

This is tape two. And Hilde is talking about Crystal Night, and her leaving her apartment, and rushing over to her own home, her first home with her parents. And her father is sick in bed.

Right. So I told my father, Papa, I forgot. They sent the money but meant the money to pay for the tickets as soon as I got the passport. I mean, they had paid money down as a proof. But they wouldn't pay it before they got the passports.

So I told my father, I said, Papa, I forgot. He said, never mind, very cold. He knew it, I was upset as with him. He told me later, when I was white as like a sheet. Then I asked, where's Mama? They didn't have any idea.

And I asked, where's Mama? She's over at the baker. So with women, we didn't know about it. He got my mother over home to the apartment. Then the question-- what do we do? They were still upon the store. If there would be danger, who knows?

So I decided to go upstairs in our house. Now, you have to remember, my parents lived there since 1905. And they panicked. So I mean, at this first one woman, she was a widow with a daughter. We were always very, very, very good friends, even if she was much older than I. We were very good friends.

So I went to her then. I said, listen, this and this is going on. Can I bring my parents up? No, they did not give parents a store. Can I bring my parents up? No, I'm afraid. Safety-- it was risky business, very risky business.

So I went to another. It was a mother and son, which also knew my parents from that time that they moved in and went up there. And I said, so-and-so, this is the situation. Can I bring my parents up?

Bring them up, you know, it can be that you are stuck with them for weeks? Bring them up. You had this and this. They I said, you know how risky it is. Bring them up.

So I went downstairs. I brought them up there. I don't know what happened after that. If the store was demolished or anything, I don't know. But they went later on back down to the apartment.

And my passport, later on, in the other apartment-- now, where are the passports? I didn't take them with me either. They were in my purse, both. Where are my passports? I came back to the apartment.

Now, my husband had gone to the military section because he was of the military service age that he had to sign to be signed up anyhow, Jew or non-Jew. So he had to give them notice that he was leaving. So he wasn't in the apartment by that time.

Only when he came back, he didn't have any idea what had gone on. But they were front steps. Now, that was in a mezzanine apartment. Was a mezzanine apartment. And that was the [INAUDIBLE]. Was a mezzanine apartment.

He saw on the steps my ironing, my iron. It had a green handle. And he knew that was mine. So he didn't call me into there because that could have been instant death.

So he knew that they had ransacked.

There was something.

Something wasn't right.

Right.

And that was smart.

And so he went downstairs into the cigar store, where we had blitzed a lot, spent a lot of time with his people. But when

I called them from my parents' house, when I called them, it said, I can't go back there now. You don't know of anything. They didn't give us even an answer. They were afraid people there at that if they don't talk to us, even for this, to say that they are still there or what. You know.

OK. So my ex-husband, he saw that thing in there. He was smart enough that he kept, walked past. And then he went to the cigar store. And they had been gone already to raid the store. And then when I came back with my brother-in-law. And then we went into that store. Yes, they are gone. So we went upstairs.

I told you, everything was out. The customers had spent. And there was a difference between me and my in-laws. They would put much value on-- what should I say? I don't think. What should I say?

It was, to me, important that my husband was clothed, new clothes, everything-- new shoes, new suits, everything. Do you think I still found that? All [? cut, ?] all gone. Even the shoes, they tore apart so that they couldn't use them. I don't know what else. I didn't even look in there.

They tore shoes up that were there?

Yeah.

So that they couldn't be used?

Yeah. They took the new shoes away. They stole the new clothes.

And damaged everything else.

Because in that part of the apartment that we used still had all the new clothes, ready to leave. But that wasn't so important. See, that was a mess. They'd thrown everything together, and of course, passed through it all.

Where is my purse? Because I wasn't getting-- he wouldn't give me my purse. I had my passport. I found it under the-- I think on that couch, just tossed on that. They looked through it.

My parents, my sewing machine. I had a small home where I only worked. I had a wardrobe in there, a sewing machine by the window, a wardrobe, and a table just for working and private customers. That's what it was. And they had toppled the wardrobe across the room. So I didn't want to go through it. So that's it.

The same evening, then we had to go and buy luggage because we weren't prepared already. It was something that was after the customs inspection, after you got your passport to buy because otherwise, you didn't know.

So my husband took a cab to buy some luggage. And then the taxi driver said, hey, I'm not driving this way. I drive the safe way. A longer way, but a safe way. So there were people that were using the headlights.

And then in meantime, I had found the passports. So this I had. I didn't even look for anything else. That was the main thing that we had.

But you went to your sewing machine, right? And you got out the--

That was there, where my parents' stuff was. My personal stuff, I was only 20 years old, what did I have already?

I mean, you had some jewelry. What you usually, as a young girl, some own [INAUDIBLE]. I never put value on jewelry or furs, or things like that because I was still too young for that. Then I'd had it. You wouldn't dress that [? hiding, ?] at 14 into jewelry, and furs, and so on. You didn't do that. But my parents, they always told me, it was not.

