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PASSAGE ON "THE GENERAL MAKES"

NASH: Today I have the pleasure of speaking with Mrs. Sabine Rapp who is a voice teacher in New York City. I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Rapp because she was also my voice teacher. Mrs. Rapp is an immigrant to this country about thirty years ago.

RAPP: Twenty-five years.

NASH: Twenty-five years ago and has a very interesting story to tell. Mrs. Rapp originally came from Germany and came to the United States by way of Shanghai and I am going to let her tell her own story now. Mrs. Rapp, what year did you leave Germany?

RAPP: Well, I left Germany in October 1940 and I had to use the

route via Russia, Siberia because Italy had by then joined the War and we could only go by land.

NASH: Let's start out first with what your life was like a little bit in the city in which you lived.

RAPP: In Germany?

NASH: Yes, what city was that?

RAPP: I lived, at the end, I lived in Breslau, in Selesia, which is now Bratislava in Poland, but for many years I used to live in Berlin, which was then the capital of Germany. I had studied music, both voice and piano, and I had attended the University in Breslau and the State Music Academy in Berlin, and Hitler interfered with my possible career, so I did only a rather limited amount of singing in Germany before I left. I also was pretty young still, so I might even under normal circumstances not have done much more singing then. And I began to do a lot of teaching. As a matter of fact, in 1933 when all the Jewish children had to leave public schools, there was great need for Jewish teachers in parochial schools, and so I began to teach in a Jewish girls' school in Berlin. And later, after I got married and moved back to Breslau where I had originally come from, I was teaching at a Jewish school there which included all years of school.

That means elementary grade and what you would call here an extended high school, which ended for the students at age eighteen and nineteen. The last two years of that particular school, which you call the "gymnasium," were approximately equivalent to our first two years in the universities and colleges here. And I got always great satisfaction out of teaching. I must say that. And, of course, I also did some singing. So this was the situation when I left Germany.

NASH: What sort of singing did you do?

RAPP: I sang in oratorios and recitals and a few opera performances, but you see, at that time, there was what was called the "Kulturbund," a cultural association, which included all Jewish artists from all opera houses and other institutes where they were formerly very much in demand and all of a sudden they were kicked out, so, of course, the opera of that Jewish "Kulturbund" was felt with the most accomplished and well-known artists and so it was very difficult for someone who was a beginner, rather an apprentice, to get in there. Therefore, I sang very few opera performances at that time in Berlin. And I concentrated on lieder, as I said, and oratorios. I did a lot of synagogue singing. I have sung in synagogue since I, I don't know, was thirteen or fourteen years old and I have continued in this country to sing in many services in New York City and the Hotel Concord with Mr. Tucker being the cantor there until I gave it up.

It took too much of my teaching time to rehearse and so on and they couldn't pay that much. But I have been connected with religious services even in Shanghai. I did a lot of singing then in churches, in synagogues and also in churches.

NASH: Let's return to the time immediately preceding your leaving Berlin?

RAPP: Berlin or Breslau?

NASH: Breslau.

RAPP: The last place I lived in? That was Breslau because I had gotten married and my husband lived in Breslau so I left Berlin and for the last year and a half I lived in Breslau where I was teaching at the gymnasium. And my husband was imprisoned at that time. He had been denounced by someone and had to serve thirteen months in prison. And this also accounts for our leaving that late. We had applied for the United States, but our quota hadn't come up and so when we then came to Shanghai, we had our quota and application transferred to the Shanghai American Consulate. This, however, was closed, of course, with the outbreak of Pearl Harbor and it did not reopen until the beginning of 1946 and then all applications had to be made afresh.

NASH: What was your trip like to China?

RAPP: Well, we left Berlin with the train to Moscow. In Moscow we had to wait for two and a half days. We arrived on a Thursday night and through some clever money arrangements which my husband was able to do, we were able to go to the opera every evening. We arrived at five o'clock on Thursday and at eight o'clock we were in the opera.

NASH: That was in China?

RAPP: No, that was in Moscow.

NASH: Oh, in Moscow.

RAPP: Yes. We used our waiting period for the Siberian Express by going every night to the opera or to the Jewish theater.

NASH: Were you able to take money with you?

