pets, with everything and then of course came the gold and silver. I remember the day where my father and I, not my mother, my father and I went four times with laundry baskets with the gold and with the silver. Before this happened, everybody over 5,000 Mark in their savings account had to make lists what they have in gold and silver and in furs. And you know how very strict, how shall I say, dumb, Germans are who put everything on the list, and also the Jews. The Jews are just as the Germans were. And they said you have to make a list and put everything what you have on the list, you put everything on the list. You never know for what this list was. But the police, they had our list, and everything was crossed off what was brought. I'm still by the Temple burning, where the Temple burned and afterwards we are no schools anymore

of course. Because there were some schools in synagogues also, not in our synagogue, but in our synagogue were these, maybe there were also some lessons going on, I mean some, you were always kind of learning, you wanted to know. The synagogues were, were burned by this time, and we had to go and make slave, slavery work, *Zwangsarbeit* [forced labor]. My father was called to the *Arbeitsamt* where they give out the work. He was being asked where his villa was, you know the villa I was born in, and he told them then and there. Of course they knew all this. So they said, "So you have to clean the streets in front of the house." My father had to clean the streets and he had to see by this time he planted 100 fruit trees and he couldn't have even one fruit. And by this time this section was extremely antisemitic. They were all SS men living, it was a suburban from Berlin. My mother had to work in the, in a factory where they made fur coats, those lamb coats for the *Militär* [military]. She contracted a terrible sickness, but she had to work on the little hair, you know, her nose was affected, her backsides was infected. It was terrible, and we couldn't go to doctors anymore. And I had to work in a tree nursery. Of course this is a beautiful name. It's not for little trees, but we had big trees, very large trees, and we had fruit, it was a very big terrain by Späth. Tree nursery Späth was an extremely big place.

JF: About what year was this...

HK: This was in '39.

JF: ...that you all worked?

HK: The beginning of 1939. The temple burnings was November 1938, and on, shall I say this experience what I had this personal experience which came out later?

JF: Mmm hmm.

HK: On November 10, again I wanted to see what my synagogue is doing and in the middle of the night I dressed myself and went out of the house. Of course nobody saw this and I went to my synagogue. It was a very wide street with two lines of trees. And the synagogue had a piece of ground and then there was a big fence around and this fence was like on a pedestal, on a, you know, like from here and then out. And I saw a group of boys, Hitler *Jugend* boys about 16, 17, 18, 19 years old. They amused themselves with throwing stones into the synagogue where the gorgeous, big windows, you know, burned out, but still it was still hard because it was, and they threw stones and stones and they had a good time and it was the middle of the night. And I was standing near a tree behind a tree and a stone came right here to me.

JF: On your foot.

HK: On the left side of my foot, yes. It rolled toward me.

JF: It, I'm sorry, I did not understand you.

HK: It rolled, it rolled, it rolled toward me. I don't even know from where the stones were all come, must have been from the synagogue. It rolled toward me and I took the stone. And there was one boy who was on this pedestal, you know, and really threw the stones high up into the synagogue. And I took the stone, and with all my might

I threw it against his head. And he fell down, and everybody was around him. And I very, very slowly walked home. And I was extremely, I remember praying, I forgot everything about it. I went home, and I forgot everything about it. I put it completely out of my, out, out, out of my, out of my mind. I don't remember anything. How could I live with such a thing? I remember the ambulance coming, and I don't remember anything. I went home and I laid down. And I forgot completely about it, until how many years later? Thirty years later?

JF: What brought it out?

HK: It came out as we had a B'nai Brith meeting, and Mary Costanza⁹ was our guest. She was sitting next to me. And a very nice man, who was once president of our, of our lodge came to me because he knows I'm very political minded; both of us are very political minded. And he said he does not think it was such a good idea to have Begin¹⁰ as a, voted in as a prime minister, because he has blood on his hands. He was a *Revolutionär*. And I said, "But Begin is," I admired Begin before he, long before he became prime minister as I read his books. And said, "Begin, Begin," and all of a sudden I looked at my hands, and I-- blood on his hands. And then I said, "Every country is born in blood. Every baby is born in blood." And I remembered, blood on his hands, I have blood on my hands. And then Mary Costanza looked at me as if I cra- and she said, she said, "But Begin is all what we need." She as a Gentile said, "Begin is all what we need at this time." And I was there, this came and since then I hardly can forget it, what I did. It came out and all this time I completely forgot about it. There are more things to say about the November, night of November, besides the shedding of blood. We were in the house a day before the 9th of November, on the 8th of November. The *Prokurist* of our, of our, factory--the *Prokurist* is the manager, the first manager-- came to our house and asked my mother to prepare a little suitcase because they need my father for a third man or fourth man of *Skat* playing. *Skat* playing, this is a game, this is a card game. My father was a card player, not a card player, *Skat*, he played once a week *Skat* it was, I don't know if they play this game here. And, of course my mother knew something will happen, yes, and she made a little suitcase and my father left the house. He said goodbye and kissed everyone and he said he will be overnight. He did not tell them that he will stay one night, but he had his suitcase in his hands. I remember this very distinctly. By this time the pets were already gone, I think. On the 9th of November, around ten o'clock the bell was ringing and my mother opened it. We had still the girl, the Jewish girl. My mother opened it and the, two Gestapo men came and wanted to take my father. And my mother said her husband isn't there. "So where is he?" She said she didn't know, he didn't come back last night. And, so they came for every room, and I was at this time in my parents' bedroom. And I don't know really how it was, this one side of the bed. We had beautiful *Dannendecker* [down quilt], you know, over the beds, and one

⁹Philadelphia artist, Holocaust educator and scholar.

¹⁰Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel, 1977 - 1983.

really was down to the floor. One side was down to the floor. And I was, I don't know what I did in this room. I just was at this time as they came in my parents' bedroom. I had a beautiful bedroom myself. But so, they came. And they're, "Oh, we know, he's under the bed." And with his stick, whatever was this came or what it was, he went under the bed, but nobody was under the bed. I don't know why the bedspread was down there, I really don't know, but I remember distinctly the bedspread hanged on one side down. My father was not in the house. So he asked me where my father is, and I said, "I don't know." He was not in the house. So they left and a few hours later maybe 20, 19, 20 boys came, 20 years, 19-years-old, big boys with sabers, you know, from the, from the Hitler *Jugend*. They all had sabers in their [unclear], in their girdles. And when you came in in the *Herrenzimmer*, the *Herrenzimmer* was like a living room, was two couches and red leather with beautiful oil paintings and they ripped up everything. Everything. They, they tore everything. They went with their sabers in those leather sofas. And my mother and the maid ran out the house. And I was alone. And I went into the dining room and stood full corner. And as they cut the oil paintings, I took one oil painting, this oil painting it was one of the smallest, it was the *Hamburger Hafen* [Hamburg harbor], I put this, but of course without the frame, I put this behind me. Then I went, then they came to the dining room and took the, we had a big bookcase, closed bookcase all with glass, large-- I have a picture-- very large, they took the book out, bookcases out, the books out and threw it through the window. And on the bookcase we had a large elephant, a large *Marmor* [marble] elephant. We had a quarry for the lamps; we used to have a quarry, an alabaster, *Marmor* quarry.

