

When and where were you born?

In Mainz on February the 2nd, 1919.

Can you tell me a little bit about your education in Mainz?

Didn't have any education in Mainz. We moved to Munich when I was seven. And well, in Mainz, I went to Jewish elementary school. And in Munich, I went to grade school and to the Anna Lyceum four years. And when Hitler came, that was the end of the education in Germany.

Why did you move from Mainz to--

Munich?

--Munich? Well, my father had died in 1922. And my mother kept on with the business. He was a wine merchant. And she kept on with the business. And she put us into a children's home because it was the better thing under the circumstances than having maids. And she also came from Munich. And my father came from Munich.

When you said she put you into a children's home, she was running the business during this time?

Right. She was a traveling saleslady.

Was that acceptable in Germany at the time?

Well, half and half. I mean, you had to know what you were doing. But she stopped the business anyway in 1930. And she moved in with a woman friend of hers. And she kept house for her.

While you were going to school in Munich, did you have many non-Jewish friends as well as Jewish friends?

Quite a few non-Jewish friends, right.

What was the relationship like between you and the non-Jewish friends?

Was very good. But then, of course, I had the advantage that I didn't look Jewish. So I guess, they took to me more readily than they would have taken to somebody else.

Did you notice that was true with other Jewish children, that maybe they were not as well accepted?

Well, I found that the very religious-- and we had quite a few in high school, we had about 13, which was the largest class that had any Jewish children-- they sort of stuck to themselves. And they did not mingle with the others.

But I had mingled with them because I had regular-- well, our grade schools were really more Catholic than anything else. And I was brought up with Catholicism from the time I was very small. So it didn't make any difference to me. I mean, I knew as much as about Christmas, and Advent, and everything as the Catholics did.

In this children's home that you lived in, did you have--

That was Jewish.

That was Jewish, OK.

And they were very good to us, contrary to most children's homes that you hear about.

How far was it away from where your mother was living?

My mother was traveling all over Germany. So this was the place where she would come back to. But we were separated quite a bit, for many, many months at a time.

While you were going to school, you mentioned that you went to the Lyceum? What did you hope to become?

Teacher of gymnastics and needlework.

How did you-- well, you mentioned, you were in the Lyceum. When did your education stop for you?

When Hitler came in 1933. Hitler came the 31st of January. And we left Germany the 1st of April. We went to England, to London.

What made your mother decide to leave so soon after Hitler came to power?

Well, first of all, my brother looked very Jewish. And she was a little afraid for him. And she had this woman friend who had been a Zionist from way back. And it was the woman friend who decided that, under the circumstances, we should leave. But everybody, at that time, thought that Hitler would go away like a sickness, only he didn't go away.

Right. Did you-- living in Munich, which was the beginning of-- at least the place where Hitler support began, did you notice many things in those early years that were anti-Jewish?

Well, they did very often sing the Horst Wessel song, which was a pretty terrible song. And I really can't say that I noticed much in school. But then don't forget that we left when Hitler first came. So it made a difference. I mean, I could only tell from talk at home. They were talking about the elections.

And from about 1928 on, it would be-- every year, my mother would say, well, the Nazis have won a few more votes-- and up until 1933. And I think they sort of expected him to win finally. But things were bad in those days. There was a lot of unemployment. And when the stomach is empty, people will do a lot of things. Let's face it. You have to pay your rent. And you have to pay your food.

Did you notice any difference in the attitude of the children that you went to school with?

No, because I really-- as I say, I left too early. Suddenly, I was gone. So I don't know what the attitude was towards the other children.

When your mother told you you were leaving, how did you react?

Well, I think like a very good German girl, I kept my mouth closed. I didn't have any reaction. Besides, in those days, children were seen but not heard.

Besides acting like a good girl and not saying anything, were you feeling that way?

I really couldn't tell you how I felt. I only know that I liked it better in England in some ways. School wasn't as strict. I didn't go to high school in England. I went to elementary school that had commercial course-- typing, and shorthand, and bookkeeping. And I had a very nice teacher, who took an interest in me because of my French. And I found, life was easier, not so restricted.

When you decided, or when your mother decided, to leave Germany, did she have any problems as far as running this-- as far as being a saleswoman early in 1933?

She had stopped being a saleswoman in 1930. And she kept house for this friend of hers. And I only lived with her for a half a year before we left for England. And she boarded us with a family. And she went to Palestine in September of '33.

When you say she boarded you, this was in Germany or in England?

No, in England, in London.

And she left for Palestine?

Right.

Was this due to this friend's Zionism?

Yeah.

When you got to England, how old were you when you came there?

14 Was 15 and a half when we left. My brother was in England too.

How did you feel living in someone else's house in England?

