IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Karpf
Forename:	Natalia
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	27 February 1911
Interviewee POB:	Cracow, Poland

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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 30

NAME: NATALIA KARPF

DATE: 30 JULY 2003

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minutes 48 seconds

AG: First of all, Natalia, I would like to thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with me and if I could perhaps just start by asking you please what was your maiden name when you were born?

NK: Weissman. My parents.

AG: And where were you born?

NK: In Krakow, it was still Austria, and it changed in 1920 to Poland.

AG: And when were you born?

NK: I was born on the 27th of February 1911.

AG: What sort of people were your parents, what sort of family did you come from?

NK: My family background was, my mother was from Benczyn, which was, I would say, of Russian influence more and in school also, and my father was from another Polish place, a small place, Jacków, and I don't know where they went to school, I don't remember anything of that. I know only that when I was in my teens and I came home, my mother was reading Pushkin, in Russian, and she was also learning English and read English books and she spoke perfectly German and so did my father. My father was an industrialist. He had factories.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 32 seconds

And we had in Germany twelve houses, which were all lost, and I don't know even where they were and there is no one alive who can tell me.

AG: And what did he manufacture?

NK: Mostly wool things and they were sold to big, big stores.

AG: Clothes?

NK: Yes. And he was also a big businessman, very, very wealthy, and we lived in our own house, where we had a big apartment. I mean, in the twenties, to live in a five-room apartment was a luxury. And we always had two people working for us, a cook and a maid. But my mother's father, my maternal grandfather, had a wonderful voice and all his three children were highly musical, and if he had been trained, my grandfather, he would have a voice like Caruso. And, thanks to him, I studied in Berlin afterwards with the greatest teachers, like Arthur Schnabel - George Bertram, Arthur Schnabel and Steuermann, who came from Vienna to Poland also.

AG: Before we get on to your studies-.

NK: I was four and a half when my parents had a piano left by one of the tenants, who lived in the house and evacuated during the First World War for Austria, for Vienna. My parents didn't leave; they had a comfortable home in Krakow, although there was terrible anti-Semitism always. And they left the piano when they went to Vienna, a grand. Because we had big rooms and there was somewhere to put the piano. And so I started when I was four, I started everything what I had and straight away with both hands, I found my own harmonies to play, and I was whistling, and I was singing, and I put a tambourine on my leg. I remember it. Now, one day, when I was four and a half, it was July, I remember it exactly. The bell rang and a lady came in with very thick glasses and said to my mother, 'I heard you have a child prodigy, who plays everything by ear. Would you allow me to teach her?' And my mother said, 'Yes, by all means'. And I was running without shoes, it was very hot, and she said, 'Would you like to have lessons?' And I looked at her, she seemed to me a bit funny. I thought she was old, but she wasn't, and I will tell you later the whole story. I said, 'Yes, OK'. So she started coming to us, teaching me. And she taught me for many years, and she wanted me also to perform, which I didn't like very much. But still, when I was nine, a very well-known singer came to us. His name was Mann. He was a tenor, a wonderful voice, and he asked my mother whether she would allow me to share two concerts, which he was going to have in two towns in Poland, in Częstochowa and in Sosnowiec, whether I could share, because for him to sing for two hours, it would be too much, and if I fill half the programme-. And they asked me and I said yes.

Tape 1: 7 minutes 46 seconds

AG: How old were you then?

NK: Nine. They were my first two concerts in my life.

AG: In 1920?

NK: Yes. But it was soon after the war and the trains didn't function yet. I had to go in a coach train. But it was near my grandparents. And I was given for that a white dress, white socks and shoes and a big white bow here in my hair. But I went off in a jumper, a navy jumper, with a darn even on my elbow. And when the evening came, and I had to go to the next place with this Ignazio Mann, and my grandfather said, 'You go with him', because we had to go there earlier to see the hall and to have a rehearsal, 'and I come with a suitcase for you, with your dress and everything'. Now, we were waiting, and the concert was going to

start, and my grandfather hadn't arrived yet with the dress. So I was very distressed and the manager of the theatre where we had to perform, it was a big theatre with a big podium and so on, and he said, 'Look, it doesn't matter what you wear, it only matters what you play'. But I said, 'Haven't you got anything to give me, a dress?' He said, 'I've got a daughter of fourteen, and that will be too big for you. It doesn't matter, start the concert'. When we started the concert, after one piece, I played some Mozart Sonatas, some Beethoven, everything from memory of course, my grandfather arrived. So I looked like Eileen Joyce, who changed her dresses between the items.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 12 seconds

NK: I changed my jumper into this white dress and I had an enthusiastic audience, who were wonderful, how they received me. Anyhow, it was a very successful concert. From there, we went to the other place, and Mr. Ignazio Mann got a hoarse voice and couldn't sing, only two pieces or something, and I had to fill the whole evening. These were my two first concerts.

AG: Was the first one at Częstochowa?

NK: Yes.

AG: And then you went onto Sosnowiec? Could I ask you just one or two questions to fill in some background?

NK: Yes.

AG: First of all, what was actually your father's name?

NK: Isidor Weissman.

AG: And how do you spell Weissman?

NK: W-E-I-doubleS-A-N.

AG: And what sort of man was he? You said he was a successful industrialist, what was he like as a father?

NK: He was absolutely besotted with me because I was the oldest. They had another daughter but she died when I was eleven and she was fifteen. And she wasn't too well, she had diabetes, and she was in a German school, a boarding school. But he was so proud of me, completely besotted. And my mother had a wonderful voice too, and-.

AG: What was your mother's full name?

NK: Eva Friedman. And she had a brother and a sister, who were also very musical, but they were not married. She was a spinster, her sister; they were still young before the war. And the brother was studying dentistry in Berlin, he was a technical part of the dentistry, you know, he used to make all these dentures and other things.

AG: How did your mother spend the days?

NK: My mother was involved in many charities. When she died, aged 47 - I was 19 - all the charities were crying for her because she used to deliver for holidays: to one, for Easter, all the matzes, for another the whole coal for the winter, and also the organisations everywhere, she was also on the board of some charities and she did a lot. And then she studied and she had two more children, apart from me, my sister and my brother. My sister was five years younger, my brother was seven years younger than I.

AG: What were their names?

Tape 1: 13 minutes 31 seconds

NK: My brother's was Nathan, although I was Natalia, because I was the third daughter, so they thought that the - when I was born, I was the second daughter - and my grandfather, my father's father, died four weeks before my birth. So, his name was Nathan, so they thought they wouldn't have a son, so they gave me Natalia. But then, the fourth child was a boy, so they gave him the name Nathan. And my sister was Helen, Helena.

AG: And you say your mother died when you were 19, so 1930?

NK: Yes, just.

AG: So the charities she was involved in, were these exclusively Jewish charities?

NK: Yes, they were only Jewish.

AG: Was your household strictly Jewish?

NK: Yes, we were Kosher, strictly Jewish. We were Kosher, but when we went on holidays my parents used to eat in various places. But during my studies in Berlin I never ate anything but Kosher because my grandparents were alive. My grandfather, he wouldn't eat at my place if I wasn't, so I kept Kosher. Even after my mother died, I had it all Kosher. Why I am laughing, because my mother, when we were small, thought that ham is very healthy for children, so sometimes she bought some ham and she had it in the paper, and she gave us in secret a piece of ham.

AG: Did you attend synagogue regularly?

NK: No. My parents were regulars but I wasn't. In Poland, the young children just came to visit their parents, but they didn't attend the synagogue.

AG: You said a bit earlier that there was a lot of anti-Semitism in Krakow.

NK: Yes. I had to go to school when I was five to learn to write or read and no school would accept me because the compulsory age was at that time seven, so the only school which accepted me was the 'Evangelische Schule', which was the German school.

AG: But that's Protestant, not Catholic.

NK: No, that wasn't Catholic but it was still- one could hear 'Jude', 'Jude', 'Jude'.

AG: But they would have taught mainly in German there?

NK: Yes, a lot, mostly German. That's why my second language was German.

AG: Presumably you spoke Polish?

NK: Yes.

AG: Did any of your relatives speak Yiddish at all?

NK: Yes, my grandfather spoke Yiddish, to my parents, and I heard it all the time, yes, but my parents spoke German between themselves, and that's how it was.

AG: German, not Polish?

NK: Polish and German.

Tape 1: 17 minutes 41 seconds

AG: Tell me a little bit more about this 'Evangelische Schule' that you went to.

NK: I remember the director's name even. His name was Buchek. It wasn't a German name, I don't know, maybe he was of Czech origin or something, but I remember him, how he looked and so on. But quite a lot one could hear against the Jews and I felt not comfortable. That's why, after I finished primary school at eleven, I went to the Hebrew Gymnasium. My parents didn't want to send me anymore to the Polish school. And the Hebrew Gymnasium was close to where I lived.

AG: I didn't ask you where you actually lived in Krakow. Do you remember the address, can you tell me the address where you lived?

NK: Funny enough, my youngest grandson went to Poland and photographed even - but I don't know where I put it - the house where we lived. And it was a very famous, a very, not a long street, in two parts. Because, on one side of the road, this Berek Joselewicz, because he was a famous man, this Berek Joselewicz, I don't remember why, but they named the street after him, and, on this part of the street where we lived, there were only three houses and a factory, and at the end there was a viaduct where the trains were passing, you know. And then it was the main road and another part of the same road, which wasn't also long, it wasn't a long bit. But it wasn't far from the Hebrew Gymnasium and I could easily walk there.

AG: Had you been the only Jew in this class where you went to in this first school or were there other Jews there?

NK: No, no, there were other Jews because I had a few friends there. But they are all dead. I am the survivor, the oldest.

AG: What do you remember of Krakow, in your childhood, what was it like? How do you remember it?

NK: It was a lovely place, all the greatest pianists, artists, used to come. It was such a cultural place. It had 250.000 inhabitants and out of this were 65.000 Jews and a lot of intelligentsia, a lot of artists and lawyers, doctors, university professors. Yes. Before Hitler came, there were already swastikas on Jewish shops, and it was a Numerus Clausus, no Jews could easily get to study medicine or engineering,

AG: That is a quota, isn't it, Numerus Clausus?

NK: And those Jews that did go to university had to sit on a different side from the others. That's why I-. Although it changed in Poland and I have a few Polish friends, and here in the house there are a few Polish carers, and they are very decent, but I don't trust them. I have suffered too much from the Poles. That's why I went there [points to her arm], because they delivered me, the Poles.

AG: We'll come onto that.

NK: I tell you later, yes.

Tape 1: 22 minutes 26 seconds

AG: But you felt this already as a young person?

NK: Yes.

AG: So it wasn't just in the school.

NK: Absolutely. And we even, we were talking about it, to leave Poland and to move to Germany, to Berlin, because we had such a lot of friends there, you know. I could afford to pay for Arthur Schnabel for a lesson.

[Interruption]

Tape 1: 23 minutes 2 seconds

AG: Could you tell me, after the break, the telephone, you were just talking about Polish anti-Semitism?

NK: Ya. I said we were considering moving. But then we had this factory there, and the children at school, so my parents decided, 'Ah, let's stay here'. And then, when Hitler came, my father didn't believe that something would happen.

AG: What was their view of Germany?

NK: Well, they were very happy in Germany. And I was studying there for so many years. And I gave concerts as Natalia Weissman, and I never, never came with anything against the Jews. A lot of my friends were 'Mischehen', married, you know, Jews with non-Jews. And I never experienced anything. Never. Not like in Poland. Just before Hitler.

Tape 1: 24 minutes 11 seconds

AG: Going back to you, you went, I think you said at eleven, to the Hebrew Gymnasium. Could you tell me about the Hebrew Gymnasium?

NK: Well, it was a very high standard, yes. We had the best teachers and the Polish teachers were higher standard than in the Polish schools even.

AG: And did they teach you in Polish?

NK: Yes, there was Doctor Julius Feldhorn, who was a writer, and a he was a really high class teacher and lecturer. Actually his wife was teaching me English. She translated The Forsyte Saga into Polish.

AG: What were your favourite subjects, besides music of course? What were you good at at school?

NK: I was good at art always, so when I was in the primary school the teacher used to leave me in class sometimes and go out, that I should continue with knitting, with drawing. Various things with my hands, I was always good. But actually, here, I knitted myself about six suits and jumpers, and everybody admired them, I'm very good in it. But, apart from that, in sport, I started playing tennis in Berlin but my hand started to - I didn't feel very well with my hand - it was hurting me and I was trembling, so I gave it up. Skiing and swimming, I was always a coward, so I can swim where I can stand, and when I go skiing, and I was on top of a mountain and somebody was at the other end, I was screaming, 'Out of my way', because I knew that I would land somewhere else, so I gave it up.

AG: Did you make friends at school? Did you have friends?

NK: Yes, I had friends, very good friends at school, and in the German school, as I told you, I had a few good friends, Jewish friends. And I had also in the Hebrew Gymnasium friends, but they are all now dead, most of them.

[Interruption]

AG: Just continuing, you were talking about your friends when you were at school. Obviously, your friends in the Hebrew Gymnasium would have been Jewish, but did you and your family mix with non-Jews?

NK: No. No. Just one or two, who were associated with my father's business, but otherwise no.

AG: What sort of people did your parents mix with?

NK: My parents mixed with people who were intelligent, who had businesses, who had professions.

AG: Were your parents interested in politics at all?

NK: No, not in politics.

Tape 1: 28 minutes 29 seconds

AG: Did they have views on say the question of Palestine? Were they Zionists?

NK: Oh yes, always. And my brother, my youngest, I can't get over it, I said goodbye to him when he was twenty and I have never seen him again. And he was dreaming of going to Palestine. But, when my mother died, and my father was in Berlin, and I was alone with - they were my children, I brought them up, fourteen and twelve. I came back, and my brother was crying, he was twelve when my mother was buried in Berlin, in Weissensee, after an operation, which cost us a fortune, but they made her, poisoned her, uremia. He was crying, he said, 'Yesterday I had a mother and today I haven't got a mother'. I said, 'I'll be your mother'.

Tape 1: 29 minutes 50 seconds

Yes. And my father married another woman in Germany after one year. He was 49, my mother was 47 when she died, he was 49, so he was a young man. But it didn't last and I was glad it didn't last because I couldn't stand her.

AG: Was she German?

NK: German-Jewish. She thought she was going to marry a rich man, so that's why she was very keen on him.

AG: I'd like you to go back to your musical training. You mentioned a lady who came and asked is she could teach you. You didn't actually tell us her name, the lady with the big spectacles, what was her name?

NK: Yes. Gisela Riese. She was from a very nice family, not from Krakow, they were from Czarnów. Her brother was a solicitor and her father was also.