JF: A quarry.

HK: A quarry. And this was made, a big elephant they threw it toward the window. It was maybe 100 pounds or maybe more it weighs than 100 pounds, threw it through the window.

JF: This painting that you're pointing to on your wall...

HK: Yes.

JF: ...you saved from this apartment.

HK: Yes, I saved this four times. Everything what I put behind me was saved. They did not touch me. How this happened I don't know. They went to every room and mostly scarred everything. They took some things but they rich-rached [phonetic], you know, but everything I took, I remember I took linens out of the buffet, everything what I threw behind me they did not touch it. I don't know, and I was in shock. I was not afraid. I'm still not afraid.

JF: This was the day before *Kristallnacht*?

HK: No. This was on the 9th of November as the temples were burning, but this was in the morning. It was around eleven o'clock.

JF: This was before.

HK: This was on the 9th of November.

JF: Mmm hmm.

HK: On the 8th of November this *Prokurist* came and took my father where. This, what this happened on the 9th.

JF: In the morning.

HK: Yeah. At this time I didn't know that the temples were burning.

JF: And how long was your father away?

HK: Until the 11th.

JF: And he was returned at that point? He came home?

HK: He came home.

JF: Did he tell you of his experiences.

HK: No. He did not have any experiences.

JF: I see.

HK: He was in their house, and then they told him that something happened. He told, he knew about the temple burnings by this time.

JF: Mmm hmm.

HK: They saved him. And...

JF: What happened then? After,

HK: ...everything what, what I threw behind me was saved, so what was, was this picture, and this was...

[Tape two, side one ended.]

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two of an interview with Mrs. Hardy Kupferberg.

HK: After they left the house, my mother and the maid came back. And I was-- at first I couldn't speak, but then I, but, but then I made, I was angry at my mother to have left me by myself. But, I don't know, so they tried to make some [unclear], it was hard. And as my father came back on the 11th, I'll never forget this, he put his hands about this book here and he cried. It was terrible. And then after this happened, after this happened anyhow you know, I looked at the Temple burned and then we, I remember we had to pay \$1,000,000¹¹-- not we, the Jews of Berlin, had to pay \$1,000,000 for all the damage. This was very hard to get, \$1,000,000, because everything was already on, on *Sperrkonto* and I don't know how they did it. You know, I mean I still was only 16 years old, and I remember the \$1,000,000 fine.

JF: After you started working in 1939,

HK: Then were already the stars. Then began the business with the stars. We all had to wear the *Jude*. I still have mine.

JF: You kept yours?

HK: *Ja*. We had to wear it on everything, and at first I was very, I, this I remember, I was very, I really was not very scared. We'd from so many years already, I was not scared. I, I'm still not scared. But I said to my mother, "Well, how terrible, you know, the people are so terrible to us." Then, now, anyhow I looked very Jewish. Anyhow, German Jews usually look very Jewish, dark, and dark eyes. Polish Jews look very often Gentile, which was at this time a big plus for certain things. But everybody could see that I was a Jewish Jew.

JF: Were you aware in 1939 of anybody that you knew personally being taken away and not coming home again?

HK: Yes...

JF: Did you know where they were being taken?

HK: ...a man. Also, I was aware that I was supposed to marry the young son of the *Hazan* [cantor], the most famous *Hazan*, Lewandovski, who came at this time also out of the concentration camp. He was taken in 1938. He came back in 1939. And I was supposed to marry him, but I begged my father, God forbid not, because he was completely, he was not-- they, they were hitting him terrible and he couldn't even wipe his nose. And in order to go to Shanghai, I think it was at the time, he had to marry, because somebody had to take care of him. And then my father of course said no, he was not able even to [unclear] to wipe his nose.

JF: He had been in a concentration...

HK: Yes.

¹¹She says "a million dollars" but probably means "a million *Marks*"

JF: ...camp for a..

HK: He was taken this day, on the 9th of November, and he came back later, I think six weeks later. But he was completely maimed. He was so that he couldn't even wipe his nose. I knew him from before, but not in a, like, like so-- we only you know, we met, we danced, [unclear] no, we didn't, we,-- oh no.

JF: How long did you live in Berlin, working and living in this apartment with your parents after the war started?

HK: Well, until we were all, until my parents were taken on 27th of February until '43. But we had to take another, we had to take another family in. This was, was I think, in '40, 1940. We had to take other people in.

JF: How did the beginning of the war change things for you?

HK: Well, we were in *Zwangsarbeit*, we were all three of us. [Someone else speaks. Mrs. K. asks JF if she'd like to have some food; she responds thank you.] In *Zwangsarbeit*, we were not allowed to use public transportation, only when you worked many miles I think after 30 miles it was, I'm not sure how many miles you had to be from work in order to use public transportation, and our transportation was mostly by the elevated, who had compartments for packages. This was the last department, you know, where there were very little sitting room, but it was, they were bigger than the normal compartments, was beautiful, the elevated. And we were not allowed to sit down. I, at this time I was working in the tree nursery which was for 10 hours. It was extremely hard work. It was under, under, under supervision. People, they had guns. For us girls, they had guns.

JF: Who were these people who were in charge?

HK: Oh, I think it was the *Schutzpolizei*, but it was in with the *Hakenkreuz* [swastika], it wasn't the SS, they wore green, green uniforms, with, with, with guns. And we also had to work with, it was, you know, it was near Sachsenhausen [concentration camp], and every morning we came from home, so-called home and they came from the prison Sachsenhausen, but not Jews. They were Gentiles. They were *Bankräuber* [bank robbers], they were bank and murderers, very tall and big men, strong men in those prison clothings. They came every morning from there, and who made it even worse for us.

JF: How?

HK: They called us names. They sometimes threw something at us, and when it was raining, they had to do work in the hot houses and we had to work in the rain and in the snow. It was very hard work and the blood ran, just ran down.

JF: Were you able to have any kind of communication with these prisoners, or was it only...

HK: Well the communication was this. They were, they were shouting at us, and sometimes throwing things at us, and when we were, when we were hungry [unclear] I remember we were so very hungry, we were constantly hungry and thirsty and I was

together with some of the girls I went to school with. We were young, and all the blood was running our arms, we were, it was hard work. And also there were people who we thought were our friends. They were *Volksdeutsche* who were taken to prisons or something, they had to work there, too, and who talked in Yiddish to us. They were Gentiles, Polish people, Ukrainians. No, they were terrible. At first we were so happy that we found friends.

JF: These were people that you had known before the war?

HK: No, no, of course not, but they talked Yiddish to us. They talked to us in Yiddish and this is such a *haimish* [homey, comfortable] language, you know. And at first we thought these were Jews, but these were not Jews, these were Gentiles. And then later on we knew they were Ukrainians and they did horrible things to us, whatever they could do. But they were also some, in some kind, not really prison, but working camps or something, because they also worked there. And they also were, they had much better work than we had, mostly in hot houses, especially in the rain. And I had frostbite all over here, and it was all...

JF: All over your leg?

