

OK the first picture--

My name is Tana Hecht Basa. The first picture is of my father and mother in Berlin in 1940.

And those are pictures, various pictures, of my mother up until 1940.

OK. Can you slide the whole thing over towards you? Yeah.

What do you mean?

Just bring it towards you more, the whole photo. Slide it, yeah. Mhm. Keep going. Yeah.

OK?

OK. Again, the other pictures are your mother?

Up until 1940.

OK, hold on, natural light.

Are you using--

OK. And what is this?

This is eine Geburtsurkunde, which means it's a birth certificate.

OK. OK.

Do you want me to say what they are? OK. These are baby pictures. The one in the middle is my--

Do the one closest to you on the top.

OK. Well, this is just a baby picture.

Mhm. OK.

And this is my mother and the governess that we had. Again, a baby picture.

Hold on for a second. OK.

This is my oldest sister, Ruth, holding me. This is my aunt. Her name was Recha, R-E-C-H-A, funny name.

Hold on.

And this is, again, the governess. And so are these two.

Well, let me just get a couple of shots.

[INAUDIBLE]. Oops. This one? Oh, it's the same one. I see.

Mhm.

OK. Good. [INAUDIBLE]. OK. First picture?

This is my mother. The second picture is of my father in his cantorial uniform or cantorial robes.

OK, give me one second here.

[BACKGROUND CHATTER]

One second.

[BACKGROUND CHATTER]

Beautiful.

[BACKGROUND CHATTER]

OK.

This is my sister Eva. She was born in 1922.

In the upper right one--

Upper right is a picture of my dad returning from the First World War.

Hold that shot a little bit longer.

This is him.

Oh, OK. I didn't even have that.

Which one's him?

Right here, upper left-hand corner.

It's after--

The First World War. It was a troop transport.

Oh, OK.

Returning from the war.

Zoom in.

The bottom picture is when I was two years old.

Can you hold it still?

The bottom picture is you when you were--

About two, just prior to the concentration camp.

Hold it still.

OK.

[BACKGROUND CHATTER]

OK.

Can't get it [INAUDIBLE].

OK. This is a family portrait taken in 1940, approximately May or June of 1940. There's Ruth, my father, my sister Erica, my mother holding me, and my sister Eva.

OK.

That's--

Verfugung?

Verfugung.

Verfugung.

OK. Why don't you go ahead and explain what this is?

What this basically means or says is that I have no rights to any possessions. Anything that I owe or will owe belongs to the Third Reich and to the fuhrer.

You have a new job. Learn Japanese, he said. [INAUDIBLE].

And what's that stamp, Im Auftrage, or whatever.

Where?

Auftrage?

Auftrage. What is that?

Is that someone's signature? Im--

Yeah, it's a signature of the, like, a notary or something. And he has the German stamp.

--name is. What does that say, above your name? It says all of my possessions all the possessions of-- it goes according to the rules that were established in October of 1939, and so on.

OK.

This is a document for identification that was always worn. It's made out of a cloth. And it was always worn by, in this case, myself. And it identified me as a Jew because of the J that was printed on here. It had all the official stamps there. And OK?

OK. The one on the left is a pass, a food pass that gave us a means to get some foods. The other two papers there are the money that was printed to be used in the concentration camp.

It was specific.

[INAUDIBLE]?

[INAUDIBLE].

So what is Quithung uber Zehn Kronen?

It was specific. Zehn Kronen, Kronen is the name of the money, like cents or whatever. And this was 10.

[INAUDIBLE].

Is der alteste der Juden means Jew. So--

Where is that?

In the bottom right-hand side in the bottom one.

Yeah. Yeah. It can be only used by the Jews in the camp.

Only used by the Jews.

Yeah. Because it wasn't worth anything outside the camp.

OK.

Pretty sophisticated. Huh? Print their own money.

Yeah. I think it would be more like Monopoly money or something.

Really.

OK. That's good.

Let's see if this-- let me know when to start.

OK.

