

1700 Alameda de las Pulgas in San Mateo, California. We are interviewing Gerda Cohn. My name is Peter Ryan, interviewer, and Jay Levin is doing the videotape. Could we begin my asking you where and when you were born?

I was born in Breslau, in Germany, in the province of Silesia, which was close to Czechoslovakia and Poland. And I was born on September 29, 1914.

How many people were in your family?

My family consisted of my mother and father--

What were their names?

My father's name was Alfred Fischer, and my mother's name was Margarete. Her maiden name was Riesenfeld. And I had a brother.

Older, younger?

Younger-- 6 and 1/2 years younger than I was.

OK.

And his name was Klaus Peter Fischer. And I also had a sister who was 13 and 1/2 years younger than I was, and her name was Lori Fischer.

Uh-huh. What kind of work did your father do?

My father was an engineer, and he had a scrap iron business which he developed after the First World War.

Was he--

Excuse me?

--in the war?

He was in the war, yes. But he was of Czechoslovakian birth, and he fought in the Austrian army.

Now, you say Czechoslovakian. Was there a Czechoslovakia when he was born?

Yes. He was born in Olomouc, Czechoslovakia.

And that was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

Well, it must have been, but that I really am not too sure about.

OK. How about your mother? Where was she born?

My mother was born in Breslau.

In Breslau--

Yes.

Where did they meet?

I'm really not sure.

OK. Do you know when they met?

I only know that they got married. I know when they got married, in 1913.

In 1913--

Yeah. So I guess they must have met a little while before-- I guess not too much before that.

Did they meet in Breslau, do you think?

Yes, I think so.

Uh-huh. How big a city was Breslau then?

I think we had about 500,000 inhabitants.

And was there a big Jewish community?

Yes. I would think so. I remember that we had three temples-- an orthodox, a conservative-- no, I think these were only the two-- a conservative and an orthodox. I don't think we had anything like reformed temples at that time.

OK. What kind of living quarters did you have? Could you describe it?

Yes. You mean when I grow up?

Yeah. Did you live in the city?

We lived in the city-- a little bit towards the suburbs actually, not in the middle of the city.

OK.

And we lived in an apartment. I remember that. And I think it was rather large apartment. And we had [? two in-help ?].

Do you have good memories of the apartment?

Yes, yes-- very good.

What can you tell us?

Well, I had a wonderful room to myself, and it was rather large and beautifully furnished. And I liked that I had an alcove, which had two sit-in chairs. And it had windows all around. And I remember that I loved that the best, to sit there.

--private place--

Yeah, sort of-- read and do things like that. It was a wonderful way of life that I was privileged to have. Well, my parents apparently did very well. We had a car, and I had about everything that anybody could really want. Although, I must say, it wasn't like it is today with young people. Birthday presents were maybe two very nice presents.

Not 20--

Not 20, not 30-- no.

OK.

But my father was rather strict.

How would he express being strict?

Well, he was easy with a hand to give us a patch. And he was demanding that we did extremely well in school. And if it was only a B, he was very upset, and punished us. And also, he had what I remember I was a very sensitive person, and he always teased me so that I'd very often-- when we had our meal, that I had cried.

And when I was a grown up, very grown up, I once asked him-- I said, why did you do this to me? Because I've never forgotten that. And he said, I thought, with that, I could get you over your sensitivity.

Because he recognized that you were pretty sensitive.

Right, right.

How would he tease you?

Oh, that I really can't tell you.

[INAUDIBLE].

I don't know the way it-- no, no, it wasn't anything like that. It was more maybe about my manners to other people. And I always thought I did so nicely, but he would find little things and tease me about that. And I think, later on, I just sort of wanted to forget about it and not think about it anymore.

Because it made you unhappy.

Made me unhappy-- but on the other hand, he was really a very good father, and would-- he was always very much for us to be with him. And on Sundays, he would get us out of bed-- 6 o'clock in the morning, which we all did and very much appreciate. He said, come, come, we'll go to the country. And we would drive out, and he would take us to the woods and explain the different berries to us and the different kinds of mushrooms-- which ones were poisonous, and which ones were not.

Was that fun?

That was a lot of fun. We just absolutely loved it.

Did your mother go?

Yes. Yes. And we would be out in the wheat fields, and there were always poppies and corn flowers growing in there. And this was very nice. Anybody could go in there and pick the flowers, and we would pick all these wonderful flowers.

Was Silesia a big farming place?

There was a lot of open country around, a lot of farming. And when we went further, we went to Czechoslovakia a lot, especially in the wintertime for skiing. We almost went, I would say, probably every two weeks.

Now, this was after World War I and--

Oh, yeah. This was already when my siblings were--

Older--

--children. And that I always really enjoyed a lot. So there was always a lot of being together, but we also had-- I had a grandfather that was my mom's father, and he was quite religious.

Did he live with you?

No. No. He lived with my mother's sister. And we always had these family gatherings, especially on the holidays. And that was-- brought us all very close. I had a lot of aunts, and cousins, and uncles.

On your mother's side?

On my mother's side-- on my dad's side, I only had-- my dad had a brother who lived in Vienna, and a sister who passed away at an early age, and my grandparents in Olomouc, and then--

This was your father's--?

They're both my father's parents.

They lived in Czechoslovakia?

Mm-hmm. And they were already elderly, and my father took-- financially took care of them. And then, when the money and Germany became less and less and less, he told them one day they just had to come to Germany, because it was going to be a lot easier. And so they came, and I never forget my-- they came, and my grandma came with a bird in a cage. And that was something I've never forgotten.

So they came to live with you?

They came, and my dad took them, provided a small apartment for them. And they came every single day and ate with us. The main meal was in the middle of the day.

Right.

And so that was always very nice. And then they spent the afternoon-- my grandmother usually helped a little bit in the kitchen. And my grandfather, who was a very tall, very good looking man, and had a little mustache-- gray mustache-- and he was sitting there all afternoon brushing his mustache. But these were all very happy times for me.

Can you explain why it was easier for them to be in Germany than Czechoslovakia?

Because remember, the mark was devaluated, and so-- I remember, one time, my mother sent me to the fish market, and she said, well, here's-- lot more money than it should cost-- but buy such and such. I don't know what it was. So I did go, and by the time I got there, I could not purchase what she has asked me to for the money that I had.

Right.

And I remember that I was very upset about that. And it was easier that way to take care of my grandparents.

Did you have a grandmother on your mother's side?

No. My mother's mother passed away when my mother was 16 years old. She had diabetes, and at that time, there wasn't too much that people knew about all that.

