

OK. Is there anything else about Germany that you would like to talk about, either Berlin or Breslau or Hamburg, before we move on?

Well, I mean, the only thing that was really very upsetting in Germany, amongst other things, was the fact that my stepfather kept losing his jobs because of my mother. And he knew that if he would divorce her, he would get all the jobs he wants, because he had-- he was running the newspapers. I mean, he was the editor.

He was the number-one big shot, and it was very hard on him that he couldn't be-- of course, with the Nazi business getting worse, I mean, he wouldn't have lasted very long anyhow. But that was upsetting. That was really upsetting.

And I hated to see him suffer because he was an outstanding person. And he was so kind and so sweet to me, really. So I really felt terrible when he was jailed and all that. So that's about the only thing. I mean, there's nothing much to say about Germany, really. [AUDIO OUT]

[INAUDIBLE] Was there anything more about that process that you--

No. I mean, she got her passport, and it had this big old J in there. And they added the name "Sarah" to her name, which was ridiculous. I mean, but Sarah's a very nice name, but in this case, it was supposed to be an insult. But we managed to get out.

And you had a regular passport?

I had a regular passport-- nothing. There was "Irene Pischel, blah, blah, blah, and that's it. So I just-- I zipped right through. And they didn't do much looking at my mother because I was flirting with them. And I was trying to discourage them from being too-- so they were kind of disinterested in my mother, who was dying on the vine on the bed there somewhere.

So that was very convenient. They couldn't question her, you know? I said, she's really sick. She's got a terrible-- she's going to get vomiting and everything. And I said, terrible. But she did. I mean, she was really. When she got a-- she was really sick with these migraines. Nowadays, they can do something about that, but then in those days, they couldn't. And she always got them before a party or something. She-- terrible. Yeah.

So then we just got on the train. And by the time we transferred to the Siberian Express, of course, then the Jewish and non-Jewish had nothing to do with it. Nobody cared. Nobody. You were just a-- supposedly an Axis person, you know? I mean, the Englishmen had more to worry about than we did.

But they were anti-foreign anyhow in Russia. They were anti everything that wasn't Soviet Union. So it was kind of scary from that point of view because we didn't know what was happening, whether there was a war or whatever. I mean, we just didn't know what was going on. So you're really isolated there in Siberia.

And I mean, that's an enormous place. Takes nine days from-- until you get to Manzhouli, and I mean not to thinking about this way. I mean, you get off the train, and you are lost forever. It's that big, that big. It's huge. But it was an interesting trip. I mean, I'm glad I went.

And so you said that you got out in--

Manzhouli. Manzhouli.

Manzhouli?

Yeah.

And then from there?

We took another-- I don't know what transport, another train, I guess, because Siberian Express stopped there. I don't remember any details on that. We went someplace into a place where we waited. And then we got on some kind of a conveyance. I guess it was a train. And we went through Harbin and all those places. It was very interesting. We stayed in Harbin a couple of days.

Nothing but White Russians. Even the streets have these Russian names. It was very interesting. And very good food-- excellent food. And everybody was at least a general or a Romanov or something. I mean, there were all these White Russians there, lots of White Russians. And then we went to-- through Manchuria to Korea. Yeah.

And we traveled through-- on a train. I remember seeing Korean people with these funny hats that you could look through, these cylinder hats, these high top hats, yeah, and the white clothes. I mean, I remember seeing them. And then we got to Fusan. And we got on a boat, and we went to Shimonoseki and got in. Shimonoseki.

And that's where you slept on the--

We slept on the floor, on the tatami, yeah. It was very interesting.

How long did you stay there?

In Shimonoseki? I think it was two nights. And then we started to travel for about two weeks, waiting for my stepfather to come back from China.

It took him about two weeks?

Yeah, about two weeks. He was trying to drum up some newspaper deal. I don't know whether he was successful or not. He never talked about money. But we lived quite well. And we got to Yokohama eventually. And we lived in Yokohama on top of a hill called Masaka. You could look right onto a naval base there, Japanese naval base.

And we lived there for a while. I don't know how long we lived there-- until '40-- '41, I guess, or '40. '40. When my sister came over, we had to move, because our house wasn't big enough. And we rented a house in Yokohama-- very fancy house he rented, right there by the beach. That one burned down. The Americans burned it down because they didn't watch what they did with their stove. The stove.

But it was a kind of a happy time, although my sister was a very difficult-- she is a very difficult person, I have to say. I don't want to say nasty things about her, but she's very difficult. And she made trouble for my mother, and she made trouble. She was trouble. So the really happy time I had was in Masaka. It was really nice-- that and in Berlin, when I lived with them in Berlin it was very nice.

Lived with?

My mother and my stepfather in Berlin. It was nice. And in Breslau it wasn't as good, because my sister was there half the time. She was visiting. I mean, she's an intrigue-maker, you know?

Right.

Yeah.

So after Shimonoseki-- Shimonoseki-- where did you go for two weeks?

Masaka? We went to Honmoku, a place called-- in Honmoku in Yokohama. Yeah. Very nice house. And we had a servant, and we had a boy that did I don't know what, all kinds of-- I mean, we lived high off the hog. And it was really very nice.