OK. Since we were in a Czechoslovakian camp, this is the Czechoslovakian repatriation office. And this was worn by us after the war to identify us. And it states on there, it has the family name, the date and place and country of birth. Occupation, I really didn't have any, since I was only a child.

Desired destination, since we were from Berlin, we wanted to go back to Berlin. My father signed it for me since I was only five years old. And every one was like a tag, like a identification tag which helped the Allies to process the people.

Yeah.

It's like an emergency. You have all these tags that tells you.

Good.

OK. And that's it. This is a certificate that says that I, Tana Hecht, was a prisoner in the concentration camp of Terezin or Theresienstadt since March 18, 1943. The military and civilian authorities are asked to assist in any way. Again, this was used for relocation and identification.

[INAUDIBLE].

And it's signed on August 10, 1945.

Hold on a second. One more time. OK?

[INAUDIBLE].

OK.

OK. I'm Judy Weightman. And I'm here today on June 21, 1989, talking with Tana Basa. And Tana, we'll go over a few of the chronological questions that we need to know and your historical questions and your family. And I wanted to know, first of all, what your present address is. And what was your date of birth and your place of birth.

I was born April 18, 1940 in Berlin, Germany.

OK. And are you married?

I am.

And how many children do you have?

I have two girls.

And were you married-- you weren't, of course, married before the outbreak of the war. You were a child at that time. OK. And could you tell me a little bit about your parents, the full name of your father and if you remember his date of birth and place of birth and the same with your mother.

OK. My father's name was Paul Israel Hecht. And he was born November 25, 1897 in Posen, East Prussia. My mother's was Carolina. Her maiden name was Blond, B-L-O-N-D. And she was born also in Posen on November 20, 1896.

So do you know how long your family was in Prussia, how many generations?

That, I have no idea. I never got to meet my grandparents. And we're in the process of trying to trace things down. But it's a little bit hard because the records weren't kept up well.

And do you know how they got to Posen, where they came from?

I know my parents were born there. And I don't really know whether my grandparents were born there or emigrated from somewhere else.

OK. And do you have any brothers or sisters?

I had three sisters, Ruth, who was born in 1920, Eva, who was born in 1922, and Erica, who was born in 1930.

OK. And you were in Germany in the early years. And can you remember anything about the first few years of your life in Berlin?

None whatsoever. Well, I was born there and then I really don't have much of a recollection until I was about four years old or so.

And where were you then, when you were four years old?

We were in a camp called Theresienstadt, or Terezin, in English. We were transported there from Berlin and lived there until the end of the war. The Terezin was considered by the Nazis a model camp. It was more of a camp for political prisoners. A lot of children went through there. I believe they said something, like, about 150,000 children went through

the camp. Of those children, 100 of us were left alive after the war.

OK. And go ahead.

OK. Tana, we're getting back after the lawnmowers. We'll try to keep talking now. I was asking you about Theresienstadt. And what do you first remember about your stay in Theresienstadt?

I remember the place where we lived. It was one large room. And what still strikes me was the fact that it had a tile floor. And the tile was like a checkerboard, black and white, huge tiles, really big pieces of tile.

And we all lived in that one room, just my father, my mother, and I.

What happened to your three sisters that--

They all lived in the camp, but they were put in other barracks. They had lots and lots of barracks where they housed people. And they didn't leave us together. That was their policy.

Were the three girls together, your three sisters?

No, they also lived-- my two sisters, Ruth and Erica, were together. But my sister Eva was not in the same barracks.

Were they able to spend any time together?

Not that I know of.

Did you see them when you were in camp?

Not till after the war, not at all.

Can you remember getting to Theresienstadt?

No.

You were too young.

My first recollections are of that room and playing outside. I had long blond hair. And I remember playing. I was, what, about three years old, maybe close to four. And I remember this Nazi officer coming up to me while I was playing. And he asked me to go home with him.

And I told him off. And my aunt told me afterwards, after the war, she said they were so scared that he was just going to take out his gun and shoot me. And what had happened is, because I looked so Aryan, and they were after Aryan children, he, I guess felt that I was a good recruit for their Aryan population or whatever because I was so blond and fit their--

Did he know you were Jewish, do you think?

