Charlotte "Lotta" Scheiberg Transcript

EMILY MEHLMAN: Today is July 1, 1996.

CHARLOTTE SCHEIBERG: That's right.

EM: And this is Emily Mehlman and I'm here with Lotta Schreiberg.

CS: Scheiberg.

EM: I'm sorry, Scheiberg—at her home at 36 Highland Avenue in Cambridge, Apartment 47. And Lotta, the reason I'm here is that at Temple Israel we're going to have a project on Jewish women whose lives have spanned the century.

CS: Yeah, well that's what you told to me.

EM: Yes, and this is in conjunction with a new project from the Jewish Women's Archive to put women's stories on tape. So that's why I'm here, so let's get started. How about this? Tell me when you were born.

CS: Where I was born?

EM: When and where.

CS: I was born in Germany in a small industrial town where Rhine-Ruhr— sometimes I have to think what it—German and English. It is mostly industrial—coal and iron, and not far from Dusseldorf, if that gives you an idea. And my brother and I, we lived in—my parents were very wonderful people and they—there was a beautiful youth and childhood.

EM: Your parents were born in Germany as well?

CS: Hmm?

EM: Your parents were also born in Germany?

CS: Yeah.

EM: And your brother, was he older or younger than you?

CS: My brother was a year and a half older than I am.

EM: Let's stop now. I want to make sure I can hear. I want to hear—

CS: He lives now in Israel. No, he used to live in Israel. He's not living anymore.

EM: I see. Let's see how this sounds. Okay, let's continue. So you grew up in Germany with a brother who was a year and a half older and your parents. What kind of work did they do?

CS: My parents—we had a men's clothing store in Oberhausen. That is the city where I was born. And there was also in our store a made-to-order men's department. We moved there. My father passed away when he was 56 years old, and my mother took the store over and my brother later had been almost a year in Paris at the university.

EM: Now when were you born? What is your date of birth?

CS: It was the 19th of September, nineteen hundred and six, so I'm going to be very soon 90 years old.

EM: Mazel tov. [Chuckles]

CS: For that reason, I have invited a lot of my—some of them came by themselves—friends and relatives, and they're all going to come and assemble here in Boston or Cambridge.

EM: On your birthday?

CS: Yes, I wanted them to come on my birthday over to Thursday, but I thought [chuckles] a 90th birthday is not that very often—

EM: Right.

CS: So they might as well come on a Thursday and take a day off.

EM: Now, some of these people who are coming to visit you, do you know some of these people from Germany?

CS: What, dear?

EM: Do some of these people come from Germany?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Did you know them when you were a child?

CS: Yes, but they are not living anymore, many of them. You know what happened in Germany. My sister-in-law, my brother's wife was the first one about ten days ago who called me and said, "Lotta, I think I'm going to come to your birthday and I'm going to bring my nephew along—my sister's son. His name is Etan, but I don't really know his second name."

EM: So she's coming from Israel?

CS: Yeah, she comes from Israel.

EM: Wonderful.

CS: Yes, it is wonderful.

EM: And she's coming. Do you remember anything of your life in Germany before you left? Did you go to school in Germany? How old were you when you left?

CS: I left Germany in 1935. Here's a little arithmetic.

EM: So you were 31 years old. [She would have been 29. –*Ed*.]

CS: Yeah, my first husband, when he was 30 years old, he went with his father's relatives to America and he was a young man—a young fellow about 30 or 40 years old. And then the war broke out in 1914. He couldn't go back to Germany, and he had to stay in the United States. So unfortunately, he didn't get along too well with his uncle. His uncle demanded too much perfection of him.

EM: Did you meet your first husband in Germany or in the United States?

CS: I met him in Germany and [chuckles] I met him at a very nice party of friends of ours in Osterburg. My mother's sister lived in Osterburg and she had invited me for a few days. I went to Osterburg. There was this party I was invited to and my father sent my costume along, which was a sort of a Mozart outfit.

EM: Mmm-hmm, with a vest and laces and all that?

CS: Yes.

EM: Uh-huh. Yes.

CS: It was very nice, and that's where we met.

EM: How old were you when you met?

CS: I must have been about 19 or 20 years old.

EM: Did you have a long courtship?

CS: Yeah, for about a year and a half or so. I was just going to say, I don't exactly know the date when we—either it's the 17th of June or the 27th of June, that I don't know, but it doesn't matter anymore. My first husband passed away on the 15th of August, nineteen hundred forty-five, with a massive heart attack. That was the day when the war ended in, I think in Japan, wasn't it?

EM: Yes, that's right. Do you remember your wedding? Your first wedding?

CS: What, dear?

EM: Do you remember anything about your first wedding?

CS: I only know that it was in Essen—

EM: In Essen?

CS: —in a temple and all the relatives were there.

EM: Do you remember your dress?

CS: Most of them are gone there—

EM: Yes.

CS: —disappeared in those wonderful German horrifying [long pause] concentration camps. That is something that I remember almost every day. Not that I was there. I had left Germany, but all those people who were near to me, my cousins, my—they died a horrifying, horrifying death. I hope you didn't come from Germany and all those people…

EM: No, no, I didn't. But I know many people, of course.

CS: The first few years when they came to the United States, they lived in New York.

EM: In Washington Heights?

CS: What?

EM: In Washington Heights?

CS: No, not—

EM: No? Where?

CS: My husband's cousin said, "You can only live on Riverside Drive, not further up than 96th Street." And that's where we lived.

EM: Uh-huh. [Chuckles]

CS: 698 Riverside Drive.

EM: Now where was your mother at this time?

CS: My mother—

EM: Yes.

CS: —was still in Germany.

EM: Did she ever get out?

CS: She went a couple of times to Israel to visit my brother, and she came to me. But she always went back to Germany, unfortunately or—I don't know. Anyway, my first husband and I, we came to you on the 5th of April—that's my second birthday, I always say.

EM: 1935.

CS: 1935, yes. And we came, I think, on a Wednesday or Thursday.

