

Interview with RUTH PHILIP

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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Interviewer: Mike Askenazer

Denise Lietzel

Transcriber: Brenda Hill

MR. ASKENAZER: Today is Tuesday, April 16th, 1991. My name is Mike Askenazer, and I am interviewing Ruth Philips for the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco, California.

A Excuse me. It is Ruth Philip.

Q Ruth Philip for the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco. And assisting me today is Denise Lietzel.

RUTH, COULD YOU TELL US WHAT YOUR MAIDEN NAME WAS, AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN (INAUDIBLE)?

A My maiden name is Ruth Cappel. I was born Cologne, Germany, on the 28th of July in 1921.

Q COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY. DID YOU HAVE ANY BROTHERS OR SISTERS?

A I have an older brother. His name is Francis Cappel. My parents' names were Paul Cappel

and (Meta) Cappel. They were both living in Cologne. *Spelling*
 My father was an attorney, and my mother came from
 (Visalia.) Her maiden name was (Brownsheig), and we *Spelling*
 had a very happy family in Cologne.

Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE A LITTLE MORE YOUR FAMILY
 LIFE (INAUDIBLE)?

A My father had two brothers and two sisters.
 My mother had six brothers and sisters. We were a
 very close family. I had lots of cousins. We saw
 them once a year even though they did not live in
 Cologne.

My maternal grandparents, I did not know.
 But my father's parents lived in Cologne, and we saw
 them every Friday night on Shabbat morning -- Shabbat
 after Temple. And we were, as they called -- as they
 were designated in Germany, conservative Jews. There
 was no reformed Judaism. We were conservative Jews.
 And my grandparents were orthodox Jews. They still
 had an orthodox household. We did not.

We had a regular family life. My brother
 went to school. I went to -- I went to school.
 Vacation times, once a year, we went on a trip
 together. Either I visited some aunt or uncle or we

went together to either Switzerland or Holland or traveled in Germany.

So before 1933 we had a normal, healthy, good family life. We lived in a nice part of town of Cologne. When I was born, we lived in a street called (Olnstrasse) 65. And as my brother tells me -- at four years, I was just a little girl -- we moved to (Mechildisstrasse) which was (Mechildisstrasse) 15, which was right around the corner from the synagogue. And this was the place where we emigrated from in 1939. So we lived there nearly practically all my life.

And I went to school. I started school when I was 6. We went to Jewish elementary school -- I went to Jewish elementary school and then transferred into, as they call in Germany, a (litzaum,) a girls' high school. And after three and a half years of high school, Jews were not allowed in a German regular public school, and I was forced to leave that school.

My brother went to a boys' gymnasium, and he was able to go much longer than I did. And after I

left school, my parents decided that I should learn a trade, something that we could use maybe if we had to leave Germany.

I am skipping already, skipping ahead.

Q WE WILL COVER THAT IN A FEW MINUTES.

A Yeah. I am sorry. I went a little far.

Q THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

YOU MENTIONED THERE WERE ORTHODOX JUDAISM AND CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM, AND YOUR FAMILY CONSIDERED THEMSELVES CONSERVATIVE.

A Right.

Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT CONSERVATIVE WAS IN GERMANY AT THAT TIME?

A I would think conservative is comparable to reformed Judaism here, maybe a little bit more Hebrew. And women and men sat separately. So it was really a little bit more conservative -- well, it was a more conservative service.

My father was a very active member in synagogue. He was president of the synagogue for many years. I was very active. I sang in the choir. And we spent a lot of time in synagogue, especially

towards the beginning of the Naziism because we were just not allowed to do too many other things. We had a large (den) which gave us the opportunity to put on plays or see plays, and we had dancing school in the lodge because we could not mix with the other groups anymore. And all this of course happened after 1933.

Spelling

Talking about 1933, I think I should mention that the first boycott day, which was April 1st, 1933, my father was in court. He was an attorney. And my mother received a telephone call -- or we received a telephone call that they were trying to accost the Jewish attorneys and not to worry; Daddy was all right, but he was beaten black and blue. He had a broken nose, and they put a certain number of -- well, first they put them on a balcony, and they tried to push him off the balcony. But my dad had an old-fashioned stick pin on his tie, and as they were trying to get to his neck, that stick pin would not give. So he more or less was saved by being grabbed.

And they took a few of the attorneys and put them on a garbage truck, and the garbage truck had a big sign on it, "We are Jews." And they drove them

through the center of town, and then they released them and took all his money away. And his partner, who was not in court on the same day, was notified that somebody put him into a taxi cab -- put my dad into a taxi cab, that we should come down and pay the taxi driver because he had no money with him.

So my brother and I went downstairs, and I remember so well that I only recognized him by his hands. He was just bloody and black and blue, and it was a horrible sight.

As we were going up the stairs, a neighbor's doctor saw him, and all his comment -- the only comment he had was the only thing to do is to put a -- what is it? -- a gun to your head, shoot yourself. And this man -- this doctor committed suicide a few months later.

So we took our dad upstairs, and we had called our doctor already to check him out. And his brothers came. And we were told we have to put cold compresses on him all night long. I was 11 years old. And it was very heartbreaking because my mother, who is a very -- was a very energetic and

brave woman, was so upset that I remember she wanted to go across the street where the S.S. people had their building. It was called a (brown house.) That is where their office was. She wanted to go over there and tell them -- wanted to get one of these people over there to take a look and see what they had done to her husband. And we literally -- not I, but my uncle said to hold her down, not to let her go over there and cause any more problems. So this was 1st of April 1933.

Spelling

And I asked myself: Why did our parents stay? But the answer always was six weeks -- that is all. That is as long as it will last. This cannot last any longer.

That same week, my mother got a telephone call from her sister-in-law, who lived in Hamburg, that her brother had disappeared. Her brother was a very prominent director of a big department store, (Kashruts.) He had taken his three girls to school and did not come back home again. After a week, he was found hanging in a forest.

Spelling

Now, my aunt still claims that somebody did

this to him, but we are convinced that he committed suicide. He just saw in the future that he couldn't continue, and he knew his job was at jeopardy because he was Jewish. And having a wife and three girls and having lived in a very wealthy style, he just couldn't see it. And he figured if he committed suicide, they would get his life insurance and at least they could live. And this was my favorite uncle. So that was April 1st. So this was 1933.

But Jewish people in Germany just could not see that anything -- or could not foresee that this could continue like this. My father kept saying, "I can't leave. I'm an attorney. What am I doing in a different country? I don't speak the language." He was an intellectual. He didn't talk like we did. He did not make any mistakes. He would not miss-mouth. He just didn't want to talk.

So we kept saying another month, another year, and this too shall pass. Good Jewish optimism. So we stayed. And then of course I was kicked out of school, which was quite painful, as I said before.

Q WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

A That was in '36.

Q OKAY. CAN WE COVER THAT LATER?

A Okay. All right.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHO BEAT YOUR FATHER UP?

A No.

Q WERE THEY DRESSED LIKE CIVILIANS?

A I have no idea. I have no idea. Probably not because they didn't hide. I mean they were proud of what they were doing.

Q YOU DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT WAS THE S.S.?

A Oh, I am sure it was the S.R. -- not the S.S. The S.R., yes.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHO THEY WERE?

A I have no idea.

Q YOU SAID YOUR UNCLE -- YOU THINK -- YOU THOUGHT THAT HE RECOGNIZED THE WRITING ON THE WALL AND COMMITTED SUICIDE?

A Mm-hmm.

Q SO MOST OF THE JEWS DID NOT REALIZE HOW LONG IT WAS GOING TO LAST. YOUR UNCLE AND SOME OTHERS DID.

A Well, he was afraid that he would lose his

big position, and I guess he felt this was the only way that he could save his family, by protecting them through his life insurance.

Q (INAUDIBLE.) THEY KEPT SAYING IT WAS ONLY SIX WEEKS?

A No. I think not. But I asked myself had he seen this -- I mean had he realized it would take longer, he would have taken his family out of the country. But he was just desperate. That's all. So that was a very rude awakening at 11, 12 -- almost 12 years old.

Q YOUR FATHER WAS AN ATTORNEY?

A Mm-hmm.

Q WAS HE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE LAW AFTER APRIL 1ST OF 1933?

A Yes.

Q (INAUDIBLE) PROHIBITING JEWS FROM BECOMING ATTORNEYS IN 1933 -- YOU DON'T RECALL IF IN FACT THEY DID?

A No.

Q HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE TO PRACTICE?

A He was limited to his practice or to going to court. I don't think it was in '33. I think it was later where they could only go three days a week.

Q TO COURT?

A To court, mm-hmm. But I don't remember when this was. I think it was in '36, if I am not mistaken.

Q SO BASICALLY, HE CONTINUED TO PRACTICE LAW UNTIL (INAUDIBLE)?

