

--1994. I'm Judith Antelman with the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco. And today, I'm interviewing Irene Frank. And producing is John Grant.

Irene, I'd like to begin with a few background questions. Can you please tell me your full name?

Irene Helga Frank.

And when and where were you born? I was born in Berlin, December 16, 1918.

And can you tell me your parents' names and occupations?

Well, my parents are divorced. But my mother's name was Estelle Rubins, born Rubins. And she married Dr. Velna Pischel, P-I-S-C-H-E-L.

So growing up, was your maiden name, then, Pischel?

Pischel, yes. Pischel.

OK, and any siblings-- their names?

Who, my children?

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Oh, I have one sister. Her last name now is Pischel-Lotsy.

And her first name?

First name is Marlies-- M-A-R-I-L-I-E-S.

OK, I'd like to start also by asking a few questions about your childhood in Berlin-- what your family life was like, your school life, if you were brought up religiously in Hebrew school or non, or--

No. I was not brought up as a Jew. My mother was a Protestant, and my father was kind of agnostic I think. So I never liked religion very much, to be really honest. My mother sent me to Sunday school, but I never went. I always played hooky with boyfriends around the church instead of going to Sunday school. I just never liked it, I still don't.

But I wouldn't know what to say about the religious aspect. I was really not brought up Jewish as such, because my family for a long, long time has been Protestant.

Was your father an agnostic Jew?

Yes. No, he was not-- he was non-Jewish altogether. I'm only half. My mother was of Jewish origin but not of Jewish faith. So I didn't even know I was half Jewish until all this Hitler business came about.

OK, so how are you half Jewish?

My mother.

Her parents.

Her parents, well they were Protestant too. But they were of Jewish origin altogether. So my grandfather came from Holland. And he became a German because he was working at the Berlin University as a physicist. And he became a

German citizen because he liked it. And was very intellectual and very interesting to him, so he became a German citizen.

And my grandmother was born in London of Jewish parents. And they lived in Berlin. And this is all I knew about it. And we never really discussed religion as such. My grandmother was not religious either. She only went to church on, I think Christmas Eve she took me. That's the only time we went. So religion did not play a great thing in my life, no.

So it was your mother's grandmother?

Yes. That was my mother's mother, my grandmother. Yeah, and the ones before, I haven't met any of them. I don't know them. So my grandmother, like I said, was not religious. So she didn't push me. And my mother tried and did not succeed. So what else you want me--

What were your parents' occupations?

Well, my father had a big job in the German railway administration. My mother was a housewife but she studied on the side. She studied art, and she was quite talented. She danced ballet, and she was a very beautiful woman.

And it was not a very happy marriage. And after 16 years they divorced. And my mother remarried. And my father eventually remarried too. So there was no bad ill feelings or anything. So I had a happy childhood, you can call it that. Yes.

So you were in a secular school?

Yeah, well no, I went to a private school. It was a Protestant school. And it was extremely boring, let's say. I didn't like it, no. I didn't like school at all. I think it was boring. The only classes I liked were the language classes. And I liked the music and the art classes. But all the other stuff was just really very boring.

I didn't stay in school very long. I had to leave. I really wanted to study to be a doctor. And I wanted to go to a special school where they teach you Latin and give you a background for serious studies. But I wasn't allowed to go because I was half Jewish, you see?

I quit the school when I was more or less maybe 10th grade or something. And I went to a commercial college for a while, taking shorthand-- English, German, and French shorthand-- and things that I didn't like at all. But I learned that.

And really, the education that I can be proud of, I really got from my grandmother, who taught me a lot of things. She made me read all the classics and saw to it that I finished the languages. And so I really am very grateful to her for my education, for what it's worth.

Were you involved in any social, or political, or cultural organizations when you were in school, as a young child?

No, I was not. The only thing I joined was the philharmonic choir. I sang in the philharmonic choir. We gave concerts in different churches and different places, and mostly Bach, and Beethoven's Ninth, and such. And I loved it. But I had to quit that too, because I was half Jewish. They threw me out.

So in school, I had trouble. You see, I moved from Berlin. When I was a little child, I moved away from Berlin to a place in Kusel, and then from Kusel we moved to Breslau, which is in Silesia. And I went to school in Silesia for about six or eight years. And this is when all this Hitler business started. So I had problems at the school, as far as the race situation was.

What year were you in Breslau?

What year, I--

Was it before '33?

Oh, yes. Yes. I was about five or six years old when I came to Breslau. So I lived there for quite a while. And my parents lived there when they divorced. And then she married this other man, who was a wonderful person. He was an editor of a newspaper in Breslau. And he lost his job because of my mother.

And the first time it struck me, really struck me what was going, on was when my mother got married to this man, half the people didn't show up for the wedding because they were afraid. This was really the first time that really was a personal thing.

And then I had another very personal experience that-- before they knew at school that I was quote, "tainted," we had these lessons, what they called race lessons, where the teacher teaches you about what happens if you're half or quarter Jewish or something, or all Jewish, god forbid.

She taught all this garbage. And she picked me, of all the kids-- 40 kids in class-- she picked me as the prototype of the German race, which was really interesting because I saw a picture here in the States, not too terribly long, ago about a boy who went through some kind of examination at school too. And it brought back my childhood because this is what happened to me.

She took me out of-- in front of the class. And she did the measurements on your head, and how big your nose, and how-- all this kind of thing. And then a few days later, the director of the school came in the class and said, all Jews, and half Jews, and quarter Jews, get up. So I had to get up. And this teacher never forgave me. She never forgave me.

So after that, it was very difficult for me from the point of view that she picked on me because she made a fool of herself. So she would say, what will happen when you get married tomorrow? You will have nothing but moronic kids. They're all going to be sick. And if it was around Christmas time, they made me stand with my face to the wall because I wasn't allowed to sing Christmas songs.

And they picked on me. And Hitler made a speech. And everybody had to go and listen to the speech. And you're supposed to Heil Hitler. And I refused to do it. And so I got in trouble. I did get in trouble.

How old were you, about? Was this in Breslau?

Yes. I was about 12, maybe.

So when she was measuring you and doing the whole measurements event, what was going through your--

Well, I mean, I thought she's an idiot. And I mean, not only that, but she took a real liking to me. And she said I was the leader type. And she was going to recommend me for leader position in the German Bund Deutscher MÄ¶del, that I was the leader for 500 girls. And I said I didn't want to. I didn't want to tell her. So it was kind of a seesaw situation.

Were there any other antisemitic gestures or attacks?

Not to me, necessarily. The girls in the class knew me well, so they kind of accepted me. As a matter of fact, the Jewish girls were more unfriendly because I didn't go to synagogue. And I knew nothing about it. And I'd never been in the synagogue. And they thought that was shocking. So you really are on your own when you're like that. It's been that way for quite a while.

Did you have any close friends in school?

Yes, I had a very close friend in Breslau, Inga [PERSONAL NAME] who didn't care whether I was half Jewish or not. We were just friends. And we were both troublemakers. So we got along just fine.

And then when I moved to Berlin, I had a close girlfriend by the name of [PERSONAL NAME] who was very dark,

with dark curls and a long nose. And she was French. And she used to laugh because when we'd walk in the streets, somebody would holler, hey, you Jewish bitch. And she used to say, don't worry. They're talking to me, which they were.

There was a lot of that going on. I had a lot of trouble with that way, too, because I don't look quote, Jewish. And when I moved to Berlin, and I lived with my grandmother, I used to get accosted in the street every so often because my grandmother was a little Jewish lady. And then you say, how dare you German Aryan girl walk with a Jewish woman in the street. And I say, excuse me, that's my grandmother.

Yeah, it was really ridiculous. And I've had that trouble all along. Even when I lived with her, we would go to a restaurant or something, and she used to like to go and have a piece of cake or something. And there were restaurants that a lot of Jewish people went to, and so she preferred to go to that one because they wouldn't hassle her. But they hassled me. They hassled me.

One or the other?

So I couldn't, even when I came to the States there was still a lot of that. Yeah.

So did you discuss this, the racial measurements, did you discuss this at home with your parents?

I don't remember. I used to come home, and what upset me more than anything else is the fact that she said I would have kids and that are deranged or not normal.

When the teacher says something like that, and I used to talk to my mother about it, or my grandmother, or whatever. And they said, ach, don't even, you know, baloney. Which it was. So it never bothered me after that anymore, because I knew it wasn't true. But I was hurt many times because I was ostracized after a while.

When we moved to Berlin, there were seven Jewish girls in my class. And they cut me dead. And the others didn't know what to do with me. Eventually I made friends, but not really good ones.

So did you move to Berlin after Breslau? You went back?

Yeah, well, I moved to Berlin-- from Breslau to Berlin. And my stepfather had lost his job in Breslau so he moved-- he got a new job, eventually, in Hamburg. And so we moved to Hamburg for about a year. Then he lost the job again because of my mother. And so we came back to Berlin.

And my mother and my stepfather left for the Orient. And I moved in with my grandmother. And I stayed with my grandmother until 1937, I think it was. And then my mother came back trying to get me out. And I left Berlin in 1938, just about two weeks before the Kristall thing happened. So I was very lucky.

But it was touch and go when I left, really, by that time. The janitor in the house where I lived with my grandmother used to say, you better leave. The Gestapo it's always asking questions about you. You better leave. But there was no place to go. Just was no place to go.

OK, I'd like to talk in detail about this period of the '30s. So January 30, 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor, you were back in Berlin or were you--

No, I was in Breslau. I was in Breslau.

Do you remember that day, or speeches, or discussions?

Well, people kind of were shocked. They used to talk about Hitler in a way, like, who is he, anyhow? And all these rowdy people running in the streets. I mean, he's never going to get anywhere.

And a lot of Jewish people said, well, we're German. We're not going, and we're not going to leave. This is our home. A lot of them went to-- fought in the First World War and had these crosses and things. My stepfather had one of those. And they felt secure.