EM: By ship?

CS: The next day we went to apply for papers, because we wanted to get my mother out of Germany. Fortunately, we did get her out, and I'll tell you something. Every day I'm happy and say thanks to the Lord that she didn't have to die in that hell.

EM: Your father had already died, is that correct?

CS: My father was not living anymore, yeah.

EM: Yes. Did your mother live with you?

CS: My mother lived in Oberhausen. That is the city where I was born in.

EM: Yes.

CS: In 1935, my brother went to Israel, and he settled in a small village, which at that time was a small village. Today it's a little bigger in Kfar Sava. Do you know Israel?

EM: Yes, I do, but I don't know that town.

CS: No, but you know Petah Tikva.

EM: Of course.

CS: It's about 15 minutes by car from Petah Tikva.

EM: How did you happen to decide to come to the United States and your brother went to Israel?

CS: My first husband, I told you, had relatives here in the United States.

EM: Yes.

CS: They took care of him. He knew the United States very well and he spoke English perfectly. I shouldn't say that in here, but I always said that he could curse in English that was just beautiful. [Laughs]

EM: What kind of work did you do when you came to the United States in 1935?

CS: Who, me?

EM: Yes, and your husband.

CS: Oh, at that time, that was the—

EM: The Depression.

CS: —the Depression. I couldn't get a job, but finally I got a job. I worked in Lord—no, not Lord and Taylor. What was the other one?

EM: A department store.

CS: What, dear?

EM: A department store?

CS: Yeah, in an elegant department store as a contingent and I was very proud that I got three dollars and seventy-five cents, I think for a day—

EM: Maybe a week. [Chuckles]

CS: —or a week, I don't know. For a day, I think.

EM: And your husband, what did he do?

CS: [He] sold pocketbooks and I sold dresses and I had a lot of fun sometimes. I remember I was selling in Bonwit Teller.

EM: Bonwit Teller.

CS: Yeah. [Chuckles] And I sold dresses—better dresses, and of course I presumed that the people there must have laughed about—a little bit about my accent—

EM: Yes.

CS: —which I still have. And I had once a very nice Italian lady who spoke with a heavy Italian accent. And I sold her some dresses which she wanted to have for in the winter to go to Florida, I guess it was. And I had two dresses, the same thing. And one was pink and one was blue. And I said to her, "Which one would you prefer, ma'am?" And she said, "I thinka I take a pinka."

EM: [Chuckles] Well, you know why she said that, because in Italy they pronounce—

CS: Yeah.

EM: —every vowel and the ends of every word has the emphasize, so that's why Italians say, "I thinka I'll take-a the pinka." Now where did you learn English?

CS: In school.

EM: In Germany?

CS: Oh, yeah. We had three years no foreign languages, and then I learned French and two years later I had also learned French and English. So I really did learn French and English in school. It was not a—it was a so-called girls' school.

EM: When you came to the United States in 1935 and you went to work for Bonwit Teller, where did your husband work?

CS: Well, he was on his own. We had a lot of tough breaks when we came to the United States, because when we came we were allowed to take $10,000 from Germany. We came comparatively early. But—

EM: That was quite a bit of money in those days.

CS: He had to make connections with a man who manufactured ladies' dresses and he had the $10,000 in our pocket—or he had it in his pocket. I said to him, "I think that it's not good to run around in Manhattan and have that much money in your pocket. We should really put it in a bank." So since we had made these connections and he was going to work with this other man—who incidentally was a professor at Columbia University—he put it in the bank with his account. That was on a Thursday I think, and on Friday we found out that the moment he got the money, he went and wrote checks out for all his personal debts.

EM: So you lost it?

CS: Yeah, almost everything. We had left over $1,500 approximately, and this Mr. whatever his name was—doesn't matter. So there we were, no job, no money, and at that time we lived in a hotel on Broadway and 72nd Street. Of course, we couldn't afford that for a long time. We had to get an apartment, so that, oops [something is dropped]--

EM: That's okay. Go on… So you found an apartment.

CS: We got an apartment, as I told you, on Riverside Drive. No, it wasn't Riverside Drive. It was—the street in between. What is it?

EM: West End?

CS: What?

EM: West End? West End Avenue?

CS: I guess so.

EM: That's the next one.

CS: Yeah.

EM: And your husband—

CS: And it was—that apartment was absolutely horrible. There were two rooms. We had one of these kitchens, which were clothes in—

EM: The closet.

CS: Yeah, the kitchen was there. The refrigerator was in another, and we didn't bring our furniture because my husband said to me, "We haven't got the money to get an apartment where we can put them in." So we had a miserable apartment.

EM: No furniture?

CS: What, dear?

EM: And no furniture?

CS: Well, we had a few. We had a bridge table and we had one apartment that looked modern, but it was all right. And they had a couch, which we used later on when my mother came to sleep on, and we had a very small bedroom and a bathroom. And that is all.

EM: Now, how long did you work for Bonwit Teller?

CS: I really don't know anymore. Then I worked also for Lord and Taylor.

EM: Yes.

CS: But only on contingent because you couldn't get a steady job.

EM: Yes.

CS: Then finally, I got a job downtown for a wholesaler who sold merchandise to mostly Europeans who just came from Germany and bought merchandise and went around to resell it. It was sometimes very funny; it was sometimes very sad. And it was very hard work.

EM: During the war years you were living in New York. Your first husband was still alive and you were both German, of course. Did you mingle mostly with people who had left Germany? Were most of your friends—

CS: Well, my husband, on account of his connections with his relatives, formerly relatives, we had got, for instance, to know a lady whose name was Rena Levy and was the niece of Werner Bamberger.

EM: Yes.

CS: And her mother, Gerde.

EM: And he was the rabbi of Shaaray Tefila?

CS: Pardon?

EM: He was the rabbi of Shaaray Tefila?

CS: Yeah.

EM: And that time, I believe it was in the '80s, on the West Side, the synagogue. Did you go to that synagogue?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Often, or sometimes, or holidays?