A Yes -- well, no. Well, his law practice was very limited because he could only go to court three times a week. And he moved his office into our home. And ironically enough, when he was in the concentration camp, he was sent a letter -- or he got a letter that he could appear in court more often. I don't have this letter unfortunately, but we lost everything when we left Germany. But this was very ironical; he was in concentration camp, and then he got this letter.

Q WHEN WAS HE IN CONCENTRATION CAMP?

A '38.

Q HE HAS BEEN OUT (INAUDIBLE) --

A He has been what?

Q HIS EXPERIENCE IN CONCENTRATION CAMP.

A Well --

Q BACK IN 1933, THEN, HE WENT BACK TO
PRACTICING LAW?

A Yes. Yes.

Q PRETTY SOON AFTER THAT (INAUDIBLE)?

A No. He had to recuperate and recover. Yes.

Q WERE HIS CLIENTS MAINLY JEWISH OR ONLY
JEWISH?

A No. I don't think they were mainly Jewish.
Later on, of course, but not in '33. As a matter of
fact, about 15 years ago my husband and I were in
New York. He had been to New York twice a year on
business since 25 years. I was alone. I took a cab,
and I was alone in the taxicab.

And the cab driver -- when I asked him to
drive me somewhere, please, the cab driver said, "You
are not from New York."

I said, "No."

And he said, "Where do you live? Where do
you come from?"

I said, "San Francisco."

And he said, "Did you live anyplace before San Francisco?"

And I thought, gee, he has a nerve. His accent is quite thick too. I said, "Yes, I did." I said, "Where do you come from?"

So he said, "I asked you first." And obviously he was a nice fellow. And I was told not to discuss things with a cab driver, but I don't agree with that because most of them are lots of fun. Anyway, he said, "Where do you come from?"

So I said, "Cologne. I was born in Cologne."

He said, "In Cologne?" He said, "I am from Cologne too."

I said, "That's interesting."

He said, "I knew somebody very nice in Cologne."

I said, "Well, try me."

"Oh," he said, "he was an attorney."

I said, "Really?" I said, "What was his name?"

"Oh," he said, "you wouldn't know."

I said, "Well, try me."

So he said, "His name was Dr. Cappel."

I almost -- I didn't know what hit me there.

I said, "Really?"

He said, "Do you know him?"

I said, "Yes. He happened to be my father."

He said, "I can't believe it." He turned around, and he said, "He was defending me on a case, and we won. And I didn't have too much money, so I gave him a blanket, and I gave him as much money as I had."

I said, "Do you know that we still have that blanket?"

And he couldn't believe me. Then I said to him, "Well, you better -- we better get going because the meter is running."

"Oh, no," he said, "this is on me." New York. So these are things -- he was not Jewish.

Q HE WAS NOT JEWISH?

A No. He was not Jewish. No. He had not only Jewish clientele.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A I said to him, "What made you leave Germany?"

He said, "I couldn't stand it anymore."
Take it for what it is worth.

So that's no -- no, he didn't. Of course, after -- the more close we got to '38, the more Jewish clients he had, naturally. But I don't remember whether his practice was curtailed in '33.

Have you heard this from other people? Maybe that was already in '33, but I don't think that early. I really don't think so.

Q (INAUDIBLE) ENTERING INTO THE LEGAL PROFESSION?

A Oh, entering into the profession. He was in the German army. He had an iron crest from the army. You know, he was all Jew.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE IRON CREST WAS RECEIVED FOR?

A I don't know. Some bravery. I don't know. As a matter of fact, my brother has it at home. And so my father-in-law had it too. For some bravery.

Q EVERY TIME SOMEONE HAS TOLD ME IN AN INTERVIEW THAT HIS FATHER WAS IN THE GERMAN ARMY, WHICH IS QUITE COMMON --

A Mm-hmm.

Q -- ALMOST EVERY SINGLE ONE --

A Maybe. My grandson is very proud of it.

Q BUT THE PEOPLE I INTERVIEWED FELT THAT THAT WAS THE REASON WHY THEY GOT MORE LENIENT TREATMENT IN SITUATIONS THAN THEY WOULD HAVE RECEIVED --

A I do not believe that. I don't believe that. They recognized nothing, I think, of the past -- nothing. You were Jewish and that was it. So I don't think so.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER?

A My mother was one of seven children and the second youngest, and she was a very energetic, fun-loving lady who spent a lot of time with us kids. Every afternoon we went for a walk, and we did our homework, our verbal homework, walking in the park. She spent many, many hours with us. And she was really the pillar of our lives. She was the one who -- the instigator of things to do. And luckily,

both my parents came over to this country. We did not lose them. And unfortunately, she died of -- well, she had Alzheimer's very early and passed away in this country.

Q WHEN WAS THAT?

A In 1960. But she loved life and enjoyed the good things of life, but she made the best of all the situations. They were leaving -- well, I am skipping. I shouldn't even talk about it. But leaving the country, leaving with ten marks in our pocket, waiting in England to be able to come to this country, starting a new life here, which I will elaborate on a little bit later, if I may. Played a good game of bridge.

Q YOUR FAMILY LIFE, THEN, WAS VERY WARM?

A Oh, yes. Very close. We still have a very close family life here, which you will find out later on when I can tell you what we are doing for our family -- what we have done for our family.

Q YOUR FATHER WAS (INAUDIBLE) INTELLECTUAL?

A Well, this was his problem when we came to this country, but he managed very well, and he lived

to a ripe old age of 92, made the best of this life, and very lucky that we saved -- that our lives were saved; whereas, he lost a lot of his family, which is very sad.

Q DO YOU WANT TO DISCUSS THAT A LITTLE BIT, THE (INAUDIBLE)?

A All right. Well, my father, as I said, he had two brothers. One died a natural death in Germany. Another one died in camp in Germany in Dachau, I think. And his sister died. She was unmarried. Then another sister who lived in Paris with a husband and son -- the husband died a natural death. The sister died in camp, gas chamber, and the son, who was same age as my brother was, was caught while he was fleeing camp.

A very strange thing happened. We were in Israel 10, 12 years ago and (Yerushalayim) has lists of people who have perished, but there was nothing -- not a list ready yet from France. So we were asked to come into the library there, and they handed us a book of -- we could find maybe when my aunt passed away or what happened.

word?

So as you go through the book and you thumb through a book -- I thumb from the back. We were asked if I knew what transfer she left on, and we didn't know. They had moved her from Paris to Toulouse when she left. She was picked up from there. And I thumbed through this book, and all of a sudden my husband looked over my shoulder. He saw the name Alexander, and this was unbelievable. And there we found out that she was -- where she passed, where she died in the gas chamber.

The same thing happened to my husband's uncle who made it possible for him to come over here. We had no idea where he had perished. And again, we looked through a book, and we found -- and this was from the Netherlands, and they had already listed him.

So when my aunt died, my cousin died. And my mother's side -- this one uncle died, and another aunt and uncle moved to England. They survived. And we have one living aunt in Australia. She is 92. We were just there to visit her again. She is not a sister. She is a sister-in-law. So actually we lost

five or six people in concentration camp from my side. My husband lost two.

So it is pretty hard. It is pretty difficult. And you ask yourself how come you are alive and you were not the one. And at first it was kind of a guilt feeling that I think we all felt -- why them and how come us? But when you go through the war -- when you go through a (blitz), you touch the walls and you are glad yours are warm and it is the neighbor's house and not your own. So I guess this is human.

Word 7

So we have lots of cousins, and we see each other lots -- many times. We used to have family day, one family weekend a week -- once a year. And usually kids were not invited. They were too small. But every few years the children were invited. So we were very close with all our cousins. And unfortunately, we are all getting older, and there are a few not around anymore.

Q ARE THESE COUSINS WHO WERE BORN IN GERMANY?

A Yes, all born in Germany.

Q AND THEY WERE ALL ABLE TO ESCAPE TO THE

U.S.?

A Yes. No, not U.S. Some moved to South Africa. Some moved to Australia. Some live in Israel. Some live in the United States, Chicago. And quite a few in San Francisco. So we are very lucky, and we always have quite a crowd when we get together. We hope our children will continue this too. We are trying. We are trying.

Q GETTING BACK TO THE FAMILY'S RELIGIOUS HABITS, HOW OBSERVANT WAS YOUR FAMILY?

A We observed Friday night. And as I said, we went every Saturday afternoon to our grandparents when we were younger. We celebrated all the holidays, and we were observing Jewish -- observing Jewish family.

Q DID YOU GO TO TEMPLE (INAUDIBLE) ON THE SABBATH?

A We went usually either Friday or Saturday Sabbath, but I was very active especially in the younger years. And it was very interesting to go and see all the boys there. And I was active in the choir. And I was -- they had no bar mitzvah at that

time, but I was confirmed. And my brother had a bar mitzvah, of course. And we were pretty -- as I said, my father was very active. He was the president. And we were observing -- not orthodox, but observing Jewish people.