RAPP: Well, no. We were only able to take ten dollars fromGermany, and we paid all our expenses, all our trip expenses, from

Breslau to Shanghai in German Marks, but we took our ticket first class and the cleverness of my husband consisted of changing our first-class ticket from Moscow to Shanghai into a second-class ticket and we got the difference in Moscow in Rubles, which enabled us to buy those tickets.

NASH: What did you take with you from Berlin?

RAPP: We took only what we could carry, which was very, very little. You know, some changes of clothes and really very few things. As I said, we lost all our things which we wanted originally to take. We lost this all in Italy where we had sent it for storage until we would be able to claim it and by the time the war was over, Hitler had ordered all of these properties to be distributed to (?) bumped out fellow citizens, and that was the story of our belongings, so that we started all over again.

NASH: So you proceeded to China?

RAPP: Oh, yes. And then from Moscow we left with Siberia Express which brought us then to Manchuria. We had to wait for three-quarters of a day before we entered Manchuria because we realized later that it was some kind of quarantine. I don't know how to pronounce this word in English.

NASH: Quarantine.

RAPP: Because there had been an outbreak of pest, pestilence, you see, and we didn't know this at the time, of course, but we were just kept in the train before we were allowed to proceed. And then we went to Harbin where we stayed for two days where the Jewish people took very good care of us, you know, and they were used to having immigrants coming through and they are, of course, most hospitable. And then from there we proceeded to Diaren.

NASH: It must have been a very warm welcome when you got to Harbin.

RAPP: Very, very, very, yes. They really handed us around and we were treated with great warmth and hospitality. Well, then we went to Diaren by train, which is already on the southern coast of Shanghai, where I encountered my first rickshaw, and I said to my husband, "I will never allow any other human being to pull me." And my husband then said, "Well, you will get used to it, particularly when you think that this poor rickshaw coolie will have less to eat if you don't use his services," which convinced me then very easily. And then from Diaren, we had a two-day trip by boat to Shanghai and we arrived there on October 28th or 29th, I think. Well, we had to show in Shanghai some kind of money to prove that we would not become public charges and see on that money we began to live. Well, I got in touch

there with some musicians. There was an orchestra conducted by an Italian and Mario Parchi was a wonderful musician. There were some other European, German musicians already in that orchestra and some what established.

NASH: These were Jews.

RAPP: Yes, yes. And they had then introduced me to Mario Parchi and he engaged me to sing, and viewing my years in Shanghai, I am happy to say I did a lot of singing, a lot of singing. I have full scrapbook with programs and reviews and I did some operas and I conducted even some performances of oratorios and I sang a lot. You know, we were about sixteen or seventeen thousand people from middle Europe and some years ago when I met one of the Shanghai people here in New York, he said to me, "You know, I don't know how it came I have never heard you sing," and I could only answer him, "How did you manage that?" because I have done a lot of singing in Shanghai and people really couldn't escape it, I would say. And I enjoyed it very much. So my husband tried to get into some business, some brokerage business, which was very alien to what he used to do in Germany.

NASH: What did he do?

RAPP: He was in the metal melting business, and he and a partner of his had a small plant, but they did a certain specialty there and, of

course, this was out of the question after he had left and so he tried to do some business there. And I got into singing and teaching and it didn't take me too long to get some students. And it was really quite interesting. For instance, I advertised by suggestion of some earlier arrivals, that I should advertise in the North China Daily News, which was at that time the best and most prominent British paper, and among others who answered that ad, there were five people by the name of Chung, so I remember that I distinguished them by Chung blue because he wore always blue shirts or Chung tall, you know, and things like that. And I enjoyed it very much. I had very, very interesting experiences and I met many Chinese people and it was really very nice. Also, at the same time, the Director of the National Conservatory of China, Leway Ning, became my student. It was very peculiar. He had heard me in several of the concerts and he came and asked me whether he could teach me because he wanted to engage me to the Conservatory, you see, but apparently he wanted to try me out first. It was very funny. He had studied in Europe and he spoke even some kind of German and very good French. He had been a student of Vansan Dondi in France and he had been in Austria and so on, so he was quite European oriented I would say, and I taught for many years at the Conservatory.

NASH: How many years were you actually in Shanghai and all?

