

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Amely Smith on September 26, 2019 in Peabody, Massachusetts. Thank you very, very much, Mrs. Smith, for agreeing to speak with us today.

I'm very happy to be here.

And to share your experiences and something of your story. I'm going to start the interview with the most basic questions, and then we go from there. OK?

All right.

So the very first question I have is, can you tell me what your name was at birth?

Amely Helen Baer.

How do I spell "Baer?"

B-- in Germany, we spelled it B-A-- umlaut. The little dots. --H-R.

Ah, I see.

And when we came here, we changed it to B-A-E-R. B-A-E-R.

B-A-E-R, and you dropped the H.

That's right.

OK. So you were Amely Helen Bahr. Where were you born?

I was born in Koenigsberg, East Prussia.

And when were you born?

In October 11, 1926.

October 11, 1926.

Yes.

OK. Well, I want to ask you many questions about your early years there, your childhood and teenage years. And I have to say, we don't have many interviewees from Koenigsberg.

All right.

So I'm going to want to know as much as you can share with us, what was it like growing up there. Let's start, though, with your family. Did you have brothers and sisters?

No, I'm an only child.

OK. And so your mother's family, what was her maiden name?

Her maiden name was Dubowsky. D-U-B-O-W-S-K-Y.

D like David?

David, yes.

OK, Dubowsky.

That's right.

And what was her first name?

Meta, M-E-T-A.

Meta Dubowsky.

That's right.

And was she from Koenigsberg, too?

No, she grew up in Tilsit.

Oh.

Yes.

And Tilst tells me-- what is Tilsit? Where is Tilsit?

Tilsit is about two hours from Germany-- from Germany. From Koenigsberg.

OK.

And I think, as I remember, it was on the River Memel.

OK.

And I think when you crossed the bridge, you were in Lithuania.

That's right.

That's right, isn't it?

So the River Memel has-- the name is Niemen in Polish.

Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

And Nemunas in Lithuanian.

Yeah.

So she grew up in Tilsit, which was on that river.

On that river, yes.

Right at the border.

I remember that, yes.

Did you visit it?

I was there when my grandparents were there. As a matter of fact, until I was three, my great grandfather still lived, but my great grandmother died just before I was born. And I used to--

Oh, my.

Yeah, we used to visit him. And then of course, I was often with my grandparents in Tilsit.

Did your mother have brothers and sisters?

Yes, she had a sister.

What was her name?

Edith, in German. E-D-I-T-H.

OK.

Edith. And she was 2 and 1/2 years younger than she.

OK. So Meta and Edith, were they the only children for this family?

Yeah, there was a little boy who died as a baby. Yes, yes.

And do you know how your grandfather made a living?

Yes, he had a cigar Store a cigar, yes.

Where was it located in Tilsit?

Where? You mean on what street?

Well, sometimes people will remember the streets.

I don't remember. I don't remember that. No.

Was it in the center of town?

Yes, it probably was. Yes, it was. And they had many relatives there. Other relatives, and-- yes.

OK. So the family was well established in that city.

Yes, they were. I think their grandparents or great grandparents-- I think they were there since 1700 or so.

Oh, that's a while.

Then the one part of the family, my grandmothers, my grandmothers from the other family, they came from Vilna, from Lithuanian. That's how they're named Dubowsky.

Oh.

And they came, I guess, and established themselves in Tilsit. But my grandfather, I think he must have come as a small

child. Because none of his sisters are brothers had any accent in German, accents. I didn't know those great grandparents anymore.

So it was your mother's side of the family where there were great grandparents, the great grandfather that you did know.

Yes, yes.

What was his name?

His name was Moritz Rosenthal. Rosenthal.

Ah, Moritz Rosenthal.

Yeah.

OK. And all of this-- well, I don't know. I was going to say, all of this was part of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, but maybe not.

No, I don't think--

No, because Vilna, of course, would have been.

Yes, yes.

And Lithuania would have been.

That's right, but I don't--

But the Koenigsberg area and Tilsit, that was part of Germany.

That was part. Oh, yes. That was. The Junkers, who were the elite--

Tell me what is it. For those of us who don't know, what were the Junkers in Germany?

The Junkers were the I say the aristocrats, and they were mostly came from East Prussia, from Prussia or East Prussia.

OK.

And usually they had land, landowners, and big landowners.

So would this be people who had a "von" in front of their name?

Most of them, yes. Yes, that's it. Yes.

One of the most famous ladies was a Grafin con Doenhoff.

Yes, I have her book.

Oh, yeah. Me too.

Very interesting. Yes, yes.

She there had a family estate in Prussia.

That's right. Oh, yes. Many did. Yes, yes. Small towns, mostly.

And so this was your mother's side of the family.

Yes.

And your father's side of the family, how many brothers and sisters did he have?

Oh, there were eight. Four sisters and four brothers. So eight children they had, and they grew up in Hamburg.

They grew up in Hamburg?

Hamburg, Altona. Yes, yes. He comes from Hamburg, but he went to establish a business in Koenigsberg.

What brought him East?

What's that?

What brought your father eastwards?

Because I guess there was an opportunity. He learned the-- when he was 14, he left school. They had to leave. You know, they had to make a living. And so he learned the business of hides and skins. And then there was some opportunity to be in business. As a matter of fact, he was in business with my mother's uncle, Samuel Dubowsky. And that's how my mother met him.

Well, that was one of my questions.

And this was in Koenigsberg. That was in Koenigsberg.

OK. And what was your father's first name?

Josef.

Josef Bahr?

That's right.

OK. And do you know when they met?

When they met? Yes. I would say 1923. They met-- they met at a-- my uncle's second wedding. His wife died, and he got married again. And they met at their wedding, this uncle who was in business with him.

And so this is uncle on your mother's side. So--

Yes, Dubowsky.

Yeah, how was she related to him? Was it her father's brother or something?

Yes, was her father's brother who got married again, yes.

All right. And--

And they lived in Koenigsberg.

And they live in Koenigsberg.

Yes. Your grandfather, then, it was your grandfather's brother was this man?

Yes.

And his name his first name was what?

Samuel.

Samuel.

Yes.

And what was your grandfather's name? Louis.

Louis.

Yes.

All right. And your grandmother's name on your mother's side?

Ella.

Ella Rosenthal.

Yeah, Ella Rosenthal.

Rosenthal, Dubowsky. And did you know your father's relatives much? Did they stay in Hamburg, or did--

No, no. They-- most of them, the children, the boys, the other three boys, except my father moved to Koenigsberg, and they moved to Hanover. They lived in Hanover. I never was in Hamburg until later, after the war.

And then my grandmother-- my grandfather, my father's father, died very young. He had diabetes. And I think my father was 16 maybe when he died. He was the youngest. My father was the youngest of the children.

Of the eight children.

Of all the children, yes.

OK.

And so my grandmother became quite old. She was 88 when she died. And she was-- she lived-- she lived-- she lived with her daughter. But in the summer, she was always in a hotel near Hanover. And it was a Jewish hotel, kosher. And then she had birthday August 27. So every year the whole family came.

You, too?

Yes. Yes, and I remember especially her 80th birthday. I remember. We have a lovely picture of that. Yes, I have.

And you were about how old when her 80th birthday turned around?

I was 8 years old.

So it was 1934?

Yes, that's right.

OK. And did you-- so that was an opportunity for you to meet all of the aunts and uncles--

That's right.

--on your father's side.

Yes.

Tell me their names, if you can.

I think you mean his brothers and his sisters?

Mm-hmm.

The oldest one was [? Zali. ?]

[? Zali. ?]

Zali. And he was a banker, and he was one who was a millionaire. So he supported the mother, and he was a wonderful person. And became a bachelor. Was a bachelor.

OK.

Then there was Phillip. Phillip, he had his wife Sophie.

Mm-hmm.

And they had two children.

OK.

Ruth and Heinz.

OK.

Do you want to know that far?

Yes. And then the next?

And the next, then there was Julius and Marianna. And they had no children.

OK.

So they were not that many. And then the sisters. OK, well, one sister. I was named after her. Her name was Helena. Helena. And that's my second name. And she was murdered by her husband. Her husband was a dentist. And he used to inject her with morphine. And they didn't know it, and then she died. My grandmother was always very suspicious of that, she suddenly died.

And must have been maybe 30 or maybe in their 20s. I don't know. This was before I was born. I think it was in 1920. It was big in the papers all over the country then, but they didn't know it. And then he'd married again. And the same thing

happened. That woman, the wife died, so they got suspicious. And then they came to my grandmother, said we'd like to open the grave up to see what happened to her. And that's not a Jewish thing to do that.

Yeah.

And they were rather religious. But then she gave in. She said, yes, it's necessary. And then they found that he had done that.

All this morphine in her.

Then he went to prison, of course, yes.

Oh my goodness.

Yes, that was an interesting story. It was a sad story.

Did they have children?

No, they had no children. She was a nurse in the First World War, as a matter of fact.

And her name again?

Her name was Helena-- her married name was Goodman, Gutmann. Goodman, yeah, yeah.

But her first name was Helena.

Helena, yes.

OK.

And then there was Rosie, who married a Dutch-Jewish man in Holland. They lived in Amsterdam. And her husband was Willem, and they had two daughters.

OK.

And then there was-- her name was Sarah, but they called her [? Jaka. ?] You know, so that's all I knew about. But I know the name was [? Zalla ?].

OK.

And she had one son. But who's the other one? oh, Else. Else was actually the oldest daughter. And she had two girls, too. So that was the family.

And did they all-- aside from the ones that you mentioned lived in Amsterdam, did they all stay in this Northern Germany kind of region?

Yes, yes, yes. One lived in Hamm. That's in Westphalia. But the brothers, the other brothers all lived in Hanover. They established themselves in Hanover.

OK.

And one lived in Stuttgart, one sister.

But all of this is in the Western part of Germany.

Yes.

And in the part of Germany that became West Germany.

That's right.

That formally became West Germany afterwards.

After the war, yes.

And so your father is the only one who really goes East.

Yes, yes.

Did any of his family visit him in Koenigsberg?