Q DID YOU KEEP A KOSHER HOME?

A No.

Q IT SEEMS LIKE YOUR RELIGION WAS SORT OF A MIX BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND REFORM WITH TRADITIONAL -- THE U.S. CONSERVATIVE TYPE OF RELIGION TOTALLY SKIPPED. THE MEN AND WOMEN SAT SEPARATELY, BUT DID NOT KEEP A KOSHER HOME. HAD A CHOIR.

A Yeah, and an organ. Uh-huh. My grandparents went to a more orthodox synagogue, as I said before, and they were fortunate to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. And I remember on holidays and Yom Kippur, we used to walk to their synagogue and visit them and make sure that they were both all right, and then we walked back to our synagogue, which was about a 25-minute walk. Of course it was fun. We walked with the boys. I hope my grandchildren are like that, kind of put a little

fun into life. Right?

We celebrated every holiday. We had passover first at my grandparents and then at our house because my grandparents got too old. And we had all the traditional foods, and we did the traditional thing.

Q WHAT WAS THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN COLOGNE LIKE? DID IT CHANGE, AND HOW DID IT CHANGE OVER TIME? WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?

A Well, it was very important. It was a big community.

Q ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE?

A I can't tell you. I can't tell you. I really -- I would be lying. I don't know because by the time we left, I was 17, and of course people had dwindled away and moved out, and I was not aware of numbers really. I should have looked it up.

Q IT WAS A FAIRLY LARGE COMMUNITY.

A Oh, yes. It was a large community.

Q DID MOST OF THE JEWS LIVE IN THE SAME AREA OF TOWN, SAME AREAS OF TOWN, OR WERE THE JEWS DISPERSED?

A They were dispersed. They were dispersed. There were quite a few living around our area, but there were other parts of town where they lived too.

Q HOW MUCH INTERACTION WAS THERE BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE NON-JEWS SAY BEFORE '33 AND AFTER '33? DID IT CHANGE AT ALL?

A I was 11 years old in '33. I went to, first, as I said, to a Jewish school and then to a non-Jewish school. And I know we played with everybody, and there was no -- no difference between the three or four or five Jewish girls and the rest of the class.

Q WE LOST OUR POWER, BUT WE ARE BACK NOW.

RUTH, YOU WERE TELLING US ABOUT THE CONTACT THAT YOU HAD WITH NON-JEWS, ESPECIALLY AS A LITTLE GIRL, AND NON-JEWISH FRIENDS (INAUDIBLE).

A I imagine I played on the street just like everybody else with Jewish and non-Jewish friends. After '33 I think things became a little bit more difficult. And if I remember right, my parents probably had mainly Jewish friends.

But myself -- I guess we all had only Jewish

friends. A Jewish youth group started called BDJJ. These initials stand for the youth group, and we were very active in that because obviously we could not join the Hitler unit and we didn't want to and we needed to have some kind of a -- I imagine entertainment, fun or even intellectual group where we had different kinds of subjects to discuss. And those people -- and this group of course was only Jewish.

I belonged to a Jewish gymnastic group, I remember. And when I got older and it was time for dancing lessons, we could not join into a non-Jewish group. So we had -- we were very fortunate. We had a very nice lady who started a dancing school right in our lodge, and I remember we had dancing lessons. We had -- as everybody had in the other groups, we had our balls. We had finishing balls. And we had a great time. We missed nothing because we were able to do this amongst our own group.

We had lecture series. We put on shows ourselves. We had a wonderful religious -- Jewish religious teacher who was a great one for plays and

shows. So we put on shows and plays. And the first few years, I don't think that any one of my age group felt that they missed anything.

Q THIS WAS THE FIRST FEW YEARS AFTER '33?

A After '33, right. Of course, as things became a little bit more pronounced against -- the hatred against the Jews, we had to take protection. We had to -- we were not allowed to go out at night anymore unless we were chaperoned by our parents or some older adult. And certain restaurants we could not visit anymore. Certain places of vacation were not allowed to be visited by Jews. It was not the city -- but certain parts, we could not visit anymore.

And still the Jewish people in our part of -- in Germany kept saying, "It can't go on like this." Let's say the optimism never left them, which up to this day, I cannot understand. But I guess it takes a lot of courage to leave your home and leave everything you have, your families and everything you have, and go into a strange new country.

Now, my brother left Germany the end of '33.

Q HOW MUCH OLDER IS HE?

A He is five years older than I am. And he was sent to Czechoslovakia where he learned some trade. And then my uncle who lived in Paris wanted him very badly to come to Paris. Luckily, that didn't work out, and he ended up in England where he found himself a job, was very comfortable, and lived there. And it was through his help that we were able to leave Germany, stay in England for a year -- little over a year until we got a visa from the United States.

And he felt the duty to help England, and he joined the army as soon as we left. War had broken out and he joined the army and he had quite a career in his army life. Hopefully, he will be interviewed too, maybe.

Q DOES HE WANT TO BE INTERVIEWED?

A I don't know, but I will talk to him about it.

It is through him really that -- to him we have to be grateful because he saved my parents, my aunt, and my life, and he made it possible for us to

come to England. And now he and his wife are here, two children, living in San Francisco.

Q HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU WENT TO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL?

A I was 10 -- 11, I guess. '33 -- '32 or '33.

Q YOU WENT INTO --

A Public high school. And in '36 I had to leave.

Q WHAT WAS THAT LIKE FOR YOU TO GO INTO A PUBLIC SCHOOL AFTER HAVING SPENT SO MANY YEARS IN A JEWISH SCHOOL?

A I spent four years in a Jewish school. It was a way of life. It was -- yes, I imagine it was a change, going to a public school or to a high school where you have different teachers compared to the Jewish school where you just have one teacher or two teachers, but I don't think it was too big of a trauma. I can't remember that it was too big of a change for me.

Q IT WASN'T A TRAUMA HAVING NON-JEWISH CLASSMATES --

A I don't think so.

Q -- AND BEING A MINORITY?

A There were five other Jewish -- four other Jewish girls in my class. My brother's school, the boys' school, was right around the corner. So maybe I felt this protection of him being there. But he left in '33, so there was not really that much -- No. I don't remember that was that much of a trauma. Unfortunately, my life had bigger traumas than that, I guess. I don't know.

Q WERE YOU EVER CONVINCED THAT YOU HAD
(INAUDIBLE)?

A Not in particular, no. I mean our life got more difficult, I remember. And there was one thing that I remember: My mother and I had a confrontation like mothers and daughters do have once in a while. The German youth group was wearing a blue skirt with buttons down the front, and I was dying to buy one like this -- get one like this, and my mother said, "No. You look too Jewish. You can't buy one like that." So I remember when we emigrated to this country, that is the first thing I bought, a blue skirt with buttons down the front. But, you know,

that was the child in me.

But no, I don't think there was anything earth-shaking -- well, as I told you, there were certain places we couldn't visit anymore, but it was a way of life. I was not the only one. My friends next door to me couldn't do that either.

And -- oh, yes. There was one thing we had in Germany. It was a custom -- customary thing that you have maids. You have a maid, a live-in maid. And I am trying to remember what year we were not allowed to have non-Jewish maids living in our house. I can't remember. Maybe you were told by somebody.

Anyway, one year, whether it was '36 or '37 -- '36 maybe, we were told that our good maid had to leave. And I was heartbroken because I knew her since I was a little girl. And it was a very teary farewell, and she had to leave. And then we hired -- or my parents hired a Jewish lady who came from morning until over dinner. It is not a -- it is not a status symbol to have a maid in Germany in those days. It was just a way of life. And she was with us until we left Germany, I guess, this woman. And

she was the one who came on November 10th screaming into our house that I could not go -- that I should not go to work.

We lived right -- as I said in my beginning of my talk, we lived right around the corner from our synagogue. And the back of the synagogue we were able to see from my parents' bedroom window. And early in the morning, we heard these horrible noises of having books thrown around, just a horrible hollow noise. And then all of a sudden, we saw the flames shooting out of the roof of the synagogue. And we knew something had happened, but we did not know what.

This lady came at 7:00 in the morning. She was very upset, and she told my father not to let me go to work. And I insisted I had to go to work. So I always took the street car passing by my grandparents' synagogue. And I was young and thought, well, what can be so bad? Well, we drove through that street, and I saw the Torahs on the ground and people just defacing the synagogue. I couldn't believe my eyes. I just couldn't believe

what I was seeing.

When I finally got to my destination and came to the place of business where I was working, there were -- my two -- three bosses were standing in front of the big building. It was a three-story building. All the windows smashed. All the hats out front thrown all around, everything, ribbons. I can't describe. This was a millinery wholesale place where they had all the ribbons and flowers -- you name it, whatever, in this whole building.