RAPP: I was in China from October 1940 until February 1948. Yes,

but I have to say that there was one part of Shanghai which was called Hung-k'ou, some kind of a--oh, I wouldn't say a suburb, but some kind of suburb,although it didn't imply and social or economic difference, but in that area there had been a lot of destruction during an earlier war between China and Japan, (she coughs) and when there was such a great influx of Middle-European refugees in 1939, in that part they were allowed to establish some camps. I mean not in the sense that these were restricted places, but it was necessary to accommodate thousands and thousands of people and so we called these "camps," although later on the name implied something very serious, well, here the Jewish Committee there had to deal with people who had just escaped.

NASH: What was the name of the organization, the Jewish Committee?

RAPP: No, the name of the committee was the Joint Distribution Committee and they had helped people to allocate in some form. Now, most of the people didn't have any money, therefore, they were not in any position to take an apartment or even rooms, so they had to be accommodated and that was done in those large camps where they had possibility to cook and , you know, to do their laundry and all of that. Of course, I mean they were free to go about, you know, but there, of course, was also then right away a congregation with their services. Some of the people established shops. You know, very industrious, very industriously. Some people could right

away base their shops on their skills and on their craftsmanship. They were very excellent dressmakers and shoemakers and how do you call hat-makers, you know, people who made hats and so on. And very soon many people from Shanghai proper would come down and order, you know, garments and so on. There were restaurants and bridge clubs and coffee houses and there were many Austrians and many Germans and there was often very great animosity between the two German-speaking people. And if one of each group should marry one another, then we would talk about a mixed marriage and things like that. But quite a number of the people who arrived were able to get jobs in Shanghai proper and were able to establish shops and stores and did really quite well. And then came Pearl Harbor and that changed a lot of it, because all the British and American people, of course, and French people who in many cases had been employers, they were imprisoned as POWs, as prisoners of war, and many of the refugees lost their jobs and it became even worse when it turned out that the Japanese...

NASH: Excuse me.

RAPP: Yes.

NASH: I want to go back a little bit here. Who was in control of Shanghai at that time?

RAPP: Well,there was not just one who was in charge of Shanghai. Shanghai really consisted of several areas. There was what we called the "French Concession." It was administered to by the French. Then there was the International Settlement which was largely administered to by the British, but also by Russians. You know, there was a very, very large Russian community in Shanghai, both White Russians who had come much earlier, and also Soviet Russians who had fled Russia after 1917, and who had really become mainstay of a certain part of Shanghai.

NASH: But who actually did the imprisoning? You say the Europeans were imprisoned after Pear Harbor.

RAPP: Yes. Well...

NASH: Who put them in prison?

RAPP: Well, the Japanese. After Pearl Harbor the Japanese took over Shanghai. You see, they had occupied Shanghai. And so since they were the enemies of the allies, they were the ones who had put up those camps. Now, we stateless refugees, however, all the Middle-European refugees, most of them were stateless, we were not brought into any prisoner-of-war camp because we had no Consulates behind us and so for us the situation really was very precarious. We were left alone until 1943 when Japan finally had

to succumb to German pressure and do something with the stateless refugees. You see, neither Japanese or Chinese know any religious hatred. And the Japanese, who by nature, as you know, are small people, had their day now, because they could command and in many cases be every cruel to the taller man. Not because he belonged to another religion, but he was taller. So they could conquer their inferiority complex in that area, but because they were members of the Axis, Hitler insisted that something would be done with the Jews from Middle-Europe and there were all kinds of alternatives. One alternative was to put us in gas chambers which had already been built, or almost been finished. The other alternative was to bring us into the interior of China and leave us there to our own fate. And the third, and the unprevailing alternative, was to put us in a ghetto in Shanghai which was called a "designated area" which was not considered a ghetto,of course, for the Chinese who lived there, but who was that ghetto for us who lived there. It was policed by policemen particularly for that purpose and all of us had to move into that designated area who had arrived after 1937 and who were stateless. Only certain doctors could stay in Shanghai proper, who did not have to move to Hung-k'ou. Now, my husband and I, we had lived in Shanghai proper and we had to move also to Hung-k'ou. We had to buy, with a lot of money, we had to buy a room there, and, you know, people utilize the misery and, you know, the pressure of the people that are forced to go there. And, well, my husband and I, we got a relatively large room in a former "go-down" which was converted into a house.

NASH: A "go-down?"