And this was you, your--

That was my stepfather, my mother, and me and my sister. But then things got kind of-- well, we knew-- my father said to me-- my stepfather said to me, the day is going to come when they're going to arrest me. I know they're going to arrest me. They're arresting people for they think they know too much, or they're being a journalist. "They" is the Japanese police.

And the Japanese police was being stirred up by the SS. And the head of the SS in Japan was a guy by the-- Colonel Meininger was his name. He told the Japanese police whom he wanted arrested. The Japanese didn't know. Like I said, they didn't know what was what-- you know, foreigner.

So a lot of people that I knew were arrested. That was during the war. Was not before the war, was during the war. That was in 19-- my father-- my stepfather got arrested I think either in-- I think it was '44. So he was in jail until end of '45.

I want to go back a little.

Yeah.

So you got to Yokohama in '38. You were living there. So did you get a lot of news from Europe regarding the war? So you didn't know--

No news. We got letters from my grandmother, but they were always censored. You know, letters were censored.

Right. Yeah.

So she was very careful what she wrote. I have all the letters still. My mother had them, so I kept them. They're all in German, of course. But there really is no political news in there unless you read between the lines.

Did you detect anything--

Well, I read them a long time ago. I've been very not courageous reading these things. It stirs up stuff that you don't really need, you know? I mean, I keep them because I think they are historically interesting, and somebody will be interested. I mean, I wrote a lot of letters to my mother while she was in Japan.

And I'm sure I mentioned some stuff. But I've never really delved back in my past too much because I was too busy raising all these horrible children. But they really-- she never wrote anything drastic, you know? Like she would say, well, food is getting scarcer. But a lot of times, things were just blocked out, so I don't know what she wrote.

Now what about if your stepfather-- he was-- he had a connection with his journalism. So did he-- he must have had news. Did he?

Well, the news-- he wrote mostly about international stuff, what was going on in Singapore or what was going on-- I don't know what he knew from Germany about this Hitler business. He never, ever discussed it with us. I mean, I know he was walking a tightrope. I know he was.

But he wrote a lot about Japan, what was going on in Japan, because they were connected with the Germans. So I mean, this is what was his downfall, because he wrote a lot about Japan politics, because that's why they threw him in jail. That's the reason they used, see?

My husband's brother spoke Japanese. And he was brought up in Japan. He spoke and read it. Ludi never did, but he read it. So he would read the Japanese newspaper and give my stepfather all kinds of information concerning the Japanese. So that's what was his downfall.

So you weren't getting much European news? Did you know on September 1, 1939 that Germany invaded Poland?

Yes, we found out about that.

How did you find out?

I don't know. I guess my father, my stepfather, told me. Yeah.

Right. So I want to talk about in detail about your life in Yokohama. You were in a new country.

Yeah, well, yeah, the language-- I picked up what I needed pretty soon, what they call "kitchen Japanese." You can talk about the weather and what you want to buy at the grocery store. But I mean, I got a job. I got myself a job with an engineer.

He was a German by the name of Tiedemann, Dr. Tiedemann, who wanted somebody that spoke English. So I went in there, and I looked very young for my age. I was 18, 19 by that time. And--

20?

First thing he said when I walked in, he says, I'm not opening a kindergarten, which hurt me deeply. And he spoke to me in English. And I knew immediately he was German. And we were talking back and forth in English. And then he says, well, where exactly do you come from?

And I said I was born in Berlin. And he got really mad. And he says, well, why didn't you speak to me in German? And I said, well, you wanted somebody who knows English. Now you know I know it. So he hired me. So I worked for him for quite a while.

It was an interesting job-- private secretary. I had to answer the phone, which was very difficult, because all I knew is to say [JAPANESE] and then I didn't know anything else. So I hired a Japanese girl to do that for me for a while, and I took dictation in English, in German, and in French.

And I had to write it, and a lot of statistics and stuff-- very boring. But he was a very nice man. And he was being harassed by the German embassy that he had hired me. They wanted him to throw me out. Can you believe it?

What happened?

Oh, you should have heard his language, what he said to the German ambassador. Very outspoken. This man was not a Nazi. I wouldn't have worked for him if he was. But he told him to just go and blow-- you know, I mean, in so many words. And he stuck with me all through the time that I worked for him. Then I got married, which I shouldn't have done that. Anyhow, I got married. And--

How did you meet?

Oh, I knew him a long time. He tried to take me for years.

Met you in Berlin?

No, no, no, he was never-- he never lived in Germany. No, no, he was born in Japan, raised and born in Japan, and with a German father and an English mother-- German Jew father. Oh, another story I want to tell you before-- about his father.

About Lou's father?

Lou's father. When I started dating Lourie -- Ludi, I call him. I was sitting at the beach. And his brother lived right by the beach in Yokohama. And I was sitting at the beach, and I met Ludi's father. And we were sitting in the sand, talking

about where he came from and so forth. And he said he studied at the Berlin University.

And I found out he studied physics under my grandfather. It's a small world. And he knew my other grandfather, the Sanskrit. He knew him, too. And so he told me stories about my grandfather on my father's side that I didn't even know. So that was really-- it's a small world. So, anyhow--

And he was a German Jew?