CS: Well, when after my husband passed away, for instance, I told you he had this heart attack and never woke up again.

EM: So you were in your forties at the time?

CS: Yeah. And at that time I had my mother with me and my husband's mother living with me.

EM: Now when did she come? Your husband's mother?

CS: Oh goodness, I don't know anymore.

EM: After your mother?

CS: She came from Austria. One of my husband's fathers lived in London and the other one lived in Vienna. And when Hitler came into Vienna, I remember that she told me, he called them up from—he was on a business trip in Holland. And he said to them, "You have to get out of Vienna, out of Austria to Switzerland as soon as possible." And they said, "How could we pack that…?" He said, "Never mind. Take the child." And somebody else was there—I think one lady who worked with them. And they left during the night. It was the last train that left before Hitler entered Vienna. Now since—

EM: Hmm. And they went to Switzerland?

CS: Yeah, they went to Switzerland. From Switzerland I think they went into Holland, to…I don't know which city in Holland. There my brother-in-law, the older one whose name was Walter, came later also to London, and they had a factory there—ladies' dresses. And they did very well in England.

EM: What was your first husband's name?

CS: Fritz Malkus.

EM: Markus?

CS: M-a-l—but we spelled ours with a “k”—

EM: K?

CS: But some of them, the family, wrote it with a “c.” Well, of course at that time we had no way of getting money out of England to the States, so I had to look out for the three of us and, by golly, it wasn’t so easy.

EM: And you were selling dresses and handbags and things at Bonwit Teller or Lord and Taylor?

CS: Yeah, but that was the minor job.

EM: Yes.

CS: Not the major job, but really the job that I had was working in this wholesale house. They sold stockings and blankets and all kinds of things to resale. My husband’s cousins worked for Metro Goldwyn Mayer and one day I said to one of my cousins, “I have a very tough job. Would you think that I could get a job with Metro?” And they were very reluctant. They told me I might not be able to, they were there for a long time. I think they thought I might not be able to do things that they needed to have done. And—

EM: Do you want the pillow behind you?

CS: No, no, this is fine.

EM: No? Okay.

CS: I was [unclear]

EM: I know.

CS: Are you comfortable?

EM: I'm very comfortable, thank you.

CS: Well, I went to present myself to the personnel man and he sort of found out that I could do a little bit of arithmetic, that I knew what one and one was. And he said, "Yes, you can come tomorrow." And I said, "Oh, no, sir. I cannot. I have to tell the people I'm working for now that I'm going to leave and I have to get somebody to—"

EM: Replace you.

CS: —replace me." I don't think he ever heard anything like that in his life. [Chuckles] So I said to him, "I'm going to come next Tuesday." And he said, "All right, but why don't you want to come on Monday?" I said, "I don't know. Somebody once told me one shouldn't start a job on a Monday. One should start on a Tuesday. That would be a better time to come." So he was all right. He must have thought I was a little queer.

EM: So did you take the job at MGM?

CS: I did. Yeah.

EM: And what did you do?

CS: I was in their bookkeeping department and there were a lot of young fellows and ladies, and we had a wonderful time. Lots of fun. But then when the war came and America got into the war, a lot of these young fellows had to go to the war. And I got a better job and finally, I had a job that I was able to make decisions what kind of a picture is going to be, first class or second class or third class. And there we saw all the new pictures. I think I was one of the very first ones who saw *Gone with the Wind*.

EM: Huh.

CS: It was very nice; it was fun.

EM: But you were supporting the two mothers.

CS: Yes, and myself.

EM: And yourself.

CS: I worked very hard; I'll tell you that much. And I didn't have much money at that time.

EM: How did you meet your second husband? When? Fred Scheiberg.

CS: Well, I was not going to get married again. I don't know why. But my friends said, "You should really marry again." At that time, I was about 46 or 47 or something like that. And there was a lady in New York whose mother and my mother were cousins. And she said, "Lotta, I think you should meet this man. He lost his wife a year ago, and he wants to very desperately get married again. He needs somebody to be with him." So I said, "Well, okay." I had met some other guys and I was not very interested. So we met on a Saturday morning. They had a little store on Broadway and 87th Street or something there. I don't know—eleven o'clock or whatever. It was an early spring. It was possibly April. And well, I went into that store. It was, let's say, eleven o'clock and he was walking up and down. And later on, he said to me, "You know, when I saw you going by, I said, 'If that's the girl I'm going to meet, I'm going to marry her.'"

EM: [*laughs*] So how long after that did you get married?

CS: It was in April, we got married and November, a day after Thanksgiving.

EM: What year?

CS: 1955, I think.

EM: Oh, so you were really on your own about ten years.

CS: About ten years, yeah.

EM: And he continued to operate this shop on Broadway?

CS: What, dear?

EM: He continued to operate the store on Broadway?

CS: Right, I walked to [still unclear] at that time—

EM: He worked at that store on Broadway? It was his store?

CS: Yeah.

EM: What kind of a store was it?

CS: They sold cigarettes and candy and—

EM: Magazines?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Newspapers?

CS: What do you call it again?

EM: You know, years ago they called sundries—S-U-N-D-R-I-E-S.

CS: Yeah, yeah.

EM: You don't really ever hear that word anymore.

CS: There are not too many of those—

EM: Yes, yes.

CS: —available anymore.

EM: So you stayed in New York, obviously, for quite a while?

CS: Yes, I was living in New York for 20 years.

EM: And what brought you to Boston?

CS: Mr. Scheiberg lived here in Boston and did business from here. I knew him as Kalman and I don't know whether you know them—a lawyer. And—

EM: So Fred was from Boston, and he was working in New York?

CS: Yeah.

EM: And—

CS: He didn't—he was in New York at the time.

EM: And you stayed in New York for 20 years?

CS: I—yeah, I was in New York for 20 years.

EM: With him?

CS: What, dear?

EM: With him? With your husband?

CS: Yeah, until he passed away.

EM: So what brought you to Boston?

