

Ethnography of Hilde Schottlander

by Meghan Bermudez

“The past is our definition. We may strive, with good reason, to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it, but we will escape it only by adding something better to it.”

-Wendell Berry

Our past will never leave us. It has shaped our present and inevitably our futures as well. We can not deny it, forget it, or change it, but it is our job to learn from it. History books can provide facts and figures about the Holocaust but it is only through the testimony of those who suffered that we can even begin to understand the scope of this tragedy. This is the only way we can prevent history from repeating itself, it is the only way we can ensure that the Holocaust never happens again. We must learn the stories of Hitler’s victims. In the words of Wendell Berry we must add “something better” to it, their past. This “something better” is taking the stories that we have learned and carrying them with us; carrying them with us and passing them on. This is our duty to those who survived the horror and have lived to tell their stories but it is also our duty to those whose voices we will never hear. We honor those whose lives were lost by always remembering, so that their suffering will never be forgotten. I can honestly say that I have felt no greater responsibility in my life than when I received this opportunity to learn the story of Mrs. Hilde Schottlander and to share it with others. She said I was a ray of sunshine in her life but I’m not sure she realizes what a light she was in mine. I hope that my efforts here will do her justice and that after hearing this, the story of her life, she will be someone you never forget. I know she is someone that I will never forget.

For me, this journey to understanding began with a seemingly simple task: a phone call. Nervous, I picked up the phone and dialed Mrs. Schottlander's telephone number. As the phone rang I became even more nervous and I will admit that I cowardly hoped to hear an answering machine. This silent plea went unanswered as a gruff voice sounded from the other end of the telephone line telling me that Mrs. Schottlander was not home. I did not know who that voice belonged to, but I was thankful for it then as it gave me a little bit more time to get myself together. I was able to postpone what I anticipated to be an awkward telephone conversation for just a little longer. I called again the next day and was met with a different voice on the other end of the line. This time it was Mrs. Schottlander but as I feared our conversation began with a rocky start and my feelings of anticipation grew. At first, Mrs. Schottlander thought I was a telemarketer and thus was less than open to engaging in any kind of conversation with me. Fortunately, I was able to quickly explain myself and once she understood that I was not a telemarketer our conversation took a turn for the better. I instantly felt a comfort with Mrs. Schottlander that can be explained only by her warm personality. She immediately welcomed me into her home for our interview which left me excited rather than nervous in the time leading up to our first meeting.

Mrs. Schottlander lives in the Rotary Senior Housing complex in Old Bridge, New Jersey. Her apartment is small, but cozy and warm. Her door is decorated with a sign which reads "Shalom". This modest ornament speaks strongly to the person that Mrs. Schottlander is. She is proud of her Jewish heritage and her wish for this the world is simple, "peace." Upon entering her home one can see the pride and love she has for her family. The walls are adorned with picture frames displaying photographs of her children and grandchildren. Stuffed bears fill all available space on her shelves and atop the back of her sofa. She sits in an armchair to the left

of the couch. She looks strong, confident, and far younger than her 82 years. My initial response: she does not fit into Hitler's prototype of what Jewish people look like. She later mentions this during our interview and points out that with my dark hair and dark eyes I would have been considered more Jewish looking than she was during this time. Her light colored hair and eyes likely could have helped her "pass" as an "Aryan" girl had she remained in Germany during the war.

She welcomes me and I am immediately put at ease. She is not at all intimidating and her warm demeanor makes me confident that the interview will go well. She is not only ready to tell her story but has prepared for the experience by gathering several documents she has saved over the years. These documents include the letter given to her in-laws from the Nazis when they took over the family's department store. She also has the passports of her husband, her mother, and her in-laws, but not her own. This turns out to be more significant later on as Mrs. Schottlander begins to share her story. We proceed to go through the documents, an experience I will not soon forget. It is one thing to learn in a textbook that Jews were forced to carry a passport marked with "a red "J" stamped on them" and to take on "new middle names for all those Jews who did not possess recognizably "Jewish" first names -- "Israel" for males, "Sara" for females." (Nuremburg 1) It is another thing to see these sanctions carried out and to hold the documents in your hands.

