

Gertrude, thank you for coming down today and for taking the time to do this. And we would like to start out with where you were born, the year, and your name-- also your family members.

I was born in Poland. It's called "Lwów"-- "Lemberg." And when I was 10 years old, my parents, my sister, and two brothers, a family of four, moved to Vienna, Austria, which I completed my education and was raised and brought up in Vienna.

When I was 18 years old, I met my husband, Fred. And a year later, we got married. And we were very happy-- very content. And my husband's a jeweler. He opened up, as we got married, a beautiful jewelry place.

And we never thought of leaving Vienna till, in '39, Hitler occupied Vienna. And our happy life-- my father and mother were in Vienna-- my sister and my two brothers. And we really enjoyed life. And one day-- it was a Friday night-- as we were lighting the candles, sit down for Shabbat meal in my parents' house, the radio announced that Hitler occupied-- marched in to Vienna. We couldn't believe what we heard, because we were assured that nobody will ever reach Vienna. And the Germans, they just occupied Sudetenland.

And, but, well, that was the beginning of the end, because next day, we didn't know what to do, and they announced and they were screaming in the streets, celebrating-- it was a panic. We hid in our apartments. And after only about three weeks, they came from house to house. They arrested my mother and my father-- for no reason, because they were Jewish.

And I was standing a whole night front of the-- it was a school where they placed the Jewish people. So the one who went to the right went to concentration camp and one to the left went home. So when my father got out-- it was about 2 o'clock in the morning-- he was so frightened and shook up that he didn't know where to go. And he said, first word was, "I am so happy that you are here."

I took him by the hand, and I brought him home. And my mother wasn't home yet. He was scared and very much frightened that she was sent to the concentration camp. But luckily, an hour later, she came.

But what was a terrible, they were born in Poland, and the Polish government, who was also very antisemitic, they made all the people-- it's called "Staatenlos"-- people without countries.

No citizenship.

No citizenship. They revoked all the citizenship from the Polish people. And they gave them six weeks to leave Vienna. They had no idea where to go and what to do and how.

Well, I remember, my oldest brother, just when Hitler was a week there, he got married. He was planning to get married-- my oldest brother. And he went, illegal, to Switzerland. He didn't have no passport. He didn't have nothing. So they went to Liechtenstein. And that were there was all wired already with electricity-- wire.

And so he went under it with his wife. They were young. And they went-- they were the first refugees in St. Gallen, Switzerland. When they arrived there, they called my parents and they said how they went through the border. My mother and father should do the same and not remain, because they're going to all take them to concentration camp that they heard in Switzerland.

So a week later, my mother and father left the apartment, everything they owned, all the money in the bank, and they went to Switzerland. It was very hard for them, because then they put up dogs by the border. And when they saw people, they start barking. So the SS came, naturally, and pulled them away.

But they were lucky because my brother told them in which spot the dogs are not there. And he was waiting already on the Swiss border, to pick them up. Well, luckily they got to Switzerland.

They got to Switzerland. Now my mother was very much worried about us. So I had already my oldest brother and my mother and father in Switzerland. Meanwhile, my oldest sister went in '37 to Israel. She was safe. She wasn't in Vienna when Hitler came.

And my youngest brother, who was 14 years old, was with us. Because I thought, because I was a Viennese Austrian citizen, through my husband, that they always have in mind that they wouldn't touch us. They wouldn't do nothing to them.

They would not deport.

Not deport. Well, after being three months there, it turned out that everybody had to wear a J. This was the first thing. So--

Standing for "Juden."

Yeah. Standing for "Juden." Then they start taking-- and they deported all the Polish or people from Czechoslovakia and all over. They deported them or put them in concentration camp. So we--

And my mother every night called me up, and she said, don't stay there. Even that you are Austrian, the same thing is going to happen to you. So she called up, and she said we should go to Bregenz. Bregenz was a border between Switzerland and Austria. And there is one consul, the Swiss consul, and you tell him that you have means, somewhere. Some of the family send you money to live in Switzerland. They would give you the visa.

