Off-camera, you mentioned something that I think is really important for us to have recorded, that people would know about this detail. You explained that there was a reason beyond that he was Jewish why your Uncle Otto was arrested. Tell me the circumstances.

They had composed a prayer that was supposed to have been said in all the Jewish congregations in Germany on Yom Kippur. And it mentioned something about oppression, and the Nazis didn't like that. And that was why they were going to arrest Leo Baeck and my uncle said, he's old and fragile, I will go in his stead.

Yeah, take me instead.

Yeah.

And so it was this prayer that was the pretext?

Yes, yes.

OK. Back in London, 1942-1943--

Right.

--your parents are now out of Germany?

Yes.

Are you getting regular communication from them?

Yes.

Where had they landed?

In New York.

In New York?

And they stayed in New York.

And why New York? What made it the destination?

They had relatives there. My father had relatives there.

OK. And was there talk of you joining them?

They were hoping, yes.

And did you want to?

Not too much because, I really-- it was an adjustment to go from Germany to England, and I felt like home by that time. And then to go again-- it's not that I didn't want to see my parents, but I had kind of made roots in England. I had friends. I spoke the language. And I was not too anxious.

That's understandable.

Yeah.

Certainly, even after a hard beginning, to find the way where you're in a pleasant circumstance--

Right.

A person doesn't want to give that up so easily.

Yes. But of course, my parents were anxious to have me, so eventually, we did go. And my cousin happened to hear that they were looking for stewardesses or something on a troop ship that came from the Far East to Southampton. And from England, it was supposed to take GI brides and babies to the United States.

What year was this?

'46. Right after the war.

So you stay the entire war in Great Britain?

Yeah.

Do you attend that course for physical therapy?

Yes.

Did you finish it?

Yes.

And your sister, Lotte, where was she during this time?

She was in Dewsbury in Bath. And she studied nursing, and she became an RN.

And did you have opportunity to meet?

Yes, once in a while, yeah.

All right. But you're basically living two separate lives, both of you?

Yes, but we had a couple in London who were really related distantly to my Aunt Martha.

Who stayed with Uncle Otto?

Right.

And they were very hospitable. And they took care, not only of us whenever we needed a home away from home, they housed boys and men and women refugees from Germany-- I mean, young people. Because they happened to have a good position. I think the husband was in the woolen trade, and so he had connections to England from before the war.

So they were financially secure, and they always had an open house for young people who needed a refuge. And they were lovely people. And if you had a problem, you could talk to them. I mean, they were almost like a mother to my sister.

Oh, how wonderful.

Yeah, and I stayed with them at times. They were very nice.

And what part of London did they live in?

Hampstead, I think. Right.

OK, and do you remember their names? It's OK.

Pip and Mim. They came from Frankfurt. It'll come to me when I don't think so hard.

OK, that's OK.

Everybody called them Pip and Mim.

Pip and Mim?

Yeah.

Now when you were in that restaurant for that half year, and the rest of the time when you were in London, were you in danger of bombs?

Yes.

Did you experience the things--

Many times, we had to go to air raid shelters. But sometimes, it came when you didn't expect it. The buzz bombs, you heard, bzzz. And then when the noise stopped, it meant that the bomb was dropping. And if you thought you heard it overhead, it was not a good sign. But usually, when you heard the bzzz, you went into an air raid shelter. Or if you were in a building, in a house, the safest place in an air raid was under a stairway.

And I had friends that I visited-- there was a school friend that I had visited. I went to their house. And the safest place under the stairway was that the lavatory, (LAUGHING) the bathroom. And the father had been a colleague of my father's. He was a very stiff kind of person. And it was very funny to crowd into the small toilet with him. But these are the things that happen in wartime, right?

Yeah, yeah. And London also was a city that was in many ways experiencing huge-- not only chaos, not only war-- but huge changes. There were so many refugees who were in London from the East.

Yeah.

There were Poles who had come to London.

Yeah.

The Polish government in exile was based there. They were also East European Jews-- some.

Yeah.

Did you did your path cross any of these other groups and peoples?

Not really too many. There were a lot of free French in London too. And I always wanted to practice my French, but I didn't have an opportunity. I couldn't just go up to a French soldier and say, I'd like to (LAUGHING) talk to you.

To speak French, (LAUGHING) yeah.

No.

And so how long did your course last?

Two years and three months.

All right. So by the time you finish, it's coming close to the end of the war?

Yes.

When you entered, was that a full time thing to go to these studies, or did you have to find a way to make a living also?

