Regina Fleischer

The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures. This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share the belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson
Director

ABSTRACT
Interviewee: Regina Fleischer
Interviewer: Rhea Adler
Date of interview: Spring, 1981

- Length of time in Wilmette
- Birth in Bydgoszcz (Poland) - Germany - Life 1928-1933 – An only child - Father in wholesale leather business – Anti-Semitism forced move to Warsaw
- Explanation of Hasidic Jews -- Mother's background vs. Father's background (more worldly)
- Life in Warsaw compared to the Depression years in U.S.A.(through Joseph Fleischer's experience)
- Childhood reaction to anti-Semitism - Wish to come to States began early - Conflicts within parents at thoughts of leaving friends and family to reestablish themselves in a new country kept them in Warsaw
- German occupation - Formation of "Judenrat" and Ghetto – Life in the Ghetto - Concentration camps
- Move to factory apartment for safety - Mother picked up by police. Father obtains her release - Move from factory- Father walks out and never returns
- Maid arranges for Regina to live with a Polish Catholic family Unsuccessful - Returns to Ghetto and Mother - Leaves Ghetto shortly before its burning - Lived with Catholic family - Not familiar with religious ritual practiced in family so eventually returned to hiding place with Mother, complete wiping out of the Ghetto, people in hiding "turned in" when money ran out - Polish uprising against Germans -Becomes courier for Polish Resistance - Poles overcome by Germans - Decision to be caught
- Caught and placed on a cattle train with 150 people to a car - Taken to Ravensbruck, Germany in N.E.
- Worked as slave labor for Siemen's Electrical - Describes life in concentration camp, "life was hell," kept hair at great cost
- Decide to be taken on transport and were put under Red Cross care - Used as camouflage for movement of German troops
- Arrival in Copenhagen after much delay and illness from food from American Red Cross packages - To Malmo* - Lived in Sweden for a year and a half waiting to come on Polish quota
- Came to U.S.A. at age of 18 years- Expression of strong emotional pull then and now - Present philosophy
- Came to New York City on "Gripsholm" - Met by uncle – First impressions of New York and Chicago - Mother employed in garment district, lived in small apartment, begins school with no English at Roosevelt High School, dropped out, starts business college, finished and goes to work for chemical jobbers

- Meets Joseph Fleischer, marries and goes to New York as he goes into Navy in Korean War - Returns to Chicago, pregnant with daughter Janice while husband still in service - Baby born at Great Lakes Naval Hospital - Mother has remarried so she and baby take a furnished apartment at 6106 University on the Midway - Joe returns, gets employment and they move to a larger southside apartment with very good friends across hall - Baby-sat for each other - They also sensed her potential and encouraged her to go to night school
- Becomes pregnant second time - Has a son and remains a homemaker 20 years
- Return to college after Janice entered New Trier and Marc is in junior high school - Equivalency test finds her in 98 percentile - Encouraged to enroll at Roosevelt University in CLEP Program which University of Chicago and Princeton developed - Tested and entered as a college junior, graduated with honors, graduate school at Rosary prior to Roosevelt graduation - Graduated Rosary with honors 1972
- Job hunt, Wilmette Library opening under Helen Siniff – Works part time with graduation following year, hired full time as reference librarian and cataloguer under Mr. Freiser and Dorothy Hasse - Upon her retirement became Assistant Director under Dick Thompson
- Library system goes on computer — Lack of security— Community attitudes change regarding respect of library property
- Takes computer course at Oakton Community College – Wilmette Public Library goes on computer, placed in charge of conversion
- Future of libraries - Various kinds of library users – Changes in needs of readers as changes in communications occur

TRACK 1

RA: How long have you lived here?

RF: We have lived here for about sixteen years.

RA: Tell me where were you born?

RF: I was born in a town in Poland named Bydgoszcz. That is the part of Poland which is considered the corridor to the sea. After the First World War when Poland was created, the country was given access to the ocean. And this morning they are very much in the news. This is where the labor strikes are. It was at one time Germany. There are a lot of German people living there. Then it became Polish. Now I think the town was not far from Danzig. I guess that is now Poland also. At the time of my birth it was still Germany.

RA: The Polish Corridor didn't they call it after the war?

RF: Right.

RA: Then how long did you live in the area that you were born?

RA: I was born in 1928 and my father had a business in the town. I was the only child. I had a pretty nice life until about 1933 when....

RA: Then tell me, what kind of business did your father have?

RF: My father was in the leather business.

RA: Oh, yes.

RF: In those days shoes and purses and all kinds of things were made out of leather and so he had a business where he was providing the fine leather.

RA: Oh, yes. He was the middle man so to speak.

RF: Yes.

RA: This is interesting. What happened in 1933?

TRACK 2

RF: Well, in 1933, of course this was after Hitler has come to power in Germany and there was a tremendous amount of anti-Semitism in Poland and especially, I guess, in this area because they did resent the fact that they were taken away from Germany. The large German population resented that. So all kinds of overt violent acts started occurring towards the Jewish merchants. .My father's business was attacked and there was a boycott where nobody would do business with the Jewish merchants and my father was then forced to sell his business to leave Bydgoszcz and we went to Warsaw. My father’s family was originally from Warsaw and he had family in Warsaw. He came from a pretty prominent family. My grandfather was a rather wealthy man in the city. My father's brothers were prominent doctors and attorneys in the city. He went back to Warsaw because that he would be better off there. There was a large Jewish community in Warsaw which was somewhat protected.

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My parents were of two different kinds of people in a way. My mother came from an extremely religious family in the small "Shtetel."

RA: Now what is that?

RF: A "Shtetel" is a little village, a little town which has a Jewish population.

RA: I see.

RF: I mean this whole town wasn't Jewish but, you know, there would be a part of the town with a Jewish population. It was just a small town and the Jews lived there and had their own culture and they had their own synagogue. They had their own cultural activities and So on. My grandparents were Hasidic. My grandfather wore this long caftan and my grandmother wore the wig and they were very observant Hasidic Jews.

RA: "Schtetel" don't they call it?

RF: Right. The "Schtetel." My mother came from a family of nine children. My father was a man who travelled in other countries. He spent some time in Rio de Janeiro. He was rather worldly. Loved to dance. He used to win prizes for dancing the tango. He was a very nice looking man and had a wonderful personality. He was very well liked. He was not a practicing Jew in the sense that I think he was agnostic. He did not follow anything at home. My mother used to go on high holidays to the

services and I can recall when it was very hot, usually those Jewish high holidays were very hot, just like in this country in September when the holidays come around it is very warm and, of course, the big synagogue in Warsaw was not air conditioned so she would sit there fasting and it was very hot and uncomfortable so I would go with the maid to visit her and we would bring her usually an orange that had cloves stuck in it -- in the orange. Then she would sit there and smell it. It was like smelling salts. It was that type of thing. It would kind of revive her in this terrible heat and being hungry.

TRACK 3

My maternal grandfather was a really extraordinary man because when he knew that his children would not follow the religion the way he did, he never made any statement or comment about it. He felt that religion is a very personal thing between the person and his God and that everybody has to be responsible for their own conscience so that he felt that he had to do whatever was appropriate for him and he lived his religion from early morning to late at night, but he felt that he could not impose his faith or his way
of living on his children. I think he was very progressive for the times because even in his own house one of his daughters, my mother's sister, who lived at home and was not married, even in his own house he would not

impose his rules, because on Sabbath she went into her room and did some sewing or did some things that were not the kind of things that he wanted done on Sabbath. He would just ignore it. He would pretend that he didn't know. I remember my mother saying to him, "Well, you know you can enforce it in your own home as long as she lives in your house. You could ask her not to do these things that are offensive." But he said no because she didn't feel that this was what she wanted to do and it was meaningless if he told her to do it. So he knocked on her door and came into her bedroom and if she was right in the middle of doing something that she wasn't supposed to do, he would just walk out of the room and close the door behind him and never say anything. He was a very tolerant person. Now I used to go there for visits, usually on school holidays, and I can remember that it was probably the best times of my life, because I was very much loved and they were very happy to see me. Didn't know what to do for me. There was also my mother's sister who lived in the same town who was married and had a beautiful home and was rather well to do so she was able to take me all kinds of places and do all kinds of things and it was very exciting.

RA: I take it she had no children.

RF: She had no children.

TRACK 4

RA: How many grandchildren were there?

RF: There were other grandchildren. The grandchildren, of course, who are here in the United States, whom they only saw once or twice when they came for a visit. There were also two other grandchildren in Poland. They lived away and I don't know if because this was a son whose children these were, it wasn't quite as close as with my mother so I had some really wonderful times there. I would get terribly spoiled and I would come home and my mother would be very upset because she would say I would never go there again [Laughter] because "I can't do a thing with you. They just spoiled you rotten."

RA: Then it was an interesting thing. Your grandparents did get to this country then to visit?

RF: No. My uncles came from here. They brought their families to visit them in Poland. My mother's brother lived here in Chicago. He had a business in the city. He took his wife and children to visit. I think it was twice that he took them there for a visit. So they did meet the children but they never came to the United States. Anyway, my dad then went to work for a tannery in Warsaw which was actually in the same line of business. However, this time he didn't own the business. He was working for somebody else. We were comfortable. I really have to say that when I talked

to my husband and he remembers the Depression in the 30's very vividly and how difficult the times were I don't have these kinds of recollections. If there were economic problems that my parents had I was never aware of them. I really did not feel it in any way, whereas I say my husband remembers all of these different things that were happening and what things he couldn't have, although his father was working during the Depression, but sort of hand me down clothes, used bikes, and all that sort of thing.

RA: Our children interestingly enough remember none of that though they went through that but they were very small at the time, as your husband must have been.

RF: Yes, but he remembers that though. He remembers that families had to sort of help each other and that there were times when people were out of work. He can't remember hunger as there was in this country in many places. He was never hungry and, like I say, his father was always working. His father was a milkman and he continued to deliver milk, but it was just that everything was sort of, in his memory, everything was shabby and you couldn't do things and you couldn't go on vacations or whatever, so he does recall that. I cannot recall that. I remember that we were living a fairly comfortable life, that we did go away for the summers and that we continued

to have the help at home with this live in maid and I went to a private school. I can't remember really any kind of a hardship or even my parents saying, "Well, you can't do this because we can't afford it." Like I say, maybe they had problems but they certainly did not indicate that.

RA: Your husband was not an only child in his family?

RF: No. There were four.

TRACK 5

RA; Would that have made a difference perhaps in your family?