So I went, by myself, without my husband, because men they grabbed-- and then they could. So I was, at the time, 19 years old. And I went all by myself. And it was the terrible experience of my life.

I went on a train, and I was sitting, and there was the whole train filled up with young Nazis. And they were singing [SPEAKING GERMAN]. I was sitting there, terrified.

Could you translate that to--

"When Jewish blood from the knife"--

"Sprinkles"--

--sprinkles, then is it doubled, [GERMAN] means "doubled joy."

As their joy.

Their joy. So I was terrified. And I didn't know-- and they didn't know at the time that I was Jewish, because I wore over my dress with a-- had a J, a coat to cover it. And I wanted to get to Bregenz to get a visa and go into Switzerland legal, because later on it was impossible to go under the wires because they put electric wires.

This was on the border.

On the border between--

Switzerland and Germany.

--Germany-- and Austria.

Austria.

So I got into Bregenz, like, 3 o'clock in the morning. I got in there. And whenever I wanted to go in for a cup of coffee,

there was-- and this belonged to Austria-- Bregenz. So wherever I got in and wanted a cup of coffee, there was [SPEAKING GERMAN]. This means "Jews and dogs"--

[? Vermin. ?]

--are not to come--

"Are forbidden to come in."

--"to come in." I was afraid, so I didn't do nothing. And when I was on the train, there was a young fellow that was young at the time, and he started asking me where I'm going and what I'm doing here. And I just put my head in a book, and I was reading. I didn't answer him. I was afraid.

And then, when I got off the train, I noticed in the corner of my eye that he followed me. And I didn't know what he thought-- if he thought I'm Jewish or I'm young and pretty or whatever. I went into the ladies' room. And I was so scared to come out.

So I saw the feet on the bottom, you know, of the door, marching back and forth, back and forth. I was afraid to open that door. And I was sitting in that ladies' room over an hour, till I went on my stomach and looked through, that I didn't see those footsteps anymore.

And then I start-- and when I came out, I went-- I saw a lot of people come in the station-- I went in like-- and he disappeared. It was my first really scary experience.

Then in the morning, I went-- and I knew where the consul is, because I was told in Vienna the street. And I asked somebody-- said the consul is opening first 10 o'clock. And it was, like, 5 o'clock in the morning.

So I was sitting over, there a woman was cleaning the office. She let me in, and I was sitting there. And all of a sudden came in the secretary of the Swiss counsel. He came in to me and asked my problem. I told him.

I says, look-- my husband and I are newly married. And he's born in Vienna, a Austrian citizen, but the way I understand, that he cannot remain here because you know what waits for us.

So he was very sympathetic. He was awful nice. He says to me, look, I'm a Swiss--

Citizen

--citizen. If you are going for a cup of coffee, I'll say you're my friend. He was very nice. I says, fine.

We went in, and I said, I'll pick up the check-- because money I took with me. And he said, OK. And he saved me, because he made me wait for-- the consul came, and he said to me, when you want to go to Switzerland, I should give you a visa.

I had already a passport, and it was "Jude" on the passport. He said, what reason should I give you? There are thousands of people here.

So I said, well, I heard that you will give anybody who doesn't need from Switzerland anything that he could support himself.

[INAUDIBLE]

So I said, I could support myself. We have an uncle in London, an uncle in London who can send us money Switzerland and that we could live on till-- because we are waiting for a visa to the States, because we have affidavit, but we have to wait up till our next will come. And it could be two or three months, and then we will go away.

Well, he listened to it. And he was very nice. He says, well, I have to have a telegram from this uncle what you're talking about. Went ahead and called up Vienna, to my father-in-law, at the time, home and I told him the story. My father-in-law will send a telegram to London, to my uncle. This was my mother-in-law's father. And he right away knew what we want-- send a telegram that he has money in Switzerland, and we could get that money and live on it as long as we--

And he really did have accounts. He was a doctor. He was an ear, nose, and throat specialist. But he left Vienna. When Hitler came to Vienna, that uncle was picked up for the English-- the English plane. He was a special doctor that-- and they took him away with 15 doctors from the hospital-- very famous doctor in Vienna. Is Fred's uncle.

