

Transcript:

Terry Freudenthal

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Interviewer: I'm Jacquelyn Hedgecough and today is June 10th, 1990, and I'm speaking with Terry Freudenthal. And I'd like to begin by asking you what life was like for you as a Jew in your town or city before the war, and if you could describe as many things in detail as possible.

Terry Freudenthal: Uh-huh. Well, I was born in Wolfenbuttel Germany which is near Hanover, northern part of Germany, in 1929. And my maiden name is Teresa Moses and I came from a very happy traditional Jewish home, had a six wonderful content and healthy years as a child there. Then at the age of six, I was turned down for my first year of school, which was a great disappointment to me. And the reason that the German government gave us was that I was underweight. We felt that this was a concocted reason and just to...because anti-Semitism had already started. As a result, and by the way, I do want to indicate that I was a very healthy child and very strong and vigorous. I used to do a lot of climbing into trees and such, so we really felt that this was no reason to keep me out of school. Then the following year, when I was seven and I was allowed to go to school, I was the only seven-year-old in the first grade and also the only Jewish child in school. And they at that time already were calling us names and throwing stones at us and it made it quite difficult going to school under those circumstances.

Interviewer: So now this is 1936 you're talking about?

Terry Freudenthal: That's correct. It would be 1936 that this happened.

Interviewer: Can you—

Terry Freudenthal: And...yes?

Interviewer: Can you describe, you say, the town that you grew up in, give me some idea of how large or how small a city this was? Obviously, it wasn't the very large cities that we're familiar with in Germany.

Terry Freudenthal: That's right. Wolfenbuttel would be known as a small city. Not a town, but as a small city. And it was a very cultural city, it had universities, and a very interesting point about Wolfenbuttel too, it had the only Jewish...gee, I'm trying to translate it now, for children boys who were not well behaved, would be sent to Wolfenbuttel to a special school where they would have a little stricter supervision.

Interviewer: A juvenile detention?

Terry Freudenthal: A sort of type of that, only it was—

Interviewer: But just for Jewish boys?

Terry Freudenthal: Just for Jewish boys and so it was...most Jewish boys know Wolfenbuttel only as that because parents would reprimand them, if you don't behave, we will send you to Wolfenbuttel. Besides that though, it was a city for Goethe and Lessing both wrote there, and another author that is known to a lot of German children that was Wilhelm Busch. He wrote German poems and verses and was very famous like you had your nursery verses here, we all grew up with Wilhelm Busch and the two characters he wrote about was Max and Moritz. These were two boys who constantly got into trouble and made all sorts of little tricks amongst themselves.

Interviewer: So it was a cultural city.

Terry Freudenthal: Very cultural, uh-huh.

Interviewer: One that you might...that your family was surprised that you would have this anti-Semitism right away.

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah. Well, it was a small creeping situation and our parents kept all these, whatever they could keep from children, they would. We only would be aware of it if it actually happened to us individually as a child and my eyes were really opened when I went to school and that was my first encounter with other children than the small knit Jewish community, which was very, small by the way, in Wolfenbuttel. We had our own synagogue, and I imagine that they were not more than maybe 25 Jewish families in Wolfenbuttel. And so I really was just—

Interviewer: Definitely in the minority?

Terry Freudenthal: Minority.

Interviewer: So, you want to go on to tell me what happened in school, your school experiences?

Terry Freudenthal: Uh-huh. Well, that first year when I first finally did go to school, I was constantly reprimanded for little things and made an example of by the teacher and then of course the children would mimic and make fun of me at the same time. But it was difficult going and coming from school because you never knew who your friends and enemies were. I did have one good girl friend who never turned against me, one gentile friend, but the rest really went...were a little more difficult on our lives.

Interviewer: What do you mean that she never turned against you?

Terry Freudenthal: Well, she actually would speak to me and at that point, that would be...in 1937, it was not advisable to anybody, children or adults, to speak to other Jews. At that point too, my father had a shoe store and customers were forbidden to come into the store and the only way he could get his customers, if they came in the back way. And in '38, this is a picture of Wolfenbuttel by the way. This gives you...that's the town square and the entire town was built with fachwerkhauser. That's the stucco and lumber type homes, and it was quite a beautiful town and they have restored it back. And the only thing that—I'm jumping around a little bit—but thinking about the town right now,

the only thing that was really destroyed quite a bit was a canning factory. And the reason it was destroyed completely was because after we came over to America, my father sent blueprints and all the information he had in his head about this factory, because underneath the canning factory was an aircraft manufacturing where they manufactured airplanes for the German government. And the only reason he had gathered information he had gathered information was because of the shoe store. He had all these people coming in for their boots and shoes, whatever, and with conversations from different SS and Nazi leaders. He just listened and he never told anyone. My mother didn't know about it and it turned out that actually, that factory was just like three blocks away from our home and it was all underground. Above, it kept going for canning vegetables and fruit.