Now she is ready, "What do you want to know?" (Schottlander, 9/15)

"What do you want to know?" What didn't I want to know? I wanted to know everything and Mrs. Schottlander was more than willing to oblige me. Her children never wanted to hear much about her experiences during the war and she is relishing the chance to share her story with someone who wants to hear it. She said about her children, "No they aren't even that interested." (Schottlander, 9/15) When I inquired about why that she thought that was the case her answer

surprised me, “I don’t know because their father never talked about it. I don’t think he ever told them about his stay in Dachau. He didn’t even tell me.” (Schottlander, 9/15) Ernest Schottlander set the tone for talk about the Holocaust in his family and in his home. He could not bear to talk about his experiences and consequently the Holocaust was a topic that was never spoken about. Now that he has passed on and her children are grown Mrs. Schottlander is finally able to tell her story, to share her experiences, and I am honored to say that she was able to share them with me.

Mrs. Schottlander’s story differs from that of many other survivors because she was able to escape Germany before the large deportations to concentration camps began in 1941. This does not make her suffering any less important than those who were deported to the camps but it markedly changes the way in which she suffered. She does not even wish to be called a “Holocaust survivor” because she does not see herself as a survivor, but rather as a refugee. In fact, when Mr. Paul Winkler first contacted her from the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education she told him she was not a survivor at all. He proceeded to ask her if she had been in Germany on November 9, 1938 the date of the infamous Kristallnacht. She had been in Germany at this time, and thus is considered a survivor by the State of New Jersey which uses the date of Kristallnacht as a means to define who is and who is not a survivor. Those in Germany at this time are considered survivors and those who left prior to this date are not. (Schottlander 11/14) I would contend that while Mrs. Schottlander’s suffering differs from that of the “typical” survivor, it is just as poignant and those interested in learning about the Holocaust can learn as much from her as from any other individual. Her belief that she is not a survivor is an important fact to consider however, as one learns her story. This belief shapes the way she views not only her past, but her present, as well as her future.

Mrs. Hilde Schottlander was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1925. She grew up as the only child of divorced parents, something not typical of the time. “My childhood was very different from my friends’ childhoods. My parents were divorced when I was a very little infant and I never had a father at home.” (Schottlander, 9/15) During the week Hilde lived with her mother and grandmother in an apartment complex. On the weekends she reluctantly visited her father whom it seems she would have rather not seen at all. As we broach this topic in the interview, her early childhood life, one can see the anger with which Mrs. Schottlander remembers these weekend visits. “I had to go visit him [her father] every week which I hated. I did not like my father. As a matter of fact I hated him. It took me a long time to make peace with that.” (Schottlander, 9/15) This brief moment of anger is quickly washed away as Mrs. Schottlander states with pleasure that her childhood was a happy one. She speaks of friends and neighbors and can not recall once experiencing Anti-Semitism. “The people in Hamburg, I hate to say it but its true were not as viciously Anti-Semitic as in other cities.” (Schottlander, 9/15) She continues, “I have to say one thing. No one every called me a dirty Jew. I didn’t look Jewish.” (Schottlander, 9/15) This lack of anti-Semitism can be attributed to the feeling of coexistence the city as a whole felt with the Nazi regime at this time. “The Hamburg Jewish Community experienced the years between 1934 and 1937 as a period of relative calm, which appeared to offer the possibility of an accommodation with the Nazi regime.” Hamburg was not affected as early as other areas of Germany and this is likely why Mrs. Schottlander did not feel the effects of Hitler’s politics as early as other Jewish citizens. (History 1)

The apartment complex in which Mrs. Schottlander lived was filled with mostly Protestant families, but Mrs. Schottlander can not recall religion ever playing a role in the interactions she had with her neighbors. She knew that many of her neighbors were not Jewish

but this didn't seem to matter at all until Hitler's power began to grow and his politics became widespread. "I went to a Jewish school but this was not because of Hitler... So I grew up very sheltered but I did play with girls who weren't Jewish. All I knew was that they celebrated Christmas. I knew nothing about other religions." (Schottlander, 10/19) She can recall one story where instead of asking another neighborhood child whether she was Jewish or Christian she asked "Are you Christmas or Hanukkah?" (Schottlander, 10/19) This recollection, while it is brief and may at first seem to be insignificant, shows that at this time religion did not separate people as it did during the Nazi regime. In this instance, the question is not over religion, but over holidays, and even then the answer doesn't seem to matter much.

