

Erna Schutz  
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Q. When and where were you born?

A. In Konigshutte, in Germany.

Q. Did you grow up in Konigshutte?

A. No, we moved to several places and actually grew up in Hindenburg, in Upper Silesia, where my parents manufactured liquor and they had a big business there.

Q. Drinking liquor?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that an area for that—was it an unusual business?

A. No. It was not unusual and this was a mining district and the miners, when they came up they like to drink. So you found these *gaststette* almost everywhere.

Q. About how many people did he employ?

A. Well, he had about eight people and he did a lot himself.

Q. Could you tell me a little bit about your education?

A. I went to school, what you called a Lyceum, and I finished after ten years and I got a very good education. My parents gave me every opportunity—I played the piano, I learned to sing, I could ski, I could skate. They gave me every opportunity to learn sports, to everything.

Q. While you were in school, did you have mostly Jewish friends?

A. We were three Jewish girls in our class—one was a redhead, one was dark and I was blond. Three out of thirty. The rest was mostly Catholic and a few Protestants.

Q. How would you describe your relationship with the non-Jewish children?

A. We were very close. There was no anti-Semitism at this time. They were very nice and the teachers were very nice. If you were a good student, you had a good standing in the class.

Q. What did you hope to become after you finished school?

- A. I wanted to study but that time, we didn't have a Gymnasium for girls and in order to study, you had to make the *Matura*.
- Q. Like the *aribtur*?
- A. *Arbitur*, right. And you could only do it in the neighboring cities, not in Hindenburg where I used to live. So I would have to get up at 5:00 in the morning and come home late and this was very inconvenient so I finished my school and went later to a business school and learned how to type and steno and everything that goes with it.
- Q. When you finished the business school, did you take a job?
- A. Yes, I took a job in Breslau for a short time as a secretary.
- Q. How far was Breslau? Were you able to commute?
- A. Breslau was the capital of Silesia. No, that was not commuting. I had to move to Breslau.
- Q. Did you live in Breslau then by yourself?
- A. Yes. Later on I got married, my husband was from Hindenburg, too, and he came to Hindenburg to visit and he met me and we got married and moved to Breslau.
- Q. As a young married couple, did you participate in the cultural activities?
- A. We belonged to the B'nai Brith and we went to meetings but I had two children shortly after we got married and we also traveled a lot.
- Q. By cultural events, I was including opera and concerts...
- A. Oh, yes, yes, yes. We had a subscription for the opera. We had a subscription for the theaters. There were two theaters, one opera and one for lighter music-operettas. And we went twice a week to the theater.
- Q. You mentioned that you traveled a lot. What type of business was your husband in?
- A. He was a lawyer.
- Q. Did he practice in Germany only or internationally also?
- A. In Germany only.
- Q. What type of law did he practice?

A. He was not specialized but he had many criminal cases.

Q. In 1933 when Hitler came to power, how was your husband affected?

A. Well, it didn't affect us because we didn't take this matter seriously like most unfortunately. Everything went as usual. Then it started—his practice wasn't so good anymore. The gentile clients didn't come. So we gave up our beautiful apartment and moved downtown and had the practice and our apartment together.

Q. Were most of your husband's clients gentile?

A. Yes, definitely.

Q. Was he allowed to practice as far as the German government...

A. Oh, yes. Most of the younger lawyers were not allowed to practice anymore but he was one of the older lawyers and he was allowed to practice until he left.

Q. As a lawyer, how did your husband feel about the belief that Hitler wouldn't last long?

A. Well, he felt the same as I did otherwise we would have left earlier probably. And I still had my parents in Upper Silesia in Boiten. Of course, we were thinking of emigrating and we prepared already. We got affidavits from distant relatives here and little by little prepared to emigrate.

Q. When did you first think about emigrating?

A. I think after Kristallnacht.

Q. But up to 1938...

A. No, we wanted to emigrate earlier but for some reason—my parents were still there and I don't know—there is something in a human being that they push things away, the bad things away and hope that things will take a turn for the better.

Q. How did you notice the difference in the gentile attitude towards the Jews?

A. Oh yes. That was very noticeable right away. They were not so friendly anymore. I could only have a maid who was over 45. And the milkman was not so friendly anymore and the grocer was not very friendly anymore. And later, much later, there were certain hours when the Jews could shop and there wasn't much left then but this was when my husband was in Cuba already.