CS: My husband lived here in Cambridge. Mr. Scheiberg lived here in Cambridge.

EM: Yes.

CS: And he did business out of Cambridge.

EM: Oh. So you moved to Cambridge in what year? Do you remember?

CS: We came after I got married. My mother was very sad that I left her in New York and—Oh, I have to show you this.

EM: Okay. Let me see this picture. Oh, this is you and your husband?

CS: Yes.

EM: This is you and your husband? Oh, my!

CS: We were so happy together.

EM: You had matching shirts on.

CS: Yeah.

EM: Handsome man.

CS: Yeah.

EM: Very handsome. I would say you were probably in your 50s there.

CS: What, dear?

EM: You were probably in your 50s.

CS: Yeah, he was in 50s.

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: I was in my 40s. We were in St. Thomas at that time, and he wanted to take a picture of me, and there was a photographer coming by. And he said, “You sit down there, and I sit down there.” He said, “Give me your camera. I’m going to take a picture of you.” And he must have said something very funny.

EM: Oh. [Chuckles]

CS: The two of us had such a good time there.

EM: It’s a beautiful picture. So after you met your husband, you moved to Cambridge?

CS: Yeah.

EM: And you left the mothers in New York?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Well.

CS: She didn’t like that very much.

EM: No, I’m sure she didn’t. Did she know any English, your mother?

CS: Oh, sure; they learned English in school.

EM: Yes.

CS: But my mother, unfortunately, didn’t hear well—but she had nice neighbors.

EM: So did your mother and your mother-in-law continue to live together?

CS: No, my mother-in-law at that time—when the war allowed the Europeans to come to the United States again, they wanted her to come to live with them. They said it was too much of a burden for me. They were extremely nice, her sons. They were very nice to me. In reality, I wasn't a bad girl.

EM: [*Chuckles*] Sure, sure. Was your second husband also from Germany?

CS: Yeah.

EM: And where was he from?

CS: I don't know. I don't know if you know Germany very well.

EM: I do.

CS: You do?

EM: Yes, because my husband and I lived in Frankfurt on Main.

CS: He came from Bielefeld.

EM: Bielefeld…

CS: Bielefeld is—do you know Osterburg?

EM: Yes, I know where that is, uh-huh.

CS: I lived in Osterburg. He lived in Bielefeld, and then it goes further up to Hanover and Berlin. So it is on the border, I think, of Westphalia.

EM: Mmm-hmm. When you were living during the war years, meaning after you came to this country with your first husband, did you experience any discrimination because you were a German Jew?

CS: Here?

EM: Yes.

CS: No.

EM: No, none.

CS: Not here, but in Germany, of course you did, yes.

EM: Was your family affluent in Germany?

CS: I was once invited by my hometown—I think you must have heard that the Germans feel a certain kind of guilt—

EM: Right. [Chuckles]

CS: —and they—

EM: They invited you back. And when was that? When did you go back?

CS: It was before I got—'80—you need this…?

EM: No, you were—ten years ago, maybe.

CS: '85 or so.

EM: 1985? Oh, so it was not that long ago. When did Frank die?

CS: It must have been before that because—I tell you why I say that. In 1989 I had the shingles, and the shingles are something awful. I still have them. And I can't get rid of them, and so I have to live with them. I think I'll take them with me way under.

EM: [Laughs] I want to ask you about your education as a child. Did you go to public school? Did you go to private school?

CS: It is not a private school. In Germany we had, at that time—well, you said you know Germany.

EM: I do, but I don't know a lot about the educational practices.

CS: That was before the war.

EM: Before the war. I want to know that.

CS: Do do you understand German?

EM: A little bit.

CS: *A tischte shule*. It was only for girls' higher educational schooling. It means that first we learned German with all the trimmings. That means reading, writing and arithmetic, and that after three years we started to learn French. And after five years we learned English, and we went to that school for ten years. So I really was in school from about six and a half years to sixteen and a half years. And that was after the German war. My parents, especially my dad, didn't want me to go to any university because they wanted to be able to take care of their little girl.

EM: Did your father serve in the Army during the First World War?

CS: Yes, he did.

EM: He did? And where was he?

CS: And my husband, Mr. Scheiberg—

EM: Yes.

CS: —did also. He was about 16, 17 years old. He was a pilot.

EM: Really? In the First World War?

CS: Yeah.

EM: But your father left the home and went to serve with the army.

CS: He came home, thank God.

EM: Of course.

CS: Yeah.

EM: What kind of work did he do? Your father?

CS: I told you.

EM: Yes.

CS: He had a men's store.

EM: Yes, but I meant in the army. You don't remember.

CS: After, you mean—

EM: When he was in the army, your father.

CS: Yeah, my mother took care of it.

EM: Your mother took care of the store. Did your father—

CS: With my father's older brother.

EM: Mmm-hmm. Did your father do clerical work in the army? Did he—was he on the front?

CS: No.

EM: What did he do?

CS: No, he was what they call a *landverer*, a GI.

EM: Uh-huh. And how long did he serve? Do you remember? Do you remember being a child and his not being home? Do you remember that?

CS: Yeah, I remember that very well. I remember when he came home after the war, and I see my mother running down the steps and he came early in the morning, and she wore a red velour housecoat. And she heard my father's voice and she ran down the steps. I still see that. My mother and my father were very much in love with each other. There is a picture over there on the wall. I'll show it to you.

EM: Tell me about this furniture in your apartment—this beautiful…

CS: Well, this furniture, in reality, is the furniture of my husband's first wife.

EM: Mmm-hmm. Second husband's first wife?

CS: Yeah, they come from Cologne. I'm in love with them. I do say that.

EM: And they were able to bring it over with them?

CS: They were.

EM: No, no, I understand that they brought it over.

CS: Yeah, they brought it over.

EM: The clock also?

CS: Yeah. They also brought—what is it? Sometimes it gets me stuck in my…

EM: Chifforobe?

CS: What?

EM: Like a closet? Like a shrug?