And I was staying there for two days. And I was lucky that the Swiss-- he was a secretary, a [? male, ?] for the consul-- went into a restaurant with me, so I wasn't afraid. Because he's Swiss. Nobody really bothered me. I was lucky.

And then I got the visa. And I went back to Vienna. We went to Vienna back.

And I told him, you know, I says, we can't take any money out of Vienna. And I really would like to be on welfare in Switzerland and so many people and charity. So he says, whatever you have, mail it to me, and I'll bring it to you to Switzerland.

To London?

No.

The man--

To register Switzerland, to this--

To Switzerland, to this consul.

--to this consul. And I figured-- so we had a little jewelry a camera. We mailed-- we figured, we have to leave it in Vienna anyhow. So we mailed it to him. And with my husband, my in-laws, my parents, said, forget it.

I said-- came there. We told him where we're going to be. Because my brother was there already, my mother. Everything was there.

Now.

Yeah. It was nice. Well, then we had to wait till got us to about six months between having the visa and going to Switzerland. We couldn't go.

So what town in Switzerland were you staying, then, with your mother and your brother? What town?

To St. Gallen. Yeah. But the trouble start before I went to Switzerland. We had to wait for some-- for yeah, the passport-- they told us that the passport, the one we have, is no good. We have to make another passport. So to get a passport, I went on a line 5 o'clock in the evening-- again without my husband, because men they grabbed right away and put into concentration camps.

So was this still in Vienna?

It was still in Vienna before we got to the-- and I was staying the whole night till the consul opened-- until another consul-- the passport-- people give out the passports opened up, like, 9:30, 10:00. And I was, like, the third one in line, because I came very early. I stood through the whole night.

And on that night, I'll never forget what they done to us. What they did-- the one-- we were staying on line, about thousands of people, maybe more. So they came with horses, you know? And they went through the line we should fight with each other. I was before here on line. And then you lose your next.

And they gave out the 25 passports. And there were so many people. I went five times on that line. Five nights I was spending the whole night with a thermos bottle of hot coffee or tea.

And my husband was walking around, looking, but he was afraid. I didn't want him to stay because he would have been sent to Dachau.

So came in the morning, finally-- yeah-- so we hid in the--

Did they hurt anyone--

Oh, yeah.

--who went--

Oh, yeah.

--these horses.

People fainted. People-- the horses, you know, went over--

Trampled them.

--trampled them. It was a-- I'll never forget this in my life. Then what happened in the morning, we were the front because we stood the whole night through. He comes out and says, we're starting from the back.

Oh!

[INAUDIBLE]. So you never knew-- know where to stay to get a passport. And then finally I got a passport. And we went-- we were-- and then came the Kristallnacht in November. We were in Vienna. Unforgettable. Unforgettable, what happened on Kristallnacht. The synagogue was burned. The windows-- terrible. We were scared to death.

And then I came to visit my mother. That's right before she left to Switzerland. And my parents were very religious people. And-- and they were scared to death and sitting in the room.

And I was more free, because I was Austrian citizen. So I had more freedom to move. Because when they stopped me, they wouldn't deport me, because, through my husband-- he was Viennese. So my-- I was Viennese citizen.

So I came in. And the two frightened people, my mother and father, staying with the window, frightened, shivering, and with my 14-years-old brother, who later I will tell you about, he left. They went.

There was, like, a three-story building. They ran upstairs. All the religious-- the prayer books and the shawls-- tallis, you know-- they threw down in the yard, just front of the window where my parents used to live on the ground floor-- put on a match and burned up and burned all the religious.

And you don't know what kind of feeling-- when I looked through my father's eyes, this painful thing. For him it was the holiest thing. It was his faith, his religion. He saw it going up in flame, including his.

So through then, they knocked on the door. They send, ask if [SPEAKING GERMAN]? Are there Jews? You were scared. You thought was-- couldn't bring out to say yes or say no. But when you lie, it's even worse. So we said yes. We were lucky again. They gave a look and locked-- closed the door and let us go.

