

Edith Levy Weinstein

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Abstract

Edith Levy Weinstein was born January 20, 1932 in Treuren, Sachsen (?) In the East Zone of Germany near Czechoslovakia. She was the second oldest of seven children. Her father came from an orthodox family in Fergenstein (?) and her mother was a gentile. Her father gave the children some Jewishness by speaking Yiddish and taking them to his mother on Friday nights. Because of the mixed marriage, they had difficulty finding housing and lived in Schrobenshausen (?). All the children went to school and did tasks to make some money so there was no time to play. By 1935, life was more difficult and the priest tried to save the children by Christianizing them. The father's mother left for South Africa in 1937 and left the business to Edith's father and his brother. The two were deported to Buchenwald in '38. After a year, they came home and her father performed forced labor in a granary. Edith and her sister would get beaten up by children when they delivered their mother's sewing. Her father went to Thereisenstadt in '42 and Edith had to go with her sister and mother to Plauen to register. Edith was with her grandmother in Treuren when she saw her father dragging a wagon while on a death march. The Russians were advancing so they returned to Thereisenstadt where he was liberated. He returned to Fergenstein and the family moved upstairs from their business. The Russians occupied their area and Edith and her husband, a Polish Jew (married '49), left the East Zone at night in November '51 to flee the Russians. She had lost her German citizenship when she married him and had to register monthly. With help from HIAS in West Berlin, they obtained papers for Canada where they remained for three years. Her mother converted to Judaism after the war and Edith converted back. In the early 50s, her parents went to a Jewish camp near Munich. In the 60s, the family reunited in Philadelphia. Edith visited Germany in '95. She has two children and grandchildren.

Summary

00:00 Edith Levy Weinstein was born January 20, 1932 in Treuren, Sachsen (?) a little city in the East Zone of Germany two or three hours from Hoss, Czechoslovakia. It is about 6 hours to Berlin and three hours to Leipzig. There were seven children in the family. Edith was the second oldest. The oldest was Ruth Gedesky born October 14, 1929 and she died. After Edith came Anita Blanko born October 20, 1922 and then Harry born April 10, 1935, then another brother born March 18, 1937, then Heinz born July, 22, 1929 and the youngest was a sister born April 22, 1943.

- 05:00 Her father was Leon Hart Levy born September 26, 1907 in Fergenstein, a bigger city, in the East Zone about 20 kilometers from Treuren. Her mother was Charlotte Hendel Levy born April 26, 1913. Her mother was a gentile. Her father came from an orthodox family. They met at a sports association where they swam. They were 16 and 21. Her father had two brothers (Harry and Rudy) and a sister (Edith). Harry got killed in 1938 in Buchenwald. They had a large Jewish community in Treuren and in Fergenstein. When Edith's mother got pregnant with her first child (Ruth), Leon's mother said not to marry her and sent him to Argentina. Her father shoveled coal and returned to Germany and married her mother. Edith's grandmother, Augusta Levy, wore a sheitel. No one gave them living quarters so the family lived in Treuren. Every Friday evening, her father walked the children to his mother's to celebrate the Sabbath. He did not stay with the children. The family was rich as they had a department store. Edith met some of the family after the war when they returned from concentration camps. The others got killed. Her mother did not go to church. Her father only spoke Yiddish to the children.
- 10:00 By 1935 their life got worse. The pastor visited the grandmother and told her to bring the children to church and he will protect them by Christianing them and three sisters did so. Her brother was sick and did not go. Her father kept some Jewish traditions such as taking them to his mother who gave them toys. His mother left in 1937. Edith's mother gave birth to her first child in her parent's home. She knew Amy and Para Hendel. They had their own house which they inherited from the grandparents. Edith's mother was born in Lagerfeld where her parents had a mill. Edith's father returned from Argentina in 1930 or '31. She owns a photo of his ship.
- 15:00 Her father was devoted to her mother. Her mother was strong and stayed with her husband. Gestapo came to the house and offered her mother options if she divorced the father but she refused. Her mother converted to Judaism after the war and Edith converted back. Her father worked in the business but when he returned he performed menial jobs for farmers. He went to Jewish school and lived near Plauen. After returned from Buchenwald, he performed forced labor at Blau. Her mother's parents lived in Treuren and she was born in their home. They had a big garden with fruit trees, goats and chickens. She slept upstairs in a bed with straw. The toilet was around the house. No one in 1932 would give the family living quarters. Her sister was born a year and nine months after her and they lived in two rooms until after the war. They lived in a small town of Schrobenhausen (?). Her mother had three brothers and two sisters. Her grandpa was a salesman.
- 20:00 Some of the younger siblings and older son and two children lived with the grandparents so there was no room for Edith's family. Her mother's family name was Shotttelotz. Heinz was her oldest brother, Mottle was the next oldest brother, then her mother (Charlotte), then Louisa and Wolf was the youngest. Everyone knew of the Levys because his business was well-known. They knew who he married so no one gave them a

