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Alice "Lisl" Schick oral history interview by Carolyn Ellis, October 5, 2009

Lisl Schick (Interviewee)

Carolyn Ellis (Interviewer)

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Carolyn Ellis: Okay, today is October 5, 2009. I’m speaking with survivor [Alice] Lisl Schick. My name is Carolyn Ellis, I’m the interviewer. We’re in Largo, Florida in the United States. The language we’re speaking is English, and the videographers are Jane Duncan and Nafa Fa’alogo. Lisl, could we start with your spelling your name for us?

Alice Schick: Yes. Lisl, L-i-s-l, Schick, S-c-h-i-c-k.

CE: Okay, and what was your name at birth?

AS: Alice Edith Schick—no, excuse me, Porges.

CE: Porges.

AS: Porges, obviously. (laughs)

CE: Right, and that’s—do you want to spell that, just—

AS: P-o-r-g-e-s.

CE: Okay, and what was your date of birth?

AS: December 20, 1927.

CE: Okay, and your age right now?

AS: Eighty-one.

CE: Eighty-one, okay. And the city and country where you were born?

AS: Vienna, Austria.

CE: Okay, and do you remember the address where you lived?

AS: Yes. Most of the time I lived at Köllnergasse 6. Want me to spell Köllnergasse [Göllnergasse]?

CE: Yes.

AS: K-o-e-l-l-n-e-r-g-a-s-s-e, and the number is 6.

CE: Okay, and that was in Vienna?

AS: That was in Vienna.

CE: Right, okay. And then you said that you moved in with your grand—

AS: Yes, after [Adolf] Hitler came into Austria. A few months after that, my dad lost his job. We had no income, so we couldn't stay in our apartment. My grandparents had not a very large apartment, but we had nowhere to go, so we moved in with them.

CE: Okay, and could you tell us your father's name and occupation?

AS: My father's name was Paul Porges; he was an accountant and he worked in an international bank.

CE: Okay, and your mother?

AS: My mother's name was Charlotte, called Lotte, L-o-t-t-e, Porges, and she was a homemaker.

CE: Okay, and your siblings?

AS: I had one sibling, Walter Porges.

CE: And were there others in your household?

AS: We had a maid slash au pair, until Hitler.

CE: And your grandparents?

AS: My maternal grandparents were Erna—her real name was Ernestine—and it was Posamentier. I'll tell you something funny: her maiden name was Schick.

CE: Oh, really?

AS: Yes.

CE: Oh, how interesting.

AS: We never found out any direct relationship, but that was her maiden name. And my grandfather was Heinrich, H-e-i-n-r-i-c-h, Posamentier, P-o-s-a-m-e-n-t-i-e-r.

CE: Okay, thank you.

AS: And my paternal grandmother was Mathilde, M-a-t-h-i-l-d-e, Porges, and my grandfather, who died before I was born, was Rudolf Porges.

CE: Okay. I want to start with just your life growing up. Could you just tell me, give me a picture of what that was like?

AS: Yes, I had a very pleasant life. We, as I said, had an au pair who lived with us, and I played with her a lot. I had friends. We went to school, we took summer vacations, we went swimming and ice skating—swimming in a pool, of course; Austria's inland. We just had a very pleasant life. I had a lot of friends. Some were Jewish, some were not Jewish, didn't seem to matter. I was not conscious of it at all, the fact that we were Jewish. My mother was more conscious of the fact that we were Jewish. I remember that in particular.

We were not religious. We belonged to a synagogue because everybody did. Every Jewish person was registered as Jewish and belonged to some kind of temple or synagogue. But we were very inactive. We would go on occasion, but we did not observe any of the minor holidays. I remember we observed just the two major holidays, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. That's when we would go to temple, but beyond that we really did nothing. We didn't have Shabbat candles on Friday night, we didn't have a Seder, we didn't observe Hanukkah. As a matter of fact, we had a Christmas tree. I felt we were very assimilated Austrians who just happened to be Jewish.

There was a Jewish section where a lot of Jewish people lived, mostly people who had come in from Poland, and we lived in a totally different area.

CE: Did your parents talk about being Jewish to you?

AS: Not that much, not that much. And they also had friends who were Jewish and non-Jewish. It was not a major factor in my life at all.

CE: So would you say your major identity, then, was being Austrian?

AS: Absolutely.

CE: And what about school?

AS: I went to a public school, grammar school. And as I said, I had friends, Jewish and non-Jewish. We did have a subject called religion. Austria was a Catholic country, and so the Catholic children once a week had Catholic studies and we had once a week Jewish studies. I remember the teacher; none of us wanted to be there, and we gave her a very hard time.

CE: (laughs)

AS: Her name was Ms. Wolf. I remember it to this day. And I'm so sorry, Ms. Wolf, that I gave you such a hard time, because she tried her best, but we really didn't want to be there and we were not that interested.

CE: Were you a good student?

AS: Yes. I wouldn't say I was outstanding, but I was a good student.

CE: And would you say your parents were upper class? Middle class?

AS: Middle class.

CE: Middle class.

AS: Yeah. My father was very well educated, and my mother went to a private high school, actually, but she didn't go to college. My father had some university—I'm not quite sure—but he was a very, very bright man.

CE: And could you talk a little bit more about his profession?

AS: Well, he worked in an international bank, which it turned out saved his life, the fact that after the Anschluss they helped some of their middle and top management people get out.¹ It was called Banque des pays de l'Europe centrale; it was based in Paris, and my father spoke fluent French.

¹The Anschluss was the annexation of Austria by Germany on March 12, 1938.

CE: Could you spell what you just said?

AS: Oh, my goodness.

CE: Oh, if not—

AS: Banque la—

CE: If you—

AS: I'm not sure I can. (laughs)

CE: Say it one more time, then.

AS: Banque des pays de l'Europe centrale.

CE: Okay.

AS: And in Austria it was called Länder Bank, which means “a bank of all lands.” So, obviously, they had a branch in Vienna. And after the Anschluss, after a while when it became so dangerous, they helped some of their middle and top management people get out.

As I said, my father was very well educated. He was a very wonderful man; everybody loved him, including me. (laughs) I had a marvelous relationship with him. And he lived to be eighty-five, and he really wasn't ill; he just one day went to bed and didn't wake up, at age eighty-five.

CE: We should all be so lucky.

AS: Yes, and he had all his marbles. He was very bright. He was an excellent chess player. In later years, when they moved to Clearwater [Florida] many years later, he was the chess coach at Clearwater High School.

CE: Oh, wonderful.

AS: And he played correspondence chess. So, he was a very special figure in my life.

CE: So you were very close to him as a child.

AS: I was very close to him.

CE: And what about your mother? As a child, your relationship?

AS: As a child—to be quite honest, I was always closer to my father. My mother was very, very protective. My mother is—my parents were married six years before I was born. My mother was told she would never have children. When I was born, I was a little princess, of course, and my mother was very protective of us, too much so. Of course, I will never forget what she did to send us to England; that must have been such a horrendous thing for her to do, because she really watched over us so, so carefully. Of course the doctors were wrong. I was born, and four years later my brother was born. She really thought these two children were a miracle, and she was really going to watch over them.

CE: And tell us about your brother as a child.

AS: As a child, I adored my brother. He was darling. He was four years younger. I remember when my mother brought him home; there was this little blue bundle, and she put him on the dining room table and she said, “This is your brother.” And I picked him up, I said, “This is my baby.” And he was absolutely adorable, and as he got older he had blonde curls. He looked nothing like me; I was always dark and [had] dark eyes. He had hazel eyes, greenish hazel eyes, and much lighter hair. In later years he became very gray very early, which is what I would be—but I’m not! (laughs) He was just a darling child, and I loved him dearly. I played with him. We got along very well, always.

CE: Wonderful. Were your parents political at all?

AS: My parents certainly had leanings towards the left, you know; they were—I don’t quite know how to put it—Social Democrats, I guess, but they were not active politically in any active way. But they were active in an organization called B’nai B’rith International, and that is probably what helped us a great deal to get on the Kindertransport [Refugee Children Movement].

Yeah, my parents were very, very charitable. They didn't have a lot of money; we lived a middle class life. But I remember that my father, whenever he got an envelope that asked for charitable contributions, he'd always put a little money in. He never turned down a charity. And I think he imparted that to me, to a great extent, 'cause I kind of feel that way now.

CE: Yes, I can tell that. Was there any discussion of the Nazis or what was happening in the country?

AS: You know, I remember years before that, when I was very young, in the early thirties [1930s], when [Engelbert] Dollfus was the Chancellor of Austria, when he was shot and killed and everybody was very upset about it.² It was all over the radio; there were demonstrations. We were in the country on vacation at the time, but I remember that my parents were very worried. And then I do remember a little talk about Hitler coming into Germany, getting into power in Germany, but not much. And I can't remember feeling at all nervous or threatened. Now, don't forget I was very young, so I didn't hear everything. I heard more in later years than my parents wanted me to hear. But I was always curious. My brother didn't understand anything; he was really little.

