

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Jackie Sherman Interview

Conducted by Adina Langer

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Transcribed by Tyler Rodriguez

Born in New York City in 1954, Jackie Sherman learned that her mother, Doris Regensburger, had to flee Nazi Germany as a young teenager. Along with her parents, Alfred and Johanna Regensburger, Doris and her sister, Marianne, emigrated to the United States in 1940 after a sojourn in England. Doris was sent in February 1939 on a Kindertransport after experiencing the horrors of Kristallnacht in her hometown of Fürth, near Nuremberg. Alfred, a bombardier in the German Army during World War I, helped to save other Jewish veterans from incarceration in concentration camps before escaping with his family. Having owned a successful textile business in Germany, the Regensburgers struggled to start over in the United States, and their experiences as refugees of the Holocaust left a lasting impression on Jackie and her family.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Well, today is Thursday January 12th, 2023. My name is Adina Langer. I am the curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. I'm here with Jackie Sherman who will be recording a Legacy Series interview in memory of her mother's family, the Regensburgers, and the rest of her family. And the Regensburgers were from Fürth, Germany. So can you start please by stating your full name?

Sherman: Sure, Jaqueline Ruth Sherman.

Interviewer: And do you agree to this interview?

Sherman: Absolutely!

Interviewer: Awesome! Can you please tell me when and where you were born?

Sherman: Sure, I was born in Beth Israel hospital in Manhattan on January 28th, 1954.

Interviewer: So before we talk a little bit about your childhood, I'd like to go back and start with your mother's family. Can you please tell me your mother's full name?

Sherman: Sure, Dora Louise Regensburger.

Interviewer: And when and where was she born?

Sherman: She was born in Fürth, Germany and she was born on August 24th, 1925.

Interviewer: And what were her parents' names?

Sherman: My Opa, her father, was Alfred Paul Regensburger and my Oma, her mother, was Johanna Regensburger and I must say I don't know her middle – oh, Bergman would have been her middle name. Johanna Bergman Regensburger.

Interviewer: Do you know how they came to meet each other?

Sherman: Actually, I don't! I saw your question and it made me curious, but I don't.

Interviewer: And what was your grandfather's profession?

Sherman: He was the owner of a textile mill that was in Hof, Germany that had been owned by his cousin David Regensburger and I don't know how it is that he inherited it. I know that he worked there, that he had done an internship and come to the United States in the early 1900s, and that he owned the textile mill and that one of the things that mill did was make fabric—uniform companies were some of their customers.

Interviewer: So they made parts of uniforms for..?

Sherman: Like textile, like they wove fabric.

Interviewer: And so uniform companies that served the German government?

Sherman: Undoubtedly, yes. I mean it may have served other places but yes.

Interviewer: And had this company been around since before the first World War?

Sherman: Definitely...yeah.

Interviewer: So what was their neighborhood like in Fürth?

Sherman: So, I visited with my mother in 2002, and they lived actually really close to the town square, around the corner from a department store actually that, we went there to buy an umbrella cause it was raining when we were visiting. It was near the train station. It was off a main street. And it was a, I guess in New York you'd call it a brownstone? It was sort of semi-detached, multiple floors.

Interviewer: And did they own the whole house when they lived there?

Sherman: Yes, they did.

Interviewer: And did they have people that helped them in the house?

Sherman: My grandparents were fairly wealthy, sometimes I refer to them as German-Jewish aristocracy and I think the only reason I say that is that I know they had what my mother referred to as maids. So they had a cook and they had somebody who took care of the house and cleaned, so they were quite well-off.

Interviewer: And was there a large Jewish community in Fürth?

Sherman: I think so, yes. Just for the record, Fürth is just outside of Nuremburg, its just northeast of Nuremburg and so while it had a separate Jewish community, my mother always referred to doing things with Jewish friends from Nuremburg.

Interviewer: Do you know how they would have gone from one place to another? Did they take public transit, or did they have a car?

Sherman: Well, they may have had a car, but I know that they had a railway because when my mom and I were visiting and we took the train from Berlin to Nuremburg, you had to change trains and the gauge from Nuremburg to Fürth was different, it was a smaller gauge railway and so she had a recollection of that and one of the things I remember was her talking about how strange she felt as she got on this railway and she wasn't really quite sure why and I thought to myself "I understand why, you haven't been here since 1939!"

Interviewer: And when you went with your mother, did things look very familiar to her?

Sherman: Totally. Absolutely. Yup. Yeah and in fact the department store was a place where she had shopped as a child! And it was right around the corner from their house.

Interviewer: And what did the architecture look like?

Sherman: Wow that's a great question. I think of it as tall and brick and sort of city-like townhouses, is what the center of town looked like.

Interviewer: So, what role did Judaism play in the lives of your grandparents and your mother's family?

Sherman: So, I know that my grandmother's family owned seats at the synagogue, and that her family was somewhat observant, and that my mother went to, like, learned Hebrew as a child and went to some sort of what we would call Sunday school. My grandfather was totally agnostic, maybe even atheistic, and I think he probably went with the family when they went for – I think they only probably went on high holidays.

Interviewer: And I remember, in the oral history you shared with me that your mother had done, she talked about *Kashrut*¹ observance and how different members of the family observed at different levels. Do you remember much about that?

Sherman: Oh well I remember hearing the same part of the interview, I don't know what my grandparents observed in Germany, they absolutely observed no Kashrut in the United States.

Interviewer: How about German identity? What role did that play in their lives?

Sherman: So, my grandfather, the way my mother used to describe it, was he was German before he was Jewish. He fought in the first World War, he had an *Iron Cross 1st class*,² he really thought of himself as German, though I know he identified as Jewish, his primary identification, I believe, was as German. As far as my grandmother, I have less of a recollection. She died when I was about 18 or 19 and I don't remember having spoken much with her about her life in Germany, but my grandfather didn't die until I was in my mid-20s so I had more of an opportunity to converse with him.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about his military service?

Sherman: Yes, here's what I know. He originally signed up to be in the cavalry, and as I understand it, the cavalry was not exciting enough for him, and so he then switched to the air force and became a *bombardier*.³ He definitely won medals and, you know, I know he was really proud of his military service and I believe in the effort to leave Germany that the – his military service medals sort of supported him to be able to get out of the country.