Tape 1: 31 minutes 4 seconds

NK: And she was a pupil of Severin Eisenberger, who was a famous pianist, but living in Vienna. And, when I was nine, he came to Krakow, and she introduced him to me, and he said to me, 'I will give you now a Beethoven Sonata, which you have never played before, can you read it?' And I played it straight away, my sight reading of music was always incredible, and it is still. When I see a piece, anything which is printed, I can play it straight away. And nobody could understand it, I myself couldn't understand it, how it comes. So he said, I remember how he patted me, he said, 'Das ist meine Schülerin, die kommt zu mir nach Wien', 'This is my pupil and she is coming to me to Vienna'. But I never wanted to go to Vienna.

AG: No?

NK: No. And we couldn't because we had all our fortune in Berlin, so why should I go to Vienna? And in Berlin, where the greatest teachers were. I remember when Schnabel accepted me, and I was 16 years old, 17 years old, he accepted me. I sent a telegram home: 'Accepted by Schnabel'. It was such an event. And, when I was 18, I played with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, in the Beethoven Saal, a Chopin Concerto.

AG: And who conducted?

NK: Professor Heinz Bongartz, who was after the war the conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra. There is a picture of it, where I played the Tchaikovsky Concerto.

Tape 1: 33 minutes 23 seconds

AG: And did you stay, this is just to fill in the gaps, so did you stay with this lady-?

NK: I stayed with this lady until I was eleven and, at eleven, I-. Rubinstein's brother-in-law, Arthur Rubinstein's, was a very well-known pianist and professor in the Krakow Conservatoire.

AG: What was his name?

NK: His name was, let me see now, because I'm so...with all these names. Waboinsky, Victor Waboinsky. His wife was the sister of Mrs. Rubinstein, they were brothers-in-law. So I went to him, and I. Because, later on, he was also the teacher of my first husband, who was also a pianist and a lawyer, and whom I married when I was 22. But Waboinsky left after a year or two, he went to Kansas City with his children and his wife, and I was taught by my first husband's friend, who was also his pupil.

AG: And what was his name, the teacher?

NK Ritterman.

AG: And then you went to Berlin. Did you have to go there for an interview to be accepted by Schnabel?

NK: Yes, of course, I had to be prepared. And I was prepared for this by Maria Zweig, who was Zweig's cousin, first cousin. She lived here after the war. She's probably dead. She introduced me to Schnabel.

AG: Can you remember what it was like going to Berlin for this test?

NK: Of course I can remember.

AG: Had you been to Berlin before?

NK: Not to Berlin. I was in Vienna with my parents. Because we travelled every year for two months in summer, my parents and three children, having such a fortune, you know? Every year. So I wasn't-. That was my first visit, with my father, afterwards my father used to come every four weeks.

AG: This was 1929?

NK: 1926.

AG: So you went, oh yes.

NK: ’26, end of ’26.
AG: Can you describe what happened when you went to Berlin?

NK: Now, we had a man who was administrator of all our houses, and they put me up in a - what was it called? I can’t remember but I know the woman, who was in charge of it, and she didn’t give us to eat. That was a ‘Mädchenschule’, because I was so young.

Tape 1: 37 minutes 16 seconds

NK: That was the end of 16, I was 16 years old, and I couldn’t stay on my own anywhere. Although there was this Hugo Levine, who was this administrator, who took care of me, but they put me up in this ‘Mädchenschule’, where I sent to my parents the piece of meat she gave me, in an envelope. It was so dry it was so horrible. I said, ‘That is where you put me up. I haven’t got anything to eat here’. And it cost a lot of money and there were many girls from all over the world. But, afterwards, my father came and they changed it and they put me up with a teacher, a Jewish family, not far from that family of Mr. Levine, so that he could have, you know-.

AG: What part of Berlin was that?

NK: What part? In Sybelstrasse, Sybelstrasse sechzig. That was near Kurfürstendam, very near. They hired a piano for me, a grand piano, and I could practise many hours, because in the same house was a very famous family Spivakovsky, with a violinist and pianist. They made more noise than I did.

Tape 1: 39 minutes 6 seconds

[Interruption]

AG: Continuing after the microphone was put back in its little holder. What happened when you went for your examination, or whatever it was, to be interviewed, to be accepted as a pupil by Arthur Schnabel?

NK: Well, I had to play a piece, and I don’t remember what he asked me, a few questions, and I had to play another piece, and he gave me some music and I had to read it and he said, ‘OK’.

AG: Where was this? Was this some kind of institution?

NK: No, no, private lessons, for which I paid 100 Mark for an hour. Can you imagine how much money that was? It was at that time 20 pounds, because it was 5 Marks to a pound, I think. In 1920-something, it was ’27, ’28.

AG: That’s a lot of money in those days, in the ’20s.

NK: Yes, and my parents didn’t mind, and it cost them a lot of money, and the place where I was living with some food and looking after me, and teaching me. I had lessons, because I finished school when I was very young, so I had to learn with somebody, and he gave me lessons, the teacher. That was a teacher, a professional teacher. And that was all paid privately.

AG: Did you get out into Berlin at all?
NK: Yes. We had some relatives. My father had his first cousin, who lived in Charlottenburg, in Kurfürstendam, in a big place, and I made also friends. And I found this friend, after the war, in Paris, it's a funny thing happened. I didn't know she survived. Do you know Berlin?

AG: Yes.

NK: But you didn't come from Berlin?

Tape 1: 41 minutes 30 seconds

AG: No, but I know it. Were you continuing to give concerts? I mean, you gave your first concert at the age of nine.

NK: When we went on holiday to Swinemünde, when I was 11, there was a competition for pianists. So I entered the competition and I got the second prize. And the first prize was an old pianist. And I got the second prize. So that was funny. But no, with this teacher, this Gisela Riese, she wanted me to perform when I was 8, 9, and no, I didn't want, until this singer came and asked me to play at this concert, a proper concert, but not a pupils' concert. And so I finished with her. But, when I survived the war, no, when I came back, because she didn't survive, when I came back from my studies, I heard that she is living not far away from me and she is married, so I went to visit her. And her name was Karp. She married a chemist, whose name was Karp. When I met my second husband, his first question, because I was a pianist - I knew my second husband only for five days when we got married, within six weeks, because he was in Warsaw and I was in Krakow – so when I met him, he said, 'Did you know Gisela Riese?' I said, 'She was my first piano teacher for six years'. So he said, 'And she was my sister-in-law'. What a coincidence! And this poor woman, with his brother, were shot in the same camp where I was brought to be shot.

Tape 1: 43 minutes 49 seconds

NK: In Płaszów. So that is the end of this story. But I went see her and she was delighted to see me and hear about my successes, because I had a few concerts. When we were in summer holidays, every year my parents used to go to Bad Nauheim, because my father, he thought that he's got heart trouble. It wasn't true, he was a very healthy man. But they went for a cure to Bad Nauheim, and then for 'Nachkur' somewhere else, for three weeks, four weeks, Belgium or Harzburg, or here or there, or Swinemünde or Warnemünde, and other places. Anyhow, in one place, where was it? What was the clue about it? Because now I started thinking about something else, so I don't know why I came back to this, I must recall what connection did I start about this.

AG: I originally asked you about giving concerts.

NK: Yes, now I know. My brother was highly musical and he dreamt of playing the cello or so, and I remember when he was five, and he used to find the Liszt Consolation just to recognise the music printed, and brought it to me and said, 'Play it to me, please'. So, after the war, the first thing I bought was the Liszt Consolation, so that I can play it. In Bad Nauheim, there was Kurmusik, every day there was an orchestra that played for all the guests, and my brother used to stand there every day and listen to the music. One day, the conductor noticed this little boy of twelve, because it was - twelve or eleven – no, nine, or ten - because

when he was twelve, my mother died already, he must have been eleven because that was a year before she died. And he said, 'What are you doing here every day?' He said, 'I love music'. So he said, 'And where are your parents?' And he said, 'My sister is a pianist, and my sister is a pupil of Schnabel'. And he said, 'Ask your sister to come here'. And that was-. He was seven years younger, and I was seventeen, or sixteen and a half. So I came and he met me and he asked me, 'Why don't you come here next year and play with me at the concert? I said, 'Fine!' And that was Heinz Bongartz, Professor Heinz Bongartz, who after the war was the General Music Director of the Dresden Philharmonic, who knew me then. So I came the next year and I played the Liszt Hungarian Fantasy with the orchestra, enormous success, and he engaged me to come to - where was this other concert in Germany? Where he was also conducting always. Meiningen. In Meiningen.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 19 seconds

NK: You see everything comes back to me. Touch wood, my memory is so. I have all my numbers in my head, the telephone numbers and so on, and if you want to remember something from years ago, I can do it.

AG: When you first met this Professor Bongartz, it was in Bad Nauheim?

NK: Yes. So I played in Bad Nauheim, and then a few months later a Chopin Concerto in Meiningen. And there were my big concerts. And then, he came to conduct the concert in the Beethoven Saal, on 14th of December '29, in Berlin, and there were three pianists, an American, Miriam Allan, who played the Tchaikovsky; Bärbel André, who was Rathenhau's 'Nichte'.

AG: Walther Rathenau?

NK: Yes, my very close friend, played the Mozart, and I played the Chopin. 'Drei Pianisten Abend.' And, after the concert, we were all invited to the Andrés, who had a palace in Tiergarten, opposite the alte Frau Rathenau, where she had a palace. And we were taken there and it was an unforgettable evening.

Tape 1: 49 minutes 53 seconds

AG: Tell me a little bit about Arthur Schnabel, what was he like?

NK: He was very strict, he was very, I would say cool person. But one trusted him, you know, because he was such a great artist. And what else we did, we were phoned by his secretary to come to other pupils' lessons, to listen, which was a very useful, wonderful experience. At the same time was Franz Osborn.

AG: He came here.

NK: Yes, I know, I knew his wife as well. I knew Franz and his wife. Who else was there? William Glock was before, yes, because he was older, and he was before his pupil. Because when I broadcast and I played with my trio, I had a letter from William Glock: 'When I heard you playing the Beethoven Three', or something, 'I knew you were a pupil of Schnabel, I recognised it'. That's what he wrote to me. I had quite a long career and a wonderful career but I was never a pianist, an artist, who is pushing, because if I was like this, I would have had

a much bigger career, and been God knows where, internationally and so on. But after all what I have been through during the war, I was beaten by Gestapo once so terribly that my whole body was as black as you have this stand, and I had to lie on my tummy for three weeks, I couldn't move. When my sister saw, and my friends, afterwards, they said, 'Those hands that could do to a young woman this' - I was in my twenties – 'should rot'.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 37 seconds

NK: So that's why I didn't push too much. I wanted a family and I wanted children. And I married this angel after the war. Because my first husband left me on the 4th of September '39, with his younger brother. They left, they went going behind the Polish Army. There was an appeal that all the men have to join the army and they went and they alighted the train and on the same day they were killed, on the 4th of September '39. And I was afterwards - for six years I didn't know that I'm a widow.

AG: What was your first husband's name?

NK: Julius Hubler.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 30 seconds

AG: And how did you meet him?

NK: How did I meet him? When I was 11, I was invited to a family, who had 8 daughters and no sons. And the youngest was my age, and the older one was 18 or 19 or 20. And there were young men, and I played there, and I played the piano everywhere when I came, and I met him there. And then, I didn't see him anymore until when my mother died, and I said to my father, 'I'm taking the children on holiday when they have school holidays, to Sopot', which is near Danzig, near Gdansk, near the seaside.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 20 seconds

NK: Very famous it was, it had a casino. So I hired a - I took a flat of two or three rooms. I was very mature, at 19, being on my own in Berlin for nine years, although I came home every two or few months and my father visited me every month. But I was very grown-up, and also the death of my mother, and I was on my own when she died in hospital, made me probably more mature than other young women at nineteen at that time. So I took the children there, and we went to the beach, and there was a whole clique of young men and among them Julius Hubler. Again, he thought that I am a very rich girl, and his parents wanted him to marry a rich girl, they had four sons, so he fell in love with me. I didn't. But, when I didn't want to marry him, he threatened me that he will kill me. So I was frightened. I was frightened and I became engaged.

AG: Which year was this, 1929, or '30?

NK: No, no, no. This was 1930 when I met him. And I married him in 1933, on December 24th 1933.

AG: And did you go back to Krakow?

NK: Yes. He was a brilliant pianist, better than me. But he was jealous of me giving concerts and he didn't encourage me. While my second husband, who had no idea of music, later he became a very good critic, because he was an artist, with all this here what you see. And so he encouraged me to give concerts, he encouraged me. But my first husband said, 'You are a brilliant pianist, but stay at home'. And I used to give concerts because there was an institute, a music institute, and there was an association of musicians in Poland, where they asked me to play quite often, but I didn't go abroad to give concerts anymore, finished, when I got married with my husband.

AG: When did you stop your lessons with Schnabel?

NK: Stop? Ah, I stopped in '29.

AG: And did you go back to Berlin afterwards?

NK: Well, I stayed in Berlin on and I went to George Bertram, another one, who helped me with my-. Because Schnabel didn't correct your technique. Nothing. You have to be perfect with you technique, but I failed, something was wrong with my technique. So I went to George Bertram, who was very, very known, and he helped me with the technique, and I stayed with him until 1931.

AG: Did you notice, in Berlin, the Depression, or then the rise if the Nazis?

NK: Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. Because it started after that.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 47 seconds

AG: We're coming towards the end of the tape, so I suggest we take a little break now, and we'll continue with that on the next tape.

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minute 7 seconds

AG: When we stopped at the end of tape one, you were just beginning to talk about the end of your first marriage and your life in Krakow when you came back. Could you tell me a bit more about how life developed for you when you came back to Krakow in the thirties?

NK: Well, when I came back, it was a very hard life for me because my father was away until '37 in Berlin.

AG: He stayed in Berlin until 1937?

Tape 2: 0 minute 40 seconds

NK: Yes, yes. Because he had some court cases and he didn't want to give in, and I don't know how he survived there with Hitler to 1937, I've never found out.

AG: He was a Polish citizen, wasn't he?

NK: Yes.

AG: And was he trying to hold onto his businesses?

NK: Yes. And it was a big struggle because we were left without money, none anymore from the houses, nothing, and before we used to have 10,000 dollars a month, income, or so, from 12 houses, from all the businesses, and suddenly I was without anything. I started teaching, I started making cushions, I started making, just not knitting only, crocheting gloves, whatever I could do to make money for 'my children'. And we had a nanny who stayed with us and she helped me.

AG: By children, you mean-?

NK: My sister and my brother, they were my children.

AG: And did they come with you-?

NK: Yes, they were living with me. And even when I married the first husband, they still were living with me. Where could they go without anybody? Only-. And when my father came back in '37, they moved with father. But I married in '33, and it was '34, '35, '36, until July '37 they lived with me, all of them, the nanny, and my brother and my sister.

AG: And they were being educated at that time?