The first memory that Mrs. Schottlander has of Hitler's actions in her country reflect the naïveté with which the majority of German citizens received Nazi actions. Kristallnacht took place on the night of November 9, 1938. On November 10, however, Mrs. Schottlander had no idea that this event had even taken place. As she recounted this day during our interview one can see that at first the day began like any other, but by the end Mrs. Schottlander realized that her life would no longer be the same. She remembers arriving at school with a girlfriend and being immediately sent home by a teacher. The children thought nothing of it and simply turned around and returned to their homes, a day off from school! Mrs. Schottlander's mother and grandmother were happy to see her, "how nice you are home we are going to go downtown shopping." (Schottlander, 9/15) The three set off on their way only to be turned around just as they got off the streetcar by a very kind "well dressed man". They were to return home immediately and waste no time. The women did not take this advice lightly and quickly went on their way. (Schottlander, 9/15) While some may not have recognized the gravity of this event Mrs. Schottlander's mother was prudent enough to see the danger in the situation. After returning

from downtown on the streetcar Mrs. Schottlander can remember her mother receiving a phone call. "My aunt, my grandmother's sister called, they took Kurt, her son. They took him. We had no idea what was going on. My girlfriend's mother called. They took her husband...It started to ring a bell...and we knew what was going on." (Schottlander, 9/15) Consequently, Mrs.

Schottlander's mother began to realize that the family's future in Germany might be uncertain. It was at this moment, on this day, that the fate of the family was irrevocably changed as Mrs. Schottlander's mother made the decision that would save their lives. Her family would not wait in Germany to see what else might happen, they were going to get out while they still could.

Kristallnacht is a night that forever changed the lives of all German Jews. For Mrs. Schottlander the night would not only directly affect her immediate family, but the family she would come to have in the future. On November 9, 1938 thousands of Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues were destroyed. This destruction however, was not the only action taken against innocent Jewish citizens. In addition to the physical destruction of property, hundreds of Jewish men were captured by Nazi soldiers and taken to Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. This was the first large scale arrest and transport of Jewish citizen by the Nazi regime. Thirty thousand men were taken from their homes and were released only after they arranged to emigrate and transfer their property to "Aryans." (Kristallnacht 1)

Among these men were Mrs. Schottlander's father and her future husband. Mrs. Schottlander's father would be released after 4 weeks due to his prior service in the army during World War I. Her future husband, Ernest, was also released after being held for 6 weeks in the concentration camp. Though both men survived, the time they spent in Dachau forever affected their lives. Mrs. Schottlander can recall a visible change in her husband occurring each and every subsequent November. This lasted throughout his adult life up until his death. "My husband was

there 6 weeks and let me tell you every year when it came around November he was a nervous wreck.” (Schottlander, 10/19) The affects of the Holocaust did not end with the liberation of concentration camps in 1945, but continue today as the pain suffered by the victims of the Nazi regime remains a part of their everyday lives.

After Kristallnacht more and more regulations were passed against Jewish citizens. Mrs. Schottlander can remember seeing countless signs reading “No Jews and Dogs”. “At that time Jews and Dogs prohibited, signs all over...parks, restaurants, theaters...Jews and Dogs prohibited.” (Schottlander, 9/15) She repeated this several times throughout our interview and the impact seeing these signs had on her is clear. This is the closest Mrs. Schottlander ever came to experiencing Anti-Semitism and while it may seem small in comparison to the experiences of other Holocaust survivors the impact of the signs has stayed with her even today. Luckily for Mrs. Schottlander her mother was not waiting around for more terrible things to start happening. She saw these same signs and knew that she had to get her family out of Germany. Consequently she actively began making preparations for their escape.

Escaping Germany at this time was not any easy task. Mrs. Schottlander’s mother was not the only German Jew who realized at this time that emigration was the only way to save her family. In fact, there were 115, 000 German Jews who felt the same way and emigrated from Germany in the months following Kristallnacht. While the Nazis were encouraging emigration at this point in the war it was not an easy experience for many families. Most had been deprived of their wealth and property by the Nazi regime and few countries were willing to take in large numbers of these now impoverished immigrants. At this time the world was also facing the struggles sparked by the Great Depression which only furthered the difficulties that Jews faced in attempting to emigrate to other countries. (Kristallnacht 1)

