

Q: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

A: I was born in Worms in 1922.

Q: And did you grow up in Worms?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you go to school there?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your education?

A: In Worms? I started in public school until 1933 and then for another two years when I was supposed to go to the schuler you were not allowed anymore so at that time they started an aufbauschuler which was attached to the public school and offered the higher subjects, languages, mathematics and so forth, so we were allowed to attend that and there were four Jewish kids in my class, four girls.

Q: You weren't allowed to go to the . . .? . . . , but you were still allowed to go to this aufbauschuler which was not under Jewish auspices specifically?

A: No it was public.

Q: That's what I meant.

A: There was a Nazi teacher who was one of the very bad ones in our class. She really made our life miserable. Terrible.

Q: How did she do that?

A: When we were sitting together she left no occasion to make all kinds of remarks against Jews. She made remarks whenever she could, and she instigated the other kids against us. Those that were sitting behind us would hit us and kick us from the back of the class and she knew that and she didn't do anything about it. She would reprimand us for not sitting still and being quiet.

Q: At that time you must have been about twelve years old, something like that. It must have been very difficult.

A: It was terrible.

Q: Do you remember going home and telling your parents?

A: Yes and because of that my father when they took the initiative of starting a Jewish school and he was one of the initiators of starting the school.

- Q: That was before it was actually mandated.
- A: That's right. And it came in very handy because it kind of coincided with the time that we had to get out of the public school anyways.
- Q: When you say that your father started to initiate the Jewish school, how did he go about doing that?
- A: I think he got together with the . . . ? . . . gemeind and he helped in organizing it. And he was very much involved in getting the teachers together and trying to get the building and rooms furniture.
- Q: Up to this time when you had this incident with this Nazi teacher, did you have many non-Jewish friends as well as Jewish friends?
- A: I had one very close best friend which every girl had and she was not Jewish, and then she went into the . . . ? . . . schuler which was the schuler and at this point she didn't say hello to me anymore in the street and that affected me so badly that I didn't get over it for many, many months.
- Q: Did you ever have a conversation with her?
- A: No never.
- Q: She just completely. . . .
- A: Yes that was it and it was terrible for me to meet her in the street and it was terrible emotionally.
- Q: Children especially at that age, maybe girls more than boys want to be accepted, want to be one of the crowd, did you notice many of these girls beginning to belong to the bedaem or the boys the Hitler youth at this time?
- A: Yes, everybody did. I remember sorting them out, who was going to join and who wasn't. I think there were a few from my class who did not join. I guess because their parents were not thus inclined.
- Q: How did you cope with this, I guess isolation is the only word I can think of?
- A: Well I think I was lucky because I had these Jewish friends who were with me in the same class, very good friends over the years, and then when the Jewish school started all our lives centered around this whole area, and aside from the outside we had really a nice time together, and those times we felt very good about each other.
- Q: What kind of business was your father in?
- A: My father was in the . . . ?

- Q: Was it a retail or wholesale?
- A: Wholesale, and also he did some real estate in Gute.
- Q: When Hitler came to power in '33 how did that affect your father's business?
- A: I guess it affected it, but not to the extent that he felt that he wanted to leave.
- Q: Do you remember any discussions at home about . . . ?
- A: That's about how long Hitler would or wouldn't last. In the beginning I think yes. I know what we were always . . . ? . . . , especially during dinner time and we always had arguments about it because we didn't . . . ? . . . and my father always insisted on this.
- Q: As time progresses, '33, '34, '35, how did things change for you as a family?
- A: I don't know when our matron wasn't allowed to come anymore.
- Q: '35.
- A: Among other things, so we had to help more in the house. I had a younger sister.
- Q: You were already at this time in the Jewish school, 1935?
- A: 1935.
- Q: Did you ever see signs Juden . . . or Juden Vorboden?
- A: Sure. And it always made me furious. I couldn't understand it. I always thought why am I any different than other people. Why should I be different than other people.
- Q: Did you ever have those conversations with other people?
- A: No, never.
- Q: Do you remember you parents trying to explain the situation to you at all?
- A: They always had political conversations, I don't know.
- Q: In terms of you being Jewish or don't worry. How did they try and protect you ro did they try and protect you?
- A: Emotionally? I don't think they really did. I think whatever protection must have come from my own resources. I have thought about that and my memory isn't that clear. Give me an example.
- Q: What type of protection do you think you had from your own resources? Or you developed I should say.

