

Interview with Rita Schorr Germain, Class of 1953
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Claudia Perkins Schechter: It is July 13, 2014. This is Claudia Perkins Schechter, [class of] 1966, interviewing Rita Schorr Germain, [class of] 1953, at two o'clock. You had just started to tell me in about your interest in finding out how this began, but perhaps you would be willing to begin a little earlier in your life?

Rita Schorr Germain: Okay.

SCHECHTER: You say in a statement that I read in something that you recorded that you were a privileged child until you were sixteen? Perhaps you'd tell us a little bit about your family and then the loss of your family, and how you came then to consider coming to the U.S. And you just talk regularly.

SCHORR GERMAIN: You know, I wish I could put a rational, realistic plan—but there was none, really. I was in Munich at the time. As you can well imagine, I did not much have much love to stay in Germany after what happened. I think even today I still cannot process the whole process of the Holocaust. It's kind of hard to imagine Hitler in an evil like that—that would enjoy and create, you know, crematoriums, and just want to destroy a race. It's still hard to imagine, why a person would do it. But it was done, you know. And there's really no answer of it. It's still today, and it's many years since then. It's still hard to believe that a whole family can be wiped out just because they were Jewish. So it's like posttraumatic stress, you know. Rationally, you cannot understand it.

SCHECHTER: One of the things I've seen in your writing, or things you've said that others have written, is your love of education. Did that come from your mother and father, and when the Holocaust caught you into this horror that we can't explain, were there values like education that your parents had given you that helped you become a survivor?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh definitely, definitely. You know, the Jewish religion and the Jewish culture basically is founded on the family and education. There's no great wisdom to it, that education is the foundation of a self and identity—which by chance or by that, mine was Jewish. We'll never have the understanding [of] what motivated Hitler to set himself on the course of destruction. And it was nothing personal that we did to him [laughter]. So why would you do it, you know? And that's what was so hard to understand, a human mind works like this. Like tit for tat. Or reciprocity. You can't understand something like that.

SCHECHTER: Do you want to speak about the time before the Holocaust at all? And about your family, or would you prefer to—

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, definitely. Whatever you need, yeah. [5:00]

SCHECHTER: Why don't you tell us something about that time?

SCHORR GERMAIN: I was born in—my home was Boryslav, which was Poland then. Now it's Ukraine, it's changed. We were very well set because my father was in banking and also lumber and construction. The area I come from is a petroleum area. Just like, I think, Texas is in America. The derrick, which is the petroleum, you know—and we were always, the whole family was waiting for the petroleum to burst. So you can exploit it, you know! Also it was a very rich area in Poland, in terms of there was lots of salt, digging and export—but primarily petroleum. And so what my father did—it was a combination of banking, he actually created the idea of banking in that area in order to have small interest rates and make it possible for people to enter business mortgages on interest rates which were not cutthroat. It was a good life, a very good life.

SCHECHTER: What was your education like in Boryslav?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, I didn't really have much education just yet. My mother was primarily it. You know, she was a mother, she was a wife, but she was in music primarily. She played piano, and she was not a performer, but she enjoyed music. To my father, banking was the goal—but also there was what I call a Jewish kind of touch to the goals. To make it available on low interest rate, to lend money so the interest doesn't swallow completely the person and the mortgages. And also employment—it employed a lot of people in the bookkeeping department and the staff, which really there was nobody else employing. It was some social concern or some conscience that one [unclear]. My mother's whole family was employed in banking [laughter]. Because that was one thing they felt didn't demand so much salary and that will help people, you know. I was still too young really to understand all of it, but I know that I always loved to go with my dad to the bank, and he taught me a lot of bookkeeping and stuff. And my dad, I've... you talk about that—I was much closer to my dad, than to my mom. My mom, today I would love her dearly because that—but my mom was only concerned that I'm the most beautifully dressed [10:00]. And she'd have every hat maker and every dressmaker was supposed to dress me up like the perfect doll, and I hated it [laughter]. Looking back many times I talk to her to a picture, and I say, "Mom, I was a little girl and I wanted—I liked my dad better than you!" I was honest, because he treated me as a human being that can do things, and he taught me everything about banking and business, construction business. He used to love to take me on a field when a transport from the—how do you call it in English, *tartak*—the lumber was cut, you know... You know, tree was brought—

SCHECHTER: In the mill?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Yeah. The tree were brought into the sawmill [laughter] and my dad worried always because I used to love to sit at the end of [the transport], and the ride to it, got to it and my dad, “You will get killed!” [laughter]. Oh, I didn’t get killed. I always jump up in time, you know [laughter]. But my father taught me the business, he taught me bookkeeping, he taught me all those things. I wasn’t just a dress-up. That created that I was much closer to him.

