

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

**Name of interviewee:** Brunn, Ruth

**Date of interview:** 3/24/1999

**Summary:** Ruth was born Ruth Oppenheimer on 9/26/32 in Mannheim, Germany, where her father, Franz Oppenheimer, operated their family owned import and export business. Her father died of a severe heart attack in Switzerland. Ruth, her mother and her sister fled Germany in 1935 and ended up in Strasbourg for a short time, until Ruth and her mother moved to Brussels with her grandparents and sent her sister to an institution for paralyzed people in Holland. Ruth and her mother stayed in Brussels until May 10, 1940, the day the Germans invaded Belgium.

They caught a taxi that took them across the French border. From the French border they took a train to Paris, which stopped halfway in Hula, they slept there then her mother found a bus driver who was driving south. As they were heading south, her mother's friends spotted Ruth, they stopped the bus, got Ruth and her mother, and went to a town called Brive. They left Brive after they found out that the French police were looking for them. They settled down in a small town called Venelebeh(?), which was located in the Pyrenees Mountains. She stayed there for a while because she was enrolled into a catholic elementary school. However they ended up moving to Marseille, where Ruth had her first experience with bombings. The square next to their hotel was air raided by the Germans. This was a terrifying experience for her, it still traumatizes her till this day.

Their next journey was to head out to the US. They got on a train that took them through Spain and Portugal, and in Portugal they waited for a ship to take them to the US. They reached Ellis Island with a temporary visa, so after staying there for two weeks they decided to go to Mexico because their family was staying there. After they received their permanent visas they went to New Jersey where the rest of her father's side of the family lived.

A few years before the interview took place Ruth was introduced to her sister and enjoyed getting to know her until her sister passed away. Ruth and her sister both shared their experiences of the Holocaust, and even helped Ruth remember her father.

Ruth went to school in South Orange, New Jersey, and attended junior high school in Corona, New Jersey, which was a very unpleasant experience for her because the area was dangerous. Then she attended high school in Forest Hills, graduated and attended New York State College where she took a two-year radiology course, and 6 weeks after she graduated her mother passed away. She got a job at a local hospital, and she would quit during the summer time and go visit Europe, come back and start working again. She decided to go to California after she heard her mother rave about how beautiful it was. Four hours after she arrived in California she received a job as a Manager in the Radiology department at a hospital. She met her husband George, got married, and had two children. She stopped working at the hospital after her first child

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was born. She now works at the Anno Nuevo State reserve, which is located 25 miles south of Halfmoon Bay.