CS: No, like a desk. What is it?

EM: Like a desk?

CS: I'll show it to you.

EM: Okay.

CS: But it was made in 1756.

EM: And they brought that over.

CS: Yeah, they brought that over, and another one.

EM: When you were growing up in Germany, and as a young person even married a few years, were you affiliated with a synagogue in Germany?

CS: [Stammers]

EM: Did you join a synagogue in Germany?

CS: No, well I—

EM: In Germany, yes.

CS: When I was in Germany—

EM: Yes.

CS: But not when I—[still unclear] I [still unclear] bed for a week.

EM: No, no. When you were a child, did your family go to a synagogue?

CS: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

EM: Was it a liberal synagogue or a traditional synagogue?

CS: Actually, it was a liberal, because it was not Orthodox.

EM: Yes.

CS: But I don't think, a real Reformed synagogue it is not—it was not and I personally like it.

EM: It was mostly in German or mostly in Hebrew or little bit of both?

CS: Mostly in Hebrew and on the holidays the services went from 8:30 or 9 o'clock until 1:30 or 1:00; I don't remember.

EM: But men and women sat together.

CS: No, no. The ladies were sitting upstairs.

EM: Oh, so it was more Orthodox, yes.

CS: It was not Orthodox, but it was not Reformed—definitely not. I personally am a Reformed Jew.

EM: I know that, yeah. Did you go to any kind of Jewish school in Germany?

CS: Yes, we had to go. As a matter of fact, we were sort of lucky that we had a German teacher—a Jewish teacher who was a little bit more modern—not too old-fashioned. I learned a little bit of Hebrew, but I forgot most of it. That's too bad because when I was in Israel I couldn't talk to very many people—only to the Germans.

EM: Did you go to the Jewish school on the weekend or after the regular school? How did it work?

CS: No, after the regular school during the week.

EM: How many days a week? Do you remember?

CS: We had, I think, two afternoons that we had one or two hours of Jewish education.

EM: Together with boys or separate from boys?

CS: Boys and girls together.

EM: Together. Uh-huh. And did you observe Shabbos in your house?

CS: My mother was not very religious. I don't think we had the lights on, on Shabbat. I know that it was a special evening. We could go out when we were older.

EM: Older.

CS: But on Friday evening, we had to be home.

EM: What did she make for dinner?

CS: What?

EM: What did she make for dinner on Shabbat?

CS: What she made for dinner?

EM: Do you remember?

CS: Oh, probably a roast or a chicken or something like that.

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: Friday noontime we had either fish or pea soup, and in the winter sometimes sauerkraut, if you know what that is.

EM: Yes, of course.

CS: Sauerkraut with borscht. I don't know whether my mother was a very peculiar—or whether that was kosher or not, she never did. My mother had another feeling. She said, "You don't have to obey all the"—

EM: Rules?

CS: "But if you are a good, decent human being, then you are a good Jew." That's what she did. And she did. She was extremely good. She was a wonderful person. I always said, "I wish I was like my mother."

EM: I have a feeling you are like your mother.

CS: What, dear?

EM: I just have a feeling you are like your mother; I do. [chuckles] Not that I knew her, of course.

CS: My mother was wonderful. She was a—

EM: What were you saying now? When your mother went to Israel? You said—

CS: Well, [still unclear], my mother had a friend who lived in Israel and my mother—I was still alone and I wasn't married. My first husband didn't live anymore. I dread the word "dead." Dead is something so final. No human being is dead.

EM: They just don't live anymore.

CS: What, dear?

EM: They just don't live anymore, but they're not dead. It's a very good way of putting it.

CS: Yeah.

EM: I like that.

CS: You can say that, but anyway. But this friend of my mother's, who used to live in Oberhausen, was very sick when she came to New York. And she had to go to the hospital. After she came out of the hospital, none of her relatives wanted to take her. And my mother said to me, "Lotta, we have to take care of her. She's a friend of ours." So we took her into our house, and we tried to get her well again, which we did. My first husband had a cousin in New York also. And this young man was in the war, of the American war, in the Pacific, and he got some kind of a sickness in the war. And he couldn't work. He was sick. And my husband didn't live anymore. My mother said to me, "We have to take him into our house. He doesn't have to live here because he has an apartment; but he has to be here during the day, so we can feed him and give him good food." I think that is good. I think that is something that—

EM: That's very Jewish.

CS: Yeah.

EM: Maybe it's not Jewish in terms of ritual, but it's Jewish in terms of practice and the way we like to feel that Jewish people are very charitable. It's *tzedakah* to take a person

into your home and—

CS: I always want to tell you, we did not have much money, my mother and I.

EM: I'm sure of that, from what you told me.

CS: But we always were able to pay our rent and our telephone and all kinds of things, and we had food in the house. During that time we had—on Rosh Hashanah and—not on Yom Kippur. My mother and I still don't know whether she fasted or not. But she said, "It doesn't matter." She wouldn't say yes; she wouldn't say no.

EM: What about you? Did you fast on Yom Kippur when you were younger?

CS: No, I don't fast.

EM: You never did.

CS: I had—

EM: And what about your husband, Fred?

CS: Huh?

EM: Did Fred fast on Yom Kippur?

CS: No, I didn't.

EM: No.

CS: When I was still alone and I was very sick—I had gall bladder infection, and that made me quite weak at that time. So I just said, "It doesn't matter whether I fast or I don't fast. I have to keep well. I cannot"—nobody can afford to be not well. If you can possibly do so, you should try to keep well and help other people—Do you know that I

dedicated a—what do you call it again?

EM: A tape recorder?

CS: Yeah, I—no—to the temple.

EM: A library—something in the library?

CS: Yeah.

EM: A shelf?

CS: What?

EM: A bookshelf?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Yes. In memory of your husband?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Oh, I didn't know that.

CS: Well, not in the memory—to my mother.

EM: Oh, your mother.

CS: But—no, no.

EM: What?