SCHECHTER: Do you think that your father’s treatment of you, did that help you with the skills that led you to be a survivor? You must have had remarkable internal skills to... or sense of self.

SCHORR GERMAIN: You know, I don’t think he knew about what was coming.

SCHECHTER: No.

SCHORR GERMAIN: But I think, for example, when a transport would come to the sawmills, he would always make it a point: “Rita, you take down when I dictate you all the sayings.” And then he would say, “Rita, you go to the big bookkeeper and work with him to enter it into books.” I think my dad made me feel that I can do those things, and I did them well, you know.

SCHECHTER: Mm hmm.

SCHORR GERMAIN: And it was not easy for him to work on [??] [13:01] because when the Germans occupied the area, you know, they also—there was killing in the fields. So even if you did get a job, which made you an [??] [13:18], a working Jew. I...[laughter] at that time, I wore an “R,” [??] [13:33] can you imagine [laughter]. A big [??] [13:37]. But, you know, I wore an “R” which means that I was useful to the Germans. [13:45] [??] [13:44], it’s... “better leave them alone, don’t kill them all because we need some labor,” you know.

SCHECHTER: Mm hmm. Right.

SCHORR GERMAIN: A lot of things I really didn’t understand, to be honest. I really didn’t understand.

SCHECHTER: I don’t want to hurry you, but if you’re comfortable, tell us a little bit... so you were working through this awful period of time, and then how did you come to be liberated?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, I really wasn’t liberated *per se* because eventually I was taken to a concentration camp—to Auschwitz, which was, you know, a concentration camp with a gas oven and everything. And Mengele was in charge there [15:00]. [laughter] You know, it’s amazing—here he was with all his boots and all the strength, and I ran after him and I said, “Tell me, where are they taking my mother and my sister?” So he pointed to the oven there, I didn’t even know what

he was pointing [to]. I really, my imagination didn't work that way. That was afterwards we got to know. And he kind of thought he was improving it a little more. And I had a younger sister too, and when the separation in Auschwitz came, my mother and my sister were pushed to one side. And I had an aunt, who kind of had a cape, and she covered me so he didn't see me. But when I did run to Mengele who was in charge of Auschwitz, and I said "[???] [16:15]" "Where did you push my mother?" So he said, "Do you see that smoke? That's where your mother is." I really couldn't understand it, you know. I just couldn't understand it. After a while, after they shaved my hair and put a number on my hand, I started to understand it. That it's power, control—total control.

SCHECHTER: Then soldiers came at the end of the war?

SCHORR GERMAIN: No, no, it was—no. Actually it was all by accident that I survived because the Germans started to withdraw from Auschwitz. We expected the Russians to come, but they were not coming on our demand [laughter]. We tried to get back to the open ghetto, you know? There was a ghetto before it—

SCHECHTER: Oh, uh huh.

SCHORR GERMAIN: And we tried to get there because, in a way, we saw a certain security there that the Germans were giving us. But it didn't work [laughter]. And it was... I really don't know. I still don't know.

SCHECHTER: So after you were able to leave Auschwitz, leave the concentration camp, you studied. Am I right? How did you come to find the resources within yourself, and also how did you get help?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Okay, okay, I will tell you. I was little, but anger does a great deal. It's not often love, but anger. You know the word, forgive me for not being elegant, *fuck you* [laughter]. As little as I was, I said, "God, I won't let them break my life," you know. And I didn't mean to be crude [laughter].

SCHECHTER: No! I can't imagine, obviously, what you lived through, but anger is a very strong emotion, I agree with you. And it can sometimes be a very useful one for doing things.