- A: My pride in being Jewish. I think that is mostly it.
- Q: Did that increase over these years?
- A: I became much more aware of it sure. And the schools we went to too.
- Q: Did you belong, you mentioned the gemeinde, did you belong to a congregation in Worms?
- A: There was only one really, the orthodox one, but that was very small and everybody didn't belong to it; to the main congregation.
- Q: Which was I take it liberal or something like that?
- A: No conservative. Men and women were separated, but they did have an organ.
- Q: Do you remember any conversations by the rabbi or among the Jewish people within Worms about emigration?
- A: People were talking about emigration all the time.
- Q: How did you feel about that?
- A: It was sad to see all the friends go. We wanted to get away too. We didn't know, we felt kind of lost about it, because in the beginning my father didn't want to leave and then when he did make an effort it was too late.
- Q: When did you begin seriously considering trying to get out?
- A: We got a number. An American visa number. I don't remember what year that was. Maybe '37. At one time my parents had applied for me to go on one of the English transports, kindertransport, and I had a relative who had moved to England and was going to help and had a family picked who was going to take me, and I remember that my mother and I went shopping for me to fit me out, and I was trying to get emotionally set to go to England and the worst thing which is kind of funny now, was to buy an evening gown, which we both enjoyed doing, and I loved that dress that we bought.
- Q: How did you feel about going to England on the transport?
- A: I had very mixed emotions about it and I was terribly scared too. I don't know exactly which . . . ? . . .but it never came to pass.
- Q: It never came to pass because other events transpired?
- A: Yes.
- Q: At what point in your father's business life did he begin to feel that he may have to leave? His business kept on quite awhile in your memory?

- A: Yes.
- Q: You were still in Worms on Crystal Night?
- A: My family was and I was at the time in Frankfurt in the Judische . . ? . . . that I had just started, and it was three weeks that I was there and then the Crystal Night came and they closed and I came back home.
- Q: You finished this Jewish school you were in and went to Frankfurt then?
- A: Yes for three weeks.
- Q: That' what I meant. What purpose did you have in mind when you went to Frankfurt?
- A: It was one of the few things that was open in further education.
- Q: Had you planned on doing that, when you said that was one of the few things available, had you looked into other possibilities of what you might do?
- A: In the area yes, but there was really nothing. When I went to I didn't want to go and that was about the extent of it. I didn't want to be a seamstress, that was not my thing.
- Q: When you said hashera, hashera had a definite emphasis on emigrating to Israel and you as a family did not consider going to Israel?
- A: No.
- Q: Did you consider going any place other than the Unites States?
- A: No my father, he was writing to Uruguay and South America, all kinds of places but there was nothing tangible.
- Q: Did anybody help him in terms of organization?
- A: I don't think so. I think he was trying his own resources. Family and friends.
- Q: That's what I meant. Did you have friends in those places. What happened to you in Frankfurt on Crystal Night?
- A: All I remember was that we were all sitting in the basement huddled together. Nobody came into the home or the school. And we were scared and we didn't know exactly what was happening.
- Q: When you came to Frankfurt did you notice any differences in the situation in Frankfurt and in Worms?
- A: No because I was very much closed in the school and it was only for a short time.

Q: But out on the streets?

A: I didn't go out very much.

Q: On Crystal Night when the evening was over and you went out were you aware of what had happened?

A: I don't know if we were aware of the full extent of it, and I don't remember if my parents picked me up. No it couldn't have been because my father was hiding somewhere and I must have come home by myself.

Q: How did you come home, by train?

A: I imagine so. There was no other way.

Q: When you say that your father was hiding, your father was not taken on Crystal Night?

A: No.

Q: How did he manage to escape?

A: Because he was hiding. I don't know exactly. I think in his office they had a safe or something that was like an old room in the back. He was hiding in there.

Q: Did you notice a difference in your father between before you left for Frankfurt which was before Crystal Night and when you came home?

A: I don't remember.

Q: What I'm really asking was there a sense of urgency?

A: You mean about emigration? There might have been. We were trying to get out of Worms at least, and get to Heidelberg, but between Worms and Heidelberg I went back to Frankfurt to Norensberg to and they had classes

Q: But what did the Home for Difficult Children have to do with baby nursing, it just happened to be together?

A: No. They took girls in who had illegitimate children, who at that time were of course outcasts in society, especially who had children from gentiles.

Q: So in other words that was an opportunity . . .

A: So when these babies were born they were taken care of there and the mothers stayed there for awhile and that gave us the chance to learn baby nursing with these children.

Q: Why did you want to earn baby nursing at that particular time?

- A: Well at that time it seemed like some kind of a professional direction. I enjoyed it too. I thought I would enjoy working with babies.
- Q: The reason I'm asking is with emigration in mind?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Let me backtrack just a moment. You mentioned that there was near Frankfurt. Your family had decided to leave Worms. Why did they decide to leave Worms for Heidelberg?
- A: My father had a sister married in Heidelberg and she and her family left to go to England and the apartment became available and we were able to move into that apartment and life in Heidelberg was much easier than Worms.
- Q: That's what I was wondering. In what way was life in Heidelberg much easier than Worms?
- A: Well the population was much more . . .? . . . and there was much less hatred than Worms.
- Q: How did you feel the hatred in Worms? How were you feeling it directed at you?
- A: Well there was hardly and communication any more between Jews and non-Jews except for the essentials of living, like buying food, and shopping.
- Q: Were you still able to go shopping?
- A: We had to. We had to buy food and we had to buy clothing.
- Q: How were you received in those stores?
- A: It depends. Some stores you dreaded to go in and you made yourself as small as possible and hoped that you wouldn't be recognized as a Jew and others were know to me more, you can't say friendly.
- Q: Had your father fought in the First World War?
- A: No.
- Q: Could he ever imagine, what I'm asking is it was particularly difficult to take for men who had either fought in the First World War or were particularly German nationals, to understand that this was going on.
- A: This was difficult for him anyways. His brother had and his family was very German. He was born in a little village on the other side of the Rhine in Gerstadt and there were seven children I think.