Everything was thrown around on the street and glass all over, and all these three bosses said to me, "Go home. Don't stay here." I couldn't believe it. So I went inside, and they just almost forced me to go home again. And I went home and told my story at home.

And then we heard over the radio that all the Jewish men would be picked up. So my father had heard it already before, and he was ready. He was just ready to leave, and he was going -- he said he was going into hiding with some of his friends. We had no idea where he was going to, and all he said to

us was, "Go somewhere where there are no men in the house." My aunt, my mother's sister, was living with us at the time already. She was a widow.

So we went -- we left our place, and we went to some relative whose husband had passed away many years ago. And we were sitting all around, not knowing what was happening, glued to the radio. And on the radio there was an announcement if anybody -- any Jewish person has any weapon from the war still in their home, please turn them over immediately to the police. Well, my mother knew there was a gun in the house. My dad had a gun in the house somewhere, which we children never knew where it was. But she said, "I am not going home. I am just too afraid. I am not leaving here."

So we stayed overnight with this lady. And the next morning there was an announcement on the radio that everything was called off and everybody could go home again. So we went home, and the maid from the -- we lived on the second floor. And the maid from the first floor said to us as we were walking -- as we were walking to our house, "Your

husband came home yesterday afternoon to pick up the weapon and he delivered it to the police and then he went back into hiding." We couldn't believe it, but he did.

This is a typical German way when somebody tells you to do something, and he didn't want to endanger his family. So we went back -- we went back home, and I guess showered, cleaned up, and my father appeared. So we were happy. He had hidden in the Jewish hospital. They had made, I guess, accommodations for him in the basement.

Oh, yes, while we were there -- I forgot. While we were there that night over coffee and tea, the doorbell rang and two S.R. men came in, not in their uniform, but they wore a trench coat. That was their thing, to cover up their uniform with a trench coat. They wanted to find the men in the house.

So the lady who lived there said, "My husband died six years ago. There is no men in the house."

"We don't believe it."

So she said, "Go ahead and search." So they

searched the whole house. Of course, there was no -- nothing there, and they looked into the closets to make sure that there was nothing hiding in the clothes or anything. Anyway, they were satisfied and they left.

All right. So I come back to the next day. My dad came home. We were very happy. We had lunch or something. And all of a sudden the doorbell rang, and here are these two henchmen with their trench coat on asking whether my dad was home. And I guess my mother said yes. Well, they were just going to pick him up to interrogate him. So my mother said, "He didn't do anything. And over the radio it says it is all over." No. They have to pick him up. And they told him to pack a toothbrush and pajamas and a hairbrush and a comb, but no shaver -- no nothing that -- nothing sharp. And a piece of paper and a pencil, I think, he took.

Well, he left. And typical of my mother -- in those days, one took extra amount of vitamins just to stay strong. We had these vitamins in a bottle so -- no. They were liquid. So she handed my aunt

and me the bottle and said have a schnook instead of liquor. We didn't drink any liquor. "Have a schnook to stay strong."

So we didn't know what happened. Here he was gone. And we called up -- my mother called up the Rabbi to find out whether he had heard anything, and he said yes and not to worry; they would take him into some kind of a -- what do you call it? -- just a holdover place; not to worry. Well, this of course is easier said than done.

And of course, we listened around. The man downstairs was picked up too, and a lot of our friends' husbands and fathers were picked up. Well, it took, I think, 48 hours, and then they got a -- I don't know -- a phone call or something. The Rabbi could come with some things that people needed, some extra underwear or something. He could come and bring it.

So what do you send? So I remember my mother sent some chocolate, some of his favorite chocolate that he liked and underwear and handkerchief. I don't remember. Anyway, we packed

something in a hurry because the Rabbi couldn't schlep all this stuff. So we just made a little packet or something, and that was it. Then he came back -- after the next day, he came home and reported he was in (Buchenwald) waiting to be transferred. And transferred home or transferred someplace else, he didn't know.

Spelling

Q WHO WAS TRYING --

A The Rabbi. He was the contact between this. And my dad had sent a note, and I think it said ten times: I am well. I am well. (Ich bin gut) in German. And we knew that was just written in duress. This wasn't like him at all.

word?

Anyway, to make a long story short, he did not come home and he was transferred to Dachau. And very little was known what they did, how they did, whether they were coming home -- nothing. And it was -- needless to say, it was a very trying time, a very scary time.

And after six weeks, the man from downstairs who lived below us came home. And I was -- first of all, I did not like the man. He was

not nice to his wife, and I did not like him. I liked his daughter. I was very friendly with her. And my mother went downstairs to see whether he knew something about my dad, and he reported my dad was well and -- he was well as could be, and he was just lucky to be released, but he thinks daddy would be released soon too. Little does he know, but he was very nice about that.

So my mother wanted me to go downstairs and welcome him, but I hated it. I just hated it. Why this man and not my father? Of course, I was a young girl.

So the next -- two days later, the phone rang in the morning, very early in the morning. My father was on the telephone. He was at the railroad station, no money, nothing. He was coming home. All he said is, "Get the doctor. Get my brothers. I am coming home." And needless to say, we couldn't believe it. We just couldn't believe it.

Well, he came home. His hair was white. You know, he had dark hair when he left. His hair was snow white. His beard was white, but he was

alive. He had the same suit on that he wore when he left. And all I remember is the dining room table was breaking with food because, you know, we just didn't know. He was very starved, and everybody came with food. And the doctor examined him, and he said he was fine. He was a tough man. He was in the army and he was a healthy man and a sporty type. And I think that is what saved him.

And he said, "We have to leave Germany within three months." My mother said -- well, my mother had said already years before we will have to be kicked out of here before we go, and this was literally true. So this is fine. We had to leave Germany. We had an application for the United States, but we were way off. I mean they only let a few people in as you know.

Q WHEN HAD YOUR FATHER FILED THE APPLICATION?

A Years before. I mean years before this happened.

Q SO YOU HAD --

A We had intended to leave eventually. Right.

Q ONLY (INAUDIBLE) --

A I think only --

Q -- THAT IS WHAT YOU WERE INTERESTED IN AT THAT TIME?

A Yes. My aunt and uncle lived in San Francisco, and they had immigrated here already.

So how do you start dismantling a household? How do you start discussing or finding out what to take or what not to take. Well, we were told we could take ten marks, buy a ticket as far as we wanted to to wherever we wanted to go, and take whatever we can carry. No. They said we could take -- we could fill a lift. We could send furniture.

So we, I guess, dismantled our household and sold or gave away whatever we could and tried to work on our leaving Germany. And as I said, my brother lived in England, and he turned every stone to get a Visa for us to come to England. And as it says in my passport, just one way and that's it and no working. And I was the only who could work in the household.

So one incident I remember very distinctly: We were packing our -- the people were packing -- the

movers were packing our things. And my father was a very gentle, quiet man. And after concentration camp, nothing was discussed, whatever happened there -- nothing. It took him at least ten years to say something.

They were rolling up the rug in the dining room. And my mother, as I said, was a very energetic woman, and she couldn't see how we could go over there with ten marks in our pocket and what could we do. So she took some of our silverware, which actually should have gone to the Nazis and rolled it into the rug thinking that we could sell this over there.

So these two guys take the rug over their shoulders and walked down the stairs, the entrance outside. All of a sudden one fellow comes back up, and he says, "Look what I found." Two knives and a fork are falling out. My father saw it. I have never, ever in all my life seen him so excited and scream at my mother, which he has never done. When he saw this, he says, "Do you want me to go back to concentration camp? Get this cupboard up here" --

they unrolled it. He took all the silverware, whatever we had, put it in a box and marched it to the S.R. people and delivered it. And he collected my mother's jewelry, whatever we had -- everything was brought to these people.

So anyway, that was the episode of the silver. And, well, we got it all together and put it into whatever they call it -- a lift. But unfortunately, the whole thing burned down somewhere in (Dukram) or somewhere, they claim. We personally think it was never sent. They just kept it and that's it. *Spelly*

So we left in March 1939, and two of my uncles were still in Cologne. They couldn't leave. And my grandparents had died in the meantime. And my grandmother died in '32, before '33. Luckily, she didn't see what happened to her son. My grandfather lived a little longer, and he was a -- he was a tough man. So he survived all this.

So anyway, we left to go to England by plane.

Q RUTH, CAN I ASK YOU --

A Yes.

Q -- A QUESTION BEFORE --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT THAT?

WAS YOUR FATHER ABLE TO SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY?
DID HE HAVE AN INCOME UNTIL THE TIME THAT YOU LEFT OR
BEFORE, OR DID THE INCOME DRY UP TOO?