Well, I felt good because I had my own room for the first time in my life. And as I say, life was easier, more flexible. The only things I didn't enjoy was when I did something wrong, the man used to beat me. But look, a lot of fathers beat their children. So it's something that you take as a matter of course. You can't do much about it.

When you say when you did something wrong--

Well, the cat once decided to jump into the bathtub, and drowned, and things like that. But I liked life. I found that life was easier than it had been in Germany. There were not that many restrictions.

Oh, could you specify that what kind of restrictions that there were?

Well, in school, for instance, your teachers were more on a friendly basis, not like in Germany, where everything was extremely strict-- the way you used to see it in the old movies. Life was easier in England.

Did you continue-- you mentioned that you went to school for typing. Did you still want to become a teacher?

Couldn't. There wasn't enough basic education. I had my choice between going into a household and becoming an office girl. And I preferred to be an office girl.

Who paid for this typing and shorthand schooling?

School didn't cost anything.

Oh, it was free.

Free, like here.

OK. You mentioned, too, that after a year and a half, you went to Palestine. Did your mother send for you to come to Palestine?

Right. I wanted to stay in England. But I lost the battle. At 16, I'm afraid, you lose the battle. When you came to Palestine, this was 1934, mid-1934-- what did you find when you came to Palestine?

Well, I cannot complain about it. We lived pretty nice. We lived in the lower part of a house that my mother shared with another man. They owned it jointly. And I went to school.

The first year, I wasn't too happy because I was sick a good deal. But I went to a commercial school, the Rothschild School. And I took quite a few classes in Hebrew. I learned Hebrew typing-- not shorthand, but Hebrew typing-- plus a lot of the other subjects. But as I say, I missed out because I was sick so much the first year. And I got a job with Barclays Bank at the end of December 1935.

How did you manage? When you left Germany and went to England, did you know English?

No, only school English. I managed between the dictionary and other books. And when you're a child, you pick it up pretty fast.

And what happened when you went to Palestine?

That was a different story. With German, you got along pretty good, also with a certain amount of Yiddish, which I didn't speak. But the Ivrit, I found a little difficult, didn't make out too well. But in the Rothschild School, they spoke partly English, partly Ivrit. But there was ostracism. There were another German girl. And the Palestinian girls would not speak to us. So most of the time that we were in school, there was no communication between us. The Germans were hated. They were sort of the interlopers.

How did this make you feel? You had to leave-- or you left Germany basically due to Nazi-- the Nazis making you feel unwanted. And here in Israel, you felt the same thing as a German.

Well, I guess, when you're a child, you learn to take it. You don't pay that much attention to it. Besides, I was in school only for a year.

Was there ever any conversation with these girls, trying to explain to them that you were Jewish?

No, because they wouldn't speak English. And since I didn't speak enough Ivrit-- I mean, I spoke enough to get by, but not really to make my feelings understood. So the other German girl and I, we stuck together.

How long did you stay in Palestine?

Two and a half years.

And you mentioned that-- did you work?

Yeah.

You worked for Barclays Bank, you said. After the two and a half years, what made you decide to re-emigrate?

I didn't decide, my mother did. She didn't like it over there. But she didn't like it over here, either. So you take your pick.

But she decided to come to the United States from-- directly from Palestine. Was it easy, at that point, to come to the United States from Palestine?

No. No, as a matter of fact, the Puerto Ricans don't realize how much easier they have it than we had it. No, you had to have an affidavit. And your relatives here had to at least take the pledge that they were completely responsible for you. You would not be a burden on the government.

And after you came here, you had to apply for your first papers. You also had to take citizenship. And you had to learn how to read and write English. You had to pass a test. And as I say, when you came here, you had to make sure that you had some kind of employment.

How did your mother earn a living in Palestine?

She really didn't. She owned, also, part of a house. And well, yes, she did. She took in boarders at noontime. She used to cook luncheons and dinners. And then, as I say, she owned a part of a house. So she had an income from that.

But of course, life in those days was very inexpensive. You didn't have any frills like you have here. You went to work, you got up in the morning, you went to work, and you came home at night, and you sat on your balcony, and you read, or you went for a walk until we had trouble with the Arabs. And life was simpler.

What kind of trouble was there with the Arabs in those days?

Well, the shooting.

Even in 1935?

Right-- '35, '36, '37.

How about the British? What kind of relationship was there?

Well, it was the usual relationship. I worked with a lot of English people in the bank. But of course, they used to look down on us. And otherwise, we got along pretty well with them.

In what sense do you mean looked down on you?

Well, you were still-- being that it was a colonial empire, you were the little nothing. And the British were the big ones.

Did they realize that you were from Germany?

