

## **RG-50.322.0016**

### **Summary**

Renate Harlan (née Wasserman) was born in Koln (Cologne), Germany on March 7, 1928. She describes her family and childhood. She has one sister, who is two years younger than her. Her maternal grandparents lived in the house with them. Her father was a physician, and her mother was primarily a housewife. Her father's family was religious, while her mother's family was not. Her family spoke German in the home until 1934, when her mother decided to learn English and hired an English nurse. She considers her family to have been upper-middle class. She describes her childhood as a happy one.

She began attending school in 1934, at which point Jewish children were restricted to Jewish schools. She recalls an incident in which children chased her and threw stones and insults at her when she was six years old. Her father was barred by German law from practicing medicine in 1934. She recalls first becoming aware of Hitler during the remilitarization of the Rhineland (March 7, 1936), though not understanding the significance. She describes her family's close non-Jewish friends distancing themselves as of 1937 or 1938. She describes her family's experience of Kristallnacht [the night of November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 1938] in detail. Her father was arrested, and her mother drove her family out of the city, where they were hidden in family friend's attic. Because her father worked closely with the US and British Consulates, they were able to secure temporary papers to England and her father was released. They had previously applied for immigration to the US, but the waiting list was four years. A few days later, they left for Amsterdam. Her father had been smuggling money out of the country to their family in Amsterdam for some time at this point. Her nurse's family, who longer worked for them due to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, took in the family in Southampton, England after a few weeks in Amsterdam. They lived there with the Catholic family for one year. They emigrated to the US in December 1939. They lived in Cincinnati, Ohio after moving to the US. They struggled to secure visas for their family that remained in Germany. Her mother was bitter and unsatisfied towards the Jewish Community Council, the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society for their work with Jewish refugees. Her father died of leukemia in April 1941. Her mother worked in a factory afterwards. Her maternal grandmother and uncle were taken to concentration camps. Her grandmother did not survive, but her uncle was liberated by the Red Army at Theresienstadt.

She recalls her experience after the war. In 1948, they received restitution for the forced sale of their home in Cologne. She reunited with her uncle in Cologne in 1951, after her husband was deployed to Munich, Germany during the Korean War. In 1961, she and her husband took their children to visit the family that sheltered them during Kristallnacht.