

IRMGARD HORN
RG-50.150. 0018. Recorded 1993

Irmgard was born in Cologne in 1909. She had a brother and a sister, and her father had a stationery factory. The family was not region although they belong to a congregation on Rohnstrasse led by Dr. Kober. Irmgard doesn't remember any problems with antisemitism when she was growing up. She married her first husband, Max Ehrman, in 1932 and moved to Hamburg. After Hitler started gaining power they wanted to emigrate. Irmgard learned how to make hats for the purpose of having a trade. Initially her husband didn't want to leave. His parents and his sisters and their husbands were able to move to Luxembourg and they were able to keep their money, but still her husband didn't want to move

Finally, a non-Jewish husband of a friend told his Jewish friends to leave Germany in June 1938. They decided to go to South Africa where her mother was born. An uncle in Johannesburg sent the required affidavits the to go to Swaziland (they weren't allowed into South Africa). however, her parents didn't want to go. On Nov 10, after they already had their passports, the Nazis came to their apartment and arrested her husband. She found out he had been sent to Oranienburg. She went to the police station and managed to get her husband released by promising that they had tickets out of the country and the SS could keep all their belongings. Her husband came out to the camp very thin and ill and took months for him to heal.

They went to Cologne and then Luxemburg and convinced his parents to come to South Africa. His parent and grandmother went on the ship. They get off in Capetown, but Irmgard and her husband had to go to Mbabane, Swaziland, where they stayed from April 1939 until August 1940 when they went to the US. Parents were taken care of by the uncle in Johannesburg. In Mbabane, which Irmgard describes as very primitive, they were restricted in their activities because they were German and the British ruled Swaziland, her husband got a job in Esurene, about 7 miles away, as a hotel manager. There were about 60 Jewish refugees in Mbabane, including a Doctor Mastbaum who was a leader in the field of Malaria. Irmgard describes life there with wild animals, locusts, earthquakes. In May 1940 they learned the Nazis had captured Luxemburg where Max's whole family lived; they found out in July 1948 from the Quakers that the whole family was dead. Her husband then committed suicide.

Irmgard never went back to. Germany, nor did she receive any reparations. Since she already knew English she did not have too much trouble adjusting to life in New York. She has a close group of German Jewish friends and remarried.