NK: Yes, they were in the same Gymnasium. And I said to my brother, 'Look, your father is away, your mother is not alive, you can't stay until 18 at school, you must go to a professional school at 16.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 5 seconds

So he entered a college, engineering college, and he got a degree, he was a specialist in building lifts. And when the war broke out, he was 20 years old, he had a Buick, an American car already, in which he went, left Krakow. But he came back because all the men, it was on the 1st of September, and the whole - the first two three weeks of September '39, it was such a heat, that one couldn't carry anything, and first of all he had to abandon his car because there was no fuel, no petrol anywhere. He had to just leave it. He had no clothes, nothing, he went with short sleeves, and reached Lvov, which is now Ukraine, not anymore Poland. That was always Poland and now it's Ukraine. The Russians wouldn't give it back and the right to return to Lvov, the people. But the Arabs want the right of return, when they ran away from Israel, they were 480.000 that ran away and now they are 4 million, because they multiplied, and they want to have the right to return. It's a strange world really. Anyhow, that's how it was and he- I have never seen him again.

Tape 2: 4 minutes 50 seconds

AG: Do you know what happened to him?

NK: I was looking for him through all the Red Cross which exists in the world. And last year I had - and I give them money and so on - and last year, I had, after many years, one message, that he was arrested in Lvov, because all the bachelors and everybody wanted to return back

and he wanted to return back, he was 20 years old, he wanted to come home. So he registered. So they took him to Siberia probably, somewhere.

AG: That was the Russians?

NK: Yes. So the last message from the Red Cross a year ago I got that he was arrested in 1940 and the same thing happened to my second husband because he too was arrested but he was released as a Polish prisoner in 1941. But what happened afterwards, no trace. No trace. And he was born on the 12th of March 1918 and he adored me and my sister. We were such a close family that, if he was alive, he would have searched in the whole world for me. I went once to a clairvoyant, twice. Once after the war, and I didn't know what happened to my husband, and I didn't know what happened to my brother.

[Interruption]

AG: You were saying that you went to a clairvoyant after the war?

NK: Yes. In Krakow. And I had no ring, nothing, because the Germans took away everything I had. I even didn't have a piano where to practise. So I went to a job at an orphanage, to Zakopane, in the mountains. And I weighed 48 kilos, I had a dress of a 15-year old girl on me. And so I took this job there. There was a grand piano and the Tchaikovsky Concerto music, and I thought, 'Oh, this is fate, this will be my first piece I am going to play with an orchestra, to show them that I am stronger than before, that I have survived, and that I can play a concerto that only men played'. But before, I wanted to tell you something else, what was it?

Tape 2: 8 minutes 5 seconds

AG: The clairvoyant.

NK: Ya. The clairvoyant said, 'You were married before' - I didn't say a word, she didn't know who I am, nothing - 'And your husband got killed of some bomb or something', she told me. And I didn't know, until his cousin came and told me that nobody survived, just few people survived. 'But you are an artist. Shortly, you will meet somebody, a very cultivated man, with whom you will go abroad. And you will continue your career, and you will have two children.' I had goose skin, you know, when she told me all this. I said, 'Thank you very much'. And I said to her, 'What happened to my brother?' And she said one thing, and I did not believe it, she said, 'Your brother is with somebody whose name was with 'M', Marie'. And our nanny was Marie and she died during the war. That was all. 'Goodbye.' A few weeks later, that was perhaps January '46, my friend decided that their friend, who was going to be posted in the diplomatic service, he's an old bachelor, and he needs a representative wife. So, there were two women - my friend, who is also there in the photo, and me. She was much older than me. And who shall we introduce to him? They decided. And they said, 'Oh, Natalia will be better because she's an artist, and when they go to London and so on she will-'. So. They said, 'Oh, we would like you to meet somebody'. I said 'Who?' They said, 'Oh, just somebody who is to go on a political career, a diplomatic mission, and so on, and he needs a-'. I said, 'Oh, don't be silly, you are not going to be a 'Shadchen' to me'. How do you call them? A matchmaker. And I made fun of it. But his brother was a lawyer in Krakow, and they knew him, so they said through the friends that he is coming for the weekend and that they would like me to meet him. So I made a joke and I said, 'OK, let's see what it is'. Now, as you see my husband in this picture, he had a little bit a broken nose, because when he was

seven or eight he was a very nasty boy and he jumped from his first floor staircase and broke his nose.

Tape 2: 11 minutes 46 seconds

And he came to his mother and said, 'Mama, I broke my nose'. So he had one operation when he was older and there was always a mark a little bit here, and now I have the same here because I had an accident, a bicycle knocked me down, you know, six years ago, and I had this bone here, and my nose broken and five ribs, and I survived everything. So, when I met him, my sister was already with her husband away in Breslau, in Wrocław, so I wrote to her, I said to her, 'Oh, I met somebody very cultivated, very nice, but I don't like his nose'. So she wrote to me a poem, she always was writing poems and plays and music and everything, she was a phenomenon, gifted in art, so: 'What a los...', in Polish it's 'los', what a fate, 'Jaki los, taki nos', 'when everything is already alright, it's the nose'.

Tape 2: 13 minutes 11 seconds

Anyhow, I thought afterwards that's not important. He came for 24 hours because he was in the Treasury in Warsaw, so he had to go back. But the first day he met me, I think he wanted to marry me. I said goodbye. Two weeks later, he came again. And that's when he asked me about Gisela Riese and said to me that was my sister. I said, 'A funny thing that goes on, that something connected'. And the third week he came, I said, 'Oh, I'm glad to see you'. So he said to me, 'OK, let's go, let's get ready'. Because he said to me, 'Can I visit you?' And I said, 'Yes, you can'. Because I got my first parents-in-law' flat recovered in Krakow. So I had one room or two rooms there. And we go not far away to his brother and they opened - and he said to me, 'Oh, can I say to you 'Du'? 'Dutzen'?' I said, 'You can say what you want!' That's how I said - we come there and they open the door, and he said, 'You can congratulate us, we became engaged!' I said, 'What?! Who said so?' I was flabbergasted. But, before that happened, I was already teaching in the Academy, the Music Academy, because I was also a pupil of the most famous Polish pianist and teacher, Drzewicki, who was the teacher of Fou Ts'ong and Halina Czerny-Stefańska, who won the first Chopin Prize in '49 at the competition. And so I was teaching and I came home and there was a big basket of flowers, with my husband's card.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 36 seconds

And my friend came in, she was waiting for me. So, I came late, and she was sitting there and seeing the flowers and the card, so she said to me, 'Flowers from Dr. Joseph Karp? You have more luck than 'Verstand'', she said, that you have more luck than brains, 'You don't know who this is, what a person and from what a family'. So, I thought - when he said we became engaged, I said, 'What?' And I was really surprised and maybe even angry a bit - but then I thought perhaps it's fate. It's fate because when I came back from my studies, I kept going back from Berlin when my mother died, my husband, who was 11 years older, when his father died when he was 25 years old, he was such a son that he slept with his mother in her bedroom so that she wouldn't feel unhappy that she is a widow. And, you know, in the Jewish families in Poland, they used to have a big iron safe in their bedroom, which was called 'Kasse', or something like this, 'eine Kasse', you know, and it was a big thing like this, and there were various papers, and jewellery, and all the valuables. And they had something in their room. And he one day opened this and saw a name, 'Natalia Weissman'. And it was then 1920, so, that's why it was fate, I'm telling you. And he said to his mother, 'What's this, who

is this name?' And she said, 'Ah, the Jewish people like a matchmaker, and those matchmakers, without you knowing about it, put on the list the richest girls and the best families on the list, and they go round and sell it and propose this and perhaps they make some business. And one of them came to the family Karp. And he got this name. And she said, 'Yes, one of the Shadchens came one day'. She would have liked because that was her oldest son, and she had three sons, or four sons, I think, so she wanted him to get married. So, one came and said, 'There is a very good-looking young woman, pianist and rich'. He said, 'Mother, verdreh mir nicht den Kopf'- 'Don't interfere' – 'I don't need a rich one, I'm rich enough myself. And I don't want a pianist'. So, when I met him again, and he proposed, and he was happy to get - I said, 'Serves you right! You didn't want me when I was rich, now you have me in one dress, one coat, one pair of shoes!' I didn't have anything else when I met him. But he didn't mind. So that's the story about my angel, who never called me by my name, only 'My soul', which is in Polish a beautiful word, 'Dusza'.

Tape 2: 19 minutes 58 seconds

And I live with these wonderful memories, and on, and also I don't think I would have had such beautiful and talented and intelligent daughters that I have with another man. Only with this man.

AG: You didn't have any children by your first husband?

NK: I had a still-born child with my first husband. And that was that.

AG: Is there anything about your life in Krakow before 1939 that you'd like to tell me about?

NK: 1939?

AG: You know, in the 1930s?

NK: The 1930s, nothing, it was just when I got married. I resented the attitude of people, who only wanted money, and unfortunately the family of my first husband, and I mean not just his parents, because the whole family, my mothers-in-law, were in love with me, they all were very close to me, but they just wanted their sons to get rich girls, and that was something I wasn't very happy about and it was very hard for me. That's why the more I appreciated this man and the life with him. Now when the Germans arrived-.

AG: Do you remember the outbreak of war?

NK: Oh! And how! On the 1st of September, it started bombardment, and my husband and me, we had to be on the-. We moved from our house to a very modern flat, which was the house of the Sparkasse, the Polish PKO, it was, 'Powszechna Kasa Oszczędności', the Polish Sparkasse, yes. And they had a big - in the front was their offices and their bank and on one side of the road were luxurious flats with central heating and so on, so we moved there in '36 and lived there. There was also another pianist. I was on the fourth floor and on the third floor was another pianist. And then we had a very comfortable and nice flat. But on the roof, there was a flat roof, they had some people, who were on duty. Against what? Against the Germans, who were bombarding us, because we were not far away from the railway bridge. They were frightened that that would be bombarded. And so the whole night me and my husband spent there. That I remember. And it was such a heat, unbearable. And we - when my

husband left - we had of course a maid, a Polish woman, who did some cooking and cleaning - unfortunately, the last one, I didn't know that she was anti-Semitic, but when my husband left and the Germans came on the 5th of September, 6th of September-.

AG: It was as early as that?

NK: Yes, yes, yes. The army was already defeated, they used to come and walk barefoot, the soldiers, everything lost, and the rifles, it was a tragic, a horrible sight, to see this. But, a few weeks later, suddenly into my flat she brought some German soldiers. That here is a nice flat and one woman living there, yes. So they were a few young officers, fortunately they were musical, they saw I had two pianos, they saw the pianos, and they said to me that she brought them up, that they should take my flat. And they said to me - and I was going to my mother-in-law, because I'm not going to stay there of course, if they take my flat. So they were very nice young officers. The Wehrmacht. That wasn't Gestapo you see, it was Wehrmacht - and they said, 'We have here, we have a music book with Russian songs. Would you play it?' I said, 'Of course I will play'. And I played it to them, and they were starting to sing, and I was singing with them. And they said to me - she wanted a salary from me still, that she is there in my- and so they said, 'You are not going to pay her a penny, we are going to pay her and I will let you know when we are going to leave your flat and you can remove what you want'. That's how they behaved, Germans, at the beginning of the war.

Tape 2: 26 minutes 11 seconds

Anyhow, I moved to my mother-in-law and I stayed with her because she was crying every day for her four sons and her husband, because she stayed alone in a comfortable flat. And I removed some of my furniture and carpets and so on. But I lost it afterwards, because they came to the other flat and came in, knocked, one lets them in: 'This, this, this'. That's how they robbed us of everything. They didn't give me a penny for all this I've lost. Only for being in the camps, and losing a bit of my health.

AG: Did the Germans make any special regulations for the Jews in Krakow, how did they-?

NK: Soon we had to put on the yellow star, and we were not allowed to go there or there or there, soon it started like this and then they started robbing us and taking everything away. And I decided I was - my sister was with my father, who came back, and I with my sister, we decided, they are going to make the Ghetto in Krakow, we don't want to go to the Ghetto, we will go to , where there was no Ghetto, a smallish town where I had never been before, but there was a big Jewish community there, and my best friend's aunt was living there, so we decided to go there. But there it was the Ghetto a few months later, and they were killing in one day 15,000 Jews.

Tape 2: 28 minutes 4 seconds

AG: In Tarnów?

NK: Ah! And so, after two years or a year and a half there, we decided we want to escape. And that's when the Polish police caught us and handed us over to the Gestapo. And we were in Zakopane for four weeks and the Gestapo, and from there-. Also, my sister was so beautiful that everybody fell in love with her, that a German fell in love. And one of the Gestapo there, when he was coming with some food - what was his name? Fritz - he was whistling

especially, to let us know especially that we shouldn't be frightened. You know, some Germans, even in the Gestapo, had a bit of a heart. It's peculiar. So, he took us, he took us back to Płazów. He knew that we are going to be shot. But we didn't know. He said, 'Oh, don't worry, this is an 'Arbeitslager', it's just for work you're going there. You'll be alright there'. And they locked us up in a bunker and from there we were going on the hill next day to be shot. And we were five women brought in. So the Kapos learned about it, that we were brought in on that day, and they knew that I was a concert pianist. And they knew that Amon Göth, this murderer, which is from where Schindler took and had with him the whole business to let the people go, that he loved music. So the Kapo came to him and said, 'Five frauen eingeliefert'.

AG: Five women delivered.

NK: 'Von draussen', from outside, brought in. He said, 'Was sind sie?' 'Eine ist Klaviervirtuosin.' 'Ach, na, sie soll heute abend zu meiner Geburtstagsparty kommen und spielen'- 'She should come tonight to my birthday party and play'. So they took me out to the hairdresser to have my hair done and I had still my clothes on, because in the ghetto I could wear my clothes. And, of course, when we wanted to escape, I also wore my clothes. But, before I go on with this, I must tell you another thing about the Poles.

Tape 2: 31 minutes 15 seconds

When we wanted to escape from Poland, from the Tarnów to Warsaw, to be on 'Ayrische' false papers, as Catholics, we were told that there are two railwaymen, who will accompany us, but we had to pay them a few thousand Zlotys, which was a few hundred pounds. Because we were frightened on our own to go, after all this, by train and to buy the tickets and so on. So we arranged with them. And we had packed a whole suitcase with our best clothes, and things to wear and to be needed, and they took this suitcase and met us and we were waiting at the railway station and they were a little bit, you know, they wanted to frighten us: 'Oh here comes somebody, but don't worry, you sit with us' and so on. And they went with us to Warsaw, and I had my best friend, she was there already, and she prepared a room for us, but when we - they gave us the suitcase back, and we opened the suitcase, there were stones and papers in it. That's why I come back to it, what the Poles did to us.

