

I'm Diane Plotkin. This is December 16th, 1991, SMU. We're interviewing Erica Stein.

I'm Mark Jacobs.

I'm Erica Stein. And I'm ready to talk about my experiences during the Holocaust. I don't know where to start, really.

Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself, where you were born, when you were born, a little bit about your family.

OK. I was born in Leipzig, in the former Eastern Germany, on September the 30th, 1909. My father and his other brother, Albert, had a small department store in the working class section of Leipzig. And we lived right above the store.

I have an older brother, Manfred, who he's two years older than I am. And my mother was born in the province, Posen, and born a Krauser. Her father had a brick factory. And he was mayor of the town, Wolfstein, in the province, Posen. At the time that was German territory. And he was a staunch royalist. He believed in the Kaiser. And just the opposite was my mother's brother, only brother, who was a social democrat from the very beginning. And I guess that made our minds in that in that direction.

Anyway, I had a very normal childhood. We had everything that our middle class could have, good schooling and arts and piano lessons and dance lessons and what have you. And everything was very normal.

What kind of Jewish education did you have?

It was Reform, Jewish Reformed. And when I was 18 years old, I had a boyfriend, which my parents didn't approve of, so they sent me to Frankfurt on Main, to a widow, who kept young girls, like a boarding school.

And as it happened, my mother took me there. And she went for a weekend to Wiesbaden, for a little rest, and stayed in a hotel, where she saw a sign up. Some people, some men looked for a third person to play cards. And my mother was an avid card player. She was an excellent bridge player and skat. So they took her and played. And on weekend, I visited her there.

And my husband-to-be came with his sister and visited his father. And that's how we met. But it was a long, drawn out story. It was four years before we could marry, because he was still in dental school. And the old times, a couple didn't marry until the man could support his wife.

So that was in the year 1928, when we met. And we married a day before my 23rd birthday, in 1932, in Leipzig. And I moved to Frankfurt, which I liked very much from the very first. And three months later was the first and last election. That's when Hindenburg was elected. And a month later, Hitler came to power. That's how our married life started.

And my husband had started his practice in 1939 and worked hard. And it grew. And after Hitler came to power, quite a few of the professional people, who had enough money, left. At that time, they could leave and take everything with them.

Excuse me, what year did he start his practice, again?

Dentist.

What year?

1939 or 1929?

He started in 1931.

'31.

'31.

Yeah, in 1932, we married. In 1933, everything went haywire.

And what was his name?

Pardon?

What was your husband's name?

William, William Stein. And he was eight and 1/2 years older than I. He had already a degree in business but wasn't happy there. And since his father-- my husband's mother passed away when he was six years old. And the father had remarried. And there were three more children there. And he didn't want to burden his father and ask him for the money to go back to school. But he wanted to be a dentist. So he got the money, from an uncle, from his mother's side. And that's when I met him, when he was still in dental school.

And well, life went on. And he gradually built up his practice. And it got better after several of his colleagues left Frankfurt. And he did not want to any even think about going away. We had the worst argument, in 1936, when I told him, it's time we look around. He said, you are ruining my practice. You can't do that. We have to stay here.

What was happening?

So I was powerless. I couldn't do anything. Then by 1937-- his father traveled quite a bit in Switzerland. And he worked for a Jewish company, who-- well, what do you call that? They didn't manufacture it. They just sold rubber items and stuff. And he mostly traveled in Switzerland.

And they had, in the upper group of the employees, a non-Jewish man, who was very, very nice, a younger man, and pro-Jewish. And he thought he could help the company by joining the Nazis, the Brownshirts. And in September, they had that big rally in Nuremberg. And his buddies said, we are going there. He said, OK. I'll go by train. No, you go with us by car. And next morning, his wife got a phone call, that he was drunk. And he had fallen in a pit and had a concussion. He never came to again. And he never drank.

So that was the first sign. When my father-in-law heard that, he was beside himself. He came back, on the 27th of November, from a trip. I have to say that he had the angina pectoris, anyway. His heart wasn't good. But two days later, he died from a heart condition. After that, we got more serious about thinking about leaving.

So we started to write all over the world, to Manila. He had a patient. My husband had a patient, who had married an Indian Jew in Calcutta. And she wrote, she would help us, if we come there, to start a practice there. And we wrote to the Woburn House, in London. That was a central station for professionals to help them find places where they could go. And my husband went to London to talk to them.