Interviewer: So that was on—

Terry Freudenthal: And, yes?

Interviewer: You said you have a picture of your father's store.

Terry Freudenthal: Yes I do. He had a very large store and the reason I'm saying large is because his greatest competitor was an SS leader in Wolfenbittel and his store was right across the street from my father's. And so, he was very anxious to take...he constantly took pictures of anybody entering our store so that it could be posted then on the town bulletin board that some so-and-so did go into a...had the nerve to go to a Jewish store. Anyway, my father was approached by a buyer from Berlin to sell the store at a very ridiculous price but he went ahead, he knew...he saw the writing on the wall. We were fortunate in having an affidavit sent to us from an uncle of my mother's, and so we had a way to leave the country. He sold it at a very low price, but he was thrilled to the fact that he could sell it to a chain, because it would then hurt his competitor who was the SS leader. On the last day of his business, this SS leader got the German youth, the Nazi youth in their uniforms, they were all outside the store and they threw a stink bomb into the store. My father picked it up in rage and threw it back. It was a good thing that he did it. He was glad about it but it was time for him to leave. That night, he left the city.

Interviewer: Do you remember as a child hearing your parents discuss all of this at home?

Terry Freudenthal: No. Our parents kept everything from us in order to protect us.

Interviewer: So you learned about most of this years later?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, very much so, even so much later that only a few months before my father passed away, when he was...actually just a few weeks. When he was sick and he was hallucinating, he kept seeing, identifying different doctors in the hospital with people he knew in the past. And would say, "This is so-and-so who is going to go after us and he poisoned this." He came out with some terrible fearful situations which he never told us about, and I don't even think my mother knew about some of the situations. And it was quite frightening for me to hear all of this that he had lived with in all of these years, maybe couldn't even tell us anymore, you know, after it had passed. I'm sort of rambling on but...

Interviewer: I have a question, do you remember what your parents said to you when you were what, nine years old at the time, when they sat the family down and said, we are going to leave Germany, did they explain why?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did they? What exactly did they say? If they were trying to keep it from you, what—

Terry Freudenthal: All right. What happened is that that night my father who had, by the way, had been pulled in many times to the German government, like the police department, and they would sort of accuse him of maybe selling defective boots or overpricing it. And each time, he could prove that they were wrong and that he did no wrong, that he did everything above board which he always did and each time they had to release him. Well this was the last straw he figured, and he better get out of town. Being the fact that we had our affidavit, he left for...he was in, I

can't think of the name. I think he went to Cologne, Germany. I'm not quite sure now where he took up a course in window decoration. He hoped to get a job in the United States because he always did window display and he—

Interviewer: But it takes time to get an affidavit so the decision to do that must have come quite a bit earlier?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, they did about...I think it must have happened a year before, but we didn't know about it. But that left my...when my father left that night, it left my mother and my sister and myself to pack and leave ourselves. Every night, just about every night, the Nazis would come and interrogate us to where my father was, what we're going to take, and because you're only allowed to take used furnishings and belongings that were used and nothing new. And one night, they asked, "Well, how many cameras are you taking?" And my mother said, "Just this one." And my sister popped up and said, "But mother, we have two cameras." And that was a disaster. At that point, the Nazi leader said, "Children always tell the truth." And the interrogation went on and on. Luckily, they ransacked the whole place looking for the second camera, they did not find it. When they left early that morning, my mother went to the washing machine where she had hidden it in the motor and destroyed it and threw it out. She said, "I'm not taking any chances over one little camera." And so, we did finally...we were the only...we did get all our furnishings out. Our ship which left August 31st, we arrived September the 10th in America—

Interviewer: What year?

Terry Freudenthal: —was the last ship...1938. That was, we left August 31st, 1938 and it was the last ship that would allow your personal belongings to go along with you, so we took our entire furnishings. We had to go through a physical examination before leaving the country, and I felt it was another way of trying to keep us from leaving the country, to put another curve into it. And I do remember as a nine-year-old, going from cubicle to cubicle, from one doctor to another for a physical examination, which was a week before we left. And just two days before we were to board ship, the head doctor told my parents that all were well except that I had a curvature of the spine and would not be allowed to leave the country. There was absolutely no truth to this because I became an ardent ballet dancer when I came to the United

States just a year later. My father was fortunate to have enough money that he could pay them all off and that was the only way that you could leave, if you had enough money which we had to do already in Wolfenbuttel and then in Hanover which was our port of departure. And we were able to leave and got on board the ship which was the SS Theodore Roosevelt which was used just one more time after we came to the States by the armed service. And then it was sunk because it was demolished because it was in such a poor condition.

