Frieda Piepsch Sondland Transcript

RB: This is Roz Bornstein and today is May 1, 2001, and I am in Mercer Island, Washington, and I am meeting today with Frieda Sondland at Frieda's home. We are here today for the Weaving Women's Words project for the Jewish Women's Archive. First of all, Frieda, do I have your permission to tape you today?

FS: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you very much. We are here today to gather Frieda's oral history and Frieda why don't we start with where and when you were born?

FS: I was born in Germany on June 3, 1921, to my mother, Lina, and my father, Herman, in Germany, but they called him Joseph in Russia. According to my mother, I was a pretty easy birth. Three o'clock in the afternoon. She had to run and get the midwife because, in those years, you didn't go to the hospital. That's when I was born, in Berlin.

RB: What was your last name?

FS: My mother's maiden name was Nussdorf, and my father's name was Russian, which in Russian was Pieprich. The Germans made Piepsch out of it because they couldn't pronounce Pieprich, which means pepper.

RB: Can you spell that for us?

FS: The German?

RB: Sure, that would be fine.

FS: Piepsch.

RB: And the Russian – do you know the Russian spelling?

FS: No, I really don't.

RB: Okay, that's fine.

FS: I was sorry that my father never taught us Russian because it would have been very useful to know.

RB: Tell us the circumstances about your parents and describe them for us.

FS: Well, my father came to Germany as a prisoner of war. He was in the Russian army, and he was taken prisoner in East Prussia. They had a big battle, and he was put in a German camp. My mother was born and raised in what was Austria before the First World War and became Poland after the First World War. And the part where she was born was at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, and it was a beautiful spot, like a real shtetl you'd see in lots of movies. My mom was one of fourteen children, four of whom died young. She was one of the older children. My grandmother had a sister in Berlin, and she came to visit and wanted to help my grandmother. She asked her to send one of her girls to Berlin. So, they sent my mother. This is how she got to be there. After my father was released from prison camp, after the war was over, they released him, and he managed to get somehow to Berlin. He never told me the story. He met my mother there. They got married.

RB: Do you know the circumstances of how they met and were married?

FS: I really don't know. They didn't talk much about it. I know my mother was living with the family because my grandmother's sister who brought her to Berlin had actually just used her. She needed a maid and instead of teaching her, she promised my grandmother she would send her to school and teach her business. They had two or three businesses, and she used her to wash clothes and watch her children. One of my

mother's oldest brothers came to Berlin to see how she was doing and when he saw that, he took her away from the aunt and placed her with another Jewish family who also had a business. They sent my mother to school and she learned the business. They had retail, and so she got involved in this. But if my uncle wouldn't have taken care of her, she would have still been a maid to my great aunt and great uncle.

RB: So once your mother left your great aunt's home, how did your uncle know which family to send her to?

FS: Well, he knew some people. I don't know how because they never talked about it. I only know the circumstances because when I was born, my mother was very friendly with that particular family. They had two children, a young son and a daughter. They visited on weekends. I got to know them real well and I liked them a lot. They treated my mother real well.

RB: Do you remember their name?

FS: Wallach. W-A-L-L-A-C-H.

RB: They sent your mother to school or training – apprenticeship?

FS: To school and the apprenticeship she did with them in the business. They took her every day and taught her all the ropes. That's the best way to learn. Better than school.

RB: Was this common for women to do in those days, do you know?

FS: Well, I think in Europe women were quite entrepreneurial, I would say. They all knew how to do things besides being housewives and unless you were in very wealthy circumstances that you had maids and people that catered to you, you just learned something to be a useful member of society. That was it. As it turned out, my mother was the soul of our household because she was very dynamic. My father was very quiet

and he just did what Mother did. He helped her but he was not in a sense as much the head of the household like my mother was. She made the decisions and that was it. I think it had something to do also of being almost the oldest in a big family. You get it in your blood.

RB: Do you think of your mother as a role model?

FS: Yes.

RB: How so?

FS: Well, first of all my mother was very hard working. She taught me work ethics. She also was an extremely kind person. My mom didn't have a bad bone in her body. Her credo was there is something good in every person. You just have to work on it to bring that good out. I still believe that in many ways. I can't believe that people can be really mean and I've learned in my life of course that there are people that, no matter how nice you try to be to them, they don't respond.

RB: But at the same time you remember those values and beliefs that your mother taught you.

FS: Absolutely. And my grandmother. It's really interesting because my grandmother had fourteen children of whom four died. My grandfather was a holy man who studied all day the Torah, and he didn't lift his tush out from the chair. My grandmother raised the children, and they had a slaughterhouse where they slaughtered the animal – kosher slaughterhouse – and she did everything.

RB: Isn't that remarkable?

FS: It is remarkable. Every time I think about it – I mean, I only stayed with her for one year when I was five years old. I remember her so vividly to this day because she made

a big impact on me [with] her kindness and sweetness just like my mother. And just [had] a firm hand with all the girls and boys she had and with the people that they worked with.

RB: I hear there's a wonderful story about that visit to your grandmother at age five.

FS: Yes, it was wonderful. No, I just told Lila the things that I remembered. We bought a house on Capitol Hill when we first came to Seattle, and we had a big garden. I go out in the backyard, and there's a whole bed of nasturtiums and I smell the nasturtiums, and all of a sudden, like you take a curtain and pull it away from my eyes, I see myself playing. In my grandmother's little shtetl, they had a big cemetery, and it was full of nasturtiums, and I played with my aunts and my uncles up there. It was a beautiful place to play. But that smell brought back that memory which I hadn't thought of in years.

RB: That's a wonderful memory. Maybe we should backtrack so that we can get to the story of how you got to your grandmother's at age five. You were born –

FS: I was born in Berlin. My mother, once she was married and established, tried to help some of her other sisters, and she brought three of them actually to Germany one of the sisters, the middle one – she had an older one, a middle one, and a younger one. They were all in between, all the fourteen kids. The middle one did not have a permanent visa to stay in Germany. So, at one point when I was five, she was expelled. She had to leave Germany because her visa expired. So, my mother sent me along with her. She had to go back to Poland. She sent me along as a token that she would do everything in her power to get her a permanent visa. That's how it happened. That's how I stayed almost a year with my grandmother. That was the only time I ever met my grandmother. We never went back. I never saw her again, but that one year is really indelible in my mind because I had very interesting experiences with the people there and with my grandmother. The life in the shtetl [phone ringing] – you want to turn it off?

[Recording paused.]

RB: So, you went to Poland.

FS: Poland with my aunt. I got to meet all my other aunts and uncles, and they all fussed over me, you can imagine. My grandmother fed me like I was a little goose. After I left Poland, I weighed ninety pounds at five years because I could eat like a longshoreman. All the good things she cooked, and the air there and everything was different than the big city in Berlin. It took me six months to lose all that weight when I came back. [laughter]

RB: And what were the circumstances of your return? Did you come back with your aunt?

FS: I came back with my aunt and with my mother. She came to pick us up. And that's how we returned. And then my aunt stayed in Berlin where she married. She married a widower with two children, and she never had children of her own because she wanted to give all she could to these two children. She was their mother. To this day, she has been gone for quite a while, and we still keep in contact. Her daughter lives in Israel. The son lives in Montevideo still. We see each other and talk.

RB: Was it common at that time for people to help out their siblings who needed to leave Poland?

FS: Absolutely, absolutely. If you had any kind of feeling for your brothers and sisters and wanted to try to give them a better life, you did that. My mother was so loving; she wished she could have done more. We were very comfortable, but we were not rich. She didn't have the means of bringing more people to Berlin at that time. Just like now, people come to America to make a better life. This is how in those years people wanted to come to Germany or wherever. Lots of Jewish people from Poland, as I understand, went to France to make a better living. So this is how my mother worked it to try to help her sisters. She married off three sisters and helped them so I felt that was wonderful.

RB: It sounds like you had a very close family and extended family.

FS: Yes.

RB: And who were your siblings?

FS: I have a brother who still lives in Montevideo. He's three years younger. I have a sister who is eight years younger, and she lives in Seattle.

RB: What are their names?

FS: My brother's name is Bernard Piepsch. My sister is Cilly Kaminoff. She's married to Max Kaminoff. I brought my sister here, where she met her husband and got married. [laughter] And she has a daughter, one daughter and two grandsons.

RB: That's wonderful. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your life as a young child in Germany?

FS: Well, unfortunately, my dad had a big problem. He was an alcoholic. When he was sober, he was the sweetest man alive. When he was inebriated, he was not so good, and he didn't treat my mother very nicely. I always felt, “Why doesn't she get a separation? Why didn't she get a separation?” But she didn't because in those years you got married for better or for worse. It isn't like now. My biggest joy was going to school. I loved school.

RB: Really?

FS: I had wonderful teachers. I loved to learn. I loved to study. I felt very good at school. I really did. My saddest moment came when the Nazis took over because then even the schools were affected. As a Jewish child, I was already in higher education because in Germany, you start high school after the fourth grade. You have to make up your mind and you have to pass a test if you're good enough to go onto a higher

education or if you want to be just a working person. If you are just a working person, you work. You go to school until you're sixteen, and then you graduate [with] a high school degree, and then you go on. If you work at something, have a profession, you go on as an apprentice and then journeyman, and then you become a master of your trade. Whatever you do, that was the thing that you did. If you went onto higher education, you went after fourth grade into high school where you learned English. You started English, French, and then you went to that school until you were eighteen, and then you can go to the university. [Telephone rings. Recording paused.] I went to a, they call it in Germany, lyceum.

RB: Could you spell that in German?

FS: Yes. L-Y-C-E-U-M. It's like high school but it is already higher education. And in 1937 – '36 actually – all the Jewish children had to leave those schools, and then the Jewish community had schools to continue your education. I went to a Jewish high school with boys and girls. It was nice. We had good teachers, but we already began to feel you're not wanted. Signs began to appear – swimming pools, everywhere – "Jews and dogs are not permitted," or "Jews and pigs are not permitted." And you couldn't go anywhere. The Jewish community that was there pulled together and you did Jewish things with Jewish people. At the time, they started movements for Israel. I joined a group when I was in my early teens, Hashomer Hatzair. I got to learn a lot of Hebrew and songs. Actually, I also went to Sunday school in Germany because you had to take religion in your regular school but the Jewish children went to the Jewish religion school, and then they incorporated your grades into your regular grade point at school because religion was something that you had to take. I have to add to that when the Christian children took their religion class, the Jewish children were excused and you could sit outside or do your homework and wait for that hour to go by until the next class began. My mother was a very smart lady. She said to me, "You learn the Christian religion too. You have to live all your life with Christian people. You should know what they believe

in. Don't miss that class. It's something that you should study and learn." I learned a lot about Christian religion. It has made me – I think it has made my character a little bit different because I can accept any religion, anybody, and respect it.

RB: Your mother, it sounds like she was a very open-minded.

FS: Very open minded. Very tolerant.

RB: What was your religious background growing up?

FS: Well, my mother and father were quite religious. They were Orthodox. We had dishes for Passover, and we had Shabbat Friday nights. The minute we left Germany actually and came to South America, we discontinued all of that for some reason or another. I don't know why, but my mother was completely – I don't know if you would call it disturbed or whatever it was. My own feelings at the time – I could never say was that I was proud to be a Jew. I was afraid to be a Jew. I never sent my daughter to Sunday school when she was born because I always decided she should pick what she wants to be when she grows up because I was really afraid to be Jewish.

RB: At what point did that start for you or what were some events that happened that started that process? Did you have a Jewish identity at one point and then that feeling took over?

FS: Yes.

RB: Can you describe that process? What happened?

FS: Well, I was fine until the Nazi movement started and we were persecuted and you were afraid to be a Jew. Ashamed to be a Jew. I was a child. What did I know? What did I know? I just sort of went into myself, and I decided I have to live my life the way I think fit.

RB: At what age do you remember were you when the Nazi movement – when you became aware of its power?

FS: Well, I was twelve years old.

RB: So bar or bat mitzvah.

FS: Yes, well, I never became bat mitzvah because in those years, first of all, we were Orthodox and the girls did not become bat mitzvah. The boys became bar mitzvah. You know my brother was bar mitzvah. We were very proud of him. I remember still, the amount. My mother had ninety people for his bar mitzvah, and let me tell you, she cooked and baked months and months ahead for that bar mitzvah. It was at our home.

RB: But it sounds like it was a very significant time. You were coming of age. You were age twelve when the Nazi presence –

FS: Yes. And the school, the hatred in the school. When we used to go on outings, on picnics with your school, with your class, they would sing these horrible songs, “When the blood of the Jews comes from the knife.” It was horrible. The friends that you thought were your friends were not your friends anymore. It gives you a horrible feeling. Before your adulthood, you really don't know what to make of it. You get very confused. Then, when I was sixteen, I met my husband, and we didn't want to lose each other because at that time people tried to immigrate as fast as they could. I got married at sixteen and a half, not knowing what destiny had in their mind because we were married eight months when we had to separate and this is another story how we left Germany.