- Q: In his trying to cope with the situation was it difficult for him, eventually, I guess after Crystal Night he had to get rid of the business. Was that a difficult time for him?
- A: It was so difficult for everybody. You didn't look at it this way at who had a more difficult time.
- Q: How did he get rid of the business?
- A: I don't remember. I guess they just closed down. He couldn't sell it. They just closed down.
- Q: After he went to Heidelberg, this is after Crystal Night, 1938?
- A: Maybe it was in '39.
- Q: And you were still in baby nursing school near Frankfurt?
- A: I don't remember the exact timing if I went from Worms to Frankfurt. I don't remember.
- Q: How long did you stay at the baby nursing?
- A: I think about nine months or so.
- Q: And they lived in Heidelberg during those nine months? I'm just trying to get the timing.
- A: I don't remember the exact timing. We were deported from Heidelberg in October of 1940. So it was between '39 and '40, maybe a year. I'm not quite sure.
- Q: After you went back to Heidelberg after this time in the baby nursing school did things get worse in Heidelberg?
- A: My recollection about life in Heidelberg is very vague.
- Q: Where you afraid of any physical harm?
- A: At the end? I guess not because I took walks all over and I enjoyed the city itself very much. I mean the landscape. I took walks, everybody did, but there was no more Jewish life there really, just some kind of a makeshift shul which was very bad.
- Q: When you say Jewish life, other than school, what else are you referring to?
- A: Services or any kind of cultural activities which had been very much so in Worms before the Crystal Night.

Q: Cultural activities, was that at the Culturbund or were you still allowed to go to the ... ?

A: Oh no. Only at the Culturbund.

Q: But they were still active until 19 . .until Crystal Night, that you remember.

A: I think so.

Q: How did you get notice in October 1940 that you were to go anywhere?

A: Very easy. They just came and said pack, and you've got to be ready in two hours. Any they stayed right in the apartment with you, maybe in front of the apartment. I don't know if it was police or Gestapo. I think this was document, but I don't remember.

Q: But they stayed with you?

A: Or in front of the door to make sure that you didn't get out.

Q: Was there any forewarning of that?

A: No. You didn't know what's what. My father's brother who was living in Worms at the time was married, was visiting us and he pleaded with them he wanted to go back to his wife and they did let him go, unfortunately because then he was deported.

Q: From Worms?

A: Yes.

Q: When you were in Heidelberg receiving this news did they tell you where you were going?

A: No. Nobody knew.

Q: That must have been a terrible frightening situation not to know where you were going.

A: Of course. We were just hoping that we would go west instead of east. When we were on the train that was what we were always watching out for are we going east or are we going west.

Q: What difference? What did you prefer west to east?

A: Well there were rumors already of terrible situations of people going to Poland or some kind of camps in Poland. People having to go to forced labor. Nobody really knew but there was a frightening idea of east, going to Poland, and west nobody knew but they figured if it is going to France or somewhere there it could not be as terrible as Poland. That was really all we knew.

- Q: What were you able to take along?
- A: Well they told us what ever we could carry. I think one suitcase per person. Only as much as we could carry ourselves, and they told us to take warm things.
- Q: As it turned out this was a concerned effort of the Nazis to take all the Jews from Baden, but where did you meet, or how did you know it wasn't you alone or . . .
- A: Well first of all we were living in a building with other Jews and everybody got the same notices and I think there were more people in the street too.
- Q: Was that an accident that you were living in a building with many Jews or in any way had that been proscribed.
- A: No this is where my father's sister had lived too, so we wound up there. Maybe the building was originally Jewish owned. I'm not sure.
- Q: When you met or when all the other people came out of the apartment building and met on the street the mood must have been pretty close to panic.
- A: No it wasn't. I think people were very quiet. They kept their fears to themselves. My father wrote an account of that and also I kept a diary. I kept a diary as a young girl and kept it on for a while.
- Q: Do you still have it?
- A: Yes I do. When I was describing it, I don't remember all the details now.
- Q: When you were on the train and did realize that you were going west, were there any rumors or did you have any ideas . . . ?
- A: As to where we would wind up? No. We began to breath a little easier when we came to unoccupied France and the German SS would go away and there were only Frenchmen.
- Q: October 1940 was already unoccupied France. The SS did go away? The left you at the German-French border?
- A: Yes. Not at the German-French border, at the border of unoccupied and occupied France. I don't remember exactly where that was.
- Q: When the train stopped was that at Gers?
- A: Oh the train stopped innumerable times. It took three or four days to get there and we were shifted form one place to the other and we stood and all in all we were finally, we got off the trains . . .
- Q: I think we were in a first or second class compartment.

Q: Did you get food? Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

A: Coffee or something. We were told that we should take food along.

Q: Did they tell you for how long?

A: For two or three days. My grandparents were with us too as a matter of fact. They lived with us in Heidelberg.

Q: How old were your grandparents?

A: They were in their seventies.

Q: When you came to Gers what did you find?

A: I don't have to tell you I guess. Nothing.

Q: But in your words what did you find?