I'm sure he must have because I was in the camp. I was just playing.

When you were playing, were you playing outside by yourself?

Right, by myself, on the dirt, or whatever. And then he just walked away when I told him no. You know, I told him, no, you're just going to kill me. And then he walked away. And they thought for sure he was just going to take out his gun and shoot me.

What made you think that he would kill you? How did you even know to think about that?

I guess you know, knowing that the Germans were who they were over there. I don't know whether someone told me about it. Or yeah, I was pretty little.

Did your parents talk to you about any rules or regulations when you were in the camp? Did you know there were things you were allowed to do or not allowed to do?

No, not really. But I do know that afterwards, my hair was cut off totally. And they made me bald. And according to my aunt, she said at first it was because of lice. But then she told me that they were just scared. So they decided to make me look like any of the other prisoners rather than just leave my hair nice and long and blonde and curly.

Who was scared?

I guess my family, my mother and father. So they just cut it.

I remember being hungry a lot. And I remember having a cast on. And that I slipped.

I had a walking cast. It was like a piece of metal on the bottom. And I just slipped and fell and broke my leg, again. So they had to put me in traction. And I remember that part in camp.

Did your mother or your father talk to you about what they were doing during the day in camp?

No. Well, my mother was mostly at home with me.

She was there with you?

Yeah.

Was there anyone else there with you?

No. Not that I remember anyone.

And what did your father do during the period in the camp?

I think he was busy with, I don't know, administrative stuff, or I don't know. I'm not sure. And he never talked about it at all.

What did your father do before he was taken to Theresienstadt?

He was a cantor. He was the head cantor of Berlin. And he was very good in administrative things. Because I remember after the war he did that also.

And what else do you remember or did your parents talk to you about?

Well, I remember being kind of naughty.

In what way?

See the camp, Theresienstadt, was a garrison, a Czechoslovakian garrison. And I remember at the end of our road, there was a fence, a brown fence. And there was a hole in the fence.

And I was able to crawl through and go to the other side and be with the Czechoslovakian soldiers. And they would take me on their knee and they would feed me candy and things to eat. And I would always try to disappear. And my mother

would have a fit.

And then you would just crawl back in?

And I'd crawl back under the fence and crawl back in. And I was just a terror. She would be so upset, you know? And I remember that part. And then the only other recollection I have of her dying in that room.

What happened?

I remember she got very-- like, she got a headache. She got very, very ill. And then I remember my dad came. And he picked her up. And she just died. She died in seconds.

What happened is she had a cerebral hemorrhage, I found out afterwards. And I remember staying in, like, a crib and watching the whole scene. And then they came with this cart, horse drawn cart, and just took her away. And we didn't get any ashes or anything after that.

I remember my dad trying to tell me, or I found out afterwards that the ashes were just thrown. They cremated everybody and just threw them away. Even though he wanted the ashes, they wouldn't give it to him.

And then what happened to you and your father?

Then afterwards, because my mother had died, I guess the Germans felt that I really was a hindrance to my dad because he had to take care of me. And my sisters were gone by that time.

How did you know they were gone?

Well, my dad told me. I mean, they were not with us. But my dad knew that the two went to Auschwitz. And then my other sister Eva had gone someplace else.

Who went to Bergen-Belsen?

I think it was my sister Eva.

Eva.

Went to Bergen-Belsen, yeah. I know they told us that she was transported to several different camps. And then because the Germans felt that I was a hindrance to my dad, they tried to take me away. And I guess kill me.

But what happened was he hid me. We had one of these tubs with the feet. And he hid me underneath the tub. And I remember them coming and he was trying to tell them-- he was being interrogated.

And they wanted to know where I was. And he wouldn't tell them. So they knocked out all his teeth. They started beating him. And then I don't remember too much after that.

You stayed under the bathtub?

For a while, yeah. And then my dad, he knew one of the doctors in this place where they kept, I guess people with TB. And he put me in there until the end of the war.

And the Germans never knew that you were there?

