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Reisman, Paul and Gertrude oral history interview

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**SHANGHAI JEWISH COMMUNITY
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**BATES COLLEGE
LEWISTON, MAINE**

PAUL and GERTRUDE REISMAN

MONROE, CONNECTICUT

MAY 7, 1997

Interviewer: Steve Hochstadt

**Transcription: Nicci Leamon
Steve Hochstadt**

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Steve Hochstadt: If, well, I've heard a lot of stories about Shanghai . . .

Paul Reisman: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: . . . but every story is different and I'd very much like to hear . . .

Paul Reisman: My version.

Steve Hochstadt: . . . stories like the ones that you told me when we were at the Concord . . .

Paul Reisman: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: . . . and if you remember that I wasn't there and you paint me a picture, or draw me a picture with words of the stories that you have to tell, that's the most helpful. But I would like you to start in Europe, with your family and things that happened maybe after the *Anschluss*, all of that.

Paul Reisman: Yeah. In Vienna, 1938, 13th of March, we were at the, we were at the, at the meeting of the Boy Scouts, and one fellow comes in and he says, "You have to close the meeting, because Hitler came over the border." And that was it. So we closed and we went, we didn't go the main street home, because we had our uniform, the Austrian uniform on, and all the Nazis were on the street already, and we were a little afraid. So when we came home, that night we didn't sleep much, and the other night, the following night, my mother was taken down the, the, from the apartment down, downstairs, and she had to brush the sidewalk, clean the sidewalk. SS and SA guys were laughing and making jokes, and my brother came home and he helped my mother and they told him, "Look, this woman was always hard working and she doesn't have to be there too long." So they told her to go home. But others were still washing the sidewalk, bru-, cleaning the sidewalk or whatever.

And finally, my, my, I went to school and, went to engineering school, and when I got to the front of the school, there was a big, big, people were milling around. What happened? So, "We, we just threw a Jew down the, down the staircase," you know, there was no elevator, but we had a staircase going to the fourth floor. They threw him down the fourth floor, from the fourth floor down. So he got killed naturally, and so I made a U-turn and went home. So that was the last, my last experience in school.

So after a couple of weeks, my father came home and he said, "If we want to stay alive, we have to get out of here." And it was a very, very hard time, because everybody, all Jewish people wanted to get out of Vienna. And my father went to consulates, to whoever, American consulate, British consulate, and whatever, and nobody wanted to give us visas. So my father decided, he got a visa from the Chinese embassy, and we went, we went to Shanghai, China. First to Genoa, and from Genoa we boarded a sh-, a boat and went to China.

Steve Hochstadt: Could I ask you some more about Vienna before we get to China?

Paul Reisman: Ja. They had all kinds of anti-Semitic advertisements on the billboards, you know, the . . .

Trude Reisman: You mean from Vienna before Hitler came?

Paul Reisman: No, no, no.

Steve Hochstadt: Yeah, that too.

Trude Reisman: That, too.

Paul Reisman: But, before Hitler there was always a little anti-Semitism always there, but it couldn't be, nobody beat up a Jew or somebody, but the police would interfere. But now the police would help them [laughs] to beat up the Jews. So it wasn't, it wasn't a very, very . . .

Trude Reisman: Pleasant.

Paul Reisman: . . . pleasant experience to be under Hitler in Vienna, especially in Vienna, Austria, because the Austrians were always antisemitic. More than the Germans, because the German, I think the populace of the German, in Germany is about 75% Protestant. In Austria, there were a 100% Catholics, and Catholics were antisemites, that's it. So . . .

Steve Hochstadt: When your family decided to go to Shanghai . . .

Paul Reisman: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: . . . how did you prepare for that?

Paul Reisman: Prepare? We packed the little things we had and we could get out of Vienna, because they only allowed, I think, how many Marks, I don't know . . .

Trude Reisman: I have no idea.

Paul Reisman: I have no idea . . .

Trude Reisman: You just left with the bare necessities [unclear] .

Paul Reisman: But, you see, bare necessities, because we've sold everything what we could sell, we couldn't sell, we left behind. That's all. We left a whole apartment behind with all the furnitures and everything. So nobody wanted to buy anything, because . . .

Trude Reisman: They took, what they didn't buy, they took.

Paul Reisman: Not only that, the, not, the Jewish people wanted to sell everything, they wanted to get out and they, how many, the, the non-Jews wouldn't, wouldn't buy it anyhow, so that was it.

Steve Hochstadt: How old were you at that time that you were leaving?

Paul Reisman: Oh, fourteen and a half, fifteen, almost fifteen. I was born 1923 and, '38, so I was about fifteen.

Trude Reisman: You had to drop your schooling right . . .

Paul Reisman: Ja, ja, I told him about the schooling.

Trude Reisman: . . . which made it very difficult.

Paul Reisman: So . . .

Steve Hochstadt: So what did you think about going to China?

Paul Reisman: We were very unprepared for it, because, you know, we didn't speak English. At that time I had only high school English, this is the table, this is the chair, this is the couch, and that was it, you know. So I didn't know English, and Chinese, Chinese I learned there when on the job.

Trude Reisman: You did speak it very well.

Paul Reisman: I used to speak it pretty good.

Trude Reisman: Tell Steven when, about China when you and I were engaged, about the Korean guy, that we almost got killed [unclear] .

Steve Hochstadt: Well, let's, I really would like to sort of go in sequence, slowly.

Trude Reisman: Go in, slowly.

Paul Reisman: So, when we got to China, so the first thing I knew, people, so many people, like ants.

Trude Reisman: The dirt, people.

Paul Reisman: Dirt and sicknesses, awful. So, but when you are young, you can get accustomed to almost anything. But at that time it was an International Settlement, it was under English, under English, the municipality was English, and we thought that was it.

Trude Reisman: And also when you are young, as you most probably know of with the children, you can live with, as long as you have your parents with you . . .

Paul Reisman: And we tried, I didn't go to school any more because I wanted to make a little bit money to help my parents, and I started to work at, I started to look for a job as a mech-, as an apprentice in the bus company and they gave me the job, and I worked there for three years, in the China General Omnibus Company. And I learned Chinese on the job. All the mechanics were Chinese, so I had no choice. [laughs]

Steve Hochstadt: Were you apprenticed to a Chinese person?

Paul Reisman: Sure, of course.

Steve Hochstadt: And how did you get that job, what, how were you able to get that job?

Paul Reisman: I, my father and I went to the guy, manager of the engineering, I mean, of the, how shall I say, of the shops, you know, where they repair the busses. And my father talked to the guy, who was German, born German, I mean, not Jewish, and he hired me. That's it. That was all.

Steve Hochstadt: And it didn't matter that you were Jewish and he wasn't?

Paul Reisman: No, no, it didn't matter. They needed, they needed somebody anyway.

Trude Reisman: [unclear] the Chinese knew what Jewish, they didn't . . .

Paul Reisman: Not the Chinese. He was a German, Trudl.

Trude Reisman: Oh, he was a German?

Paul Reisman: He was a German.

Trude Reisman: I didn't know that. [unclear] I thought he was Chinese . . .

Paul Reisman: He was a German, ja, sure. Oh, no, he was German . . .

Trude Reisman: . . . and he . . .

Paul Reisman: . . . he was German and he didn't make any, it didn't make any difference to him.

Trude Reisman: I think that a lot of German, whoops, a lot of Germans, like the Russians, they fled, they left Germany or [unclear] . . .

Paul Reisman: No, no, no, he was, he was German, but he didn't mix politics with anything, you know, I don't think so. And that was it. And when, naturally, when the Japanese, after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese took the, they marched into the Settlement and took the, everything, and there was, finished bus company, because they took all the diesel engines and shipped them to Tokyo or Japan, because of the war effort, you know. So they told us, "You can walk," you know. [laughs] Don't have, "You don't need busses, you can walk." So anyway, I wouldn't have worked for the Japanese anyhow, because the way they handled, I, I, even so I didn't, I, even, even if I wouldn't have spoken Chinese, I saw how they handled, the Japanese handled the Chinese populace. It gave me feelings of disgust, you know, and, you heard of the rape of Nanking, I'm sure. And I wouldn't have worked for the Japanese no how.

Trude Reisman: Not very much nicer to us, either.

Paul Reisman: Ja, and when we moved, when we had to move into the ghetto, the Japanese labor ghetto, and we had, my father lost the house to the Japanese high command, because they, we had a home there and we had w.c., which was very, very uncommon. Over there they have these pots, you know, the maid, the coolie came and emptied it out. So anyway, we had a water closet and everything, beautiful home, and the Japanese took it for their officers corps, so, [laughs] and we never had any . . .

Trude Reisman: Ja, they took all the homes away from us [unclear] .

Paul Reisman: So we moved into another house and . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Did you get that first house as soon as you arrived in Shanghai?

Paul Reisman: No, no, no, we had, we rented one room, because we didn't want to go in to the *Heim* or home, you know, like it was some people went to, so we had one room. And later on my father got the house and we tried, you know, whatever we had, we sold and we bought the house. And then we lost that.

Steve Hochstadt: So you were able to buy this house with, by selling some things that you had brought with you.

Paul Reisman: Ja, but, and my mother made hand made leather gloves. She manufactured.

And my father sold them, and we made a living, that's all. And then later on my father and mother rented a stall in the market, fruit and vegetable, and when the bus company finished, I helped my mother and father on the market for about six or eight weeks, and I couldn't take the retail, because we didn't have any refrigeration. So, sub-tropical climate, tomatoes and apples, if you don't sell one day, you got to throw them out the other. So I couldn't take that, so I went into wholesale. How did I get into wholesale? I went into the main market in the, on, that was outside the ghetto, and, on two o'clock in the morning, and when I got there, I said, I told them, I says, "Look, my father and mother has a stall in the market," in Chinese, and they told, I told them, "I don't have the money to buy right now, but in the afternoon, once I get paid, you get, one hour later you get the money." And they trusted me.

Steve Hochstadt: These are all Chinese people that . . .?

Paul Reisman: All Chinese, all Chinese, all Chinese. And I bought hundred pounds of this, hundred pounds of that, potatoes and whatever I needed, and one hour later he got the money. And I had never went, even when I was with Trude, I never had any money with me, never. Everybody knew me, I knew Chinese, and that was it. We went to the movie, I got the tickets and went in. And the, later on, I mean the next day, they went to my father and they got the money. That's it. I never had any money, I didn't need any money.

Steve Hochstadt: Was that very unusual for you, or because they trusted you, or was that a normal way . . .?

Paul Reisman: They trusted me because, you see what happens, in China, if you can't, if you wouldn't trust anybody, you lose your face, you lose face. And if I wouldn't have paid, I would have been floating in the Yangtze with my throat cut. This is what, it was, one hand washes the other. And that was it. It was very, very, how shall I say it? Uncommon here, it's not common here, but in China at that time, it was very, very, how shall, everyday thing. Because I didn't need any money. My name was good enough and that was it. No problems.

Steve Hochstadt: How long did you do that wholesaling for your parents?

Paul Reisman: Oh, not, not for my parents, for myself. That was during the Japanese occupation.

Steve Hochstadt: During the whole time?

Paul Reisman: The whole time.

Steve Hochstadt: So you didn't just supply your parents' stall, you . . .?

Paul Reisman: No, no, I supplied the Kitchen *Fond*, because the Kitchen *Fond* was the, look, the Chinese had a very peculiar way of selling things. Let's say that this basket of apples over there were, is hundred pounds, and they sold it under their price, but if they turn it upside down, on the bottom there was all crap.

Trude Reisman: Rotten.

Paul Reisman: Rotten. I went to the Kitchen *Fond*, I says, "Look, my price is like this, but one apple is like the other. If you turn it upside down, regardless." And I sold them, and they paid my price, and I had no problem. And I was more expensive than the Chinese, sure, but my, my produce was perfect.

Steve Hochstadt: So you would buy from the Chinese and throw away the bad stuff?

Paul Reisman: No, no, I, before I bought, I turned it upside down and looked what, what you telling me?

Trude Reisman: Because there's no refrigeration there, so you have to . . .

Paul Reisman: You have to, very, very careful, so you got to, you got, there's always a way to get around. Naturally I had to pay a little bit more, yes, but I got quality product. And the Kitchen Fund got quality product. I couldn't get rich on them, but I made a little profit, just to get along, just to make a living. I couldn't get rich, but just to make a living.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me about the Kitchen Fund, about the people that you dealt with in the Kitchen Fund?

Paul Reisman: How can I tell you? Well, I don't know any names, I couldn't tell you any names, but we went to the Kitchen Fund in the Alcock Road, yeah, I don't know any names.

Trude Reisman: But I think what Steve wants to know what the Kitchen Fund was all about, right?

Steve Hochstadt: Yeah, how did that work? So you supplied the Alcock Road Heim?

Paul Reisman: No, no, wait a second, I didn't supply any, they wanted, let's say, two hundred pounds of apples. Where they sold them, where they supplied them to, I don't know, I have no way of . . .

Trude Reisman: I think they supplied the *Heim*.

Paul Reisman: But, naturally they supplied the *Heim*, but which *Heim*? There was the, two or three different *Heims*. Kinchow Road and, you know . . .

Trude Reisman: Ward Road.

Paul Reisman: . . . Ward Road, Alcock, and then the . . .

Trude Reisman: Kinchow Heim.

Paul Reisman: No, not Kinchow.

Trude Reisman: No?

Paul Reisman: No.

Steve Hochstadt: So you brought everything to Alcock Road . . .?

Paul Reisman: You, I brought them everything where they were supposed to go, and that was it.

Trude Reisman: And they supplied the *Heims* with that, yes, the people that, whatever little bit of food . . .

Steve Hochstadt: How did you transport all this food?

Paul Reisman: That's how I screwed up my, both my hips. I, if it would be two hundred or three hundred pounds or maybe five hundred pounds, I could transport it myself. I had a trailer on the bicycle, right, so I could transport it myself. But, if it's maybe a thousand pound, two or three thousand pounds, then I had to get a transport, two coolies with a hand, you know, they had these hand, two wheels and a platform and they do it and I give them whatever they wanted, a transport, that's it.

Steve Hochstadt: Where was the Chinese market that you bought from?

Paul Reisman: In Frenchtown.

Steve Hochstadt: Do you remember where it was in Frenchtown, what street it was? Thank you.

Trude Reisman: Want some sugar?

Steve Hochstadt: No, thank you.

Paul Reisman: It was, it was exactly, it was, when you took the Bund, you were, you know the Bund, you follow the Bund straight out toward almost the end of Frenchtown. That was where the market was, the whole market, vegetable, fruit. And as a matter of fact there was, when I came back from the market every single day, I met a guy who went to the market. I went already back and he went, but he was a butcher. Motzi Singer.

Trude Reisman: Motzi, you saw Motzi, Motzi Singer.

Paul Reisman: Motzi Singer.

Trude Reisman: He was there, he was the short heavy guy, nice cheery fellow.

Paul Reisman: I met him almost every day.

Trude Reisman: And his two brothers, Latzi, his twin brother, worked with him, and Euler, his third brother, he was an art- . . .

Paul Reisman: No, Euler didn't work.

Trude Reisman: He was an artist, he was a very good artist.

Steve Hochstadt: So you had to go over the bridge, then, leave the ghetto all the time.