Yeah. He graduated from that university, yeah, summa cum laude. He wasn't stupid. He wasn't stupid, but I didn't like him. Anyhow, that's beside the point.

--Lou in Yokohama?

Hmm?

You met Lou in--

In Yokohama, yes. I met him at the international club. He was always playing football and stuff. So he was very tall, very handsome, very good-looking, and a very clean-cut kind of person. And things were getting really bad, and all my friends were picked up. They all left Japan. And the ones that stayed, they were in the concentration camps in Japan, you know?

What were those like?

They were bad, bad. And a lot of them were thrown in jail. My girlfriends and some of them disappeared in jail.

Were these Jewish people?

No, some of them were British. And this one girlfriend that-- she was, I think, quarter Jewish-- very good-looking girl. But she knew a lot of people, and she mixed a lot with a lot of people. And that was a dangerous thing, see?

So the Japanese-- the military police-- they didn't trust any foreigners?

Very anti-foreign.

That was the reason for putting them in concentration camps?

Yes.

Were they prodded by the Germans?

Yes, definitely, definitely.

Did you ever get a description of the concentration camps in Japan?

Well, I didn't see any, no. I've been to the jail, yes. I went to the jail. And I went twice to see my stepfather in jail. Very difficult to get there.

Let's go back--

Yes, I don't want to go-- jump too far, yeah.

So you met-- when did you marry?

'42.

And until then, were you living in Yokohama with your family?

Right.

And working?

Yes. Yes.

--strange--

Yeah, right.

And then your friends were being picked up? And--

No, that wasn't-- not that time yet, no. They started picking them up a little later, I think about a half a year later, I think, when the war got a little bit more touchy, when the Japanese were getting very uppity, because they were winning. And so I guess the Germans started to really make trouble for anybody that was partly Jewish or had connections that they didn't like, and mostly Jewish.

German Jews were having a bad time. I mean, they were just being harassed. And it wasn't only my stepfather, who wasn't Jewish, but had a Jewish wife. But there was another couple that both of them were half. And the husband ended up in jail. He lives in LA now. I just talked to him on the phone not too long ago.

And there were other people. I didn't know that many people. I really didn't. There were some Jews up in the mountains where we were evacuated that were not of German origin, I guess. So they were still hanging around, and they didn't pick them up. It was mostly the German Jews that were picked up because the Germans pushed it. The Gestapo pushed it.

How did you feel in Japan before '42, going to your job-- what was the--

Oh, I was having a good time, yeah. I took a job because I felt I didn't want to lay on my stepfather's pocket. And I felt that just going to cocktail parties and dances were really in the long run very boring. I mean, I couldn't live that way.

So I told him I was going to get a job. And every morning when I went to work, he would say, you don't have to have the job. You can quit it. But I didn't. I nearly quit it once because my boss hired a Japanese guy who was very uppity. And he usurped my spot at the desk. And he wanted me to stand while he was talking to me. And I said to him, you better stand and work, man.

So I went to see my boss. And I said, it's either me or him. So he threw him out. And I hired a girl that had lived in New York for a while, and she spoke English. And she was very funny. She must have lived with some Jewish people because she spoke Yiddish. [SPEAKING YIDDISH] She used to say that. Very funny.

She was very funny, but a very nice woman. And she took some of the Japanese phone calls, because my Japanese wasn't good enough yet, you know? I mean, it took a while, until I was-- but I kept the job. Even after I got married, I kept the job for a while. And then I got pregnant immediately on my honeymoon.

And then I got sick with polio. I was four months pregnant, I guess. I got sick with polio. And I was paralyzed, but I could breathe. I mean, I didn't have that kind of polio. I was paralyzed. I still have-- my left arm is not what it should be. I mean, lifting it up, I have a hard time. I was in pretty bad shape.

Anyhow, they said that I had to have an abortion, and I said no, the baby's already moving. I don't want to have a-- well, you're going to die. I said, well, I don't intend to, and I didn't. That was Nick. So I had Nicky under very difficult

circumstances in Yokohama. It was already wartime.

And the taxi just didn't come because the motor had frozen in or something. So the guy eventually came, and he had to build a charcoal fire underneath the motor to thaw it out. But in the meantime, my marriage was in pretty bad shape, because I was paralyzed, and I was home. Eventually, they let me go home.

And poor Ludi had to carry me, and I couldn't walk and all that kind of stuff. It was very difficult for first year of marriage, anyhow. And then I had the baby. Worked out all right, you know? And I missed him. I couldn't nurse him very long, only about three months or so, because I wasn't well yet. I had a very difficult time dressing him and everything. But it worked out. So then shortly after that--

I want to go before that for a minute.

OK.

December 7, 1941.

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, I remember that. I was at work when it happened. And I didn't know what happened. But I was coming home. And when I got to Yokohama, they wouldn't let me go through the-- where they-- where you get out and show your ticket to get out. They said I had to have my passport. And I said, are you out of your mind? Why do you want a passport from Yokohama from Tokyo?

I was working in Tokyo. And they want my passport in Yokohama. I mean, it's a 40-minute ride or something. So I had to call my stepfather. I call him Hushi. I'd call him Hushi. I called Hushi on the phone, and I said, would you kindly bring me my passport? And I said, what the hell you done?