They didn't ask us too many personal questions. I mean, it was on the questionnaire when you first applied for a job.

When you first came here, by this time, you were, let's say, 1919 to 1936--

18.

--18, right. How did you manage the first few days when you got here?

I was extremely lucky. I got a job with the Barclays Bank in New York City the first day I came here.

So it was basically through what we would call today a transfer?

Right, right. But it was only a summer job. And it was given to me as such, for six months.

Where did you-- when you came off, did you come by boat?

Yes.

Where-- when you got off the boat in New York, where did you live?

The first 10 days in Connecticut with our sponsors. They were my mother's cousins. And then in the city, 107th Street.

By this time, I take it, language was not a barrier.

Right.

Did you ever consider going back to school.

I did.

You did go back to school?

No, I did consider. But it was too difficult since I worked five days a week. Sometimes-- no, we worked five and a half days. And I would have had to go to school not like you do now, that you only go for a couple of hours. I would have had to go every night from 6:00 to 10:00. There would have been no time for homework so I couldn't do it. We had no reciprocity in those days, that you get your equivalent exam.

While you were-- how did you try and set up a social life? Where did you meet your friends?

Oh, I used to like to go hiking. And I joined a hiking group. And before that, I didn't seem to have too much trouble. Somehow, I was introduced to young men. And I never had much trouble socially.

What kind of hiking group did you join?

Well, the man was first with the Aufbau. It's a German-language newspaper. They call it Aufbau New World Club. And then afterwards, he made himself independent. And I went with him for quite a long time, about three years.

So in other words, it was basically a German Jewish group?

Right. But there were others too, I mean, not just Germans, there were Czechs and Austrians. But the main language that we had in common was German.

Today, in your life today, do you still have-- are most of your friends of the German Jewish or German-speaking Jewish community or Americans, American-born?

Mixed, I would say, but still more Europeans, I would say.

Majority still Europeans.

Yeah.

Why do you think that is so?

Well, as you get older, you don't make friends that easily. And unfortunately, some of your friends move away. Some of your friends die. And I guess we all have a tendency to stay within our own sphere, upbringing, background. But I get along just as well with Americans as I do with the Europeans. There's no difference there.

After this job in Barclays-- you mentioned it was only a summer job-- how did you go about getting another job?

Well, in those days, it wasn't as simple as now. I went to an employment agency. And I got a job with a German newspaper, mostly typing the stuff that you would run off nowadays on machines, typing form letters and so on. And I stayed with them six months. Then I had enough.

What kind of German newspaper?

I don't know what they call it now.

I mean, not the Staats-Zeitung.

No, no, no, it was-- I couldn't even tell you anymore. And after that, I was out of work for a summer. And then I worked for a company where the main office was based in Berlin, Germany. But they had a subsidiary here. And I worked for

them up until Pearl Harbor. And then it was out.

When you say you worked for a company that was German-based, this was a non-Jewish company?

Right.

How did they react toward you-- they knew you were Jewish?

They didn't care because they had all different personnel there. Well, by that time, since it was kind of hard to find a job, I decided, I was not going to be Jewish anymore. So I told them I was Protestant. I had to have a job after being out for so many months.

Do you think that made a difference in there?

Sure, it made a difference, let's face it. The prejudice is there. It's still there today. But today, they don't ask you. Maybe they don't like your nose and they want to employ you. But in those days, on the unemployment application, you had to put down what your religion was and what your background was. There was no way of getting away from that. And it made it hard.

When-- as you were earning a living in New York--

If you can call it earning a living.

I mean, the pay wasn't so good.

The pay was not good, no.

--you mentioned that you had learned to become a typist and stenographer. Were you as good in English as you were in--

Well, I had taken it up in Germany--

--Hebrew?

--I had also taken up German stenography and typing. But no, my Hebrew could not apply.

But you were you were proficient enough in English by that time?

Oh, yeah, oh, yes. I worked in-- when I was in Palestine--

That's right.

--we were all typing in English.

While-- when you said up to Pearl Harbor, why did this job end at the time of Pearl Harbor?

Well, when the war broke out, they couldn't keep the office open anymore here. And they definitely could not employ somebody who was not a German. So being Jewish, you were not German. And I was not naturalized yet.

Right, OK. That's like the men faced with enemy aliens.

That's exactly what we were. We were enemy aliens. But then the trouble started here too. You suddenly became an enemy alien. And it was very hard to get employment. I finally ended up with cop recovery. It was not the civil service exactly, it was something less than civil service. But I worked for them for quite a long time.

When you-- well, the first time you heard the word enemy alien, what did you think of that?

