

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Deutsch, Edith

Date of interview: 11/3/1999

Summary: Edith Deutsch was born in Arnswalde, Germany on January 21, 1925, to father Fritz Abrahamowsky and mother Lotte Gradnauer. She was born into a prominent family; both her father and grandfather were grain merchants. The family lived in a large home, where her father's offices were located as well. As a young child, Edith was raised by servants, rarely seeing her mother or father.

In 1933 the problems started; this was also the year that the family lost all their property and moved to Berlin. She remembers the Nazis going into the homes of Jews and taking all their books, but she does not remember it happening to her. Edith spoke of how her father was a German and did not think that they were in danger. In Berlin, they lived in an apartment. Edith went to public school and in the afternoons she would study religion. While in school, Edith does not remember any anti-Semitism. She went to public school until Kristallnacht, after which she was no longer allowed to attend public school. She then attended Jewish school until they left. Even though Edith did not recall any anti-Semitism directed towards her, she did remember going to the Olympic Stadium with her class and seeing the No Jews Allowed signs.

In April of 1939, Edith and her family boarded a ship headed for Thailand because it was the only place they could go. However, they needed proof of having enough money, so an aunt and uncle gave them approximately two hundred dollars. While loading their lift onto the ship, an SS guard asked them for all their silver; so they had to take all their silver out of their luggage. Edith says that they boarded a train to Hamburg, and then boarded a freight that went through the Suez Canal and ended up in Singapore. Originally they planned to go to Bangkok; however, the schools were not good there. After a week in Singapore, they boarded the Antos, which took them to Shanghai.

When they reached Shanghai, they were taken to a camp where they stayed for a week. Once out of the camp they moved into a room, and eventually into a place that was larger than a room. In Shanghai Edith did not attend school, but worked. Her first job was a sewing girl, then she was hired as a sales girl, and after the Japanese occupation, she became a beautician. After she was married she worked in the PX.

In 1945, Edith was engaged to an Austrian man who was eleven years older than she. In February of 1946, they were married in Shanghai. Edith says that it was the happiest day in her life.

In 1947, Edith's family tried to emigrate to America, but because there was a quota for Austrians, Edith and her Austrian husband were not allowed to go. In

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August 1948, Edith gave birth to her first son. In 1949, Edith and her husband, along with their son, moved to Australia. In Australia housing was scarce, so they lived in a boarding house. Food was still rationed. Her husband found a job in a restaurant and a friend to rent them a room.

In 1951, Edith and her family came to America. Edith states that she could have stayed in Australia, but her family was in America. First they lived in Oregon, and then moved to San Francisco.

Throughout Edith's life she has continued to socialize with and have contact with other refugees.