- Q. You mentioned that you had two daughters. Were they in school at this time?
- A. Yes. They were in private Jewish school—that time already.
- Q. How did you shelter them from the unfriendliness?
- A. That time they were about 10- 12 years old –they didn't complain too much and since they went to a private Jewish school, they didn't get in contact with the other children.
- Q. Did you belong to a congregation at this time?
- A. Yes, we did but as I said, we were members of the B'nai Brith.
- Q. Did you notice when you were in the synagogue or at the B'nai Brith meetings, were most of the people talking about the *Auswanderung* or did the rabbi give...
- A. This was the only conversation. We saw my relatives packing and going—to South America, to Shanghai and we, of course, planned, too. My brother-in-law, he was a ship doctor with the Nord Deutsche Lloyd and he wrote to the line—yes, he did them a great favor. When he was a ship doctor during World War I and he was that time in China with a ship from the Nord Deutsche Lloyd and he was able to take all the silver and brought it to a forwarded and asked him to hide it until somebody, the firm will claim it. He really saved the whole silver for the Nord Deutsche Lloyd and they didn't forget it. And when he was ready to go—he was a doctor in Berlin, with his wife and two little boys, and he got his visa right away to Cuba and took one brother along and my husband with one daughter.
- Q. Was this after Kristallnacht?
- A. No. I think that was shortly before the Kristallnacht because my husband left after Kristallnacht but he didn't go together with them. He went separately to Cuba.
- Q. What happened to you on Kristallnacht?
- A. Early in the morning, the bell rang and a woman came. She was my husband's client and she was very grateful to him and she warned him about what was going to happen—that they arrest the Jews and bring them to a concentration camp and things like this. So my husband dressed and took Laurie along, my daughter, and she carried a briefcase and in the briefcase he had a nightshirt and some toilet articles and they went to the station but they didn't go the main street, they went around and came to the station. My husband went to my parents, to Boiten. There, my father was imprisoned already and everything—my parents' apartment, it was just unbelievable. The chandeliers they took down and smashed them to pieces. Everything was broken. It was terrible. Even my mother's needlework,

they pushed a bayonet through the needlework. What they did to the china—everything was completely destroyed—this apartment. And this is when my parents moved to my apartment in Breslau.

Q. But your husband went to your parents' apartment...

A. Yes. He went there and my mother had gone to the old age home to find shelter—she had a sister there and there was a decent gentile man who bought my parents' house and he was a very decent man and he was at the station when my husband came. He must have called to my husband "Are you Dr. Schutz?" And my husband answered and this man took him to my mother and he brought my husband to the *altersheim* (old age home) because my husband didn't know where they were.

Q. Your husband was saved...

A. He was not taken thanks to that woman who warned him. And he came home about three days later.

Q. Let me just go back for a moment, when you were in Breslau did you ever see signs *Juden Unerwünscht*.

A. Oh sure. Many signs.

Q. Did your husband feel, due to these signs and his practice falling away, the pressure to emigrate?

A. Yes, of course.

Q. When did you apply for a visa?

A. We applied very early for a visa. My mother-in-law had very distant relatives—they had a very big factory here—Kleinert—they made the shields and Mr. Kleinert gave a visa for my husband. And it was usually like that—if the husband went to America, he was allowed to write for his wife to come, too, and she got the visa.

Q. Was America the first place you considered?

A. Yes. My husband went to Cuba but I came directly to the United States because I had the American visa already from Berlin.

Q. I meant whether America was the only place you considered going?

A. Yes. We wanted to go to the United States.

- Q. Why did you choose the United States?
- A. We thought that this would be the land of milk and honey—this is the best land.
- Q. Your husband had been quite successful in Germany. Do you remember his feelings when his business started going down?
- A. Of course, he was depressed and it was really terrible. In the end, nobody came anymore and the only way was out.
- Q. You mentioned that you arranged for your husband to get out first. He had his affidavit and how did he arrange to leave for Cuba?
- A. At that time I don't know how he got passage for himself and for my daughter and I brought him to Hamburg to say goodbye to them.
- Q. That must have been a very difficult day for you.
- A. Yes, it was. Crying a lot—to say goodbye to him and my daughter because I didn't know if I ever see him again. But in all the excitement, I didn't forget to take all my jewelry and slip it into his suitcase on the boat.
- Q. Was he only able to leave with the 10 RM?
- A. Yes. He took very little along. I think I arrived here with \$3.50. That was what they allowed to take out. And later on, when I packed and when my husband was gone already, I was ready to go, I brought my furniture with me but I had to pay a duty so that I could take my own furniture out.
- Q. When your husband had booked passage for Cuba, was that the only way...?
- A. He wanted to go with his brothers and through his brother who had some connections, he got the visa to go to Cuba with his daughter.
- Q. After your husband left, how did you manage?
- A. We were separated for about 9 months. I lived with my parents and so it wasn't so bad—I wasn't alone and with my youngest daughter.
- Q. How did your parents, who were getting older...?
- A. They weren't too old. They were 64 and 66 at that time.
- Q. Did they try to emigrate?

