

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Bekerman, Anni

Date of interview: 8/2/2003

Summary: Anni Bekerman was born in Dresden, Germany, in 1930. She was an only child of an affluent family. Her memories of her childhood in Dresden are happy but vague as she was still a child when she left Dresden. These memories include attending school for only a few years as well as attending temple where her grandfather, to whom she was very close, carried the Torah. Her family kept shabbat but they did not consider themselves religious and they did not keep kosher.

In 1938, when Anni was eight years old, her father was picked up on Kristallnacht and imprisoned for two weeks. At this time, her grandfather made arrangements for Anni and her parents to leave for Shanghai by boat on the Conte Rosso, shortly after her father was released from the prison. (Date of debarkation to Shanghai is unspecified.)

In Shanghai, her father had a few businesses including making children's dresses that she modeled, a barbershop, a stationary store, as well as renting out their bathtub. They lived in one room until they moved to a small house with other refugees. She attended the Jewish school, (Kadury School) and was fed at the Jewish Children's Kitchen. She remembers rationing and her mother cooking for others. She describes some interactions with the Japanese, including the official Goya. She worked in a sausage factory, a lab, and a printing company. Her last job was doing typing and taking shorthand in English for an all-Chinese, all-male staff.

In 1947, Anni and her parents received a visa from her uncle, a doctor in the U.S., and came to San Francisco on an army boat. She got a job for brief time selling linen. Not long after arriving in San Francisco, the family moved to Seattle for five years where her parents were the groundskeepers for a well-to-do family while Anni worked in sales. Sales became her life-long work. Her father died at age 65 and her mother lived with her for another 14 years.

Anni moved from Seattle back to San Francisco to be with her husband (date unspecified and name not recorded), a Shanghai Refugee from Poland, although they did not know each other in Shanghai. They were married in 1953 for 30 years until her husband's death. Her daughter was born in 1954 and is married with two children. Anni expressed regret about not having a better education but said that she made sure her daughter went to college.

She has a cousin (check fact re type of relative and name?) in NY who is a concentration camp survivor. (Check if there are other relatives who are survivors.) Her grandfather remained in Dresden until he joined his daughter (check relation) in London where he remained until his death.

At the close of the interview, Anni stated her fear that another Holocaust might occur and that she was lucky to get out alive, although she wished that she had left Germany earlier as other relatives had done, so that her life would have been

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better. She also stated that her parents wanted to send her to Kindertransport but decided against it. She said, "Maybe they would not have left (Dresden) had I gone on the Kindertransport".