Yeah, once in a while they came. Yes.

OK.

Yes. But mostly we went there, because of the grandmother.

Yeah. And so her 80th birthday, you were eight years old, and it's 1934.

Yes.

That's a year after Hitler comes to power.

That's right.

Did that make itself felt during this celebration?

Not as far as-- no, I don't think at that time yet, you know?

OK.

There were things, I guess, that were happening--

But you don't remember any kind of--

No, I don't remember that, not that far back that there was any difference. We could travel. We could go. We could stay in hotels. We could still at that time.

And there still was a Jewish hotel to stay in.

There was a Jewish one, but otherwise not until it's 1936 I think that happened that you couldn't stay or you couldn't go to a restaurant because of the Nuremberg laws.

And your father is the baby of the family.

Yes, yes.

When was he born?

He was born 1897.

1897. And your mother?

My mother was born in 1904.

OK.

Yeah.

OK. And when they met in 1923 or 24, they met at your uncle's wedding.

Yes.

When did they themselves get married?

They got married in 1925.

OK. And they had you in 1926.

Yeah, they were married October 18, 1925. And I was born October 11, 1926. Very legal.

OK.

[LAUGHTER]

And did either of them have higher education?

My mother went to a postgraduate school in Berlin. To learn some just--

Administrative? You mean like typing and things?

Something like that, something like that. I mean, but she never used it, you know, because she didn't work at the time. And yeah--

And your father, did he have any--

No, my father, I think I said before, he left school when he was 14. That's the way it was done. And he was sent away from home to a family where he learned the business.

Did he serve in World War I, your father?

Yes, yes. My father was-- as a matter of fact, he was a prisoner of war in France.

Was he?

Yes.

And so he was fighting for the German side.

That's right. And I think he was only 17 when he went in, when he went into the army. Yes.

Did he ever talk about his experiences?

Oh, yes. He was wounded a little bit. He had, I think, a shot in the-- yeah, you could see this wound on the arm, and a little bit over the eye. He said he was by Senegalese soldiers he was shot. You know, and then I guess--

By Senegalese.

--I don't know-- then he was caught, I imagine. And I think a couple of years he was in prison. And he never would eat rice anymore, because that's all he was fed.

Was rice, and rice, and more rice.

Rice, rice. Yes.

And so he was imprisoned in France.

Yes, I don't know where, but I know he was.

OK, OK. Now, in this business that he was that he was in with your uncle, you mentioned that it was hides. Was it a tannery?

No, it wasn't a tannery. Here he had a tannery, but it was-- you know the hides and skins that you sell to tanneries, and they processed them. It was like a--

So he would get them. Who would be the people he would buy them from?

I think from-- what do you call this? For animals, you know-- oh, I can't think of the name of it. Animals-- to process the animals for food, and then the skin would come off, and he'd buy the skin.

I see, so he wouldn't--

And the hides, and whatever--

He would not buy them direct from, let's say, a hunter--

No, no. Not from a hunter. No, no.

--or something like that. No. It would be like a cow was being taken to someplace for--

Yeah, where they first--

--slaughter it.

Or this or that. Yes, I know we used to go into the country, all over East Prussia, make these day trips with my father and that's where he saw his customers. Not just customers, but from the people he bought.

Mm-hmm.

And then he would-- yes, they were processed, and sold to tanneries, and-- yes.

I see. So he would buy them from whoever would have slaughtered the cow.

Yes, right.

And would take--

Slaughterhouse. The slaughterhouses, but also I couldn't think of the name till you said "slaughter." Yes.

OK.

Yes.

So those are the people he would buy them?

Yes, yes. I know that he did that.

And what kind of process did he put through them, or was he simply--

I guess they skinned them. I really-- don't ask me. I know they had a-- he had a building, and he had an office. And then also there was where they processed the skins. That's all I know about that.

Did it smell?

I know more-- yes. It's a very-- I'm used to that smell.

Yeah?

And then he here he had a tannery. And so again the smell.

OK.

Yeah.

But it was one step further in the process.

Yes.

Of making leather.

Yes, right. He was well known. He was one of the biggest dealers in East Prussia.

Was he now?

Of this. Yes, yes. They knew him even here in America. Yeah. Because--

So do you remember some of the places that you visited in East Prussia with him?

Oh, there were lots of-- Allenstein and Gumbinnen, and we went as far West as the Polish border, down with the [? Masurian ?] You know [? Masuria ?]

Mm-hmm. So Allenstein, Gumbinnen.

Yeah, and further down, all these places.

Well, these are such--

These are--

Really, they were small places. And all those people, I remember those people because they were also Jewish, who he

bought from. And they finally-- they came to America, too. And we were very friendly with them. My father did business with one of them, too, here in America.

Well, the places you mentioned are so unfamiliar to most people. And surprisingly also in Germany.

Yes, yes, yes. I've met here some Germans who said, "Oh, I had a cousin in Allenstein." A woman here.

Yeah, who knows of Allenstein?

That's right.

Who knows of Gumbinnen?

That's right. But you do.

Yeah, I do. I do. But that's because we're so close geographically.

Yes, yes, of course.

But it struck me-- I must say, I was there in the early '90s-- as a very pretty part of--

Pretty part. It was very pretty. And of course the Baltic Sea, we used used to go--

Where did you go on the Baltic Sea?

Well, there was a place, Cranz.

Cranz.

It was half an hour from Koenigsberg. We used to spend summers there. Not all summers, but we did. Then another place we went to was outside of Memel. Do you know Sandkrug? No? I don't know what it was called in Lithuanian. It was right across from Memel. You took the ferry to come over.

I know, yeah.

My relatives were all in Memel, so my mother loved that area.

It was very pretty. It's a spit, yeah.

And there was Schwarzort. This was [INAUDIBLE]. We went back there in 2007.

Oh, did you?

We went to Schwarzort. What's it called in--

In Russian?

In Lithuanian. Yeah, I don't--

Ah, Schwarzort-- Juodkrant©.

Yes.

Juodkrant©. That's what it is. Schwarzort. Yeah.

Yeah, beautiful, beautiful.

Well, that area is called Kursiu Marios in Lithuanian. There's Nida. Which was Nidden.

Yes. [INAUDIBLE] Nidden. Yeah, German-- Nidden. Yeah, yeah.

And Thomas Mann had a--

I was just going to say that.

Yeah, had a summer place there.

Thomas Mann had a house there. So we went up there. It's sort of up the hill, you know?

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, I know. It was beautiful. Because I went back in 2007. We spent maybe 10 days, maybe two weeks in Schwarzort.

OK. Did you-- did you cross into what is today the Kaliningrad region?

The Kaliningrad?

Yeah, what Koenigsberg became.

Oh, yes, yes. Of course. Yes, then we took from there, we went on a bus. I should have stayed longer. I stayed only two days and one night, my husband and I. And my cousins stayed back [INAUDIBLE].

And so that was very interesting for me, you know, because it's all built up Russian-style. But I found my way.

Did you?

Yes, I did. I did.

And do you remember the street you lived on as a child?

What was the name of the street? General-Litzmann-Strasse. That was German-- one of the German generals. You know, they renamed it. It used to be Stresemannstrasse. He was some kind of a big shot during the democracy.

OK.

And then, of course, they renamed it, you know?

OK, so it was General-Litzmann-Strasse?

Yeah, that's one of the main-- it was a main street up in-- they called it the Hufen. It was up-- residential section. Wasn't downtown, you know?

OK, was it north of downtown or?

Yes, north, yes.

So you lived in a northern part of--

Koenigsberg, yes.

All right.

And I used to have to commute. I don't know if I'm getting ahead of myself.

No, no, no, please.

I had to commute on the streetcar to go to-- first I went to a public school for two years.

As a little girl.

Yes, a little girl. I started in 1933 when Hitler-- they start there in April. They start school in April.

Really?

Yes.

That's interesting.

I don't know. It's crazy, because then they go for vacation two months later.

Yeah, yeah.

But they did. The year started in April. And I started April. And he, Hitler came in, in January.

That's right.

Yes, 1933. And at first, of course, there wasn't a Jewish school yet. You know, they established that about two years later. They established a Jewish school. They felt it was necessary. And that's I think I went a year later, from '36 after they established it.

And you would travel--

In the public school

So you say two years or three years in the public school?

I think I was three years.

Three years?

Because I know they established a school in '35, and I didn't go right away.

OK, OK. Describe for me a little bit your house, where you lived in the Hufen, General-Litzmann-Strasse.

Well, at first-- I have to say, at first I lived in [? Gluckstrasse. ?]

OK.

That was right near the zoo, Tiergarten. They called it Tiergarten. It's animals garden.

Yeah.

It was either called zoo or Tiergarten in German. In Berlin, they called it the zoo.

Yeah.

And so I lived like maybe not even five minutes walk. So every day when I was little, I went to the Tiergarten. So I had a nanny. And then later on, we had a housekeeper. She didn't want the nanny. She wanted to be in charge. So she said, let her go. I'm going to take care of all of you.

OK.

And then-- and then we moved to-- they were apartments. Very nice apartments.

So you lived not in a separate single family home?

No, no. There were not many people in the city in Germany who lived in single houses, because there was that much space.

So describe for me the apartment building you lived in. The one in-- the one you remember the best. Let's see.

The second one--

The second one.

--where I lived the most. [INAUDIBLE] was four I think we moved over to General-Litzmann-Strasse. And we lived in a house underneath was stores, and there was even a movie underneath.

Well, that's convenient.

Yes, it was convenient. They let us in as long as we-- we could always go there. They always let us in, you know? I mean, then it was forbidden.

As children.

No, then it was forbidden. They still-- you know, we went to rehearsals. And it was lovely, as I saw all the movies. I was a child, but I saw all these--

What were some of the movies that you saw in the cinema? What did you-- in this theater?

What did I see? Well, there was a Shirley Temple movie, but I saw adult movies, too. I can't remember the names. There was Greta Garbo and whatever. Now I can't remember-- recall. But so on, names of the [INAUDIBLE] the movies of the [INAUDIBLE].

