

**MEMOIRS OF
NESCHE SCHATTNER**

Narrator: Nesche Schattner
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Place: Mrs. Schattner's home - Birmingham, Alabama
Interviewer: Elizabeth Morrison

This is Elizabeth Morrison. I am conducting an interview for the "Memory Bank" project of Birmingham Jewish Federation. The person I am interviewing is Mrs. Nesche Schattner.

Q. Suppose you start by telling me about where you grew up and what growing up was like for you.

A. I grew up in Brody, Galicia, which was Austria. And I was one of seven children and the youngest one; it was spoiled of course with all those babies; and it doesn't help when you get older, because it's kind of hard when you don't have all these, you know, advantages. The best wasn't good enough for me, but what my parents did...for I had four brothers, and there were three girls, and I was the youngest of the family. And then in 1914 when the war broke out I was 13 years old and we lived on the border, really you could cross the border by walking, it was maybe a 15 minutes walk from the city to the Russian border, so most of them were afraid that the Russians would come in and the first thing they would go for is girls and my older sister was a

young girl, she was about 3-1/2 years older than I am, so they sent us away - the other ones were much older already. I tell you, I was an aunt before I was born, you know how it was years ago when your parents, you know, they married young and they had their children when they were young. At that time they were married my older sister was married and two brothers were married, and two were still single, but of course we were the youngest and they send the two girls away somewhere to a friend farther from the border. The city was Stryj, also in Galicia. She lived in our building and her parents, the woman's parents lived in Stryj, so we all went over there and stayed with them for three weeks; in the meantime the Russians, you know, started to progress, you know, farther into Galicia, and my parents had to leave of course; it was in summertime and most of them were, you know, in Europe they used to go in summer this time of the year, in August, you know to summer resorts, to spas, and so my father happened to be in a spa, he wasn't home; part of my family - only my mother with the other brother were home. And she came back to Stryj, my father was in another section of Galicia; she couldn't reach him, she didn't want him to come back. So she came to Stryj and the war with Russia started. So we left Stryj. We just, went farther and farther till we reached Vienna.

Q. To another village?

A. Yes. So, still my father was still in the other place, a resort named Gleichenberg.

Q. What kind of work was your father doing?

A. Well we were in wholesale business - feathers, feathers and horsehair, you know, raw materials. We didn't have 'detailed' [retail] business, just export.

Q. Was it a family business?

A. It was, well, with each one was independent; the married ones were in the same kind of business, but well they were already independent in the same line of business. We used to export to Germany and to France, you know, feathers and things like this. So we just were going from place to place and finally reached Vienna. And my oldest brother, he reached Prague, Czechoslovakia. He didn't come to Vienna, because we had to go where we could, you know, could run. This was our first invasion. And then after we were in Vienna a few weeks, my father finally came to Vienna, the oldest brother was in Prague, and the other two married brothers were with us in Vienna, because our business never...you know, the Russians took it over, we didn't have nothing, but we were lucky when we came to Vienna, they weren't very eager to take in people in Vienna then, you know, but we were lucky that we had some, bank accounts and we also had

bank books; the police came to check if we had, you know, money, that we won't be any burden to the Viennans, so they let us stay there.

Q. Who let you stay, the government?

A. The government. Because they came to check, to control, in fact they came once at night, in the middle of the night, they came to see, but we were lucky, my younger, my brothers had bank books and they had their accounts in the other places.

Q. Where did you find to stay there?

A. We rented an apartment. All the families. We lived in Vienna until 1938.

Q. I want to back up a minute and find out, growing up about your schooling. Did you....

A. Well, I went to school. I finished almost, well, we used to call it different - here it's high school, grammar school, or something - but in Vienna, I went to business school, and my sister too. In fact my sister, she went in Brody to a business school, so, I mean, just went to school a little bit, you know, just did something to spend the time because it was different, you know, didn't think of practical

purposes. When we lived in Vienna, of course we lost everything that we had in Brody. The building stood there. We had several warehouses in Brody, so one of the warehouses still had feathers in it, you know what we had, so my older brothers went back to Brody to try to, you know, to finish it up the business.

Q. Magazines? Is that what you said?

A. Storage places, the people working for us sorted all this. So they (the brothers) went there and they just finished up the business there, and they stayed there and started up again. The building was left; it was a very substantial, you know, two story building, but they took away everything, the furniture and the silverware, everything was taken away. We lost everything, we had to start from the beginning.