CE: So, how old were you when your life changed, and talk about that moment?

AS: Well, when Hitler marched into Austria in March of 1938 and I remember—I don't even think I really saw it, but I've seen the picture so often, with Hitler just marching into Vienna. I mean, the troops marched, and he came in an open Mercedes. He was standing in the car with his right hand raised with a Hitler salute, and everybody was rejoicing and—you know, partying and dancing in the streets. It turned out there was a Nazi party in Austria that, of course, I wasn't aware of, but the next day there were Nazi flags all over Vienna. And the little swastika lapels, people were wearing them. So there had been an illegal Nazi party, a very strong party. And the Austrians welcomed him with open arms, and I remember [at] that point my parents saying, "This is not going to be good for us."

CE: They realized that?

AS: They realized it immediately. They didn't—nobody could have foreseen how horrendous it would become, nobody. Some people thought of leaving, but my parents really didn't at that point because, you know, when you don't want to see something, you don't really see it clearly, and they rationalized. They said, "Look, this is not good." I mean, we started losing our

²Dollfuss was assassinated on July 25, 1934 by eight Nazi agents.

privileges almost immediately. The laws that he had enacted in Germany over six years he did in Austria overnight, with a lot of help from the Austrian population. But my parents said, “You know, there are still a lot of Jews living in Germany, and this man is mad. It’ll pass; this can’t last.” So, you know, we kind of rationalized.

Now, if you want me to tell how it changed my husband’s life, I can tell you that, also.

CE: Yes, do that.

AS: Okay. My parents-in-law—of course, I didn’t know them at the time—lived in Vienna, and they were immensely wealthy. My father-in-law and his brother had a huge international potato and onion import and export business, and they were very, very wealthy. They lived on a much higher scale than we did. The day after Hitler came in, they arrested both my father-in-law and his brother. Their picture was on the front page of that Nazi publication called *Der Stürmer*; they called them “the criminals Schick.” They put them in prison in Vienna, and he was in prison for several weeks.

The only way he could get out—and my mother-in-law moved heaven and earth to accomplish it; she was a very bright woman. The only way they would let him out is if he turned over all his assets to the Nazis, every last penny, and they let them out of the country. They left within weeks, ’cause they had no choice.

CE: Which probably saved their lives.

AS: Oh, that saved their lives; they went to Portugal and then to England, and then to this country in 1940.

CE: So your husband arrived here in 1940?

AS: Yes, and he served in the American [United States] Army.

CE: So, all this is happening. Are you feeling the anti-Semitism at this point?

AS: Oh, yes, absolutely. But first of all, my dear friend the maid/au pair had to leave immediately, the day after. There was an edict that no Christian woman under the age of forty-five could live in a Jewish household, so she packed her little bag and she left. I was really

brokenhearted, because she was my best friend; she played with me all the time—and with Walter, but more with me. My mother used to complain that she really—she’s supposed to help in the household, and she doesn’t do very much. But I would always say, “Leave her alone. We’re busy; we’re playing a game,” or something. And so I was devastated that she left.

And then, I went to school, as I always did, and I was equally devastated when I saw what happened. My non-Jewish friends would not speak to me, and I couldn’t understand why. They said, “No, we will never talk to you again.” I said, “Why? We didn’t have a fight. What did I do?” They said, “You didn’t do anything, but you’re a dirty Jew, and we want nothing to do with you.” I just couldn’t understand it. And then they said, “If we did, our parents will get into trouble, so forget it. This is it. We’re not speaking to you again.” So, you can just imagine. I was ten years old. That was almost the end of my world at that point.

So then, we tried to do the things that we normally do. I told you how protective my mother was. My mother picked us up from school every day, and we would go to one of the beautiful parks in Vienna and we’d play for a little bit. We got to the park, and there were big signs, “No Jews or dogs allowed.” So, we were on the same level as an animal, but they treated their animals better than they did the Jews. The same thing happened wherever we went. We went to the ice skating rink, “No Jews allowed.” We went to the swimming pool, which I loved because it had—this one pool had artificial waves and we’d jump around in the waves. Couldn’t go in there.

Could not take out any books from the library—of course the Nazis had immediately cleared the bookshelves of anything—of any books that they felt were not in keeping with their philosophy, but we could not go into the library anyhow. And summer vacations were out, and very soon after that my father lost his job. Even though the bank was an international bank, somehow the local authorities made sure that no Jews worked in those banks.

At that point, we had no income, so we moved in with my grandparents after a while. Which I thought would be marvelous; these were my maternal grandparents, whom I adored. I was very, very close, especially to my grandmother. I mean, anything that we wanted to do, it was fine with her. She spoiled us so terribly, and I just adored her. And that’s what I do with my grandchildren now.

CE: Oh, good, good.

AS: I love doing that. And I have a plaque, a little plaque that says, “Whatever happens at Nana’s stays at Nana’s.” (laughs)

CE: (laughs) Oh, that’s fantastic!

AS: So that is kind of the relationship we had, so I said, “Oh, my goodness, this is going to be so wonderful, fun and games. We’re living with my grandparents.” Walter and I lived in a tiny, tiny—it was practically a corner, but that didn’t bother me. But it wasn’t nearly as wonderful as I had thought it would be, because—you know, as a child, I could feel the tension in the household. And it was not good. (phone rings) But you know, we sort of went along, because everybody said, “This can’t last; there has to be a change.”

There was a change and, of course, that was in November of 1938. And that’s when Kristallnacht occurred.

CE: Right, right.

AS: “Crystal Night.” That was an absolute horrendous night. Nothing actually happened to us personally that night, and we were not even aware—I think there were rumors, though the night before, but we were not really aware. We went to school—we had a radio, but there was one station, controlled by the Nazis, so we didn’t hear it. There was no television. When I talk to children these days and tell them I grew up with no television, they can’t believe it, that I actually grew up with no television. So, we didn’t know what had happened.

My dad walked us to school—he tried to walk us to school. We lived on the fourth floor, and we walked down the stairs and we opened the front door to the apartment house, and I will never forget the sight that I saw. It was absolutely horrendous. There was broken glass everywhere, all along the pavement. We couldn’t even—we could hardly open the door. And what we saw were these hundreds—looked to me like thousands of Jewish men. I could only see men. They were on their hands and knees, and they had little tiny brushes in their hands.

And standing over them were the black-shirted SS and the brown-shirted SA men with whips in their hands. And if these poor Jewish people didn’t clean up the mess fast enough that they had made, because they had smashed every store window that they could identify as a Jewish shop. And it was a very nice area; there were plenty of Jewish shops in the first district. And they just whipped them.

I was so horrified, and I remember looking at my father, who I felt could fix everything, and I remember saying, “Can’t you do something?” And he just shook his head, and he said, “There’s nothing I can do.” And that, to me, was actually the turning point. And after that my parents realized we had to do something, we had to get out. I was really terrified to see that. I think what terrified me so much is that my father couldn’t help me.

So, we started to look for ways to get out. If you had, you know, money abroad, possibly, which my in-laws did, you could get out. We had no way to really get out, so we looked at every possibility. I remember my parents looking at places like Trinidad and Shanghai and all sorts of different places. But then, through B'nai B'rith, they heard about the Kindertransport, which was started the month after Kristallnacht in December. And because they were active in B'nai B'rith, they somehow had access to the information. And whether or not we got preferential treatment, I'll never know, but we were able to get on the Kindertransport in April of 1939, April 25. And what happened was my mother asked me whether I would consider going to England, and the only proviso was that I would always have to take care of my little brother, 'cause he was much too young to understand any of it.

CE: And you're ten at this point? You're ten years old? How old are you at this point?

AS: I was just eleven.

CE: Eleven, okay.

AS: And my brother was just seven. I said, "Yes, I will always take care of Walter. I want to get out." I was so frightened. I realized this is not good, and of course I overheard a lot of conversation. I said, "If there's any chance to get out, I'm going to make sure we get out." And so we did. And as I told you, I think it was the most heroic thing my parents ever did. I can't imagine being in that situation and making that decision. I really can't. But my parents did it, and saved our lives.

CE: Could you talk a little bit about preparing for the trip?

AS: Well, I remember we were each allowed one little suitcase, so my mother made some of our clothes, with the help of a dressmaker. We had some clothes that really didn't fit yet, but she said, "You're going to grow, so you'll grow into them." And then I had about a half a dozen handkerchiefs, and she embroidered—my mother embroidered the initials.

CE: Wow.

AS: Yeah, and I have since—I've kept those handkerchiefs and I've since framed them for my granddaughters.

CE: Wow, wonderful.

AS: And one of them is at the museum, in a showcase. And then I had a little tiny—it was like a little tiny steamer trunk, a toy steamer trunk with twin porcelain dolls. I was able to bring that, too. That was the only toy I could bring, but one of my granddaughters has that now. And so we prepared, but I don't remember preparing much except clothes—oh, and I had a diary. They gave me a diary, and they said, "Write everything down." I still have the diary; it's partially in German; but my oldest granddaughter some years ago helped me translate it on the computer.