So this would have been movies coming from Hollywood as well?

As well, they were. Yeah, yeah. They were adapted in German. They were-- yeah, yeah, mostly. You know, you saw them, and they adapted them.

That's right.

Yes, yeah.

And what were some of the-- what were some of the actors or actresses from Germany that you saw?

There was one was Lil Dagover. A beautiful woman. I always said my mother looked like her. And who can I-- Heinz Ruhmann. And some were Nazis, some were not. And there were quite a few. Of course, Greta Garbo was then already.

Was Marlene Dietrich in--

Oh, Marlene Dietrich, of course. Yeah, of course then she left and went to America.

Then she left. Yeah.

She was great.

So you had this theater. It was a cinema or a theater?

No, no, cinema.

It was a cinema. And it was right underneath where you lived.

Yes, and there was another store. And then the owner of the apartment-- of the apartment house had his own little addition there. That was like a double up and down, near the garden. You could look into his garden. And we had-- and there were four Jewish families-- six families in the whole house.

Not a big apartment house. You know, they were also little apartment house. And there were six family. Four were Jewish. And maybe upstairs lived the teacher before-- well, when did we move over there? It was probably 1930s. So I was friendly with the little girl. But as soon as Hitler came-- finished. She wasn't allowed to talk to us anymore.

And she had two older brothers. So they became terrible Nazis. Terrible. When you came down the stairs, you'd go right to the side. You were afraid they were going to really attack you or whatever.

Do you remember their names?

It was not very pleasant with them.

Do you remember their names?

Hippler. H-I-P-P-L-E-R.

Hippler?

So much like Hitler, yeah, that I remember the name.

Yeah.

And so this was a Gentile family, a German Gentile family.

Yes.

And they became adherents to the new ideology.

They did, they did. Yeah, yeah, yes.

OK.

They did. The little girl was my age. The boys were older. But she was not-- you know, I think the brothers probably. The father didn't seem like that, but the young-- you know, the young fellows were, yeah.

OK. So what about the other family that was not Jewish? Do you have--

No, others were all Jewish.

Oh, the others were all Jewish?

Ah-hah. There were four. Downstairs was nothing. Was just the lobby. And then you went up the stairs a whole flight.

OK.

And we lived on the first floor. And next to us lived a family. And the boy went to school with me. We were friendly with them. And then upstairs lived a lawyer. They were very much to themselves. And then above us was another family that we knew well. Also was one boy. They all were my age, and we all went to school. We were in the same class together.

Do you-- did you live in what was then predominantly a Jewish neighborhood?

No, no. It wasn't. No. That was more downtown.

It just happened at this house.

Yes. There were Jews around there. I had a girlfriend, you know. Diagonally across was my girlfriend that I went to school with, a Jewish girl. But not predominantly Jewish there.

And did I understand correctly that even after Hitler banned Jews from going into cinemas, the cinema would let you in to watch movies anyway?

Well, yeah, they were very nice to us, especially children if they had-- they were trying out the film. I don't know if you call it rehearsal or whatever. They would let us come. It was during the day, and they would let us in. Yes, yes.

OK.

It was after-- it must have been-- I wonder. Because my parents went to the-- every Saturday night to the movies. And when they stopped that-- no, I don't think they would let them in. They wouldn't dare when the laws were already-- that must have been '36 or '37 that they couldn't go anymore.

OK. But until that time--

Yes, yes. Oh, yes, yes.

OK. What other kinds of shops were on the ground floor?

What kind of-- there was a paper store, you know? A paper store.

Papierwaren.

Yeah, it was only two stores. The other one was a shoe store.

OK. And where did you get food?

Food?

Yeah.

In the stores. We could go. The stores we could keep going, you know? That was till the end you could go to the stores.

And was that--

The end. That we left. Of course, after that, I don't know. We left in '39.

Yeah, yeah. But did your mother go shopping every single day for food?

More or less. There was a gro-- there was a single grocery store called [? Koryand ?].

What was it called?

[? Koryand ?].

[? Koryand ?].

Yeah, I don't know exactly now. The name doesn't come to me. It was--

OK.

Anyway, there was a store, where you get-- it was maybe five minutes walk, you know? But usually our housekeeper went shopping for that. And we had a bakery near there. So she went whatever she wanted what she needed. Oh, she went every day. But probably you didn't go once a week and get a whole-- you couldn't carry it home. Yeah.

Yeah. Let's go to your own home, the apartment itself. You say it was on the first floor. That is the floor above the street level.

Yeah, they would say here second floor.

Exactly, exactly. And how many rooms did you have?

We had-- let's see, a living room, a dining room, my room, my parents' room. And then there was a bathroom. Of course, one bathroom. And then there was a very small room next to the bathroom. It was long and small, and that's where the housekeeper lived.

Oh. And there was a kitchen?

And the kitchen, of course.

And the kitchen. And was it a modern building? Was it built in the 19th century, do you think?

Yes, I think so. I think so.

How did you heat it? How was it heated?

Well, you had to go down every morning in the cellar and got the coals. And then there was like a little stove.

A Kachelofen?

No, not that. Not that. That we didn't have. My grandmother had that. This was in the kitchen, and you put the coals in, lit them, and heated the house.

So it was all the rooms?

But it wasn't central. It didn't come from the bottom, you know? It didn't come from--

Oh, that's interesting.

So each one had--

OK.

That was terrible. We had to get up early in the morning, 5 o'clock and so on. 6 o'clock. So that when we got up it was warm.

Yeah. And did you have electricity?

Yes, yes, definitely.

Did you have indoor plumbing?

Did we have what?

Indoor plumbing.

Yes, yes. No, no. It was modern.

Did your parents have a phone?

Did your parents have a telephone?

Of course. Yes, we had a telephone. Yeah.

Did you have a radio?

Yes. No television.

OK.

No, I'm kidding.

Now, what kind of radio broadcasts do you remember hearing?

I remember-- as a child, I remember sitting with my-- when my parents went out with my die Liesel-- that was our housekeeper. She was like my second mother. And I'm sitting there. There were comedies and things came from Koelln often, you know?

So you would hear-- you would hear plays over the radio.

Yes, yeah. Yes, plays and stories, and--

Did you hear-- did you hear Hitler over the radio?

Oh, of course. Yeah, yeah. That we heard. That we heard. I even saw him when he came to Koenigsberg. I was caught in the-- I was coming home from school or something, and in the middle they're all standing there, and you couldn't move at the moment. So you had to stand there, too. But you weren't supposed to be there as a Jew, you know?

Yeah. And how old were you when you saw him?

Probably 10.

OK, so about 1936.

Yeah, yeah. At least. Yes, yes.

OK.

I think it was even later.

Did he drive-- did he come by in a motorcade?

In a motorcade. Yeah, and of course everybody raised their hand. You weren't supposed to, and you didn't want to, either.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. So you stood there and you hoped nobody saw you, you know? Because you didn't raise your hand. You didn't want to.

Did you at that point have to wear any kind of identification marks?

No, that was until when the war broke out. That wasn't before, when they wore the star.

OK.

We didn't have to wear that yet.

OK. And would you say that your family was well-to-do?

Yes, fairly. Not extremely rich, but well-to-do, yes.

Comfortable.

Comfortable, yes.

Did your father have an automobile?

Yes, yes. We had a Ford.

You had a Ford?

Yeah, we had a Ford, yes.

OK. So when you would go with him into the countryside for him to visit the slaughterhouses--

We went by car. Yes, of course.

You went by car.

Yes, yes.

OK.

Yeah.

Describe to me a little bit what that countryside was like.

Oh.

I know it's hard. It's an open question. But what stays in your mind's eye?

Because you know as a child, you probably don't notice so much, the nature. You know, you don't look at that. But it's beautiful. I mean, East Prussia was a very, very flat, very flat, beautiful. I can tell you more when I went to see, you know, what Cranz looked like. It was beautiful. We had a long, long boardwalk and hotels there. All the years we stayed in those hotels. There was a Jewish hotel later.

Was there?

In 1938-- 19-- yeah, before [INAUDIBLE] in that summer we stayed there.

In a Jewish hotel?

I went to Memel, to my aunt. They were still in Memel then. Because it must have been later that they left. And then I-- in the meantime, they had a raid there. They raided. You know, they were looking for someone or something the night before I came home.

And this was in 1938?

Yeah.

When you went to Memel in 1938, did it-- was it still-- was it still part of Lithuania, or was it already part of Germany?

No, see, that's what I'm trying to think. When did they go into Lithuania? Was it in '38?

March. It was in March.

'38 in March or '39?

I think it was '39.

I don't remember. Then it could have been '36 when I went, you know?

Well, then it was definitely--

Maybe it was '36 when I went to Memel, when I was in Memel in the summer.

Then that was definitely--

Yes, and then came back. That night they had a raid, you know, at the hotel.

Oh, really? And what were they looking for?

They said they were looking for somebody or something. And of course, they knew it was a Jewish hotel. I don't know. She didn't know herself. They didn't know. And the owner was a woman. She was very interesting, intelligent, very lovely woman. And when the 1938, the Kristallnacht, you know, the small town was very bad, you know?

And so she came to us. She stayed with us for months, I think, in my mother's house. My mother always welcomed everybody. And she went out, because she couldn't be in Crazn anymore, and the small town was getting-- a lot of people moved into the city, Jews who lived in the country.

So you're saying-- if I understand this correctly-- you happened to be in Memel and were coming home one night. And there was a raid from that took place in Crazn, not in Memel.

No, no, in Crazn.

In Crazn. And at this time, the authorities then-- it would have been the German authorities--

Of course.

--were looking for something in that Jewish hotel.

A man, I think, [INAUDIBLE].

OK. Now, when you went across-- when you went to Memel, it was to visit an aunt, did you say?

Yeah, my aunt and my grandmother. My grandmother lived as well-- I think my grandparents were separated. Yeah, my grandfather was a difficult man. And so they were sort of separated. And she lived with my aunt and her husband, and the little girl, my cousin, who was much younger, eight younger than I.

What were their names, grandmother's names?

