

Interviewee: ZIFFERBLATT, Ava
Interviewer: Hanna Silver

Date: November 10, 1981

Audio tapes: 2 English
Restrictions: No restrictions

Transcript: Draft, unaudited
1 vol. (unpaged) English

SUMMARY

Ava Zifferblatt, née Tews, was born February 21, 1934 in Stargard, Germany to a Jewish mother and a gentile father. Ava later found out that her father left because of fear of what would happen to him. Ava shares her childhood memories of her experiences during the Holocaust. After her parents divorced, she was raised by her grandparents and an aunt. Her mother, living in Berlin, rarely visited Ava, who never formed close relationships with her family. She recalls memories of a man whose store was vandalized and was beaten in the street, and burning sections of the city. She also recalls hiding behind a chair, at age four, when her aunt was killed by the Gestapo. Rescued by a German woman, she was sent to Sweden on a children's transport in 1939. HIAS paid for foster care in several homes, where she never received any affection and was neglected and exploited: injuries ignored, taunted by other children, forced to perform hard work, and molested by two men. She suffered nightmares and, at age eight, considered suicide.

Her mother remarried and her husband's family helped Ava obtain a visa for the United States. In 1949, Ava arrived in New York City and lived with that family until she was molested by the father. HIAS sent her to Philadelphia, where the Association for Jewish Children became her guardian. She lived in two different homes and left high school after failing her courses. At age 17 she began working in retail stores. She married a businessman, studied to earn her high school diploma at age 30 and went to college and art school. She was divorced, remarried, had two children and then separated from her husband. She has suffered from acute arthritis and a melanoma. She describes difficulties in her adult life and feels the continued impact of her childhood experiences. After the war, Ava learned that her mother died in Auschwitz.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Holocaust Jewish 1939-1945 Germany

World War II 1939-1945, Personal Narrative

World War, 1939-1945--Children

Jewish children in the Holocaust

Refugee children

Kindertransports (Rescue operations) - Germany to Sweden

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

Holocaust survivors--Psychological aspects

Holocaust survivors--Mental health