RF: At times that would. Also, I think that my father's position was different than his father's position. My father had a much better job as long as he was working. Our lifestyle really did not suffer. There was a depression in Poland, which I understand was worldwide. I had never noticed. It almost reminds me of, like the recessions we have lived through here. If you live on the North Shore you really don't know that there was a recession. You keep reading about it in the paper. There are areas where there is high unemployment and people are out of work and can't pay their bills and so on, but you certainly don't see it around Old Orchard or Northbrook Court. People are still shopping and still doing and going and people are taking vacations. It depends, I think, on the economic level.

RA: And the area in which you live.

RF: That's right. So my recollections are that .it was a very comfortable time economically. My recollection is also that it wasn't a comfortable time in many other ways and that is....

RA: Certainly not politically.

RF: Certainly not politically. And also I think that I was very aware of the anti-Semitism. As young as I was, I was terribly, terribly hurt by it. I felt that even then, as I say, I was a young child, but I felt and I can remember it very distinctly because it was a very strong feeling. I remember saying to my father when he would come in to say goodnight to me that I wanted to go to the United States and he would say, "Uh huh, Why would you want to go to the United States?" Well, I had started school and I had started learning things and I was an avid reader and I knew that there was this country out there. Of course my mother had her family with whom she corresponded. So I was aware of America and I felt from everything that I heard and I had read that it was a place where I wanted to live because of the freedom, and I had this sense that all this kind of anti-Semitism that was going on at home would not be happening there because of the fact that it was a land of freedom. So I would say, "Dad, I just want to go to

the United States. Why couldn't we just go there?" And he would say, "I can't understand it. You have all your friends and you have all your family here and you are comfortable, so why would you want to go to the United States?" I would say, "Because I really hate it. I just despise everything that has happened and I want to get out of here." He just would laugh and say, "Now you really don't mean it because you would have to leave all your family and all your friends and you wouldn't be happy if you got there." And he just, like they say, that saying, out of the mouth of babes. If he would have listened to me we would have left before the war started and established ourselves in this country and he would have been alive because, of course, he did get killed by the Germans. The reason that I hated it so was because everywhere I went I was reminded of the fact that I was Jewish and I was despised for it. I went to a private school. We had uniforms somewhat like the Catholic schools would have. We would go on a field trip to a museum or to an art institute or whatever and there would be other schools visiting at the same time and the other children, as young as they were, would recognize / our uniforms and they would know that this was a Jewish school and they would call us all kinds of names and spit at us and all kinds of things like that. I would come

home absolutely crushed and I would be crushed at this attitude and the cruelty of it and I thought this was terribly undeserved. I guess I always had a sense of my own worth or dignity or something and I just did not feel that I wanted to be abused like this and that I would not permit myself to be abused like that. That is why I wanted to get out of there.

TRACK 6

RA: That inner security of feelings that you were a person of worth so young is most unusual.

RF: Yes. I think so, I mean that I did have that, but then my parents did not want to leave the country because they were older and they would have to really cut all their ties,- it would require a great deal of upsettinq of their lives and an adjustment and they were fearful. But I was young and wasn't fearful. Part of that feeling was that I felt that my family was living in Poland for, I don't know, I never researched my family, but I am sure that they lived there for hundreds of years and I just felt that up to that point they were considered Polish citizens and they fought in wars and paid their taxes and did all the things that a citizen was supposed to do and contributed in whatever way they could and they were also good citizens, responsible citizens. I couldn't understand why all of a sudden this whole thing turned around and everybody started acting like they were no

longer Polish citizens and they became second class citizens. So that was not acceptable to my way of thinking and that's why I really was not happy there and never had any desire to go back. Now I have absolutely, as a matter of fact it isn't that I don't have a desire to go back, I would go out of my way not to go there if I had to. I have no good memories with the exception of my family. I have absolutely no good memories towards the country of my birth. I have no nostalgia or sentimental feelings towards it.

RA: This is sad.

RP: It is sad, but that's the way it is.

RA: Then the thing that meant the most to you was wiped away with the German occupation.

RF: Right. And I know that. The things that were meaningful to me are gone and there is absolutely nothing there that is meaningful to me. I have no sense of country. As a matter of fact, you know people ask me, "What is your nationality?" Of course, I can say to myself, "American," but many people who are Americans will say, "Some kind of a hyphenated American," but I am not hyphenated.

RA: You are definitely American. This is interesting in that last Tuesday I participated in a reception for new immigrants that had been sworn in that very morning, 150, that was what they had prepared for. Every week we take in approximately

that number of people in the city of Chicago alone which in 52 weeks of a year is a lot of people, and it was very interesting to see how many countries they come from. There were Polish people who were attempting to get out of Poland. There were Afghanistan people from Afghanistan.

RF: Well, this has always been the refuge of the whole world, but that I felt that I had made my choice really at a very early age. I just sort of opted for America.

RA; It is too bad that you didn't, weren't able to.

TRACK 7

RF: Yes. Then later on in life, after the war, when we were in Sweden and we had absolutely every opportunity to stay there and it was a very fine country, lovely people. We were very happy there, made many friends, had jobs, a place to live. My mother was very fond of the country and wanted to stay there.

RA: Because it was closer to home.

RF: Well, it was just that she was already there and again she didn't feel that she wanted to make another transition, but I did not want to stay in Sweden. I felt that it was a marvelous place, but it wasn't dynamic for me. I always felt that the United States was a dynamic country, that it had opportunities. It gave me a sense of happening, something is always happening and that you could really thrive just on the excitement that the country sort of exuded. There was always a vitality in the people and

everything that was happening. I didn't feel that there was that kind of vitality in Sweden and that there was that kind of exciting, vibrant climate.

RA: Is this because you suppose it is an old country?

RF: It's very settled. It's very settled and it's very homogeneous. The people are, I think that the richness of this country is really because there are so many cultures all together and commingling and there's one feeding on the other, the contributions that the people from all over the world are making to this dynamic climate. Like you say, the vibrancy comes from the mixing of the cultures and the richness of the whole fabric....

RA: That's right.

RF: ....were in most other countries, with the exception of maybe like Canada or Australia, I am not too familiar with it, but the established European countries, the population is all the same, the culture is all the same. Not that many people travel from country to country. There is not that much of a broadening of horizon, plus this is a very big country, physically big country. There are many things happening that are affected by climate, by geography, by all kinds of things and, therefore, you have that very rich mixture that works very well.

RA: It's a two edged sword sort of because what makes it that way also makes it more difficult to govern,

RF: Yes. And, of course, it creates a penchant for ethnic and racial and whatever.

RA: But tension is not all bad either.

TRACK 8

RF: Yes. That's right, but I mean it creates negative tensions, too.' It also creates a very positive tension to create and produce and build so it is a.... So, anyway, the fact remains that I chose what I am and I am very happy with my choice. When the war was coming, everybody kind of had the feeling that the war was coming, it was just a question of when. And Germany was not going to be satisfied to stay within its borders and, of course, Poland always had the misery of being located between these two super powers of Russia and Germany and whenever they clashed Poland got smashed in the middle. The Germans and the Russians kept overflowing into Poland so that was nothing new. Poland was really independent for a very short time, only between the wars, after the League of Nations established their independence. So they hardly got used to it. But my father was not a person who was pessimistic. He was a very optimistic person and he felt that things were going to be great and that nothing was going to happen and the war wasn't going to break out and he didn't worry

about it very much. As a matter of fact, that last summer of 1939 we were away to the summer place in the country and my dad would come there on week-ends and things were really getting pretty hot in August. The talk of war was all over the place, but my father would *not* listen to it and what he read in the paper or whatever. He just told us that it was not going to come about because his whole contention was that Poland had a pact with England and if the Germans attacked Poland, which is exactly what happened....

RA; That's right.

RF: ....if the Germans attacked Poland, then they would have to fight England and he felt that the Germans did not want to fight England because they were afraid to fight England. And, of course, France was another one, England and France. So he did not believe that Hitler wanted a world war.

RA: He couldn't accept that.

RF: No. He felt that that was too great of a risk and that Hitler wasn't going to take that risk.

RA: He was assuming he was a sane person.

RF: That's exactly right. And, of course, since then the history has borne this out, that Hitler could have been crushed very easily in the beginning if anybody did it because he had nothing and it was after....

TRACK 9

RA: The Germans are in occupation of the whole country now. Would you like to....

RF: First of all, immediately all of the schools were closed and there was, of course, lack of food. There were all kinds of hardships on everybody, not just Jews, because at that point the Jews and Poles were still mixed up and there was a hardship on everyone. Schools were closed. People started organizing, schools in homes, in temples and whatever. It was sort of underground schools. I went to stuff like that and continued my education somewhat but, of course, you have no access to books or any kind of materials and it was very difficult. It took the Germans about a year to get themselves settled and organized and so on and the next things they did was they took some of the prominent Jewish people in Warsaw and created what they called a government.

RA: With Jewish people?

RF: The "Judenrat."

RA: Oh.

RF: And they were organizing a ghetto. They were starting to tell the Jewish people that they had to move only into a certain area of the city and they really used these Jewish people who, of course, did not know what * was in store for them, as the policing force and the arrangers of all of this so that it was the Jewish

people who themselves had to supervise and organize their own destruction and they created the ghetto. At first it was open where you could go in and out at will. Soon after that they surrounded it with a wall which had gates in the wall and at that point they were in total control because all the Jewish people from the city, plus a lot of people from these "Shtetels" around the city, were hoarded into the ghetto. The conditions in the ghetto became impossible. There was no housing for all that many people. In a home or an apartment there would be half a dozen families. People shared the same rooms. A couple of families would have to share. They had total control of what came in and what went out of the ghetto so, therefore, they were able to control the coming in of the food into the ghetto and they were very strict about that so there was no food. There were no medical supplies. There were no sanitary services and it just became a total hell.

RA: And you were moved into this situation in your own home?

RF: We were fortunate enough that our place was within the walls, but we had to share because my grandparents then came in from the little "Shtetel" that they left and they stayed with us.

RA: These were your mother's parents?

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RF: My mother's parents and her sisters.

TRACK 10

Now my aunt from the "Shtetel" the one that was married was totally different, her husband was quite a wealthy man. He had a flour mill and he did the milling of the flour for this whole big area there. They had an absolutely beautiful home. Magnificent |imported furniture, all kinds of fabulous art, beautiful things of all sorts because they traveled widely all over the world and bought all kinds of things. They both had beautiful clothes. Everything that my uncle wore was made in England and imported and so on. Of course, when the Germans came into town, whoever was the head guy of the German units would ask what is the best place in town and everybody said it was my aunt and uncle's home. So, of course, they chased them out right away and took over their house. They did say to my aunt that she had excellent taste. They thought she did alright, but anyway they were pushed out of their home with absolutely nothing, just the clothes on their backs. So they came also to Warsaw. So anyway we had a full house and....