Some people had enough sense to leave. My mother's brother, who was a chemist, he didn't stick around. He left. He left in '33. He went to Valparaiso and he was teaching at the university up there. And we said, why do you want to leave? You fought in the war. You don't have to worry about-- he said, no. I'm not staying. So he got out.

But my family got pretty well decimated. My grandmother took poison. In '41. I think two or three of her sister and brother killed themselves. Some of them went to England because they had double nationality. She didn't have double nationality. She could have left, but she wouldn't. She had a pension from her husband, who was a very well known physicist. And she just didn't want to leave.

Even when I was in Japan, I used to write to her and say, why don't you come here? You can-- so well-educated, you could teach. You can do anything. And I was making all this money in Japan. And I wasn't using it because my stepfather paid for everything. So but she wouldn't. She was very stubborn lady-- very stubborn. Yeah. So she didn't go.

I'm curious about your father during this period.

I don't know what he was doing because my parents were divorced. I'm very worried about what my father did during that time. I can't really say what he did. But I am very suspicious. He was not antisemitic. He did not divorce my mother because she was Jewish. He divorced her because they didn't get along.

But he was pulled into the army. My father had a big job at the railway administration. They pulled him into the army and made him a general. And they sent him to Poland. That's what I heard. This is hearsay. I know he went to Poland. And he was in Krakow, I think, during all this killing.

So what he did, whether he sent people in trains to concentration camps or not, I don't know. But I'm very suspicious. And he was the type of person that would follow orders-- good German official. You couldn't bribe him. You couldn't-- he never, I used to-- just couldn't believe it when I lived with him. They used to send him boxes of fruit, and boxes of brandy, and boxes of this. And he would send it all back. He says, I don't take bribes.

He was a very honest person. And his best friend was a Jew by the name of Fulks. I remember him. But I don't know what he did during the war. It's a very strange thing that I went to see my father after the war. I've been there a few times. He's dead now.

I never asked him, because I didn't remember. I cannot put it out of my mind. Is that such a thing? I couldn't. And later on somebody said something, and one of my sister's kids said something. He sent "the Jew trains," or something. And that's what-- my god, really?

So I thought about it. And I thought, why did I never ask him? I never asked. Never entered my mind. They say you forget things that you want to forget. Very strange. So I really don't know. But I'm very suspicious. Yes.

So during the '30s you had no contact with him or the boys? During the '30s I did. I'll tell you, until they got divorced. After that, he still was a friend to my mother. There was not nasty. Whenever he came to town, he stayed with us. And he paid for my trip to Japan under duress. Don't ever ask me for anything else again, kind of thing. Which I did anyhow.

But he was married to a rather bitchy person. I didn't like her at all. And, of course, she didn't like me because I was half Jewish and that was bad for her. Because she wanted to join the German whatever, Frauenschaft, or whatever. And they wouldn't let her because she was married to a man who had been contaminated.

So she wasn't too-- although as a person, I think she kind of liked me. But I was not an asset, as far as she was concerned. And she had a son. So he's another pain-- terrible, terrible person. I don't like him. I don't have any connections with him. But Nick is going to go and look him up. I don't know why.

But I told Nick, I said, don't give him my address. And I don't want to have anything to do with him for many reasons. He was spoiled up by his mother. And he was quite a Nazi, I think. He said some horrible things. And I got really mad at my father. And I still don't understand why I didn't put two and two together.

I think my father, he was just keeping his mouth shut because he had to live with her. I guess when you live with somebody, you don't want to make waves, although, boy, I sure would have. I just don't go for that. It was really quite surprising.

I went to visit him, I think it was in '60-something. And his son was about 19, I guess by that time, or maybe a little more. And it was in winter and we walked. We were going to go to a movie or something. And we got to a bus station. And there was this nice German gentleman with a little hat with a feather. And he slipped and fell by the bus station.

And I said, go help him up, you know, this poor man. He fell down, and he looked like an old man. And he said, no. I said, why not? He says, he's a Jew, and he's lucky he didn't get killed. So why should I bother. He just lost his job.

And I turned right around and went back to my father. And I screamed at him. I said, how did you bring up this crummy son of yours? But I had no influence on that. So I kind of dropped this guy like a hot potato. I haven't seen him in years. So if Nick goes once to see, well let him they most probably won't let him in the front door.

He's in Germany?

He's in Germany. He has a big job. He's a prosecutor-- makes a lot of money. He married a woman from Berlin who is a principal of a school. And she seemed like a nice, outgoing person. I don't know what she ever saw in him. It's beyond me.

I wanted to ask more questions about school, the '30s, and if you remember any other experiences that were antisemitic, either toward you or toward other children.

Well, there was one girl, her name was Gerda Jacobson. Very intelligent, very, quote, "Jewish looking" girl. And she was Jewish. And she got very sick-- scarlet fever I think she had. And she was gone out of school for about six weeks. And the teacher was a very nasty teacher. I forgot his name. Anyhow, he made a point of giving a big test on the day she came back. And she passed it with flying colors.

And I never forgot that. I don't know was-- she was really smart. She got an A, and there's nothing he could do. And everybody was amused about it, because he tried to make trouble. There was always this underhanded kind of trouble-- the little things, which keep going even as you're grown up.

And when I came to the States I got a little bit of that. I went with my children. I had three children then. I went up to a place up-- Steiner. It's a park up there. I used to take the kids up there because we lived in this terrible place. And I'd never-- I've always lived in a villa. And suddenly here I was in the slums. Well, and I didn't want the kids to play outside or anything. So I used to take them to the park.

And this particular neighborhood is populated by a lot of Berlin Jews. And they heard me speak German to my children because I tried to teach them the languages. And they cut me dead. And I could have explained, but I didn't feel like I should have to. I thought, well you're just about as bad as the Nazis because you judge people before you even have a chance. I resented it very much. So I never talked to any of them.

So you get this kind of stuff. When I came, even the second day in the States, I took my kids out in the little pushcart that one of them. And some guy hung out of the window in this horrible house and hollered down, oh, I see they let these goddamn Nazis into this country. So I thought, well, same old story. See, that's the way it works.

I always said to my grandmother, I wished I had a long nose and curly black hair, and then I would know where I'm at. Even in Berlin they had the yellow benches and the green benches-- the yellow benches for the Jews, the green benches

for the Aryans. And I said, there's no striped ones. Where am I going to sit? Whichever one I sat, I'd be in trouble. That's the way. It's idiotic. Really idiotic. Yeah.

Ignorance.

Yeah. But I remember when there was this big [NON-ENGLISH] with Hitler, where he shot all these people. Of course I didn't hear it on the paper or anything. It's some girlfriend that lives down the street came over. We lived in a place called Mozart's Closet in Breslau. It's a beautiful villa. And she said, did you hear there's all these people getting killed? But when you're young like that, you say, well, so they got killed. So many people got killed all the time.

And the first time it really hit me that something was going on-- that was before I lived with my grandmother-- is when the brother of one of the Jewish girls-- he was 17, old, I thought-- 17, they picked him up and threw in the concentration camp for something. I don't know what it was. Then they let him go after few months-- they let him go. Sent him home. And he went up in the attic and hanged himself. And that is the first time I thought, I wonder what's going on?

Because we had no, I mean, there weren't any concentration camps close to Berlin. And people didn't talk about it. They were afraid to talk. The ones that had connections with this were afraid to say anything because they were afraid they would get picked up again or, that their relatives would be hurt somehow, or whatever. So it was very much under the cover for a long time.

So you went back to Berlin to live with your grandmother?

No, not right away. I went from Breslau to Hamburg. We went via Berlin, visited. And then we went to Hamburg where my stepfather had another job. And we stayed in Hamburg one year. And then he lost the job. And we went back to Berlin.

Do you remember what year you were in Hamburg? Was it--

Teenager. Young teenager. I don't really know. But there're pictures of me there. And I look like young teenager. But when we moved back to Berlin, we moved around the corner from where my grandmother lived. So I saw her on a daily basis. So when my mother left for Japan with my stepfather, I stayed with her.

I don't know how she put up with me. Must have been terrible. But I enjoyed it. I really did. She was a very stimulating lady, very amusing, and very interested in education. And she got me a French governess and an English-- Miss Pin. And she taught me a lot. She studied with me. She used to give me dictations and things. And I had to read all this stuff.

And she used to say, well, I'm going to give you dictation and then you have to translate it. And if you make a mistake, you're not going skating. So I didn't make a mistake. She was very good.

She was a very good teacher. She made me read all the English books she had. And I didn't want to read English books, so she, like a good teacher, she knew just what to do.

She started me off in a Sherlock Holmes book. And it was a story about an engineer that was in the room. And the walls were closing. And the ceiling was coming down. And the floor was coming up. And right in the middle of it, she says, you want to know about it? Read it. That broke the ice. Yes. Clever, you know. Never forgot it. So I was about I guess 14 or so. Yeah, so yeah.

What did you do for the year in Hamburg? Did you--

Nothing. I just stayed-- I don't remember very much of the whole thing. I didn't like it. I didn't go to school. I guess I just didn't go. You kind of laid low those days.

Were the streets filled? [AUDIO OUT]

No, not in Hamburg. I didn't see anything like that. As a matter of fact, you didn't see that much of that. It depended on where you lived. I lived always in the fancy-pantsy neighborhoods. So like in Berlin, they had a lot of fights with the communists and stuff and the Brownshirts. And that was mostly around Alexanderplatz, or down places where workers lived in the big houses.

But where I lived, you didn't see that-- was all that undercurrent was there, like the janitor telling me the Gestapo was coming checking on me. And I couldn't hide myself because my grandfather was a famous man, see. So everybody knew who I was.

Who was you grandfather?

Well, he was a physicist. He worked with Einstein, and Planck, and all these kind of people. And he was very well known. Then he died very young. He died when I was two or three because he went to a conference in Paris with Madame and Monsieur Curie and Einstein, and all these people-- Borg, and Planck, and everybody. And it had something to do with radium. And they gave him a radium pellet, and said, you know-- so he stuck it in his front pocket. And he got leukemia and died of leukemia.