RAPP: A "go-down" is a kind of a warehouse. And it so happened that on the board of that association--I have forgotten the name of it--were some old Shanghai hands, people who had come to Shanghai earlier. Among them was a gentleman by the name of Berriglass, a Swiss Jew who had lived there almost all his life and who happened to have been a very avid concert goer and seemed to have taken a liking to my singing and he was responsible for the fact that my husband and I got a much larger room, that normally a childless couple would have been assigned because I had a piano there and I was giving lessons and he felt that it had to be a bit more roomy than an otherwise a much smaller room. So we moved then in 1943 to that Hung-k'ou area and now, of course, that ghetto was closed and only those people who could bring a letter of guarantee from an employer in Shanghai were given--only those were given a special passport with which we were allowed to leave the ghetto. And these passports had to be approved by the Japanese. Some of those Japanese in that Stateless refugee Office were terribly cruel and mean people, who were just interested in their career and many people lost their jobs because they were kept waiting for weeks for the approval of their pass and, of course, many white-collar workers and sales people, you know, they couldn't convince their employers that they would eventually get their passports, so they lost their jobs. I myself, however, and a few

other musicians who had been teaching at the National Conservatory, we were lucky enough to always get our letter of guarantee and no matter how long we had to wait for the approval of that pass, we could make up our lessons because the director needed us and it was some kind of prestige for the Conservatory that so many European teachers were there. So we were lucky in this respect. And I never lost my passport although I was restricted to the area where the Conservatory was located. I before had been able to go to all, to the French Concession, to the International Settlement, and to the, what was called, Western District which was a further out area. However, the Conservatory was located in the International Settlement and so eventually my passport was restricted to this area, but I was very lucky. Friends of mine lived two minutes from that Conservatory and I could have all my private students who lived in other areas and who did not have to move to the ghetto. You see, I had all kinds of nationalities who were not imprisoned by the Japanese. I was lucky enough to be able to give them lessons in the house of these friends. So I was really very lucky.

NASH: Were your friends risking anything by permitting you to do that?

RAPP: No, they were not because they had arrived in 1933 and they were absolutely independent from the Japanese altogether. But let me tell you one small story which is really very interesting. One of the men in

that Stateless Refugee Office, his name was Mr. Goya, a small, almost ape-like looking man who never missed any of our concerts and who himself played the violin, and who sometimes would invite one of our pianists to come to his house and play with him. And at that time, as we were told he was charming and hospitable as only an Asian can be. Well, when the war was over and all the war crime trials were on, Mr. Goya could claim that it was he that had suggested the ghetto as it turned out to be administered. He could claim furthermore that nobody died from his hands although he was at times very cruel and mean, but nobody had died from his hands. And so in the end he went without any punishment. This is the way I got the information when I left Shanghai in 1948. In 1968, I visited Australia where my sister lives in Melbourne, and where also very close friends of mine from the Shanghai time lived and with whom I also stayed for a while. And they had visitors one evening and I told that story of Mr. Goya and why he went without any punishment. So my friends were dismayed and they said, "What story are you telling about Mr. Goya." I said, "This is the way I heard it." They said, "Well, did you never learn that he was an American spy?" He had been an American spy. Consequently, he had to appear like a schizophrenic person. The man who loved music and who had invited Mr. Mogolinski to his home to make music with him, the man who had pleaded for the ghetto because it was the least harmful arrangement for us, that was his true personality, and the man who was mean and pretended to be cruel was the American, was the man he had to pretend to be. Interesting. Well, I hope I

am not going into too many details.

NASH: Not at all. It is fascinating.

RAPP: Okay. Now then, when the War was over in 1945, August 10, 1945, later than anywhere else in the world because we were dependent upon Hiroshima. After that...

NASH: You remember then when the--what was the effect of the bombing of Hiroshima in China?

RAPP: Well, the war was over by that time and so, of course, the ghetto was opened and that was for us the end of the war.

NASH: I just wondered what the reaction of the people...

RAPP: Well, it was, you know, in one way it was horror and the other way it was, you know, it meant the end of our suffering.

NASH: How about among the Chinese?