RB: I would love to hear that story. Why don't we take a step back though just to talk a little bit about when you met your husband and the circumstances of your meeting.

FS: Well, I met my husband on the beach. [laughter] Berlin had some beautiful lakes, and I had a very close friend that went with me after I sort of half-finished my education. I

went to designer college because my father wanted me to learn something practical in case we immigrated that I could make a living. At this designer college, I meet this young girl who was my own age and we became very friendly. One Sunday, she says, “I am going to this lake, you want to come with me?” I went with her, and my husband was in another group. She went over to that other group to talk. She had friends in that other group, and she introduced me. He looked at me, and he had taken judo lessons at the time, and he made this funny movement with his leg, and I was laying at his feet with sand in my mouth. I thought, “What a jerk.” [laughter] Well, anyhow, I didn't look at him the rest of the day but he looked at me apparently because the next day when we were at school, we came out because it was an evening school – we started at five, and it was over at nine every day. He picked us up from school. He was there.

RB: How did he know?

FS: Because he knew my friend. He knew that she was going to that school, and, of course, he asked. So, that's how we met. Then it became pretty hot and heavy after a little while, and six months later, he asked for my hand in marriage, and my father threw him out because he says, “Marry somebody your own age.” I was sixteen and a half, and he was twenty-two and a half. He was twenty-three when we were separated.

RB: So, at first, your parents weren't –

FS: No, my parents were not – I was so young. My god.

RB: At what age did women at the time become engaged?

FS: Well, ours was actually quite special because women got engaged, formed relationships, when they were eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two. It's not like now in America that women wait; they want a career first before they get married. But they were in their early twenties, I would say. Late teens, early twenties. My own daughter got married at nineteen, but she finished her career.

RB: But in your situation, it was different. What factors made it different, do you think?

FS: Well, what do you call it, the angst of being separated, not being able to see each other again. You clung to everything that belonged to you in a way because you tried to make the best out of a poor situation.

RB: The poor situation being the rise of the Nazi party.

FS: The rise of the Nazis and best friends and families that you know disappearing. You didn't know where they went, what happened to them. You just didn't know. So whatever was around you, you tried to hold. It was a very special time. And young people also, I think they were more in love with each other at an early age because of the circumstances.

RB: What do you mean?

FS: Well, I mean younger people – I saw lots between my own friends, my own girlfriends – they had lots of boyfriends, and maybe it was like here, but it was more intense than – here it's sort of more playing around. At that time, it was more intense.

RB: It sounds as though there was a greater sense of immediacy to life at the time.

FS: Yes. And you didn't know what the next day would bring. It's almost like being in a war.

RB: So, how did your parents come to accept your relationship?

FS: Well, they finally accepted it because his parents came to talk to my parents, and they finally accepted it.

RB: Were they also Orthodox?

FS: No, his parents were not Orthodox. They were religious, but the holidays – my father-in-law was, I think, sixth generation German, and so his religious beliefs were not as intense. But he still was very Jewish, and so was my mother-in-law.

RB: They felt a very strong Jewish identity.

FS: Yes, and they had two sons, my husband and his brother. They taught the kids being Jewish, but I don't think either my husband or my brother-in-law were bar mitzvahed.

RB: Could you tell us a little bit about your marriage and the ceremony?

FS: Well, the ceremony was performed by a Rabbi and the immediate family, and it was very simple. We did not have a honeymoon. We stayed with my husband's parents because, at that time, my father had started proceedings for emigration, and so did my father-in-law, and so we were all sort of in limbo. After we were married about eight months and I just found out that I was pregnant with my daughter, we had to leave Germany because in Germany, you are what your father is at that time. If your father was Hungarian or if he was Romanian or if he was Russian like my father was, the children, the wife, were considered Russian. And in ‘38, very early on in ’38, they began to expel the Russian Jews. They gave you two weeks to leave the country or concentration camp. My father made the decision in the ‘20s; he had a chance to become a German citizen, and he kept his Russian passport. That decision saved our lives because if he would have been German, they would have put him in a camp. We had these two weeks, and even though I was married to my husband, they did not permit me to become a German Jew because lots of foreign-born or so-called foreign-born young people tried to marry German Jews to get a working permit. Because if you were

a foreigner, you couldn't get a working permit. So Hitler stopped that, saying, “You cannot become a German Jew.” I stayed a Russian Jew after my marriage, and I was expelled together with my family.

RB: All of you, your family –

FS: I was the first one to be expelled. I get the papers. I have to leave Germany in two weeks. Then, my parents got it two days later. But you can imagine how I felt.

RB: How did you feel?

FS: I was destroyed. What can I say? I was seventeen years old, and I was married, I was pregnant, and what do you do? How do you feel in circumstances like this? And then we had to go to this committee because in two weeks you'll get a visa to go anywhere. In those years, you couldn't go anywhere without a visa. They had a big committee set up in Berlin to help the people that were in immediate danger, like this two-week thing, a Jewish committee.

RB: Do you remember the name of it?

FS: No, the committee was from the Jewish Community. They had access to visas, and they knew where they could send the people so they got us visas to go to Paraguay. We got the visas in less than a week. We had to go to France to take a ship to go to Paraguay. It was horrible because we couldn't take anything with us. We went out with the clothes on our bodies and ten marks. They permitted us to take out ten marks. And then, later on, my in-laws managed to pack boxes with some clothes and household items and send it to Uruguay. But they stayed on. They were German Jews, and it was very lucky that my father-in-law wasn't sent to a camp. He also had the Iron Cross in the First World War. My father-in-law was so German, you have no idea. He even took his German citizenship back after the war, that's how German he was. And so we left.

RB: Excuse me, could you tell us a little bit about the circumstances in that two-week period where you're packing and your parents –

FS: No packing. [laughter]

RB: That's right. But your parents had a business, is that right? A lingerie business. Do you remember the name of the business?

FS: No. [laughter] I don't.

RB: That's OK. What was it like preparing to leave and to say goodbye to those you left behind?

FS: It was horrible. When we got to the train station to leave Berlin, and he came with me, I almost was ready to throw myself out of the window. I was just absolutely devastated. Then my mother was also devastated because she had to leave everything. My mother did not look very Jewish, and she was always very sweet. People liked her a lot, so lots of times, Germans that knew you would say to the authorities this woman is Jewish or this man is Jewish and this business is Jewish. They didn't know my mother was Jewish. So they didn't molest her. She had to close the business and leave everything behind. She never took anything. So that was it.

RB: And what plans did you make with your husband before you left?

FS: Well, the plans that we made [were] that as soon as I would get to Paraguay, I would send him some papers so he could join me. I never got to Paraguay because on the ship over, when we left Germany and France, we met a British family, and the head of the household was the director of the British railroad in Uruguay. When he met us and found out about our circumstances, he said, “You cannot live in Paraguay. It's too primitive.” And when we got to Uruguay, the authorities came on the ship because you had to leave the ship and go on a bus to go to Paraguay because it's an inland country, it doesn't have

waterways to it. So the ship arrived in Uruguay and you had to board buses to go to Paraguay. When the authorities came on the ship, he talked to them and said, “If you let this family stay, I will take care of them if they can't take care of themselves.” He had a wife and two children. The wife had become very fond of me, and she felt so sorry for me without my husband and being pregnant. I was sick the whole time I was on the ship. I was throwing up like crazy. You can imagine, the beginning of your pregnancy. When we got there, he helped us, and he put us in a pension, and we stayed there. Then he found us a couple of rooms, and they got us dishes and things too because we had nothing. For tables, we had orange crates, and for chairs, we had orange crates. This is how we started out.

RB: Do you remember his name?

FS: Rudge.

RB: Could you spell that?

FS: R-U-D-G-E. Rudge. He had two children, Eileen and Stanley, and they were just a wonderful couple. For years, this Mr. Rudge befriended our family. When, finally, Israel became a country, he said to me, “Frieda, I am so happy that the Jewish people finally have a homeland. But I am very much afraid they will never have peace.” He said that to me the day – because they had a big celebration in Uruguay when Israel became a state. All the Jewish people in Uruguay concentrated on the big plaza, and they sang, and you had the Israeli flag. It was a very emotional day. He visited us on this day, and this is what he said to me: “They will never have peace because the Arab people will not accept the Jews.” And he was right.

RB: How did your family decide to go to Uruguay? Do you know why Uruguay? Or Paraguay, I'm sorry.

FS: Well, I told you, that was the only place we could go. They didn't decide. You know the committee got you the visa, and you had to go where you could go.

RB: So there was no decision-making around where you were going to go.

FS: My father actually wanted to go to Australia. He had applied in 1936 to go to Australia, but since he had a Russian passport, he was considered to be a communist, and they did not want him in Australia.

RB: So when you found out that you were going to Paraguay, what thoughts were going through your head?

FS: What do you think? I didn't know the country. I didn't know where it was. We didn't speak Spanish. We just had to go. We just were lucky. We felt lucky to be able to get out. The only thing that I remember very clearly that annoyed me to no end was my parents had paid for part of the trip in Germany to this committee that got us the visas. When we got to France, to Paris, we had to wait for the steamship tickets in Paris at the travel agency. At that time, HIAS was so corrupt; they charged us double again for the tickets. And my parents – my mother, jewelry, everything that she had, we had to use, so we came to Uruguay without anything. That made a big impression on me at that time – how Jewish people could do this to other Jewish people. That was not a very nice thing. And then, when we got to Uruguay, there was quite a big Jewish community. There were Sephardic Jews who were there first. They were the aristocrats of the Jews. And then there were Russian Jews and Polish Jews and German Jews, and everybody had their own little committee. So we went to one Jewish organization, I can't remember which one my mother went to, and to find some help, some assistance, and they said, “We cannot help you. You are German Jews or Russian Jews. You have to go to this other committee.” That was another thing that sort of turned you off when you are in need and you had to go and beg and they sent you from one place to another.

RB: Was there any united force in the Jewish community or was it really broken into –

FS: Yes, it was.

RB: Describe the community.

FS: Well, they all had their own groups. The Sephardics were with the Sephardics, and the Ashkenazic with the Ashkenazi. Within the Ashkenazi community, you had all these different countries. When we came to Uruguay in ‘38, there were Hungarians and Rumanians from all over the world. Lots of German Jews, and they all formed their own little cliques in their own little corner. It was not cohesive. Absolutely not. Not like you have here. And here it has become, as I understand so now after all these years – because when we first came to Seattle in ‘53, there was also a division. The Sephardic Jews that married Ashkenazi Jews were sort of frowned upon. I don't know if you know that. I had an experience in Montevideo. I had a Sephardic boss where I worked, and he had a son who fell madly in love with an Ashkenazi girl, and he didn't want her to marry him. He didn't want his son to marry the girl. I was very angry, and I marched up to his office, and I said, “Why don't you let your son marry Sulema?” That was her name. And he says, “Well, she is not Sephardic.” And I said, “But she's Jewish. What is the difference?” He says, “Well, she doesn't know our customs. She doesn't know how to cook what we eat, and this and that.” And I just gave him such a harangue, you have no idea. Because I was very open with my boss, and he liked me a lot, so I could speak to him very openly. He finally gave his son permission to get married after his fiancé learned all of the Sephardic customs.

RB: Really? So you were instrumental in helping them accept her.

FS: Yes. Well, they were married, had a good life and four children. Sadly, she died three years ago. We stayed in touch. When I visited Uruguay, they received me royally. They were very nice to me. But I had a very good relationship with the family, and when

the girls – he had eight kids, and when the girls needed something done, a new dress or something, they always came to me and said, “Can you talk to my dad? Please help me.” They were very rich. But he was very tight with his money and didn't permit the kids to get anything they wanted.

RB: Well, that's a remarkable story of how you traveled over to and made it to Uruguay. You mentioned that when you first got there you really were not able to bring anything with you. Describe how you managed. What did you and your family do to manage this situation?