Paul Reisman: Oh sure, not only, you left the ghetto when Kung Ping and Broadway, Kung Ping and Broadway, it's quite a ways to the Garden Bridge, so you had to leave the ghetto. I had to get the pass from that son-of-a-gun Ghoya, and sometimes I had problems, and sometimes you got it.

Trude Reisman: Paul was lucky he was not tall, and so he didn't give him too much of a hard time.

Paul Reisman: If you would be tall, they . . .

Trude Reisman: Anybody that was much taller than him, he'd beat the thing out of him, I mean.

Paul Reisman: . . . would step under the goddam table and beat them.

Steve Hochstadt: What kind of problems did you have? What was a problem that he would give you?

Paul Reisman: Sometimes I came to the office, right, after three hours standing in the sun, came to the office, he closed the office, in front of the door, and I had to go next day and stand three hours more. So, just like a whim, you know. No reason or rhyme.

Trude Reisman: And if he didn't feel like he renew the permit, you had to come back.

Paul Reisman: Just, "Oh, he come to Shanghai to go with dirty women. That's it. Get out." That's all. [laughs]

Trude Reisman: Or to make a business with prostitutes, you know?

Steve Hochstadt: How long was your pass good for?

Paul Reisman: Four weeks . . .

Trude Reisman: Four weeks.

Paul Reisman: . . . one month, one month. Every month we had to go.

Trude Reisman: Ja, it was really very degrading, I mean, it, this little Japanese . . .

Paul Reisman: But look . . .

Trude Reisman: He called himself the King of the Jews.

Paul Reisman: Ja, sure.

Trude Reisman: He's not alive any more, is he? He asked forgiveness or something.

Paul Reisman: I don't know.

Trude Reisman: Ja, forgiveness.

Steve Hochstadt: So were you the only person selling fruits and vegetables to the Kitchen Fund?

Paul Reisman: Oh, no, no, there were different, there were different people who sold. So, I had, I was in, later on I was in, in partners with a guy whose father and mother have a vegetable stall, too, Mr. Weinstein, but he passed away in Chicago, Fritz Weinstein. He was a very, very nice fellow and I got along with him very, very well. He got along with me, too. And we

never had any problems, he didn't cheat on me, I didn't cheat on him, no problems at all. Got along with him fine.

Trude Reisman: I don't think my husband knows how to cheat. He cheated me. [laughs]

Paul Reisman: Ja, I cheated you. So anyway . . .

Steve Hochstadt: You don't remember any of the names of people who ran the Kitchen Fund or who were important there, or how it worked?

Trude Reisman: You know, Motzi would be the man to ask.

Paul Reisman: Maybe, yeah . . .

Trude Reisman: Motzi knows . . .

Paul Reisman: Motzi, no, you know who would know? You know, the girl who knows us?

Trude Reisman: Ditta?

Paul Reisman: No, not Ditta. She lives in Florida now. [unclear] she knows everything. You ask her, she knows about. Trude, you know her.

Trude Reisman: She lives in Florida now?

Paul Reisman: Yeah.

Trude Reisman: They moved to Florida?

Paul Reisman: No, they didn't move to Florida, they move to Florida maybe two or three months.

Trude Reisman: Oh, Lucy.

Paul Reisman: Not Lucy. The other one.

Trude Reisman: Evelyn?

Paul Reisman: Evelyn.

Trude Reisman: Evelyn Golder.

Paul Reisman: Golder, ja. Evelyn Golder, she would know . . .

Trude Reisman: She lives in Flushing, Queens, but she's a very, very sick girl. She's, Evelyn Golder. I ha-, in fact, her husband is the one that takes care of the *Wiedergutmachung* for the Germans.

Paul Reisman: For the German people.

Trude Reisman: For the German people.

Paul Reisman: For German Jews.

Trude Reisman: I can give you their phone number . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Sure, we can do that later.

Trude Reisman: . . . and the address, and then I can call her and tell them that you could get in touch with them. They're very, very nice people. She's quite ill, but they're lovely people.

Paul Reisman: But she knew everybody and everything.

Trude Reisman: Ja, Evelyn knows everybody. She's unbelievable, she's . . .

Paul Reisman: You told, I told you the story about when Trude and I was going steady, not even engaged, and one guy was going from there, from, a Korean who was inducted into the Japanese Army, and he pulled out his Mauser and said, against my stomach, I didn't tell you?

Steve Hochstadt: Tell me, you did tell me this, but tell me again.

Paul Reisman: Well, when you live in the Far East, you know the difference between Chinese, naturally, and Japanese and Koreans right away. And that Korean had, I mentioned to Trude in German, he was going on the other side of the street, and he had that Mauser pistol, not with leather, with a string around his belt, his stomach, and I mentioned it to Trude, and he pulled out the Mauser pistol, came over the street, and pointed that gun at me. So I ask him in Chinese, I says, "I didn't do nothing, I didn't say anything," [unclear] and I guess that saved my life, that I spoke Chinese with him, so he told us to go away, to move on. If I wouldn't have spoken Chinese, he probably would blown me away. Life for a foreigner, or no, even the Chinese meant nothing to these guys.

Trude Reisman: Babies died, they rolled them up in mats and just left them on the street, and

hoping that a rich Chinaman would come by and . . .

Paul Reisman: Hoping.

Trude Reisman: . . . hoping that a rich Chinaman would come by and throw it in the Yangtze River or bury it someplace, and that's how all the sicknesses came about, you see. Because they were laying there for days and days at end.

Paul Reisman: So once, once the, our Allied armies, I mean, Americans came, so we, I gave up my market, everything, and got a job at the, as a mechanic for aircraft. And the way I got the job was, the officer asked me when he, they hired me, the officer asked me, "Did you ever see an airplane nearby or on the ground?" I says, "No, I saw them flying above." So he says, "You're the first fellow who told me the truth, you are hired." [laughs] But I showed him my, my letters of recommendations which I had from the bus company, you know, I worked there three years, recommendations. So I got the job with them, for ATC, and when ATC let go some of the civilians, civilian employees, I got that job for the Northwest Airlines, over there.

Steve Hochstadt: ATC was American . . .

Paul Reisman: Amer-, Air Transport Command.

Steve Hochstadt: Air Transport Command.

Paul Reisman: And I got a job with Northwest Airlines, and my brother, too. And my brother worked in another, he left China, we left in '47, he left in '49, and he was still working for Northwest Airlines then. And then he went to the States directly, and we went to the States after five years.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me about that trip, when you left, where you went to and, or how you even planned, maybe tell me also about how you managed to get out of Shanghai, the whole process?

Paul Reisman: How we got out of Shanghai. They ask us, UNRRA, United Nations Rehabilitation and whatever . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Relief.

Paul Reisman: . . . Relief Association, ask us if we want to go back to Vienna free of charge. I says, "If you supply me with a big, with a good . . ."

Trude Reisman: Uzi.

Paul Reisman: “. . . a semi-automatic and with plenty of ammunition, I will go there.” So . . .

Trude Reisman: Only a few Nazis, right?

Paul Reisman: . . . so I wouldn't have gone, and I wouldn't have gone back to Vienna, no way. So my father had a friend in Bolivia, my father-in-law had a friend in Bolivia . . .

Trude Reisman: Also they have been in Shanghai and he . . .

Paul Reisman: . . . he, he got us the visa for Bolivia.

Trude Reisman: For money, of course.

Paul Reisman: Of course.

Trude Reisman: Good money.

Paul Reisman: And so we went from Shanghai to San Francisco. My parents were waiting for us in San Francisco. My parents had the Czech quota, the Czech quota was wide open, and the Austrian quota [unclear] . And so we, when we got married, we . . .

Trude Reisman: We were married a year . . .

Paul Reisman: No, no, wait a second, when we got married, we went to the American Consulate in Shanghai and registered to go to America. And it took us five years for our, for the Austrian quota to come up, you know. And we went from Bolivia . . .

Trude Reisman: So Bolivia.

Paul Reisman: . . . from, to Bolivia and then her, '48, her daughter's husband, my wife's . . .

Trude Reisman: My sister's husband, sister's husband.

Paul Reisman: . . . sister's husband got, got . . .

Trude Reisman: Lost in action, lost in action.

Paul Reisman: . . . lost in action, and . . .

Trude Reisman: And my sister had just lost an eight-week-old baby.

Paul Reisman: . . . and we wanted, we had to go there . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Where was that?

Paul Reisman: To Israel.

Trude Reisman: To Israel. Because she didn't see, we didn't see my sister for three years and she was so desperate, she says, "If you don't come, I'll kill myself." So we picked up, being that we traveled with my parents all over the world, I wasn't going to let go of them now. Life in Bolivia wasn't that easy for us either, I mean, we had to learn the language. I opened up a beauty parlor, I did well, but Paul and my father couldn't find a job. When they finally did find good jobs, that's when my sister came calling, and of course we, we went. And then when we came to Israel, that was really bad.

Paul Reisman: [laughs]

Trude Reisman: That was very, very bad.

Paul Reisman: Go ahead.

Steve Hochstadt: Yeah, talk about that please.

Trude Reisman: Ah, we came to Israel and my sister had promised us, she . . .

Paul Resiman: Why don't you sit over there?

Trude Reisman: Is that right?

Steve Hochstadt: It's okay, it's wherever you're comfortable.

Trude Reisman: This chair is comfortable for me. My sister said she had an apartment for us and we should come, and I was, I conceived our son in Bolivia and going to Israel, I was . . .

Paul Reisman: Nine months pregnant.

Trude Reisman: . . . nine months pregnant and . . .

Steve Hochstadt: When was this, what year was this?

Paul Reisman: 1949.

Trude Reisman: Danny was born in 1949. And so with a big tummy, you know, I went to

Israel, and the doctor on the boat said, I'll never make, it was an Italian ship and he said, "You'll never make it to, the baby will be born here," and my husband of course said, "No ways, it's going to be born in Israel." Okay, well, we went there and we came there, there was no apartment, no nothing . . .

Paul Reisman: Nothing.

Trude Reisman: . . . and we had to live with my sister. And being that my sister has lost her child, she was pregnant then with her daughter, she was very possessive of my son, when finally he was born after two weeks, and it was very, very bad. So it just didn't work out, so we left in the middle of the night, at two o'clock in the morning. My husband is not a man that gets angry, but he had gotten extremely angry, and I couldn't believe him, so, and he was right. And we just left. We picked up our baby, and Paul and I left my sister, and my mother and father ran after us. My mother and father had an apartment. Well, you know, one room in . . .

Paul Reisman: A room for rent.

Trude Reisman: A room and bathroom, that was all you could get at that time. And so there we were walking the streets with a two-months-old baby, no place to go and nobody would take us in.

Steve Hochstadt: Where was this?

Paul Reisman: Israel.

Trude Reisman: That was in Haifa.

Steve Hochstadt: Haifa.

Trude Reisman: My sister lived in Gav-Yam, actually, near Haifa.

Paul Reisman: Well, this is in Haifa, in Haifa, it was in Haifa we were.

Trude Reisman: Ja, and, well it's the outskirts . . .

Paul Reisman: Kiryat Eliyahu, she lived.

Trude Reisman: Kiryat Eliyahu?

Paul Reisman: Sure.

Trude Reisman: Well, whatever.

Paul Reisman: Gav-Yam we lived.

Trude Reisman: We lived in Gav-Yam, yeah, and so we walked the whole night, the whole night. And where my parents lived, they wouldn't take us in. They said they couldn't take a new born baby in, because they had to go to work and they can't have babies crying. And nobody would take us in, even for a night, I mean, you couldn't believe it. I shouldn't even say that because you shouldn't record it, but I tell you, I've learned to hate our Jews.

Paul Reisman: Not hate.

Trude Reisman: I really did, I mean, I couldn't believe it. So we walked, we walked the streets, and there is a man out there, let me tell you something, because at two o'clock in the morning, my mother and my father and Paul and I walked with the baby and somebody passes us by, and this lady says, "Stella?" My mother's name was Stella. And she said, "Yes," and I don't remember her name any more, it's a terrible thing. And she says, she was a very good friend of my mother's from Vienna. And she says, "What are you doing walking with a new born baby?" And my mother told her the story, and she lived with her daughter on the top of the roof of a building, had one room there, and she had like a kitchen . . .

Paul Reisman: A shack.

Trude Reisman: . . . a shack, a kitchen, and [unclear] was kept very clean and very neat, and she said, "Look, I can take Trude in with the baby, but I can't take Paul in." Well, Paul was allowed to stay where my parents lived. So my mother said, "If you don't mind," I mean, that was very nice. So I didn't want Danny to cry the whole night, he was two months old, so I carried him around the whole night, so these two people can go to work the next day, and then the next day in the morning, Paul came and took care of the baby, because I had gotten a job by then. You know, as a hairdresser, wherever you go you can find a job, there's no problem. So when we left from Bolivia to go to Israel, we met very, we met young people that came from . . .

Paul Reisman: Chile.

Trude Reisman: . . . from Chile.

Paul Reisman: Jewish people.

Trude Reisman: I mean, rich, rich young people from rich families. They didn't even wanted to go, but they wanted to go to *aliyah*, they wanted to go. So we befriended themselves, ourselves with them, and they said, "Look, we are going to be in the Meshek Sarid, Kibbutz Sarid, Meshek Sarid, and if you're ever in trouble or you need something, just come calling on

us.” Well, when things got really bad, we couldn’t find a home, Paulie couldn’t find a decent job, we went to the kibbutz. And because of these young people, they allowed us to go into the kibbutz.

Paul Reisman: They guaranteed for us.

Trude Reisman: They guaranteed. Don’t think that, I don’t know how it is now, but at that time, don’t think, because you are Moishe Whatever, you want to enter the kibbutz, they let you enter the kibbutz. Like I said, I don’t know how it is now. And they vouched for us and we went to live in the kibbutz, and we lived there almost a year. I was [unclear] . . .

Paul Reisman: Not a, a year, a little over a year.

Trude Reisman: A little over a year. I was very unhappy, Steve. I was so unhappy, I was so miserable, and I just couldn’t take it. I said, “Paul, it’s either me or the kibbutz.”

Steve Hochstadt: What was, what was it that made you unhappy?

Trude Reisman: They did not, the young people, you know, our friends, like for instance let’s say, Paul is now going to be 74, I’m 69, and we were 21 and 26. And our friends were . . .

Paul Reisman: 35, 40.

Trude Reisman: 40, 45, 50, you know, because the young kibbutz-, the young people from kibbutz, the Israelis, they would not recognize us, they hated us, because they said, “You have some nerve to come move into the kibbutz. You have a wonderful life, our parents dug ditches and you want to take over.” What take over? They gave us a little room, Steve, it was about this size, it was out of wood, it had holes all over, but Paul, you know, patched them up and I had nice pictures, I hung them up, and I made them like this home. You, anybody who came in, they couldn’t believe that it was just a little wood thing. And my mother-in-law had made us for our wedding a beautiful bedspread out of a Japanese *obi*, I put that up and I really made it very, very nice. And . . .

Steve Hochstadt: So it was because you were European that you . . . ?

Paul Reisman: No.

Trude Reisman: No, no, because we were foreigners.

Paul Reisman: Not foreigners, we were newcomers.