Interviewer: And did he see action during the first World War?

Sherman: Oh he dropped bombs. Yes. Sometimes you know you think about The Red Baron⁴ and people would joke like “oh Opa was like The Red Baron”.

Interviewer: So, what did your mother tell you about her early childhood?

Sherman: So, I have some stories about her kind of walking to school, I think they got rolls for breakfast in the morning that she didn't necessarily like and she would throw them behind a bush in front of the house. She went first to German school and then, I guess it would have been after the Nuremberg Laws, they were taken out of the German school and had to go to a school just for Jewish kids. I think she had a really enjoyable

¹ *Kashrut*: Kashruth, (Hebrew: “fitness,” or “kosher state”.) also spelled Kashrut, or Kashrus, Hebrew Kashrūt, in Judaism, regulations that prohibit the eating of certain foods and require that other foods be prepared in a specified manner. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/kashruth>

² *Iron Cross 1st Class*: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Iron-Cross>

³ *Bombardier*: the person in a military aircraft who controls when the bombs are dropped <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/bombardier>

⁴ Manfred von Richthofen, a German fighter pilot who was the deadliest flying ace of World War I was nicknamed “The Red Baron.” <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/manfred-baron-von-richthofen>

childhood. She was the younger of two girls. My Aunt Marianne was four years older than my mom, and you know my mom was definitely interested in boys and you know she had friends. She was, as I understand, she was generous. She would be given chocolate that she would then give away to children. Those are the kinds of stories that I heard. And then there's a very funny story about her as a small child, they had apparently a mustard jar, not a jar with a lid but like a piece of pottery that sat on maybe a cocktail table and she could be found spooning mustard out of the mustard jar and eating it. So I think that's really...

Interviewer: Did she retain that love of mustard throughout her life?

Sherman: Yes, she did! Absolutely!

Interviewer: Did you ever get a sense for if or how The Depression affected your family? Between the first World War and the second?

Sherman: I don't really. That's a great question, I never thought about it before.

Interviewer: So you mentioned kind of a little bit about her personality, what did she like to do for fun?

Sherman: As an adult?

Interviewer: Well, as a kid.

Sherman: As a kid, I'm sure she liked to play you know the playground games and hanging out with her friends. I know she played dolls; she had a doll from Germany. So I think the kinds of things that might have been typical of a girl at her age at that time period.

Interviewer: And did she ever recall experiencing antisemitism before Hitler rose to power?

Sherman: Before he rose to power, I don't think so. After? Definitely.

Interviewer: Did the family have a sense that Hitler might be dangerous?

Sherman: That's a great question. My grandmother did, and I think my grandfather thought it would blow over and this couldn't happen in his Germany, and I know that my grandmother and grandfather had a difference of opinion of what was happening and about how to respond to it.

Interviewer: And how did life begin to change for them after Hitler came to power in 1933?

Sherman: Well so my mom and my aunt had to change schools. Their ability to sort of go out and be wherever they wanted to be as they had been in their younger years was limited. It's my understanding that some of the people who had been friendly with my grandparents were no longer friendly. There was apparently a price to pay if you decided, as an adult, if you were gonna hang out with Jewish people. So, I think it got restricted.

Interviewer: And there was a story that I think you had told me and that your mother also relayed about how her sister looked – didn't look what was thought to be Jewish-looking, looked Aryan...

Jackie Sherman: Yes.

Interviewer: ...and that that kind of affected their life in their school.

Sherman: So, apparently my aunt was asked to play the Christmas angel in her school Christmas play, and as I understand it my grandmother went to talk to the Rabbi to make sure this was okay, and he said yes. And then there must've been some sort of write-up in the newspaper and a picture of her, she was blonde-haired, had blue eyes, and this was sort of you know like drug through the – dragged through the press, I think it's called the *Stürmer*.⁵ And so they had some backlash from that and so that would have been right around the time the kids would have been taken out of German school.

Interviewer: Yeah, so then with the passage of the Nuremburg Laws in 1935 how did things continue to change for them?

Sherman: Well I think the restriction, and they were not able to move around the city in the same way or have the same kind of friends. As I understand it, they were paid a very small amount of money for their apartment, for their home, and then they were put on some sort of allowance. So, from a financial perspective, things would have tightened up.

Interviewer: And they lived so close to Nuremburg, did your mother ever tell you about seeing people attend rallies or...

Sherman: No.

Interviewer: ...anything like that?

Sherman: No, she didn't.

Interviewer: So, at this point, did your grandparents ever discuss leaving the country?

Sherman: Apparently, my grandmother spoke to my grandfather about it and really wanted to leave and, because he didn't really believe this was happening in his Germany, he refused to leave. And then as I understand it, they were visiting in the summer of '38 in Berlin, and you know things were clearly getting worse and apparently friends of my grandmother's had been making arrangements and managing to leave and she told my grandfather you know you can stay but I'm getting the girls out and I'm gonna get out. At that point, as I understand it, my grandfather made arrangements to buy

⁵ *Stürmer* example: https://www.ushmm.org/media/emu/get?irn=538811&mm_irn=37932&file=primary

a ticket for my mom on an early *Kindertransport*,⁶ she left in early February 1939 and my aunt was away at school and she left in April, and then I believe my grandparents left in either – the summer, August-September.

Interviewer: So, during all of this time, did your grandfather lose his business?

Sherman: I don't know at what point he lost his business. I know he did lose his business; it couldn't have been too early because my mom told me that, and this is actually on the tape, immediately after Crystal Night, my grandfather took the revolver that he had from the service and, late one night, walked out and threw it in the river. And then shortly after that, apparently, he had a saber from when he was in the cavalry and, he had an office in the back of their home in Fürth in which he had bolts of cloth, cause I think in addition to whatever he – they did in the factory for larger customers, he must've taken sort of commission or business for suits and things like that, and so he took the saber, wrapped it up in the bolt of cloth, and walked it over to the SS office because he knew that if they found either the revolver or the saber in their home, that basically they would use the weapons on them.

Interviewer: So what did your mother tell you about her memories of Kristallnacht?