Interviewer: What do you remember of the ride over? How long did it take? Do you remember?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, I do. It took us 10 days and it was a very...September is a very stormy time to be on the seas and it was so stormy that the stewards would come around at night and buckle you into your bunks. It had two leather straps and they would come around and buckle you in especially the children because we were in the upper bunks. And it was so stormy that most people were very seasick and just stayed in their cabins but my father and I for some reason, we felt pretty good and we went to the dining hall and sat to be waited on and nobody came around and finally some steward came out, he was seasick himself, he said, "Just go in the kitchen and help yourself." And actually, they say it's best to eat something, to keep something in your stomach, not to have it empty. And I do remember my father and I going into this huge kitchen and we did actually help ourselves to eat something. That was 10 days.

Interviewer: Were there a lot of other refugees in the ship?

Terry Freudenthal: You know, I don't really recall that there were, for somehow, we must have stayed very much to ourselves. My sister and I do recall my sister and I playing on board the ship, and we were very relieved that it was an American ship. If we had boarded a German ship, I think we still would have been very frightened. But once we boarded an American ship, we already felt a great relief and I remember the greatest thrill was seeing the Statue of Liberty and even after all these years, tears come to my eyes just thinking about it. And in fact, these are my passport pictures, let me get this out, of my...we look very awkward there, but that is my mother, myself, my sister, and my father and here is the Statue of Liberty. The photo is quite faded but it was very, very important. I guess the films weren't as good but that was...we arrived

then on September...I'm sorry, September the 10th is when we arrived. I don't know why I have 11th, in 1938 and when we got off board ship, we just about kissed the ground. But the uncle that sent the affidavit, the uncle of my mother's, met us in New York and he took us to his home, and we had our first American meal there which was a great embarrassment to my father. They served corn on the cob, and in Germany, the only thing you do with corn is to feed it to the pigs, the hogs, and the geese and he was insulted because he felt, "We're not that undernourished that they have to stuff us with corn." And his face just turned red and he was just...he could not, you know...and then we realized afterwards that this was a vegetable that was very, very popular here in America. That it was a very ticklish situation there for a while because they actually stuff it down on the geese, they hold the goose's neck and actually stuff it down with a wooden mallet to fatten them up. So, that was our first experience with it in America.

Interviewer: Now, your immediate family was able to leave, did you leave behind uncles and aunts and cousins?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, uh-huh, and let me go back to one thing because you're asking about family. My father was able to sell the store but he sold it at a very, very cheap price. The German government was to send a monthly...okay, okay. Now, we left off that I was talking about...

Interviewer: Your uncles, your aunts, cousins that you left behind and your grandmother.

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah, sold it and the payments, uh-huh, to my grandmother. You tell me when you start again.

Male: Anytime.

Terry Freudenthal: Oh. The payments never arrived. They were to send...we also left a lot of money behind with the German government. And they had said that they would send, I don't know the amount because my parents never told me. A certain amount was to be sent from the business that my father sold and his bank account to my grandmother in Frielendorf, where my father came from. My mother came from Frankenberg. These are two very, very small towns and their anti-Semitism did start

earlier than in Wolfenbittel, and I lost that grandmother of mine, that was my father's mother. She was taken to Theresienstadt and died there, and two uncles and aunts and several cousins all died in concentration camps. One, my father's brother, got out of Germany by going to Holland and then from Holland, he came to America, but that was only because my father was able to get a visa for him and his wife. And I remember to this day very clearly, my father who by the way—I'm jumping around—but we left...the German government only allowed you \$50.00 per person. So when we left Germany, we had \$200.00...my father had \$200.00 in his pocket but he was glad that we got out he didn't care about what was left behind and we were ready to start a new life when we come to America. My father worked in a bakery, mopping up the floors. So many refugees came over at the same time that it was very difficult to find a job and you took anything in order to survive. And my mother, who never worked in her life, she was a housekeeper, she helped my father in the shoe store quite a bit, did house cleaning. She earned money by cleaning other people's apartments. And then after a few years, I believe two years later, my father got a job in a display house in New York which he kept for 25 years. And he saved money so that he could put a...when you send a visa to someone, you have to vouch for them and put a certain amount of money. I think it was a thousand dollars...I really don't know exactly the amount anymore, that has to be put in escrow, in the bank, in case they become a ward of the state if there are any problems so that the American government is protected. And so this was quite difficult for my father to gather up all this money so that he could send the visa. But he managed because it was a very, very cold winter and every night after work, he went from door to door of anyone he knew to ask for a little bit of money, whatever they could spare, so it could be sent over to Germany to get my uncle out and his wife, and he did.

