

Interviewee:	<u>ZACHARIAS</u> , Irmgard	Date:	October 19, 1991
Interviewer:	Eva Abraham-Podietz		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Irmgard Zacharias, nee Pinkus, was born July 15, 1904 in Friedrichshagen, Germany, a suburb of Berlin. She attended a private lyceum in Berlin. Her parents had a variety store. Her father, a World War I officer and veteran, believed this would save them from persecution. After *Kristallnacht*, when their store was demolished, he realized they had to leave Germany. By that time most of their money had already been confiscated and they were not able to secure an affidavit or visa. Through connections of a cousin, the family was able to obtain four tickets on a re-conditioned Japanese warship to Shanghai. They arrived in Shanghai in May, 1939.

Irmgard met her husband, a Prussian engineer, upon her arrival and they married five months later. They lived and worked with her family in a grocery store purchased from other refugees. The family lived above the store and she relates that the living conditions were decent in comparison to the majority of Shanghai residents. She details life in the compound of Hong Kew, where food was scarce, sanitation was lacking and infection was rampant. Dysentery, for which they often received immunization shots, was normal. Cholera and typhoid were also common. Dead bodies were left on the streets for pickup twice a week.

For a short time Mrs. Zacharias and her husband got jobs in a department store in Tzingtao [now Qingdao], a city located on the coast of China north of Shanghai, which was reached by boat. Irmgard's son was born in 1941. Her husband died of typhus in 1942, seven weeks after their child's birth. When the Japanese arrived, the family was forced to move to a ghetto but were able to take their possessions and opened another grocery store. Her father died in 1945.

Irmgard left Shanghai with her mother and son in 1948. The American Joint Distribution Committee and the Sassoon family provided the means for their emigration to the United States. In 1981, when Irmgard returned to Shanghai to visit the graves of her husband and father, the gravestones were gone and the cemetery was replaced with a children's park.

Note: Collateral material file available through the Gratz College Tuttleman Library includes correspondence containing additional detail on life in Shanghai.