

Now, what were you saying about the Displaced Person Quota?

The displaced-- it was-- the so-called DP quota was thrown to Shanghai. It was not used from the German quota. The German quota was always big during the war, but that didn't happen Jews let through to Shanghai.

The reason was Mao Tse Tung was communist, and the Americans tried to get everybody out. So when we told them that we had a chance to go to Australia, we were German-born, they said, no, you don't. You go to the States, which of course, we did prefer.

And you go to the States. We need the other smaller quotas for the Polish, Hungarian, and so on that have only a very small quota to go to the States that had no way, otherwise to get out, we need to open doors for them. And that's how we came to get on the DP quota, Displaced Person Quota. And I think they got everybody out.

I wanted to ask you, after World War II was over, did China ask you to leave, or did you just-- everybody just wanted to?

No, no, no, no. No, we wanted to. We couldn't have stood that for much longer.

Right. Did a lot of-- did some of the people return to Germany? You said your mother--

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

--returned to Germany.

Oh, yes. There were quite a few people, to my surprise, that went back.

What do you think was their hope or their motivation? Were they trying to connect with family back there, or--

They had their family there. When they came back they got reimbursed. They got settled by German government.

By the new German government?

Yes. And some were so old to go into another country where they don't know the language. There were quite a few that never learned English and too old, so they went back to Germany. Some went by choice because maybe yeah, they came out now with a Swiss bank account. They figured they had money. That may have been out of Germany, but they went back.

Do you know how they did? Did you stay in touch with any people who went back? Did you ever find out, for example, how was it for them when they went back to Germany?

Well, they started them on-- let's say they started a normal life. They were settled in apartments. They got aid from the German government as reimbursement for all they went through and money. And if they get older, they got the Social Security, which they had to-- a birth right to. When you lived in Germany, you had to pay in, and they still paid in, even without that, only a little bit.

The 10 years in Shanghai were counted in. But they should be [INAUDIBLE]. They were counted in. So they had a right to the security.

So they didn't lose their years--

No, that is the-- was [INAUDIBLE]. And people adjusted again, readjusted, let's put it this way. They were-- I had in-laws that survived in Belgium, my husband's sisters. They survived in Belgium, and in-- they went right after the War one couple went to South America. But when the husband died, and then she went back to Germany, she got her social

security.

She was settled in an apartment, and she was very healthy, yet Germany's got this health problem. It's not like here. For sure, they call it social medicine, but it's really not clear. Because if you get sick, you go to the doctor. You will be treated with anything that is possible, even which I-- we almost laughed about. They get sent every year or every second year to a spa for two, three weeks. Can you imagine that here, picked by the government? So they were not-- they weren't too bad off.

Now, you said to me a few weeks ago that your mother could not immigrate with you to the States.

No.

Could you explain that again? Because she wound up splitting off and winding up in Germany, right? And your father died in Shanghai.

That's right. My father died in Shanghai. My mother was German, but she was born in a section that's so-called Posen, Posen or Poznan. That was sometimes German, sometimes Polish. That always-- it was a [INAUDIBLE].

The border changed a lot.

Yeah. And my mother-- my parents or my mother at the time after the First World War-- they stayed with the German side. They were German. They could decide if they wanted to be Polish or German. At that time, the whole family stayed German.

But when it came to come to the States-- because the quota system was, I think, in 1919, after the First World War, that that was settled So Poznan was Polish at that time, after the First World War.

My mother was born there. My father was born in Germany, but they-- in the-- close to Berlin. But because he died, she fell back on her own quota and got put up in the Polish quota, and we couldn't take her out on our tickets because of that. So she fell back on her own quota and got repatriated to Germany, Munich, by the Americans.

She was-- I don't know about the-- what it was. it must have been a very good place for old people. And so that's why she couldn't come with us.

What was her feeling about that at the time? Did she want to return to Munich, or did she want to come with you?

Well, my mother said, if your husband gets the chance to go even when we had the table. She was a good mother. And I remember that I gave my father hell because he hadn't taken her on the sheet-- you know, on his papers.

Years later, he couldn't because he was German and she was Polish after the quota system. That's right. And my father was in Shanghai with us. He could come to the States, too, but not my mother. That was it. And she was repatriated to Munich, Munich has a dialect totally different.

Than Poznan, right.

[INAUDIBLE]

So then she remained there, and she was not doing well in health. It that right? When she went there, wasn't she kind of going to a nursing home when she got there?

It was kind-- must have been kind of nursing home, yes.

Was there any way to bring her over here from Germany?

No, not under the quota system.

You mean the number of people America would accept?

It would have been taken quite some time. to put her, bring her over.