No. He was able to keep it a secret that he had hid me in that place. And I'm not quite sure, but I don't understand quite why they kept a TB-like sanitarium around.

Were there Jewish people in the sanitarium?

Yes, I imagine so. Because the doctor was Jewish. Yeah. And so he kept me in there until the end of the war, until the liberation, till the Russians came.

Did you see your father after you were put in there at all until the liberation?

Not that I remember, no. I remember then after the war, after the liberation, we were still in the camp.

Right.

We still stayed there. And I remember my two sisters coming back. And my dad trying to give me a bath.

And he put me in this pan, like. And I was so naughty, I just kept tossing, throwing all the water out. And he was just so angry, you know.

I mean, he was typically German. He never was involved in child care. And then suddenly, he was left with a four-year-old. He just didn't know what to do with me, you know?

What happened when you were staying at the TB sanatorium?

Do you remember anything of being there at all?

I just stayed there. I guess they considered me as part of the patients.

Can you remember anything, any day there. Can you see yourself there at all?

No recollection, whatsoever. I just have-- certain things stick very clearly in my mind, like our room, and the place where we lived, and then a few incidences. Other things is just what my family told me because I was so young.

Another thing is they had a little pond on the other side of the fence. And I would sneak away. And one day I almost drowned. And then this man came and he just sort of picked me up and he put me on his shoulders. And he said, well, you don't know how to swim. I'll swim with you.

And he did that for a while. And then I would go back the next day. And here he was, again.

And he was German because I talked to him in German. And then he'd put me on his shoulders again and he'd swim with me. And then I'd sneak back under the fence again and go back home.

And one day I told him, I said, I have a sister at home. Because this was directly after the war, my two sisters came back. And I said, well, I have a sister. Why don't you come and meet her?

So he did. And they've been married 47 years. I think they got married in '46.

Oh, for heaven's sake.

This man turned out to be my brother-in-law.

Was he Jewish or German?

Yeah.

He was Jewish?

He was Jewish. And he was just there, too, because he had been a prisoner, you know, and then was brought back.

Where was he?

He was in Terezin.

Oh, I see. OK. So you don't remember anything of the years, actually, until you were over five years old?

About 5, 4, like that.

And when you were in the sanatorium. Can you remember the first time you saw your father after the war? Or what was the first memory you have after that?

My main memory was of the Russians coming in.

What do you remember about that?

And how kind they were.

What happened?

They gave us food. And it was my first taste of home fries, or fried potatoes. And to this day, that's my favorite. It's got to be my favorite food, you know? I seem to never be able to have enough of that.

You were saying that you were always hungry in the camp.

We just never had enough food.

What was your usual food for the day in the camp?

I don't remember.

Your only feeling is just of being--

Just always hungry. I guess, especially towards the end, they didn't have very much. And I remember the smells, the smell of-- see, they built crematoriums right outside the camp [AUDIO OUT]

OK. So you were talking about building crematoriums.

Yeah, they had built crematoriums there. And I do have a recollection of an aunt and an uncle. And my aunt was holding a baby. And they were standing in line.

And I remember they were crying. And my uncle, he had reddish hair. And then walking in this line towards the showers. And that's all I ever saw them. And they must have died, too, because they were not there after the war.

Did your father talk to you about the extermination camps at all, or what would happen outside of Theresienstadt?

No, no, no, not at all. Because And most of the information, I really didn't get from him. It was more my aunts who helped fill me in.

Because I did have three aunts who were left alive after the war. And they're my mother's side. And one was also in the camp. And she returned. And she sort of took over the care of--

Which camp was she in?

She was in Theresienstadt also.

And did you see her while you were in the camp, do you know?

I only remember her afterwards.

So you really don't have too much memory of being in the TB sanatorium. But when the Russians came, could you tell us a little bit about what happened there?

Well, like I said, they were very, very kind to us and just gave us food. And I guess started the process of trying to get us back to where we needed to go.

Do you remember who was taking care of you when you were in the sanatorium? Do you remember any person that you were with?

No one in particular, no.