I did. I had a partial scholarship from the Christadelphian Society. And also, I stayed with a woman and her mother. And the when the woman was out, the old lady needed company, and I made dinner for her and things like that. And for that, I got a free room. Not free board, but a free room, which helped.

So you sort of patched things together?

Yeah. And I cooked for myself. And I cooked for her separately. I always said, I'm cooking now, what would you like? She said, no, I'm not hungry. And 10 minutes later, she wanted it anyway.

She might have smelt the food and changed her mind.

I guess so. I guess so.

Do you remember where you were when the war ended?

I was in Leeds, and everybody danced. And my mother had sent me a hand-me-down from an American cousin, a red dress. And I had reddish blonde hair. I never wore the dress. And that day, I decided I'm wearing the red dress. And everybody danced in the market square. It was really amazing.

Oh, how cool.

Yeah.

How wonderful.

Yeah, it was very nice.

And then how soon after that was it that you started to look for ways to get to the United States?

I guess my parents were very anxious to have us. My cousin happened to hear that they were looking for a nurse or somebody to take care of the GI brides and babies. And it turned out they just wanted bodies. You didn't have to have a nursing background or anything like that.

So out of 10 stewardesses, there were four Hirsch girls, my two cousins and my sister and myself. So we got a free passage to the United States taking care of mothers and babies. We filled bottles with formula, and took care if the mothers were seasick. But that was all we had to do.

I never heard of that before.

It was just like I say, all my life, I've been lucky.

And you get to New York City, and that's the first time you've seen your parents in seven years?

Yes.

What was reunion like?

Very cordial. They were very happy to see us. We said we had a room. My parents lived in a one-room apartment with a kitchenette and thing. Oh, my father-- part of the week, he used to work in Kingston, and weekends, he would be home.

Kingston, Rhode Island?

No, Kingston, New York-- upstate New York.

Oh, OK.

So we could sleep in his bed while he was away. But then we found a room in the neighborhood, and my sister and I stayed there. And my parents said we should look around the United States before we started getting a job. So we visited a friend in Boston, and then I visited a friend in Washington.

DC?

DC, yeah, before we settled down to get work. And then I looked for a job as a physical therapist. I had already worked as a therapist in England. We worked with soldiers. Actually, I even worked with a German prisoner of war.

Did you?

It was interesting. But I don't remember-- I asked him whether he belonged to the Nazi party, and he said, I had a wife and two children, what would you have done? Right? So what would I have done?

Did you think it was a fair question?

No. Right. I mean, he answered it truthfully, right?

What kind of injuries did he have?

I really don't remember.

Did he know you were Jewish?

No. I don't think so.

You spoke in English?

No, I spoke German with him. That's why they sent me there, because I was the only one who could speak German. So they sent me where the German prisoners were-- the wounded German prisoners.

I can't imagine what that must have felt like.

Well, I sort of have a way of putting things away. I guess I'm unemotional in some ways.

Well, there's ways of being able to cope.

Yeah.

How do you cope with stuff?

Yeah.

What part of New York did your parents live in? You said they had a one-bedroom apartment?

Midtown Manhattan.

They lived in midtown?

Yeah.

OK. And where did you eventually settle down?

When I came to the United States? In New York.

So you looked around, like they said, and then you chose New York?

Well, I guess because my parents were there, right? And then I looked for employment. And by that time, it was the beginning of summer, and wherever I went they said, nothing happens during the summer, come back in September. So I decided I had to do something. I couldn't just sit around.

And my cousin had heard one of her teachers in Berlin had opened a children's camp in North Carolina, and she was looking for counselors. And for some reason, my cousin had other plans, she didn't want to go. She said, why don't you ask her? So I went there as a counselor for the summer.

For the summer, yeah.

Yeah, so I had room and board, and I got a couple of dollars at the end of the summer. So at least, I was occupied and fed.

Yeah.

And it was a boys' camp. They were aged five to 11.

Did you visit your maternal grandmother and-- who was it-- her son?

Her son.

Yeah, your uncle?

No.

No? OK.

I didn't have enough money to do that.

Was there communication, though?

Yeah, my mother had been to visit them, yes.

OK.

But I was supposed to go much later, and I ended up not going until much, much later.

OK. And then you returned to New York after that summer was over?

Yes.

And what did you do then?

And then first, I had a part-time temporary job for somebody who was on maternity leave. And then I ended up having a regular job, first at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. Yeah, I stayed there for a long time.

And your sister?

My sister got a position at New York Hospital as a nurse. And she stayed there for quite a while. I don't remember how long.

Was it easy to adjust to the United States? Was it easy to adjust to the United States?