A: It was just empty barracks. And the first impression that we got, I don't remember if it had rained before, but I think it had rained a little bit which had made for the famous situation of mud, so I guess people fell all over the place and got dirty carrying their luggage to . . .

Q: How were you assigned to whatever barracks you were assigned to?

A: I guess somebody must have been there at the entrance and told us as we came in that now this number goes to this barracks.

Q: Now this was under French control, at the time?

A: Yes.

Q: Once you got into the barracks what was the setup in terms of beds?

A: We got some straw mattresses that were distributed, otherwise it was just empty. Absolutely nothing. It was an empty room.

Q: How many people in a room?

A: Sixty. I think around sixty.

Q: Were there any bathroom facilities?

A: Are you kidding? They had some special latrines, on the outside, and you had to find your way there.

Q: Not only find your way, but in terms of numbers, were there enough?

A: No you had to stand on line.

- Q: And what about the food?
- A: I don't know how long it took before we got some coffee, the middle of the night or something.
- Q: Looking at your grandparents and your parents what was the reaction to this place?
- A: They tried to adjust. I assume that especially my grandmother was remarkable adjusting, better than anyone else. She had a tremendous amount of will power and self discipline.
- Q: It must have been a very difficult thing to adjust to. I mean they were seventy years old.
- A: And separated from her husband, but my mother, grandmother, and I were together which of course also helped.
- Q: The men were separated from the women?
- A: Yes, and my father and my grandfather were together. They were my mother's parents. And my sister later came to kinder
- Q: Originally she was with you?
- A: Yes. Until they organized the kinder.
- Q: What was the worst thing in your memory about life at Gers?
- A: How can I pick out the worst and best. There were so many horrible bad things, sometimes nice things, you can't pick out what is the best and what is the worst.
- Q: What were the things that were most uncomfortable or the most . . . ?
- A: Well we were hungry most of the time and of course the . . . ? . . . situation, the working situation, especially for me, and the latrine situation, and the dysentery, and later on some people had lice.
- Q: The dysentery situation was a problem at Gers and many different places, especially with the lack of latrines. In terms, I think the biggest problem there from what I read was the humiliation for the people who couldn't make it or you know, couldn't make it on line and so on. What were the good things? You mentioned before there were some nice things.
- A: The nice things were that I met my first boyfriend in Gers and I think that he was the only really nice fellow that I remember with the fondest of memories and we had the nicest time together.
- Q: Where you able to see each other?

- A: We were able to see each other there. Sometimes the boys or men got passes to visit the women. I was visiting at a New Years party that Elo had made up and I was invited.
- Q: That's the boy's name?
- A: No. Elo was the compound. And we left at more or less the same time with possibilities to emigrate. He to the United States and we to Santa Domingo at the time. We met again in Marseilles. He was in Lemilles and I was in Marseilles and he got passes to visit, and that was the time I lived for. The highlights, and it was a beautiful experience.
- Q: Did you have to work at all in Gers?
- A: I worked voluntarily in the hospital barrack.
- Q: What was your daily routine, or most people's daily routine?
- A: I think they tried to establish some kind of post so there would be something to do. . . ? . . . shift, some people were in charge of cleaning it out and some people were in charge of kinder . . . ? . . .
- Q: You mean to take care of children?
- A: To take care of children. I went to the . . . ? . . . the hospital and I was working there, I don't know how long, for awhile. We were only there for four months all together. Part of that time I was the kinder.
- Q: Was there medical care?
- A: There were doctors. They did whatever they could.
- Q: Did you feel safe in Gers in terms of the Germans?
- A: Well depending on the war. We were trying to watch the war and as long as we were at least unoccupied we felt that we were safe.
- Q: But you felt that that was temporary?
- A: Everybody wanted to get away.
- Q: Were there any guards in Gers making sure that nobody left at wrong times?
- A: Sure there were guards, French guards. Gendarmes.
- Q: Was there anybody who was able to leave Gers illegally?
- A: I think you heard about some people sometimes getting out. It seemed more like very individual cases.

- Q: How did you make an attempt to get out of Gers, I mean legally, through emigration?
- A: We were really lucky for our American relatives. They made the effort and because my family had a connection to the . . .? . . . settlement that was really our personal luck. Everybody who did get out a lot of people had . . .it was just my family's luck.
- Q: What kind of settlement did you call it?
- A: The Sasua settlement in the Dominican Republic.
- Q: What kind of connection was there between your family in the United States and this settlement?
- A: My father's brother who lived here for many years was very friendly with the director of Joint who was on that settlement as a director, and my cousin my father's nephew was working with him in the Dominican Republic and he managed for us to be able to join this group. They were at the time going around Europe and trying to get young people who would be farmers in the Dominican Republic. We didn't exactly fit that description. My parents, my father was born in a small village and they had land, familiar with farming, but he had never worked as a farmer and he was beyond that age, but he still got the visa to go. They accepted us.
- Q: Was that visa for all six of you?
- A: No my grandparents were not. My grandparents were taken to one of the transports to another camp. They took older people. Old people.
- Q: You mean like Thereienstadt?
- A: No, in France. They said they would have a little better accommodations and would be cared for better. My parents thought since they cannot come with us, it must have been a terrible decision to make. I didn't realize so much then, but looking back I shudder when I think of it.
- Q: I take it then when you got notice that you could go to Santa Domingo, these two things coincided that your grandparents could go this . . .
- A: Yes, they left before us. And they went to one camp and the people from that camp, well anyway my grandparents ended up in a cloister and they were taken care of by nuns.
- Q: Through the whole war?
- A: Yes. And my grandfather died there and my grandmother at 78 came all alone to the United States. She lived till she was 83.