Sherman: So they – the Nazis came and knocked on the door, told them to you know get dressed, they were going into the town square. Apparently, my mom was not dressed in anything particularly warm and one of the officers said “well you better wear something really warm its gonna be very cold where you're going”. And so they, they didn't live very far from the center of town, from where I believe people were being rounded up and so they walked into the square and at one point my mom said she had to go to the bathroom and so apparently – the women and the men had been separated by then, and apparently the women would make a like a circle around her to give her a little bit of privacy in order to be able to go to the bathroom. It's an interesting memory that she had. And then I guess the men were taken off in one direction and many of the men were sent on cars to Dachau and, I don't know how it is that my grandfather was not on one of those cars. The women were sent home and they were very concerned whether they would see my grandfather again and when they got home, my grandmother told my mom to go get something to eat because she hadn't had anything and she was in the kitchen and apparently all of a sudden my grandfather appeared and so, they were just feeling really fortunate and what I've been told, and what was on this tape, is my grandfather was the head of the Jewish war veterans in the Fürth-Nuremburg area and he considered those men to be like his men. And apparently, he negotiated to get them all back from Dachau. So, I know

⁶ *Kindertransport*: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Kindertransport>

nothing more about how that happened or you know whether – but my understanding is that he was able to get them to release them.

Interviewer: And I know in the archive that you shared, there is some documentation where he's written the names of some of these men...

Sherman: Uh huh.

Interviewer: ...it's really extraordinary. So this was all then before they went to Berlin.

Sherman: No, I think – well they never moved to Berlin. My great-grandparents, my Opa's parents lived in Berlin. As did his brother who was a doctor, so I think that must've happened, I don't know sometime in the fall? I don't know if it was before or after.

Interviewer: But they were definitely in Fürth on Kristallnacht?

Sherman: Absolutely. Yes, and Fürth did not have the same experience on Crystal Night as Nuremberg did so there wasn't the same smashing of glass in Fürth. My grandparents' home was not harmed in anyway the way homes and stores were harmed in Nuremberg.

Interviewer: It's amazing how such a difference with such a tiny distance between the two places.

Sherman: Uh huh.

Interviewer: So, they don't know exactly what happened to your grandfather in the hours between when they separated from him and when they saw him again?

Sherman: I'm sure they knew but I don't, sadly.

Interviewer: So what did they decide to do next? You mentioned that they began to make arrangements for their daughters?

Sherman: Yeah, so my grandmother was the youngest of nine and, if not her oldest sister, one of her oldest sisters, or a cousin had married a Brit and lived in London. She married into a prominent family I believe, so one of their relatives was in the House of Lords and so my grandmother started to make arrangements for – really ask them if they could receive my mother and my aunt and then eventually them. And I think at the same time, my grandfather found a Polish Jew who, for a hefty sum, was helping transport peoples' home effects; furniture, linens, silverware, whatever, out of the country and he was able to – he told my grandfather to pack up some trunks and be prepared – prepare to have them sent out. My mom says she – my grandmother sewed some jewelry into some of the linens and they sent it to England.

Interviewer: And did your mother, when she was sent on the train, did she have additional jewelry or money sewn into her clothing?

Sherman: You know that's a great question. I know that jewelry was sewn into some clothing but I don't know if it was sewn into the clothing that she was wearing on the train. My suspicion is no because I think had they found it, she would not have made it out. I know she was instructed when she got to London, to the train station, that she was supposed to go to the baggage keep, to the baggage claim area and inquire to see if the trunks had arrived, which apparently they had and she had been instructed to write a postcard that said, you know "the children have arrived" as a way, kind of a code – code word, and I find that, well first of all interesting but amusing because I can remember when we were growing up and you had to pay for a long distance call and my parents had some code words like you could call collect and say you know, "homer eins", I'll be home at one. So when I heard that I thought it was kind of interesting I guess how people create these codes.

Interviewer: And what was your mother's journey to England like for her?

Sherman: So, my understanding is that my grandfather had pneumonia at the time and so he was not able to go to the station. My grandmother took her to the station, she was on a train, she had a cousin around the same age who was travelling with her, and I believe they had an older cousin who was actually accompanying some of the kindertransports to England. They went through, is it called "Hof Van Holland" or something like that. That would have been their first stop. They had some friends that lived there who kind of met them and sort of – then they continued going on to – across the town.

Interviewer: And you mentioned that your aunt travelled separately from your mother? And what was her experience like?

Sherman: I know absolutely nothing; I wish I did.

Interviewer: And what did your mother do when she arrived in England?

Sherman: So, I guess first I'd say is that my mother learned French in school but not English, so my grandmother arranged for her to have private English lessons realizing that they were gonna try to get the girls out to England. So my mother was quote "learning English" but it's clear she didn't feel very competent at it, she got to the train station and kept practicing saying "I don't understand much English". You know, in my childhood memory brain, I have a picture of her sitting on her suitcase in the middle of the arrival hall waiting for her aunt or cousin to come and pick her up and sort of be received, its clearly you know my childhood picture brain. So, she was received, and she was put in boarding school, I believe the family lived in Kent or Sussex. So she was put in boarding school there, and then when it was no longer safe, and they were getting people out of, kind of what I call "the greater London area", the boarding school moved to Wales. And so she finished school during the time that she was in England and Wales. And she says it was actually a really positive, she would use

the word pleasant, experience. I mean I have some stories like, no food was wasted, so you know if people didn't want their potato skins and they were sitting kind of on the plate, my mother was always like very happy to eat that part.

Interviewer: And did she ever tell you any memories of air raids or?

Sherman: I don't remember any of that. If she did, I don't remember.

Interviewer: And what did she like about boarding school? Did she tell you any particular things that she enjoyed about it?

Sherman: I think she liked her friends and what I would say is, given what the situation had been like in Germany, I would imagine that it was sort of somewhat of a state of normalcy even though she was not with her parents.

Interviewer: And you had told me at one point that your aunt had some background in farming and that that kind of changed her experience in England? She did different things?

