

-TITLE-EDITH WEIGERT
-I DATE-NOVEMBER 2, 1989
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-GOOD
-DURATION-52 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

0:01 Edith was born in 1899 in Armatreden (ph) German. Her family consisted of her twin sister and her parents. Went to school in Wrocaw (Ger: Breslau) from approx. 1905. didn't know of any trouble during her school time. By the time Hitler came to power in 1933, she was already married. She had married when she was 21 or 22. Her husband had his own textile business which he had taken over from his elderly uncle.

3:56 Edith worked with her husband and says that the business didn't suffer. Most of the customers were on their side, and although it wasn't safe for them to discuss it openly, they weren't pro-Hitler.

5:48 She says that she remembers Kristallnacht well although at the time the expression didn't exist. one day in 1938 (she thinks) after breakfast, the police came and arrested her husband. They were very nice to him saying: "We don't want to do this but we have to." Edith didn't know where they were taking him, but was happy that he at least had his sandwich with him, especially when she found out later that he had stood on his feet for almost 12 hours, at the police station without being fed.

8:22 He didn't come home and she didn't know where he was. A policeman who lived downstairs in her building told her to come to his house so that he could give her some information and she went. He was the one who told her of her husband's first day at the station, and that they had taken him somewhere but he couldn't tell her where. She didn't hear from her husband for several days and in the meantime, took care of the business. Then she received a letter from him saying he was well and that he thought he would be home soon.

12:30 At work, Edith recalls having some very faithful employees, whereas others with whom she had been on very good terms didn't even look at her. One morning, after quite some time, she woke up to find her husband standing on her bed, looking "terrible". She rushed to hug him but he backed away saying: "Don't touch me, don't touch me." At first he didn't say very much. He just wanted to clean himself.

That evening, his five brothers came to visit him. One of them, a well known pediatrician, was living with them, They all considered themselves very lucky to have him home and healthy.

15:27 At this point they knew they had to leave Germany. Edith's parents had already died (natural deaths) and her twin sister lived in Berlin with her husband, a Jewish dentist and two children. They never considered leaving Germany. Her brother-in-law kept saying that this would pass, that things would have to change. Their older son age 13 or 14 decided he wanted to leave Germany and go to Israel which he did. Today he is no longer alive. Her sister's younger child suffered from an intestinal disease and remained with his parents in Berlin.

18:30 Edith and her husband prepared to leave with the help of their loyal employees. All the decorations and the curtains at the business had been slashed and soaked in ink, with "Jew" written everywhere. Many of the people they knew hadn't known they were Jewish and were very surprised. They had to liquidate everything and sell all the furniture. Then they had to find a country to go to. In 1938 or 1939, her brother-in-law went to England and Edith and her husband obtained visas for Bolivia. Her sister's husband still maintained that things would change but Edith and her husband said: "We're not taking any chances. We are leaving. "Her sister in law stayed but were not killed (it is not clear where they were during the entire war. Edith indicates they didn't remain in Berlin the whole time but doesn't know where they went.)

23:33 Once everything was sold, they headed for Bolivia. They had money which they couldn't take with them so they brought the most expensive tickets on the boat. They had quite a good time on the boat but couldn't join the others who were having lots of fun on the trip. At one point someone asked her why they weren't 'mixing, and Edith told her.

27:25 On their way to Bolivia, they stopped in Panama and remained there for a while. Once in Bolivia, Edith was interviewed by the President's wife, who wanted her to come live in the palace and teach the children German, English, Spanish. Edith declined the offer and went to work at a Jewish children's home/school.

31:19 At first, while Edith was working at the school, her husband didn't have a job, but after a while he started working. Given the fact that glass wasn't being produced in what Edith described as "primitive Bolivia", her husband earned money by going around to clubs and collecting bottles for recycling. In the meantime Edith kept her job at the school which she liked a lot. Because she spoke several languages the Jewish children's home had provided her with a nice apartment. There were some very nice teachers at the school with whom Edith became very good friends. She herself didn't teach because she didn't have a degree but describes herself as doing "everything" else. some of the children there were orphans and others had parents who couldn't support them.

36:00 Edith says she doesn't remember there being any Nazis in Bolivia when she was there. She had lost contact with her sister, and didn't know how to find her. One day, when her husband went as usual to pick up the mail, he came home with a letter from her sister. She couldn't believe it. Her twin was in Berlin with her husband and child and the elder son was in Israel, although the family had never been religious.

38:59 Before Edith left for Bolivia, she and her husband visited with her sister and brother-in-law in Berlin, who took them to their boat. Edith went to California with her husband, whose brother, the pediatrician, was already there. She doesn't remember when it was that she arrived.

42:54 Although she doesn't talk much about how the war affected her, she says she feels very Jewish. She also says that at the Jewish school at which she worked in Bolivia, there were a few hundred non-jewish students. When asked if she had anything else to say about her life, she says that she remembers it being very good before Hitler. One of her big sorrows was not being able to have children. It was upon finding that out that she immersed herself in business. After Kristallnacht, it was clear that she and her husband had to leave their home. Her husband never talked about his experience in the concentration camps but thankfully he had not been there alone. His brother's son had been with him.

48:10 Edith was always grateful that her parents hadn't lived to see the war. Her sister passed away, but wasn't killed in the war. Edith expressed her hope that this interview would be of help in preventing anything like the Holocaust from ever happening again, although she realized that there's no guarantee. She hopes that something good can come out of all the bad things that happened.
.END.