

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010
RG-50.030*0545**

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Ellen Zweig, conducted by Judith Cohen on March 2, 2010 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Silver Spring, Maryland and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

ELLEN ZWEIG

March 2, 2010

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Ellen Zweig**, conducted by **Judith Cohen** on March second in **Leisure World** in **Silver Spring**. Let's start by telling me your name at birth, as it was in **Germany**, the names of your parents.

Answer: Okay. The – my name was **Ellen Seligman**, it's spelled with one **n, s-e-l-i-g-m-a-n**. My mother's name was **Rose Hirschfeld** was her maiden name, and my father was **Julius Seligman**.

Q: And did you have any siblings?

A: I had one sister, younger than me. Her name was **Margit**.

Q: And where were you born, and your date of birth.

A: I was born in **Regensburg, Germany**, which is right on the **Danube**, in May 18th, 1929.

Q: And how long had your family lived in **Regensburg**?

A: My mother's family go back to the 1800s, I believe. I know like 1890 or earlier. My father's family I think came to **Regensburg** when he was a young boy. They came from a town called **Lambsheim**, which is near the **Rhine**. And they opened the store there in germ – in **Regensburg**.

Q: Tell me something about the first couple years of your life, you remember, before the Nazi takeover. We'll start with what sort of store your father owned –

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – and what sort of cultural activities, religious activities that your parents were involved with.

A: Okay, yeah [**indecipherable**] yeah. Well, they were pretty assimilated. My – my maternal grandparents had a department store called **Teats**, which was sort of a chain store. They – they had combined buying powers, I believe, and it was a very nice store, I remember that, it had several floors. And after my parents got married in 1928, my father opened another store in the suburb. And they were well off, I have to say, I mean, I would say middle upper class, you know. And we had a good life, that's all I can say.

Q: What was your hou – what did your house look like?

A: Well, we – we had a flat, we di – never lived in a house. Even my grandparents did not have a house. It was a big flat. My father had a car. We had a ri – th-the – the house we lived in had three stories I – I remember, and it had a big garden. And it was a – a very nice place. And you know, we – we went on trips, wa – like I said, my father had a car, we could go in the summertime. This was before 1935, I would say. We would go skiing in the winter, we g – we would go sw-swimming. Mostly in the rivers, but they had special places where you could go swimming. My parents

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

belonged to a tennis club – before all this happened, you know, when they were still able to do that. S – s –

Q: And –

A: – and it – so when I – or when I entered school in 1936, I guess, I had to go to a Jewish school, I could not go to a public school.

Q: Okay. Let's go back a little bit. What was your parents' social circle like before the Nazis? Did they have German friends in addition to Jewish friends?

A: I'm su – I'm sure they did, because when they played tennis, you know, at this particular place, it was like a little country club, I guess, and I'm sure they did. I was too young to remember all that. The only thing I can tell you, my mother's sister, who was younger than she was by three years, met her husband through tennis, and he was not Jewish. And even though my grandparents weren't happy, she married him in 1934, I think.

Q: Oh, after the Nazis had taken over.

A: Yes, yes, uh-huh, yeah. And he was a very nice man, he was a lovely per – man and he was from a good family, they were Catholic. And he helped my grandparents in a way, because they moved in with my grandparents, and in a way, because of him, you know, things didn't – weren't bad for them.

Q: Did he face any, you know, problems –

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

A: Yes, he did.

Q: – from **rossenshonda**(ph) and –

A: Yeah, yeah, well, he did. Well, this –

Q: [indecipherable]

A: – this happened after we left, my parents and I left **Germany**. They eventually took him to camp, or to a – a workplace, because he wouldn't divorce her. And my aunt at that time had two little boys. I – my – my older cousin I remember. One was maybe five, and the other one had – was born after we left. She moved in with her in-laws, they took her in with the two children. And she – they were living in **Munich**, and then she went back to **Regensburg** where her in-laws were living, after everybody had left, 1941, I guess, '40 - '41. And because my family was so well known in **Regensburg**, and dote – we had a lot of farming communities around there, they brought her food.