FS: Well, the first few weeks, we had this help from this English gentleman. He helped us. He invited us for dinner. He invited us for lunch. They were just wonderful. And then I went out to find a job. I hadn't finished my designing degree. I knew how to design, and I knew how to cut things. I knew how to put things together, and I was very young, but I knew my job. I went to all these factories that manufactured clothing to offer my services. And nobody wanted to take me because I looked like a child. At seventeen, I looked like I was fourteen. I never looked my age. So I went to my last resource, which was a knitting factory. The owner said, “Look, honey, you are too young. I don't think you can do the job.” I started to cry, and I said, “Please let me try. If I am not good enough, you don't have to pay me. Just give me a chance.” So he did, and Mr. Eisenberg – I'll never forget it as long as I live – was just a doll. And he gave me the job, and I worked for a week. After the week, he handed me my paycheck, and he said, “You did very well, and I am very proud that I took you.” I worked there until my daughter was born and he also gave me the last months off because it was very hot. Lucy was born in April, and in February, I was cutting out some clothes and I fainted at the cutting table, so he sent me home. He said, “Honey, you stay home. After your daughter or son is born, your child is born, you come back to us.” As it turned out, I had made a very close friend during the first year that we were in Uruguay, and her father was a tailor. And so, after I had my daughter, we decided to do some work at home. I had gotten my sewing

machine in the meantime because Gunther's parents had packed the big box for us, and they included my sewing machine. So I had my sewing machine, and he had a sewing machine, and we took in homework because, in those years, they did not have factories in Uruguay where merchants would go and buy their merchandise. Every store had their own designer, their own workforce, and everything that was sold in the store was produced in the store. The quantities were shipped out to home workers that did the work, so we did ten coats a day and stuff like that. After I did this for a little while, one of the shops that needed a designer because theirs had quit approached me if I wanted the job. That's how I started. I had at that time about thirty people working in the store, and if people wanted to have something done, you measured them, you made custom clothes like a dressmaker. Also, the first design of garments were sold in the store. There were so many different styles of suits and coats and dresses, and I had to make the first design, and then it was done in different sizes and sold in the store. From that place, a bigger store approached me. After I was in this one place for two and a half years, close to three, they approached me and wanted me to work for them. Their designer had gone to Denmark on a trip, and they needed somebody. They asked me, and I worked for them for a while, and right next door was a big store that had fabrics. Big fabric store. Our shop bought their fabrics at that big store. And one day, the boss of that big store invited me for lunch. He asked me if I would like to start a ready-to-wear department. They have all the fabrics, they have all that's needed to manufacture, and why wouldn't I come and work for them? And he offered me double the salary that I earned next door. I couldn't say no. I was a solo breadwinner in my family. My father couldn't find a job. My mother had three children to take care of. My sister was eight, my brother was fourteen when we immigrated, and I had the baby. So I was the only one that worked. And they made do. My poor mother. I remember that first job with Mr. Eisenberg; I made six pesos a week. That was like six dollars a week. And my mother supplemented. She went every evening to the market. She asked for the vegetables that the farmers were going to throw away, and for liver for the cat, and bones for the dog. She made soup,

and we ate liver. I can't see liver anymore. So, we survived with my little salary. And then when I made a little bit more, it was better. But we lived very primitively for a long time. And when my daughter was three, and my dad was not so great to be with, I moved out of where we lived, and I went on my own. I found a very nice Jewish man from a Jewish organization, and he found me a pension where I could live and a daycare where I could put my daughter. So I worked, and I went home. I took my daughter to daycare in the morning, picked her up at night, and it all worked.

RB: That's remarkable, all that you did.

FS: You make a living. I helped my mother. I gave her so much a month. But I moved out because I didn't want anybody to raise my child but myself. I was very lucky, had a nice daycare – lots of lovely children. At that time, all the immigrants in Uruguay really were pretty close. They all went more or less through the same things. There were a dozen of them that came out with all their money and all their possessions because they'd hidden it in Switzerland or somewhere else, and they were the money makers that employed people that didn't have a job because they started businesses. If you have money, you can start anything. They actually were the beginning of a middle class in Uruguay which didn't exist before. They were either very poor or very rich. And all these immigrants, Germans and Russians and Hungarians – Hungarians started restaurants. Jewish people are very enterprising, and they don't mind working. So it is just like all the Asian people that come here now. You will never see anybody on welfare, right?

RB: So, you worked for Jewish people, the owners of these businesses were Jewish.

FS: Yes. The first shop that offered me a job after I did the coats with my friend's father were from Hungary. And then my other boss was from Germany. Then the last one that I had, I worked for him for about eight years. He was a Sephardic Jew. They were from the island of Rhodes.

RB: Do you remember the names of these – the last names of these employers?

FS: Yes. Sasson was my last boss. His first name was Allegre Sasson, and he had eight kids of which I knew all the names. Then the other German Jews were Cerf – C-E-R-F – and he was related – the husband was related to the writer Cerf in New York. They were a very prominent family in Germany. Very rich and very aristocratic, really. They started a business down there, and I'm trying to think of the name of the first – of the Hungarian couple, and it will come to me because my senior moments don't permit me to. [laughter] I think of something, and then it comes back to me after a little while. So if I remember it, I'll tell you.

RB: You have a remarkable memory, I think.

FS: I do have a pretty good memory. But sometimes it doesn't work. The other day I kept thinking of the names of my rhodey and my azaleas. I couldn't think of the words rhododendron and azaleas. After half an hour of torturing myself, I laid down, and all of a sudden, it came by itself. It's guess it happens when you're going to be eighty.

RB: It sounds like the Jewish community, although it was broken up into different cultural units, really took care of each other in Uruguay. Or helped each other.

FS: In a way. It was not helping each other as much as they needed. They needed labor. And anybody who was willing to work and had knowledge of something could find a job. My very best friend's father started a dry-cleaning shop and succeeded. Her husband was from Czechoslovakia, where he was trained in manufacturing jersey, knits and things like that. He was an engineer. He found a job right away because they didn't have anybody to do this.

RB: And what were the cultural barriers like for you? Did you learn Spanish?

FS: The thing about Uruguay that I dearly loved was that, at that time, people did not look down upon you because you were poor. That was a wonderful thing. I met some Uruguayan people. They invited us to their home. They were so kind to us. Through this British director, you know he knew lots of Uruguayan people, and he talked about us, and they called us, and they invited us for dinner. They never made a difference between us poor people and them. They helped whatever they could. I remember when I started working, I got lots of customers just wanting to help. I was very lucky. I had eight years of French in high school. So I learned Spanish in four months because I had a Latin language as a background. Because when you go out to work, you have to know the language. And to this day, I haven't forgotten it. I speak Spanish almost better than English.

RB: That's incredible. In four months, you picked it up.

FS: Yes. And when you are young, you know I tell you something. I never thought that I had it in me.

RB: What do you mean?

FS: I keep thinking back to how young I was and how hard I worked, and I was a princess at home in a way. You know, little Jewish princess. My mother cooked everything I wanted to eat. I had nice clothes. We were spoiled rotten. You know how Jewish mothers spoil their children?

RB: This was in Germany.

FS: In Germany. And except for the way my dad was, with his drinking problem, I was cherished, and I never thought I would be able to work, support my family, support my child – I never thought I could. I always thank God that I had something in me, and it

must have come from my grandmother and my mother.

RB: What parts of them did you carry with you and use to –

FS: Well, you should realize that by now. The working ethics and their

determination. I don't know what it was. I have no idea. I always saw them working and being happy and not – the one thing that God gave me that I feel very lucky, I never looked upon work as something horrible or undesirable. “Oh, I'm so tired, I have to go to work or this or that.” All my life, I felt I was lucky to have a healthy body and a job to go to. That was something that is ingrained in me. I don't know where it came from. I can't tell you. But you either have it, or you don't have it. When I worked here in West Seattle, we had a shop, and the people would come in the morning and – “I'm so tired Mrs. Sondland. I would like to sleep a little bit more.” I used to admonish them. I'd say, “Be happy you have a healthy body and a job to go to.” I couldn't stand it when people complained because they have to go to work. I think work is something that helps you over bad times, over good times. When you do something well and you are recognized, you feel a certain pride. But I never saw work or studies or anything like this as tedious or something undesirable. I think you are born with this kind of feeling. My daughter is the same way, and so is my son. They are both workaholics, and they like to do things. My daughter doesn't work, but she is in every Jewish organization you can imagine.

RB: And philanthropic work, yes.

FS: She likes to do that because when we came to Seattle, we had to start anew because we didn't have much money when we came here. Our Uruguayan money wasn't worth anything; it was completely devaluated, so we started from scratch again, and she got a scholarship from the Jewish Women's Organization, Council of Jewish Women, and she is paying it back now.

RB: The one thing that we haven't talked about at this time in your life is that you were not only working hard to support your family, but you were raising a child, and I would love to hear what it was like to do both at the same time.

FS: It was not easy, but I was lucky because my daughter was a very easy child. In all the years that she has lived, Roz, I've never had a bad word out of her mouth. No. To answer me bad or to wanting things that she couldn't have, never in all her living years. I was very blessed in that respect. And she was my little companion. On our days off, we went places. I had lots of wonderful friends. She was included in everything. As a matter of fact, I had friends, a couple, he had a birthday the same day that she had. So we would make a little birthday party for my daughter in the afternoon and she was invited to his birthday party in the evening. You could take her anywhere. She was well behaved and had nice manners, and they loved to have her. Then the friends that had children, of course, where she could mingle. But I wouldn't say I had a hard time raising her because she was a wonderful child. God blessed me in that way. And she was a good student. I made a big sacrifice which I thought was very important. I sent her to good schools. She started out at a public school, and she was very shy at the time. There were thirty-five children in her class, and she was never called to recite anything. After first grade, I always went to school to see what was going on. The teacher said, "Your child needs special attention, which I cannot give her. Is there any way you can put her in a private school?" At that time, we lived on a street, and two blocks down, they opened a new private school. They charged very little, to begin with, to attract customers. I mean students. So, I enrolled her in that little private school. There were eight children in her class. She absolutely loved it. She really loved it. She sort of developed. Then that little school was bought up by a bigger private school and she kept on going to the other school. She had very good schooling, and I had a very hard time because financially it was very tough. I can tell you one thing I did not have money to sole my shoes, so I put newspapers in my shoes so my daughter could go to private school.

RB: Is that right? Education meant –

FS: Meant a lot to me.

RB: – a lot to you. And your daughter's welfare meant a lot to you.

FS: So, one day, after she started – I'm just trying to think – she was twelve. I put her in a special school in Montevideo when she was through with primary school. It was called the Crandon Institute. I was very interested to get her into this school because they prepared the children that went there for a career. Anybody that came out of that school could count on a fabulous job as a secretary or accountant or whatever. They prepared them that well. It was a very desirable school. It was an American school, and they started out as missionaries at the turn of the century, and then it became a high-class school. All the people that could afford it sent their kids there. They learned languages. My daughter learned English. She had English and Spanish. In the afternoon, she learned English; in the morning, she learned Spanish. So she was fluent in English when we came to this country. This is what the people liked – to have well-prepared young people. I sent her to the school, and one day, my boss calls me in, and he said to me, "How come you can afford to send your daughter to the Crandon Institute?" I said, "I can't afford it, but I make do with what I have." I said, "It would help if you give me a raise." [laughter] I got a raise. I did. That's the same boss, the son of my old boss that I helped to get married. So I got a raise, and my daughter got her education. When we came to Seattle, to Garfield High School, she was a sophomore, and she had already learned in her freshman year what they were teaching in her sophomore year. So she was considered to be elite. She spoke English, she spoke Spanish, and she became so popular in her first year of high school here [that] they made her a cheerleader. She was in her element. She spoke Spanish, she spoke German, and the teachers had her as an assistant because in those years, in the '50s, lots of the teachers were not good in the languages. They taught language, but they had to prepare their whole lesson the night

before in order to present it to their students. They were delighted to have Lucy in their class and to help them with the language. So my daughter became very popular in high school.

RB: Isn't that something? Now during this time, what was happening with plans to bring your husband over? At what point did he make it over to Uruguay, and how did that come about?

FS: Well, the way it came about from the first day I was in Uruguay – I tried to get papers for him. My husband, at the time when we got to Uruguay, in January of '39, fled Germany on a German freighter. He had a friend who put him in the – no, an English freighter, I think. He put him in the vegetable bin in January and hid him there. When he got to Le Havre, he had both legs frozen, and they had to put him in the hospital. I didn't hear from him for quite a number of weeks. I was just frantic. Then he went to Paris, and he even got a job in Paris. His father managed to send him a little money, and he got a job. He was a furrier; he was in the fur business. He started working in France, and it was fine until the war started. I tried to make his papers in the meantime in Uruguay. I wasn't very successful because I was not legally in Uruguay. It was wonderful that this British family vouched for us and they let us stay there, but I didn't have a legal status. If you don't have a legal status, and you live in a corrupt country, it's very difficult to get any kind of papers unless you have a lot of money to be able to bribe people. So Gunther was in France when the war started, and they put all the men at that time in a big labor camp because for French people, he was German. So there were lots of other young men there – five hundred of them. They had a choice either to stay in that labor camp or to join the French Foreign Legion. So he joined the French Foreign Legion. He was in the Legion, and at first, it wasn't too bad, but then they put him in a concentration camp when France fell, and the Vichy government took over. He was in that camp until the British and the Americans liberated North Africa, and then he joined – he was born in Prussia, which also became Poland, so his birth certificate was Polish and

German. That birth certificate helped him to get into the British Army like a free Polish citizen. I don't know if you remember your history. He joined the British Army, and they sent him to Britain to be indoctrinated to be a soldier. He was happy because his cousin was there. He had a cousin from Danzig, which is Gdansk now. She went there with a children's transport. He saw the cousin there, and then they sent him. I also told this in my movie that right by him they separated the regiment. Half was sent to Italy, and the other half to Burma. And he got to go to Burma. The part that went to Italy – there was not one single survivor. My husband went to Burma, and after a year in Burma, he decided that wasn't for him because it was very dirty and muddy. You didn't know who was friend or foe. Since he spoke three languages, he applied for the intelligence corps. And they sent him to India. He spent the rest of the war in India. Accompanying the trains and the troops and all this sort of thing. But it took him another two years after the war was over to be able to come to Uruguay because they were the forgotten army. They didn't repatriate them right away because they were not in danger; they were not in combat. So they waited. The Britains waited to bring the boys back two years after the war was over. In the meantime, I tried to get his papers, and you heard the story.