And he said, well, some big thing happened. So he brought me the passport. And he told me. He had heard what had happened, and he told me. And I said, son of a gun. Jeez. So I knew. That's when it hit. That's when things changed. Yeah.

What was the feeling in Japan after the--

Well, the feeling I had-- what idiots they are. Do they think they can defeat the United States? They must be insane. I was still in Yokohama when Doolittle came over. I went out in the streets, said, good for you, baby. And my husband pulled me in the house. He said, shut up, Irene. He says, don't do it again. I could tell. The plane sounded-- it had a sound like--

[IMITATING PLANE]

And the Japanese plane--

[IMITATING PLANE]

Like that, you know? It was completely different. I knew that, yeah, they dropped something. Oh, and it made me feel so good. And they had all these war preparations. When we were still in Yokohama, they had the women with their funny-- they have all these funny pants. They called them [JAPANESE]. They would stuff their kimonos.

And everybody had it. And they would have little buckets. That they would throw little buckets so that they would put out the fires. I mean, the houses burned like matchwood. I mean, ridiculous. And the house we lived in, Ludi and I-- the house belonged originally to an American friend of mine who was the head of the New York bank-- Bank of New York, you know?

And they picked-- he left. And he unfortunately didn't make it all the way. He ended up in Santo Tomas in the Philippine concentration camp. I saw him after the war. He was pretty beat up there, but starved and everything. We all

starved.

But he said, take my house, move into the house, when he left. And he left me his little dog, which disappeared. Somebody ate him I think or made soap out of him or something. Well, people were hungry, you know? Cute dog-- Mitzi. Little, little jumpy terrier. Anyhow, so we were still in that house when Doolittle came over.

So after-- I want to go back again. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, did you feel-- was there a noticeable shift in mood in Japan and the way you were treated and--

Not right away, no. They were very preoccupied with what they were doing. They didn't bother much. But it tightened, I think, daily. And they were getting very anti-foreign, you know? I noticed when I lived still in Yokohama, and I was pregnant with Nicky, the kids used to throw stones at me and call me [JAPANESE], which means "dirty foreigner," see? Yeah.

And I liked the little kids. They were really very cute. Japanese kids are just adorable. I was really hurt, partly because it hurt, and partly because I thought, why do you do this? But I mean, they didn't know any better. They were told. Kids do what they're told.

So where were you living at that point?

Still living in that-- it was a street that was-- it was called [JAPANESE], which means "the Street of the Cherry Trees." And it had cherry trees all the way up and down. And they were in full bloom when we got married. It was just beautiful. I went back after the war. The street was gone, never mind the cherry trees. You couldn't find anything. Nothing. So the police came to the house and said, you have to-- you're being forcibly evacuated.

Was this after--

After Doolittle. After Doolittle they didn't want us around, so they made us leave. So we had the choice of either going to Karuizawa, where we went, which is up in the mountains. Or we could have gone to Gora, which is a different direction. But I knew a lot of Germans were going to Gora, and I didn't want to go there, so I went to Karuizawa, which is-- used to be a very beautiful summer resort.

And people used to go there to be cooler because Tokyo and Yokohama get very hot, yeah. So that's when we moved into a house in Karuizawa under police protection, if you want to call it that. And they were in and out of the house all the time. I had a servant who was a police spy, yes.

--was you and your husband?

And Nicky.

And Nick

And I was pregnant with Kitty.

And where were your mother and--

They were in Gora.

They went to Gora?

Yes.

And was your stepfather still working full force with his--



I don't know what he was doing. He was probably trying to make money somehow. I don't know what he was doing. He probably was writing something. I don't know what he was writing. I don't know what paper was printing it, either.

It used to be the Hamburg paper and this and that, they used to print the international news. But I don't know whether he-- I really don't know. So they picked him up pretty soon after that and threw him in jail.

So was that '42?

'42, beginning of '42. No, no, they picked him up in '44, because I remember my mother coming-- we went we went to Karuizawa in '43. See, I'm not sure about the timing, but it was, I think, '43. I was pregnant with Kitty. '44-- I had her in July. So it must have been the end of '43 that we were.

Wen to Karuizawa.

Yeah. And my mother came. She wanted to be there when I had the baby in '44. And she had to leave immediately. She was going to stay with me, and she had to leave immediately, because her husband was thrown in jail. So she left, and I had to handle it on my own. It was a strange affair, too, with this birth. I wasn't allowed to have her before the 1st of July because the hospital wasn't open.

So this was Kitty?

But she was due the middle of June. And the doctor says-- the doctor that I had there, he said-- the electricity was cut off all the time. He says, I can't-- the instruments aren't sterile. You'd better not have her. So I didn't. I had her on the 1st of July.

I had her at 2:00 in the morning, 1st of July. I opened the hospital. Yeah. I went in at midnight, and I had her. That's when they opened it. And I went in and had her at 10 minutes past 2:00 in the morning. I was the only patient in there, I guess.

How were you treated?

Hmm?

How were you treated?

Oh, Karuizawa? I was treated pretty good. I was treated very badly in Yokohama when I had the polio because-- I never even mentioned that.

Talk about Yokohama.