CS: That was something else. I have a friend here in Cambridge. She organized something in Israel of Jewish and Arab Jews to live together. And she said, "If these

young fellows lived together and know each other, then they are not going to—"

EM: They can work together.

CS: Yeah, they can work together.

EM: Is this the Fellowship of Jewish and Arab Youth—

CS: Yeah.

EM: — in Israel?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Yes, I know that organization. Your friend started that organization?

CS: My friend started it, yes.

EM: And what's her name?

CS: Frances Smith. Frances Elena [?] Smith. Do you know her?

EM: I don't. But I believe that Gisela Wizansky was also involved in that organization. Gisela Wizansky. Here in Cambridge.

CS: Yeah.

EM: I know because my husband and I, we support them every year. It's a very worthwhile organization.

CS: Yeah.

EM: It is. Have you been to Israel recently?

CS: What, dear?

EM: Have you been recently to Israel?

CS: No, I—no, I have not been—she was in Israel. She—

EM: Yes.

CS: She founded it.

EM: Yes, I know that, but you, have you been to Israel?

CS: No, I did not go to Israel. I went to Israel to visit my brother.

EM: Yes, and how long ago did he die?

CS: My brother—

EM: Yes.

CS: I think it was about ten years that he passed away. I loved my brother very much.

EM: When you moved to Boston, to Cambridge with your husband, did you move to this apartment?

CS: No, we first lived on Harvard Street in a much smaller apartment. But this is not a big apartment, I mean, but for one person—even for the two of us—

EM: Yes.

CS: —it was plenty big enough.

EM: It seems to me it is.

CS: And we enjoyed it, you know? We liked the view out of the window and this house has something special. The people in here in this house are very, very in the varied…There's every kind of person here in this house and there's—that we have Chinese; we have—what can we say?

EM: All nationalities.

CS: We have academics, old ladies like me and we have—

EM: Graduate students?

CS: What, dear?

EM: And graduate students, as well?

CS: I showed you a picture of my friend who was a next-door neighbor. Your husband knows him—Mr. Mehlman. He is an architect and I love them—him and his wife. They are wonderful. I love them very, very dearly. They—they're very nice to me too.

EM: How do you manage with the shopping and taking care of things?

CS: I have a lady who is coming three times a week to go with me. As a matter of fact, we went this morning. I'm going to have my 90th birthday in September. Of course, you know that.

EM: You told me, and your friends and your relatives are coming in.

CS: My sister-in-law called me ten days ago, I think. And she said to me, "Lotta, I'm going to come to you for your birthday." And I said, "That's wonderful! It's a great present." And she said, "But I'm not going to come alone. I'm going to come with Etan." Etan is—did I tell you that before?

EM: It's okay. It's her grandson? Isn't her grandson Etan?

CS: Yeah.

EM: And how old is he?

CS: What, dear?

EM: How old is Etan?

CS: I don't know. I only know that his birthday is on the same day as mine.

EM: Wow!

CS: And then I called my niece, my husband's sister's daughter in Buenos Aires on Saturday morning, and I said to her, "Lido, do you want to come to my birthday?" "Oh, Auntie Lottie," [chuckles]—she said, "That's wonderful! And I tell you something, your friend, Edith, is going to come with me. She wants to come."

EM: From Buenos Aires?

CS: What, dear?

EM: From Buenos Aires?

CS: She—no, Edith is the wife of my husband's very best friend in Germany.

EM: Uh-huh. Where does she live now?

CS: She lives in Buenos Aires.

EM: People from all over the world are coming.

CS: Yes.

EM: Your family is very far-flung. But I guess it's typical that people just weren't able to all go to one place. People went where they could.

CS: Yes, I have a cousin who lives in London on my mother's side, and I have a cousin in London who lives on my father's side. And I have a cousin on my mother's side in Munich. But she is giving me a lot of trouble. Her birthday was on the 16th of June. So I sent her a letter—a birthday letter—and I said, "I'm going to try to call you, since you said"—I tried to call her. I cannot get her on the phone, and I really didn't know what to do. So I called my cousin in London again—I have a phone bill, I'm telling you.

EM: [laughs] I hear that.

CS: I said to him, "How is it possible to reach this Ruth?" Her name is Ruth. And he said, "Oh, leave that up to me. I think I'm going to call the [*wolf-shatz*?] in Munich and they might find out for me."

EM: And where will the party be? Will there be a party? Will you have a party?

CS: We're going to have a party.

EM: Where?

CS: Oh, I was going to ask you.

EM: Yes.

CS: Would it be all right if I would get a little room in the temple downstairs?

EM: I'm sure. I'm sure. You should call the temple and speak to Mr. Soyer. S-o-y-e-r.

CS: Who?

EM: Soyer. I'll tell you afterwards. I'll write it down for you.

CS: Yeah.

EM: Okay? And I'll tell you how to do it.

CS: And I would like to have—I have to get—it doesn't have to be kosher.

EM: No, no. Do you have to get it catered?

CS: A little lunch for the—

EM: Yes, yes, yes. When you came to Cambridge and you married a second time, did you continue to work?

CS: Don't laugh now. [chuckles]

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: I didn't get a job at first and I had a friend in New York, and she said, "You can take some of my representation." There was scarves and sweaters, and I went off. I took them and went off with the scarves and the sweaters. And don't think for a moment I didn't sell any. I sold some.

EM: You went to the stores here?

CS: Yeah, but you know, it was a big suitcase like this here. It was too heavy for me; I couldn't do it. And to go around with the scarves was all right. At that time there was still all right [several words unclear]. Do you remember that?

EM: Of course I do.

CS: At [unclear] I sold some there. And there was another—I don't know what the name of this was. I think somewhere on—also on the Commons.

EM: At Crawford Hollidge perhaps?

CS: Yes.

EM: When I got married, I got my going-away outfit from Crawford Hollidge.

CS: Really?

EM: Yes.

CS: Well, I would like to give you a scarf from my collection.

EM: Well, thank you very much. That's lovely—

CS: Nice [still unclear]

EM: Well, thank you.