HK: Yeah. And one day, and I talked to my parents that I would like to go to the *Arbeitsamt* [labor office] and ask for different work. Well it was just the same as when you were sick and then came to the concentration camp. And my father even begged me not to go. But I did go. Because like, I said, before I did not know any fear.

JF: What happened when you...

HK: I walked. I went there and I, we didn't, this was all paper around my leg, because we didn't have any material anymore, used it up, bed linen what we had, and everything. And they put me, they didn't, they didn't send me to the concentration camp. I said to them, "I, this is not that I don't want to work". I-- and they put me to work at a *Kabelwerk Wilhelmine* [unclear] [cable factory]. This was, we had to make cables for airplanes and [unclear]. And at this time I was, and as I was working there I enjoyed the work, but it was hard work, long work, but I enjoyed it because, like I said before, at this time I still was mechanically inclined, not now anymore. And I was being asked, told, twice, to be the foreman, and I said no. Because I, being the foreman meant that you have to put on paper names who are not as quick. There was always a reason.

JF: And there was no problem when you refused to be a foreman?

HK: I don't remember. I don't think so. Yeah, I had to do more, that was all. It was all right with me.

JF: What kind of...

HK: At this time, at this time...

JF: Excuse me for one minute. What kind of payment did you receive?

HK: Well, yes, I did receive payment. I was the only one in the family who received payment. My parents got an empty envelope. Only this what they should have earned, a little money for their work, what was put on the *Sperrkonto*. I was the one who

brought the cash home, the only one. Apparently I had a bank account with under 5,000 dollars, *Marks*. My parents made it like this, you know. Apparently because I was the only one who brought this *Marks* home, not my parents. And in the morning we, we went already with these people with the guns you know...

JF: You were permitted to have this ...

HK: ...the guards...

JF: Excuse me, you were permitted to have a bank account because it was under 5,000 *Marks*?

HK: I don't know if I was permitted to, but if I would have more than 5,000 *Marks*, I would have also gotten an empty envelope.

JF: So you were supporting the family during those years?

HK: Yeah. Well what you can buy, couldn't buy anything with this little bit, but I was the only one who brought home cash. My father, whatever he could, you know, he made like my father was a, a Mason. This was, of course, forbidden. All those organization was forbidden. He was in a *Freimauer* [Freemason] lodge and he was, he had a white apron, leather apron. He made us shoes, my mother and me, with soles, you know, we couldn't buy shoes. My father made us many things.

JF: Were there any places in Berlin during those early war years where you were permitted to worship?

HK: No.

JF: Was any kind of practice going on privately in homes?

HK: Yes. Yes, for us.

JF: And you were not stopped?

HK: Well, nobody knew about it. But they had to work of course. There was not, during this time-- I want to bring out certain things-- the Germans say that they didn't know about all this. We stay with these Germans together. I only know of two Jewish families at this time in this big house we were living in. They saw us getting up early in the morning. They saw us coming back. All these things the same things. I had to wear the wet clothing from the day before. This is why I'm full with arthritis, I'm going on a cane. We had to wear the wet clothing what we had the day before the same, next day again, and also one day my cousin had birthday. We were not allowed to buy flowers. We didn't have the money, but we were not allowed to buy flowers. Jews were not allowed to have flowers or buy flowers or plants. By this time it must have been already '41. I could not, my work was from the afternoon through the half of the night, 10 hours. I'm talking, I'm still now not in the tree nursery anymore. Now I'm already working, at this time I was already working in the cable factory. My cousin and her husband, of course, had a wonderful son, at the time 11 years old. Of course there was no schooling at this time and he was also working on the cemetery, with dead people, you know, put them into graves and something like this, an 11-year-old boy. And they had a little girl three years old, beautiful, huge black eyes. I did not want to forget this

incident, and I wanted to make a notice but [unclear]. I walked in the morning a few hours to get to their place with the little flowers. I got it from her through the back from the flower store. One flower in a paper, you know, and I walked and I wanted to give it to her. It was her birthday and her work also was the night shift. But this was really not night. It was in afternoon through the middle of the night. And, but she did not work with me together. She lived someplace completely in a different sector, and as I came near her house I saw the big van in front of them to go to the concentration camp. And I saw her coming out, and I went into a big house, and they, and they, you know, in the house, you see all those houses in Berlin, those big apartment houses were very large and had five, six floors. Our apartment houses we owned, I mean was what's taken away from us, had 47 apartments, so you can imagine how many, you know, it was. And I looked and my cousin came with her husband and her son and she had this beautiful little girl in her hand. And there was much shouting going on, "*Mach schnell!* [hurry up] *Schnell, schnell, schnell, schnell!*" So this little girl ran away, ran away, from her hand, and they shot her, in the middle of the street.

JF: They shot the child?

HK: Yes. They shot the child. So let nobody tell me that the Germans did not know. They all knew, and also like I mentioned before about the schools, the schools were terrific in Germany, these were not dumb people, all of them not dumb. When they say they did not know it is absolutely a lie. They did know. And I can attest to this. Also, during this time I wanted to see what my syn-, what the other synagogue is doing where I can look from the Elevated. This was a different Elevated what I used for work. And I went on one day, and near this Fasanenstrasse I wanted to know what happened from this ruin, you know, what, and it was in September also. We didn't even know when we had the holidays, but my father knew. And I saw this synagogue was in a beautiful neighborhood. I mean, they're all beautiful neighborhoods, but this was the Tiergarten, and very near was the Berlin Zoo, which is one of the most famous zoos. And I saw with my own eyes that they took the elephants out in the ruins of the synagogue to mess. I saw this, and I never ever forget.

JF: They took...

HK: The elephants.

JF: ...the elephants...

HK: Yes.

JF: ...from the zoo?

HK: From the zoo, which was very near, to the synagogue, was the ruins of the synagogue. This was a most famous synagogue in Berlin, the Fasanenstrasse. When you come to Yad Vashem you see right away the picture of Fasanenstrasse burning. And I saw that they took the elephants out to mess there. I never forget this either. I saw it with my own eyes.

JF: This was right after *Kristallnacht* or later?

HK: No, this must have been '40; I was already in *Zwangsarbeit*. Well, I was in *Zwangsarbeit* in '39, but I would not have been able to see this in '39 because there I was working in Späth, so I must have been working already in the cable work, in the cable factory. Otherwise I would not have time to go in the morning to look at it. I saw this, and all the Germans saw this too, I mean all the Berliner saw this, too. [unclear]. But there are very few people, next to me, who can attest to this.

JF: Did this happen, the occasion that you saw, only, or do you think that this was something that had been going on or done afterwards?

HK: I think that it was going on. I do not know this. But when it was this day; it must have been all the other days, too. This day was not a special day, it was one day. But the zoo was bombed. But this was not...

JF: And who brought the elephants? The zoo personnel, or...

HK: Yes.

JF: The zoo personnel.

HK: They were being walked. There was also a big bunker in this neighborhood also. And this was bombed. But I know that they brought out these elephants to mess there.

JF: Were you aware of any spies in the neighborhood?

HK: Spies, about what, spies?

JF: You had talked about the children being asked to tell if anyone was being disloyal to Hitler.