Tape 2: 32 minutes 54 seconds

Now, they took me to the hairdresser, coming back to the party, and I was terribly frightened. First of all, I hadn't played for so many years. It was the 9th of December '43. Why do I remember the date? Because all the people in the camps afterwards, and the Kapos, used to laugh. They said, 'She was born again on the 9th of December '43'. Because, after I played-. When I came there, there were all the officers in white, and Amon Göth in a white jacket with all his medals here, and then his big dogs, which he called 'Mensch', and us he called dog, 'Hund', and I was so frightened, but the fright made me play. And I played Chopin's Posthumous Nocturne. And first he said to me 'Du', 'Du, Sarah'. But, when I played the Nocturne, and before - he had his mistress, he had a mistress, if you remember from the film or from the book - and she said, 'Sei doch nett zu ihr'. So, when I played the Nocturne, he said, 'Das Sie spielen können, gestehe ich zu. Sie soll leben'. And I did not remember that I said, 'Nicht ohne meine Schwester'. But, about ten years ago, I was in Switzerland, in Zurzach, it's a spa, and we were going with my friend, who lives here, already back to England, and she said, 'I'm going, still before the taxi comes, I'm going for a walk'. And she

came after twenty minutes and she said, 'You know there were two women sitting on a bench. And I started talking to them, and I told them with whom we are here'. And they said to her, 'Oh, we know her, we were in Płazów in the same camp' - two women from Israel in Switzerland - 'Oh, we know her, we were in the same camp as she was. And when Amon Göth said to her, 'Sie soll leben', she said, 'Nicht ohne meine Schwester'.' That's how I learnt about it. And then he said to me, 'Und jetzt gehen Sie in die Küche. Meine jüdische Köchin wird Ihnen zum Essen geben'. So I went, and she packed another lot for my sister that I took with me, because we didn't eat the whole day. Anyhow, that was - 'Sie sind frei. Frei ins Lager zu gehen' - that was the 'Freiheit'. And, of course, on a bunk somewhere, ah, many times, midnight, twelve, at midnight: 'Natalia Hubler hier?' Hubler was my first name. 'Ja'. 'Der Kommandant will Sie heran wieder', um 12 Uhr nachts. I had to dress and go there again. And who was there? Brothers Rosener, they were very famous, the two, in this film they showed that the Roseners played, one played the violin, the other one played the accordion. Yes. And they were playing, and I never played light - I could play light music but I had to improvise. They were playing Brahms, Hungarian Dances and all that, and I improvised with them. That's how it happened. And that's what it is, and from there we wanted to escape again, in Płazów.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 27 seconds

AG: Did you have to work during the day?

NK: Of course! We were blockaded. I had so many specialities. In Tarnów, in the Ghetto, I had to work in a factory, with uniforms, German uniforms, and I used to make the button holes and I am a specialist in button holes now, making.

AG: How long were you in the Ghetto in Tarnów?

NK: Oh, I was in Tarnów with my sister from the end of '40 until the beginning of '43.

AG: And what were conditions like in the Ghetto?

NK: Dreadful, dreadful. Every few days, another shooting, another this, dreadful! Frightened all the time, all the time frightened. Terrified. When I heard their boots, I thought already I got something in my head. And we had this gathering on a big place, sometimes we had to undress and defilate like this, and then I heard, 'This, this, this' - all to the gas chambers somewhere. And my sister was behind me, and he let me through, and then I heard, 'This!' – 'Tak!' or 'Diese!' I didn't dare to look, until a bit later, a few minutes later, I saw her behind me. All the time like this. And then on one day, that was very bad, on the 7th of May, and then on the 14th again, and they were preparing lorries and they loaded the lorries with all the children, and they took them away to the gas.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 53 seconds

And we were not allowed to look up. The loudspeakers were singing 'Mutter, das und dies' and a special thing, and we were kneeling on the ground. And my friend, who was also my first husband's aunt, his mother's sister-in-law, most beautiful young woman, she was two years older than I, the most beautiful woman, and her son was nine and he was also taken away. It was such a terrible experience, I can't tell you. She was fasting on every 7th and 14th of May as long a she was alive. Two boys, one of 9, one of 16, 15 she lost. What the Germans

did-. That's what Bongartz wrote to me, because in the sixties, Halina Czerny-Stefańska, the one who got the first prize, came to England to play, and she visited me, and I said to her, 'So where are you going from here?' She said, 'Oh, I'm going to Dresden, to play with the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra'. I said, 'Who's conducting?' 'Oh, Professor Heinz Bongartz'. I said, 'What?! That was my conductor with whom I played a few times before the war'. I said, 'Send him my best regards'. I knew he was a decent chap, and his wife was also a friend of mine, she was a very well-known singer. And so she told him about me, and he wrote to me straight away, 'Was die Deutschen dir angetan haben, kann ich nicht gut machen, aber du kennst mich doch, du weisst wer ich bin und wie ich bin. Komm und spiel mit mir, und um Erfolg gross zu machen, spiel Tchaikovsky Concerto'.

Tape 2: 42 minutes 10 seconds

So, I went. But I had a terrible experience on the first day of my visit there. First of all, I was frightened because the Russians were there. My husband went to the Foreign Office and asked whether I should go. They knew that he was in the Diplomatic Service and so on. And so he said, 'By all means. What the politicians spoil, the artists mend for us. Let her go'. OK! !o they sent me a ticket and I was going there, and when I came there was of course the 'Konzertbureau', the office was all state, you know, the German, it wasn't a private enterprise. So I came and I said, 'Ich bin nur zu ihnen gekommen spielen, weil ich wollte meinen Mutters Grab besuchen. Ich bin die einzige, die überlebt hat' – 'I'm the only one who survived, and I promised myself that I will go and visit my mother's grave'. Although I was only 19, and I was already in my 40s when I wanted to go, my memory helped me. I never wrote down where my mother's grave was, but I knew in my head that it's 'Abteilung Sieben, Feld A'.

AG: Which cemetery was it?

HK: Weissensee, which is as big as Hampstead Heath.

AG: But that's in East Berlin, isn't it?

NK: So when I came to the Konzertbureau, I said, 'I have to be tonight in Dresden, because tomorrow morning at ten o'clock I have a rehearsal with the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, but I want to go now and visit my mother's grave in Weissensee'. 'Alright, Frau Karpf, unser Chauffeur wird Sie dort nehmen und er wird warten, and you can't fly to Dresden because it's foggy' - it was February – 'so you will go by train, and the train leaves at seven o'clock. You will be ten o'clock tonight in Dresden, and will be awaited there.' OK. So he took me there, and it was about ten past four, and I wanted to make sure - there was a little hut with flowers, so I took some flowers - and I said, 'I want to make sure that my head is alright, that my memory is alright, because it has been so many years since my mother died'. In 1930 and that was already in the sixties. So he said, 'There is the office, it stands there, it was nothing destroyed, all the books are there. Go, and you will find it'. And I went there, and they found it: Eva Weissman, geboren Friedman, died am 22ten Mai, 1930. Feld A, Abteiling 7'. 'OK, gehen Sie entlang der Mauer' – 'You go along the little wall there to the end', he said to me, and you will find it. But it's quite a long way because it's enormous, enormous, and at that time nobody from abroad used to come, everything was neglected, overgrown. There were enormous monuments because there were very rich Jews in Berlin before the war and they had these enormous mausoleums, you know. He said to me, 'But, at five o'clock, we are closing the cemetery, so remember, come back before'. OK. So I went along and it goes there,

it took me about ten minutes to get there. I remembered exactly where it was. And I come there and I can't find it. With all my flowers, with everything. I was in a short black fur jacket, it was cold, and it was getting a little bit dark, but I will be alright. 'But', I said, 'I can't find it, my God, what do I do now?' I go back a few yards and then I come back again. I said, 'It must be here'. So, but at the end of that, there was no further there, but there was a way here, so I turned to this and the second grave was my mother's. It was black granite with gold letters, and the letters were already very weak, but I could see everything. Again, it was overgrown, so I started cleaning, and I put the flowers there, and I started thinking it must be about a quarter to five, I must go back, because I will be locked in here. So I go back, but I lost my way, and the longer I go, I look here and here, but I could not go out to the real path. I was in despair, I could hear the clocks, I could hear five o'clock ringing, and I thought, 'Oh my goodness, now I will be here all night'. Not a soul was there at that time. Not a soul. And the walls around the cemetery were as high as this room here, nobody could go through, and I was starting calling and whistling, and echo, nothing. I am not hysterical, I am a very composed and normal human being. In the camp, when they all were grumbling, 'Oh we will all be killed', I said, 'No, we will not be killed, we will survive, we will survive again'. And they said that I was a blessing that I was talking like that to them.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 1 second

One day that I was hit in the latrine, you know what a latrine is? I went there and the poor woman, who was in charge there, they were so dirty some people, so she took the anger to me, she took out a big broom, dipped it in this muck and started hitting me. I was never hitting anybody before, but when she did behave to me like this, I took it out from her hand and started beating her with it and left. And, when I came to my barrack, they were clapping when they heard, and they said, 'One person who withstood her'. But coming back to the other thing. Where did I interrupt?

AG: You were trying to get out of the cemetery.

NK: Yes. It was about twenty past five. I started praying to my mother, which I never did before. I said, 'Mother, let me out from here, please.' A few minutes later, a dog was running towards me. I said, 'Oh my God, where there is a dog, there is a human being, so I ran into this direction and, 100 metres further, I saw a woman in a black coat coming, so I ran towards her, and I said to her, 'I lost my way'. And she said, 'I'm not surprised, we were once looking for three hours for somebody here, who got lost'. She said, 'You are lucky, I never go here for a walk with my dog. This is the first time' - the keeper's wife.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 4 seconds

'This is the first time that I go here for a walk with my dog, and I have the keys and I will let you out.' And it took us fifteen minutes to get to the gate. And it was already six o'clock and my train was going at seven. And I came out and the stupid chauffeur was asleep in the car.

I said, 'You were not wondering that I am so long?' He said, 'Yes, I was'. Anyhow, that's how it ended, it was a Cauchemar for me, a nightmare, this. But I have been since then, I had for three weeks, year after year, concerts, engagements, a tournee in all of East Germany, and they fêted me everywhere, and there were articles about me, that I was in the concentration camp and what I suffered and after my first concert was an article they wrote, a review: 'Die Karpf spielte und siegte'.

AG: ‘Came, played, and conquered’.

NK: Ja.

AG Can I just go back to the camp at Płazów. Could you describe that a bit?

NK: It was a nightmare. It was a nightmare because opposite my barracks-. Because, there again, I was learning another profession, because we were placed, with my sister, in a barrack where we had to put into the lousy, excuse me, socks, German troops socks, which came back from the front, new heels. So we took out the heels and there were pieces and we had to stitch them, so that one can’t notice. And I did a wonderful job. So I had a few jobs during the war. Because I’m quite, I’m not clumsy with my-. When I have to do now, when I buy a dress or so, and I want to shorten it, I am not going to a dressmaker, I do it all myself. I’m good with my hands. And my technique-. And, by the way, I have three concerts in September. I told you. But you won’t be here?

AG: No, but that’s not relevant to the interview. Did you feel in Płazów that you were in danger all the time?

NK: All the time. All the time. Opposite was a men’s latrine, opposite the barrack where we were. And Amon Göth used to go walking with these enormous, what were they? Labradors or what? White enormous dogs, with black spots, you don’t know what the breed is?

AG: I don’t. Labradors don’t-.

NK: He used to have such a dog, who he called ‘Mensch’. And I saw, with my sister, we’ve seen through the windows, one scene, where the man was going to the latrine, and Amon Göth was coming with the dog and he said, ‘Mensch, Fris den Hund!’ And he started tearing pieces of flesh off him. And that’s what we’ve seen. Or one day we had to go round a place where there was scaffolding, and six young men were hanging, and we had to look at them. We are not allowed to look away. All the time like this. All the time. Until we were going to Auschwitz. We wanted to escape from there, from Płazów also, and my aunt, my friend, this beautiful one, she arranged with a friend that the electrical wires will be cut at one point and outside will be somebody waiting for her and me and my sister. But that was arranged for four in the morning, or five, and half an hour earlier, we had to get up and come to a place because we are going to Auschwitz.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 48 seconds

AG: I just want to ask you a couple of things before that. First of all, were you at all aware of what happened to your father at this time?

NK: My father was in the Ghetto in Krakow. Yes. He went to the Ghetto. And I was told that he found a woman, who was his partner, and I was very happy. Because I went to Tarnów with my sister, and he was there. Until I heard that there was a send-off from the Ghetto to some gas chambers, so I contacted one Pole, who was recommended to me, a young man, who was helping us sometimes - because there were a few very, very nice – and I don’t think that the whole Polish population was like this, but a lot of them were, but those who were helping us, some of them suffered and some of them survived, yes - so, he got to know what happened and he gave us the news that on this and this day in June, in June ’42, he

disappeared from this Ghetto with this partner, with this woman. And I knew that he had some savings, which he invested in some gold or something, and he probably buried it somewhere there. He went and stayed there. So that was all. Never again. Only when-. I had his picture here, but my daughter Anne took it. Every time I look at it, I think, 'God knows what this man went through before he died'.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 56 seconds

AG: Another thing that I wanted to ask you is that you mentioned you were very badly beaten by the Gestapo. When was that?

NK: In Tarnów. There wasn't a Ghetto yet, but there was one part of the main road that Jews were not allowed to go. And I lived, we lived, my sister and me, we had a room, and the nanny, together with us. The nanny was born a Catholic, but she was an orphan, and she was placed into a Jewish family when she was 11 years old, in the place where my mother was born and my grandparents lived, in Benczyn, that was there. And she lived with Jews, she wanted to become Jewish. So she applied, because she had to have a certificate or something from the Catholics, that she leaves the Catholic faith, to be able to show it to the Jews, because she wanted to become Jewish. She spoke better Yiddish than I did. And she was more observing kosher than I did, because she came to us from the other place when she was twenty. And stayed with us until she died of cancer in Warsaw. And we buried her during the war in the Catholic cemetery. But she wanted to be buried in the Jewish cemetery. So my sister, what she had, she sold, and went to Warsaw after the war, exhumed her rests and transferred to the Jewish cemetery, to Krakow, and there she paid the Catholic cemetery a big sum that they will never bury anyone else anymore in this place, because it was her wish.

AG: We have to stop now because the tape is coming to an end.

TAPE 3

Tape 3: 0 minute 8 seconds

AG: Go ahead.