RA: Were there other children?

RF: Well, there were other brothers of my mothers and their. families, but we were not....

RA: You were the only small child?

RF: Right.

RA: That's what I mean.

RF: Because my aunt did not have any children and the other aunt was not married. So I was the only child and at that time I was eleven years old.

RA; I was going to say you must have been about in fourth grade or eleven.

RF: We had tried, my father was also again very fortunate because the company that he was working for was also within this area that was designated as the ghetto. They, of course, were immediately taken over by the Germans and started producing leather for the German army and the employees were kept intact. They were working for the Germans then. So then they had somewhat of a privilege. At least they were working and while they were on the premises of the factory they were a little bit more protected than if they were elsewhere. And they also had contact a little bit more with the outside because people were coming into the factory from outside of the ghetto and going out so that you could have a little contact with the outside. And, of course, this maid that I told you about who had been with us all these years had to leave us because she was Polish and so she couldn't live in the ghetto so she had to go somewhere else to work and my father

got her a job with one of the German people who were in the factory and he kept somehow in touch with her....

RA: Yes.

RF: ....through this man who was working with my father.

TRACK 11

So she was able to occasionally send us some food or something and we kept constantly in touch with her. Of course then it became so bad in the ghetto that my grandparents and my aunt and my uncle decided that they were going to go back to their own small town and they just could not stand the conditions that were there. My grandmother was sick and so on. So when I am talking about the conditions in the ghetto and you have to remember my age and the kind of thing that was happening, kind of traumatic experiences.

RA: Can you define approximately the area that the ghetto covered?

RF: Well, it was an area, I don't know exactly how big it was, I can't remember, but it was sort of in the middle of town. At that time there were, before the ghetto was created, a lot of Polish people living in that area. They, of course, were displaced also. They had to leave. There were churches. There were all kinds of community buildings and they were also displaced. There was this very big prison which was called Pawiak and I guess it later became very well known because the Germans did a

lot of "nice" things in there. But anyway this was the area and what I was going to say about the conditions was, people were dying from hunger. You walked down the street and there were people laying in the street with swollen legs with open sores from malnutrition, wrapped in rags, totally decomposing right before your eyes. There was tremendous epidemic of typhoid fever which was uncontrolled because there were no medical supplies. Very few doctors. No hospitals and survival rate I am sure was very low, but some people did just on their own. If you carried any kind of a package and this happened to me, I was carrying, I had a bird, and I carried a little package of bird seed that somebody gave me for my bird and I was walking down the street and some young man thought that maybe I had bread and so he ran up to me and pulled this package out of my hand and bit into it thinking that it was something that was edible. So I mean people were really at their, not their worst, but at the end of their ropes. It was extremely difficult. Now I had an experience at that time with a German soldier who, my father was sick, had the typhoid fever, and was in the house sick with a very high temperature and he was going through the crisis and all of that kind of stuff and my mother taking care of him. And I went some place to the store

or whatever, to get something and I was only a young girl.

RA: Pre-adolescence?

TRACK 12

RF: Right. And as I was walking down the street, on one side of the street, I could feel that somebody was watching me and I just sort of turned around and I saw this young German officer, you know how they wore dress sticks with all their finery, and I could see that he was following me and he was watching me. I just had a very bad feeling about this so I went into a, you see all these kinds of experiences teach you at a very young age to be extremely alert, so I went into a store and I said to the shop keeper, "Do you have a back door?" I figured that if I could get out the other side I would be lost and he said, "No, I am sorry | I don't have another door." I just barely said this to him and here comes this officer into the store and he asks me to come out of the store and he asks, "Where do you live?" I told him that I lived right across the street. So he took me right there and then he's talking to me in German. Well, I really did not speak German but I could understand it. I had been enough around people who spoke German and my parents, if they didn't want me to understand something, would speak Yiddish and Yiddish is somewhat a bastardized German. So I had

a basic understanding. So he is telling me that he wants to go to bed with me.

RA: And you were then about twelve?

RF: Yes. I keep saying that I don't understand German. I understood him but I just kept saying, "I don't understand what you are saying." And he says, "You live right here. I want to go in with you into your house." And I kept saying in Polish, "I don't understand a word you are saying. I don't know what is going on here." Real dumb, stupid and whatever. This went on for about ten minutes where he is trying to get across to me what he is trying to get across and I'm absolutely refusing to understand and he was getting extremely frustrated with this whole thing and he was carrying, you know how they carried these swagger sticks, he took that stick and he hit me on the head about three or four times, you know hit me on the head, knocked me from my feet, I mean to the ground, and just in desperation walked away. Why I was very fortunate because he really did not even have to talk to me about it. He could have just simply gone into the house and that was it.

RA: Was it actually your house that you were in front of?

RF: Yes, it was.

RA: Oh, it was.

RF: But I mean he didn't have to ask or anything. Later on

they didn't, but at this point for some reason he was still discussing it and so all I ended up with was some welts on my head and my mother almost having a heart attack because she thought I was going to have a concussion and eyes and brain damage and all that kind of stuff, but basically I recovered. So anyway this was, also then as time progressed in the ghetto things just got progressively worse and the cruelty and all the attitudes of the Germans became worse as time went on. They came into people's homes, anything that they thought was valuable or that they liked they would just take it. You had absolutely no privacy. You had absolutely no right of property.

TRACK 13

Then they started to send people out of the ghetto to the concentration camps. They would take a block or a couple of blocks from the city and surround them with soldiers so that nobody could get away and then just go house to house and door to door and drag out the people who were in the houses and the apartments and just put them in trucks and take them to the railroad station and load them into the cattle cars and send them to Auschwitz or any other....

RA: Auschwitz was then....

RF: …or Treblinka or whatever to all the different concentration camps. So at that point they, my father decided that we could no longer stay in our home and

that we would have to move on to the premises of the factory. That was the safest place. So there was a little apartment which was/I guess, maybe the gatekeeper's place, and my dad decided that that was where we were going to live and we could move in. Well, I remember my mother, a couple of things my mother said were very interesting. One was that, of course in 1939 when the war broke out and the banks closed and everything and the whole financial structure of the country collapsed, my mother's comment was, she was always a big saver and she was always running to the bank and....

RA: Depositing....

RF: ....So her comment at this point was when she lost her lifetime savings, "I should have played the horses. I would have enjoyed it more." Also at the time when we were going to this factory apartment my mother walked out of the house and I said, "Aren't you going to lock the door?" and she says, "What for? I am never going to come back here." So we just walked out and everything in the house was left behind and that was again her whole life that was in that home - all her-things, all her cherished little things, and she just walked away from it without even looking back. We went to this little apartment which my mother always fixed up no matter where she lived. You know it always was

fixed up beautifully and this place, which had nothing in it, but somehow she managed to make it into a home. Well, one day they were marching some people over right near the factory, they were marching some people to the trains. They rounded them up and so on and of course, they would have - it was like a parade. They would have all these people in the middle of the street and then they had the German soldiers all around them with their guns drawn and everything. I will never forget that because this, a pregnant woman darted out of this column of people and tried to get away and the German soldier just lifted his rifle and he shot her right in the stomach and there she was. I mean he actually killed the baby. So my mother at that time decided that there was some reason that she had to go some place. Anyway, she couldn't get off the premises of the factory. We were sort of like in a jail in this factory. You couldn't walk out the door. My father was right. This was the safest place. The Germans were not going to come in most likely looking for people in a German factory. So anyway, she had decided to go some place and when she did, they picked her up. Somebody came back and let my father know that she was picked up and was taken to a rail station to be shipped out and my father came to me, I just want you to remember - to visualize this, here is

father of a twelve year old child, an eleven year old child, whatever it was, who has to say to his child, "You can't come with me. You have to stay here. I want you to sit on this bench and wait for me to come back, but I might not come back because I am going to find your mother and I am going to try to bring her back but I might also have to go with her so you might be on your own**."**

TRACK 14

RA: At twelve years old.

RF: And so you just sit here and wait and see what happens. Then he went there to this big area where they were loading people on the trains and he had some kind of papers that he was working, just like he was counting on that he had these papers that he was working for the Germans and that this might help him out and he was very lucky because they did let him in and they did let him look for her and they did let him bring her out.

RA: Oh

RF: So he came back. Well, after a while we couldn't stay there on the factory grounds anymore because the Germans decided that they didn't want anybody living there. So we went to a little apartment, as a matter of fact I have a book Mila 18, you know how that was on that street. A little apartment there and we stayed there. Not very long because everything was in a turmoil by

that time. My father decided he had to do the same thing as my mother did before. Everybody was hiding. People were hiding between/ in the attics, in the basements, in closets, under the floors, all kinds of places, and my father decided that he had to go some place and, of course, the minute he walked out of the door he was picked up.

RA: Oh, dear.

RF: He hid us away. He put us some place in an attic, my mother and me, and then he decided he was going to go downstairs and he felt for sure with these papers, because he had this good experience with my mother and I don't know if he did leave and then he was immediately picked up and that was the last we saw of him.

RA: Did you have any contact at all with him? Did you hear from him or anything?

RF: That was it. He just walked out and he never came back.

RA: And you and your mother were on your own from there on?

RF: Yes. I had a little dog also. A little Pekinese dog which I walked one day and the German soldier came up to me and said, "I like your dog," and he took the dog. Anyway, after my dad was gone we heard that he was on a transport train to Treblinka and some people jumped the train and came back and we were sure that my father was going to get himself out of it somehow. But he

didn't and we never saw him again. So at that point my mother and I made a decision that we could no longer stay in the ghetto and that we had to try somehow to get out and our only way to get out would be to ask for help from this maid that .lived in our home and raised me from infancy and with whom we kept in touch. So there were working parties that were leaving the ghetto to work on the outside of the ghetto and somehow my mother found there were no phones or anything like that and this maid then received our message that we were trying to get out, that my father was killed and that- we were trying to get out and could she make arrangements for us to get out. She got a message back to us that yes if we can arrange to get out of the ghetto she will see to it that we will have a place where we can hide and she then proceeded to make some arrangements with a man who lived in the same building where she was working. She could not take us in because she did not have her own place. She was working for this German family, but she met a man who had his own little apartment in the basement of that building and she talked to him about it and he said that for a certain sum of money he would be willing to let us hide in his apartment and that is what happened.

TRACK 15

RA: How were you able to get money?