RB: Please tell it. It's a great story.

FS: Well, I had tried for years and years to get his papers, and to no avail. They always sent me back home and said, “Manana, manana, manana.” I didn't have money to really bribe somebody because it took a hefty amount of money to get anywhere. I could maybe sleep my way through all these officials. That was another way which I didn't particularly want to do. So I had to wait, and I had been – when my husband finally got back to England and he was waiting for a ship to come to Uruguay to see if he could come as a visitor, I went to the different organizations and to the offices, and I tried and tried.

[Recording paused. End of disc 1.]

RB: This is Roz Bornstein, and we're back today. I'm with Frieda Sondland at Frieda's home on Mercer Island, Washington, and it is May 1, 2001. We're going to continue with her oral history for the Weaving Women's Words project. Frieda do I have your permission to continue taping?

FS: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you very much. You were describing the story of how you tried to help your husband over to Uruguay. Why don't you describe that?

FS: Well, after my last few visits to different offices to get his permission to come to Uruguay or get a visa to come, I was just very, very low. My spirits were so low because I just didn't know what to do anymore. I didn't have money to bribe anybody. To run every day to the organizations and ask to be taken care of was almost a heroic task. So after the last office I went to that day, I was sitting in the hallway, and I was crying my heart out because I just didn't know what to do anymore. An elderly gentleman came by. He had not even shoes on. He had – what do you call these –?

RB: Sandals?

FS: No. Well, he came by, and he said, “Why are you crying?” I looked at him, and I started to cry some more. I just poured my heart out to him. I told him my whole story, the things that had happened to me. “I have a husband. I have a child that was born in Uruguay, and my husband came just out of the services, and I need a permit for him to come to Uruguay, and I can't get it because I've been manana-ed for so long I don't know what to do anymore. I do not have money to buy it.” He said to me, “You wait a minute. Don't move,” he says, “I'll be right back.” He left. Ten minutes later, he came back and said, “Follow me.” I followed him, and he took me to some beautiful rooms. I ended up in the office of the Minister of Interior. And he introduced me and said, “Now tell your story again to this gentleman. He wants to hear it.” So I told him, and he just shook his

head and says, “I cannot believe that these people work for us. What they are doing to you. You have a Uruguayan daughter that automatically permits you to get a permit for your husband, and I don't know what the manana was all about. I apologize very deeply.” He says, “I am sorry for all the trouble you went through, but you come back tomorrow, and you will have all your papers.” And I did. Then I got my papers, and I found out later on that the elderly gentleman was the retainer of that family; he raised this Minister when he was a child. He was with that family for forty years or longer – I don't know for how long – but he had permission to get in and out of his office, and he was in his – what do you call this? He wasn't even in shoes. He had his house slippers. He had his house slippers on, and he was shuffling around. I thought to myself – when he first approached me and he talked to me, I thought he was a kind older man, and I said, “What can he do?” I thought to myself – but I was sitting there. I was resigned to anything. He was the one that helped me in the end. Then I got the papers, and then my husband came, and we were very fortunate. Actually, it took him a while to get to Uruguay because the year that he came back to England from India was the coldest winter in English history to a point where even the water froze in the toilet tanks it was so cold, and there was no heat. You had to go to the subway to go to the bathroom. The ships couldn't leave the harbors because they were all iced over. He had to wait, and he finally arrived in April, the end of April 1947.

RB: What was that like when he –?

FS: It was very emotional, and I feel very lucky, Roz, because when we saw each other again, it was really funny, we waited down below at the harbor until the ship docked and the immigration officer went upstairs. Here I was standing downstairs on the pier with my little girl, and we were looking up, and he was looking down, and we were just looking at each other. We couldn't believe that we finally saw each other. When we came onto the ship, they finally permitted us to go onto the ship, and of course, he hugged his little girl right away, and she was just so thrilled to have her daddy, you have no idea. It took her

not even half an hour to sit on his lap. And the first thing he said to me was, “Would you like a gin and tonic.” [laughter] This is what they were drinking on the ship when they were coming over. He didn't know what to say. We got a big hug and kiss, and then he said, “Would you like a gin and tonic?” [laughter] Of course, when we went home, I had moved from the pension, and I had moved in with an Austrian family who had an extra room, and they had a maid. I lived with my daughter there, and when she came home from school, there was somebody there that she could be with. It was a very lucky situation. It was not too far to go to work, about twenty minutes on the bus. And then, my husband came from the war. She gave me the room that I had with my daughter, and my daughter could sleep in her room because her husband had died the year before and she was alone. So she let Lucy sleep in her room so we could have a bedroom. Then a year later, we found a nice apartment, very modest and remote, and we started our family life.

RB: And this was after how many years of being separated?

FS: Eight years and eight months, exactly. And then my little daughter, of course, was always looked upon as a child that didn't have a father and that she was lying – her mother, single mother. It was not like it is today with single mothers and children. You were looked down upon because you didn't have a husband. I had a very close friend who had a little girl. I think Lucy was about four or five, and they were playing together, and the mother later on told me the story. The little girl had had a birthday, and she got a tricycle, and Lucy said to her, “I'm going to get a tricycle too when my daddy comes back from the war.” And the little girl said to her, “You don't even have a daddy.” My daughter got so upset [that] she smacked her in the face. The mother told me the story and apologized to me. She says, “If your child is traumatized or something, be aware that this happened today with my daughter and her. I don't know where she got it.” So you could imagine how she suffered, but she never let on. She never let on or said anything. When her daddy finally came to Montevideo, he had to go to school with her every day,

she introduced him to everybody, and it was a big love affair. You have no idea how they loved each other.

RB: What was that like for you to see that and to have it finally –?

FS: It was wonderful.

RB: How so?

FS: It was wonderful. I think it was the happiest day of my life that we finally got together. After a few weeks, I kept thinking how lucky we are that we still liked each other. But he still found me interesting and attractive, and he was the only person that I ever really loved. I had lots of opportunities to just cut my marriage and marry somebody else, but I never did because I loved him. I lived with his pictures for almost nine years. But there was something that held us together and was attractive to us. I don't know what it was. You can't tell in people's lives what attracts you to another person. He wasn't rich, he wasn't – he was just him. Now, we have been married sixty-three years, Roz.

RB: That's wonderful.

FS: And we had our ups and downs. There are times in people's lives [when] you don't agree on things, but one thing I learned in my married life, I never fight. I don't like to fight. I always tell him, “Honey, you're right.” Maybe a week later, he'll say, “Why did you tell me I was right? I wasn't right at all.” [laughter] I said, “But you know me, I don't like to fight.” And I think I felt lucky that we both developed in a certain way. I keep thinking sometimes I don't know if my marriage would have lasted that long. I mean, if I would have had a different kind of character.

RB: What do you mean?

FS: Well, young women of today want everything now, and it has to be exactly what they want or if it isn't exactly what they want. I don't know.

RB: What qualities do you have that have sustained you and your marriage and your life in general? What do you have?

FS: Well, I think the qualities that have sustained us, that we are both willing to work, make things go. We love each other, and we are best friends. I can tell my husband anything. He has a different perspective on things and we look at things – we don't argue. We don't fight. Where the children are concerned, I was very lucky to have another child; my son was born here in America. I have a Latin daughter and a Yankee son. [laughter] So I felt very lucky. You don't throw things away. When you've been alone so long, like I was, Roz, and you meet different men – I was a very nice-looking young woman, and I did not have a lack of people that pursued me or wanted to get me into their bed or something like this. I was not a promiscuous person. I was so busy all day [that] I didn't have time to think about it. But I could see the difference. How kind he was, and my husband never gossips about other people, and his whole character was something that I liked.

RB: It sounds like there was a tremendous amount of respect and love for each other. How did the war experience shape your later years in marriage and now?

FS: Well, the way it shaped us, Roz, is that we never take anything for granted. It isn't coming to us. So whatever you have, you have to work hard, you have to make it work, and you cannot just let things go. If you want something, you have to pursue it. If you can afford it, if you can make it, it's wonderful. If you can't make it, you don't fall to pieces. I think that's important. But you know people are different.

RB: Well, I think that those are incredibly powerful statements that we can all learn from.

FS: I had quite a few people that learned from me. I am very proud to say when we were in business, we had a small dry-cleaning plant in West Seattle for like twenty-eight years, twenty-nine years. I saw young people growing up, and I was like Ann Landers in the neighborhood. They would all come to me with their little problems. After the wives had a fight with their husbands, they would come and cry and sit in my back room. Lots of times I gave them some advice, and some followed it, and they came back, and they said it worked. [laughter]

RB: Is that right? How was that for you to be in that role?

FS: It was sort of nice. I still get it. We have been out – I mean, I have been out of this business now for eight years, and I still have people calling us, and we get together with some of them still, and it's very nice.

RB: That's wonderful. So your advice was valuable to them and stayed with them.

FS: Yes. The other day I was talking to a young woman at the (See?) Center. I got new glasses, and she just had had an argument with her husband and her eyes were all red, and she had been crying. I said, “What's the matter?” I said, “Are you sick? Do you have a cold?” She said, “No, I had an argument with my husband.” We were talking about it, what the argument was about, and it was so stupid it defied words. I said, “You go back, and you make up with him. You tell him you're sorry and don't start that again. It doesn't work. It doesn't work. If you love your husband, then no, you don't argue with him. But what good is it if you want to be right and he wants to be right? Is it worthwhile to fight about that?” She looked at me and says, “You know Frieda, I never thought about it that way.” I said, “Now go home and talk to him.” Then I came back two weeks later, and she says, “It's working, Frieda. It's working.” [laughter]

RB: Well, listen, thank you so much for your time today. Would it be possible to come back another day if need be?

FS: Yes.

RB: And you'd like to?

FS: Yes. I don't mind.

RB: Thank you very much.

FS: I don't mind. You know it isn't really painful for me to talk about these things. It's like I relive my whole life. I feel very lucky to have gotten to this age the way we've gotten, and we feel very lucky because we have two wonderful children who are very supportive, and they make our life very special. My daughter and my son both get along like a house on fire. I mean, they support each other, and they help us. They both get together and right now, they are working on my eightieth birthday party. [laughter]

RB: That's great.

FS: I feel, don't you think I'm fortunate?

RB: And blessed. Yes. And we are too to know you and to hear your stories.

FS: Thank you.

[Recording paused.]

RB: Hi, this is Roz Bornstein, and I'm here today with Frieda Sondland for the second half of her oral history interview for the Weaving Women's Words project for the Jewish Women's Archive. We're on Mercer Island, Washington, in Frieda's home. The date today is May 17, 2001. Frieda, do I have your permission to continue interviewing and taping you?

FS: Yes.

RB: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be back. [Telephone rings.]

FS: Can you stop it?

RB: Of course. [Recording paused.] Okay. Where we left off last time, I believe, was at the point in time where Gunther had just made it over to Uruguay, and you were reunited as a family.

FS: Yes.

RB: And how wonderful.

FS: Which was very nice. At the time, I was living with a family, a Viennese family, I had a room in their house, and we occupied the room, Lucy and I. When my husband came back, they were very gracious. She had lost her husband, so she let Lucy sleep with her in her room so we could have the bedroom. We lived with her for another six months until we found an apartment, and we established ourselves as a family. Then my husband found a job, and it was very nice. We had lots of friends, and we just had a good life. Simple life but a very good life. One day, we got a letter from my mother and father-in-law, who had, in the meantime, come to Seattle. They lived in China during the war. They escaped to China in 1939. My father-in-law had a chance to get a ticket on practically the last boat to China through a friend who had gotten an affidavit to come to the United States. He sold my father-in-law these tickets, and they got to go to China. They lived there during the war, and they had to leave after the Chinese occupation or the Communist occupation. They had to leave China on a displaced person's visa, hundreds of them, practically. They traveled around the world like for sixty days until they finally arrived in Seattle, where my in-laws had distant friends or relatives. That's how they got to Seattle.

RB: And what year was that? Do you know?