NK: I told you that we lived in Tarnów, in a private room. I think he was, I don't remember whether this chap, who let us live in one room, was a tailor or something else, but he was a quite nice chap, a family man, with a wife and one or two children. And we had a comfortable room, with three altogether. And there were transport, on one day - we helped sometimes the Jewish community when there used to come transport from Germany, from other parts - we heard that there is a transport of 2000 Jews coming to Tarnów on this one day and we didn't have enough in the community of crockery and cutlery, so my friend, whose aunt lived there, and who lived not far away, my best friend - by the way, she was killed, also through Poles, in Warsaw, during the war - I said to her, 'I'll meet you on the corner of the street, three o'clock in the afternoon'. She said, 'Fine'. Anyhow, I was going down- my sister was away on that day, somewhere else, she wasn't with me - but I was going down. And downstairs - that was on the second or third floor that we had the room - there were two men, searched by two men, who were in civil, not in uniform, so I didn't know that they are Gestapo. But the two men, who were searched, one of them was the author of 'Conspiracy of Silence', Alexander Weisberg, who was also in a Russian prison for many years, and was let out at the beginning of the war. He was a physicist. And Einstein interfered with the Russians to let him out

because he was a great man. And he was in love with my sister, and he came with his cousin, who was a solicitor, from Krakow, and he said, when he saw me - I wanted to pass by when I saw that they are searching - he said, 'Warte Natalia, wir gehen zu euch'. So, when he said this, the Gestapo let him go and started on me: 'Du Sarah, du freche Sarah, 'raus von hier'. And I said, 'Ich gehe'. So they ran out after me and took me to the Gestapo. The two men escaped and they took me. And I was well-dressed, in a knitted suit, because it was autumn, I think, already, yes, it was on the 4th of September. Why I remember the 4th? The 4th of September, my poor husband had here a terrible car accident, when he was taking my Eve to school, and a few minutes later I had a telephone call from St John and Elisabeth that, 'Your husband has been admitted to hospital after a car accident'. So I screamed and they said, 'Oh, nothing too much, only his right hand is smashed.' His right hand is smashed! He had this one amputated up to here, and those ones were like this. And all this work, what you see here, is done with those two fingers. So that's nothing but-.

Tape 3: 4 minutes 37 seconds

And coming back to the other- they took me to the Gestapo and started hitting me with trunches, thick like this, and I was holding my head, so up here was black [gestures to her forearms]. And then they hit me from top to bottom - like your shoes - not one piece of flesh could be seen for three weeks until later it became a bit darker than this [picks something up, not visible on camera]. And they locked me up and at first they hit me, 'Where is your husband?' I said, 'I don't know, I can't find him. I don't know what happened to him'. So, 'Who are your friends?' 'I have no friends.' And my friends were afraid that I will say, so they didn't undress, they were staying in their clothes the whole night. Not far away from Gestapo. I said, 'I have no friends here, nobody'. 'Du freche Sarah!'

Tape 3: 5 minutes 49 seconds

That's this. And they hit me, hit me. 'Ah, we will put her down with the rats there.' You know, they were so cruel, they were so inhuman, the Gestapo. That was the one, Rudi, he was called Rudi, and he was shooting children like this in the street. I was the only case that they didn't shot me because the next people they caught like me they were killing, you know? And another thing, I was praying again here. Here, here I was praying the first time, you see? Because they locked me down in the cellar. And I didn't feel even, I didn't feel, I felt that something happens to me, because I was so swollen, my whole body was so swollen, and they kept me there, and that was in the basement, and I could hear steps outside, and the doors closing, so I started praying to my grandfather, who worshipped me, and my mother: 'Either let me out or let me die now'. That's what I wanted. Now at 2 o'clock in the morning, and that went on for nearly 12 hours, I could hear the door: 'Du Sarah! Nimm deine Sachen!' I had a handbag, with a silver comb, with a silver powder thing, and a few-, I don't know whether I had any money, I don't remember, but a lipstick and a mirror, and other things. And again to the ground floor. The radio was on. The dim light. 'Da hast du deine freche Sarah' -

Tape 3: 7 minutes 58 seconds

'Here have you got…'. So he said, the other one to him, 'Oh, let her out'. He said, 'No, let her out and shoot her outside!' Alright. So, they said, 'Take your things' and 'Dank dem Jehovah'. And they kicked me out with their foot, and that was that. And I was outside, and I could not walk properly afterwards for three weeks, but at that moment, I felt as if I had wings. I started like this in the street [makes gesture with arms], to go to the parallel street

where my friends lived, with their son, who was in love with me. He was a German Jew from Cologne. And I knocked at the door. And opposite them lived a very close friend of mine, a doctor, but because it was near the Gestapo, I didn't want to endanger him. So I knocked at their door. That was a house with flats, and they lived on the first floor. And I didn't wait long, only a few minutes, and the 'Hausmeister', which was the porter, you know, every house had a 'Hausmeister', opened the door to me. He probably got such a shock when he saw me because I had here blood stains, all this black here, black on my hands and everywhere. So I said, 'Ich gehe zu Birnenbaum'. I knocked, the door opens, and they are all dressed up, three o'clock in the morning. And when she saw me, Madame Birnenbaum, the mother of that young man, she said, 'Ah, jetzt weiss ich was mit sie dem Rudi gemacht haben'. Because she got a telegram from Auschwitz, three weeks before, that her son died. And she put me to bed. They gave me two sleeping pills, and compresses the whole night, and I didn't sleep, I couldn't sleep, I was lying on my tummy, until I recovered, I could go to my place again. And then, again, they said you should move from that district to another one. So we got one room and kitchen, and fifteen people, women and men, they didn't have where to go, together with us. They were fighting to be with my sister and with me because they knew we would never quarrel. They were lying on the floor, they were lying in the kitchen, where there was a place. And we moved eight times within one year, from one place to another one. Then it came the very big 'Aussiedlung'. They were sending people to Auschwitz, you know, and it was the Ghetto. And we got, in a very modern block, one room from the 'Judische Gemeinde', which was the house of the Jewish 'Arbeiter-', you know, the union, the Workmen's Union, and I don't know, I don't think it was the communist one, but maybe between socialist and communist. This house was very modern and on the first floor - there were bigger rooms and smaller - and I got with my sister the small room, and I had even my upright piano there, so I could play, because I took it from one place to another one. And one day - but there was a loft - we had behind our cupboard, there was a door, we didn't know that, only when they announced there was going to be 'Aussiedlung', it means that those who didn't have a stamp from the Germans to stay in Tarnów, in the Ghetto, will be taken away, finished. So, when they heard it, they started coming to this house, and knocking on every door: 'Can you help us?' And they came to us, to my sister and me, they said, 'Look, behind your cupboard, there is a door to a loft, which can accommodate 200 people'. Enormous. Because that was this organisation's house, where they printed also leaflets and then, you know, I forgot what they were called at the time, that's one of the few things, which I can't remember.

Tape 3: 13 minutes 50 seconds

AG: It wasn't the Bund?

NK: Bund! Thank you. That was their house. So they used to come at night and said, 'The 'Aussiedlung' starts tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, let us in!' So I said to my sister, 'What will happen? If they discover, then they will shoot'. So she said, 'So we will go with all of them'. So I said , 'OK, if you say so, alright'. So we had nearly 200 people come in the night, and they brought with them buckets for relieving themselves, and they brought children, and sleeping tablets for the children not to cry, and they brought other things, and food, and at night we opened the door, we moved this, and let them out to clean everything and we boiled them an enormous pot with hot water to give them something hot to drink, and we shut it again. But, two days later, we heard some voices, so we said, 'Listen, we hear voices of the Germans, don't betray yourselves, we may be out.' And they came in and said, 'All out from the house'. They're going to search. They're going to search. And I said to my

sister, ‘They’re going to search, that’s the end of us’. And when they came, one of them came and I said, ‘Can I lock up the room?’ And he said yes. And I took the key and I locked it up. But they heard, that when we left, there were shots. They thought that they shot us. They were devastated. Now that took about five days, this whole procedure.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 56 seconds

And they took us to a different part, and we didn’t know what happened to those 200, nearly, up there. But when they said, ‘Alles Zurück!, we went in. The only not open room in the whole house was our little room, my sister’s and mine. Now, to let them know, these people, that we are there and alive and nothing happened, I started calling my sister by her name, and she called me, and we were laughing and joking, and they heard that everything was alright. And then we removed the piano and opened the door and they all went out. And one of them said - why I remember, that was a Tarnów family, a very wealthy family, they had a factory, a candle factory - and they said something in Yiddish, a word or something, ‘Den Skhis’, or something, I didn’t understand, I think ‘For that what you did, you will be well rewarded in your life’. Rewarded! My poor sister died of cancer in such terrible pains, for all she did. That’s it.

Tape 3: 17 minutes 20 seconds

AG: Can I take you back where I think we stopped before?

NK: Yes.

AG: You told me about the plan to escape from Płazów, but just before you could try, you were transported-.

NK: Yes. There was a train, but there is another miracle, again a miracle, because we were one of the last in the queue, to go to the train. The first train which came, and they said that we are going to transported somewhere. Now, when it came to us, there was no more room. It was a cattle train and they placed them in, every one of these, about seventy people or eighty people. There was room for twenty, twenty five, they were all like herrings together and they were in a terrible state. Some died and some suffocated, terrible. But this transport, where we were the last one and couldn’t get in, didn’t go to Auschwitz, they took them to Stutthof and they drowned the 2000 people in the sea. And the next train went to Auschwitz. Again, they let us out, sometimes they opened after two hours or something, because it took a long time. They opened it, so we said, ‘Shall we jump down and escape?’ No, it’s too risky. So we were taken to Birkenau, where the gas chambers were. And my sister had beautiful long hair. But in Płazów, when we-, before we went to Warsaw, we all tinted our hair, because the Poles said that the dark colour hair - because this is my colour hair and I was for 45 years a blonde, a dark blonde, because I dyed my hair. It was only twelve years ago, two years before my husband died, I said, ‘I’m fed up with this tinting, I’m going to grow my own hair’. He said, ‘I married a blonde!’ I said, ‘Never mind, you will get used to the dark hair’. Yes, so, we wanted to escape again, but-.

Tape 3: 20 minutes 17 seconds

There, at Birkenau, Mengele, you know who Mengele was? Mengele was coming, a threat: ‘Mengele is coming, Mengele’. And they kept us overnight, and my sister had this beautiful

hair and she said, ‘If they shave my head, as the other ones there, I commit suicide’. I said, ‘Don’t be silly, you idiot! Your hair will grow back, but your head won’t!’ And so she laughed. That’s how I was. They kept us there for 24 hours with this fright every few minutes. Ah, dreadful, dreadful! And all the time we heard, ‘Such a transport, such a transport, this one goes there, that one goes there, there, there, to the gas chambers’. And then they decided now we are going to go to the ‘Entlausung’, yes, to the shower. And they gave us a black dress. First they gave us something else. We went there and we had no - it was already November, it was cold - my friend had something to wear, and they stole it, the gypsies stole it, and she had nothing, so she ran out afterwards, half naked, to the men’s barrack and they threw her a pair of trousers, and she was small, so she looked ridiculous. We all- I looked ridiculous because I was - now I shrank, I shrank about three inches - but I was about five foot six, six and a half. Last week, I went for a check-up and they told me how tall I am, so I said, ‘I am shrinking now’. Anyhow, they gave me a dress, as short, [gestures], and they gave other people who were small long things, that they couldn’t even walk in them. Ridiculous! Anyhow, that’s how it was. And then we started-.

[Interruption]

Tape 3: 22 minutes 53 seconds

NK: What was our work? We had to carry stones, heavy stones. That was our work in Auschwitz. And, you know, we had - it was cold, this was November - I had clogs on my feet, without stockings, without anything, and I didn’t catch a cold, and I wasn’t ill. And there we spent few weeks and the front was coming nearer. The Russians-.

AG: So this was November 1944 then?

NK: Ja, ‘44, end of ‘44. The Russians were coming nearer and they wanted to evacuate Auschwitz and Birkenau. So they started sending out some on the march, the very famous march, where many people got killed and lost their lives. And us two they sent to Lichtewerde in Sudetenland, a small village, a small place, not a village, but a very tiny place, where there were barracks. And we were placed in one barrack, and we had a ‘Haupsturmführer’, who, when we complained that they gave us 100 gram of bread for 24 hours and a cold soup from potato peel probably, without salt, without anything, he put his finger in it and said, ‘This is cold?’ Hop, on you [gesture indicating that he threw the soup over you). That’s how it was. We were very hungry. My sister was very clever. She saw some of the German women, who were also looking after us, and she said, ‘Oh, she can tell her the future’. So, she started telling her the future, and she sometimes got an apple or a potato for it. That’s what she did. Now, in Auschwitz, they took everything of us away, and we didn’t have even a toothbrush, so our gums started bleeding. My sister went in this factory, we were placed in a flax factory, where they made out of straw big things, ropes and other things. I was placed at a machine, which was as big as - up to the ceiling. I had a mop and I had to mop this machine every few minutes. And one day my mop got into the machine and the chap, the German, who was working, a Sudeten-German, I don’t know, an old chap: ‘Was haben Sie gemacht?’ I said, ‘The mop got in. And I can’t help it’. And I, you know, I had a black dress, after a few minutes, the dress was this colour, from the dust, which was there.

Tape 3: 27 minutes 2 seconds

So he was so angry. I said, 'How long have you been working at this machine?' He said, '25 years'. You know, I said, 'I have been playing for 25 years the piano. If after one or two weeks, a fortnight, you will play the piano as I do, I work like you'. And my sister said, 'You are stupid. They will kill you!' I said, 'Let them kill me'. Do you think he killed me? He didn't. The next day, he had some - I don't know what he thought, anyhow half of his teeth were out, he could hardly eat - he had such big pieces of bread, with an enormous crust, so he came to me and offered me the crust. I said, 'You keep it'. I didn't want it. And then the next day again, he came: 'Do you want some salt?' I said, 'Yes'. 'I bring you some salt tomorrow', he said, 'But we haven't got the white salt on the bread'. I said, 'Alright'. Because they give us the soup without anything, it was just water. And we were terribly hungry, terribly hungry. Only sometimes I got something. And we were queuing, and some of our Jewish fellows, women in the same barrack, were horrible, they were fighting for the food. And we were standing in a queue and queuing for the soup, and one with her clogs, hit me in my leg there, because she was pushing, I felt a pain but I didn't know anything. The next day my leg had a red stripe from top to bottom and I fainted at this factory when I went to work. So they took me to the 'Krankenstube', as it was called, you know, the place where they have got for people who get ill.

Tape 3: 29 minutes 24 seconds

And my friend came to me. I didn't eat anything. I was hungry, I was very, very ill. But I said to them, 'Don't worry, the war will soon end'. And it was already April. I said, 'Don't worry, I will survive'. And they said, 'Will you eat a 'Koggel Moggel'? You know what that is? An egg yolk turned with sugar, and it is just like a shadow or something, a shot, you know you bake it for - if you turn the egg with sugar, it gets so foamy and you can eat it. I said, 'Of course I will eat it!' It's a dream, where will somebody get an egg or so? There were a few of the workmen in the factory, communists, and they gave us, you know, news from the radio they kept secret. And they told us what's happening sometimes, that's why I said that the war will soon end. And when they asked me, 'Will you have a 'Koggel Moggel'?', I said, 'Of course I would', because I knew it was impossible. It wasn't impossible. My aunt is my friend. At night, she got out her gold crown, you know, crown, which she had in her tooth, and the next day she changed with the woman in the factory for two eggs and sugar. And they brought it to me to this hospital, so-called hospital, to eat. I just couldn't believe it. That's how miracles happen. But the first miracle in Płazów was that we didn't go, we had no room anymore to go to Stutthof. All the time, we were like this.

