

Summary of Oral History Interview with Trudy Friedler July 1990

Friedler was born to a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. Her parents divorced when she was three or four years old. They were very poor, and her mother worked as an actress-dancer to support her family. Her mother had to go on the road with a performance group, and she was given to an orphanage, which was run by a Jewish Community Council. There were about one hundred girls in the orphanage.

In 1938 when Hitler marched into Austria, everyone was upset, and slogans appeared on the street. She and others were hassled in school. Her mother had a very primitive apartment, and she stayed in the orphanage. In 1938 her mother found a paper in the door that said "Jewess perish." Consequently, she was kicked out from there and went to the second district, where she had to double and triple up with others. Then the Aryans took over the apartments, and she moved around quite a bit. Her uncle was arrested and deported. He joined the French Legion and was never heard from again. The Jewish professors were kicked out from the schools and had to teach at the Jewish schools. The students started to leave, the orphanage was liquidated in 1940, and she came home to her mother. They had to wear identity cards that were marked with a "J."

They went back to Jewish schools, where her mother lived. She joined the Zionist Youth Organization. Some people went to Palestine, but her mother did not allow her to go. When she was in eighth grade, she was ordered to work in the fields cutting asparagus. An SS man who lived with her family was in charge of the field labor. Her family was packed on a train that went to Vienna, where they had to re-register as Jewish citizens in 1941. They were then issued the yellow star and were basically free to walk the streets.

Late fall they worked in a detergent factory, and they had ration cards for food. Every day more people went missing. They had to accept it, and no questions were asked. In 1942 they were picked up for resettlement. By a miracle they were saved and could stay in Vienna. They worked in lumber yards for two months.

In July 1942, they left and stayed near U-Boats. They stayed many days and nights in the parks, always prepared to leave. While they were in the underground there were no more ration cards. But a friend of her mother's was able to supply them with food. They made attempts to leave Vienna and go to Hungary, but they were never able to leave. Between 1943 and 1944 there were air raids, and America bombed Vienna.

Their aunt was also in the underground. She was caught in 1945, sent to Bergen-Belsen, and died of typhoid. Because her grandfather was a veteran, he was able to get them a job moving heavy furniture. Her grandfather was then deported to Theresienstadt. He survived the camp but then died in 1948.

In 1945, they left by boat to Germany, and there was an air raid. They went into the city and then back to west of Vienna until May 1945. They were liberated by the Americans.