SCHORR GERMAIN: Yes, anger. Just anger, you know. How could you do it? Why are you doing it? And fuck you. [laughter]

SCHECHTER: So how did you come then to get into school and become considered for this scholarship? You obviously must have been a remarkable student. [20:00]

SCHORR GERMAIN: After the war, as Auschwitz was liberated, Red Cross started to compile a list of survivors. And they also... there was a committee—there were committee on a committee on a committee—and they tried to organize, "what do we

do with the so-called survivors here?" And I didn't want to stay in Germany. And I put my most on the Red Cross, and I started to get letters from, you know, there was a cousin in Leechburg, Pennsylvania. My father's cousin, she sent a cake [laughter], "I'm glad you survived, and we went to the consulate. If you want to come, we'll send you papers and adopt you." And there were several kind of people, some were related, and some were not. There was a lot of niceness in human beings, that they would say, you know, "We have one child only, and you are about the same age. And perhaps you would consider coming," and there was a lot of niceness. And I still have some of the letters that people wrote. And also, through the kind of... Some of the letters were people, "Your father was my second cousin, third cousin," you know, it's kind of—they really were trying to find a connection [laughter], but there was none almost, you know. But it was kind of nice. And like, they said, "Please write us what you need." [laughter] What I needed, that I needed—sanity, you know. I mean, to minimize the Holocaust, it's naïve. There is a posttraumatic stress, you know, of kind of... fear, you know. So it was a difficult period.

SCHECHTER: It was a period of about five years before you actually were met in New York, is that right? Or not quite five years?

SCHORR GERMAIN: No, when I survived, I went to Munich, because there was a distant cousin who survived too and who invited me to come there. So I was in Munich. As you can imagine, it wasn't a happy situation, to be all of a sudden—And yet, there was a family there, in Munich, that offered me warmth and love. That really kind of, after a while I said, "Oh, they are not all bad." The Millers, you know. A distant cousin of mine found me through the Red Cross, and we moved into the Millers'. And the Millers were the most wonderful human beings. That really cured me of blind hate, you know. Mrs. Miller was—and Mr. Miller, you know, he moved out himself from his study, and he said "[??] [24:39] Just enjoy the books and the music." And just when you come in, then it was not a happy situation. I didn't like going to a German school. And I went—there was a Jewish committee, and I said, "Look here. I did survive, but to put me in a German school—forget it! I won't go." [25:00] So they said, "So what should we do?" I said, "I don't know, that's your problem!" So he said, "Okay, come to us next week." In the middle of Munich, they bought two houses and created a Hebrew high school [laughter]. You can't imagine how bizarre it looked! But they put a Hebrew high school in the middle of Munich. And they brought up people from Palestine, there was no Israel yet. And they brought people from Palestine as teachers. And it was in the middle of Munich, the [??] [die Hebräische Schule] [26:05], the Hebrew High School. And soon they—[??] was this lake. They built like a camp for kids, Holocaust survivors, and they had teachers from Palestine, and we were taught Hebrew. So it was kind of a recycling a whole life. And it worked, we had camps—it worked, and yet it's sadness. There was always underground sadness. Somebody would burst out crying and screaming. You know, "Those [bastards]!" The whole thing, it was exploding, you know. But there was nothing we could do. They tried their best, but we carried the anger.

SCHECHTER: Of course.

SCHORR GERMAIN: So there was summer camp for the kids, there was a Hebrew high school. You know, we didn't know Hebrew, so. And also, you might remember there was the ship Exodus.

SCHECHTER: I do.

SCHORR GERMAIN: Yeah, that was refugees and all those things. And they were stopped inside Cyprus—It wasn't a pretty story. But it was still a difficult time.

SCHECHTER: And when you came to Brown, to Pembroke—

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh God, that's still a long story.

SCHECHTER: Yes, tell us that story!

SCHORR GERMAIN: I went to a Hebrew high school, and I graduated from a Hebrew high school. And by being in Hebrew high school, there also a lot of German teachers who were very, very concerned about what was going to happen to us. And there was one Dr. Lance, and he was very fond of me, and he said, "Look here, you don't want to stay in Germany." He said, "You will never forget the number and what happened." I said, "No, [laughter] but, you know, you handle as you are," and he said, "Why don't you wait. I'm going to write to friends of mine in the United States. Would you be willing to go to the United States?" I said, "I don't have any family in the United States. I don't have any relatives [in the] United States." And he kind of looked at me and put his hand on it, and said, "It doesn't matter, you know. You don't need relatives. You can try to build a good life. Just do it."

SCHECHTER: Wow.