place to live. Sangenhausen (?) was a small town. There were only 12 children in her class with three classes in each room. In their house in Truren, two other families lived with one toilet and no water. They had to go two blocks for the water. The children did not understand why people did not talk to them. There was no time to play as they had to make money. They picked blueberries and the mother sold them. In September and October they worked picking potatoes for farmers.

- 25:00 Her father's mother came to visit before she went to Africa with the sister and brother but she could not get passage for the others. She forgave her son. Her mother worked on a sewing machine and the children delivered the items and later her mother hired out. Her sister was 14 so she could go out to work but if she did, they would take her to a work camp or concentration camp. Other fathers went into the Army so she did not realize the seriousness when her father went to a concentration camp. When she was five or six, Edith learned about the Hitler Jürgen as she was not allowed to join. There were many differences as she could not attend the movies or own a radio. At the end of the war, Edith learned about concentration camps. Her father went to Thereisenstadt in '42. Edith had to go with her sister and mother to Plauen to register. Her father did any work he could get. On Friday evening they walked about one and one-half hours to Fergenstein.
- 30:00 While the children were with the grandmother, her father must have waited in the business downstairs. Edith did not meet her paternal grandfather and later went to Berlin. Jews were arrested and windows of businesses were broken. On Kristallnacht, they burned books and people had to bring books to the SS. Sometimes Edith was outside and sometimes with the other grandmother. The Gestapo and the SS marched around. Edith was home with her family on Kristallnacht. The Gestapo always came to their house even if her father was not at home as they wanted her mother to give up the children. In 1935 the pastor said to bring the children to church. In 1945 Edith saw papers that the children were going to be transported. In the town square, Edith saw books, Jehovah Witnesses and a naked lady taken through the streets. A Jehovah Witness girl was picked on more than she was. Edith and her sister delivered the sewing her mother completed and children beat them up. One day ten children waited for them to beat them up even though they had converted.
- 35:00 They lived in a small town. In Fergenstein in 1939 to 1940 all the Jews were related and all went to the concentration camp. Her father's mother and sister went to South Africa as they saw everyone was getting killed. Their business was taken. Every day something was taken. It was not safe to be a Jew in Germany. When they left, her father took over the business but all the windows were smashed on Kristallnacht. She did not see it happen as was not allowed to leave her area. Forced labor was brought in from other countries to work the farms and factories. They slept in barracks and worked during the day. Edith could go to Fergenstein. The drummer came to the small town and announced they were under the supervision of the Gestapo. Her grandma left in 1937.

One son was married to a German saleslady and remained. They went to Buchenwald with her father. The grandmother took many relatives and business people to South Africa.