My grandmother was the one, you know, Dubowsky-- I mean, Rosenthal, yeah. And then was my aunt. Her name about Burack. B-U-R-A-C-K. Yes.

And her first name?

Her husband was from Memel.

OK.

And actually, he had a factory in Germany. And as a foreigner, he had to close it already. I think in '36 or so, they weren't allowed. They had to go back to-- as foreign Jews, they didn't allow to have any businesses anymore.

In Germany.

Yes. And so they went back to Memel.

OK. Where in Germany did he have his factory?

Near Koelln.

OK, so it was not in East Prussia.

No, no, no.

He had a factory near Cologne?

That was. Yes, yes.

And his last name was Burack.

Yeah.

And his wife's first name?

Edith, Edith.

Edith, Edith. Oh, so it was your mother's sister.

That's right. Yes.

Your mother's sister lived there. OK.

And my grandmother lived with her. Yeah, so I was there. And they had a little girl eight years younger than I.

Well, it was-- at that point it was a different country, Memel.

Yes.

Did you notice? Did you feel that when you were there, that it was a different country? Or not so much?

Yeah, well, you know, Memel, I always thought as a child there were only Jews in Memel. That's all I saw. There were a lot. There were a lot of Jews in Memel. And they all lived very well. When we went in the summer, went over to Sandkrug, [? the pier ?] and we stayed there in a hotel. And it was a lovely life. Lovely.

And the women, all of them went to-- they went to the restaurant every day. The cafe, not the restaurant. The cafe, and had coffee, and they played cards. At least, my aunt. This aunt who had--

Aunt Edith.

--the daughter, Ina.

Oh, she's the one who had the daughter, Ina.

Yeah, my aunt and uncle. Yeah, it was really my mother's-- she was my mother's first cousin.

But did you notice a difference in-- that you were in a different country, or not?

No. and I say, I saw a lot of Jews. I didn't meet too many other people there. And I found-- to tell you the truth--

Sure, sure. No, go right ahead.

I went on the boat alone. I kind of-- and there were mostly Lithuanians. I looked Jewish, probably because I was dark. And in East Prussia, if you're darker, you were Jewish. And I felt very uncomfortable.

Really?

I think there were a lot of Nazis there.

So there were antisemites amongst those.

Yes, I think so in Lithuania.

OK.

And you know, I didn't feel very comfortable.

And did you travel that way often, or was this the one time?

With my mother, yes. Because we went not every year, but every other year we went there in the summer. You had to go on the boat. Now you can go on the bus there. When I went back from Lithuania to Koenigsberg, to Kaliningrad, we went on a bus.

But at that time you could take a ferry from--

You had to take a boat--

From Koenigsberg?

No, not from Koenigsberg. From Cranz.

From Cranz.

It was called Cranz. It was outside of Cranz. And it went-- and it went. It stopped in Nidden. And it stopped in Rositten and all those places.

Yeah, all those places that we know.

And it went far as Memel.

OK.

But we did that often, yes.

OK. As you were growing up, what kind of interaction did you have with people who supported the Nazis? You mentioned the neighbors and the two boys who would come down the stairs.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Did you meet-- did you have it in school? Did you have-- when you were going to primary school?

Yes.

And the public school for three years?

Yes, yes.

Do you remember any kind of discussion, any kind of indoctrination?

Well, they were indoctrinating. And every morning there was a swastika made out of wood with holes in it. So we weren't allowed to do that right away, but the children, you know, they brought \$0.10, and they could put a nail in those holes. That was how they raised money. And I don't remember. They didn't associate with us. No, they didn't. They didn't at that time already.

And this would have been when you were how old?

In '33 I started.

In '33.

Yeah, I think they were indoctrinated. But we were enough Jewish children there. As I said, not a Jewish section, but there were maybe in my class about four or five. You know, Jewish children. And we were together. I don't remember ever associating with the others. You know, even talking to them.

Or what about the teachers? How did the teachers behave?

The teachers? I think they were all right to us. I don't think we had at that time-- you know, I don't think they were especially mean. Because I wouldn't have stayed two years, or three years maybe. Because three years I could have gone. But it wasn't bad. It wasn't that bad. You know, the teachers were OK.

And what about in the shops and on the street?

In the shops? Well, I never noticed anything like that. You went shopping. You didn't if you were-- you know.

And tell me about Liesel, who was your housekeeper.

Oh, she was wonderful.

Tell me about her.

She was-- she always-- before she came to us, she worked only for Jews.

She herself was not Jewish.

No, no. Not at all. Not at all. Came from Gumbinnen.

Oh, she came from Gumbinnen. OK.

And if she would have been educated, she was a very smart woman. You know, she would have really been something. Very clever. Basically. And then she came to us, but she was very bossy, and she said, I don't want this nanny here. I'll take care of Amely. I'll take care of everything. You know?

How old were you when she arrived?

I was two years old.

Oh!

So I grew up with her, and she was really like my second mother. We spent a lot of time together.

Was she older or younger?

Older. You know, she had to be. Later on, I think the laws came-- that was in '36 again-- the Nuremberg laws, that no one who worked for a family--

For Jews.

--that was non-Jewish, they had to be over 45, because of Rassenschande. Race--

Disgrace.

Disgrace, yes.

And she was over 45.

She was over 45. I never knew how old she was, but she must have been-- at that anyway, it was 1936. I would say she was 50, maybe. Yeah, wait a minute. She was a little-- yeah, quite a bit older than my mother of course. Yes, yes. She was a very obese woman, and very-- you know, she knew how to bring me up.

And you know, my mother-- my mother wasn't very social, but she went-- she'd love to go to-- in the afternoon, she would walk downtown where my father's office was. And they would have-- after he was finished, they went with the secretary, who was Catholic. They would have tea, and you know, and then she would bring rolls, and they would eat them. Then at night, they already had a cup of tea or so. Because we eat our main meal at lunch time.

Did your father come home for your main meal?

Yes, my father came home for lunch, for the meal. And then rested a few min-- that's how the Europeans did. Lay down a while, and then went back again. He had about 15 minutes by car, I think, from downtown to uptown. Yes.

What a nice tradition that they had, though, that she would go and meet him every evening.

Yeah, she loved to do that. Yeah, that was her life. She was not a card player. And she was-- yeah, she had friends. They had friends there.

Was she a quiet person, your mother? Or more extroverted?

Yeah, I would say she was, to a certain extent, maybe shy. But yet, you know, she was outspoken, and she was-- but she-- she had friends, intimate friends. And they had friends. But not otherwise. She didn't like, for instance, organizations.

In Germany it wasn't so much, but here, no, no, no, no, no. There were a lot of people didn't like that. To a certain extent, yet people said she was haughty because she was-- she knew what she was doing, you know, and she didn't--

She knew what she wanted.

She wasn't really. She wasn't. Yeah, she was very kind, and she was very-- she did a lot for people, you know. When people came here from Germany after the war, they stayed with us at first, and she was always very giving.

What about your father's personality? What was he like?

My father was quiet, but he also was he knew what was right. Even though he didn't have much education. For instance, my mother loved the theater. They used to go to theater. And he developed a very wonderful knowledge of the theater, and he judged the actors, and he was very-- and a fine man. And what can I say?

Did they-- were they a good match? Were they a happy couple?

I think as happy as-- yeah. I mean, the match was, my mother was much more educated, but he was not uned-- he learned, you know? And I think perhaps-- I don't know how happy they were.

Did you have a favorite?

What? My favorite?

Did you have a--

Well, I was very close with my mother, because I was an only child. But my mother was very strict, and I had to be perfect. And I wasn't perfect. I mean, I wasn't the perfect type. She wasn't perfection. I wasn't. I was more like my father, easygoing, you know? But we got-- we were-- and well, later on in life, too, I always felt I owed her that. I was an only child, and she was-- when my father but rather young, she was lonely.

She needed some company then.

She needed, yeah, yeah. And she expected me to be. She gave me everything, everything. Much too much and material things, which I didn't want, you know? I didn't need that. I said let it-- but then on the other hand, we often had discussions, you know? We were very different.

Going back to your own childhood, did you feel like you had a lot of toys, a lot of-- were you spoiled? Or had more of a strict--

I would say, mother always gave me-- not that she overdid it in toys and everything, but she obviously-- all my life, she was-- she liked to give. She liked to give, you know? And I wish she would have been not so strict and I was not expecting so much of me. That was a little bit hard to live with her. Yeah.

Well, give me an example of what she expected. Give me an example.

She expected me to be perfect, you know? To be perfect. And I wasn't. I think later on I came out much more. You know, when my mother died, I was in my 70s. She became 96.

Wow.

And there wasn't a day hardly that I didn't see her, you know? We lived very close, the same street and everything.

Here in the United States.

Yeah, yeah. She did everything, but she expected me to be there. So--

Where did you live on the same street? What town was this?

We lived in Williamstown, because we went-- you know Williamstown?

Tell me where--

It's in the West. It's in the Berkshires.

Right.

Williams College. It's a beautiful town, beautiful to live in. And my father, my father was-- he had a tannery later in Woburn. First he worked for them, and then he could take it over because a man died. And then we had to expand, so we went to North Adams, founded a bigger one. And my husband, who was a chemical engineer, studied chemical engineering, went into business with him. Because that was a lot with chemicals, was making leather.

And then we were 10 years in Williamstown. And then he died. And then my husband led the business. And--

OK. So I was just jumping--

Going off.

No, it's OK. I was jumping ahead a little bit to ask where in the United States you had lived. And you gave me a picture. Now I'll go back to Koenigsberg.

Yes.

And did your parents read newspapers? Did they--

Oh, yes.

What newspapers did they generally read?

It was a Berliner Illustrator I think was one of them.

Berliner Illustrator.

There must have been a Koenigsberg paper, maybe two. Oh, yes, they did. My mother, my mother was very political. She read a lot of it. Yeah.

So this is what I'd like to find out. When Hitler comes to power, and you are seven, eight years old, what kind of discussions are going on at home?

Oh, you know, they were always-- my mother always saw the light. She said, let's go out. Maybe by '36 at least or '35, let's go out of Germany. But my father's business was good, you know. And you lived there all your life, and it was a decision with the language and everything, and to reestablish yourself.

