

So how long did you work there?

When it comes to it, it lasted for three years.

Now, that would have put you at about what, 16, 17, 18?

17.

17.

Between 17 and 18.

I see.

OK?

OK. But then there was a situation that my parents still at the store at the time, my mother had to work. And so they hired a maid. But that was normal under Germany. Anybody who had store or whatever had a live-in maid that did the housework.

But then they had put out a law. Jewish people could not get help under the age of 50. I don't know if it was exactly, but this age. Otherwise, they couldn't get help.

They couldn't get help.

Maids.

OK. And with that, the Jewish people couldn't have any maids at all?

They could have maids but over a certain age.

Over a certain age, right.

Maid of a certain age.

Could they have German maids?

Yes.

Non-Jewish?

Yes.

They could at that point.

They could. But mostly, these were women in their 50s or in 60s. They were not good as a help. And so after I was graduated, OK.

I worked for a little while at another company. And then seeing my mother, who had to be in the store, she couldn't do everything-- the house, food, and so on, and being in the store from the morning at 7:00 till 8:00 at night with a two-hour break.

And so I said OK, I'll stay home. Because what we had, the maid we had, I think she would have been in her 50s. She

didn't do anything. That left my-- people-- were the other ones did more. She didn't.

My mother had to do to the housework, really. So and then I said, OK, I'll stay at home. That is what made the hardship for if you had a business of your own or whatever, if you needed house help, because German they couldn't work, couldn't be within a Jewish household.

We didn't know it. If they opened, it's almost like today's situation. When they opened the bar that said, the Jew touched me. He wouldn't get so through it. He would be a goner.

So he would just be taken.

Oh, my. So that was things that were going on in the private life. Then of course, what shall I say? You could not, as a Jew, go into a cafe, into a restaurant. There were signs of the law, no Jews wanted.

And of course, you could look like anybody else. But if you felt it-- I would never, never have gone into any of those places. You couldn't go to the theater. That's it. I was a teenager. I couldn't. But you wanted to see the movies, of course. There were certain cubbies that we had, but only to these certain cubbies you could.

You mean a section of the theater?

Yeah, no. No, excuse me, the movie, oh, what sat in our sections. We sat where we wanted. But they hate us. You knew you were not wanted. We really didn't know at that point. They didn't know. It's hurting for a teenager, for young people, this kind of thing.

But on the way, you never-- I went at some time with my boyfriend, who looked, supposedly, like a Jew-- thick, curly hair. No hook nose, nothing of that kind of features, but he had thick, curly hair.

I read this as boring for a long time. I brought him home. I was sure I would come home. And nobody would turn me in, you see, because of my looks. This boy wasn't safe and boring at all. His brother, he was the young one. And so the brother was older.

He ran into a place that he knew. But they had the [INAUDIBLE]. They wouldn't let him pass. And since I took him, it was-- I wished I would remember the name now of the house where they took all the Jewish people. They took them into there. And they kept him for about, in this case, only a couple or three days.

He got for breakfast what they called a hot breakfast. That man didn't-- he didn't eat it. They called it a hot breakfast. And when it came time to be home, we were told not to mention that. He looked terrible. There were rats all over and so on from this so-called hot breakfast.

And he had a non-Jewish girlfriend, with whom he went a long time. And he was told, if you see her, they better tell us that he knew her. So that was one case. I know that he saw.

And he did nothing? He just--

Nothing. He was walking down the street.

--he was just walking down the street. And these guys attacked him. They cut his way off that he couldn't pass them. Yeah. And they took him then to the-- I wish I could remember the name of the building where they took all the Jews. It's a big, everybody knows.

Myself, my boyfriend, one day, we went over the Nuremberger Platz. That was a theatre, used to be the theatre. It had become the Horst Wessel house. You heard the name Horst Wessel? It was an eagle, it was [INAUDIBLE]. And that's it. It was picked in the beginning. So that was an eagle. So that was named after him.

So my boyfriend and I, we walked across there. Suddenly, we hear, and called. His name was Leo. And he looked what's happening, but kind of standing out there, in that building. And he caught him.

As I said, it was my looks. I was 17 at that time. So he called him. He knew whom he called. They were friends before. What is that girl? If you ever see this girl with me, I don't know if my friends know she's Jewish. I was just standing on the side.

No, she is not. Yes, she is. So he caught me. He has to ask me, what are you? I said right away, Jewish. No, you're not. I said yes. And the only piece of ID I had with me was a card from the U-Bahn. That means the streetcars, now, up and down, streetcar [INAUDIBLE].