This emigration trend was reflected across Germany but it was also specifically reflected in the number of people who fled from Hamburg at the time. “The Hamburg Jewish community experienced three waves of emigration, that are partly reflected in the above figures, namely in the period from the beginning until the summer of 1933, then following the "Nuremberg Laws", and lastly following the pogrom of 9/10. November 1938” (History 1) The Schottlanders, however, were lucky and had family in the United States. If this had not been the case the Schottlanders would not have been able to come to America. “My uncle, my mother’s only brother married a non-Jewish girl just before Hitler came to power, before you couldn’t do it anymore. They lived in Berlin where Anti-Semitism started up much sooner than in my town and he wanted to get out of there in 1936.” (Schottlander, 9/15) This action by Mrs. Schottlander’s uncle showed foresightedness in his reaction to the Nuremberg laws which “on the 15th September 1935, the day of the NSDAP party conference, the "Nuremberg Laws" were enacted. These laws made Jews second class citizens and, as a result, set them apart from the rest of the population.” (History 1) These laws explicitly stated that “marriages were forbidden between "Jews" and "German" nationals or those with "generically related blood". Extramarital contact between these groups of people was also forbidden.” ( History 1)

While Sara Schottlander worked hard to arrange the paperwork to get her family out of Germany her daughter Hilde feverishly learned English. At this time there was nothing that Hilde wanted more than to get out of Germany and to learn English. “I was a young kid I was 11 years old and I became obsessed at that time—I’m going to America. I learned English like crazy. When I came here in 1939 I spoke English fluently.” (Schottlander, 9/15) She would not and could not rest until both of these goals were attained. This desperate need translated into

anxiety for Mrs. Schottlander. She constantly feared being stuck in Germany; unable to escape. These fears have never left her and remain a part of her life today.

Fortunately for the Schottlander family, Hilde's fear of being stuck in Germany was never realized, although the family did have a close call. Sara Schottlander was able to arrange the paperwork for her family's emigration to America but one last hurdle remained. This hurdle was a court date to approve the family's move. "We were constantly postponed because at this time our American consulate employees were very happy to take money. They pushed people ahead and my mother didn't know to do that...to give somebody money. It's not German! It's terrible!" (Schottlander, 9/15) The family was told they would be given another court date in the coming weeks. These delays nearly prevented the family's departure from Germany. "We were pushed back and back. We gave up our apartment, moved in with my grandmother's sister. My mother had to go to the authorities to buy summer clothes because it went from summer to winter." (Schottlander, 9/15) By the time the next court date arrived the family's clearances had all expired. For Mrs. Schottlander's mother this meant a frantic rush to get the paperwork reapproved. "All of the sudden in July we get a letter to come to the consulate on the 7<sup>th</sup> [of August]. My poor mother ran around like a crazy lunatic. You had to have so many clearances and they had all expired." (Schottlander, 9/15) All went well except for the approval of one necessary document. The Schottlanders were told by a clerk that he would try to get the document to them in time for the court date, but he could not promise them anything. "The man there says he doesn't know if he can get it by the 7<sup>th</sup> of August...he will try." (Schottlander, 9/15) That night a miracle happened. "That night at my aunt's house he came. If anybody had seen him he would have been sent off to a concentration camp. He said 'Don't tell anybody! Good luck!' And he went away." He brought with him not merely a document but a future for

the family; life embodied in the last clearance they needed for their emigration. Of this man Mrs. Schottlander said, “So here and there were decent people...not many but there were.”

(Schottlander, 9/15)

The family’s passage had been granted. A stroke of luck had gotten them through the court date and another stroke of luck would get them to America. “The next day my mother and grandmother did a very smart thing. God must have whispered in their ears.” (Schottlander, 9/15)

The Nazis had taken over Germany. In the past weeks, months, and years they had threatened, tortured, and stolen from Jews across the country. Who, at this time, would want to take German transportation to get out of the country? The answer seems obvious and it is true, no one wanted to take the German steamship line out of the country. This is what saved the Schottlanders. “Of course you went to the American steamship line. Who would go on any other boat to America?”

(Schottlander, 9/15) There was not room on the American line however until October. Mrs.

Schottlander’s mother was aware enough of the situation to know that waiting that long would be too much of a risk. She said, “We’ve lived in Germany this long, we’ll go by German boat.”

(Schottlander, 9/15) Her family would take the German steamship line. It turned out that this decision is what made the difference between her family escaping Germany rather than

remaining in the clutches of the Nazi regime. The German steamship carrying the Schottlanders

was the last one that was able to leave the country and arrive safely in the United States. Mrs.