And they said, oh, you know, obviously Hitler wasn't like everyone. You know, those that stayed said Hitler wasn't going to last very long. They're not going to last, you know? So you know, that's what they said.

That was the discussion.

My mother said let's go. And then she said, we had friends who went to Belgium. Now their children-- their children are here in Woburn now. And they went to Belgium. My mother said, let's go to Belgium, you know? And she went over there to visit them.

My father-- if I go out of Germany, I go out of Europe. I don't see the future very well good for-- I don't have any hope for Europe. And that was a smart thing.

Well, that's true.

That was smart, and we did. Yeah, yeah.

So as you're growing up, they're having conversations about whether to stay or to go.

Yes, of course. I think everybody did more or less, if they had the means.

And so was this the same conversation going on in your friend's homes?

Oh, yes. I'm sure everybody. You know, some went earlier, some didn't. But most of my friends didn't go until '38 at least, you know?

Uh-huh.

My father's brothers left in-- two brothers left in '36. Oh, the other-- no, no. The two brothers left, and one went to Palestine at that time. That's right. All three left. Only my father didn't. He said no, I'm not going yet. I'm not going.

So he was the last holdout.

Yeah, and they could take all their money out. In '36, they could still take them. After that, you couldn't.

So one of the brothers lived in Amsterdam already.

No, that was a sister.

That was a sister.

Yeah, she lived there already, in a married life. Yes, but they were deported later.

Were they?

They're the ones who died in a concentration camp.

Well, that was one of my questions.

From Amsterdam, of course. You know, they sent them to-- they were, I think, Bergen-Belsen. I think. Yeah, yeah.

OK. And did they have children?

Yes, they had one daughter was married-- no, both of them. Of course, both of them were married. One daughter also was killed. The other, they had a husband that was a real smart-- forgot to mention-- he finagled, I think. And he was-- he had one child they left behind. They had a little boy. They left him with a Christian family in Amsterdam. The other girl was-- I don't know-- maybe five, six years old.

And the three of them were saved because, you know how-- who knows? I don't know. That was her husband, my cousin's husband.

Your cousin's husband.

So they survived, they survived.

In hiding.

In hiding-- no, they were in the concentration camp, and they survived. That was-- I don't know. What he did, I don't know. You know? Yeah, who knows? But they survived, and then they did very well after the war. But my cousin died young. She died young. She had cancer. She died young. [? So ?] destination. So I knew her daughter. And she went to Israel later. Yeah, the daughter went to Israel. And she came to me, visiting with me.

Remind me again, which sister did this family branch come from? What was her name? The sister who married the man in Amsterdam.

Oh, they came from my father's.

I know, your father's sister.

Yes.

What was the sister's name, that sister?

Her name was Rosie.

Rosie, and she's-- and these are the daughters of Rosie who married different people.

That's right. Yes, yes.

OK. And so the three brothers, your father's three brothers leave.

Yeah, two brothers went to France, to Southern France. They were in Nice.

OK.

And they were very well off, because the brothers was the uncle who was a millionaire. And they lived very well, but they helped us later to get out of-- because we couldn't come to America right away.

We'll talk about that in a minute.

Yeah, OK.

And one brother went to Palestine.

That's right, yes.

OK. The other sisters who stay in Germany, the three sisters. What happens with them?

One was dead already. There was only two left.

That's right. Two left. Right.

Two others. One was her husband left for America. And she had a little boy, was a year younger than I. And they're hoping that she would get, but they couldn't get there before the war, you know? And so they were sent away. I don't know where-- I think they went to Riga. Yes, because we looked it up in the Holocaust Museum that time. Yeah.

And what's the other one?

So did she perish in Riga?

Yes, yes. sent her and that little boy. And yeah, the other, the oldest sister, Elsa, they went to-- the whole family went to Africa, South Africa, to Johannesburg. And they all are dead now. Even the cousins, they're all gone. Yeah, yeah.

But they survived.

They survived.

They survived war, the Holocaust.

They and their children, their three boys. No, the third boy stayed in Germany. And I don't know what he did during the war. Maybe he was in a concen-- but he survived, the third boy. He survived. He stayed here in Germany after the war.

So it was one sister who survives-- excuse me. One sister who perishes in Riga on your father's side. And the other sister in Amsterdam, who is deported and dies in a concentration camp.

That's right.

And every other sibling on your father's side survives the Holocaust. Is that correct?

Yes. no, they were-- the brother, that's [? Zali, ?] the oldest one, and Julius. [? Zali ?] was with them all the time,

because he was a bachelor. So they lived together. And then during the war, in France, they were interned. Let's say interned in Gurs.

Oh, there were interned in Gurs.

Yes.

OK.

And then somehow they could-- but he had some kind of a-- some kind of a wound. I don't know what happened to the oldest one, [Zali. ?] And he got out, and he died, you know? It was part of what happened in Gurs.

In Gurs.

Yeah.

OK.

And the other one survived.

The other one survived. OK. So they weren't untouched. They--

Yeah, not quite, not quite. And then later they came to America, the other couple. Yeah.

So that was Julius?

That was Julius, yeah.

Julius and his wife.

And his wife, Marianna, yeah.

OK. And so your father is a holdout. Your father is saying, I don't want to leave.

That's right.

I've got my business here, and Hitler will come and pass.

That's right. That's what the ones who stayed thought, you know? But I think it must have been that my mother-- my mother's uncle, the one in Memel, he had-- his wife had relatives here in America. And my mother knew the women. She married an American. And he said, why don't you ask her to give you an affidavit, you know? That was very good.

And then that was maybe before Kristallnacht, but not much before. My mother just filled out the papers at that time, because the Nazis threw it all over the place when they came in. Yeah.

We'll talk about that now. The uncle that you're talking about is Edith's husband. The uncle--

No, Ina's father.

Ida-- Edith's.

Ina. Oh, not Edith. No, Edith was-- the uncle was her mother's brother, the one in Memel, who lived in Memel.

Ah, her mother's brother.

Her mother's brother. Yeah.

OK, OK. And what was his name?

Arthur Rosenthal.

Arthur Rosenthal.

Yeah.

And did he have a business in Memel?

Yeah, he had-- he was in the lumber business.

Lumber.

Did very well, yes, yes.

OK. All right. And he is the one who had relatives from his wife?

His wife had relatives.

In the United States.

It was a cousin who had married-- I think she married a cousin in America. And they lived in Detroit. And they gave us the affidavit.

Now, what happened to that branch, all of them, the branch of the family that-- your mother's side-- that was in Memel? What happened to them?

You know, I don't know whether you know that story. They know that Hitler was coming into Memel in March. I think it was '38, wasn't it?

I think so.

Yeah. And there wasn't a Jew left when Hitler came in. They all fled. All through the night the day before. Was amazing.

Where did they do?

And most of them were killed later. They went to Kovno. To Kovno.

To Kaunas.

Yes, to Kaunas. Yes, yes. And But he didn't go there. He went to Finland because of his business. He had business, lumber business. And from Finland, and before the war even, he went to Sweden. That whole family is now in Sweden.

Ah.

His children and grandchildren.

So Arthur Rosenthal and his family, they ended up in Sweden.

Yes, during the war they were in Sweden.

And your Aunt Edith left.

Well, she left. They left with my mom, my grandmother and the child, and went to Kaunas.

OK.

But in Kaunas they couldn't live as German citizens. Again, they were German. They couldn't. So they had to live outside of Kaunas. It was a small town. A lot of Jews in that town. Called Kazlu Ruda.

Oh, yeah, Kazlu Ruda.

You know that. Yeah.

Yeah.

Yes, and there you don't know what happened there.

Tell me.

They were taken out the night before by the Lithuanians, and then they were shot in the woods. Yes. We heard that from a witness who was a baby then, but who knew all about it. They saved this baby, and the rest went to the ghetto.

So the night before what? Before everyone else--

Before Hitler came in, in 1941.

Got it.

Yeah, in June.

OK, in June 1941.

Yeah.

So during those few days in June, before he arrives in Kaunas--

That night before Hitler marched in, I think. Yeah, that's what they said.

This wouldn't be accurate. Hitler never marched into Lithuania, but the German army did.

Yeah, the army.

The German army.

That was the war, during the war.

But he did come to Memel. He did, when Memel was--

Then he marched-- yes, Memel. That was in '38, I think.

When he annexes Memel.

That's right. Yes, yes.

And that's why Germans were not very popular in the rest of Lithuania.

Yeah, yeah.

And ironically, then, your relatives having German citizenship got the brunt of that, if they tried to live in Kaunas.

That's right, yes.

So Aunt Edith and your grandmother perish.

There, you know, with the child.

And with the child.

With the child. She was eight years old.

And--

And her husband, too, Edith's husband.

And Edith's husband. And who told you about this?

We never knew for sure what happened. We didn't know. A synagogue or something. We knew that they were not in the ghetto, not in the Kaunas Ghetto, that they were-- and then I heard a speech. I lived in the Berkshires in Pittsfield. In the synagogue, they had a woman speak who came from that area, who came from Kaunas. And she spoke about this.

And I asked her, do you know the name Kazlu Ruda? "Of course I know," she said. And then she said she was saved as a baby, but she knows the whole history now. And the parents went into the ghetto, and they saved her by giving her to a Gentile family.

And she said they were all killed right way. You know, that night before. You know?

I see. I see.

They were all in Kazlu-- All of Kazlu Ruda, all the Jews. There were quite a few Jews. And like I said, a lot of Jews lived in those small towns.

Yeah, it's true.

Yes, yes.

It's true. And what about your grandfather who was difficult to live with in Tilsit?

My grandfather then stayed in Tilsit.

OK.

Until '42, I think. They sent him. And then he was sent with the Koenigsberg people to Theresienstadt.

Is that what happened to--

He was the one who died in Theresienstadt.

Your grandfather died in Theresienstadt.

Yes, yes. And his brother was there who lived in-- that Samuel, who was my father's partner.

[SNEEZES]

Bless you.