And then she passed away, didn't she?

But at that time, right after she was brought back there, I wrote to the doctors, and they informed me that I could take care of her for 24 hours a day, yes.

So she was quite ill--

Yes.

--at the time.

She was. I don't know if it was Alzheimer, if it was aging. She was old for her age. Through all what she went through, she was old for her age. But I would not say that she had anything-- any sense of Alzheimer. She just got old.

They took her all the time.

Now, your father who emigrated from Munich-- no, from Berlin-- with you to Shanghai-- he passed away there?

Yes.

What happened to him? Was it old age or stress?

No, my father had asthma.

He what?

Asthma.

Asthma.

And if his asthma attacks.

Oh, yeah. This is not all--

My father literally was cured from the asthma. He couldn't take the climate. I remember my father only crying two times in his life. One time he had an infection on his hand. And we had a kind of hospital in Shanghai, and he was in pain. It was-- my father was a butcher, and probably a sliver of bone inside in the flesh or whatever-- it can take years before it comes out.

And he said [INAUDIBLE] very badly, and that was the only time that I saw him cry, the first. Then they made a mistake. At night, they bathed my father's hand in the bath to stop the infection, and they forgot. All night he was sitting in the bath.

In the bath?

Yeah, in the bath, you know, a bowl with water or whatever. They forgot about it. The effect was that my father's hand got operated on, the right hand, got operated on, and the hand was like cloth. It did not come back to normal. So he was disabled. He couldn't do his job, anything with his profession.

And then the second time that I saw him cry was when I ran into him on the street and he had just laid himself on the stair and stood there. And he was crying. He weighed 100-- I think, under 100 pounds.

He had on a very heavy fur-lined coat, and he weighed under a hundred pounds. That was the second time when I saw him cry.

Now, was that during the years of Shanghai or right after the liberation?

That was in Shanghai before he--

--before he passed away with his asthma.

[INAUDIBLE] that he couldn't-- he died over there. It was asthma killed him.

So he basically was sad because he knew that he was really sick.

Yes. He couldn't take the climate. As a matter of fact, when we were asked for help, financial help, to leave Germany to go to Shanghai as a family, we were refused because of my father. They couldn't help us because he couldn't take the climate.

But we were seven people. And if he wouldn't-- if he would have stayed in Germany, you know what would have happened. So one way or another we didn't have a choice. Yes, he could not take the climate.

His normal weight was 160 German pound. That means 160 10% percent in English pounds. It was his normal weight. He was not tall. He was not big. But he was tough. But in Shanghai, that's when he died. And with that heavy coat, winter coat, fur-lined, under 100 pounds. That, of course-- it didn't take long then after that he died.

How old was when he passed away?

He was-- he died in '45, December of '45, so he was 67.

And what was his name?

Hmm?

What was his name?

His name?

His whole name, yeah.

Alex [? Holtz. ?] He did-- that was the full name, Alex [? Holtz. ?] He was buried in Shanghai, and-- one month before my son was born. And he-- I don't know. He was in such a bad shape, and I was-- saw him for the last time. He said something, and I could not understand what he was saying.

But I guess it was take care of Mama. And it was a terrible, terrible state in which you can't breathe. The worst thing for me was he would try to inhale from some stuff. He would light it, and it would grow. And he had to inhale that.

And then my mother would say something, or he would say something to my mother. And she had hearing loss, and she was in tears because she couldn't understand what he was saying. And he had a hell of a time-- [INAUDIBLE] have a bad time to bring the words out.

So they couldn't communicate, really, after that?

[INAUDIBLE] Yes, she could communicate, but then when there was an asthma [INAUDIBLE], he couldn't. It was too hard. At the Shanghai ghetto, he was there. Was born in '78, in '78. Yeah, he was 67. It was-- what did--

And then your son was born three months later?

One month later.

One month later. And what year was that? What's your son's birthday?

My father died, passed away, December '45, and my son was born January '46. And he was looking forward to that.

How old was your son when you came to America?

Two years, exactly, on the ship.

So when did you leave for America?

In he was two on the ship. That was in December, December '47.

December of '47.

End of '47.

What is the name of the ship? Do you remember the ship you came on?

The Bianca [INAUDIBLE]. Italian ship. No. I'm sorry. That's was the ship we came to.

Not the ship you arrived on. Yeah.

The Marine Swallow. It was a commercial ship that had been remodeled for the war, for troops [? on ships. ?] And it was on its last trip to the States before going commercial again. I got to [INAUDIBLE]. And--

Were there a lot of people from the Jewish community in Shanghai on that ship heading out with you?