HK: This was in school.

JF: Were you aware of any of this going on in the community, in the apartment houses that you lived in?

HK: It probably happened, but I was not aware of, because I was not this, you know, I was still a little girl by this time, I was born in '22, I mean I really-- well of course one was spying on the other. But it could have, it could have been, I know this from afterwards, you know, but there was always, you had to be very careful, but about the good Germans, well, there were some Germans, you know, who were so very, very, tired of the 10 hours of work. I think in *Kabelwerk* it was 12 hours of work but I'm not sure, it could have been 10. And we were not allowed to sit, even in the middle of the night, but there was one time this one woman or one man gave me some chocolates at one time, but I'm not aware that many people said anything to me except one day-- I never forget this either. We came home on the elevated from work and this was on the 30th of January, was Hitler's birthday¹², this must have been on the 31st of January. We came, we were in this big, you know, it was in this big wagon with the people with packages, but of course in the middle of the night nobody was there with packages. When there was nobody in, of course we were sitting down. But sometimes there were

¹²Mrs. K. might be referring to the anniversary of Hitler being appointed Chancellor, January 30, 1933.

some people. One day on the 31st of January after a very, very big bomb alarm on the 30th Hitler's birthday, there was a priest sitting down, and as we came in, the priest said we should sit down. So the other, I answered, "We are not allowed to sit down." So he said, "You see, I am a priest." You know, white collar. "When I tell you to sit down, please sit down. You're worked out." Yes, we were very tired. So he said, "Can I do something for you?" We said, "What can you do for us?" And I said, "I want, I want to have a blessing. I have not had a blessing in so long. My father used to bless us every Friday night." And I said, "But I want to have it in Hebrew, in my language," and he did it. He did it. And I walked out, and for the first time I woke up my parents. They're sleeping, and told what happened. My mother right away was asking, "Well, you could have asked him, maybe you be, could hide by him, or something like that." I said, "I didn't, I didn't even think about it." My mother was always talking about hiding, and I think she had somewhere to hide or something, because she was always talking about it. By this time my grandmother got a list, my real grandmother, the mother of my mother, the mother of my mother, but this was in 1941. She was a very, very rich woman. She was also a very spoiled woman. And my uncle, who is, he left for Shanghai in 1939, and he put his mother in a very expensive home for older people. It was not a home, this was a pension, a *Pension* [boarding house]. But he didn't tell her anything. She never, my grandmother never used public transportation in her life. She always had her chauffeurs and everything. And he never told her anything. My uncle was a very beautiful man from the outside. They painted pictures from him which hung in the Jewish museum as [unclear] and he had beautiful hair. He was a beautiful piano player. He was a professor of languages. He was the only European who taught the Chinese Chinese history, Sanskrit and [unclear]. He knew 21 languages and taught 16, but character he was not such a good man. I have here still, in Shanghai he had the Hebrew college in Shanghai. He had the Chinese college. I have all of this in my hands. This is not talk. Everything what I can, I know, I can, I have like a [unclear], but character he was not such a good man. But he was a very learned and very beautiful one. He came, he was in Shanghai. He had four offers here in America, from four, by four colleges, Pennsylvania, College of, Pennsylvania University and Harvard, he had, but he wanted to come here because of me, but he, they couldn't let him in because they found something on his lung what he got in Shanghai. He was a very learned man. He was in Israel. He wrote a play which they played in the Ramat Gan theatre, and then he, he passed away. Also on heart disease. But what happened to my grandmother was absolutely terrible. She got her list and she let me know this and I went to her. And this was just before-- she came away on the 14th of January, '41. On the 28th of January, 1941 was the law that we have to give up all the fur coats. Because, I would have said it was before, but it couldn't have been before because she still had her fur coats. And I went to her and I took out an affidavit for this day not to go to work. Things like this were done very, very seldom because this meant when you don't go to work it meant right away concentration camp, but again, I

got it. I said, "I have to be with my grandmother who is going, who is being...
[Tape two, side two ended.]

Tape three, side one:

JF: This is tape three, side one, of an interview with Mrs. Hardy Kupferberg, on September 23, 1981 with Josey Fisher.

HK: And I also took out from the police a, call it affidavit, that I am at this date allowed to be on the street after eight o'clock. We were not allowed to be on the street after eight o'clock, Jews, were not allowed. And I went to my grandmother, and of course, like I told you before, we could not say anything. We needed desperately money to buy something, but we had, every piece of furniture was with a stamp, not belonging to us. So my father-- first of all I took from my father-- I took from my father some woolen stockings also I know he could never replace them, because we could not buy anything, and also a man's coat, because I know my grandmother only had fur coats. And we knew already that we had to give them up. So I went to my grandmother as early as I could, and I told her that she is being deported. And she said she doesn't know what I'm talking about. And I said also to her she should, I know she had so many watches which were not gold, because gold was already all taken, taken away. And I wanted to take, you know, to bring something home to sell, and I said, "First of all I bring you those stockings and those coats." And she couldn't understand this, I bring her a man's coat. She would never wear a man's coat. And she said she'll wear one of hers. And I said, "They'll take it away from you." And she said, "I don't know what you're talking about. I think you're sick." And I said, "Also, you can only have maybe 10 Marks with you. Maybe you can give me everything what you have left over." She said, "Of course I have money. But I cannot give you any money. Doesn't your father give you money?" She did not know anything. She was not a dumb person at all, but she lived in a completely different world.

JF: Where did they take your grandmother?

HK: She was a very good taking, very good-looking woman, 71-years old.

JF: Where did they take her?

HK: They took her to the police station, and then later on to the, by this time partly fixed synagogue, but only for one room, because all the transports went from the synagogue, the Vetzerstrasse, to, to Riga. She came to Riga.

JF: She went to Riga?

HK: Yes. Well, if she ever reached it.

JF: You never heard what happened to her?

HK: Well I'll tell you how she came away. So she didn't give me anything. She didn't wear my, the socks I brought her. She put on, she sang to me an aria of Carmen and one of another opera 10 minutes before they came. She sang to me beautifully. She was never told anyone anything of all of this. And it was terr-, absolutely terrible. And I saw a highly-educated woman in one hour, in two hours, being made to a, to, to an animal, to, to, to a senile person. She couldn't understand me what

I'm talking about. So the Gestapo came and picked her up and she had to give all her money. She had, I don't know what she had, but she had money. They took the watches. She gave them everything and I wanted to have them so very much, only to sell for bread. She didn't give me anything because she couldn't, she knew this, I never, you know, I wasn't poor. She didn't, didn't understand. So they took everything away from her. I had her in my arms to go down to the police station, and they gave her a push, she fell down the steps, and I recovered her. And on the police station she gave an ID of her name, and she was shaking all over. Then I had to go with her to the Vetzerstrasse. They told me then to take her then to the Vetzerstrasse. They gave her another push and she fell on the street. She still had her coat on, her coat on, but I know for sure they took it away from her. And she was, she probably froze to death. So in the Vetzerstrasse, my synagogue was made, being built of, not as a synagogue, like a barn, you know, this was a place where they took the transports to concentration camps. This is also in the middle of town, I mean not in the middle but, but, but for everyone to see. And at the door she wanted, she wanted to take me in. And the-- this was SS-- and the SS man said, "*Entweder rein or raus.*" Either you go with her, or you go out. So I just let her go. Of course, I never saw her again. And in the meantime my father ran home like a crazy man and then I went back to the place and took the coat, the man coat and the stockings, you know, what I had, and took them and then I went home. It was a terrible day for my father, because he thought since I stayed with my grandmother they took me, too.