Schottlander described her mother and grandmother’s efforts to book passage to America. “They

went to the Hamburg-American steamship line and booked passage for August 17<sup>th</sup>. The boat

was only a quarter full because all the Jews went by Scandinavian, the Dutch line and that was

the last boat to leave Germany so we were very very lucky.” (Schottlander, 9/15) This decision,

whether it can be attributed more to luck, quick thinking on the part of Sara Schottlander, or God

is the reason Mrs. Schottlander was able to come to the United States and escape the horror of the Holocaust. “We arrived here one week before Hitler marched into Poland. We arrived here August 25<sup>th</sup>, he marched into Poland on September 1<sup>st</sup>. I mean we were so lucky. I can’t begin to tell you.” (Schottlander, 9/15)

Coming to the United States did not come without a price. The journey was difficult and struggles awaited the Schottlander family. Mrs. Schottlander was prepared however, for some of the difficulties she would encounter. Her nearly perfect command of the English language helped her to adjust more easily after her arrival in the United States. She had an accent, but she stated in the interview that she was able to lose that pretty quickly. “I learned English the British way but I lost that right away.” (Schottlander, 9/15) The family settled in Washington Heights, New York. “Of course the area that we lived in was a lot of German Jews and I made a pretty quick adjustment. It was hard at first but I was so happy to be here. You have no idea.” (Schottlander, 9/15) After their arrival the Schottlanders did not waste anytime “becoming American.” Mrs. Schottlander tells a story about how her mother, knowing little English and having no idea where she was going, made her way through the city to get the first papers she needed for her family to become citizens. “I mean we were only here a couple of days and my mother didn’t speak English very well and my uncle said you have to go get your first papers...and my mother went on the subway. She had never been on the subway, she didn’t know where she was going, she had a piece of paper.” (Schottlander, 10/19) One could easily see the pride with which Mrs. Schottlander recounted this story. Her mother did not let her lack of knowledge about the English language or the new city she was living in stop her from getting those papers; from officially becoming an American. Her mother, Hilde’s grandmother, felt the same way. She approached this by declaring that the family would no longer keep a kosher home. Mrs. Schottlander says her

family wanted to assimilate, to be American, and this is the way her grandmother thought they could accomplish that. “When we came to America my grandmother, may she rest in peace, she was a very with it lady and when we came to America she said ok enough with this kosher stuff. We didn’t mix meat and milk but we had only one set of dishes. She made things more streamline.” (Schottlander, 10/19) Mrs. Schottlander too wanted to be as American as possible and to accomplish this she spoke German only when she was at home. Even with her friends, many of whom were also German Jews who had come to America, she did not speak German. She says, “We would walk home from school and people would ask us for directions sometimes, we knew they spoke German, we wouldn’t answer them in German... We wanted nothing to do with it, nothing.” (Schottlander 10/19) This has not changed as Mrs. Schottlander has gotten older. Today she does not speak German at all and if asked what her background is she tells people she is American. If she is pressed, she will admit to having been born there, but for the most part she does not want to be associated at all with Germany. This is part of the reason she no longer has her German passport. While she kept the passports belonging to the rest of her family and even her in-laws, she could not bear to keep her own. She destroyed it after coming to America in an effort to rid herself of her German heritage. For Mrs. Schottlander, this strong desire to break away from her German past translated into an obsession with becoming American. Throughout her adolescence in the United States Mrs. Schottlander developed a love for this country that would put many of us to shame. She was so happy to arrive in America that she is grateful for every moment she has been able to spend here. When she speaks about the United States one can easily see how much love she has for this nation and she openly criticizes people whom she does not feel share the same love and pride she has for America. “The people that come here today all they do is knock at what’s here in America. I can’t stand it. How dare

you knock anything here! Nothing's perfect. This is still the best place to be. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else." (Schottlander, 10/19) While this statement may not accurately reflect the feelings that immigrants today have about the United States this statement clearly reflects the way Mrs. Schottlander feels about this country. This is a fact that is important to remember when hearing her story.