Trude Reisman: Newcomers, we were new *haverims*. And they just didn't accept this, so I was very, very, very unhappy, very unhappy. And then I couldn't get used to the idea that I couldn't take care of my own child, because my child, as you know, it's in a nursery. We had to go to work, we were allowed to see him certain times in the day . . .

Paul Reisman: Two hours.

Trude Reisman: . . . in the evening.

Paul Reisman: Two hours each day.

Trude Reisman: You know, it wasn't my child. And, I mean, I wasn't used to that. And besides, I didn't like the way we were treated, and I didn't like the way another young couple was treated.

Paul Reisman: That's nothing to do.

Trude Reisman: Well, they . . .

Paul Reisman: No, there's nothing to do with this story.

Trude Reisman: What do you mean it had nothing, it had to do with my unhappiness.

Paul Reisman: All right.

Trude Reisman: Because they was, he doesn't have to put that in, I mean that's up to Steve, but they were six years in concentration camp, they come to live here, the man got very sick, and because he couldn't work, they made his life miserable. It was a terrible thing.

Paul Reisman: Because in the kibbutz, if you don't work, you're a burden to others. I mean, it makes sense, but Trude doesn't . . .

Trude Reisman: Yeah, but after six years of concentration camps, give me a break, I mean, you know, but whatever. So I, I wasn't brought up like this. So I told Paul, "I cannot live here any more." So we were, they didn't know that I was that unhappy, and usually it takes a year before they make you *haverim*, you know, from the kibbutz, and if one person votes against you, out you are. And they voted us in . . .

Paul Reisman: Nine months.

Trude Reisman: . . . before a year, because we both were hard workers, and I did my job and

everything, but I couldn't exist there. So when we got out of the kibbutz, you know, you go in with the kibbutz with nothing and you come out with nothing. If you're lucky, they gave us our bed. That's it. And the clothes that we came in with. And so then I got a job and he got a pretty good job, but he said . . .

Paul Reisman: I got a job with the Israeli Air Force.

Steve Hochstadt: Did you move, where did you move to when you left the kibbutz?

Trude Reisman: To Haifa.

Paul Reisman: [unclear] next to Haifa, ja, between Haifa and Akko.

Trude Reisman: But then he wasn't very happy. He says, "If I can't live in the kibbutz, I don't want to live out, outside the kibbutz." I says, "Then we'll go to America, be with your family." And he says, "Well, if you want to go to America . . ."

END SIDE A, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE ONE

Trude Reisman: . . . so I went to all the consulates and everything to get the visas. Now, those days, consulates not like now. If you want to enter a country, you go and get your visa, you go and get your injections, if you go to the Far East, or wherever you go, that's it. That wasn't like that then. You had to go for days and days, and stand in line for hours and hours, especially young people who wanted to leave Israel. Why? What's wrong, what did, you know? So anyhow, so finally I got us the visas, everything, but he, he then signed and that's how we came to the United States.

Steve Hochstadt: And when did you come to the United States?

Paul Reisman: '52.

Trude Reisman: '52. And so then, the first year wasn't that easy either for us, but then nobody, I mean, we came with no money, we lost everything in Bolivia, that little bit that we had, so . . .

Paul Reisman: And we had to, from Shanghai to Bolivia, we had to pay our own way. From Bolivia to Israel, we had to pay our own way.

Trude Reisman: We never asked anybody for anything.

Paul Reisman: Not only, we could ask, but who wants to give? [laughs]

Trude Reisman: No, but we didn't either.

Paul Reisman: But from Israel to, my parents helped with . . .

Trude Reisman: Paul's parents helped, and Eric and Bernice helped, and when we came and we started to work then and we wanted to pay them back, his parents and Eric and Bernice said it wasn't necessary. Of course, thanks because of them that we were able to come. And, you know, I don't care what anybody says about America, it's the best country in the world to live. Because wherever we've lived, and we've lived all over, we could never achieve what we achieved in the United States, never, never. So that was, that was good.

Steve Hochstadt: You liked the kibbutz more.

Paul Reisman: Oh yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: Why did you like it, what did you like about it?

Paul Reisman: Because there's no worry. You got no mortgage to pay, no insurance, health insurance or life insurance, no car payments, no nothing. You work your eight hours, you work hard, but everything is taken care of. No worries. No worries. Complete worry-free life. I liked it.

Trude Reisman: But you see, when we came to the kibbutz, Steve, it was again like I said different than it is today. When we came to the kibbutz, and I wasn't used to all that. I had to share my clothes, and I, you know, my blouses, what, the *haverims* that lived there for so and so many years, they didn't wear any more, it was clean stuff, but that's what I got to wear. And all this didn't bother me so much, when it came to my underwear, I mean, I don't like to share my underwear. And it was the way it was done, it wasn't given with heart. I, I found it very, very difficult, very difficult. I mean, and I'm not exaggerating, take my word for it. I would never. As far as food is concerned, and our son took very, very ill in the kibbutz, because the American Red Cross came to inoculate the children against tuberculosis, and our, and the children had to be over a year old, and our son had a couple of months . . .

Paul Reisman: Why don't you move the chair, Trude?

Trude Reisman: No, I'm very comfortable here, Paul.

Paul Reisman: Because of the sun.

Trude Reisman: No, I like it, thank you. And even the *menahelet*, which means the nurse, said to the American nurse, “She doesn’t want Danny to get that injection,” and, “Oh, nothing is going to happen, [unclear] .” When they gave him the injection, and our son took very, very ill, we almost lost him, all his main glands swole up with pus, and I must say one thing, if it wouldn’t be for the kibbutz, our child, let him live and be well, would not be alive today. I mean, they did everything and they had the best doctors.

Paul Reisman: From Tel Aviv, Haifa . . .

Trude Reisman: All over.

Paul Reisman: . . . and Jerusalem, three specialists came to our kibbutz for our son.

Trude Reisman: But, you wouldn’t believe it, when we got out of the kibbutz, it was a nurse in the *kupat holim*, which is . . .

Paul Reisman: Health . . .

Trude Reisman: . . . health thing, it’s called *kupat holim*. In the *kupat holim*, she wanted to be a doctor, but she didn’t have the means, but she was a wonderful nurse. She was the one that cured our son. She was the one that cured our son. But I must say, if it wouldn’t, at that time streptomycin came out and they gave him the streptomycin, then after that penicillin came out, so they gave him the penicillin.

Paul Reisman: No, no, penicillin is first.

Trude Reisman: First penicillin, then the streptomycin. And nobody in Israel, unless you were very well off, could afford that medication, and that I must say, they did a wonderful job with our son.

But there was so much, I mean, it was really, I was extremely unhappy. If it wouldn’t have been for the other, the people from, that came from Germany, from Vienna, from Czechoslovakia, they were wonderful to us. They took us on like their own children, and that was nice. But other than that, it was difficult for me, because I had to do things which I never in my life thought I would do. They made me, everybody had to go, how do you say that, Paulie . . .

Paul Reisman: On watch.

Trude Reisman: . . . on watch during the night. And then cook for the people, like Paul

worked in the *refed*, *refed* means the, where the cows are.

Paul Reisman: Stables.

Trude Reisman: The stables. And that was one of the hardest job. And the person that had night watch, what meant night watch? I had to go every hour and wake the mothers to go to the nurseries to feed their babies. And that was every hour, every two hours on the hour, and then I had to prepare breakfast for all the work, hard-working men. And in those days, the Arabs were pretty much hidden still in the woods. They wanted to give me a gun. I says, "Forget it, I wouldn't take a gun for anything in the world," it was really quite dangerous. But you know, when you're young, you have no fear. It's unbelievable. I said, "I'll be all right." So I did that. I did such a good job, everybody else only did it one week, they let me do it two weeks . . .

Paul Reisman: [laughs]

Trude Reisman: . . . you know, they did me a favor. And so I did that. Then I worked in the kitchen for the grown-ups. When they found out that I could cook, and you know, we had *zenner*, you remember that *zenner*, which means it was, everything was rationed.

Paul Reisman: Rationed.

Trude Reisman: And in Israel it was called *zenner*.

Paul Reisman: It was, you see, what happens, when the English pulled out of Palestine, so-called Palestine, they took everything which was not nailed on, they took everything along, and which was not nailed on, they went, they gave it to the Arabs, not to the Jews. This English, it's typical.

Trude Reisman: So that we were rationed, and they allowed you so and so much grain, so many onions or whatever, because the rest had to be sold, you know, on the outside. And I had a way of doing things, so that I could make the food better by taking, let's say, sweetener, you know, instead of sugar. Well, it worked out very well, they did me a big favor, I worked there for quite a few weeks. And then afterwards they let me work in the kitchen with the children, and that I enjoyed very, very much, because I love children, and that was very, very nice. It was very, very good for my sister, because they had very little food outside, very little food. And I was able to get chickens, you know, buy the chickens for very little money, and food and tomatoes and vegetables, and my mother and father would come.

Because my father couldn't find a job in his profession. My father was a leather tanner, and he couldn't find a job as a leather tanner in Israel, so my father was very handy, so he became the painter. So I got him a job and he would paint the houses inside and out in the kibbutz, and he made fairly nice money. I mean, he couldn't get rich on it, but he made fairly good money. And when my parents came, I would give them the food for my sister, and that

was wonderful. That was about the only good thing about the kibbutz, that I was able to help my sister out.

And so, after we got out, like I said, I worked in a beauty parlor, until we came to the United States. And our son, again, Paul and I had to rent, just goes to show you how small people are, we rented a very, very nice room through an English lady.

Steve Hochstadt: Where is this?

Trude Reisman: That was in Haifa, near Haifa . . .

Paul Reisman: In Gavyam.

Trude Reisman: . . . in Gavyam. It was right by the ocean, it was beautiful, but she would not allow us to have our child with us. She had two girls and she had plenty room, but she would not allow us to have our own child. So my, our son had to be with my parents. My mother practically raised Danny until he was nine years old, which was okay. But then when she got to know us and she got to know the kind of people we are and that we keep a neat house, then she would let us have Danny over the weekend, and, until we left to come to the United States.

Paul Reisman: That's right.

Trude Reisman: I worked in Haifa, in a beauty parlor, and, but we could really just about make ends meet, because, like I said, everything was rationed. And if we wanted a little something extra, we had to buy things from the black market. And my poor mother had to stand hours and hours in line in that heat for a quarter pound of chicken, and the only reason why she did st-, maybe I would sit over there, the sun, and why she, you know, for a quarter pound of chicken, she only did it, because we had to feed the child. So my mother would take the meat and cook it for Danny, and out of the bones, you know, she'd make gravy or something or soup, and we managed very, very well, believe me. And for a while there, before we were able to get a room for ourselves, my mother, my father, Paul and I, we slept in one bedroom, the four of us . . .

Paul Reisman: And the baby.

Trude Reisman: . . . and the baby, and we had a little shower, I think the bathroom wasn't any bigger than the one in here, and we had like a little portable shower, and we managed. I mean, it was clean, it was nice, until we got our own, our own place. Luckily Paul got along with my parents fabulous, you know. And so it worked out all right.

Paul Reisman: We had a room, wall to wall beds. [laughs] Wall to wall beds.

Trude Reisman: And my parents [unclear] in that apartment. It's unbelievable, if you

really think about it, the things that you can do when, if you have to. Think how our kids . . .

Paul Reisman: To survive.

Trude Reisman: . . . our children don't know about that.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you go back to Shanghai and tell me about meeting, the two of you meeting each other, and what you did to, in courtship, what would you do in Shanghai?

Paul Reisman: Yeah, listen, when she, she had a very nice voice and she used to go on the stage, we had our own stage, and I went to . . .

Trude Reisman: I used to perform in operettas and things like that.

Paul Reisman: "Zigeunerbaron", that means Gypsy Baron, how shall I say it in English?

Trude Reisman: I don't know how you say it in English.

Paul Reisman: Well, anyhow, there was one certain part where she played, and I went to that, to hear her voice three times. And then we, she was at one of the parties, and I was invited, too . . .

Trude Reisman: Well, actually it was my mother that went fruit shopping and vegetable shopping in his stall, and my mother always used to come home, and she'd say to me, you know, when Paul was young, he was very, very blond, very blond, he was always tanned, and my mother always used to say, you know, I don't know, "That nice looking *shaygetz*, who works there for the Reismans," you know? And, "I wish you would meet him." I says, "Ma, leave me alone." What are you, [unclear], you know. I mean I was only 15 years old. So then one time we were invited to a party. Did you meet Fred Zunterstein, Fritzl Zunterstein?¹

Paul Reisman: Yeah.

Trude Reisman: He gave a party, he gave, oh, he was such a handsome man.

Paul Reisman: He was such a handsome guy.

Trude Reisman: You know, I look at this man and my heart breaks. I mean, he's still a lovely man, but he was all sports, and it's really sad what [unclear] . . . But anyhow, and he gave a party and invited Paul, invited me. And we both went there, and as parties go, even when we

¹ See interview with Alfred and Eva Zunterstein, Salzburg, May 28, 1995, Shanghai Jewish Community Oral History Project.

were young, there was, you know . . .

Paul Reisman: Smooching.

Trude Reisman: . . . smooching, not sex or anything like they do now, but you know, kissing, hugging, playing with the button, you know, and neither Paul nor I were into this. I mean, if I kiss somebody, I've got to love the person, or at least like the person very much. So after a while I sit down on a bench, and Paul said, he says, "May I sit down?" He was a gentleman then . . .

Paul Reisman: [laughs]

Trude Reisman: . . . and I said, "Of course," you know. We got to talk and I said to Paul, "You know, I have to get up seven o'clock in the morning to go to work, and I'm really bored with this party. I am going to go home." And Fritz said, well . . .

Paul Reisman: Fredl.

Trude Reisman: Fredl says, "I'll take Trude home," and Paul says, "No, no, you're the host, you stay here, and I'll take Trude home." And he did take me home and what I liked about him, he was really a gentleman. He did not try to kiss me or anything goodnight. And I liked him, because we just left this party, you know. And he asked me for another date. I said, "Well, we can go for another date, but you know I'm very, very busy between working, singing lessons, piano lessons." I was very lucky in Shanghai, and I'll tell you that story later about my life. He says, "No, I don't mind." So he would just take his bicycle, put me on the front of the, of the, what do you call it . . .

Paul Reisman: The bicycle.

Trude Reisman: . . . yeah, on the bicycle, and drive me to all the things. He'd go someplace, then come back for me. And we dated for about a year and a half, and then we got engaged and married, and everybody said it wouldn't last. All his friends said it wouldn't last, because Trude's so spoiled, it wouldn't last. And it lasted, thank God, 51 years. [laughs]

Paul Reisman: 51 years.

Trude Reisman: So now I look at them and say, "You see? Shame on you, you said it wouldn't last." Because they're all divorced today, the others [unclear], the ones who said our marriage wouldn't last, they're all divorced. And thank God we've been happily married all those years. And that's how we got, between my mother and Fritzl's party, that's how we, actually, you know, I didn't like him. I did not like him. Not because he was not nice looking

or he wasn't pleasant everything, but for me, I never thought I would like a blond man, don't ask me, *mishegas*, you know, you're young. But what actually got to me, he invited me to his house and when I walked in to the house and I saw how these boys treated the parents, I said to myself, anybody that treats the parents the way Eric and Paul does has to be a good man. You know, the old fashioned way, with courtesy, and there was the love and everything. It was, and I fell in love with his father as soon as I met him. I mean, his father was, next to my father and Paul, his father was my third love. I adored him and he adored me. And when I saw that, you know, I realized there, he's a good person, he's a good man, and I wasn't wrong. And that's how we got, after a year and a half we got married in a very nice Jewish syn-, naturally, Jewish synagogue, beautiful . . .