It was different from England, you know? In England, it's always, after you, and here, it's me first, you know? And I had to learn to be pushy, you know? Because you wait for a bus in England, they wait patiently. And if you don't make the first bus, the next bus comes a half hour later. Nobody grumbles, you just stand there and wait. Here, you push your way to the front, otherwise, you don't get anyplace.

Well, it certainly is New York's subway system.

Yes, right. So I remember the first time we went on the subway when we came, every time, the subway was full. It must have been rush hour. And we stood on the platform and let it go by. And there was a conductor, and he saw us, and he said, did you want to get on the subway? And we said, yes. And he pushed us like you do with a suitcase. He pushed us in, and (LAUGHING) we got in, right?

There was a lesson there.

Yeah, otherwise, I'd still be standing there.

(LAUGHING) In that subway.

Right. So you have to learn. Then I think on the second day that I was here, my mother sent me next door to buy some bread. And I said, could I have a loaf of bread? And he said yes. And I said, could I have a pound of butter? He said, do you have money? I said, yes. So why do you ask? But that's the British way of asking, you know?

Yeah.

He said, so why do you ask?

Different psychology.

Right. Well, I learned, meanwhile.

How much did life in Germany that you had left behind and that you experienced in the '30s-- how much was that still a topic of conversation after the war? And all the experiences that went with it?

With my sister, I sometimes recalled little things that happened when we were children, you know, funny things. We used to ride on the vacuum. It was like a little-- we called it our little dog, you know? Stupid things like that that we remember-- we said, do you remember so-and-so?

But all of those turbulent, and then in the end, really tragic things-- was there much talk about that?

Not-- I guess, you want to forget it. Not too much, no.

And was there any interest in any of it from outsiders, from people who weren't from Germany?

Who were not from Germany? Yeah. Not the lady where I first worked.

The Canadian?

Yeah, she was not interested. Later, the people that I worked for with the little girl-- yeah, they wanted to know. They were more interested.

Excuse me for a second.

We had picked up a little, that's for sure.

That's OK. It's a little bit.

No.

It's OK. Did you ever go back?

Yes, much later. I wanted my husband to see where I came from, and my husband wanted me to see where he came from. And then we were also invited by the city of Stuttgart.

Oh. So tell me, how did you meet your husband? Who was he?

Through friends. A good friend of mine that I had known in Germany for years-- her husband and my husband were classmates. So one day, my friend said, we have a friend who owns a car and we're going to the country-- which was really not the country, we were going out of the city-- would you like to come with us? And that's how I met my husband.

So then he made a date with me, and we walked along a city street where there was a low apartment. And they had some kind of mahogany furniture, and he said, oh, look at that beautiful furniture. And I thought, I don't like sleazy furniture, I like modern furniture, you know? I didn't say anything. But I thought, he's not my type.

He's not my type, yeah.

No. Turned out later on that what he was admiring the workmanship, not the sleaziness. But he was very much into workmanship. He made that lamp--

Oh wow!

--from a picture that he saw in the New York Times Magazine.

Wow, that's talented.

So he was--

And it's nicely done.

Yeah.

It's a beautifully wooden curved lamp here.

Yeah.

Where was he from in Germany?

Vettweiss, a small town near Cologne.

Vettweiss?

Yeah, he went to school in Cologne.

What was his name?

Joseph.

Joseph Schwarz?

Yeah.

OK. And when did he come over to the States?

Earlier. I think in '39. His brother was already here.

OK.

His brother had come earlier, so he had someplace to go.

And what year did you meet?

I'm trying to think. In '39. No, '40, excuse me. We married in '52. '49.

OK, OK. And so the two of you came back together? What year was that? I keep asking these years, but I want to get a sense of the distance from the events itself.

Oh. Well, we used to go on dates. And I don't know, for some reason, I decided to distance myself. I think he wanted to marry me, and I was not quite ready. So I went on a polio mission. They send you. It was after they had polio epidemics, and they sent a therapist to rehabilitate the children.

And where was this?

The first one was in Canton, Ohio, like Canton here.

Yeah.

For three months, and then in Vicksburg, Mississippi for three months. And after that, I came back here, and I thought I was really foolish, you know? He's such a nice guy. Why didn't I stick to him? So I arranged for an accidental meeting.

Because I knew where he came out of the subway to go home. And it was where two subways meet in Jackson Heights. So I happened to be there just at the right moment.

And did it work?

Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

It worked.

It worked, right?

Could he see through the accident part of it?

(LAUGHING) Yes. I told him later that it was not accidental.

Did you have children?

Yes.

And how many?

Three, Peter, Tom, and Peggy.

Peter, Tom, and Peggy.

Yeah.

Did you both tell them about your own childhoods and growing up in Germany?