What was his name?

Heinrich Rubens. Yes. Yeah, he was quite a-- there's a picture of him in the book, The Life of Einstein. You can find it, and his picture's in there. You can look it up. Both my grandfathers were very famous. He was famous and my other grandfather on my father's side was a Sanskrit professor.

And what was his name?

Pischel. God, well he died when my father was 12. I'll think of his name, the first name, in a minute. God, isn't that something? Don't know his first name, but it'll come to me.

OK, when it comes to you. And what was your grandmother's full name-- your maternal grandmother?

You mean originally, before she was married?

Yeah.

Hirschfeldt. Hirschfeldt was her--

And her first name?

Mary. Marie.

OK. And was your sister with you in Hamburg?

Yes, she was with me in Hamburg. But then in Berlin, she didn't stay. She stayed with her father in Wuppertal, which is in the Rhineland, and his new wife. And there was nothing but trouble. My sister's a difficult person. So nothing but trouble between her. And she played one against the other. So anyway, eventually she came to Berlin and stayed with us-- with my grandmother-- which was difficult.

So the decision was made in Hamburg for you to go to Berlin?

Yes. And your parents then, your mother and your stepfather, were going to Japan?

Yeah, they came back to Berlin. And he tried. He went to all these different newspapers. He was a newspaperman. And he said, would you like to have foreign news? I'll go to Japan. I'll be a foreign correspondent.



So he got all kinds of contracts. He kept his mouth shut about his wife. And then he went to Japan. And that was about the only place you could go. It had to be access. I couldn't go, even myself, I couldn't go anywhere else. I was just no place to go. A lot of people went to China. But we managed to get Japan, which I think was better, then. Although it got really bad. It really got bad.

But so he went to Japan. And then my mother stayed in Berlin for about a half a year. And she got a little apartment, and I moved in with her. And then she got really sick. And she had gall bladder trouble. And she went to the hospital. And I was by myself. And it was all miserable.

And then we tried to get a visa to go via Siberia to Japan. That took weeks, and weeks, and months to get that visa. They just gave her a terrible time because she had this Sara business on her passport, with a J. I didn't have that. So I could get away with whatever. But they were just really-- didn't want her to go. So eventually we got it.

So we left Berlin in October '38. I remember my grandmother, she took us to the train. And I saw her go down the stairs. And I knew I would never see her again, which I didn't. And we went by train via Warsaw to Moscow-- very interesting trip. When we left Germany, they all came. These Germans came in trying to see the passport.

And my mother, she was the type of person, she says, I have a terrible migraine. I'm going to bed. That's what she did. Which was a good solution, no doubt. And she was very clingy kind of person. So they looked at me. And they looked at the passport. And they looked at my mother's passport. And they said, well, what the hell. Let us go.

So we went on the train via Warsaw. And before you get into Russia, they had this big kind of arch and it said, "workers of the world unite" in Russian, which I can't read. But I was told that's what it says. And we were not allowed to look out of the window. We had to pull down the curtains. But I looked, of course, and they had all these pillboxes with their guns trained on the train. They're very interesting. Very interesting.

So when we got to Moscow, we stayed at the Moscow Monopol Hotel. And then we went on the Siberian Express, if you can call it that.

I'd like to go backwards before we go forwards, and talk more about the '30s, especially up until '38, when you went to Berlin. When you-- to live with your grandmother. So it was about '35?

Well, yeah, well it got very difficult for her. I did not realize it. But she progressively lost her pension. She had a lot of money. My grandparents were very rich. And she had a lot of money. And she had a big pension, which slowly was being cut down to a point where she could hardly live on it.

She had all kinds of diamond-- cut and uncut-- because the Dutch relatives were all diamond merchants and tea merchants, both. And so she had a lot of diamonds, and cut and uncut, in the bank, and gold bars, and whatnot. And I used to love to go to the bank with her because the guy was so polite. I thought it was wonderful.

But anyhow, all that, of course, disappeared. All of it, including all her original paintings, and whatever she had, and all the books, and stuff that my grandfather wrote. And of course, they're all in the library. You can find all his books. His books and the other guys' books are all in Stanford and everywhere else. But the ones that she had, with the gold, whatever-- so all that gone. But then the servant had to leave because she wasn't allowed to have a servant, or the servant wasn't allowed to stay with her-- all these little things.

And my grandmother was the type of person that was brought up without any knowledge about how to run a household. She didn't know when the water was boiling. She just didn't.

She sent me, before I went to this commercial school, she sent me to a housekeeping school of some kind, where they teach you how to cook and iron because, she said, obviously it's something you have to know. And I said, well, I'm missing half of school time. And she says, well then work a little harder and catch up. Which I did.

But I learned how to cook, and I think I've never impressed as much as when I cooked my first roast beef, or roast pork,

I think it was. She thought that was absolutely fantastic.

But see, all the really bad things, like the star on the clothes, and the business where you couldn't go out shopping at certain days-- for Jews was not allowed to go and shop-- I missed all that. So that was after I left.

I guess after this Kristallnacht, things really tightened up. But the only thing that I noticed while I was still there, was that some stores, they had people from the Sturmer, newspaper standing by the front door and photograph people that would go into the Jewish store. But then the Berliners were not Nazi or antisemitic. They would go in. They said, why shouldn't we go in? It's the only decent store in town. And they would go in-- they would. And it just wasn't that obvious.

And even during the times when the SR, the Sturmabteilung, well, they were the Brownshirts-- when they would go down Kurfürstendamm or something and scream and stuff, these guys all had an accent from Bavaria or Silesia or something. And if you spoke German, you could tell they went from Berlin. Yeah. They're just-- the Berliners didn't go for that. They all had their pet Jew. And it just wasn't that obvious in Berlin. I think if I'd stayed in Breslau, I would have seen much more of it.

And it was all very, very low class. It really was. Like my father said, he said, even if I hadn't had a Jewish father, I would never join this party, because they're all proletarians. And they go out the street and sing dirty songs. To him that was just-- you just don't do that. So as far as my grandmother is concerned, I think she kept it pretty well hidden from me, I think.

And I didn't see too much of it but, for the school where I got more discriminated at the Berlin School than the Breslau one, because in Breslau, they knew me well, where in the Berlin School they didn't.

What was that like? Can you--

Well, I was kind of lonely. And eventually I made a friend with this one girl whom I liked very much. I don't know what happened to her. I'm sure she got beaten up a few times in the street. I'm sure she did.

For being friends with you?

Yeah. Yeah. A lot of people could be beaten up. The Turkish ambassador got it once because he looked like a Jew. We used to laugh about it. I used to know a lot of people in Berlin that were anti-Nazi. Some of them were partly Jewish. There was two brothers, Brush was their name. And they used to-- very musical-- and they used to play on the radio. What you call this?

Accordion?

Accordion-- the one guy used to play Bach on the accordion, wonderful. And I don't know what happened. His father was a big surgeon. And they had the best parties in their house, and I remember those. But they disappeared. They just disappeared, these people. A lot of them disappeared. And you didn't know where they were and what happened to them.

And, but there were still-- people were kind of-- they were still looking at it like a passing thing. And we used to have, when I got to be a little older, and before my mother came over-- I was about 16 or so-- I used to go to a lot of these parties because my grandmother didn't know I was going to them. And she would never let me go, but I went anyhow.

And we used to have these parties. And people used to go up and imitate Hitler. And they'd tell these jokes about Hitler, and Goebbels, and Goering. And everybody would laugh. And we'd drink wine and champagne and think we were really, really nice. And they were mostly artists. And I've turned out to be one too, in the meantime. I do sculpture and things.

But they were very, looking back now, it was really terribly dangerous. If we had had an informant, that I guess we

would have all been killed. But you don't think of that when you're that young. You just don't. I thought life was just one big fun, you know? But it certainly changed after a while.

But my grandmother, she took poison. I found out about it through an aunt who lives in England who said she came to look for my grandmother because she hadn't heard from her. My grandmother used to be very close to her family there. And she used to call her sister every day. And her sisters, and mostly one sister, and she didn't, I guess.

So they went to check up on her. And she was in bed. And she was terribly ill. And she just had enough strength to tell this aunt of mine not to call a doctor. So she took poison. Which was terrible because she was a very healthy person. But they were going to ship her to Warsaw, I guess. And she didn't want to do that. So that was in '41.

And so I wish she'd come to Japan because she would have survived. I don't know why she didn't. But she was very stubborn. She could have gone to England. I have some real wealthy relatives in England that I've never met and don't care to, either. But I said, why don't you get in touch with these people? You know them. No, no, no, no. Uh uh. No. She didn't want to.

And she saw some of the stuff. One of her brothers, and his wife, and his three sons went to England because he had English nationality as well as German. So he went to England. But he was a judge. And German law is not the same as English. He couldn't make a living. So he killed himself too.

But the sons worked out fine. And the daughter is married. She's very well known artist. And one son I think was a professor at the University here in Philadelphia. He was a mathematician-- smart. He tried to teach me and hit me in the head. He says, you just don't want to. So I don't know the other one, what he's doing. I don't know. But they survived.

But there was another sister that killed herself because they said if she wasn't around, her kids would inherit whatever she had. She was married to a German. And so she killed herself. I don't know whether the kids got what-- I don't know. But within your family, when you have this mixture of "Aryan," quote, and Jewish, there's a lot of tension.

Like my father's brother, who was 12 years older than my father, was a very nice man and definitely not a Nazi. But his wife was. And the children, there were three girls, and I didn't like to go there. And when I was ready to go to Japan my father said, you have to go and say goodbye. So I went there. And they knew I was coming. And all the girls were dressed in Hitler Youth uniforms.

And I didn't want to go because I knew my grandmother was not welcome. And I didn't go places where my grandmother wasn't welcome. But my father insisted that I go, and I was under age. And so I went. Hated every minute of it. And I never forgave him. I never had any connection with these people. The oldest daughter came and visited me here once in San Francisco. And she has a degree. I don't know what, political science.