RF: Well, this is a very interesting question because all through this whole experience of the war my father, you see he wouldn't go to the United States, but he believed in the American dollar so he kept buying American dollars on the black market. There was this tremendous black market for American dollars and he kept buying American dollars. The American dollar was absolutely the most valuable currency at that time, not because it was so valuable but because of the format that it came in. Actually the British pound was more valuable than the American dollar but because the American dollar was a small bill, thin paper, you know the British pound was big paper. The American dollar was a small bill, thin paper, you can roll it up, you can do all kinds of things with it, very durable paper. You could do all kinds of things with it, you could hide it in all kinds of places and it was a good kind of money to be able to hoard. He also bought some gold pieces. Gold pieces weren't very good because they were hard to hide. My mother made arrangements with the people who were in these work parties and they had some kind of deal with the guards, you know the German guards, and so we went out with the work party and then when the work party came back and was two short the Germans just turned their heads and didn't pay any attention. So we paid for

that you know and had to leave. Marysia was waiting for us outside of the ghetto and the way we transported the money out of the ghetto was we rolled up the dollars. this is what I was saying is so interesting because the dollars were rolled up in a very fine roll and then they were put into a condom and then they were inserted in the rectum.

RA: For heaven's sake !

TRACK 16

RF: They were right on your body so that if they took your clothes away or whatever, you still had the money.

RA: I never heard of this before.

RF: Then when we came there she was waiting for us and we went to this man's home and this is where we started hiding.

TRACK 17

We were in his house for about a year and a half. We were in total hiding. Now the apartment was an English basement, somewhat like this room which means that people could look in from the outside and see what was going on in the apartment. Nobody knew we were there so that meant that during the day we were not allowed to walk across the room because it would be visible from the street and my mother had a little chair in one corner like over there.

TRACK 18

Also we were invisible from the street and that's where we stayed all day long because we could not cross the room because people could see us. When they had company visiting we would have to

go into a different hiding place which was in the closet. He had a trap door built and we would slide through that trap door into the crawl space under the floor and then we would just have to stay there totally immobile and quiet until the company left. So that as far as the neighbors, anybody, their friends, relatives or whoever, nobody knew that we were in the apartment. At night my mother and I slept in this man's bed and he made himself a bed on the table so that there were no extra beds.

Everything looked normal.

RA: So that one person occupied it.

RF: Right. He did the shopping and the cooking and whatever. He worked so he was not home during the day. He was an elderly man. Very kind, very nice man and we paid him a monthly amount for doing that. Of course he was taking a tremendous risk because the Germans would shoot the person harboring the Jew as well as the Jew.

RA: How long were you here?

RF: Well, we stayed there, my mother stayed there for about a year and a half. I didn't stay quite that long because I left for a period of time. It was very confining. It was a very unhappy time because it was just a total restriction of movement.

RA: But where did you go?

RF: Well, we thought that maybe we should try, since I was

young and I spoke Polish very well, and you know there was no, we felt that maybe I wouldn't be recognized as being Jewish. So this Marysia got some papers for me and made some arrangements for me to go for the summer to stay with a Polish family. They did not know I was Jewish. It did not work out too terribly well because they were religious. There was a lot of Catholic ritual in the family which I was not familiar with and it was very difficult to stay one step ahead of all this going to the church, knowing how to behave and all that sort of thing which would have been, of course, expected of me being a Polish Catholic child arid it became very difficult. So eventually after trying a couple of places on the outside I came back to this hiding place. I missed my mother and my mother was very unhappy without me so we finally came back. We lived, this hiding place was about two blocks away from the wall of the ghetto, just right outside of the ghetto, what was at that time a new neighborhood of high rises called Joliborz. It was a very nice neighborhood, not that I had any benefit of it, but these buildings were new high rise buildings and they were fairly modern with indoor plumbing and whatever. So we were in this hiding at the time when the Warsaw ghetto was burned.

Track 19

We could see it burning. We left Warsaw ghetto only months before the total destruction of the ghetto. I would say a

couple of months before the total destruction of the ghetto because right after we left, this is when they they had the ghetto uprising.

RA: Oh, yes. The Jewish people in....

RF: All the ghetto were fighting the Germans and the Germans, of course, shut off the water and shut off the gas and shut off the electricity and now brought in the heavy tanks and were shelling the people of the ghetto and were bombing the ghetto from the air and were using flame throwers and all that kind of.... It was a regular little war going on right in the middle of the city and, of course/everything was totally wiped out to the ground. It was a war zone. The people who were in the ghetto lived in sewers and underground bunkers and all that kind of stuff and eventually, of course, they were overpowered. They absolutely could not survive against the might of Germany and had no food and had no supplies and I think that a small number, most of them were killed, a small number were captured and then killed. But anyway, the feeling at that time was that there was really no point in giving up the fight because you were going to die one way or another so you might just as well do it fighting and that's what they did. It went on for several weeks and we could see the fires and everything and knew what was happening. Well, after the ghetto was burned,

the Germans and the Poles felt that they got what they always wanted which was a Poland free of Jews and they did not have to worry about it anymore. So from that point on the emphasis was on searching out the few remaining Jews which were in hiding in different places. We were very fortunate because these people who helped us did not turn us in. Now there were other people, some of our friends, who when their money ran out the people who were helping them would just turn them in to the Germans. So it was strictly a business proposition and once the money was gone there was no feeling about turning them in. But I don't know how our situation would have gone except we were saved quote unquote by a Polish uprising in Warsaw. We also were running out of money and they had the uprising where the Poles were fighting the Germans. The Russians' were standing right on the other side of the Vistula River, but would not cross the bridges, which were intact because they wanted the Germans and the Poles to have a go at it. And, of course, then once the battle was over....

RA: They moved in.

RF: But at that time the same thing that happened to the Polish ghetto, I mean to the Jewish ghetto, then happened to the Poles which is kind of a good lesson to learn because what happens to your brother might happen to

you too and the Germans used the exact same tactics against the remaining Polish population which was uprising that they used in the Warsaw ghetto. They were bombing Warsaw, they cut off all the supplies, they cut off all the utilities, there was no water, there was you know, they brought in the tanks. They used the army, they had their regular war flame throwers, bazookas, whatever, everything just against the civilian population exactly as they would do in the field against the military force and I was somewhat involved in that. I became a courier for the Polish Resistance and carried messages and so on and at a certain point, of course, they too were a doomed cause and the Germans overtook Warsaw.

Track 20

Well, we had a choice to make, my mother and I, because we did not, we were running out of money. We lost touch in all this with this woman who was helping us. She was out of town when this whole thing started and we really didn't know what to do and the Germans were rounding up just everybody. They were just doing the same thing to the Poles that they were doing to the Jews before and they were sending everybody to the concentration camps although they weren't Jewish. My mother and I finally, decided that we would permit ourselves to be caught.

CD 2 Track 1

RA: Oh, you made a decision then on it?

RF: Right. Yes. We thought that if we went to the concentration

camps as Poles rather than as Jews that we had a better chance of surviving and we thought that if we stayed in Warsaw we most likely would not survive at all because, either we would be turned in or picked up or something would happen and then we would be picked up as Jews and then we wouldn't have a chance at all. So we thought that since everybody else was being sent to concentration camps that maybe it wasn8! such a bad thing. We would just sort of mix in with the Polish population and go with them. So that's what we did. We just went outside and allowed ourselves to be picked up.

RA: And where did they take you?

RF: So then we were put on one of those cattle trains about 150 people or so in a car and with straw on the floor, and the train was taking them to Germany and we went to a camp called Ravensbruck. That is in the northeastern part of Germany and we came into this camp with the Poles, with the other Poles, and were then incorporated into the population of the camp. We were there for about nine months. At that time the Swedish Count Bernadotte was making exchanges with the Germans, giving them grain and whatever other foodstuffs in exchange for people from the concentration camps. Now this was not Jewish....

RA: I understand that.

RF: ....but just prisoners in the concentration camps. Of course in the concentration camps, a lot of people were, every day they would have transports, they were taking people out, women out of the camp and they were sent in transports to the munitions factories in Germany. Of course when they got to the munitions factories then the Americans and the British came and bombed the munitions factories and they got them that way, but we were working right on the premises of the camp. There was another little camp attached to it and it was the Siemens Company, that had their factory there and what we were making there was, like as now, extremely popular and that is all these little components for transistors and computers and whatever they called these things. But anyway these were electrical parts.

RA: I see.

RF: They were, of course, the Siemens Company was working for the....

RA: Was it wire wound on a small spool?

CD 2 Track 2

RF: Right. Different sizes and all that. The company was working for the German army and they had cold ice and they had all kinds of stuff and whatever. I was very interested when not too long ago I was stalled on the Tollway and I saw the Siemens name there.

RA: Now is this Siemens mattress people?

RF: No. Siemens Electrical.

RA; Electrical company.

RF: Siemens.

RA: I **see.**

RF: They have an office somewhere in Northlake or something. Anyway, they were using the labor force from the camp.

RA: Were you paid?

RF: No.

RA: You weren't paid? It was straight labor?

RF: That's right. It was slave labor.

RA: Forced labor.

RF: Forced labor. The camp conditions/ of course I am not going to belabor on that because there has been so much written about that, but one little interesting thing - I had very long hair and generally when you came into the camp all the clothing was taken away and the hair was shaven because there were really no physical facilities to take care of anything. There was no hot water, there was no soap hardly. There was no, there were outhouses for the bathrooms, there were no showers. There was nothing. So there was really no way that you could take care of anything.

RA: Now were the occupants of the camp mainly women and children?

RF: They had separate camps. There were very few children. They had separate camps for the men and the women. Women were in the women's camp. They had different kinds of prisoners. They had Jews there. They were in a separate category. They wore the Jewish star on their camp dress.

RA: That was what I was going to ask you. Then they took your clothes did they give you a uniform?

RF: Yes. They had the blue and white striped prison outfits. [Laughter] That's all you got. You got a dress and a pair of wooden clogs.

RA: Oh.

RF: And that was it. I think maybe there was, I can vaguely remember some kind of a drawstring pants.

RA: I was going to ask you if you were permitted any of your underclothing.

RF: No. This was winter and summer. That's all they had.

RA: And what time of year? You said you were there nine months.

RF: I came in there in the fall and we went through the winter there.

RA: And this was northern Germany?

RF: This was at 5 o'clock in the morning you had to come out of the barracks and you had to stand in rows and be counted and if somebody died during the night and the count did not come out right/ you stood there for three and four hours

in the freezing ice and snow until they....

RA: With clogs?