Paul Reisman: [unclear] .

Trude Reisman: . . . beautiful ceremony in a very old *shul*, I'm sorry, I have those pictures, with the moving, I have everything up in the attic. And loads and loads of people, because my father was very well known, his parents through the market were very well known. I had the beauty parlor and we didn't even invite anybody, because my father . . .

Paul Reisman: They all came.

Trude Reisman: . . . my father took very, very ill. My father couldn't be in my sister's wedding, my father couldn't be at my wedding. My father developed double pneumonia. Now, double pneumonia, [unclear] years back, was that, was, I mean you died. But we had some fantastic Jewish doctors, and this one doctor that took care of my father, he gave up his practice. He said, in those days, penicillin you had to give during twelve or twenty-four hours every few hours, had to be refrigerated, you would give an injection, and this doctor gave up the practice for my father and he stayed by him and he gave him those injections. And luckily my father was able to afford it, because you could only get it in the black market. Now, 51 years ago, we paid for a little bottle 150 dollars. So we picked the first one up and that was spoiled. See, there was no way of knowing. So we had to rush back and it was down, you know, through all kind of different . . .

Paul Reisman: Channels.

Trude Reisman: . . . channels, and that was lucky that my dad was able to afford it already at that time, and that saved his life, but he could not come to the wedding [unclear] .

Steve Hochstadt: Who was this doctor?

Trude Reisman: I don't remember his name any more. Sorry I can't ask my father.

Paul Reisman: Margolis.

Trude Reisman: Mar-, yeah, may-, I think it was Dr. Margolis, you're right. Dr. Margolis, you are right. But he's, he died a l-, I mean, long time ago. Dr. Margolis, very good, Paul. And he saved my father's life. And so, in fact there are a couple of pictures, you would think that I'm a film star and Paul's a film star. We were just surrounded, I would say, for maybe 100, 150 people, I don't know where they came from. And then later on my mother threw a little party and, for the immediate family and everything, and we made it upstairs in the bedroom and that was very nice, just for the immediate family.

Steve Hochstadt: So you were married after the war was over?

Trude Reisman: In '46 . . .

Paul Reisman: '46.

Trude Reisman: . . . '46 we got married.

Steve Hochstadt: But you'd started going out with one another while the Japanese were still there?

Trude Reisman: Yes.

Paul Reisman: Oh, yes.

Trude Reisman: During the bombing and everything, yes, we went through everything.

Paul Reisman: Of course.

Trude Reisman: That was, that was not very nice. We were very, very happy to see the Americans, but boy, I'll tell you, we lost a lot of Jewish people, they got killed . . .

Paul Reisman: [unclear] bombing.

Trude Reisman: . . . from the bombing, and, you know, in those days, I didn't know whether he and his family was alive, and he didn't know whether we were alive, and suddenly I see Paul and Eric on the bicycle coming towards us, and we were so happy to see each other, that we were all okay. It was just, and you know, we didn't have telephones, we didn't have cars, but . . .

Paul Reisman: We didn't have nothing.

Trude Reisman: . . . it was enough that we were survivors, you know.

Paul Reisman: Bicycles, that's all.

Trude Reisman: See, I was a little luckier than Paul as far as coming to Shanghai.

Steve Hochstadt: Maybe we should, could we start with your story, start with when you were born and something about your childhood?

Trude Reisman: Okay, I'll, ja, when I was born in '28, I was born in Vienna, 1928, I was born also in Vienna, and my mother was Viennese, my father was born in Poland. And my father emigrated from Poland to Hungary and from Hungary to Vienna. And when you lived in Europe, you didn't have to get your citizenship-, you didn't acquire the citizenship like here in America. You just could live on life very well, and that was it. So . . .

Paul Reisman: You paid taxes, and that's it.

Trude Reisman: You pay your taxes and that's it. But when Hitler came to Vienna, my father of course was declared stateless, and so was my mother, because she married him, and my sister and I. And when Hitler came to Vienna, I was about eight or nine years old, because I was stateless, I was not allowed to go to school. So as long as my mother could, she took a private tutor, but that didn't last very long, because my father was taken to Dachau. My . . .

Steve Hochstadt: It didn't matter that you were born in Vienna? It mattered only that your father was . . .

Trude Reisman: Only because Papa was born in . . .

Paul Reisman: Poland.

Trude Reisman: . . . Poland and never became off-, it wouldn't have mattered anyhow. So they, how long, they would have let me go to school maybe another year, because as you heard the Germans say, that even they were not allowed to go to school. So anyhow, what happened afterwards, when they, we heard that the SS are coming around the houses to get the men to bring them to concentration camp, my father was hidden for three weeks.

Steve Hochstadt: Is this around *Kristallnacht* or was this . . . ?

Trude Reisman: That was in . . .

Steve Hochstadt: This was earlier?

Trude Reisman: That was in '38, 39?

Steve Hochstadt: *Kristallnacht* is '38.

Paul Reisman: '38, *Kristallnacht*.

Trude Reisman: Ja.

Paul Reisman: We left after the *Kristallnacht*.

Trude Reisman: Ja, and so my father was hidden for three weeks, but he didn't bathe and he was hungry and decided to come home to eat. And we had, you know, of course, Gestapo all over the house, and it was my mother's best friends that she grew up, they were the worst. Steve, they were the worst. My mother's best girlfriend that she grew up with, she said, if the last Jew's out of the house, she puts a white flag. Now, understand me, they ate together, they went to school together, they were the most miserable Nazis that you can imagine. The people that you played with, like your children [unclear] our children and you played with your friends.

So as soon as my father took a shower and sat down to eat his soup, there was a knock on the door. "*Herr Zalusky?*" "Yes." Very polite, very beautiful, "*Bitte, kommen Sie mit uns,*" please come. Well, we knew right away what was happening. They took my father to Dachau. My father was there luckily only six and a half months. At that time, if you could prove that you can get out

...

Paul Reisman: Inside of twenty-four hours.

Trude Reisman: . . . inside of twenty-four hours, that you could leave Europe . . .

Paul Reisman: Not Europe, Vienna, Austria.

Trude Reisman: . . . Vienna, Austria, if you could leave Vienna, Austria, within twenty-four hours and you have a ticket to go anywhere in the world, and at that time it was Shanghai, because what happened, we could get boat tickets through the black market. We didn't have a lot of money, because my father was just a *Schwerarbeiter*, you know what that means, a hard worker, we just about made a living. And so my mother sold half of the furniture and bought through the black market the tickets, only for my father. My father came, my, the tickets came and they wouldn't let my father out of the concentration camp.

So my mother sold the rest of the furniture, and we were very lucky, because this gentleman, and he was a gentleman, he came from Czechoslovakia, and he was *Evangelic*, am I pronouncing it properly? And they were usually not with the Nazis, you know, and he said to my mother, "Stella, I'm buying the furniture. You can stay in the apartment as long as you want and I will not throw you out." And then she got the second ticket and my father did come home

from Dachau, and had to go immediately to the SS, what you call it, like office, like, and they told him, “Herr Zalusky, you have to be out within twenty-four hours.” And that’s what my father did, and my father left the country, and left Vienna and left my mother and me, and my grandmother lived with us, and my sister.

And so when my father had left, they came around to take my mother. And luckily did they not throw my mother into concentration camp, they put her into a jail, and in that jail she stayed about a week. And I tried to get her out. I came to visit my mother and I said to my mother, “Mama, I know that you took a course in cooking and baking.” There were a lot of English families, which you must probably have heard, that took on a mother with one child. And my mother took that cooking course and she passed it, and there was an English family, they were already waiting for us to come. But I couldn’t get my mother out. But I didn’t, I questioned my mother about it, and my mother says, “I have no idea, Trude, where everything is, where the papers are.” And I says, “Well, where can I go, Mama, to get them?” So she says to me, “Why don’t you try and go to the *Jüdische Kultusgemeinde*?” That is, I don’t where the heck it was.

Paul Reisman: Jewish, Jewish . . .

Trude Reisman: Where was that, *im 2. Bezirk*? Whatever.

Paul Reisman: I don’t know.

Trude Reisman: But for me to get there, we lived in a different *Bezirk*, and that was, I would say . . .

Paul Reisman: Different part of Vienna.

Trude Reisman: Different part of Vienna. And that . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Where did you live?

Trude Reisman: I lived in the *20. Bezirk*, and that was like, I mean, with a car today, it’s nothing. I would have to take a couple of trains. It, I would say it took 45 minutes to an hour to get there. Now, I was only 8 or 9 years old. My grandmother wasn’t going to let me go by myself. My grandmother at that time was already 72 years and she went with me wherever I went. And so I took her along, and I went to that *Jüdische Kultusgemeinde* and again, I said luck was with me, and as I walked the hallway, I see my, my teacher, my religious teacher that taught me Jewish religion . . .

Paul Reisman: Religion, Jewish history.

Trude Reisman: . . . history in school. I don't remember her name any more, either. And she says, "What are you doing?" And I tell her the story, that mama is in the *Rossauer Lände* and I need to get her out as fast as possible before they send her to concen-, *Rossauer Lände* it was, before they send her to one of the concentration camps.² And she says, "Trude, I'll try to help you as much as I can." And she did. She found the papers for me for my mother, that she passed the cooking course, and the visa to go to England and everything, but there was no mother. So I had to go to this SS man. And every time I walked into his office, he told me, "Don't worry," he was, happens to be one of the very nice guys, and I think, I know he liked children very much. And I was very lucky again. I believe in fate, don't you? And I, he liked me.

Steve Hochstadt: Where, where, was he in an office, did you go to his . . . ?

Trude Reisman: He was in an office in the SS building, he was in an office all by himself, he was a big chief . . .

Steve Hochstadt: And you went with your grandmother?

Trude Reisman: And I went with my grandmother, and I went in and, and I was a very angry little girl and I said, "I want my mama, I want my mother," in German you know, and he says, "Well, I can't release her. I promise you she'll be home in a day or two," and that went on and on for a few weeks, and I went again, I went there again and I showed him all the papers that I have, you know, that we can leave Vienna. Didn't mean a darn thing, of course. And it was a very, very hot day and there were no chairs. Jews don't have to sit down, you know, they can stand. And my mother, my grandmother passed out on me. Well, with that, I got so upset and I got so angry and we, he took me in and I started crying and I said, "You don't even give my grandmother," I was very lucky, they could have thrown us, my grandmother, my mother and me in the concentration camp. But he took a liking. If I may say so myself, I was a cute little girl, I had the bluest eye and the blackest curl, curly eyes, and I had that pug nose and I looked everything but Jewish, I looked like a little Gypsy girl. And he picked me up, he put me on the table, and as he put me on the table, God help me, don't I pick up my fist and smack right in the eye. And I said to him, "I want my mother." I mean, I was 8 or 9 years old. I was very lucky, Steve. The guy liked me, he liked my stamina, I don't know what it was, he says, "Look, I'm picking up the phone right in front of you," and as he picks up the phone, he says in German, "Release Mrs. Zalusky." And he says to me, "I promise you when you go home, your mother will be home before you." And she was, because the *Rossauer Lände*, where my mother was, and where we lived was not that far apart. And sure enough, my mother was home. But like I said, you need luck to everything, don't you? I mean . . .

² The *Rossauer Lände* was a large police jail in Vienna.

Paul Reisman: She was very lucky.

Trude Reisman: I was so lucky, the guy just liked children, and there were a few of them that were there because they had no other choice. I don't know how many, but I was lucky I found the one that was. So I always say, if he walks around, he still walks around with a black eye [unclear] .

Steve Hochstadt: Now at this moment your father is already . . . ?

Trude Reisman: My father is already in Shanghai.

Steve Hochstadt: So he took his ticket and went to . . . ?

Trude Reisman: He went, with this ticket . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Went to Italy? Did he go to Italy?

Paul Reisman: Italy, yeah . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Then he went to Shanghai.

Trude Reisman: And he was already in Shanghai.

Steve Hochstadt: And you had, you had said before, your mother had gotten another ticket.

Trude Reisman: My, well, no, my, one ticket and that ran over, couldn't be used.

Steve Hochstadt: Oh, so then your husband . . .

Trude Reisman: It was for one boat. We had to buy another ticket.

Steve Hochstadt: I see.

Trude Reisman: And my mother used up all the money for all the furniture, and by then this gentleman came, and he said to my mother, "I'm sorry Stella, I can't help it, they are really after me, I have to throw you out of the apartment. I don't want to throw you out, but I have to." And my mother says, I understood, so we had to move away from there with nothing, with nothing, and move into a different district, where nobody knew us. And so in the meantime my mother, my father was in Shanghai already, my sister, if I tell you, my uncle came to my mother and said to my mother, "Stella, if you don't let Lore go to Palestine, you will never see your child again." My mother never said goodbye to my sister, we never said goodbye, she just left for Palestine, and like I told you, 11 years later we saw her again.

Steve Hochstadt: How old was she when she left?

Trude Reisman: She was 13. She was 13. And so we finally, so we were all ready, I got my mother out, we moved to another district. And what happened, you know, we had to wear, you know, the arm band with the “J”. And of course, we were not allowed to go to any markets to pick up meat or milk or things like this. So at night when it was dark, I would take the, nobody knew us there, so I would take off the “J”, you know, the band, and I would put on a *kabushka*, and of course my mother was terribly frightened. I would go to the, to the supermarkets and pick up meat and milk and everything, and I brought it home. But luckily nobody knew us there.

And then a friend of my mother’s, he was not Jewish, but he was a very good friend of my parents, and he would come and bring us food and sandwiches and that. In fact, he wanted to adopt me. My mother said to him, “Tony, are you,” his name was Tony, she said, “are you out of your mind, you want to adopt a Jewish child?” He had no children at that time, they had a daughter afterwards. And they find out, they’re going to throw you and your wife into concentration camp. And my mother wouldn’t have let them adopt me anyhow.

Steve Hochstadt: Now had the war started by this time?

Trude Reisman: The war, where?

Steve Hochstadt: The war with Poland.

Trude Reisman: I don’t know, yes, I think so, sure.

Paul Reisman: ‘39 it started.

Trude Reisman: Yeah, ‘39 it started. But my father had no attachments to Poland any more. So as we were ready to go to England, we never thought we would get the visa from my father, because it was already Japanese occupied, and then you needed a visa.

Steve Hochstadt: Were you corresponding with your father?

Trude Reisman: Yes, through the Red Cross.

Paul Reisman: No, no, not the Red Cross, Trude. It was . . .

Trude Reisman: What was?

Paul Reisman: . . . before the war, before the war.

Trude Reisman: But it took a long time to get a letter.

Paul Reisman: It may have been, but not the Red Cross.

Trude Reisman: Anyway, it took weeks and weeks and weeks.

Steve Hochstadt: But he was trying to get you a visa?