FS: In ‘48 or ‘49. They kept writing to us, they wanted us to come to America, and they hadn't seen their son in such a long time. We finally made up our minds when our daughter got to be close to fourteen. We said, “Maybe there's a better chance for my daughter in the United States.” She also had gone to an American school and learned English, and she would be perfect for that. So we just sold everything in Uruguay, and we came to America.

RB: What was it like leaving the friends and community that –?

FS: Very hard, very hard.

RB: How so?

FS: Very, very hard because the friendships that you make when you are under duress and when you have hard times in your life, those are the friendships that stay forever because today I can go back to Uruguay and whatever's left of my friends, which are very few, I would feel just like I had left yesterday. Those are the things that don't happen very often in your life. But at the time, when we got to Uruguay and I met all these friends, we were all in the same boat. We were all refugees, and we all had lost our loved ones. We had lost our homes. We had lost our – most people – their possessions. In Uruguay, lots of people that were doctors and lawyers in Europe could not practice because there was a law that they had to go through all the – what do you call it? – the examinations and the tests and to do it in a different language was very difficult. All these lawyers and doctors went selling door-to-door sausages and whatever they could sell to make a living. It was very difficult. You are sort of like a communal brother/sisterhood. Everybody had to contribute to make life comfortable.

RB: And in terms of the Jewish community there, was there a synagogue that started or was it –?

FS: No, they had synagogues. They had Ashkenazi synagogues, and they had Sephardic synagogues, of course. As I told you before, the Sephardic Jews were the first ones to get to Uruguay, and they were the aristocracy. They did not like to mingle with all these refugees that came from Europe. So then, lots of them, the Ashkenazi synagogue, started to get bigger, and it was like a beginning.

RB: And you had mentioned at some point in time, and I can't remember if this was on tape or not, but that while your family had practiced Judaism and were observant in Germany, that when you came, went to Uruguay that that –

FS: That finished. That finished completely.

RB: What happened?

FS: I think it was – I cannot explain. It was sort of a bitterness that because you were Jewish, what happened to you – then my mother didn't have all the accouterments that you need to keep a Jewish home like dishes and milchigs and fleishigs. We didn't have dishes, period. So it was very, very difficult, and so little by little, it went by the wayside. Also, going to services, you had to belong to a synagogue. You had to have the money to become a member. All these things were completely out of our reach. My little mother would sit on the high holidays – we had like a rooftop. She would sit on that rooftop with her siddur, and she would pray.

RB: Is that right?

FS: On Shabbat, she would light the candles. That's what she would do, but as far as keeping the holidays like we used to, nothing.

RB: Did you find that that was the case for many of the families that came over as well?

FS: Lots of them, yes.

RB: I would imagine.

FS: They were actually very few people that were – I mean, we were all Jewish, but it was not like you have a community here – you have a community center, you have your synagogue, you have your rabbi. I mean, it wasn't like that at all. People cannot imagine what it's like unless you are absolutely very religious and it has been with you, or it will stay with you that you have this innate religiousness. Lots of people have it, and some people don't, and in that case, we did not.

RB: Although it sounds like your mother had –

FS: Oh, yes.

RB: – a spiritual –

FS: Yes, she did. But I never sent my daughter to religion school. She never got any Jewish formal religious education. And it's very interesting. When we came to the United States, and she met her husband, and we joined a synagogue, all of a sudden she started regaining her roots.

RB: Isn't that something?

FS: She went to school. She learned Hebrew. She was interested.

RB: It sounds like you were a marvelous support to her in that process, you must have been [inaudible] religion.

FS: Well, we tried, yes, yes.

RB: So when you made a decision to come to Seattle, what was that like then moving? What happened? How did you actually make the move?

FS: Well, it was really quite simple. We sold everything. We got our tickets to go on the boat, and then we left Uruguay. We had hundreds of people at the port saying goodbye to us, and my daughter had all her friends that she had made during her childhood years. I think there were about one hundred people at the pier to say goodbye to us. It was exciting and it was heartbreaking because I really did not want to go because I left my parents behind – my brother, my sister, and my mother and my father at the time. But I felt I should be fair to my husband because he hadn't seen his parents for so long, and they went through lots of hardship too. So we came here, and his brother was here, his mother and father, and we stayed with them for a little while until we rented our own house. We rented that together with my mother and father-in-law, and we lived together for eight months. And young people and old people really don't go so well together.

RB: It happens.

FS: Yes, so we had to make a decision, and then we bought our own little house on Capitol Hill, and they moved close by into an apartment.

RB: Now, where were they living when you – what neighborhood or street?

FS: On Capitol Hill.

RB: And do you remember the streets or neighborhood?

FS: Oh, yes. Where we lived or where they lived before we came?

RB: Where they lived upon your arrival?

FS: Well, my mother and father-in-law, upon our arrival, had rented a room with a family by the name of Epstein. They were a very prominent family in Seattle. The elderly mother rented rooms to new refugees because they were refugees. They rented the room in their home, and they were living there. The Epsteins were wonderful. It was a

huge family. When we arrived, we rented a house together to be with them. And then after that, we bought our own little house, and they moved close by into an apartment. That's where they lived until they went to Council House. I think they lived a little while at the Council House, and then they went to the Kline Galland home, and that's where they both died at the age of ninety-four and ninety-six.

RB: Is that right?

FS: Gunther's parents, yes.

RB: So, when you first came over you lived with them and then bought your own house.

FS: Yes.

RB: And how was it settling in Seattle? What supports did you have and [inaudible]?

FS: Well, the support we had, in a way, was that we had some family, that we were not alone. And besides that, I was so used to finding my own way. I found my own job, and my husband found his job. I mean, we didn't bother anybody at the time. We spoke English, so there was no reason why we should bother somebody. My daughter started school. She went to Garfield High School where she really blossomed in a way because she used to be very shy and very quiet, and she was a sensation at Garfield because she spoke Spanish, she spoke English, she spoke German.

RB: Isn't that something?

FS: And she was far ahead. She got here in her sophomore year. She was learning in Seattle what she had learned in Montevideo in her freshman year. That's how far behind the schools were here. So she was an excellent student, and everybody liked her. I still have some of her newspapers from the time, and she fit right in. After the first year, they picked her to be cheerleader. There were nine cheerleaders, and they picked her to be

their Song Queen. It was so funny because all of them picked her. Between the cheerleaders, they pick their Song Queen. All of the kids picked her.

RB: How was that for you? How did you feel when that happened?

FS: Well, exciting. Very exciting. A mother sees all these nachas from her children. [laughter] No, and I must say my daughter has given me a lot of joy in her life. Life that she has been living, I never had any problems with her ever.

RB: You sound very proud of her.

FS: Even when she was dating. I mean, I never had this problem that she would come home late. It was so funny because I used to tell the young men that – first of all, I never permitted her to be running outside and somebody honking the horn. People that would come to pick her up had come to the house, say hello, and then she could go. Mother Frieda was very strict, and she gave the young man – whoever picked her up on a date, I gave them a dime, and I said, "I know you are a gentleman. You will bring my daughter home in time. But in case you spend all your money on your date, and your car breaks down, this dime is for you to call me. I do not like to sit up all night and worry about my daughter." At first, Lucy was very embarrassed that I did that. And then, a little while later, she said, "You know, Mother, the kids really respect you." I never had any problem after that.

RB: Isn't that something? That's a great story.

FS: She dated, and she was quite popular in school, but she never got involved with anybody. She just was friendly with all the kids, and she dated a lot, and then she met Herb. Actually, Herb's parents were the first friends we made when we came to Seattle.

RB: Is that right? So how did you meet?

FS: Well, Lucy made a friend in high school by the name of Elaine Stusser. And Elaine's parents had just finished building a house in Seward Park, and they invited us all for dinner. At this dinner party, we met Jack and Grace Pruzan, and we just hit it off. We had to take three buses to get to this dinner party because we didn't have a car. They had a truck, and when we had to go home – we used to live on Beacon Hill then. We had this rented house – they took us home in their truck, and I sat on my husband's lap. We got there and we just hit it off. Like when you meet somebody. We were friends for five years, almost five years, before our children ever met because Herb was national secretary of AZA. Lucy was going to school. She was still in high school. One day, Herb came back from one of his trips. He never had a date in Seattle because he dated girls when he was going to Portland and to Vancouver and here and there. He had a dance from his fraternity, and he asked his sister if she would know somebody that he could take to the dance. She says, “You know the Sondlands are friends of Mom and Dad. They have a daughter.” “How old is she?” “Eighteen.” “She's too young for me,” he said. But he didn't have another date and so he asked his sister to ask Lucy if she would go out with him. Lucy had a date that evening, but she broke the date because she wanted to meet this fabulous Herbert that – the parents were so crazy about their son that she had to meet Herbert. Anyhow, he took her out that one night to that dance, and he never dated another girl. A year later, he came and asked for her hand in marriage. Really, the old-fashioned way.

RB: That's lovely.

FS: Yes. And they got married. Before, while they were dating, also Lucy went back for three months to Montevideo. At the time, she asked me if she could go back. She had saved some money for a trip, and she says, “Mother, I have to get out of Seattle to make sure that I really love Herbert and that it isn't the comfortable circumstance with you and Dad and his parents. I love them both, and I really would like to see if I really love him.” So she left, and she came back three months later. He picked her up in New York. He

had to pick up a car in Detroit. They drove home, and they wanted to get married right away, so I said, “Well, you have to wait until I make her wedding dress.” [laughter]

RB: How lucky and fortunate for her that you were a designer. [laughter]

FS: Yes, well, I made her wedding dress. They waited, and it turned out to be for the best because Herbert at the time was [in the] National Guard, and he had six weeks off the training that he had to go to. So that gave me time to do the dress and to prepare [for] the wedding. With his mother, we went to look for places for the wedding, and it was very, very nice.

RB: Sounds very exciting. Do you have pictures, I'm sure, of the wedding dress?

FS: Yes.

RB: That would be wonderful for us to have some pictures of these [inaudible].

FS: Yes.

RB: Now, what year was that?

FS: They got married in 1958. Yes. Gordie was born in ’57. My son was born in ‘57. She got engaged, and I got pregnant.

RB: Can you tell us about that? That's a marvelous story.

FS: Yes. [laughter] Well, I have to tell you the story about my pregnancy because that is really funny.

RB: Actually, we might be running out of tape here. So hold on just a moment, okay? [Recording paused. End of disc 2.] Hi, this is Roz Bornstein, and I am with Frieda Sondland. It is still May 17, 2001. We're continuing with Frieda's oral history on tape three. Actually, I should say mini disk three. And Frieda, for this mini disk, do I have

your permission to continue taping and interviewing you?

FS: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you. And so where we had left off is you were going to describe your pregnancy with your second child.

FS: Yes. I never thought I was going to have another baby. My daughter announced that she was going to get married, and mommy got pregnant. The way it went was one night, I woke up, and I felt really sick to my stomach but not sick like when you have eaten something. It felt like pregnant. I woke up my husband in the middle of the night, and I said, “Gunther, wake up, wake up.” “What's the matter? Where's the fire?” he said. I said, “I'm pregnant.” He says, “Go back to sleep. You had a nightmare. You're not pregnant.” I said, “But I am.” Well, he says, “Go back to sleep. You're not pregnant.” So I went back to sleep. The next morning, I just was really sure. I hadn't missed a period yet. I went to my doctor. We belonged to Group Health which was right across the street, and I had to go and find out. I get to my doctor, and he says, “How many periods have you missed?” I said, “None.” He says, “It's all in your head. All you middle-aged women want another child.” He says, “Go home. I can assure you you're not pregnant.” I was so insulted when he said that that immediately I called up Grace, and I said to her, “Look Gracie, I think I'm pregnant, and this is what the doctor said to me. I'm very insulted because I am sure I am.” She says, “Well, women have this intuition.” She says, “Why don't you go to my gynecologist?” He was also at Group Health, so I made an appointment the following day. In those days, you could make an appointment from one day to another, and they would take you. I went to see him. I told him the whole story about the other doctor, and he was very upset. He says, “That's not a way to treat a patient, regardless of whether you are or not. We have a very simple test, and that will determine – this frog test.” They had that at the time. That will determine whether you are pregnant.

RB: Can you describe the frog test?

FS: Well, they inject the frog with something. If it dies, then you are pregnant. I don't know how it works, I'm not a doctor, but this is how he explained it to me. Well, they did the frog test, and I was pregnant. Then, nine months later, my Gordie was born. And of course, the whole family was really excited about it. His sister, my daughter, always wanted a brother or a sister. To her, that baby was absolutely fabulous. She would go with him for walks with Herbert [laughter], the two of them, the engaged couple with mommy's baby.

RB: Do you mind if I ask how old were you at the time that he was born?

FS: I was thirty-six. I was two months short of eighteen when Lucy was born. So, I was eighteen years older.