RF: Yes and bare legs, in this dress and you had to wait until they got their figures together and there were always, in the camp that I was in, maybe 75,000 women. So that's a lot of counting [Laughter]. It took them a while to get everything straightened out. Of course people were dropping dead standing there in this what they called appell (roll call). There was a lot of illness there. Ravensbruck was one of the camps where they did a lot of medical experimentation with the surgery and all that kind of stuff. They had the political prisoners, which we were considered political prisoners, and then they had also criminals and prostitutes and the Jews, and each one had a different, the Jews had a star, a yellow star. The political prisoners had a red triangle and the criminals had a green triangle and the prostitutes had the red triangle. So you could just tell who was what. I think I said the political prisoners had the red. Anyway, the prostitutes had the red. Anyway, they were designated. The living conditions were pretty much the same for everybody. They had the crematorium right there. The dead were burned in the crematorium and there was this oppressive smell of burning flesh at all times and the camp was surrounded by beautiful homes of the people who

worked in the camp. As we were brought from the train station to the camp we walked from the train to the camp and we passed by these beautiful, neat German homes with the lovely gardens and the flower boxes and the…

CD2 TRACK 3

RA: And were those kept up by the people within the prison?

RF: Yes. That's right.

RA: And camp?

RF: It looked like one of those picture book scenes/you know, if you want to go travelling. Then, of course, we came through the gates, into the camp and we entered Hell. Each barrack has a German woman overseer who was in the German SS and they wore green uniforms with the culotte skirts and then they had....

RA: You had women barracks guards?

RF: Right. Black boots and they had black capes with hoods on them. They looked like Halloween witches running around at all times. They were very, very mean and beating people and....

RA: Sadistic.

RF: They were very sadistic. The worst thing that could happen to anyone was to get sick because if you ever went to the infirmary it was about the end of that. Food was, they had the big kitchen which was also the prisoners worked in the kitchen and they served some kind of watery soup once a day and a piece of bread,

dry, to go with it and there was never any meat. There were some vegetables that they would cook up. That was about it. Ersatz coffee and a piece of bread for breakfast and some soup and a piece of bread and maybe some vegetables for dinner. That was the end of that. There was no fat, no nothing. This was the kind of diet, then, you had to work about ten hours a day and they switched the shifts so it would be sometimes in the day and sometimes at night. What I started saying about my hair was that I had very, very long hair and my mother was absolutely determined that they were not going to shave that hair and she pleaded and begged and cried, threw herself on her knees and kissed this woman's feet trying to get her to not cut my hair off. I guess the woman finally decided that she wasn't going to do it. So I had my hair, but at a very great cost because the hair had to be taken care of. There were lice in the camp and all that, so my mother one time did not eat for a week to save up the bread so she had enough, a loaf of bread, and then she paid this loaf of bread to someone for a special comb which was for delicing.

RA: Oh, yes.

RF: The teeth were very close together. Every week both of us would have to give up some of our bread to buy hot water from the kitchen so that we could wash my hair and

then use this comb to keep the lice out of my hair. So it was really a very costly proposition in terms of our food supply, but anyway we did make it through and I came out of the camp with my hair intact.

CD 2 TRACK 4

At this point the Swedes were making all the arrangements for the exchange of prisoners and, of course, we didn't know that they were doing that and we always tried to avoid the transports because we knew that they were going to the munitions factories where we didn't want to go, but this one time they were having a transport, and just like we made a conscious decision in Warsaw that we were going to get caught to go to the camp, at this point we made for some unknown reason the conscious decision that we were going to go on this transport. And we had never gone on a transport before and always tried to stay out of them and hid and did everything possible to be inconspicuous you know when they were picking the transport. Well, that particular morning they were picking people for transports and my mother and I talked it over and we decided that we had had enough of this place already, that anything, that any change would be better than staying so we decided that we were going to go on this transport. They let us out of the camp and at that point
they told us to rip off the number and the insignia off the sleeve of our dress and, of course, when they told

us that we knew that this was a different kind of a transport than any of the others. We didn't know if it was good or bad. It could have been Auschwitz or something but anyway we were committed and there was no choice that we had. So we walked through the men's camp, which was quite a revelation because when you see the pictures of the emaciated people this is how these people looked and they were really skin and bones, skeletons, the big eyes and everything. Totally like zombies. Then we walked through to this other entry camp and at that point they kind of gave us some American Red Cross packages which contained chocolates and all kinds of goodies and sugar and all kinds of things like that. So everybody, of course, ate that and got deathly sick because none of the food was, um, the kind of food...

RA: They'd been used to?

RF: Right. After years of starvation this was about the worst thing anybody could get to eat. The whole group was vomiting, having diarrhea, dysentery or something. [Laughter] But also at that time we realized that we were going, not going to another camp but to some other strange place.

CD 2 TRACK 5

They led us again onto this train which was also the same type of train as we came to the camp and didn't tell us the destination or anything, but we just were loaded onto the train and

shipped off.

CD 2 TRACK 6

They used us as a cover for some of their troop movements because this train had a red cross painted on the roof of the train so that the allied pilots would not bomb the train while they were going. They would put us somewhere in the woods so that we were covered up with the trees and then they would take one of their trains and paint the red cross on it and move their troops.

RA: Now these were German troops?

RF: Right.

RA: Okay.

RF: So that everybody knew that this train was going through but we would be stashed away somewhere camouflaged in the woods while they were doing their own thing and didn't have to worry about being bombed. This went on for like a week. Actually, where we were going was to Denmark. Of course, we didn't know that. Denmark wasn't all that far, but....

RA: You were wandering around northern Germany then on tracks being switched from one place to another?

RF: Right. We finally, I guess, the Swedish government started questioning what's happening and where are these people and what*s going on. So they had to stop what they were doing and they brought us into Copenhagen. It was quite an experience because everybody, now we were on the train like I said for a week, people were so sick from those

American Red Cross packages, just recovering from that, there was very little food given to us, actually it was sort of assumed that since we got those American packages they should last us until we got |to where we were going and they didn't have to worry about feeding us. They occasionally stopped the train and let us out into the fields to exercise, not exercise but to go to the bathroom. So, anyway, the cars were smelly and dirty and people were sick and hungry and weak and upset because they didn't know where they were going and all that sort of thing. Then we pull into this Copenhagen railroad station and they open the doors of the cattle cars and there are these Danish nurses standing on the platform in their gray starched uniforms, bright crisp aprons and white caps and looking like they just came out of a shower and out of the laundry. They are helping us out out of the cars and, of course, everybody's first reaction was: "Stay away from me because you are going to get dirty."

RA: Yes. .

RF: But, anyway, they were talking to us and we didn't understand what they were saying, but they would be helping **us** out of the train onto the platform of the railroad station and right across the railroad platform was another beautiful modern Danish train standing there. They were taking us

from this miserable dirty, smelly train into this beautiful passenger train with the upholstered seats and the plush whatever and it was, the two worlds all of a sudden seemed to crash. Everybody was standing there wondering what's going on here. I mean what is this? It was like a dream. Once we got on the train they took us to the border of Denmark, well, maybe it was, I can't remember, anyway, we went on the train and then from the train they transferred us on a ship in Copenhagen, that's what it was, it was at the border of Germany and Denmark.

RA: That's where they put you off?

CD 2 TRACK 7

RF: Uh huh. Then they took us to Copenhagen and then they transferred us onto a ship and we went to Sweden.

RA: To Stockholm.

RF: No, we went to a little town called Malmo.

RA: Oh yes, I know Malmo. We have friends there.

RF: That's where we came on this ship to Malmo and they had a very nice greeting committee waiting for us of Swedish people who welcomed us and they were very gracious, very nice and they had right there big tents set up. You got off the ship and then you went into these tents and they had showers set up and they had the whole thing, doctors, all that and everybody had to first of all shed their clothing, which was then burned, and then they were examined

by doctors, went to the showers, washing hair, doing whatever was necessary and then a new issue of clothing was given to everybody, underwear, stockings, clothes, whatever and by that time, this was a week before the war ended....

RA: Oh, that close to the end?

RF: Right. So they emptied a school to use as a quarantine.

RA: Oh, yes.

RF: We went into this school after we were cleaned up and we stayed there for six weeks under quarantine and medical observation and so on. The people of the town were just lovely. Everybody, of course the school yard had a fence, but it was a cyclone fence so people came to the fence and they were trying to talk to us and convey their, you don't have to really know the language, their feelings were certainly very obvious. They were handing us pictures of themselves and asking us for pictures of ourselves. We didn't have any. They were very friendly and very kind and very concerned. Very happy to have us there. They made us feel very good. Very welcome. So then after the six weeks of quarantine, they provided us with housing and with jobs and they made us settle in. My mother and I at that point we were under an assumed name, a Polish name, we had Polish papers and all that kind of stuff. We had to go through the whole

business of trying to identify ourselves. Then we started to see if we can find any of our family through the Red Cross, through the Jewish agencies and so on. We were able to get in contact again with this Marysia from Poland so that she would know that we survived. We met some Jewish-Swedish people and found they were very kind and welcomed us and we made friends and we felt very good. Liked them very much. The people were marvelous. I have nothing but the greatest praise for the Swedish people. I don't think they, they did a beautiful job of assimilating these people who were total strangers and extended themselves no end to make everybody welcome and to make them feel at home.

CD 2 TRACK 8

It was a lovely place. Sweden is a marvelous country. The people are great. Their standard of living is high. It was very good. My mother and I worked and we liked them very much. We got in touch with my uncles here in the United States and they sent us immediately papers to come to the United States. However we couldn't come right away because there was a very strict Polish quota.

RA: Oh.

RF: We had to wait our turn on the Polish quota. It depends on how it suits people, like when we were in Poland we really weren't Polish. We were Jewish, but all of a sudden when we came to Sweden we had become part of the

Polish quota and we were again Polish. Anyway, we had to wait for a year and a half in Sweden.

RA: Oh, for heaven's sake.

RF: My mother liked it very well there. She really, I think that if it were up to her she would never have come to the United States because she settled in there and she liked the people and she was comfortable in a sense that after all that....

RA: She felt accepted probably.

RP: Yes. And after all she has gone through she was tired and this was just a place where she was already resting and you know the people made, understood what she went through and were helpful and were nice and it was peaceful and there wasn't too much commotion. It was a small town. It was just very beneficial to her to live there at that time, that way. I was the one that insisted that we have to go to the United States.

RA; And you were at this time about....

RF: I was eighteen when I came to this country. I was insistent. I felt that I always wanted to come to a country like the United States and I was going to make it. I felt that the United States was dynamic and had opportunities and it was the place where I felt at my age I wanted to be. I thought that in Sweden/although it was what my mother considered to be a comfortable existence, for me I felt it was not, it did not present

any kind of opportunities, that it was stagnant, that it would be the same way twenty years later as it was then and I didn't want it.