Trude Reisman: He was trying to get us a visa, and we needed to get out of Vienna, otherwise we would have, yes, and my mother and I, my mother, one of my father's brother, his son and wife, and I, my sister was already in Palestine, we tried to go immediately to Holland, and we didn't make it to the border. You know, going through all the back roads and the woods and everything. Ja, I did everything. And . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Did you take a train out of Vienna?

Trude Reisman: No, walked.

Steve Hochstadt: You walked?

Paul Reisman: No, no, you got to go to the border with the train.

Trude Reisman: Yes, of course, with a train or bus or whatever it was, but from then to the, then we went into the woods, you know, just [unclear] .

Paul Reisman: Ja, sure, [unclear] .

Trude Reisman: And we didn't make it, and they sent us back. They sent my mother, my uncle, the whole family, they sent us back to Vienna.

Steve Hochstadt: The Dutch?

Trude Reisman: The Dutch people. But at that time, again we were lucky, they didn't throw them right into the concentration camps. That was in the time when they let you go, go back without sending you to Auschwitz or Dachau or whatever. And we came back and my uncle tried again with his family, he did make it the second time.

Steve Hochstadt: Into Holland?

Trude Reisman: Into Holland. He made it the second time into Holland with his family. In the meantime, my father's visa came from Shanghai, and we had already the visa from England,

too, but naturally we went to Shanghai with my father. Now, my uncle make the second time. In 1942, Steve, the Dutch sent them to Auschwitz, and my uncle, my aunt and my cousin got killed, in 1942, mind you.

Paul Reisman: And well, that was during the war, Trude, '42.

Trude Reisman: 1942, and then Shanghai and the story, I had it a little better.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me about, your father sent you a ticket also?

Trude Reisman: My father, and then when, let me tell you quickly. My father . . .

Steve Hochstadt: It doesn't have to be quick, it can be detailed, slowly.

Trude Reisman: Okay, detailed slowly, I get a little carried away, I get a little emotional. My father, when he left Vienna and he came out of Dachau, and I don't have to tell you, the nights were terrible. My father would cry and scream the whole night long, and I can still hear it in my ears, "Don't hit me, don't knock my teeth out," and that went on until my father left Vienna. It was terrible, break out in sweats and everything. And, and when my father came home from Dachau, he said to my mother, to my sister and me, he says, "Don't ever ask me any questions about Dachau." My father went dying and never, never talked about Dachau once. Am I right?

Paul Reisman: We never asked him.

Trude Reisman: We weren't asked him, we weren't questioned, he didn't want to talk about it, that's fine. And my father said to my mother, "When I come to Shanghai, no matter how bad it is, I'd rather sleep on a bench before I go into another . . ."

Paul Reisman: Home.

Trude Reisman: ". . . home," you know, like a closed up facility. So when my father came to Shanghai, had a very, very good profession, like I told you, and he was really a wonderful craftsman in his business . . .

Steve Hochstadt: What did he do? You said he was a *Schwerarbeiter*, but what . . .?

Trude Reisman: He was a leather tanner. [unclear] , you know, with his hands, with the boots to here, not the way they do it now, you know, you have to have a college degree now, which is okay. And they don't know how to fix the machine. My father knew how to fix every machine and everything, self taught. And never went to school a day, I want you to know, my father. Spoke I don't know how many languages, my father. Math, I mean, he was

unbelievable. My mother taught him how to read, how to write, spoke Spanish, spoke English, spoke, spoke Russian and Polish, and fluently, every language. Yiddish. You know, people I think sometimes that are not educated in school, they're smarter, [laughs] you know, it's, it's really amazing. So when he got to Shanghai he met up, I don't any more, I don't know any more through whom, but he met up with this Russian Jewish man, his name was Ifland, don't ask me how to spell it. Ifland, I-F-. . .

Paul Reisman: I-F-L-A-N-D, Ifland.

Trude Reisman: He and his father had leather factories. And he, my father was introduced to him by somebody, don't ask me any more who, and he hired my father. And he made, my father made him a rich man. I mean, my father made leather that nobody else ever made, you know, by hand and all . . .

Paul Reisman: Shagreen.

Trude Reisman: . . . and shagreen, you know, by hand and all this, and he did very well. And my father made a very, very nice living. So by the time my mother and I came to Shanghai, my father already had in the factory, it came with two homes, with two houses. His brother or his oldest brother was in with him, he also was in the tannery business, but he was not the *Fachmann* that my father was, but he was all right. So they had one house, and my mother, my father and I had the other house, a very, very nice house. Then, of course, the Japanese took away from us like Paul's parents, but my father was able to buy another very nice house in the, in the Hongkou district.

Paul Reisman: Houses in, you know, it was different in China at that time. To buy a house was not very much money. To buy a house here, you got to have a lot of money. To buy a house there, it wasn't that expensive. That's it. It also depends what kind of house, you know. If you buy a palace, you have to pay that amount of money, you know. In the ghetto, or in Hongkou, the houses were not very expensive. In Shanghai, it was a different story. The Settlement was, the houses were more than over there, where we lived, we lived in the outskirts.

Steve Hochstadt: What did your parents think about having this fruit and vegetable stand? How did they feel about doing that kind of work, instead of the work that they had done in Vienna?

Paul Reisman: My father was always a businessman, so, even in Vienna, so it was business, so it wasn't, and my mother was always working. What's the matter, Trude?

Trude Reisman: I wanted to know is Patsy still there.

Paul Reisman: Ja.

Trude Reisman: So, so where was I? So my father was able to buy another house, which was with regular bathroom, and I always said Paul fell in love with the bathroom, not with me, because [unclear] we had a nice bathtub and everything. And we had, somebody rented a room from us with, nice size room, beautiful room downstairs. And I went to school, but I wasn't a happy camper in school, I wanted to be a hairdre-, from the time I was five years old, I wanted to be a hairdresser. So my father said, "Okay, if you want to be a hairdresser, that's fine." And I did, I left school at fourteen, and I was an apprentice in a beauty parlor for three years, and in the evening I went to, through ORT, you've heard of ORT, through ORT I went to school to forward my education. And in the beauty parlor I learned the practical part, you know, how to do perms and all this, and the theory I learned in ORT, together with my equivalent of a high school education.

Steve Hochstadt: Is that all happening in the ghetto?

Paul Reisman: In the ghetto, ja, sure.

Trude Reisman: That's all happening in the ghetto. Now in the ghetto we were very lucky, if you wanted to learn a profession, you know, the people, when we were taken in to the ghetto, the ghetto, you know, everything was in ruins and the Jewish people built it up. They opened up businesses, bakeries, photo shops, cleaning stores, you name it, and

Paul Reisman: Beauty parlors.

Trude Reisman: Beauty parlors, and we were able, we had a night club up on the roof, we went every Friday or Saturday evening. we had a fairly good time.³ We, there was a, where was that swimming pool where we all met? That pool, that big pool, it was a big . . .

Paul Reisman: Hongkou.

Trude Reisman: In Hongkou they had a pool, we met there the young people. Paul played amateur . . .

Paul Reisman: Soccer.

Trude Reisman: . . . soccer, Motzi played, my uncle, one of my uncles played . . .

³ Trude Reisman refers to the Roof Garden Mascot at the top of the Broadway Theater on Wayside Road.

END SIDE B, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE TWO

Trude Reisman: You know, Jewish people like art and entertainment, and we had Jewish, wonderful J-, we had a lady, her name was Raya Zomina, and she, Paulie, what was his name, the partner? Her name was Raya Zomina and she . . .

Paul Reisman: Zernik.

Trude Reisman: Huh?

Paul Reisman: Zernik?

Trude Reisman: Zernik, his name was Zernik, have you heard of him?⁴ And they put on, Steve, the most beautiful . . .

Paul Reisman: Shows.

Trude Reisman: . . . *jüdische* shows. I mean, it was fantastic. And we had, we put on operettas, operas, serious theater, there was a lot of talent on the Jewish immigrants.

Steve Hochstadt: Could you tell me about your singing career?

Trude Reisman: Well, I had a, like Paul says, I had a beautiful voice. And I studied voice in Shanghai for four and a half years. And in fact I was a very, very silly girl, because one day my father, my father's boss came to the factory, and I practiced singing and I sang. And my father's boss, Mr. Ifland, says, "My God, you have a beautiful radio station," and my father says, "It's not the radio station, it's my daughter singing." And he wanted to send me, he would pay for the Chinese conservatory.

Paul Reisman: No, Shanghai Conservatory.

Trude Reisman: Shanghai Conservatory, it was one of the finest ones . . .

Paul Reisman: Very good.

Trude Reisman: . . . in the world. I mean, I think to this day, you know, what musicians and

⁴ Raya Zomina was a singer of Jewish songs and a dancer. Herbert Zernik had played in the Berlin Kabarett der Komiker, and was a renowned entertainer.

everything come out of there. But I was only fourteen, fift-, fourteen years old and I didn't want to leave my mommy after going through all this, not seeing my father, my sister, I wasn't going to leave my mother. I was, I would have had to leave, you know, like our kids go to college now away, I would have to do that and I didn't want it and my parents wouldn't force me, and I really gave up a wonderful opportunity. And so instead, I did this, this show business bit.

Steve Hochstadt: Who did you take lessons from?

Trude Reisman: I don't remember his name, but he was from Vienna and he was a wonderful teacher. And I'm sorry to say, but you know I was so young and I didn't write those names down and everything. And it's very, very funny, you know, when you live someplace as a, in my case, not everybody's case, some people have a fantastic memory, names like this [unclear], but I guess when you live in a country that you know it's really not your country, you're there because you have to or for one reason or another and then you leave, you want to forget these bad memories. In my case, not in everybody's. And I just don't remember the names, but I remember him, I see him in front of me. He was a tall lanky man, greyish hair, narrow face and very patient and a wonderful teacher, but I'm sorry I don't remember his name.

Steve Hochstadt: And this was during the war that you were taking the lessons?

Trude Reisman: That was during the war. My father, my father was able to pay for the lessons, and because we were all immigrants, you know, it was quite feasible, and we did that. Then I went to that Kadoorie School. I don't know where Eric, where did Eric go to school? Did he tell you where he went to school, to another school?

Steve Hochstadt: Eric told me, but I forgot.

Trude Reisman: Ja, I went to the Kadoorie School, you know that English Kadoorie, man, Kadoorie. And you had to pay for that school. Now there were a lot of children that couldn't afford to pay, so the people that had a little more money, like my father, like I said, he was not rich, but he was fairly comfortable, Shanghai, you know, thing. And my father would send me to school and he would sponsor another two children, so they were able to go to school, and others did that too that way, but he would, some people did very well in Shanghai. Like I said, they didn't become rich, but comfortable. And so I went to school there and my boss, Kurt Mosberg, have you heard of Kurt Mosberg, he lives in Australia? Kurt Mosberg was my boss, he also is from Vienna, and . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Your boss where, at the . . .?

Trude Reisman: In Shanghai, I learned hairdressing in Shanghai through Kurt Mosberg. He had a very nice beauty parlor and I was an apprentice there for three years. And what happened

afterwards, when the Americans came to, liberated China, Shanghai, suddenly everybody went crazy. They wanted to work for the Americans, for the PX, and my boss was one of them. He gave up his business and everything, and they went to work for the Americans. So I saw an opportunity, I was only 17 years old, I said to my father, I said, "You know, Papa, Kurt is giving up his business. I want my own business." My father says, "You're 17 years old, you want your own business. Are you sure you know enough about the business?" I says, "Papa, I promise you." So what he had to do, he had to ask the people to move out, not throw them out. He got them in another apartment someplace and where these people lived my father, within 24 hours, I had a beauty parlor. And I worked there until we left. I had . . .

Steve Hochstadt: So downstairs from where you lived.

Trude Reisman: Yeah, and I had three employees, and they were older than I was, [laughs] and I had a very good business until the day I left.

Steve Hochstadt: What was it called, what was the name of your beauty parlor?

Trude Reisman: I don't remember any more, I guess Trude's Beauty Salon, something like that, you know. And it was very, in fact, it was wonderful, I did very well. Sometimes Paulie came to visit and he helped out, he washed some hair for me, and it was all right. I mean, I, I personally cannot complain about Shanghai, when I got there, because I had it easy already. And like I said, my father was fairly comfortable and we were able to buy fruit and vegetable, which a lot of them could not do, could not do. But my father promised himself, he's never going to have to do that again, and thank God he didn't, no, I never ended up.

I think a lot of the Jewish people that came to Shanghai, why they stayed there in these, in these terrible, terrible, the way they lived, you wouldn't believe. I mean, I . . .

Paul Reisman: You saw the tapes.

Trude Reisman: It was awful. Steve, I don't know if they, you're not going to record that, are you?

Steve Hochstadt: Everything is being recorded.

Trude Reisman: Yeah. But you're not going to talk about that?

Steve Hochstadt: If you don't want me to.

Trude Reisman: No, because sometimes I didn't think they have to live there, not all of them, but some of them really didn't have to live there. I think that was just a way out, to, I don't know why, but anyhow that's beside the point. But don't, don't write that please.

Steve Hochstadt: Tell me about singing, tell me about the performances that you gave, the ones that Paul came to, and who else performed, and who organized it, things like that?

Trude Reisman: You know, I don't know the names, that's the sad thing about it. But there were a lot of people that came from Germany and from Vienna that had theatrical backgrounds, and they wanted to do something with it. And they put . . .

Paul Reisman: Zernik.

Trude Reisman: Ja, and Raya Zomina and so many others that had gorgeous voices and were going to be either opera stars or dancers or whatever, and they . . .

Paul Reisman: Because they were Jewish, they couldn't do it.

Trude Reisman: And we had to be en-, and we wanted to have entertainment so they put these beautiful sh-, they were wonderful shows, honestly, and beautiful voices. And everybody, we sewed our own costumes, we got material, and they did a, we did a beautiful job, and it was done very well. And it was sold out every single day for weeks and weeks, because what other entertainment did we have?

Steve Hochstadt: So you were in the "Zigeunerbaron"?

Trude Reisman: "Zigeunerbaron" and "Dreimäderlhaus" and all these operettas, because I loved operettas. And I never had a big part, but, you know, a fairly nice part. So it was very enjoyable. I wish I would have the pictures, but we moved and they are all over the place.

Steve Hochstadt: So you have some pictures of those performances?

Trude Reisman: I have some pictures, yes. My grandchildren look at it, they say, "Grandma, you were so beautiful." I says, "Am I not beautiful any more?" "Yes, yes." [laughs] But you know when you're young, you look different. And my granddaughter, Aileen, she's a beautiful ballerina, you can see her stature and everything. She danced, she danced once with the Bolshoi Ballet, and she's really something.

Paul Reisman: She's good.

Trude Reisman: And she always looks at those, she used to look at the pictures, she says, "That was you Grandma? Mommy, Grandma was so beautiful." So cute. "You're still beautiful, Grandma," she tells me. And you know, she's so tall and slender, and she bends over me and she says, "My little Grandma, come here and let me hug you."

Steve Hochstadt: So how much practice did you have to do before you were able to put on a show?

Trude Reisman: We practiced for hours and hours every day for weeks and weeks. I would say a good three, four weeks, we practiced every day for hours and we put on a good show, we really did. And it was wonderful, it gave us something to do, it gave us something to forget about, forget about the Japanese . . .

Paul Reisman: The Eastern Theater.