And it turned out that the secretary of the woman, who took care of his case, was the daughter of my parents' best friends. And she, of course, had quite an interest to help us. And they had helped a doctor from Dusseldorf, a young doctor, who had a non-Jewish wife, to go to British Honduras. And he was so happy there that he wrote them and thanked them and said that there was room for a dentist. If they had somebody, he gladly would help to establish his practice there.

So she told us about that. And since we needed a lot less money there, than if we would have gotten to India, where you have to have God knows how many servants and spend money to make money, we decided we look into that more. And then we made up our minds, we will go there.

But also, he wanted to take a young mechanic along, because he, himself, was not too good in mechanical work. So he put an ad in a professional paper for a young mechanic. We would pay his way. And he would live with us and take

chances. But he could get out this way.

And we found a young, nice man from Cologne, whose father had died while the young man was in college. And he had to stop his studies and become a dental mechanic. And he had a brother, who was retarded, and a mother. And he had no way to get out. And we thought, if he gets out with us, he will be able to get his mother and brother out, too, sooner or later.

What year was this?

Pardon?

What year was this?

That was in 1938.

Were you still in Germany during Kristallnacht?

Beginning of 1938. Yeah. We still could do that. And then there were my husband's two sisters, maiden sisters. The one was my age. And the other was, at that time, in '38, she was 21. She had just gotten out of a-- well, it's not college. It was where she was training for a kindergarten teacher.

And so we had to take them along, too. They had no way to get out. They both had numbers to wait for a visa to go to the United States, but we didn't have anything. And nobody wanted to help a family with two children anyway. Our only chance was just to go to British Honduras and start a new life there.

You have some passports? And you told me--

Well, these are the passports of my parents.

Those are your parents?

But ours were not any different, but I have, here, a letter from the British consulate, where they told us that they can give us visas, for ourselves and for our two children, to go to British Honduras. And I had to go to the police department to get the passports. By the time that happened, that was in-- well, that really comes later. That was one thing. So we were not that far yet.

Can you show the passport again, please?

Can you show the passport again, please?

The passport, you want to see that, too? This is my father's passport. Oops. And this is the identification card that every Jew had to have, with a big J in the middle of it. But ours were the same way, only I have mine in the safe. I didn't get to it.

You mentioned that you already had two children by 1938.

Yeah. My son was born 9th of November in 1935, and my daughter, the 7th of January in 1937.

And what were--

They were quite small, still.

And what were their names?

Walter, Ernest Walter, and Ellen-- Ellen is named after my husband's late mother, Ella. Her name is Ellen. Anyway, where were we?

You had just received word that--

You could go to British Honduras.

--you could go to British Honduras.

Oh, yeah, we could go to British Honduras. Well, we had to make quite a few preparations. Because we found out, when my husband was in England, he got a little brochure about British Honduras. And it was so desolate there and so little there, that even the Nazis felt sorry for us and gave us permission to take-- he could take a portable drilling machine. We could take a sink and all kinds of things that, normally, you wouldn't put in your baggage, while you travel. You know, what can be sent with you? And then we had two huge lift vans-- that's big boxes-- that were full with our furniture and our other belongings. But this, we were allowed to take with us.

We took mattresses with us to sleep on and a stove, gasoline stove. That little country had no regular water supply except the rainwater, which was collected in big cisterns from the rooftops. And everything had to be sterilized. And there was just nothing. Electricity was a few hours at night. And otherwise, you had to have kerosene. The stoves were kerosene. I mean we knew it was going to be a hard life. But it was all better than to stay in Germany at the time.

What kind of things were happening in Germany?

At that time?

That you saw.

Well, for one thing, I mean, we knew that they arrested people. And they came out with their heads shorn. You knew, right away, they were in concentration camp, because everybody got their heads shorn. And nobody would say anything. They clammed up, nothing. They were afraid to talk. And one after another, they lost jobs. My husband worked as a dentist until September the 30, 1938. And at that time all doctors, all dentists, everybody had to stop working.

My father's business, they had already sold it or had more or less given it up. Because in 1934, they had the boycotts. And although people knew my father-- his business started in 1906-- and he was well established there and well liked, but they had to do what they were told to do. So everything stopped. You couldn't do anything.