My name is Cohn-- C-O-H-N. People that used to change were Jewish. And they changed over way back. There was this person [INAUDIBLE]. See that their names were Jewish. That was my name. No, you are not Jewish. So you've got the warning. If you ever pass by there again, sees out there together again, he is a goner.

I was Jewish. So I came home. I told my father about it. We went to the police station that I need an ID. I need a passport. That was the only ID I could get. It was OK. Certainly, he knew what.

We went to the police station. Of course, my brother, we were well-known there. My father lived there. He moved in in 1905. And that's what we told him. Said, do you know? My father said, I got that passport over there. Said, do you know what you're doing?

Now, I could leave any time. But I said, yes, I know what I'm doing. But I had to have something. And I did. At that time, it was still on my name only. Later on, our passports-- every woman was named Sarah in it-- Sarah. Every man got the name Israel in his passport.

As a first name?

It is your name. It was the ID that you were Jewish. But the irony, of course, was my husband. His name, at that time-- my husband's name-- later husband, OK, his name was Israel.

So he was Israel Israel?

So he was Israel Israel.

Yes, he got his name in that. The was with the passports. So they tried to also-- and you were attacked. You never did know where you could be attacked.

Now, we're up to what year here, approximately?

I was 17. The was about '34, about '33, '34. I was still an apprentice.

So you were saying that just going down the street, you never knew if you were safe. If you look what they thought looked Jewish, you weren't safe.

But you said that you had had no incidents yourself because people did not look at you and see a Jew?

Yes.

So you were protected somewhat.

I was protected by my looks. I was fair-eyed, fair eyes. I had the very straight features.

What about your brothers? Did they experience any incidents?

My oldest was, the one that died in Poland, in Auschwitz, he looked a lot like me, only that he was brown haired. But he wouldn't be taken as a Jew, either. The other one had a small, narrow face, but also not very Jewish features. My mother was not very Jewish. OK, my father had black hair, but also not the features that you were then supposed to have as a Jew.

You were supposed to have, huh? The stereotypes.

Yes. Well, I married that boy. When we went over the Brenner Pass from Germany over the Brenner Pass to Italy, to Genoa. Then we went up to the [INAUDIBLE]. I think that was the Crystal Night, that day.

When we came, it was train there, over the Italian train, where there were a lot of people from Italy-- fascists, you know, that came to Germany to work. OK, it's true. And they went home for the [INAUDIBLE] you get or whatever. And that was a full train ride. Yes, there were only Italian men. And these Italian men, my husband-- then he wasn't my husband-- he was looking just like them.

He looked just like them.

Just like them.

And what was your first husband's name?

[? Neil ?] Tsinski

Tsinski?

Yeah. T-S-I-N-S-K-I. But he exactly like all the Italians on the train. It startled me. It startled me. I have seen so many with a SS sign on them. You could have made a dozen Jews out of them, Italians.

And they looked Jewish, but they were SS officers?

Found that out. I think it was when in our neighborhood was the nice ice cream store. In Germany, it used to be in the summer, it's an ice cream store, in the winter, it's a [? poultry ?] store. It was that they, they had the ice cream stores. They had good ice cream. And they were-- the Italians made good ice cream. That was Italian ice cream and so on at that store.

Now, I was always sent to that store for my brother's boss because I got double portions. I don't know why they liked me. I got double portions. So after this, the first was, it was when I was about seven years old, the same time about, now, there were two partners.

One, you could have made a dozen Jews out of him, the features. The features the coloring, everything, he was a Bavarian. The other one had features like I would have said.

But my husband, later husband not pronounced except the coloring, red hair. That was it. And of course, I'd been already with my husband then. And suddenly, that store had [? pets, ?] SS [? pets ?] in there, I don't know what else, and also, SS signs.

And we weren't too familiar with that. I was not familiar at all with the SS sign then. And came my husband with his old friend. And all around him there, they wanted to cut up as a Jew. He was sent home with the SS.

And I, of course, pop out. What was all that in there? And my then friend, he just told me. I wasn't familiar with the SS sign then. And it's tied all over that store, which I grew up in, in that store.

This was in Berlin, this store?

Yes. the ice cream store with them. And of course, I couldn't-- I popped out, you know, what I said here. My boyfriend, poor him. And he went out of the store very clearly. I won't let him.

He served me like always. You know that I had got the extra helping because he knew who I was. There was no question. He knew who I was. After all, I had came to that store when I was a kid. All right. And he knew me. And this wasn't that secret.

Then I thought, well, when we go out, he said, didn't you see? I said, what? He's an SS. That is the symbol if there's a [INAUDIBLE] in front. The stormtroopers only a brown uniform. He's an SS man.