Yeah. When did you begin going to school?

I went to school when I was six. And I went to a private school.

Religious?

No. No. No, it was a private school. It was a very nice school and a very good school. And the first day, I remember-- when you came out of school, and really behaved yourself, and didn't cry for your mommy outside, you got what they call a [? Zucker ?] [INAUDIBLE], which was a large cone about this high made out of cardboard, I would say, and decorated in beautiful colors. And it was totally filled to the brim with all the candy that you loved. And that was always a very nice treat.

Now, would[these things being made at home, or bought?

No, no. This was always bought.

Bought--

Yeah. Every child got that right the first day of school.

If they were good--

If they were good-- and then, of course, since you knew you got that, you were very good.

So what are your memories from that school?

I have very good memories of that school. I made a lot of friends. And also, the teachers were very kind, except the teacher who taught us sewing, and knitting, and things like that. She was the principal's sister, and she was terrible.

She was ugly, and we called her the owl, because that's exactly what she looked like. And she was just so strict, and if you made a mistake, she would hit you over your fingers.

With a ruler?

I beg your pardon.

With a ruler?

With a ruler, yeah-- and she was just awful. And that wasn't a good memory of that school. But the other teachers were very nice, and I have very, very fond memories of that school.

Was your family religious, Gerda?

My family was religious on the holidays, and then they were very religious. We only walked to temple, which was a very long, long walk. On Yom Kippur, we stayed all day in temple.

Now, which temple did you go to?

To the conservative--

To the conservative--

I also had religious training in school. And then, as I grew a little older, I got very into the religion. I took Hebrew lessons, and then I came home one day and I said to my mom, I love to light the candles on Friday night. Well, this, I guess, was not what they liked to acknowledge. And so my mother said to me, if you want to light the candles, you can

do this in your room. I have nothing against that.

In other words, they didn't do it.

No. It was not going to be a family affair-- absolutely not.

So did you? Did you light them in your room?

Yes, I did. I did.

All by yourself?

All by myself-- and that was very interesting. Then, on the holidays, we were always together with my grandfather and my aunts. I have wonderful memories of a large family, and everybody was very loving. And especially when I was smaller, they all wanted to take care of me.

Yeah. Well, you were the only grandchild then weren't you?

Yeah, but it wasn't so much my grandfather. It was more my uncles, who also-- and their families-- had fewer children and grandchildren. But for some reason-- I don't know-- I guess they liked me a lot.

Maybe it was something about you.

I don't know. I don't know. I only know what my mom told me when-- my mother was very fun loving. And she liked to be with the family, and she liked to go out. And my dad was in the war, and when I was little, she always took me along when I was a baby. And then everybody took care of me.

And I remember they played a lot of cards all on one large table. It was called [GERMAN]. I don't know-- what kind of a game that would be today. But they loved that. They played with very little money and, I guess, just had a wonderful, fun time.

So those are good memories?

Yeah-- all good memories.

Now, did you have friends who were not Jews as well as Jewish?

Yes. I already started with my non-Jewish friends when I was in that school, in my first school-- by the name of Irming Schuller. And I had a lot of non-Jewish friends also.

Did those friendships continue?

These friendships continued to this day. Would you believe it? And I have seen them. I went back to Germany for the-- I did not go last year because of my eyes, but before that, for three summers in a row, I went back for a few days to visit them. And they're all non-Jewish friends.

I have one Jewish friend whom I have contact with, who lives in Argentina. And then, two years ago, I discovered three more Jewish friends from school in London, and I went to visit them.

In London?

Mm-hmm.

What was that like that visit?

It was very interesting to me. It was not as close a contact that I could develop as it was with my non-Jewish friends, which was really interesting. They were very much into their own lives, and really not too interested in my own. It was wonderful that we got together, but it wasn't anything that I thought that we would talk about former times. They did not touch on that. For what reason--

--don't talk about--

No. Well, I wanted to, and I started to, but I didn't get too much of a response, which was very strange. They wanted to talk about today. And then I had dinner with one of them, and then I could get a little more information about what she knew about all the school friends that we had who have passed away. But she knew a lot more than the others were willing to communicate. It was strange that way.

Had she gotten to England before the war?

I don't think so. And I know very little about them, because they were not too open to talk about it, and I did not want to dig. I felt it wasn't my place to do that.

So how long did you go to that school, the first one that you--

The first one I went uh-- past you see, they started at the 10th grade. They started The other way around. And I went there to-- through sixth grade. And then I went to another school, Auguste Schule, which was school of-- what I would say-- probably higher learning, I guess.

No, it's more than that, because they call it gymnasium-- because when I came to this country and I thought maybe I would have an opportunity to go to college, they would recognize two years of college on my diploma.

Do you remember what year that was that you went to that school?

Yeah. What year was it? Well, I was six, so 9-- to that school. Well, let me go backwards. I had six-- eight years there, and I graduated in '34. So '26 I must have gone. And I went through seventh and eighth, and then [GERMAN] you have here the juniors, and seniors, and sophomores. You have the double one. And I graduated in 1934.

Now, did they have religious instruction in that school?

I don't believe that. I don't remember that. No, I don't think so.

Now, in the first school, you did have religious instruction.

Yes.

Was it actually at the school?

Yeah, it was in school-- I think, as I remember--

And what would they do? They would separate the class by religion?

Yeah, that's right. A rabbi came in.

How many people were in that class, the religious instruction?

I don't know-- maybe 10. I don't really remember the exact number-- maybe 10, I would say. I think I still had a little bit of religious instruction in the other one, maybe in the seventh grade.

So you seemed more interested in religion than your parents.

Yes-- always was more.

Did that continue?

Yes-- absolutely. There were years-- let's say, when I came to this country-- where I don't think that was something-- and I didn't go to any temple for quite a number of years. The beginning was not an easy one, and we were very consumed with working.

Survival--

I beg your pardon.

With survival--

With survival-- and not only that-- I was very intent on getting my family out of Germany. I wanted very much to study medicine. That was always my wish. But of course, after '33, there was no such thing that a Jewish person could go to the university. And you see, the school system was such that, when I graduated, then I could have gone to the university immediately.

There was no such thing like four years of college or something like that. That was forbidden. I asked my father if it wouldn't be possible to send me to the Sorbonne so that I could fulfill my wish, and he was totally against that.

Why?

He felt you don't leave Germany-- for him, for the longest time was absolutely no reason to leave Germany.

He was convinced this would pass?

Yeah. He was absolutely sure. As a matter of fact, he always said, I hope maybe Hitler should get in. He's so crazy that he'll be out in no time, and then we can forget about that.