Q. What was your response as a teenager, to being uprooted and going some.....

A. Well, when you're young, you know, it doesn't hit you so much. Of course, my parents were unhappy, you know. No, on thinking back, it just, it was like an adventure for me, you know. It was different like you take a 13 year old girl now away from their home, everything destroyed and she has to start new, it just don't worry that you lost it. I didn't

miss that we didn't have the silver and all these, and the dishes, you know. Then we started to work up again, because my brothers were, my two brothers were in Brody, started doing the same business, and we lived in Vienna, of course, we lived in more moderate circumstances because we lost everything from Brody. I was young, it didn't bother, you know. We didn't have such, like here, the children, you know, does work; in fact it was in 1914 or 1918 when they couldn't go back after they made the peace with Russia, so it's about 62 years, you know. It was different times then, the young people weren't so, you know, money possessed and luxuries possessed and all that, you know. They had what they needed and they lived you know, dressed and went to school and went to little parties or to dancing, but it wasn't such a problem for my mother, she was very unhappy, she didn't have this candle, the silver candle holders, and the menorahs, you know, she had to start from little things at first. She was never happy then in Vienna of course, because she was displaced, you know. For me, I started to live there, you know, when I came at 13 years old, you know, so we started to live there, made friends, you know. Started to go to all kinds, you know, to university, all kind courses, and so made friends, go dancing, and it just was a different time.

Q. Was it necessary for you to go to work?

A. No, I didn't go work. Of course, we started to get in the feather business, with my father and younger brother which was, you know, the two older ones went back to Brody, in fact the 3 was, and the younger brother were still with us in Vienna, he started in the same business in a smaller scale, but we made a living. We worked up a little. Here when you have this kind of business here you are a rich man. Over there it wasn't showoff business, you know, you lived a different scale.

Q. How would you say then the war affected you and your family?

A. Which war, the first one?

Q. The first world war.

A. Well, it was a change, but it didn't affect me so that I sit and grieve about it, I was with my parents, you know, since I was so young, and I had to get used to being alive. So I was at that age where I could go dancing and made friends and all this, so it didn't affect me the other things. In fact, we did go back every so often to see the other brothers, you know, one brother married there and he stayed there with the business. We just had one brother in Vienna the other ones stayed back..., but my father didn't

want to go back to Brody because he he just couldn't start over like he was, so he rather got used to living in moderate circumstances, and not go. In fact, when one of my brothers married and he went back to the wedding, do you know that my father, we were religious people and in wedding ceremonies - after the wedding there were 8 days celebrations (Sheva brochos) - "Seven blessings". And he didn't even want to wait for the 8 days celebrations, he just packed up his suitcase and came back to Vienna, it hurt him to see what became of him, you know, he worked up so much, you know, he was in such position and all of a sudden it's nothing, you see. It was on a very small scale, so you know there was in Vienna, you know, when he started up again in a smaller scale, because he did have to see what became of him, but the people, you know, they in Brody loved my father, he was a very friendly man, always a smile on his face, but he didn't want to stay, he never did go back. My mother did go back once in a while and she took me along because I was the youngest, she didn't want to leave me. But my father never did go back to see what became, you know, worked all these years, of course, he was at an age when, I don't know what the age was when he left, but he was at an age where it affects more than a 13 year old person, so he stayed in Vienna until 1938, and it was pretty good, you know. My mother died in 1927, in Vienna yes 1927. She died in Vienna,

it was a time of unrest, you know, the Social Democrats and the other ones were demonstrating, and my younger brother which wasn't married; used to go every Friday for the weekend when she was in the country, couldn't leave Vienna. We used to go every summer to the beach, it was sulphur spas and my mother needed it, so my mother used to go only with my sisters and stayed there. And my younger brother used to go every Friday and spend the weekend there because Saturday we didn't do any business - you see it was closed, it was a wholesale place and we didn't do any business. He used to go every Friday afternoon to the spa to spend the weekends there. So, and I waited till my mother was supposed to come back and I would have gone then, you see, to stay with my sister. So one Friday it was, the Social Democrats started some unrest you know and burned the, what do you call it, the Palace of Justice, and there was no way to go out to the spa, that Friday. My mother was so excited, he doesn't come out, so she was afraid there comes another war and she is again to be turned away from the family, from the children and all that, and she had a heart attack. So then on Tuesday they all came back to Vienna. I wasn't then at home when my sister brought her back and of course it depressed me to prepare my clothes and go out to stay with my sister there, but my mother was supposed to come back. And on the way, when I come home, I see my sister running, she called me to

come in quick. My mother, you know, again felt the family was divided, like it was, because after all it did happen before with all of a sudden children, you know, and she wanted wanted to be with all of them, it wasn't enough she had the brothers in Brody, and at that time, we had to go by train because it was about 24 hours, longer than from New York, and it wasn't so easy for to go so often. So she missed her children, they were married and had families. So my mother had a heart attack, it was on a Tuesday and I came in from the dressmaker and she was laying already in bed, and waiting for the doctor; and the doctor came in. He said it's a heart attack and she'll be all right. He came in every day to look after her. Thursday, the doctor, you know, went out for the weekend too. In Vienna it was - people went out for the weekend like people go out here for the weekend, and he said she'll be all right, she just has to stay in bed and rest, and this was Thursday and I even did her shopping to get something for the house, we started to prepare dinner and my mother didn't let me do anything, I always was just babied, I didn't have a hard life. So when I came home I started to cook for Shabbos. On Friday night, she still went down to light the candles, and my two girlfriends came in to sit and talk; and all of a sudden she had another attack. So I was left without a mother and I wasn't prepared for it, she wasn't sick and all that, and my life changed

too, but still it was, my brother was real close and took very good care of me.