- A. You know how people are—when it comes to money, my father was a self-made man. He started out with nothing and became a very wealthy man. He had his house and his factory. So he was not so eager to leave. He got an affidavit very early and put it away and when he needed it, it wasn't good anymore and they put him at the end of the list. There was no hope that he could come direct to America so when we were in America—when we both were here, we sent my parents a visa and paid \$500. for the visa which was a lot of money at that time but unfortunately, they didn't let them out anymore. It was too late.
- Q. How did you emigrate to America?
- A. That was quite interesting. I left I think September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1940. The only way was via Russia and Japan to come to America and the *Hilfsverein* in Breslau helped me to arrange that adventurous trip.
- Q. September 1940 was a year after the war broke out. What were things like for you in Breslau during that year?
- A. It was very bad. It was actually for nobody enough to eat. I remember we once got a goose and had to close the windows so that nobody would smell it—that we have something to eat, and wouldn't come and take it away.
- Q. Were you afraid to go on the streets?
- A. No, it wasn't that bad yet but shortly after I left, they started wearing that yellow star. I didn't have to but very shortly after I left, they started.
- Q. Were your children still able to go to the Jewish school, your daughter?
- A. Yes. My daughter went to the Jewish school, not a private school anymore but the Jews had a Jewish school where they got their lessons.
- Q. Was she at all frightened?
- A. She was not too frightened because she was among Jews—Jewish teachers.
- Q. How did you explain all this to her?
- A. I didn't have to explain. She lived through it all and she was a smart child and she noticed everything and this was a daily conversation, you know between us and parents. I didn't have to explain.
- Q. Children like to belong and when she heard things like *Juden Unerwünscht*, how...

- A. She took it for granted already that we must be something different. We didn't look different but she must have felt it that we were different from the crowd.
- Q. How did you arrange for your emigration?
- A. The *Hilfsverein* helped me. The trip was paid for by me in Breslau—the whole trip was paid and they gave us a date and they gave us a time table—what to do and when to leave, where to go and so on.
- Q. Including trains and...
- A. Including trains. The trip was paid for by me in Breslau to the *Hilfsverein*.
- Q. On the day that you left, what were your feelings...
- A. My feelings—I cannot describe it anymore because it was so sad to say goodbye to my parents. Fortunately, there was a visitor, an uncle was there so they were not completely alone when I left. It was such a terrible feeling to say goodbye and my father cried and my mother cried and we all cried and I just told them they will come soon and they shouldn't worry so much, I will see to it that they will come.
- Q. Did you believe that?
- A. Yes, I believed it at the time and I made all the efforts as I said before, I bought the visas for \$500. which, again I repeat myself, was a lot of money. You could buy a house that time for that kind of money.
- Q. Did the Germans make it difficult for you in any way to leave?
- A. No. This trip was arranged and I had no...from Breslau, if there were many people from Breslau who left with me...we were completely separated until the border when we had to cross the German border, then everybody was there. I went alone with my daughter to Berlin and from Berlin we went to Königsberg and from there to the border which was not very far.
- Q. Was this a German train?
- A. No, that train went over Vilna to Moscow. In Moscow we met people who—we had to wait for the trans-Siberian express. The trans-Siberian express left twice a week only so we had to wait for two days for that express and we met a lot of people who used the same route. And they brought us to a very fine hotel in Moscow and we even did some sightseeing. It was a beautiful city with broad avenues—of course, they only showed us the beautiful things in Moscow.



- Q. Were you able to take any money along to pay not for the hotels and the train but for food or anything?
- A. No, we didn't have any money. Later on, I will tell you how we got to a little money.
- Q. When you were in Moscow, and traveling, how did you manage to get food?
- A. Well, there was a dining car in the train and we could get our three meals a day. This was all part of what we had paid to the *Hilfsverein*.
- Q. From Moscow how did you go?
- A. From Moscow, that was very interesting, that was a completely different train. There was always one place short. I guess we were about 80 – 100 people left at the same time. And if we were 100 people, there were 99 seats—one was short. And you can imagine how people were running for their seats. It started awful—that trip—until Moscow, we had second-class—upholstered class. And we thought it would go on like this. But when we came to the trans-Siberian express we noticed that we had *holtz classe* and my daughter and I had the seats in the very last compartment—the very last wagon. So this was a terrible thing because these last wagons were only connected with the trans-Siberian express through a walk and two chains were on either side to hold on. It was really dangerous, to go to the dining car for instance. Later on, I made the acquaintance of the leader of the *intourist* and he was a very kind young man and helped us to get into the main train and there were had separate compartments, my daughter and I. I slept with a woman and two young men and arranged it very nicely. First the women went inside and got undressed—we never got completely undressed. We just kept on our underwear and wore pajamas and then came the young men and slept on the upper berths.
- Q. You said *holts classe*. How would you describe this?
- A. It was very primitive, very old cars, very primitive. It was just impossible to spend there two weeks.
- Q. Were there bathroom facilities?
- A. Yes, but you can imagine with 100 people and the usual travelers—the Russians—how busy these bathrooms were always. The dining room—the facilities were also very primitive. They couldn't do better even if they wanted. If you looked through a glass of tea, it was cloudy. But we didn't complain because we were not spoiled from what we had in Germany and we were happy to be there and we made friends and the trip was quite nice and interesting.