CS: [several words still unclear]

EM: That would be lovely. Thank you, really. Did you ever get a job in a store like you did in New York?

CS: No, I did not. I worked in a wholesale house on Kneeland Street.

EM: Mmm-hmm. Also a clothing, apparel?

CS: Yeah, and [still unclear] wholesale house.

EM: Mmm-hmm. Near Chinatown?

CS: Yeah, opposite Chinatown.

EM: Yes. And did you retire, or you just—

CS: No, they threw me out.

EM: [laughs]

CS: I mean it!

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: I was about 71 years old, and I had two bosses, and one of them thought probably, "If I have that woman in our place they'll think it's old and I don't want her anymore." So he said to me—his partner, whom I really like very much—As a matter of fact, I was—the other day I was thinking I should call him again. He's a very nice guy. That was on a Friday; we had a sale. And somehow or other, maybe I wasn't as alert as—is it still working?

EM: It's still working; yes, it's still working.

CS: But this here shouldn't really be in it. Well, maybe it should; I don't know. You can cut off—

EM: Okay.

CS: —as much as you like.

EM: All right.

CS: So they said to me, "Well, Lottie, you don't have to come back on Monday," and I was so insulted.

EM: Oh, I bet!

CS: I was so insulted. I said, "All right."

EM: Just like that?

CS: Just like that.

EM: Just like that.

CS: Yeah. I don't think I have ever taken anything away from them. I felt like a thief. I felt like a—I can't—

EM: They treated you so poorly after all those years.

CS: Do you know that I'm still in touch with three girls?

EM: Uh-huh, that you worked with?

CS: Yeah.

EM: Marvelous.

CS: I called one girl. She was sick, and I called her several times. And one girl is in Newton and another girl is in Canton, I think. She calls me. She says, Is for me cheaper, than for you.

EM: [laughs]

CS: And I don't care.

EM: I know why. When you moved to Boston, was your husband already a member of the temple? Of Temple Israel?

CS: Yes, he was in a—I think he wasn't a member. He was being introduced to it from Mr. and Mrs. Stone. You don't remember.

EM: What were their first names?

CS: Robert Stone.

EM: Robert?

CS: Yeah.

EM: I don't remember them.

CS: You don't know them.

EM: No, no.

CS: And his wife and there were two or three brothers. They manufactured curtains and my husband, at that time, shortly after he came from Europe, he was very artistic. He could make curtains with figures, and they could be done so they could be louvered. I don't know what you call that right now.

EM: Mmm-hmm. He made the designs for the weaver.

CS: Yeah. My husband—Mr. Scheiberg—

EM: Yes.

CS: —was a very artistic man. Here, see the pictures.

EM: I will look at them.

CS: Those are the photographs—

EM: [several words still unclear]

CS: —he did.

EM: Yes. Oh, he did those with the cutouts?

CS: Yeah.

EM: What do they call that? There's a certain name for it.

CS: What, dear?

EM: Decoupage, do they call it? What do they call this type of photograph?

CS: [still unclear]

EM: What is the term for it?

CS: [several words still unclear] Wait a minute. They were cut—

EM: It's cut-out-like.

CS: Cut out, yeah. But say, oh, those are old and those two pictures in the round—

EM: Yes.

CS: —they are from my first husband's wife's relatives.

EM: Hmm. They look like they're more than 100 years old.

CS: Yeah.

EM: They're much more than 100 years old.

CS: They must be about 120 years old [still unclear].

EM: After you joined the temple—Temple Israel, did you come regularly? Did you participate in services and other activities at the temple? Did you and your husband participate in the life of the temple?

CS: Yeah.

EM: What did you do? What kinds of things were attractive to you? What kinds of activities did you come to? Services?

CS: After they threw me out—

EM: Yes.

CS: —I stopped, and I was very unhappy. I tell you what I did. Here on the corner is the hospital.

EM: Cambridge Hospital.

CS: Cambridge Hospital. I asked my doctor what I should do. I really was sick with it. I was—and he said, "Why don't you try to do some voluntary work?" And I said, "Yes, I will do that."

EM: Yeah.

CS: So I went to the hospital there and talked to the young lady who is still my friend—Jean de Pasquale. And I said to her, "I would like to help you a couple of times a week, if you can use me." But I said to her, "I'll tell you right now. I'm not going to go into the rooms where the sick people are. I'm very happy if I can do something in your offices," which I did for many years.

EM: It's very convenient. Do you drive?

CS: No.

EM: You never drove?

CS: [still unclear] did.

EM: Did your husband drive?

CS: Sure, yes, he did.

EM: Uh-huh. In what year did he pass away?

CS: 1951.

EM: Your second husband? 1951? No, no.

CS: 1991.

EM: Oh, 19—oh, just a few years ago.

CS: Five and a half years.

EM: Yeah, so you were married quite a few years to him? More than 30 years.

CS: Yes.

EM: Yes, yes.

CS: I miss him so much.

EM: Oh, I'm sure; I'm sure, because it was the two of you. You were probably in love for all those years. [Chuckles]

CS: Yeah, we had wonderful times together.

EM: Did you travel very much?

CS: Yes, yes, we did. He never went back to Europe.

EM: But you did?

CS: I did, yeah. Whenever I went to Israel, I stopped one—in London. I stopped in Paris. I stopped in Zurich. I stopped in Greece, in Athens. And I got little bit educated with the—I liked it very much.

EM: Of course.

CS: My husband always saw to it that I stayed at the very best hotels, because he said, "I want you to be secure and"—

EM: I agree with him. I would do the same.

CS: He was a wonderful guy. Honest to goodness, he was nice.

EM: All right. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? If not, we can close for today and look forward to your birthday party.

CS: I'll tell you something.

EM: Yes.

CS: I am very, very happy that you came.

EM: Thank you.

CS: And I'm very happy that—I don't know that I was helpful or not—I don't know.

EM: You know, your life is very interesting to me, because you lived a life different from my life; and maybe to you it was a very ordinary life, but it really wasn't an ordinary life.