Yeah, Yokohama. They put me in the hospital. In Yokohama, they had a big hospital on top of the hill on the bluff, they called it. It was a hospital run by nuns, a French superior and some Irish nuns and whatever. I don't know. And the Germans took over the hospital. They took it over.

And so the head doctor was a big German Nazi. And they wouldn't treat me. Somebody told me that he said, "Let the bitch die." You know? So I knew a Jewish doctor who was a friend of mine, beside the fact that he was a doctor. And he came to visit me once while I was-- I was in a lot of pain.

And he came to visit me, and he said, we've got to get you out of here, because you're not getting any treatment or nothing. And he said he wanted to do a spinal tap and all kinds of stuff, and they wouldn't do anything. So he managed to get me out. I don't know how he did it. I don't know.

But he got an ambulance. It must have been an ambulance from the year 1750. I mean, I don't think it had tires on the wheels or whatever. I mean, it was really-- what a ride. It was terrible. But I was in such pain, it was just terrible. But he

got me transferred to a hospital in Tokyo where they had an English Reverend Mother there, head of their-- she was a doctor, very nice woman.

And I had my baby there, too-- Patrick. And she saw to it that I got some pain medicine and stuff. This French Reverend Mother there in Yokohama, she was one of those nuns that-- she was very beautiful and very haughty and very-- she should have never been a nurse, you know? I mean, she used to have-- like when they had prayers or something, and I needed a pain shot or something, she would let me wait, because she had to say her prayers.

You know that kind of a woman? Yeah, nasty. Nasty. She was very nasty when I had Nick, too. I threw her out of the room. I did. I threw her out of the room. I told her to leave. I don't want you here. She shushed me. I didn't scream when I had my babies. I mean, you moaned, kind of. And she said, shh. And I said, get out! So she never talked to me after that. She just wouldn't talk to me at all.

So this was the hospital in Yokohama?

Yeah, that was it, in Yokohama. Nicky was born in Yokohama. Kitty was born in Karuizawa, yeah.

Were there any other incidences in Yokohama that I was discussing? Were there any run-ins with the military--

No, no, I didn't have any, nothing. It was all too early already. They weren't that sure of themselves, you know? And that all came later. Yeah.

So then when you were transferred to the hospital in Tokyo, and you were under this--

Yes.

--Jewish doctor was caring--

Yeah. He came and took care of me.

Right.

And eventually, they let me go. I mean, I was still paralyzed, but things were more or less normal still. So what I did is-- I know it sounds crazy, but I had Nicky. And I decided I was fed up limping around. And by that time, I could walk. And I still was very weak and stuff. And so I knew this Russian woman. I forgot her name.

She had a boarding house up in Karuizawa or something. And so I said to Ludi, I'll have to go up there and get my strength back. So I went up there, and I rented a horse. I used to go horseback riding a lot. I rented a horse, and I had somebody help me on the horse.

And every morning, I went horseback riding. And I got all my muscles back. I did, I got them all back. As a matter of fact, when I had my next baby, the doctor says, where did you get all these muscles? And it was really funny. But I recuperated pretty good, yeah.

And then you went back to--

Yeah, oh, yeah, I went back to Yokohama.

And this was still 1941?

Yeah, '40-- that was '42-- '43. '43. It was already wartime, but it was still--

So you were-- you didn't feel any kind of hostility?

Well, they were unfriendly, but, I mean, I wasn't-- I never heard of anybody going to jail or anything. I mean, I just-- you know? No, I was much too preoccupied with having had polio and a kid, you know? Yeah, you know how it is. You encapsulate, you know?

It all kind of crashed down at one time, more or less. When Hushi got picked up and thrown in jail, when Ludi's brother went to jail, when one of my girlfriends suddenly disappeared off the street, and while we were up in Karuizawa some men was thrown in a concentration or was picked up by the military police. I don't know what they did to him. And he hanged himself the next day on a lamppost.

And that's when things started. And then, of course, the lack of food was coming. And I mean, there wasn't any food, you know? It was really very, very difficult. I mean, things got really unbearable.

How were you supporting yourselves?

I didn't support myself. I just had two kids, and--

What Lou was--

Well, Lou was teaching. Yeah, he was teaching. And he got more to eat than me because they used to feed him at the embassies and stuff. And he never brought anything home. I never forgave him for that, either-- never. But I mean, he was very hungry, I guess, but I was very hungry, because I was nursing the baby. I nursed the baby for eight months because there was no food and no milk. And the little bit I could get I gave to Nick.

So I mean, I really lived on-- how should I say? Lousy-looking bread. We got a little bit of bread. It used to pull threads. When you cut it, and you opened it up, and it was all kind of rotten. I think there was a lot of potato in it or stuff, you know? Really bad. And well, there wasn't any food. I drank a lot of water. Drank a lot of water.

But Kitty, she thrived, you know? I mean, I had a lot of milk. As a matter of fact, they pumped my-- some milk off me in the hospital and gave it to a little Japanese boy who's probably still around someplace because the mother couldn't feed him. So that was fine with me. I mean, I didn't care, you know?