But then they took-- we had an apartment. We got married. We rented an apartment. So they put in-- they right away-- they took-- my in-laws had a beautiful apartment. So they gave them a apartment on a attic-- two rooms.

There was his mother, father, and my grandmother, who was at the time was 75 years old. And we moved in with them. Because there has to be at least five till seven people in these rooms.

And we didn't see nothing-- no windows. There was only a roof where you look through and there was only pigeons. We counted them. We couldn't go down.

So only-- one evening, my husband dared to go down to a grocery, to get some bread and milk and we should have something to eat. And then my parents lived, like, an hour away. So I was afraid to take the train home, so I was walking to visit my parents from his parents.

I came there. And on the way, I saw people with beards, religious people, on the floor, and they put-- they wrote down something and said with a toothbrush they should clean up the sidewalks. I passed by. My heart was aching. I was young.

And one day they caught me. One day, I had a terrible day. They ran ahead and came over and said-- and I had my J, my "Jude," yet. So they said to me, halt. Well, I knew it's concentration camp or--

We lived in fear. The time we were young, we didn't realize. We were, like, numb. We didn't know what's next.

So they gave me hausen a toothbrush, I should clean the street. All right-- laid down with the toothbrush. And the worst thing was they had-- in Vienna it's called, like, a strong water to, you know, like [INAUDIBLE] water. You know, you called Clorox.

Oh, like another--

Clorox.

Oh, Clorox.

Clorox.

Yeah.

And they poured it over the fingers. You know, they was burning. It didn't have water to wash it off. So they were staying and laughing like would be the biggest joke, that we suffered. You know? It wasn't only-- there were at least 200, 300 young people, that they got. And then they came over, gave us a kick, and said, you could go. "Go, Jude."

So they let you go?

Yeah, we didn't have no name. We had just "Jude," because we cleaned good away everything. So they let us go after two hours. And it was smelling from this Clorox. The eyes were tearing. It was a horrible experience.

It must have been an acid of some kind.

An acid, of course. And then my parents had a grocery store. And one day I came there. It was the beginning. And they wanted my mother to go out and put on the window a J, in yellow, that people shouldn't come shopping to her. Should know they shouldn't go buy. She had a grocery store for years there.

So when they came in, with that yellow paint, they were so scared-- the SS came in. They came in with a bucket, with a pencil, and they said that she should go out. I saw her, that she couldn't even move. She was stiff.

And I was young, so I went over and I said, please let me do it. They-- you see, the elderly people. They're scared of you. Why-- do you mind? I would do it.

So they done me a big favor and I-- so they made me do double-- two J. I said, fine. I'll do-- I'll make two J. Anyhow, they closed up the store, and they took away everything-- a day or two later, so it didn't matter.

And my in-laws-- then, we were also lucky that they were-- after all this, my brother took him to Switzerland. And then they were in the States. We brought them here when we came. And--

So was he with your parents in Switzerland?

My parents, my mother and father.

So you brought them all?

We brought only my mother and my father. [PERSONAL NAME], my oldest brother was in Switzerland. And my sister, as I said, was married, and she left before Hitler, in Israel. She's still in Israel. In Haifa she lives.

And now my youngest brother was only 14 years old. [LAUGHS] So one day-- you know the Judische Kultusgemeinde?

Yeah, the-- like a federation? Or, yeah.

Federation. Yeah. Took all the young kids, including my brother, and they sent them-- and we went on the Exodus, the boat to Israel. You heard that one. And, Because he was already lucky, because he had my sister there. But anyhow it took them a long time.

Did he make it into-- which was Palestine, in those days--

Palestine, yeah. He made it in.

He made it in?

Yeah, but it took them three months.

Wow.

They were hiding. They were sent back. And they were in trouble. And the poor kid-- I remember taking him to the train, in Vienna. So for the night we rented a taxi to bring us to the-- so everybody could go with a knapsack. He was a young kid. In that knapsack was one bread he's supposed to take and one salami.

And then he told me that they [LAUGHS] stole his bread with the salami.

