

were born in '42 somewhere on a train. Then I was annoyed that she didn't have any more kids when we came to America or didn't have any more kids in Germany, feeling that would have made everything all right. I don't know if it would have or not, but it certainly would have replaced the grandparents, aunts, and everybody else that they lost that I didn't know what it would be like to have. I guess I knew what it would be like to have brothers and sisters because I saw people who had them.

Miriam. I can relate to the thing about the grandparents. I mean, that to me is the greatest symbol of the difference between my childhood and the childhood of my friends. A grandparent to me was something that was a strange concept. People would say, "I'm going to visit my baby, and she makes me this," and it just always seemed very strange. When I met with some of my old friends from high school, we discussed now, as adults, how we never even mentioned that we didn't have grandparents. It was just something that you accepted that was missing. I just found out three weeks ago from my father that his grandparents were killed in Auschwitz. Now, I'm 38 years old. Because I never asked him. And as I'm getting more interested in finding out, I'm asking the questions . . . which even intensified our relationship with our parents, which was already, I think, so laden with guilt and intensity. In addition, I didn't have a grandma I could turn to. I did have one aunt nearby; that was the only real family.

Interviewer. How much do you really know about your parents' past? Many of you have already mentioned . . . some stories being told, little anecdotes, often humorous and devoid of emotion and little snippets here and there. Do you have a sense of really knowing what happened? Do you question what happened?

Reuben. I have a pretty good sense. I talked to a lot of my father's friends and talked to my father and interviewed him. . . . Though I know he leaves things out because I still learn things. But you mentioned anger and you mentioned guilt, and I just learned recently that my father couldn't talk about his experience for a good 10, 15 years after the war. . . . And my family was still very close, very protective, but I think that also generated a lot of anger between us because I tried to break out of that protectiveness. Also there was a lot of anxiety about getting angry because, first of all, when I was very small it was very hard to discuss emotional issues. I think people were afraid that somebody would leave. So there was a lot of guilt associated with anger, and that's a problem . . . because I think when I was very small, I got the feeling that people were walking on eggshells around my house. Although later, when I was six, seven, eight, we discussed everything openly. At least on an intellectual basis. I don't think we got that emotional.

Sarah. I still feel like I'm walking on eggshells with them. As a matter of fact, I use that exact term when I talk about them. My parents live three thousand miles away and . . . I understand that that's not unusual for children of survivors to kind of move away far enough so that you don't visit very often. We speak every week, but I do a yearly trek and I visit them, and because it's so far away it's a little more extended than both of us can deal with. It's like I'll go there for two weeks, and like after day eight it gets real tough and I have to be very careful because of the anger. I'm afraid that if I make them angry that it's going to remain that way, that it's going to be something that can't be fixed. Some of that has to do with guilt. My father is really morbid. When we were in Germany—and I'm not sure when I heard this story—but I know that when we were in Germany he went to visit Dachau. We lived really close, like a half an hour away by train. And my mother couldn't understand why he would want to go. She thought that was senseless. He went and he wanted to see the ovens, and he came back and he was very sick. He went to bed and he got very depressed. That and certainly everything else has affected him in such a way that he's depressed and somehow made me feel that if I could only be perfect, he would come out of it. Of course, that's never really happened, but it's always just this giving kind of thing: "Is this enough for you to be less depressed and to feel that life is worth living?" That all these people have died senselessly and could I make up for it?

Interviewer. Like you could never, no matter how perfect you are, and how much you try, you could never make up for all that suffering and deprivation that they experienced.

Sarah. And I felt in a lot of ways I couldn't ask for things because they had such a hard time that whatever I had was already ten times more than they ever had. . . . So how could you ask for things that I saw all my friends having? I could never follow a fad. I always, from a very early age, said, "Well, that's just a fad and I can't be a follower." . . . So I was a little bit of an outsider. . . . But nobody ever wants to be an outsider.

Reuben. Did your parents teach you that you were responsible for their happiness?

Sarah. Not verbally; I mean, no one ever said, "You're responsible. . . ." I don't think so. But certainly if I did something that wasn't making them happy, it was like, "You're causing me pain."

Interviewer. Yes, I think that's real common to sense that somehow we might have been responsible for it, and that we were the ones to fix it; that somehow they needed us to fix their pain. Even though that wasn't stated explicitly, I think a lot of us picked that up.

Miriam. Well, I think it's because in many ways they wrote off their lives. I know my parents, it's like the war disrupted their lives. My