Then it finally turned out his partner was Jewish. So then he was out. And he was one that he would have certainty he's a Jewish partner. Look like a dozen, with all the features that you wanted. He was a Bavarian. It's how Bavarians looked like back then. That's all.

Of course, everybody was inundated. And my father said, didn't you see that? It's not worth it. These things could happen to me. People are, they know you, almost every from being a baby.

And then, of course, there were other things you just didn't go into. I must say I would say it this way, personally because of my looks. I was never, ever checked in any way. In my street, nobody would do anything to me.

But the Crystal Night, I told you about that. I was already there. Then I lived in my in-laws' apartment. Of course, it didn't make sense anymore to be taking on your own apartment, furnish it, and so on. They knew. There was plenty of room there.

And suddenly, my father-in-law, he came, Hilde-- I was working on the sewing machine. Hilde, out. Out. What? And then I saw them coming out, a mob.

A mob.

A mob.

How many people?

Oh, I wouldn't know, too many.

Did you know them?

My brother knew them. But I didn't. They knew my brother. No, they came to that apartment But it was not a straight apartment of them. They came because they knew the people that lived there. So get out as I was. Now, I was already-- we had planned already to leave onto the Netherlands about two weeks later.

You're going to leave Germany?

Yeah. It's a matter of fact a couple of days before. My husband and me, we were the first of the family who got their passports. We got a passport if you could get prove that you were leaving. That means you had to have a ticket that you were leaving. Then you were able to get a passport.

And where was your ticket to?

Shanghai.

Shanghai, China. OK.

The only way where you could go was only a ticket. There was no other open door. So we had gotten our passports. I had to bring my purse. We didn't really expect anything.

I was in a very old smock. You know, we wore always the oldest stuff because we had a customs inspection what we could take out, what we would have to pay customs on, and so on, from the whole family.

All the good clothes, everything was laid out, plus a heap of silk stockings that I had-- that I didn't intend to take with me, again, because we used to go-- we were planning to go shopping for clothing to take more stuff with us.

But I laid it out. It was news that I didn't have. And this one, I think-- just we had a packed [INAUDIBLE]. It was a corner apartment, Landsberg-- not Landsberger-- yeah, Landsberger Allee. And that was the point. The back exit was Landsberger Strasse back. I don't-- I'm getting confused now with the name.

But anyway, that was the building, the way that was a corner building. And we went out through the back. My mother-in-law-- me and my mother-in-law obviously went as we were. I'm telling you, my mother-in-law was lost. We didn't know where she was. We called, we called. We didn't know where she was. But we left the building because we had to, all right?

Now, where were you? Was the mob coming up the front?

At the front, into that building. If they were, they fought their way in, I don't know.

So they didn't see you leave?

No.

You got out before they arrived.

Through the back, through the back door. And as I was, whatever finally happened. And I had some money in the apartment. It was from childhood on. My parents always wanted me to have some money on me. You know, in case I-- not much-- if it was a mark, OK, or 50 pfennigs, but I had money with me. I mean, I don't know. Really, I don't know how that went out. But that was OK.

Now, I was ready to work already. I had a lot of work to do before we had to leave, before our date came up. That was on the minds of my parents. And our ship would leave on the 23rd from Italy. So had plenty of time still, OK, I thought.

I had very old house shoes. I had an old, very old smock. But I had a wallet in my purse with my pocket, which was lucky. My brother-in-law didn't take any money with him. So we called a cab.

It drove down to my parents' apartment, where the store used to be. And I told my father-in-law to wait. It's the house there. You know, they have the big, German roads and streets, very big. I said, you wait there. I will see what's going on. I'm safe.

And then here knocked at the door now, my brother and his friend, two 24-year-old boys. They were playing tough. They didn't know anything that's going. They didn't know.

So the first thing I said to my brother's friend, I said, Leo, get home. He was my brother's friend. Leo, get home. Don't you know what's going on? They've vandalized all the stores. And they had a very good leather goods store. And from the store, nothing [INAUDIBLE]. You know, they ran towards the other upper apartment.

It was spiral stairs?

Yeah, into their apartment. They were very well-off. But they were an [INAUDIBLE]. They did that any which way. I said, get home. Just get home. Then where's Papa? My father had asthma. Couldn't believe that wasn't [INAUDIBLE].

So we brought them back. Found my father, said, Papa, that was it.

Then I remembered that in my sewing machine, my father's jewelry and some money was there that had been in safe point at home. But I didn't know. And I had paid-- gotten at home 2/3 of jewelry for the tickets. My father was poor, so he had to sell. And I left that all in my sewing machine. I just--