AG: How long did you actually spend in Auschwitz?

NK: In Płazów?

AG: No, in Auschwitz.

NK: In Auschwitz, not too long, about six weeks or seven weeks, but it was like years. One day, I got terribly ill. We were standing on the parade there for hours. And it was pouring with rain, and with this cold. I told you I never had a cold, we were never ill. And with this wet cloth we went to bed, and we never changed, we had a shower, we put on again the same things. And I got, I don't know, something that upset my stomach. Because we didn't have a spoon to eat. But again, the brushes, the toothbrushes. My sister went to upstairs where they had the joinery in this factory, and asked them to make two pieces out of wood, like a toothbrush. And she knew how to do it, she got a wire or something, or some other, or not a

wire, but something she could put into the toothbrush, it wasn't plastic, at that time we didn't have even plastic. And she made two toothbrushes and we started brushing our teeth. But she also made a spoon there. Because they gave us in Auschwitz the soup, which we had to do this way [gestures], and that gave me such cramps after each such food that I got very ill. I was standing on the parade, excuse me for it, what I am telling you now, and it was running down me, and I could not move, and I was told by my sister not to move because they will take me to hospital and to the gas chamber.

Tape 3: 33 minutes 52 seconds

I must not say that I am ill. So I stood like this, in this filth and everything. But we met another friend there, who was already - she is dead now, one shouldn't talk about dead people - she behaved to me wonderfully, but she was dressed in a knitted suit, and lovely boots, and who walks like this in a camp like Auschwitz or Birkenau? Nobody, who hasn't got any connections with somebody. So that's what must have been. But my sister called her and she told her that I am very ill, so she gave her, I think, a blanket, a blanket for me, to cover me up, and she gave her something and a glass of milk. And that helped me.

AG: Were you subject to any of these, what they call selections at Auschwitz? Did they come and make selections?

NK: Yes, all the time. I tell you we were non-stop, in Płazów and Auschwitz, everywhere, terrified of the selections. And I always, with my sister, survived. It was incredible. That was fate. I sometimes think of it, I think how can one survive such a thing and live a normal life and enjoy life, which I do. I do. I want to live longer and enjoy life. I enjoy playing the piano and giving concerts. I enjoy-. I went the other day to a lovely film, a French film, 'Etre et Avoir', and I enjoyed it, and I love the theatre and good books, and nice friends. Unfortunately, I can't entertain too much now because I'm getting a bit tired, that's why I feel my age, but otherwise, here, no, [points to her head], touch wood, I don't-. Do you want to know anything else?

AG: I I'd like to know of course what happened to you when you were liberated. Were you still at Lichtewerde?

Tape 3: 36 minutes 50 seconds

NK: Ach, that was an incredible experience. Because we were liberated by the Russians. First of all-.

AG: When was this?

NK: On the 6th of May, 1945. The Germans, who were beating us, who were humiliating us, called us and said, 'We are damned to announce to you that we lost the war and that you are free'. And they fled. And we are free. And we stood there, 300 women, and we started crying. Free? Where to go? And we could hear shooting. The front was 2 kilometres away, we had no food, but there was a train full of food for the Germans not far away, and some of them smuggled themselves around there to get something, something to eat. But I said, 'Don't do it, you will get very ill, because you were starving for such a long time'. And many people died and were very sick. But I was very careful with my sister and my friends, with whom we

were. A few friends together, we kept like this, my aunt, and my other friend, who lived here in East Sheen, also her picture is here.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 40 seconds

So, a woman, a blonde, beautiful woman on a white horse, in General's uniform, came into the camp, and saw us and she started crying, a Russian woman. She said, 'You are the first camp where we meet you alive'. And this Kommandant, who threw this soup on me and on someone else as well, they ran away, all of them. They were only clever with the Jews, but when they heard the Allies - because we could hear the flights, you know, the flights of the English and Americans, and saw aeroplanes going through - he was shouting, 'Down! On the ground!' They were such cowards, you have no idea.

AG: Were these SS men?

NK: Yes, yes, of course, of course, yes. So that's how it was. And then they left. But I said to my friend, whom I met in Płazów in '43, she came from the Eastern side of Poland, from Droniowice and Lvov, from this side, to Płazów. And the first thing she-. She was placed opposite me in the barrack, to work, and we fell in love with each other. And she was the most beautiful and lovely woman, and we were friends until she died. And she came here afterwards to England as well. So, what did I want to-? Now it escaped me again.

AG: You were talking about the liberation.

NK: So I said to her, 'Look, I was a concert pianist. When the war will be over and when the Germans will go and it's quietened, we will go look for a piano, and I will play to you'. So she said, 'Fine'. And the next day, on the 7th, there was still shooting. On the 8th, it was quiet, so, 'Let's go to the village'. We go to the village. Deserted of course, they all escaped, the Sudeten Deutscher. But we found a villa that was a doctor's villa and when we came in there was an upright piano there on the ground floor. And I sat down at the piano and my fingers were stiff, I couldn't play. That was on the 8th of May '45. And on the 17th of March '46, I played the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the Philharmonic Orchestra in Krakow, relayed on all the radio stations of Poland. How could I do it? After not playing so long. So she thought, 'My goodness, she was a concert pianist, and she can't play a piece, nothing'. Alright, but we worked together afterwards in the same orphanage in Zakopane, and there was a piano and I started practising. And that was a house, which was taken over by 'Joint'.

AG: Oh, the American-.

NK: Yes, run by them. And they paid our-.

AG: How did you get back to Poland from-?

NK: Now listen, this is also-. Now, first of all, the day, on the 8th of May, while we were there in this villa, the Russians came in, some young officers, "Oh, there is a piano, you must come tonight here and play for us'. 'OK, we are in the camp, we will come'. So, we were a few women, my sister and me, and we decided, and a few, two more, we will go to see what's happening there. We went, and we were lucky, because in the camp the ordinary soldiers came and they started raping the women and there were terrible scenes, and we avoided all this, we thought we had.

Tape 3: 43 minutes 41 seconds

Partly. And when we came in there, on the first floor, it was a big table, laid with a white table cloth, a lot of vodka, and there was food and so on. And I stayed with my sister. The two others disappeared. We didn't know what happened to them. And I said to my sister, 'Remember we are not going to drink the vodka, and we are not going to eat, or very little, because we may be very ill'. We were too hungry, we suffered too long, for six months a terrific hunger. So she said, 'Alright'. Every few minutes, they're getting up, 'Na zdorovia' Stalin!', and drinking and I took this and when they didn't look I poured it down, so that's it. I drink with them. They said, 'Alright, at nine o'clock, or later on, you will go back to your camp'. But it was longer and longer and suddenly it was announced that the war ended, you can imagine what happened, what joy and everything, and I was placed next to a very nice young officer and he asked me whether I was married, and I said yes, because I spoke a bit of Russian, and I answered him, and he said, 'Oh, don't think of your husband, come with me to Russia!' I said, 'I'll think about it'. And then they said, 'It's ten o'clock, you can't go back to your-. It's now this, you know, blackout, you can't walk, it's still on, now you will go tomorrow morning. But we will give you here a room where you can sleep'. So they gave us a little room where there was a bed and we could have gone to bed. I said to my sister, 'We are not going to sleep and we are not going to bed. And take the key out of.-'. First of all this, we had the key. So I said to the-. He said, 'Why don't you go to sleep?' 'We are not sleepy. We won't sleep'. 'If you don't sleep, then I'll sleep'. So he went to bed there and he slept. At five o'clock, when one could hear already the chickens and cocks and everything, they said now you can go back.

Tape 3: 46 minutes 18 seconds

Alright, so they accompanied us. We were dressed. And on the way, I said to my sister, 'Now you can throw out the key, we are going back to the camp'. And we heard what's happening there, so we decided we are going to march, now. That's the only thing we can do. Marching out of this place, to the next place. The next place was a bigger place and we found a flat, we found a flat with a pantry full of wonderful food, and preserves and compotes and everything what you wanted. Again I wanted not to, slowly, slowly. And then I said, 'Let's go and find a chemist shop and get some charcoal tablets. If something happens to our tummies'.

Tape 3: 47 minutes 23 seconds

[Interruption**]**

We found it, we found a boarded chemist shop, so we broke in, and we found the charcoal and some other things, and we took it. To prevent us being ill. But we were a few women together and at night we barricaded ourselves with some cupboards and chairs because we were frightened of the Russians again, you know? And the next day we started again. And we found, there was an open lorry, and they said to us, two Russians, 'Where are you walking?' 'We want to back to our places, to look for our people.' 'Oh, we will take you.' So some women took from this pantry sugar, and others-. I said, 'I am not touching this'. 'You're stupid, they robbed you from everything, why don't you?' I don't. I had the dress on of a fifteen year old girl, I told you. And that's how I went to Krakow. But, on the way, we had various things happening. Because my aunt, my friend, whose name was Yelinek. Helene, she was called Yelinek, because she was Czech Pole, from Poronim. On one place, we arrived on this open lorry. The Russians were laughing at the women who were carrying something.

They said, ‘You should travel like we do. ‘Tchasy’!’ ‘Tchasy’ means ‘Watch’ in Russian. He had one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten watches on him. ‘That’s how one travels’, he says, ‘Not with parcels and sugar in your bags’, or something like this. But I was dreaming, I was dreaming of a scrambled egg out of ten eggs, I was dreaming of a loaf of bread. And I eat one piece of bread now a day. That is ridiculous. And that is how it happened. Suddenly we come to one place, and my Yelinek started jumping in the lorry.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 5 seconds

I said, ‘Oh, she’s gone mad!’ No, she’s not gone mad. She saw, from the distance, a few officers with their caps, and she was Czech Pole, and that was the Czech Army, and one of them was a first cousin of hers, a high rank officer. You can’t imagine the scene, when we were getting out of that lorry, how he greeted her, and us, and all of us. And he puts us up with a family for a night or two, that we have a rest somewhere, and he gave her money, 1000 zloty. But she was very upset. Upset?! She was devastated because she heard from somebody, because her husband, who was on false papers in Warsaw, with her older son, who was fourteen or fifteen, he sent his son out to buy him cigarettes when the were hiding. This child was denounced by a Pole that he’s a Jewish one and he never came back. And she heard of it. She was devastated. But he gave her, this cousin gave her 1000 zloty. 1000 zloty would be here perhaps now, I don’t know, 2 pounds. But for us at that time, in ‘45, that was a fortune. OK. So, we stayed with this family. He gave them a sack of flour for that she accommodated us overnight, that she had something to bake out of this flour, it was very difficult with food everywhere. And we started again. So we found, we got into Katowice. We got into Katowice and we pass a patisserie, a shop with cream slices and other cakes. And they were so fascinated, these five women, and my sister and me - I was somewhere else, and those other three - that they said, ‘We are going to buy some cream slices. We can’t stop it’. So they went in and they spent 500 zloty on the five slices of-. And they brought it to us and we had the best feast in our life. But we still had to get on a train, and there were no trains, only goods trains, to Krakow from Katowice. So, at last, we found a goods train to go overnight. Overnight! It was one hour, two hours, normally, but with this train, we went overnight. So, we were sitting next to the guards, on the floor there the 500 zloty for this journey to Krakow. Now, we came to Krakow, I wanted to look, I wanted to find my husband, my brother. My sister wanted to find her fiancé, with whom we were going to escape. I missed that out, I think, that when we wanted to escape from Warsaw Ghetto - not Ghetto, we were outside - and because we had a few denouncements that we are Jewish, again by Poles, and we were frightened, so we decided to leave Poland to go again with a guide to Slovakia where there were buses over the mountains on the border waiting for people who wanted to come from all over and to be taken somewhere in the West.

Tape 3: 54 minutes 47 seconds

On that day. So, we hired again somebody, and we went by train. And it was already the fiancé of my sister, and we five women: his friend and her mother, and my friend, my sister, and another young one, we were six together, with him. No, we were five, plus the daughter of the old lady, who was with us, with my future brother-in-law. We were seven. And we went in this train with the Polish guides, who were going to get a lot of money to take us to a mountain place in Poland, in the Jordanów. We were going into the mountains and from there cross into the Slovakian mountains. And, on that day, in this place, this Jordanów, were at the station Polish policemen placed. And the train was only stopping there for two minutes, three minutes. My sister had a very heavy rucksack with things. And I had not much. And the

others went down when the train stopped and my sister's fiancé noticed the Polish policemen and he said, 'Back to the train! Don't get out!' But my sister already stepped down, and the other two. So I thought I'm not going to save my life if my sister can't come. So I jumped down. And the train went, with the fiancé, and the daughter of the other woman. And the Polish policemen, two of them, approached us, straightaway. That was 15th of October '44. What I say? '42, '43! '43, because on the 9th I got into Płazów. '43, 15th of October or 15th of November. But that was the day. He said, 'What are you?' And we showed our birth certificates. One said, 'No, they are Jews'. So the other said, 'Let them go'. And the other said, 'No, I'm not letting them go'.
[Interruption]

'I am not letting them go. I will take them to the police station and hand them over to the Gestapo.' That I missed from the story before, I didn't tell you this. And that's what they did. They handed us over to the Gestapo and that's where we stayed for three weeks, in the Gestapo there. And they asked us-. I never disclosed that I am a concert pianist. 'What are you? 'Oh, we are dressmakers.' 'Oh, can you mend some things of ours?' 'Yes.' So, my sister could do this on a sewing machine, and we were placed in a room there to repair their torn things, and we did it. And that's where they placed us in the basement, where this Fritz came in, whistling, to let us know, but he fell in love with my sister, and he said that her name was - her false name was Julia - and he called her Julitchka. 'Julitchka, du bist so schön', he used to say to her. And I was Anna. I was Anna Bolehovitch. And when we lived in Warsaw for the few months, we were blackmailed by the Poles. At last, we were running from one place to another, and once the police has arrested us and placed us in a police prison with murderers and thieves. And started bargaining: 'How much are you giving to let us free?' So, whatever we had in our purse we gave them, and they let us free, so we started running to a different place, moving, and the other place, the last place we were in from where we-.

AG: We're going to have to stop because the tape's coming to an end.

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minutes 8 seconds

NK: So, when we moved again, when we moved again, we had a room in a small house, one floor, opposite lift, one other room with another couple, a Jewish couple. But my neighbour was a Polish woman and it was just when the Ghetto was burning and she called on me and said, 'Ah, Frau Anna, Pani Anna, Mrs. Anna, look how the Jews fry!' And I don't remember even what I said to her. So that's when we decided to get out from there again, a few months later. You wanted to ask me about my post-war-?