CE: Wow!

AS: And then, unfortunately, I kept it for maybe three or four years, and I sort of tapered off. I really didn't finish it.

CE: When you look back at the diary, how does that make you feel?

AS: It's hard to say. I marvel at how mature I was, I have to say that. I took it in my stride. And don't forget, I had a mission; my mission was to make sure that I took care of Walter. And so when we arrived in England—and I didn't speak English—I remember arriving at the station after a long journey and holding on to his hand and whatever language they used—and we had numbers around our neck, and that determined where we were going to go. Fortunately, I guess we had adjacent numbers. Whatever, I held on to his hand, and I just made sure that we go together, and we always did. We were always together, and I took care of him.

CE: Do you remember getting on the train and leaving your parents?

AS: Oh, yes, absolutely, absolutely.

CE: Can you say anything about that?

AS: I remember that very distinctly. I didn't cry. My brother cried and cried and cried. I said, "Well, I can't cry. I have to take care of him." So I held him on my lap all night. We left late in the evening, and we traveled through Germany, Holland, and the English crossing, the English Channel. But on the train, I held him on my lap the entire night, and he finally stopped crying and I said, "Don't worry, everything is going to be fine now. Everything will be fine, and I'll take care of you." And I remember that very distinctly.

I remember the Dutch ladies. We crossed the border, and everybody was so excited. The Nazis did check our suitcases. I don't know what they thought we could pack in those little suitcases, but they checked it in Germany. Then we crossed over to Holland and everybody was very relieved, and the ladies came on and brought us hot chocolate and biscuits. It was like such a relief, and the older kids understood it even better. I know they sang some songs, some Hebrew songs that I didn't even know. And they danced—you know, you could just tell everybody was really relieved.

CE: Now, what languages did you speak at that point?

AS: I spoke German. That was it.

CE: Just German. So when you arrived—you knew where you were going?

AS: Well, we knew we were going to England, but—

CE: England, but that was it.

AS: That was it. And then I have no idea how they determined it. They had kids going to private homes, to families, boarding schools, hostels. We went to a boarding school, not far from London.

CE: So when you arrived, did someone meet you?

AS: Well, actually, my uncle, my mother's brother, had gotten to England, and he was there. So we saw him, which was great. But then, of course, we had to go where they told us to go, and we went to this boarding school.

CE: Okay. Tell me a little about the boarding school.

AS: The boarding school was very different than anything I've ever seen. Actually, it was run by a Jewish couple by the name of Dr. Cowan, C-o-w-a-n. He and his wife were actually not very nice people. I know it were very strict; there were very strict rules. But the matron—we had a matron in the dormitory. The boys and the girls were separated, but they told me where Walter was going to be. I checked that out. He had a different matron and I had a different matron, and

they were very nice. And the teachers were very, very nice, and so were the other girls. There was already some [that] what we called refugee girls there, and they were very helpful. And it was very difficult because, you know, I really couldn't communicate, but at age eleven you pick up a language very quickly. I also had no choice.

CE: Did they teach you English?

AS: Well, we just went to classes and I just picked it up. And the only thing that—to this day, I can't eat oatmeal. I know it's very good for you. I cannot touch it. Every morning for breakfast we had this bowl of porridge, and it was all thick and lumpy and tasteless. And I was a very poor eater anyway. I was very thin in those days, and I was a poor eater. And I just barely was able to swallow that porridge. And I cannot eat oatmeal. Can't even look at it.

But at that point, we had enough food, and we—actually, I think we even had uniforms. I'm not totally sure about that. In later years, in high school, we had school uniforms, which was wonderful because we didn't have enough money to buy a lot of clothes, so having a school uniform made us feel like all the other kids. So, that was good.

CE: And how was money dealt with?

AS: I don't remember that either. I had no money to speak of. Somehow, I got stamps to write letters to my parents. Maybe we got a little allowance. There was not much money to buy anything, and not much opportunity to buy anything. We were pretty strictly supervised.

CE: And how long were you at the boarding school?

AS: Well, we were at that particular boarding school for about—let me think a minute. May, June, July, August, September—close to six months. But I'll tell you what happened in June. Okay, we got there in April. In June my dad was able to come to England, which was marvelous, and the bank that I told you about made it possible for him to get out. He had two choices, and thank god we were in England. He could either go to France or to England, and of course he chose England. The people who chose France, most of them perished during the war. But he came to England.

So, he had no money. I don't know how he managed; somebody helped him. He lived in a boarding house in a small room, not far from our school, and so once a week we were able to see him. That, of course, was the highlight of our week. And my mother kept writing to us; we could still write.

CE: And where was she at this point?

AS: She was in Vienna.

CE: Still in Vienna?

AS: Hoping to get out. She was coming out hopefully on what they called a domestic permit. But it was delayed and delayed; there was red tape; they lost her papers. And before you knew it, in September the war broke out, and at that point she could not get out. We were at war. Not only couldn't she get out, we couldn't communicate with her. We were able to do some writing to Switzerland; somebody knew somebody in Switzerland and they were able to pass on the letter to Vienna. So we barely knew what was going on.

CE: And so what was her life like during that time?

AS: You know—

CE: Did she tell you about it?

AS: She lived with her parents. She spoke very little about it. She was obviously very, very unhappy, very traumatized. And to be honest with you, she really never got over this whole situation.

But a wonderful thing happened. My dad had a distant relative, some kind of second cousin who knew some people who were very wealthy, an attorney in New York City. She went to these people and she told them of our situation, and she said, "Please send this family an affidavit," which means a piece a paper that says, "Let them come into this country. They will not be a burden to the government; we will personally vouch for that. If they need to be supported, we will support them."

These people did not know us. I mean, to say, "I'll take care of a family of four," they took a big chance, but they never had to support any of us. They actually saved my mother's life. Because of the affidavit, my mother was able to come to this country in May of 1940. And it was one of the last ships, if not the last ship, that left Europe. She sailed out of Italy. After that, Europe is absolutely closed.

CE: So, she came to New York at that point. And your father, did he get his job back?

AS: Oh, no, no, no.

CE: No?

AS: No, no, no.

CE: No.

AS: My father—that was not so good. After the war broke out, there were a lot of Germans and Austrians in England. Don't forget, it's a small island. The English government did not know who was a refugee, Jewish refugee, and who was a German spy, and England was overrun by spies. So what they did, they arrested every man over the age of seventeen and sent them to internment camps—now, not concentration camps, but they were prisons. Some were sent—my dad was again lucky; he was sent to the Isle of Man. But keep in mind this was a prison with barbed wire. I never saw it, but it was far removed. Other people were sent to Australia, and some of them had horror stories about that.

There's a movie, it's a documentary called *Into the Arms of Strangers*; it's the story of the Kindertransport. One of the men talks about his experience of being shipped to Australia. It was a nightmare. My dad didn't have that. My dad was interned for two years. So, we didn't see him, but at least we were able to write to him. The letters were censored, but we were able to write to him. And he spent two years playing chess.

CE: Okay. (laughs)

AS: That kept him going. But of course he was terribly worried, especially about my mother. And he was worried about us to a certain extent—I'm sure he was very worried, but we never lived in London. We never lived anywhere where there was heavy bombing or anything like that. As a matter of fact—the first boarding school was about six months. Then we were sent to another boarding school in Folkestone [Kent, England], which was on the coast. We lived there for several months, until the Germans marched into France and started first shelling Folkestone and Dover. So, the English government decided they would evacuate as many schoolchildren as they could from the coastal areas and send us all the way to what is now Wales, Monmouthshire,

and we were very safe there. We were never bombed, nothing ever happened. And we lived in small towns and villages, even.

CE: So did you live with families at that point?

AS: At that point, yes. At that point, we lived with families for a while.

CE: And you and your brother were together?

AS: No, that was the only time—he lived down the street. But I was with another girl in this particular family. It was sort of a farm—it was a farm. The very, very kind lady who took in—she said she wanted two girls, so this girl whom I barely knew and I moved with them, and my brother lived down the street with another family. Lovely people. And we went to the same school, so we saw each other every day. As a matter of fact, we walked to school—oh, possibly an hour, if not an hour and half, each way. And when my kids and grandchildren complain or say it's so far to walk, I tell them, "It's nothing!"

CE: (laughs) So your schooling continued really uninterrupted? Is that right?

AS: Yes, yes, except it was different schools. And then after a while—this particular school was in Newport [Wales], which was on the coast, and after a while the school moved back to the headquarters and we—let me see. Yeah, we went back into a boarding school in Newport. And then from Newport, we moved back to this small town called Chepstow [Wales], and that was about two years before we left, so it was 1943.