Do you remember what you did during the day?

Just played. I don't know what, whatever a four-year-old does. We just played. And like I said, most of my recollections are kind of spotty.

Yeah, that's usually what happens at those ages. And then after the Russians came, do you remember whether they came into the building to get you, or how you knew who they were, or did you go out?

I just remember them marching in, seeing a lot of soldiers, that they didn't speak German.

Did you know that they weren't German, that they were there to help you?

Yeah. Because they were kind. They were totally different than the German soldiers were. I was, I guess, pretty much afraid of them.

You were afraid? How do you remember being afraid of the German soldiers?

Well, for one, I was being told don't go near them. And then I don't know whether they warned me or my folks warned me, or what. It's just, I guess, part of the feeling in the camp.

And when the Russian soldiers came in, where were the Germans at that time? Do you remember seeing German soldiers around, too?

No. I didn't remember seeing them.

They were just gone and then the Russians were there. You don't remember a time in between when they weren't?

No. And I was told that, of course, there were lots of atrocities that occurred. And how the Russians treated the German soldiers. But I didn't witness any of that.

And what about your father?

Did you see your father first or your aunt first? Or who did you see after?

Well, I went back to live with my dad, back into that room.

Into the same room?

After the liberation. Because we stayed there for a while.

OK. So your father came to get you, probably.

Mhm.

And then my aunt came. And then my sisters came back. And I remember someone coming, this girl coming to the door and saying that she had seen my sister Eva on a train. And that everyone was sort of exterminated on that train.

So Eva--

So my dad said in the paper that my sister died in Auschwitz. But we really don't have any proof of that.

But she never came back?

She never came back.

And your other two sisters?

They just came back.

Did they ever see her at Auschwitz? Did they see her anywhere?

They never said anything about it.

And did your sisters talk about their experiences in Auschwitz?

My oldest sister has refused to talk, totally. She won't even talk to her children about it or anything. My other sister has talked about it. She was 12 at the time. And she talked about her experience.

The two of them were healthy and stayed together. And they were put in a work camp in Auschwitz. There's Elisa. And that's why they stayed alive.

And they actually were sent to Auschwitz just towards the end, because that was part of the final solution to get--

I see.

--they knew the war was ending, was going badly, so they were trying to eliminate as many people as they could.

And how did your sisters get back from Auschwitz, your two sisters? Did they come back together?

Came back to Theresienstadt together. They stayed in Auschwitz together.

And how did they know to get back to Theresienstadt?

Because they had lived there before with us.

So did they tell you why they went back?

Well, because they knew we were there. We were either there or no longer alive. So that was the place to come back to.

And then what happened when they came back? Do you remember that?

We went back to Berlin.

How long? You said you had stayed in Theresienstadt--

Until we were able to-- I guess, transportation or whatever to get back to Berlin.

Was there a displaced person status there?

I don't know. What do you mean by displaced?

Did they turn it into a displaced persons camp?

Right, right. Because a lot of people were coming back, and whoever was alive still in the camp, and from the surrounding areas, people were coming back. And I think my dad got kind of busy with that and trying to find people, get their homes back, find their relatives, and so on.

Because after we came back to Berlin, that was his primary duties, working with the Red Cross to get people back with their families and back to their homes, and so on.

Do you remember about how long you stayed in Theresienstadt after your sisters came back?

It was, I think, quite a while.

Months?

A couple of months, like that, two or three months.

And what did you do during that period of time there?

I just played.

You still played. Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

I just played and found my brother-in-law.

And then do you remember any decision or discussion about going back to Berlin?

There was never-- not with me. And I'm sure since we were from Berlin and this is where my dad felt he had his home, or thought if there was anything left of it, he wanted to get back. Yeah.

Do you remember having any sort of a religious life at all? Since your father was a cantor, was the Cantor of Berlin?

Not in the camp, no. But afterwards, definitely.

Do you want to talk a little bit about what happened when you went back to Berlin?

OK. I remember the three of us-- four of us-- well, no, it wasn't even the four of us. Because my sister got married soon afterwards. And my brother-in-law had a visa to come to the United States. So they went. They left in '46.

