

Interviewee:	<u>LESSER</u> , Rose	Date:	September 14, 1989
Interviewer:	Bernice Zoslaw		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	Draft, unaudited
Restrictions:	No restrictions		1 vol. (unpaged) English

SUMMARY

Rose Lesser, née Markus, was born April 10, 1924 in Breslau, Germany. Her mother died when she was three weeks old; she was raised by her paternal grandparents spending significant amounts of time with them even after her father remarried. Her grandfather served in the German army. She describes in detail her grandfather's reaction to Hitler becoming Chancellor and her grandmother's insistence that Rose should get away and discussions of her going on a *Kindertransport*. At 14 she was too old. Her family belonged to the Reform Synagogue and her stepmother sang in the choir. Rose describes antisemitism she experienced: schoolmates called her "dirty little Jewish girl," never having any gentile friends and expresses never feeling safe in Germany. She explains changes when the Nuremberg laws came into effect: all the Jewish children had to leave German schools and her father lost his job. Rose recalls *Kristallnacht*: seeing burning buildings, beatings, the demolition of the department store where her father worked, and Germans threatening her stepmother and her with arrest if her father didn't present himself after his absence. Her father reported to police and was taken away to Buchenwald for six weeks.

The Jewish Agency helped her parents secure passage to Shanghai; her father had to report to the Gestapo every day for about 4 months until they left April 18, 1939 as terms of his release from Buchenwald. Her grandmother also secured Rose's ticket to Shanghai by selling valuables. Her grandparents were sent to Theresienstadt where her grandmother died of malnutrition and her grandfather died in Auschwitz.

Rose describes her family's trip via train to Genoa, boarding the *Julius Caesar* to Shanghai and a frightening welcome by German brown shirts who shouted insults at them. She describes a rough transition to life in Shanghai; her father and step-mother opened a coffee shop which went bankrupt. Rose describes the many jobs she had, including working as a nurse, in a dental office, at a sausage factory, and details the scarcity of food and difficult living conditions and also mentions that her family in England helped them financially. She explains that all Shanghai Jews were forced into the ghetto (where her family already lived) in 1942. She describes Mr. Ghoya's

cruelty and how she always tried to avoid trouble. She married in 1946 and emigrated to the United States in 1947.¹

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Holocaust Jewish 1939-1945 Germany

World War II 1939-1945, Personal Narrative, Jewish, Female

World War, 1939-1945--Children

Jewish children in the Holocaust

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Psychological aspects

Holocaust survivors--Psychological aspects

Kristallnacht, 1938

Shanghai (1939-1947)

Health conditions – in

Jewish refugees - Shanghai

Survival Skills

¹This information is according to her personal history form. She married Alfred Davidson in 1946. Her second husband's name is Henry Lesser. The date of arrival in the United States is not discussed in the interview.