My dad was able to move to Chepstow—and before you ask if he got his job back, no, he didn't get his job back, but he took a job at a shipyard to help the war effort. Unfortunately, they wore no protective gear over their ears, and my father really lost a good deal of his hearing at that point. But he worked as a manual laborer in a shipyard. He lived—we went back to a family at that point, a different family, and there was on the next street and this family already—it was a husband and wife who had no children. They had taken in a war bride and her little toddler, and then they took us in; my brother and me. It was a very small duplex with one bathroom. That's another thing when my kids say, "We didn't have enough bathrooms in our house." I say, "We had eight people using one bathroom." It was okay.

Anyhow, after a while I persuaded this couple to let my dad live with us also. So, way at the end, we all lived together.

CE: In this little duplex?

AS: In this little, little house.

CE: Wow!

AS: Yeah, they were—people were very, very kind to us. I'll always be grateful to all the English people. And in addition, I have to tell you—in addition to B'nai B'rith sponsoring the Kindertransport, the Quakers were very active, English families who were able to do so. The English people are just marvelous.

CE: Wonderful. So, how long did your father live with you?

AS: Oh, that was about a year.

CE: About a year, really?

AS: The last year or so, and I had finished high school by that time.

CE: So altogether, you were in England, how many years?

AS: Six years.

CE: Six years. And he was with you the last year?

AS: The last year.

CE: And were you able to be in touch with your mother?

AS: Well, once she came to this country, sure. Oh, yeah, we wrote back and forth and she sent us packages, and she worked so hard to try and get us over here. She—I mean, this is a woman who was fairly sheltered in Vienna. And when she came to this country she—the only thing she knew.

She was a very good housekeeper, so she worked as a maid. And the only other thing she could do is sew, on a machine. So after a while, she became a sewing machine operator. Always supported herself. And, you know, the couple who sponsored us never had to support her financially.

CE: And did she—where did she live? Did she live by herself?

AS: She lived with her brother, and that didn't work out too well. They then had a baby and it didn't work out. So, then she took a little one-bedroom apartment, where we all lived when we came over.

CE: Oh, my.

AS: It was a little crowded, but we managed.

CE: Okay. So, did she send you money, or did she ever—?

AS: I don't think she sent us money, because by that time my dad had some income from the shipyard. And believe me, we didn't spend much money; our big thing was to maybe go to a movie once a week, which we loved. And we would sit through a double-header, I remember that, see two movies back to back, which I couldn't do now. I remember getting packages. And she, as I started to say, traveled from New York to Washington [D.C.] to try to do something to expedite our coming here. And the reason we couldn't come [was] because—I don't know if you remember this, but the U-boats were very active in the Atlantic. There was a ship with a thousand children that was sent to Canada to safety, and the ship was torpedoed and sank and all the children were lost.

So at that point, the government wouldn't let any passengers, private passengers, cross the Atlantic. When we crossed, it was in—we left, it took two weeks. We traveled in a convoy, and the only people that were allowed to come [as] passengers were people who had close relatives. There were a lot of war brides; they were allowed to come. Or close relatives in this country, so we certainly qualified. So we came in—left in December of 1944, and it took two weeks to cross the Atlantic in a convoy. We landed in Halifax [Nova Scotia, Canada].

CE: And your father came with you?

AS: And my father came with us, the three of us. It was a pretty rough voyage, I remember that. The chairs were bolted down in the dining room, and everybody was sick. I was the only one at the table. I was so hungry. I was sitting there on my seventeenth birthday and I was a growing teenager, and I was so hungry the waves didn't bother me. To this day, I don't get seasick. I was the only one eating.

CE: (laughs) Wonderful.

AS: Yup, I ate. We came actually in a banana boat; the usual cargo is bananas; this time it was some passengers.

CE: When you think of the time in England, how do you think about it?

AS: I just feel I was so lucky to be in a safe place and to be treated so kindly. And, as I say, I always had my brother with me, so that gave me a lot of security and yet a mission to be very strong and grow up very quickly. I was always very optimistic. I always felt that, especially once my mother was in this country, I said, "Sooner or later, we're going to see her again." So I had always had this hope. And I was hoping that we would see my grandparents. I really had no idea what was going on.

CE: You didn't?

AS: I either didn't know or didn't want to know.

CE: And what did happen to your grandparents?

AS: Oh, that is a horror story. All my grandparents, all my extended family, my father's young brother, were all killed by the Nazis. We know what happened, more or less, through the Red Cross. We found that out many years later. My uncle was conscripted into forced labor; he was a brilliant young man. He got his law degree at night; he also worked in a bank, different bank from my dad's. But he was very, very bright; he had a law degree. He was sent to Poland, and he was not a very strong man. He was a little—you picture an intellectual, somehow, you know, but not physically very strong. And we heard somehow that he was on some kind of a march and just fell by the wayside and—you just imagine what happened. That was the end of him.

And all my grandparents and great-aunts and great-uncles, distant cousins, were actually sent to Minsk, in Russia, and that's where they have the mass graves. They didn't even send them to a

camp. So when we found that out, it was very, very traumatic. My mother, I think, had a lot of guilt because she left her parents—there's nothing she could have done. She never really got over it. And we tried, actually, not to talk to her about it very much.

She was very bitter in many ways, and it was—she had so many reasons to be so happy. She and my dad—yeah, she and my dad were married for just about sixty years. He was a wonderful father and husband. I was very happily married, had four children. My brother was a tremendously successful man, married, had two children—three children, sorry. So, she had so many reasons to be happy, but she was never completely happy.

CE: Had she been happy before? (phone rings)

AS: I think so, but she always worried a lot. She was very protective, and she tended to worry a lot. I remember that. And I just didn't—I'm very different from her, let's put it that way. I'm very different. And I'll tell you quite honestly, the adjustment coming over here was not easy. Everybody thinks this is so great, we were reunited. We all lived in a one-bedroom apartment for a few months, not too long. It was very difficult for me and for my mother, because she had remembered a little eleven-year-old girl. Well, I was totally grown up. I was seventeen; I had been in charge for six years. I was also very tall, five [feet] seven [inches]. My mother was five [feet] two [inches].

CE: Wow.

AS: Yeah. And my dad wasn't all that tall, but he was a little taller than that. Anyway, all of a sudden this little woman is telling me what to do. And I was a miserable teenager. I didn't take—

CE: I can't imagine.

AS: I really was, trust me, but I made up for it in later years. I was a very good daughter. But it was not easy.

CE: Should we stop now? Are we near? Because I'm thinking this is a good place to stop, and we could take a little break and then start up with your arrival in the United States and what happened after that point.

AS: Sure. That's a nice story! (laughs)

CE: Well—

Mp3 file 1 ends; Mp3 file 2 begins.

CE: Okay this is tape two, October fifth, interview with Lisl Schick. So, I thought, Lisl, we would start with talking about the friend that you made in England, and then move to your arrival in New York.

AS: Fine. Okay, I had quite a few friends in school and one of the girls—it was actually a day student; I was a boarder. She was an only child, lovely parents, and we became very good friends. The parents would invite me during vacation time, and I spent quite a lot of time with them. After I got married and she got married, later, we went back to London—when I say back to London, we went back to England. I never lived in London, but we went to London, my husband and I. We met Cynthia and she had married a very nice man who is an international accountant. My husband and he really hit it off, and Cynthia and I, of course, had been friends for all these years. Of course, I'll never forget how kind the family was to me.

And many years later, we always stayed in touch—and she remembers everything, so she would always remember birthdays and whatever. Anyway, after a while my husband and I bought a condo on Belleair Beach [Florida] and they came to visit us. They came to this country quite frequently, and they decided they would also buy on Belleair Beach. And so to this day, they have a condo on the third floor—ours is on the second—and I see them on a regular basis.

CE: Oh, that's wonderful!

AS: She is my oldest friend.

CE: Do you speak about the time in England?

AS: We speak about mutual friends with whom she has kept in touch; I have not. But she will update me on, "Remember Ruby? Well, Ruby is now doing so and so," 'cause they are old ladies.

CE: So, let's go back to your arrival. You're coming over to New York, you arrive in New York. Can you kind of go back to that moment and tell me about it?

AS: Right, sure. Well, I was very concerned. My brother never showed too much emotion, and I was very concerned how he would feel about seeing my mother again. I really prepped him, and I said, “Now, look, you have to be very nice to her, and you have to give her a kiss, and you know she’ll be so excited to see us.” And, so I really tried to prepare him and he just said, “Okay.” And I’ll never forget it. We arrived—and I have a hard time with this part. He burst into tears and he threw his arms around her, and he hugged and kissed her. I didn’t have to worry. It was the right reaction.

CE: And he felt it—he wasn’t acting, it sounds like.

AS: Right, and he always got along much better in the house than I did. I was the one that was the troublemaker and the rebellious one. Of course, he was thirteen years old; he was in junior high school.

CE: Before you go on, what was your—when you saw your mother, how did you feel?