I guess I was ready to spit in somebody's face. It wasn't a very nice term. But on the other hand, I can understand, too, when there are politics involved that you can't make any difference. The German is the German is the German. After all, you can't tell whether he's infiltrating or not. Since he had the Bund here, I could have been a very good spy too. I don't blame the Americans for feeling the way they did.

Were you here at the time-- were you in the United States at the time of Kristallnacht?

Yes. Did you have contact with people in Germany at this time?

I had relatives. But I had two aunts. But I couldn't tell you what they were doing at that time. I really don't know. Was there any connection at that time?

1937?

But the war wasn't on yet.

No.

We really didn't-- I don't remember that we had much contact.

What I was really going to ask is were you aware, in America, of what was going on?

We only knew about Kristallnacht. And we knew about the persecution. But we knew nothing about concentration camps or how they were being used. Now, I had an uncle who was in the concentration camp. And they beat him up. He was in for six months. And shortly before he died, they let him out in order not to take the responsibility. But we really-- we knew nothing about the-- what went on after. And I think most of the trouble really started after the war broke out.

Oh, yeah, it didn't start till a little bit later.

But I don't remember too much contact. I know, there was a letter that my one aunt wrote from the concentration camp. But things before the war were a little better than when the war started. I think they treated them a little better.

As you-- you mentioned that you were living on 107th Street. Did you continue? Is that where you were living through the '30s and early '40s, let's say?

No, we moved from 107th Street to 112th Street and to 111th Street. Then we moved out to Sunnyside. And then after I got married, we moved to Newport, Rhode Island. That's where my husband was stationed. And as I got my citizenship papers, I also was able to get a job in the Navy, in the civil service.

Before you moved to Newport, did you notice the numbers of refugees that were coming to New York? Were you surprised at the number?

No. They didn't come at that time. They didn't come until-- usually, until about after '45, when the war was stopped.

I meant the number of German Jews who were coming to New York. Did you notice?

Well, they didn't get-- the ones with the numbers did not get out of camps until after the war.

Yeah, but I meant even before. I meant, the people--

No, the ones with numbers, they didn't get out of concentration camps.

I meant the ones who didn't go to camps, the ones who came--

Oh, no, they didn't have numbers on.

No, no, I said, did you know the numbers, the amounts of people?

Oh, you mean the amount of people. Oh, I thought you meant the numbers here. Oh, I see. Well, actually, not that many, no. I really can't say. I mean, my mother's friends had come here about the same time that we came. And there really weren't that many people. And most of them came after.

At that time, there weren't too many coming in.

There weren't that many coming in.

During the war, it was different. Only those who--

Everybody laughed at us when we left Germany. And everybody thought we were crazy. But by the time the others wanted to get out, they couldn't.

That's right.

Now, I have relatives all over the world who just happened to get out by the skin of their teeth. And most of my older aunts and uncles, they all died in camps.

When you say, they laughed at you and thought you were crazy to leave, that's generally the--

That was the general attitude.

--what happened. But did your mother think-- did your mother-- how do you attribute her-- do you attribute her move to foresightedness? Or do you--

No, strictly to her friends. My mother would never have left. As a matter of fact, my mother didn't want me to leave either. She figured, she would like to have one child with her.

Did you mention that about Milton.

What?

How he was persecuted at school.

He was very persecuted. He happened to be very smart.

This is your brother?

Yeah.

He was very Jewish-looking.

Yeah, well, he was very Jewish-looking. And he probably would have gotten it. They used to beat him up.

He was older than you?

Yeah, by three years.

What did happen to him in school?

Well, they probably would have beaten him up if we hadn't left. But since we left, nothing happened.

Was it usual-- you mentioned this friend of your mother's who was a Zionist. Was it usual for-- did you know many people who were Zionists at the time?

No, not really. I would say one thing I found, that the German Jews were a lot more religious than the Jews over here, no comparison. But I really didn't know many Zionists.

When your mother got to Israel, did she-- after having been a Zionist and believing--

She wasn't a Zionist. She only went to please her friend.

I see. My mother was never a Zionist. But she was very good-- she was very religious. She kept a kosher household. And she was what you would call a good woman.

When you look back at her reaction, how do you feel she felt about Palestine?

My mother was really only happy in Germany. And she was not happy in Palestine. But she also wasn't happy here. And that, I think, has a lot to do with age. People in their 40s and 50s just didn't take to the other countries the way young people did.

And unfortunately, she influenced me to a great deal too. I was never happy over there, either, because-- maybe because of her influence. I think, if I had gone to a kibbutz, I probably would have been much happier. There would have been something to give of yourself. But just an ordinary job, it's-- it wasn't the same as doing what the young people were doing at that time.

Right. In looking back, do you feel that you had the same-- do you feel that you had an opportunity here in this country?