[MUMBLING].

But that was not the case. But he was still not at all convinced about anything. What was there to do for me? Nothing--

When did you graduate?

When I graduated-- '34. I was seeing a young man-- dated him. And we decided to get married in '35.

How old were you then?

I was 20.

Not 21?

I was not 21 yet. I was only 20. My father still had to go and sign for me [INAUDIBLE].

Did they--?

--that I was allowed to get married.

Did they approve of the marriage?

Yes, they approved of the marriage-- my father not too much, my mother yes. He came from a very fine family and he was a very fine person.

You met in school?

No, no. He was already studying law, and I met him-- I think I met him at students-- law students function-- one of those functions, I guess.

What year?

Well, must have been '33, I would say, probably.

How aware were you in 1933 of changes that might be going on in Germany?

In '33?

Yeah.

Not at all, not at all-- I was in school. I was always a little frightened, I would say, because all the teachers-- especially the men-- wore Nazi uniforms.

In school?

In school-- oh, yes. And while before, we were always-- it was the custom that, when you passed the teacher, you curtsied, but then it was always heil Hitler. And you had to do it. If I could get away from it, I tried, but if they just looked you into your face and into your eyes, you better did it. And then they separated the Jewish girls from the Christian girls and put them in the back of the room.

What year was that?

That was already, I think, in probably the end of '33.

They put you in the back of the room?

Yeah.

Like you didn't belong--

We were separated. And very much so, there was a lot of a lot of remarks about Jewish people--

Who would make them?

--by the teachers-- not very flattering, of course, as you can imagine. And you had to just swallow this.

Were they talking about specific people in the room, or just in general?

No, it was a general remark. And I remember that I had a teacher whom I was very fond of. I had him for, I think, probably three years already. And he was always very nice-- no remarks, nothing. And we were still sitting in our regular seats, not in the back of the room.

And two of the Jewish girls were constantly talking while he was trying to teach. And so I guess his temper let loose, and he started to-- it's always the Jews who have to disturb things. And it was just terrible. And I was so upset, because he was really my favorite teacher, and so I ran out of the room.

I remember that. And I went to the bathroom and I cried my heart out. I was so disappointed and so hurt that he would do that. And it was very strange. Two days before a final exam-- he taught physics. He called me. I still remember that like yesterday.

We had windows, and he was standing there in the hallway by the windows. And I walked by to another class, and he called me. And I was very-- not too friendly, I guess. And he said, you know, I have to talk to you about something. It's two days before the exam. I have in my book what everybody knows best, but I have nothing about you. How come?

I said, I don't know. Maybe I don't know very much. And he said, well, I'm sure you know about this, and you know about that, and about this. I think you know about that. And I said, well, if I have to know, I will. And after school, I went right away to a girl who had graduated the year before, and was just fantastic in physics. I said, I have to help me here and teach me that. And sure enough, in the exam, these three things came up, and of course, I could do it.

Now, how would he know that people were good at this or that? By just observing them in class or by--?

No. It was certain things about certain things that-- how he knew?

Yeah.

Yes-- I guess so.

Why didn't he know about you? Was it because [BOTH TALKING]

Well, I think he knew some, but I guess he wanted to-- or he was asked to ask these particular themes by whoever made up the questions that he--

Were you quiet in class?

Yes-- partly. What I liked-- I was very verbal. What I didn't care for so much-- I was probably quiet. But it wasn't that I didn't know anything about that, that I wasn't any good at it. It was just that these particular questions-- that I wanted to be sure that I know this, and I thought it was very nice of him to alert me.

Somehow he didn't have you in the same category as a troublemaker, huh?

No. I think he really always liked me very much, and I think he felt terrible that he let his temper get loose.

Oh yeah? You think he did?

I think he did. I really do.

What makes you think that?

Well, because he was basically a very kind man. But the whole atmosphere in Germany was so that I guess everybody was drawn into the-- this whole Jewish thing. And I remember even I met a teacher, and I went home-- this was already outside at the end of '33-- I went home on the streetcar, and one of my teachers and in Nazi uniform was sitting down.

And I came in, and there were no seats. And he got up and he said, please, take my seat. So basically, I'm sure that a lot of these people in uniform really weren't totally, totally convinced, but then they tried to save their own skin. And I think that was that.

They got on the bandwagon, but maybe not with their full heart in it.

Right. But I want to tell you another thing that was really funny in that last school year. That was also 1933. We were

still sitting in our regular seats, and we had a substitute teacher. I don't really know exactly what it was. He was a substitute for the day, and he wanted to really teach us something very interesting-- how an Aryan, a real true Aryan looks like, and what his measurements would be.

And he wanted to teach us that and show us that. He pointed to me and said, come here. And he had all these instruments, and he put them on my head, and he put it all on the blackboard-- and my ears, and everything. He measured me all over the place. Nobody said anything in class-- nobody.

Were you blonde?

Everybody was quiet. Yes-- very, very blonde. So when he was finished, he said, you see? This is what an Aryan person is born with. This is a true Aryan.

Nobody giggled?

Well, of course, the whole class burst out laughing. And I turned around and I said, I'm so sorry that I have to disappoint you, because I'm Jewish. Well, he took his things and he ran out of this room so fast like you wouldn't believe. And that was really funny.

How did the kids respond to you about this whole incident?

Well, the kids really-- I cannot remember that anybody was really anti-Semitic in this whole class. We were all very good friends, and we all had a very good time together, and nobody-- and nobody was into this too much yet in 1933. People just gradually sifted into this whole atmosphere.

And I think that people who were non-Jewish were beginning to be very afraid, because the propaganda was such that something would happen to their own family. And I think that's why they gradually pulled back.

Right. In 1933, they were still offering you their seat--

Yes. Yes, absolutely-- which really surprised me. But I was shocked.

A few years later, that wouldn't--

Oh my gosh-- I wouldn't have liked to meet him. God knows what-- but that was very interesting. When I had the final exam, the questions were asked by my teachers, but the grades were given by a lot of principals from other schools and from universities who had absolutely nothing to do with my teachers. They just came from the outside.

And I was really scared that-- I wasn't worried that they won't give me the best grades. I knew that that was going to happen. But I was really concerned that they would not let me pass.

That they'd fail you out?

Yeah-- that they failed me for some weird reason and-- because I was Jewish.

Yeah. Now, this what, in spring of 1934?

That was May 1934.

OK. And tell me how it actually went.

And it was scary. It was hours of grilling, and it was very scary.

Verbal questions?

Verbal, all verbal-- the written things we had done probably a month before. It was all verbal.