- Q. Were you able to get off the train at all?
- A. No, that was very dangerous to get off the train. People certainly wanted to stretch their legs a little bit when the train stopped after three or four hours when there was a stop. But the trains started very slowly and you didn't hear a whistle—nothing. And all of a sudden, these people had to run to catch the train and get on. I never went out.
- Q. How were you able to make yourself understood? The people running the trains were Russians?
- A. Yes, but they spoke German. And there were a few Russians who traveled with us—doctors, engineers and highly educated people and I must say they were lovely, they were wonderful people and they mostly spoke German. And of course, the leader of the whole transport from *Intourist*, he also spoke German.
- Q. What route did you follow from Moscow?
- A. We went through Tomsk, Omsk, Novosibirsk which is in the Urals, then you come to Asia. After Novosibirsk we traveled hours and hours and hours until the train stopped. And then we came to that famous Baikal Sea. We traveled for a whole day and made only half of that sea. You can imagine how big this was. But the landscape was very beautiful in Siberia. It was September and everything was still green, the woods and forests and it is a beautiful country. Very few houses you saw and when we stopped in one of those little—few stops, the peasants came and offered us to buy some apples and whatever they had—they didn't have much but we didn't have money to buy.
- Q. Was your end stop to be Vladivostok?
- A. No, we went a different way. We went to the Manchukuo border. Manchukuo isn't anymore. It is Korea and China—that time the Japanese, they took the land—they just marched in and made Manchukuo out of a big part of China and the capital was Harbin. When we came to Manchukuo, there is this what I wrote which I could read quickly what happened in Manchuli. Manchuli was the first city in Manchukuo. *Der erste ort war Manchuli...*
- Q. You mention that the women got *holtz*...
- A. Little pieces of wood, like a cushion. It was for the frissure because the Japanese have a very artful hairstyle and so it doesn't go to pieces right away, they sleep with a cushion—a pillow filled with little pieces of wood.
- Q. How did your daughter react to this experience?

- A. Well, she took this in good spirit like a kid, new impressions. There were other children on the train, too, and I hardly saw her during the day.
- Q. You mentioned that you were sleeping 10 together.
- A. Yes, five in each direction—you know, heads together.
- Q. Men and women together?
- A. Sure. We never undressed completely. You'd be surprised how good you can sleep without changing clothes and very often, I noticed that I went to bed with my shoes still on.
- Q. How were these beds set up?
- A. They were against the wall, the beds, and in the evening we let them out and we had cushions and blankets. They were young boys and we always said it has to be clean here. Everything you have to keep law and order here in our compartment.
- Q. What did the other people say about the hotels in Machuli?
- A. They thought it was terrible. Bedbugs and other pleasant things. This was the only clean place—that's why he brought us here. We just happened to be standing there on the corner and waiting and finally he came.
- Q. When you arrived in Harbin...
- A. Let me just tell you a little episode from Harbin. When we arrived in Harbin, there were people there already who left Germany and settled in Harbin. They greeted us when we came and my daughter found a girl she had gone to school with and they were very friendly and brought us to a hotel and we got dinner and they were very helpful and I bought tea, I don't know how I paid for it—but I bought tea and sent it from Harbin to my parents in Breslau. That was the only thing I could send. I remember my daughter had a sore throat and I said for heaven's sake, what are we going to do now? There was a doctor there—a German doctor and he fixed her up somewhere outside in a corner—her fixed her up and she was alright.
- Q. Did they help you while you were in Harbin?
- A. We didn't sleep in Harbin. We arrived in the morning and left in the evening. But they were very friendly and helpful but we had to leave.
- Q. Where did you go from Harbin?

A. From Harbin we went to Manchuli. And that was very funny. In Manchuli they took away the sleeping facilities—the tickets for sleeping cars—and gave us money instead. The *Hilfsverein* or whoever it was, which authority it was, I don't know, took away our sleeping cards and we couldn't sleep anymore for several days—only sitting up. But we had a little money so then we didn't travel like *schnorrers* (beggars). We had money in our hands—maybe if it was a lot, maybe it was ten dollars.

