

LILO AND ANN CALLMAN  
RG-50.150.0002. Recorded December 1977

Lilo and Ann were twins born in 1910 in Berlin. Their parents divorced when they were young and they mainly lived with their mother. Their father remarried and had another daughter. He had emigrated to England in the 1930s which helped both girls to eventually get to England by going as household employees. They were in Berlin during Kristallnacht and remember that the next morning was a horrible sight. They saw the temple in Riegenstrasse destroyed with only some walls standing. They thought this was unbelievable as they felt they belonged in Germany but they decided to emigrate. First Ann went to England in January 1939 and Lilo was able to follow in August. (Much of Ann's experience was noted in her oral history of RG-50.150.0001) They were never able to get their mother out of Germany and learned after the war that she had died in Auschwitz.

Both Lilo and Ann worked as housekeepers in England. They had gotten certificates for household cleaning in Berlin through a Jewish agency. Ann just went on a regular passport but by the time Lilo went she had a "J" marked on her passport. They hadn't thought that the war would last and didn't have any fear of the concentration camps because they didn't know anything about them. They both worked as housekeepers in Yorkshire, but when war broke out they were interned like many other Germans. Because there were in an industrial region they had to be interned, although father and his family in London did not have to be. They were sent to the Isle of Man, where they had an enjoyable time with other German friends they met in Yorkshire.

They came back from the Isle of Man in January 1941 when the war started to go badly. They both volunteered for the British army. There were two German regiments in the army, where Lilo worked as a cook and Ann worked in an office. In February 1946 they went to Germany as volunteers. In Berlin a cousin who had survived by living underground took them to Oranienburger Strasse Center to look for their mother. There they found that she had been sent to Auschwitz in February 1943 and immediately gassed. While in Berlin they were shocked to see the Riegenstrasse synagogue had been used as a horse stable.

They immigrated to Canada following their father and half-sister, but decided they couldn't live under his domineering personality so they went to New York, which felt like home to them as they were used to the big city. They moved into an apartment in Washington Heights in 1952 and stayed there up to the time this interview was done. Most of their friends in New York were German Jews like them. They refused to take reparation money for their mother but did take their German social security they were entitled to.