Mrs. Schottlander met her husband in the United States after the war. He too had been able to escape to America before being deported to another concentration camp. His parents were also able to get out of Germany and spent the war in China. "My in-laws had went to Siberia...and then of course already America was going into the war and the American consulate told them to proceed to Shanghai, China. China was the only country on the planet Earth that let Jews in with just their passports." (Schottlander, 9/15) Mrs. Schottlander praised China, impressed that they would allow Jews to come in so easily as compared to the policies of other countries at the time. In reality, this may have actually been less a credit to China and more a credit to Japan. "Yes—the port city of Shanghai was a haven for some Jewish refugees during the Hitler years-- but large areas of China were under Japanese military occupation from 1931 until 1945, and immigration to Shanghai was controlled by the Japanese government, not the Chinese. The Japanese, hoping to improve their relations with the United States and the American Jewish community, permitted thousands of German and Austrian Jews to settle in Shanghai during the 1930s." (Medoff 1)

The couple had three children. The twins, a boy and a girl, were born first and the youngest, a son, followed in the next couple of years. Mrs. Schottlander raised her children in a Jewish home but one that would be considered lax by strict practitioners of the faith. "We were sort of modernized religious and when I got married my husband wasn't at all. I didn't have a

kosher home but we celebrated the holidays, we went to Temple, my boys were Bar Mitzvahed you know that sort of thing. But not as religious as I was growing up.” (Schottlander, 10/19)

Today Mrs. Schottlander’s children are married and have families of their own. Neither her children nor her grandchildren strictly practice Judaism. Her children have all married outside of their faith and raised their own children in homes which celebrate both Jewish and Christian traditions. This is a fact that saddens Mrs. Schottlander. While she was never a strictly observant Jew her children are even less observant. She says however that while this is something that she wishes was different she is satisfied to simply have a happy and healthy family. She worries about the future and that something like the Holocaust could happen again. She speaks fondly of her grandchildren, especially of her first great grandson born 6 months ago and hopes that they will grow up safely in this changing world. Her small apartment, filled with photographs of family, is a constant reminder of the life she was able to have because she escaped from Germany so many years ago.

For many years Mrs. Schottlander had successfully put her life in Germany behind her, separating her adult American self from her German girlhood. When the opportunity to return to her homeland arose, she was hesitant to take up the offer. “I never wanted to go back. Hamburg has a program already for years...the last twenty years or more and they invite survivors to come back on their expense and you have to register. Of course they take the oldest people first. I-I never registered. Some of my friends went. I did not go.” (Schottlander, 9/15) It seemed that Mrs. Schottlander would never return to Germany. This changed when an old friend who still lived there called her to let her know that there was a newspaper article looking for Ernest Schottlander. Mrs. Schottlander got into contact with the Historical Society in Munich which had placed the article mentioning her husband. “To make a long story short I got in touch with them

and the Munich government gave an amount of money to the Historical Society to do an exhibit on Jewish life before, during, and after Hitler. One of the guys was doing his PhD on this and they got in touch with me and they invited me to come to the opening of the exhibit and I sent them a lot of stuff and telephoned and wrote and I had absolutely no time to prepare.”

(Schottlander, 9/15) The exhibit was to open in three weeks. Mrs. Schottlander rushed to get a passport. The Historical Society had invited her to bring one of her children as well, but with the short notice this was not possible. So Mrs. Schottlander decided she would go by herself. Her experience in Munich is on that she looks back on fondly. “I had a very very good experience there. In Munich people are very very friendly. Of course I was tourist. I had never been to Munich before and I liked it very much and I said to my kids: They were so nice and I enjoyed it so much I was just like a tourist there. I think I’ll put my name down to go to Hamburg.”

(Schottlander, 9/15) So Mrs. Schottlander registered to make the trip back to her hometown. The program that funded these trips back to Hamburg for Holocaust survivors allowed for survivors to bring a spouse. Unfortunately, Mrs. Schottlander’s husband had already passed away, but she was able to bring along her daughter instead. So the two set off for Hamburg, neither really knowing what was in store for them.

Mrs. Schottlander had been excited and looking forward to the trip to Hamburg because she anticipated it being as wonderful an experience as her trip to Munich. This was not the case. “So my daughter went with me to Hamburg and it was a horse of a different color. You know because I had been there.” (Schottlander, 9/15) When Mrs. Schottlander went to Munich it was the first time she had ever been there. Now in Hamburg she felt very different because she had known Hamburg before the war. Seeing her old hometown now, so many years later, was a much more emotionally taxing experience than seeing Munich. Hamburg was not the same city and

Mrs. Schottlander was not the same scared little girl that fled it so many years ago. Overall however the trip passed largely without incident until it was time to leave. Mrs. Schottlander had made arrangements to take her daughter to Munich after their stay in Hamburg. “What I did is when I was here in the States I arranged for a train ticket and for reservations to Munich. I wanted to show my daughter where her dad came from. We were already in Germany so we stayed in Hamburg. We had reservations in the hotel they made for us and that day we were going to go to Munich. Everybody else was going home and we were going to Munich.”