RB: So, the first doctor you went to considered thirty-six to be middle-aged?

FS: Yes.

RB: Ha.

FS: Ha. Yes. In those years, it was middle-aged. I just have a friend who had a baby at fifty-two.

RB: Yes, it's so different now, isn't it?

FS: Yes.

RB: What is it like becoming a mother a second time in Seattle?

FS: Well, to tell you the truth, I was scared to death that I was going to be a mother because I didn't know if I would have the patience and how it would work out. I had to work, which was very important. You know I just – we needed the salary. I was a little bit

scared [about] what I was going to do, but everything worked out just great because I was working at the time at Frederick and Nelson as a fitter in the alteration department. I had lots of following because I was quite knowledgeable, knowing how to make clothes myself. I never permitted women to buy clothes that didn't look good on them. You know how salespeople are? They squeeze you into anything and say you look gorgeous where you look like hell. They got to rely on me. They said before they bought something, “Call Mrs. Sondland, I want her to see it.”

RB: Isn't that something?

FS: And then when I said to the girls, “Don't you have something else for her? This doesn't fit. Oh, two sizes bigger?” “Well, she wants a size eight.” I say, “Well, but she is a size twelve, so she cannot get into a size eight.” So they sort of relied on that, and when I left, I had to leave Frederick and Nelson when I was five months pregnant. They didn't permit women to work at that time when you were having a baby. I went home, and all the people that were my clients at Frederick and Nelson came with me. I opened a studio, and I started alterations and making new clothes. I worked like that, and then when my son was born, I could stay home. I had a studio, and I also taught sewing in my old house.

RB: So this was out of your home.

FS: Out of my home, yes. And it worked out fine because Gordie took naps in the morning. That's the time when I had my fittings and my customers came, and he added quite a bit to my business because he was so funny. I had a customer who – [laughter] she was hysterical. She was an older woman. One day, she asked Gordie – she says, “Gordie, how do you like my dress?” He said, “I love your dress, Mrs. White, but you are too fat.” [laughter] Things like that. And then another day, he said to her – she came, and he was crying for some reason or another. She says, “Gordie, why are you crying? What's the matter?” He says, “Mrs. White, take your hands off me. You smell so terrible

I can't stand it." And she says to me – she was very sweet. She says, "Frieda, children always tell the truth. My perfume must smell terrible to him. I better change my perfume." And she did. [laughter] But he was the sweetest child alive. He became the light of our lives, and I was so happy that I had the luck to have another baby. Of course, my daughter and everybody spoiled him rotten because he was the baby of the family.

RB: Truly. How was it parenting –? The first time around, you were a single parent in many ways.

FS: Yes, yes.

RB: Although your family was nearby. But how was it this time with having Gunther?

FS: It was wonderful.

RB: Wonderful. In what way?

FS: It was wonderful the support, first of all. Also, the day that Gordie was born to have my husband there and all the family was just great. You cannot describe it when you have everybody around you or when you are completely alone. Because when Lucy was born, I was completely alone. I had my mother there, but the thing was that I had to go into this hospital that was from the state, and I didn't know anybody. I hardly spoke Spanish at the time. Here I was, laying there in labor pains and nobody around me, no husband. It was a horrible experience. But things work out in life for us, and I'm grateful that I had this second chance. But the interesting thing about Gordie's birth was the fact that before we left Montevideo, I went with one of my friends – she went to see a person that told you the future, your character. I didn't want to go but my friend says, "Let her tell you your future." And she said to me, "You are going to cross the ocean and have a baby." At that time, I thought, "Oh, how silly. I crossed the ocean, and I had a baby, you know? What is she telling me?" And I really crossed the ocean again, and I had another baby.

RB: Isn't that something?

FS: Yes. And every time I think back on this, how she would know. She could see in the stars that I was having another child, and I was going across another ocean.

RB: And where was Gordon born?

FS: Gordon was born at Group Health on Capitol Hill, and it was really a very, very happy occasion. It was wonderful. His sister just adored him. The only thing [was] he couldn't come to her wedding because he was too little. [laughter]

RB: Now, let's see –

FS: She married July 3rd, and on July 16th, he was a year old.

RB: Isn't that something?

FS: Yes.

RB: Now let's see. So when he was born, did you decide to have a bris for him? Did religion come back into your life?

FS: Yes, it did. We had a bris, and it was wonderful. Yes. And by the way, my son-in-law, when his first was born, he held the baby, and he fainted. [laughter] I shouldn't tell you this. This is family secret.

RB: It sounds like a marvelous story, though.

FS: And then when he was five years old – that is a very sad part again of religion that I have to tell you. When Gordie was five years old, I wanted him to go to religion school. I had worked for Herzl for a whole year. I was in the choir, and Herzl suited me because it was Conservative. It was not too religious or too – I mean, it was not too Orthodox, and yet it was not too modern.

RB: Excuse me, Frieda, I hate to interrupt you, but I think for those people outside of Seattle and Mercer Island, if you could describe Herzl and where it was located, that would be helpful.

FS: Well, at the time, it was located in the central part of Seattle, was a Conservative synagogue. They had a wonderful rabbi and his wife, Rabbi Wagner and his wife Betty. I felt very contented there and very happy. I joined the choir, and when they needed some volunteers to do the tables and this and that, since I was working at home, my time was my own, and I could give of my time. And then came the first High Holy Days. I wanted to attend the services. They did not want to sell me the tickets because I was not a member. I could not afford to become a member, which was so much a month. I didn't have the means. So I couldn't become a member. And they only sold tickets to members. I said, “But look, I've been working for a whole year as a volunteer, I sing in the choir, and I like everybody.” I said, “Why can't I buy tickets?” “Well, that's the rule, and that's the Board and this and that.” Rabbi Wagner's wife, Betty, intervened for me. She wanted me to come to services but to no avail. They did not sell me tickets. After that fiasco, I went downtown. I took the bus. I went downtown on an errand, and I meet Herb Bridge on the street. We just bought some cutlery at his place. You could pay by the month –ten dollars a month. I just bought some cutlery because we didn't have very much that we had brought from Montevideo. And he says, “Frieda, you look so sad. What's the matter with you? You are always so friendly and happy looking.” I said, “Herb, I have to tell you something that I can't believe myself. Here I am, working for a whole year for a congregation. I sing in the choir. Come High Holy Days, I want tickets, and I can't buy them because I'm not a member, and we cannot afford to become a member.” So he says, “I tell you, Frieda, I'm a Reform Jew. If you don't mind, come to our Reform synagogue. We have our synagogue – next to it, we have a big room. We also have lots of times people that don't come to services.” Those were the times when people had seats. Every family had their seats. “And they leave the seats. I am an usher, and they leave the seats with me, and I will – you come with your husband. If you don't mind the

Reform service, you'll come to services [at] our synagogue." Which we did, and as it turned out, Jack and Grace were members too of Temple De Hirsch Sinai. At that time, the rabbi was Rabbi Levine, and I felt right at home. The services suited me, with my way of thinking, with my way of feeling. It was just great. And being accepted by another synagogue where your own did not care, and they did not make us be members. We became members when my son turned Five and wanted to go to religion school. And so we became a member of Temple De Hirsch Sinai, and ever since, we belonged. We don't go every Shabbat, but we go whenever I feel like it. I miss Rabbi Levine terribly because he was absolutely wonderful. I did not care for Rabbi Starr the whole years that he has been there because he was one of these PR [public relations] people that just catered to people that gave a lot to a synagogue and were very rich and very influential. But in thirty years, he has never called on us in our home. My husband has been in the hospital; he has had Parkinson's for sixteen years. Do you think he would ever come or call us or find out? He's very friendly when we see him at the synagogue, and he will – you know, the obligatory birthday wishes and this and that.

RB: With Rabbi Levine, though, he had an impact on you, it sounds like.

FS: He did. He was a fabulous person. First of all, he never forgot your name. He would always inquire about – my in-laws were not members of the Temple. He would always inquire about them, how they were. He would call. When my son was born, he was blessed at Temple. It was such a pleasure for him to do that. My son was bar mitzvahed at Temple, and it was a big pleasure for us. He was a real, true rabbi for everybody. Not just for the few people.

RB: He was available to all.

FS: Yes.

RB: You mentioned that when you went to the High Holiday Service that first year, that it suited you, and you felt – how was that and how did it suit you? What parts of it?

FS: Well, the thing that suited me, number one – it's really interesting because part of the Reform service also contains a lot of the Orthodox. That is sort of interwoven with the Reform. And then I also – the whole rules and regulation and the way that people could sit together, the husband and the wife, and the children were there. It was a very nice atmosphere, I must say, and that suited me. Since I am not a deeply religious person in the sense that I became Orthodox like my parents were, this was just what I needed.

RB: That's great. Now you mentioned Gunther and his illness, and I wonder, at what point in time that you found out about his diagnosis?

FS: Well, he is eighty-five now, and he was seventy. Fifteen years ago. This is going on sixteen years.

RB: [inaudible]

FS: And actually, it started out his little finger started twitching, and he couldn't control it. They took a blood test, and they found out that he had the beginning of Parkinson's. The first few years were not bad. But it has been very hard on him the last three or four years because it gets – it's an illness that progresses slowly, and you cannot stop it. They haven't found anything to stop it. I don't know if you know what Parkinson's really is.

RB: I'm not well educated on Parkinson's [inaudible]. Why don't you tell us?

FS: I'll tell you in very short words. Parkinson's is a lack of dopamine in your brain. There's a material in your brain that's called material nigra, and that contains dopamine. When it diminishes, it affects the dopamine controls [to] all your muscles in your body,

from blinking to eating to swallowing to walking to talking. That is what dopamine does to your body. If the dopamine diminishes, you cannot control your muscles. As you get medication that replenishes a little bit of the dopamine, and then you have good moments. When it wears off, then you are back where you were before. As the sickness progresses, you have moments where you're completely immobile; they call it freezing. And then, after a little while, you loosen up again, but you have to encourage the patient – walk, breathe, swallow. My husband started having trouble swallowing his pills. I found a way to – I make him "ahh" several times real loud so it activates his muscles in his throat and so it's easier to swallow, things like that. But then he has good moments again. My daughter was honored not too long ago, as you know, by Hadassah. He went to the dinner, and he managed to survive it, which is very nice.

RB: Isn't that lovely he was able to be there? How have you managed with the illness all these years?

FS: Well, it's not easy, but you know I am very lucky because Gunther has a wonderful disposition. He is always willing to try something. He never says, "Leave me alone, I don't want to do this," like some men are. Well, he never. He is always willing, and he likes people around him. I tried to give him as much stimulus as we can. I entertain at home. I take him out. We go to matinees, we go to the movies, we go to the theater, and thanks to my wonderful children, who are very supportive, they pay for a caregiver who comes every day. He comes at noon and leaves at eight. And Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, he comes in the morning and leaves at four because Gunther still manages in the mornings pretty well, and he goes to the JCC to exercise.

RB: Is that right? That's terrific.

FS: He goes to a group that has people there that have had heart problems, and he also has angina besides having Parkinson's. He has another sickness, chronic ulcerative colitis, which he brought home from the war. But all these three things, the spirit that he

has is incredible. It really and truly is incredible. The people in his exercise class – there's a group. They pick him up, bring him home, and admire him. They admire him so much. They say he is just a sample of what you can do if you really put your mind to it.

RB: That type of strong spirit.

FS: Yes.

RB: I find you both strong positive spirits. What do you attribute to that?

FS: I don't know, Roz. I think it's you either have it or you don't have it. When I got to be alone in Montevideo, I had to fend for myself all these years. I never knew I had it in me. I was really a little Jewish princess when I was a child. I never knew that I could do what I did. And I did. I don't know where it comes from. Might come from my grandmother, might come from my mother, I couldn't tell you that, but I always feel that adversity either makes or breaks a person.

RB: What qualities, individual qualities, did you draw on of yourself to pull you through the hard parts and the good parts?

FS: I think the biggest part of my character is that I'm very tolerant. I am not judgmental. I try to do my own thing. I never judge other people. In that respect, I think I inherited something from my mother who said basically there's good in everybody. You just have to know how to bring it out. She never put people down, which I don't do either. I think I inherited that from her. But you are born with kindness, or you are born mean. I mean, I had something in me that helped me survive all these years and do the things that I'm doing. And also be open. I like nice things. I love to dance. I'm a very gregarious person. I love people. I take my pleasures where they come from. I never say no. [laughter]

RB: What are some of the pleasurable activities that you've engaged in leisure time?

FS: In years past?

RB: Sure, yes.

FS: First of all, of course, I like to exercise. I like to swim. I like to read a lot. I'm not a card-playing person. I like dancing.

RB: What type of dancing?

FS: Ballroom dancing. Any kind of dancing. I'm a frustrated dancer because when I was a child, I had ballet, and I would have liked to continue, but circumstances – the Holocaust didn't permit it. I was capable of dancing a whole night and [going] to work the next day. [laughter]

RB: That's fine.