Interviewer: So, he was only able to get his uncle and your—

Terry Freudenthal: Uncle and...his brother and his wife out. They were the only ones and I remember—

Interviewer: What about your mother's siblings?

Terry Freudenthal: On my mother's side, we also...my mother's side, we got an...I remember they were trying to collect money there for a sister of hers that was still out. Two sisters did come over to the United States also

through the same uncle's visa. And one sister, also with her husband and child were in Holland, and their story is unbelievable. They were taken underground by gentile people and they were separated and lived underground for years until the American army came after the war was over, excuse me. And when they came out, the mother and child were taken care of by one family, and the husband was underground by another family, and they were actually just two or three blocks away from each other and didn't know for several years, I think it was a period of three years. And when they came out, they had so many different ideas and ways that it broke up the family. The mother committed suicide because they could not get together as a family again, apparently her—

Interviewer: This was your aunt?

Terry Freudenthal: This was my aunt and apparently my uncle had befriended another woman and she could not take the stress and strain anymore of everything that went on and then this falling apart. So my cousin, her daughter, was taken care...was put in a home with nuns, and nuns took care of her for two years before she was, it could have been more than that, before she was able to come to the United States. We got her over then. She came to the United States. And she was raised by nuns and to this day, she is still in touched with them in Holland, the town is Halen, Holland. And it was her English teacher, the nun was her teacher too, and she came to the United States a few years ago and visited my cousin, my cousin who's just a year younger than I am.

Interviewer: Did she live near you in New York when she came?

Terry Freudenthal: Not that far away, she also lived in Washington Heights. Most German Jews settled in upper Manhattan called Washington Heights and you almost created your own ghetto because you needed to be around people that experienced the same things that you did and you sort of got strength from each other and helped each other in every which way. So, that's why New York is such a tremendous city, and it just allowed everybody from different parts of the world to live their way. In a way, I guess it's a ghetto but it's not the right terminology to use in the United States. It was a melting pot for everyone and it made—

Interviewer: So you grew up around a lot of people that had been in similar situations.

Terry Freudenthal: Correct, that's right.

Interviewer: And you found comfort from them.

Terry Freudenthal: My mother-in-law never needed to learn English. She was already quite a bit older. My husband also came from Germany and they came over in 1937. But you could do your grocery shopping in Washington Heights and ask for various foods in German and they would know. So there wasn't a necessity unless you went out to work, then of course you learn the language, and as a child, you learn the language very quickly in school. And America was...especially New York, was very helpful to the refugees in many ways. We had special classes in New York which were called opportunity class. I actually had to start again in the first grade even though I was nine years old.

Interviewer: Oh really.

Terry Freudenthal: But as you learned the language and progressed, you were allowed to skip to the next grade right within that school year. So you could skip maybe three grades in a year or four grades as soon as you picked up on the language and you understood the grade work.

Interviewer: Do you remember that as being a difficult time, a hard time? Did you feel accepted or did you feel, well, they threw stones at me in Germany, was it the same or did you feel—

Terry Freudenthal: No, I really left all that behind. Now I'm sure that at different age levels, there were different feelings, because I was able to be much more flexible and accept my whole new life much easier than my sister who was just two and a half years older than I am. My sister had a lot of resentment towards my parents who had to go out to work, and she was sort of put in charge to look after me and was responsible because she was the older one. We went to school, came home, and prepared dinner, I mean, we were young children but we had to take

on responsibilities of adults, and my sister had even more than I did. And so as a result, it was a much greater burden to her. I sort of enjoyed all the newness and all the exciting opportunities that were there and being together in a class with others that had the same problem with language and everything else really helped.

Interviewer: So you didn't feel like an outsider so much?

Terry Freudenthal: No, I don't recall that I did and now, when I was finally put into my regular class, I found it much more difficult because then I was competing with American children and I was on my own, sort of, and I really had to prove myself then.

Interviewer: So you remember that as being hard?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah, but that was more difficult than being within your own group. The teachers were very...the teacher I had was very understanding and very...put in a lot of extra time, after class even, to work with us.