AS: Well, I was very happy to see her, and I was very happy that my brother reacted the way he did. Of course I was delighted to see her. It was only after the initial “How wonderful this is” that she tried to tell me what to do, and I said, “Well, I don’t do this.” You know.

CE: Did she—so, she was English speaking at that point, too?

AS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Both my parents spoke very good English.

CE: And where did you live at that point?

AS: We lived in her little apartment. Don’t forget, it was towards the end of the war and apartments were very difficult to get, and also we were very limited financially. So, we lived with her in her little one bedroom apartment. My parents had like a little couch in the kitchen—I remember it to this day—and Walt and I slept on a pullout sofa in the living room. And that was it.

CE: And did your father get a job immediately?

AS: My father got—yes, my father got some kind of a job as a bookkeeper. It was not nearly at the level that he had had, and he never liked it. He did it. It was also an international firm—I

forgot the name of it—but the fact that he spoke German, English, and French was very helpful, apparently. So, he had this job as a bookkeeper, but he was not really, really happy, and he said, “When I’m sixty-five, I’m going to retire,” and he did.

And my mother kept on working as a machine operator, and then in later years she switched over and became a bookkeeping machine operator at Burroughs Bookkeeping Machine. Which is probably obsolete now; I’m sure nobody uses them anymore.

CE: And did you go to school, or did you—?

AS: I had finished high school.

CE: You had finished high school.

AS: I finished high school, and I started in the fall—I started going to college at night—or no, maybe even—I’m sorry, in the spring. I started going to college at night, and I worked in an office part-time though friends of my mothers. That summer I was a counselor in a summer camp, and I loved that. That’s when I became Americanized, because I wanted to lose my English accent. I wanted to be just like any other American teenager. I made some very good friends, and I loved working with the children. I had really always—I loved children. I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. That never happened, but I loved working with the kids. They were actually inner city kids from New York—it was in the Bear Mountain region [New York state park]. I really enjoyed it. I did that for two summers, and I worked part-time.

But after the first summer—I think it was after the first summer—one of the older counselors said to me, “It’s going to take you a long time to finish college; you should really go to business school.” And I did enjoy business, so for one year I went to a business school in New York City, and I learned short hand, which is obsolete, too, but I was pretty good at that. Bookkeeping, typewriting, those were the main subjects, and I was really pretty good at them. And when I finished there I started working full-time. Still took courses at night, but at that rate it was going to take me a long time. So, my kindergarten experience never materialized. I just have a lot of children and grandchildren.

CE: (laughs) There’s nothing wrong with that.

AS: Right.

CE: So now, let's talk about your relationship with your mother, because it seems to be an important part of the story.

AS: We became used to each other after a while, and you know, I was pretty independent and I made friends. And don't forget, I only lived with my parents for four years, and then I got married.

CE: Okay.

AS: No, we got along pretty well, but much better in later years, when our roles were a little bit reversed. And I took good care of my parents.

CE: So, were you dating at this point?

AS: Yes, I started to date. I actually met a young man on the ship. He ended up going into the service and he thought I was his girlfriend, which of course I wasn't. But we would write letters. And then there was an Austrian-German club for teenagers; they had all sorts of organizations, and I joined that. I met a couple of guys and I dated—just kind of casual dating, certainly nothing serious, but I had a good time.

I started going to baseball games, and I would bribe my brother to come with me to the Polo Grounds and see the New York Giants.³ He sort of liked it, but not as much as I did. And I would bribe him; I'd say, "I'll buy you another hot dog; sit through a doubleheader." (CE laughs) We loved going—I mean, I loved going to those baseball games. To this day, with all my kids and sports things, it's a good thing I know about baseball.

CE: It is, it is.

AS: So, I had a very happy life.

CE: And you were still close to you father at that point?

AS: Oh, yes, I was always very close to my father. Yeah.

³The New York Giants moved to San Francisco in 1957.

CE: It's hard for me to imagine having been apart for six years and then coming back together.

AS: It was not easy, it really wasn't. But we got used to each other; it was okay. And don't forget, my brother was still at home, so I had him.

CE: And what was your attitude at that point towards Austria?

AS: That's a little hard to say. My mother was very angry and said that she would never, ever go back, and they did not. My parents used to go to Switzerland every summer after my dad retired. They loved going there, they loved the mountains. They loved going to Switzerland, but they never ever went back to Austria. My husband and I went back for the first time in 1965, and it was a very painful experience for me. I was actually physically ill. I went to the house where we lived, both the first house and then my grandparents'. I was just sick. It's very hard. And I would look at the people and I would say, "Were you one of the guards at the concentration camp?" I would say it was a very mixed experience.

And the funny part of this that I remembered Vienna very well, but the houses seemed smaller, the streets seemed shorter. I saw it from an adult perspective, and I remembered it as a child. But I really wanted to go back and see it. And then, I've taken all my children there, and their spouses, and my two older grandchildren. I wanted them to see our roots. And Vienna is a very beautiful city, really beautiful, a lot of culture. But it was very difficult the first time. So, I probably had more anger than I realized, until I went back.

CE: And during the time you were living in New York with your parents, was being Jewish important to your family?

AS: Not at that point. Not really, because my parents still didn't observe anything. We knew we were Jewish, and I had an aunt by marriage who was very religious, and I loved that aunt. And on occasion I would go to temple with her, to Jewish festivals. As a matter of fact, my brother did become bar mitzvahed in New York, but we did not belong to any congregation.

CE: Did you talk about your experiences with your parents? Did they?

AS: Not all that much, because it was so painful for my mother that we tried to kind of put it behind us and start living a normal life.

CE: Did other people ask you about your experiences?

AS: They did. They did. Most of my friends were—my parents' friends—were European. They had quite a circle of friends, and they kind of stuck together. They lived in the same areas, more or less, and they saw each other. Some of them were friends from Vienna, whom I had known. But I tried actually to become very Americanized. I got friendly with the people I worked with, with a couple of people I went to school with.

CE: Were they Jewish or not?

AS: Some were; some weren't.

CE: Some weren't.

AS: I've always had friends in both areas.

CE: So then, you want to talk about meeting your husband?

AS: Oh, sure.

CE: (laughs) Your eyes light up.

AS: That was the highlight. Okay, my mother, as I told you, was pretty much alone in New York City. One day she was walking in downtown Manhattan, which is a big place, and she came across—she saw her best friend from high school. They both went to this private girls' high school in Vienna, and of course they were thrilled to see each other. They didn't know that they were each in New York. And of course her friend had come out with the family—I told you how her husband was put in prison right away—so they were living in Brooklyn. Her friend said right away, "Oh, my god. You're here alone, you have to come and visit us and celebrate holidays and birthdays and whatever else." And everybody was just wonderful to her; she became part of their family.

And so, when we came to this country, we heard about this Schick family. My mother said they were the first people we were going to visit—"They can't wait to meet you and they have a daughter who is your age—" a little older than I, actually, but not much. And so, we went to visit them. They were wonderful. The mother and father were at home, and the sister, Al's sister. He

was away; he was in the service at that time. The sister and I became friends immediately; we just took to each other and really—and she worked not far from where I worked, so we started having lunch and seeing each other.

Al was in the service, and right from there, he never came back to New York. He went to college and then into medical school in Rochester, which was a long way. There was no freeway built, so it was like a ten, eleven-hour drive from New York City to Rochester, New York. So I didn't meet him for about a year after that, or maybe two years. It was probably closer to two—or close to three years, now that I think about it. It was certainly 1948.

Ellie said, “You know, the only person you've never met in our family is my brother. Wouldn't you like to meet him?” And I said, “Oh, why not?” Well, I was going out with somebody and I didn't consider this a very special date, but my mother said to me, “You can't turn him down if he calls you, because we've been friends all these years. You can't spoil the friendship; that would be rude.” And I said, “Okay, what's one night?” And sure enough he came home for Easter break, from Rochester, and he called me and we made a date to go out.

We went to see a movie, which was called *Shoeshine* [*Sciuscià*]; it was an Italian movie—very sad and very depressing movie. And then we had an ice cream sundae, and I came home that night and I said to my mother, “I've just met the man I'm going to marry.” I totally fell in love with him that night, I really did. Of course, he had no idea of that, no idea. As a matter of fact, he made some mention of the fact that he can't get serious with anybody because he's a poor medical student, which he was, so I said to him, “What makes you think I want to get serious with you?” And he said, “Well, I just wanted to make it clear.” And a year later we were married. It was probably the best thing that ever happened to me in my life.

He was a very, very, exceptional man, very wonderful. I put together a book about him after he died.

CE: Did you?

AS: Yeah, we were married for forty-four years. And he was a marvelous husband and father and friend, and highly respected in the community. Everybody loved him. He was an outstanding physician. I've been very lucky in my life.

CE: So, and do you want to talk a little bit about your children?