JF: You said that they took your parents in 1943?

HK: Well we were working, yes, until the 27th of February. Like I said before, I had young parents. By this time were only in Berlin, only working people who were in the working houses. And the Vienna police, the Vienna Gestapo, finished us off. Also the Vien-, the people, Austrian people say they were invaded by Hitler and they were the victims, they were not victims, they were oppressors. They were even worse than the Germans. If there is not such a thing. The Vienna Gestapo did put all Jews on the 27th of February, 1943, to the camps, from work. I think my mother had connections with going into hiding. She never could do it. They were taken from work. Since I was working the night shift, the afternoon and night shift, I was not taken in the morning 'cause I wanted to go to work. They told us, you know, little groups of people told me, "Don't go to work," Jewish people.

JF: You said that the Vi...

HK: Vienna. Vienna.

JF: Viennese took the Jews on this date.

HK: Yes.

JF: But your parents were in Berlin at this time?

HK: Yes.

JF: How did this affect them?

HK: All people. They came; probably the Germans couldn't do this all on one

day. They did, the Vienna Gestapo did it.

JF: The Viennese Gestapo came into Berlin?

HK: Yes. Yes. And finished up the last 10,000 Jews going to concentration camps. They were all taken from work. They were all working at the time.

JF: Where were your parents taken?

HK: From work. My father from the street, my mother from the factory she was working.

JF: To where were they taken?

HK: Auschwitz. This I found out later. Auschwitz. They were killed in Auschwitz. You know...

JF: You were not working that day?

HK: I was working this day. But not in the morning. I slept in the morning. But I wanted to go to work and then there were little groups of Jews standing there, and they said, "Don't go to work. Don't go to work!" They were all taken from work. So what should I do? My mother and my father had, like everyone else, I had the too a knapsack, a rucksack, prepared for this day. Not for this day, nobody knows what day it was, we were working. But I knew that both of my parents, my father and my mother, had poison. Not me. My father told me that he couldn't procure for me poison, but when we are going on the transport that he will, he will kill me.

JF: He will strangle you?

HK: Yes. By this time mostly in every house somebody took his life. Many people. I saw many people hanging. I saw the people hanging in our house, who lived in our house. It, it was, it was for us an everyday thing, because at the time they were supposed to be transported. Then at the time in 1943 there were no lists anymore to see what could be deported this and this day. They were just deported every day, so and so many, but from home, not from work. And my parents had poison. And I even knew where the poison was. My mother had in her knapsack a sky cap and in front was a knob, you know, in the side, and she had this poison in here. My father had it someplace else in a knapsack, I know where.

JF: They were able to take these knapsacks with them?

HK: No, they were not, because they were taken from work. So I went home, what shall I do? I had to give them the knapsacks because of the poison. It was of extreme importance to give them their knapsacks. So my coat, we had those stars, of course. I had a black winter coat which was, which was buttoned on top at the side. So I put this, put it around to cover the star but of course you couldn't cover the, the star, a little end came out. But I did it anyhow.

JF: You turned the lapel of your coat?

HK: I turned it, yes.

JF: To try to cover the star.

HK: And I took in both hands those knapsacks and went to the Burgstrasse, to

the seat of the Gestapo. And they looked at me, probably like a crazy girl and I said, "I wanted to know where my parents were, because I wanted, they're taken from work and I wanted to give them their knapsacks." So he said I should go first, the first floor, the second room. So I went the first floor, second room, I don't know, Eichmann was in this, Burgstrasse but I don't know if I talked to him. Who knows to whom I talked. So I knocked at the door, they let me in, and I stood there with my two knapsacks and my star came out some, I'm sure it came out. You could see it. This was killed on the spot when you did this, you know, something like this. So I said to the man that my parents were taken from work this morning and I will give them their knapsacks and if he can help me find them. His desk was in front of a large window going to the courtyard of the building and he said this is back towards the building. And I came from there to the front door. And he said, "Come here. I will show you where your parents are." So he took me around and let me look towards the window to the courtyard of the Burgstrasse was a big courtyard, there were standing maybe 30, 40 big vans and the SS took out with forks, with hay forks dead people from those vans. I saw that. They showed it to me. Of course I know these were not my parents probably. These were probably older people or so which they gassed, you know, in those, in those vans.

JF: So they gassed them in vans right there on the platform before they were even taken from Berlin.

HK: Yeah. Not platform, on the courtyard in the Burgstrasse. I don't know it were Jews. They had stars, but they were dead already. They took them out with hay forks. This is what he showed me, and he said, "I will show you where your parents are."

JF: Was this an enclosed courtyard? In other words, could people see this?

HK: Yes, people could see. This is the, the Burgstrasse is a big street and the whole building was of course Gestapo but buildings around it were there. I don't know if these were government buildings anymore, made to government buildings, but I'm sure these were buildings, high apartment houses. And this was, no, I don't think it was enclosed. It was enclosed by houses, but not all Gestapo, only this big building was a Gestapo building. So let nobody tell me they didn't know. I saw this also. So I went home. By this time already the door was broken in to pick me up, but nobody was home. And as I came home, again with the knapsacks, people came from, who lived in this apartment house, some people came, took pictures from the walls, took, took, from the walls, I had, you know I always had since my legs were frosted and I always had cold legs, they took my two bottles out, warm bottles out of the bed, and the other took the beds out, and I was still there. I was still there. All by myself. And then I took the poison, my mother's poison, because it was easier to reach. I took the poison and then I woke up in an apartment by this former *Prokurist* [attorney] of my father's, the one who took my father on November the 8th, you know, out of the house. And they said I was very sick and-- now I told them, "What shall I do now?" I never wanted to be in hiding. So, and he said, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow when you're stronger you have to