And then it was just my sister, my father, and I, my sister Erica. We lived in Berlin. And then my dad worked, I remember, in this big building. The top was totally bombed out. And he just worked there, trying to get people back

together again.

And did you live with your father at that time?

I lived with my father at that time. And then he met this lady and they got married. And she had a daughter by a previous marriage. She was a widow. And then things got kind of bad.

Why is that?

Really bad.

[LAUGHS]

Well, you've heard of Hansel and Gretel? She was the original Wicked Witch of the West. Things were kind of tight after the war, as far as food and everything. And she felt that only her daughter counted. And so my sister and I ended up in an orphanage.

Was this a Jewish person?

Yeah. And we lived there for quite a long time, quite a few years. My dad would come to visit. And he was also a Hebrew teacher. And he would teach there.

And I would see him periodically. But we had to live there. And sometimes on weekends, I would go home.

How old were you when you went into the orphanage?

About six.

And you went to school there?

I went to school there. And I just lived there with a whole bunch of kids. It was a Jewish orphanage.

And there were children not just from Germany? Or they were all--

It was mostly all Germans.

All German-Jewish children. And then do you know what happened after that? Can you remember some of the--

Well, like I said, I stayed there. And on weekends, I sometimes went home. But it was kind of a really bad experience at home because my stepmother really didn't like us. And then after a while, my sister Erica just refused to come home there. She stayed away totally.

Did you have any relations with any of the German people there at the time?

Like which ones?

Did you know any of the German people in the community in Berlin?

No, because I stayed mostly in the orphanage. I went to a public school and all that.

Were there German children there with you?

Uh huh.

Did you have any problems? Or what kind of an existence was that there?

No, it was just regular school. And afterwards, we'd have to come back to the orphanage and study. We'd have both religious study and our regular, more secular studies. And we had someone that would oversee that we spend so many hours doing our homework and all that. And that was about it.

So you didn't feel any different being Jewish when you were back in school in those days?

No. Not that I remember. I just know it was kind of rough, because we had to spend so much time. We couldn't play. And if we did have some free time, it was help with the gardening. And we had chickens there. And we had to clean the chicken coops and all that kind of stuff, so no free time.

And so what happened when you left the orphanage? Or what brought about the leaving from the orphanage?

Well, they were kind of odd circumstances. My dad and his wife didn't get along that well. And then my stepsister one time did something. My dad got kind of angry. So he slapped her.

And my stepmother got so upset that he had slapped her daughter, she took a beer glass. So I remember I was home that weekend. She took a beer glass, and she smashed it across his head, cut his jugular.

And I remember him bleeding and all the towels--

Oh, no.

--just full of blood. And there was a couple of policemen that lived in the building we were in. And so I remember them rushing him to the hospital. So afterwards, they got a divorce.

Had your stepmother been in a camp also?

I don't think so. I really don't think so, even though she was Jewish. I don't know. I really don't know.

But then a strange thing happened. When we got ready to come to the United States, he remarried her. And we came to the United States. And he divorced her again. I don't know.

Well, how did you leave the orphanage? What happened at that period of time?

Well, after he got hurt and divorced, then he took me back out of the orphanage. And I went to live with him.

About how old were you at that time?

Maybe about nine.

So you had been in the orphanage about three years, then?

Right, about that. Yeah.

And do you remember-- oh, go ahead.

No, go ahead.

You left to go to the United States when you were 11. Do you remember what happened in those two years between the years you were 9 to 11?

Well, I stayed with him. And we lived together in this apartment. And it was a really good time for me because I

continued my religious studies. Because he was always after us to learn.

And I remember he had this huge, huge Bible which was too big to put on a table or anything. We had it on the floor, on the carpet. And it was a beautiful Bible.

And every day, he would read to me. And we would go through the pictures. And it was just a really nice time to spend with him. And it was that way until we came to the United States.

And do you remember how you got to the United States?

Well, we took a boat.

I mean, before that?

