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Summary

Erica Goldstein Mansfield; born in Vienna 1933, at 5 1/2 yrs. brought to US on Kindertransport ship May 1939 without her parents, baby brother; Erica credits OTC One Thousand Children organization, "Unfilled Promises" book by Judith Baumel, HIAS Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, German Jewish Children's Aid, JDC American Jewish Joint Committee, AFSC American Friends Service Committee, USC Unitarian Service Committee, credits 1938 British efforts immigrating 10,000 Jewish children; discussion re: 1200 Jewish children brought to US between 1934-1945, arriving in small groups, Erica among them; Congress' Wagner-Rogers bill (Spring 1939) attempting to circumvent Jewish children refugee immigration, bill fails, US continues limited quotas not transferrable among countries-limits number of children allowed in; hardships on Depression era US families wanting the children "One child placed in seven foster homes." (according to Erica), Erica's expresses grief "Only 1200 in 11 years (sent to US) where 1.5 million children perished in Holocaust."; Erica reads from Dr. Erwin Tepper's (one of the 1200 children) poignant account describing his family's desperation, deaths in Germany, his parents' trauma releasing him to strangers; rescue efforts by Gilbert Kraus (assisted by pediatrician Robert Schless), traveling to Germany for 25 girls, 25 boys through Brith Shalom Society; Erica's parents required to sign over power of attorney to Kraus; Vienna May 1939, Erica's father brings her to train station (train to Berlin), their wrenching despair in parting, Erica's confusion being sent away, feeling unloved; through Kraus' "heavy table banging" (according to Erica), children enabled to board SS President Harding (in Hamburg); "The Krauses (wife Eleanor) were our watchdogs on ship."; Erica recounts voyage, much time learning English, 3rd class (4 to cabin), seasickness, incessant singing of "My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean," seeing the Statue of Liberty, Rep. Leon Sacks accusing Kraus' efforts as a publicity stunt; Erica's fear about getting sick, that she might be sent back; regret "losing my mother tongue"; the children being looked at through social windows by potential foster parents; once chosen, the foster parents "being pushed away"; Erica's fear of no one wanting her (later learning many of the children felt that way); every Sunday, Kraus read comics to the children in Camp Brith Sholomville; Erica interviewed by a woman named Lee (earlier referred to as "very special woman"), joined her home for 2 mo. with their kind 16 year & a 10 year old "who hated by guts", driven to school by their chauffeur, Lee threw Erica a birthday party (even though Erica did not know her birth date), "They were lovely to me."; awaking in hysteria from nightmare recalling Nazis knocking at door & for first feeling "understood" by 16 yr. old's empathy "Don't you see she's frightened?"; parents enter US, father had survived concentration camp, Erica does not want to return to parents, can no longer speak German, Lee goes to your court to keep Erica, "I go from affluent home to cold water flat with no bathroom"; father dies 1949 10 yrs. later, mother scrapes by, finds 1 bedroom in building with Jewish actors (in Manhattan), "Some say I never knew we were poor, I knew we were poor."