I said, well political science during that time, it must have been how to be a good Nazi or whatever. So she stayed with us for a while. And I couldn't stand her. So I sent her home and said, I don't really care to have any contact with you. Well, she died in the meantime. I don't hold anything against her. She can't help it. She was-- the upbringing has a lot to do with it, I guess. Yeah. You meet some weird people as you go through life, you really do.

So did your mother have any contact with your father when you were in Hamburg?

No, I don't think so. She did not keep much contact with him. Once he got married, they lived their own lives. And my stepfather was very-- they were very happily married. It was one of the happiest time of my life, when I lived with them. Yeah. Very, very wonderful. No tension, no fights, no nothing. And I'm a fighter. So if there's something--

But I loved him. He was the most-- he spoiled me for any other man because he was so attentive, and very good looking, and very loving to my mother. And during the war, everybody was in Japan. They threw him in jail, and tortured him, and everything. And they told him, if you divorce your wife, we'll let you out. But he never did. No. No.

And he was Aryan?

Yes. Yes he was. From the Baltic States. I think it was either Lithuania or Estonia. I don't know which it was. And very snazzy family. Very nice people. And he had a brother who went to Sweden. And the sister was in England. They were all over the place, too, although they weren't Jewish.

But his brother, funnily enough, was married to one of my mother's cousins. Which was really sheer coincidence. They didn't even know each other. But they found out on a trip. They went on a trip to Norway or someplace on a ship. And they found out that he was married to my mother's cousin. So of course, when this Hitler business, though, he took off and went to Sweden.

I have no contact with him I don't know at all. They were very nice people, though. But the woman, I never met her, the one that lived in England. And my stepfather stayed too. They tortured him to a point where he never recuperated, really. Yeah.

So you were in Berlin with your grandmother, could you first describe that journey from Hamburg to Berlin? You went with your mother and you stepfather?

Yeah.

And were there any problems?

No problems. We went by train. You didn't need any-- my mother did not what the Germans considered Jewish-- did not look like that. She had a nice little straight nose. And she had auburn, curly-- I should have brought your picture. She was beautiful. Just a beautiful woman. And most men just thought she was God's gift.

So she traveled with this good-looking man, everybody was very nice to her. No problem. No, no problem at all. And they just rented an apartment on a place called [PLACE NAME], which was around the corner. And I stayed with them for a little while. Yeah.

And then they decided to go to Japan?

Yeah, well he got this contract. So he thought he'd better go. And he took my mother with him. He couldn't take us because he didn't know whether he could make a go of it. So that's when my mother came back. I think the end of '37 she came back. She really risked her life to come back to get me. And like I say, we had a very hard time getting out.

Before that-- so you lived with your grandmother then, when your mother was in Japan with your stepfather.

Yeah.

So I'm just trying to get a feel of what your days were like. So that, what, 1935?

Yeah. Yeah, '35-'36. Yes.

So did you just, daily, did you see storm troopers going through the streets? Where there swastikas on buildings, what?

Swastikas on buildings, every so often. Yes. They hang out the flags. But you get kind of immune to that. It had nothing to do with me. I felt that they were all demented. And they had nothing to do with me. And I resented it because I was being pushed around.

But I never thought of the danger until this janitor, who really liked me. And he used to make fun of me because my mother had a different name. Her name was Balk, B-A-L-K. And my grandma's name was Rubens. So he never knew whether to call me Miss Pischel, Miss Rubens, or Miss Balk. So he used to call me by different names every day. He thought I was funny, and I didn't care.

But he used to warn me. But I said to him many times, I said, what do you want me to do? You know, what can I do? Where can I go? What can I do? I mean, there was no other place to go. I could have gone and stayed with my father, but I guess his wife would have thrown me out.

And my father didn't really-- he kind of dropped me like a hot potato when he had his son. I was supposed to be the son and I wasn't, so, you know. I was his favorite child before, but after that I wasn't-- not anymore, no.

Was he living in Berlin?

No, he was living in Wuppertal, which is in the Rhineland. Yeah.

So I know that you mentioned you were living in a nice part of Berlin. So you were not near the [PLACE NAME] where they were having the marches?

Well, we were close to Kurfürstendamm but there were not much things going on on Kurfürstendamm, because, like I say, the Berliners were a strange kind of German-- very international, very cosmopolitan. And they don't like anybody tell them what to do. That's why most Germans don't like Berliners.

I've met Germans, and then find out you're from Berlin-- well, they know that I'm from Berlin. One woman said to me once at a cocktail party, she says, you speak fluent German without any dialect. But you've got a big mouth. You must be from Berlin. See?

Yeah, there're only two places in Germany where they speak high German-- Hanover and Berlin. And, of course, I wasn't allowed to speak any dialect at home. I know some. But the Berliners are that way. And that's why the Hitler business, the whole Nazi business, just didn't really take a hold of, in Berlin.

There were some things, like I mentioned before, where I noticed that suddenly a store would be closed. There was a little store on Wilmersdorf Straße which is close to where we lived in Halensee and near Grunewald where they had a little store with materials, and threads, and needles, and where you could buy stuff to sew.

And they were a Jewish couple. And they disappeared. And the store was closed. And I remember. I was with my girlfriend, and I said, what happened to them? She says, I don't know. They disappeared. People kind of disappeared. Like in Japan during the war. They disappeared. Where are they? Nobody knows. Nobody knows.

So how were your days spent?

Oh, they were just normal teenage days. I used to go swimming. And I used to go to parties and go to movies with my grandmother, and go to movies with Madame Enique, my French governess who took me to all the indies and French movies. And I learned a lot. And I used to go up to my grandmother tell her about it. She was shocked. But I had a good time with just this undercurrent. There was always there, the undercurrent.

And, of course, when my mother came back, I knew things were down to the nitty gritty. I knew it. And then it got really kind of scary. So when she got out of the hospital, I said, we better get moving. We better get out of here.

So we went to the Soviet consulate there and wandered in. And then we applied for a visa. So it took forever. I thought we'd never make it. And it was just by the skin of our teeth.

How did it get scary? What were the first evidence that there was change?

Well, people were getting more jumpy. And my grandmother was worried. She wanted me to leave because she was probably talked to the janitor too. And the money was getting tight.

What about what was happening in the city, on the streets?

Not much, in Berlin. No. But there was a lot going on in Munich, and a lot of places going on in Breslau-- little places-- Silesian. The Silesian surroundings-- all around Breslau and all that place there was very Nazi. Bavaria was very Nazi. Hamburg was pretty bad. And the Rhineland was so la-la, because there were too many French people living there.

But Berlin was just kind of an island, even doing the Kristall thing, they said that the buses and the cars that were coming full of SR-- what they call it, SR-- Sturmabteilung, the Brownshirts. They all had accents, like Bavarian or Silesian or something, because the Berliners just, they didn't like that.

They just-- maybe in places where there were a lot of working people, the ones that lived under difficult circumstances-- not enough heat, not enough food. They had a lot of fights. There were communists-- a lot of them communistic people. And they fought with the Nazis. Eventually, they all turned Nazi. But you didn't see them around where I lived. The only people I saw was the man that delivered the coal, or you go to a store, and where you buy your food.

And I wasn't allowed to talk to anybody behind the counter. That wasn't done. Stupid rules. I broke all those rules very soon. I didn't like it here. You can't talk to the garbage man? It's ridiculous. Why shouldn't you be able to talk to the garbage man? I said, he has a lot of things to say that are very interesting. I just couldn't see it. I never have been able to see this.

So these were all the anti-Jewish laws?

Well, not really. Those were the laws in my family. They were very snobby, very snobby. My sister still is.

So when you do go out into the city in Berlin, did you see any Jews being taken off, or beaten up, or--

None of that, no. I didn't see that. I think most of that happened after I left. Yes.

What about the newspapers or the radio? Were you getting any--

Yes. Full of it. Full of it. They had this horrible newspaper called the Sturmer, which had all of these horrible pictures of people with huge noses. And they were all raping Aryan girls and doing horrible stuff. And that was the newspaper where the people from the [NON-ENGLISH] stood by the Jewish stores and took pictures of you when you went in to scare you not to go in. But they went in anyhow.

Kurfürstendamm had a lot of Jewish stores. And those were the elegant stores-- KaDeWe and all these places where the people shopped. Unter Den Linden they had-- the good shops were Jewish. And so people shopped there. They weren't about to buy in places in [? Longs, ?] or something like that. You just didn't. So they tried to scare people off. But they just wouldn't cooperate.

I don't know what they did in Breslau. I'm sure they cooperated in Breslau. I'm sure they did. I was in a good place. And they were a little more careful in Berlin because there were a lot of people from other countries.

I had friends that were from Switzerland. There were some from France and some of them from England. I had an English boyfriend, and I had people from all over the world. So they were a little bit more cagey about this kind of thing, see? In Breslau I never met anybody that wasn't German. So there was a different feeling altogether. But my grandmother got progressively quiet and worried. I could tell.

Did she ever talk to you about her fears?

No. No. She was just that kind of a person. She never said anything that would worry me, which I really appreciate, looking back now. But she protected me. And when I had to leave school, she said, don't worry about it. You're going to get an education come hell or high water. She sure saw to it.

How did that happen? You were in school in Berlin?

Yes. Well, it was getting very uncomfortable. And the higher education they offered wasn't really anything that I wanted. What I wanted was I wanted to study. And there wasn't anything. And I couldn't go to the university. They wouldn't let me. I wasn't allowed to go to that particular school that I wanted to go, which was a boys' school that did take girls-- not many, but they did. We had to pass a test.

But when they found out I was half Jewish, I wasn't even considered. So I was just not interested in going to the school. So that's when she sent me to this commercial college. She says, you might as well find something that maybe you can make a living if you have to. But I didn't like it. It's boring. I did get a job like that later on in Japan. But it was a good job.

But bookkeeping? I didn't even take the class. She was going to give me an F. And I said to her, well, if you give me an F, I wasn't in your class. Going to really look bad for you if you can't even teach people how to do bookkeeping. I used to spend my time outside reading an English book. I just didn't want to-- bookkeeping, it was not my thing.

