

Interviewee:	<u>KUPFERBERG</u> , Hardy W.	Date:	September 23, 1981
Interviewer:	Josey G. Fisher		
Audio tapes:	3 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

## SUMMARY

Hardy W. Kupferberg, nee Wiersh, was born on September 15, 1922 in Berlin, Germany to a religious family. Her mother died when she was three years old. Her father remarried when she was seven. Her father, a decorated WWI veteran, owned a lamp factory and was active in synagogue and community life. Hardy's relationships with non-Jews was positive until 1931 when she experienced antisemitism both in school and during several hospitalizations. She describes increasing antisemitism with the Nuremberg laws -- the Aryanization of her father's business, Jews forbidden from public parks and required to bring their pets to be killed. No longer permitted in the public school, she describes the positive atmosphere of her Jewish school. She was taught by *Rabbiner* Doctor Regina Jonas, whom she loved and who is known to be the first woman rabbi. She relates that the school included *Mischlinger* who very often sided with the anti-Semites.

Hardy details the horrors and emotional toll of *Kristallnacht*. She saw a group of Hitler Youth throwing stones through the broken windows of the burnt synagogue. She shares a story that she buried inside for 30 years -- when one of the stones rolled near her in her hiding place, she picked it up and threw it at one of the boys. It hit his head and he fell. In the commotion she left the scene and walked home.

The morning of *Kristallnacht*, the family apartment was ransacked. In 1939 she and her parents were compelled to do forced labor. For a small salary, she worked outdoors in a tree nursery under horrible conditions and described that the girls' arms would bleed daily. She was granted a transfer to a plane factory making cables. In 1941 Hardy witnessed the shooting of her little cousins during a deportation. She also saw zoo personnel desecrating the synagogue by bringing elephants from the Berlin zoo into it. Hardy describes the deportation of her grandmother to Riga. They never heard from her again.

In February 1943, Hardy's parents were taken from their place of work by Viennese Gestapo who arrested 10,000 Berlin Jews. Because they were taken from work, they did not have their knapsacks, in which they had packed some necessities including poison. When Hardy went to Gestapo headquarters with the knapsacks to find her parents, an official pointed

out a window toward a group of vans from which dead bodies were being pulled and told her that was where her parents were. She learned later that they were murdered in Auschwitz.

Hardy went into hiding for a year and a half, helped by several non-Jews. Some asked to be paid and a friend of her father's provided money. Hardy was caught by a Jewish woman and deported to Ravensbrück in March 1944. She details some experiences, including witnessing an atrocity against a child and her job clearing the dead from the barracks in the morning. At Hardy's request, the focus of this oral history is mainly the years in Berlin and not on her concentration camp experience as she felt that her camp experience was not unique to her.

She was liberated by the Soviets and repatriated to Berlin, where she met her husband Kurt Kupferberg in March 1946. They arrived in the United States August 20, 1947.<sup>1</sup>

See also her second 1983 interview and also her husband's 1981 interview.

<sup>1</sup> These details are added based on her personal history sheet.

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#### SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939-1945 - Personal Narratives- Jewish, female  
Berlin - Forced labor  
*Kristallnacht*  
Nuremberg Laws