SCHORR GERMAIN: And he did. He wrote letters, and that's how I connected to Brown. It was not so much Brown the University. It was the students in Brown wanted to get involved into something that helps somebody [30:00]. And I really for a long time was digging to find out who organized it all. And it was really the students who said, "No, we were fortunate. We didn't have it, but whatever we can do." So they had a rummage sale [laughter] you know, and all kinds of projects. They were selling—they really were original—they would buy Florentine leather bags, and pocket books and that, and sell it for the profit! [laughter] And that way they created funds, you know, to do it. And so that's really kind of, I wonder where that... People give credit to just the students who didn't have really any experience, but they were running the rummage sale [laughter] galore! And somehow collecting money. And I guess it worked up to a point [laughter].

SCHECHTER: As I read the *Pembroke Records* that said, you know, "We have a student coming. We've been successful. We have a student coming." "No, she's not

coming. It got postponed.” “Yes she’s coming.” “No, she’s not coming. It got postponed.”

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, yeah. But they tried so hard.

SCHECHTER: How did you feel during that time? September to January and then you arrived.

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, [laughter] I didn’t know if I was coming or going. Naturally, it sounded good, and I still think many times when I talk to my children, or now grandchildren even, I say, “I would like to shake the hands of the people who tried to have the rummage sale [laughter] and everything to bring me.” Because Brown couldn’t take everything, and I needed help with other things.

SCHECHTER: And so I understand that two students met you in New York, and you all traveled by train?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Yeah.

SCHECHTER: Tell me about coming to the campus and kind of your initial introduction to the university. And then let’s talk about your education and what you thought about the students and the university.

SCHORR GERMAIN: I think I had a lot of fear, basically, and anxiety. But I also have to say that it really worked. When I came to Brown, some families in Providence reached out, and they started to invite me to Friday night, to the weekend for Shabbos. The Hillel invited me, and started to invite me for Friday night. I didn’t know what Hillel was [laughter]. And then there was a family in Providence, the Dorenbaums. Dr. Dorenbaum and his wife. He was an orthodontist. She was—I guess you could say she was a manufacturer, and they got interested because they had two children that didn’t work out. And that’s my embroidery, by the way. Their children didn’t work out, and they were intensely determined to make me work out [laughter]. And many times I said, “Get off my back! Leave me alone!” Which wasn’t very thankful, you know. But I still today have their picture, the Dorenbaums, Dr. and Mrs. Dorenbaum [35:00]. And they really, for whatever reason, they became very fond of me, and I became like a project in their life [laughter]. First of all, I had plastic surgery on my arm to eliminate the number. “You’re not going to college,” Dr. Dorenbaum, “with that number—everybody asking you. You don’t owe anybody anything.” So, you know, it kind of was such a mixed bag.

SCHECHTER: What did you like about Pembroke College, and what did you study? What did you think of the education?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, first of all, I’m always amazed that somehow I conquered English, which was a foreign language to me. Like from the Dorenbaums as individuals opened their house—I even remember Nora, she was the housekeeper.

She tried to figure out what I like and bring it to the dormitory for everybody. So everybody in college started to like me because I had all kinds of goodies [laughter]. And it's kind of a complex picture... I don't deserve so much attention. Just that—and yet appreciating it.

SCHECHTER: The contrast seems so huge for me. For you, what was it like to, for example, live in the dorm? And how did you begin to get to know your classmates?

SCHORR GERMAIN: I still remember, I lived in Metcalf Hall and then Andrews Hall. I still had friends that I made in the dormitory till recent times. Virginia Martin, Nancy McBride. Virginia Martin was my friend and my children's friend, you know. Pat McBride—I didn't know how to type, so she typed all my papers [laughter]. And we were friends till recently here in the United States. It's like... Virginia Martin, you know, she not only was a friend to me, but she was a friend to my children. At one point I had difficulties in marriage, she just came with a station wagon and said, "I'm going to take the kids with me, and when you are ready to come and pick them up, call me." [laughter]

SCHECHTER: Those are special friends. I have someone who helped me at a point in my life like that. That's wonderful. Well what did you think of the education? Were there special professors who helped you achieve, go on to achieve your educational goals? You went on to become a professor.

SCHORR GERMAIN: Yeah, there was a Professor Armstrong in Brown who really kind of didn't allow me to drown, you know. Professor Armstrong was in History and International Relations. And they didn't have children, the Armstrongs [40:00]. But they had tea Sunday afternoon, and Professor Armstrong and his wife started to come and pick me up for the tea. And then there was in Metcalf Hall there was another professor who lived not far from my dormitory, and his wife tried to help me by saying, "Look here, the dormitories are crowded. On a weekend, you come. Bring the books. You have the second floor, you can just do what you want." There was a lot of good will that I appreciate, and I have been in touch with them, and my kids were in touch with them. So it meant easier adjustment, just easier.