Sherman: So, I believe in 1939, before leaving for England, she was in a farm school of some sort, not in Fürth, and she was part of a group of people who were being trained in farming to move to Kenya. So what I learned visiting Nairobi once was that there was actually a movement to sort of have an Israel-like country in East Africa. And so, my connection is that it was probably related to that. So she was learning farming. When she went to England, I think they put her in more of a farm school. My aunt was very smart, she loved to read, and she was, you know, what my mother would say was the intellectual in the family.

Interviewer: Such an interesting juxtaposition because you know, you told me about her intellectualism and also imagining her farming...

Sherman: I know, I don't understand that. From what I know of my aunt, I would imagine that the notion of the culture on a *kibbutz*⁷ would have been very attractive to her.

Interviewer: And can you just define a kibbutz?

Sherman: Oh sure. Collective farms that are generally associated with being in Israel, but I'm thinking that the must've been thinking that there would be such things in East Africa.

Interviewer: And I know that that's also associated with socialism or communism movements, was that kind of part of the training?

⁷ *Kibbutz*: <https://www.jewishagency.org/what-exactly-is-a-kibbutz/>

Sherman: I don't know if it was part of the training. What I do know is that my aunt had very, what you would call, liberal – leftist political views. When she was in school in the United States, she went to a Quaker college. She was very much of a pacifist, and so I guess I kind of connect the two and she definitely would have had socialist leanings.

Interviewer: Yeah, so how did your grandparents then get to England?

Sherman: Great question. I'm thinking my grandfather somehow managed to buy tickets. He – from what I can tell from the paper's I've inherited, he made arrangements to get a number of families out and sponsored in the United States, so they had relatives in the U.S with whom they must have corresponded and asked first for sponsorship to go to the United States so they didn't have an intention of staying in England, England was the sort of, a stop on the way to getting to the United States.

Interviewer: And so you mention that after the war started and your mother and her school they evacuated to Wales, what happened to your grandparents after the war started?

Sherman: When they were in England – my grandfather couldn't work, he was very disturbed that he couldn't work you know he was a proud man and you know he worked hard in his factory and I know he was really disturbed that he wasn't able to work so I think they just lived in the country house of their relatives until they were able to get passage to the United States.

Interviewer: And then I recall in, maybe it was your mother's interview, that your grandfather was actually interned?

Sherman: He was interned in the Isle of Man. And, when they finally got passage to the States, they were set to leave out of Glasgow and my grandmother and my mom and her sister were already on the boat in Glasgow and my grandfather was supposed to arrive and he wasn't coming and he wasn't coming and he wasn't coming and what my mom said on her *Shoah* interview was that apparently they sent him to the wrong port. So they sent him to Liverpool and then had to quickly get him from Liverpool to Glasgow. And so again, in my little kind of childhood memory, what my mom says in her interview is that my grandmother was begging with the captain of the ship to wait wait, that my grandfather would be coming, and he wasn't, and they were leaving in convoy because it was wartime. And so the captain said you know I just can't wait any longer we have to go and all of a sudden, they see this light from a flashlight coming through the departure hall and its my grandfather, so like I have in my head that he like jumped the plank, but you know to get onto the boat just in the nick of time.

Interviewer: That's amazing, all these stories of him appearing in the nick of time!

Sherman: Yes!

Interviewer: So, what did they have to get together in, terms of immigration documents, in order to get to the United States?

Sherman: I wish I could tell you; I don't know.

Interviewer: But I think you did tell me a little bit about working with Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society?

Sherman: They were received by *HIAS*,⁸ the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, when they arrived in the United States and they were housed by *HIAS* originally, then once moved out of a more communal living situation they were, I don't know if they were given or found an apartment which they rented, you know my grandfather had to look for work. My mom was still in high school, and she as enrolled in George Washington High School. They lived in Washington Heights, eventually they got an apartment on 181st street, it was a one-bedroom apartment. Apparently, my mother and my aunt slept in the bedroom and my grandparents slept on a couch in the living room. And they had that apartment until my grandfather was in his 80s and moved into a senior independent living home.

Interviewer: And how did they look for work? What were some of the things they did?

Sherman: Well, so I'll tell you about my grandmother first. She did piece work, she knit, she was a very good knitter, she did piece work and knitted and also she worked as a baby nurse. How she found the work? I don't know. And I think she also did you know did cleaning which when I think about her upbringing as a you know a pretty wealthy woman in Germany to then, you know, she did what they had to do, and it was a very very big change.

My grandfather, who had been a businessman in Germany also had to look for work. He did a lot of sort of, I think he did travelling sales things, and in an effort to earn money, one of the things I found in there in the papers was a letter that he had written to the Gillette company. He had a Gillette safety razor that apparently, he must have acquired before World War I, it made it through World War I and he thought perhaps the Gillette company would be interested in owning this relic or you know historically preserved razor. It was a very elaborate letter, and he got a fairly short, terse, "thank you we have plenty of these", but you know, he was trying to trade whatever he could. Eventually, man I don't know, they arrived in 1940, and I don't know how long it took before he was able to buy a car, he bought a car, and he really became a travelling salesman that sold, you could call them knick-knacks or trinkets, to drug stores, to pharmacies. I mean I remember as a child, I guess there's a version of this today in CVS and stuff, but as a child there were always these little things that you could buy that were on the counter at the drug store and those were the things – his trunk was filled with these things, the little like people or animals

⁸ *HIAS*: <https://hias.org/>

where you pushed up a hole in a piece of wood and the animal would collapse for you and so the trunk of his car was always filled with those because he drove up to the Catskills every week and sold that and then came home on the weekends.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thinking about, I had the opportunity to read the letter he wrote to Gillette again this morning and its so moving to me you know the story that he imbues this artifact with, and I keep thinking about: that's exactly something that you know a museum would appreciate even if Gillette, you know, didn't. But it just tells so much about his hopes and the challenges that he was facing. So, what did your mother do after she graduated from high school?

Sherman: She worked in a doctor's office, she had a relative who was a doctor, an internist and she worked as an assistant, as a doctor's assistant and then eventually as a dental assistant. I don't know if whether Dr. Steinfeld was a relative or a friend of the family, but she worked as a dental assistant really until I was born in 1954.

Interviewer: How did she come to meet your father?