Interviewer: What do you remember of your parents, of how difficult it was for them? Did they more or less keep it entirely from you? Did you ever see your mother crying? Did you see the strain on their lives or were they very private about it?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah, I think the German people as a whole, are not as outgoing, very reserved. And I think my parents' emotions were very pulled in and reserved. I could see the strain on my mother because it was such a completely different life for her. She had lived a very protective and a very easy life. We had a full-time house help in the house and someone who came in and did the sewing for all the clothing we worked and we had a nurse maid and then, coming into the United States, had to do all that all of a sudden by herself.

Interviewer: She starting to clean other people's houses.

Terry Freudenthal: Exactly.

Interviewer: Where she never had to clean her own house.

Terry Freudenthal: —her own house. And they both learned the language pretty fast. They took some...had some lessons in Germany before we left, and my sister had taken some English because she already was in a higher grade than I was, but I didn't know the difference between yes and no when I came to United States. I didn't know a single word of English.

Interviewer: So you remember it being more difficult for you than for them?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, the language part,, but we picked it up very quickly. The fastest way to learn was movies. We even saw the first American movie was a Disney cartoon on board the ship and was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. That's when I first heard the English language.

Interviewer: From a cartoon movie.

Terry Freudenthal: From a cartoon.

Interviewer: Walt Disney.

Terry Freudenthal: Walt Disney movie. And I guess now, people would pick up the language real easy from television and videotapes and such.

Interviewer: Now you spoke about the corn on the cob.

Terry Freudenthal: Hmm-hmm.

Interviewer: That you remember how upsetting that was for your father, do you remember any other incidences where the culture clashed so remarkably that you can remember either in your own experiences or seeing it through your father or your mother?

Terry Freudenthal: That really stands out in my mind and I think after that, we sort of were so close knit as a family. Other than going to work and to school, we really kept to ourselves a lot that, maybe that was our protection so we wouldn't have these cultural shocks. My father showed emotion more than my mother did in ways that, I guess, we...as we're in the country, the longer we were in the country, the more we would strike out and became part of it. And especially my experience with going to ballet, and very seriously because I went once a week, I really got myself so involved with just the dancing and maybe now looking back on it, that was a way for me to protect myself too. I was in my own little world there.

Interviewer: So you grew up in Washington Heights, you went to school there and you married in New York?

Terry Freudenthal: I married in New York, I met my husband in Washington Heights like most German Jewish people who lived there. And we met up there but we moved immediately to Nashville because he was travelling in this area and chose Nashville because his cousin Ernest Freudenthal lives here in Nashville and it was centrally located for his territory. It's a very interesting situation, the fact that my husband was in the American army after he came over and you automatically became an American citizen once you were inducted into the army. This of course I didn't know until years later because we didn't know each other until years after the war. He had, with the American army, he was with the...oh, gosh, he did interpretation, he...I can't think of...

Interviewer: Interpreter?

Terry Freudenthal: Gosh, oh...

Terry Freudenthal: Can you cut it off for a minute? What is it? He was with the American intelligence unit and they chose a lot of German refugees for this because they could listen in on the radios to the German government and interpret and that's what he did. He was with...and it so happens, he was with the Tennessee infantry and he wasn't even thinking about Tennessee at that time. He only moved to Tennessee years and years later. But he was back in Wolfenbuttel with the American Army and he

saw the destruction of the factory that I was talking about. The FBI that never told my father anything about it except the fact that they acknowledged receiving the plans and the description and whereabouts and we did read in the newspaper about a year later or so that there was a tremendous bombing in Wolfenbuttel. But Kurt, my husband who passed away five and a half years ago, actually was in that town and knew about the destruction, and the American army stayed in the main building there like we have the Capitol here in Tennessee. They stayed which was called Weiss Haus like we call here the White House. They took over the headquarters of the German government, the American army took that over and stayed there.

Interviewer: Coming back to the bombing of the canning factory.

Terry Freudenthal: Hmm-hmm.

Interviewer: You said you didn't find out until years later that your father had even sent in these plans.

Terry Freudenthal: Well no, I knew that my father...I knew that he sent it in but I didn't know that he knew any information on it. I knew he was doing some...sending something in on it but we didn't know about the actual results that it was of any use.

Interviewer: And you mentioned something about reading in the newspaper, what do you remember reading in the newspaper about the war and what was happening to the Jews? That certainly should be...could you tell me more about what you read and what you knew during the war?

Terry Freudenthal: Well, the one thing that I...we were very...first, now that you're asking me these questions, the first thing that comes to mind is the fact that President Roosevelt was the president of the United States at the time when we came over and he was next to God for us. I mean, we came to a country and the president was president Roosevelt and we were Democrats from the very first day on because President Roosevelt was a Democrat and would never even think of voting any other way. Now, years later we find out that Roosevelt wasn't really the greatest friend as far as helping, getting the Jews out. And to this day, I still like

to put that on the back burner and not want to believe it, because to us, he was a great savior, he really was.