SCHECHTER: Given all that you experienced with the Holocaust and then the drive to leave Germany, sometimes it must have felt like the students at Pembroke who hadn't had this life experience, you must have felt sometimes that they were naïve or inexperienced? Did you ever feel—I shouldn't presume. Did you ever feel that way?

SCHORR GERMAIN: I really didn't. There was a distance between, you mean, my life and their life. No, I never really felt it. I think for better or for worse, you don't question when something goes well [laughter].

SCHECHTER: Uh huh.

SCHORR GERMAIN: I just didn't, you know. I felt it goes well, let it be well.

SCHECHTER: I saw that you wrote an article about the UN for the Pembroke Record, for the newspaper at school. Were you involved in a lot of International Relations and UN activities?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Well my major at Brown as International Relations, and I had an internship where Brown sent me to the United Nations. I spent two summers in the United Nations working on the Security Council.

SCHECHTER: Wow. What did you do in that internship? What kind of work was that?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, some was translating because I had Russian and I had German. Some was translating, some was just, you know, just work that helped me with my International Relations studies. And there was also, there was a lot of support. When I said Professor Armstrong... you know... tried United Nations and other things... But also there was Professor Chase, a lot of the teachers at Brown were very supportive. It wasn't just all teas [laughter]. Yeah, it wasn't all teas.

SCHECHTER: Right. What did you think about— You and I both came to Pembroke at a time when it was the women's area within a larger university. What did you think of the relationships between the women at Pembroke and the men at Brown and the education of both?

SCHORR GERMAIN: To be honest, I didn't think [laughter]. I'll be honest with you. The gender issue, I just didn't even think [laughter]. But, but—

SCHECHTER: Are there other things about... Go ahead—

SCHORR GERMAIN: But there was also a great helpfulness. Professor Brown, he was in Russian [45:00]. He was kind of encouraging me. There was the Cold War at that time. He was encouraging me to continue more with Russian. And I had Polish, you know. Just strengthen those languages and you should be able to get into Russian Research Center in Harvard. And here also was a wonderful connection that was made from within the professors of Brown. I lived in a dormitory, and there was a Sharon Brown, who was a professor of Victorian Literature, but you know he really kind of... I remember one time, he just came to class and he said, "Let's take a walk." And we took a walk, and he said, "Rita. I would like to take you to Boston, to Cambridge. My sister is a dean of Radcliffe. Let's see what she can do for you." And so we went to Cambridge and to Boston. I met Mrs. Cronkhite, and she said, "I can guarantee you a good fellowship, but I am concerned about room and board. But I have done some legwork, and I have good friends—Professor and Mrs. Green. Professor Green is the chairman of the Classics Department. They live on 60 Shepard Street," [laughter] I still remember that. "We're going to take a walk and see what they can offer us. Their daughter just left for a Washington job, and we know

that they have an empty apartment.” So, you would know, in Cambridge we walked on Garden Street and talked. And then we went and rang the bell, and Mrs. Green said, “I have the tea ready.” You know, this English tea with the silver and everything. And she said, “Rita, I want you to come with me upstairs. My daughter just left, so I will show you what is available.” So there was like an apartment with a separate entrance from the kitchen—and there was a bedroom, a living room, and a study. And she said, “You can have that apartment here for as long as you go to Radcliffe. For fifteen dollars a month.” [laughter] “How does it sound to you?” I said, “Very good” [laughter]. And I ended up there for four years.

SCHECHTER: Have you ever gone back to class reunions? You said you kept up with a number of your good friends from Pembroke. Did you ever go back to the campus?

SCHORR GERMAIN: You know... 60 Shepard Street was always kind of symbolic. The Professor and Mrs. Green became [godparents] for my kids and my grandkids, and they were kind of part of a family.

SCHECHTER: What have you thought about the growth of the university and the various things you have watched it do over these last forty, fifty, sixty years?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, I think, you know, the country has changed too. I don’t know [laughter].