Yes.

Did they ask questions, or was this something that came later?

It came later, right.

OK. Did they ever go back to Germany with you?

No, not with me. Actually, only my middle child, my son, Tom. He went back to Germany. And he likes to practice German. He spoke German with my mother, and he can read and speak fluent German. The others didn't go back. I went back, I took my daughter along, right.

OK.

But the oldest one I don't think ever went back.

And you and your husband-- remind me again, his first name was Joseph?

Yeah.

OK. Did you speak English together or German with one another?

English, because I spoke Swabian dialect, and my husband spoke Plautdietsch.

Plautdietsch?

Yeah.

OK.

And we thought we wouldn't understand each other. It was better in English, so we always spoke English.

And when was the first time that you went back with him so that he could show you where he was from, and you could show and where you were from?

I would have to look up the year.

OK, approximately, then. Was it 20 years later, 30 years later?

We were married in '52, and it was probably in the late '60s.

OK, OK. And then you say you were invited by the city of Stuttgart?

Yes.

And that must have been some time after that?

Yeah.

OK. Do you have any recollections from the first time you went back? Did you still see your house?

We went to look at my house, yes. And we rang the bell, and I said, I used to live here, and they said-- I don't know, I think the husband was ill or something. They didn't want us to come in the house. But they allowed us to go back in the backyard.

And did it look different?

Not much. The top story-- I had seen a picture of it already. The top story had been bombed. It was off. It was not there. So I guess I was lucky. Nobody got hurt, but apparently, it did damage to the house.

And did you meet anybody that you had known as a young girl?

Yes, my classmates came to the hotel.

Did they? In 1969 or so?

Yeah.

And do you remember anything of that conversation?

Well, they wanted to know how I'm doing, and it was what they all personally were doing. But I mean, it was very nice that they came. I think there were like 10 or 12 of them that I knew.

Did your husband have a similar experience when you went to his place?

No, he just showed me the house where he used to live. And I think he went to visit a couple of neighbors who remembered him as a small boy. And it was a village, it was a small place.

Yeah, so people remember in small villages much more so

Yes, yes.

Yeah.

And they remembered his parents.

And when the city invited you back, what kind of, let's say, tour or events had they planned-- when the city of Stuttgart did?

We had a dinner, some typical German foods. And I think we went to meet the mayor, who was very hospitable. And I forget his name now.

What year would it have been?

I have pictures.

Could it have been-- and I'm taking a wild guess here-- I think that General Rommel's son--

Yeah?

You remember Rommel, Manfred Rommel?

Yeah.

He was mayor, and I want to say Stuttgart, but I don't know if it was Stuttgart.

Yeah, he was the mayor of Stuttgart.

He was the mayor? Would it have been him that you met?

Yes.

Manfred Rommel?

Yeah.

And he had his own interesting history.

(LAUGHING) Yes, right.

With his father--

Yeah, indeed, yes.

Yeah.

But he was very-- and they sent us to a cafe, where they had whipped cream and strudel or something. No, traeubleskuchen.

Traeubleskuchen?

Yeah.

What is that?

Red currant.

Oh, that's very nice!

Yeah, that's what we could order. We could order, I think, what we wanted, but that was a very typical south German dish.

What kind of feelings did this leave you with?

I sort of liked the idea. I mean, it was not a hostile feeling, you know? And like I say, they went out of their way. They brought flowers. They went out of their way to be hospitable.

It's a different generation, and they tried very hard to make good. We went to some lectures, where a young woman teacher was saying what she's teaching her students. And they were leaning over backwards to make us feel welcome, and to show that they're trying to undo what harm was done.

It's a tough thing to do.

Yeah. Well, we appreciated it.

Yeah.

Yeah. It was an interesting visit.

And you went with your husband to that visit, the one where the city--

Yeah.

OK. And your children-- you say two of them have gone back, or gone to Germany?

I'm trying to think. My daughter went with us, but I thought that was not the same time, and I can't-- but I know my daughter went along. My son went on his own. And the other one, who lives in California, I don't think he ever went.

OK, OK. But one of them, at least, you say speaks fluent German?

Yeah.

A lot of German Jews, when they came over, refused to speak German.

To go back, right.

Refused to go back, and refused to speak German.

Right.

And their children too.

Well, like I say, I had more good than bad experiences. I mean, it was not pleasant when the Nazis marched around, and you knew that people got beaten up, like a friend of ours who was the head of the music conservatory. They came-- and I forget-- he was later liaison between the Jewish congregation and the German city, whatever. But he was beaten up for no good reason, just because he was Jewish. And things like that didn't make you feel very secure.