- Q: When you say that it was a very hard decision, it must have been very difficult for you too. I lived with my grandparents and I know how close you can become. Were you able to say good-bye to them in terms of going to a train?
- A: No they were taken to the commune or whatever it was and we saw them being taken, and I think that's all. We could wave good-bye to them from the barbed wire.
- Q: On the day that you were able to leave Gers what were the logistics of leaving? Who took you to the train?
- A: My father and mother and sister we did not go together. My father had to go in one transport, men in one transport and women in another transport. They collected a few people who were able to go to Marseilles. That was the intermittent, what do you call it, the intermittent something, and the men were kept in Lamilles that was the auslander unslogger. And we were in the city of Marseilles in the hotel.
- Q: Who paid for you in that hotel?
- A: I guess the French government must have paid for it.
- Q: And then you were able to reunite on the boat?
- A: No. No. In Marseilles everybody had to take care of their emigration and go from one consulate to the other in order to get their visas and transit visas and arrange for how you were going to travel and we all got, I think the Dominican visa we could only get in this part and the American visa, I am not quite sure of all the logistics, but we had to get the transit visa through Spain and the transit visa through Portugal, the train tickets.
- Q: You had only left with . . .
- A: Maybe we got the Dominican visa in Marseilles. We must have had some kind of proof that we were going to get it. Definitely or otherwise they wouldn't have let us out.
- Q: When you left originally I take it you left with your suitcase and ten reichmarks that you were allowed to leave with.
- A: I think 100 reichmarks. And in Marseilles my father was able to make some black market dealings and he made money with exchanging back and forth so that this way he was able to manage.
- Q: When you came to Santa Domingo you were on this settlement. Wait a minute we're getting ahead of ourselves. When you came to Marseilles you went over Spain and through Portugal to Lisbon?
- A: Yes.

Q: All by train? [Contact reference@ushmm.org](mailto:contact.reference@ushmm.org) for further information about this collection

A: Yes.

Q: How long did you stay in Lisbon?

A: Three weeks.

Q: Again how were you able to support yourselves without money?

A: We had money.

Q: The same money?

A: The same money. Since we were four people, two children really, it kinda worked out. I don't know, maybe my father had tucked away some extra money that he didn't . . . It never occurred to me before. Maybe he did. If he did it he was very courageous because they had threatened with death on the train if we had anything extra.

Q: You mean on the train going from Heidelberg to Gers?

A: Right.

Q: Did they in fact search you?

A: Never.

Q: Not the suitcases either?

A: No.

Q: When you were in Lisbon what kind of ship did you go to Santa Domingo on?

A: We didn't go to Santa Domingo, we went to the United States. There were no direct ships to Santa Domingo, we had to go via the United States.

Q: via New York?

A: via New York.

Q: Where you able to see your family?

A: They were able to see us because when we arrived in New York, I think it was in June 1941, we came to Ellis Island and Germany had just invaded Russia and we were declared German citizens and we were not allowed in the country. So our family came to visit us on Ellis Island and the only way we saw New York was with the F.B.I.: on the way from Ellis Island to the boat, which was in Brooklyn.

Q: When you say F.B.I. you mean the F.B.I. escorted you?

- A: Yes. To make sure that we wouldn't escape and illegally enter the country.
- Q: Your intention was to emigrate to the United States and Santa Domingo would just be an interim stay until your number, until you were able to enter the country?
- A: Well then a number didn't do much good any more. Nobody knew what was going to happen.
- Q: When you went to Santa Domingo from New York and you found yourself on this settlement, what was it like?
- A: Well I and describe it in one word. It was a unique experience.
- Q: In what way?
- A: Well it was a little bit like a kibbutz, but not with the sprit of a kibbutz.
- Q: You mentioned that it was an agricultural settlement.
- A: It was meant to be an agricultural settlement.
- Q: Meant to be? Meaning that it didn't work out that way?
- A: No, there were a lot of difficulties and people were trying in all different kinds of ways to build up the settlement. I think they mostly succeeded with cattle raising and dairy.
- Q: You mentioned that you were not ideally suited, that they were looking for young men essentially to populate the settlement. When you got there what kind of work did you have to do?
- A: Well I didn't have to do any kind of work. I tried to find something. Everybody tried to find something that they would fit in it. Some people tried not to find something.
- Q: Who was in charge of the settlement?
- A: It was an organization founded especially for that purpose called DRSA or Dominican Republic Settlement Association which was actually part of JDC.
- Q:Dominican Republic?
- A: Well in Susua itself it was no problem because everybody spoke German. They still do.
- Q: It's still in existence?
- A: On a very, very small scale. Lets say there are still people living there. They have become financially very, very successful.