SCHECHTER: Well tell me then about getting your advanced degree, and you met your husband and entered a whole new part of life as a working mother with two children. Tell us about that. **[50:00]**

SCHORR GERMAIN: We were just celebrating fifty years of marriage. And at first, there were difficulties. I’ll be honest. Because of backgrounds and attitudes. He was a New England boy, you know, [pause] and it was a little difficult.

SCHECHTER: And you made your first home in the Midwest? In Iowa, is that correct?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Grinnell College, we both got jobs there. And I said, “Oh no, here I go to the American midwest. It will be horrible.” They were the most open, liberal people you can imagine. And that kind of really tamed me [laughter]. That, you see, you imagine, and here it was open-minded. The dean—Dean Stauss—was great. The president of the college was great. I got all the courses I wanted and my husband too, he was in American Literature. And the people were so liberal and open-minded. I just couldn’t believe it.

SCHECHTER: And what did you think of your students as you taught them over the years? What about your students, what did you see in your students and see in changes in students as you taught at Grinnell?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Again, when we went to Grinnell I had all these ideas, “Oh God, they will treat me like the Mata Hari,” with big eyes and dark hair [laughter]. They were the most wonderful, you know. The dean was wonderful. The president, President Bowen, was wonderful. It was a wonderful experience.

SCHECHTER: How long did you teach there?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Five years. Both of us.

SCHECHTER: And then where did you go from there?

SCHORR GERMAIN: We came back because my husband’s family was here, and his father was failing, you know. So Franklin & Marshall, we both got jobs in Franklin & Marshall. And I actually switched then to a state university, Millersville. Yeah, I went to Millersville because I felt it was so much politics in one college for both of us. So it did work okay. And I taught at Millersville, and he taught at Franklin & Marshall. And as it was, he was American Literature, I was European History, and again it was a very good experience. Very good experience.

SCHECHTER: And what did you think of your students and your colleagues at Millersville? It was a good experience in what way?

SCHORR GERMAIN: It was a very good experience because Millersville then started to dream about taking on some liberal arts courses, which we both wanted to bring. And so they were very cooperative with changing the schedules, and it was really kind of like being part of remaking a state university into a liberal arts college.

SCHECHTER: Interesting.

SCHORR GERMAIN: And it was very successful, you know. And we enjoyed the challenge.

SCHECHTER: And as you raised two daughters, what advice did you give to them? What advice did you give to your daughters as you raised them to be working mothers as well?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Okay, first of all, I should have brought pictures. They’re as different as two can be, you know [55:00]. And Emily, my older daughter, she [laughter] was about three years old when she was going to preschool, a Montessori preschool, and the teacher, “What do you want to be?” And she said, “Oh, you don’t have to ask me. Of course I want to be a doctor.” “Oh, what are you going to be a doctor in?” “Oh, to eliminate cancer!” So the teacher was all excited, “You’ve got such a nice daughter! She’s going to eliminate cancer!” I said, “Slow down, ask her *what* cancer.” She thought the teacher put her on connection so they could hear

what—oh don't you know it, to destroy anti-Semitism [laughter]. Just a little job [laughter].

SCHECHTER: Right.

SCHORR GERMAIN: So we had a good laugh, but that was her idea of cancer. And she did become a doctor.

SCHECHTER: It is a cancer.

SCHORR GERMAIN: Yeah, and it is a cancer. But she is a doctor. She's a specialist in hormones, basically. And she is in charge of the Krieger Institute here in Johns Hopkins. And she married a very nice boy—a Korean boy, not a Jewish boy [laughter], who's in genetics and has his own lab. And just now he's working on a "Mighty Mouse" [laughter] protein. But he's very bright, and very dedicated, and they're a good couple together. Even though he's not Jewish [laughter].

SCHECHTER: And your other daughter?

SCHORR GERMAIN: My other daughter, Mirah, she's completely different. She couldn't tolerate Emily in her medicine and her single-mindedness. She just wanted always her bike and the countryside. And when I would say, "Mirah, what do you see in the countryside?" "Mom, don't you see! That's God! Earth is God!" And she still is on her bike, all going through the countryside, worshipping her God [laughter]. They are different, and yet very exciting in different ways.

SCHECHTER: As you reflect back on the two years, only two years, that it took you to graduate from Brown University—from Pembroke—what is now most important to you, thinking back to the university?

SCHORR GERMAIN: [pause] That really made me think [laughter]. [long pause] I really don't know [laughter].

SCHECHTER: If I say "Pembroke" and "Brown University," is there something that immediately comes to your mind?