40:00 She was angry that the father had married a gentile so did not take him to South Africa. The grandmother begged Edith's mother for forgiveness. She gave them money for a carnival and toys and after the war, contacted them. They went to Johannesburg. When the grandmother left, Edith's father and his brother, Harry, took over the department store until '38 when they went to Buchenwald. Her father and Uncle Harry returned a year later around Christmas '39. Uncle Harry loved her mother and said that the Germans are never going to get him again. His wife had two brothers in the SS and he went to Berlin. At that time Jews were supposed to wear yellow stars but he did not want to wear one. Edith's mother sent him a ration card and the Germans picked him up and he was killed. He might have killed himself or been beaten to death. Her mother picked up his bloody clothes. His wife did not want to live with him. She knew they were different but not that being Jewish was different. Edith's family was the only Jewish family left. They were not supposed to tell anyone that they were Jewish. People gave them old clothes and food.

45:00 Since her father was always skinny, Edith did not know if he looked any different upon his return from Buchenwald. Then he performed forced labor for farmers and lived at home. He worked in a quarry. Her father would arise at 3 AM and walk to the train to get to Plauen. He picked up big trash cans until '42 and came home late. He had to work to make a living. In '42 the Gestapo came to their house and her mother did not let them in. Her father had received a letter to report to the Gestapo in Plauen. Edith went with her mother and sister to accompany their father to Plauen. For the first time they met others in mixed marriages. Everyone marched to the Bahnhof. Her father marched accompanied by the German soldiers with guns. Many transports arrived at the train station with prisoners going to concentration camps. Some were pleading and some women were slicing their wrists and were forced to walk or be hit.

50:00 Edith, her mother and her sister were separated from the father. The train station was full. Her father was deported to Thereisenstadt. They found out his location when he sent a card home. The next time they saw him was when he was on the death march. Edith was with her grandmother in Treuren in April 1945 and someone called, "Leo is coming through the town." Her grandma took her and they saw a big wagon pulled by Jews, a motorcycle and machine guns on the way to Thereisenstadt. The Russians were advancing so the Germans decided to return to Thereisenstadt. An SS came with a gun and said, "Take that child away." Someone got Edith's mother and she got three minutes to talk to the father before he returned to Thereisenstadt where he got liberated. When the Russians advanced, they emptied the camps.

- 55:00 Her father had walked from Plauen to Treuren. She waved to him and he waved back. Her grandma talked to him. Her father walked with a gun to his back. Her 10-year-old brother was hiding behind a tree and saw him. Another brother's wife said she would have hid him. Her mother converted and is buried in the Jewish cemetery next to the father. The farmer next door was young and degraded the father. Edith returned to Germany in '95 as a cousin asked her to visit him. He lives in the house that she was born in. Her mother did not want to return to Germany. The older sister took care of the children and assured there was sufficient food in the house. Each child had a chore.
- 60:00 They were only allowed to go to elementary school, not to higher schooling. They realized they were different as the other children wore the Hitler Youth uniform. Edith was in 6th grade in '45. Sometimes she could not go to school as there was bombing. The American bombs were silent. They were supposed to go to the basement when there was bombing. One day they did not hear the bombing and did not go to the basement and felt they were being watched by G-d. In Sangenhäusen (?) they could see the bombing in Plauen. They had to get out of their living quarters but did not know that worse things could happen. Many people died that night.
- 65:00 Sunday school was their only enjoyment as they were shunned. There were many forced laborers from other countries. Her family was being watched. There were POW from the Ukraine. Everyone had to work for the farmers. There were many Dutch with wooden shoes. They walked to the factory to work and she saw them on the street. Edith's family felt they were prisoners as they were being watched, could not leave and were not free. Her uncles had to join the German Army. One was a Communist before the war and got into a Russian prison camp and came home later. He was no longer a Communist. One went to a prison camp in England. They were all in the Wehrmacht and became POWs. The one from the Russian prison came home half dead. He was in the prison for two or three years as Edith recalls he was not home when her father and sister died. Her father went to Fergenstein where he was born and the grandmother lived. When the uncles came home, he was not there. In '95 when she visited Germany, Edith saw the youngest uncle. She had seen him in '43 when he got married. Edith's maternal grandparents did not like Hitler and did not want to go to war. They were nice people. She did not condemn the sister. Her mother's oldest sister was a dressmaker and saw that they had clothes to wear. After the war, they lived in Fergenstein.
- 70:00 The grandmother lived in Treuren. There was not much transportation after the war. They needed to get a permit from the Russians to go to the East Zone. Later they found papers from the Burgomeister that the family was about to be transported. The Nazis wanted to trade in for Russians. Edith's family got liberated by the Americans but suddenly the Russians were occupying. Her sister was 16 and hid her Jewish star so she would not be bothered. The Americans, English, French and Russians each wanted a part of Germany. Berlin became East Germany and was occupied by the Russians.