So I learned how to do the shorthand, which came in handy later. I had a job in Japan where I used it. Of course nowadays you don't do that anymore. That's all old fashioned stuff. Yeah.

So in this school, the commercial college, were there--

They didn't know who the hell I was.

They didn't know you were Jewish?

Nah. No.

So you were left alone?

Yeah. They didn't bother me. Yeah.

When it got bad, what were you thinking? Were you thinking about that you have to leave or where to go?

Yeah, well I discussed it with my mother. And my stepfather was in Japan. So I knew I was going to go to Japan if I make it. If we make it out, I knew I was going to go to Japan. So it was a very scary trip. It really was scary because it was in '38, October 38, and we didn't know whether there was going to be a war with Russia. And I didn't speak any Russian. I learned one sentence in Russian, [RUSSIAN], which means "I love you." Came in very handy.

But we didn't know what was going on. All the time where we were on the trip in Russia, we didn't know whether there was a war. Every time the train stopped we thought they'd take us off and put us in the concentration camp or something, some Gulag or whatever. Well, it didn't happen. We were lucky. We went all the way through.

I broke all the rules in Moscow too. They could have picked me up. There was a very nice Englishman on the train, a veterinarian, who said, do you want to see things you're not supposed to see? I said yes. So we went into the basilica.

You weren't supposed to go in this church there by the Kremlin. It was a museum with red flags and Lenin all over the place. But it was very interesting. And we walked all over the place. And of course, we weren't supposed to. But I saw quite a lot of it.

But once you were on the train, why, you were really watched. You had Russians on this side of you and you had Russians on that side of you. And the waiter in the dining car spoke every language you could possibly think of. So you have to watch what you said.

Before the train ride, I want to go back again to-- your mother arrived in Berlin in '37?

I think it was '37. Yeah, around that time, yeah.

OK, so can you describe those circumstances? You said that she got sick?

Yeah, well, I lived with my grandmother. And my mother arrived. And she didn't know how long she had to stay in Berlin, and she didn't want to stay with her mother. She didn't want to impose on her. So she rented a little apartment in a different part of Berlin.

And she wanted us girls to live with her while she was there. But my sister didn't want to, since she-- yeah, that's another story altogether about my sister. I don't want to talk about that. But I said I would. I didn't want to, but I would. And it was difficult for me because my mother still thought I was a little girl. And she said, oh, you can't do this, and you can't do that. And I said, yes, I can. So it was kind of difficult.

But then she always had gall bladder trouble and it flared up really bad once she was finally living there. And she had to go to the hospital. And I was by myself, and it was really kind of scary. I was about 16, I guess, 17 maybe-- 18, 18. I must have been 18. But I never lived alone. And I was on the phone all the time to my grandmother. It was scary. But then when she recuperated, why, we decided we'd better try. It took us months to get out.

Can you describe that process in as much--

Well, we would go. We'd have an appointment at the Soviet consulate. And we'd go there, and we'd stand and wait, and wait, and wait for hours. And they said, why don't you come back in four weeks? That kind of stuff. They still do that with a visa. But we had to get out. We just had to get out. So eventually, when they gave it to us, we left.

How many months was that?

Well, I don't know when we started it. She was sick and all, so it must have been three or four months until we got it. Yes, I'm sure.

Were you still going to that commercial college?

No, I wasn't going to school at all during that time, at all. No.

And what was the political situation like during that time?

'38 was pretty bad. Yeah, pretty bad. And I was worried about my mother being back because they were picking up people all over the place. I didn't know the people, see? I didn't know. But there was rumors.

But nobody knew about-- I mean, I didn't know about camps where they killed people. It was well hidden, well hidden, unless you lived next door in a little village like Auschwitz or something, where you smelled the chimneys. I didn't see anything like that. No.

That would have really scared me to death. But I didn't know that. I was just afraid that they would throw me in the concentration camp. I thought it was just a concentration camp. I didn't think it was something that terrible.

But you did have fears about being taken to a concentration camp?

Oh, yes. Later on, thinking about it-- I was in the age they would have put me in a bordello or something. Would have killed me, most probably. I've had close times when I nearly got killed many times, all during this time-- this period and later. Yeah, yeah.

So it's '37, and your mother's in the hospital.

Yeah, and then when she came out we decided we'd have to do something. So we started trying to get out. It took forever. And I went to see my grandmother a lot. And she never said anything. And my sister had come back from my



father. And she stayed with my grandmother, which didn't work out at all. They couldn't get along either.

Nobody could get along with my sister-- nobody, nobody. I do, because I don't care. But most people don't. She's a very difficult person. And we're very, very different-- very. As a matter of fact, when I-- she lives in Switzerland-- and the few times that I visited her, she isolates me. I don't meet any of her friends. None of them. I just don't meet any of them.

She's afraid I'm going to say something. She never told anybody that she was partly Jewish. They're very antisemitic in Switzerland too. I told her kids, though, that they're half Jewish. They came to visit and they were, huh? I told that! But my kids were informed about that immediately. I never made any bones about it. It's ridiculous.

I'm very proud of my Jewish heritage. Why should I-- that's ridiculous. That's where I got my brains from, most of them anyhow. So the kids are very conscious of it. And it's the way it should be. So anyhow, my sister lived with my grandmother. And that didn't work out too good.

So in 1941, when things got really bad, my stepfather went back to Germany to get my sister out. And he managed to do so, under threat of death, because he was in this first World War. And he fought with the White Russians against the Bolsheviks. So his name was on a death list in Russia.

And he went by Siberian Express, the only way you could go. And he pretended he didn't speak Russian. But he told me afterwards if they had watched him, they could have noticed that he knew Russian because every time they said what time it was, he looked at his watch. He spoke fluent Russian. But anyhow, he made it out.

And my mother, and I went to Peking-- Beijing they call it now-- and we met my sister and him there. And my mother had a really bad time getting her passport back. She should have never gone because she had that J in there and the Sara. And the Chinese police wouldn't give it back. And we had to go back and forth and back and forth. And it was really scary. And I said, why did you ever go? You should have never left Japan. You should have stayed. But it was too late and we did get it back eventually.

But, see the Oriental people didn't know the difference between a Jew and a Hottentot. So to them, it was a chance to push a European or an American around, see? They took advantage of it very, very much in Japan too-- very much. And so we left Peking and went back to Japan. That's when everything went haywire.

Important now. Before we get to that, so I guess I would like to talk more about getting your visas-- it took three months or four months?

Yeah, about, yes.

And then you and your mother took off for Japan?

Yes, yes.

And your grandmother was still living in the apartment?

Yes, yes. Right. By herself. No with my sister. With my sister. Yeah. So when my sister left, that is what she committed suicide, you see. She waited. I never forgive her. She should have come to Japan.

But some people are stubborn. She was like that. She said, there's absolutely no reason for me to leave where I am comfortable. And I'm glad, in a way, she did because if they had sent her to Warsaw, god forbid, she probably would have died on the train. So she was better off. But what a horrible way to force people into such a decision. It's just, healthy person like that-- it's just sick. Yeah, well.

I don't have much use for Germans, I'm sorry to say. No. I do have one or two German friends. On one to one, it's different. But whenever I went back to Germany after the war, when my father was in Frankfurt, the moment I hit that Frankfurt airport and I heard all that German, and all these German, oof! I'd look at everybody about my age or younger

or a little older, and I thought, well, I wonder whether you would have shoved me in the oven. And you can't get over that. You can't. It just really haunts you.

My husband doesn't have that feeling because he never lived there. he was in this crazy monastery there where they should have never put him to begin with. It's true. I think they really loused-- they get brainwashed in there. That's very bad. Well, that's another story.

So describe your journey, then, from the moment you left Berlin, to the train station, on to Japan.

Yeah, well it was very, very sad when I left Berlin because you leave your friends behind. I had some friends that I left behind, although most of them had disappeared in the meantime. And I don't know where they were. And I didn't really understand what happened. And I left my grandmother, which I didn't want to do. My sister didn't come to the train station. I don't know why she didn't. But she didn't. Maybe she was working, I don't know.

But it was difficult. It was like uprooting yourself. And Japan, of all places. I had never heard-- I knew nothing. I didn't know a word of Japanese. I'd met one Japanese man in Berlin, who spoke fluent German, who was attached to the embassy. He's married to a German Jewish pediatrician. It's [INAUDIBLE] that I met him later in Japan, I have to tell you about that.

Anyhow, he was the only one I ever met. And he was completely European in his attitude. I forgot his name. Isn't that something? Nice looking man. He was really fun. We had a lot of fun. I went to the opera with him once to see "Madame Butterfly." And I never saw anybody laugh as much as he did. He thought it was so ridiculous.

But anyhow, so on the train, it was scary. There were all these German officials. And they were always very brusque and very unfriendly. And you will find that they still are. They all still think they're better than anybody else. And the difference, even when you go to Switzerland, the moment you cross the border you get the Swiss and that's grÄ½ezi and nice, and nice. And in Germany, it's horrible. Anyhow--

What was the train station like? Was it--

The train station was crowded.

Um hm. Were there swastikas all over?

There always are. There're always people with Nazi uniforms, black and brown. But I didn't even look at them. All I could see is my grandmother and leaving. It was a very weird feeling, really weird.

How much were you able to take with you in terms of--

Just basics. Just basics. I don't know how much we had, but it was just basics because we carried it. So I didn't have that much anyhow. I was never very spoiled. My grandmother didn't believe in it. She would buy one expensive thing and it better last. So I didn't have very much jewelry.

That was another thing the way I was brought up. You don't wear-- if my grandmother would see these, she would tear them out of my ears. You didn't wear jewelry. You just didn't. She had one brooch that she wore all the time, which was a very valuable brooch. And she sent it to England in case she would ever leave so she'd have something to live off. But one of my cousins absconded with it-- nice. He was a lawyer. And he died, unfortunately, otherwise he would-- well.