After we stopped, we sent-- I mean he stopped working, we started getting all the things together. And end of October, I think it was, or beginning November, we sent my children to my parents, in Leipzig, so that we didn't have to worry about them and could really get busy. We had, in the meantime, booked passage, on a Dutch boat, to leave on January the 29th. Oh, no.

Well, we tried to take English lessons. And everybody, who still was there, clung together. Because, in our house, where we lived, people were afraid to say hello to us on the stairway. Somebody might hear. My husband had an old practice help. She was with his predecessor, already. It was a little old lady. And very late in '36 or something, she married. And the sons of her husband were avid Nazis. And they told her what she had to do. She was afraid to do anything different.

And we had to pay her salary for four weeks after-- no, for two months after he stopped working. The only time she came was when she picked up her check, and otherwise. And she always said, oh, she loves the Jews. And she feels like one of them, all that kind of stuff. But they were all cowed. Nobody dared to do anything.

Were you in Frankfurt during Kristallnacht?

And then that's what I come to now. Then, while my children were in Leipzig, my son's birthday came on November the

9th. And we got a call from my mother. That was after they had broken all the glasses and everything and picked up all the men. She called us. They had come and got my father. Although they had said they wouldn't. They didn't take any men older than 60 or younger than 14. It wasn't true. My father was 64 already, and they took him.

And she said, come and get the children. I don't want the responsibility for them. So we tried to get a train. That was the only possibility. And couldn't get one until at night, at 11 o'clock. So we called back to let them know we wouldn't be there until the next morning. No answer. And I got hysterical. I thought they had come back and had taken my mother and my children, too. I didn't know what to do.

So by the time we got there, we found everybody asleep and everything all right. And it turned out that Walter, he was at that time three years old, but crawling around, he must have pulled out the telephone wire. Or maybe the Nazis have done it. I don't know. But anyway, we couldn't reach him. But that was a terrible night.

And then we took them back. We took the children and went back by train. And when we came to the house-- my sister-in-law, Alice lived with us, at the time. And she greeted us that the Gestapo had been there wanting to pick William up. And if he's not reporting, they are going to come back and get her. So my husband, who really was a schlemiel in that respect, he was too honest and too believing. He couldn't think that they would do anything to him. He had never done anything wrong in his life.

He took his overcoat. And I packed him a lunch. And he had a little suitcase and put the underwear in there. And he went and reported to the Nazis, to the police department. And they took him to the Festhalle, which is a huge hall in Frankfurt. And there, they had already collected all the men that they had picked up the day before. He found an uncle of his, who was also in the 60s already, and his best friend, Hans, who was William's age, and a whole lot of people.

They kept them there. And from there, they marched them to-- well, they put them in a train or buses, I don't know what. And took them to Buchenwald. And on the way, they marched them through a tunnel and hit them over the head. He still had a bump, years later, on his head. And some of them died, right then and there. And my father, they were together by that time in Buchenwald. They were together.

And my uncle, my mother's brother, who was very prominent in the social democrat party, they had picked him up as his house. And his wife had lost her mind. She was running around, half-naked, with a knife in her hand when they came and knocked on the door. And he didn't want to open the door, like that, and fought with her.

And it took them too long, so they crashed in the door. And then they beat him up, terribly, and took him to Buchenwald. And when he got there, a few days later, he died. And my father and my husband, they were there with him. And all his wife got was a postcard that her husband died from a heart attack, and the ashes would be sent to her. And of course, she was, by that time, completely gone. She died a few months later in a hospital.

And my mother? When that card came, my mother got hysterical. She said, they got my husband. They got my husband. And she ran off. She didn't know what to do. I didn't know anything of all that going on. But then they said that we could make applications to get them out. That meant I had to go downtown, to a Nazi-- what was he, a CPA or something like that or half a lawyer or something-- and fill that out. And you had to do it in the morning. You had to be back by 2 o'clock, because there was curfew. You couldn't get out. Or if they caught you, it was just too bad.

So he filled out the application and sent it in. And I waited for him to come back. And in the meantime, there were practically no men left. My brother-in-law, my husband's brother, Julius, he was lucky. He had quite some trouble with his knee. He had several knee operations and had a cast that was cut open. And he put that cast on. He didn't need it anymore. But he put it on. And when they came for him, he limped around. And they said, we can't use you, and left him there.