A I don't know. We lived the same way as we
did before. And he must have had an income. And as
I said, ironically, while he was in the concentration
camp, my mother received a letter that he now may go
more often to court. And she was so upset. She
said, "What kind of nonsense is this?" So I think
after he came home from concentration camp, he didn't
work anymore. He worked on his emigration. And my
mother, I think, learned a trade to do pedicures and
make candy. And she wanted to learn something to be
able to do something in the new world.

We all, of course, had English and French in
school, and we took private English lessons here to
get prepared for England and eventually the United

States.

Q AND WHO OWNED THE HOUSE IN WHICH YOU LIVED?
WAS IT AN APARTMENT?

A It was an apartment.

Q WAS IT RUN BY A JEW OR --

A I have no idea. No idea. No idea. There were lots of Jewish people living in that house. As a matter of fact, there was a Dutch family living in the main floor, and they were very good friends of ours. And they kept saying, "When Hitler comes, you just come to us, and you will be protected with the Netherlands." It didn't help.

Q BUT THEY WERE NOT JEWISH?

A They were Jewish. They were Jewish and they went to Holland and they lived underground for four years.

Q WERE THERE NON-JEWS LIVING IN THE BUILDING?

A Yes. The manager or whatever you call that -- it was not -- yeah, the manager, I guess. He was not Jewish. And I think the rest of them were all Jewish. I don't think there was a non-Jewish family living there.

Q WERE THE NON-JEWISH LIVING WITH ALL THE OTHER JEWS?

A I guess so. I am just trying to think. Next door was my girlfriend and there were four families living and I think they were all Jewish too. Yes.

Q AND CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY LEAVING GERMANY?

A What did you say? Pick up where I was.

Well, anyway, we arrived -- we left Germany. This is very insignificant, but it shows you how distrustful the Germans were. We had -- my mother rolled up some stockings to use them as polish as kind of buffer rags because she said, "I don't know what we will find over there, and this is good to have." And she sewed them all up. And we stood at the airport. They didn't trust -- they thought there was something in there. So we had to undo all these things. And finally, my father got angry, and he said, "Just keep them." You know, we stood there almost missing the plane.

Well, anyway, this was our first plane ride

to London. Very exciting, needless to say, leaving Germany, going into -- where to. And my brother picked us up, and we were able to -- we lived in a boarding house. And then I found a job as a nanny with -- the first family, they lived out of London, but that is not important.

Anyway, the father with the second family was very nice. And I took care of a 9-month old little girl and a 3-year-old boy, and I learned English from this 3-year-old boy. They were very good to me. They worked me hard. I didn't get much money, but at least they were nice. They were Jewish people also.

And then in September when the war broke out, they panicked, and they evacuated out of England. First bombing, they evacuated. And I had to evacuate with them because that was my livelihood. And I think my parents must have gotten some money from my uncle in Paris. I really don't know where -- how else they could have managed.

And finally in March 1940, the big day we got our visas to come to the United States, and my

father -- my parents had bought a ticket for all of us to go by ship first class.

Q THAT WAS YOUR FATHER?

A My parents bought that in Germany, before we left Germany.

Q BEFORE YOU LEFT GERMANY?

A Before we left Germany, we were allowed to buy a ticket to wherever we wanted to go to. So he bought a first-class ticket to come over on the (Wingdom.) It was during the war. The war was pretty long (lines.) But again, youth doesn't worry about these kind of things. I had a great time. It was very nice. Fancy ship. I didn't get seasick. And I shared my cabin with my aunt, and she was very seasick. And she was very worried about all the (mines). So, I guess, were my parents.

But anyway, we arrived in New York, and we had a cousin who picked us up in New York. And I think my aunt and uncle from San Francisco sent us \$300 to live in New York and have a little beginning. And first thing my mother did -- went to Amsterdam Avenue and bought me an American dress. No money to

eat, no money to play, but I had to look a little American. And that dress, I remember, was kind of a sea green. When I worked later on here as a saleslady, I needed a black dress. So that dress was dyed black. I think I wore it until there was just no color left anymore. Then, later on when she made a little money herself, she bought me a necklace to go with it, which I still have in my little junk box. But I would never throw it away. Anyway, this was the type of lady she was.

So then we came to San Francisco. And we took the train to San Francisco, and they had --

Q WHEN WAS THAT?

A That was in 19- -- the Challenger train in 1940.

Q SO HOW LONG WERE YOU IN NEW YORK?

A We were in New York six weeks, not by choice. I told you I had an aunt living -- emigrating with us. And her daughter was already in San Francisco, and she had a very, very bad accident. And the family in San Francisco did not want my aunt to see how sick her daughter was. So we had to play

for six weeks in New York, which just was -- sure, we did a little sight-seeing, but we were anxious to come out here.

Anyway, her daughter got better, and she was able to meet us at the train. And that is all they wanted. So anyway, we were six weeks in New York, and then we came to San Francisco.

Q RUTH, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE TIME YOU SPENT IN ENGLAND? DID YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO REALLY DO MUCH OTHER THAN JUST --

A No. I worked -- I worked. And on my day off, I went home and slept. I went home to my parents, and I slept. And they forced me to go to the movies because they figured that is the best way I could learn English, but I was just not interested. We did the necessary sight-seeing of, you know, Buckingham Palace and whatever in London, of course. But it was really working and my days off to be enjoyed -- I enjoyed being home with my family.

Q SO YOU WORKED THE WHOLE TIME --

A Oh, yes.

Q -- (INAUDIBLE)?

A Mm-hmm. Right.

Q AND IN NEW YORK, WHERE DID YOU STAY?

A We stayed at a very, very primitive boarding house. Oh, yes. There was one incident that happened that typifies how ignorant or naive I was. We arrived, and my cousin wanted to take us to the automat. That was -- and I was just reading in the paper, they are all closing.

Anyway, but we had two rooms, my parents and my aunt and I together. My aunt was like my mother to me. And I saw the maid come in to open the beds. In those days, even in a simple boarding house, the maids came and opened the beds, turned the beds down. And she was pitch black, the girl. I had never seen a black person except in the circus, never on a one-to-one basis.

So my father stood on the stairs. He says, "Let's go."

I said, "Just a minute, please. Wait a minute." I was 17 years old. I said, "Wait a little bit." 18. He couldn't understand what I was waiting for. I was dressed. I was ready to go. Well,

afterwards I admitted I just wanted to see whether this black on her hands would discolor the white sheets. So that was -- I will never live that one down. So my grandchildren might as well hear this too.

So New York was very impressive, of course, these tall buildings. And yes, I was the one that spoke English the best of all of us, so I was supposed to ask directions.

I think we had to go to the Bronx or Brooklyn or somewhere else. We had some distant relatives. Of course, the policeman spoke so fast, I just couldn't understand him. And my mother kept saying, "You know English. Tell him you know English."

Well, I had a real British accent, but we finally ended up in Brooklyn or the Bronx or vice versa. When we arrived to visit with the relatives, they were all worried we wanted something from them, and they didn't want any part of us. So that was it. But we did the necessary sight-seeing by foot, by subway, whatever -- overwhelmed with New York of

course.

And then when we came to San Francisco, my aunt and uncle and two cousins lived here. One cousin picked us up. They picked us up from the train, I guess, in Oakland. They lived down in the marina. And my cousin asked me -- now, we arrived from (Warrington), England. First question: "Do you have an evening dress with you?"

I said, "If our suitcases are here, yes." Yes, the suitcases are here. That night the Jewish Liberty Forum -- which was a Jewish organization for newly arrived refugees, a group of people like us, only they had been here already two, three, four, five years before us -- had a dance at Aquatic Park. And he wanted to take me there and introduce me to all his friends.

Well, the suitcases had arrived. My aunt was busy ironing one of my evening dresses. And I said okay. So they took us around to this procedural, which was this beautiful area and had rented a two-room furnished apartment for us down in the marina.

In the evening, I went with him, and I was introduced to lots of people. And finally, I knew one girl who was from Hamburg, and she had a boyfriend with her. And I was introduced to him. This man is my husband since 48 years.

So the dance was very nice, but every few minutes the searchlight from Alcatraz was shining into that big bay window. And about after an hour and a half, I said I couldn't take it anymore. I have got to go home because it reminded me so much of Germany as well as England where we had just left all these searchlights. So that was my first day -- or evening in San Francisco.

But I must say I can only admire my parents. My mother and my aunt were the first ones who found a job in this country. Cleaning ladies, 25 cents an hour in the morning and 25 -- and a job in the afternoon, and my mother waited on tables in the evening -- put on a black dress and apron and went and walked up to Broadway or Pacific Avenue -- my father walked her up and picked her up again -- to wait on tables. And every week we pooled our money,

put our money together. And if we had enough, we bought silverware. We bought china, china crest, dishes, linen, blankets, and things like that.