But it was very wrenching to leave. But in a way, it was a happy feeling because I knew I'd get out of this mess. I realized that I didn't have a choice. I realized that. I was big enough to know that. So the trip in itself was very interesting to me.

My mother spent a lot of time in bed. She just hated the whole thing. She just hated it. And she only got very upset when one of the Russian soldiers came into our apartment and said that he liked me, and would she mind if I moved in

with him. She said, yes, she did mind.

And that's where I learned the word [RUSSIAN]. That's what he said to me. And I asked somebody else, I said, what does it mean? And they said it means I love you. My mother had a fit! Isn't that funny how you remember stuff like that. That's really funny.

So the train was very basic. The food was very basic. The only thing that tasted good was the vodka. Everything else was eggs and smelly eggs. The food was not good at all. But I didn't care about food. I still don't. I'm not much of a-- food, my mother didn't like it. But we had enough to eat.

And everything was pretty dirty. A lot of velvet and things in there, but everything was dust-- and the basin. somebody told us that we should get some kind of a thing to set into the basin because the basin was dirty. So we had a kind of a rubber thing to put in there. Thank god, because it was really very dirty.

But it was rather uneventful. It was a daily thing. You look out, and you see the steps, and you see the birch trees. And you see these big women that would come at the stations and put the water in the train, or where-- these big babushkas with a-- oh, god-- huge, heavy. Strong women. Oh boy, they were something. And they didn't sell anything edible to anybody.

It was really quite an experience, but interesting. I liked it. And I taught some English to some of-- there was a German Jewish dentist from Breslau, who didn't speak a word of English. And he was scared to death he wouldn't be able to make a living in Japan.

And he had to learn English. So I tried to teach him. But I didn't get very far with him because he was not talented at languages at all. But he learned a few things. And I think he made a living because I saw him afterwards.

And he was a lousy dentist. He worked on me once. The only cavity I ever had, he worked on it. And I nearly died. Yeah, I told him he was a dentist. His name was Louver. I remember him. Very unattractive man, very.

Well, anyhow, he was on the train. And there were a few other people on the train. Not necessarily all Jewish people. There were English and other. And everybody was worried that there was going to be a war before they got out of Russia. Yeah.

So eventually we hit Manchuria-- Manzhouli that's where we went over the-- And that was very nice for me because the customs official smiled. That was the first smile I saw after entering Russia. And they still don't smile. No, they don't. I just got back, so I've seen them. They don't smile. They just have been harassed to death.

But then we went from Manzhouli through Korea, to Fusan and from Fusan to Shimonoseki by boat. So Shimonoseki was another experience that I don't know whether you want to know about it. It was very fascinating because we had reserved, we thought, a room in an American hotel or international hotel. And they didn't keep the reservation.

So we had to spend the night in a Japanese Inn. And we slept on the floor on the tatami with the futon, which I'd never done before. And we had Japanese dinner, which I didn't know what I was eating. And the noises-- and it was very, very country Japanese.

You heard the little geisha girls, or they call them Maiko. They're little dancing girls. And they have bells in their hair, and these high geta-- these wooden clogs-- the cluck, cluck, cluck. They would walk in the streets. And the guy would sing something about fish or something, whatever. It was so different! It was really-- I knew I was in Japan. I knew I was in Japan.

And then we stayed in Japan there, I mean we be traveling around waiting for my stepfather, who was in China for some business or other. And we waited for him. So we traveled around Japan. We went to the Inland Sea, and we went to different places-- Kamakura and Karuizawa and then this Buddha, and that temple, and whatever. And the Inland Sea, which, beautiful. I was just beautiful.

So I really enjoyed it. I thought, oh, it's a beautiful country. And the people were nice. Of course they looked at me like I was the devil. They used to pull my hair because they thought it wasn't mine. They never saw very many foreigners in '38.

The kids used to look at me and scream. Yeah, and they're really funny. And they called me obachan, which means grandma. They thought my hair was white. I was very blonde then-- very blonde. So they couldn't make out what the heck I was. I was an obachan all the time while I was over there. Yeah funny.

How many days was like journey from Berlin to--

Oh, that's a long time. Then, the Siberian Express took nine days from Moscow to Manzhouli. And before that, of course, it doesn't take that long-- from Berlin to Warsaw. It's just a hop, a skip, and jump. And from Warsaw to Moscow, I don't think it took very long. But I saw nothing in Warsaw. There must have been things going on in Warsaw. But we never got off the train. They had us on that train.

They wouldn't let you get off in Warsaw?

Mm mm.

Did you see anything out the windows along the way that might have been ominous?

No, the only thing I saw it's the ominous was the guns. They were pointed at the train in no man's land. Between Poland and the Soviet Union, there was a no man's land, quite a long one. And that's where they had all these gun encampments. And all the guns were trained on the train, which I thought was very interesting.

But you think it, I thought was it-- they're not shooting. I looked through the window. I wasn't supposed to. You weren't supposed to, but I looked. And then once you got into Russia, once we left Moscow, all you saw were trees and little villages with pigs running next to the express train. You didn't really see anything. But you have to be careful what you said on the train, because, like I say-- but what did I have to say that was, you know?

Did you get into any trouble on the train?

No, not really. No, I didn't. I didn't. I made a lot of friends on the train with a lot of people. And the Russian soldier gave up, so I guess it was all right. My mother was furious. I said, well, don't worry about it. They can't force you. But of course, they could have. Yeah. But I didn't even consider that because I was very innocent those days.

People are much more-- a lack of innocence is pretty obvious these days. But I found out a lot in Berlin when I was a teenager. I did go to a lot of parties. But nobody ever got fresh. They knew who I was, and they knew my background. And they knew what family I came from. So they treated me with respect. So I never worried about it.

Actually, now that you mentioned that, at those parties in Berlin, was there any talk ever about what was happening politically with your friends?

Well, I think they talked amongst themselves. The Jewish guys, I knew some Jewish guys-- one of them, Peter Kaiser, I remember him, he wore one of those gold stars. I have two of those. Yes, the kids brought him from Israel for me. I wore them for a long time. But they didn't talk to me about it. You see, this is the trouble when you have this kind of situation. They didn't know my attitude that much.

I'm sure they talked to each other, because there were places where the Jewish people, the Jewish teenagers, that used to congregate in different cafes. And when I went with my grandmother. I saw them. And I knew some of them, but they never talked to me. And the Germans didn't talk to me either. So I had the wonderful situation of being on the nonstriped bench, if you know what I mean. It was very difficult.

Were you forced to wear a yellow star?

There were no yellow stars when I was there. No, I missed that. No. I guess my grandmother had to wear it.

--after Kristallnacht.

Yeah. I don't know how she sewed it on, because she didn't know how to sew a button.

So you weren't forced to do any of--

No. No. Hmm mm. No.

Did you know about any-- either any friends or anyone that was in any political organizations at that time, or were there any Jewish returning?

No. I had a girlfriend in the school who was a Nazi, blonde-- Lotte Schultz. I remember her. She used to love my grandmother. She used to come from the Hitler Youth meetings directly to my house with her guitar. And she used to play songs for my grandmother, some of them you wouldn't want to repeat.

But she denounced her parents to the Nazis, because her parents talked against Hitler. And the parents went to concentration camps. That is nothing special-- happened all the time. I said to her, how could you do that? How could you do that? I owe it to the Führer. I said, you could be sorry some day. I bet she was. But she loved my grandmother. She thought my grandmother was so much fun!

And she wished you would have been--

Yeah, and I said, well, how would you? How could you? But you know, Germans were very funny. During the war, too, in Japan, when I had all this trouble with the Germans up there in Karuizawa, there were lots. They were 150% Nazi up there.

And one of these German guys came up to me and he said, if you want to meet me in the woods and have sex with me, I will give you some eggs for your kids. And I said, the day is going to come I sell myself for eggs. I said, what about your blood? It's supposed to scream when you look at me? I said, what's the matter with you? They didn't feel that way. That was all on the outside. All on the outside. So. God, I used to hate their guts.

I'm curious about Lotte. What year, do know that, she's denounced her parents?

Well, I was still there. So it must have been 1937-- '36, '37. Was in Berlin. I have a picture of her in my album. I look at it sometimes. Blonde, blue-eyed, beautiful girl. Thick blonde braids-- typical German with her Nazi uniform on.

She goes and she went to see your grandmother with Nazi uniform on?

Oh, yes.

How did your grandmother respond to this?

My grandmother didn't care. She was just a kid. Demented, they were all demented. I think the main thing, what happened with these people, is they stopped thinking.

They were brainwashed?

They just stopped thinking, When you bury yourself in garbage, you stop thinking. I don't think-- a lot of them didn't realize, really, with exception, of course. But most people, the ones that I knew in Berlin, they did not know some of the horrible things that went on. They really didn't. I didn't because I didn't see it.

I didn't see Jews in the street, cleaning the street with a toothbrush. I didn't see it. I didn't see people getting beaten up. I never saw anybody beaten up. They weren't doing that where I lived, or if they did it, they did it at night. And I wasn't allowed to go out at night, although I did, every so often. But I never saw anything like that.

Of course I heard them walk through the streets and these idiotic songs, [NON-ENGLISH] and whatever they were singing. What was the one? When the blood jumps off the sword or something, Jewish blood. I mean they were very nasty songs. Oh, yeah. And they used to sing those in school and stuff. And I refused to sing it. I did get in trouble with that kind of stuff. I just refused.

Was that in Berlin or in Breslau?

Both.

So what was that like?

Well, I just refused. I mean, Hitler make a speech. I didn't want to go. So they made me go. I have to go. So I wouldn't make the Heil Hitler. I would not do it. I said, why should I Heil Hitler? I don't wish him heil. I don't want to Heil Hitler. So I got all kinds of punishment, work, and stand in the corner, and turn your face to the wall, and that kind of stuff.

So when the teacher said, OK, let's go. Hitler's making a speech. Where did you go? To an auditorium or--

Yeah, auditorium. Yeah.

