

## **RG-50.407.0301**

### **Summary**

**Ilse Blair (née Presch)** – born on January 27, 1918, in Berlin, Germany. Father – Nathan Presch; joint owner (with brother Max) of men's/boy's wholesale clothes company. Mother – Ellie Redlich – did not work. One brother – Karl – 3 years older than Ilse.

**Before the War** – “Well off”; exposed to much culture. Went to primary school for 4 years (ages 6-10); then won scholarship to “college”. Loved to read and write, didn't love structure of school, so left when she was 15. Her mother made her learn a trade – dressmaking. Became involved in socialist groups in her teens. Family affected by depression; had to rent out two rooms in flat, then had to move in 1935 or 1936. Married (May 31, 1938) when she was 20 to first husband, Werner Baer, a musician. When about 17, Ilse was pregnant with his child. With help of her mother and a Czech attaché, arranged to have abortion in Czechoslovakia since illegal in Germany. Later married the father who was sent to Sachsenhausen for 2 weeks. Ilse helped get him out. Parents wanted them to leave Germany, especially after Kristallnacht. Brother went to Brazil because it was only place he could get a visa for. Parents went to Brazil after he was settled. Mother died within a year of leaving Germany. Ilse and her husband left Germany in December 1938, bound for Bangkok or Shanghai, but taken off ship in Singapore.

**During the War** - Spent two years in Singapore. Husband taught music and Ilse worked as dressmaker; lost job when war broke out because she was German. Had 1<sup>st</sup> child, Miriam, there. Was ordered to leave Singapore; went on Queen Mary to Sydney and then by train and put in internment camp in September 1940 in Tatura, Australia. Housed in barracks. Met her second husband, Hans, there. He was from Vienna.

**After the War** – After leaving Tatura, went to stay in Melbourne with some friends. Then she and Miriam moved around until she remarried (to Hans – no mention of what happened to first husband) in 1950. Hans also a musician. Had a shop in Melbourne, she continued to sew. Had another daughter, Noel.

**Ilse's Thoughts and Message** – Ilse never got over what Germany did. In her mind, in Germany “bad was good and good was bad”. She has no sentimental feelings about Germany, but has revisited there and in Vienna. Her message is to try to cope as well as you can, appreciate your family, and never pretend to not be Jewish.