- Q: What was the morale like on the settlement?
- A: It's hard to describe in a few words. In a very brief way. A lot of the people were also considering it an interim stay, while the organization itself wanted them to regard it as a permanent stay, and that made for a lot of conflict.
- Q: In what way did those conflicts arise, you know show themselves?
- A: There were a lot of conflicts, but some people after a number of years did go to settlements. Not for a number of years, they started right from the beginning to just put people on settlements and none of them were farmers to start out with, there were only very few.
- Q: Did you have a training program?
- A: Yes they had a training program, and they gave them a certain amount of land and a house and cattle, and they experimented with various products and it took awhile before they found out what would be successful and what wouldn't, and that made for problems between the administration and the settlers, and sometimes there was a rift between the people who stayed in the main village or whatever you want to call it and the people who actually went out to the settlements. There were all different kinds of problems which were quite unique for that situation. I'll show you a book if you are interested. I'll show you a sociological study.
- Q: When you say you were in a house, they provided you with . . . ?
- A: The settlers got a house, yes. They build it themselves or it was built for them. Originally the land was bought from Trijillo who had responded as the only country in the world to the Avion conference. You probably know that story.
- Q: But specifically for farming, specifically for agriculture?
- A: How it was going to be used I think was left open, but he wanted really a mad of people to come there. He would have opened the country to 100,000 people. That is one of the big things that are always against the JD and all the big Jewish organizations, that they didn't go on an all out effort just to get people out in order to save them, which would have been an opportunity. Instead they selected people who they thought would be suitable for farming and they got a few hundred people out.
- Q: But that was one of the few places that did at least say they would take them. Did you know that you would not be able to emigrate from Santa Domingo to the United states until the end of the war?
- A: Yes, we knew that.
- Q: When the war ended you did come to the United States I take it, immediately thereafter?

- A: Pretty much. In 1946, yes. My sister and I came first, and then my parents.
- Q: You and your sister came first? Why did you work it that way?
- A: Well we thought it would be easier if we tried to establish ourselves first and then our parents come after.
- Q: Were your parents paid at all in the Dominican Republic for the work?
- Q: Yes, my father was working in the warehouse, what they call commardo which is the general store of the settlement. He was the manager, during most of the time during our stay.
- Q: Did he do anything else?
- A: Yes, before he did that he was trying to organize . . . ? . . . He had some ideas about that. It didn't work out too well.
- Q: Some ideas in terms of what?
- A: Industrial ideas that he thought he could develop with the help of the organization.
- Q: But while he was there he was able to collect wages and save that money?
- A: Well everybody got paid if they did some work, but the administration, by the organization. A certain amount, and you got housing free and the food we had to buy. In the beginning we got a little pocket money. You couldn't save any money from that unless you started your own business and when you went on farming you were successful.
- Q: Had you realized while you were in Santa Domingo what was happening in Europe?
- A: On account of Jews? Well we heard rumors. Nobody really knew to what extent.
- Q: Did you have any contact at all with your grandparents?
- A: No.
- Q: So you didn't know. When you and your sister did come to the United States, the day you got off the boat who met you?
- A: By plane. My mother had friends and family here. She had a brother and his family and they were the ones who brought us over, and we borrowed the money from other relatives in Canada who were the people with money and they lent us the money for the fare. We paid them back eventually.
- Q: That first day when you got off the boat did you stay with this aunt and uncle?

A: Yes, we stayed with them. We came by plane via Cuba to Miami and then we came by train two nights or two days and a night, I don't know how long it took and we arrived at Penn Station. And at Penn Station they picked us up and then we went by subway.

Q: What did you think of that first subway ride?

A: I think the most impressed I was that the train level and the platform level were the same. You didn't have to take any steps up.

Q: Did you go home to Washington Heights? Was that where they lived?

A: Right 75 Washington Avenue.

Q: How did you get your first job?

A: I started, in Sasua I had worked in the hospital as a nurse, and in the dental office also and in the kindergarten, so when I came here first I wanted to work as a baby nurse because it seemed like for me this was the way I could make the most money the fastest and everybody knew somebody who was doing that at the time and my family had a friend who was doing that and she was so good she had so many requests and turned some over to me, and I was 24 at the time and I was working like two weeks straight at a time, day and night.

Q: So you were living also at these people's houses. How did you manage with the language?

A: Fairly well.

Q: Did you know English?

A: First of all we had English in school in Worms, and then I took some English lessons in Santa Domingo, and then I picked it up pretty fast.

Q: Did you work mostly with American Jewish families or German Jewish families?

A: Only American Jewish families. German Jewish families at the time couldn't afford baby nurses. Because I was working only in American surroundings I picked up the language.

Q: How soon after you came did your parents come?

A: A half year.

Q: Then did you have an apartment all together?

A: No, we got them a little unterleiter thing in the neighborhood and it was easier to start from.

Q: In what way?