It was kind of interesting. OK. Unlike today, where you hop a plane as an immigrant and come over, we had a time, once we found out we were coming, we had our visa, we had an orientation time. It was spent in another camp. And we stayed in Bremen.

And we lived there for a while. I think it was a couple of months or so, during which time we learned about the US-American culture. And we got indoctrinated with American food and American music, lots of Ella Fitzgerald and lots of Louis Armstrong and country and Western music, and lots of hot dogs and hamburgers. And we were told things, like, don't put your hand under your seat because there's gum. Americans chew a lot of gum and they always put their gum underneath the seats, and things like that.

So we stayed there for two months, approximately two months, where they checked us as far as our health and I guess tried to teach us a little English, unsuccessful where I was concerned, and my dad, too. And then we came to the United States.

We had a ship. We were on this horrible, horrible troop transport ship. It was all rusty. And we were segregated, all the women in one part and all the men in another part. And we got together for meals, but that's it. And I remember everybody was so sick all the time. We had such terrible weather. And everybody stayed-- my stepmother and her daughter, they stayed in the bunk. And they were constantly sick and throwing up.

And not me, I wouldn't stay down there. It smelled bad and everything. So I was always up top side and almost got washed away by the waves. But I remember once, I don't know who it was, but somebody scared me a little bit.

He said, well, this ship is so old. It had been sunk during the world war. And we have brought it back up again. That's why it's such a rusty old tub. And during the trip, they were constantly scraping and cleaning. And it was so rough that I remember even the captain was sick.

Wow, the captain. I've never heard of that.

Well, unless he was just one of the officers or something. But well, I remember seeing him lying over the side and being sick. It was just awful.

And your sister Erica was with you, too.

No, no, no.

She went earlier. She came in November of 1950.

And where did she go?

She also went to Boston. Because she stayed with my sister.

OK. And then when you arrived in--

New York.

Then what happened?

We took a train, I remember. And then my sister and her husband met us in Boston.

So what about Ellis Island?

There was no Ellis Island. No.

What happened?

And I talked to my sisters just recently. And they said they were not at Ellis Island also. So they must have closed it down. Because no one that I know of arrived and landed there.

What's your first memory of New York? Tall buildings, enormous buildings, and we didn't stay there long. It was just a few hours. And then we went on to Boston.

And I remember my brother-in-law and my sister meeting us in this black old, old Buick. I think it was about a 1936 car or something. It was kind of neat, with a running board. And it was an interesting car. And we lived with them. We stayed with them.

How did you feel about leaving Berlin, when you left?

I was a little bit afraid to come. Because I didn't know the language, even though they tried to teach it to us. And everything was so strange. But on the other hand, I knew my sisters were in the United States, so I really wanted to come.

And did you find that you could learn English when you got here? Was there a problem?

I'm not that easy in learning languages, at least as I seem to get older, I seem to have a harder time. And it took me about a year to learn English well.

That's not too bad, I would say.

But I remember-- well, they put me back in school. I was, like, 11 years old and here they put me back into second grade.

And how long did you stay there?

I stayed there-- let's see. I came in May, just a couple of months.

That's what I would have thought, yeah.

Yeah. And then I went on to third grade, stayed a half a year. In fourth grade, half a year, fifth grade, half a year, and sixth grade, half a year. Because I had been going to school in Germany. I went up to the fourth grade, which was way higher in equivalent as far as the languages and math and stuff. I was way ahead.

And what did you think of the American schools?

It was good to play. I was never much of interested in studies. I mean, it was just because I knew most of the things.

And I was too busy just having a good time, playing.

What did your father do when he got to Boston?

OK, at first, it was kind of sad. They tried to place us. They had immigration societies that really helped you out and taught you, again, try to teach you the culture and teach you how to live in the United States.

And they placed my father who, mind you, was a cantor and very, very extremely proud man, and they placed him in a shoe factory. And so he was so upset, he threatened to go back.

What was he doing in the shoe factory?

I guess working, making shoes. And he just couldn't handle it. And so he was ready to go back. And then, luckily--