AS: Oh, my children, sure. I have terrific children. My oldest son is Ken; he is fifty-six years old. He has been with HBO [Home Box Office] Sports for twenty-eight years, and he does the marketing—I think that's what he does. (laughs) He does the marketing for boxing at this point, and that in the past came with a lot of perks, like I had two trips to Wimbledon, the tennis matches. And I've met a lot of prizefighters, including Evander Holyfield, who came to the museum as our guest speaker one year.

CE: Wonderful.

AS: Yeah. So my son, he is terrific. He helps me a great deal. He's very, very supportive; he helps me with my finances and just really takes care of me. He's married to Cindy, for close to thirty years. They met in college, and they have two terrific children: Leslie, who is twenty-four, and she is the assistant director of marketing and advertising for Phipps Plaza, wonderful position for such a young woman. She's gorgeous. And Adam I'm so proud of. He is a senior at the University of Florida, and he can be seen on television every week now. He does sports broadcasting, and now he's on television on Channel 31, every Wednesday at 5:30 [p.m.]. He broadcasts for the girls' softball team and volleyball team, and he travels all over the country with them. Very personable young man. So, that's the oldest set.

The next one is Nancy, who is fifty-four. I hope she doesn't mind my saying that, (laughs) but she is fifty-four. And she's really the reason we moved south, because she was born in Syracuse [New York] and she was a preemie [premature baby], and she did very poorly in the cold climate so we moved south—because of (inaudible), also.

CE: Did you move here at that point?

AS: We moved to Charlotte, North Carolina; we lived there for three years.

CE: Charlotte, okay.

AS: But that was not a good move professionally for my husband. The move to Clearwater was. But the fact that we're in the South was good to Nancy. Anyhow, she's a wonderful young woman. She was married; it was not a good marriage, but she has two terrific children. And then, shortly after her husband and she separated, she met a wonderful man. He's a neurologist. His name is Will Greenberg. He was divorced and he had two children. And the two children, his and hers, are sort of comparable ages, and they've been married for close to twenty years now. They have really done a wonderful job of blending their families.

She is the mother of my oldest grandchild, Dana, who lives in Washington. I am immensely proud of her. She works for a huge law firm; she does that during the day, and at night she goes to law school. Actually, before the economy took this downturn, she was what—became what they call a student associate, which meant that the law firm was paying all of her tuition in law school, all of her books, tremendous package of benefits. Unfortunately, after the economic collapse they did away with that program, but she—

CE: Too bad.

AS: Yeah, that is too bad, because law school is not cheap. But she is very, very smart, and she's going to graduate in another year or so. And her brother is Bryan. Let's see, Dana is twenty-six, Brian is going to be twenty-four. I just had dinner with him. He lives in Tampa. He went to USF for a while, but that didn't work out too well, so now he's working. He does have a job, so that's good. He is a great kid, he is handsome—he's six [feet] four [inches], got the tall genes from somewhere. So, I see him quite a bit. I'm very close to all my grandchildren; they call me, I call them. So, that's that family. Will has two very nice children, also: Erica and Adam, who are both working, finished college and are working.

The next one is Robert. He was just fifty. He lives in Atlanta. He is a veterinary allergy dermatologist.

CE: Wow!

AS: Yeah. And he flies his own plane. His base is in Atlanta; he has a huge clinic and he is a dermatologist, but he also works in a clinic in Michigan and one or two in south Florida. And he has twin sons, Justin and Jeffrey; they are nineteen. They just started college. Justin is at Cornell [University] and just started, and he's on their polo team. They're quite accomplished. And Jeffrey goes to Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology], to the honors program. So, they're very smart children. Unfortunately, Robby and their mother are divorced and that has not always been easy, but Robby is remarried now to a very lovely young woman by the name of Barbara. And actually, her son lives with them, and so far it's working out nicely.

And then there's Kathy, my baby, who is—is she forty-five? Yes. My god, is she forty-four or forty-five? I think she's forty-five. Let me think about this. Yeah, she was just forty-five. And she is married to a wonderful man—they've been married nineteen years tomorrow—and he is a chiropractor, right around the corner. Takes good care of me, has taken care of my back for twenty years.

CE: Oh, how lovely.

AS: I have no back problems when he's around. And they have four terrific children. The oldest one, Alec, is named for my husband. He was born six weeks after Al died. Al died in 1993. And so, Alec is sixteen. Darling young man, just got his own car, wonderfully helpful. He's my IT [information technology] person, and when he's not available, then the next one in line is Jordan; he's fourteen.

CE: Oh, you're lucky.

AS: Yes, he lives around the corner, of course, also, so he comes and helps me. They're wonderful kids, Kathy is a terrific mother; the kids are so good. In two days, I'm going to Jordan's installation into National Junior Honors Society—in case you think I'm proud of them!

CE: (laughs) I can tell. I don't blame you.

AS: The next one is adorable. He is ten, and he and his little sister, Michelle—this is Lance, who's ten. Has a head full of blond hair; we always tease him. I don't know where it came from, but he's very blond, as blond as you. Darling kid. So, he and Michelle go to Wellington School. Michelle is a very good gymnast and dancer, and a darling little girl. I'm obviously a little prejudiced, but I think they're just the best kids around. But I will tell you that other people comment on how well brought up they are and how polite and how respectful.

So, I've been very, very lucky.

CE: And it looks like you've had something to do with all that, as well.

AS: Well, I try. I've tried to tell my children about my history and my story, and I've been to all of their schools, even the ones in Atlanta, to speak. Of course, they're always pretty proud to say, "This is my grandmother," you know, introduce me and all that. But I think it makes an impact. As a matter of fact, Lance just told me that one of his friends said, "Your grandmother's the best speechmaker I ever heard."

CE: Oh, that's quite a compliment.

AS: Keep in mind, he's ten years old. I don't know—

CE: That's still quite a compliment.

AS: I don't know how many speechmakers he's heard. But you know, I talk from the heart, and it's a true story.

CE: I would like to talk a little bit—well, before we—I was going to talk about your speaking to crowds, but let's hold that for a moment and tell me about your religious life and Jewish identity, because I have a sense that a lot of that has changed.

AS: That changed a lot. I had next to no Jewish identity in England, except for the very first boarding school, where I learned for the first time that you're not allowed to write on Shabbat. That was news to me. But we wrote letters all the time to our families, and on Shabbat we didn't have to write. So, that was news, but after that I was in a totally non-Jewish environment. As a matter of fact, in school I went to Church of England, and with most families I went to Methodist church, which I liked very much because I loved their hymns. I learned to sing all the hymns and I liked the music—I love music—and so that was very pleasant.

Once I came to New York, we practiced next to no Judaism at all. My parents did not belong to anything, although, my brother was bar mitzvahed, but that was about the extent of it, really. Once Al and I got married, he was in school, I was working. I worked as a legal secretary, by the way; I kind of specialized. Al thought it was better to specialize in something. He was absolutely right, because I was paid quite well in those days, and I was the breadwinner, so that was good. But we certainly had no time for being involved in charities or temples or anything like that, because Al was busy—you know, twenty-four [hours]/seven [days a week], and I stayed pretty busy, too.

So, the first time we joined a synagogue was actually when we moved to Charlotte, at which point we had two young children. That's when we joined a very beautiful Conservative synagogue, and we made a lot of friends there. The little Judaism I had was Conservative; to my knowledge there was no Reform in Vienna. And my husband's family was certainly more Conservative. His father was fairly religious; his mother was actually only half Jewish, and she was not religious. Anyway, in Charlotte we started joining. We joined the synagogue, I joined B'nai B'rith. As a matter of fact, I became an officer in B'nai B'rith very quickly. And I joined Hadassah, but I wasn't active in Hadassah then.

When we came here, there was a very, very small Jewish community, and we wanted to make sure that we established ourselves as a Jewish family. A lot of people—this was in 1960; it was a long time ago. There were very few Jews here, and my husband was the first Jewish physician in Clearwater. So, we made it very clear that we were Jewish, and I have to say, we were warmly

welcomed. And even the fact that they hired my husband was a real—well, first of all, he was a marvelous radiologist, but there were other people who were interviewed for the job; one was from a prominent family in this area. And they took my husband, so I gave them a lot of credit for doing that.

And as I say, we became friends with a lot of people, and we became very active in both communities, the Jewish and the non-Jewish. My husband became quite active in Kiwanis; he also became, after a while, president of our temple, even though he was very busy. We supported everything Jewish. There was no B'nai B'rith here at that time, but there was a very small Hadassah chapter, and I immediately joined that. I became active at a very low level, and then I was pushed up. (laughs)

CE: Can you explain the transition from your Jewish identity not being all that important to being so important?

AS: Well, I felt that our tradition was very important. I'm very proud of my heritage. I think it's a horrendous crime that the Holocaust happened and they killed so many wonderful and, god knows, brilliant souls, and I have always felt that whatever I do, I can't make up for the death of my grandparents. Every time I walk into the museum, I think of that family, of my family. I told you I was very close, especially to my maternal grandmother.