RA: May I ask do you feel the same way now?

RF: Yes, I do. That is the greatest attraction the United States has. There was, of course, the freedom, but aside from the freedom, I think economically the greatest attraction that the United States has is not that the streets are lined with gold and not that anybody gives you anything because they don't but because it is still the land of opportunity. I think that still of all the world it was the only land of opportunity.

CD 2 TRACK 9

RA: That's right because there is this dynamic growth, there is this attitude of change and a person can come, there isn't as much as the people say, sure there is a certain class distinction and whatever, but all these things are surmountable.

RF: It is not written in stone as it is in some other places. A person can come here and even if they themselves might not achieve, their children can achieve. There is no limit of what a person can become if they apply themselves, if they have the intelligence, if they have the ability, if they have the opportunity, if they create or have the opportunities. It is not for everybody. Not everybody is going to make it, but it is a carrot which is always there.

RA: Yes, that's true.

RF: You are always thinking that, I am going to be the one that is going to make it. Like I say, as have so many stories that we are familiar with, the people came here, immigrants did not have anything, did not even know the language, were poor, were uneducated, whatever, and their children or grandchildren achieved the greatest heights, became |presidents. Supreme Court justices, prominent business people, directors of corporations, presidents of universities, great medical people and so on.

RA: And this has all come about with the philosophy that is at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

RF: Give me your huddled masses.

RA: That's right. Sometimes I feel we have gone astray from that philosophy and are attempting to make schisms where they shouldn't be.

RF: Because you never know. I keep saying that. I always said that to my children and my husband and I believe in this very firmly. We have always taught our children not to have racial or religious prejudices, and consider each person on her or his merit and I always kept saying to them, "You never know where the next Einstein is coming from."

RA: This is so true.

RF: It is absolutely true. I feel that the black people have

not been given the opportunities in the past and now as they are getting the opportunities more and more that they too will produce great people who are going to make fantastic contributions to the welfare of the country and the world. The people come here from all over. They already are, I have a theory about this, that the greatness of this country is based on the fact that the people who came here from other countries are already strong, determined people.

RA; That's right. Survival of the fittest more or less.

RF: They were survivors and they came here because they were willing to leave their homeland and. were willing to take on this tremendous adventure of going to a strange country and then created certain opportunities for themselves in this country and, therefore, the genetic pool that this country has is very select.

RA: And of tremendous potential.

RF: That's right. So this is where the greatness lies. And this is what attracted me at that time when I was seventeen, sixteen, or whatever before I came here and I was pushing for coming here.

RA; Now you are eighteen. What mode of transportation?

RF: We came on a ship.

RA: You came on a ship?

RF; On the Gripsholm.

RA: And where did you dock?

RF: We docked at New York. My uncle from Chicago picked us up in New York. We visited some friends and stayed, this was the year when we came here that they had a coal strike and New York was dark when we were there. We A visited some friends of my mother's from the old country and some relatives. We didn't stay long. We stayed maybe like overnight and then we took the train **to** Chicago. My first exposure to Chicago was when my cousin came with a car to the railroad station to pick us up. They lived up on Kimball Avenue near Foster.

RA: Oh, yes.

CD 2 TRACK 10

RF: We went on the Outer Drive. I thought that Chicago was absolutely the most beautiful place I had ever seen. I immediately fell in love with it. It was really a totally new experience. My mother was sick practically all the way across on the ocean because we came here in the end of November and the Atlantic was pretty rough. I was sick for a couple of days, but I thought the ship was great. There were all kinds of things on there and then when we came to Chicago my uncle had a little apartment that he rented for us. He had this job for my mother in the garment district.

RA: Oh, yes.

RF: He wanted me to go to school.

RA: What year was this?

RF: This was 1947. End of 1947. So I went to Roosevelt High School for a very short period of time because when I started going there I didn't know English, so I had a very difficult time.

RA; It must have been. There were no classes in second language?

RF: No. There were no classes in second language and nobody changed everything to suit me.

RA: No, you had to change to suit it.

RF: Right. I had a really difficult time. I also felt at that point that I really wasn't all that interested in gaining academic skills which was very difficult to do. I was interested in gaining some skills so I could get to work and get a job. So my uncle then sent me to a business college and I went there for six or eight months or whatever it was to learn typing and bookkeeping and all that kind of stuff. By that time I was beginning to pick up some English. My first rule with my mother was that she could talk Polish to me, but I would not speak Polish to her. So in my broken English I would speak to her and anybody else that was talking to me. I would speak in English and I really never used Polish again. I became Americanized the minute I started talking.

RA: And in doing that you helped her to speak English.

RF: Right. So after going through this business school I could get a job downtown on Hubbard Street for a very nice company, a small company. They were chemical jobbers, LaPine and Company was the name of the place. I was working there in their bookkeeping department. I met my husband and we were going together for a while and then we got married. He went, of course, to the Korean War and I went with him to New York. I worked for a business in New York. All this time I did not have a high school education.

RA: Oh, I didn't realize you hadn't finished high school.

RF: No. I went to Roosevelt High School for just a very brief time, a couple of months. It was very difficult because they didn't know exactly where to place me, what level. They didn't want to start with freshman year. I was the oldest one there. Certainly I could not go in with the fourteen year olds when I was eighteen. There was a problem with my educational background. In other words, there were too many problems and it just didn't work. There was nothing really done specially. They just said, "Okay,..here is the high school. Go to it." Nobody really sort of worked with me and tried to tailor make a program.

CD 2 TRACK 11

RA: That's never been done I understand in Chicago.

RF: Right. So what it was was just make it or don't make it

and I felt that for the struggle that I was going through it wasn't worth it to me at that point and I wanted to become independent and self supporting.

RA: Well, that's where your initiative came through and you found the nitch you needed.

RF: My mother and I were simply never people who liked to depend on somebody else. So it was demeaning to us that my uncle had to help us with our livelihood and with our rent and with this and that. Both of us were very determined that as soon as possible we are going to be on our own and independent and we don't have to take anything from anybody. So when I came back from New York I was pregnant with my daughter Janice. Joe was still in the service. I came back because I had contacted some virus pneumonia in New York and I had nobody to really help me and so my doctor felt that because I was pregnant it was a good idea if I went home and somebody would get me on my feet. So I came back to my mother's house who, by that time, was married. I stayed there through my pregnancy while Joe was still in the service. My baby was born at Great Lakes Naval Hospital and then I came back to my mother's house for about six weeks after the baby was born. As soon as I began to feel better physically I took a little apartment at 6106 University, right on the midway there.

RA; Oh, yes.

RF: It was a furnished apartment so I moved in there with my baby and got myself prepared for my husband's homecoming. So then he came home and got a job and we found a different apartment in Hyde Park on 5207 Ingleside which was a very nice big apartment. We moved in there and I had neighbors in that apartment. They live now in Wilmette. Their name is Klass.

RA: Oh.

RF: We have kept in touch all these years and this man was a graduate of the University of Chicago and the editor of the American Federation of Labor paper. His wife is a teacher. She teaches in Northfield and we became very good friends and we exchanged babysitting. They were older than we were, but we were right across the hall on the second floor and we would go out and they would watch our child and then they would go out and we would watch their children. We became very good friends. I kept saying to them that I felt a tremendous lack because of my interrupted education. I was always a very avid reader. We discussed it for quite a while. They felt that I really should do something about it, that I should try to catch up on my education because they felt I had the potential.

RA: They weren' t wrong were they?

CD 2 TRACK 12

RF: I guess not. So, anyway, they were very encouraging.

I sort of started doing things. I would take classes on Tuesday evening and I would go to night school at the high school and take some courses. I had my hands in it all the time. There wasn't really a semester that I wasn't doing something. It wasn't full time. By then I was pregnant with my second child. Marc, and with two small babies. I couldn't really do much. I didn't have a car.

RA: So all of your American education has come since you had your whole family?

RF: Right.

RA: This is amazing.

RF: I was just keeping my hand in and I was doing all these different things while I was home for twenty years with my children. So then at a certain point or when my children were grown enough that my daughter was at New Trier and it actually was in this house....

RA: After you came here that you started to college?

RF: Right.

CD 2 TRACK 13

So when my daughter was at New Trier and Marc was in junior high school I went to college.

RA: After you had been a housewife for twenty years?

RF: Yes. Well, at that point I decided that I wanted to get a college education. I had just sort of dabbled with it and I had taken some courses, but really never seriously considered getting a degree. When my children

the train down there and went in and took it. I got my results and I was in the 98th percentile.

RA: For heaven's sake. Even with math and stuff?

RF: With everything. So I was just very encouraged. Well, I must not be as dumb as I thought so I can proceed then. I took that high school diploma then and started looking around for something so far as a college was concerned. I read somewhere that Roosevelt University was instituting a new program which was called CLEP. They were giving a CLEP examination which was a College Level Examination Program.

RA: Oh, yes.

RF: What they were doing, this was developed, I guess, by the University of Chicago and probably Princeton also where they were testing people on the basis of their life experiences and giving them college credit for what they have learned in life, even if it wasn't in a classroom which, of course, is a very valid approach because all education is self education. It's only directed by the university, but it is self education. So anybody who, there are an awful lot of people who have no college degrees and they are extremely well educated because they are self educated. You know it's like the old idea of reading in law. If you read and if you pursue certain kinds of ideas or information you

can be extremely well educated.

RA: Well, look how many great men came out of our early history in this country by the method of....

RF: That's right. So it is a very valid method and I am surprised that it took so long for it to come out. They were just starting this program and it required five two hour examination periods in different areas. Then after that they would evaluate the results of that and would determine at what level a person would enter the university. So I took that test, also cold, just absolutely never went to the library and took out books how to prepare. Just cold. I figure well, whatever I know I know, what I don't know I'm not going to be able to cram for because it's not that kind of an exam.

RA: No, no.

RF: I went in there and I signed up for it and I took all the tests and I was given two years of college credit and the most encouraging thing I thought was that I had an extremely high grade on reading comprehension so I felt that that was important because if I was going to continue with my studies that would come in very handy.

CD 2 TRACK 14

Then I went ahead and took the necessary courses to finish off the four year study. I graduated with honors from Roosevelt and while I was still at Roosevelt the last

semester I decided that I wanted to go to graduate school and then I wanted to go to library school. I got in touch with Rosary and what was happening was that while I was finishing up at Roosevelt, I think there were two or three courses that I was still taking at Roosevelt as I would be graduating in January and Rosary courses were starting in September which was the beginning of the semester. So I wanted to start with these courses because one was the reference and one was acquisitions. I went to Rosary and talked to them and showed them my grades and that sort of thing from Roosevelt. I asked them 'if it would be possible if I would go simultaneously, finish up there and go here. They were very nice about it. They figured, you know, it was like money in the bank. It wasn't that I wasn't going to graduate. So they permitted me to do it. So I was going to two schools at the same time. [Laughter]

RA: So you must have been at Roosevelt under Rolf Weil.