Sherman: On a ski trip. Apparently, there were busses that left the port authority on a Friday, late afternoon, to go up to either you know what we called Upstate New York or into Vermont and so she went one weekend and on this weekend she met my dad. As the story goes, I think she might've been interested, he must have been interested in her. He asked her if she could get off another weekend cause the doctors and the dentist all worked on the weekends, if she could get off another weekend so they could meet again skiing and apparently she did everything she could to make that happen.

Interviewer: How did she learn to ski? Did she learn from her parents?

Sherman: I have no clue! I don't know if they learned in Germany, I know when they lived in Germany the family took vacations in the mountains but the stories that I've heard would have all been at times when you could easily walk trails and pick up flowers and things like that so, I don't know how she learned to ski.

Interviewer: And what was your father's full name?

Sherman: Stuart K. Sherman.

Interviewer: And where did his family come from?

Sherman: My father's father came from Russia, I think kind of the area that's Ukraine and my grandmother came from the part – well she was born in the United States actually, on the day of Dewey's Parade, she was born in New York. But her family came from the part of Poland that went back and forth between Russia and Poland.

Interviewer: And they were Jewish?

Sherman: Yes, both.

Interviewer: But they came to the United States long before World War II?

Sherman: Yeah, I think my grandfather came in 1909, I don't know if my grandfather's whole family came at the same time, but I believe he came in 1909 and he was the second of I think there were nine children, several of them died in fires and maybe there was a stillbirth, but I believe there were five that came to the United States, five or six. And they lived in the Lower East Side. In fact, there was a club, they lived at 10 Rivington Street, which when we went to the museum at Ellis Island, there was a picture of 10 Rivington Street which eventually became – was a settlement house and I think it is now called the University Settlement House. I may have the place that they lived wrong and be confusing it with the settlement house club where you know they went as young people, but it was really interesting to see that photo and then many years later, my great aunt, my grandfather's brother's wife, I went with Aunt Rebecca and my cousin Molly on a tour of the Lower East Side and we actually got to tour the settlement house, it was pretty cool actually.

Interviewer: That's awesome! Do you know if Sherman was the original name?

Sherman: I don't.

Interviewer: It's only interesting to me because it actually doesn't sound especially Russian or Polish.

Sherman: No it sounds more German like Zisserman.

Interviewer: So, what was your parents' marriage like?

Sherman: That's always an interesting question. So the first thing I would say is I call it a Jewish mixed marriage, meaning she was Western European and more kind of upper middle class, and he was from an Eastern European family and the cultures were very very different. She came, my mother came, from a very cultured European background and I think really through her whole life she thought of herself as European. And people who met her would experience that in her manners, even in the way she spoke. And my dad's family was very Eastern European, sort of, a little bit loud, maybe a little brash and, sort of, I think it was probably orthodox when they were growing up, but more conservative style of Judaism. And it was a big family and they got together regularly for holidays; I remember the Passovers that we had at my Uncle Nat's country club.

Interviewer: Did they speak Yiddish?

Sherman: They did not speak Yiddish to each other. I don't think my mother knew Yiddish but because she knew German, she could understand Yiddish.

And I don't know how much my father might have spoken it, I doubt it. I would assume my grandparents spoke Yiddish.

Interviewer: So what were some of your first memories of your parents?

Sherman: That's a great question. I have lots of memories of things like ski trips because skiing was really my parents' sport, and I started walking on skis when I was two, as has my nephew and I think did my sister. And they were pretty fun-loving. In addition to doing a lot of skiing, I remember my father played a lot of tennis, he loved tennis, and you know he taught me tennis when I was pretty young. We have pictures of, and I have memories of, my parents going to a Halloween party as Zorro and Auntie Mame. I remember these gold, these stiletto heels that had at one point been patent leather and were sprayed gold. And so, they played a lot of Scrabble, that was our family game, it still kind of is our family game. Apparently early in their marriage, my father entered a crossword puzzle contest through the New York Times and had this whole system, my father was an engineer, and he had a whole system for how they were gonna figure out the words and it was kind of laid out on my grandmother's big dining room table. So they, you know, they had things they liked to do together. Like I remember Hanukkah in our home, my mother was very creative, and she would – we got eight little gifts, and they would be strung from ribbon on a banister, I would have one colored ribbon and my sister would have the other, and we would get to choose one and cut it off each night. My parents decided, probably I must've been about seven years old at the time or eight, that it was fine to have Mother's Day and Father's Day but that they were going to invent Children's Day, so we would have a day every year, something tells me it was in September, when we would get to decide everything, what we wanted to eat for each of the meals, what we wanted to do. My mom took us to you know concerts and the art museum, and I remember seeing you know the Leonard Bernstein Young People's concerts when I was little, I still have a picture of me in a little white angora hat and like a blue velour top going into New York City. At the time, even though, you know we only lived a subway ride away, we got dressed up to go into New York City, it was a big outing.

Interviewer: What about your memories of your Oma and Opa?

Sherman: So, my memory of my Oma, sadly, is almost like a depressed face, like, she was warm, she was loving, she was a good cook, and she was a great baker, she made the most wonderful cookies and tortes and my mother learned to do that as well. But I don't remember her as particularly happy. My Opa on the other hand, he was like really always optimistic and upbeat and he was very committed to the family. He had a heart attack; I'm thinking it was maybe in his 70s and I think at the time things were difficult financially in our family and my dad had switched jobs and, my brother is 12 years younger than I am, so Mark was born in 1965 and two years later, my dad sold or got out of the paint business that he had been in

with my grandfather and went back to school to become a computer programmer. So he was very early in the computer industry and things were really tight financially. My parents owned a home, you know its amazing, they paid \$400 a month for their mortgage that they got at like four percent so they weren't gonna lose their home but things were really tight. I remember what we ate for dinner shifted from you know meat maybe four, five, six times a week to you know more spaghetti and things like that and my mother always said she thinks that my grandfather – my Opa came through his heart attack because he felt like she and our family needed him. So, you know the way I think of it is he was really loyal, you can see that in what he did to get people out of Germany and he was really loyal to my grandmother. He lived in New York City, she was in a nursing home, I think it was in Hackensack or maybe farther than that, and he you know at 80-whatever would take the bus three times a week to go visit her. You know he had an injured arm and I can remember him carrying this bag with you know whatever food or whatever he was bringing her on the bus with him.