FS: No, I really liked that. I like bicycling, and I like lots of things.

RB: You mentioned reading, and I wondered if there are any books that had a particular impact on you.

FS: I'm trying to think. I've been reading so much in my life because I like to read serious books, and I like to read this time in my life in the evenings before I go to sleep. I like to read very simple novels with lots of wonderful things in them that put you to sleep. [laughter] That relax your mind. Nothing violent. I don't like violent movies. I don't like violent books. I like a good mystery, sometimes. I think one of the books that really influenced me, I think a little bit, is Gone with the Wind.

RB: How so?

FS: Well, because the character of the girl in the book –

RB: Scarlett.

FS: Scarlett. I mean, she really was a spoiled Southern belle, and what she did with her life – the only thing I did not agree with [was] the way she treated her husband. But I thought it was remarkable. I liked the way it was written. As a matter of fact, unbeknownst to me, my husband read the book during the war when he was in India, something he couldn't put down. He read it in three days. He liked it so much.

RB: Is that right?

FS: So it was funny to find out that I liked it too. And then, of course, I loved the [James] Michener books. I really like them because the way he describes people and things. I also read a lot by Leon Uris. I liked his books.

RB: So now, currently, you are home, and you take care of Gunther quite a bit here in the home, but you also are involved in other activities. Can you tell us a little bit about those?

FS: Well, my activities are not so many anymore. The only thing I really do seriously once a week is work at the Mercer Island Thrift Shop. I volunteer and I do cashiering, and I like that because, first off, you see people – Frieda, the people person. I also have lots of opportunity to speak Spanish there because lots of customers are from Mexico and Ecuador and Guatemala and from all over.

RB: Is that right?

FS: Yes, and because it is a place where you can buy wonderful things for very inexpensive. Lots of people don't have money, so they come there and buy, and lots of them hardly speak any English. They are so delighted that I can speak to them. I have a lady too from Austria, and she comes and speaks German to me. She doesn't speak English. It's really sort of fun. I don't know if I told you after Gordie got to be a little bit bigger, my husband and I bought a dry-cleaning plant in West Seattle, and we ran that for twenty-seven years.

RB: How did you take that step? What were the circumstances?

FS: Well, the circumstances were the following. My husband had a job at the tux shop in Downtown Seattle, and one of the brothers was supposed – he wanted to open his own shop and wanted to take in Gunther as a partner. Well, Gunther worked for a whole year with him for practically nothing preparing for this partnership, and then he backed out; it never came to be. And so I said, "Look, I said we have to have something of our own that we are not dependent on anybody." I said, "What could we do?" So somebody suggested, "Why don't you open a dry cleaner? You can do the alterations and sewing, and Gunther can do the dry cleaning." We went to Seattle Community College for a year, both of us, and we learned all about dry cleaning. That was in our spare time. We went because we were working during the day. And then we bought the business in White Center, which was not a very good idea. We had people advise us, and they advised us badly because it was not a good area to buy. We did not have too much money to invest in a business, so we had to find something that was within our range. I have this horrible thing – I don't dare to invest or buy things if I know I can't pay for it. That is my drawback. This is why I've never become rich, because people that become wealthy are people that dare. They buy with other people's money, and that's not in my character. I am happy with what I have, but I do not like big debts. We could have bought – at the time that we bought our dry cleaner, we looked into all sorts of possibilities. There was a house in Bellevue that would have served beautifully for dry cleaning purposes, and we could live upstairs, and it was in the periphery of Bellevue. But they wanted seventy-five thousand dollars for the house.

RB: And in what year was this?

FS: That was in 1963, '64. We did not buy it because I could not see paying seventy-five thousand dollars. When you think – we paid for this house twenty-three thousand dollars, seventy-five thousand dollars was a huge amount of money. Our first house was

eleven thousand dollars. So seventy-five thousand dollars was a huge amount of money. We did not buy it. Well, I have to tell you, the person that bought that property got a million and a half for the piece of land, and you know what's on this property today? Benjamin's. You know, that building where Benjamin's? That was the property.

RB: And that's on – could you describe –? Is it on 8th Street?

FS: No, it's not on 8th. It's on, I think, 6th or 5th. It's in the heart of Bellevue. Now it's the heart of Bellevue. In those years, it was the periphery. Bellevue Square – I don't know if you knew what it was like with trees and bowling alleys and movie theaters, and it was just a real cute little area to go and visit. You went to the movies there. But, like the mall today, it is just overwhelming. It wasn't there. So the person that did, or had the money to buy that property, made a huge investment. I mean, they got really their monies out of this. But this is what I say. We never did that. Neither Gunther nor I were ever adventurous enough to go into things like that.

RB: But you bought –

FS: We bought the dry cleaners in White Center, and it was hard going. We had a very hard time. And then there was a place available in West Seattle, a block and a half from the Fauntleroy Ferry in a place called Wildwood Place. The owner of the building where we had the dry-cleaning place asked us if we would take over because the person that owned the building there – no, not owned the building but owned the dry-cleaning place there – went broke. So we took it over, and we had it like a drop shop, where people dropped their clothes, and then Gunther did everything in our plant in White Center. And that was a little bit better, and I stayed to manage that place and did my sewing there. I became the Ann Landers of West Seattle because it was like a neighborhood store, and all the people would come in. All the children would come in after school. They would ask me if they could do their homework in my back room because Mommy and Daddy weren't home.

RB: Was that right?

FS: Yes, it was really cute. And then the children were just lovely. There was a school a block away. The first few years, it was really nice, and they would bring me their little May baskets when they made them in school. I had lots of little friends then. Actually, we were there for twenty-seven years, and I saw all these children grow up and get married. West Seattle is like a little conclave in itself because you have parents, and then the children go away to college. Then they come back and they get married, and they move again to West Seattle. So you had families of three, four generations. It's like it pulls. And in a way, we profited a lot because it was very friendly. We had a bakery around the corner, and we still see them. We go and buy some stuff there. I still have people that call me and send me Christmas cards, and it's very nice.

RB: Sounds like you were quite beloved.

FS: Well, I don't know. I was popular, I think because it was so funny. Young couples would come in with their problems. The women would cry [if] they had a fight with their husband.

RB: You had a lot of compassion for people.

FS: Well, I always told them not to fight with their husband, it doesn't pay. [laughter]

RB: You gave them good advice.

FS: Yes, I tell you I was like Anne Landers. [laughter]

RB: Now, did you live in West Seattle during this time?

FS: No, we lived here. We had bought the house on Mercer Island because when I was forty-two, I had a stroke, a light stroke, and I couldn't take care of our house on Capitol Hill. My daughter found this little house where we are presently living that used to belong to her son's preschool teacher. She and her husband were transferred to Richmond. He was with Battelle, and so they wanted to sell the house in the worst way. It wasn't even on the market. That was the time that my daughter saw the house, and she said, "Mother, I have the perfect house for you. You don't have stairs to climb, and it's easy to take care of. I want you to – and it's easy for me." Because they used to live on Mercer Island, too, at the time. "I don't have to cross the bridge to come and see you and help you." So we sold the house on Capitol Hill, and we moved to Mercer Island. We have been here ever since. The same house. At first, I thought the ceiling was going to fall on my head because the house on Capitol Hill was big and airy and high ceilings, like twelve-foot ceilings, big rooms, and this was like – I felt cramped. I felt unhappy in here until we did some of the remodeling, and now I'm happy I have it because I would not want to have a big house. It is really more like a glorified apartment. I have three bedrooms, but everything is small and easy to take care of.

RB: It's a wonderful place. Tell me, on Capitol Hill, did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

FS: No, I lived in a Catholic neighborhood. To a point, it was so funny because everybody around us had a minimum of six children and up [to] ten, twelve. The one Catholic lady that had the record had twenty-two children.

RB: [laughter] Wow.

FS: Well, anyhow, to a point that my son wanted to have a Christmas tree at Christmas time. One year, I broke down. I didn't give him a Christmas tree, but I bought him a Hanukkah bush. We bought a living tree. We decorated it with Hanukkah – what do you call it? – all the lions and the stars and what you have at Hanukkah. And then, after

Hanukkah was over, we had a big ceremony, and we planted it in the yard. The tree is still there.

RB: Is that right?

FS: Yes. It was our Hanukkah bush. But that was the only time. And then from then on, instead of having a Christmas tree every year, we had a huge Star of David in our window with lights. And Gordie was a sensation at the time because all the Catholic children were envious that he had that big star because everybody else had a Christmas tree. That was a novelty. You know? [laughter]

RB: So how was it moving from Capitol Hill to Mercer Island? How would you describe the neighborhood when you moved here?

FS: Well, I cannot say that I felt any different. I mean to me, a home is a home wherever I am. We had nice neighbors on Capitol Hill which were very supportive and very nice. Wherever I go, Roz, really, in a way, I always manage to make friends and have relationships. Some good, some bad, but I always manage. Here on Mercer Island, when we first moved here, there wasn't a great big Jewish community. There were Jewish people here, Jewish people there, but it was not – and they didn't have the Jewish Community Center then. They built that after we moved here, and we became part of it from the very beginning because my daughter was President at the time. My son-in-law was President of the Jewish Community Center when it first started. We became very involved. As far as Jewish neighbors go, I have one down the street, and I had – I don't know if you know the (Sandorfys?). They used to live on the street behind us. That was it. No Jewish neighbors.

RB: How has it changed over the years?

FS: Well, it has become – since Herzl built their synagogue, lots of Jewish people moved in.

RB: What year was that? Do you recall?

FS: I cannot tell you exactly. And then Temple B'nai Torah started there in the early '60s. They started their temple with Rabbi [James] Mirel. I was very fond of Rabbi Mirel. I met him when he first came to Seattle with his wife because my daughter had some friends, Dr. Goff and his wife, and they befriended the Mirels. This is how I got to know them from a very early time. I adore them both because they are just wonderful people.

RB: Excuse me. Herzl is a Conservative synagogue. And Temple B'nai Torah is –

FS: Is Reform.

RB: Ashkenazic Reform?

FS: Yes. And it's really interesting. Reform can take on lots of different aspects. You have Reform very liberal. You have Reform that's closer to Conservative. I think everybody makes their own religion. In the Christian religion, you have so many denominations, Methodist and this and that. I mean, there are a hundred different Protestant denominations, and they all believe in one thing, which is God and Jesus Christ. And we believe in God. So I think over the years, I find – I wouldn't say that Judaism has watered down, but I would say that in modern times now Jewish people are very choosy. I find that the people that really and truly are good Jewish people are the people that are good from the heart. It has nothing to do with a synagogue or religious affiliation.

RB: It's who you are on the inside.

FS: Yes, that has been my experience. Because you can be so religious and be such a mean person. This is what I used to see in Germany. Lots of my mother's business associates, my father's – they are beating their breast in one way, and in the other one, they cheated you behind. And even as a very young person, it made a big impression on

me, so I thought whether you are Jewish or you are Christian or Muslim, or whatever you are, it is what is in your heart that's important. That's the way I feel.

RB: It's an important lesson, I think, for all of us. I was wondering if not to change the subject too much, but I know that your grandchildren are very dear to you. I want to make sure that we have some time today in the interview to talk about them a bit because I know your eyes light up when you talk about them.

FS: Oh, yes, I do. I do.

RB: Could you tell us how many you have?

FS: Well, my daughter had – I'm just looking at it – my daughter had three boys, of which the oldest – again, you have three boys from the same parents, the same background, the same education. My oldest grandson, Adam, is thirty-eight. He is one of the people that I dearly love, and I would like to help find a mate or something. He is thirty-eight years old. Then my middle one, Alan, is married. He is the only one that's married. And there I hope for a baby, for a great-grandchild. And my little one is thirty-two. Those are Lucy's three boys. The oldest one is very religious. He works with Rabbi Lapin. He is his public relations person. He is kosher. He does not eat at my home unless I get a kosher meal. The middle one is the artist. He works with Disney Productions. He makes games for the Internet and stuff like that. And the baby is the jock of the family. He has a kayak business in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He sells kayaks, rents kayaks, and takes people on tours, and he is a daredevil. He is the sweetest child alive. You have no idea how sweet all of them are and in their own way because they are so different. But they all relate to us, and they are wonderful to us. You have no idea how good the grandchildren are. And then my son Gordie married out of the faith. He married a Gentile girl. She never became Jewish. She never became Jewish. But she is a wonderful human being. A good mother. And they have two children. My little Maximillian, who is three, going on four. He's going to be four, and he was born

December 31. He is actually three and a half now. My little Lucia, who my son named after his sister, so she would turn out like his sister.

RB: Is that right?