Trude Reisman: The Eastern Theater, well, it was on Broadway, Shanghai Broadway you know, so we called it the Broadway Theater. And until the Japanese did a thing on us, with this coming during the night . . .

Steve Hochstadt: What is that, tell me?

Trude Reisman: The Japanese, during, well, you know, you heard that the Japanese had already gas chambers built for us, did you know about that?

Steve Hochstadt: Well, some people say they did, some people say they didn't.⁵

Trude Reisman: It's a fact, it's a fact, it's a fact, it's a fact. But anyhow, they used to come like at one, two, three o'clock in the morning, just like the Nazis, and would knock on your door, so and with the guns they would come, they want to check for weapons. Because, you see, the Jewish people, it happens not me and my family and Paul family, but there were a lot of Jewish people that had hidden guns and revolvers, because if anything would have happened, they would not have taken us peacefully.

Steve Hochstadt: So did they come to your house, did the Japanese . . .?

Trude Reisman: They came, ja, in the middle of the night, we had to go out, they checked the house to look for weapons. Thank God, they didn't find any, and it was a scary, scary thing to, just brought back memories from Hitler's time, you know. And that went on quite a few months, didn't it, Paulie, that went on? And you know they are like animals, I mean, like monkeys.

Steve Hochstadt: But what did that have to do with your singing and . . .?

⁵ There is no evidence that any gas chambers were built, although this rumor persisted among many refugees.

Trude Reisman: That has nothing to do with the singing.

Steve Hochstadt: No, I thought that you'd made a connection.

Trude Reisman: Oh, no, I said when that, put a damper on me, you know, I mean the happiness, the little happiness that it brought to the singing and to dancing and to the entertainment

...

Paul Reisman: It dampened it.

Trude Reisman: . . . you know, it dampened the whole thing, because from one moment, you know, our, we were up mentally and physically, and the next moment they gave us a kick in the you-know-what again. So, but that was tough times.

Steve Hochstadt: Do you know anything about where the finances came to put these programs on?

Trude Reisman: I, we had some backing from people that were quite comfortable. I think some of the money even came from the Russian Jews, you know, because the Russian Jews were quite comfortable. They were very, very rich when we came to China, and they had some [unclear] .

Paul Reisman: The English Jews were the richest.⁶

Trude Reisman: They were the richest.

Paul Reisman: Because Kadoorie . . .

Trude Reisman: Yeah, but I don't think . . .

Paul Reisman: . . . made his money from opium.

Trude Reisman: Ja, but Paulie, Kadoorie only had to do with the schools. He had nothing to do with the theaters, nothing to do with the theaters. So . . .

Paul Reisman: We never, we never, and I hope I never in the future, I'll never deal with opium, my God.

⁶ Paul Reisman means here the Baghdadi Jews, who had English passports.

Trude Reisman: No, we never did and we never will need to. We had pot smoke, pot growing in our back yards and we didn't know what it was, we had no idea what it was. But, Paul, no, I lived right across the street from the jail in Shanghai, and, you know, during the war they say that jails and hospitals should not be bombed.

Paul Reisman: No, the Japanese were, international law says that in the jail you don't store weapons, ammunition or anything. But the Japanese knew, so the Chinese guerrillas knew that the Japanese stored weapons there, and we were right around the jail, our ghetto was right around the jail, and it was the largest jail in the Far East, and naturally they bombed it. Otherwise if the Chinese guerrillas know, the Allied knew, so they bombed, they wanted to bomb the jail. They didn't bomb the jail, but they bombed all around and we lived . . .

Trude Reisman: And I was living right across the street from it, I was, we were very lucky that it didn't hit our house, you know? And all the prostitutes were under there, all their problems were there, right underneath the jail. Did you know that?

Paul Reisman: What underneath, what?

Trude Reisman: Right underneath the jail.

Paul Reisman: What underneath the jail?

Trude Reisman: You know they had these little rooms there?

Paul Reisman: Where? No, on the other side of the jail, not in the jail.

Trude Reisman: I thought it was under the . . .

Paul Reisman: No, no, it was not.

Trude Reisman: They did away with all that, you know, they can't do away with it here, but they did away with this, overnight they cleaned everything up, that's the way it should be. When were you in Shanghai?

Steve Hochstadt: In 1993.

Trude Reisman: 1993.

Steve Hochstadt: And in 1989, for a week each time.

Trude Reisman: Oh ja? Because we were, Paul and I, we had all paid to go back to Shanghai.

Paul Reisman: Ja, from a tour.

Trude Reisman: With that tour that went, and I got very sick and ended up in the hospital, so we couldn't go there and very lucky they gave us everything back.

Paul Reisman: Glad to get out of there.

Trude Reisman: But I don't know, I'd like to go back there. Did you find, I mean people, what people tell you, did you find any changes? Everybody says it had, nothing has changed.

Steve Hochstadt: Oh, it looks very different, it's very prosperous looking now.

Trude Reisman: Is it, ja.

Paul Reisman: Sure.

Steve Hochstadt: Yeah, very prosperous, busy, bustling . . .

Paul Reisman: Sure.

Steve Hochstadt: . . . lots of business, clean, pretty clean.

Paul Reisman: Clean, ja, the Communists keep everything clean.

Trude Reisman: I'd love to go back to visit, I really would.

Steve Hochstadt: So after the war, did your family think about going back to Vienna?

Trude Reisman: Never.

Paul Reisman: No.

Trude Reisman: Never again. It wasn't in our minds. Well, we came here to the States then, and then after about a year we brought my parents over from Israel. And then my parents, see my sister was alone for nineteen years, she got married, an Israeli. By the way, her husband . . .

Paul Reisman: Eleven years.

Trude Reisman: Huh?

Paul Reisman: Eleven years she was alone.

Trude Reisman: She was in Israel for nineteen years, nineteen years, Paul.

Paul Reisman: Okay.

Trude Reisman: She was alone eleven years, I agree with you, but she lived in Israel even after we came nineteen years. And then she wanted to leave Israel then, too, so when my parents came here after a couple of years, they brought my sister and her family here. Thank God, the husband was found and she had another two children after that and so, they live upstate New York now. Excuse me. [unclear] My sister came then over with her husband and her then two children, and took them a while to get themselves together, huh? They missed Israel for a while.

Paul Reisman: Oh yeah.

Trude Reisman: Yeah, very much so. But then my brother-in-law really didn't have a profession, because, you know, when you live in a kibbutz and you're in the military, you know everything, but you know nothing.

Paul Reisman: You know everything, but nothing.

Trude Reisman: So he somehow took to the leather business, but the mixing of the colors, never did it in his life, and took to it wonderful and was very, very successful.

Paul Reisman: Well known.

Trude Reisman: Very, very well known. So he worked for many, many years . . .

Paul Reisman: A color mixer.

Trude Reisman: . . . as a color mixer and they moved to upstate New York, to Gloversville, have you heard of Gloversville? Because at that time all the, they made the gloves there and all the leather factories was there. You know, they closed everything down, there's nothing there any more. And they've been living there for how many years? Many, many years now.

Paul Reisman: I remember the last day in Israel, when I was in the Air Force, working in the Air Force as a civilian, a private came over to me, and he knew that I was going to go the next day to, the next week to the States. He says, "Paul, I want to show you something," and he took me in a Piper Cub to the Jordanian border. As far as your eye could see, we were hedge hopping, you know, very near the ground, because the radar shouldn't pick us up, as far as the eye could see, one brown, the other side green, like next to the border, like the border, one side

brown, the other side green. And as far as the eye could see. Unbelievable. If he would have told me, I wouldn't believe it. I saw it with my own eyes. Fantastic.

Trude Reisman: If I really think back, my father went through so much in his life. I mean, from Poland, you know when they had the pogrom, his father took his wife and the five children, and they had to leave everything then, and they moved to Hungary, you know? And my grandfather was in the leather business also, in the tannery business, and it was always a very hard profession. And he always used to say to his boys, "If any of my boys go into this business, I'll cut their hands off." Well, two of his sons went into that business, one of his sons went into the furrier business, that's the one that went to Holland and was sent back and got killed. And, and they were quite successful, but then from Hungary they had trouble there, and then they moved to Vienna and then, my father really was what they call a real traveling Jew. It was terrible.

And you know, I never told you that story, I had, my mother's, one of my mother's brothers. He was married to a Christian woman in Vienna and when Hitler came to, he ch-, he became *Evangelic*. And when Hitler came to Vienna, in order to save his family's life, he moved away from where he used to live to another district, where nobody knew him. So nobody knew that he was Jewish, and he raised his children of course not Jewish, which didn't mean anything by Hitler, you know. In fact, when you were Jewish and you married non-Jewish, they were the first ones that were thrown into the concentration camps. And his son was in the SS Army and his daughter was in the BDM, you know, what do they call it?

Steve Hochstadt: *Bund deutscher Mädels*.

Paul Reisman: [unclear] .

Trude Reisman: Now, my cousin Günter was very, very fond of my mother, in fact my mother raised those two children. And one day we were, my mother was on the street and here comes my cousin, full SS uniform, and he goes to my mother and he wants to hug her and my mother says, "Günter, what are you doing?" "What do you mean, you know, you're my *Tante*." And my mother quickly explained it to him and she said, "Get lost, but quickly," you know, "make believe you don't know me." Well, of course, he couldn't understand what was happening, and so he went back, and I guess his father explained everything to him, and that's the last time my mother saw of her brother or of my cousin. He did save, his wife in the meantime died and he remarried again a non-Jewish woman and nobody ever found out that he was Jewish.

But after the war he committed suicide, and my cousin also, could not, his wife then wrote to my mother that he could not live knowing that he saved his life and the family, and that his son was in the SS Army and their daughter was in the BDM, and that his brother and the family, one of his brother, the family got killed in the concentration camps and he wasn't able to save them, and that his mother died all alone some place in Vienna in a cellar on pneumonia. Luckily not concentration camp, but it was bad, too, because she was all alone and she was, she died of pneumonia. And he just couldn't live with the idea and they committed suicide.

So you see, even saving your family's life sometimes leaves the kind of impression, you know, how come I couldn't save my brother, and how come I couldn't save my mother, you know? My mother, too, she suffered all the time, because she couldn't get her brother and her mother out. Always. I mean, she talked about it constantly. So I think everybody has, has terrible stories to tell, some of course worse than others. Paulie has cousins, they were really, one cousin, she was in every concentration camp that you can think, [unclear] right Paulie? She made a tape through "Schindler's List", you know? She . . .

Paul Reisman: Not "Schindler's List".

Trude Reisman: Ja . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Spielberg.

Trude Reisman: Through Spielberg, I mean, ja, Spielberg. But she too, she could not talk, she was very, very emotional, she went through a lot. And . . .

Paul Reisman: My other cousin, first cousin, they were both born in Czechoslovakia in Pressburg and they went underground, and on the day when the Russians were, armies were already in Czechoslovakia, you know, on the border, my other cousin tells the other cousin, I, they wore weapons, you know, "I'm going to get myself a couple of Germans." And my other cousin says, "No, stay in the bunker." And he went, never came back. He may have gotten a couple of Germans, but they may have gotten him, too. They probably did get him. That's, that was it.

Trude Reisman: Did your grandparents ever speak about China?

Steve Hochstadt: Yes, I interviewed my grandmother this way.

Trude Reisman: Yeah.

Steve Hochstadt: My grandfather had died already before I talked to him.

Trude Reisman: And did she remember it all?

Steve Hochstadt: She remembered a lot of things, yeah, she was able to tell me her story.

Trude Reisman: Everybody's story is so different, and still very similar, isn't it?

Steve Hochstadt: So how do you think your father was affected by what happened to him in Dachau?

Trude Reisman: Very much so.

Paul Reisman: Oh ja, sure.

Trude Reisman: Very much so. My father was a very happy man, a very funny man, he used to joke around a lot. And we came, when he came out of concentration camp, he was still after many, many years, after he had all the family together, he was a happy man and a content man, but he was never the same, never the same.

Paul Reisman: And he was only, only, and he was six and a half months there.

Trude Reisman: He was only six and a half months, thank God, there. What kept, what kept him alive was his strength. My father, because of his profession, was a very, very strong man. It's mostly, people that died were lawyers and doctors, and they couldn't work hard, they couldn't, they couldn't keep up with, you know. He was very lucky also, my father took very, my father always had trouble with his throat. As long as I can remember. And he got one of his very bad throat infections in Dachau, and there was one, what did they call the guys that had, the group, *Gruppenführer*, what, what, I don't, I, you know what I mean?

Steve Hochstadt: Yeah, the German [unclear] .

Paul Reisman: *Kapo*.

Trude Reisman: Huh?

Paul Reisman: *Kapo*.

Trude Reisman: Like a *Kapo*, ja. And he took a liking to my father and he would bring my father hot tea and things like that, and I think that's what saved my father's life, that he had somebody that, but he took a big chance this guy, let me tell you. Because they found out, they would just kill them just as quickly. You help anybody, well, you know that, and you were a goner. By the way, this guy that sold the tickets on the black market for the Jews to be able to get out to Shanghai, he was caught, he was thrown into a concentration camp, he died.

Steve Hochstadt: I wanted to ask you about these black market tickets. So who, how did your mother get these tickets?

Trude Reisman: We never met, we met, my mother never met the fellow. It was done, you know how it's done, through this one, through that one, and, but we never actually had contact. My uncle found out about that, one of my uncles. Two of my uncles also were in Shanghai, my father's two brothers, and I think it was Josef and Paula, my aunt and uncle Josef and Paula that,

Joey and Paula, that found out about that. But how they got the contact, I really don't know. But it was always through somebody that knew somebody and the money went and then the next thing you know you had the ticket. You see? My mother was probably, would be able to tell you bet-, more about it, but sorry I can't wake her up, I wish I could, you know? And a lot of people went like that, a lot of people went like that.

Steve Hochstadt: What boat did you go with?

Trude Reisman: I went with the "Conte Biancamano", that was the one that was sunk in 1940. In fact my mother and I went out in 1940 with the last boat out of Genoa, that was it, there was no other boat, that was it.⁷

Paul Reisman: A friend of mine came through Berlin, and they had this friendship with the Soviet Union, remember, friendship pact, and he went Moscow, Vladivostok, Trans Siberian Railroad, Vladivostok and Shanghai, by train.

Trude Reisman: And my mother and I went six weeks around the coast, you know, because everything was mined already, six weeks all we saw was water and sky.

Steve Hochstadt: So you didn't go through the Suez Canal?

Trude Reisman: No.

Paul Reisman: No.

Steve Hochstadt: Because that was too late then to do that?⁸

Paul Reisman: Ja.

Trude Reisman: Too late then.

Paul Reisman: There was . . .

Steve Hochstadt: So you went around Africa?

⁷ The "Conte Biancamano" was not sunk. The "Conte Verde", another Lloyd Triestino liner, was sunk in Shanghai harbor in 1943 by its own crew. The "Conte Biancamano" sailed from Genoa to Shanghai in February 1940. Other Lloyd Triestino liners left Italy later that year.

⁸ After Italy joined the war on the side of Nazi Germany, its ships could not sail through the Suez Canal.

Trude Reisman: Africa, ja.

Paul Reisman: Ja, around the, the Good Hope.

Steve Hochstadt: And where did you stop?