Interviewer: That's really sweet. Did you know your aunt, your mother's sister?

Sherman: I did. I met my aunt the first time, I wanna say in the early 60s she came from the United States, so I'll give you a little of her history. She, Marianne Regensburger, she went to Earlham College on a scholarship and then she enrolled in The New School for, what I believe was supposed to be a PHD in political science. Apparently, she must've been interested in journalism because she got an internship in Munich where she went, I think she went back in 1950. Or something. Is that possible?

Interviewer: So just ten years after she came to the U.S?

Sherman: Yeah, that makes about sense, maybe late 40s. Yeah, I think so because that picture that we see, the one with the car, is from 1948. So she took the internship and basically, she never returned to the United States to live, she worked for a newspaper in Munich, she worked for other newspapers. Eventually she moved to Berlin until she died in, I want to say 2002 or 2003. And she worked in kind of a variety of aspects in what you call the media, she wrote for newspapers, she wrote both, I think, news and opinion pieces. She was very active in the Peace Movement in Germany, sort of in leftist politics. And then she went from print to radio to T.V journalism. My aunt was four foot eleven, so she was short and she wasn't you know like, she had small bones, and so I have this picture of her standing on a wooden box holding a microphone you know sort of doing an interview so she did television but before she did television she was on Rias, the radio international of the American sector in Berlin, she had a very well-known voice, my mom tells a story of my grandfather being in a cab with Marianne in Berlin and she's giving the cab driver directions and he recognizes her and says "are you Marianne Regensburger?". So she was well known for her journalism and outspokenness.

Interviewer: And so you mentioned that was the American sector, so she was then based in West Germany?

Sherman: Yes.

Interviewer: And did her leftist politics, was that ever an issue?

Sherman: Yeah I think it was dangerous for her. I remember my mom said something about that “there was money on her head”, like there were people who apparently wanted to get rid of her or harm her in some way. I don’t really know the details, but she was very outspoken.

Interviewer: And, you know, did she have opinions on the Cold War that was going on?

Sherman: You know, I don’t know what the opinions were about. She did a lot of exposés to expose Nazis, former Nazis, I think that was another reason why she might have been wanted. So, I met her for the first time in the early 60s, I think the second time – we lived in Queens and then in 1963, we moved south of Chicago, my dad was transferred to build a factory outside of Chicago, and then we moved back to New Jersey in 1965 right before my brother was born. And I think she must have come visit sometime in the sort of 1965-1968 range. I always thought she was really cool, she would like walk me to school and she smoked and I got to try cigarettes, never to try them again. My mother was not happy that she let me do that. I was always really interested in her and so I did my junior year abroad, and the summer that I travelled in Europe I made a point of visiting her for a week in Berlin. So I got to know her then, and then I lived in Paris for a little while and visited her when I was there, I’m thinking 1978. And then once during the years I lived in West Africa or kind of when I was coming through Europe, and then a last time shortly before she died. I was really interested in the fact that she left in 1950 and never returned, and I don’t think she ever planned to return to the United States, and so I found myself really curious about that. You know, when I was growing up, and maybe it's still true now among – you know Jewish teens would hear their parents talk about how they wouldn’t buy anything German, they wouldn’t buy a Mercedes, or you know anything from Krupp’s. And I always felt like I didn’t have the luxury to say I’m not gonna visit Germany, most Jews would not even consider visiting Germany, but I didn’t feel like I had that luxury because my aunt lived there and my family was there, I wanted to know her. And I tried to, you know, really understand what made her go back and I don’t know that I ever asked her directly until the last time I saw her, but because she did these exposés, I kind of decided that perhaps her returning and doing the kind of journalism she did was about making sure that what happened with Hitler would never happen again, and particularly not in Germany. And when I asked her, the answer I got was yes, she was really kind of devoted to uncovering things and making sure that what happened was exposed,

that people were exposed, so that people would have the knowledge to help make sure that this didn't happen again.

Interviewer: And you had mentioned and I read some things about her, that she converted to Christianity?

Sherman: She became Lutheran. I think this was about a couple of things; first of all there really wasn't much of a Jewish community and my aunt was fiercely feminist and the Judaism that she knew, which, you know, prevails in many parts of Judaism today, was very male oriented, had a sense of chauvinism that she felt, that she really didn't want any part of. And I believe that many of her friends from the peace community were Lutheran, so she converted to being Lutheran. I know that she would have studied the theology, she could read Greek and Latin, but I don't know what her thinking was about why she wanted to convert, why she wanted to be any religion for that matter.

Interviewer: That's fascinating. So you mentioned that you have a younger brother, do you have any other siblings?

Sherman: Yes. Actually, I'm the oldest of three; there's me, my sister Wendy who is 22 months younger than I am, and my brother Marc who is eleven and three quarter years younger than I am, or ten years younger than Wendy is.

Interviewer: And so you mentioned some holiday celebrations, in general, what role did Judaism play in your childhood and your growing up?

Sherman: So, as a small child I remember it would have largely been my father's family that like celebrated Passovers and had big gatherings for those holidays and we participated. I don't remember my mother's parents doing anything particularly Jewish. We always lit Hanukah candles and celebrated that. I think, you know, my parents didn't work – my dad wouldn't have worked on the Jewish high holidays. It wasn't until we moved to south of Chicago where we were very much in a minority, I think there were eight Jewish kids in my elementary school, where we started to go to Sunday school and my parents joined a Jewish community. And then when we moved from south of Chicago to Englewood, New Jersey, which had a pretty sizeable Jewish population, and there were you know three main synagogues, if not all in Englewood than all in the kind of Englewood area, that we joined a synagogue and continued to go to Sunday school. My sister and I were not Bat mitzvah'd, my brother was Bar mitzvah'd, by then my parents had shifted from the synagogue that, when I was growing up, had belonged to another one that they kind of helped form. What I remember after we moved to New Jersey was that we – I don't know whether I remember this better because I was older or because it was just a distinctly different way of observing, but you know we always observed the high holidays and you know my mom had family for dinner, we always made a big Pesach, Passover, mostly with my

father's cousins would come or we would occasionally go to their place, and it was always a lovely Hanukah celebration.