Interviewer: But during...

Terry Freudenthal: And I don't...and to answer that too, I remember more listening to the radio than reading newspaper maybe because of my age, nine, and the difficulty of the language, understanding it, and I don't think enough...I don't recall enough being written about the Jews in Germany.

Interviewer: What about after the war when all the reports of what had happened in the concentration camps, how did that affect your family, your parents, and you? It could have been you.

Terry Freudenthal: Oh definitely and even when I was asked to give an interview on this, I thought, well, what significance would I have to this program? I was lucky enough not to have gone through concentration camp and have this horrible experience behind me. And yet, thinking about it and after I was called once more, I thought, well maybe there is something I can add to the story so that we can...that people in the future would be prepared a little bit better in recognizing what can happen.

Interviewer: The writing on the wall and talking about the significance of what you have to say now.

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah.

Interviewer: In terms of being able to tell, what kind of things to look for.

Terry Freudenthal: Hmm-hmm, the danger signs.

Interviewer: Yeah, danger signs.

Terry Freudenthal: Let me give this some thought. The government...see, my father who fought in World War I and was given a cross, the honorable...

Interviewer: Iron Cross?

Terry Freudenthal: Iron Cross, all of that meant nothing there, being a Jew and yet, I don't know, I'm trying to think why he recognized that fact that we had to leave. I guess just that it became difficult to live there in normal situation. I'm trying to come up with something to tell people...

Interviewer: Now, you were the first of your family to leave?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah, we were the first.

Interviewer: Or had some of your other aunts and uncles—

Terry Freudenthal: No, we were the first ones.

Interviewer: So he—

Terry Freudenthal: The others might not...didn't want to leave like that uncle that I told you about, he saw no reason to leave, that the town would support him and he saw no danger.

Interviewer: Was he living in the same town?

Terry Freudenthal: He lived with his mother in the town where my father came from, in a small town, and yet they were...the synagogues were burned, I guess I never mentioned the fact that we weren't allowed to do, go to any cultural or school after...did I jump over that completely, I think.

Interviewer: No, we'll get back—

Terry Freudenthal: I had one year of school and then we weren't allowed. I think the fact that they stopped and didn't allow us to go to any cultural functions or parties or gatherings, swimming, music lessons and all that was cancelled out for any Jewish person, and I guess that would have been a sign.

Interviewer: You said something about school, were you not allowed to go to school at some point?

Terry Freudenthal: I've had...only one year of school I had.

Interviewer: And how long were you out...where did you go to school after that?

Terry Freudenthal: I had to stay at home.

Interviewer: So you were at home for how long?

Terry Freudenthal: I was at home for a full year before we left.

Interviewer: Just helping your mother...your sister too?

Terry Freudenthal: Just staying...yeah, we wasn't allowed to have any kind of education or music lessons or gathering of any kind, we couldn't go to a movie theater.

Interviewer: Did your mother tried to educate you at home during this time?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, we kept reading our books and tried to do some work at home but it was a very disturbing year and I don't think we did too much. The fact was that the synagogue was an off base for us too. We were not allowed to go have religious education or go to services, and the synagogue was burned after we left. That was Kristallnacht. You see,

we arrived here in September and Kristallnacht was November so we were able to escape before all that happened but our synagogue was destroyed.

Interviewer: Now I know it's a lot of years ago, you were eight in that year that you were out of school, but do you remember how you felt about being Jewish that year that you had to stay home with your mom and your sister? And you couldn't go to the movies and you couldn't go swimming and you couldn't go to services, and particularly not being able to school, do you remember how you felt about being Jewish?

Terry Freudenthal: We felt a very strong need to bind us and I think Judaism became stronger for us at that point. My parents kept a kosher home in Germany even though we were really more conservative than their parents were but we kept an orthodox Jewish home because of their parents and relatives, they were all very orthodox. And when we came to the United States, we were more conservative. But the religious part still stayed there but it wasn't overwhelming, I don't recall. We went to Sunday school here in America and we went to religious school. I never learned Hebrew because I wasn't allowed to go to those years, that in Germany, I missed out that full year of Hebrew study and of course my parents didn't have the time to train me. My sister did have Hebrew a year before that. But I then picked up...the religious school part of it here in the United States.

Interviewer: Now you said your parents kept kosher in—

Terry Freudenthal: In Germany.