And then there was a fraternity brother of my husband's. He was a marvelous guy. He was blind. They didn't take him. But he was so smart, he gave us English lessons. And his hearing was so keen, and he was so fantastic. He was the only one I could talk to, discuss things with him. He came by bus. He knew exactly which bus to ride and all. And he was the only one I could lean on in the whole building. We were in an apartment building. All the Jewish men were gone.

There was one woman, her husband was Jewish and she was not. And as it was at that time, the women didn't have signature on the bank accounts. And all the bank accounts were blocked. She didn't have any money. And she couldn't get any money. So we helped each other that way.

There was a milkman, young man who came, they brought the milk and everything every day. One day, he gave me a pound of butter, which we were not allowed to have, just to show how he felt about us. Really, that touched me. People that you hardly knew, and you didn't expect it. But he wanted to do something. So he gave us some butter. And things like that.

And before the Kristallnacht, we went walking in the park with the children. I went walking with the children. And my husband's best friend's father was an old man. And he always was in the park, too. And Walter saw. And from far away, he saw an old man sitting, there, with a cane. And he ran up to him, because he wanted to play with the cane. And I after him, and I just heard, when I got there, the old man told Walter, go away, you dirty Jew. Go away, you dirty Jew to a three year old boy. I mean that's the mentality of the people.

How did he know he was Jewish?

Well, he looked Jewish, I guess. So it's unbelievable. I mean you were afraid to move, more or less. And anyway, time passed. There were two weeks when I hadn't heard from William. And then, one day, by word of mouth, we were told there is bus coming with people that they released. So I was hoping and hoping. But he didn't come.

But then, one morning, an elderly man came by and said that he was together with William. And I asked him how is he. Oh, he's all right. And he just sat there, didn't say much. I fed him. And he was there most of the day. He never said very much. And then he came back the next day and the same thing. And then suddenly, he blurted out that the application was rejected, because they had transposed our birth dates. And when they called him up and he had to say his name and his birth date, it was the wrong birthday. So he was sent back.

So I had to go back to that man and make a new application. And he took another two weeks, then, one night, he came out. And he smelled to heaven. We had to burn his coat and his hat and everything. And his head, of course, shorn. And the next week, most of the time, just like that man that came out before, he just sat there, brooding, hardly saying anything.

The only thing he said, we have to get Hans out-- his friend. We have to get Hans out. We went to his parents. And he told them to write to some colleagues. He worked for a big iron company that had branches all over the world. And he said write to England and tell them to send him a visa or something, right away, that he can get out. So they did that. And he did come out, then, a week later. Was in the same state of mind, like everybody.

Then William said that they were told not to tell anything what's going on there. If they would, they would find them, no matter where they go in the world. They would find them. So we rushed, then, with all our preparations. And William had the internal revenue check to find out if he had always paid properly his taxes. And that man said he had never seen as good accounts as his were.

When everything was cleared, he had reported everything-- yeah, one other thing. My husband had the ring from his father. It was a diamond. And he wore that, always. When he was in England, in September, they told him, leave that ring here. And he said, I can't do that. I listed all what we have. And it's on the list. And if they find it's gone, I get in trouble. I can't afford that. So he didn't leave the ring there. And then we all had to give up all our jewelry. We could keep the wedding band and a watch, that was it. I had a pearl ring, that wasn't even a real pearl, but it had the gold band. It was gone, too. Everything.

And then he had two little life insurance policies, one in American dollars and one in Dutch gulden. And he had reported that. It was listed. And they OKed it. It was all fine. Then the day before we were ready to leave-- we had to leave on the 28th of January, to drive by train to Hamburg, to catch our ship. They called and said, what about these two policies?

He said, well, they are on my list. And they were approved. Well, you can't leave. You have to leave them here. So he called me. He said please, call Holland and tell them, please, to write them over and send the certifications as fast as they can. We have to leave tomorrow. And I have to have it, or we cannot leave. And they just couldn't understand what was going on. And to make sure that we don't leave with these policies, they kept my husband overnight in prison, there, didn't let him go home.

So they were as good as gold from Holland, and they sent the certification. So then we could leave on time. And we stopped in Leipzig and said goodbye to my parents and went to Hamburg. This ship was a Dutch boat, but they took on provisions and stuff in Hamburg. And we boarded in Hamburg and came to Amsterdam and were laid over, there, two days in a posh hotel.