No, I would say, not the same opportunity I would under ordinary circumstances have had over there because over there, I would have been able to finish my education. Also, I wasn't a good student. But over here, I really didn't have a chance. And I must say another thing. In the '30s, the role of a woman was entirely different from the role now.

I feel, I would like to live that part of my life over. But I would live it differently. But this has a lot to do with the emancipation of women. In the 1930s, you went to work and-- until you met a nice young man. And then you got married. And you retired from work. And you brought up your children. And nobody thought it was a disgrace to be a housewife.

In the 1930s? That lasted a lot longer than the 1930s.

But well, nowadays, it's sort of a shameful thing for a woman to say, I'm just a housewife. And most everybody gives themselves a different title. Now--

Specialist homemaker.

Well, right. But I would say that I did miss out on a lot of things, primarily because of financial reasons. I mean, you did need money to get someplace. And we just didn't have it. But then few people in the 1930s actually had money to get someplace. And later on, it was really a matter of making money. You didn't have money to spend on the private education. So at least we didn't have it. Maybe some people came with money. We didn't.

Do you think that-- as a parent, do you think that you are a different parent than some of the parents who are, let's say, the American-born parents of your children's friends?

I don't know. I think a parent is a parent. I will say one thing. I think the Americans ask for more than Europeans did. But we've caught up.

You think? In what sense do you mean ask for?

More material things. And the women, I think, demand more than we used to demand. Also, an American woman is equal with the husband, whereas in Europe, especially in Germany, the woman was quite subservient. The man in the house was the boss. What he said went. That was the one thing that I appreciated.

It's the thing you noticed, right?

I still notice it amongst a lot of our patients. I notice how the-- how subservient the women are when the husbands are still around.

Oh, what should I-- have you ever gone back to Germany?

Yes, last year.

The first time?

No. We had made two tours through American Express. But at that time, we just went with the group in the bus through parts of Germany. But last year, for the first time, we went back to Munich. And I had no feelings either way. It was-- I couldn't say I liked it. I couldn't-- I mean, I like beauty, the nature, the beautiful things that are there.

But as far as the people were concerned, I had no animosity. And I had no particular liking. They were people, just like any other people. And it is-- amongst the young people, it is a different generation. And I don't believe that you can hold the young people responsible for what their parents did.

Did you ever meet any friends that you knew from when you were a student in Munich?

I don't think so.

You didn't, I did.

No, my husband did. I didn't. I met a girl from England when we went to England two years ago.

No, but nobody from when you were in the Lyceum? Did you go back to your home? You mentioned that you were--

We couldn't find it. We also didn't have enough time. But as I say, I like the beauty. But the people-- I know one thing. I think the older generation that-- our age, maybe if they had to do it again, they probably would do it again. After all, there is a neo-Nazi movement. Maybe they wouldn't kill them in the ovens.

But I'm sorry, but the antisemitism is there. That is not going to change. It has never changed. When my mother was a young girl, they used to call her names because she-- god knows. These are things that aren't going to go away, not overnight. And the element of Jews they have over there now is not a very good element.

You mentioned, also-- I want to go back just for a minute-- that when you got married, you went to Rhode Island. There, you were basically not in contact with the same group of people.

Right. Well, let me tell you, it was very rough, very rough. We were together with New Englanders. I worked in the legal office. And they had never seen a German Jewish girl, let alone a Jewish girl-- I mean, German was bad enough, but German Jewish was impossible.

They too ostracized me. They wouldn't talk to me, not until after I got pregnant. Then somehow, the pregnancy seemed to melt them down. And we became very good friends. I worked up until three weeks before my son was born. But New Englanders are hard to take.

When you say the German Jewish was impossible, could you explain that a little bit?

Well, coming from Europe, they've never seen a European, most of them. And on top of it, being Jewish, they'd never met a Jew. And I guess whatever they had heard about Jews was bad.

It's an impossible situation. At that time, the war was on.

Right.

How did the fact that-- did they know you spoke German?

I don't know. I mean, we-- they did it. I mean, we never spoke German together on the base because there was no reason for us to speak German there.

Well, what I was after was how did they handle that dichotomy of being-- here, the Germans were enemies, and yet you were Jewish.

Well, that's something that until-- [AUDIO OUT]

--been there a few weeks. I just said to my husband, I'm not staying here. I says, I'm going back to New York. And I guess, I was so disgusted that I kind of brought it out in the open there. And we talked about things. But as I say, it took quite a few months until we really became friendly.

When you say you brought it out in the open, you brought it out in the open with them?

With them.

There were about 20 of us in the legal office. And it's a terrible thing when you have 19 around you who ostracize you and won't speak to you. I mean, my blood isn't any different from theirs.