Yeah, yeah.

And when the men were arrested and things like that. But otherwise, somehow, you remember the good parts as well as the bad parts.

Yeah.

Right.

Well, I think I've come to the end of our interview.

Good.

And I appreciate it. Is there something that I have not asked you that you think is very crucial, like the moment when your Uncle Otto says, take me instead of Rabbi Leo Baeck? Is there anything else that you would like people to know about?

Well, my father didn't want to leave until he found a successor, even though theoretically, they could have left much earlier.

How do you look at that?

It makes me proud of them, right? And I remember that they did a lot of charity anonymously. My father always said he felt that people didn't have to know about it. And I thought that was a good example, right.

Did he ever feel adjusted to the United States?

Did he?

Yes.

I think so, yes. I think so.

Did he ever find work that was closer to home?

Instead of going to Kingston?

Yeah.

Yes. And he did a lot of-- he could never sit lazy. He made cigarettes that, instead of tobacco, had menthol in them for people who wanted to smoke--

[PHONE RINGING]

Let's cut.

Cut.

Before the phone rang, you were saying that your father could not sit still. He started making cigarettes with menthol?

Right, and he made them from scratch, and they looked so real, and they had a mouthpiece. People could smoke, and inhale menthol instead of tobacco, right. And out of silver and colored wire, he made little flowers, pins that you could put on your clothes. He always had to do something. And he also helped a lot of people with [NON-ENGLISH] restitution.

Oh yeah, with restitution questions.

Right.

Did your parents ever go back to Germany?

Yes, I think they went once. I think they went on the way to a vacation in Switzerland.

Did they stay in midtown Manhattan?

No, they moved to Queens.

They moved to Queens?

Yeah.

And when did they pass away?

My father passed away when he was 76 in '58. And my mother passed away, she was 98.

Oh wow.

Taking after her. In '96.

In '96?

She was born in '98, so '96.

In 1898-- that's when she was born?

No, she was born in 1892.

So that would have been in 1990 is when she passed--

That's right, actually, yeah.

Yeah. And your father was born in 1888, was that right?

Yeah.

So at 76, that makes him 1964, I think it would have been.

No, he died in 1976.

He did.

Yeah.

Oh, in 1976?

Yeah.

OK. OK.

Yeah.

Well, thank you very much, Trudy.

You're very welcome.

Thank you very, very much.

So I hope I got everything pretty correct.

Yeah. You did wonderfully. You painted a picture for us of what life was like. You painted a picture for us of what the cost was that people had to bear in general, and that your family in particular paid, you know? So thank you for all that. And I'll say that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Trudy Schwarz on December 11, 2018. Thanks again.

Thank you.

OK.

Thank you.

No, we're back, I'm sorry. I turned everything down.

OK. Trudy, Dan who was working with us had a question for you as well about the air raids that you experienced in London-- their frequency, about times of day, how many per week? Did you know anybody who got hurt in them? How was that part of your daily life? Describe that a little for us.

The air raids happened more often at night than in daytime. Some people actually slept in the shelters. But it also happened in daytime, and you had to go to a place where it was safe, like under a stairway.

You told us about that, yeah.

Right, or sometimes, if you were in the street, you just ran to the nearest shelter, which was in the Underground.

Well, you said it was more often at night than during the day?

Well, it was in daytime and at night, because I remember running into the subway, you know, the Underground, which was safer than being on the street, because you could be hit with falling bricks or whatever. Even if you didn't get a direct hit, you might get hurt from falling houses-- buildings.

Did you know anybody who did get hurt?

No.

OK. And did you see the after effects of this?

Yes, yes. It was very sad to walk down the streets and see half-houses, you know, the walls of houses. I was fortunate that where I lived was sort of out of town. We didn't have any close hits in our neighborhood, because they concentrated more in midtown London.

OK, any other part of that, Dan?

How many times a week?

How many times a week would you experience a raid? How'd you put it that way?

Sometimes every day, and sometimes two or three times a week.

OK. Was it ever more than once a day?

I think so, yes.

And one last question, was it more frequent when she first got there or towards the end of the war? When were they--

Yeah, was it more frequent when you first came to London, or did it become more frequent towards the end of the war? Do you remember that?

I was in London only for six months.

No, I believe you said you were in London for several years, because you took that course there.

No, the course was in Leeds, Yorkshire.

Ah. OK.

So I was in London for six months before the course started--

I see, and so was--

--to make money.

OK. So you're talking about these six months that you were there?

Right.

OK. Now was there bombing in Leeds?

No.

OK. OK.

Not that I remember, no.

OK. OK, thank you, Trudy.

You're welcome.