FS: She is going to be two on June the 13th. Those two children are the lights of our life because they are so sweet, and you know how you enjoy babyhood until they get big and have their own friends, and this and that. They are just absolutely adorable. And we are very lucky, Roz, because my son married into a family that's very family-minded, and they include us in everything. So we have Hanukkah, we have Rosh Hashanah, we have Yom Kippur, and we also have Easter and Christmas. At Christmas time, her family has a house in Sun River, and we are always invited. We spend the whole week. They have a bedroom for us, and they treat us very nicely. I cannot complain.

RB: You sound very blessed.

FS: And even though I would have liked them to be a little bit more Jewish, my son always was very Jewish in many ways, and then he met this girl, and he is right now – I don't know. But as long as they are happy, as long as the children are healthy and well, and they are good people, that's all to me that counts, really. As I said, I am not judgmental. I love my daughter-in-law because she's very generous and very kind to us, and what more can you want, Roz. What more can you want? I mean, religion is great if it encompasses everything like what we have. I feel what we have – we have more than most people do. We are not wealthy as far as money is concerned, but we have lots of love and affection around us, and I think that's what counts.

RB: Yes.

FS: Don't you think so?

RB: Absolutely. I agree wholeheartedly with you. Now, it's been wonderful talking with you, and I am noticing that we're running out of time. I know that you volunteer soon. In wrapping up this interview, I wondered if you have any final thoughts about your life or family or events in your life that you would like to share for all of us in closure?

FS: Well, what can I say? It's very difficult because I had lots of sad parts in my life, but I also feel very lucky to have had good times in my life. And right now, the last ten years of my life have been really and truly blessed with my children, my grandchildren, my daughter-in-law, my son-in-law – my daughter's husband is an absolute prince. I always feel that every Jewish mother should have a son-in-law like my son-in-law. It has been absolutely wonderful. But also, the only sadness right now that I do have is my son-in-law's mother, who used to be my dearest friend. She is in the Kline Galland Home. She had a stroke. She is not well. We go and see her once a week, or she comes here. She has a wonderful caregiver that brings her on the Access bus, and she has lunch with us sometimes. The sad part about her is that she has her mind, and she has no body. She is just completely helpless. She was a lively, wonderful sense of humor, just a great person. And that is my biggest hurt right now.

RB: Your mind is really on her.

FS: Yes, it is because I go to see her once a week, and she can't – when I sit with her, she holds my hand. I tell her all the stories about the children and the grandchildren, and I say, “Now, if you understand, just nod your head,” and she does. So I'm glad that the grandchildren go and see her. But you have to prod a little bit, you know? So I push everybody to go and see grandma.

RB: And what lessons have you learned from her experience?

FS: To take nothing for granted, my dear. You cannot take anything for granted because four years ago, she still was in good health and was well. She's ten years older

than I am, and I say here, for the grace of God, am I. Something can happen to anybody. We've lost so many friends these last couple of years. I looked the other day at my album from our Golden Wedding, which was a highlight in my life, and I would say one-third of the people are gone.

RB: So it's important to not take life for granted.

FS: No, no.

RB: That's what you said.

FS: You have to live every day as if it would be your last and enjoy what comes your way and not spoil your living by being petty and resentful

.

RB: Those are very important lessons. I remember on a family, a beautiful family tape, a videotape, that your daughter helped organize to create, that one of Gunther's messages –

FS: My daughter-in-law did that.

RB: It was beautiful, beautiful tape.

FS: She has friends in Portland. One is a camera lady, and the other one is an interviewer. They did a professional job.

RB: A beautiful job. One of the messages that Gunther expressed on that tape was that it's important to always fight for freedom and to not forget that, and I wondered how you

felt about that message?

FS: I'm the same. We think in the same vein, you know?

RB: Is that right?

FS: Yes. This is why we have been married for sixty-three years. [laughter] Otherwise, we wouldn't.

RB: Well, Frieda, thank you so much for your time.

FS: You're welcome.

RB: And you're a wonderful narrator

FS: I didn't tell you about my Golden Wedding, which was great.

RB: Take a minute to do that, and then we'll stop the tape, okay? That's important.

FS: We had one hundred thirty-five people for dinner dance at the Rainer club, and the kids organized it all. It was really the best day of my life, I must say.

RB: How so?

FS: Because I had everybody that I loved around me. Everybody. And it was so wonderful and so freilach. It was just really great.

RB: Freilach? Tell us what that means.

FS: Freilach means happy. [laughter] It's a Yiddish word.

RB: Do you speak Yiddish?

FS: Yes.

RB: You do? Okay. From the time you were a child?

FS: From the time my parents – in my parents' home. They spoke Yiddish.

RB: I didn't realize that. In all of our discussions here.

FS: Yes, I speak Yiddish and not –

RB: In addition to all the other languages.

FS: To all the other languages. But this came from my childhood, and I understand a lot. The funny thing is our caregiver that takes care of Gunther took care of Jack, Herb's father at the Kline Galland home knows more Yiddish words than you can imagine. Just taking care of him for four years. [laughter] It's really funny. No, but my Golden Wedding was beautiful. We had a fabulous band, and we danced and we were all – I'll show you some pictures if you have time. It was really a very happy time.

RB: And what year was that? Do you know?

FS: Thirteen years ago. Yes.

RB: That's terrific.

FS: Yes, we have now 2001 – it was '88.

RB: That's great.

FS: My children ever since – this is why I say the last ten years have been so wonderful because they have given us every year a trip to go somewhere. We get to go like with – this year, we were in Hawaii, and they pay for everything. It's really nice. They are so supportive, and my son brought his little girl the other day to us to stay over. She stayed overnight, and it is such a pleasure. Then he takes her home, and then we get our little boy. We try to go twice a month to Portland to see the children, and they have a little

apartment for us in their home, so we stay with them. It's really nice, and we have been very lucky because both my kids have been doing well. I mean, they are both hard workers. I do think they sort of inherited a little bit the work ethic from my father-in-law, who was a very big businessman. We all worked hard. and I think it sort of comes through in the family.

RB: I would say so. I was thinking that I'm sure that part of their work ethic comes from you as well.

FS: Yes.

RB: I would imagine.

FS: Oh, yes. Well, my son, when he was a little boy – I mean, when he wanted something, he had to earn half of it. I never forget – it's really funny. When he wanted a tape recorder very badly when he was twelve years old, I said, “Gordie, if you can earn half the money, I pay the other half.” So he went – he did lawn work for the neighbors and all sorts of things, and he earned half for the tape recorder, and then before he bought it, he went to every place downtown that sold tape recorders to see where he could find the best and cheapest one. [laughter]

RB: Smart boy.

FS: Yes.

RB: That's great. Well, Frieda, thank you so much, and maybe we can take a minute to go over some pictures with you. Terrific. Thanks a million. [Recording paused. End of session two.]

This is Roz Bornstein, and I am back with Frieda Sondland at Frieda's home on Mercer Island, Washington, and the date today is June 20, 2001. I had the pleasure of coming

back today to have lunch, a wonderful, delicious lunch, with Frieda and her husband and to look at some letters that Gunther had written Frieda during their separation so we're going to continue and have Frieda describe the context of one of those letters. And she'll read the letter at this time. Frieda, do I have your permission to interview and tape you for this?

FS: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you so much. Okay, I'll let you take it from here.

FS: There came a time in my little girl's life when she was four years old. She had been a very healthy, well-adjusted little girl, and all of a sudden, she had all the child sicknesses in one year. From roseola to measles to all sorts of things, and she ended up with a very bad whooping cough. After the whooping cough was mostly gone, she was very weak and had an asthmatic condition. The pediatrician at the time suggested that I take her away from the ocean – we lived very close in Uruguay to the ocean – to take her inland where the air was easier on her and where she could recuperate. That was easier said than done because we didn't have the money to do it. You needed money to put her in some situation where she could recuperate, and I was living in Montevideo and working in Montevideo. There was no way that I could go to the country and find a job for us to live anywhere else. I thought and thought, “What could I do? What could I do.” Then I decided to write to my husband to see if he could send me some of his pay. He was in the British Army at the time, and through the consulate, we got in touch, and I wrote to him. In the meantime, I had some wonderful friends. The kind of friends that you make just once in your lifetime. One of my friend's husband had gotten a raise in his job, and when he found out how desperately I needed the money to send my child to the country, he gave me his raise that he had gotten that month, and he said, “I'll give it to you as long as you need it.” Well, the first month, I paid for my daughter's stay in the country. Then I went back to the consulate, and they reassured me that the money will

be on its way. In the meantime, all the employees from the consulate had collected money so I could leave her a second month in the country, and fortunately, by the third month, the authorization for my husband's pay finally came through, and I got money from him plus a little bit of back pay. I managed to backpay my friend. On the other hand, the people in the consulate didn't want it back, and they said, “Please keep it and enjoy.” That was absolutely wonderful. Here is one of the letters that my husband wrote me during that time.

RB: Frieda, could you tell us what year this was and where your daughter stayed in the country?

FS: The year was 1942, and my daughter stayed at a place called Colonia Suiza. It still exists. It was a little village. The people that had the place where she stayed had a pension where they took paying guests for vacation. Their daughter actually had a PhD, and she took care of young children because she had a sickness herself. She couldn't be very much in the public eye because she had lost lots of her hair. She was a very sweet and kind person, and she was the one that took care of the children. They adored her because she was excellent. And also, the lady of the house, her mom, was very special. She taught the little children how to bake and cook, and she took them to the animals. To see all these things was wonderful for my daughter to be in this kind of environment. I have to tell you a little sweet story. It's a little vignette. I came to visit my daughter one weekend, she took me by the hand, and she said, “Beatta” – that was a dog that they had there – “had puppies.” She said to me, “You know what, (Dada?)” – [who] was the daughter – “[told] me where the puppies come from? From Beatta's tummy. But I couldn't believe it, Mommy. Is that true?” I said, “Yes, it's true.” I said, “Why can't you believe it?” She said, “I turned the dog around and around, and I couldn't find the hole where the puppies came out.”

RB: [laughter] That's great. Do you want me to hold the mic?

FS: Oh. Now I am going to read you the letter of my husband that came from the Intelligence Core in Karachi, India. “Dearest Frieda and Lucia, I hope you and Lucia are well and got my letter from December ‘44. I received a letter from you with a picture of Lucia. It was dated from the 14th of September. I've got some good news for you. After nearly two years, I got the family allowance for you and Lucia through. The allowance will be paid through the British Consulate in Montevideo.”

[background noise]

FS: Want to turn it off?

[Recording paused.]

RB: Okay.

FS: “Dearest Friedal and Lucia, I hope you and Lucia are well and got my letter from December ‘44. I received a letter from you with a picture of Lucia. It was dated from the 14th of September. I've got some good news for you. After nearly two years, I got the family allowance for you and Lucia through. The allowance will be paid through the British Consulate in Montevideo. Please get in touch with the Consul at once. The rate of my pay is 47.6 shillings a week. You also can claim the backpay from the day I joined the Army, 12th of March 1943. But this will be arranged later by the pay-makers. In any case, from now on, you will get this money, weekly pay. The consulate must be already in possession of the letter from the Indian army in order to pay the allowance. When the consulate makes any difficulties, don't bother with them. Write to the Commander in charge in India. I think that will improve your and Lucy's situation a little and you can afford to send her to the country where her health doesn't permit her to live in Montevideo. How is she getting on? I hope she's feeling better and doesn't suffer

anymore from the catarrh. I was very much pleased with the picture but please no more colored. Still, I am expecting some more pictures and a lot of letters from you. Friedel darling, I was not very satisfied with your letter because you didn't explain yourself. How do you feel? What do you think about our future? Then I would like to know what you are doing besides your job. How do you spend your time and generally more about you and your life? Perhaps it is too inquisitive, but I have got to know more about you after more than six years of separation. I did write some time ago about this matter. About our positions to each other. But I wasn't content with your reply. I hope you will write in your next letter more about it. This is all for today. Answer as soon as possible. Many regards to your parents and sister. Lots of love and kisses, Gerald (Gunther). Lucia, darling, I am so glad to get your latest picture, and I am so proud to have a big daughter. I hope you will be kind to your mother and your relatives. In a short time, you will be going to school, and I hope you will learn your lessons easy that your mother can be proud of her daughter. I look often at your pictures, and I am so sorry that I can't hold you in my arms and embrace you, but this will come soon, and I see forward from this day when all of us will be together again. I hope, my little darling, that you think as much of your daddy as I think of you. I wish you the best of health and a nice time. Thousand kisses from your daddy."

RB: How do you feel reading this letter after all these years?

FS: I want to cry. [laughter] And I did cry when I read it a little while ago by myself when I first found the letters.

RB: They're really beautiful. Frieda, thank you so much. I really appreciate all the time that you put into this project.

FS: Oh, I will feel very honored to be asked, and if I can leave something for posterity, for my children and grandchildren, it is a great honor, as I said before, to be asked.

RB: It's a wonderful gift to leave your family.

FS: Thank you.

RB: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]