Right. What-- how did they react when you brought it up?

I think they were dumbfounded.

How did you bring it up?

Well, I told them that I thought it was time that we all talked. And I couldn't stay in the office under those circumstances. And then we talked about it. And they explained that they had never met a Jewish person. And they'd certainly never met anybody German. And up in New England, life was so different. The people you meet are so different.

Especially in those days, there was pre-skiing, they hadn't seen many Europeans. And it came out. And I guess they realized after a while that you have to learn to mingle with others too. After all, there were colored people in the Navy too.

What made you realize that that was the problem?

I really don't know. I guess, when you're together with people day in, day out, it's-- something's bound to happen.

No, I was wondering if there was anything that they said or--

No, they just wouldn't speak to me.

--there was any way that you would know that that was--

I would have my lunch alone. And nobody spoke to me. And you can't work under conditions like that. If you work in a one-girl office, all right. There's nobody else to speak. But you work together with 19 other people, there must be somebody that wants to say a word to you.

Let me ask you-- this is a little tough, but in terms of ostracism, I mean, you were a young girl when you felt the ostracism in Germany. And you felt it in Israel. And then when you came here, you felt it. How did you deal with that?

Well, my life has been, unfortunately, quite a bit of ostracism. When I was in the children's home, the girls from the school wouldn't invite me to their house. It was like, you're beneath me. And I can't invite anybody who doesn't have their own home. So I was used to it. You learn to deal with things the way you have to in order to survive.

Looking back now, I think, I did pretty well considering. But it isn't always easy. It's-- I guess, I was strong enough to be able to overcome it. Maybe somebody else wouldn't have been able to handle it. But I had no choice, no matter, in order to survive, I had to make the best of it. I had to say, well, this is what I have to do.

Do you think that when you said that you were so disgusted in Rhode Island, do you think that was kind of a-- I don't know, I'm just trying to imagine myself. It's a hard thing to deal with. Do you think that that was kind of a last straw?

Well, I guess, maybe, I could understand it, especially during the war. I can understand that-- how people felt. And there has to be a certain hatred. I mean, we started to hate the Japanese suddenly. I'd never met a Japanese in my life-- or like in New York, they hated the colored so much. When I was in a children's home, we happened to have a nice colored Jewish fellow. And we treated him. No, you can't think about this.

No, no, I'm not-- no, no, no, I'm just surprised that a colored Jewish fellow in the children's home in Germany?

Yeah, right. I know, it seems very strange. I have no idea how he ever got there. But his name was Salazar. But he was very nice.

I never heard you mention that.

A lot of things you don't know. He was very nice, easy to get along with. But we didn't make him feel the way they make the colored feel here. And I must say, also, when I came over here, there was not this antagonism against the colored as there is now. Maybe because there weren't that many. Most of them were confined to Harlem. And the colored knew their place. But things now are different.

When you left Rhode Island, where did you go?

Unfortunately, we had to split up. My husband went to Shoemaker, California, and I went back to New York.

Why did--

My husband got transferred out there for nothing.

Why did you have to come back to New York?

Well, the family didn't want me to go out to Shoemaker. And I wasn't strong enough at that time to make the decision for myself. I guess, also, I had never been on a plane. And I didn't cherish the idea of flying.

You did mentioned that you had a little boy in the meantime.

Yeah, well, right.

Right, he was-- oh, getting back to the little boy. You felt that the pregnancy broke down a lot of barriers.

It did.

After you had the baby, did you see these women?

Yes. We did.

Still? They used to come to the apartment. And we had nice little gatherings at night. It was really nice.

And they were still working? They were not home with--

They were still working.

I was the first one of the whole bunch to get pregnant.

When you came back to New York with your little boy, how were you able to support yourself?

Well, through my husband, the Navy paid. And I was living with my mother, plus what we had from when we got married.

Where were you living, in Washington Heights?

No, in Sunnyside.

That's right. Yeah, OK.

You used to turn a dollar in those days. And the dollar would go quite far.

What did you do for recreation in those days?

At that time? Not much, really, I couldn't go out. You're tied down. Well, I used to go for walks every day. And I had a cousin who was living near. So we were not that intent on what you call recreation, I mean, this business of jogging and all that. To us, that's old hat because it's part of gym. But you didn't go in for recreation the way you do now, this swimming bit and all that. Well, we read a lot. We would go to a museum if you had the opportunity. But mostly, I don't know.

Did you feel-- and looking at your mother, who was middle-aged when she left Germany or--

Yes, she was.

--I don't know, middle age is going further and further away-- but anyway, who was maybe in her 40s when she left Germany.