- 75:00 Her father came home from Thereisenstadt and got rid of the people living in the apartment above the business and took it over. The police helped get them out. This was the grandmother's house where Edith's father was born. It was large like a palace with a big living room, a kitchen and bedrooms. Later they lived in a nicer apartment across the street. She did not visit there in '95 as she heard they were stealing parts of cars. She visited Leipzig and Berlin. She went to Treuren to get clothing and did not see her brother again. At Sangenhausen (?) was where they killed a 7th Day Adventist and the wife was taken naked through the town. In '95 Edith found out their daughter had died. She was disabled and they took her to a mental hospital where she was killed. Edith did not know about concentration camps during the war. The family heard from the grandma in South Africa in '45. She was blind by then. Aunt Edith sent the family used clothing. After Edith got married, she left the East Zone for Berlin. Her Aunt Edith wanted Edith's sister to come to South Africa but she did not. The family received no financial support. Edith left the East Zone at night to flee the Russians.
- 80:00 Edith's paternal grandfather, who lived in Berlin, died during the war. Her father's sister and brother were in South Africa. Another brother's son visited her in Philadelphia as his brother passed away and he looked for family. Her father took over the business in Fergenstein in the East Zone. They had the business until they left November '51. The Russians confiscated everything. Her father owned another store to sell items to the Russian soldiers and officers. His first store sold to the citizens. When she married, in '49 she lost her German citizenship and had to register every six months. Her husband wanted to go to America. She knew her husband since she was 15 as met him in '47.
- 85:00 Her husband was liberated in the Bavarian Alps in the snow by the Americans on May 2nd. After the war, he went to school in Ansbach (?). He needed a special permit to take the bus. He was young and ran for the bus but the conductor would not let him in. He pushed his way in and reached Fergenstein. Edith thought he was handsome. Her mother had two maids. Her future husband came to visit her two days after they met but her parents were not at home. The hotel in town had told him to go to the Levys. He worked the Black Market. He needed papers to reside in Fergenstein. He was the only survivor from his family. He was 22 years old and came with a friend from the concentration camp to Ansbach (?). Her father did not want him to live with them as there were the two girls. Her mother liked him and he liked her mother. He loved the five-year-old sister. He was from Warsaw and did not want to return there.
- 90:00 Life was difficult in Fergenstein. His friend in Ansbach had family. Edith had a chauffeur who drove her, her husband and his friend, their son to Potsdam. There they took the S-Bahn to HIAS in West Berlin and rented a room. Others went to a camp in Berlin. They obtained papers for Canada and Edith left with her husband although she did not know anyone there. The friend's brother lived there. They went to Toronto and with help from HIAS, they stayed three years. They wanted able people. Edith's sister

married and went to the US. The Polish quota was taken so it took them 11 or 12 years to get to the US. Edith's husband was permitted to go on her quota. They went to Philadelphia where they reunited with her father and siblings. Her father had family in NY and found out that he had a cousin in Toronto who lived just a block from them. Twenty-two years later, after the war, he found a brother in Russia and relatives in NY. He wrote the Polish Red Cross and found the brother in Sevastopol in the Ukraine. Her husband's brother had gone to Bialystok. His father died in the ghetto and his sister and mother went to the gas chamber in Treblinka. From Bialystok, the brother joined the Russian Army. They tried twelve times to get the brother out of Sevastopol. He had a wife in the Ukraine.