Interviewer: —in Germany. Do you remember where they got their meat? Was there a kosher butcher in...there's only 25 Jewish families.

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah, well, it was right next to [Braunschweig (sp) 0:49:27.8] and then you could get all of that from [Braunschweig (sp)] which was a larger city yet. But they were a little bit more lenient about the kosher meat I think even at that time already. I don't remember it being of great importance. We didn't mix dairy and meat, but I don't think we had too much of the kosher meat except that my mother salted it herself.

So maybe because it wasn't large enough with a butcher there, a separate...we did not have a kosher butcher that I know.

Interviewer: Hmm-hmm, okay. So you feel that your religious practice did change somewhat when you moved to America?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes but very little. It's just freer feeling of it. I guess I was too young to realize that we did very little of religious participation towards the end. I remember our holidays in Germany were all very important but then the last year, we just didn't have any at all. We were afraid to do anything that we were not allowed to.

Interviewer: So, how long do you feel...I mean, for you, you were a child and I get the impression that you adjusted fairly quickly. Do you think your parents ever felt at home in America? Did it take them a long time or did they adjust—

Terry Freudenthal: No, they had some difficult years in the beginning to start all over again, because they really literally had to start from the beginning and had two young children that they had to raise. But they, I think, adjusted very well. My father was a very hardworking man and so was my mother. She really pitched in and it was a very harmonious family. We just took one step at a time and we were happy with every little addition. In order to help with the house, just about every family that came over in Washington Heights, would take a larger apartment and as an extra income, you would rent out a room and then have room and board and you make even more money. So we always had two boarders in our apartment which gave a tremendous help financially to keep things going. And my mother did the cooking and they were...so we had two boarders, had to have room and board for years and that helped quite a bit.

Interviewer: How about...so they were very sure of their decision to leave and they just worked toward that. There was never any—

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, definitely. I mean, the writing was on the wall as far as my parents were concerned. They had to get out and they had to get out then, even though a lot of people did not leave. My father tried to talk to several Jewish people in Wolfenbuttel itself to say, "Get out, do

what you can to get out as fast as you can,” and everybody still felt that “Oh, this can’t happen to us. It’s just temporarily, it’s going to pass,” but it didn’t.

Interviewer: So your parents were very sure, both of them together?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah.

Interviewer: There was never any...well, like say your mother saying, “Well look, everybody else is staying.”

Terry Freudenthal: That’s right.

Interviewer: That she was just as certain as him.

Terry Freudenthal: That’s right. And I think what helped was the fact that they had moved once before in their life. See, both my...so often in Germany, just like here, you grow up in a town and you get married in the town and you stay in that town. When my parents got married, they moved, each one moved away from their town and settled in a new town and started their life there. And I think probably, that made it a little, gave them a little preparation, made it a little easier to have another move.

Interviewer: Do you remember overhearing any arguments between your father and other towns people or your father and other relatives about his decision to leave and his urging other people to leave with him?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah, we had...the doctor that delivered me, Dr. Kirschheimer, was a very close friend of ours and he couldn’t understand this to happen and hesitated to the end, but he did come out and I think just a year later. I forget exactly, but he did make it out but he would not help my father in making out this plan, blueprint and such and all the information for this plan, for this plane manufacturing company even though he knew about it. And when he was here in America, he still felt close to the German government. To this day, he corresponds with people in Germany. He said it’s still...he felt like this was his country.

It's difficult to put yourself into a situation of leaving America, going to another, and then shutting the door on the fact that you're an American or that you had allegiance to America or any connection to it. It's quite a change but some people were able to do it and others weren't.

Interviewer: Do you correspond with anyone in Germany?

Terry Freudenthal: No, I have no desire. The German government will let you come over and visit and pay for your visit, your transportation and your stay and will wine and dine you if you're a refugee from a particular town or something. The town will go all out to do it. I have absolutely no desire to ever go back to do that. I don't want to ever say thank you to anybody in the country of Germany. Even though we went back on business, it was a very...my husband sold ribbons all over Europe for seven years, including Germany, and we felt very uncomfortable every time we were in Germany. And every time I looked at a person that was the age of my parents, I saw them in a uniform. I would visualize them in a Nazi uniform. And each time I would see somebody in that particular age group, I wonder, where were they and what did they do against the Jewish people. So it's something that even to this day, you know, you say you forgive but it somehow, it stays back there, you don't forget. I have forgiven but I can't forget, and I will not forget to a point where I would want to be wined and dined by the German government and say thank you to them.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the reunification of Germany, the recent events?