So did you rescue your parents?

I didn't see my parents before I left. No. I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know. I just hoped that they're safe. I couldn't reach them. And hoped that they were safe enough that they'll survive.

And then we left. I packed, tossed just in what everyone has, including [INAUDIBLE] stockings, the ones were there damp [INAUDIBLE] but they are silk stockings. And how good are silk stockings once they are worn any which way?

So my sister-- oh, because on the other side, where we went out, there was my brother-in-law, my sister-in-law, that means my husband's brothers, they lived across the street. And of course, we went out right away. And they weren't there. They didn't know anything either. Had no warning. That was around the [INAUDIBLE]. That was all. Actually, was one of them. [INAUDIBLE], really.

And we went up there. And then we walked out . And of course, as I told you, I brought old stuff, my stockings and all, so my sister-in-law would be of these certain stockings.

And then, of course, we packed whatever we had. We had a piece of luggage for one, each for one of us. I don't know. It was not so difficult. The important thing was to have the papers to get out.

So now, at this point, was your parents jewels and the little bit of money still in the sewing machine?

Yes, it was still in the sewing machine.

OK. So you had already--

But they got it then from my in-laws because it was only my husband and me who could leave.

I see. So then the in-laws came back to the apartment eventually?

They did, yes.

OK.

My mother-in-law had gone out to another apartment. But she didn't say, hey, come on. Had do be-- I mean, you know, she just vanished. I think that we had [INAUDIBLE]. She had in-- it was a big building. And she was gone. Then we came back my brother in-law to the apartment, finding a mess. All of it, all was vandalized. Was a big apartment.

OK.

All vandalized. She was -- He had found her. He had found her, my brother-in-law had found her there. And as I said, so we tried to pack up whatever was possible. The family decided, you have the passports. You go today. You go as you are, but you go.

The main thing was I found the passports. I didn't look for anything, for anything, nothing-- my clothes, of course, what I needed, I packed. What I could pack. I hadn't done one personal thing for me because for the plan --

I had about two weeks. And I figured that I had about more than a week to work on my clothes, including my mother's. My mother didn't like it. I hadn't made anything. So we packed, went to the station. What we could take with us was 10 marks per person, no more.

So now, you were leaving the country the same day with your parents?

Without my parents.

Without your parents, only you and your husband?

Only my husband and me. We were the ones of the family who had the passports.

I see.

Without passport, you couldn't leave.

So that night, you now, you got on a train?

Yes.

And you went to Italy?

Right. That night, the funny part is-- what I never understand today-- I never was much for perfume. But on the train, on the railroad station in Berlin, I bought a little bottle of perfume, lily of the valley. I love lily of the valley. I bought that bottle of perfume. Maybe I had a few extra marks, which I couldn't bring out, something like that.

Anyway, we left. Then we came to Munich. The Munich railroad station was swarming with soldiers. I do believe we were the only ones from Berlin at least later on, when we came to the Italian side. We were the only Jews.

So I told my husband, I said, you sit in the corner I sat by the window. If anybody looked at me, I wasn't afraid. But if they looked in to my husband, not anybody could tell, the people.

All right, we made it from Munich to the Brenner Pass. The Brenner Pass, we were checked, separated and checked. I had to undress. Yes, undress, totally undress, except the only thing that I kept on was bra, you know the old-fashioned bras, corset-like? That's the only thing the woman let me keep on.

And then she left me alone for maybe 20 minutes. I am 100% sure she watched me. Oh, I was watched Let's say it this way. Because people-- but you could-- I mean, other things, you could-- people tried to hide things in their private. And then you were --

But I didn't have anything on me. So I told her, as a matter of fact, I told her, I can't have that off. The woman. Well, it's not necessary, you know, because then in your corset, you can exit. It's fine. That's it. I didn't have anything on me, only what I normally wear. but I didn't really know, a ring.

It was about the last month that you could still take some jewelry with you. But you had to have the paper and permission to take this jewelry. But at that time, whatever I had on, if it were earrings or what.

So when we came to, as I said, the Brenner Pass, they also did the same thing with my husband, who did the same thing. So after we did that, they told us we can get dressed. Then one of the border police pulled us over to the other side, to the Italian side.

And he showed us which train we should go on this. He was beastly gray. You know, you have the feeling. He told us, don't come back. But you can put it this way or that way. Don't come back.

And I finally, don't come back. We knew if we would go back there, we're dead. OK. And then he told us what trains to take, not to go anywhere else, not by accident cross the line because it was almost the same building like probably [INAUDIBLE]. You couldn't dare be there, accidentally go that way.