CS: But your life was much smoother, not quite as sad. You didn't have to say good-bye to your friends in the letters and never saw them again.

EM: You never see them again, yes.

CS: You were born here, weren't you?

EM: Yes, I was born in 1941, actually a week before Pearl Harbor, I was born.

CS: And your husband—your husband speaks German too?

EM: Yes he does, because he studied German in high school and college, and I don't know if you know this, but in 1964 to 1960…—excuse me, 1963 to 1965, he was in the army and he was stationed in Frankfurt. And we were married in 1964.

CS: Were you in Frankfurt?

EM: Yes, and we lived in Frankfurt. And we traveled all around Germany because he was a chaplain and he had—

CS: Well, I'll tell you something.

EM: —posts all over the place.

CS: It is very good for you to travel and see the world from outside of the United States. You get a better picture of it.

EM: You know, when I went to Germany, I was 22 years old and people said to me, "How can you go to Germany?" But I really didn't have a choice. My husband was—as you know, you followed your husband—

CS: Along with him.

EM: —and I followed mine. How long was I in Germany? About 14 months.

CS: Oh, that is quite a while.

EM: Yes, we lived in Frankfurt.

CS: My French friend, my friend Franny Smith—

EM: Yes.

CS: —lived in Germany too. She had three children. I think her husband did research in Heidelberg.

EM: It wasn't far from Frankfurt. Heidelberg is a beautiful city.

CS: No, no. Germany is not as big as—

EM: But you know—

CS: Germany is a beautiful country—

EM: Beautiful—

CS: but I don't like the Germans, I'm sorry to say.

EM: I understand. [Chuckles] When we were living there, we would walk down a street and anyone who was over a certain age at that time, about 50, you would look at them and you would say, "Well, where were you 20 years ago?" And it was hard being there, but it was an interesting experience for us, and the experience of living in Germany and among the Germans because we didn't live in government housing, we lived in—

CS: Did you like it?

EM: Well, I was a bride, you know. Why not? I loved it. [Laughs]

CS: I think my cousin—

EM: It was very interesting.

CS: —[still unclear] to Germany to live there

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: —with her husband. She didn't want to, but her husband wanted to go back. And I never understood how she could do it because they did those to our people.

EM: Well, we didn't have a choice. My husband was sent there by the United States—he was a chaplain—

CS: Yeah.

EM: —a Jewish chaplain. And he felt it was more important to serve the Jews who were living in Germany—the American Jews as well as the German Jews who remained.

CS: There were hardly any.

EM: You know, many came back. It was very interesting. We were surprised. There were many German Jews living there—

CS: I would—

EM: —who returned to Germany from other places. Maybe their language wasn't very good. Maybe they couldn't make a living elsewhere, and there were a lot of Americans—

CS: They were mostly from—

EM: —that were American citizens.

CS: Weren't they mostly from the eastern part of Europe?

EM: And they moved to Germany. You're right. They were.

CS: Yeah.

EM: Mostly from Poland and even from Russia, who settled in Germany.

CS: I'm not saying that because some people think the Germans are high-headed and I don't know—to me, a person is a good Jew being—if, what I say is he believes in the Ten Commandments.

EM: On a final note, I want to ask you something entirely different. Do you still cook German food? Do you make German dishes?

CS: What, dear?

EM: Do you make [still unclear]? Do you bake?

CS: What?

EM: Do you bake cakes?

CS: Sometimes.

EM: Sometimes. German-style or American-style?

CS: Well, I don't know.

EM: You don't even know anymore.

CS: They eat it. [Chuckles]

EM: They eat it. [Laughs]

CS: My neighbors are—she is born in Vermont.

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: And he is born in Austria and I'm extremely fond of them. And tomorrow is their 30th anniversary.

EM: They're young people.

CS: Oh, I ordered some flowers for them. And now—oh, I have to show that—our little garden is something like a—It's very small. It's about three times as big as this room here.

EM: It's not so small. This is not such a small room.

CS: Oh, yeah, that's a small—but, you know what happened? I'll tell you something what's nice. There were three elderly ladies living here. One lady, a Mrs. Resnick, who passed away a few years ago in Webster—Webster Street, at old-age home.

EM: Oh, the Coolidge House.

CS: The Coolidge House.

EM: Yes, yes.

CS: And there is another lady who is—do you have to go?

EM: No, not at all. I'm just watching the tape.

CS: Is it still working?

EM: Yes, it's still working.

CS: Oh, my God.

EM: [laughs]

CS: And there is another lady who is very nice, and I'm also there. There are three chairs downstairs.

EM: Uh-huh.

CS: There was nothing down there. That was just a piece of—and so about four years ago there were three chairs—I think the Rubbermaid chairs. I guess you know them.

EM: I do.

CS: And they put them around the tree and under the table and then they said to themselves, "Wouldn't it be nice if they put some flowers here?" So they put some flowers around it. I go down there very often, almost everyday if I can.

EM: Do you stay here all winter?

CS: I stay here for a little while, take my telephone along.

EM: Oh. No, in the wintertime, do you stay in Boston, or do you go away?

CS: No, we used to go away. Right now—I have been very sick a few years. This followed this—early summer they detected breast cancer and I had to have two little operations and they took the bad parts out. And then I had five weeks—

EM: Radiation.

CS: So that was the winter. How could I go away?

EM: You look wonderful. You do. You look the picture of health.

CS: I wake up every morning and I say, I thank the Lord that I slept and that I was woken up and that I had a quiet, nice house. And then I always feel the Lord should give me a little bit of help to make somebody happy.

EM: I think you've made a lot of people happy from what you've told me today.

CS: What, dear?

EM: I think you've made a lot of people happy from what you've told me today. And you know, I'd like to come back in ten years, when you're approaching your 100th birthday and do this again. Is that a deal?

CS: Will you come to me one day and we'll have coffee in the garden?

EM: I'd love to do that. Thanks very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]