RF: Right.

RA: He had a similar experience to yours in getting out of Germany.

RF: Right. He was very lucky he got out before the war. So I started Rosary then and in January, that's my picture of my graduation from Roosevelt.

RA: With your son?

RF: Right. That's my son and my mother. My daughter, I don't know where she was. She might have been with my husband when they were taking the pictures. Yes, that's something on my mother's face. It's in the picture. Anyway, my mother just came out of the hospital at that time and she would not miss that for anything.

RA: Oh, no.

RF: I continued with Rosary and graduated Rosary with honors and was elected to the National Honors Society. When I was halfway through Rosary, I decided that I really never worked in a library. I didn't know the first thing about libraries. All I knew was that I liked books [Laughter] and on that basis I made the decision to start a career and I couldn't really afford to make any mistakes at my age because if I then found out that it wasn't good then what would I do? I was running out of time. So I decided that I would like to get a job in the library, part time, to at least get the feel of the place and find out if I were able to continue with it. I might hate it. I was very unfamiliar with the library world at that time and most people at Rosary were working and going to school.

RA: Yes, I know this is true. The people I worked with....

RF: Right. So I, because I was so ignorant of the library world, I went to an employment agency. No, actually the way it started was on a very cold January day I saw in

the paper that the Evanston Library was looking for clerks and I thought that's good. I would just apply for the Evanston Library. Then I found out that you can't apply at the Evanston Library. You have to apply at the village, to the City of Evanston because it's a civil service job.

RA: Oh, I see.

RF: By the time I came to the City Hall or wherever it was that I would have to go to apply for this job/ the job was gone. I thought I am already in Evanston and I'm not going to waste a whole morning so I think I am going to try several employment agencies right down on Church Street and I'm just going to go into one of them and see if I can't find a library job. Well, library jobs are never gotten through an employment agency.

CD 2 TRACK 15

So I walked in there and I'm telling this lady that I want a job in a library and she's telling me that why don't I wait until I'm finished with my degree and so on and there's really nothing much she can do for me, but in the meantime she took down my name and phone number and address and so
on and she would get in touch if there was any way she was able to help me. Oh, it was a loss. The new semester was starting at Rosary so I figured well, if I'm not going to be working then I am going to take more classes and get done faster. One day about March, the end of March or the

beginning of April, I was just about ready to leave to go to the library or go to class or whatever it was and my phone rang and it was this lady from that employment agency which was three or four months after I was there. She said, "Are you still interested in a job in a library?" I said, "Well, not really anymore because I signed up for all these courses and I really don't have any time to be working any more because I am overloaded with school work." She says, "Well, don't say no so fast. Why don't you first hear where it is?" I said, "Okay. Where is it?" She said, "It's in Wilmette." I said, "Okay. That's a different story." [Laughter] I said, "Could you make an appointment for me to be interviewed?" She said, "When is it convenient for you?" and I told her and she said, "I'll call Miss Siniff who was the head librarian and tell her that this would be a good time for you and if we can come to an agreement I will call you back." Then she called me right back and said, "Yes, it was okay with Miss Siniff and she will see you at such and such a time on such and such a day." I came in there, Miss Siniff took me in her office. We had a very nice talk. Hit it off immediately.

RA: Um, hum.

RF: Just great. I put to her very simply that I was basically interested in a professional career. I was not applying

for that job to spend the rest of my life as a desk clerk. I was going to school and it was my primary concern to finish up school, which meant that if I took the job there would have to be adjustments made when my class schedules switched and so on and I wanted her to have the understanding that my school came first, that I was not concerned with the money that I would be making on the job. I wanted to get my feet wet in the field. I was interested in getting some experience and I was interested in making it a career. She was very sympathetic to that. She said she respected that. She felt that it was commendable/ that she would do anything in her power to help me achieve that and she said she was going to call Rosary and if the recommendation of Rosary was good, then I could start the job. I told her also that I was very heavily involved with the classes and that I would not be able to start the job until June 1 when the semester was over.

RA: This was when?

RF: This was like April.

CD 2 TRACK 16

She said that if the recommendation from Rosary was good that she would hold the job until June 1 and I said, "Fine. Great." Then she called me back and she said that I had an excellent recommendation from Rosary and that she felt that she would really want me on her staff and that if I was willing to take the job then we had a deal. We never discussed money.

RA: Never?

RF: No.

RA: That's interesting.

RF: I said fine, that I would take the job and we will proceed from there.

CD 3 TRACK 1

So I started June 1 and I worked at the desk full time that summer and then when school started in September I cut down. I only worked part-time. She was very cooperative and very helpful in terms of letting the people who did the scheduling know that if my class comes out on Monday night and I have all this work on Monday night somebody else should take that night, that they should switch with me and accommodate me and everything and in that event, I really feel that I couldn't have worked at a nicer place for a nicer person than she was.

RA: She was really a great person and Wilmette is better for her period of time in the library because I go back with her and knew the struggle which she had as I always have been interested in the library.

RF: She was a very hard task master.

RA: She expected a great deal of herself and of other people who worked for her.

RF: However, I had nothing but admiration for her and I felt that she exemplifies really the very best in the profession because she was - nothing was beneath her **.**

RA: That's right. She could do anything and everything and did it. And she built up the library in the way of the universality of the holdings.

RF: Right. She built a tremendous collection. She was absolutely willing to do anything that was necessary to be done and she considered the library to be like her child, like a part of her life and she was totally devoted **to** the welfare of her staff, of the collection, of the service to the community and really epitomized the very best qualities in the field. I admired her greatly and I really felt that she was sort of a model to emulate. So anyway, when I did start working at the desk, of course, I am just not a person who does only the job that they are hired to do. It just is not part of me. So when I started working at the desk I really did not just learn the desk, but became very interested in all the other functions of the library and became involved in it too, doing it and searching for opportunities, especially because of my professional desires. I was not there to just work at the desk and get my pay check at the end of the week. I was there because I wanted **to** make this a learning experience. So I did learn as much as I wanted or could. Mrs. Basse was very helpful, too, because I would ask her a lot of questions and she would be very helpful in trying to show me how things are done and what needs to be done and all that sort of

thing.

RA: Well, she either had it when she came to the library or Helen Siniff's philosophy and feeling rubbed off on her. I don't know where she acquired it, but I felt the same way about Dorothy Hasse, that she had the overall grasp of....

RF: Right. She also had the welfare of the whole place at heart and she was a very giving person. I mean she did not feel that If you, that somebody, whatever was an imposition on her or that it was a threat to her or anything. She was very secure.

RA: That's right.

RF: Both of these ladies were very secure.

RA: I think Wilmette has been very fortunate in that respect, too, in the main, to have people who are secure.

RF: So in some ways they both were extremely helpful and, of course. Miss Siniff was the kind of a person who knew every little minute detail that was happening in the library. I mean nothing missed her. She walked through that place every single day and there wasn't a spot on the floor or a piece of dust or anything that anybody was doing or wearing or whatever that would escape her attention. So she was watching what I was doing and although I didn't see her a great deal, but she kept tabs.

RA: She knew.

CD 3 TRACK 2

RF: So then when a year later, I started on June 1, and a year later in May 1 was graduating. She came to me. I didn't go to her. We had a very funny relationship [Laughter] because we were, I mean, from the very time that we met, we just hit it off and it was a kind of a relationship that we respected each other a great deal. She respected what I was doing and I respected what she was doing.

RA: Well, she was a great administrator in that she picked people and then she relied on them to function the way se expected them to function.

RF: So she came to me then, oh, maybe like again in April and she said, "I know that you are going to graduate soon. When are you graduating?" And I said, "I am finishing up this semester in May and then I will get my degree." She said, "Would you be interested in a full time position at the library?" I said, "Yes, I would. I haven't really looked around any place, but I like it here and I like the people I am working with and I would be interested." Then she said to me, "You know there is no position here at this time, but I am sufficiently pleased with your performance here and I would like to keep you." And she said, "I would talk with the Board and see if they can't create a position for a while so that you could stay on." And she said, "I'll let you know how it goes." Well, she

went back to the Board and I guess explained to them, because at that time it was Sue Osmotherly who was doing the cataloging. Miss Siniff thought that she was going to retire and when she retires that Sue would not stay on and so at that point Sue's position would be open and that's where she felt that she wanted me to go in. So although this was all still in the making, but she was more or less planning for the future, and really felt that she did not want me to leave. She wanted me to stay on. So then she came back to me and said, "Okay that the Board said it's okay and that as soon as you graduate you are going to become part of the professional staff. You will be in reference." So...

RA: This is where you....

RF: This is how we started it. And then, of course, she did retire and Sue thought that she would not. stay on with anybody else because this was a personal friend of hers and she was more or less doing her a favor and she only worked a couple of days a week so it was a mutual agreement kind of thing and once Helen left there was really nothing left to keep Sue at the Wilmette Library.

RA: What happened to Sue?

CD 3 TRACK 3

RF: She lives at the Presbyterian Home.

RA: Oh, does she? I didn't know that.

RF: I see her once in a while.

RA: Oh, do you?

RF: She then. Sue kind of broke me in, into the cataloging and after Sue left then I took over the cataloging.

RA: That was in what year?

RF: I started there in 1971 so that was 1972.

RA: I hadn't realized that it was so late because to me you are such a fixture in the library that I just thought....

RF: I have been there ten years.

RA: Well, I would have said you had been there much longer than that because you were definitely very much of a fixture from the start.

RF: So that was the time that I took over the cataloging and I did the cataloging under Mr. Freiser's directorship and then, of course, Dick Thompson came and when Dorothy Hasse retired then I was offered part of her job and that's when I became the Assistant Director. Then, of course, the computers came and while in a sense I think that certain things you know, people have to think through and make in a way their own opportunities.

RA: Um, hum.

RF: When I went to library school there wasn't even a course in computers. Just think, I graduated in 1972, that's only ten years ago. It's not like my library education was way back when.

RA: That's right.

RF: It's a fairly current education. The computers were no

were on the horizon. Nobody was even talking about it. When I came to the Wilmette Library and I worked there for a couple of years I began to feel that that was the direction that everything is going to go. Computers were becoming accepted in other areas and it only made sense to me that libraries weren't going to be left behind, that at a certain point the libraries were also going to enter into this and it was just a question of when. I even discussed it very strongly with Mrs. Hasse that I felt that the future of the library lay in the computer area and that this was going to be the most massive change that was going to occur in the next few years and she was very averse to it.