Q. Were you able to use this money in Manchuko?

A. No, we didn't spend money. Everything was paid up. And when we left Manchuko, we went to what is now South Korea and we arrived in Pusan and there we waited for a boat to bring us to Japan. The boat was there and it was really a wonder—the sea was quiet. It is usually a very stormy sea and we came to Shimonoseki. Shimonoseki was one of the places which was bombed from the A-bomb. And there a train was waiting to bring us to Kobe. In the meantime, I was so tired from sitting up for three nights at least, that I said I stay in Kobe and I don't want to travel any further. I want to sleep, I want to sleep. The people said don't do that, don't do that, don't separate yourself from us because we don't know what will happen to you. And in Kobe, I met a friend who was waiting for a boat which would bring her to Manila. Then from Kobe we went to Yokohama. Japan is such a beautiful country. We saw the Fujiyama. It is such a beautiful country—it is like a fairy tale. We boarded the train from Kobe to Yokohama then and there we made friends already and in Yokohama, we went out—we went out to eat and we felt like *menchen* (people) again. Yokohama was a beautiful city and there we got the boat.

Q. Did you have a deadline—did you have to make a certain boat?

A. We better made it because we had to cling to each other.

Q. I meant was there a certain date by which you had to be in Yokohama?

A. Yes, definitely yes. We couldn't take another boat, we had to take that boat.

Q. Was your visa only in effect up to a certain date?

A. Probably. I don't know. I mean there was no rush to go there because the trip took us four week—from Breslau to Seattle—four weeks so there was no other way to go and we had to stick together.

Q. What kind of boat was it that you boarded in Yokohama for America?

A. It was a Japanese boat—the worst you can imagine. We had—there was tourist class and there was second class. We were tourist class, my daughter and I. It was down, you had to go down. This board was loaded with watermelons—but

there was a reason for it. They needed the space—the watermelons they disposed in America and they loaded the boat with iron and scrap metal—things they needed later to declare war on America. They loaded it with material in America—but we had watermelons.

Q. What kind of facilities were there on the boat?

A. It was terrible. I got seasick the very same evening. It was horrible. I was seasick for a few days. I hardly wanted to get up and it was just awful. Finally a gentleman came down, very nice man, and said get dressed and come up. So we went up, my daughter, a child is not so seasick. But I went up and he put me up there on the deck and I felt much better there.

Q. What about the food?

A. The food was horrible. It was unbelievably bad. But this man arranged that I could eat in the second class and then it was much better.

Q. Was it Japanese food?

A. It was a mixture of everything. I don't know that it was Japanese food. I don't think so. The Japanese food I didn't like when I was in Manchuko, in Kobe, in Yokohama—it was kinds of raw fish that they eat and things we were not used to. But of course, in second class the food was much better. I was so happy that I could eat there. Then I wasn't seasick anymore. We got used to it and finally, we approached the American coast and this I never will forget. We were heading for Vancouver and it was so beautiful. There were all these little islands and I must repeat myself, it was like a fairy tale. Pine trees, wonderful pine trees. But when we came to Vancouver, we couldn't leave the boat because we didn't have a Canadian visa—we had to stay on board. Then we came to Seattle, which was our destination.

Q. One thing before we go on to your life in America. How did you find out about arranging for this trip with the *Hilfsverein*?

A. I got a kind of pamphlet where everything was written down. I got it from the *Hilfsverein* and they had everything written down, where we would stop.

Q. But how did you know that this was available through the *Hilfsverein*?

A. That was easy. Everybody went there for information, for everything. And they advised me that that was the only way—the only possibility.

Q. When you arrived in Seattle, were you planning to come right to New York?

A. Yes. My husband lived in New York and he unpacked the life van I had sent with our furniture. So, we were in Seattle for a few days until the money arrived to bring us to New York. This the *Hilfsverein* didn't pay anymore. My husband had to raise the money, somehow and sent us the money and we went for three days and four nights in the train from Seattle to New York—there were no planes then.

Q. I'm sure you didn't want to see another train for a long time.

A. No. I arrived in Penn Station.

#### Tape Turned

Q. After having crossed Europe, Asia and now America, what were your impressions of America?

A. I was stunned. The greatest impression I had was when I went to a supermarket and saw the meat there and the fruit and saw everything and later on, I saw the bread and everything in the wastebasket and I couldn't understand that this would—I really couldn't understand how people could throw food away. I said, my gosh, that must be the land of waste, here.

Q. When did you first go into a supermarket?

A. In Seattle, we could move freely around. We went for walks. Seattle is a beautiful city, as a matter of fact.

Q. How did you make yourself understood?

A. I spoke English. I learned it in school. I also spoke French fluently but unfortunately, I forgot a lot.

Q. So English was not a problem for you...

A. Well, it was a problem, you know. Today I am not perfect. I'm sometimes searching for words, for the right expression.

