

RG-50.407.0083

Interview: Marianne Roth, August 7, 1996

Summary

Marianne Roth [Freund], born in 1920 [month and day not given] in Oppeln, an industrial town of about 45,000, near Breslau, Upper Silesia, Germany (now Opole, Poland), describes: her father, an academic and intellectual, mother, a musician, and one younger brother; living in a “very cultured” home filled with music and art and many visitors, both Jews and gentiles; these being the very happy years of her childhood; living in a deeply religious but largely secular and diverse environment; attending school in Oppeln and Berlin; the constant presence of antisemitism in Berlin but getting along well with gentile friends; being aware of significant social and cultural change associated with Hitler’s rise; despite being warned of danger, insisting on viewing Kristallnacht incidents to bear witness; the Gestapo coming to her home several times in search of her parents, who had been warned off by friends; meeting up with her parents and brother in hiding; her father turning himself in to local police and being warned to leave Germany; her father becoming very ill and dying in hospital five weeks later; her brother being taken in April 1939 to England via Kindertransport and interned on the Isle of Man; she, herself, escaping Germany in May 1939 and immigrating to Australia, where she had relatives; her mother remaining in Berlin and attempting suicide in 1940 and again in 1942; receiving a letter from the Red Cross that her mother had been taken to a concentration camp in Poland, where she died; [reads her detailed, written account of these events beginning with Kristallnacht]; her explanation of Nazi success in turning Germans against Jews and gradually increasing economic and political pressure on Jews; arrival in Australia, where she was initially treated antagonistically by Australians and other Jewish refugees, who feared competition for their jobs; marriage and giving birth to two daughters; still having faith in God.