Q. How old were you at that time?

A. I was 26. I wasn't married. And my brother was older than I was, and my sister was married, but I wasn't. It's complicated. It was so mixed up, it's hard even for me to put all this together. For me it was my life experience, but for you, it's too mixed up story, it was such a long time. So, well, I stayed home, I didn't do nothing, just was friends with a girl who worked in our office, but I didn't work so I used to go pick her up and we would go to 5 o'clock teas. You know, you went to theaters, to operas, I lived nice. I missed my mother, but I didn't miss nothing else and company, we'd go out...

Q. You were close to your mother?

A. Yes, sure I was the youngest, you know, the youngest, that age especially. I was lost in the beginning, you know, since she died almost suddenly, you could say she wasn't sick, she didn't suffer, so it was hard to get used to that. I just couldn't...still believe that she's dead.

Q. How old was she when she died?

A. Well, she was I guess about 58 or something. She started her children when she was 16, you know, at that age. And, in fact, when my mother died, my father was in a resort

place, he wasn't home, it was in summer. It was in July. So it was on Friday, and he called and we told him Mother died. You know, he asked the Rabbi if he can come back on Saturday, he said no, he came on Sunday, Sunday morning. So he come back Sunday morning just as the funeral was starting - we were religious people, it was different than the things here, it's an entirely different life, it's so hard to compare it here. I guess it was, many years ago it was different here too than the older people you know, and the younger people just can't, what do you say, comprehend or whatever. I'm not so good in English. So, just can't see that, it's a different life. So I had to go on this thing without a mother. Of course, my brother was, he wasn't married either, you know, and we just, he was a bachelor and I was a single woman too, but we had friends you know, and we just go on living - at least I had a home. I didn't have to cook or take care, you know, I didn't have to do nothing, just to have friends and go out and have a good time and embroidering, doing, you know, go to speeches, it's a big city, there was plenty to do there, you can't get bored, you know. And you didn't need a car over there, you know, there are buses everywhere, it was a different life in Vienna than it is, you know, than it is here, you know, you never felt bored, you still started to go back dancing, go out, it was different, of course. Then when I, so I was the only one

which married into 'detail' [retail] business.

Q. How did you meet your husband?

A. In Vienna. Through friends. Was through friends, you go out together, so and then sometimes you get stuck.

Q. How long did you know each other before you got married?

A. Eight months.

Q. And how did you decide to marry him?

A. Well, it was high time, because I wasn't young any more, and I couldn't stay always at home with my brother, then my brother married. In fact, he married about two months before I did, because he didn't want to leave me alone. Then in 1937 my father died. I used to go every summer with my father since I wasn't married, to a resort place, to a spa, Gleichenberg (for asthmatic people), so I used to used to go with him to spend two months summer in a spa with him. We had a good time and people and all that for a few weeks, so then my father died.

Q. Did your family approve of your marriage?

A. Well, my mother didn't live any more, and my father lived, because I married in 1932, my father liked, because he was from a nice family and a decent fellow, so, a year

before my father died, I lost my oldest brother, and he lived also in Brody all this time, and he had children the same age as I was, because my oldest brother lost a daughter suddenly to a ruptured appendix and he became sick then and remained sick. Then my sister went to a wedding there, to a nephew's wedding and she brought him back to Vienna and so he [the brother] died in Vienna. So I was left with my father and took care of him, not that I had to do something really hard for him, but we lived together and in 1937 my father became sick and he died.

Q. How old was he when he died?

A. Well my father was about near 70. So I was left alone, so I was married already when my father died. He lost his his oldest son of course. Then I married and I had my husband and the business. We were the only ones in the retail business.

Q. What kind of business was it?

A. We had paints and house furnishings you know, all kind of, a retail store. I helped and I liked it and I used to go in and once a week I used to go out with my sister. My sister, she married, she was still in the export business in horsehair and things like this, mattresses from horsehair. You changed the seats from horsehair, you know, like you

have now, what do you call it - foam, or whatever it is...it was big business, because you had ...and now it's different because horsehair's expensive. And then we came up with... So, and my sister, I used to, since we didn't have any children, I used to be a lot with my sister, she had two children. She had her husband too, she was a bookkeeper, she worked in the office there and she used to go to work to... So I used to go at the holidays and so I used to go to spend with my sister. My husband had family too, he had brothers there, we used to get together, just family life, and then in 1938, of course, Hitler marched. It was something, after being settled you know, and lived a normal life, when this came it was...