Q. I want to ask you something in terms of your husband. When did he go to Cuba?

A. He emigrated shortly after the Kristallnacht—he emigrated in February, 1939 and he was in Cuba for nine months and then he came to New York. And I arrived in October.

Q. How did your husband manage to support himself during the early time in New York?

- A. Shall I tell you the truth? I sold things which I sent here. He was not the youngest man anymore. He used to be a lawyer. It was very hard for him to find a job. He sold—when I came I didn't find my silver, my beautiful china. He lived off that—he had to live. He sold the Bechstein baby grand which I had sent—he sold that. Well, I don't blame him and I didn't have so much to clean anymore.
- Q. You were able to send that in a lift?
- A. Yes. And strangely enough, it arrived in August very shortly before the war broke out. Everything came in very good condition—not a cup was broken.
- Q. How did your husband feel—he had been very successful in Europe...?
- A. He was very unhappy. He was VERY unhappy. He really didn't know what to do first and the Council of Jewish Women, what we called the *Hilfsverein* over there, I still remember they were on Times Square was the office and whenever I go—which happens very very seldom to Times Square, I have the funny feeling that we went up there and we hoped to get a job but nothing doing.
- Q. Did your husband have any possibility of going back to school?
- A. My husband was fifty-five years old when he arrived here and he had terrible trouble with the language. We went to Mr. Kleinert, the man who gave my husband the affidavit, and we hoped that he would give him a job but he did not. He had a factory somewhere in Astoria but he did not. He was good enough to give him the affidavit but this was it. And I talked to Mr. Kleinert and I said to him “don't you think it would be better if we leave New York?” because there is actually no chance for my husband to find a job here. He said you're a very smart girl and he arranged it somehow and the Council proposed that we should go to Indianapolis, Indiana—that the money was just on the street—that you just have to bend down and pick it up—it was the right place to go. So after three months in New York and I tried to make a little money by helping out people so we left with our furniture—Mr. Kleinert paid for that—and came to Indianapolis, Indiana.
- Q. How had you tried to help out?
- A. Well, a woman moved in the building and I helped her put the furniture and I worked in her apartment for a whole day—she was out and in the evening, she came back and she gave me one dollar and the way I looked at the dollar—she said this seems to be the first dollar you saw or you earned. And I said yes, you are right, it is the first dollar. But I didn't complain—money was rare.
- Q. Did your husband object to your working?

- A. No. Later on I went, we used to live in Elmhurst, he had an apartment in Elmhurst. Then we took a roomer in, a friend of us and we gave him a room and that helped a little bit to pay the rent. But it was—I couldn't find a job and I was dissatisfied. I wanted to leave New York and then we went to Indianapolis and we stood there for three years. The Council or whatever it was, from the Jewish community, gave me a job with a gentleman—I should cook for him, I should clean the house. I did it for a few weeks but he was a very unpleasant man—he was a refugee as a matter of fact, from Nuremberg—he came here with plenty of money—he had bought a house right away. He was very unfriendly. I had to cook and eat in the kitchen while he ate in the dining room, etc. So, I said to the man who got me the job, "Listen, this is not a job for me. I want to work. I want to do something." He said I have a job for you. You will work for as a biller. Do you know what a biller is? Somebody who writes invoices. I said to him do you think I can do this? He said you will do it. I know a company who is looking for a biller. Well, I was in this country four months. So I went to this gentleman, Mr. Silverman. He was a very nice man and he said can you do some figuring? Oh yes, I said. This was my worst thing in school but I said "Oh yes, I can." So, you can start tomorrow. I was very happy. He also asked me can you type? Yes, I can type. I did the typing with three fingers. I came the next day and everything was very nice but I couldn't read the orders I had to type—the invoices. I couldn't read especially—this was very funny—my boss, his wife, two sisters married two brothers and only the man was—he wanted me to stay and he helped me to learn and to do it. And very often I went by bus from where we lived with tears rolling down my face because these three others were so horrible. But this man kept me for some reason and I made it! I made it! I came home—I made eighteen dollars a week. I came home once, my husband said our troubles are over! I said what is the matter? I rented a restaurant. You will do the cooking and I'm going to help you out—it is a very beautiful restaurant near the railroad station and business is excellent. I said I have to give up my job (dejected). He said yes, you have to give up your job because we want to work on our own now. So, the next day I went to work and I said to Mr. Silverman, I'm very sorry but I have to quit. My husband rented a restaurant and he needs me. Well, he was very mad—he was so annoyed. Finally, he brought me where I had to be—I wrote beautiful invoices—no mistakes and on a billing machine and I quit. The day I quit, there was nobody from the bosses to be seen, nobody was there. I just left. They were so mad at me. After all the trouble they went through, I had to quit. Well, this restaurant we had three weeks. We had it for three weeks. It was terrible. I don't want to go closer into it. It was simply awful. We couldn't manage that and nobody came in—no customer came in anymore. After three weeks, we gave up.
- Q. What kind of experience did you have to cook in something like this?
- A. I could cook. The food wasn't so bad. But you need experience to do something like this and we didn't have the experience. So the customers, one after the other, left and finally we had to give up. So, in the meantime, I went to the Jewish