Ah.

And anyhow, he got to Israel. And he's--

Does he-- is he still in Israel?

No,

He died.

Oh.

Second war.

Oh, he was killed in a war.

Killed in Israel.

Sorry.

He got married there, and he had two children, which-- one daughter is now-- we adopted her, actually, his daughter, when-- Because they lost the mother, too, in Israel. The mother died from cancer in Israel. And then the father-- and the kid was only six years old.

So we adopted her. She graduated. She's now in New York. And in fact she's going to come here for Easter time.

And she got married. And we supported her college, [INAUDIBLE] college, in New York. She met a nice fellow. He's a doctor. They got married. Last year we went to their wedding there.

Could you please give me the names of all your-- like, your mother, your father-- in fact, your maiden name also?

Yeah. My maiden name was Lauer-- L-A-U-E-R. Lauer.

Lauer.

And my father was Max. And Tobi. My mother's name was Tobi.

Your sister, the one in Israel?

Israel? Hela Leiner. She was married. And she has two children. In fact, he's now, her son is in the army again.

And the brother who--

Who died there? Izio Lauer. Izio. Yitzhak. Isaac.

Isaac.

Isaac Lauer. And my oldest brother, he lives in Brooklyn. And his name is Charles Lauer. Charles Lauer. So the brother and sister still here. And my father and mother died in New York, and my in-laws.

So when did you leave Switzerland for the United States?

We came in '39.

'39.

Yeah. April '39.

And were you able to bring your parents, shortly after that?

Yeah. Yeah, from Switzerland, we boarded. We had-- my mother had here an uncle. And I went over to him and asked him, please to give me the--

Affidavit?

--affidavit. And I-- and they were-- first my husband brought his parents, because they remained in Vienna. So they was in Vienna. So they came first. Because mine was more safe in Switzerland. So we decided to bring his parents first.

And they managed to get legal papers also-- a passport and--

Yeah. They came out-- they came here in 1940. And my parents were six months later. Good people-- when we were here with the-- we were one of the lucky ones. We went through a terrible, frightening, frightening moments-- hours and days. He marched in in '38, and we left in '39. Actually we suffered with one year between coming here and--

And then my parents, the both of them, they told them they have to leave Vienna for 24 hours. They didn't have no passport-- nothing. They were lucky. They went illegal, without-- she put on, my mother, two skirts and two blouses, and that's all. She couldn't take anything.

They locked up the doors. What a feeling it is. You have a home, and you have to close everything and leave it, and you never see it again. But one thing-- you save your life. Maybe we're one of the lucky ones, because many, many friends, cousins, uncles, they all got killed-- in Auschwitz--

A grandmother my husband had, she was at the time about 78 years old. They put her in the concentration camp. And then she was in Auschwitz-- never heard of her again. Two uncles and--

From my immediate family, luckily we were saved. We were saved. But it was a horrifying life. You can't imagine that one person could do so much damage to people-- frighten them and kill them for no reason.

The population, the Austrian population, cooperated very well, didn't they? Yeah, with the Nazis. Yeah. We were only shocked. We never realized that they were so against Jews.

For instance, when you went to school, to public school, I'm sure you went with non-Jewish--

Oh, I have a lot of non-Jewish friends. But then they didn't know me anymore. They said-- not that they-- they were scared. They were afraid. They turned their head and-- when you say "good morning" or "hello" or whatever, we said "Guten Tag," they just ignored you, like you don't exist-- like air.

And I was standing on the line. And then this one fellow on that horse-- he was the best friend of my husband. He used to-- he was at our wedding. He came in, and when he saw us he just laughed and ignored us. There was no friends anymore. We didn't have friends.

Actually, when you were in public school yet, as a young girl--

Of course!

--did you feel any animosity--

No. No.

--in those days? No.

Not at all. We felt in Vienna very happy. We were in there one of them, and we didn't realize what's doing-- what preparation they were making. We even have seen-- there were a lot of clubs in the basements, you know-- young people. We ignored it, because we didn't even look what they're doing there. Because like young teenagers, they're making groups and they're having-- we figured that they're Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. They're not Girl Scouts; they were Nazis! Prepared.