Q. How was that for you?

A. How it was, it was terrible, because we knew what was waiting for us. I tell you the truth, till Hitler came to Vienna we didn't believe it was so bad in Germany, because my brother from Brody, he used to go to Germany, you know, for business, the feather business and all this, and in 1936, he was in Berlin, he came back to Vienna and stopped to see us in Vienna, and it was already bad then in Germany, because Hitler came in Germany in '33, but it wasn't so bad. So my brother said, well it's bad there, that there is anti-

semitism...but he didn't know what's going on with the camps you know, that it wasn't in such a high scale. So he went back to Brody and he just didn't expect that bad too either, he just thought well it will change, he didn't expect it to have stayed there. In 1938 when Hitler came to Vienna, he closed the stores, not to shop at Jewish stores, you know, and all that, and took people away from stores and all this. I remember it was Shavuos, six weeks after Pesach, and I went to say Yizkor and I came back and there was already two Nazis there in front door of my store, not to let any people in to go shopping. Then a few days later they just - they didn't come in to shop - Hitler came in in March, never ever - you know, it at once it got worse and worse and worse, and some people started to apply, they had to run away from this, they had to leave. My husband had a sister in New York so he decided to go to her - he didn't even make an application for me because he thought well I'll stay here and finish up the business and then I'd go too. In a quiet way we would do it...

Q. Was that all right with you?

A. Yes, sure, just you hate to give capital away, you know. So he never, I liked it in the business and it didn't work out that way, and this was in March. Then they took him in November when was the Kristol-nacht. And in the

meantime, he got the papers to go, but it got worse, it started to...

Q. How did it get worse? What happened?

A. With the Nazis...so he added me to the papers, so I was on the papers already, he couldn't come to the United States, they had the quota, so many, so many come in every year to United States, and we had to wait for our quota. We couldn't go just because we had the papers, we had to wait till the United States let us in. So added me to the papers and it was an affidavit, still we knew that it would come some day, every day that goes by it's nearer to the quota.

Q. What was waiting like?

A. Waiting, why it was very sad, we were, it was like in a bad dream, you know, it wasn't a normal life. We were afraid to go, you know, and do something, [shops, restaurants and parks, and movies were closed to the Jews - ed.], and gentile people were afraid to talk to you even, they pretended they aren't your friends, they are afraid to talk to you. And some pretend that they are friends and the next day they tell for the other, of course they had the Social Democrat button and then they turn on top of the next day and have the swastika you see, which they wore behind their lapel. So this was people and how all this changed, you know people

can't understand how we were there. We still were in the store till 1938 and he [Hitler] came in in March and this was November 1938. I guess it was 1938, so when ... At that time I wanted to go buy already boat tickets and I had it was about 1300 schillings we needed and so, I had this in the drawer there at the store to go to the office to buy boat tickets, because I had to drag the case down and you weren't sure that you had the money or so, and then started to move all over Vienna, all over Germany, it was all over. They started to burn all the temples at the same time. And two men pretended to be our friends, the day before, came in and took the money away, took everything away and dragged my husband out and took him away from the store. Well, I locked up the store, and then I...

Q. Did you know where he was?

A. And then the caretaker of the building of the store came in and helped me to close the store. They happened to be Gentiles and they lived in the place where the store was and she took me, a woman, she took me, took me in because I started to faint. And they began robbing out the store, taking out the things. And I was laying there on the couch, you know, they tried to bring me back to life, I knew that's the end of us. Then the next day I went over and stayed with my sister, my sister was in Vienna still. Now

my brother-in-law had a business visa to go to England because he was in business connections in England too, and in this...I got so much stuff in my mind you know.

Q. But he [husband] got out of Dachau?

A. He got out of Dachau and he had to go of course every morning to the police to, report that he's there, in Vienna, and, you know, the police in the police station was in, not in a big hotel. They had to stay with the face to the wall, they face the wall you know. They stayed there for hours too before they let him go home, and when they finally...he didn't have his visa, but he expected. So, in March came a commission from England, the Jewish Committee, and decided to take out 3,000 people which were in Dachau from Vienna and 3,000 people from Germany. Men, men. But he had a chance later on to go to the States, - just for transit, they took them to England. England in camps - it wasn't a concentration camp. It was an army camp that they could stay, it was Kitchener Camp - Richborough. And then my husband was selected among the 3,000 and he was one of them and he could go. So he went to England to wait for the transit to come to America, and I was in Vienna staying with my sister because her husband was already away at that time. In fact, he was in England and then he got a visa for the

States. He had a Mexican visa but he had a visitor visa for the States too. Because he had connections, his work was always out of town, he knew all the people so I went with my sister, and my sister, the older boy was 16 years old and he wanted, had to send him away, so he did go away to Israel, on the Youth Aliyah, then they went, went away you see. He didn't even...I jump from one thing to the other, but this is what we went through, we didn't even allow to go to the train to see him off and you know what, all he was allowed to take was just a knapsack, a leather jacket and boots, a few things like that. My nephew was a tall fellow, nice boy. He couldn't even go on the street with it (the boots) but he had to walk around in the house to be able to start to wear them, you know and all that, so we couldn't go to the train. And then after while sitting there, can you imagine what feeling - how it was sitting there, the woman alone and my niece was there with the children. We were sitting alone, the telephone rings and he calls and he said we can come to the train to see him off. So we are out at the train, you should have seen the train, there are a lot of children you know, but usually a transit to go to Israel. I remember a little girl, she was always behind him, behind him, because she was small, he was tall, so she was little. All he could take away from Vienna was the knapsack, the boots, leather jacket and his skis. That's all he could take.