And some Japanese woman was very kind. She came and brought me something to eat in the hospital. There was very little food. And she had some stupid goats right there by the window, and they made a lot of noise and disturbed a lot. So she felt bad. So she made some pancakes, and she brought them up to me. It was the best thing I ever ate in my life. With nothing, just pancakes, three or four of them. I don't know what it was. I remember that.

[INAUDIBLE]

You're always hungry. I think-- and what I want to stress is that you really do not think much about the danger of being bombed or being killed or being imprisoned, although that is always there. You live from day to day worrying what you're going to feed the kids.

Will I be able to nurse the Kitty? Will I get something to eat so I can nurse her? Will I not freeze to death tonight because it's so terribly cold? And we can't light the fire because we don't have a match. And there is no paper to light it with. Or there's maybe wood, and the wood is so green, it won't take. There are all these kind of things, and that they fill up your day. They do.

And then the police would come and check on you. And they would eat the last apple you have that you kept for your son. And I wanted to kill them. And that is really what you do in such a position. I mean, they didn't put us in jail, because they knew we were not mixing with anybody, and we were not.

I was taking care of the kids. And they're very fond of children, Japanese people, although he did eat his apple. But I mean, they didn't go that far. But they realized that we weren't really doing anything terrible, you know?

So what would this military police that were checking up on you and-- what would they do? They'd come in and--

Well, they wanted to see what you were doing. And there were things you were forbidden to do. You were not allowed to take photographs of any kind, which I couldn't anyhow, because, I mean, by that time my house had burned down, and I didn't have a camera. I wasn't even allowed to take a photograph of Nicky in the bathtub, you know? I mean, they were really paranoid about it. They were just ridiculous.

But they were just trying to harass you. I mean, they harassed you from the moment you got up there. And it got worse and worse. And after they burned down my house-- that servant burned down the house. I know she did.

The police were stealing everything that people had given me, some blankets and things. They stole it. And the servant stole whatever she could steal. And we had no place to go. I mean, it's really hard to explain what went on there. It was just unbelievable. It was really.

I know that your husband described the burning of the house, but I want--

Well, I mean, the thing was when-- after we burned down, we went to jail. They took us to jail.

Before the house burned down?

No, after, while the house was burning.

I want to talk about the house--

Yeah, well, the two little kids-- the house burned down because the servant put the charcoal under the-- twice I caught her, twice, and the third time I didn't. That's when the house burned.

So where were all of you? You were all out?

I was upstairs. We were having dinner, supposedly. We had just sat down to eat something. And I saw the smoke coming underneath the door. And I realized that the house was burning. And Ludi has funny remembrances of it. But I said to him, take Nick and run down the stairs. Get out of the house. And I'll get Kitty.

When I got into Kitty's room, she was laying in that little basket with the flames shooting up the window. I mean, I'll never forget it if I live to be 100. So I just picked her up and wrapped the blanket around her and ran down the stairs. And I made it out with Kitty. And then, of course, everything else burned, all my things.

The only thing I saved was my fur coat because it happened to be at the Japanese place where they were going to put a new lining into it. It was falling apart. But Ludi burned all his suits. I mean, it killed him. And all my jewelry-- they stole whatever didn't burn. Diamonds don't burn, but, I mean, they stole it.

I found one ring in the ashes afterwards. I still have it. But it was just ridiculous. Kitty was four month old, I think, and Nick was about-- Kitty was what? Two month old, I guess. Three month old? God knows, I don't remember. But yeah, it was in November, so she was born in July.

This was '42?

Yeah. No, that was '44.

'44. November '44?

Mm-hmm.

Was the servant a Japanese woman?

She's the one that-- oh, sure. Sure, and she took all her stuff out of the house before. She didn't lose anything. She had it all shipped to Kyoto I found out later.

Now did somebody put her up to this?

Oh, yeah, police.

The police?

Oh, yeah, sure. Sure.

Do you think that the Germans put the police up to--

Possibly. I wouldn't be surprised. I wouldn't be surprised. But maybe they did it just for the funsies, you know? They loved-- they were very mean. The Japanese police was extremely mean.

Was it because you were foreign or because you-- right, it was just that you were--

I don't think they knew anything about Jewish and that, no.

So then what did you do?

Yeah, that's a good question. I left my kids with people across the street. They were Jewish people from Romania or someplace. I really hardly knew them-- very nice people. I knew their daughter. She was taking classes with Ludi-- math and chem or whatever. And they loved to come over and see when Nicky took a bath or something, you know? I mean, he was a cute little blond, blue-eyed kid, you know?

He was so cute. They thought he was wonderful. Well, anyhow, they took the kids into their house overnight. And they gave me a few diapers, too, because I didn't have a single diaper for-- I mean, it was really terrible. And they took care of them.

And they wouldn't let me go home from the police station, although, I mean, I was nursing her full-time, and I was starting to run a temperature. And I was in pain. They wouldn't let me-- they were very disagreeable and very--

Japanese police?

Yeah, the Japanese police were very disagreeable. And they made all kinds of sexist remarks. And I was scared to death of them, but I wouldn't show it to them. And they asked me whether I liked Japan. I said, I hate it. I said, I hope the whole thing goes under water for 10 minutes.