They were the youth group, the Nazi youth groups.

Yeah. Yeah. And there was one leader, one older guy, who taught them. And the whole thing was to hate Jews and kill Jews. They talked them in so much, they really believed it.

And I hope it never happen again. Because it is a terrible-- a terrible life, to be under such a dictator.

Yeah. Tell me a little bit about your-- when you arrived in the United States. How you-- did you come by ship?

Yeah. We went from Zurich, from Switzerland, to Italy. We went on the Conte di Savoia-- the Italian ship. And the reason that we could come-- because the uncle that I told you, from London, sent us money. And we didn't have to ask for money in-- from the Swiss. And the uncle really paid us the trip to the United States.

But it was also very nice-- the way we got the visa is through coincidence. My husband had a brother. He was a pharmacist, and he had a master degree in pharmacy. He was an older brother.

And they had no relatives in the States-- no family, the Viennese people. So he went and wrote letters to all the pharmacists in the United States-- to Washington and to Chicago, to New York, that he's a young man and he has his master degree in pharmacy. And he could--

He was single at the time, and he said he could really work if somebody could send him only an affidavit. Believe it or not, with strange people-- and he made duplicates in the typewriter. And he sent duplicates.

He got three affidavits from strange people. And so he didn't need three, so he gave-- he sent a telegram to a man. He was a pharmacist in Chicago. The name is Norton Friedman. And he wrote him a letter-- "thank you. I got." He got an affidavit from the People's Drugstore in Washington, my brother-in-law. And he said, but my brother and sister-in-law need the affidavit. Maybe you could transfer from their name.

So he sent a telegram to the American consulate in Vienna, that it's OK. This how we came. We met him, after, the people. They came to see us when we came to the States. And we--

He signed it over to us. And meanwhile we were in Switzerland, so where we did also a not foolish thing. We went-- we had to go back to Vienna, to get the affidavit signed, and we were already in Switzerland. And we didn't know what to do, because they told us that it will take years till we get the affidavit to Switzerland. And we couldn't stay in Switzerland too long, because every six months we had to sign then that we're leaving. So we were there just--

Temporarily

--temporarily.

But-- so you came--

So we went back to Vienna.

--on an Austrian quota, then.

Yeah. Yeah. An Austrian quota. I went back to Vienna. It was also very frightening, because the trains-- we had to go to the German consulate in Switzerland and ask permission to go for 24 hours into the consulate and then come back.

So we went. And his parents were in Vienna yet, so we took a taxi. We went over to see his parents. And we went back to Switzerland, which was also very, very dangerous. There were all Nazis in the train. And then, when we came back, they all waited for us and they were all really happy to see us back.

And then we went--

And you did get your affidavit.

Yeah. We get our affidavit. We were very-- and then we had to go to Italy, to get the ship-- boat. It was in April. This was seder night. And it was the whole--

So we-- and the visa-- strange people sent us the affidavit. They never knew us. They never-- and then where we came, they came to New York to greet us-- to meet us.

Isn't that wonderful.

Yeah. We were, as you say, not too many people had luck like we had.

They also had the fortitude, the thought-- I mean, it was such a wonderful idea, just to write to these pharmaceutical people.

Yeah.

It was--

One in 1,000,000.

A wonderful idea.

Yeah. Yeah. And in fact he had three affidavits. And the third affidavit, he signed it over to his parents. This were all three--

Wonderful.

His brother-- he died, his brother. There were two boy-- how he died-- it was-- he was already in Washington. He got married. He had rheumatic fever as a child, and in the war, they took him into the army to-- and he didn't-- he made the prescriptions out for the wounded soldiers. So he overworked himself-- got a heart attack. And he was 37 years old when he died. Very young man, my Fred's brother. So he's the only one.

So when you came to the States, did you come to New York? Did you live in New York for a while?

Yeah. We came to New York-- Brooklyn. We lived many years-- my children were born in New York. My son and daughter was born.

And could you give us their names-- your son's and daughter.