And I was very fortunate. I found a job as an errand girl at (Mesa Mandesell,) which was a very fancy store right in the San Francisco Hotel. And when Ms. (Mandesell) was alive -- she was an old spinster, and she realized from, I guess, the background I had, and she took a liking to me. She gave me a break and taught me the business -- or let them teach me the business. Let's say it that way. From errand girl to later on sales girl, cashiering, wrapper, whatever. And I was very fortunate.

Speller

Speller

My father, who had a harder time as I said in the beginning -- he started as a Fuller Brush man walking from door to door. The family thought he would learn the language talking to housewives and whatever. One day he was sick, and he thought he would lose his job if he didn't work, so I took that suitcase. I didn't go to work and I took the suitcase and I walked from door to door. And I realized what kind of a job this is. Now, we lived

in the marina, and he had the Richmond district. And for some reason -- my husband's parents lived in the Richmond district. And they -- my mother-in-law and mother were together in girls school a hundred years ago. They found each other here again.

So my husband drove -- not knowing that he was ever going to be my husband, drove my father home quite often feeling sorry for the man who has been walking the streets. Of course, the old folks kind of pushed a little bit that we should get together, but I had a boyfriend and he had a girlfriend. So anyway, we did somehow. His girlfriend married somebody else, and we got together. And his girlfriend I play bridge with every Wednesday. She is my best friend, and we go traveling together, the four -- the two couples, for many years.

Well, we made a go of it. And after a while we saved enough money to go into an unfurnished apartment. My parents bought furniture and whatever is needed for this.

And what shall I say? My dad went to night school and became an accountant. He worked as a

bookkeeper. Made a good, nice living. My mother -- instead of doing housework, she nursed sick people. She, you know, when people came out of the hospital -- she was a practical nurse. And I --

Q DID SHE GO TO SCHOOL FOR THAT?

A No. She just went to school to learn English. No. She was just a natural for that.

Q DIDN'T SHE NEED A LICENSE?

A No. It was not a practical nurse per se. Just when people came home from the hospital and need somebody to take care of them, help them walk, you know, and help them get their strength back.

And we got -- my husband and I got married, and my in-laws lived here too. They lived in San Francisco.

Q YOU GOT MARRIED IN '43?

A We got married in '43. You can figure well. Right.

And we have two boys, two daughters-in-law, and five grandchildren. And we worked hard. And whatever we worked for -- whatever we have, we worked for.

Now, my dad got quite a bit of money as a restitution like all the German people did. And unfortunately, he got a big lump of money the day we had to take my mother to the hospital. And she was in a hospital for three years.

My dad lived with us for 19 years. He moved in with us after my mom was hospitalized and was a great brave man and lived to a ripe old age of 92.

And so this family stuck together. My brother and sister-in-law and kids are very close to us. And I think this is what made us survive. And I hope and pray that my children -- our children will remember if you stick together, you will survive; otherwise, you don't. I think that's really the clue of having both feet on the ground and helping each other.

Q IN 1940 -- THE U.S. IN 1940 -- THAT IS BEFORE THE U.S. JOINED THE WAR?

A Right. We arrived here. And the end of that year, the U.S. joined the war.

Q THE END OF 1941?

A Yes.

Q SO IT WAS OVER A YEAR?

A Uh-huh.

Q DID YOU HAVE TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE FACT THAT THE U.S. WASN'T IN -- HAD NOT JOINED THE WAR, OR WAS THERE JUST TOO MUCH GOING ON (INAUDIBLE)?

A No. I don't think -- no. I was really -- I admired Mr. Roosevelt. And when I really realized, I was very angry at him. I admired him as a father figure, but knowing that he could have saved a lot of people, I was very angry.

Q YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT UNTIL MANY YEARS LATER?

A Yes. And many years later -- I told you my dad never spoke about his concentration camp happenings. We were able to buy a house, my husband and I. When did we buy the house? In '52. Yeah. And we had a garden. We were very proud of all the flowers that we'd planted.

And one day my parents came over, and my dad said, "Can I do anything for you?"

I said, "Yes. The garden needs watering." We didn't have a sprinkler that went all around. We had one of those manual things. I said, "Would you

like to do it?"

He said, "Okay." He went downstairs. And I looked out the window, and I see he has this hose on. Every flower is just drooping. And I went downstairs. I said, "Daddy, you have the spray on too strong." I said, "You are killing my flowers."

He said, "You do it."

A few days later I said to him, "What was the matter with the hose? What was the matter with it?"

"Well," he said, "it reminded me of my concentration camp days."

I said, "It did?"

"Yes," he said. "We used to have to get up at 4:00 in the morning" -- this was November -- "and they put the cold hose on us in lieu of a shower."

I said, "Well, I guess I better not ask you to water anymore."

"No," he says. "It's all right now."

That was the first comment we ever heard about concentration camp. And later on, he said to us that they were told that there are spies all over

the world. And when I asked him, "Why did you not ever say anything," he said, "Well, we were told there are spies all over the world." And he said, "I didn't want to take any chances." And drips and drabs came out, but not very much.

Q ABOUT HIM TALKING ABOUT THE CONCENTRATION CAMP?

A Yes. He was warned not to talk about it because there are spies all over and something can happen to him or the family. And so he took it into the grave with him.

Q HE DIDN'T GIVE YOU MUCH MORE INFORMATION?

A No. It is past.

Q THAT IS WHAT HE TOLD YOU?

A Yes. It's past.

Q DID YOU PUSH HIM FOR DETAILS?

A I pushed him a little, but then I felt he didn't want to hurt me, and I thought I was putting salt on a wound. What is the sense? He made a good comeback, and he lived a good life over here. And unfortunately after my mother died, he was --

let's say he survived that horrible state of where we had to visit her all the time, and she was really -- didn't know who was who.

And we were able -- between my brother and sister-in-law and my husband and myself, we were able to get him over this, and he lived some 19 -- let's say 13 pretty good years -- 15 pretty good years. And so why dig into the past? That's all I have to say.

Q WHEN THE U.S. JOINED THE WAR DECEMBER 7TH, 1941, DO YOU REMEMBER HAVING ANY --

A Well --

Q -- (INAUDIBLE)?

A I had a boyfriend who was in the army, and I was very scared. And of course, they put the curfew on us. And that is a funny story, though. I was dating -- well, after the war -- after the war had started -- not immediately were we put into curfew, but I was already dating my now husband. And as my mother said, it was the safest time because we had to be home at 8:00 every night. (Inaudible.) What could happen?

So then around Christmastime the curfew was off for us, and we were allowed to stay out longer. So we had a date, and we went to -- I think it was the Fairmont Hotel.

Q THIS IS 1942 CHRISTMASTIME?

A '42. Yes. '42, Right. We got married in '43. Right.

And we went to the Fairmont Hotel. We were home at 10:30. So my mother looked at me and said, "Did you have a fight? Did you have an argument? How come you are home already?"

I said, "No. We are both so tired, we can't keep our eyes open." So that was all right.

But no. I was happy that the United States would help. We were so involved with making a living, surviving, and finding our relatives -- I don't know whether this is the right way of saying it. Maybe finding our relatives, making a living, and surviving. There were no other feelings, just searching -- searching and trying and not believing what was going on over there and realizing that we had no complaints. We just had to work hard in order

to survive and help the next one and help the people. And we -- as you probably heard, all these German Jews got together, and we somehow -- you know, everybody sent packages, and everybody tried to help the next one and --

Q WHY DON'T YOU DISCUSS THAT A LITTLE BIT (INAUDIBLE).

A Well, when we came to this country, there was very little help available for us. Everyone opened their doors and had tea and crumpets for us and -- but when you asked them for some help or advice, everybody was afraid to help.

I think we Jews have learned something by helping the Russians a little bit more. I think we are overdoing it, what we are doing now, because they too can work the way we did. But I think we have learned that we have to help a little bit more -- not just financially, but in general.

And because we were standing pretty much alone, our group, and we stuck together. We are still -- we still have -- like we have one group where there are six couples. Every month we meet and

we play bridge. And we all came at the same time, all of us, with nothing. And we keep saying every once in a while: We help the Russians? Of course we do, but who helped us? Nobody. Yes, there was the Jewish Family Service, but we didn't get any linens. We didn't get any furniture. Nothing. We had to really work for it. And not that it did us any harm, but I guess -- I think the world has learned.

And we are trying to teach our children, and I hope they get the message. We have one son who lives in Portland, Oregon. He is very active in the Jewish organization. He does a lot of organizational work. So does my daughter-in-law. The local one is married to a Catholic girl, and he is trying to divide it, but he is doing a good job. They are both doing a good job and hoping that -- knowing that help is needed wherever, you know, both sides.

Q BOTH SIDES --

A Well, her religion needs help as well as ours.

Q SO THEY ARE ACTIVE IN BOTH?

A Yes. Yes. They are doing both. Well, our son is not active in Temple work, but he does a lot of monetary giving. Luckily, he can afford it. So -- and hopefully, some of our background and teaching stuck. I think so. So we are happy to live in this country. That's all.