Q: And let me ask you a little bit more about this German uncle. What was his name?

A: **Fritz Brem, b-r-e-m.**

Q: And did he survive the war?

A: Yes, he did. They all survived the war.

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

Q: Did his family support him after the marriage to your aunt, or was he disowned, or –

A: Well, he – he had – he had a profession. He was a director of a – a mine that – I – I'm not quite sure, **kalkswag**(ph) it was called. And he was a director of it before, and after the war the Americans put him back in a director. So, you know. Although he did encounter still anti-Semitism, even after the war.

Q: Let's move back to your own immediate family.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You were still fairly young, but what's your first memory of life under the Nazis?

A: Well, you know, like I said, I was rather young. I – I just do remember though, my father had a Catholic secretary. And since my parents couldn't take us to things like movies, you know, and – she would take – take me. And the sti – I faintly remember that she once took me to a program, you know, in December, before the Christmas, they have this Saint **Nicholas** in **Germany**, and it was very Catholic party, and where, you know, they c – would come around and – and ask all the children, you know, have you been good, and so forth. And later, I understand – I was told this story, that somebody came up to this woman who had – who was not

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

married, and said, who is that nice little girl with you – that nice little Aryan girl with you? And it was me, because I had blonde hair and blue eyes. So, you know –

Q: Any idea what she responded?

A: I don't know. I don't know whether she did – she said her niece probably, you know, something like that, so, you know. But she was a – a wonderful person and even after the war she kept in touch with my family. Her father – her brother was a priest and she eventually went to work for – with him, or was his housekeeper. So – and after the war, we – my parents got together with her again. In fact, she came over here once with her brother on a pilgrimage.

Q: And do you have any other memories of your childhood under the Nazis before you emigrated?

A: Well, I think my family kind of shielded me from this. I do remember that the – the Jewish community in **Regensburg** found a place – it wasn't a synagogue – actually a gymnasium – a sports place where we could all go and congregate on the weekend, or on Sunday. And you know, then – we could play and you know, it wasn't exactly a country club, but it was a place where the Jewish families could go and have an outing, and things like that. I remember that. It was far out into the suburbs. But, you know, it gave us a place to go when we weren't allowed to – to commingle with the other population. So, you know, and we would play sports there, and so forth,

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

you know. So – but that – other than that, I mean I – I never really – until

Kristallnacht. That – that – then – then of course, things cha – really changed.

Q: Yeah. Tell me your memories of **Kristallnacht**.

A: Well, I do remember that there was a knock on our ap-apartment at six in the morning. But of course my sister and I were in our – were in our bed, and we didn't get out of bed. But there was a knock on our door, and they came to get my father. I mean, that's all I know. I mean, you know, at that – that time. And we – I really wasn't privy to anything, and my mother probably spoke with my grandmother. And eventually we moved, we went to my grandmother's house and stayed with them –

Q: And why did –

A: – while he was – actually my father was not taken to concentration camp, because he had had a broken leg the summer before. So he took his two canes with him, and because of that they kept him in the town jail with all the older people, for a week. And after that they – my grandmother was very active in the community and she got him out. Also her – my grandfather, and their son, were sent to **Dachau**. But my grandmother, as I said, was very active in the community, and she actually wa – this I – this I was told, went to the Nazis, to the – to the police, and said, several of our men died, we need 10 min – 10 people to have a minyan. So this –

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

and my grandfather, I think was, came back, and my father was let out, and so forth. They were – they did let people out. I don't think **Regensburg** was – there were N-Nazis, but I don't think it was like in some of the other towns, that they were so awful. Now, I do have a picture here that shows my father in a cart, being marched through the town. You know, they took all the men that day and marched them through the main street. It was called **Maximilianstrasse**, I remember that, before they took – sent them off to either **Dachau** or the – or the prison. I have a picture of that.

