

September 19, 1991

Slate # 1349-021

Interviewee: Mrs. Trude Heller

Interviewer: Richard Irwin

Notetaker: Rose Shames

0:00 - Trude Heller born in Vienna in 1922. Only child and spoiled. Wonderful childhood. Parents had two stores selling tailor supplies. Home was in the 2nd district of Vienna. During holidays, frequent traveling.

2:00 - Description of some anti-semitism.

2:30 - Hitler invades. Within 30 minutes swastika flags were everywhere - suddenly. Synagogues burning.

4:00 - Father wants to leave Vienna, but Mother says no.

5:00 - Attended a private high school specializing in commerce. Had to leave school.

6:00 - Things changing quickly. Non-Jewish people could not work for Jews. Family car taken away one night, suddenly. Then apartment taken away, and family had to leave within 6 hours.

8:00 - Move to another place.

9:00 - Father arrested in November - went to hide.

10:00 - Description of Kristallnacht. Locked themselves in store for 28 hours in order to survive.

12:00 - Heard shouting outside. Many people disappeared that night.

13:15 - Had to wash streets with Mother to clean up mess after Kristallnacht. Description of traumatic episode with mob. Nearly attacked by group of men.

14:50 - Personal reaction to incident.

15:45 - Had to find way to leave. Father was called to Gestapo but he ran away.

16:35 - Description of Father's escape to Antwerp. Father called family with instructions. He had gotten an apartment in Antwerp. Mother and Trude began escape on train.

20:15 - Stranded in Cologne. Traveling for 5 weeks to escape. 1939 a very difficult winter. When people were captured, women were sent back and men taken away.

24:45 - Finally got to Antwerp. Guides were paid but their identity not clear. Description of Cologne limited because stayed in hotel.

27:00 - Description of networking process for guides and escape process.

27:39 - Reunited in Antwerp. Moved from apartment. Bought visas to Chile, but then visas were canceled. It was good fortune for them because the boat they were to have taken to Chile sank en route.

29:32 - Located a distant cousin in U.S. and tried to get papers. Mother and Trude on Austrian visa got papers, but Father left behind because he was on Polish quota.

32:15 - Description of difficult trip to U.S. Mines and stormy weather.

33:00 - Arrival in New York. Got a job immediately.

34:10 - Father put on train to French desert as political prisoner, but escaped to Marseille.

35:22 - In all 200 family members lost. All of the Polish relatives were killed.

36:28 - Description of meeting future husband, Max, at summer resort in Vienna. They remained in contact during all the problems.

37:37 - Max came to visit when they arrived in New York. Convinced her to go to Greenville. Her parents were very protective, but they were married.

39:45 - Lost contact with family in Poland after the invasion. Those who survived were brought over by Trude's family after the war.

41:00 - Visit to Vienna later. Felt only like a tourist. Trude loved America immediately. Parents had more difficulty in adjusting.

43:00 - Life in Greenville after war. Three children to care for. Later became active in community. Tried to teach children to be good people and treat other people kindly.