Q. Keys? What kind of keys?

A. Skis, skis, you know, what you call skis. He took them along to Israel. And you can imagine the train that we saw leaving and then we came home and I stayed with my sister.

Q. Did he get to Israel all right?

A. Yes. My nephew's ambassador, Israeli ambassador to South Africa now.

Q. What's his name?

A. Harmelin, Joseph Harmelin. He was Amabassador in Iran just when he, he was lucky he got out alive, when they took over the Israeli Embassy. Compared with others...and he was, when he went to start something different, and he went to get out, you know, Ambassador, he left all his belongings but his suitcase...because they came in and took everything he owned and they took over the Embassy.

Q. How did you get out of Vienna to London?

A. Let me tell you something - the wives from the men which the English permitted there to wait for transit to America, sent them visas for the wives to come to England, so he went through March, the last of March, April to England.

Q. This was a Jewish agency that was doing this? Which one?

A. Well, the United Jewish Committee or something, I forgot the name of it, I don't know. Of course, for Austria and for Germany...3,000 into Germany, 3,000...and it was there in the camp waiting, so they send a visa to the wives. In fact, my husband, my brother-in-law, the younger one, he was in that camp too, Kitchener Camp, and they send a visa for his wife and he had a little baby there, and his wife because she was staying in Vienna waiting till her parents can go to Canada. They were waiting there and she wanted to stay with her parents, and she never came out. When I had the visa of course, I went to England, I didn't wait for nobody, and my sister was still in Vienna.

Q. Were you relieved to get it?

A. Sure. I left. Before I left, you know, this was, I left on Tuesday, before I left on Saturday, they took me to the police station and kept me about five hours. And I didn't know what's happens. They took me. But I had so much, you know, courage then. At that time we had a furnished apartment and it's so complicated because I waited with my sister-in-law, my brother's wife. My brother waited for my husband to go with him to, he wanted my husband to go to Switzerland to the border, just to see the border, he didn't

want to leave him alone, he thought he'd come home from where they took him (Dachau). And he waited a few days, so he left and he went to Switzerland. And he left his wife and two children. So at night we moved to my sister's. She had an unfurnished apartment. I lived with my sister. One Friday night, when they have their, you know...Vienna. And they are looking for me, that woman, they had that furnished apartment, I stayed with my sister-in-law then, for visiting with them. So she said the police came to look for me...so she thought maybe I won't come home, but I went home, I didn't hide, because it wouldn't have helped, we went home with my sister - we had so much courage - every night we drank a glass of wine and had a piece of cake. My sister's daughter was with us. You know, every night, because we didn't know what the morning brings, that's how we lived, in a furnished apartment and in the morning, Saturday morning, sure enough, 6 o'clock, the police knock at the door, and the woman, we rented from her, the bedroom and the dining room, and so she says she was a widow too, and she says well they're still sleeping, so that man says it's all right, I'll go in and wake them up. And he knocks on our door and comes in to the bedroom, so, but I had so much courage, so I said may I take a breakfast, have my shower, and do you know, I did it, and then while I was eating the breakfast he was waiting to the window you know, he was watching me eat

breakfast, and he didn't take my sister or the girl, but he took me. But, I knew that I had the permit to go to England on Tuesday. This is a Saturday morning, and when I came down to street I saw a whole bunch of women, I wasn't the only one, so you couldn't be scared, you just couldn't. They were marching to the police station and my poor niece runs after me, wants to see where they take me, so the policeman says you don't, they don't call you, you just go home, she didn't want to let them go, you know, to see. Then they took me in to the police station and was sitting there with all the people, the crippled people, an old lady with a pillow, she took along her pillow so she can stay there, sit there, sit there on the floor. It was a terrible picture the police station. And then about...my sister sitting there wondering about me didn't know what happened, but about 12:30 they call me in. You take some, you know you have to tell them something I don't remember but they let me go, so I went home to my sister. Right away she knew they were starting to release the people that they took Saturday.

Q. What language were they...

A. German.

Q. How many languages do you speak?

A. Just German, Jewish

Q. Yiddish?

A. Yes, that what my parents spoke. The children and the brothers and sisters, we talked German, but with my parents we talked Jewish. In fact I talked more Jewish here than I talked at home because there are so many Jewish people here and I like just the Jewish language, I started to get used to talking Jewish. Then when we had to talk wherever we went in the business world well I did go - took some courses in French but then I gave up - the summer started something, you know, when I was young but never finished. So, Saturday, they let me out around 12:30. Then finally I came home to my sister and we ate lunch then we went out, you see, you couldn't take out, I knew everybody...and my sister knew she would go away too, eventually. So we just...we still had some money to give people, you know, but you are already in the States, you know practical things, they said bring this and bring that you know, we went just shopping, even dust rags, you know, such little things, it was unbelievable. And then, in fact then we have to go and give up our jewelry and our silverware, you see, I didn't tell you about that. You see, everybody when they did go out of the country, we had to go and deliver, we used to stay there, the Gestapo, we are people with the suitcases, the small suitcases - one suitcase here, one suitcase here - me and my sister we take out our...and the silverware. They gave us a receipt for

