

RG-50.407.0226

Oral History with Susan Pask, October 17, 2001

Summary

Susan Pask, born April 19, 1913 in Vienna, Austria, describes: her brother, Hans; her father's machinery business; being cared for by a governess; her father, but not the rest of the family, being religious; having a "spoiled" life; her father's business going bankrupt; having Jewish friends; experiencing occasional anti-Semitism; wanting to be a teacher but being prevented from it by anti-Jewish restrictions; not being concerned over Hitler's rise in 1933; thinking Zionism was "crazy" but her brother joining the Zionists; observing the Germans marching into Vienna during the Anschluss; almost an immediate increase in anti-Semitism; fearing she would be physically attacked, particularly because she lived next to a synagogue; witnessing a damaging attack on the synagogue; Jewish panic to leave Austria; not being helped by non-Jews; having difficulty obtaining a passport; her father being detained for two days because he looked Jewish; being able to obtain Christian identity papers but not wanting to do so; pervasive anti-Jewish propaganda; having friends who were forced to do demeaning labor; deciding to go to Australia because her brother was there working for a Czech company; her parents staying behind because her father was too old to travel to Australia; Susan immigrating to Australia in 1939 via Prague and London; her current feelings about religion and Judaism; meeting her husband in Australia and having two sons; her husband feeling more religious and having a greater connection to Judaism and Israel than she does; feeling welcomed by Australians; not realizing how bad things had become in Europe and discovering belatedly that her parents were sent to, and perished in, Theresienstadt; feeling Jewish national, but not religious, identity; her teenage grandsons not caring much about the Holocaust; urging her successors never to change religions. (Shows photos of her parents.)