So was there one teacher questioning you, or a number?

No, no. All of our teachers were questioning us. The questions that apparently had come from-- I don't know whether it was the government already, or whether it came from some university people, or where the questions really came from.

Did they test you separately one by one, or together?

One by one--

One by one--

Mm-hmm.

So how many people were questioning you when you took your exam?

I don't know-- quite a number. I don't know-- maybe six, maybe eight.

And the principals and the other people who were going to give the grades-- they didn't [BOTH TALKING].

None whatsoever, none whatsoever--

They sat and watched?

They sat, and watched, and listened.

How did it go?

I never knew how it went. I had absolutely no idea, until a few days later. I think the grades were posted, or it was said, you have passed, or whatever it was. I don't know. That was really the only thing I have left is my diploma, which I brought. I remember that I was very scared.

But you passed?

But I passed. Yeah.

But you knew you weren't going to be able to go on?

Well, even if I had failed, you see, I wouldn't have been able to go back to repeat. That would have been impossible. So that was scary.

So then I remember-- this was still, I think, while I was still going to school. I was walking down a very prominent-- one of the most prominent street in Breslau, and I was walking along with then fiancée who was-- who had dark hair and a little darker complexion than I had.

And two Nazi officers passed us by, and they rammed me and they spit into my face. That wasn't a very good experience.

Did they say anything?

Not one single word, not one single word--

Did they just do it to you or to both of you?

Just to me-- I passed there on the street-- just to me.

They thought that you were--

Well, they did not like that I went with--

This dark person--

With this darker person, who looked a little-- maybe, in their eyes, a little bit Jewish. And there were many incidents that happened where you were-- where they rammed you, pushed you, even called you Jew.

You remember?

I remember a few incidents. But otherwise, it wasn't as bad in the streets. But you were always worried, because there were constant proclamations about one thing or another. One day it was said that they were going to do house-to-house searches for weapons. And I remember we were sitting at dinner, and all of a sudden, my dad got very pale.

And he said, my God, I just remembered something. I have a saber and a pistol from the war in the attic. So we went into the attic and we found it. And that same night-- I will never forget that my dad put on a long coat, and he strapped that saber on him and the pistol in his pocket, and we went in the car and drove quite far away to a very quiet little village, which had a small little lake.

And we sat in the car for a long time to see if anybody was coming, but it was all very quiet. And then my dad got out, and he threw the sabre and the pistol into that lake. And then we left in a hurry, and thank God, nobody saw us.

What year do you think that was?

That was, I would say, the beginning of '34.

And he was still saying, we should all stay Germany?

Yes. We got married.

In '35--

In '35--

What did you do that year after you got out of school?

After you got out of school, that was '34-- nothing, absolutely nothing.

Could you work, if you wanted?

No. There was no way that I would have gotten a job. And I think I did absolutely nothing. I read, and things that I could do at home. No, then there came a time when I said to my dad, you know, this, to me, doesn't look very good. And I think that you should think about it, leaving the country.

My dad still had his business, and it was still going OK. I'll never forget that, that he turned around and he looked me in the face, and he said, you are absolutely crazy. Why would you do a thing like that?

Do you know where your mother stood on that?

My mother never said anything. My mother was very much with my dad-- never said anything. I presume that she felt the same way. And then we got married in June of '35, and there were preparations and everything, and-- except for the book burning that happened and-- where we had to go and bring all our books that had any kind of-- they listed exactly the books that you had to bring.

When was that?

That was in '34.

Did you have to witness the book burning?

Not only that-- I had to bring all my books. And my fiance I had a lot of books, and his family had a lot of books, and we had to bring them to a certain place-- a big open place, and then-- yes, I was there, hidden from view when they burned all the books. And it was absolutely terrible.

What type of books?

Like Thomas Mann, Heinrich Heine, Jewish writings. And this was mostly what I really remember, because those were some of my most favorite books. And that was very, very upsetting.

Do you think that was before or after you told your father that maybe we shouldn't stay?

No, I think that was before I told my father. But my father always said, these are little incidents. Don't pay too much attention to it. It'll all blow over.

Now, there wasn't any difficulty about two Jewish people married?

No. No, there was no problem yet. My father had to sign for me, and we went to the place where you--

City hall?

City hall-- [GERMAN] they called it-- city hall, yeah. We got married. No, there was really nothing. And then we had a wedding at the temple.

Did you have a big wedding?

Yes-- had a very big wedding. That all went still OK. I guess we were all caught up and the beauty of the moment, I presume. And that was still all right. That was in June. And then my husband and I really started seriously thinking about leaving Germany.

The two of you?

The two of us-- at first, we decided, since Switzerland was neutral-- well, you couldn't work in Switzerland. That was not allowed. But we went to Liechtenstein, and we saw that that was a wonderful little country where my husband-- he was a lawyer, but he couldn't-- he thought he wouldn't probably be in his profession.

But he had already entered a furniture factory where the man who owned it, who was a friend of my dad's, wanted a junior partner to teach him everything. And I think that was already in '34 sometimes. And then fiance went to work there, and learned the business. And we decided that's what we were going to do, and we already picked out the location, and this was all very, very great.

Did your father think you were crazy for doing that?

Oh, yes-- absolutely. My parents-- they just couldn't think of it. And when we came back home, I started thinking about

it, and I said, you know, this might not even be a good idea. Who says that Hitler, who threatens to take Czechoslovakia, who threatens to take Poland-- why won't they take Switzerland? Why won't he go into Liechtenstein also? It's also close.

And I came up with the idea maybe we should go to America. My husband had relatives in Czechoslovakia who had business-- great business connections in New York. And they gave us letters of introduction to people who would possibly help us. We went in-- I think it was November. I believe it was November of '35 we went to America.

You had no trouble getting into America?

That was no trouble at the time. You still got a passport, and you could come in-- on a visitor's visa. We had to get a visitor's visa. And we came, and we visited the people whom we had recommendations to. And they were very, very nice to us, and really wined and dined us, and gave us affidavits.

We had two who gave us affidavits, and when we came to the third one, this gentleman said, this is so strange that you come at this time for what you come for. And he told us a story that he had many years before a lumberyard. And he had a partner, and they had made already pretty nice money and had money in the bank.

And the partner went to the dock to pick up, I presume-- oversee the picking up of big a big lumber shipment. And I guess he took quite a bit of money and-- to pay for the shipment, and he never came back. He never came back. And nobody could find out what happened to the man, and why did he run away with the money, and what happened to everything?

And then this gentleman decided, well, he was going to close up the lumber yard and do something else. And that was in years he had built up a very nice, I would say, probably a giftware shop.

This was where?

That was in New York. It was rather large, I remember. He had a ground floor and a second floor, and the offices were on the second floor on the side. So he said, two days before we came, he had a caller, and this man-- his former partner came in. And he said, you must think that this is unreal that I'm coming here to you after what happened.

And so he told him he was at the lumber yard, and he was standing there and was looking up at this big lumber shipment that they brought down on the crane. And something broke, and this whole shipment fell down to the ground onto him. And he was given up for dead. He was in the hospital for over a year until they were able to repair all the damage that had been done to him.

And then, when he was well again, he needed a lot of therapy. So it was, I think, two or three years until he was back on his feet. How he got to Washington I don't know, and what he did in Washington I don't remember, but he had absolutely the connections to the whole-- everybody in the government.

And so he came to him and he said, now I've been in Washington, and I have really gotten a permanent position, and I want to give you back all the money that I took and everything that I had done to you. And whatever I can do for you, just name it-- I'll do it. And so he told him that we were coming and we were looking for wonderful connections so that we could go to America and get a visa.

And he took us to Washington, and we met the Speaker of the House, then Bankhead-- and even met Tallulah Bankhead, who was there-- his daughter-- and a lot of people in the State Department. And everybody gave us a letter of recommendations so that we could come over. And the consul in Berlin would not recognize any of that.

Wouldn't recognize it?

Nothing, nothing-- he said, I only give a visa to people who have relatives in America, and we have no relatives. All these wonderful letters and everything didn't help us at all. We went back and forth to the consulate, and I think, after

we went there for many, many times, he finally said, well, I'll give you a visa if a bank account of \$10,000 is opened in your name. And then I will give you a visa. And one of the people who were so kind to us opened a bank account of \$10,000 for us and sent it.

The German consulate didn't care whether you--

The German consulate only wanted us out. It was the American consul who didn't want us to have the visa. And when he saw that, then he finally gave us the visa.

So this was the American consul.

It was the American consul who did not want to give us a visa. He said, I only let you go to America if you have a relative. And all the people who had maybe a sister, or brother, or--

Someone [INAUDIBLE] to take care--

And if a cousin-- they got their visa immediately. And we had a very hard time getting it.

How long did it take to get?

It took a long time. We left in November of '36, so it must have been probably until maybe a month before that or so. And still my parents--

Now, when you say left, left America?

Left Germany--

Left Germany--

Germany to come to America--

OK.

Finally-- and my parents were still--

You went to New York. You go to all these wonderful letters.

Right, right.

Did you have to go back to Germany?

No, no, no, no. No, no.

You stayed.

Once the American consul gave us the visa, we came to America. Of course, we went to Ellis Island, and that was rough, because they examined you physically and mentally. And that was really a gruesome examination. And then, when we were through with that, then they allowed us to enter New York. The last words that they said-- when you are in public, you speak only English. And if you become a public charge, we will report you right back to Germany. And that was our last words from--

[INAUDIBLE]?

Oh, yeah. That went real fast.

Did you know English when you came?

English-- that I learned in school. I was perfect in spelling and perfect and grammar, but very poor in conversation.

Did your husband know English?

There was the same way. This is what you learned in Germany. You really never had an opportunity to speak English. They didn't have conversational English, so we were very good and in grammar and spelling, but not in conversational English. So it took a little doing. I was always walking around with a--

Dictionary--

--dictionary. And it was quite hot at the beginning.

What did you do the both of you?

These last few weeks that I was in Germany, I went to Berlin and learned how to make these very fine handmade gloves, which were very fashionable at the time-- very thin, fine leather. And so I had made a collection.

On the ship, we met a couple who had an art gallery in Germany, and they came to America. I don't know exactly the reason, whether they transferred-- wanted to transfer some things from Germany into American museums or what-- art galleries-- whatever it was. But they were awfully kind to us.

And they also asked us a question. Now, what do you want to do? So we said, we really don't know. My husband couldn't practice law. That was all he knew. And I knew nothing, practically. I didn't have a profession. So they said, well, don't worry. You'll come down with us at the pier. We are met by the nose and throat specialist of New York. He is very prominent.

And just wait what's going to happen. So we came down there, and we met this man and his wife. And these newfound friends of ours said, oh, listen to this man-- his first name was Caesar-- said, listen, Caesar, I think your son should have violin lessons, and here's a young man-- he can give you-- your son violin lessons. My husband played the violin just for fun.

And so she said, I am going to-- I'm going to Chicago now and I'm meeting a lady who has a boutique on Lakeshore Drive, and I will get in touch with her, and she will be in touch with you, and maybe you can do something with your gloves. And so my husband started with violin lessons, and they were very kind. They overpaid.

And I started making a collection of gloves. And in a very short while, two ladies knocked at our door. There was the one from Chicago and her friend, who had a boutique in New York. And they wanted to see the gloves. And the lady in Chicago ordered something, and she took my collection along. And the lady from New York-- her name was Mrs. [PERSONAL NAME]-- said that she would also be interested, and I should give her three or four pair of gloves and see if she could do any business.

That was the beginning. And it took a little while. I got some orders from Chicago-- not much, but after a pretty short while, this Mrs. [PERSONAL NAME] from New York called me. And she said, you know, I don't have much trade for the gloves. Do you want to come and work for me?

Well, of course, I was delighted. So I did go, and she interviewed me. And she said, yes, I need somebody who could model, and somebody who could sell, and even be my personal social secretary sometimes. Well, of course, I was delighted. She offered me \$20 a week, which was very-- a very good salary at the time. And I was really delighted.

Later on, a couple of weeks later, she rescinded her generous offer and said, no. I was thinking about it. It's a little too much. I'll pay you \$18. So that was my beginning.

Now, this was 1937 now?

That was 1937-- just the very beginning of '37. And I worked for her for, I think, four years. She was a very-- let's put it that way-- not a very nice person. She took terrible advantage of me, and times were really not so that I could afford to even look around for another job, because we really needed every penny.

What kind of advantage?

She would be mean. She would say 10 minutes for lunch is much too much. Take five. And lunch for me was going around the corner to a bakery and buying a couple of rolls, and go to the bathroom and eat my dry rolls, and have some water out of my hand from the sink. And that was my lunch.

But 10 minutes was too much for her. Five had to be-- and I had to work very hard. And I worked six days a week, Saturday also. And then she said to me one day, there is a man in the house who just lost his wife and who was looking around for somebody who would come in and clean his apartment every day, and change his linens, and do his dishes, and vacuum, and just keep his apartment clean.

And I had heard the man talk to her that he was looking for somebody. And he said to her, get me somebody, and then tell me how much it is, and I will pay you. I will reimburse you the money. And so she said to me, this is the situation. Why don't you come in at 8:00 instead of 9:00, and go up there and keep his apartment clean?

[INAUDIBLE]?

I was delighted, because every penny for me-- for us was just so important. And so I went there every day at 8 o'clock, and I worked very hard do the right job and please him. And at the end of the week, this gentleman came down and told her that he was delighted. She must have found a wonderful person for him, because everything is just so perfect. And how much did he owe her?

And so I don't remember what it was. So he gave her the money, and she put the money in her purse. I did that for years. Never, ever did I see a penny. And she did many things like that. When my father and my brother were taken to concentration camp, I-- my mother sent me a telegram, and she just signed it, and Mom and Lori. So I knew what had happened.

You knew what that meant.

I know exactly what that meant. May I just have a sip of water?

Sure. When was that?

That was the end of '38. And I was very perturbed, of course, as you can imagine. And she came in and she said, why you look so grim today? I told her I just had a telegram, and I knew that my father and brother must be in a concentration camp. So she said to me, oh, God-- they must have really done something terrible. They must have stolen something done something really bad, because otherwise, nobody would put anybody into a concentration camp. And I tried to explain to her. She wouldn't listen.

She was Jewish?

Oh, no. No, she wasn't Jewish at all. No, a Jewish person wouldn't have done that. But she did many of these very nasty things and made my life pretty miserable. She finally-- I think it was in 1941-- she finally closed the boutique, and that was when I finally could leave and was out of her grasp-- which was good.

Now, what did your husband do during those years?

My husband went into the insurance business, and by then already-- we had already better times. The years in between, we worked very hard to try to get my-- well, let me go back a little bit. My mother came to visit me in 1937, and I told her that I was absolutely determined to get my brother and sister out of Germany. She was very unhappy about that thought, but she didn't really fight me particularly.

So you were saying, I want my brother and sister--

I was saying, you got to leave.

But not them--

You can't stay. Yeah, I told them. She said no. You know how we feel about it. No, no. And she said, you really think this is necessary? So I said, yes, I really feel very strongly about that. And if you're not going to be happy about it, I said, I will have to do it anyway, because I see absolutely no future.

Then my dad came in '38 to visit me. And that was already in the latter part of '38. And I've said to him, you can go to Cuba. It takes three days to immigrate to America. Do it, and let mom dissolve the business and everything. Well, he had about a fit. He was very angry at me that I would suggest such a thing.

And he went back to Germany, and that was just the time when they started putting people into camps. The manager of his business had asked him about his-- the manager's son, who was always in trouble. And he was 16 years old. And he said to my dad, couldn't you just give him a small job? I think, if he would have steady work, he would really straighten up. And so my dad said OK.

This young guy came while my brother and my dad were at the camp. He came to my mother's house. He denounced my brother and-- my dad and my brother. And so he told the Nazis, here's a Jewish people, and here are two men. And they came right away and they took them away.

And then he came in his uniform up to my mother's apartment with an ax. First, he took all the jewelry. That was the first thing. And then he took an ax to the furniture and just did horrible, horrible damage so that they couldn't they couldn't stay there anymore. And they moved in with my husband's parents, who had a very large home, and then they lived there.

And in the meantime, I found out that, if you got a visa for somebody who is in a concentration camp to another country, then they would-- the Nazis would let them go. And they had to leave without anything. They had to leave within three days and leave Germany. And so we were able, with borrowing and whatever-- everything that we had-- to buy a visa for my parents for England. And in the meantime, my brothers and my sister's visa came through from America, and--

Which you had applied for--

--which I had applied for. And so my mother was able to get them both out of the camp, and took my sister and my brother immediately to the Bremen and put them on the ship to come to me.

To America?

To America-- and then my dad and my mother went to England, to London.

Now, how long was your father in the camp? Do you know?

It must have been many months. I don't know exactly how many of this. I really don't recall. But it must have been very hard. And they had nothing to eat. He never, never talked about that, and neither did my brother. When you started talking about it, then they would not tell you.

The only thing my dad told me once was that he tried to get himself a job in the kitchen, and then he stole a few slices of bread and brought it to my brother so that he would have something to eat. That was the only thing that I ever heard. And my brother and sister came to me. And my brother was 17.

They were both terribly, terribly spoiled, because my parents saw that money was going to be taken away from them anyway, so they gave them anything their little heart desired. So whatever came to their heads, they got. And so they came to me, and I didn't have a thing, and they couldn't have what they thought they were entitled to.

When did they come to you?

So that must have been, I would say, '39.

Early part of '39? Do you know when?

Must have been, I would say, probably-- maybe in the summer of '39, I would say, probably. My brother was passed away when he was 50 years old in 1970-- '71, I think-- yeah, 1971. And my sister passed away, oh, just very shortly after that. So I never had really an opportunity anymore to question them, ask them anything.

Were very glad to be out of Germany?

Well, I don't believe that they really realized too much what was happening.

Even though your brother was in the camp?

Yeah, even so-- I don't really believe that even that had made a very big impression on him. But I really don't know, because he never would venture to tell me anything.

Do you know what camp he was in?

I'm not sure whether it was Buchenwald, but I'm really not 100% sure. My brother was just 17 and my sister was 11. And I was able to get a job for my brother. He worked in a jewelry store.

And we needed every penny, because we needed to send money to England. My parents weren't allowed to work, so we had to sustain them. And my sister had a horrible time. She went to-- I put her through school. I worked two jobs, and I was never home really before 9:00-- 8:00, 9:00. And she was in school, and every week I had a letter from the teacher to come and see me-- to come and see her.

And she said, I don't know what to do with this girl. She sits on the last bench in the back. She sucks her thumb. And she will not learn English, she will not participate, she will not talk to anybody-- nothing. And then she would go home and she would sit on the couch. The beds weren't made, we all rushed out so early in the morning. The dishes were still in the sink.

She wouldn't do a thing. And I said to her, you know, you're 11 years old, and we all work so hard. This is your job. You'll have to learn English. You have to do good in school, and you have to help a little in the house. Nothing I could do with her-- nothing. I met a very nice Jewish family who lived in the suburbs. And they were really, really very sweet, and tried to help somebody.

And they told me that. And I told them about my sister, so they said, how would you feel and how would she feel if we take her to live with us? They had two little girls. One was a little older than my sister and one was a bit younger.

Had they met your sister?

No. So when I introduced them, and they said-- they asked her, would you like to come and live with us? She said, yeah. Well, within a month, she was the best in school. She spoke perfect English. They called them mom and dad. And they

spoiled her. She had the best things, and she had just an absolute wonderful, wonderful life-- until my mother came. My mother came-- I believe it must have been '41.

And you say your mother, not your father?

No. My mother wanted to stay with my dad, but it was-- we didn't have the kind of money that we could afford. And I said to my mother, if you would come, we only have to send money for daddy. And then you could help me in the house, because I work very hard. And so they finally decided it would be the right thing to do, and so my mom came.

Just your mother?

Mm-hmm. And the minute that my sister knew that my mother was there, she was not to be lived with. She just wanted to come home. She was really not very gracious to these people. And it was terrible for me, because they had been so good to her. And I didn't know what kind of excuse to make that she would make such--

How long was she with that family?

Well, she was with this family for, I would say, probably close to two years. She wanted to come home. And so finally, that's what we had to do. And it was very hard, because my mother was very ill. And so one day I said, you look so terrible and you don't feel well. You have to go and see a doctor.

There was no money for a doctor, so I said, there's a clinic in Mt. Sinai Hospital. And that's supposed to be a very good clinic, and so why don't you go? It costs \$0.25. And so she went, and when she came home, she said, well, she had a wonderful doctor-- an older man. And he said, if she wasn't operated on immediately, she would absolutely-- she would pass away.

What did she have?

She was bleeding internally. I think she had some woman's problem. And that's what she came home with. And she was already so anemic from losing all this blood-- which, I had no idea that was happening. And so I didn't know what to do. And I asked her who it was, and she gave me the name of the doctor.

And so I looked him up in the phone book, and it happened that his residence was very close to where we lived. And I called him up, and he was very gracious. And I asked him if I could come and see him, and he said, of course. And so he told me that that was true. If she wasn't operated on within three days, she would-- she couldn't make it.

And so I said, well, how does this work in the clinic? He said, you see, we give one day a week-- one day a month, I think it was-- to the clinic to help people. We don't get paid for that. And she might get a first year resident to do his first operation, or it's possible she gets to a wonderful surgeon.

Well, that, of course, broke my heart, because I wasn't going to take any chances with my mother. I asked him what he would charge for the operation, and he told me, normally, he would charge \$200. I said, doctor, this is my mother. I would like for you to do it, but I don't have any \$200.

I will promise you I pay you that, but how long that will take, I don't know. We have absolutely nothing. And I guess, since he was Jewish himself, he took pity on me, I suppose. And he said, OK, I'll agree to that. And he operated on my mother. My mother got well. And it took me many, many, many years before I could put two \$100 bills into a nice new billfold and bring it to him.

And he said, I didn't think that that would happen, but I trusted you anyway. So that was that. And then it was getting to be very hard. My dad always felt, in America, you have to have your own business. I kept saying, daddy, to have your own business, you have to have money.

He said, well, yeah, but I can't take a job. I have to have my own business.

When did he come here?

He came about five months after my mom. And of course, I called our apartment the [? rabbi ?] apartment, because all we had was a living room, a dining room, and two very small bedrooms, and we all lived there. And it was beginning to be very difficult, because we needed really more income to do what we-- to sustain such a big family.

So my husband finally said, you know what we have to do? We have to get your parents an apartment, and we'll pay for five months, and then we tell your dad, in five months, you have to be on your own. Between the two men, they should be able to sustain the family. And my parents, of course, were beside themselves, and they were very angry with me that I-- they felt I put them out.

But there was nothing I can do about it. And I had met a very nice lady who was looking for a companion to go to Florida with her. She had a home and an orange plantation, and she was widowed, and she didn't want to go by herself. And she needed somebody to go with her for five months.

A cousin of hers asked me, do you know anybody? And we didn't know anybody. And then, after a while, I said, well, what about me? I'm just losing my job, and I could really use a good vacation. And my husband was very much for that. She wasn't going to pay me anything, but it was also not going to cost anything. And he had very good friends where he could live until I came back, and then we would be on our own. And in the meantime, we could-- with the money that he made, we could sustain my parents for five months.

Did your brother and sister go with your parents?

Yeah, right. And so I went to Florida with this lady, and didn't take a month and my father had a fantastic job.

Doing what?

You remember that film company Pathé?

News.

Yeah, something like that--

News reel.

Yeah-- correct, correct. Now, exactly what he did for them-- but it was in the engineering field. And then he was there for quite a while, and then he changed to some kind of an outfit that made storm windows. And he designed these these windows. They were custom made so--

[INAUDIBLE].

Oh, absolutely, absolutely--

Could he speak English?

Well, he learned, like everybody-- every one of us had to learn-- the same way.

Your mother learned?

My mother learned. And in the end, my father was very, very successful with this company. They lived there-- of course, then my brother got married, and then he had his own life. And then my sister got married, and she moved out of the house.

Now, where were they living?

My brother was living in Larchmont, which is a suburb of New York. And my sister was living in Forrest Hills--

And your parents-- where were they living?

Was also New York. My parents still stayed, and they lived in West 180th Street.

Manhattan?

In Manhattan-- and then my mom passed away. And then my dad couldn't stay by himself, and he went into a senior home, and he stayed there a number of years until he passed away.

Were they glad they had come to America?

Yes. Well, and especially with what happened in Germany, of course, they were very glad. They liked America very much. And they traveled around a lot and got to know the country. No, no. They were totally integrated into American life.

How about the grandparents?

My grandfather on my mother's-- of my mother still passed away while I was still in Germany. It was even before I got married, he passed away.

And on your father [INAUDIBLE]?

And my father's parents passed away. My grandfather passed away while I was on my excursion trip to America in 1935, and then my grandfather passed away very shortly after that too. My grandmother passed away shortly after that also.

Did you have cousins?

Yeah, but I had really lost all track of-- some went to Israel. A lot of them went to the gas chamber. And I had I tried very hard to get my mother's sister out to come to America. She was my favorite aunt, and it just didn't work out anymore. She was taken to a camp, and perished there.

I had no idea where any cousins went, and only lately, I heard-- and I have to look into this-- that I still have a cousin who lives somewhere in Texas. I have contact to a cousin in Australia, but they are really the only ones that I have contact with.

What did your husband end up doing in America?

My husband ended up to--

Oh, insurance--

--to be in the insurance business. When I came back, I also took my insurance exam to work with him for a while. I did not like that. I also took the real estate brokers exam. I did not like that.

You still wanted to be a doctor, huh?

I wanted so much to be a doctor. Well, we sort of drifted apart, and in 1942-- at the end of 1942, I met a dentist who was just going into practice. And he asked me if I would be interested in becoming his assistant, and that he would teach me everything. I had no idea about anything.

And he was only going to work a half a day to begin with, and so I worked-- since I didn't like the real estate, I thought I could drop that. And then the insurance business-- I just worked a half a day, so that was great. So he only started in the afternoon. It was from-- I think from 3:00 to 8:00. And he really taught me, and I was with him for quite a number of years.

What were you, like a dental assistant?

Yeah-- right, right. I worked at the chair, I did all the surgery with him, and I also kept the books and worked in the office-- sort of an all around person. And I really loved that. And then, in 1942, I-- my husband and I divorced.

Was that painful to you?

No, it wasn't painful, because we had really drifted apart. It wasn't painful for me. As a matter of fact, I really felt I was still so young, and we didn't have any children. Wasn't that better to just go our separate ways and build a life for myself-- which I did. I learned all that the assisting, and I really, really loved that job.

And after a few months, he went into practice all day, and by then, I was already trained, and that was really nice. And then, in 1946, a friend-- it was really a family friend. She was 10 years older than I was, and she was very close to my parents. And she had married in Germany, and they ran all over-- to France, to Italy, and everything, and finally landed in America.

He was a conductor by profession, and also that was a hard beginning for them. And he developed cancer very soon after they came to this country. And when he passed away, she wrote a very, very sad letter to my mother and asked her if she couldn't come and be with her for a little while. But my mother couldn't leave the family. My brother and my sister were then still-- I think that they were still at home, I believe.

Where did this woman live?

She lived in San Francisco.

[INAUDIBLE].

Yeah. So I said, you know what, I could take two weeks' vacation. I haven't had a vacation in a long time. And I could go, and that way, I see some of the country. That'd be wonderful. So I took a vacation, and I came out to be with her, and I fell in love with San Francisco-- absolutely fell in love with it.

That was the first time that I really felt, oh boy, this feels like home-- for a city. And after the two weeks were over, she wasn't so sad. She already had a boyfriend, and she had lots of friends, and so it was really a wonderful time. And after two weeks, I-- even before two weeks, I went and looked around, and I found myself in a room. And I wrote my boss-- sorry, I can't come back. I'm going to stay here. And I found a job.

In the dental field?

No. I worked for Maisson Mendessolle.

For what?

Maisson Mendessolle. Have you been to San Francisco for a long time? That was a very, very fancy dress shop in the St. Francis Hotel. And I started there. I had a recommendation from someone, and they took me, but it was a straight commission job. They would pay me \$200 a month, but I had to make it up and commission.

Well, the old sales ladies who were there didn't let you get to anybody, and it was really, really a terrible struggle to make these \$200. And I was a wreck. It was so stressful. I hated every minute of it. And there was another young person

who was there also, and she didn't like it. And she got an offer at [INAUDIBLE] that was a sporting goods store.

And she said they offered her the job as a buyer. And she said, I'll tell you what, if you want, I'll take you with me. You won't make \$200, but if you want, it'll be probably fun. And since I was so much into sports when I was a young person, I said, OK. So instead of \$200, I made \$175, but I had the time of my life. It was just absolutely, absolutely what I loved. I sold ski wear, and tennis gear, and--

You worked in the store?

I worked in the store. I grew up with a lot of sport, and so I had good knowledge.

You didn't tell us about that that part of--

I probably haven't told you a lot of things that have happened. But anyway, I was very, very, very happy there. It was a lot of fun. It was fun to sell that. But \$175--

Didn't go very far--

Came the 28th, that was rough. And all our friends-- they were in the same boat. Nobody made a lot of money. Came the 28th, everybody had a problem. And so we always got together, and we pooled our resources. One would bring bread. The other one would bring avocados from a neighbor's tree. Another one would bring an apple or something like that. So we lived until the 30th or the 31st until we, again, had money, and could do it all over again. But that was a wonderful, wonderful time for me.

How long did you work there?

I stayed until the beginning of 1948-- not quite two years. And I had met my husband and-- my next husband, my second husband-- already in New York. He was a patient in the doctor's office, so I knew him. And he really pursued me.

Cross-country--

Cross-country-- religiously, every week-- and well, we fell in love. And in 1948, I went back to New York to get married. And that was the end of my very beautiful, carefree San Francisco time.

You stayed in New York?

We stayed in New York. Our daughter was born in November of '48. We got married in January of '48, and Jackie was born in November '48. And my husband lost his very, very good job on the day our daughter was born. New government regulations after the war didn't permit these people that he worked for-- he was a textile chemist, and he had his own lab, and developed all these yarns. And these yarns were sold to foreign countries.

And all of a sudden, the government did not allow this anymore, and the business had to fold up, and he lost his job. That was a shock. And now came very lean years. It was hard for him. He tried a couple of things, which didn't work out. And in the end, he decided that the only way to do this was to have his own business.

Just like your father said--

Right. And with the help of some friends, and finding a partner, he founded [INAUDIBLE] Incorporated, which was a converting business where the yarn was made into certain fabrics, and then dyed, and finished, and sold. He limited himself to the flag and banner industry, and sold--

Flags and banners?

Flags and banners, yeah-- sold this-- these particular fabrics only to flag and banner people all over the United States and Canada. We had an office, and also a stock room where the finished fabrics would come in. And we had a manager, and a secretary, and a packing person, and then it was shipped all over the country.

And as the years went on, he traveled a lot. And in '53, our son was born. And he, as he grew up, was always pretty sick in the wintertime. He constantly had throat infections. And when he started school, he was more at home than--

[INAUDIBLE] California [INAUDIBLE].

--in school. No, no-- not yet. And so one day, my husband said, you know, I have traveled-- I have to travel so much-- he was away about six weeks at a time. He said, you know what, why don't we try Florida? Why don't you go to the-- to Florida with the children for the winter, and see if he doesn't do better in a warm climate?

And at first, I couldn't believe it. I said, we can't do that like that. And he said, yeah, yeah. That's not so hard. He said, I come after my travels. I come to Florida, and I am in touch by telephone and special delivery letters with the office every day, so it's no problem. And then, in the summer, of course, we have to go to New York for a month or six weeks. So I left in--

So he was going to keep the business in New York [BOTH TALKING]--

Yes, yes.

--Florida?

Yeah. Well, just come to Florida-- still, we had our apartment in New York, and-- but he felt he could be with me in Florida for quite a bit, and then be in New York for a bit.