My mother was [INAUDIBLE] and then is 34-- 46, right.

How did-- how do you feel she adjusted?

She didn't really adjust. My mother just didn't like things too well. Unfortunately, her friendship with her friend broke up too. That's mainly how we came over here, eventually. But my mother had a rough time. She was widowed very early. And she had a rough time of it. And a lot of it rubbed off on me, I guess.

I never wanted a house. I was dead set against a house. And I certainly never wanted to live away from people the way we do out here. And a certain discontent-- no, I'm really not a discontented person. But there was some of her ideals and ideas rubbed off on me, which is normal, when you're living home.

Did she ever think that life was better for her in Germany?

She had a struggle of it in Germany too. But I guess, she kind of missed the family. She had two sisters in concentration camp. And the one died. And her brother went to England. The family was torn apart. And it's hard. When you're close with your family, it's hard when suddenly, the family is torn apart. Were they ever reunited or no?

No. We have cousins, two cousins in Argentina, one in South Africa, an aunt and a cousin in England, a cousin in Denver--

And Sweden.

--a cousin in Sweden. I have a cousin here on both my mother's side and my father's side. But we were on good terms with the cousins here. But otherwise, not-- you just don't get to see people anymore. We saw the cousins long after my mother died, the one from South Africa came.

Right, but I meant, as far as her immediate family, those were all sisters and brothers that she-- of hers. In terms of your children, do you think that they-- do you see them as complete Americans?

Very much so. Also, as I say, my oldest son is an oddball. He's not-- he's not your typical young man, let's put it like this. He's a loner. He likes to be alone. And he doesn't mix with people. But the others definitely are.

Most of their friends are-- well, it's true.

They have a lot of non-Jewish friends, let's put it like this.

Well, that's all right.

They get this from the Americans.

Oh, yeah. Oh, you had it off?

You said, why do you think it wasn't a good thing to be a German Jew?

Well, you were hated in your own country. But that hatred, of course, goes way back. When you came over here, you were pretty much hated because every German Jew somehow made it-- by hook or by crook, even if they had to scrub floors, but they made it. And when the other immigrants came, they didn't make it. They went on welfare when welfare started. That is the big difference. We were proud. We wouldn't accept anything. We only wanted that piece of paper so we could come over here.

You mentioned that you had difficulty in getting that affidavit. You said it took a year and a half?

Right. Well, because primarily, as I say, my mother's cousins didn't want us to come here. And the one was quite willing, but not the other one. And the papers had to coincide.

But what quota were you on? When you applied-- do you know this, when you applied for the visa?

Well, I guess you would still consider it the German quota, despite the fact that Hitler made the Jews stateless. I guess it was the German quota.

Sure.

We were not considered Germans anymore.

No, that's right. But I was wondering whether you were considered-- because you were coming from Palestine, whether you were considered-- you weren't British citizens.

No, I think we were what you would call stateless.

You still had a German passport.

Yeah.

German passport.

We never had--

With a J.

You had a passport with a J?

No, because I was too young. I was on my mother's passport.

But she had in on.

No.

She had the J on it.

I think so.

Jews would not have survived it because there was a certain-- well, it's like, I guess, if you-- and the average American knows that the parents or the grandparents come from someplace else.

Right. Pan-Am advertises that all the time.

But I know now, they're advertising Germany. But when I go back to my family, they were as German as can be. I mean, German Jews, but fatherland-- that was the big thing. My father served in World War I with a bum leg. Things were different. Whoever thought that somebody like Hitler would come?

That's right. That's right.

And I always say, people here don't realize, when they've got American citizenship, it's the most precious thing. But they don't. To them, it's nothing. I says, that passport, that opens the door to everything-- well, since you don't have to go over there.

That's right. When you say that-- did you come from an observant home? You mentioned that your mother kept kosher.

My mother kept a kosher household.

Did you belong to a congregation?

Yes. But the congregation was sort of conservative. It was the Dr. Baerwald. He had a congregation here too in New York.

Right. Oh, that's right. Dr. Baerwald came from that village.

Right, right, right. He's the one that married us here too.

Yeah. Let me ask you-- you mentioned that Hitler started in 1923 with the Putsch. What things did you notice, as you were growing up, before he officially came to power in 1933?

You know something? I guess I was kind of dumb. I didn't notice that many things. I mean, I used to notice swastikas here and there and people marching. But being that our life really revolved between school and the children's home, I guess we didn't notice that much. I used to pass that Braune Haus every day when I went to high school after I lived with my aunt.

I had kind of funny upbringing. I was in the children's home. And then I lived with my aunt for half a year and with my mother for half a year. And that last year there, I used to notice a lot. And of course, we all liked the marching. I always say, they could use a little more patriotism over here-- a quarter of what they had over there, if they had here, I think it would make people a little more patriotic.