AG: Yes, I thought we'd-. We got as far as you were going in the train from Katowice back to Krakow?

NK: Yes, when we came to Krakow, we stayed at this station. We started thinking, 'What shall we do? Where shall we go?' So, as we were four now, only because one disappeared, died, before the end of the war, the elderly lady, but we four the younger ones, we survived. We were sitting at the station. And two of them decided-. Somebody approached us at the station, a Jewish woman, who knew us before the war. She said, 'What are you doing here, you stupid women? Why did you come back here? Why didn't you go to Sweden? So many people went to Sweden and they have been given everything to live a normal life'. I said, 'We

wanted to find our people. I wanted to find my husband, my brother. My sister wanted her fiancé. And some family of my husband'. So, she said, 'It's as bad as before, it's a terrible situation, there's terrible anti-Semitism, but there is a 'Jüdische Gemeinde', there is here a Jewish Board of Deputies, there and there, you can go there'. So two of them decided to go to get some information, and we stayed at the station, waiting there. So, my sister came back and told me that an aunt of my first husband is there, they survived and they are where they lived and we can get in touch with them. And my other friend has heard that her sister is also here, so she went to her sister, but my best friend went with us, because she didn't have anyone. So, we went together, and we got in touch with the uncle and aunt of my first husband and they gave us shelter for a few nights in one room, where we could sleep all of us. Now, my friend found someone else, and I stayed with my sister and we recovered, I recovered, one room in the flat of my parents-in-law, which wasn't far from them. And my sister went there, found her fiancé, and she went to live in Wrocław, and I stayed there on my own and I got this job.

Tape 4: 4 minutes 22 seconds

No, first I went to Zakopane with my best friend. Because we didn't have the piano, nothing, but my sister found-, her fiancé found a piano of his family somewhere and some things recovered, and so I got it into my room, where I got a flat afterwards. And that chap came from 'Joint' one day when I was practising, in Zakopane. I started practising the Tchaikovsky Concerto. It was ridiculous. Because I started it in November '45 and on the 17th of March I already gave a concert! How could I dare to do it, after not having played for nearly six years? This is when one is young. And I was young and healthy and strong. And he came and heard me playing there. And he approached me and said, 'What are you doing here?' I said, 'I start practising, I'm a concert pianist, but I haven't got anything, I lost everything, all my pianos, and I haven't got any money, nothing, neither clothes, nothing'. So he said, 'Look, go back to Krakow. I will give you a grant of 2000 zlotys a month, and so you will survive. In the meantime, you will find somewhere to start playing. Don't be ridiculous, don't stay here'. Alright! So I went. And that's when I went, in January afterwards, I went to this clairvoyant, who told me all about it, you see? And so I started. And I met one of my professors, my teachers, with whom I was in touch before the war, who came to me, to my beautiful flat where I lived with my first husband, he came from Warsaw, and because I wanted still his help after so many years, you know, coming back from Germany and so on. So he used to come and give me a lesson and we were very close friends, and when afterwards, after the war, he came here and was my guest, he also stayed with us - I had a big house in Langland Gardens, very comfortable. And that's how it is.

Tape 4: 7 minutes 17 seconds

And I went for an audition, to this, in January, after playing just two months, I went for an audition. I thought I never get it, not having played for this long, and they heard me, they said OK. And then I played with the orchestra, and then I had a broadcast, and then, then I married my husband, and he was sent here, and I was already pregnant with-, I said I'll be too old to have children later, and I want a child straight away. He said, 'What will happen to your career?' I said, 'My career won't escape but a child will escape me'.

AG: When did you marry your second husband?

NK: I married him on the 7th of April '46.

AG: And why was he sent here? Can you explain, tell us for the film, why it was that he came to England?

NK: They needed a deputy for the financial councillors. First they thought they will send him to Canada.

AG: So he was in the Diplomatic Service?

NK: He was in the Treasury.

AG: And what had happened to him during the war?

NK: He was in the Russian camps and he was released, I don't know which year, and he was already painting, because he had studied painting in Vienna, with a famous painter, and when they released him from the camps, he earned his living with painting people and getting food for it, and then he met his sister, who was also in Siberia, that was in Siberia. And he got a job as in a cultural-, in a college. What was he? He was teaching them. What was it? I forgot now. Anyhow, that's how he survived. And he came back to Poland already a year earlier than I was freed, and was sent as an economist to the Treasury in Warsaw. He was working in the Treasury in a very high position. When they asked us to come back after three years here in the embassy, they asked us to go back to Warsaw, to finish with the Diplomatic Service, and he was offered Grade Four. Grade Four was a very high position in the Treasury and the Ministry there because the President had Grade One. And he came home - I had already Anne, she was three months old, or two months old - and he came home on the 16th of August 1950, and said, 'Here is a letter from Warsaw calling me back to Warsaw on the 31st of August'. Two weeks they gave us time. 'Are we going?' I said, 'No. We are not going. We will ask for asylum the British'.

AG: When did you actually arrive in this country?

NK: '47. April 25th '47.

Tape 4: 11 minutes 23 seconds

AG: And what was your impression of Britain when you came here?

NK: I was already expecting Eve. And I had few friends here, who were already here, where I could contact them. But I was really lost, not too much English, and expecting a baby, without money, in a new country, and my husband had to go to work, there at the embassy. I think they have rented a room in a little house in Marylebone Road here, not far.

AG: Is that where you lived?

NK: For a few weeks. And I had to contact the doctor, and I contacted a Polish doctor, who thought that we were communists, and she was against communists. Because if my husband works in the embassy. But happily she was a partner of my friend's husband, who was in the same school with me when she married a Russian doctor, Dr. Goram, who was here a GP and her partner. So, when I went to her, she was a gynaecologist, she said, 'Oh you must go back to Poland to have your child'. I said, 'What?' I phoned my friend, I said, 'Eva, I must go to Poland back. She said, 'Nonsense. She doesn't know you. I will call her and tell her who you

are'. So she changed her opinion afterwards and she said that she will book me somewhere and she did. I was in New End Hospital having my daughter, with eight women in one ward. And the sister was such an anti-Semitic woman, she couldn't stand me. And it was a whole procedure there. But the women, the English women, were very lovely, kind and nice. When I asked them for a word in English, they explained and they told me how to read the instructions in English, how to knit, so I knitted already there, started knitting, and we were in touch really for a few years. Non-Jewish English women they were, they behaved wonderful.

AG: When was Eve born?

NK: She was born on the 2nd, Saturday is her birthday, on the 2nd August '37.

AG: Did you encounter other experiences of anti-Semitism, other than this sister in this hospital in Hampstead?

NK: No, no. Never. Here never. If you are an artist, I think here in England it didn't matter whether you are Jewish or non-Jewish. I don't think so.

AG: But you must have mixed with British people who were not artists as well?

Tape 4: 14 minutes 56 seconds

NK: Now, first of all, I met soon the greatest authority on Chopin, which you will find here in one of the papers, Arthur Hedley, who wrote a book about Chopin also, and who wrote about me, that I am one of the foremost interpreters of Chopin also. And we gave together, because he had the greatest, he had a collection of original manuscripts and various things of Chopin. An English man, who spoke perfect Polish. He was half French, half English. And the same in French. He was head of a French Department in a school. I never knew that because we only had-. We were afterwards such close friends, gave many concerts together. And I am the second artist who played in the Royal Institution here, the first one was Menuhin, and I was the only one who played there, because Headley exhibited his original manuscripts, and I played from the original manuscripts, and that was a very festive evening there. I have that even, I have the programme, but I couldn't' find it.

AG: What was the concert you gave on the day of the centenary of Chopin's death? Can you tell us about that?

NK: I played also-. They decided to celebrate this because it was 100 years since Chopin gave his last concert in England, and he played in Chelsea, in Eaton-, it wasn't Eaton Avenue, it should be there on this [gestures]. I think she lived near this princess, Iris Kalitzy. And here you will see a photo of the Polish ambassador, and me playing on Chopin's piano, which was brought from Pleyel. Here is a big picture. And it was a year after that that they celebrated this 100th anniversary.

AG: And where did you play?

NK: In the same house, at the same piano, in-, it wasn't Eaton Square. No. In Chelsea. And there is a plaque now, that Chopin played there. That was his last concert.

Tape 4: 18 minutes 16 seconds

NK: In ‘48. But he died in 1849. No, he was playing there in ’49, I think.

AG: Did you give a concert at the Wigmore Hall? You were showing me-.

NK: Yes. Yes because they-.

AG: Can you tell me about that?

NK: One of the three concerts that were celebrated. Well, that was the ambassador, he wanted to celebrate this, so he said the embassy will give three concerts and the first one will be Natalia Karp playing Chopin. And I played there in the embassy before, with a very famous Polish violinist, named Yevgenya Ominska. She was very well-known. So, we also played in the embassy.

AG: And did your career flourish in England?

NK: Started. It was very difficult. The BBC, when I went for an audition, I passed it straight away, they paid 7 guineas for a recital, in ‘51, ‘52, ‘53. Now artists get such a lot. I just read the other day an article, I cut it out from The Times, that in Verbier now there was a big festival, and there were eight pianists, the best pianists in the world, sitting at the piano playing, and some of them ask for an appearance 30,000 pounds. When I played in the Albert Hall the Tchaikovsky Concerto, I got 100 pounds.

AG: When was that? When did you play in the Albert Hall?

NK: In the seventies. I played many times. Tchaikovsky and Grieg I played there. And in ‘67, 1967, just two days before the terrible war in Israel, I gave a Chopin recital in the Queen Elisabeth Hall for Cancer Research. Dixon Wright, who was the chairman there, asked me. You know, his daughter is the fat woman, who now writes-.

AG: Yes, on the television.

NK: Yes, yes, but she had a hate-love relationship with her father, I think. But he asked me, because I met him a few times, to give a recital for Cancer Research, and I made 3000 pounds, in ‘67, without getting any salary, any fee, I never - I play for charities always for nothing. Now I’m playing again for a cancer hospice for children, on the 6th of September.

AG: What would you say are the high points in your career as a concert pianist? Is there any that you-?

NK: The Promenade. I played in the Promenade in ‘59. It was a-. The Grand Variations. I was terrified, coming out in the Albert Hall, 70,000 people on a Saturday night, sold out, and BBC microphones. The first moment I came out, it was a horrifying scene, 2000 people standing there, but after a few minutes I settled there. And my husband recorded it, I have the tape somewhere. And they say, ‘Here she comes out in a beautiful dress’. I had a special dress made, really beautiful, champagne colour, with some sequins or something, embroidered, and I was so young, and it was a very, very big experience for me of course. And then I was playing-. Another experience, when I played to Arthur Rubinstein, because I had an engagement. I played the Chopin Concerto Number One, for the BBC, and then they asked

me to play after a few weeks the second one. And the first one I could play in my dreams because I played it so many times in different countries and everywhere, and in Poland and everywhere. So I didn't know what to do and Rubinstein was coming, and I met him through mutual friends, he was coming to give a concert in the Festival Hall, he was playing the Fourth Beethoven. So, I knew that he is in the Savoy staying. So, I wrote to him a letter that I have this engagement for the BBC and he is the only one who plays it so fantastic and dreamlike, the Second Movement and so on.

Tape 4: 24 minutes 5 seconds

So, on the day that he gave the concert, at lunchtime the telephone rings. My husband answers, 'Who wants her?' Because he asked, 'Could I speak to Madame Karp?' 'Who wants her?' 'Rubinstein.' He himself. So I came, I took the phone. He said, 'Look, I had my rehearsal this morning, I came late last night, I'm playing tonight in the Festival Hall but I'm not going to say no to a colleague. I have a lovely Steinway in my suite in the Savoy, come at 5 o'clock and play to me. So I went with heartbeat, and I started playing the First Movement. He didn't correct me or anything. And in the Second Movement, he said, 'Now you are going to take a special key and open the heaven door. 'Isn't it beautiful?', he said. So I said, 'Only Rubinstein can do it'. 'Nonsense! You are an excellent pianist, you can do it.' And I did it. And then the last movement, he said, 'Now have a mazurka', so I did it. And afterwards he said to my friend, who is his friend, together they studied in Berlin, both, and he said, 'She's an excellent pianist.' So!

AG: What year was this?

NK: What year? That was also in the sixties. I've got all the contracts but I'm not going to take them out. On the BBC I had 100 broadcasts, 100 broadcasts in the BBC, but I also had this Chamber Music, this trio with which I played in Israel and in Switzerland and France.

AG: Tell me about your trio. What was it called?

NK: London Alpha Trio.

Tape 4: 26 minutes 26 seconds

AG: And who were the members?

NK: The violinist, the first one, because afterwards we changed, the violinist was a French, very gifted violinist, but we didn't know that she was so much older than we were. And she died. When she left this world, I heard she was about ten years older, she would have been over 100 years now. But she was a first class violinist. And the cellist was a wonderful cellist, Regina Schein, whose son is now Clive Gillenson, he is the London Symphony Orchestra top manager, the whole world knows him, everywhere he is known, all the artists want to be only with Clive Gillinson. And Rostropovitch, when he gave his first recital after the war in Russia, he had to take Clive with him. That was his mother and she died a few years ago.

AG: And where did she come from?

NK: She was Russian-born but they lived in Zurich, in Switzerland, her parents. Her sister was a violinist and she was a cellist. And she studied also with Stutchevsky, who was a

famous cellist, a Russian cellist, Jewish, who went to live in Israel. Now she, he was 20 years older, and she was the most beautiful woman, and a fine cellist. She married this Stutchevsky and went to live in Israel with him and she was married to him for several years and couldn't stand it anymore because he all the time treated her like a pupil one treats, so she left him for an English, an Irish Jew, whose name was Gillinson. And this Clive Gillinson is her son, who is now the manager of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Tape 4: 28 minutes 48 seconds

AG: What was the name of the violinist in your trio? What was her name?

NK: Just a minute, because we had a few afterwards. Now, on the, you have here a leaflet of the London-.

AG: We'll take a photograph afterwards.

NK: That would be the first one here. My goodness, it's the one thing I forgot because, I had afterwards Carmel and I had a violinist, who is in Scotland now, a few after her. Because we gave a recital in the Wigmore Hall, we were together for a few years. And, unfortunately, Joseph, it wasn't Joseph Cooper, what was his name? Imogen Cooper's father, he was a famous critic in The Times, the Telegraph or Times, and he wrote, he was in the Telegraph, 'Trio's pianist of distinction', when we gave a recital. And she said she was so furious. She said that I am always on the first place in the programmes and in all the posters. I said, 'Because it's a Piano Trio, it's called. So they give, it's not my doing, they give everywhere the pianist first, first the pianist's name, and then the violinist and the cellist'. Her surname was Kante, Henriette Kante.