Interviewer: When did you first learn about the story of your mother and your grandparents' immigration to the United States?

Sherman: That's a really good question. I don't know, I am fairly certain I must've known something in the seven year oldish, that's kind of how I would place it, maybe younger. My grandparents spoke with a very heavy German accent, my name Jackie was never pronounced "Jackie", I was "Cheggy" or "der größere", the older one. And, you know, my mom spoke German with her parents. My father didn't understand German so my parents didn't speak it at home, but I could usually tell if my mom and grandparents were talking about me or sister, der kleinere. So I don't know when it would have filled in with a lot of details, I certainly knew a fair amount by the time I was in junior high and high school.

Interviewer: So you knew that they were from Germany, did you know that they were refugees?

Sherman: Yes. Yes, I did. I don't know when I knew that, I did know probably sometime in junior high or high school if not before. You know my mom had left Germany on a children's transport, that she had been in England, that she had gone to boarding school, you know basically that they had "escaped". That would be the way it would have been phrased.

Interviewer: And when did you first learn about The Holocaust as a historical event?

Sherman: Well, that's a great question. I'm thinking as a teenager.

Interviewer: And at that point could you ask them more questions?

Sherman: I could have, my mother would have been happy to answer any questions she could answer. I don't remember asking my grandmother any questions, it's possible that I did. I'm sure as I got older, I asked some questions of my grandfather. My family wasn't hush-hush about their Holocaust experience, I know my mother did not consider herself a survivor until she was in her 60s. When she attended the Fürth-Nuremberg community, refugees in the United States, like a group of people who would get together, if not annually than every couple of years, and my mom started attending these gatherings that they held up in the Catskills I think at *Grossinger's*,⁹ and she attended a workshop once in which she learned that she too was considered a survivor. And I know there were lots of people that escaped and had not been in a camp who never considered themselves survivors, and I think that shifted some things in terms of my mother's ability to start to integrate some understanding about how that

⁹ *Grossinger's*: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grossinger%27s_Catskill_Resort_Hotel

experience of having left at thirteen and a half, what they went through, might have affected her or might be affecting her as an adult.

Interviewer: What role do you think her experiences, and to some extent your grandparents' experiences, played in her life? You know, how she looked at the world or how she raised you and your siblings.

Sherman: So, I think overall she had a bit of a scarcity mentality. And, frankly, probably had some level, although I don't remember this when I was a child, I certainly remember it more as an adult, that she might have had some level of low-grade depression. My grandmother certainly did. I think she had a lot of gratitude for what she had. Her commitment to voting and her membership and activeness in the League of Women Voters, you know I can remember her taking me to the voting booth as a small child and she never missed an election, she felt like this was something that was taken from them in Germany and that was really important that she fulfilled her obligations or rights as a citizen. Same thing with jury duty. How else might it have affected us growing up? So, I think probably the strongest way would be emotionally.

So, my grandfather was very stoic, as was my mother. And when my siblings and I look at my mom's Shoah tape, we're all struck by how dispassionate she is in telling her story, how seemingly removed she is from recounting the events. And I think she must have had to develop some sort of self-protection mechanism in terms of managing her emotions because I think she did feel things deeply and she was a very compassionate person. But I don't think either of my parents were particularly comfortable with their emotions and so I think all three of us struggled to kind of find them and let them out and be what I would call publicly vulnerable. I think I developed that first as a result of some therapy starting in my 20s and I think my brother and sister, really much later in their lives.

Interviewer: So are there other ways that your family history maybe has shaped your outlook on life?

Sherman: Well I'll tell you from a food perspective, I do really like things that you know might have a German flavor, whether it be cakes and cookies, or wurst, you know things that would be highly not-kosher, but we ate all of those things and you know very European food. I mean, we ate steak tartare when I was a child. So, definitely from a food perspective. Ask the question again?

Interviewer: Yes, just how your family's experience kind of affected your outlook on the world.

Sherman: I think I was always curious about Europe, and people who came from other places. So, you know in high school I knew I wanted to take my junior year abroad, that I wanted to explore, that I've always wanted to

meet people. I'm very interested in people from other places and have different life experiences than I do. I think that I have an ability – though I know I cannot really imagine what it is like to be someone other than myself, I think I have an ability and a willingness to put myself in other's shoes and try to understand other people's experiences and outlooks. And I grew up with a strong sense of *Tikkun Olam*,¹⁰ of my obligation to repair the world, I think I got that both from my mom and also from my dad's family that supported a camp for underprivileged kids in New York, a little bit like *Fresh Air*,¹¹ but not the same. So, I think I've always had a feeling of volunteering and giving back, you know my first profession was as a development economist, so the year I lived in England as a junior, I studied development economics, the economics of developing countries, and I got really interested and I sort of decided that's what I wanted to be, I wanted to be a development economist and you know I went to graduate school and got a PHD in economics and my two areas of interest were developing countries, international economics, monetary policy, etc. So, you know when I had the opportunity to decide what I wanted to do my dissertation on, I had some colleagues who had all lived in Africa and done research and I got really interested in doing that and fortunately was given an opportunity to go to teach economics in west Africa and to work on my dissertation. It was a really, really fascinating experience, it was particularly interesting, it was a time when the U.N had just passed the Anti-Zionist Resolution, and I was living in what was then Upper Volta and is now Burkina Faso, and somebody, I lived in the bush for a while, and a chief in a village up the road had heard that there was an Israeli American Woman living in the town I was in. And the Israeli part was that the Israelis had worked in Upper Volta to sort of help teach about agriculture and irrigation and things like that and so he got curious and actually invited me for lunch one day. And I remember he like made this big toast to the Israelis, at a time when the Upper Volta government was, you know, wanting to kick Israel out of the U.N. So I sort of, I don't know, I had this consciousness of a kind of difference, and I was interested in helping developing countries feed themselves. I remember, while I was there, that I didn't think as a 27- or 28-year-old woman I should be telling developing country governments what to do which was the only way you could be an economist at that time. So I eventually changed fields, I think the field that I've been in which is organizational development and coaching is a sort of organizational version of making the world a better place.