The guy said, your Japanese isn't very good. I said it's better than your English. And I said, I hate every one of you. I said, you're really mean. And I figured I had nothing to lose. They were going to torture me, they were going to torture me. I'm going to have my say. And they said, we're going to go and torture your husband. I said, go help yourself. What can I say? But they didn't.

So you were in the police station--

I was alone.

Alone?

Ludi was in a different room.

And where were the kids?

With this family, yeah.

So each of you were questioned?

Separately, yes. They brought all kinds of papers to me, and they wanted me to sign them. And I said, I'm not signing any of this. I can't read it. So he said, well-- it was something that I burned the house down or something to that effect. And I said, I'm not signing this.

So he said, well, I'll read it to you. I said, you're a liar. You could read me anything. I don't know what you're reading. I said, I'm not signing it, and I didn't. That's when they said they're going to torture my husband. I said, well, there's nothing I can do about that. And they threatened me with lit cigarettes up the nose and all that kind of stuff.

And then they eat in front of you when you know you're hungry. And they had white bread and butter. Would you please? I mean, when you're really hungry. They were sitting there, laughing. Very, very mean. So they wouldn't. But later on, I found out there was a woman in that village where we were-- black market woman. And she gave us something once in a while. And she liked Ludi. She did. She thought he was hot diggity he was.

Anyhow, she came to see me afterwards. And she says, the Japanese police was real impressed with you. They said you're a tough cookie, which I thought was really funny. But that's Japanese, see? They really appreciate if you don't grovel. And I knew them well enough by then that I am not going to. Yeah.

How many hours did they keep each of you?

Hours. Hours and hours and hours. It was daylight when the house burned. And I got home, I don't know, 2:00, 3:00 in the morning? 4:00 in the morning?

So like 10? Maybe 10?

I don't know.

Then when you left there-- did your husband sign any papers? Or what was--

I don't know. Never asked him. I'm sure he didn't because they were lies. Why would he sign it? Maybe they said they're going to torture me, and he signed it. I don't know. See, he's much softer than I am, you know? I mean, you can bend him any which way. And he spoke Japanese very well in those days, so he was probably arguing with them. I mean, my Japanese wasn't-- I've never had that that fluent, so.

So what happened is we went over that-- next door, the house across the street. And they were very kind. They gave us something to eat. They had good pretty good connections. See, our problem was that we had been expatriated by that time. And so we did not get anything from anybody. We were stateless.

So the Germans did not feed us, and the Jews didn't feed us. And there was nobody else that gave us anything. So we had no protection as well as no food. So this family had-- the Jewish Conclave and the White Russian Jews, so now, they all stuck together. They traveled here, there, and everywhere and then brought all kinds of things to Karuizawa for themselves-- cream of wheat, and you name it, they had it.

And so this lady was very kind. I mean, she gave us a little bit something to eat-- not much, but something. And I got in touch with my sister. And I said, I have to have a place to stay with the children until we can do something.

And where was she staying?

She was in Karuizawa with her husband-- nice place. He had diplomatic standing. He was a Swiss. He worked for the

International Red Cross. He was a silk merchant, actually, but he worked for the American-- for the International Red Cross. So he had diplomatic standing. They couldn't touch her, and they couldn't touch any of him, of course.

And so she had all the food you wanted, all the everything. So I took my two kids. And Ludi said, I'm not staying with her. He says, I'll find a place. You go. So I had to go because I had the two kids. So I went and stayed with her for, I think, a week. And I couldn't stand it. It was all very, very difficult. And she resented me being there. And it looked bad for her. And I had nothing to wear.

And I asked her whether she could warm up one room so I could give Kitty a bath, and she had all this wood, and she wouldn't do it. And it was just very bad. So I contacted Ludi and I said, I got to get out of here. And her husband-- very nice man. He was very apologetic. And he says, anything I can do to help, whatever.

Well, he couldn't do anything. So we found a place. The French consulate said they had a house that we could go in for the time being. So we got in that house. And that's when the police came and stole all the blankets and everything that somebody gave me. Different people in the village got together and gave me some stuff. They were very nice. And they stole all that, so we had nothing. So--

--from the French consul?

Yeah, they stole it out of the house. And I told them it wasn't mine to give. And they said, never mind. They told that-- the servants were there with them.

The servant who burned down your house?

So they took whatever they wanted. And so very soon after that, we got to know-- after a few days, the French consulate contacted us and said that we couldn't stay in the house, because somebody from Tokyo that was a French citizen wanted the house. Well, I mean, I don't blame them. They had a right. So we got thrown out, and we had no place to go.

Where did you go?

Well, we were the proverbial wandering Jew at that stage. And we had a little cart, and we put whatever we had in that little cart. And it was snowing. And I was carrying Kitty, and Ludi was carrying Nicky. And we walked into the snow. And this gal turned up. I don't know where she came from. Ludi probably knew the connection. I didn't. And she said she was the daughter of the Chinese consul or whatever.

Probably the charge.

Yeah, *chargé d'affaires* or something. And they had a summer house out in the boondocks. And if we wanted to walk down there, we could occupy that house. So we went there, and it was so cold. I mean, that place is like Siberia in winter. I mean, they have permafrost up there, you know? So we got in the house-- no heating, no nothing, no beds, no nothing.