He was also sent at the same time to Theresienstadt with his wife. And the wife, what I found out not too long ago, was sent to Auschwitz. But he died in Theresienstadt before my grandfather.

So the two of them die there.

Died in Theresienstadt, yeah.

So your father's partner, basically.

Yes, yes.

As well as your uncle and great-uncle--

Yeah.

--perishes because he stays.

Yes, because he stayed. Yeah.

And your grandfather as well.

Yeah, he wanted to stay. He wanted to stay, so he stayed.

OK. And in the meantime, your uncle Arthur, your grandmother's brother, is the one who secures the connection for your parents to be able to leave Germany and be sponsored into the United States.

That's right. That's right.

OK. Now, you are-- when you stop going those three years to public school, where do you continue your education?

There was a Jewish school was established '35. They know then it was necessary. And it was-- it was that we had a beautiful synagogue, a big synagogue. And there was enough room for a school there, too. So that was where we went. And it was downtown. And--

Did you travel there by trolley?

Yes, yes.

OK.

And also, you know, you wonder as a Jewish child. You were out on the street. And I know one thing, that we never wanted to go alone on a side street. We lived on a sort of a main street. There was side street right around my corner. You were usually chased by kids, you know? By other kids. Chased and Jews. Yeah.

So you would hear this?

So you went always on the main street. Yeah, but on the trolley it was fine. You know, and I usually met my girlfriend on the next stop, and we went down. And--

You'd go to school that way.

Yeah, we went to school that way.

Do remember the street the synagogue was on?

The street? Yes, Lindenstrasse.

Lindenstrasse?

Yeah, yeah, a beautiful synagogue. And we had the best-- the cantors who composed were well-known, Lewendowski and Birnbaum. They all started in Koenigsberg, yeah. It was a well known synagogue. And they're rebuilding it now. They actually rebuilt it.

Really?

Yes, there a lot of Jews, Russian Jews now who live in Koenigsberg.

OK.

And they rebuilt it. And a man who has a lot of money sponsored it. They want to make it just like it was.

Did-- oh, what was I going to ask? So you continued at this Jewish school now in the synagogue.

Yes. Until I left.

Until you left. And that's for about how many years? A lot.

Well, I think I went in '36, so that would be 3 years. That's right. But it was what seemed like an eternity. I was always there for a long time. Yes.

And did this school then-- was this school for all the Jewish children of Koenigsberg, when they could no longer go to German schools?

Yes, but the younger children. It only went up to the sixth grade, because then they would go on to the Lyceum.

Gymnasium? Ah, Lyceum.

And they were allowed to go until the war, I think. The older children could go to the Lyceum and to Gymnasium. And there was no school that-- yeah, it was strange. There was no-- there was no school, no classes for them. You know, so it was just till sixth grade, I think.

And about how large was the student body?

How large? Hard to tell. Maybe 150.

OK.

Yes, and they did wonderful for us. Made us feel so at home. And that's where we had our entertainment and everything.

Were families leaving Koenigsberg? Were Jewish families leaving Koenigsberg as this was going-- as you were in the mid-'30s, as time was going on? Did you know of many?

Of course. Yeah, my circle that my parents-- and then of course I met many, when I went to that Jewish school, especially the ones who lived downtown, who we didn't know so well. And so I met-- I met a lot of people. I was always interested. Being an only child, you like to have a lot of friends.

Yes, of course. Of course.

Yes.

And what did I want to ask now? I'd like to get a sense, if you know, of how many Jews stayed in Koenigsberg.

I don't know. There were-- most of them were downtown, didn't have the money anymore to go. They could have gone to Shanghai. There was nothing open, not much open at the end. And therefore they didn't-- you know, so most of the poor ones stayed.

I see.

Very few, I think who had money, they went the last minute. They went, like we went, in '39. You know, '39 in June.

So that means you were-- that means you were in Germany during Kristallnacht.

During?

You were in Germany--

Kristallnacht? Yes, of course. That's what I remember the most.

Then tell me about that. What happened during Kristallnacht?

Well, I can tell you what happened to us.

That's what I would like.

Yeah, yes. The evening before, which was the 9th of November-- the afternoon, I guess I went to-- I had a girlfriend who was leaving the night-- was supposed to, and then she didn't get out. Leaving the next day for Canada. They went out later, but not then. And she said, let's celebrate. Let's go to movies. They won't know that we're Jewish. And we did go. My parents didn't know that, you know?

So you went to the movies?

We went to a movie in the afternoon.

The one downstairs?

That I remember so well. No, no. It was more of the further downtown. It was a good movie. I don't know what it was. And so we went. And then I said goodbye. And that evening on Wednesday was always the day off for our Liesel.

Oh, she went off.

And my father was in Berlin on business. He went every four weeks to buy, you know, whatever he needed. And so we were alone on that night. And then she came home early.

Liesel came home early.

Liesel came. She always visited friends, you know. She had friends. And she said, I don't know but there's something on the streets. It's very-- people-- the Nazis are out there. And it's loud and [INAUDIBLE] he doesn't know what's going on there.

And then, during the night, my mother heard steps. You know, people walking up and down with boots. And she said it was those boys I've talked about, that they have company, and they were-- [INAUDIBLE]

Then at 7 o'clock in the morning, the bell, doorbell rang. And Liesel went to the door. And there were three Nazis, a Gestapo and two SS men. A young Gestapo, a student, young guy, you know? "And is Mr. Bahr? We want to see Mr. Bahr." "No, he's not home." "Where is he?" "He's in Berlin, out of town." "Is Mrs. Bahr home?" "Yeah, she's still in bed."

So they went in. She let them. And then she said, "don't come in until you wipe your feet."

Who said this?

Liesel.

Liesel?

Oh, she was another daring one. And she said-- and they said, "are you Jewish?" She said, "no, I'm what you call Aryan." They were quiet, you know. So they went. They went, and they were more or less decent. [INAUDIBLE]. They wouldn't have to take my mother if they wouldn't have been decent.

And then my mother-- in the meantime they were in the living room. Then she came in the living room, and they had thrown all the papers off her desk. And she said, "pick up those papers. Those are the ones that were going to the application to leave this country." So they did it.

They did it?

They did it. Can you imagine? She was lucky. They could have shot her. And then they looked at the bookcase and said, "Oh, you have these books by Jewish authors. You're not supposed to have that." "Oh, yes, in homes, in private homes, you can have them." Left them alone.

So she argued with them.

She, did, she did. You know, she was lucky. I mean, that they were decent. And then they--

Well, they weren't as bad as they could have been.

They looked all over. And they looked under a chair. She said, "do you think he's a dwarf?" Anyway, and then in the meantime, I got myself-- you know German duty, getting myself ready to go to school. You know, we didn't know what was happening all over, you know?

And I went. I went on the street car. And the next-- at the next stop, I met my girlfriend who always went with me. And we whispered, and she said her father was picked up early in the morning or during night. And then we went on, and we thought we'd go to school. And on the way, we were halfway down, we heard somebody say the synagogue is burning. Oh, my God.

And that's where your school is.

That's where the school was. So we said, let's not-- we don't want to see that. So we went, got off, and went home. And

then I came home, and they were still there, had ransacked everything, and the drawers, thrown them out, and everything looking--

My mother said, what are you looking for? We're looking for correspondence with Grynszpan. You know? The one who killed--

Who is Grynszpan?

You know, the one who killed-- that so-called started the--

Kristallnacht.

But didn't. They had something in mind, anyway. But he killed that secretary that--

That was in France.

Vom Rath in France. Yeah, yeah. We're looking for correspondence with-- anyway, so and then I came home. And then I broke down. I started to cry, you know?

Well, of course.

And then my Liesel-- and my mother was busy with them, so Liesel was in. She said, what's the matter? I said the synagogue's burning. And one of the SS men was standing near me. He said why is she crying? And she told him. He sort of shook his head, you know?

And then finally they left, and then they said, your husband, to my mother, when he comes, we'll arrest him when he comes home, you know. And don't warn him and what, you know?

So she did call him, and he was still in the hotel. It was early at that time. They left, it was maybe 9:00, 9:30. And he didn't know anything. And already things were going on in Berlin on the streets, but he hadn't heard done anything. So she said and she couldn't tell him. So she said--

Why couldn't she tell him over the phone?

She didn't want to. She was afraid they watched the telephone or what. Or she thought they were.

Oh, so the telephone, someone's listening in.

Listening in. You know? So she said, go to the American consulate and stay there all day. So he thought she was crazy. Said, "what are you--" "Don't come home," you know? And he said, "of course I'm coming tonight on the train," you know.

So my mother was worried that they would arrest him when he comes in on the train. So she sent Liesel. Liesel was very willing to go down, pick him up, and go home with him in the taxi, and nobody was there.

Do you remember Liesel's last name?

Whose last name?

Liesel's.

Liesel Heske. H-E-S-K-E.

H-E-S-K-E.

Yeah.

Liesel Heske.

Yeah, it was Lieschen, you know? But we called her Liesel.

So were there many Liesels, or was she an exception?

What?

Were there many Liesels in your world, in your life? Or was she an exception?

No.

I'm asking about Germans. You know, were there many people like Liesel?

Like her? There was another, her good friend. As a matter-- a good friend, was the sister of a woman who married a distant cousin of ours, distant cousin, who was Jewish, of course. And she became Jewish at that time. A lot of intermarriages in Germany already, like it is here now.

Yes, because they were already so established, you know, and integrated.

Integrated.

Yes.

So you're saying so there were more people who didn't-- who were German, who didn't like what was going on.

Yeah, who were decent. I know the man who had the shoe store downstairs, he was so decent, and Liesel and I often were invited to his house, you know? No, they were so-- they cried when we left, you know? Yeah, there were many decent people. Many.

Did Liesel have--

They were afraid, you know, of course. We would be, too.

Did Liesel have a family of her own?

Yeah, but I never heard much about them. I never heard-- I don't remember that she went home or anything or for Christmas. I don't know. She was always with us. Yeah.

So she brings your father home?