¹⁰ *Tikkun Olam*:

https://www.jfunders.org/tikkun_olam_a_defense_and_a_critique#:~:text=Few%20Hebrew%20idioms%20are%20so,%2C%20kindness%2C%20and%20political%20action.

¹¹ *Fresh Air*: https://freshair.org/donate/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&gclid=Cj0KCQiA2-2eBhClARIsAGLQ2RmHQ1SBerboyJYEHreP4vV2bwaxoy-Kkk6Hj2y47Db_7oW__EtbnoAaAgPXELw_wcB

Interviewer: That's great. So, just backtracking a tiny bit curiosity, what was your education like leading up to graduate school before you kind of...?

Sherman: So, I went to high school in Englewood, New Jersey, it was a very good high school at the time. I, you know, graduated high in my class, I went to Tufts University, at the time it was Jackson College, it was still a women's college when I applied. And as I said, I always wanted to take my junior year abroad, so I studied in England for my junior year. I still have friends from the apartment I lived in there. And I was studying mathematics; to start with I thought I wanted to be a mathematician and I learned very quickly that I did not have a head for abstract math, but you could apply math to economics. And my first year in college was the time of Nixon's 14 Point Plan and I got really interested in economics and one of my best friends in high school who was a year ahead of me was studying math and had take an econ course and so I got interested and took econ I think my freshman year and so I switched from being a math major to being an econ major and I think I've been a teacher all my life. I am one of those kids who, you know, played teacher as a kid, so I imagined myself as a teacher and my intention was to be a university professor. I realized that – what I'd like to say, in a world of publish or perish, I would have published because I have a high achievement motivation, but I would have personally perished in the process because the writing alone and the waiting years for things to be accepted did not fit my need for a different kind of feedback.

Interviewer: So, one last question before we get to how you came to Atlanta.

Sherman: Okay.

Interviewer: You were a pretty young teenager during the time of Martin Luther King and sort of a lot of civil rights discussion and activism in the United States, did you have a sense for what was going on with that from your spot in Englewood?

Sherman: I think I did actually. Englewood is a town that I used to describe as 50% Black, 50% white, and half the whites were Jewish. That's how you can describe my high school. I had friends who were African American, half the school was African American, so I feel like I grew up in a time where I knew people who came from different backgrounds from me. You know my bus went through both a white part of town and a Black part of town. My parents, you know, were very aware and liberal, so I think I had some idea of what was going on. What is a deep social justice consciousness? I don't think I know, but there was some for sure.

Interviewer: So, you've been living in Africa, you switched careers, what brought you to Atlanta?

Sherman: The weather. The year I turned 40, I realized that I was physically cold all the time. So I grew up in New York, I went to college in Boston, I went to

graduate school in Michigan, a little bit of time in Africa – warm weather, the only real experience in warm weather I had in terms of living in warm weather, my family was never oriented toward Florida or the Caribbean, but I discovered I could live in warm weather and actually I quite liked being warm. So in my late 30s I discovered I have Raynaud’s which is a circulatory syndrome which made my hands and feet cold all the time and it was kind of causing me to physically contract. And so I started to think about you know where could I go or where could I live where I could really be able to be more kind of relaxed and comfortable and have my body – a more sunny outlook if you will. Cause I think, you know my mom used to call me “Jackie Sunshine” when I was a kid, I had this bright yellow raincoat and I think you know I had a sunny side but as I got older and I got colder that really became difficult, and so I was looking for a warm place to live and I had a few criteria: I wanted it to be cosmopolitan because I liked museums and theater and things like that, I wanted there to be a good sized Jewish population, I wanted it to be warm, and I wanted to know at least one person, and my college roommate Cindy Smith lived here. And so by a process of elimination, I guess I had an unwritten criteria that I wanted to be relatively, you know, on the same coast as my family. So, that’s what brought me to Atlanta.

Interviewer: And so when did you move here?

Sherman: 1994 in July.

Interviewer: So just a few sort of summative questions, why do you think it’s important for students to learn about the Holocaust?

Sherman: That’s a really good question. So, I think that its important to understand what happened to people in the same way I think it’s important for me to understand slavery. Or any of the other genocides that have happened around the world, I think history will repeat itself if we are not aware of what happened and how it happened and keep our eyes open. You know this is a particularly challenging time where there’s a lot of expression of hate in the United States and intolerance, and I think the more people can understand what happened then and how Hitler rose to power and what the results were, the more likely it is that we as a people or a society can prevent that from happening again because we’ll see the signs.

Interviewer: And what do you hope that students will take away from learning about your family’s story in particular?

Sherman: So, I think you can think of history as dates and battles and things like that and its not, for me, very alive. But if you think about history as people and what happened to people, then I think you get an understanding of what happened to real people and this helps sort of create a broader context and a set of understanding of what was really going on in history you know the same way like I read things about whether – it’s the personal librarian about the woman who was J. Pierpont Morgan’s personal librarian who

was a Black woman who passed, and what was her life like having to sort of having to keep up this façade for the day job if you will and try to maneuver in society and what was the impact on her and on her family. Or Carnegie's maid who was an African American woman who sort of was a mind behind some of the railroad stuff, it just expands my sense. So it would be my hope that people who might listen to this or some of the other recordings that you've done, it would expand their understanding of what happened to real people. I think we can see the films of what happened in the camps, that was horrific, and it's not the whole story. So, I think you don't know what peoples' experience was and what it is that effects what they bring to their everyday interactions.

Interviewer: So, is there anything I haven't asked you about that you'd like to share?

Sherman: I'm sure there's something, Adina, but I'm really not sure what it is, I feel like I said a lot about my family, about myself. You know, I guess what I would say is I'm really aware, amidst the challenges, how fortunate my family was. You know, I guess I said some of this, I'm really aware of just how gutsy my grandfather was, and you know appreciative of what it must have taken to really be able to do what he did to help those who he could help. And appreciative of the impact it all had on my mom's family, my mother, my grandmother, and my aunt.

Interviewer: Well thank you so much for sharing your story with us and for your time. I really appreciate it.

Sherman: Thank you. What an honor to be able to do this.