Oh, yeah, quite a few. I think mostly they used it for troops to get it out of the States. We had to go by ship. We didn't fly. We had to go by ship. So we were in big cabins. Mothers and children cabins that would take a bed. You know the bunk bed type? Each mother had the bunk bed with the big, you know?

So was there a Jewish cemetery in Shanghai where you left your father? Or did you have to buy a plot in whatever cemetery they had for your father? You said he was buried in Shanghai.

He was buried in Shanghai, yes, but I found out now, during that time, they had taken the dead out from that cemetery. I do not know where to they had transferred it, made other arrangements for those guys, so I don't know.

So you don't know what happened? Oh my.

No, no. I only know that it is-- that that happened. They transferred the whole cemetery. Now, I hope-- the Chinese had always a high respect for their dead and their graves. I hope that they have the respect for these graves, too, but I don't know.

Did you know of any people in the Jewish community of Shanghai who chose to remain in Shanghai?

Yeah, there were a few. They got married to Chinese. They did. But I don't know what happened to them. They left, left

me just-- they were [BOTH TALKING[

Coming back-- I interrupted you. Coming back to the ship, when you were on this ship, what was the journey like out of China?

The journey was in principle nice. We didn't have a luxury-- it wasn't a luxury trip, but we were treated very well. We had, of course, a division between-- the men had to sleep-- [INAUDIBLE], you know, it's a big-- in the ship on there. You know, they had the bunk beds like the soldiers, and while we had supposedly a bunk bed with the cabins, you know, where maybe officers or whatever slept. You know, but the luxury wasn't there. There was no luxury. But they were very nice to us as far as that was concerned.

Now, this was an-- was this ship American? I don't--

American.

It was an American ship. So was the crew a bunch of Americans?

All American. All American. What I liked and what I never will forget was when my son's birthday, as I said, was on the ship, his second birthday. And as a woman were eating separate from the men, we were given food for the kids first, the babies, children. And then the woman got the food afterwards so that we could eat in peace. And on my son's birthday, I was not prepared at all for it.

And I was told by the nurse or whatever she was that I should wait after everybody goes, after they all have eaten. I should stay at the table. And I didn't know why, but then came one of the higher offices of the ship with a little birthday cake with a candle on it. "Happy Birthday to Kevin." It was his second birthday.

But the point is that, suddenly, I felt like a human being, recognized. This I'll never forget. He can't remember that, but I do, that little birthday cake in blue, just little. But it was then-- and it was -- normally -- I never mentioned anything because you don't expect anything under the circumstances. If they had marked that-- figured it out from the papers or whatever-- but I never, ever forgot.

The feeling is-- suddenly you feel you count. That was it. I can tell you at the time, when they came up with "Happy Birthday," I had the feeling like a mask was coming over my face. I never forget it.

And whenever I think about it, it's still the same feeling. Not only my husband wasn't-- had to deal with me because he was eating downstairs with the men. OK. But I never forgot that, his second birthday.

And then when we came to the States-- what is that-- how was it? Is there? Where were we brought? First we were brought somewhere to an empty building. But I really-- I have to think about it. First when we came from the ship-- oh, now I remember.

Where did you land? Where did you disembark?

No, no. It was in San Francisco, in San Francisco. I was thinking back to Shanghai, almost got mixed up, coming into Shanghai. No, we had friends, my sons' godparents. They waited at the harbor in San Francisco.

And the first thing-- they brought me to their apartment. They lived in Oakland. Their apartment-- they had left a little bit earlier. than, from us. They picked up me to their apartment. They took care of everything else.

And then we had I think they have a special office. It was a special office, like special workers and so on. It was specially put in for the refugees, not only for us. The rest came later from Shanghai.

But there was an office, and we were given hotel rooms, Market Street, as far as I remember. And we were given money that we could eat. And you could take a bus and so or whatever what you needed, and we had to go in sometimes, you

know? They took care of us.

Do you have any special memories of what it felt like to land in America?

Yes. Yes. When we came in, first off, we came under the Golden Gate. Of course, we threw our money and-- not all the money, no, but we-- if it's for luck. It's [INAUDIBLE].

And then we had the one young woman. She had a beautiful voice, and she started to sing "San Francisco." Do you remember that song?

Yes.

She started to sing "San Francisco," and yet you couldn't wait until the next morning when we got down from the ship. There were the guide boats, you know, that kind of thing. Yes, it was very exciting. That was exciting to come under the Golden Gate.

Did you have a sense-- any kind of sense of safety or like you had arrived in a safe destination or anything like that? Did you feel--

We were very optimistic. Let's say it this way. We were looking forward to it because you could start another life, a normal life. We didn't know what would be coming up. We wouldn't know where we would land because we didn't