I think in my small way, I want to make sure that Judaism is alive and well, and stays well, and I would like to think that we can wipe out hatred and prejudice. So, I think the museum does a very good job. I'm very active at the museum. I think we really do a marvelous job of educating the public, and especially children, who are quite impressionable. I get letters from the children that are really heartwarming. I really could show you some of them. They have said things like, "You've changed my life."

CE: Wow!

AS: And that makes me feel very, very good. If I can leave that impression with them, I would feel that in a very small way I have avenged, if you want to call it that, my family and all the other millions, and that hopefully this will never happen again.

CE: Could you talk a little bit about beginning to speak about the Holocaust? You told us when the tape was off, but I would like to have that on camera.

AS: Well, my public speaking began with Hadassah. I was very shy. I was brought up, especially in England, as “a child should be seen and not heard.” I was very polite and rather quiet, and I didn’t like to speak in public. So, when the Hadassah group approached me, I told them, “Of course I’ll join.” I was very, very convinced that Hadassah does marvelous work; they really, really do. So, I was invested in the cause, especially in the medical aspect of it, since my husband was a physician and they do cutting edge medicine.

So, I became very enthusiastic about it, but I told them, “Don’t expect me to do much except behind the scenes, because I can barely say my name in public.” I remember playing charades and being very nervous about playing charades because I just didn’t like to push myself, you know. And they said, “No, no, you can take a small job like telephone chairman.” I said, “Fine, perfect. I can do that.”

And then after a while, they said, “You know, you have leadership qualities.” Don’t ask me who decided that, but somehow they decided I did. I said, “Well, what do you have in mind?” They said, “Well, there’s a leadership course being offered through Hadassah. It doesn’t cost anything. You have to go to Tampa one day a week for six weeks.” I said, “Well—” and my friends said, “We’re going.” So I said, “Okay, I’ll go.”

Our project was—the way they taught the course, they gave us the basics of public speaking, but more importantly they gave us a different project, Hadassah project, every week and they said, “Next week, you come back, you read all about it, you come back, and you report on this project.” Well, that, of course, entails public speaking, so I said, “Well, I want to do my homework. I’ll know what I’m talking about. I think I can do that.” So I did.

After that, they started promoting me a little more, and actually, I became treasurer of the local chapter. And then they were desperate for a president of the local chapter, which was only maybe a hundred women. The bylaws stated that you took it for two years. I said, “I never wanted to be president of anything. I will not take it for two years. I’m not making that commitment. If you change the bylaws to one year, I’ll do it.” So, I took it for one year, and I loved it. And I guess I did a pretty good job, so they said, “You’ve got to take it a second year.” And I said, “Yes, I would.”

It went very well. Our chapter actually—this was a huge region in those days, all the way to Miami. Our chapter at the conference, the annual conference, was runner up to the best chapter of the year. The best chapter was in the Miami area. So, I said, “Well, I guess I did an okay job.” Within weeks I got a call from the regional level, and they said, “We want you to be a part of the region.” I said, “What does it entail?” and they gave me a job. Didn’t seem to be too big a job.

So, I went to the region level, and within a couple of years they asked me to be region president. Now, that was a huge job, because there were twenty-four thousand members. My region was from Fort Lauderdale—it didn't include Broward County. All of Palm Beach County all the way up north, [to] Gainesville, into Tallahassee, Jacksonville. It was a pretty big region.

Well, by that time three of my children were not at home anymore; they were either in college or out of college. So at that point I did a lot of public speaking, and as region president you automatically become a member of the national board. And that's when I went to Israel so many times, for meetings and conferences. And of course I spoke all over the country, once I—well, no, I was region president for three years, and then I was put on the national board. That's automatic for one year, and after that you have to run for election. And that's very competitive, but I won.

And then, one of my Hadassah friends said, "You have to be a national vice president."

CE: Wow.

AS: I said, "You're crazy. They've never had a national vice president from Florida. What makes you think I can do that?" And this is very much sought after, it's very prestigious. In those days they only had six national vice presidents throughout the whole country. A woman from Miami ran against me, (laughs) and I won. I became a national vice president.

CE: Wow.

AS: And then I really traveled throughout the country—and Israel, of course, also. During that time, the refuseniks in Russia were becoming very active; it's 1988.⁴ The women in Refusal contacted National Hadassah, and they wanted us to come to Russia. So the executive board, which is nine women, went to Russia, and it was a very, very intense trip. We were there for—I was only there for two weeks—there was a reason for that—but they were there for three weeks. Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kiev. I did not go on the Kiev part of it; I'll tell you why later. But it was an absolutely unforgettable trip.

I just had a reunion with one of the men I met over there. He came to this country. We had a lot to do with opening up the gates for the Russians to be able to leave. They were persecuted like you would not believe. One of them now lives in Boston [Massachusetts] and just came to the cape to visit us, with his companion. And I met the daughter in Russia, who was eleven years

⁴Refuseniks were people in the Soviet Union or Eastern Bloc who were denied permission to emigrate abroad. Many of them were Jews.

old, I think. His wife had died in childbirth with the second baby, because she couldn't get any medical attention.

He and the daughter came to this country. The daughter went to—where did she go?—to MIT [Massachusetts Institution of Technology] and to Yale Medical School, and she is now a neurologist. She's married and has two children. So, I was so excited to be reunited to be with him. He was a very bright man. They had reduced him to being a janitor, but actually he's a computer expert now. It was just unbelievably emotional to see him again.

CE: I bet.

AS: So, that was one of the highlights of my whole career. So, after a while—and I traveled a great deal for Hadassah as what they call a conference advisor and a speaker on tour, which is very, very tiring because you're sent out for like five days, six days, and you speak a minimum of twice a day, sometimes three times. After my husband died in 1993, I came home from one of those tours. I decided I still have to do it, but I was so exhausted, and I said to myself, "I don't think I can really put myself through this anymore. What if I get sick? I'll be—I don't have anybody. I'll be a burden to my children. I don't think I'll do the tours anymore."

So, I was elected three times, which is a total of fifteen years; then you automatically became what they call honorary council. I held several portfolios during the time I was active, some big ones. But again, I said, "I can't do this anymore." And after a while, after I recovered from losing my husband in ninety-three [1993], I started getting interested in the Holocaust Museum. The more I learned about it, the more I said, "This has to be what I have to do now." So, that's where I am today.

CE: Wow. And then you started speaking at the Holocaust Museum?

AS: Oh, yes. I started speaking at the museum and in schools and at clubs. Anybody who invites me, I'll go and speak.

CE: Wonderful. Now when you were speaking with Hadassah, were you talking about your life story or—? (phone rings)

AS: I tied it in, because in a way there's a direct connection. One of the projects, I would say, for Hadassah is called Youth Aliyah. And the way it started is that Henrietta Szold realized the danger the German children were in when Hitler came into Germany in 1933. And she started this program called Youth Aliyah, which rescued Jewish youngsters and brought them to what

was then Palestine. So that really—the Kindertransport was based on Youth Aliyah. These were children that came without their parents and she took care of them; they put them in hostels and on kibbutzim and on farms.

So, I had this direct—that was my direct connection. But I didn't concentrate on that when I spoke to Hadassah. I couldn't; I was there to sell Hadassah. I did a lot of fundraising for them; that was part of my job. I raised a lot of money for them. So, I tied it in, but I concentrated on the Hadassah projects. And with all the trips that I took to Israel, I always told personal stories. I had some marvelous personal experiences there, so that was my mission there. But of course now for the museum, it's just natural for me to just tell my story.

CE: Did you notice any changes when you started telling your story?

AS: In my presentation?

CE: No, in how you felt or remembered?

AS: Well, it was even more personal, of course, even though my personal stories from Israel were sometimes very moving, I could tell, but my own story is even more touching, I think. I mean, I had a very hard time talking about my brother after he died; that was very difficult for me. But I was so proud of him.

CE: May I ask you a little bit about him and his adult life?

AS: Oh, sure. He died nine years ago, much too young. What happened was as a teenager, he started to smoke, and he smoked a great deal. He was in the news business and everybody smoked, and of course nobody knew that it was dangerous. So, he smoked and smoked and smoked. And he was very smart. When he realized that it was not good for your health—when it came out that you really shouldn't smoke, he stopped. And twenty years later, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was sick for a couple of years, and he died.

But he had a fantastic career. He was very smart; he was also a very good writer. He always remembered his German, but he never spoke German again. He always spoke English to my parents, and they answered him in German. But he was very bright, and he wrote very well. He became editor of his college newspaper. And then he got married—now, that's a funny story, too. He met his sweetheart in college, and he was twenty-two years old and she was the same age. And they got married, and of course I always told him what to do. I said, "Walter, you are making a mistake. You are much too young. You should not get married." Well, he got married. It

was a wonderful marriage. (laughs) She is terrific. I was very close to my sister-in-law, Jeannie, and her kids—their kids. So, it's a good thing he didn't listen to me.