- A: Economically, emotionally, everyway.
- Q: Economically for your parents you mean or for yourself?
- A: For all of us. Emotionally, economically, health wise.
- Q: When you say they were bad for you economically did your father have a hard time getting a job?
- A: My father had a very hard time finding something for himself. He had a block against foreign languages. He didn't learn Spanish in the Dominican Republic, never learned English and whatever had to be taken care of we had to do for him as far as meting the outside world.
- Q: When you say we are you referring to your mother?
- A: My mother and my sister and myself. And when he did have, he had some jobs in a trucking factory, packing, and then as an orderly in an old age home where he had to turn around mattresses, and then he had a heart attack and that was the end of his physical working. Of course it made for even more problems, my mother couldn't go away, she couldn't go to work.
- Q: Had your mother started to work originally when she first came over?
- A: I don't remember. I think she had a few little jobs. And then later on when my father was home she was a companion to . . .? . . .
- Q: Coming back to your father it must have been very difficult. That was one of the biggest problems in terms of the types of jobs the men were offered.
- A: My father was very remarkable and since he knew the German economic system and apparently law also very well. He believed in Germany, you know the old kind of Germany. He believed in beidagutmacher already from Santa Domingo times, from right after the war and he started with biedagutmacher and he was fantastically successful.
- Q: He started, you mean in terms of helping people or for himself as well in helping people?
- A: Yes, he started his own little biedagutmacher business out of his apartment, and I remember what a fantastic feeling it was when somebody gave him a 100 dollar retainer. I had never seen that much money together at one time.
- Q: That must have been a fantastic feeling for him especially.
- A: For all of us. I just couldn't believe it at the time and he became very successful at it.

- Q: This was after he had his heart attack. You also mentioned that this was a tough time emotionally, in relation to all these things that were going on, is that what you are referring to?
- A: Right. This was before the niedergutmachung started, and I had my own problems and they culminated into a breakdown. Maybe that's why I thought it was really worse than it actually was.
- Q: When you say, what were the . . . ?
- A: and I still feel that way.
- Q: In terms of your own feelings did you feel a tremendous sense of responsibility once your parents did come over?
- A: I did yes. A responsibility and at the same time I had a conflict about wanting to get rid of the responsibility and be free.
- Q: That was a big responsibility. Was your sister able to work at the time?
- A: My sister was very young. She was seventeen when we came. She still had to go to high school at night and get her high school diploma. I don't think she has her diploma, but she, because she wasn't eighteen yet she had to show a certain amount of school time, I believe, and then she was working as, I forget now, she was painting a piece work, ties and all kinds of chatchkas, and that was an on again, off again kind of thing.
- Q: What did you do in those early years with your free time?
- A: Well first of all when I was working as a baby nurse for two years I didn't have any free time, and then I was trying to get out of it which I did. And then I worked in a dentist's office as a dental assistant.
- Q: Was that a German Jewish dentist or an American?
- A: American.
- Q: How did you get that job?
- A: From the New York Times.
- Q: Okay. Then after you were working as this dental assistant what did you do with your weekends?
- A: Well there were a few organizations such as the New World club and . . . ? . . . These kinds of things. And I had a few friends. And I felt very unhappy. Extremely unhappy and depresses. I didn't even know how depressed I was until too late, or that I was depressed until too late. At that time people weren't aware of these things and everybody had so many problems that they didn't see what was going on.

- Q: How were you able at that time, I mean with money so tight among everybody, how were you able to get help?
- A: Well it was an emergency. It's a complicated story. I don't want to go into all this, but I wound up in a hospital in San Francisco. In a state hospital in San Francisco.
- Q: Do you mind if I just ask why San Francisco as opposed to New York?
- A: In that state I met somebody who I thought I was madly in love with, who happened to be German as a matter of fact.
- Q: I take it non-Jewish?
- A: Non-Jewish. He came from New York and then he had a fellowship in a hospital position. I wanted to follow him and go and that's how I wound up in a state hospital in San Francisco far away from my family.
- Q: Are your friends or I should ask it this way, were your friend when you were working as a baby nurse or in a dentist office mostly of German-Jewish refugees community.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Today are your friends mostly of the German-Jewish community or American born as well.
- A: No, both.
- Q: Do you consider yourself today, more of the American mainstream or more of the German-Jewish refugee community?
- A: I think more American mainstream. I was mostly always working in American surroundings, Columbia university and American gentile non-profit organizations that had to do with education in developing countries. I was married the first time to an American Jew and Jack's my second time.
- Q: Do you have children?
- A: Yes, I have a son and Jack has a son.
- Q: As parents do you think you were different parents than your American counterparts?
- A: I think so, yes.
- Q: In what way?

A: I think I never had the kind of feelings about myself and attitudes as children of American born parents.

Q: Did your son ever notice the difference?

A: I don't know. That would be an interesting question to ask him.

Q: I was just curious if he ever pointed it out, by inference?

A: No.

Q: It was just a question, because I think we did grow up in different homes. I don't think there is any question about it.

A: Where you born here?

Q: Yes. One question I wanted to ask you, but this just goes back, it's a little out of context. When you were in Gers I wanted to ask you about the morale of the people, the morale that existed in Gers at the time. How would you describe it?

A: I think it was good.

Q: Not depressing?

A: Depressing in the term that people were trying to take advantage of each other and that thing?

Q: Was that true?

A: I'm sure there always when people have to live together you will have that, but I don't think it was too excessive.