RA: Oh, was she?

RF: She did not like computers. She did not like the idea of it and really felt that if that change came she didn't want any part of it. And I think that is probably what hastened her retirement.

RA: Perhaps.

RF: Because we talked about it and then all of a sudden the system started talking about it and there were demonstrations of the library application of the computers. Then Northbrook bought the computer and I kept saying, "No way are you going to keep it out of the Wilmette Library." She kept saying, "I don't like it." There was a period when she was Acting Director, between Mr. Freiser and Mr. Thompson.

RA: Yes, yes.

RF: She really didn't care for the whole idea.

RA: Concept, yes. Well/ it does take, I think, a special kind of person to accept it.

CD 3 TRACK 4

RF: I guess I kept pursuing this, not that I was pushing for the computer, but I just felt that this is what is going to happen. I mean if they are going to make any kind of predictions, this is what is going to happen. Like it or not.

RA: I think it's rather interesting that, as I understand it, Winnetka put it in and then took it out and now their loss of books....

RF; Oh, that, no, that was security, not the computer.

RA: I see.

RF: The security system, but no, the security we weren't even talking about. I mean it was interesting because Winnetka installed a security system and had to remove it when the patrons made strong objections.

CD 3 TRACK 5

When Mr. Freiser was hired as Director, he called me into his office as he did all the other professionals and asked us what we thought of the library and where we thought improvements could be made and what kind of problems and so on. At that time I said to him that I could see a number of problems with the library. One was that we had too many doors and that we had too many desks, too many doors and too many ways for books to

disappear and for people to come in and out of the building. I thought that the design of the plant was not the greatest.

RA: Um, hum.

RF: Then I thought that if we ever consolidated any of these things that we would have to go to a different circulation system because we had a very antiquated circulation system and that we needed some improvements in certain areas of the collection and so on. But what is interesting is that when Dick Thompson came, he made absolutely on his own the same conclusions and observations and proceeded to implement them and really got them implemented because we did go from the three doors and the desks to one central entrance and one central circulation desk. And I saw that as a positive step.

RA: Well, we had to come to it actually because the new or the so called new building under Helen Siniff was built in the days of freedom and ease and when people could come and go and your books were safe and that kind of thing. Now just the other day I was told that somebody went to xerox a chapter that someone wanted out of reference and they found the whole chapter gone.

RF: Right.

RA: This was unheard of.

RF: I have noticed a marked change in attitude.

RA; Oh, there is a tremendous change in attitude.

RF: Because we used to have the little gate by the old adult circulation desk and people objected. That's the same thing at Winnetka and Winnetka had to take it out and then when Mr. Freiser came we took it out because people objected to that gate. There was an insinuation that they weren't to be trusted.

RA: That's right.

RF: And when we had the fine wheel, when we first started the fine wheel, they were absolutely insulted if you looked up their name on the fine wheel and told them that they owed money because we had numerous comments about that of saying, "I always pay my fines and I don't want to have my name on this fine Wheel and I don't want everybody in town to know that I owe 20 cents." So there was a completely different attitude and in this short, comparatively speaking short time, attitudes have changed tremendously. There's a completely different public than it used to be.

RA: Yes, because I can compare it with Newberry because the days when I went there as a reader there was no security, there was no identification of any kind. The people walked in from Washington Square and hid behind newspapers while they slept. Well, you can't tolerate that today.

RF: Well, society generally has changed, but anyway going back to my feelings about the computer. I then thought that whether Mrs. Hasse felt that we would have one or not I

felt that the Wilmette Library was going to have one.

RA: You were going where they had one?

RF: Well, I went to Oakton College and I took a course in computers [Laughter] because I felt that I needed to know that. By that time already Rosary did have courses in computers, but I talked to a friend of mine about it who was also a librarian, and she's with the Chicago Public Library, and she took the course at Rosary and I wanted to know what she thought of it and was it worth while and she felt that if you are going to go into a course about computers you can take it any place, and you don't have to pay the graduate prices at Rosary and I thought that was good advice.

RA: Very good.

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RF: So I went to Oakton and I took a course in computers there and, of course, then when Dick and the Board decided to go ahead with computerization, I was really the only person who was familiar or knew anything about it. I think that was the reason why Dick asked me to take charge of the conversion. So from that point on I worked really with getting the library into the data bank and ready for its going on the computer and coordinated then the hiring of the people to do it and the actual procedures and whatever.

RA: Tell me in conclusion what do you see in the future for computers? Will the day come when books will be computerized

as you see it?

RF: I don't know about books being computerized. I think books are always going to be around. The things I think we are going to are the other media, people are taping things and watching on television and they are going to have the cable with all that sort of thing. Because of space constrictions books are going to be on microfiche and microfilm and micro this and that and whatever and there might be some technological advances that we are not even aware of. I think physical books still are always going to be around because there is something about the physical book that is very comforting. I know about my own attitude about working in the library and I say, "Why do I like working in the library? I hardly ever get to read anything anymore." [Laughter] It's not like people say, which people do say to me, "Isn't it wonderful that you're getting paid for reading books?" I don't read any books. I have a hard time getting to read a book because my time is so limited. Even on my own time I have a hard time reading a book so I mean librarianship is not reading books and it's changing so dramatically over the last few years thatlibrarianship is becoming the same kind of profession as running a company or running any kind of a business because it is mostly administrative. It is mostly planning and budget and expenditures and building and

all that kind of stuff. It really doesn't make that much difference whether you are in the library business or you are in the laundry business or you are in the shoe business.

RA: It's a business.

RF: That's right. You have large budgets and you have to, and you have a large personnel and you have to" administer the people and take care of the plans and get your money appropriated in the right way, and all that kind of stuff.

RA: Let me ask you....

RF: I was just going to say, excuse me, I was just going to say that the reason I like to work in the library is far removed from what people mostly think about libraries. It is because I still believe that it's the physical presence of all these books that makes me feel good in that place and whether I believe that some of that knowledge is going to come to me by osmosis, I don't know, but I like to be surrounded by books. And that's why I am saying that I feel that the physical book will....

RA: Will always be with us?

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RF: I don't know about always because that's a long time, but within the foreseeable future. Books still have a certain charisma about them and it is different than listening to it on tape. It is different than watching it on television.

RA: Or watching it on microfiche. I understand they're

saying you can put a whole book on a fiche.

RF: There is something about holding that book in your hand and being able to pick it up and reading it. I believe in that. I really think that this is good. I do feel that libraries are going to become more and more computerized. There are going to be all kinds of networks and interfacing and the library profession is going to change dramatically from a librarianship to an information specialist. Very technical. Very computer oriented.

RA: I see.

RF: Rather than the way the librarian used to be within his or her community administering or enhancing the collections because the tremendous demand for information will not be satisfied. The demand for information is going to have to go beyond the community because the collections within each individual community will not be able to satisfy the demand and therefore there will be a need to reach out into the libraries in other areas all over the country, possibly all over the world, and it will not be done physically by transporting books. It will have to be done on the computer through the telephone lines and whatever, but the information will be gleaned out of all the different collections everywhere and then brought to the community to the individual patron and this is where I perceive this tremendous change that aside from just sitting down and reading a book for recreation, libraries in general will

serve a different duty of picking out, and librarians will do that, will pick out the necessary information, the bits and pieces of information that people need for their work, for their research, for their whatever it is that they are doing and the librarians will then provide them with this access.

RA: Then according to this, and I think I buy your philosophy, I'm antiquated in my approach or attitude about the function of the librarian which is to teach people the use of the library.

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RF: Well, on a certain level because there are many levels to this. People still come into the library and take out books to read for enjoyment and that is one level. Then people come in to the library to read for self education or for enrichment or for business purposes or for advancement on the job or whatever and that is another level, but then as time progresses, the way I see it, with a new generation of people who are extremely technology oriented and with the real technological explosion that is happening in this country, there will be other needs which will be not satisfied on that level of coming into the library and using it that way.

RA: Well, it seems to me that I am seeing people becoming less independent about asking to be shown where they can find something and wanting the librarian to be the one who does the work for them.

RF: Absolutely.

RA: And it's this wrong attitude on my part should I not be thinking along the lines that they are going to become dependent upon the skill of the librarian?

RF: They will and it is going to be really the function of the librarian to provide them with that because a number of factors, the way I see it, are contributing to it. One of the factors is, of course, the energy crisis and problems with that and the difficulty of physically going to the library and the second one being that the demands on the person's time and there just simply is not enough time, there is not that much leisure any more. What used to be a pleasant experience of going into the library and browsing through the books, spending time there and having a good time looking at all of these different materials, picking out this and that, that is disappearing because people do not have that much leisure and their time is very compressed and what they are looking for is information. They are not looking so much for the, but I say, that's on a different level, they still come in and they are looking for books to read for pleasure and that is a leisurely kind of thing, but when a man or woman is on his job or her job and they need information quickly and very concise information and it is technical information or something that needs to be picked out of something else, sort of are

search kind of thing.

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THEY do not have the time or the inclination to do it themselves and they feel that the library is then the place where they can pick up the phone and say, "I need this, this and this and please you get it for me." The role of the library, in order to be able to maintain this taxpayer's support, is going to have to change to satisfy this kind of need and it isn't going to be that specialized because the specialized libraries do it now.

RA: Yes.

RF: But they are, of course, paid by the company and they are doing it for their company, but there are a lot of businesses that cannot afford their own specialized libraries and their own special librarians and they still have the needs, and to them the public library is the place where they are going to turn to get that kind of information. It is not available in that form yet because of the fact that we are still really on the ground floor of this communication problem, but it's developing and you have a system and then you have two systems connected and pretty soon they are going to have the whole state of Illinois interfaced and you are going to have access to all the libraries in the state and pretty soon the country is going to be interfaced and the computer technology is really where this country is at. This is at this point, in my estimation, the difference between this country and other

countries in the world - it is the level of computerization. We are the most computerized country at this point of any country in the world and we are getting to the point where we are not selling goods and we are not selling resources, but we are selling technology, and our technology is going to be..the thing that the rest of the world is going to want.

RA: And need and....

RF; Right.

RA: If it's going to keep abreast of things. Regina, I can't tell you how grateful I am for the experience this morning that I have had. You have done a beautiful job. I am looking forward to the typescripts on this and I am Rhea Adler signing off for the Wilmette Public Library.

RF: Thank you very much, Rhea.

[End of tape]