Anyhow, then he went into the service. There was no war at that time. He was sent to the South. He very quickly became editor of the army newspaper, and one of the officers recognized his talent. Walter always lived in New York City and environs there. He said, "When you come out of the service, call me. I think I have a job for you with a radio station." And at the same time, he was offered a scholarship by Columbia School of Journalism. By that time he's married, and you know. And he said, "I don't think I'll go to school anymore, I'll take the job." I said, "Walter, what are you going to do? You're going to ruin your career. Go to school." He said, "No, I'm not going to do it."

Well, I'll tell you what he did. He stayed with—it was WOR New York [WRNY]—for several years in 1950s. Then when television started growing he switched over to ABC Television, and he started as a copywriter, actually. He went on to be promoted and promoted. He became an associate producer, then he became producer. Then for three years he lived in Europe and he was the European news producer. Then he was, I think, executive producer, and then he became a vice president of ABC News.

CE: Wow.

AS: Yeah. He was in charge of legal practices, even though he was not an attorney, but he was known throughout the industry for his ethics and for his good judgment. And he was very low-key. I always bragged about him, believe me. But you'd ask him, "What do you do?" He would say, "I work for ABC." (CE laughs) But he was highly successful and highly regarded. At his funeral, I met all the big shots from ABC that you see on television, and they all commented on how special he was.

But he actually retired before he died, two or three years before that. When CapCity [Capital Cities Communications] took over ABC, they did what we're used to now: they chopped, starting with the vice presidents. They gave him a wonderful package, and he retired. He did volunteer work, and I think he taught at Columbia a couple of courses, and then he came to speak at Hadassah. I had always wanted him to do that, to speak about the PR level and whatever. He said, "I don't do that. I don't speak to organizations. I'm not affiliated with anything like that." And as soon as he retired, he said, "You want me to speak about PR? I'll talk to them."

CE: Great.

AS: And he did, and I was so proud when I introduced him to the national board.

CE: Did his Jewish identity become important to him?

AS: My sister-in-law—they joined a Reform temple. My sister-in-law became president of the temple. She came from a much more Jewish background than Walter did. He was not active in the temple. I wouldn't say it was important to him. I can't tell you how important it was for him, deep down, but he was not actively involved.

But in his memory—and this is something he wanted—they established some kind of a scholarship for religious schools' students to go to the museum in New York, the Jewish Museum in New York, take a field trip. He sponsors that. And I sponsor the annual teacher appreciation evening at our museum, which is coming up soon; that's in his memory, because he felt the answer was education. So, we're on the same page.

CE: Back to speaking. When you speak to groups at the Holocaust Museum, what kind of impact does it have on you?

AS: Well, I feel that many times I do reach children. I never have a problem with discipline; they listen, they're obviously interested. I try to limit the length to twenty minutes, and then quite often we have lot of questions afterwards. Sometimes there are no questions. It's so interesting. Sometimes we run out of time for questions, and other times there are not too many questions. But they're very respectful. Sometimes it's a project to write letters to thank me, and it's just amazing, the impact and the different things that they pick up, you know.

CE: Does it make you think more about your past, when you do it?

AS: I'm always conscious of my past.

CE: Are you?

AS: I'm always conscious of it. As I told you, I feel I've been very lucky. I'm very bothered with what is going on all over the world. I always hope never again, but—people ask me, “Do you think this could happen again?” Of course it could happen again, under the right conditions. The conditions in Germany and Austria were very bad, with lies being told, and if you repeat a lie often enough, people believe it. People are always ready to look for a scapegoat, and that's what happened. So, I wouldn't say it could never happen again. And as I say, look at the genocides all over the world. That bothers me terribly. I would like to be able to do more about it.

But I feel if I speak to children—and very, very often do I speak to kids who are around ten, eleven, twelve, which is about the age that I was when I left, so I really think they can identify when I say to them, “How would you feel if you had to leave your parents, and you came to a country where you don’t speak the language, you don’t know anybody? Can you imagine?” And I think they do think about that. So, I just feel—and unfortunately, there are not that many of us who can speak any more.

CE: I know.

AS: You know, it’s one thing to read something in a book, and it’s another thing to say, “I was there.” And I always start off by saying, “There are people out there that say the Holocaust never happened, the Holocaust deniers. Well, I’m here to tell you’re meeting a Holocaust survivor, so it did happen. They’re telling you lies.” But how many of us are going to be left in another few years? And then there are Holocaust survivors who absolutely will not speak about it, because as traumatic as my experience was, there are others who went through living hell. And some of them speak about it, and others just can’t.

CE: Do you know people who don’t speak about it?

AS: Oh, I do, yes. I also know a woman, whose name is also Lisl, who came from Czechoslovakia. She survived Theresienstadt [concentration camp]. She came to this country. She lost her entire family—her only brother, her parents, everybody—and she got married. And she was a very beautiful woman. I often wondered what she had to do to stay alive. She was absolutely gorgeous. She’s still a nice looking woman; she’s a little older than I am. And for years and years and years, she would not speak about it at all.

They had two daughters. They did not practice Judaism. They didn’t—she would not talk about it. She’s actually my sister-in-law Elly’s closest friend. And then there was a reunion in Israel of Holocaust survivors, and she went to that reunion, and since then she hasn’t stopped speaking. She lives on the east coast [of Florida] now and she is active in their museum or educational facility, and she speaks all over the place.

CE: Do you think there’s been a change in the United States in regards to wanting to hear these stories? Have you sensed that personally?

AS: You know, I can’t judge that, really, because when I speak up and [am] invited to speak, I’m always very well received. On the other hand I’ve spoke to people—Jewish people and non-

Jewish people—and I’ve said, “You really have to come to the Holocaust Museum.” And their answer sometimes is, “Oh, that’s so depressing.” And my answer then to them is, “It is not depressing, per se. Sure, it isn’t fun and games, but there are so many uplifting things you can learn there and see. Give yourself the chance to do it.”

But you know, especially if things are not great and people are not that happy, they’ve lost their jobs and been demoted and whatever, they just want to bury their head in the sand. And I think that’s very dangerous, because—Elie Wiesel said, talking of the sand, anti-Semitism is buried in a very shallow grave. It can raise its ugly head at any time. So, I think it’s very important to stay educated and to stay in touch and to elect the right government.

CE: Do you ever experience anti-Semitism now?

AS: No, I can’t say that I do. But I make it very clear that I’m Jewish, so even if people maybe think something, they’re not going to say it to me.

CE: Now, when I interviewed you before, you talked about going to the Eichmann Trial?⁵

AS: Yes, that was during one of my trips to Israel. My husband was with me. It was a national board trip, so we were allowed to sit in the gallery. That was very emotional. He sat in sort of a cage. You couldn’t get at him, but believe me, all of us wanted to go and personally strangle him. There’s no question. And he was very arrogant, I remember—and how he evaded the questions. It was just unbelievable that this was a human being. I was very grateful to the Israelis for capturing him. He’s only one of so many; there were so many who escaped. They were not punished nearly enough. But what can you do?

CE: Do you have any other experiences that you would want to add on to the end of this?

AS: I don’t really think so. I just hope I stay well enough to continue speaking for a long time. I very seldom turn down a speaking engagement. I’ve gone to Tallahassee a couple of times; that was wonderful. Oh, I also have to tell you about that, because that was exciting.

HBO came out with this film I talked about, *Into the Arms of Strangers*. The premiere showing was in Memphis, Tennessee. My son was at a meeting with some of the executives, and when

⁵Adolf Eichmann, who was in charge of deporting Jews to the extermination camps. He was captured by Israeli intelligence agents in 1960 and brought to Israel for trial. The trial began on April 11, 1961, and lasted until August 14 of that year. He was convicted on all charges, sentenced to death, and hanged on May 31, 1962.

they talked about it, he said, “Oh, my mother was on a Kindertransport.” So they said, “Would she consider coming to the opening?” And so Kenny called me and I said, “Oh, sure, I’ll come.” I’ll show you the pictures of that.

That was very exciting. They invited me to Memphis. I was on television a couple times, I was interviewed. I went to a couple of schools. And then I spoke before the movie started, to about a thousand people in this huge auditorium. It was very exciting. I was given the key to the city and the key to the county. I’ll show you, I have a picture. And flowers—I felt like the Queen of England or something. They put me up at the Peabody Hotel, and it was just before Christmas and it was just gorgeous. I had a whole suite. My daughter Nancy came with me. I have to show you those pictures.

CE: Lovely.

AS: That was a highlight.

CE: And do you have a message that you would like to leave viewers with?

AS: Well, my message is never forget, stay open-minded, don’t be prejudiced, be positive. I think everybody should be given an equal opportunity, and I’m very hopeful that in this country, I know we are on our way to accomplishing that. And education is very, very important. Stay educated, stay informed, and let’s hope that “never again” is not just an empty phrase.

CE: Thank you so much, Lisl.

end of interview