RAPP: Well, I tell you,I think it was--how shall I express it--I believe that the horror of that bomb was not at once evident. It meant

first and foremost that the war was over and I think only gradually began we all to realize at what cost, you see. Well, you see, we refugees in that camp, I mean in that Hung-k'ou ghetto,were in a very difficult psychological situation. With one part of our heart we longed for the American bombers to come, and Hung-k'ou was a particularly vulnerable spot to be bombed because there were American warehouses, American ships. You know, Shanghai is a port, remember that. American ships, American radio stations, American munitions depots and so on, so, of course, the Americans were aiming for Hung-k'ou, yet we were living there. And on July 17, 1945, Hung-k'ou was bombed and thirty-five of our refugees were killed by American bombs. You know, we could not as, for instance , people in England or in other places, hold hands with whoever would be next to us against the bombs in the sky because they were our enemies. We could not do that because the planes in the sky were our friends and we were longing for them to come in a way and we were afraid at the same time.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

RAPP: So we were psychologically in a very torn situation. Well, then after the war was over in August, we had to stay in the ghetto. When the war was over we tried to adjust to the new situation and as far as the

American Consulate is concerned and the possible immigration to America, we had to wait until the Consulate opened, which happened in '46. And by that time I had separated from my husband and I applied by myself. He did eventually also come to America. Well, I applied by myself and then I had to wait from '46, January '46 until February '48, until I left because there were so many things to be processed and so on. So I arrived in the United States on March 4, 1948 in San Francisco, and I have lived in New York City ever since. And maybe I have a chance to talk about this.

NASH: I hope so. Thank you very much.

RAPP: You are most welcome.

NASH: This tape is Miss Sabine Rapp. On the other tape Miss Rapp told us the story of how she lived in China for about seven years and now we are going to talk about after she left China. We discussed the fact that she took a boat through Yokohama and now we are going to pick her up--she went to Shanghai--and now we are going to pick her up in Honolulu. Miss Rapp, what happened in Honolulu?

RAPP: In Honolulu, after we got off the boat, we used the time to have a very excellent breakfast and also our very first American ice cream soda. That was a great event.

NASH: What flavor was it?

RAPP: Chocolate. It has always been my favorite and it still is, unfortunately. Well, I don't quite remember how many days we had in Honolulu. I remember a few things very distinctly in addition to the ice cream soda. That was 1948. You must not forget that. At that time in Honolulu all the cabs, the taxi cabs, had air conditioning. I remember when the first taxi cabs in New York City a few years ago had air conditioning, you know, and there was a big to-do about that. At that time it was a matter of cost that all the cabs had air conditioning. And I was also duly impressed that anyone who had a car and wanted to go to Wakiki Beach, a very fancy beach, could get into the car in a bathing suit, leave the car at a curb and just jump, you know, with a few more or less graceful jumps, into the water. I remember that also. I also remember that we went to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. I don't know whether it still exists. But at that time we were invited for a drink or whatever and the carpets in the hall and the lounges were several inches deep and I remember that we were just sinking into the luxury, you know, of these carpets. You know, a few single instances really I still remember. I also remember that the vegetation, plants and crops and all of that, was very similar to Southern Europe, so I felt quite familiar with the surroundings there. Well, then after Hawaii it was only a short trip to the mainland and we arrived in San Francisco. The

trip on that General Makes, which was ship--how do you call this--a troop transport, it took us I think--well, it was from the 17th of February until March the 4th, whatever number f days these are.

NASH: From China?

RAPP: From China. And I remember also because of the International Dateline that we had one day twice. I think it was February 23rd, we had that twice.

NASH: I'm told it was a good day.

RAPP: Very good day. I also remember before we anchored in San Francisco that we passed the Golden Gate Bridge and for good luck we simply had to throw a penny, at least a penny, under the bridge, you know, for good luck, as I said. And I was welcomed in San Francisco by a young couple. I had met them in Shanghai. The man had been in the American Army and had met a girl in Shanghai and they left together for San Francisco and they welcomed me and took everything out of my hand, it was really very nice and they invited me to no lesser place than the Hotel Saint Francis in San Francisco for my very first meal in the United States. And they thought it would be a good omen for me that I should do nothing less ever. And then I began my trip East after visiting someone in Los Angeles. I took the train

from San Francisco after I had telephoned with my cousin in New York City who had sent me the affidavit to Shanghai and he had come to this country in 1938 and he had established himself as quite a successful ophthalmologist and so I started my way East and I stopped in several places, among them Chicago, I remember that, where I also stayed with friends from Europe for a week.

NASH: Did you speak English at this time?