My son? Yeah. My son is Elliot Blau. And my daughter is Hanna, Hanna Glauberman.

And your son is a physician now?

Yeah, my son is a general practitioner, with an office in Scottsdale. And my son-in-law is a gastroenterologist. And my daughter teaches public school.

And how many grandchildren do you have?

I have four grandchildren. My son has two boys, and my daughter has a son and a daughter. My grandson is a graduate Stanford University.

Oh.

Some very bright kids. And I'm very proud of them and thankful. I hope to God that my kids and grandchildren don't have to go through, because I can't imagine we survived such a torture and frightening scare. We had a life-- every minute I was afraid they were going to lock my husband up or--

And also I was very lucky because I had a visa to go to London. They wanted very much Viennese people, especially young women as maids in London. So we applied. Wherever we could apply, we applied.

So I got a request and send in a picture. You send a picture, and you could cook Viennese-- there a family requested me as a maid. They would send me the money and the visa.

But I was married. I didn't want to go without my husband. So we wrote them back. Maybe he could be a gardener, a butler, a something. If we get a job for my husband, we would go.

But they said no, they can't use a man [INAUDIBLE]. So I didn't go. And we waited up till we really could get together we went away. So too many people didn't have that energy.

Yeah.

You have to have energy to wait till the right thing. And some people waited and it was too late, like my brother's wife. They took her brother-- a young, beautiful-- he was a medical student already-- first-year medical school. Took him to Dachau, and they killed him.

That was-- you know, so we are one of the lucky ones, that we survived, and we are thankful. And now we have our own family. You can't imagine. You can't imagine that people could go through what we went through.

When you look back, it's like a bad dream.

A bad dream. Unbelievable.

And Brooklyn. What kind of life did you have in Brooklyn? Did your husband establish a business?

Yeah, my husband settled. He worked as a jeweler place for years, then became partner of that jewelry place. And my both kids were born in Brooklyn-- son and daughter. They graduated Brooklyn College, both of them. My son went to medical school in Philadelphia, and my daughter got a master degree in education.

And then we moved out to Phoenix in 1970. I came to Phoenix.

Do you like Phoenix?

Very much. That's where have my family here.

And your children followed you, or--

No, we followed them.

You followed them.

Yeah. My son was in the army. He was in Vietnam. So they sent-- him he was already finished, medical school. So they took him to Jackson, Mississippi. And he was a recruiting station, to recruit-- to examine the new soldiers coming in.

And that time, he was married, and his wife had asthma. And he knew that Phoenix is the only good place-- dry climate-- she'll feel better. So they moved to Phoenix.

And then my son wanted only that we should follow him here. So my husband retired early, and we came here. And our

daughter--

My son-in-law was in the army in San Francisco. He was in Letterman's Hospital. It was also where he finished physician. And they were living in the Presidio. For seven years he was in the army.

And then my daughter said, I want to be near my parents-- my family. So we moved there. So we are lucky.

That's wonderful that all of you were here--

Yeah.

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]

I just want to ask you what your life is like here in Phoenix. You're retired, of course, now?

We retired, and we do a lot of charity work. As you know, we work for the Hadassah. And we're very active in Beth El synagogue. And we help out the bingo here. And we belong to the [? RMD, ?] which we are also very active.

And we live a quiet life now. And we enjoy it very much. We have our children here in town-- grandchildren-- keep us very busy.

And we try to forget-- it should never come back. Again, it was a bad, bad dream when we ever think of it.

But I would like you to repeat what you said earlier-- the purpose why we do this, the reason we are doing this, so that people will know what happened and it should never occur again.

The reason we're doing-- I'm doing that so it's unbelievable. And it should never happen again. Our grandchildren, everybody's grandchildren, should never have to go through what we went through in our young life. It was a very, very horrible, horrifying experience in our lives. And we are thankful that we were one of the lucky ones. But 7 million didn't make it.

Thank you very much, Gertrude. I think we'll conclude with that. And I'm very grateful that you could come. I would like to ask you-- I'll tell you why-- for the--

For the museum.