Our passage was first class, because we decided, if we can pay it in German money, we go first class. Because we get higher boarding money to spend. That was included in it, that you get the money for tips and things like that. And so we took that. By the time, now, we were seven people, my husband and I, my two sisters-in-law, my two children, and Eric, Eric Joseph, the young man that we took along.

And we stayed in that hotel. And William made a quick trip to England, last minute directions with everything. While we were there, Walter got sick. He got a sore throat. And an uncle of my husband's second mother-- a brother, rather, from my husband's second mother, who had died when William was 18 years old. She had a kidney disease.

He was working at an Aliyah in Holland. And he had his mother and his sister with him. He got them both out. And he had contacted us when we were in Amsterdam. And he got a doctor to come to the hotel and look at Walter. And that doctor couldn't understand how we could stay in such a fancy hotel and then not be able to pay for the doctor. We had, each person, 10 German marks. That's all what we were allowed.

And we were lucky, in so far, my husband, being a dentist, he had accumulated a lot of old gold from teeth and bridges, that he had taken out from people and kept this. And he had sent that all to a dentist friend of his in Switzerland. He also, as long as we had still passports, he went, in the wintertime, for ski vacations. And in the summertime, regular vacations, with money that we could take, and then we scrimped. And what we didn't use, we left it there.

We also smuggled out some gold. There was a young Polish goldsmith, who made beautiful work. And he made belt buckles, that he covered with leather, and wore and watchbands, and all kinds of things to smuggle it out. It wasn't much, but it helped us, anyway. And this dentist friend kept it, and then sent it to us on the ship, before we sailed from Amsterdam. And you did all kinds of things in desperation to help yourself.

So well, then, Walter got all right before we left. And we sailed off. There was another thing, too. When we were children, we had a governess, you can call it. She came every afternoon after school and stayed with us, because my mother didn't want us to just run wild.

And we lived in a section where there were no other Jewish families except my uncle's, who was in the business with my father. And they had married two sisters. And we all lived in the same house. That was a five-story house. And they lived on the second floor. And we lived on the first floor. And by the way, last year, my son and I went to Leipzig. And we saw that house. It still stands. It was, in the meantime, a communist building. And it's run down terribly, but it still had the store downtown. And there are, now, people interested who wanted to buy it but not for me. It was very depressing to see that.

Anyway, where was I?

You left Amsterdam.

The governess that you had.

Oh, yeah, we had a governess. She had a sister, who had married a Singer sewing machine man, who had gone to Chile.

And she had visited him there, her sister. And on the way back, they came into the First World War. And she was interned in England and learned a little English. And then she was exchanged with English people from Germany. And she came and stayed with us for years. And she was like family. We were very close, always, and kept contact with her.

And when this came up all with the Nazis, she wrote and said she would help us. And she came to Dover-- after we had left Amsterdam, we went to Dover-- to say goodbye to us. And she told us she would help my brother to come out, too, if he manages to get out. And she helped. My brother had married a year after me and had two children, a little girl. She was born in '34, so she was a year older than Walter, and a boy who was a year younger than Ellen.

And they barely got out two days before the war broke out. They had advance , warning and he still had his passport, luckily. So they went back over the border to Holland. And from Holland to England, and there, this Hanna, we called her, she helped him.

She had met her husband, who was an English prisoner of war, in the First World War. And they fell in love. And after the war, they married. And they lived in Kew, England. He was a railroad man. And we kept contact all the time. And she helped my brother, got him together with the Quakers, and they did what they could for them. But that's another story.

Anyway, they were, by that time, then safe, at least, in England. But we had-- well, that comes later. So then we had a wonderful vacation, you can call it. We were four weeks on this boat, that went from Dover, to Calais, to Madeira, and then across to Barbados, to--

British Honduras?

British Honduras?

It went all around the northern coast of South America, Colombia. And my mother had a cousin, who had married in 1925 or '28, a cousin of hers, who lived in Chile and went there. And they lived in Caracas. And she came to see us when we were in some port in Colombia, I think or something. There were so many different ones. And we saw her.