SCHORR GERMAIN: How much I owe it to them.

SCHECHTER: I see.

SCHORR GERMAIN: How much I owe it to them.

SCHECHTER: What advice would you give to a young woman who is entering Pembroke today?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Put all you can to be the best you can. And contribute the best way you can. [60:00]

SCHECHTER: And with those values of being all you can and contributing all you can, those are powerful values. How do you see the long life you've had in terms of those values, Rita?

SCHORR GERMAIN: I think that what I—Oh, I can't imagine my life without Brown. If that makes sense.

SCHECHTER: Yeah. It does, of course I can't experience what you have experienced. So Brown is kind of a re-starting point to build a life of service. You've built quite a life of service. What were some of the highlights for you in addition to your teaching in that life of service?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Well it really—I don't know whether I just sat down and chiseled it out, but I felt like Brown gave me something to build on—rebuild a life. And for that I am ever thankful.

SCHECHTER: I've read the brief chapter that you wrote about your Bat Mitzvah. Would you like to leave something in the archive about that and the importance of that?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, I don't remember what I wrote, but I hope what came through is that even so, I lost my whole family and that I can never really repair... [long pause] When I went from Brown to Harvard and met Dean Cronkhite, she brought me to Professor and Mrs. Green, and said, "Here, perhaps we could negotiate a home—room and board." And it did work. I lived there for five years. And, you know, Mrs. Cronkhite always was a support system. She was the dean of Radcliffe. And I knew I could always go into the office and say, "what can be done?" Whether it was my apartment or that. And I had a friend—and that meant a lot. You know, Mrs. Cronkhite and living in Cambridge meant a lot...

SCHECHTER: I noticed that you talk with groups of people occasionally about the importance of remembering the lost despite how painful that must be. When you do that, what do you hope people walk away from hearing you? What do you hope they take away from when you speak with them?

SCHORR GERMAIN: You mean, kind of the posttraumatic stress?

SCHECHTER: That, or the question of rebuilding a life, or values—I don't want to put words in your mouth. I wondered what you hope people will carry away. [65:00]

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh—never to give up. Even if it hurts. Even if you know it's a posttraumatic stress that can be wiped off. Feel more connected because you did it

[for] your parents and the heritage of education [and] family that I followed, and to see my kids carry on that tradition. That Benjamin [laughter] and Emily and—that's her husband, he's Korean—

SCHECHTER: Yes. We have seen some very dramatic changes in the world in these past two, three, five years. And your grandchildren are growing up and approaching college if not in college. You have this background in—

SCHORR GERMAIN: [laughter] Yeah. Benjamin, he's at Harvard now. And I said, "What are you going to major [in]?" He said, "Oh...Physics and Mathematics." I said, "Why that?" He said, "Because that created the world!" [laughter]

SCHECHTER: When you see these dramatic changes, you come from a professional International Relations background. You have taught that and have taught history. What do you tell your children about the world they will live in.

SCHORR GERMAIN: You know, to be very honest, I listen more to what they have to tell me, I think. You know I really enjoy when Benjamin tells me that Physics and Mathematics are how the world was created. And I like them—I like the kids and their minds. And their attitudes. I think they have to be honest to other kids. Like I look at Benjamin, and I think, "Ah, he has so much to offer." You know, and he has such an open mind and open eyes [laughter]. You can kind of tell, you know—that's Benjamin.

[shows picture]

SCHECHTER: Yes, you can tell from that picture!

SCHORR GERMAIN: And when he was a little boy... Those were kind of part of his Korean background, you know. And he heard us—when he was a little boy, those are paintings he did. And I have faith in them.

SCHECHTER: I've asked you a number of questions, but I never know whether someone I'm interviewing feels that I have covered everything that they wanted to communicate to the students and the researchers who will be reading this. What have I missed? What would you like to talk about that we have not covered, Rita?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, you know, I can't really draw for you the picture of loss and pain that I have experienced. [70:00] And yet, I also hope that I could somehow portray the survival and the commitment I had—and have—to rebuild a life of meaning and make a contribution rather than just a loss. Does that make sense?

SCHECHTER: It does make sense, yes indeed. Do you feel we've covered everything that you would like to cover?

SCHORR GERMAIN: Oh, that's yours! [laughter]

SCHECHTER: No, really, it's yours—it your story.

SCHORR GERMAIN: Thank you for listening. [laughter]

[End of interview]