Q: And did your father ever describe his emotions after the war –

A: No, not really –

Q: – or discuss this photograph with you?

A: Not really. Not really, no, no, he never did, uh-uh. Only thing I remember, when he was let go, an-and we were co – we came home – when we knew he was home, and I remember him sitting at the – at the table in our family room, shaving off his beard. Course, he had a growth of beard for the – from the whole week, I guess. So I remember him sitting there shaving his beard, that's what I remember.

Q: And what happened to the store?

A: Well, my father was able to sell his store. Now th – I think he sold it already before that. My grandfather still was really plundered. That was plundered and all

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

the windows were smashed, and I think I once saw a little bit of it. But like I said, my family, I think they shielded us, you know, from this. They didn't – they didn't want me to see it or whatever, you know. And of course, our synagogue was burned down. The schoolhouse that we – I attended, that's next to the synagogue, that was not burned, only the synagogue.

Q: And did you witness the fire?

A: No, no, we lived too far away. No, we lived too far away, yeah.

Q: And right after **Kristallnacht**, when you tried to go to school – why don't you tell me a little bit about schooling, when you had to move to a Jewish school, whether it was close –

A: Well, I started right from a Jewish school, I never went to any other school. It was na – ah – ah – it was intermittent, because I think our teacher left ha – where is – it was a one room schoolhouse, basically, all the grades together, you know? And a – th-they were – there was intermittent because the teacher that finally came to our school came from the neighboring town called **Straubing**, and he had to come on the train. And if the train was late, he was late, so, you know, schooling was intermittent. So, actually I – I don't remember too much about that. I mean, it was basically I guess from – we were suppose – well, we were supposed to leave in – in August of '39, or September of '39, and just when the war – we had packed

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

everything up, after my parents had made special furniture, small for here, because they knew the apartments here were much smaller, and we moved in with my grandparents and then the war broke out. And it was – we were supposed to go by way of **England**.

Q: Okay, before – I want to talk about emigration, but let me ask one other question with this school; did they shut the school down after **Kristallnacht**?

A: No, not really, that I remember.

Q: So you were able the next day to just come back to school?

A: No, I don't remember it was – it was the next day or it was a few weeks later. I really don't have any recollection of that.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay, let's talk about emigration. Do you remember listening to your parent talk about wanting to leave **Germany**, and what those discussions entailed?

A: Oh yeah, I mean –

Q: When they first wanted to leave [**indecipherable**]

A: – oh, well, I mean, we knew we were getting ready to leave, and that – like I said, my parents, you know, had special furniture made that would be smaller. Beds that would go up into the wall, you know, things like that, because they knew here it would be a smaller place where we would be able to live.

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

Q: And do they have any trouble getting emigration visas?

A: No, my father had a brother here, who had been here since 1926, I think, and through him we had the affidavits. And we had numbers to go to the consulate in **Stuttgart**. And we did go there, you know, we had to have clearance as far as health was concerned and all that. So I remember going to **Stuttgart** where the – where the American consulate was, and you know, being checked out and we – everything was okay, and we had the visas. Before nine – before September '39.

Q: And then – describe what – you were saying that you were supposed to go to **England** and the war broke out, so –

A: Well, yeah, I mean, that – that – then the whole thing got scrapped because we couldn't leave, we a-are – we had already packed all our things, so we moved in with my grandparents. And the – the correspondence that I found after – actually my father's death many, many years later, was regarding – the Americans evidently gave us a hard time because there were four of us, and my father's brother here wasn't making enough money, although he worked for relatives here, and the – the ones – was very reluctant to put his name down that he would support us in case he di – we needed to. So, I think they finally persuaded him, si – but we never took a penny from him, but just to put his name on the – on – you know, this – **America** was in a depression at that time, so my uncle had a hard time convincing them that

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

even if we came here, he – we would not be a burden to them. So, you know, that – that I remember. You know, tha-that correspondence I read mon – many years later. My father didn't die until 1984. But I found all that in correspondence. And it was even discussion about sending me to **Switzerland** because my father had relatives there, you know, so I found all that.