find something else because my daughter's, my wife's friend is here. This was a new apartment in a new apartment building, had only three or four rooms. He was a communist. He was a good man, but I wasn't thankful to him at all. What should I do now? And I had to leave after two days. I was there ten days, but I understand for eight days I was very sick because I had already a heart condition. He gave me money and, of course, to be in hiding, first of all to be in hiding, you needed much money and you also need to know people and I didn't, I didn't do anything, nothing, it was absolutely horrible. I was on the street. I was a night in the woods, not in, Berlin had the Gr newald, you know. And I was on benches and then I went to gentile people whom I met in this cable factory. Anyhow I was around there because this was, I was around this neighborhood. It was not real Berlin. It was also in the suburban from Berlin. Well they took me in, but they wanted to have money. So he provided me with money. I think it was some of my father's money too. My father had stopped there, I know. But he gave me money. It was the most horrible time. I was for six weeks in an outhouse in the toilet, day and night. From food nothing to talk but during, at least during the day I could read. I read a lot about Catholicism, about the Catholic religion, which I found absolutely horrible from Jewish books, you know. It was absolutely horrible. I was only sitting, always sitting, day and night in a little outhouse. You know what an outhouse is? And then I had to move from there, too. And then I went, since I had this wonderful experience with the priest, I went in a large church in Obersch neweide and I always wanted to do something but I never did anything, because I found later on it is up to God, it is up to Him, to God, to punish people. There was this priest from this large church was just being elevated to something, bishop or the, I don't know, but he had the purple band around and the purple *yarmulke*. And I wanted to talk to him. I wanted to use the church cellar, you know, to hide. I didn't know what to do anymore. And it began to be cold. And those people where I hid, they gave me, of course I didn't have the star anymore, I took this off, I had this black coat, and they gave me a widow hat. They, you know in Germany when a husband dies the widow wears a black hat with a long, black veil. And I had this, like I said, I looked terrible, terrible Jewish because when you are thin and you know, you have nothing, you had, my nose is very long, and so, so I talked, I came to the nuns, let me speak with this very high priest or bishop or whatever it was, and I told him I had such a beautiful experience with another Catholic priest and if he allows me to be in the cellar of the church. And he showed me the door. He threw me out. I wanted to, after the liberation, I wanted to do something, but then I said, no, I won't do it, I won't have this on my conscience. Let God take care of this. And it was horrible. I didn't know where to go to live. Then I was by, also by former friends of my father...

JF: Were these Christian friends?

HK: Christians, yeah. But also they had, they took me in. I had to work very hard, because like, like the PLO is doing, the Germans did so many years ago, having in

private sectors, sections of Berlin having in every house a factory. Do you know what I mean? Like this was *Sattler*, this was a leather worker, this was a leather-- this was a store where they fixed and also made new briefcases and fixed leather suitcases and to put leather work. Well during the war he had to do for airplanes also the ear *Hörer* [earphones], you know, the things with leather around, you know, leather, and you had to sew this with two needles. And he taught me to do this and I did it from the morning to the evening. But I hid by him. And also I had to contact this person, you know, this *Prokurist*, for money. And I know this is a so-called good German. I know his whole basement was full with German stuff-- with Jewish stuff, and I also found, I mean, saw some belongings from my parents.

JF: Things that he had confiscated or bought, or...

HK: I don't know. He had it. And I even said, "This is my mother's." "Yes," he said. But I was there for a year, for 13 months.

JF: You lived in their home?

HK: In their home. But I had to work very hard.

JF: Were you...

HK: And about every month ...

JF: ...hidden?

HK: I was hid, yes. I was hidden, and when they, and when they, but I could not call them good Germans, because they wanted to have money. They took my shoes away from me. And so on, because their whole basement was full with Jewish stuff, and this was their own. There were Jews. I could not say that these were the good ones.

JF: Why do you think they hid you?

HK: I do not know. I absolutely did not know where to, where to, where to go. Maybe they wanted to have a steady income, I do not know. And...

JF: This was until what time that you were in hiding?

HK: This was until March 1944. Then I finally got caught and came into concentration camp and I was happy to be there, not to ha-, I, I, I, just, I, I, I did not know what to do with me anymore. I was constantly by myself.

JF: How were you caught?

HK: I was being, by a Jewish woman, I was caught. I also want to mention again, I began this before to say that the Jewish women married to Aryan husbands were not good at all. They were, most of the time, yes, spies, because one Jew knows the other. And the Christian women working, married to Jewish husbands, were behaving much much better, were really good, who stayed with them. There was an *Aktion* one time. We wan-- they took all the Jewish men from those Christian women. They had them also in the Burgstrasse and wanted to send them to concentration camps and I know, and I saw those Christian women walking for hours in the winter time saying in unison, "*Wir wollen unsere Männer back.*" [We want to have our men back]. And they

didn't go away from the street. So finally they let the husbands go.¹³ Of course, they were in the working, they worked by *Tag* [day], but they were being saved, they saved them, the Christian women saved them. The Jewish women were, did terrible things. Well one Jewish woman also caught me, but I did never did anything against her. At one part I was glad to be caught. I didn't know what to do any more.

JF: How were you taken away?

HK: I was taken away terrible, and I think I'm gonna stop now, because my experience in Ravensbrück, I just, is any other inmate from concentration camps. But I want to say, I was not alone anymore. My introduction into concentration camp was that we were all, I was together with many people who were caught, and we were stood very near together, and they asked us-- and next to me was a child, about three, four years old-- and they asked this woman, who is the mother, and she said, "I." I was in a, we were touching arms, we were together, very, very close. And, "*Wen soll ich erst töten, Dich Der dutst,*" us then, you know, not "*Sie.*"¹⁴ *Sie* is-- do you know, do you know German? You know, "*Wen soll ich erst toten, Dich oder Dein Kind?*" [Whom shall I kill first, you or your child?] And she screamed, "*Mich,*" [me]. You know, "*Mich, Mich.*" So of course they took the child and tore it up.

JF: And did what?

HK: And tore it by the legs and threw it against the wall.

JF: How old was this child?

HK: About three, four. Was not very big.

JF: This was as you were waiting to go?

HK: No, this, we were already in concentration camp.

JF: You were already in the camp.

HK: But we were waiting, you know, to release to the where we had to be.

JF: To go to the barracks.

HK: Yes. This was the introduction.

JF: Can you just tell me briefly-- I know you don't want to talk about the camp that much-- can you tell me...

HK: I wanted to say, to say this, but really very few people know because they are not there anymore, the plight of the children. And the importance of the synagogue. And also about the disappointment of the rabbis, and I think our rabbis are disappointing now too.

JF: Mrs. Kupferberg, you were taken to Ravensbrück in 1944.

HK: Yeah, March.

JF: In March. How did you get there?

HK: By train. By cattle train.

JF: Cattle train.

¹³Mrs. K. is possibly referring to the Rosenstrasse Aktion of February 27 - March 6, 1943.

¹⁴Polite form of address is *Sie*, not *Du*.

HK: Many people died on the way.

JF: And...

HK: They smothered, you know.

JF: Why, excuse me, when you reached Ravensbrück, you were kept for a period of time before you were divided into barracks?

HK: No. We were divided the same day.

JF: Was there a selection of any sort?

HK: Yes, a naked selection. And then I had an experience afterwards with the Russians too. I-- naked selections.

JF: Immediately.

HK: A naked, a naked, immediately, yes.

JF: And you went to a barrack.

HK: Yes.

JF: Were you...

HK: And I was together with Jews from Hungary and those German Jews I came with, I haven't seen any more. They died.

JF: Were you ...

HK: As far as I know.

JF: Were you able to do any work when you were there?

HK: Yes, we worked.

JF: In what way.

HK: We plastered the street, and we slept there. [unclear]. But I was not alone anymore. I had the same experience was *nebekh* [Yiddish: unfortunate] everyone had in Ravensbrück, it was absolutely horrible, but I was not alone anymore, I did not have to think, what will be tonight? Or the next hour, or the next minute. I wouldn't be in hiding for one half an hour anymore.