Q DO YOU RECALL THE FIRST TIME THAT YOU HEARD ABOUT THE DEATH CAMPS --

A Well --

Q -- AND YOU REALIZED THE MAGNITUDE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH THE HOLOCAUST?

A Well, we got letters from over there, and half of them were blacked out. I should have probably brought them to you. Half of the letters -- my husband's uncle who made it possible for him to come over here lived in Holland at an early age, and the uncle was a twin brother of my husband's mother. So they were very close. And he got caught in Holland with his wife and two children. Husband and son died in concentration camp. Mother was in a kind of a (gurse) with the youngest son. They both survived. The son came over here. He spent three

Spelly

years in Napa having schizophrenia. We celebrated last year his 40th anniversary in a hospital in Holland. The mother took him back to Holland because the care is better. And the mother, she used to go every year over there to visit him. And since she passed away, we go every year and visit him. And last year he planned with the help of his guardian a party for himself, and we promised to be there.

If you have lost any kind of faith in humanity, after this party, you have gained it -- regained it back. I have never seen -- from patients to doctors to nurses to friends from the street -- yet 80 people there visiting. We had like a very low-key party, bringing gifts and tokens and money. And he goes to Temple on Shabbat, and he goes to church on Sunday. The priest from the church brought him a yarmulke. They planted trees in Israel for him. He will be 65 in September -- October. We are going again in June. We always go in June or July. He is left over. His mother passed away. So, you know, everybody has got a little story to tell.

We heard about the death camp -- well, she

wrote us a letter that she doesn't know where her husband or son is and she thinks that she will never see him alive anymore. But no, we only heard this when everybody else heard it because nothing came out of Germany.

Q WHEN YOU WERE LIVING IN GERMANY --

A There were no death camps.

Q DID YOU HEAR OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

A Not in '39. That only started a little later. No. Otherwise, I don't think my dad would have seen the other side of the -- what do you call the fence? No. That was later, much later.

Q BUT THERE WERE CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

A Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Well, they beat them up. They did other atrocities to them.

Q SO IT WASN'T UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR --

A That you really heard what was going on.

Q WAS THERE ANY NEWS IN GERMANY ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

A I think so. I think so. I think so. That is why we tried to quick go anyplace. We send some representative to Washington to see whether we could

get people out, but it was much too late.

Q YOUR OWN CAREER -- YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE WORKING AT A STORE. WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

A I had -- I had a baby. I had a baby. I got married, and I had a son.

Q THAT WAS THE END OF YOUR --

A Well, I did a little more work, but that was the end of my career because my in-laws were rather older already and sickly, and I needed to take care of them. And I rather make my own mistakes, raise my children and have a little less money than having somebody else raise them. Then we had a second son and my husband was working and he had a good job. And in the meantime he owns the company and our son is working for him and our daughter-in-law is working. So I do a lot of volunteer work. Very active. I used to work at (Mt. Sinai), but now I am *wood* very active for (inaudible) Shabbat Hospital in Isreal, Odessa. You name it.

That is the end of my story, I guess.

Q WHEN DID YOUR HUSBAND COME TO THIS COUNTRY?

A He came in '38 -- just before, the beginning

of '38. When Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia, one of my father-in-law's banking friends told him, "If you want your son safe, send him out tonight."

So my father-in-law -- that was the only son. My father-in-law called my husband at the office and told him, "Son, come home. Buy yourself a pair of shoes and come home for lunch." He had no idea why. So he did. And that evening he left by train to go to Holland where his aunt and uncle lived with whatever he carried. His parents were older already. And just picture kissing your son good-bye not knowing whether you would ever see him again.

My father-in-law bought him a ticket the furthest away, from Hamburg to San Francisco. And he met a couple in Holland, I guess. They were going to San Francisco too. The three of them went together. Young couple. And my husband -- first night that he was here, they put him up in a hotel somewhere. My cousin picked him up, I think. Yeah. And they knew him from Hamburg. And first night he met a man who was in the tobacco line like he was. He took him by the hand, found a job for him. He was there for 15

years. He was able to get his parents over that same year. The boss was Jewish, and he gave --

Q SO --

A Same. Yeah. '38. The boss was Jewish, and he gave him an affidavit for his parents.

Q I ASKED YOU THAT QUESTION BECAUSE I WANTED TO LEAD INTO A QUESTION ON YOUR FAMILY LIFE.

A Mm-hmm.

Q HOW OBSERVANT YOUR OWN FAMILY WAS, YOUR HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN THEIR UPBRINGING --

A Well, my husband was brought up --

Q -- TODAY?

A My husband was brought up very non-Jewish. But I carried our -- my beliefs over and my tradition, and he became very traditional along with it. My children became bar mitzvahed, have been confirmed. My older son married a Jewish woman, Jewish girl, and their children have been bar mitzvahed. As a matter of fact, we are going to a confirmation in May -- this May to Portland.

My other son is a very believing Jew, but he married -- fell in love with a Catholic girl and she

is a lovely girl and they are married 20 years. And he believes that the kids should know both.

At the time we had Seder we invited the priest, who has become a very good friend of ours. This is already the second Seder he has had with us.

Thursday my grandson has a birthday, and the priest has a birthday the next day. So they are all coming to our house for dinner. So Father Gerald comes too. He is like a member of the family. On the other hand, I keep saying to him, jokingly, but meaningly, "You have got my kids." And he gets the message.

He says, "Yeah, but you still have them too," which is true.

So it was very painful, but we overcame. And our daughter-in-law is a charming, lovely, loving girl.

Q IT WAS PAINFUL FOR YOU TO HAVE A CHILD MARRY
A NON-JEW?

A Definitely. We lost a -- you know, we lost a lot of people, but it was a hard decision for him, but he is very happy, and so are we. She is working

for my husband. So it is a very close-knit family.

And my other daughter-in-law is a lovely girl. They live in Portland, and we are very close to them. So you win some and you lose some. So you have to roll with the punches. We did not shiver when he got married to a Catholic girl, believe me. It was hard, but we love her dearly.

Q HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF NOW? WOULD IT BE AS A CONSERVATIVE JEW?

A Well, we belong to (Never Morris), Judaea. And -- no. I think we are little bit of both.

Q WHEN YOU SAY "BOTH" --

A We like the tradition, reformed -- reformed and conservative. We like the traditional things. And I question once in a while about why all this happened, but there is no use in asking questions.

Q WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS? YOU SAY THERE IS NO USE ASKING QUESTIONS.

A I have my own thoughts.

Q WHAT ARE YOUR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TODAY, AND IF YOU ARE RELIGIOUS TODAY, HOW DO FIT IN THE

HOLOCAUST WITH THE --

A I can't fit in the Holocaust. I can't fit in the Holocaust. Impossible. And I can't -- I can't understand. That's all. Now, I just read in the paper the Hasidic Rabbi thinks the Messiah is coming before Rosh Ha-Shanah. So let's hold our breath and wait. I am ready.

Q DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF RELIGIOUS RIGHT NOW?

A What is religious?

Q WHAT DO YOU DEFINE IT AS?

A I asked you first. What is religious? I am a believer.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A I believe everybody has to believe in something. Whether there is a God or not, I do not know. He has let me down many times. He has let us down many times. So it is not for me to say.

Q IF YOU'RE DOUBTFUL, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR GOING TO TEMPLE AND OBSERVING THE HOLIDAYS?

A Tradition.

Q TRADITION. DO YOU THEN TIE THAT ONLY WITH A

BELIEF IN GOD, OR DO YOU BELIEVE IT IS A CULTURAL THING TO -- IN OTHER WORDS, EVEN IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE IN THERE BEING A GOD, WOULD YOU STILL DO THIS FOR TRADITION BECAUSE OF ITS CULTURAL VALUE AND THE SENSE OF JEWISHNESS THAT YOU HAVE? CAN YOU DISTINGUISH THE TWO, BELIEF IN GOD FROM A FEELING OF JEWISHNESS?

A Well, there is somebody there somewhere. But I believe that we have to continue our Jewish tradition. We owe it to the ones that have perished. We must continue. And what I believe is my own personal, private business. I believe in tradition, and I feel the people that believe in something have a much easier life than the nonbelievers. I have seen it around me. And I somehow feel if you are a good person, if you do good, if you live an honest, hard-working life and are good to your neighbors, friends, and family -- I think that that is a good religious person.

Q IS THAT NECESSARILY TIED INTO A BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF A GOD OR A HIGHER BEING?

A There is somebody somewhere, but I don't

know where. I don't know.

Q AND YOU CAN'T RECONCILE THE FACT THAT THE HOLOCAUST HAPPENED WITH THERE BEING A GOD?