And you watched on TV?

Yes. No, there was no TV. Just had to listen to the guy screaming on the radio.

If you remember, what were the responses of the other kids?

They were bored to tears. They just wanted to go back and play or whatever. I mean, they were very few people, at that age, they were really not that politically minded until later, when they got indoctrinated. See, these were already bigger kids.

The little ones is what he caught. The ones that belong to the-- I think they called them Pimpfe or something-- the ones that were little. And then this girl, for instance, she had to join. And then they expose them to this kind of stuff. And they teach them what is right and what is wrong. And they don't know any better.

So what did you do when they went to hear the speeches?

Well, I had to go.

Oh, you were forced to go?

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

And then they went to the auditorium?

And they would Sieg Heil afterwards. And I wouldn't Sieg Heil. Why should I? Yeah. But of course I never thought of the danger. I just felt that I wasn't about to do this. I was always kind of a rebel, I'm afraid. Yeah. Yeah.

And the singing, that happened in school--

Yeah, and that really hurt me because I did have a very good voice. I don't have any more. I think it's like Perry Como now, way down there. But I had a very good voice. And I loved the music class. And I knew how to play the piano. And I joined this philharmonic choir. And I loved it. I really loved it. And I got gypped out of that. I got gypped out of my education. I got gypped out of the things that I wanted to do, really.

Did you just sit there in class while they sang?

Yeah. No, I-- Christmas songs, I had to stand with my face to the wall.

What about other songs? Did you just sit there?

Oh, the Nazi songs? They didn't sing them in class. That was when the auditorium. I didn't see them. They couldn't tell the difference. But the Christmas songs, that hurt my feelings, you know? I mean, after all, I mean my mother was a Protestant. So why can't I sing, you know? Stupid.

Did they make all the Jews stand in the corner during Christmas songs?

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Of course. Of course. I was the only half Jew in that class. Yeah. And like I say, some of the German Jews, they were really German first and Jews after. They were very patriotic, let's say. My mother was kind of pro-monarch, monarchistic, which is a bunch of baloney too because that guy was a Nazi too, that crown prince. He came for dinner in our house-- creepy guy.

When was that?

Oh, god. I don't know. '36, or something.

So you were in Berlin?

I was in Breslau. Yeah.

What was that about?

Oh, it was a big dinner party. And my stepfather had a big job. He was a big shot, so the crown prince came, and the crown princess, and the lady in waiting, and I don't know what. They had this big dinner, though, with the cooks in the kitchen and big deal.

And my sister, being the older one, had the big bouquet. She was supposed to hand to the crown princess. And she made a mistake and gave it to the lady in waiting. And my mother died. Ridiculous, it was all so foolish. Foolish. And that guy was quite Nazi, that crown prince. He really was.

Did he talk--

Yeah, he-- well, I wasn't allowed to stay for the dinner, of course. But I ate in the kitchen with the servants. But that was a known fact, that he was pro Hitler. Yeah, he was. And, of course, it didn't mean anything to me then. I was really-- I've never been a very political person. I'm more so now, definitely more so. And I'm very upset about what they voted. Yeah. 187.

I know you mentioned you didn't have any contact with your father. Pretty much, it stopped. But did you ever wonder at that time what he was doing?

Very much. Well, I was wondering whether he was alive or dead. Because they bombed all the cities and everything. And I didn't know where he was. So I really had no idea. I had no contact with him during the war at all. You couldn't write. There was no way.

And after the war, I don't know who contacted him, or whether he contacted me, or what the heck. I don't even remember. I wasn't that attached to him anymore because he kind of wrote me off as a bad investment. Although, I must say, when I went to see him, he cried. He was so happy to see me. So I guess-- maybe he cried, he is happy to see me because I wasn't the one that he shipped off on the train, maybe.

It just made me ill later on to think about that, really. He shipped all these Jews off to Treblinka. I'm sure he did. But he never talked about that. I never thought about it. I can't understand how I missed thinking about it.

He was working at the railway.

Yeah. And he was in Krakow. And did you see that program Shoah?

I know I've heard of it but I didn't see it.

You didn't see it. I did. And they were interviewing this German guy that had worked in Krakow. And by that time I knew what my father, where he was in Krakow. And I were sitting there waiting. I thought, I bet he's going to be on that thing. He wasn't. Then on Schindler's List I waited for him to turn up on that one.

But he was never antisemitic. He wasn't. He never cared about people's race. But I guess he was a gentleman. He had to follow orders, which, of course, is no excuse, as far as I'm concerned. It's no excuse. His kids could have been on that train. That's really a horrible thought.

But I never had a chance to talk to him. When I found out about-- more or less found out about him-- I was going to contact him and talk to him. And then I found out that he was in the hospital. No, I didn't find out he was in the hospital. I found out when he had died. And they never told me that he was in the hospital, that brother, half brother of mine. He apparently had broken his leg. And he would put him-- he was in his 90s.

And I got a day letter from my, quote, "brother"-- Father dead. That's what I got. Can you believe that? And his wife, my stepmother, if you want to call her that, she outlived him by three months-- just long enough to give everything to my brother. And I got nothing.

The things I inherited from my father, a little bit of money and three different things that my stepfather gave them as presents-- like a bottle top. Could you believe it? And a needle for--

Knitting?

Yeah. And something else, yeah, a cigarette case-- a silver cigarette case that had golden in the inside. My stepfather gave him those things for his birthday, or whatever. And I got those. Yeah. Isn't that ridiculous?

And there was a picture of my grandmother, my mother, my father's mother, whom I liked very much. She died much before that because she was older. My father was the youngest of the kids or something. And she was in her late 70s when she died. And I saw the day before she died. And she gave me a little necklace which burned all away and everything.

But anyhow, somebody painted a picture, an oil portrait of her-- a little one, about this big. And I wanted that. I looked like her, very much. And I said to my father, I would like to have that oil portrait. When you pass away, that's I want. I don't want the money. I don't want-- I want that oil painting.

And I wanted some of the books that my grandfather had, Sanskrit books, which would be interesting for my kids. But he gave it all to university. But they are all over, anywhere. But those were the originals. But I never got the picture. She says, everything I have goes to my son. And I said something very nasty, which I don't want to repeat now. I said, you have to have you know what, in order to inherit anything. That didn't go over too good. It was ridiculous.

This picture meant nothing to my half brother because he never met her. So Nick says he's going to go and see this. I



said, you get that picture out of him. It must be in the attic someplace. He doesn't even know this woman, you know?

And I lost everything during the war. The house burned down. And this little necklace she gave me before she died was a little gold necklace with little seed pearls, and had a little medallion with her picture and her husband's picture in it. And she gave that to me. And she says, keep it to remember me. And then when our house burned down, and of course it got burned.

So I don't have any keepsakes as such-- nothing. So this guy keeps the picture. Well, you know, he's German. I need to go to the bathroom.

Back to Berlin, I wanted to ask you, did you at the time when the Nuremberg laws were passed, did that have any effect on you? Did you hear about them? What was--

Oh, well, we-- sure, we heard about them because they did affect our lives from the point of view that suddenly you were branded as a-- they call it a *mischling*, meaning somebody that's mixed. And we were told that if you're half Jewish, and quarter Jewish, you can't marry a German. And if you do have kids then the kids are retarded or not all there, whatever.

And we weren't allowed to marry, or we weren't supposed to have kids. We were tainted. Yeah. So of course I resented that. And I talked to my mother, my grandmother, whoever I talked to. And they said it's a bunch of-- don't even listen to it. But it was very stupid, very non-scientific, you know?

But as a kid, you don't know that. So I mean I kind of forgot about it after a while. It was too ridiculous. But they did punish people very badly. If a German girl would sleep with a Jew, or have to, and it would-- somebody would report them. They would end up in concentration camps or whatever. I don't know. I don't know what they did with them.

So the Nuremberg laws were very destructive to a lot of people, especially people that were married to Jews. Now, for instance, my father could have divorced my mother just on that alone. But I know he did divorce around that time. But that had nothing to do with it, because he never felt that way.

But they were married for 16 years and couldn't get along. They should have never married to begin with, as far as I can see. But you could divorce. Like my stepfather, he could have divorced my mother just on the fact that she was of Jewish origin. Yeah.

When you were in Breslau, because I know you mentioned a lot of antisemitism happened in the smaller cities--

Oh, yes.

Were the antisemitic sentiments starting up when you were in Breslau? I know that was earlier--

Oh, I'm quite sure, because, like I said, my mother's wedding, half the people didn't come. Whether they didn't come because they're afraid or they didn't come because my mother was of Jewish origin, quote, or what reason they had, they never made an explanation. But I know that that's what happened.

And as far as in school, I told you what happens in school. But on a daily basis you just lived an ordinary life. I did. I never felt that I was-- I don't know. I just never thought about what I was. I was just a girl that looks like anybody else. And if they start to pick on me as for half Jewish, and people really didn't. I mean, the Jews picked on me more than the Germans did. They did.

Because of your German background?

Yeah. Yeah. German background. I looked blonde, and blue-eyed, and snub nose. That's a no-no as far as they were concerned. So some of the Jewish girls in my class really treated me much more unpleasant than the German girls

really. This was one, Vera Buck, she was very unfriendly. She says, you don't even go to the synagogue. I said, well what do I know? I said, I don't even go to the church either. That's the way it was, crazy. Yeah, crazy.

I know you mentioned that your grandmother kept quiet and didn't reveal or express her fears.

No, she didn't.

But do you remember if you had any conversations with her about the situation at the time? Did she give you any insight?

She never ever said that she was afraid. She never talked about the Nazis. We lived a very secluded life. She didn't have very many friends because she had a big family. So she was in touch mostly with the family. She read an awful lot. She studied a lot. She was studying another language while I was there. And she made me study. We spent a lot of time studying.

And we went to movies together. And we went shopping together when we had to. And we'd go to Kranzler and have a cup of coffee and a piece of cake. And this is the kind of life we lived. It was very secluded and she never ever said anything about danger, or suicide, or anything-- never.