it, but that's what we had to do. They said that we can go out, we can take along two sets of silverware, tableware, 2 spoons, 2 forks, 2 knives, for each person. So we left that much, for my husband two sets of...then we knew that my brother's children are going also from the Jewish Committee to England too, you know...so the children can take along each one one set. So I gave each from the silverware, each child a set, we had four sets of silverware, because you know, he had to buy one spoon when he get there, but this wasn't... When we got married my sister gave me for six people a complete silver set. His brother gave us for six people complete, it just was different..., oh and he gave a coffee set - china - but he gave a set for six, he gave a mocha set, you know, for six, you didn't give one glass. You didn't know this in Europe. It's very practical here, you know. But the family, of course, here the family doesn't give set for six or for four either, you see. But over there it was natural. My brother lived in Brody, you know the other brother he was married, but he send me candle holders, they were so high like you see them in churches.

Q. And that's all gone.

A. Oh yes. There's nothing left. This little what I have I brought from Mexico. My sister used to live in Mexico.

We used to go almost every other year. She used to come here, but we were very close, we were the two youngest, and we were close, we were so close, and she's in Israel.

Q. So you got to England with very little.

A. With nothing but, five mark or five dollars amount - with all we could take along.

Q. Did you know where your husband was?

A. Yes. Where he was, he was in that Kitchener Camp. That's how I got my visa.

Q. And were you able to see him right away?

A. He came in every weekend in London. The visa I got was, the visas what they gave were domestic visas for the wives to go as domestics. Because they needed domestics in England, and not to be a burden to the country. So, I got the visa as a domestic and but I had to go to the Committee, they gave me a job to go as a domestic, so I said yes, I'm kosher, so they gave me to a Jewish family. So, I came to a Jewish family and she saw she could be a better domestic than I could. You know she was very nice, they had a candy store. They weren't rich, but they had to help the people. So she took me in and I stayed there, she was so nice, she gave me the bed in her son's bedroom, she gave me to stay

there. Because she just didn't need the special domestic, but I stayed there, taking care of the child taken over from Austria from Germany or some place, some camp. And my husband used to have the weekends off. So he came every weekend to London, this was in London, England, the place was. So he used to come every weekend to London and we, she let us stay, spend the weekend with...Such nice people you see. And I stayed there, until we had the visa for America.

Q. And how long was that?

A. Well, it was July and we left in March. I came in July.

Q. Of 1939?

A. Yes. Then we left in March for America. We came to America in April 1940.

Q. And where did you come to?

A. We came to New York. We came to my husband's sister.

Q. What was it like? What were your first impressions of New York?

A. Listen, we were so, we just couldn't even, something, you know, straighten out our minds and thoughts what we are going to do and what we will do. Because you know that was

like from a fire. You know, just running, mind was running too, but we straightened out. And we came to America of course, we came to my husband's sister.

Q. You lived with her?

A. Yes, for three weeks. But my husband couldn't get a job there. So I had relatives here, the Shilands. But before they went to America this family, they used to come to Brody; you know how the Russian Jews came from Russia. It's my mother's brother, was here. My mother was dead already I didn't know that he lives here in Birmingham. Because we weren't so in touch with them. They left in 1914 from Brody; and two, three days later we had to run away, they left before the Russian revolution and came to America, because they had a son here, that was here a long time before, he brought them over, but before they came here, they stayed in Brody for three weeks. So, then when, but I didn't remember them so well, since it was a few years when they left, so I didn't remember them and I didn't know the day, but I had their address that they lived here, so there was one cousin, she used to write to us. So when we came to New York and my husband couldn't find a job, it was miserable weather, it was April-March, snow, and it wasn't pleasant, but of course I started to get in touch. I had some friends in New York, you know, friends which came over the same

condition as I did. So, I wrote to her, the cousin, Ida Cohn, she died, she answered right away and told me to come here.

Q. She's here in Birmingham?

A. Yes, she died. But she had two brothers and three sisters, or two brothers and four sisters. So, she said to come to Birmingham and we'll get your husband a job, and just let us know. So when I heard this, we go to Birmingham, and I had a big ship trunk, which I had some linens, just to take along, I took from New York everything along with me. Because my sister-in-law, at that time, she had a good business, but it so happened that she lost it, she wasn't in good condition when we came. She was in good condition at the time, when she send them the papers because we had to have so much to be able to, you know, guarantee that you will take care of them, when she came over, but then everything turned to sour, you know, sometimes when you're in business it's not so good. So, I just hated to stay there, you know. So we came here and I stayed there with my uncle, she (Ida Cohn) was living with my uncle, but I didn't know that they were still living.

Q. And his name was?

A. Jacob Shiland. Ida's father. He was so surprised to

see, so it was the day before the first seder, you know, pesach, I came into Birmingham and it was nice, everything blooming, you know, green, so much green, I came from the miserable New York - the snow and terrible weather. I thought I came to a paradise. Her daughter waited for us at the train, you know, in the car, to bring us to the home, and we came and everybody was so friendly and everybody was so pleased to see me so because I was a cousin and I was the only one from the family from the father's family which came out.