Q: I had more the idea of getting out. The fear was hanging over them that unoccupied France would not remain unoccupied and that' what I meant.

A: I don't know. You kind of live day to day. You really couldn't think too much a head. I think that was very much at that time altogether true. People didn't try too much to plan ahead. You lived from one day to the next. That was the only way you could survive. They were trying to figure out things ahead. There was no way.

Q: It was a kind of locked in situation.

A: I don't know. It might be interesting for you thorough the Institute the Beck Institute, I saw a book the other day that I read, mentioned in Gers.

Q: The Hama . . . ? . . . , I saw it. I did not read it.

A: It gives a very good idea of things I have forgotten that came back when I read it.

Q: Did you ever know of children in Gers who were taken by CSA or any of the Christian organizations to convents? Was that a possibility that was well know?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Have you ever been back to Germany?

A: Once, yes.

Q: When?

A: 1972.

Q: Did you go to Worms?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you feel about going back?

A: First of all it took me years to want to go back and the only place I really did want to go was the synagogue and that area, and maybe the place where I lived and that was something that I had to get out of my system and that's why I went.

Q: When you went, how did you feel when you were there?

A: I haven't been able to describe these feelings. They were so mixed up. So difficult. Of wanting to stay and not wanting to stay.

Q: By wanting to stay?

A: More time to, my husband was pushing me to get out because he saw that I was getting upset. Was I quite upset? I don't know.

Q: Did you see anybody you had know?

A: Yes, just our matron and her family. That was very nice. And she for some reason had gotten in contact with that girlfriend I was telling you about before.

Q: That was in the back of my mind.

A: Although I have never asked her to, because I didn't want to contact her. She did it on her own. She felt that she was doing me a favor. She had written me about it. She had told me, yes she would love to see you, and when the time came she had other things to do, apparently out of town. So I did not have to . . . ? . . . , and I do not know if I would have done it.

Q: If you would have seen her?

A: Yes. I was trying no to I think. I was very glad that she was away.

Q: Would you go back again?

A: Well right now a group of us, former people from Worms are getting together and we are trying to make some kind of a commemoration of a former teacher. Her name is Hada Hutsfer. She was unique in that she wrote the Auslandergrup. I don't know if you heard of that. But Henry Huttenback was forever writing about.

Q: When you say the Auslanderbock, you mean of people who had emigrated?

A: Yes, she kept a list personally that nobody that I spoke to knew about of people who had left and went to all different kinds of places and she did that until she was deported.

Q: She was deported with you?

A: No she was to I think Theresienstadt, I forget. From Worms in 1944. One of the very last transports.

Q: How did this Aus . . . ? . . . book survive?

A: It survived through very strange coincidences. It turned up in Yad Voshem. There Henry Huttenback, you know him, by coincidence came across it and he wrote and published the record. I can show it to you. I have it here.

Q: There are several such lists at Leo Beck Institute for various towns I think, that they managed to collect, but you have it here of all the people from Worms?

A: I have what she wrote. It's not completely correct. She did that personally on a personal basis.

Q: And with this commemorative . . . ?

A: This is not the only reason. The other is that in 1938 in the Crystal Night when the hoodlums tried to destroy the synagogue and burn it down, she stood in the door and tried to prevent them physically from coming in. One of the few people who tried to show some resistance, and she had no relatives and there is nobody to keep that in, for history, so I thought and now all these people with me, that this should be held for future generations and we want to do something about it.

Q: When you were in Worms in 1972, how receptive were, did you meet in any restaurants or stores, you must have met German people of an older generation.

A: We didn't meet anybody, and we didn't really tell them who we were, except in the synagogue in the visitors book, I entered myself and I said that I lived here and that I was deported.

Q: Was the synagogue still standing and in good condition?

A: The city rebuilt it.

Q: For whom? contact.reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection

A: That's a good question but they didn't want to leave it as a sham . . . ? . . . for themselves and they rebuilt it.

Q: Is there a Jewish population in Worms at all?

A: No. There are about ten people. Its there and its used as a museum or for services or marriages or weddings taking place.

Q: You also mentioned this uncle who asked to go back to Worms from Heidelberg. Was he deported from Worms?

A: I think to Theresienstadt.

Q: But he didn't survive?

A: No. The synagogue in Worms is over 900 years old. It is just as old as the door, and the Jewish community in Worms has a tremendously long history. Rashi was teaching there even before Rashi back to 1036 it was built and it had its 900 anniversary while we were there. There was a big celebration, so the city considers it now as one of its treasures so they reconstructed. As a matter of fact they are now thinking of reconstructing the whole area the Judenstrasse, a historical reconstruction.

Q: Did they in fact burn the temple on Crystal Night?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember that celebration of that 900th anniversary?

A: No. Very little, but I know that they tried to make as big a festivity as possible under the circumstances.

Q: That's what I . . . that was 1936 and the circumstances were only in their beginning stages, but was there an effort . . . ?

A: Well the Jewish community of Germany made it I think, bringing speakers from Berlin at the time.

Q: The reason I'm asking, I don't know if you remember this, but in terms of their speeches about the 900 year anniversary and the possibility of emigrating, or the . . .

A: I don't remember.

Q: What was the phrase you used?

A: . . . ?

