

RG-50.462.0442

Summary

Helen Nusberg was born on March 20, 1908, in Eschwege, a small town in the northeastern region of Hesse, Germany. She was the oldest of five siblings. Her father was a Lutheran and her mother was Jewish. But she never talked about that and they did not belong to a Jewish community neither they went to a synagogue. In 1914 they moved to Chemnitz, a town in Saxony, Germany. Before the Nazis came, they lived a normal life, like everybody else. In Chemnitz she married her husband, who was a Jew from Poland. He had a business with three stores in Chemnitz and Dresden. After the rise of Hitler in 1933 they experienced a lot of anti-Semitism and their stores got destroyed. They had to sell them for little money. In 1938 the German authorities announced that they will deport Helen and her husband. They tried to escape to Poland, but Helen was not allowed to go, because she did not have a Polish passport. She then left for Brussels in Belgium, because she had relatives there. Her husband tried to cross the Belgium boarder without papers, but he got caught by the Germans. Fortunately, they let him go and he was reunited with his wife.

She also talks about two of her brothers. One was taken to the organization Todt where he and other forced laborers had to dig ditches. The other brother was hidden by a German family and married the daughter. He lived in Stuttgart after the war.

Helen also talks about her time in Brussels. When the Germans came to Belgium they had to hide and live in the underground. Their landlord let them live in the attic of his house. They also got food ration cards from Belgium policemen who knew they were hiding there. The Belgium people did not like the Nazis and so they would have never let them down. Helen could even leave the shelter and she could go to buy something to eat. In 1943 Helen gave birth to her first child. A retired Doctor helped her in that time. She describes it as difficult times, because her daughter was not allowed to be a child, so nobody could hear her. After the war, when her daughter was 15, she developed a psychological problem and she even needed medical treatment and council. Now she is living a happy live with a nice husband.

After the Nazis left, they had to stay in Belgium until 1950, because they did not have the papers to leave. In that time, they were not allowed to work so they relied on assistance of others.

In 1950 they immigrated to the US and they settled down in Philadelphia. They started a business again, which she had to close after her husband died in 1971 from a stroke, he had a year before. He always wanted to go back to Europe, but Helen did not want to.

(English translation of the Interview beginning at 32:45)