And then we went on to Panama, and from Panama to Jamaica. And that part was the worst part. They told us that the ship usually go like that, and from Panama to Jamaica, they go like that. So everybody got seasick. I mean it was-- we didn't care whether we lived or died. I didn't look after the children. If the steward and stewardess wouldn't have been so nice, I don't know what would have happened to them.

But otherwise this was a beautiful trip, I have to say. And from Jamaica, then we took, what you would call, a banana boat, a dinky, little, dirty boat. That's where we first time saw roaches, real big roaches, too. And that was a forewarning of what's ahead of us. So we came to British Honduras.

And that was quite some let down, let's say. I mean it was so primitive, we couldn't imagine it. It was primitive housing. And the food, everything so different. They had these open sheds, where they sold the vegetables and the meats. I mean you had to buy meat every day and cook it, right away.

We were prepared. We had bottles of quinine with us against malaria. And I don't know what the name of it-- some blue stuff in which we had to wash everything, just like when you go to Mexico. You cannot eat anything without disinfecting it first.

But the people were very nice, thanks to this Dr. Friedman and his wife. They were established. And they introduced us to everybody. And Dr. Friedman had already contacted a local dentist, who was an American citizen. His parents were evangelists and lived in British Honduras. And he grew up there. But he went to college in America. And he married the daughter of a high English official. He came from Scotland. And I think he was in the bank business or something. And she had money.

And he was a very good dentist but not a good businessman. Everybody had a soft heart, and they charged, for pulling a

tooth, \$1. So you can imagine what the income was. And then, if he didn't let them pay, they had a rough time. He had four children. All four children went to school and college in America. And his mother-in-law liked William very much. And she was all for it, that he goes in practice together with him.

So they had a little, like an outhouse built, and they turned that into his practice room. At the time, he had only his manual drilling machine and everything primitive. His real stuff came, later, when we got our lift vans. And he started working with him and Eric doing the dental mechanical work, which was a big help for Dr. Pierce. That was his name.

And he loved it. He was very happy about it. At the time, when we first came, we got an apartment. It was an empty store, two-- a ground floor and first floor, with a huge veranda all around it. And it was completely empty. There was nothing in there. It was facing the center, practically, of the city. There was a river and a bridge, that. When a boat came that had a little too high a mast, they had to turn the bridge on pontoons, so that the boats could get through. This was all very, very primitive.

And we lived up there, on our mattresses, which we had with us, and mosquito nets. And we had a bathroom. The water supply was, if you want to take a bath, you had a little-- what do you call that? Like a shell where you collected the water, and you rinsed it over you. And then when you were through, you let the water out. And it went underneath, into a drum, and that you used to water your flowers and vegetables with, because you couldn't waste any water. It just wasn't there. If it was dry, it didn't rain, and you needed water, you had to buy it, so much per gallon. That was expensive.

But we settled down there as good as we could. We didn't have any furniture just boxes. And my younger sister-in-law, she tried to get some children together as kindergarten. But it didn't work out. They were not used to something like that. There was quite a caste system. There were the upper-crust English, that was the governor and the judge and the Dr. Pierce and people like that. They belonged to that.

Then there was this second class. This Dr. Friedman and his wife, they knew already what was going on. They could tell us, from the way we were invited by the wife of Dr. Pierce-- she invited me for tea-- and who was invited with me. She knew it wasn't upper class. It was somewhere down the road. Then they had all colors and mixtures of blacks and whites, because everybody mixed together. I mean the morals were nonexistent, although there was a big Catholic school there. And nuns were there.

But the men married, and then they had girlfriends, or friends on the side. That was common. Or they didn't even marry, just lived together and had a bunch of children. So it was very, very immoral, you can say. But we got used to that. And William, he really dived into it. And he met all kind of people. And he was happy. He was in his element with what he did.

And then right away, we started to try and look around, what we could do to help get my parents there or get Eric's mother there. So there was one native. He had apparently a Colored or Mayan or something mother and an English father. And his wife was something similar. And they were lovely people. He was in the government. And he was responsible for bringing people or giving visas out and so.

And we got very friendly with him. And he gave us a visa for my parents, right away. And Dr. Friedman wrote an affidavit that he would hire my brother, as his assistant, so that he could come over and send them visas. And my parents, they had already prepared. And they had also in lift van, my mother had collected beautiful antiques and porcelain stuff and everything and had carpets, the real McCoy. And she wanted to bring all that out, because we could sell it. We could get some money out of that.