AG: Thank you.

NK: I'm operating with so many names now that at the moment I forgot it. But it came back.

AG: Can I just also ask you about your family life? You had your first daughter in 1947, what about your second daughter?

NK: 1950. I went to Poland with my sister when she exhumed the-, you know, I told you, the rests, so she wrote to me that it will be the stone-setting in the Jewish cemetery, so I decided to go, to be present. And at the same time I had two broadcasts in Poland. Now in connection with what was it now?

AG: I was just asking you about the development of your family life, and when your second daughter was born.

Tape 4: 31 minutes 43 seconds

NK: Yes. So I went also to Krakow and there was my husband's brother, and he had a boy, a new-born boy, and I saw the baby, and I came back home and I said to my husband, 'You must have another child'. He said, 'Your career, my dear'. I said, 'My career will be alright. I will just stop for one year, or half a year'. We always had living-in help because I went on concert tours away from home, so I had to have somebody for two guineas a week, that's what we paid at that time. And so he said alright, and I had this gorgeous girl.

AG: I didn't ask, just for the film, what was her name, the name of your second daughter? And I don't think I asked you, for the film again, what your husband's name was?

NK: Josef. But he was with an 'f'. And I, for my artist's name, because the agent also said, 'Look, Karpf'. They very often, even now when I say Mrs Karpf, as 'Karps' they hear it. Or something else, or one wrote to me Karpe. So Karp was different, it was easy. So I did it, and I have still, on various occasions it's Karp, but now I'm called Mrs Karpf, because I don't give the big concerts anymore.

AG: What did your husband do professionally? He decided not to go back to Poland?

NK: He decided. Ah, here? It was very hard for us, because we had no money. They paid my husband 70 guineas a month here in the embassy, and the rest was in Warsaw in a bank, 'Sparkonto'. So it was very hard for us, we lived very modestly, until he decided that he will go perhaps into real estate or perhaps do something. And I met my friend, school friend, actually he was younger, three years younger, but his brother was in the same school as I was, in this Hebrew Gymnasium, and he had a silk-screen printing business and he said they need somebody. And my husband joined them, but I was very unhappy, because it was such a stinking business, excuse me, you know with silk screen printing you can smell the paint and everything. When he was at the corner of Langland Gardens, I could smell it already, before he came home, in his clothes and everything.

Tape 4: 34 minutes 59 seconds

AG: Where were you living? In Langland?

NK: I lived in Langland Gardens, I had a beautiful house.

AG: Where is it?

NK: It is parallel to Arkwright Road, on a hill.

AG: So where did your husband make his career in the end?

NK: At the end, we had a friend, who went also to here, was sent to the Polish Consulate. She lived in the same house where my sister and my father lived before the war, we knew each other, and I met her here. After the war, I met her when she came, she was also in Auschwitz, for three years, and she said, 'I haven't got where to go'. I said, 'Listen, I have one room, we have no windows, because the windows were shattered by the bombs or so, and we sleep on the floor'. And she even slept with us and after a few months she somehow managed something. And I had lost contact with her. When my husband was in the embassy, he had phone calls from the consulate, from a woman, who wanted to speak to Dor. Karpf about this and this and this. She spoke to him few times, but that was all. When I was pregnant with Eve, it was very hot in '47, that was the hottest summer we had, it was 30, 40 degrees, it was unbearable, for three months, and my husband said to me, 'Don't prepare lunch, and don't prepare food, come to the embassy and I take you out for lunch somewhere. We will go'.

Tape 4: 37 minutes 0 second

And we were walking in Portland Place, where the embassy is, and suddenly coming towards me, my friend, also pregnant. You know, fifteen years ago you had to be married, to be like this, not like now, that you have a partner, that you can be pregnant without a partner and with this-. And so, she comes to me and says, 'Ah, I can see you got married!' She said, 'I can see you got married!' And we were both expecting our children, she six weeks earlier than me. Her husband was Polish, a lawyer, a Catholic she married. She was born in Vienna, a Viennese, and so we got in touch and they started buying little houses and so on. I said we have no money, perhaps we can do something together. No money until the Germans are paying, and they gave me, backwards, and a pension, and my husband also got a pension, because there was a date that people who went to Russian camps could also apply and he did. So we both had a very high pension from the Germans and we lived very comfortably.

AG: Did he go into real estate?

NK: Yes, but they were not big things.

AG: Can you tell me what his principal career was, just for the film?

NK: No, it wasn't him, he was very unhappy about it.

AG: As to your daughters, can you tell me how you decided to have them educated, what sort of schools did you send them to?

NK: My daughters went to Holy Trinity Primary School, which is in Hampstead.

AG: I know, it's just opposite Finchley Road Station.

NK: Yes.

AG: How did you feel about sending your daughters to Holy Trinity Primary School?

NK: Because they were 50% of Jewish children, refugees who came here, and I was told about this school because it was the nearest to us, because first we lived round the corner, not in Langland Gardens, only round the corner there, in a flat, and then we bought in '53, '54, or '53, we bought Langland Gardens, it was for sale, and a woman who lived opposite, whom I knew, she said, 'Mrs Karp, this house is for sale, Langland Gardens, number 8'. I said, 'We haven't got any money, but let me know about it'. She told me, 'The woman wants 4000, or 4500'. I said, 'This is impossible for us'. We didn't have it. But I thought, I said to my husband, 'We pay here a lot of rent'. And we had sublet one room to be able to pay the rent, and our neighbours were knocking to me when I was practising and it was getting very bad, and we were on the ground floor and there was a garden floor that he was knocking when the children were crying, when I was playing, and from upstairs as well, and I used to practise four, five hours at that time. So she said to me, 'Look, she's very anxious to sell the house and they offered her 2500'. So I said, 'How can I offer 2500?' I was looking at other houses, and everywhere there was something I didn't like. Now, when I came into this house, it was bright, it was beautiful, it had beautiful rooms, there was no smell, nothing, it had parquet floors, it was a castle for us. On two floors. But on the second floor was a sitting tenant living. So she couldn't ask too much. Anyhow, she was afraid, because a bomb fell at the corner of

Langland Gardens. We were in Lindfield before and the gardens were touching. And I saw this house always before and I thought what a lovely house this is, I would love to be there. This is a miracle, what's happened. That we had only 100%. She accepted for the 2400, which we paid her, for a forty years lease, with the sitting tenant.

AG: I was really asking you about your daughter's education. Could we go back to that?

NK: That's where we lived and in this district that's where we lived, and they said that this Holy Trinity School, it was 50% of Jewish people, so we went there. And he accepted Eve and then Anne and when it came to 11-Plus, Mr. Edwards, there was anti-Semitism, one of the teachers. My Eve came home and she was six years old and said to me, 'Mummy, the teacher, this and this'. I didn't get his name, a young teacher. A child asked what it means 'greedy', what the word 'greedy' means. So the teacher said, 'The Jews are greedy'. So she came home and talked with us. Oh, that is a thing that one has to get to-. So my husband wrote a letter to Mr. Edwards.

AG: The headmaster?

NK: Yes. And wrote to him, 'I can't disclose my name because I don't want my child to be victimised, but this and this happened'. The next day after the letter arrived there Eve came home for lunch-.
[Interruption]

The next day my Eve came for lunch and she was very upset. She said, 'Mummy, did you speak to somebody and tell them what I told you?' I said no. I lied. 'Why, what happened?" 'Oh, Mr. So and So, the teacher, asked all the Jewish children to get up. 'Who betrayed this? Who said about this what happened at home? And you will pay for it.' I said, 'Don't be afraid, I don't think he can do anything'. And on the third day she came home and she said, 'He was dismissed, he was thrown out'. Mr. Edwards was such a man that he threw out this teacher. And when it came to 11-Plus, Mr. Edwards said to me, 'Mrs Karp, you have very clever children, don't despair, ask for a scholarship, ask for scholarship in South Hampstead School'. And both my girls had scholarships in South Hampstead School. I never paid a penny for their education because of Mr. Edwards who gave me the advice.

Tape 4: 45 minutes 42 seconds

AG: And did they do well in South Hampstead?

NK: They got well. Eve applied to Bristol University, she wanted to be an actress. First I said, 'No, you have to go to university, whatever you want to read, but have a university education and study'. And she was not accepted and she was in despair, she wrote to the secretary because she didn't want to go to another university because she wanted to study Drama, French and Italian. A few weeks later, after they declined her, she called me and said, 'Mummy, I'm going to Bristol University for an interview'. I said, 'How come?' 'I wrote to the Dean: 'How can you not accept me without having spoken to me and seen me? I want to talk to you'.' And they invited her for a talk. And when they talked to her, they said, 'We haven't got any place now, perhaps next year'. She said, 'Not next year, this year'. So he said, 'Oh, we will put you on the list'. And she enrolled to the Secretarial College because she-. And on the 4th of October they were starting university. So, on the 3rd, she got a letter that she can come. And from there she went to the Old Vic School in Bristol and straight away to

Coventry to the Rep afterwards. And her French and Italian is without any accent. Phenomenal. And Anne also got a scholarship and got into old universities, into Cambridge, into Oxford, into Sussex, into five universities, it was embarrassing. She didn't know where to go, and she chose Oxford.

Tape 4: 48 minutes 5 seconds

AG: A very wise choice. Sorry, which college did she go to?

NK: Anne went to, oh gosh, St Hilda's.

AG: And what did she do then professionally?

NK: She started PPE. But after a year she said, 'Mummy do you mind if I change to English?' I said, 'I don't mind anything as long as you are happy'. And she changed her degree. And when she finished, she got straight away to the BBC, as a researcher, and had big money, but she didn't like show business, and she finished, and now it's difficult, writing books and articles.

AG: But didn't she have a career in journalism?

NK: Yes, she did another, she got another degree, she got two degrees, she did a Masters in Psychology of Health and Illness, another degree.

AG: I mean, I remember her writing for The Guardian?

NK: She writes for the Jewish Chronicle. She started with an article in The Times. 'One Week', or sometimes for journalists, 'One Week', or something, what she did every day or so, and she even wrote that she was fasting on Yom Kippur.

AG: And she's best known perhaps for the book she wrote.

NK: But she's writing another book, Bloomsbury is going to-.

AG: Yes. I was going to mention the book, 'The War After', and I wondered if I can ask you what you felt when that book came out and you read it.

Tape 4: 50 minutes 12 seconds

NK: She thought that I will hate her. I didn't. Because I understand. First of all, I'm a liberated mother now. The older I get, the more tolerant I'm getting, more understanding for my children and their lives. So I was delighted that she wrote the book.

AG: Are your daughters married?

NK: They're both married. Anne had a partner first for 22 years, or 21, and they had two children, but the older one, when she was 10, she asked the parents to get married, and now she's also in South Hampstead School and there are a lot of Jewish girls there now. And she was Barmitzvahed last year, although her father is not Jewish. He's sixteen years older, he's a retired lecturer. But they are very happy. And when my daughter phoned me three years ago,

in November, and said, ‘Mummy are you sitting?’ ‘No.’ ‘Sit down. I want to tell you something. We decided to get married.’ I said, ‘It took you 22 or 21 years’. And he is a grandfather; he’s got grandchildren from his first marriage.

AG: And what about Eve? Who is she married to?

NK: Eve, she married a South African, who was a barrister.

AG: Jewish?

NK: Yes. Jewish, who doesn’t keep anything. And this one, non-Jewish, keeps everything, all the holidays. He said, ‘I bought my Kippah for Christmas’.

AG: And do they have children?

NK: They have two children, and one is in Balliol College, and finished his second year, and now he is-, when he comes back from Japan, from where they are now, with ‘The Taming of the Shrew’, Balliol College, he’s going to France, for a year, he has to spend a year in France, teaching French children English.

AG: And what about the career of Eve’s husband?

NK: He was a barrister for many years and it was a very difficult job because if you are criminal, everything is Legal Aid and they don’t like to pay straight away, only after six months or a year. By the time you got your cheque for your fees or salaries, you have already a lot of debts, and it was very difficult. But he became a judge three years ago, in the Crown Court, and he is a very gifted man and he is very artistic. He’s got a collective of Primitive Zulu African Art and he is a specialist in it and he’s very artistic.

Tape 4: 53 minutes 46 seconds

AG: We’re just beginning to wind down now. How do you feel you’ve settled in England? What are your feelings about it?

NK: My feeling now is that this is my country. I never want to go back to Poland and I feel that this is my home; it was longer than in Poland. But at the beginning it was very difficult. I felt an outsider wherever I went, and of course my language, first of all when I open my mouth they ask me, ‘Where do you come from?’. I say, ‘From London’. They look at me. I say, ‘Yes, I’ve been in London for how long? 57 years now’.

AG: Was it difficult for you to become a British citizen?

NK: No, not with the authorities, no. That was very easy because we had an interview, you know, they have here, I don’t know which office it is. The Foreign Office or the other, they knew about us everything. So one gets an interview. When you say the truth, tell them all the truth. They knew, first of all, that my husband was never in the party, that he was never a party man, and that he was a rich man. So they knew everything. And when he said everything what he had to answer, and the truth, it covered their information, they said straight away, ‘Send already for a passport’, and, after five years we applied, and we had six months later or nine months later the passport. We had to swear to the Queen..

AG: I'd only asked because I supposed he could have had difficulties because he was a diplomat from an Iron Curtain country.

NK: He was an exceptional case, because others from the embassy or consulate applied, and they had difficulties. My husband never had. He was in integrity when they interviewed.

AG: One last question, if this interview was shown to your grandchildren, or anybody else, future generations, have you got any message you would like to pass on, anything you would like to say?

NK: Just be yourself, be honest, and do with your life the best what you can and I love you all.

AG: And, on that note, we shall finish. Natalia Karpf, thank you very much for the interview.

NK: Thank you for bearing with me.

Wide shot.

Tape 4: 57 minutes 0 second

Photos.

Photo 1: Natalia Karpf's late sister, Helena. Taken in Krakow in 1946.

Photo 2: Natalia Karpf's husband, Josef Karpf, taken in 1946, in Krakow.

Photo 3: Natalia Karpf's piano trio, chamber ensemble, 'London Alpha Trio'. Photo shows French violinist, Henriette Kante; cellist, Regina Schein and Natalia Karpf. Taken in the sixties in London.

Photo 4: Natalia Karpf's daughters, Eve, the older one, and Anne, the younger one. Taken in 2002 in London.

Photo 5: Natalia Karpf playing on the same piano on which Chopin played 101 years before, in the same place, in Eaton Place, on the 100th anniversary of his death. In 1949.

Photo 6: The programme of the three recitals to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Chopin's death in 1949. He died on 17th of October, 1849. Natalia's concert was on the 12th October 1949.

Tape 4: 59 minutes 58 seconds

END