Yeah, she brings him home. And then my mother didn't let him go out for a week. She said, just stay here. And nobody came. Everything was fine. The other, the men they arrested, the police station wasn't far from us. They were in the police station. They must have had a prison there in the back. And they were there about a week, and then they let them go. They weren't sent to concentration camps.

So they weren't sent to Dachau like so many were.

No, no.

OK.

Yeah.

Oh, I just had a question in my mind about that. Ah-hah. Here's my question. You say that the soldiers-- no, no, no. The Gestapo and the SS men knock on the door at 7:00 AM.

Yes.

In the morning.

I want to make sure that I understand that-- is this the day of Kristallnacht?

Yes, the day.

Or is it the day-- night after Kristallnacht?

Kristallnacht-- it's the night after, but you know, I don't know how much happened that evening, you know?

A lot.

A lot. A lot. Yeah, but of course. They went into the orphanage, which was next door to the synagogue.

OK.

And I knew all the children from the orphanage because of school. And they drove them out here. Of course it was during the night already.

OK.

They drove them out. They were there in the night, in the middle of the night, in the nightgowns and pajamas. And some had family that you go to.

OK. Let's cut for a second. OK, so it's the night.

Yeah, the night.

If they knock on your door--

But that was after the night was [? attacked ?]

That's right.

--in the morning.

Yes.

And then some people there, they were the night. You're right. I forgot.

OK. So it was after the main events of the night. Your father comes home. He stays. Your mother doesn't let him out for a week. Does his opinion change about leaving Germany?

Yeah, by that time. And he must have already admitted it, because she already was starting to fill out papers. So shortly before that that.

OK.

And right after that, they took his business, you know.

Right after that, they took this business?

Right after that, I think. Yes, yes. They took this business. And [INAUDIBLE]. Then, of course, he knew. When he didn't have business, he couldn't live.

Yeah. What to stay for?

Yeah, that's right. And he was the one who had to work all the time. He wouldn't be happy not doing anything.

So at that point, how long does it take for you to leave?

Well, it took a long time, because everybody at that time want to go. So when it was-- we were lucky. My parents didn't want-- then they didn't want-- it looked like war, I guess, already. So we were trying to go to England. Somebody said, if you have money to put their money, to deposit.

So my father's brothers who were there, said will you lend me the money? When things are better, I'll pay it back. And he did. And they did so and so much, what they had to deposit there, so that we could live there. Because you couldn't work when you didn't get the permission to work. You were just there temporary. So we went to England in June 1939.

How did you leave? By what means did you leave?

By what means? By the train. And we wanted-- he wanted to see his mother once more. So we went to Holland and stayed there a week. And from Holland, we went by boat. Utrecht. Utrecht to Harwich, England. Yes, yes.

OK. And you say that when you leave, at least the people downstairs, the shoemaker cries.

Oh, yes, yes, yes.

OK. Was there anybody else there to say goodbye?

No, but yeah, my father's secretary. My father's-- of course, Catholics didn't have too well either there under Hitler. But she was always with him, and always. And then after the war, we reconnected again. Yes, yes. They all had to flee Koenigsberg when the Russians came in, of course. They all fled. There wasn't a person left there.

Yeah.

Yes, yes.

And Liesel? Was she still there when you--

Yes, we heard from her as long as we could. The war wasn't here in America yet, so we could still hear the beginning. And then she had to work for a munitions factories. She had to. She had to. They drafted her to do that. They bombed that factory. She was killed in the raid.

Where was the factory? Was that in Koenigsberg?

Yeah, yeah, in Koenigsberg. More towards downtown, midtown, I would say.

OK.

So yes. A lot of Jews worked there. I know I have a good friend that, also of a distant cousin, who went to-- oh, they survived because their mother-- did I talk about their mother? Yeah, their mother was-- I think I did. I said Liesel's friend was a sister of theirs, and those were the children. And we didn't have too much to do with them, but then I got close with her after the war.

So she survived because the mother was Jewish but not born Jewish. They left. You know, they left those people alone, more or less. They had restrictions, but they weren't sent to concentration camps.

They didn't--

And do you know why?

Why?

Because in Berlin, they started to send them away, and these women revolted, and they had relatives who were all Nazis or they were Christians. They were afraid. You know, they wanted to keep this a secret. So they could survive. They had restrictions. And yeah, she didn't have to wear-- for instance, she didn't have to wear a star, but the daughter did.

And she went on the street one day, and a policeman came and said, what are you doing with a Jew? And she was there. And then [INAUDIBLE]. So she said, my daughter's Jewish. You know, my daughter's Jewish. And so you know, because [INAUDIBLE] they left her alone. Yeah.

Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So these are all things you hear about later, not at that time.

That's right. Of course.

Was Koenigsberg a pretty city?

Very nice. You know, we had the big castle, the big castle where the kings were all crowned in Koenigsberg.

No wonder it's called Koenigsberg.

That's right.

Yeah, yeah. And of course, all of that was bombed out. but yeah, it was a lovely city. And the people were-- I don't know. The East Prussians were more-- a very little bit like the English. They were very not right away sweet, and not right away friends. But once they were friends, they were forever. You know?

Friends for life.

Yeah, but not right away they love you.

Do you think Nazism was as strongly entrenched in East Prussia as it was in other parts of Germany?

I always thought no. You know, my mother always said that-- what was he? He was the-- his name was Koch, Erich Koch. Have you heard of Erich Koch? Later on, he was in Russia, and was terrible, they say. But in the beginning, he was the-- like the governor. It wasn't governor. Whatever they called them.

He was very decent. My mother said he was very decent. And that's why people weren't sent to the concentration camps. They stayed in Koenigsberg, at first. And then they got after him, and he wasn't-- you know.

I see.

And then he got himself a different-- he changed, you know?

OK, so was he the Gauleiter?

She thought the East Prussians were more decent than the others. I don't know. Maybe.

OK. I just wondered.

Yeah.

I just wondered whether or not--

She felt that.

Well, you see, because many of the aristocrats, like Doenhoff.

Yeah, they were against him.

They were against him.

Of course you. They looked down on him. Yes, yes. That's [INAUDIBLE] too, I think. Yeah.

So as far as you are concerned, your family is allowed to leave in June 1939.

Yeah, allowed to leave. I [INAUDIBLE] never understand that. I think you could leave if you found a place to get into.

Did you have to get a visa to leave Germany from the Nazi authorities?

No, we didn't. Actually, you had to have a visa to get into England.

OK, so maybe I misspoke.

I think they were glad when you left, I think.

I misspoke.

No, a lot of people ask me that. "Oh, you were allowed to go?" It wasn't that you were allowed. You were allowed to get into a country.

That's it.

Nobody wanted you. Yes.

OK. So your Uncle Saul and Julius deposit some money for your father.

Yes.

In England, so that the family can at least go to England.

Go to England and not have to work. Of course, we had outside support from organizations.

And so you get to the UK, first by train, then by ferry.

Yes.

Then by boat. And what happens there? Where do you stay in the UK?

We went to London. And we stayed in a boarding house. Because we had to make it as reasonable as possible. 10 marks each one could leave-- could take when they really left. And so we stayed in a boarding house. I slept with the owner's daughter, who was a teen-- was older than I. She was 19 or so. Upstairs in an attic there.

And my parents had a big room, where they lived, and where they slept, and--

Everything else.

Yeah, but there were a lot of refugees that were in the same boat.

What part of London was this?

In Northwest. It was called Willesden Green. You know it? Yeah.

OK. So Willesden Green is where you found a boarding house.

It was not so expensive, and it was next from Golders Green. That was a little more expensive. That's right. And there were a lot of refugees, and you had a good time. Even if you had no money. I liked it, because I could put my feet on the--

You could fit your feet?

On the chair or something like that, which I couldn't do when we had the good furniture. I thought it was great.

Freedom, freedom.

And I had a lot of wonderful friends there.

Yeah. And how long did you stay there?

We stayed there a year and a half. We stayed till October 1940. From '39 in June to October '40. But in the meantime, we had the Blitz. And my father was interned.

Was he?

As a German. You were German, they thought that they would bring spies. I don't blame them. It was a war already. They thought that spies-- and they might have sent spies among the Jews there. So they treated them well. He was on the Isle of Man. And they lived in hotels. I don't know if they were all hotels, but everything was fine. But he couldn't come home until the day before we left.

Really?

Yeah, they couldn't come home. No, no. So my mother and I-- and then we were in the boarding-- and then my father said, if I have to go, I don't want to leave you with-- the people weren't too nice. So we had-- there was an apartment house where a lot of refugees lived. And the one woman was renting out a room, you know? So we rented that room, my mother and I. And they thought we were safe there.

And it was good when the bombs started, you know? They had the first two floors. The first two floors and the halls, you know? And you could have a space, or you could have a long, narrow space. And we had a camp bed. And the two of us slept on a camp bed. You know how big that is.

Oh, my goodness.

But we slept. We were tired. We slept.

Wow.

Every night, we would go down in the evening. It was summer. It was the summertime. And at 8 o'clock or so, 9 o'clock, we would go down. It was dark. And then they were all around us. One day I was coming home from school, and a plane was real low, shooting at children. I sort of went into-- into a garden there behind a bush. And terrible, terrible. Yeah, yeah. It was bad.

So you experienced--

But at least everybody was in the same boat, you know? It wasn't like in-- everybody went through that.

It's not like you were singled out.

That's right, you know?

Yeah. So it's a year and a half that you are in London. And during that time, the war begins.

Yes, yes.

You get out, really, at the 11th hour.

Just in time. That's right. It was end of June, and then September.

It starts.

And I hadn't gone to school yet, because the summer, they weren't going to start in September. So there were a couple of days before the war, where everybody knew something was coming, and they were evacuating the children from each school.

My father came home. And he said you heard. He said, you must go. It might not be safe for you. So I went. I didn't know anybody. But thank God there were some German refugees, and we were together. Yeah, yeah. So we were about maybe couple of months. And nothing happened at that time. There was no raids. There were no raids, air raids, you know? Not until the spring.

Did you speak English?