Sometimes something would come up like I had an uncle who was a psychiatrist. He was living in Berlin with his wife. And I knew his daughter pretty well. She was my cousin. We had English lessons together or whatever. And shortly before I left Germany I ran into him in the street. He was still in Germany then. He left eventually. He went back to England.

But I liked him, always liked him very much. He wrote a lot of poetry. He was a very interesting man. And I said, oh, good to see you. And he kind of stepped back and said, are you sure you want to be seen with me? And I said, I most certainly would like to be seen with you. I said, don't be ridiculous. I had that business going with my grandmother all the time. I was used to it. But that was his reaction.

So then he went to England. And I think he, I don't know, he died now. Of course he's much too old now. But I met his daughter who lives in Switzerland now. She was very stuck up and very unfriendly. And I think mostly because she knows my sister well. And I think there must have been, I don't know, something. I don't know.

And all she did is brag about her husband who is a big famous surgeon. And they have race horses. And her kids are so rich and blah, blah, blah. And I thought, I don't need this. So I just dropped it. I don't need this.

Are there any other experiences that you had in either Breslau, or Hamburg, or Berlin, that you'd like to mention, whether they were directed toward you, or your family, or friends?

No. The only one that I remember is this girl, girlfriend of mine. And she got yelled at. It was all up in the street. But then they yelled at her. They didn't yell at me.

Oh, she was Jewish?

She wasn't. She was French. But no, I really didn't. But for school and official things like that, where people had the right to push you around in school, mostly. I don't know what they did in the churches. I didn't go. So possibly I would have been discriminated against in church if they knew who I was. But I didn't go. I didn't like it. So I didn't have any problems there.

The maid we had-- my grandmother had a maid that lived in-- she was always very nice. And she was in tears when she had to leave. So that was all right. And she was very nice. She always opened the front door for me when I came home from a party. So she was a very nice person. Yeah. And she got married, I think, to somebody.

But I really didn't have a scary kind of life until maybe the last year when my mother was there. Then it got scary. I

mean, it got iffy. It got iffy. Not on a daily basis, but it got very iffy because whenever you go back, and you want your visa, and they don't give it to you, and you have to go home. And you'd say, now what are we going to do? What is it? How can we push them?

How did you get your visa?

Well, eventually they just gave up. They gave it to us.

Did they yell at you when you went back each time?

Well whatever they said in Russian, I don't know. But they were very, very unfriendly. But eventually they gave it to us. So that's when we booked the passage.

Were you afraid that if the Germans found out that you were trying to get your visas and leave that they might--?

There was always that possibility, yes. But they weren't that strict then. They wanted to get rid of the Jews, whichever way. So as long as you left all your good stuff there, they didn't care where you went. Later on, they were much stricter. But at the beginning it was mostly, you had to leave behind everything you owned, see? Yeah.

So you had no repercussions with the Germans during that period of trying to get the visas?

No. No, we didn't. No. And it was hard to really pinpoint everybody, you know? Unless you went to the synagogue or to shul or anything like that, you weren't really, you know? When I lived with my grandmother, I was kind of sticking out because of my grandfather being famous. So that kind of was a drawback for me. It really was. But when I lived with my mother, they didn't know who she was. Or they would have never taken her in the hospital if they'd known.

Now, when they took her into the hospital, did they look at her papers or anything?

They don't look at passport anything, you just-- no. She was told they want to know her religion. She said, protestant, which was true. She loved to go to church. She thought the priests, the preachers-- if there was a good-looking preacher who had a good sermon, she thought that was wonderful. That's the kind of person she was-- completely different. Yeah.

So while she was in the hospital, she was treated OK?

Yeah, she was fine. Yeah. They gave her all the medications she needed, and she recuperated. Yeah. But she used to have migraines and things. She was high strung. And it really got bad for her during the war, really bad. And so she suffered from it. She died young. She died at 70-- 69, 70-- of heart trouble. And the doctor said it was brought on by stress, because we don't have heart trouble in our family at all.

So while she was in the hospital, how did you spend these days?

You know, I don't remember. I really don't. I must have gone to see my grandmother a lot. I'm sure I did. And wandered around town, and looked around. You know, there's some parts in my life where I kind of turned off, I guess. I kind of went into neutral. I really think so.

Can't bear it, sometimes.

Yeah, I have definite times in my life where I cannot remember certain events which I know have happened. But I don't remember them. And that means I don't want to remember them, I think. It's like this business with the trains.

[INAUDIBLE]

Must have been, yeah. But I didn't even think. It just didn't get to my mind, because I would have confronted him. I know I would have.

Did you ever think of asking your half brother what your father did during the war?

Never entered my mind. It just never entered my mind. And this wife of his said, while they were in Krakow was so wonderful-- and I had quite a fight with her-- so wonderful. Was the best time of her life, she said. They had such a good time.

And your father is such a good man. He had this uniform made by a Polish tailor. And he even paid him. And I said, what do you mean, you even paid him? The man made the uniform. He cut it out. He sewed it. He made it. What do you mean, he just even? I got really mad at her. I said what's the matter with you? But it still didn't, it didn't.

Was there anything else that she said that might have been--

Oh, she had a wonderful time. She most probably lived like Schindler's wife or something. I'm sure that there were a lot of these parties. And knowing my father, he most probably did not enjoy it, knowing him. He didn't like people that didn't know how to be a gentleman. That wasn't his thing. But you know, I wasn't there. I wasn't there. Is it still going?

Yeah.

Oh, yeah. We have at least a couple more minutes.

Yeah. So I don't know. I don't know what he did and didn't do. He must have seen to it that all the trains ran on time. Knowing my father, I'm sure they ran on time. He was the most punctual person you ever want to meet. When I'd bring my report card home and it said I was late for school, I really got it. Yeah. So I'm very punctual now. I'm there, on time. That's something he instilled in me.

Did you ever talk to your mother about it? Did she have any idea of what he would have been doing?

No, my mother died before I even had any idea. And my father, they were divorced and all, but he came here in '50-something, or whatever it was. '57, or whatever, he came on a conference or something. And the first thing he did was go see my mother, to visit and see how she was, and whether she needed anything. And so it was nothing-- I never saw my parents lift a hand against each other, never. They used to have arguments about money, mostly.

And my grandmother really liked my father. They liked each other a lot. So I don't know when. When he did that, he must have just turned himself off and not think about what was on those trains. Just make sure they run, knowing him, because he would never.

I have never seen him hurt anybody. He spanked me once because I smoked. I had it coming, I guess. But that's the only time I ever got it. So he was not a violent person at all. But there were so many Germans that were like that. The lack of something, put the psht. That's sick. Well.

When did you first hear about concentration camps? Were you in Berlin?

Yeah, in Berlin, I think. Yeah, in Berlin I heard about that there were concentration camps. But it didn't mean anything. I didn't know what it meant. I didn't know until people kind of disappeared. And you thought, well I guess they went to this concentration camp.

I never heard about a ghetto in Warsaw until much later-- never knew. Even when I went through Warsaw, I didn't know that there was a ghetto in Warsaw. I didn't know. I was probably would have gotten off the train and have a look-see. And thank god, I didn't. Yeah.

Might not have made it to Japan.

Yeah, yeah. So I really didn't know. And I guess I was very, very protected because of my grandmother. She protected

me from all this, which I didn't realize then. But I can looking back now, I know, because she never talked about anything. She must have known more than I suspected.

Now, did any of your relatives on your grandmother's-- all of the family that she had-- while you were still living in Berlin, did any of her relatives disappear?

They were all there. They were all there. They went to England after I left. So I guess after this Kristall business, he must probably-- they throw their German passport away and took their English passport and took off, which was a good idea, yeah, because they were all born in England.

My great-grandfather on my grandmother's side, on my mother's side, was a tea merchant and a diamond merchant or whatever. And they traveled back and forth between Holland and England and here and there. So all the kids were born in London.

Lucky.

Lucky, yes. But they didn't do the one guy any good because he became a judge. So, you know, he couldn't make a living.

Was your grandmother born in England?

Yeah, she was born in London. Yeah. Yeah.

And then, why did they leave London for Berlin?

Well, she was born in London, and the family she came from, they were German Jews. So they always went back to Berlin. They had a beautiful estate in [PLACE NAME], and money to burn. So that was their home. But then in between, they lived in Holland, they lived in here and there, and god knows where else they traveled.

I missed out on that. They had yachts and whatnot all. I got gypped all the way. Everything is gone, sure, it's all gone. And my grandfather got all these wonderful medals, and solid gold medals in velvet boxes, all for scientific achievements, and this and that. It's all disappeared. All of it disappeared.

Did your grandmother ever tell you the stories about your grandfather?

Well, very little because I was two when he died, or three. I remember him only once. He was very tall, very handsome, over six foot, blonde and blue-eyed. And they described him in the French newspaper as a typical German race.

Well, I said to my grandmother one day, I said, they were in Holland. God knows which great-grandmother had a Dutch boyfriend or something. But how do you know? I have the high cheekbones. My other grandmother lived in Silesia. Maybe some Tartar rode through the village. What do I know? You don't know.

People in Europe are all mixed. My, quote, Jewish relatives in Holland that I've seen some pictures of, they all look like Dutchmen with the little beard, blonde, you know? I don't know. No. It's hard to tell. Anyhow, he was very intelligent man. And he went to the university. He was a physicist and studied-- he worked with Max Planck and all the other people.

The people used to visit my grandmother. All these professors used to pop in and have tea with her. And they talked science and whatnot, which was all in English, in German, in French, or whatever it happens to be. And it was kind of an interesting life there. It really was-- very intellectual.

But my grandmother was a snob too. I think money meant nothing to her. Money and sex were two things you never discussed because they didn't exist. And she always used to say, if you have an education, that's what counts. And she says, don't rest on your ancestors' laurels. You only are what you make of yourself, which is true. So that means I'm

nothing.

OK. We're going to change tapes.

OK.