--museum. Right?

Yeah.

We will bought big donations-- I really have a sister now in Israel.

I think this is still running.

I can take off the plug.

Why don't you, yeah.

Gertrude, we would like to add on the incident when you went back to your hometown to visit and how you felt and what happened.

Well, about five years ago, my husband and I decided to go back to Vienna. We never wanted to go back again, because

we lost a lot of our friends-- families-- but he wanted to look for the grave of his grandparents. And we took a train. They are trolley cars.

And we were sitting and looking out the window. And next seat, there were two women sitting. And all of a sudden--

She didn't know who we are, and we didn't speak. We looked just normal, like everybody else. One says to the other, oh my god. There are Jews!

So I was afraid-- my husband shouldn't get up and start arguing with them, so I didn't tell him till we went off-- got off the train. He said, they couldn't believe it, like we would be coming from outer space.

So it shows you there's still big antisemitic-- antisemites in Vienna right now. Yeah. And we were horrified that he could--

I told him later. He said, why didn't you tell me? I would have told them I would-- tell-- I didn't want to start a fight there.

Yeah. You wanted to avoid--

Avoid a fight. Which is maybe wrong, because we Jews have to stick up for our rights, not push our-- like, we put our heads down and let them do whatever they wanted to do with us. We were scared.

And this remind me-- this, why I didn't want to put up a big fuss, how we, finally we picked ourself up our heads high, that we are human being. And here you come back to your place where you were really raised and got married and had happy years with family, and there they pinpoint there are Jews here.

Did you find any-- like, your apartment. Could you see where it was, where you had lived?

Yes. We-- matter of fact, we were last summer back in Vienna, because our son wanted terrible to see the roots of the family. We went to Europe last summer. And my daughter was there three years ago. And we showed it to her and her husband and the grandchildren.

We went up to the apartment where my parents used to live. So unfortunately there I couldn't get in, because the apartment been made now into a medical-- some medical--

Clinic?

--clinic. Yeah. But my husband's parents lived-- we knocked on the door, and they let us in. And we went through the apartment. In fact, my son has pictures taken from the apartment. And it was--

A chill ran through our spine, seeing strange people in the place where my parents-- Friday night, they had a Shabbat dinner, my in-laws, together. And we saw, after so many years, the apartment.

Were the people nice to you?

Yes. They were nice in a way, but they told us to wait outside, and she wanted to call in a neighbor, because she was afraid. She thought-- you see, the apartment, they took away. She thought-- later, she explained us that she thought that we're coming to get the apartment back--

To claim it.

--apartment. We told them, we don't come to take the apartment back. She said, no, I was never a Nazi, not me. But she was a young person, so I don't think-- she was a child at that time. She lost both her parents.

She said, we bought this apartment. I said, so did our parents bought the apartment-- belonged to them, you know. But she said that we didn't do-- we didn't take it away from you.

And the furniture different, but the rooms looked the same. We recognized everything. We went through where we went to school. And you know, it made us cry, to see where our-- my parents-- lived.

And I couldn't forget the way-- the frightening thing of my father when they threw down all the prayer books. And it just went through my mind. And he was staying in a corner.

He was a strong man-- proud man. He saw that they burned up all the prayer books and the prayer shawls, you know, the tallis and tefillin and threw down the window. And he was so scared. It was he was unbelievable strange that somebody could throw precious things to that man-- that they could come, put a big fire on the backyard, and burn everything-- put everything into flame.

But thank god, at least I had them after there, I mean, they died natural deaths, at least. Yeah. But there were horrifying moments in our lives.

Yeah. And in fact, the memories come back when--

Oh, yeah. When you start talking-- many times at night, I'll get up at night, and I get, like, a dream, but whatever happened, you know-- not only to us but to people-- the surroundings-- the neighbors. Especially the Gentile man was-- didn't know you. And we were so young, we couldn't believe it, that people that you went to school together--

And every day, my friend was waiting in the corner, and we were talking, excited. And then, they didn't know you anymore. Like you are nobody or second-class person. You know. So--

Well, I'm--