And were they finally left end of October, with the same ship's company, and my brother was supposed to leave, a short time later, from England. And my parents got to Panama. And there they stopped them. They had to have another entry permit. And we had to send them money, because they didn't have it to get that entry permit.

And then came the news that that ship, where my father was supposed to be on, was torpedoed and sunk. And until we found out he wasn't on that boat, it was terrible. But it just so happened that my nephew Tom got sick, too. And he

wasn't able to travel. And my brother had given their tickets to another family with two children. And they were on that boat. And only the wife and one of the children survived. The other two drowned. So that was God's will, that they were not there. So they stayed there.

And my brother was first on the Isle of Wight, interned with everybody else, but then, since he was a doctor, they could use him. And he worked in the country, in a hospital, all during the war. Then, after the war, when we wanted him to come over here, they were so well settled, they decided they stay there. They had a rough time. They would have had it easier over here, but that was their choice.

Anyway, so then my parents came around in December. It was shortly before Ellen's birthday on the 6th of January. And I never forget that my mother bought her a beautiful hand-embroidered dress from Panama.

This is what year?

That was in 1930-- no, that was in-- yeah, in '39. In 1939. We left in January, and they came in December. And Ellen took it, and she had gotten a little bucket, and she filled it with water and took the dress and started to wipe the floor with it. I never forget that.

So the children picked up the language, pretty fast. As a matter of fact, so fast that one day, Eric came home, and he said do you know what kind of language your children speak? I said, I have no idea. Our English wasn't that good. He said, you better watch and listen and see who they associate with. They use very foul language. We didn't know anything about that.

So then that was in 1939. Then 1940, one day, we got the SOS call from a cousin of William's. He and his young bride had gone on one of those ships to go to south America, I think to Colombia or what. And when they got there, they wouldn't let them land there. And they were ready to turn around and ship them back to Germany. So he called us and asked if we could help him.

So William went to Robbie Gabriel, this good friend, and he gave him an affidavit. Since they wanted agricultural people, and this cousin, he lived in a small town near Frankfurt, in Weilbach. And his father was a grain dealer. And he had raised chickens, exotic chickens, and entered them in contests and exhibitions. And he had the certificate signed by Adolf Hitler in the early Nazi time. So when William told him what he was, they gave him, right away, a visa.

So he came. And he and his wife lived with us. And he tried to install a chicken farm in our house. We had, in the meantime, moved in a two-story building. Rather, it was a one-story building, but all the houses are built on stilts because of danger of floods.

And we lived upstairs. And there was a little, tiny, like a balcony, that we had screened in, where we could stay without being eaten up by the sandflies and the mosquitoes. And where was I? I lost my--

You were talking about the cousin who came over raising the chickens.

Oh, the cousin came, yeah. They lived with us, too. In the meantime, we had all our furniture and everything and had a regular household. And Eric had the room downstairs. There was one small storage room, and that was his room. So he had some privacy there. And they stayed with us until the American consul got him his visa to go to America.

All the people had numbers and were waiting before they could get to America. And in Germany, it was hopeless. Nobody could get out anyway. So it suddenly went much faster. All these people, who had their waiting numbers, they got the permission to come in. The same happened to my two sisters-in-law.

Alice was the first one who got it, and she left on a boat. And she was afraid of becoming seasick, so Dr. Friedman gave her some medication or something or a shot to prevent that. But apparently, he gave a too large a dose, and she started to hallucinate. And we thought, my gosh, something terrible is going on. But she came out of it, and then she took a later boat. And she went over.

And she went to visit our friend Hans, that William was in concentration camp with, his close friend, to visit them in Mississippi, where his Hans his brother had established a business. And they were both lonely. So they fell in love, although they knew each other from 10, 15 years ago.

And they got married. They moved to New York, where Hans had connections through his former job. And they had a very good life there for 12 years. And then my sister-in-law unfortunately had inherited the sickness of her mother, and she died from the same kidney disease. But they had a nice, wonderful time together.

So then the other one, the other sister-in-law, she was next to leave when she went to Tampa Florida, with a banana boat, and stayed there for a while, tried to work in kindergarten work. And then she went to New York, because she felt lonely, and my brother-in-law, in the meantime, had come to New York. And so she went to be with them, together.