Council and said, listen, I cannot find a job where I cannot type properly. So they arranged it that I went to business school and I learned how to type with ten fingers. They paid for it and I looked a little bit as they taught comptometry because I needed it. The multiplication was what I needed and I was very interested and I said this I can do, too. So, anyway, I looked for a job and I found a beautiful job with the American Optical Company. This was a nationwide company and it was really a dream of a job.

Q. What was your husband doing while you were doing this?

A. My husband changed jobs in the meantime. First, he had a job—somebody gave him a job and he wasn't very good in jobs—I'll tell you the truth. When a boss told him, you have to take a package and bring it there and there, to a company he took the package where it was going and went home. He couldn't lower himself.

Q. It must have been very difficult for him.

A. It was. Actually, I worked all the time and my children—babysitting was a little money. And they had little jobs. One worked in a drug store—behind the counter a little bit. It was terribly hard time. I had several good jobs then and I always quit these jobs and bettered myself. My last job was with Mayflower, the moving company.

Q. This job with American Optical was in Indianapolis?

A. Yes, they were all in Indianapolis. Mayflower, too. And in Mayflower—the first day, I don't know. I didn't understand too much what my boss said but he probably said—this was the first time that a biller could write an invoice. And I was pretty good there. I must say myself. But the people in Mayflower were real anti-Semitic. We were three Jews. There were about 200 employees and we were three Jews and they let us know. They were very mean. I did a good job there and they couldn't say anything. It was very unpleasant to work there and since I wrote invoices for people who moved from California to Chicago or from Chicago to Louisiana or whatever, I started getting so involved that I said to my husband I'm going to write my own invoice now—from Indianapolis back to New York and that's what I did.

Q. Why did you want to come back to New York since it was you who...

A. We had friends here, my sister lived here and I saw this is not the place for us. The other refugees were very happy there. They came from small towns: West *Deutsche Juden* and they were happy there but I felt I do not belong there and I wasn't happy there.

Q. How did your husband feel about going back to New York?

- A. Yes, yes, yes. It was good. So we came back to New York and my husband found a nice apartment. I was delighted when I came here because he left a few—maybe two weeks earlier to look for an apartment until we took our furniture back again to New York and we moved to Washington Heights where we had a beautiful five room apartment on 172<sup>nd</sup> Street close to Ft. Washington Avenue. Our friends lived there and that's why we moved there.
- Q. When you came back to New York, did both of you start to work?
- A. Well, my husband had the same trouble. He couldn't find a job. I found a job right away. I worked as a biller and he met a man and they made a business together—he opened up a store but no success whatsoever. Finally, in 1950, he found a job with Duparquet—that was an outfitting company for restaurants. My husband found a job there—there was an ad in the paper and when he got there, he saw a lot of young, able, good-looking young men sitting there waiting to be called and he put down his resume—he had a beautiful handwriting, my husband, and they gave him the job. He said, excuse me, but I would like to know why did you give me the job when there were so many young men outside sitting there waiting? They said we had experience with young men—they have their minds someplace else and we want a man who will stick to his job. And he had this job from—about 5 or 6 years and he was very happy in this job.
- Q. The reason I asked you so many questions about your husband is that law is basically a non-transferable profession and...
- A. Correct. Many made it—they made the examination and were admitted to the bar, many but they probably were younger or maybe they were stronger, maybe they mastered the language better than my husband. I don't think he could have worked as a lawyer here.
- Q. A lawyer was a very respected position in Germany and it must be very difficult to come...
- A. It was very hard for him. He had to lower himself and he didn't want to do that—he fought it. And then after 1953, 1955, the German restitution started. My husband got his first cases through relatives and friends and we built up a nice practice and I helped him since I could type and I didn't forget my German and we both worked together.
- Q. During all this time, your daughters were still of school age. How did your daughters adjust to the American schools?
- A. Well, my oldest daughter got married very early. She married a man in Indianapolis. As a matter of fact, my husband introduced him because they had worked together in the same place but it was not a very happy marriage.