JF: So that being in Ravensbrück was in a way a relief not to be under threat anymore?

HK: It was a terrible relief, but I was already there. I was not hungry anymore, I was...

[Tape three, side one ended.]

Tape three, side two:

JF: This is tape three, side two, of an interview with Mrs. Hardy Kupferberg.

HK: I don't know how I was liberated because I could not see.

JF: Why?

HK: I don't know, of malnutrition. They must have taken me from the dead. I woke up in a Russian tent. Don't know the language. They were very nice to me. As far as I know, I don't know who, I only know not speaking, German-speaking people, and also not French. I would have understood some French because I learned it, or English of course.

JF: In other words...

HK: They spoke in Russian or Polish.

JF: You had gotten sick during the time that you were in there?

HK: Probably. I remember the last thing what I can remember is crawling over some dead bodies to drink a little bit green water, I don't remember anything.

JF: Was this in the barrack?

HK: This was in the barrack, yes. It was outside.

JF: Do you have any memory of when that was?

HK: I don't know when. It was still warm, going on, I don't know when, I woke up in a clean tent, outside, in a tent, in a hospital tent, and then I was taken by myself, again by myself to Berlin.

JF: By the Russians?

HK: By a Russian man and a Russian woman. I presume it was a doctor and a nurse but I do not know. I never understood their language. They gave, they fed me with a spoon.

JF: During the time that you were in Ravensbrück...

HK: I had to work.

JF: You were working as you described.

HK: Yeah.

JF: Your rations were of what nature?

HK: Water, and a piece of bread. But I wasn't, I remember, I was not able to chew the bread. I exchanged it for soup.

JF: Was there any opportunity in the camp for any kind of Jewish ritual or prayer?

HK: No. But, but no. But we never knew what holiday it was, but we Jews more or less stuck together. I was always a proud Jew. I, yes, you know, I wanted to mention this before, in *Zwangsarbeit* [forced labor] also, *Zwangsarbeit* was also terrible, we had codes, honor codes, also in *Zwangsarbeit*. There was no-- an honor code of course was also in Ravensbrück, but there were no rapings whatsoever because a woman without hair and without stinking, everything, there was no question about rape, no

question about rape. But in Schleifer [phonetic] could have been, and those girls had to take their own lives. There was an honor code in Ravensbrück that when you were a bed wetter, they had to be, or stealer, stealer of bread, rations, they were killed by us.

JF: If you stole rations, or if what?

HK: They were killed, those girls.

JF: They were killed by the other inmates.

HK: Yes. This was an honor code.

JF: Any other crime?

HK: A bed wetter, we could not have this coming into our mouth, we had to sleep four to a *Pritsche* [plank bed].

JF: These ones were killed if they were wetting their beds?

HK: Yes. Yes.

JF: How would they be killed?

HK: I don't know. I don't know. We only know this, we had to dispose of them. Or going against the, oh, you asked me about the ...

JF: The religion?

HK: You asked me about the being killed and the religious part. Many went against, during the night the fence was loaded, not during the day, and those women who wanted to take their lives, they went against the fence. My work was taking the dead ones off the fence in the morning. And my Jewish part was, my Jewish part, you asked me what this, was to talk-- everybody had to do something in this code-- I mean in this honor code. My part was to talk the people out of it. But I wanted to do it myself.

JF: You wanted to throw yourself against the fence.

HK: Yes. But I...

JF: What kept you from doing it?

HK: That I had to talk the others out of it. This was my responsibility, my honor code.

JF: So this kept you from trying to take your own life?

HK: Yes.

JF: Did anything else keep you going during that year?

HK: Very little. The world had forgotten us, and God had forgotten us, and my childish-- you know sometimes-- well first of all you were reduced to a vegetable in the camp, and you only had thirst, but when it came to God, I just said what I say now, being not a vegetable, that He slept, this is an old God, what can you say? How can this happen? Children were being killed before my eyes. This was not the first child was being-- yeah, this was the first child torn apart, this was the first child, but was not the first child I saw being killed.

JF: Did you know of any other children who lived in Ravensbrück for any period of time?

HK: No. No. I also was not together with German Jews. I don't know where

they got to, I still don't know.

JF: So you found yourself liberated without being aware of when?

HK: I found being liberated, yes, and again alone, and, but I was already, already a thinking person.

JF: About what, about when were you liberated?

HK: I was already a thinking person, because I was in the, I was in the same neighborhood I came to, probably I said so, I do not remember saying this. But I was in the same neighborhood I was in Berlin. Well there is plenty to say afterwards too, and also what has to do with religion. I was already thinking at this time. I don't know how many months I was, I don't know when I was liberated, but Berlin was still in a war. And I was being led to the basement, and somebody, I don't know who again, I still have it, he gave me a silver *Magen David* [Star of David], this was a silver necklace, was a little silver necklace. I still have it and I wear it very often. And the Russians came in and you know many people were being raped. I didn't care about this. And one day a whole troop came in, and I said, *Zydowka* [Jewish woman]-- I don't know Polish-- I said *Zydowka*. "Ohhh! You *Zydowka*?" And, and, he took my *Magen David*. "So say something in Hebrew." I said every day a few times, not in Ravensbrück, I don't remember, but in slave work and all this time before a few times a day, like today, a few times, the *Shema*, I didn't know it. All of a sudden I didn't know. Well, they found where I was. They found ammunition and they found booze in the basement and also some men, I don't know what men, Germans, who cares, and they were already, they stood already against the wall to be killed.

JF: Who found you?

HK: And this Russian soldier, they found, the Russians found. And this Russian soldier who took me by my *Magen David* and by my necklace, "You're Jewish?" He wanted to lead me to those people to be killed also.

JF: You were brought ...

HK: I could not know all of a sudden Hebrew. He told me, "Tell me a Jewish word. You're Jewish," he said, "so tell me." Then he spoke to me in Yiddish. "*A nekhkertog*." [Yiddish: I don't believe it]. I understood what he said. All of a sudden I don't know one word of Hebrew, and I know it. And he put me against the wall, and all of a sudden it came to my head, "*Haneros halelu anachu madlikim*." [Hebrew: These lights which we are kindling]. You know, the prayer for Hanukkah? Right away he saw I was in shock. So he took me in his arms and he, he licked my blood up. I was all bloody. He took me and this litter, and then he told me what happened to him. He is a Polish Jew in a Russian army who was buried alive with all his family during, they were shot, and they had to make their own graves, but he was not dead. During the night he *krabbelt* [crawled] over the German, over the dead bodies up, and he went over the border and became a Russian soldier. And of course whoever says they're Jewish, all of sudden ev-- the whole Germany is Jewish, you know? And so, you know, and I was

under them, too. They didn't believe. This is why I was supposed to say something in Hebrew. I would have done the same thing. But this happened to me. I was in shock. I was only thinking, the one thing what I was thinking was, "My God, after all this trouble, now I'm being killed because they don't believe me I am Jew."

JF: The Russians brought you back to Berlin?

HK: Yes.

JF: Did they bring many people back to Berlin?

HK: I don't know.

JF: You're not aware of that trip?