A Well, I feel if there was one or is one, why did it happen? Why did it happen to so many people? And we have lost too many close people to us, not only relatives, friends. Why did it happen? Yes, it didn't happen to me. To us, we were saved. But I just have my own thoughts about it. That's all.

Q DO YOU FEEL LIKE DISCUSSING --

A No. No. No.

Q DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR HUSBAND HAS THE SAME RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS IN THERE BEING A GOD?

A No. I think my husband believes there being a God more than I do.

Q AND YOUR CHILDREN?

A I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I think that's such a personal subject, that everybody somehow defines -- just the same as love. How do you define it? I don't want to try and be evasive, but I just can't -- can't really or don't want to really describe it.

I think my children know how I feel, and I think my children have seen through our actions, how we live and how we react to things, and we are trying to go along with this very fast-moving world, which is very difficult. And I still feel if you live a good life whether you believe in God or believe in whoever -- be a good person. That will get you, I think -- will give you peace of mind.

Q DID YOU DISCUSS THE HOLOCAUST WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A Oh, yes. Well, you must not forget my father lived with us for 19 years -- not that the actual concentration camp was discussed, but on leaving Germany and why was discussed many times.

Now, again, my 10-year-old grandson came home the other day and we were in Australia and he called us. Message from the hotel operator: "Please call your grandson." Okay. So we called our grandson. We talk to them on our trips. And he had a very important thing to tell us about his report card, but the second thought was, "Grandma, I thought of you today -- you and papa today."

And I said, "Why?"

He said, "We read all about Hitler in our books, and I got really sick to my stomach. You never told me -- you told me that he was a bad man, but you never told me what bad things he did." Now, this is from Foster City to Melbourne, Australia.

I said, "Well, we will discuss it when I come home -- when we come home."

"Grandma, it is just awful. I can't believe you lived through something like this." Then he said, "We had a true or false question in religion."

I said, "Yes. What was it?"

He said, "The teacher said" -- there was one question if there is one -- no. How did it go? If you are a religious person, you believe in God our savior. And the answer was true or false. "And it should have been true according to teacher and I raised my hand and I said, 'It is false.'" Now, he goes to a Catholic school.

So I said, "Why did you say it was false?"

Well, he said, "I said my grandparents -- my papa and grandma are Jewish and they are very

religious people and they don't believe in God our savior. They believe in God."

So the teacher says, "Well, then, make it either true or false." In other words, he wanted to bring out that we believed in God and not God the savior, and we were still religious people.

I said, "Well, that is very good." I said, "I will talk to you when we get back home," \$30 later.

But see, the wheels are turning, and it is all of them -- all the kids are well aware of our way of thinking and their way of thinking. And the Holocaust -- I really must go to school and read the three lines that they have on it. But he says, "No. It is more than a half a page, Grandma." So I have to go look at it.

But they are aware. They are very aware. As a matter of fact, I told him what I am doing today. And they have been after me to write -- you know, to write something, but I think this may be much more effective if it comes out.

Q WHEN YOU SAY "THEY," YOU ARE TALKING

ABOUT --

A Grandchildren, yes.

Q HOW DOES YOUR HUSBAND FEEL ABOUT YOU COMING TODAY?

A He thought it was very important too.
Better me than him.

Q HE DOESN'T WANT TO DO IT?

A No. Well, he left early, but he gets himself really upset. But he left much earlier than I did. So it is enough. I talked. I told about him too. So that is fine.

Q WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

A Oh, I think it is an absolute must. We must have it. We must keep it. If they had had a state of Israel, we could have all been saved. We must give, give, give. And I hope they somehow will settle something. I don't know how. But more like the religious Jews say in the paper or whenever it was that somebody must have looked out for them because not many Jews were killed in the (skuts.)
That is one way of looking at it.

spelling

MS. LIETZEL: I have a question.

THE WITNESS: Yes.

MR. ASKENAZER: I am finished.

BY MS. LIETZEL:

Q AFTER YOU LEFT GERMANY BECAUSE OF THE
HOLOCAUST, HAVE YOU VISITED GERMANY?

A We did not go back to Germany 'til ten years
ago. We have a relative in (Iserlohn) in Germany,
which is an hour away from Cologne. She is very ill.
Her husband died. And when we go to Holland, we go
to (Iserlohn).

Last year I said to my husband, "If at all
possible, I would like to go to the cemetery to
Cologne." Maybe I have enough courage to go. The
question is no to Cologne.

Last year my relative became rather ill and
we had to shop for nursing homes and I had a good
excuse we couldn't go. In the meantime, my son and
daughter-in-law have been there from Portland and
have taken pictures. And my daughter-in-law who is
an American-born girl was so upset. And my son
called from Cologne and said, "Mom, don't go. You

will get too upset. There is nothing there. The Temple is like a shell." But they brought pictures. It is all different. I knew that beforehand.

This year -- oh, yes. One year we went to -- we took the train from Amsterdam to (Bocholt), *Spelun* I think, and we drove into Cologne. And I saw the dome. My husband said, "Don't you want to get out?"

I said, "No." My husband has never been back to Hamburg and has no desire. This year we are taking our 11-year-old grandson to Europe.

And he said, "Grandma, are we going to Cologne where you were born?"

I said, "Maybe." Maybe I will take him now. But there is nothing there. Our house supposedly is made into 10, 12, 14 apartments, and there is nothing there. What am I looking for? I was kicked out. Why go?

Now, this (Iserlohn) trip is a must. We *Spell* feel very uncomfortable, both of us. Both of us look Jewish. So we feel rather uncomfortable. We do what we have to do as quickly as we can. I have to dissolve a household there now.

But we were there when the story of this Mr. (Nausman) came through. I don't know whether you *Spelt* heard this two years ago. He was a German Jew who cheated his fellow Jews. He pocketed all the restitution money, and he was caught. Big headlines in the German paper. (Nausman) cheated on his own *Spelt* fellow man.

We almost died. We didn't know what to do. We had to stay there another three days because we weren't finished with whatever we were doing. It was horrible. So we feel both very uncomfortable in Germany.

Why go to a place where they kicked us out? We have to go to help this lady now. I don't know how many more years she is going to live. So we go on missions, both Germany and Holland, and then usually we tack on a little holiday if we can. So that is my story.

Any other question?

Q NO.

MR. ASKENAZER: THANK YOU VERY MUCH, RUTH.

A Thank you. I hope it comes out all right.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WANT --

A NO. I AM JUST HAPPY TO BE IN THIS COUNTRY. THAT IS ALL. I HOPE TO HAVE NOT BEEN A BURDEN, WHICH I KNOW WE HAVEN'T BEEN. AND THAT IS ALL. AND I HOPE OUR CHILDREN ENJOY THIS AND WILL LEARN FROM WHAT I HAVE TOLD.

Q I HAVE ONE MORE QUESTION. I DIDN'T THINK OF IT UNTIL JUST NOW (INAUDIBLE).

IN THE U.S. HAVE YOU EVER FELT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST FOR BEING JEWISH OR, IF NOT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, HAVE YOU FELT DIFFERENT OR APART FROM OTHERS?

A No. I don't think so. I think we felt comfortable from the beginning. Of course by the time of the curfew, we were not citizens yet, and we were not mistreated just by coming home early. This was not a big trauma.

Q THIS WAS ONLY FOR NONCITIZENS?

A I think the German -- we weren't even German. We had no state. We were stateless. No, I don't think so. I think we have made our niche for ourselves. We have very good friends. As I said,

they are mostly Jewish and mostly the same background we have.

We lived in San Francisco until 15 years ago. We moved to San Mateo. Of course, we kept the old friends, but we have made a large amount of friends and acquaintances in San Mateo.

And my husband's working. I am very active and play cards and go to concerts and -- no. I do not feel any different, and I do not feel left out of anything. I don't like the Nazi moment in this country. I don't like antisemitism, but it is all over the world. And I don't think -- if you don't provoke things, if you keep on a low key, I think life is very comfortable here. No. There is no better country than this country, let me tell you. And we have seen a few already. So where can you work and be free the way you are doing what you are doing? Of course, I don't like the -- all the fires in the synagogues and all this kind of stuff, and I am scared that it can happen again. And don't let anybody tell you that it cannot happen in this country.

Q (INAUDIBLE)?

A Antisemitism is all over the world. We must look out for it. I think you agree with me there. That is why you are doing this, aren't you?

Q PART OF THE REASON. ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WANT TO ADD?

A No. I think that is all.

Q THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A You are welcome. Thank you. And thank you for taking your time.

Q YOU ARE WELCOME.

A All right. Bob, Rita, Michelle, and Josh, Dave, Jan, Brian, Dana, and Kevin: I hope this story has a meaning to you and you learn from this hard lesson that Papa and Grandma had. Just be happy and stick together. That will help you survive any situation. We love you, Papa and Grandma.

Enough. That's enough.