Trude Reisman: I don't know, I don't remember any more.

Steve Hochstadt: Did you get off the boat, were you ever able to get off the boat?

Trude Reisman: I don't think so, no. I know I had a good time with the Italian sailors, because I would sit on the boat with them and sing my heart out, all the Italian songs. It was just, for me it was just wonderful, you know, because of the fact that I liked singing so much and I had a nice voice and they would sing and we would sing. I knew, at that time I knew all the Italian songs. I was a youngster. I mean, you know, when you're a child you have no fear of anything, it's the most amazing thing, you real-, I mean, if I say not of anything, God forbid if I would have been in concentration camp, I would have been terribly frightened. But other than that, you know, I took things pretty much in stride and I had my mother with me. My sister went through much more than I did. Can you imagine being thirteen years old and leaving your family there and starting out all alone? It must have been terrible for her, terrible. And she never forgave me for that either, she never forgave me for that.

Paul Reisman: Like it was your fault.

Trude Reisman: She never forgave me that until my parents were gone. Like it was my fault, that she was always jealous, she always told me, "You were lucky, you always had Mama and Papa. I had nobody." And she was jealous of me until the day sh-, they died. And they died and everything changed. And Paul was always upset with her and I wasn't, I said, "Look, I can understand her." I can, although I told her off a couple of times that I had nothing to do with it, but she made my life miserable there for a while. But I could understand her. I mean, can you imagine how it would be to have to send your children away in the world and never see them again for maybe never? Devastating for a child and devastating for parents, and look how many had to do that. And they worked hard these kids when they got to [unclear], they really had to dig ditches. My sister has a picture from a kibbutz, a couple is getting married and they hold a shovel and a gun and whatever, and my sister says that's how we got married.

Paul Reisman: With a canopy.

Trude Reisman: The canopy, that's how I got married.

Paul Reisman: Israeli flag.

Trude Reisman: With guns around and with the shovels and everything, because we never knew who would attack us, you know? And she went through a lot, she lost two children already and had a hard life, too. But now she's pretty content, and I guess she came to the realization that I had nothing to do with this. As long as my parents were alive, she was awfully jealous. Because, you see, I, my sis-, my parents loved my sister just as much as me, but it's a natural thing, there wasn't the closeness that I had with my parents, that she had with them, you know? I mean, eleven years is a long time, you grow, I, I mean, I left my sister, I was a child, she was a child, next time we saw each other we both were pregnant with child, you know? So it's, we had to get reacquainted all over.

Even our son, our son lives in Colorado, we see them, this is the family, this is Daniel, the family, we see him once a year, we adore them all, but naturally Carol lives twenty minutes away from here, we see her almost every day, we talk. It's a different relationship, you know. I mean, they're wonderful kids, we come there, they don't know what to do for us, and we come here and we talk practically every week with the grandchildren and they're just wonderful, but it's not the same, it's not the same. So I can imagine what my sister went through.

Steve Hochstadt: When you were leaving Vienna, what, how did it happen that your grandmother didn't come with you?

Trude Reisman: Because my father couldn't get a visa for my grandmother, couldn't get a visa. He was lucky to get a visa for us. The Japanese made it very, very difficult, because I guess at that time there were already so many Jews there that, I don't know, didn't they want any more, I have no idea what happened.

Paul Reisman: Ja, we were twenty thousand and the Japanese says no more.⁹

Trude Reisman: No more, you see? So it was very difficult for my father to get a visa for my mother and myself, and he could not get one for my grandmother, and that was really a shame. I mean, we always lived together. My grandmother always lived with us, so you can imagine what it must have been for my mother. And at that time, let me see now, she, my grandmother had a son that lived in Czechoslovakia, and he died. And then she had also Paul, in fact Paul was a singer at the opera, he was an opera singer, my mother's youngest brother. And they took him away, he got killed with his wife and a son. And then this son, Theo, he, he's the one that had to deny that he's Jewish. So she couldn't, he couldn't come and visit his mother.

⁹ In August 1939, the Japanese declared that no more Jewish refugees from Europe could enter their sector of Shanghai, and the Shanghai Municipal Council immediately followed suit. After that date, about 1000 more Central European refugees were allowed to enter Shanghai, bringing the total to about 16,000.

Paul Reisman: Wait a second, Theo went to Argentina, what are you talking about?

Trude Reisman: Well, Theo went to Argentina, Euler, Euler was the one. And Theo, that was the oldest brother, he was, he was a journalist, a doctor of journalism and something else, and he went with his family to Argentina. She never saw him again. And then there was the youngest son Euler, I mean, Paul, and he died in concentration camp, and then there was my mother and she left. So she was left all alone after all these years. And she must have, and she was such a meticulous lady, everything had to be so clean and neat, and it must have been a terrible time for her. I have the last letter that she wrote to my mother. I can't read it, you know, I get so emotional and so upset, I can't even read it. It was tough. And my mother's brother, Theo, he came to visit here once, we saw him, and . . .

Paul Reisman: We showed him New York.

Trude Reisman: Ja, and one, and I told my uncle this story. My uncle Theo, you know, in Vienna if you have a doctor, doctorate in journalism and he had a doctorate in something else. Now, if you have two docs degrees in Vienna, you're really something. They were extremely rich in Vienna. And I'll never forget that story. He invited my mother, my grandmother, and me and my sister to come to their, they had a beautiful apartment. I mean, apartment like you would have in Manhattan. They had a maid, he had a car. And I remember, my sister didn't want to come along, but I was too little, I couldn't stay home, and you know in those days we did not tell my parents, "I don't want to go," you just had to go. And we got there and the maid opened the door, and my mother, she asked my mother who she was and my mother told her that she was the sister of Dr. Brunn, and she says, "Please come," we came in to a library, I remember his name was Dr. Brunn, we came in to the library and we sat there and we waited for my uncle. I remember it like it was yesterday. And we waited and we waited, and it took my uncle forever to come, and I said to my mother, "Mama, let's get out of here." How can a br-, I was a little girl, I says, "How can a brother let his sister wait so long in a room here," you know? My mother of course, "*Shhh! Setz Dich hin. Sei ruhig,*" you know? So I sat down, I was a good girl, but you know, Steve, that stayed in my mind all my life, I couldn't get over it. Well, finally my uncle comes to America . . .

Paul Reisman: She mentioned it.

Trude Reisman: We picked him up from the airport?

Paul Reisman: I don't know.

Trude Reisman: I don't know, we picked him up . . .

Paul Reisman: In the hotel.

Trude Reisman: Hotel. And of course we showed him a very nice time, and I would only be nice to him. In fact, I was going to tell him how you should treat people, you know. And as we drive around I said to him, “Do you know, Uncle Theo,” in German I said to him, “I have to tell you something.” And I tell him the story when we came to his home. And I tell him exactly how his apartment was, how you walked in, the library, everything. Now, that was forty years ago at that time. He couldn’t get over it. And I told him the story that I never got over it, that he treated his sister like a nothing. I just told him. You know something? I told him everything, I told him how I, we have felt, and of course he was embarrassed, he apologized, he says, “I understand that, it was the way it was in Europe.” I says, “You know, I’m gl-, I’m so glad you came, because I really feel that something was lifted off my chest.” You know, it really bothered me all those years. He apologized after all those years, he says, “You know something,” he says, “I am not the man that I was,” I says, I, “nobody calls me Doctor there.” And I don’t know what, I think he studied, he taught in one of the universities there, he just became a teacher there.

Paul Reisman: No, but, he, he was on the, on a journal in Argentina.

Trude Reisman: He worked on a journal?

Paul Reisman: Ja.

Trude Reisman: But I think he taught there . . .

Paul Reisman: A newspaper.

Trude Reisman: Newspaper, ja, so you see how you can demote people quickly? And Hitler was able to do that, I’m sorry to say. But isn’t it something, that a child, there are certain things that stay in a child’s . . .

Paul Reisman: Memory, sure, of course.

Trude Reisman: . . . memory that will not go away.

Steve Hochstadt: So do you have some stories like that from Shanghai, some moments that are in your memory, things that happened to your family or to you?

Trude Reisman: Well, all I know is I always had to go, there was, the Japanese military, they were, where is it where they had the . . .

Paul Reisman: Police station?

Trude Reisman: Ja, not police station, where the Japanese military station. I don't remember, Steve, but I always, when I went for my singing lessons, I always had to pass by them, and I was always really afraid. I mean, they left me alone, but I was always, always frightened. And one day when I did go to the singing lessons, this Japanese soldier came to me, and you know how they did, "Wuh, wuh, wuh." Now I didn't speak Chinese, I didn't speak thing, and I asked him what he wanted, but he said to me then, "Go, go, go." But believe me, I shook like this. That's about the only thing that I, I can think of. Was there anything, you mean either happy or, well, we did have, like I said, we went, every Friday the young people wen-, met up on the roof . . .

Steve Hochstadt: What was the name of that place?

Paul Reisman: Roof Garden.

Trude Reisman: Roof Garden. It was called the Roof Garden, it was a, like a restaurant and, we didn't drink.

Paul Reisman: You, you could, coffee or tea or . . .

Trude Reisman: Our drinks were coffee, tea or, I don't know what . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Is this in Hongkou?

Trude Reisman: Ja, it was in Hongkou, it was up on the top, nice building and we were able to dance and . . .

Steve Hochstadt: There was a band there?

Trude Reisman: There was a band there, very good band, excellent band, and the young, that's where the young people met and we had a wonderful time. And we had a lot of private parties, you know, like I mentioned Fritz had, you know, in people's homes, because . . .

Paul Reisman: Fred, not Fritz.

Trude Reisman: [unclear] say Fred, and that's where we met. And we had the soccer, which was very nice, and every Sunday we went to watch them and Motzi, the guy, he was always a nice, nice guy, he always was my, my guardian, you know, he wouldn't let anybody come near me, that's Paulie's girl, nobody was allowed to touch me. [laughs] And he, he's, I like Motzi, he's a nice guy. And that's about it. I don't, I'm sure there were things that I should remember, but I don't.

Paul Reisman: You forg-, you tend to forget the bad parts.

Trude Reisman: Well, I know one thing, that Paulie asked me how old I was and I told him I was eighteen, and I was only what, fifteen and a half.

Paul Reisman: Sixteen.

Trude Reisman: Six-, no, my mother invited you on my sixteenth birthday party, and when he came he said to my mother, "She's sixteen, she told me she was eighteen," and my mother says, "It's not too late, Mr. Reisman." He says, "It's too late for me."

Paul Reisman: [laughs]

Trude Reisman: And he bought me two love birds, I had them until I left Shanghai, and I felt so bad that I had to leave them. And we were always, we worked a lot in Shanghai, many hours. You know, it's not like here, you go in and . . .

Paul Reisman: You see, what happens, I had to get up every morning at two o'clock, two o'clock, and, not get up, I had to leave the house at two o'clock. And when it came six o'clock in the evening, I had to take my shower and go to bed. I picked her up, and when she got ready, you know, before she got ready and dressed and this and that, I fell asleep on the chair. [laughs] Many times.

Trude Reisman: Sound asleep, my date, my heavy date. So he slept a couple of hours and then, but we usually would get up and, and my husband was never a dresser, you know? So he would come and pick me up, you know, it was hot, you put, wore shorts and you wore knee highs, just like the English, you know? And he would come and pick me up to go to a dance, I says, "You're not going to go dancing with me this way." He says, "Why?" I says, "No ways I'm going to go dancing." He was a good boy, he walked home, and that was not just around the corner, and he changed and then he came to pick me up. [laughs] His brother was always dressed like that. The two of them, as far as dress, Paul is very neat and very clean, but Eric is always the dresser.

END SIDE A, TAPE 2

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 2

Trude Reisman: . . . Paul worked for Sikorsky, he was always clean and neat, nice [unclear] . . .

Paul Reisman: Never wore a tie.

Trude Reisman: . . . never wore a tie, never wore a tie, hated, hates ties.

Paul Reisman: Principle.

Trude Reisman: Only, I don't think you like ties a lot, either.

Steve Hochstadt: [laughs] I've never worn a tie.

Trude Reisman: I see, you don't have to wear a tie teaching, [unclear] ?

Steve Hochstadt: Some people wear ties, some people wear jeans, and so . . .

Trude Reisman: Then he has to wear, he has to look nice, he has to wear a tie, and in fact he was so cute, because when he started to work there and we came to visit, he says look at your son, no more bum. [laughs] So, but Paul never, never [unclear] and did all right, I guess.

Steve Hochstadt: Paul, could you tell me about playing soccer?

Trude Reisman: Yes.

Paul Reisman: Oh ja, I played soccer for around maybe three or four years in a merchant team.

Trude Reisman: They had a wonderful team, they had a wonderful team, they had opposites.

Paul Reisman: We had, we had so many teams, JRC, Jewish Recreation Club, that was the first team. Then there was, I played for BNZ, Brit Noar Zioni, which I belonged to, and they had Hakoah, and all kinds of teams.

Trude Reisman: Hakoah and, and [unclear] . . .

Paul Reisman: Embankment, Embankment was one team.

Steve Hochstadt: So who else was on your team, we were . . .?

Paul Reisman: Oh, Bobby Katz . . .

Trude Reisman: Motzi.

Paul Reisman: No, Motzi wasn't . . .

TR: Motzi not?

Paul Reisman: . . . he was Embankment.

Trude Reisman: Who was on the team, you don't remember?

Paul Reisman: Bobby Katz, [unclear] was on that team, Maxl Weinblum, Max Weinblum, [unclear] .

Steve Hochstadt: And how did your team do in the competition?

Trude Reisman: Kurt Mosberg was on the . . .

Paul Reisman: So-so, we were really one of thirteen, you know.

Trude Reisman: Paulie, wasn't my boss Kurt Mosberg on it?

Paul Reisman: Kurt Mosberg, he played for Embankment.

Trude Reisman: He was not [unclear] ?

Paul Reisman: No, not on our team, no.

Trude Reisman: My uncle played with, right?

Paul Reisman: With Mosberg.

Trude Reisman: With, ja, with Mosberg, my uncle played with the opposite team. You don't remember anybody else?

Steve Hochstadt: So how many people would come to watch a game?

Trude Reisman: Oh, my God.

Paul Reisman: All, sure. Because we played Saturday or, and on Sunday, either Saturday or Sunday, and the people didn't have nothing to do, so they went to watch the soccer game, sure, or play on.

Steve Hochstadt: Where did you play?

Paul Reisman: Chaoufoong Road.

Trude Reisman: There's a park.

Paul Reisman: Chaoufoong Road, ja.

Trude Reisman: There's a park. We congregated there and it was, it was very enjoyable.

Paul Reisman: It was a thing to do, you know.

Trude Reisman: We . . .

Paul Reisman: And when I started to work for the market, it was very hard for me, because you, I was tired, you know, from the market and two o'clock every day, Saturday, Sunday included.

Trude Reisman: When you are young you manage, don't you?

Paul Reisman: Ja, you manage.

Trude Reisman: So, as you can see, I mean, we made, we tried to make a good life for us. You know you can't get us Jews down, can't let that happen, it's impossible. So everybody [unclear], as you have from many others there, there were radios, there was a newspaper, there was everything, bakeries, dressmakers, cleaners, shoemakers, typewriter . . .

Paul Reisman: Mechanic.