HK: I was by myself.

JF: And you were dropped off in Berlin?

HK: I was not dropped off, no, I was probably taken to one place and they sent me in the same neighborhood where I was. They rented a room for me. I don't know. They were just me there. I rented a room for me. I had to fend for myself as I was in Berlin.

JF: What...

HK: But I was already a thinking person again.

JF: What happened...

HK: Not real thinking.

JF: ...after this time?

HK: After this time what happened. I'll tell you what happened after this time. After this time I was living there, had, but having very little to eat, but I couldn't eat much, most of the time in bed, I was sick. I got a card from the Russian *Kommandatur* [headquarters] too who was not far away from there. As I told you, they put me in the same neighborhood where I lived-- that I should come to the Russian *Kommandatur*. I was, they knew I was there. And they told me I should work for the NKVD [Russian secret police] telling of Nazis, since I lived in this neighborhood, they knew this. In Germany you have papers. Everything is written down. And I said, "I don't want to do this." You see, I didn't do this with Jews, and I didn't do it with Gentiles either. I don't know why.

JF: What did you do then?

HK: I said, "I am sick. I cannot do this. I don't know and I'm sick." I did know, all of them. I did know, but I said, "First I have to work on getting well again." I told them I was a vegetable. Of course they had an interpreter. These were Russians who talked with me. And the interpreter talked German, not a good one, but German. But he was not a Jew, he did not talk Yiddish. And I said, "I'm sick, I always had a heart condition, and I have to work on being getting well again."

JF: Was there anything else specific that was wrong?

HK: And, yes, yes, after 10 days around, after 10 days, I got another card that I should come to the *Kommandatur* again. I went home, and after 10 days I got another

card. Our, this appointment was already 10 days later. I got the card in a week that I should come there. I had to get undressed and I came into the room with 10 men, all in white robes, in white coats. And they put the stethoscope on me, everybody did something. They looked in the ear, they looked in the eye, everybody did something. After a while, about the time I was freezing but it wasn't cold, but still I was naked, again naked, again. And I said so again, but they don't understand, I was talking German.

JF: These were Russian doctors.

HK: These were Russian, I presume they were doctors. They had white coats on. Yes, all 10 of them.

JF: And was anything diagnosed?

HK: The interpreter not. He was there, the same interpreter. Well then he brought me out of the room to the room where I had my clothing. And he said, "It's a good thing you didn't lie to them. You are sick. Otherwise you would have come into prison."

JF: What was diagnosed in addition to your heart condition? What did he tell?

HK: I don't know. He only said to me, "You are sick. You did not lie. It's a good thing you did not lie."

JF: What happened after this point until you met your husband?

HK: After this point nothing happened. I met my husband, and I went to them again, to the Russian *Kommandatur* again because we were talking of getting married, and I met a woman on the street. I did not talk much to her, but she, she talked to me, and she said, "Those people across the street who had a very large delicatessen store, food store, you know, but large, good store, they have most of your furniture." And then I made it my business, it was even to the street, I made it my business to look through and I did see our bedroom, beautiful. And I wanted to have this back. I went into the store, and they were all [unclear], they were fleeing around, they didn't want to look in my eyes, and then they said they bought this. I said, "You didn't buy it. How can you buy it? I was there. From whom did you buy my furniture?" And then I went out and I went to the Russian *Kommandatur* without my husband. And my husband was, my fiancé, I don't know if he was already my fiancé, I guess yes, and I went to the Russian *Kommandatur*, and I said, so, they had my name. And he said to me, "I'll give you an officer and you can go to any home you want and request anything you wish." And I said, "No, I don't do the same thing what they did to me. I was, I saw this, I was in the house as they came the day they took my parents away and took everything of mine." I said, "I don't do the same thing. I want to have mine, what belongs to me." And, "Well, take everything." I said, "No. Not this way." So I was waiting until the English came, and the English didn't give me nothing. I, the same woman who told me this with the furniture met me another day, well she met me mostly every day because we lived very near. And she said, "You know, your basement is still standing." Our house was in

rubblies, where we lived was in rubblies, but you had to get in, we gave it, what is from the police to go into the ruins, usually with a policeman. And they gave me a policeman, this was with my husband already, but he was, I was not married at the time, but he was my fiancé at the time. We went together to the police. We got this affidavit and a policeman and we *krabbelt* [crawled] over the rubble, you know, and we did find my basement. How do you know it is my basement? Because there were many, since we had the lamp factory, there were hundreds of hundreds, you know, burned out...

JF: Sockets?

HK: ...sockets, yeah, from things. And all of a sudden I screamed like a crazy woman, like a crazy, like a crazy girl. I saw something green in one corner and I knew right away what it was. My father had before my mother died, my mother was not sick, you know, she died under the knife, and she was 25 years old, and my father had made from her a bronze impression, her face, and he had made five, one for me when I get older, one for him, and one for her parents, and there were five. And this was one. So the people who came to our apartment, you know, after we left, they put this down [unclear] this most prized possession what I have.

JF: I'm sure.

HK: And this is my terrible story.

JF: I think the rest of the story we have on your husband's tape about what happened...¹⁵

HK: Yes.

JF: ...with your marriage and what happened after.

HK: We were very happily married, we have the same background, not quite the same, but the same terrible things.

JF: Yes.

HK: But as a child I suffered much, much more than him, because he is 15 years older and he did not have, you know, everything, but his suffering began with 1938. But people who had money, they suffered more, because everything was taken away from them. And the children, the plight of the children is absolutely, was absolutely excruciating. And in Yad Vashem, I mean, it was so incredible, like my husband told you in the tape. Also we didn't make the requested tape for the Gathering¹⁶ because we didn't have the time and it is very, very hard, very, very hard to do those tapes, and I said, "My goodness, there are so many thousand tapes, but this our tape we will make it when we are on vacation and everything is quiet and we'll send it to Israel¹⁷." So as we came to Jerusalem, we were on tour every day. One Friday, one Friday, the only Friday we had in Jerusalem as we came on tour, there was a message from Yad Vashem and this and this telephone number. So I called, and they said, "We were waiting for your call,

¹⁵See Interview with Kurt Kupferberg.

¹⁶World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem, 1981.

¹⁷Mrs. Kupferberg refers to sending this interview to Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

because soon is Shabbat, and you come from Berlin, we see you come from Berlin and you have to make a tape.” And I said, “Oh my goodness, how come you know this? From all these people we didn’t make the tapes?” He said, “I’m, we are not talking from those tapes, you have to make this tape in German.” I said, “I don’t want to speak German. I don’t want to, especially not on tape.” And he said, “You have to do it, and especially you.” And then she told me why. There are no, just from those children her boss is making now one, two books on the plight of those children and there are so very, very few.

JF: Well we thank you so much for giving us such an accurate and complete picture of what happened in Germany, especially before the war.

HK: It was very terrible and painful, and every day it is more painful for us now here where they say it didn’t happen and they didn’t know, and the Germans are so very much revered and everything, and they all knew.

JF: Thank you for talking to us, Mrs. Kupferberg.

HK: You’re welcome.

[Tape three, side two ended. Interview ended.]