Q: Let's come back, so September '39, you're packed and it falls through. Describe those events, so –

A: Well, you know, I was – how old – was '38, I was nine years old.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I don't think it's – it really sunk in. I just knew we couldn't go. In fact, I remember a couple times there was alarms if we were gonna get bombed, then we had to go down to the cellar. But other than that, I don't have much memory of that. I know my family kept us busy doing arts and crafts at home. They always found things for – for me and my sister to do, to keep us busy, I guess, you know.

Q: And then how did you finally get out?

A: Well, we finally got left – in fact, it was my sister's birthday, February 18th, 1940, we took a train to **Munich** and we stayed in a hotel I remember, and people came to see my father, to give him messages to take us to people that lived in **America**, asking them to help. I think that's what it was all about. And the next day

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

we took a train over the **Brenner Pass** to **Italy**, to **Genoa**. And I remember I was very nervous crossing the **Brenner Pass**, because you know, I did hear that they had taken people off the trains if they found smuggling anything, you know. If they put thing – people used to hide things in the lining of their coats and all kinds of things. So we were worried about that.

Q: And were you searched when you crossed into **Italy**?

A: No, we were not searched, but just the thought of it made me sick in my stomach after we left. But we – we got through. My grandmother made sure we had nothing contra, because she didn't want anything to happen to us.

Q: And then after you arrived in **Genoa** –

A: Well, we – we had to spend a few days there, and you know, we walked around a little bit, we didn't have much money, I guess, I don't remember exactly. But, you know, my parents – and the place we were staying was pretty bad. I mean, I know that. And we finally boarded the pip – th-the – the ship and I have a picture of the ship, you know, and –

Q: And this –

A: – it was a terrible voyage for me, I got sick as a dog because of the weather. I mean, in –

Q: Which month is this? This is –

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

A: Si – February –

Q: Of '40?

A: Yeah, by way of the **Mediterranean**, and the cross from **Gibraltar** and over to – to the **States** and we landed in **New York**.

Q: Is the fact that the war was on, we – was there any fear of torpedoes or bombing, or you just se –

A: If there was I didn't know, but I barely got out of bed. And my sister, she was fine, she went up to eat dinner, she did everything. She was fine, but I was a sick one, yeah. The only thing I remember, when we got near **New York**, that my father actually carried me up to sh – see the Statue of Liberty. That – that I remember.

Q: What was your reaction?

A: I don't remember, really, I just remember that – that part of it, yeah, yeah.

Q: So, let's talk a little bit about what happened once you got to **New York**. Did you start school immediately, or did you wait for the next year?

A: Well, no, we – we actually did not stay in **New York**. We stayed a few days with friends of ours as – from – from **Regensburg**, had come earlier, and my sister and I stayed with them, and my parents were invited to stay with some other relatives who are already very well-to-do, had been here, I guess, for many, many years. And we, immediately after that, took a train to **Washington**, because my uncle lived

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

here in **Washington**, and the other relatives that – that they had, that had been here many years always lived in **Washington**. So we came right to **Washington**, we never stayed in **New York**.

Q: And what was your life like as a new immigrant? Did you feel a lot of culture shock? Were you able to mix in with the American kids?

A: Well, you know, it was a little bit difficult. I had taken English lessons in **Germany** already, cause you know, my parents knew that was gonna happen. So I had taken English lessons. We went to live with my uncle the first four months or so. I mean, he ha – he had bought a little house, it wasn't a very big house. It was in a good neighborhood called **Glover Park**, I don't know if you're familiar, off **Wisconsin** Avenue? And he had a wife and one son, and also my grandmother on – father's mother had come right after **Kristallnacht**, they brought her out – he brought her over here. So they were for – four, and we were four, eight of us in that little house. We, my parents and my sister and I all slept down in the basement. It was a built out basement, but we stayed – you know, we lived there. And we were taken to the elementary school in the neighborhood, which – and they gave me some tutoring in math, I was – think I was be – I was like in the fifth grade then, because you know, I – I had a little – little – didn't have that much schooling over there, so they gave me tutoring, and they were very nice to us. And then, I do