95:00 The Rabbi who married the sister was the same Rabbi who buried Edith's parents. Her mother converted to Judaism after the war as did not want to be different from the rest of the family. The children always felt Jewish as they spoke Yiddish and were taken to the grandmother's for luchion (noodle pudding) and fish. As a child, Edith went to a Protestant Church but not after the war. She has never been to a Catholic Church. She respects them because of her mother. Edith feels that you can't change from what you are born with as it is always inside of you. Her mother asked if G-d would let her in heaven as she turned Jewish. Edith's father died October 23, 1972 and the mother never remarried. Her father had a massive heart attack at 55 and lived 30 years with only a heart muscle. Her father worked in a factory in the US and then for Zukerman's Kosher store where he did bookkeeping and stock. When they went out celebrating Edith's daughter's 18th birthday, they had to stop the car as her father was coughing. He died of cancer of the lungs and bone cancer six weeks later.

100:00 He had a happy-go-lucky personality and a heart of gold. They had so many mouths to feed so felt feeding Edith's husband was just one more. She felt that her father loved her the best. Her mother was very serious, honest, loyal and beautiful. The parents loved each other. Her mother passed away at 95 and did not want to die before the father. She passed away seven years ago. She was a widow all that time and never remarried. They never talked about the war as they were very private. One brother died in 2000 at 95. Her mother returned to Germany once to see an older sister but she did not want to return again as she did not identify with Germany. Her grandparents never tried to leave. Edith has a cousin younger than herself with two children. She saw her in '95 living outside Dresden. Her brother went to the West and passed away. Edith did not return to Fergenstein and got married. Her parents moved to Fergenstein where they had a bathroom with a bathtub. There was a big Jewish community there. Her grandparents had a phone, a car and a chauffeur.

105:00 In the beginning, things were OK. They left the sister to keep open the business so the Russian police would not know they left. The next day the sister was questioned and the chauffeur took her to Leipzig and then to Berlin. Edith left with two suitcases so all her

photos and other things were left behind. In the early 50s, her parents went to a Jewish camp near Munich and the mother's sister brought them some pictures. Life became more difficult when it became Communist. When Edith got married, she lost her German citizenship and had to report to the police monthly. Her husband would not return to Poland and later was buried in the US. They were unable to get supplies to sell in the store as everything was state-owned. Her father could no longer make a living so he left.

110:00 Their home had their name, "Levy" on the top. After the war, they tried to get their store back but the aunt in Africa prevented it so they all worked in the US where life was free. Her husband worked the Black Market and then drove a taxi. They lived near the Czech border, so he drove Russians there. On the Black Market he sold stockings, gasoline and fancy underwear. They left their home at night and their son was two years old. They went to Potsdam and took the S-Bahn in Berlin. They spent three years in Canada where their daughter was born. They stayed less than a month in Berlin. They went to Frankfurt and to the Lulusby Camp and immigrated via a ship at Bremerhaven to Halifax. It took them two nights and a day to get to Toronto. After the war, her husband took any work he could get. They did not get a sponsor to come to America. Her husband brought his brother from Russia to America. He read the Canadian newspaper. HIAS gave them \$30 to rent a small room. When they left Canada, her husband joined a union to drive a truck. He drove a big trailer for 10 years in the US. Then he had a grocery store until he retired. They have two children. Their son is 65 years old. He was born Christmas day like Jesus. They also have a daughter.