When you said you enjoyed the marching--

Everybody does-- marching, and flags, and all that. But I knew, at the same time, that it wasn't for us. It's a very strange feeling when you're living in the country, and yet, you know that there are factions and people that really hate you. They don't hate you as a person. They couldn't care less what you are as a person. But they hate you for the religious background.

Did you ever know anybody who was in the Hitler Youth?

I guess most of the kids in the high school in my class, they went into the Hitler Youth later.

Later. But I mean while--

Not while I was in school, no. As I say, I personally can't complain. But it was due mostly to my looks. Now if my brother had been in the same class, he might have suffered much more.

Did you ever see any signs that early Juden Unerwünscht or Juden Verboten?

Yeah, yeah.

Where did you see it?

Sometimes, on the stores, and if they had meetings, they would say, Juden Unerwünscht. But otherwise, I can't say too much. And I must say, even in Palestine, they had a German section, very beautifully kept. And I didn't notice much there. I think, in some ways, you probably had much more antisemitism here. At least a lot of it was hidden.

In Palestine, they had a German section?

They had a German section in Jerusalem, which was beautifully kept.

You mean German non-Jewish?

German Gentiles. They were Protestants, mostly. And they lived in a section by themselves. And we really-- we didn't notice much at that time. Of course, we didn't associate much with them, either.

Did you live in Jerusalem?

Yes. As a matter of fact, I tell you, when the war broke out here, nobody ever went to Yorkville. We didn't even go to Yorkville before the war. It was-- you didn't want anything to do with the Germans because you figured, they could start the same nonsense here, which they did when they had the Bund.

I thought you had two passports. This one is--

You mentioned that it was a shock when you found out that--

You couldn't stay in your own country, and you had to leave because of persecution. And I remember, my mother said, in the train, not to say anything, don't open your mouth, don't answer. I'll do all the talking. It's kind of a shock. It's a shock at age 14. I can imagine, it must be much more of a shock when you're in your 30s and 40s.

This was when you left Germany to go-- how did you go to England?

Went by train and by boat-- a pretty rough ride.

I remember that. You also mentioned-- how do you feel-- what do you think of--

In the closet, downstairs, in my work room.

You meant-- you also said something about it being hard not knowing where you belong. How does a child feel about that, not--

Bad. I did, at least. I think belonging somewhere is a big thing. And especially in my case, where I wasn't brought up at home, where I was mostly brought up in the children's home, it's-- you would like to belong somewhere. It makes it kind of hard. I felt that, really, I didn't have much of a home until I got married. And my mother and I never got along because of that. I felt that she didn't have to put us in a children's home. She could have kept us home. And it left quite a few marks.

Sure. Sure.

I think my husband always thinks that my sensitivity is probably due to that. It changes your character so. But I can stand on my own two feet when I have to. There's very little you could do to me now that would bother me too much.

You think that's a holdover from there?

Sure. You learn to-- well, I guess, I got my first taste of it in the children's home, the fact that you had to learn to survive. That was-- as I say, they were good to us. But there was no love given. Now, a child of seven needs love. No matter what anybody says, it's-- it has to be there. You've got to be able to hug and kiss somebody and know that you're loved. You have a warm place.

And when you come into a children's home, there was nobody to hug and kiss you. And you have to do it-- you have to bury it all within yourself. It has to leave something. And you feel that you never want to be hurt like that anymore. You want to go through life. And you say to yourself, nobody's going to do that to me anymore. Nobody's going to hurt me anymore. And I can take it. I can make the best of it under any circumstances.

Chances are, if I had gone into a concentration camp, I might have survived by pure tenacity, just by saying, well, I made it this far. And I'm going to get through this. Of course, then, you never know how your stomach reacts to concentration camp food and things like that. That's how my aunt died-- and the beatings, and the dirt, and all that. You take a person, reduce a person to nothing suddenly.

That's right. That's right. Did you feel-- someone mentioned the word non-- that they felt that they were a non-person.

Yes, very much so. Especially when you're brought up like I was. You very often feel like you're a non-person. You don't really count. And you get yourself through life. And very often, this is what happens to criminals. They have a bad childhood. And they remember that.

Do you think the fact that you had to leave so many places added to that?

Probably.

You had to leave Germany and England.

And especially because I was never asked. Whereas, in America, you do ask your children. Very often, you discuss things. In our house, things were not discussed, you were told. But that used to be-- in most good German households, you were told. It was wasn't much different in your house, was it?

Not quite as bad, no.

But in my family, this was-- as I say, the good German child was seen, but not heard. And certainly, your opinion was not asked.