RAPP: Oh, yes, I did speak English. I had four years in school in Germany and had very, very good English. I had a wonderful teacher trained in Britain, so my English at that time had this little British twang. And in Shanghai, of course, I did speak quite a bit of English, although not exclusively. I did speak some French while I was teaching at the Conservatory and, of course, I did speak a lot of German because within the ghetto there was no need to speak English. And during the last years in Shanghai, in fact, also during the war years the British people were all interned in POW camps so, you know, there were not too many people with whom one had to speak English outside of some shopkeepers and so on. But when I came to this country I had to do something about my English. I mean, there was no

question about that, to be really surrounded always by English speaking people and to be able to be absolutely in it. And after I came to New York I decided right away that I would spend my summer in a camp as a music counsellor, for several reasons. Firstly, as I just mentioned, I wanted to be surrounded and have to speak English at all times. Secondly, I wanted to get to know the mentality of American children, who had been described to me as difficult to handle. And I am happy to report that they are just as devilish or angelic as all children anywhere in the world, and if there are any problem people in camps, these are the parents, as anyone who has been a counsellor in a camp will attest to.

NASH: Would you like to tell me the name of the camp?

RAPP: Yes, it was Camp Naomi run by the Jewish Welfare Organization in Lowell--no, wait a minute, in Billerica, Massachusetts, not far from Boston. And so I enjoyed that camp experience very much. Also, it helped me, of course,to get away from the heat in New York City during the summer and also to make some money, you know, last but not least. And it worked out so well that they asked me to come back the next year. The second year they gave me also a bunk, you know, a bunk to take care of, an

intermediate bunk, I remember, in addition to being the music counsellor of the whole camp. I was sort of flattered about that.

NASH: It seems like it would be hard for a person coming to this country to get a job like that. How did you manage to find it?

RAPP: Well, it wasn't too difficult. I have had a lot of experience working with children and since I have always been teaching music and having always been in touch with youngsters of all ages. So I was told to go to an agency, one or the other agency, which I did, and I ended up going to the agency of the Jewish Welfare Board where I knew one of the head people who had been in Shanghai during the occupation after the war was over, a Mr. Herbert. I remember even his name. A very nice man. And so he had something to do with that agency and it wasn't really very difficult. Also, when I came here I was directed to the Office of the Joint Distribution Committee, where they had a vocational service and I was very fortunate to be directed to a lady by the name of Doris Meadow. I will always remember her name, who took a great interest in me, I am happy to say, and placed me rather soon into a music school in the Bronx where I, it was called the School of Music and Dance, where I gave firstly, where I firstly didn't teach, I improvised for dancing classes, something I had done also earlier. And it came in very handy. And eventually I began to give piano lessons and also voice lessons. And Miss Meadow also got me some

synagogue jobs to sing. One of the ones I liked best was in the Park Avenue Synagogue where David Potterman was the Cantor, and I enjoyed it very much. And I had been at that time invited to come back several times. I didn't get a permanent job there, but he asked me in later years occasionally to come. A wonderful musician, a very nice man. And also when I came here I tried to get a permanent synagogue job, church job, and I made the rounds in New York and I was fortunate enough to have a colleague, a tenor, also a German immigrant, who had been in Shanghai and who had arrived in this country about a year prior to my arrival and who had already made all the rounds, so he helped me to go only to those places which seemed to be somewhat promising and I finally landed a job in the Bronx in a synagogue for Friday night and Saturday morning, and I was quite well paid, and I must admit, however, that I didn't stay there very long. This is why I am not going to tell you where it was. I didn't like the kind of music making they did there. It was very unprofessional, and although I needed the money badly, I quit there because I feel that I would rather take a job as a waitress where I didn't lose my self-respect. But if I would have continued to make music there on that level, I just would have lost my self-respect. I couldn't do that. And then I began to sing in churches and the Riverside Church and in the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, and later on I became the soloist, the alto soloist over several years at the Church of the Heavenly Rest at the upper Fifth Avenue in New York and this developed into a very, very nice thing because it did not only entail singing during the services,

but the conductor had also established the Canterberry Choral Society where we performed oratorios and the soloists in the church were subsequently the soloists also in those oratorio performances and that was really very enjoyable. I also sang eventually in all kinds of synagogues here. I sang with Mr. Binder and with again with Mr. Potterman, quite some other conductors, and I also went for several years to the Hotel Concord during the high holidays and Passover where Mr. Shoelim Secuda was the conductor and where our Cantor was Richard Tucker and that was really very nice. And later on I discontinued that, not only because Mr. Tucker left and not only because it was really rather poorly paid, but also by and large I had quite a number of students and it would have cost me money to attend rehearsals because I would have had to cancel lessons in order to attend the rehearsals, and lessons which I couldn't make up. So I gave up singing in the synagogues then and I, you know, I concentrated more on teaching. And in 1953, I was invited to teach at the Music School of the Henry Street Settlement House where I also had the privilege and pleasure to meet my interviewer.