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

remember some kids calling us Nazis and stuff, you know, but you know, we had to let go, what could we do, you know? We were here, we were safe, let's put it that way. And the summer, during the summer, through the Jewish Community Center, we were sent to Camp **Louise**, I don't know if you – you may – so my sister and I both were sent there for three weeks, which was really nice of them to do that, you know, they did a lot, the Jewish community and also the **Washington** Hebrew congregation, where we finally ended up, which was mostly juv – German Jews. Took us in, you know, so –

Q: When you say took us in, what sort of –

A: Well, let us go to –

Q: – hospitality –

A: – Sunday school, Sunday school. And they had a newcomers club too, at that time that my parents, I think, you know, went to. So, yeah. An-And eventually we were able to get an apartment – you want me to talk about it?

Q: Sure, absolutely.

A: I think that following September, my parents were able to afford a one bedroom apartment for the four of us, you know. My father had gotten some work th-through si – through the relatives that were mostly members of **Washington** Hebrew, and were in better circumstances. Americ – they were already a hundred percent

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

Americans. And his first job was selling [**indecipherable**] door to door – not door to door, by recommendation, a company called **Real Silk**. They sold socks, men's socks and ties and I don't know what else, you know, and he was able to make money, little bit of money, you know, he wa – he was in – you know, so – and then **Giant Food**, Mr. **Cohen** was very good to the Jewish immigrants here, and gave everybody a job. So he worked for them on the weekends. They – they only had, I think at that time, two stores in this area, but he went to work on the weekends, you know, working there.

Q: And how many immigrants were working there? I'm actually very interested in this, to find out more about how the Jewish community here was helping the immigr –

A: I – I really – I-I know – I mean, I really don't know too many, I-I know a couple people that worked with him at that time, but I don't really remember how many, but you know, he worked there, and then – so I – all I know is one time one of them said to him, if you crack a few eggs, he'll let you take them home for free. So, you know, he was able to bring home some – some eggs for us to have, you know. And you know, we managed. My sister and I went to school then. My mother also got a job working as a housekeeper for a family. You know, and then she eventually found a job working for a family where she basically took care of the – the children

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

while the parents were working. So, you know, she – she had to work too, you know, they both worked, and we were kind of left to our own. At home we were supposed to clean the apartment and stuff, you know? And my sister was a rebel. So – but, you know, we managed it, but th – after that – and then what happened, my grandparents, my mother's parents were still in **Germany**, and they had a lot of trouble, they had to pay tax upon tax, and they had to repair the – the store front and everything, you know. They taxed them because they did have money. And they finally got out in May of 1940, which was late. And they – they used to have these, I don't know if you're familiar with the closed trains? They were trains that were closed from **Berlin** to I think **Lisbon, Portugal**. Well, by the time they were ready to leave, there were no more closed trains, it had stopped already. And this is all secondhand, because I heard the story through my aunt who stayed behind, you know, who was married, my mother's sister was married to the Gentile. They went – they were in **Munich**, and they went to the airline and she gave them one ticket. And they just said no, we're not go – one – either we both go or we don't go. And so my aunt said, you gotta **shmear** them, you know, give them a little money under the table. Maybe tomorrow you'll – so she did, next day she had two tickets. I mean, there – there were people that were not bad, they helped. And so they got on

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

a plane and they were able to go to **Lisbon, Portugal**, and from there they took a ship, one of those last few out of **Lisbon** to **New York City**.

Q: And came to **Washington**?