- Q. Was he of German Jewish background?
- A. No, he was a gentile and we found out later, he was an alcoholic. She covered up for many, many years. She has three beautiful children—two are married already and she divorced him a short time ago. The other one came to New York and I worked for 11 years in Russeks, Fifth Avenue. They had furs and suits and coats and I did pretty well there. And she worked as a buyer assistant in other stores and went to California. In California she met a boy from Breslau and they got married and lived happily ever after.
- Q. When they were in school, do you remember them having any problems with language or...
- A. Well, you know how fast kids grasp the language. And in Indianapolis, the principal was so kind and so understanding. She graduated from high school after 2.5 years in this country. She wanted to study but she had an interview with a teacher and when she saw that she came 2.5 years before and wanted to go to college, she said "my dear child, it would be better if you find a husband and marry somebody." And until today, she is sorry that she did not study because she had the stuff in her. This was the younger one. The older one is an artist. She is a painter and does beautiful embroidery. She has a business of her own now.
- Q. When we spoke about the restitution before, I didn't ask you how you felt about the *Wiedergutmachung* (restitution).
- A. Well, it helped a lot until today the people can live like *menchen* (human beings). Without restitution, the elderly people, they cannot live on Social Security.
- Q. Was your husband able to build up a practice doing this work with restitution?
- A. Yes. We went to Europe every year and we went to the authorities, to the *ampter* and I think that was a very good idea. We could accomplish much more that way.
- Q. How did it feel for you the first time you went back?
- A. The first time it was so strange. You saw an enemy in every German. But later on, unfortunately, you get used to it. I must say when we worked there with the authorities, they were very nice and accommodating to us and we accomplished a lot.
- Q. When you say you got used to it, did you find your attitudes changing?
- A. No, my attitude didn't change. My attitude was the same and is the same today. Once a man who worked in that restitution office said to me "Mrs. Shutz, why don't you come back to Germany?" I said "to be thrown out once is enough."

Q. Did he answer?

A. No.

Q. In looking back, what do you think was the biggest adjustment that you had to make?

A. Well, I had to work (laughs) but I'm not sorry because I loved to work. And now, my husband passed away and I'm alone and I brought most of the restitution cases which were still pending to an end. Now, it's—I fell a littler *uberflussich*.

Q. But in the beginning you thought it was the work. The *Aufbau* printed an article in 1944 about *Frauen stellen sich un* talking about women who thought they would be housewives and...

A. They were not even housewives. They had a cook and they had another maid. They didn't work in Europe and here, I had a full time job, I went marketing, I cooked, I kept the house, everything was wonderful. And I think we all, we Jewish women, accomplished something.

Q. What did you do for some recreation in the beginning?

A. Sleeping (laughs). I was tired.

Q. You had mentioned a subscription to the opera in Breslau...

A. Yes. The first years, I didn't know what a theater looked like from the inside—only from the outside. Later on, of course, we went to the opera and I go to the theater. I'm a music lover—WQXR is always on. TV is not my main pet but once in a while, there are good things to watch but I love music.

Q. Did you join any groups or organizations when you came here?

A. Yes. I am a life member at the Hadassah but, unfortunately, I go there very seldom. I love the Hebrew Tabernacle. We were members there for many years when we lived there. Unfortunately, they moved further up and I moved further down and it is for me very hard to go there Friday night or Saturday morning but it is a wonderful temple. I go to another temple here in my neighborhood and I don't like the service. I don't like the songs. The melodies which were so familiar to me, Cantor Ehrenberg, I miss, Rabbi Lehman, I miss so for the last holidays I bought ticket at the Hebrew Tabernacle. It takes a long time to go there but it pays—it's a wonderful service and the people are—I meet so many friends there and I really feel home there.

Q. I have that feeling, too.

- A. They know you and there is always a friendly hello from Rabbi Lehman and it is a wonderful place.
- Q. Do you consider yourself today more a part of the American mainstream or more a part of the German Jewish community in New York?
- A. The German Jewish community.
- Q. Are most of your friends from this community?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Why do you think this is so?
- A. Well, it is a feeling—the language brings us together again. I have American friends, too, but it is not the same.
- Q. Do you think you were a different parent from American parents?
- A. Yes. Sure. I would have a different outlook in life.
- Q. What do you think the difference would be?
- A. It is really hard to explain. There is something different between a European Jew and an American Jew—there is something different. I cannot explain. I don't want to say it's better or worse—it is different. I have American relatives here. We couldn't find a mutual background, you know. We could not.
- Q. Have you ever told this story to your grandchildren?
- A. No. Maybe my daughter told her daughter. But one lives in Florida and one in California so I have very little occasion to talk to them about my background and my emigration.
- Q. When your daughters were dating, did they date mostly American boys even though you said your daughter married this boy from Breslau?
- A. Both dated American men. Every time came another boy up to the apartment but she couldn't find the right one until she found the boy from Breslau.