NASH: Thank you.

RAPP: You are very welcome. So we must have hit it off well, otherwise she wouldn't have contacted me here. Although I remember I gave her a very hard time.

NASH: No you didn't. Yes you did.

RAPP: That sounds more honest.

NASH: Have you maintained any contacts with Europe?

RAPP: Yes, I have maintained some contacts, although the people I am still in contact in Germany are friends from China. There is absolutely nobody, with one exception, with one exception. One man, a fellow student in Berlin many, many years ago, had remained in Germany. He is gentile, but he had married a Jewish girl and so he stayed in Germany and he was always active as a Social Democrat and in later years--I mean he actually has always done a lot for other people, so he decided to stay in Germany in order to do his share and he did as much as he possibly could. After the War, he was very active in helping to get people elected into government who would feel the way he does and when he was elected into government, he became the youngest member, in terms of working in the government, having been elected in the government, he became at once the Chairman of the very powerful Restitution Committee, which was very unusual. And he left the government two years ago to become a judge in the highest court in Germany, you know, comparable to our Supreme Court here, and he is--really, I shouldn't have ever said no--he is the man, when I am in Germany, I am

always staying in his and his family's house, but I must say in all honesty that since he comes occasionally to America, he would not be a reason for me to go to Germany. I would never go to Germany if it wouldn't be for those friends I became close to in China and who are living now in Germany for various reasons. And I have no professional contacts at all in Germany. When I went to Germany for the very first time in 1953, first time after the War, and I visited these friends in Berlin, I also visited an old conductor whom I had worked with in Germany, Mr. Lederer, and we had a very pleasant visit. He was a very elderly gentleman at the time already, and when I left he sat down at the piano and began to play a part of a score which we had worked on together as automatically I began to sing, although it was really on my way out already and he got very excited and he tried to persuade me to stay in Berlin because he said, "You can start tomorrow at the Staatsoper, at the Staatsoper, we need altos and you are still very good," and whatever he told me. And, of course, it was out of the question. I would have never considered staying there. But this was really the only contact I ever had, any professional contact I ever had after my return. Maybe I can also insert that I had become very close friends while her in New York with Friedelind Wagner, one of the granddaughter of Richard Wagner who had left Nazi Germany out of protest to Hitler, much to the chagrin and embarrassment of the Wagner family in Bayreuth, and because of her wonderful political record, she was the one who was instrumental that the Wagner family in Bayreuth was again awarded Bayreuth after the war. In other words, Bayreuth

would have never been given back to the family after the war if it wouldn't have been for Friedelind Wagner. Now she went back for the very first time to Bayreuth in 1953 and she asked me since I was going to be over in Germany, would I, as one of her closest friends in America, would I do her the favor and visit her there in Bayreuth. And I felt that although it was very, very difficult to me, you know, to meet Mrs. Wagner, who was a close friend of Hitler, and to be her guest in a box in the theater where Hitler sat, I mean everyone will understand that it was really very difficult, but I felt I owed it to Friedelind. I am even crying when I am talking about it. A girl who had defied everything which was going on in Germany, or almost everything, and certainly the high--well, how shall I express it--hierarchy of Nazism in Bayreuth and who had a very difficult time here. So, for her sake, I did go and I saw some, I must admit, wonderful performances, and I went there one other time in later years. And we are still very good friends. As a matter of fact, this past summer I had a wonderful reunion with her in London. She is living in England now and we are still very good friends. But beyond this, my, as I said earlier, my contacts in Germany are absolutely nil and I have no desire nor any reason nor any--there is nothing, absolutely nothing. I am so thoroughly through with Germany, I am so kicked out. You know, when I come back here and people hear that I was in Germany and they ask me, "What do the people say in Germany?" I must always honesty say that I don't talk to anybody. I don't talk to anyone I do not know. You know, I have nothing to say to anyone although I am sure