A: Yeah, well, they were supposed to stay in **New York** with my – with their son, who had come earlier, and he was drafted by then. So they all came to **Washington**, in the one bedroom apartment, in May of 1940. And you know, we managed a hot summer, no air conditioning. And I think in September finally, my family was able to get a two bedroom apartment. So my grandparents had a room, my sister and I had a room and my parents were sleeping in the living room. That's how it was, you know. But we were there from 1941 until 1948. And I went to high school there, you know, out of that milieu, I mean, we managed.

Q: And during the rest of the war years, from '40 to '45, how much correspondence and communication was there with your aunt who was still in **Germany**?

A: Well, there were relatives of my father's who had lived in **Switzerland** for many years already, had come back long before. And through them we were able to communicate. I mean, like we sh – we would send a letter to **Switzerland**, and I guess there was – maybe send her a postcard saying, heard from, you know, everything is okay, and she would write a postcard back, without a return sender,

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

I'm sure, just to say I'm okay, or something. So that way, they knew that they were okay, you know. That's th – they were the intermediaries.

Q: And what was your – do you have any memory of news sources during the war? How you were foll – how much news was reaching the **United States**, how you followed it?

A: Well, like I say, that – you know, I remember **Pearl Harbor**, that I remember, and you know, during the war, I mean, I don't think there was – we didn't know that much. I mean, nobody really knew it, although I understand, there was corres – that people knew – well, my aunt in ger – who stayed behind in **Germany** told me after the war that when the soldiers came back from the eastern front, the German soldiers, they told her what was going on over there, they knew about it. But of course, they were afraid to talk, I guess, because they would have been shot too, you know. But she knew what was going on.

Q: Even throughout the war? During the war, this ha –

A: Well, probably a little bit later. Well, there were my cousins, my father's sister, one sister, one sister got out with her husband. The other ones didn't. They stayed – they se – actually sent their children to **England** on the **Kindertransport**. And by the time they wanted to leave, they just couldn't get out any more. And my aunt told me – this was after the war – that they came to say goodbye to her, and she knew

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

what was gonna happen. She knew about it. Course, she didn't tell them, you know, they – in fact, my cousin who now lives here said to me, she also, through – they had a very good housekeeper who helped them have – through, you know, you – she said, her mother went out and had warm clothes made, because she knew they were going east. They were one of the last deported.

Q: And do you know where they were deported to?

A: Yeah, I ha – I think it was **Auschwitz**, and actually, she just found out not long ago that her mother was not gassed immediately. Her father was, and he was one of seven brothers, and I think five of them, they were gassed imme – they were older, they were gassed immediately, but her mother was working, sewing or doing something, and she contracted typhoid fever, and then that's what did her in. So, you know, but that was my father's second sister. The first one was able to get out and lived in **New York City**. So, you know. So they're – they're the only close relatives that we really lost. And they were very Orthodox, you know, they were the kind that thought God will help, and you know. It was a big family. The name was **Einstein**, and they were from **Augsburg**. And they were a – cattle dealers and they were well-to-do, I mean, they just di – n-never thought anything like this would happen. By the time they really wanted to get out, they wanted to go to **Rhodesia**, and they wouldn't take children. So, you know, they just didn't believe it would

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

ever happen, because with their money, they were better off – well a – better off than I think my family was. But they just didn't believe, you know, they were –

Q: And when – when your father found out about his sister – how much after the war he learned?

A: Well, I don't know, I don't remember that, when it was. I-I'm not sure exactly how long it was.

Q: So – so, before we conclude, I guess, the last questions, did your parents – did you notice any change after they learned about the war, difficulties adjusting to the **United States**, to what extent they discussed this? How much talk was there in your house when you were in – already older, in high school, or like college, about what had happened?

