

I'm Dr. Freda Remmers. I'm here today with Dr. Bernard Weinstein. We're talking with Karolyn Freud.

OK, my name is Karolyn Freud, live at Irvington. And I came from Vienna. I was there all the time until '39. Now, by us was only love in the house. My father and my mother and my sisters and brothers we never were fighting.

I went to school in Vienna. And in the class, we were mixed, Jews and Christian. The same was in our house, where we lived as a tenant. The tenants were also mixed, Jews and Christian. But we never had trouble, until we heard this in Germany the Reichstag was burning, was on fire. But we didn't know who did it. Then there came trouble for Vienna.

One time a man knocked on our door and said to help him, because he was running from Germany. They kill the Jews. They kill the people. They're burning the Torah. And they're burning the synagogues. And he wanted to go. He has a certificate to Israel. So my mother and father went to collect some clothes and money. And my brothers took him to the train where he could go to Israel.

Now, this was one episode what we got to think about. But we went to work like nothing happened until March 20 when the storm troop-- that's the elite from Hitler-- I don't like to name his name, but I have to. And this storm troop came in black uniform with a band and a swastika on it. And we came one day from work and the Vienna people said, don't let him in, he's going to ruin our country, our beautiful Vienna. And he did. He did ruin it.

One day, we were sitting around the table my parents, and we heard noise on the street. So we went to the window and looked out. There were horses with Hitler on it and Himmler and Goering. And they had the name on it. And then there was the SS men, SS woman, SA men and SA woman. They were in beige uniform with the swastika.

And there were in the back cannons. They were right on our window, you know. And aeroplanes, the sky was black from airplanes. I never forget this day. It was on a Friday. And--

It's all right. Take your time. And we're looking out. And they were saying closing the window. In German, [GERMAN], and don't look out. If not, we're going to shoot.

And the woman across the street, the other house, had Hitler on the window.

Excuse me, who was saying this? Was it the SS that we're saying this? Or--

They were all saying, close the window, [GERMAN] the window, [GERMAN].

Yes.

And there was the woman and said, don't you know that you lost right now. Now, we are win. These people they all were nice. Overnight they turned around.

By you, did they mean Jews?

Yeah. Yeah. They know we were Jews, but never something happened to us. So we were sitting on the table and said, what are we going to do? Maybe my mother had a brother in America. But everybody closed the doors. Vienna quota they couldn't get into America. English closed the quota And France didn't let nobody in either. So where can we go?

So then we heard this-- then after this charade or charade, what you called this, we heard glass shattering going in in the stores and going in to loot, rioting. The whole night went like this. So my mom said to me, you know, we have to go away from here. It's going to be bad for the Jews like probably the man said from Germany. So where should we go?

The next day, I went to work. And this girl where I worked-- she worked with me-- she said Karolyn, don't be afraid. I'm going with you, and I'm bringing you home. You don't have to be afraid.

And when we were standing on the street, they all said, oh, my God, don't bring them in. He's going to ruin-- that's what Jews didn't say because the Jews weren't standing on the street. They were afraid to go out now, because they took the people scrubbing the floor, young or old. And some of the non-Jews, they took to scrub also. They didn't care if it was a man or a priest or a Jew. They took all of them.

So finally, we heard about this transport that goes-- we didn't know where right now. But we had to pay 1,000 schilling each one. But how could my parents go? They were young-- I mean not too young-- to go to a dangerous surviving. It's impossible.

Where did you think of going? Did you have a destination?

They said we might go to Israel, to Palestine. We might, but they're not sure. So we signed up, my husband and me, signed up for this. And it was very hard to say goodbye to my parents.

One of my brother had a restaurant in the same street. They told him if he gives them the restaurant, it wouldn't happen nothing to him. But give it to him, but my brother went lined up in Auschwitz.

Did your brother have a family too?

Yes. His wife and him got killed there.

Now, were you married at this time?

No. And then my mom said, you have to get married too to go wherever God tells you to go. So we went to get married. But our superintendent was very nice. She said, don't get married in white. I know you could, but don't, because they would take you to scrub the floor or to concentration. So she said wear a plain blue and white suit. Blue and white was Hakoah you know, Maccabee.

And so when she said, we're going to stay outside. Her son was, of course, one of the Nazi. But he helped us to stay on this Sunday when we got married in the temple. He stayed out and said they helped us to have the ceremony, and then we should go away.

So really the super was standing outside on each side, the man and the woman. And the young man was standing near the house, near the synagogue, and didn't let nobody in until we were finished. So we thanked them. They were very nice people.

And so one day, we got a slip we should come to the train. There were 500 people in two [? kupons, ?] you know, cups, train. And we went up to the border of Italy. There I heard somebody, said this, Eichmann there. And they didn't let us through. But we could sleep on the forest. That's what we did two weeks, no water, no food. Some people went in the train, were sleeping in the train.

And then we got an order we have to go back to Vienna. We were very happy. But on the other hand, they said, probably we go to Theresienstadt, to concentration camp. But we were lucky, because the leader said, we're going to try again to go out, to get out. And so we were happy to be with our parents together.

Then one day-- I think it was November or something-- in the meantime, they killed Jews in Vienna. Lucky, our super was very nice, and they didn't let nobody to my parents up. Only they took my brother, Fritz, to Auschwitz, and Helena his wife. He was then, I think, 32 or 33. We didn't hear nothing about him anymore.

There was my brother Max. And I told him, please sign up with us. You know, they were debating. They took his apartment away. And then they put a woman in jail because they had the abortion. And the elite from Hitler looked up all the names from the doctors who had abortion and put the woman in jail for this. One of my sister-in-law was also in jail. And then she said, she's going to sign up for this transport where I get also.

Now, then one day, we get a letter we should be there, you know, on a place. We're going to try again. And there, it was like a coal ship, broken. And on this ship were 1,000 people lying around, no beds, no pillows, nothing. Only the rats kept us company. No food, no water.

We sold a pair of shoes for oil water for the machine to make a little cocoa. And there were a lot of people there. Everybody had a seat. But then it came to me, I didn't have only a little drop. But it doesn't matter. When you're young, it doesn't matter nothing, right?

Now this ship, on each border-- Hungarian, Czechoslovakia, Poland-- they begged us to take them along, because Hitler was there also.

The Jews in those--

The Jews, yeah, were begging us to take them. But we couldn't. The leader said we can't do this. We are already having over 1,000 people here. And people got sick from the sea. There were no food, nothing, no water.

So the ship was broken in the middle. And we had to change two little boats in the middle of the--

Voyage--

Of the ocean. In the middle of the ocean, we had to change to little boat on rope. Was very danger. But we had to do it. We couldn't do another thing.

You had to climb down the rope climb?

Climb down the rope to go down to the little boats.

How many people did the boat hold?

Six people always, six people. This was nothing. I mean, if you're young, it doesn't matter. The important thing, you were out of this new regime.

And then there came another boat, a bigger one, with 2,000 people. And we had to change again on the ropes to go them. But there I met my brother Max, and I was so happy. Excuse me.

But it didn't take long. We had to change again to little boats, six on a boat, again on the-- no food. And we were always in the same clothes, blue skirts, blue, you know, blue, white, like the Maccabee. And we were gondoling around on the ocean. We didn't know where we were. No food, no, you know, nothing.

So this one week went by. After the other one, it went again up to the boat, down to the boat, up to the boat, until six weeks went by. Finally, they said, listen, now you have to do your thing. We're going to put you in the water. And we had only the knapsack. We heard shooting.

And they put you in the water. I couldn't swim. But the people who came from Palestine, the Palmach, Haganah, they said, shalom, be happy that you're here, and everything is going to be all right.

But there was shooting all around. The Arabs shoot, were shooting. And then they took us to a kibbutz for one day, give us food, and a night to sleep.

We didn't sleep six week. How can you sleep on a bare floor, the rats over you? I remember one day, we saw a piece of bread, you know, it was yellow and gray. But we took it and ate it.

So finally, we got to Palestine. But every day, there was shooting. Shooting didn't stop. So they took my husband in a orange plantation, you know, where they could, because we weren't legal. We were illegal, right.

And I went in-- I don't know where it was-- in the [NON-ENGLISH] that means like a room where all kinds of woman are. But I was working. I made hat. I was designing hat and made hats. And I got a job, took my husband out from there.

But when my husband went on the street, an Arab came and ask him for [NON-ENGLISH]. This means money. And my husband didn't have money. So he took the knife and, you know, my husband was lucky. He stabbed him near the-- he came home, you know, all blood over over.

And then my husband was one time on the street. And the truck came along. This was in Haifa. The truck came along and took my husband on the truck. It seems to me like it was in Vienna. He was in jail, I think, a few days. I have to pay-- I had to pay a 25 piaster.

Were these the British who took him?

Yeah, British. Not him alone, a few other. So I had a sister there. And she worked for the English people. And they took my husband out. I had to pay money for this that he could go home.

It was hard for men to get a job. So I worked. And we took a room. But my husband had to go Shmira. You know what this means, Shmira? Everybody has to go in Israel, every man, to watch the border with the rifle.

Shmira, to guard.

Shmira, this means the Arab staying here and he's staying here. And then--

He was on guard duty? He was on guard duty, in other words?

Shmira, you know. Thank God, that nothing happened to him. Then my husband get a job, and there was little houses. It was a house. You call this garage here. And around, surrounded, was Arabs.

One night my husband was on Shmira. And I heard around the house-- I was alone with my baby-- they have earrings and other things you heard when they're running. They were a lot of Bedouin around the house. So I said to myself, what I'm going to do? But God helped us always the last minute. The guy, the Mishtera-- you know what's Mishtera? It's police, the Jewish police. You don't have nothing there-- were there, and they chased them away.

The next day we saw blood on the street. And thank God, my husband came home. I said, was everything all right? He didn't want to tell me nothing, because-- after a while we moved-- this was Moledet. The name was Moledet, surrounded plantation with Arabs. And we moved to Holon. It was a little bigger.

But my husband still had to go Shmira. Now, I had two little babies. And there was the shooting. Up there was Tel A-Rish. The Arabs were shooting down to us, to Holon. So bullets came through the window over the head of my kids. But my husband wasn't home. And we didn't have a shelter. To the house, there was an open house. You know, there were door in Israel. Everything's free.

There was nowhere to hide?

No, you were sitting on the stairs. And I was with my two little children alone. So I went in the kitchen. The kitchen was like maybe a yard, two a yard. We couldn't sit in the living room because the bullets came in over the head of my kids.

My husband was there two weeks in Tel A-Rish. There were a lot of Jewish, you know, to stay Shmira there. You had to go for two weeks, for a month. And I was all by myself. And I had to stay to make a little soup for my children, to stay in line only for a few bones to make a little soup for the kids. And it was very hard for me without the husband, nobody.

You couldn't go Tel Aviv because there was shooting all over. And one boy, they took-- I remember they put him in-- you know where the water goes and you pump the water?

A well.

The well. They took him out the tank a neighbor of us-- he was Shmira-- and left him there until we found him. He was, of course, dead.

The Arabs did this?

The Arabs together. Until we had the war coming, it was terrible. I took my kids to the kindergarten. And the bullets came through over my head. But like I said before, when you're young, and it's Israel, it's going to be Israel. It's our Homeland should be. So we did it. It took us a long, long time. The shooting didn't hear of, you couldn't go on the street. You couldn't go to Tel Aviv. It was terrible.

There, the refinery in Haifa was on fire. Who did it? The English said the Arabs did it. And then they went to the Arabs and said the Jews did it. And that's where the war comes out, right?

So the thing is this, Ben-Gurion called out, Israel is our Homeland. But it still wasn't. Peace, there never going to be peace.

Now, we heard-- then there was a book came from Vienna. And we heard this-- we were reading this. My father got a needle to die. They took all the men, the super couldn't do nothing anymore. They came in with power and took all the people out. My mother was hiding in a hole. And the guy came and said, if you don't come out, I'll shoot. And he took her to the Theresienstadt, to the-- you know--

Concentration camp.

Concentration camp. And there, he met my sister Rose. What a reunion were this. My mother was very religious, very kosher. She didn't eat nothing, only bread and you know-- when the war was terrible in Israel, there were no food. There was nothing.

Excuse me, how did you hear about your family? Through letters? Or were?

No, no, there was book. I said a book came to us. And it was written that my father and my mother is in concentration camp. She died there.

And then we were-- after the war, it was very-- I'll make it short-- it was very good. And I was glad to have one dress. It doesn't matter to me. But my sister who was in the concentration camp went to America, to the United States, because I had an uncle there. She had the German quota not the Vienna quota The Vienna quota was still closed. Nobody let us in. And she went down she wrote us, why shouldn't we come there?

But we didn't want to come. We didn't want to leave Israel. Israel is a beautiful country. I mean, you have to work all over, everywhere where you go to have to work. It's only-- there is never going to be peace in Israel. The Arabs, they're sitting on the street with the pipe, with a few women.

I remember one time I went through this Arab street. And I wouldn't turn around. I would have a knife in my back. A little boy threw a knife at me. It was very dangerous to live where we lived.

And I have to apologize to Israel. I would never leave Israel. But my husband had lost his whole family in the concentration camps. And he had a sister in Detroit. He wanted to see her. And I wanted to see my sister here. So we left Israel.

America is beautiful. I love Israel. I love America. But when we came to America, I saw my sister is very sick from the concentration camp.

How did she get out of the concentration camp?

He got the uncle from America-- we had a uncle-- he took her over and my brother-in-law. And she told us-- when we met her, we couldn't recognize her. She lost the weight. She looked very old. She said, you can't imagine what our mother suffered.

She was with her the whole time until--

Yeah. My mother was very kosher. She couldn't eat nothing.

This was in Theresienstadt.

Yeah, but my brother, Fritz, was in Auschwitz. They took him, the restaurant. I don't know who it was, German or Viennese. Overnight, the Viennese probably had to do everything that the Nazi ordered.

Were there other instances in Vienna of people helping you, of Christians helping?

Yeah, I was working in a place who belonged to a Jewish lady. And the girl-- her name was Lottie-- she said, Karolyn-- in German-- don't be afraid. I go with you home and I pick you up. You don't have to be afraid.

Where we lived in the street, there were mixed, Christian and Jews. Like I said, nothing happened to me. It happened to my parents, my sisters and brothers and my in-laws. We lost 45 people by Hitler. I hate to say his name.

When you actually saw him, the day they marched into Vienna, what do you remember about that?

First of all, when they marched in, the next day, he had-- what do you call this-- a speech. He wasn't speaking like normal people. He was yelling, yelling. And the people, the elite, were singing when the Juden [NON-ENGLISH] is going-- I could say it only in German-- when the Juden [NON-ENGLISH].

When the Jewish blood will flow.

Flow, yeah. This you heard every day after Hitler came in. I don't know what is-- Vienna people or German people, they wore white socks with leather pants, some of them. The elite wear the black uniform. The SA wear the beige uniform.

So when I saw him one time-- I think it was on the Kaertner Strasse somewhere or Rothenthurm Strasse in the Innere Stadt. That's called the Stadt. And he was having a speech. I said to myself, my God, what kind of a human-- we say mensch-- what kind of a mensch is this? His eyes-- and he looked so bewildered. He looked like not a normal man.

But everybody said, don't say nothing, because if you say something, you're going to get arrested. We were not allowed to say nothing. Before Hitler came in, they assassinate Dollfuss, our burgermeister. He was very good for the Jews.

And after I think two years, we had Schuschnigg, Otto Schuschnigg. And he came to the radio and said-- it was like crying, you know. He had tears in his throat. He had to say goodbye. He said, goodbye, all nice people and God bless you. In German means, God is helping you, help you. It was terrible. It was a terrible time for us.

What had your father done for a living? What was his occupation?

My father, before his accident-- he had an accident and lost the eye-- before his accident, he worked in the government as-- I don't know what you call this in English--

An inspector, a health inspector.

Inspector, yeah. Oh, he was very intelligent. Everybody came to ask for advice to him. He was very-- he spoke a few languages. What a death he had. How can you give somebody a needle, thus they should die?

My father was tall. He looked like Kaiser Franz Josef, blue eyes with blond hair.

You said he had won the Iron Cross in World War I--

That was my brother. He had the Eisernes Kreuz, yeah. I have in home, the yellow thing what says Jude on it--

The yellow star--

In Austria from my brother-in-law. And I have the Eisernes Kreuz. I give it to my son, one of my son. And they still took him to the concentration camp for a few years. He was born in Germany. He lived in Germany. Yeah, that was a time, a terrible time. I hope America, the United States-- it's a beautiful country-- and I hope it doesn't come here, because you have free speech, freedom of speech and freedom. And let's pray to God that it stays this way, like always.

What do you think allowed you to survive this ordeal of the long journey--

You mean to cope with this is--

To Israel-- Yes.

To cope with it? Some time I'm dreaming of it. Sometimes I lie down and think, how could I go this through? But God helped me always.

How old were your children when you came to the United States? Were all your children born in Israel, first of all?

I have two children, two sons. They were born in Israel, yeah.

And how old were they when you came here?

That is also a good question, because my husband said, we lost so many people, why should we lose our sons? Because my son was getting to be 15. He was in the Gadna. This means he went to high school in Tel Aviv. Of course, he was a very good student, he is. And after this, he would have to go to the army. Everybody has to go.

But we did our share. My husband was-- and my brother was-- my brother was in the Haganah. But he had to work. They sent him to [? E-Amon, ?] [? El-Amin ?] to be the assistant to a general, to learn how they-- you know, how the English doing another thing. And then he was in Israel by the Haganah as a soldier, as a driver.

My brother was on this convoy where they went in both foot to Jerusalem up there, you know. Scopus.

Mount Scopus.

Yeah. And in Israel it's real hot. So he had to drink a few water, very cold water, and got very sick and died when he was 60 only. And then my sister-in-law died. A lot of things what I probably forgot to tell you.

You were in Israel when Israel became a state, weren't you?

Yeah. Before.

Just Before.

Before when it was the [? Mater ?] [? Ott, ?] if you know what this means.

Yes.

You know what [? Mater ?] [? Ott-- ?]

Please translate it.

[? Mater ?] [? Ott ?] means when the Arabs shoot. The Arabs live always up at the hill. And the Jews are always down. But I remember one time, there was a big shooting. They lived Tel A-Rish. And we lived Holon. We had only one rimon You know what's a rimon Also not. One-- to throw?

Grenade.

Grenade. One. And the Arabs were shooting all night long when the bullets came through the window on my children. So we were waiting until they finished shooting. And then our people threw this. And that's how they got Tel A-Rish. You understand what I mean?

Yes.

The Arabs got a lot of munition from the British. Yes. We didn't get nothing. We had to make our own. But our people were very strong. And God-- God-- helped. God helped us. And I thank God for it.

When you were in Palestine before-- during the Holocaust, was there any talk about it? Was there any discussion about it?

About Vienna?

About what was happening in Europe.

Oh, yes, so you had they went into the stores. They looted the stores. They killed the Jews.

You know what they did? They put the Jews in trains. My sister saw it. And said they're going to get a bath. They give them soap and a little-- I don't know, my sister said, paper to--

Dry themselves.

Dry themselves, yeah. And they never came back. That's why my sister was so sick. She saw this in her-- in the beginning, they took the Jews by the beard and slide them on the floor. It was terrible. How could a culture folk, like Germany, do a thing like that?

How did you get information when you were in Israel? How did you get information about what was happening in Europe?