that there are younger people, you know, quite a number of middle-aged people or even older who did not agree with the Nazi regime, of course, but particularly the younger people who question their parents where they have been during the Nazi period and what they have done and I do not want to deny the fact that there are people who think as I do, you know, facts bare that out. A lot of youngsters who had gone to Israel to help and to other underprivileged countries to offer their help. Some kind of Peace Corps movement and all of that. There are wonderful things happening in Germany, I don't deny this, but I have absolutely no desire to be part of it, none. I go even as far as not to buy anything what was made in Germany. I mean it didn't stop the German economic miracle, but I just--it is understood for me that I am so through with it, you know. Although, of course, I don't have ever to deny my German heritage and background. You know I am German as they come. I don't have to be ashamed of the language of Goethe and Schiller and Heine and the music of, you know, our great composers, but this is not the Germany which I left. You know, I always say even if I wanted to, I can't tear out of me what is German and I have no desire to do that. I don't see any reason why I should deny the fact that I come from Germany, but as I said, it is a very different Germany and I feel closer to any other country, but as I said, I am absolutely through in Germany. I have some contacts, professional contacts as it were, although I do not perform anymore. In England, there are conductors and other musicians whom I was together in school with and with whom I did occasional things together with,

but as I mentioned in the earlier tape, I was just beginning to do some professional work when Hitler came and so I really did not have much experience in Europe at all, and I suppose that answers your question. Yes, I wanted to say that I am very fortunate and very happy to say that I have--I feel thoroughly and genuinely and totally at home in New York. I mean, there is just no other place for me than New York. And needless to say, I also have my gripes because it would be unrealistic and dishonest to deny, you know, that there are things which could be better, but when you love someone or something very much, you feel to criticize and this is exactly the way I feel about it. I wouldn't live anywhere else, although I love--as far as my professional life is concerned, I have always loved to teach, and the fact that I didn't make the career I might have made, I would have always taught. I never considered it only from the point of making a living or because the grapes were too sour, never. I love to teach. And I have been now for the last twelve years teaching, I have been teaching at Hofstra University in Hempstead, I have been teaching classes, both vocal and piano, I have a lot of private students. I am working very closely with the drama department and I am very involved in that whole school. I have met many people across campus and I feel very, very good in what I am doing there up there.

NASH: Didn't you do any performing in New York?

RAPP: Oh yes, I did some performing in New York. I sang in several concerts, particularly contemporary music. I was always very interested in music by Schoenberg, Almanberg, and their school. I was very fortunate to have met Mr. Edward Storiman whose songs I premiered in Julliard School. I did some concerts in Town Hall and other halls and I also auditioned at the Metropolitan Opera in the Wagner repertoire, as it were, because once you audition there you have to know exactly what area you might fit in. Well, I was called back to sing again, but at that time they decided to bring Mr. Bing in as manager and, as everyone in the music world in New York City knows, Mr. Bing hated Wagner, so he wasn't about to engage another Wagner singer and that was the end of my Metropolitan career before it ever started. And I also did sing, of course, in oratorios, as I mentioned earlier. I also sang in many faculty concerts in Henry Street Settlement and later on in Hofstra University, so I do not want to say that I didn't have a chance to sing, but it wasn't the career, as I said, which I might have made. When I came to this country I was already thirty-eight years old, rather old to begin a career, but particularly so when you don't have any money at all. To build a career you need twenty-four hours and quite a bit of money, and I just didn't have that. I had to make a living, I didn't have any money, and consequently, I couldn't concentrate on just a career exclusive of everything else. But I did sing and I am happy to say that my voice even now responds not too badly of course, although, of course, I do not sing anymore in public. And I may say one more word about

New York. I have just been living in the same apartment in the musicians' neighborhood near Lincoln Center for the last twenty-three years and I feel very, very good here. I often have people here from many different nationalities because I have always been very interested in meeting, having a chance to explore culture and customs and so on of other countries. I became a member of the American African Scholarship Fund and I gave a room in my apartment to an African student who might have found it difficult to find another place. I also became the sponsor of an America Indian child last year and I hope to visit her next year. And altogether, I feel very good to be here. I could remain in my profession and I have met many, many people within the musicians' circle and related areas and also with people who have absolutely nothing to do with the arts because there are other areas in life, very valid ones at that, who have nothing to do with art. And I try to be as open and ready to be with other people and understand them because I believe that this is really what counts, contact between people and I found a great opportunity to do this in New York. And I can only wish that other people feel just as adjusted and as well as I am feeling here.

NASH: Thank you, Mrs. Rapp.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE