

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

**Name of interviewee:** Cohn, Gerda

**Date of interview:** 10/21/1998

**Summary:** Gerda was born on 9/29/1914 in Breslau, Germany, in the province of Silesia. She was the daughter of Alfred Fischer and Margarete Riesenfeld. She had two siblings, Klaus Peter and Lori. She came from a well-off family and attended school before the war. With her blonde hair and light complexion, she was often mistaken for an Aryan woman.

Her first experience of Nazi violence was about 1934, when a Nazi officer confused her for an Aryan woman and shoved her and spit in her face because she was walking around with her fiancée, a man who was obviously Jewish. Frightened by the events unfolding in Nazi Germany, she pleaded with her father to flee to America, however he refused.

She was married in June of 1935 at the age of 20. Still terrified by the events taking place in Germany, she convinced her new husband to flee to America. In November of 1936, they both obtained visas and left Germany by sea for America. She received a telegram from her mother in 1938 notifying her that her father and brother had been arrested and sent to a concentration camp. They were released when she obtained a visa for them, and her parents fled to England, while her younger siblings came to live with her in America. Once she had settled in America, she obtained a number of different jobs ranging from glove maker to dental assistant.