Q. Did you speak English at that time? Or were you speaking Yiddish?

A. I spoke in German, I speak a little English too. But we used to say 'father' or 'mother', you know, something, this kind you know, but I understood it, yes.

Q. So you learned English after you came to the United States?

A. Yes, mostly. But I did go about three years to courses (in Vienna) just, you know, they had, you know, like from the university, like here at UAB, you know, non-credit courses, they have this in Vienna too. This here is new, but over there it was natural. We took all this for granted what we had there, you know, lectures, and all that. So,

and it was Pesach, we were, you know, sitting down to the seder, and they have a big family, you know, the Shilands, they were a big family, there were children and some died already - and they all came, you know, to see us, and brought flowers. What kind of relatives was this here? Well, away from misery you know, from scare, and all that, and here you see a whole family together, it's so nice, you know...One of the brothers wanted to know if Ida Cohn's brother, Mr. Abe Shiland, was with the Star Supermarket, it's a grocery store. And he gave my husband a job and found an apartment since he started to work, you know, he start to do something, beginning.

Q. When did you go to work?

A. Well, I didn't go to work. Then, first I started there, he gave me a job on Saturday as a floor walker. I used to make \$5 a day.

Q. This was at the grocery store?

A. Yes, it was a big market, pretty big market. And I was a floorwalker, watch people, they steal, so it was on Second Avenue and 24th Street. The Oxford Gallery is there now. So he had to...and I made the I needed the money more for to help the children who are waiting in England. You know, and they were the one together, two Christian families. See

they came to England the day after, I came one day, they came the next day, that's how they left Vienna. It just so happened, you know, that it worked out. Of course I was the only one which could take care of them. We had the responsibility, my brother was in Switzerland and his wife was in Vienna sick. And I was the only one which had the responsibility for the children.

Q. How did you decide not to have children?

A. It just didn't work, just couldn't have any children, then the miseries came and I just didn't bother. So then, the children came to England, they wrote they were coming the next day, so we went on the train - my husband came in from the Kitchener Camp to London. We went to the train to wait for the children, they came by train, and they came to London. And the children, the oldest children, from the Committee all brought a trainload of children. Some had already sponsors from England to send, and they didn't have any sponsor, so they had to stay just around...so we were staying there, let's say, like here they stay at the Center, the Y, the YMCA, whatever - all the children were... And some people came to pick up the children, but these children didn't have any sponsors, and we were staying there too. It was four years the boy was four years, the girl was six years and taken away from parents. So it was staying there family - so some homes came, the children taken from the

family, they took them to a home. A children's home. Well we had to let them go to the children's home. They had, you know, they take along that one set of silverware, they had to bring their set too, and of course he didn't bother, he didn't even think then they had or don't have, so they went to that home, and that home, still people came over the others, and so people had to come and take children to the families, Christian families that were in a condition to take the children, so each would take one child to the house, it was in Coventry. So they went to that home, but I didn't see the family of children because they took the children from the home not from the, not where they arrived you see, but they took them to the home to stay at the home for three weeks, so they finally take over to families. And I got in touch with this family, they were very nice, I'm still in touch with them.

Q. What were their names?

A. One was Morgan and one was Moore. Harold Morgan and Henry Moore, Morgan...I had the paper...it's getting mixed up, it's kind of hard, you know, to even to talk. So I was in touch with these people. We were already in this country and my poor brother used to write from Switzerland, take care and do something for the children. And I started to write to these people, they were nice enough to write to me too. I used to sit with the dictionary you know, to get the

letters together to write the English people, you know, but I did write them, I mean I was in England when they were in Coventry. And I used to write to England, and then they came to America, to cover the responsibility to take care of the children and before I left from England, the people were nice enough to consent for us to come to visit them in Coventry. And this was let's see, we left in April, this was last of March, sweet and proper and so nice. We never have to go to a hotel, you know, we stayed there for the week. And then they will let the children to the train, you know, and we started to cry again, you see, they're losing me, you know, they were young, concerned in losing me. It was also terrible, but they came to America because they thought...I started to send every week, I started to send a package, because they were short of food or something. They can't forget that what I did for the children, they still think about them, that I did so much for them, because they didn't have any fruit, they didn't have candles, they didn't have any tuna fish or salmon, it was wartime! And everything I could send for a package and it couldn't weigh more than five pounds. Plenty times I had drag it back, if it was an ounce more I had to go home and unpack it and take it back to the post office. But this was my life when I came here. I worked, but I had this responsibility to take care, was nobody else which could take care of them and I knew that I

wanted them to live, so I worked and took care of them. And still, while I was here, still used to receive from my brothers and my sister from Brody you know when the Russians came in, still were the Nazis there you see, and I still saved the letters that I had from Brody. So, I had all this in my mind you know, and my brother in Switzerland, he could send a little package to them to Brody, send sardines and so, you know, help the other brothers and sister, you know. Money, we didn't have much you know, but whatever we could make we just start to help the other ones through life. And then they weren't living any more.