Then my husband offered him a cigarette. And he said, uh-uh, you don't know when you can buy cigarettes here. We had \$4.20. That was 10 marks. It was in the currency, you know. He said, you don't know when you can buy cigarettes, a decent guy

That's the way he handled himself. The I said, I told you that we came into the train. I think we had to wait two or three hours, something like that. And then we came into the train with all the Italians I know.

And we could just sit in between them. We had to go. You know, nobody would look at us. But then we came to Genoa. In the train, the Italians we talked together. I was the only woman in the train in that section. And what for?

And they said, well, where do you go, to Genoa? Don't get out on the first station. It's not safe. And they know. We talked. And we talked about this money situation. We told them, we have only 10 marks with us.

Get out on the first station. They treated us as rats. Get out on the first station. They couldn't steal anything from us, right? It was funny, that. Then we stayed in Genoa till the train stopped. My parents came. My brother came.

So that happened within two weeks, basically--

Yeah.

--that your parents joined you. And your youngest brother joined you.

Yes.

And Herman was already in Amsterdam?

He was in Amsterdam.

I see. OK, yeah.

He felt safe.

He felt safe.

Yes. Until we got to the [INAUDIBLE]. We were there from 1933 to '41. And he was picked back. As a matter of fact, he wanted me to come over to Holland. But I was engaged. And I said, what is about? Well, no one could come because you need to be with a permit. And I said, well, every three months. And he said no.

And lucky thing was I didn't sit or eat. But we never talked about it. He didn't know that my ex-husband-- now, my ex-husband-- he was a tailor. He went through the apprenticeship.

You know, like you had to have a profession. He never worked as a tailor. So that's why we did not talk about it. So if my brother would have heard he was a tailor, he could work too in Holland without permission because that was the main export that you needed in Holland.

It's a good thing you didn't go there.

Yeah. That was my life saving thing. That saved my life, really. Sometimes, it's harmony.

When you don't know, you can't predict. And the people-- you said earlier that the Jewish people, even around, just were not thinking of how bad things were going to get. They almost couldn't believe it kind of thing. Would you talk a little bit more about that?

Well, the German people and the German Jews, we would say we are German Jews. We didn't say we are Jews. We were German from generations. only then suddenly-- see, they couldn't touch, at that time, they couldn't touch anybody that had come to Germany that was naturalized.

They kept us at a certain-- from wherever they came. They couldn't touch them at the time. I told you about the friend of my brother's who they're playing card and they were home. His parents were Hungarian. The only one who was naturalized was the son. So he was the one at the moment who was in danger. He was a [INAUDIBLE] man.

So they could persecute their own citizens, but they couldn't persecute the citizens of other countries?

Yeah. Of course, later on, when they went into Holland and everywhere, then of course, nobody was safe. Nobody.

It escalated--

Yeah.

--as the laws fell away. But the first ones were the Germans. And people didn't know. Yes, I would say. It was strange. People today, they were living there. Tomorrow, they were gone, picked up.

Didn't people eventually start to believe it was as bad as it was when they saw these pickups going on? Or could they just not accept it? Or what do you think was going on?

They didn't dare to open their mouths. They didn't dare.

Now, you're speaking of the non-Jewish Germans?

Right.

OK. But the Jews themselves, weren't they finally aware enough that you would finally try to leave?

Oh, yes. Yes.

The Jews knew how bad it was getting.

We knew there were people picked up. You knew that they never came home because after all, people lived in the apartments and whatever, you know. They didn't know at first that they're going on trip. They didn't know what.

But then, of course, the people were getting-- then they were picked up in the middle of the night and things like that. Yes. The people, anybody who had a little bit of brain said, hey, what's going on? But they didn't dare to open their mouths.

I was about 16. It was in the next house. A couple, the man was a fireman. They loved children. They loved my husband, the woman especially. She loved my partner.

And we had what was like over the store our apartment, was mezzanine OK, there was a window, a deep window. And my brother would always lay on there and out, you know. And in the morning, when that woman came around, when we were small he would always say, Tante, did you have your coffee already? In child's voice. OK? We're all right. She loved him.

So when I was 16, I was young then. And one day, she had him pulled him into her house. And said to him, I can't talk to you anymore, tears in her eyes. I can't talk to you anymore. He was a fireman.

But see, if she was seen talking to us, it meant already alarm. But she told me, she asked him not to come in, you know, around the corner when she did see me or what, with tears in her eyes.

And my friend, girlfriend, and we were like sisters. We were about the same age. She was about not quite a year younger than I. We were like sisters from birth, of course. And when I went to Shanghai, I met her sister. She was a late baby. And her sister lived in our building.

And I saw her on the street. And it was really-- I knew that I was leaving. And I said, Frieda? I'm going on to Shanghai. She said, OK. Goodbye. I hope everything is good, turned around, and I told her, uh-uh. I pulled her by the arm, the

tears were just streaming down the face.

Her face.

But I was--