A: Well, I don't think there was too much talk about it. The one thing I should tell you is my mother, unfortunately, when we finally – they got on their feet, they were able to buy a house in 1949, I guess. My mother had gotten sick, and she had cancer. So, I mean, that was a real problem, you know. My grandparents were still living with us, her parents, and she passed away in 1950. I mean, I was able to finish high school, but college, I had to pay my own way and I never finished because, you know, I had to help my father actually, after my mother passed away. So that kind of put a dent in it. And the fact that they were fairly young, we spoke

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

mostly English in our house. And of course my grandparents weren't happy with what happened in **Europe** and everything, and my grandfather took it very hard when my mother passed away, so you know. And then I do remember after the war was over that they sent packages over there for my aunt and her family every week. And they also had another – a group called self help, and they were mostly the German Jewish refugees here, that sent packages over to – to people. Food, you know, to help whoever was left, or whoever survived. I do remember that. So, you know, d-discussion, I really don't remember that much, that they ever talked about it too much. So, you know, luckily that they – my mother's sister survived. That was a big thing already, you know. And actually, her brother who ended up in the army, went to see her. I think that was – happened, you know, after liberation, and did find that she was in – you know, they were okay, you know, that they survived, let's put it that way. So, you know, so –

Q: And they remained in **Germany** throughout the rest of their lives, or did they –

A: Yeah, they remained in **Germany**. They did come over here. My grandparents were able to celebrate their 50th wedding anniv – well, she came over first, I think in – after my mother had passed away already, and then they came over for my grandparents 50th wedding anniversary. So that was, you know. But my aunt – and she came back a few more times after her husband passed away, and told me that

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

after everybody had left, she had never converted to Catholicism when she married him, but she said, after everybody left, she felt like she needed to belong someplace. She felt alone, you know, and – not that she was strong in Judaism, but she became Catholic.

Q: Did she ever feel any unease living in **Germany**, or –

A: Yeah, she did, she did. She said even after – she had moved to **Munich**, and she had an apartment there, and she said whenever she came over here to visit, she would never say she's coming to see her family, cause she didn't want everybody – anyone to know that she was Jewish originally, and said she was coming to see friends. So she did have a certain amount of unease about letting people know that she was Jewish. But we have kept in touch with the cousins. In fact, the children of one of the cousins just came – was here visiting with me, and her husband. And you know, my children have gone over and stayed with them. So we have a good rela – I mean, they were never Nazi, none of them Nazis, you know. Of course, they were children too, but – and we – my husband and I had visited over there, you know, so we have kept up the relationship, you know. So they know who we are, and we know who they are, and then, you know, they're not – they're not strong Catholics either, you know. But yeah, we do have the relationship with them, yeah.

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

Q: So, is there anything else that you'd like to say, that you feel we haven't covered?

A: No, I – I think – no, you definitely – mother's mother, my grandmother, was very – very active in the community, in our town, as – has rubbed double off on me, because I have gotten involved here in a lot of community things. I mean, I was very active in **BBG**, and you know, president of my **BBG** group, and active in adult things, you know. And I'm active here in the Jewish residence, and now I'm president of a group of widows and widowers, which meets at the **JCC**, so I think it somehow rubbed off on me to be active and give – give back.

Q: Mm-hm. And if she –

A: And also volunteer at the Holocaust Museum.

Q: And is the fact that you came to the **United States** as an immigrant affected your attitudes about anything, do you think?

A: Well, I'm – I'm – I'm a liberal, let's put it that way. You know, I'm kind of hope things, and always wish that things would get better here, and-and hope, you know. So, you know, tell my children about – they know about my background, they know, and you know, that it was hard, I – you know, I had to pull myself up by my bootstraps, and had to pay for everything myself, it wasn't given to me on a silver platter, so – although, my parents did get some restitution eventually, but it wasn't

Interview with Ellen Zweig
March 2, 2010

much, and you know, basically I had to fend for myself. And luckily, when I met my husband – he was also from **Germany**, he was from **Hamburg**, but he had established himself over here by that – he came a little earlier, 1937, and had become a photographer and – and had opened a studio, and I felt it was my duty to help him, so I became like the manager of the place. So, you know, we both worked hard, and you know, we made a fairly good living, you know. And started all over.

Q: Well, thank you so much. This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Ellen Zweig**. Thank you again.

Conclusion of Interview