Terry Freudenthal: Well, I think that this is something inevitable. I knew it was going to happen and I think it's a very dangerous situation, and I feel very uncomfortable about it. I really...it has a lot to do with the culture, and you cannot just forget about the background of the German people, how they were raised, how they were taught, what their culture is like, that doesn't change and it worries me quite a bit. And I think that the German government is...the people are very ambitious and hardworking people, and I see in the future...I'm concerned about their strength and taking over, I really am.

Interviewer: Can we talk for a few minutes about your personal feelings about all of this? How do you feel that your immigration experiences and the childhood that you had in Germany, how do you feel that that has changed your perspective on life, maybe change the values that you instilled in your children, the lasting impact on your philosophies of life?

Terry Freudenthal: I think there definitely is...that I probably have, especially on our first daughter, I think that our political views, our culture and all is bound to be passed on to our children and I can see where...I have three daughters and I see where they have less and less of the German background, our cultural background, and our political feelings and our knowledge is much stronger with the oldest than with the second and the least with the third.

Interviewer: Could you be a little bit more specific about your political feelings? How you feel they've been influenced?

Terry Freudenthal: Yes, I think they were influenced probably more so by my husband who...we are quite liberal in our thinking and I think that politically, their few points may have been influenced a little as children too, and possibly as adults later on. My husband was very interested in history and I think that was passed on especially to my oldest daughter and they all three are so different and it's a pleasure to see it. They are the product...they're real American children and I'm real proud of them, but I think they've gotten some of the European culture too and I don't mind that at all.

Interviewer: Okay.

Terry Freudenthal: Uh-huh. I'm not ashamed of being of German decent. I'm just ashamed of the German people.

Interviewer: Of what they did?

Terry Freudenthal: Hmm-hmm.

Interviewer: In terms of your Jewish observance, do you think that...wanting your children to have a Jewish education or your observance at home, has that been impacted in any way by your background as an immigrant? Having to had to flee because you were Jewish.

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah. Uh-huh, I think over the years, that has feathered out a little bit too. I think we were much stronger about those feelings in the beginning. And I think we sort of let that flow out a little bit because I know our affiliation with a synagogue was a very important thing and always has been. The first thing we did when we came to Nashville as a married couple, we joined the West End Synagogue and felt that was a very important step to do and one of the first ones to do when you come to a town and became very involved. But over the years, I realized we're doing a little bit less than we used to, maybe because our children are grown now. We stressed it more as our children were growing up, the religious school and the background and the culture and all that. And now that they're grown, I think I'm doing less than I used to. But I hope that they had picked it up.

Interviewer: In terms of instilling their Jewish identity?

Terry Freudenthal: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you find yourself reminding them of where their parents came from and their heritage in terms of their Jewish identity in any way?

Terry Freudenthal: Not that much I believe. They're fully aware of our background, my past husband and mine, and I imagined that has...I don't know, I would have to ask them whether that has done anything to them.

Interviewer: The feeling of luck that it wasn't you, sort of.

Terry Freudenthal: Pardon?

Interviewer: The feeling that this could have happened to you. To think about the war time, they're just lucky—

Terry Freudenthal: Uh-huh. Actually, I had made some notes and let my...I have only other daughter who's living here, the other two are out of town. And Judy read the notes and she said, "You be sure to keep that because we need to be reminded about this." And I guess you don't talk about it all the time, it's just, if somebody asked you, you'll answer to it but you don't really come up with our background and what we went through or anything. It's only when somebody asks you about it that you talk about it, otherwise it doesn't really come up. And maybe we want to put it on the back burner, I don't know.

Interviewer: So, to sum up, now that you've told me your story, do you have something, some message that you feel you'd like others to know? We talked about this briefly before but...

Terry Freudenthal: I think it's important for us to keep remembering what has happened so it would not happen again. Unfortunately, as we read the newspaper, we are aware of similar situations all over the world. And that humanity is so cruel against each other is just unbelievable, but it really hasn't stopped. And it frightens me because if it can...situations can happen at Ireland and England, at Africa, China, Israel, the unrest all over the world is so tremendous. So we really haven't learned our lessons strong enough, and I think we somehow need to pull ourselves together and say, "Wake up, don't destroy yourselves." The world has shrunk, has come together but at the same time, we still have the hatred that's been there, and when there is just a little bit of hatred, it can develop into what happened in Germany. So that's the only thing I...a little fire, a little spark can create a fire so...like the Ku Klux Klan, the skinheads, they scare me. It's very dangerous because Hitler himself, people who really knew him before he became the leader of Germany would have thought him to be the most unqualified person, and if you read anything about him in the history, it's unbelievable that a man of his caliber and his background...