115:00 Her father delivered her son as she had it in Fergenstein. When her father came home from the concentration camp, the Germans told him to report to work in the ghetto. He was a long time in the concentration camp. He was there with the sister's brother-in-law. When they lived in Philadelphia, her husband looked for family. He had a cousin in Montreal. It was her father's friend. The brother-in-law said that Sam used to be called Tom, the name of the sister's brother-in-law. They had a bakery where the brother used to work. They were sitting in the same room and did not recognize each other. Her husband called his grocery, "Lucky's Market." When her husband had a massive heart attack they sold it as the son did not want it. She did the cashiering and bookkeeping there. Her husband wanted her to take care of the children. They never talked about their hard life. Their grandson is 41 and learned from his grandfather about their bad times. Edith did not talk about it. On the ship, her husband said he would not marry a German. She was happy-go-lucky, like her father. On the ship a guy called her "Yekka" (German Jew) and her husband spat at him.

120:00 At Sangenhausen, the family lived upstairs with their son. They were not supposed to hit back as they were Jews. They hit someone in the Hitler Youth and the gestapo picked up her mother and she got a warning. As Jews, they had no rights. If someone wore a Hitler uniform, you could not touch them. Thoughts of that time come to her and she puts them

out of her mind. She shows a folder of photos: 1) A photo of her mother in 1946 or '47 after having seven children. 2) Her parents after the war at about 40 years old. 3) Her mother's mother, Paula Hendel, in her 80s after the war.

125:00 4) Her brother in a sailor suit on the left and a baby on the right. 5) Her father's mother, Augusta Korodofsky Levy who disowned her father and went to South Africa. 6) The same lady. 7) The three brothers and sister: Harry, Siegfried, Erica and Heinz, after the war. 8) Her parents and the seven children, 9/5/48: Heinz, Ruth, her mother, Edith, her father, Erica, Anita, Siegfried and Harry in Fergenstein. 9) House in Trueren after the war where she was born. The front has been rebuilt except for the right side which is original.

130:00 10) Her grandmother's mother on her mother's side in Lagerfeld where there used to be a mill. 11) Her mother's grandma and husband from the 19th century. 12) The original home in 1932 of her mother's mother with a yard, same as #9. 13) Oldest sister, Edith, brother, cousin, little sister, two cousins and Anita, grandma in back and child in front during the war around '44. Aunt made the cross. 14) After the concentration camp. David Weinstein in the hospital. In '46 her husband before they met. He was in Auschwitz, Majdenek and Dachau and his number was #129653. 15) May 18, 1948 Edith and her fiancée got engaged on his birthday. Her parents loved him but her mother thought she was too young to get married. This is the Fergenstein house where they lived over the store.

135:00 16) Photo of when they married on 9/24/49 at a civil ceremony. They could not get married without papers from Poland. A lawyer made up a birth certificate for her husband. 17) At the Sports Association in Fergenstein where her mother met her father around '28 as the sister was born in '29. 18) Augusta Levy, the grandmother, sitting on a bed at her business in Fergenstein. Their name is engraved in the cement and is still on the building. Photo taken after the war. 19) Photo of the grandma's business which her father took over and lived there. Feuerstein, a relative on the left, had a fur store. A sign covers Augusta Levy. Now it has been made into a memorial as Jewish people used to live there. The fact that her parents had a mixed marriage made them endure a lot.

140:00 Children should know that they will never go through what they did. She respects everyone's beliefs as life is hard enough without complications. Her parents were very loyal to each other. Edith was against mixed marriages as it is very hard on the children as no one accepts responsibility for them. Hopefully, it is a new world and it won't happen again. Childhood was hard but she likes to remember that they had each other. They laughed to each other and Edith gives her mother the greatest respect as she had a choice. Her parents were happy and her mother remained a widow so long. Her parents were not accepted by the in-laws. Her parents modeled loyalty and the children took it.

Her sister is married for 60 years and a brother is married over 50 years. They all feel loyal in marriage.

145:00 They did not talk much among the siblings about growing up in a mixed marriage. It was hard to choose the Jewish way of life while living in a Christian world. She thinks about it at holidays. Both sisters went to the mikveh. There was no mikveh in the Russian zone so they could not go there. Her younger sister married twice. Her grandson from NY is interested in her story. One grandchild went to Israel and considered remaining. Although all the grandchildren are interested in Judaism, they are not very religious.