The following spring. I had a little school, you know? But you know, as a child you learn it, yes. But there with all my friends there, the Germans, we spoke German.

Of course, of course.

Yes.

And do you remember the trip over to the United States?

Oh, yes. We had a very dangerous one.

Did you? Tell me about it.

Well, we left from Liverpool and with a convoy. And it was 1940 in October. It took three weeks to go. Because you had to go all around.

Wow.

We went up to Newfoundland and came home, came down. And we landed in Boston. That's how we stayed in Boston.

OK.

And we left with a convoy. And a couple of days later-- we left on a Friday. On Sunday, German planes came, bombed a couple of those warships. But nothing happened to the people. They were saved. And then of course you had to go on, on. You couldn't stop. In the middle of the ocean, suddenly we had engine trouble. And we had to stop. And they had to go along. So we were all alone in this big ocean full of submarines.

Oh my goodness.

As we were standing there, a submarine was sighted. And we had one gunner. You know, it was a small boat, 4,000 tons. Terrible. My mother again, when we were waiting for the boat, the boat was there. And she said, oh, that must be the boat that takes us to a bigger boat. So the captain heard. He said, "yes, for you we'll hire the Queen Mary."

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, boy. Yes. So, anyway, it was-- and then we sighted a submarine, and we all had to go down to the bottom of the boat. There were English children, the first class. And we had to be in second class, third class. We were in the bottom of the boat. And it was very close, you know. And then suddenly, he must have hit them. He must have hit them. They were gone, you know?

Who hit?

The submarine was gone. It didn't come up anymore. And I think that he hit it.

So the one gunner that was on the boat?

Yeah, can you imagine? You know what they said? They said, "it couldn't have been Germans. It must have been Italians." They're not warriors.

Oh, that's mean.

No, not mean, in a way. It's nice, because they're not such warriors.

That's right.

Yeah, but when I think of it now, more I think, that was the closest I ever was to death. You know, because it was really a miracle that we came out of that.

Yeah. Well, it is lucky also that you left.

Oh, yes. Of course. That's another.

Because if you hadn't, you would have come very close.

That's right. And would have, yes.

Yeah. So you arrive in Boston.

We arrived in Boston. And my father knew that the leather business, hide and leather and all that, was in Boston.

OK. Well, in the old days, there used to be a lot of shoe factories.

Oh, yes, shoe factories.

--around here.

And there were a lot of hide dealers. And he knew, you know? So he said, let's stay here. And we-- and my mother had an uncle. There was a brother of this one from Memel. He came from Berlin. And they had been there about one or two years.

In the Boston area?

Yes, in Brookline. And they knew we were coming, but of course, that we were coming to America. I don't know what-- what it was, how it was. But anyway, we stayed. And she got us an apartment-- not an apartment. First we had a room. Then we had an apartment. And my father, it took him a while to find a position. Yes, yes.

And when did you start learning about the fates of all your relatives?

Not really-- I mean, you heard rumors. You heard them, but you didn't know, and my mother never believed it. "It can't be. It can't. How can they do that?" She wouldn't believe it, you know?

Yeah.

And then she heard after the war about her mother and later on the grandfather, her father. And then when she was older, she got a little dementia when she was about my age now, and she later lived till 96. And then one day she said, "oh, I hear that my mother and Edith are here. They arrived here. They come. You go to them." [INAUDIBLE]. constantly. It was very hard for her to--

How sad.

Believe it, that they were gone.

Yeah. And you-- nevertheless you went back to Koenigsberg.

Yeah, I want to see it.

Was this the first time?

Yeah.

And the only time when you went?

Oh, yes, because then the Soviet-- it was communistic, so you couldn't look back anyway. But once it was, in 2007, we went. We were here already.

OK.

Yeah. And--

And what impression did you have from what you saw?

Yeah. Well, you know, I feel sorry, but I don't feel [INAUDIBLE]. Because they were all Russians. No Germans. The Germans were visiting, you know? They were visiting.

There were no Germans?

Germans who maybe their parents lived there, you know? And they visit there, but there were no German-- you can't-- in the hotel, they talked very little German, you know? And there was one-- a man, he heard us talk German. So he said, I-- he was Russian, but he talked a little German. And he was-- he showed you around. He was a guide. And we took him that one day that we were there. We went all over the place. I knew more than he did what was--

And this was that street? No, no, it was another street. And I found my-- two apartment-- two houses we lived in were unharmed.

Really?

A little changed, you know? Yes, yes.

And so you found-- what was it, Litzmann-Strasse?

Yeah, yeah.

General-Litzmann-Strasse.

General-- you have a good memory.

And so your house was still standing there, the apartment?

The house was just a little bit different. The stores were gone. They changed the house somehow. Maybe it was bombed out partly, partly. But it was there, and then the other one was almost the same, the one that I lived there before. And the zoo was still there. Too bad we only spent one day. It wasn't enough, you know? We should have-- I saw a lot. And the synagogue, they had a circus there where the synagogue was. And now they rebuild it, and they had a circus there. I had heard about that, yes.

And you said the city was bombed. Was this-- who bombed it?

The city? [INAUDIBLE]

Koenig--

[INAUDIBLE] by the Russians. Yes, yes. It's all rebuilt in Russian style, mostly, you know? But then where we lived was a little bit out of town, out of downtown, so that part might have been [INAUDIBLE].

From what you saw, you could recognize the old Koenigsberg that you knew?

Oh, yeah, yeah. More or less. I could have found my way. We were near the castle, up there on the hill. That was all gone. There's a hotel, the hotel. And then I know my way, how to walk up there. Walked longer than I thought it was. And it was hot. We were there in June. Very, very hot. And I got there. Yeah.

OK. Was there any sign of life during the war there? That is, were there any memorials? Were there any-- was there anything about what the Jewish world had been?

No, no. I think later they did it, because this friend of mine, which is a little bit related to me, went to Israel in the end. She went to-- when the war ended, she was in Koenigsberg. Her mother died from starvation under the Russians. But that was later. She left before with her sister. They walked towards Russia, and they ended up in Kishinev.

OK.

And then met two Jewish men, and married them. And from there they went to Israel.

OK. And she-- and what is it that-- she's the one who told you about the--

Koenigsberg was there. Yes, yes, you know? Was very difficult. Yeah. I mean, of course it was changed.

Did it-- did it move you at all, what you saw?

Was it--

Did it move you at all, or was it something very distant for you?

It didn't move me too much. No, no, no, no. Distant, yeah. No.

Is there something I have not asked you?

Can't think of anything. I mean, I have the story of my mother on the train.

Oh, yeah. Let's talk about that.

Yes.

Because we didn't mention on that. This is something about your mother's chutzpah.

That's it.

An example of that.

And again, she could have gotten into trouble.

So what ha-- she was on a train?

She came from-- I told you we went to Hanover every year, but this time I wasn't with her. It was during school time that she went, not [INAUDIBLE]. And she was on a platform waiting for the train. And the porter, you know, her baggage. OK, here's the train. Let's get on it. It was the wrong train. It was a train that came back from the Nazi convention. I don't know if it was Nuremberg. I don't know how they would have-- Nuremberg up there and then to Berlin. No, it must have been somewhere else.

OK.

But and in Europe, they have these compartments.

That's right.

So there was a room and one compartment. And all of a sudden, she was there. It was too late. She looked around, all these Nazis there. And she was sitting there alone. But they were very-- she said he was-- she was a very good-looking woman and charming. So they were delighted to have her. Never saw that she was-- she didn't look particularly Jewish. She had dark hair, but people, when we went to Berlin once, we went to a store. All of a sudden, she ran away. We thought she wasn't going to wait on us. No, she went to get somebody who can talk French with us. French.

OK.

Anyway, and then they said, "Oh, let's sing something." You know?

They say that?

They said it. "Let's sing a song. What would you like to hear?" So she said sarcastically "Wenn Judenblut vom Messer Spritzt." Do you know that song?

Well, translate for us what it means.

"When Jewish blood spurts from the knife."

Oh, gosh. What a song.

Yeah. She said very sarcastically, but they didn't notice that. But they were decent. So they said, "Oh, you don't want to hear that," or something like that. And then they talked. And they said "we're going in the dining car. Would you like to join us?" She says, "No, she couldn't go anymore. No, I have my food with me." Thank you."

And then another man said, "I'm staying, too. I don't want to go. I'm not hungry." So when they went out, she said, "I know you. You came from Koenigsberg, and your daughter was in my--" And he was a teacher in that school, in the [? Christian ?] school. Can you imagine? She said--

Oh, my goodness.

--I know who you are, and I know Amely. I remember her." And he said, "be careful. They're big people, bigshots. You know, big Nazis." And then he said, "one's that Baldur von Schirac."

Baldur von Schirac, who was one of the most-- yeah, yeah.

Yeah, and he was very into it. And then before they got to Berlin, they all got off. My mother also stayed in Berlin. It was at the time of the Olympics.

So 1930s--

Yeah.

OK, now we can go.

Yeah, before they came to Berlin, he said, "would you like to join me? I'm going to be with our Fuhrer in the booth at the Olympics tonight." So my mother said, "I don't think my Fuhrer would like that." I don't know about that, that he knew by then or what, you know?

She said this to Baldur von Schirac?

Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

She had chutzpah.

She had. She wasn't afraid. She was-- I don't know. This was amazing, you know? Yeah. She was always very truthful, you know? She told everybody what she thought. "I don't like that on you." I said, "you can't do that in this country."

[LAUGHTER]

"That's European, Mother."

Oh, my. Oh, my. Well, thank you very much.

Well, thank you thank you for hearing, listening to me.

Is there something that you would want to share with us at the very end, your thoughts, your final thoughts? What you would want people to take away from this interview?

I'm so glad that you interviewed me. I was a little nervous last night. I got panicky, even though I've spoken. But I thought my age, and I might forget.

Oh, no, no.

That was-- yes, but I'm very happy, because I can do it for posterity.

Thank you. Thank you very, very much. So what I will say now is that this concludes the interview, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Amely Baer-Smith on September 26, 2019, in Peabody, Massachusetts. Thank you.

Thank you so much.