(Schottlander, 9/15) It was at this point in the trip that Mrs. Schottlander began to feel again like the scared young girl she had been the last time she was in Hamburg. She went to bed the night before they were to go to Munich and woke up in a panic. The anxiety she had felt in the months leading before her family had been able to escape returned with vengeance and Mrs.

Schottlander could not handle it. They had to get out of there. They had to leave. “I said to my daughter: Get me out of here! I’m going to forfeit the tickets...hundreds of dollars. I don’t care! Let’s go!” (Schottlander 9/15) Seeing the state of distress her mother was in, Mrs. Schottlander’s daughter acted quickly to get her to the airport. Even the woman working for the airline could tell that Mrs. Schottlander was very upset. “I think it cost \$50 if you change your timing and so forth. The woman she took one look at me and said to my daughter Forget about it I’m not charging you. Get your mother out of here.” (Schottlander, 9/15) Once she boarded the plane she was fine but when she got back home it took her about three months to start feeling more like her old self again. The fear of being stuck in Germany, unable to escape is something that has never left Mrs. Schottlander after all these years. Even now she suffers periodically from nightmares. The nightmares are always the same: she is stuck, unable to get out of Hamburg.

The anxiety that Mrs. Schottlander deals with in her life, as a result of her experiences during the Holocaust, is the only physical scar she carries from this time period. The other scars that mark her are not visible to the outside world because they are cuts from the inside. Mrs. Schottlander carries with her the burden that all survivors are forced to bear, the question of why she lived and others died. Mrs. Schottlander has struggled with this question many times since she arrived in America in 1939. "I become very anxious because I question why we were spared. And you feel almost guilty." (Schottlander 10/19) Of her Aunt Charlotte in particular she expresses a guilt that has never gone away. As she was preparing to leave Hamburg she said to this aunt. "When I go to America Auntie, you don't have to worry. I will make sure you are coming. That still bothers me...such unnecessary things." (Schottlander 9/15) Her aunt died in a concentration camp during the war. There was nothing Hilde could have done to save her. She knows this, but she still feels in some way responsible because she was not able to keep the promise that she made. As information about Hitler's regime began to come out after Germany lost the war she faced a particularly difficult struggle. She now felt angry towards America. This was different from any other emotion she had ever had regarding her adopted homeland. She loved America. How could this country that she loved and respected so much do so little to help during this horrific tragedy? "I got very angry with America. It was the first time I felt anger and then when it came out that President Roosevelt, especially to the Jewish people he was a God, and he didn't lift one finger to help one Jew." (Schottlander, 9/15) Many years later she took a trip with her son to Mexico and her anger was rekindled. "I took a trip with my son to Mexico once by car. There is so much empty land down there...this is going back 25 years...we could have taken so many in there. No excuse." (Schottlander 9/15)

This anger at America has since subsided as her love for this country is far more powerful than her anger. “You have to understand that I love this country more than anything else in the world!” (Schottlander, 10/19) This does mean however, that Mrs. Schottlander has forgotten. She knows that is important for people to learn what happened during the Holocaust and that is why she decided to finally share her story. For Mrs. Schottlander, so much of her story is the life she was able to have here in the United States because she was able to get out of Germany. This gratitude has made her American through and through. In Germany, she was in many ways an outsider. Her family life made her different from others, separated her in some way because her parents were divorced. When Hitler came to power she was an outsider because of her religion—Judaism set her apart from the majority of German citizens. Even within her religion she has experienced a feeling of divide. “I always feel like I’m an outsider. Everybody else their ancestors came from Eastern Germany.” (Schottlander, 10/19) Her faith has been questioned simply because of the ideas people have about German Jews, “Well you don’t know you [Jews in Germany] were never religious in Germany” Her response, “Well that’s not true there were very religious people but like here in America. We are American Jews but we are American.” (Schottlander, 10/19) For Mrs. Schottlander, being American has meant no divide between herself and others; no separation. In this arena she is just like everyone else and I think that is what she loves most about this country. This is something I have learned from Mrs. Schottlander and will take away from my experience in getting to know her. I hope that it is not something I will ever forget. She shared with me her story of intense struggle and perseverance to attain something I have taken for granted: American citizenship. I will now be a more patriotic and appreciative American citizen and I have Mrs. Schottlander to thank for that.

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