Oh, there always came information. There was radio. And those people who are--

From the underground or through--

Yeah, of course--

The Haganah.

Yeah, Haganah Everybody was in Haganah, you know. We had to be. And why not? It's our country.

Yeah.

But Israel suffers a lot from the Arabs.



Sometimes I've heard people say that the Israelis didn't want to know about the Holocaust. They didn't want to talk about it. They didn't want to hear about it.

That's not true.

It's not true.

That's not true, because really people, like me, my husband, like all what came from there, we wanted to know what happened. A lot of people went back to Vienna. But-- I should go back there. I don't know, maybe this one killed my parents, my brother, or my in-laws.

My people didn't do nothing. Why did they kill them? My in-laws didn't do nothing. Why did kill them? Why? Because they're only Jews.

Now, they're wondering, does Jews staying up to their rights, like in Israel, and fighting for their land and life. The Arab could do as well, the same. They have a lot of land there, the desert. We built Israel from a desert, from nothing. With blood and tears and sweat.

And that's why my husband said, you know what? Let's live a little bit, a few years in a nice country. Not that this nice is. Israel was very nice.

My husband was a real Vienna. He liked Vienna. He wanted to go back. But I couldn't go back. Could you go back when something like this happened? Not me.

So that's when you came to the United States.

Yeah.

Did your children ever-- your sons ever talk with you about--

Yeah, he's very mad that I took him from Israel, my oldest son. He spends a lot of money for Israel. And they don't live with me. I live alone.

Mm-hmm, sure.

They live on the shore where the business. And he's mad at me because I took him from Israel because he was born there. We speak Hebrew. He got married, but American girl. And I have grandchildren. The two oldest children from my oldest son-- his name is [Personal name] they went in the Jewish academy in Deal. If you know Deal.

Yes, Jersey Shore.

One is 20 years old. He goes to college in New York. And there's a girl, 17. She's going to finish this year the Hebrew academy in Deal and goes to college. And then he has two little kids. One is six years old and one eight years old.

Do your grandchildren know what happened to your family?

I don't think so.

That's what I mean--

Because I never talked about this.

Do you know if your sons talk about it?

No. And my youngest son has three children. One is 15, a boy. The other one is 7 and 12. They don't live here either. We talk on the phone or they come to me. But my oldest son is mad, because I took him away from Israel.

I can understand him. He's born there. I'm also mad because I had to go from Vienna. I went there to school. I went there to Hoehe Schule. You know what this means, Hoehe Schule?

Mm-hmm, high school.

No, no, higher.

Higher.

Higher Schule, a higher school. I got the diploma. I don't know, was it business school, college, or any other college. I had drawing and bookkeeping and material and English, little English, little French. And I had to leave my diploma there. I had to go only with the knapsack. I didn't take anything.

When I came here, I worked the same day, because we didn't take welfare, nothing. My husband worked. And I worked. And we said to ourselves, we never take welfare from anybody.

What did you do? What kind of work?

Oh, I made, designed hats and made them. Hats.

Hats.

Yeah. In Vienna.

You were a milliner.

Yeah, milliner. That's what it is, yeah. So I think I went a lot through. Didn't I?

You sure did.

And my children are proud of me-- or on me, I don't know, because I go to college. When my husband died four years ago-- he had Parkinson. He worked but then he got-- when he retired, he got Parkinson's. It's terrible. You know what kind of disease this is? They can't walk. They can't slide their feet. Then they can't swallow. I had to feed him, bed him. But I did it, you know, with love. We're married.

And when somebody can't swallow, that's the end of the life. So he got in October a heart attack. He was in intensive care. And then in March, the second heart attack. And that was the end.

But you continued your education.

I beg your pardon.

You've continued your education.

I hope so. I would love to graduate. But how could I graduate if I don't have so many credits.

You've done so much in your life. You may do that too yet.

Unless I get the honor graduation somehow.

Thank you very much for coming here.

Thank you.

And thank you for telling your story.

I'm glad I was talking this out.

So are we.

OK. Thank you.