Trude Reisman: . . . mechanics, everything, everything. Everybody had a profession and if they didn't have a profession, they changed over, they had to, and quickly. And so we managed.

Paul Reisman: We went to her first cousin's son got married, and we went by the, to Australia, Sydney, and we met Shanghaier over there.

Trude Reisman: Ja, that was very nice, last year.

Paul Reisman: And one lady comes up to me, says, "Paulie," she starts crying.

Trude Reisman: Last year we went, my cousin, my first cousin, that was our flower girl at our wedding in Shanghai. She was born in Shanghai. And she, they had a fiftieth anniversary and she invited us. So . . .

Paul Reisman: No, fiftieth anniversary.

Trude Reisman: No, no, the wed-, that was in Bolivia . . .

Paul Reisman: The wedding.

Trude Reisman: . . . the wedding, that's, her son got married, so she wanted us to come. So we did go, we had a wonderful time.

Paul Reisman: But we didn't stay long enough. Nine days.

Trude Reisman: Not long enough, and . . .

Paul Reisman: A long travel.

Trude Reisman: . . . in fact, it was Passover, so we, we were so funny. Well anyhow, they have a club there, what is it called? Club . . .?

Paul Reisman: Hakoah.

Trude Reisman: Hakoah, and you should see how nice the Jewish people that came from Shanghai, how nice they live there. Every afternoon they meet in . . .

Paul Reisman: Not every afternoon.

Trude Reisman: Every Friday and Tuesday . . .

Paul Reisman: Thursday or Friday . . .

Trude Reisman: Friday and Tuesday . . .

Paul Reisman: Two days of the week they meet . . .

Trude Reisman: . . . two days, they meet in that club, and you can have lunch, dinner, whatever you want, coffee . . .

Paul Reisman: Very, very reasonable.

Trude Reisman: Very reasonable. They even have a little gambling casino there, you know, the one-armed bandit. And they meet there and they sit and they talk and they chat, and we were there and that's where we met a lot of Shanghai people. And my boss, Kurt Mosberg, he showed us the most beautiful time.

Paul Reisman: Beautiful.

Trude Reisman: He picked us up in the morning . . .

Paul Reisman: “I show you Sydney, nobody else sees it.”

Trude Reisman: And he picked us up at ten o’clock in the morning and brought us back at eleven o’clock at night . . .

Paul Reisman: And he paid . . . [laughs]

Trude Reisman: He would not let us pay a penny. And I wanted, we wanted to bring our son-in-law back a chess game. And I said to Kurt, I says, “Where can I get a chess game for my son-in-law?” And he took us, oh, he schlepped us, and what we liked so much, he took us in the train, you know . . .

Paul Reisman: Monorail.

Trude Reisman: . . . monorail, you know, that goes through the city. Have you ever been in Australia?

Paul Reisman: Sydney.

Trude Reisman: Sydney. And it was so interesting, you have no idea. It was just wonderful. I tell you, I couldn’t walk the stairs today that I walked last year, I really couldn’t. I mean, we walked stairs and stairs and stairs and stairs, everything is so high. But he showed us the city, he showed us the, there’s a place where you can buy, you can go for hours and hours, where you can buy gifts, you know. It’s not malls like we have here, it’s like a whole city, it’s unbelievable. You can eat in there, they have food courts and everything. And then he said, at the, and then he took us to his apartment, his wife had passed away, Herta, and he keeps it so beautiful, and he prepared coffee and cake. And he invited his sister-in-law, which I know, because I worked with her in his beauty parlor. And after that, I want-, I thought it was time to go home. He says, “No, before you go home, I have to take you to the best Hungarian restaurant there is in Sydney.” Well, I couldn’t eat any more, I mean, we are not, we eat well, but we are not big eaters. They eat in Australia, Steve, you have no idea. And they are not fat. I don’t how they do it. And . . .

Paul Reisman: They walk a lot.

Trude Reisman: They walk a lot, ja, and he really took us to that restaurant so, I s-, he said, “What do you want?” Well, the chicken soup sounds very good. Well, you know, we ordered a cup of chicken soup, it’s a cup of chicken soup, even the plate is like this. When they bring you

European plates, you know, like this, she brings a cup of chicken soup, I tell you, after I ate this, I couldn't, I couldn't order anything else, and he was so upset. He says, "If you don't order anything else, you have to order the Hungarian dessert." Well, I said . . .

Paul Reisman: Hungarian goulash.

Trude Reisman: No, no, the des-, well, you ordered the goulash, I didn't order anything any more. So he said, "You have to order their dessert." "Okay," I said, "I order dessert," I says, "just bring me a little piece." She brought me, I tell you, it was a piece of cake like this. Well, I said, everybody would have to share it, it was really delicious. But I couldn't eat my main meal, I didn't even order it. He says, "What's the matter with you, you don't eat?" I says, "I eat as much as I can, I'm not used to it."

But he showed us a wonderful time, it was really, and that's where we met all these, oh and they, they knew Paulie better than me. When they saw Paulie, I mean, like, tears were running down. It was a beautiful reunion, it really was. And then the same year, we went back to Bolivia, I didn't tell you that. The same year my, we met, when we came to Bolivia . . .

Paul Reisman: The first time.

Trude Reisman: . . . the first time, when we came to live there, of course we were [unclear] . . .

Paul Reisman: Poor schnooks.

Trude Reisman: . . . poor schnooks. And as we, I don't know if my father or somebody needed a shirt or a tie, I don't remember what it was, and as we pass by we see a haberdashery store there. And . . .

Paul Reisman: On Main Street.

Trude Reisman: . . . on Main Street, so I said to my father, "You want [unclear] ," you know, you want to go in there? My father said okay. We walk in and we speak German and suddenly the proprietor comes out and he says, "*Oh, sprechen Sie Deutsch,*" you know, came from Vienna, he came from Vienna. To make a long story, we befriended ourselves with him, and his wife is from Germany and he's from Vienna. He came to, to Bolivia in '39. He started out as a house painter, our friend, and a lot of people from, a lot of Jewish people that came to Bolivia couldn't take the altitude in La Paz, or didn't like to live there . . .

Paul Reisman: Revolutions.

Trude Reisman: . . . they had revolutions and everything so they left. So what they did . . .

Paul Reisman: They had shops.

Trude Reisman: . . . they had shops, so in order to leave, they would sell their shops for a . . .

Paul Reisman: Very cheap.

Trude Reisman: . . . very cheap, and our friend saw the opportunity, [unclear] , you know, saw the opportunity, and he would buy these stores for practically nothing.

Paul Reisman: For nothing.

Trude Reisman: He built himself an empire. The man today is so rich, he doesn't know . . .

Paul Reisman: Millionaire, not a millionaire, he's a billionaire.

Trude Reisman: I think to this day, Steve, he owns about 35 or so haberdashery stores, he owns two knitting mill factories. They just built in . . .

Paul Reisman: In Chile, a new one.

Trude Reisman: . . . in Chile they just built, his son, when he was here and we came to pick them up in the hotel last year, he was in conversation with his son, and when he got off the phone he says, "My son just called me. He needs a million dollars to put a deposit on this factory, and I told him if he thinks it's good, go ahead and do it." I mean, that kind of money. So . . .

Paul Reisman: You know, in the whole of South America, it's not even the middle class, it's not, economically, you're well off. You're very well off or you're poor. You're very well off, very, very well off.

Trude Reisman: There's no in-between.

Paul Reisman: There's no in-between, no.

Trude Reisman: So, I'm going to go back to first when we came to Bolivia and my father walked in the store. So we befriended ourselves with them, and he and his wife asked us if we want to go out to dinner with them. And I looked at Paulie and Paulie looked at me and I says, "Well, let's go," you know. And they went to a very fine restaurant. So as we walked out, they want to pay for us, but we said no. So as we walked out, I said to Paulie, you know, "We can only do that once, you know." So they asked us again, so this time, I mean, you know, I said to myself, I have to tell him how things are. And I said to him, "Julio," I said, "you know, we'd be happy to go out with you to a restaurant, but we cannot go to the kind of restaurants that you go."

“Not to worry,” he’ll pay. I says, “No, no, no, no, we go, we pay and we go to a restaurant that we can afford.” And they did. We stayed friends all these years and now, like I said, they had their fiftieth anniversary and they invited us to come, and we had just come back from Boliv-, from Australia, and our daughter says, “Oh, come on, Mum and Dad, go for it. [telephone rings] You worked so hard all your life.” So my daughter says, “Why don’t you go for it?”

Paul Reisman: Who was that?

Trude Reisman: Wrong number. So I said, all right, I says, “Paulie you want to go?” Yes, we go. So we went there and they said not to worry, we can stay in one of their houses. One of their houses. So we get there, they pick us, he had the chauffeur pick us up from the airport and brought us to the house, beautiful, beautiful home. Everything is, everything is bought in the United States, from couch to furniture . . .

Paul Reisman: Everything.

Trude Reisman: . . . everything, lamps, everything.

Paul Reisman: He doesn’t buy anything there.

Trude Reisman: Yeah. And so they had bought a house that was right next to them, because he didn’t want any neighbors. So he offered the guy any price he wanted just so she’d move out. So this house stands completely empty, they just keep it, because they have these big parties and when they have a big party they move all of the furniture out of the living room, of the dining room . . .

Paul Reisman: Put it away.

Trude Reisman: . . . and they put it over there, they have a kitchen there, and they put up little tables and everything, just like in a restaurant. And we stayed in this house, very, very comfortable. And the party was unbelievable. We met people that we never thought in a life that we’d meet. The president from La Paz was invited . . .

Paul Reisman: No, the president of Bolivia.

Trude Reisman: . . . of Bolivia was invited.

Paul Reisman: And the mayor of La Paz.

Trude Reisman: And the mayor of Cochabamba.

Paul Reisman: Mayor of Cochabamba.

Trude Reisman: We, so we had this wonderful party. And then this, they were just in the verge of buying a, another home in Cochabamba. I'm sorry, with all his money, he's a very sick man, he has Parkinson's disease, he's a very sick man, but he can afford to come here to America, he goes to Houston, Texas to the best doctors and they, with his money really they keep him alive, which is wonderful.

And so they just bought, we saw the house, they just bought a beautiful mansion in, I'll show you some pictures [unclear] and they bought this gorgeous house in Cochabamba, I'm telling you, you know, you see the movies, the old, you see the old movies with this spiral staircase, you know, and you wait for the movie star to walk down. So they bought this, this is the house that they bought in Cochabamba, okay? Now, she took that house, that's him, that's him, and these are, this is the lady of that house that they bought. That's the father. Would you believe that this is a lawyer's wife, *Gib a Kuck*, in Cochabamba. This is our friend, that's the husband, you can see that he's a sick man. And this is the couple that he bought the house from.

And as we were there, and she redid, she redid the whole house. I mean, she tore walls down, she rebuilt the kitchen, take a look. So here we were staying in a hotel, okay? In Cochabamba.

We couldn't get a decent meal. I didn't enjoy the food at all. So our friend Julio says, "You know something, let's go to the . . ."

Paul Reisman: Supermarket.

Trude Reisman: ". . . supermarket, they have wonderful sandwiches, we buy sandwiches." So we bought the sandwiches with pickles and we stayed outside in front of the hotel and that's when, that's the first meal I enjoyed there. This is the friend, the lawyer, and this is his wife. Very, very lovely. But it was cold. And here, of course, we are eating in a restaurant, we are always eating. This is . . .

Steve Hochstadt: My last question. You've lived in Europe and Asia, in China and Israel and South America and the United States, you've lived all over the world.

Paul Reisman: Not all over the world.

Trude Reisman: Well, we have, we went . . .

Paul Reisman: Not in Soviet Russia. We missed that.

Steve Hochstadt: You missed that.

Trude Reisman: We have been, in between our travels, we have lived like a few days in Lima, Peru, in [unclear] like three or four days.

Paul Reisman: That's in transit.

Trude Reisman: In transit, but we have seen it all.

Steve Hochstadt: So how does that affect the way you think about things? The fact that you . . .

Paul Reisman: The way I think about things, that all people in the world are the same. If you handle them nice, they handle you nice.

Trude Reisman: Ja, and it's just, it is just that you have different foods, different culture, but that's about all. What we found, of course, which is very sad, most South American countries, the poors are very poor, I don't have to tell you that, you are an educator, and the rich are very rich. And it's in all over the South American countries like that, and that's very [unclear] .

Paul Reisman: Southern Mexico, going down to [unclear] Chile, Chile. The same, all the same. But when we were on the plane going from, the fir-, going to Bolivia from San Francisco, from Miami to Bolivia, one gentleman asked me, he says, "Where are you going?" I says, "To Bolivia." And he whispered in my ear, "You go to the asshole of South America." And I said he was right. [laughs]

Trude Reisman: I just want to show you, this is . . .

Steve Hochstadt: Well, it looks, so maybe our interview is finished.

Trude Reisman: Yes, fine.

Steve Hochstadt: Thank you very much.

Trude Reisman: You're very welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

Paul Reisman was born 1923; his family lived in Vienna, parents Oskar and Hermina and younger brother Eric. After the *Anschluss*, he witnessed the murder of a Jewish classmate in their school. The family received a visa from Feng Shan Ho, the Chinese Consul, and sailed to Shanghai. There Paul was apprenticed in the China General Omnibus Company, where he worked for 3 years and learned Chinese. His parents sold fruits and vegetables in the open market, and he eventually became a food wholesaler. After the creation of the Designated Area in 1943, he sold to the Kitchen Fund at the Alcock *Heim*. He also played soccer for the Brit Noar Zioni team. In 1944 the family lived in Tong Shan Road. After the end of the war, Paul got a job with the American Air Transport Command as an airplane mechanic. He married Trude Zalusky in 1946.

Gertrude Zalusky was born in Vienna in 1928 and lived with her parents, David and Stella, and older sister Lore. Her father was arrested after the *Anschluss* and spent 6½ months in Dachau. Her mother sold their furniture and got a ship's ticket so he could go to Shanghai. Then her mother was arrested and spent a week in jail. Trude at age 9 went to the Gestapo office and demanded her mother's release. Her sister Lore was able to go to Palestine at age 13, and then Trude and her mother took the "Conte Biancamano" around the Cape of Good Hope to Shanghai in 1940. In Shanghai, Trude attended the Kadoorie School and took singing lessons. Her father worked as a leather tanner. She sang in various refugee productions, including the "Zigeunerbaron" by Johann Struass. She apprenticed for 3 years as a hairdresser. In 1944 the family lived in Kwen Ming Road. After the war, she opened her own business at age 17.

Paul and Trude Reisman left Shanghai in 1947 for Bolivia. In 1949, they moved to Israel to be with Trude's sister, and their son Daniel was born shortly after they arrived. They lived on a kibbutz and Paul worked for the Israeli Air Force as a civilian. In 1952, the family moved to the US, where Paul worked for Sikorsky Aviation. The Reismans live in Connecticut.

This transcript is part of the Shanghai Jewish Community Oral History Project, an effort to collect and transcribe interviews with Jews who lived in Shanghai, directed by Steve Hochstadt at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois. The interviews are housed at the Ladd Library at Bates College in Lewiston, ME. The transcript was prepared with support from the Littauer Fund, the Memorial Fund for Jewish Culture, Bates College and Illinois College.