Q. Your whole family?

A. Just one brother which was in Switzerland, all the others killed. Each one had four children already. My sister, had already two grandchildren. So, when we came here we were in close touch with the English people and we used to send packages to the children. That was my life since we came here, I didn't think nothing about myself, I knew I had to eat and I had to work to eat and most of these people when they take out the market for the children...Then maybe it didn't make a difference to me because if you lose all of a sudden everything, so you don't care for it any more, so you do without it, you see you can live without all those things. You know what I mean? All of a sudden

you don't have anything. You live, so, you go on living.

Q. Did you find it easy to make friends here in Birmingham?

A. Yes, the only reason it wasn't hard because I had these relatives you see, cousins, so I was in touch with them you know. People in the beginning, you know, it was a novelty for them to come over from there, and they were, it was nice, I don't have any personal friends to get together with people, you know. All my life since I was here I had responsibilities. All my life.

Q. Did you join a synagogue?

A. Oh yes, sure.

Q. Which synagogue did you belong to?

Q. Beth El.

Q. Beth El?

A. Beth El. We started to work a little bit and we were very modest. I just never needed nothing for myself, I just didn't want to take it from the other ones, this was my life. In fact, even nowadays, I don't think about myself so much, because my life is behind me and since we went away from there it was almost behind me. It was such a change that ...just to do something for others. I still do what

I can. I had my sister in Israel - my nephew's mother. I was three times in Israel. The last time I think it was in '76.

Q. What's your sister's name in Israel?

A. Her name is Meyer, Golda Meyer. Because its... you see, she's ... it was different, weddings over there, some were by law, some were not by law. So her name's Golda Meyer, and she's in a parents home in Ramat Chen. And her husband died, my sister was very rich and he was a big businessman, in fact, when he came to Mexico he was in the same business - horsehair and pigs' hair. But both of her children came to Israel - on the Youth Aliyah - the nephew, the niece, so she just, they had lived nice in Mexico and they wanted for the children to come to Mexico, and they didn't want to come since they escape the galut, you know what galut is? [Strange home.] They never go there. So he joined the Jewish Brigade and he was in the Hagganah and all that, you know, and so my niece too, they just lived for this. They don't just from a materialistic, of course, they live nice, but not just from a materialistic things, its for other things too.

Q. From your perspective, what are the important changes that you've seen in Birmingham since you've been here?

A. Well, it's made changes in cultural ways. You see,

when I came from Vienna where I was used to go to the theatres, the operas, to meetings, to lectures, it didn't have it then, you know, I missed it, I used to go almost every year to New York to see my friends and to see the big city. I missed it very much and wanted to live there. Now I can't take part in this, I'm too old you see, there's no way. But before, you know, I was young and I had the desire for these things, and I missed them very much, but I was so occupied with the other things to help, that I just had to go on and do it, you see. I had, I took upon me the responsibility, and now they're safe, the children safe, I want to get him out, to be together and I brought them over here in fact, he stayed here till he graduated from Birmingham Southern. She left, she didn't like it. He was here till he finished at Birmingham Southern and he went off to Northwestern, as he was more used to...so she went to New York, but she just didn't go out for studying...then he went to Columbia University and in fact he has all the degrees, his post doctorate, his Ph.D., you know, and all that. See our family didn't enlarge, she married, she has two children, Jeff, Gina, the older one's in college, and the younger one is...college and joined the air force.

Q. We've talked over an hour, and I don't...

A. Is that so...

Q. Yes, I took up so much of your time, oh no, no, but I don't want to tire you. I would like to end by asking you in your opinion, what's the single thing in your life that's made the biggest impression or had the biggest influence on you?

A. the change in my life here, this influenced me, it's a different life than I lived, you know, that's what it is. When I got settled down, I had to take it.

Q. You're talking about coming to America?

A. Yes, it's an entirely different life. Some people come to America from poor homes and they get into better conditions. I came from a, I don't say rich, but a comfortable home, and I came into this, conditions - I have to take it, I don't complain. Then me, I came here, I'm very grateful, I don't know that I complained, but it's an entirely different life, so this is the impression and you live like that. I can't go and argue about it or complain about it, it was a catastrophe, a world catastrophe, some people got killed and some people came and adjusted...and my husband could never get adjusted, he was very nervous, very tense...he just - he felt, you know, misplaced, that's all. And he never...you got to go on living. But I can say that I took it, but always I had responsibility to keep in touch and try to, to send gifts to the children, to my sister. She (my niece) was in the army, she was older, and she can't go shopping for...why, I think,

well, gives her a little pleasure it comes from me, I know I can, I write her twice a week, my sister she writes me once a week, and I write her twice a week. My brother from New York, the children's father lives in New York, I call my sister sometimes and talk to her. Last time the bill was \$16.45 for the telephone. Nine minutes, what can you do, she starts to talk, I can't tell her don't talk you know. But that's my pleasure, you know, since life changed so much so I get pleasure out of doing those things.

Q. Mrs. Schattner, thank you so much for your time....

A.for myself and it's a sad stage you see, that I am not ambitious for myself. I have what I need and I need what I have.

Q. Thank you very much for your time.