And it was really something. And all through the time we were there, it was so cold. We warmed up one room eventually. We had a little stove in there, and we managed to warm up that one room, although it never got warm, really. I mean, you had a bucket of water standing next to the stove, and it never melted.

But where'd you eat? We had a few plates people gave us, a few plates and stuff. And my mother-in-law and my father, eventually-- father-in-law-- moved in with us eventually. But I mean, it was so cold in that house that when you took the dishes from where we ate and put them in the sink, that froze on just like that. I was so cold. I was always cold. It was terrible.

My feet were all black from frostbitten and everything. It was terrible. It was really awful. And there was no food. So we still had our nationality then. That was before we lost our nationality. So I completely shamelessly went to the German Distribution Center. And I said, I want some food for my kids.

So they had a line. We'd stand in line for butter or the-- whatever, and never got any of it. They always shoved me back, shoved me back, shoved me back. So I'd end up with one carrot that you could rip. And I remember one particular incident where I was-- and they told me not to come back, because they weren't going to give us anything.

Then right after that, we got expatriated. But I came home. I walked home through the snow. And I had a bicycle with me. I think it was Ludi's bicycle. I don't know. I never had a bicycle, but anyhow I had a bicycle with me. And I had no shoes. I just had this geta, you know, wooden. And it's hard to walk in them and very cold.

And the bicycle fell over. And I had taken the bicycle because I thought I'd get all this food down loaded on the-- well, the one carrot. Anyhow, the bicycle fell into a snow bank. And I had to go in the snow bank to get the bicycle. And I was so unhappy. Oh, God, I was unhappy. It was terrible.

But at the time I got home, I was just-- I mean, I was a mess. I was a mess. But of course, Kitty cries, and she wants to be nursed, you know? I mean, [INAUDIBLE]. [LAUGHS] It was bad. It was bad. It was really-- it got progressively worse.

And this was '44?

In '44.

And was Lou able to teach still?

Yeah, well, he lost his school, of course. But he went to the different consulates and things, and he taught the kids mostly mathematics and spelling, I guess, and stuff like that. But they were all big as zero, so they wanted-- and Ludi's very good at math and chemistry and stuff like that, so he taught them. And they fed him something once in a while, which helps.

And this was the end of-- this was November of '44? Or after? The house burned in June of '44.

Yeah, right after that.

Now was-- were your brother and brother-in-law and--

Sister.

Now who was arrested?

My stepfather.

Your stepfather?

Hushi, yes. He was in Gora.

And then was this in '44 also?

It must have been, because my mother left in a hurry after I had the baby. She was going to stay, but she left, because he got arrested. So I know it was then that he got arrested.

Did he get arrested simultaneously with--

Ludi's brother.

--Ludi's brother?



Yeah. Plus the Mr. Reis, this one I told you about, the one that worked with him, too. He got arrested, too. So they were all interrogated for about three months-- beaten, tortured.

Now did the Nazis put the Japanese military police up to that?

Undoubtedly.

Because of the Jewish--

Yes, undoubtedly. Yes, because the Germans were living high off the horse. Oh, they were living high hog there.

In Japan?

Oh, they had everything to eat and everything. They were having a wonderful time.

Did you see a lot of Germans?

Yeah, there were some up there. I didn't see them, not socially. I just knew they were there. They lived in fancy houses and ate a lot.

So can you talk about the arrests, what we know?

The arrest? I don't know much. The police came and got him. That's it. That's the way. Ludi's brother was up in Gora, too. So they worked together, see? So they just came and got him. I mean, they didn't make any bones about it. They just came and got him and threw him-- and took him to Gumyoji Prison, I guess, and interrogated them until they had signed a confession.

And my stepfather afterwards said, by the time they were through with me-- he lasted three months of-- he wouldn't. He wouldn't give in. And he says, after they were through with me, I would have signed the death warrant for my own mother, he says. That's how they tortured him.

They just tortured--

Yeah, and he never was the same when he came out of jail. I mean, I saw him. He came here and died here in the States. And it was not the same person, you know? He went senile real fast because of the blood vessels that had been-- they're kneeling on the rungs of the chairs.

They used to beat him. He had a big wound in his right arm from the First World War, where he had a-- he got shot or whatever. And so he couldn't lift his arm above that. They made him. They turned his arm around, and he was bleeding all over.

And my mother always had to go and pick up the wash and everything was full of blood, and just terrible. And she used to bring food for them-- for him. She would go there, travel all the way from Gora to Gumiyoji Prison. And it's in Yokohama, in the outskirts of Yokohama. And she'd get there, and they hit her on the head. And they'd bump her around. And then they spit in the food and stuff like that.

They would hit your mother on the head and--

Yeah.

What else did they do to her?

Well, they didn't do very much. They just humiliated her and hurt her. They didn't jail her. Scare her. They scared me to

a certain extent. I mean, I couldn't go back after the second time, because the director of the jail there, he called me up to his office and said, you show your face again, we're going to arrest you. [LAUGHS] So I remembered that one.

Well, they wouldn't let me see my stepfather. I came there to see him. I went with my mother. I traveled from-- that was a bad trip, I have to tell you. And I traveled to Yokohama, and from there to Gora and picked up my mother. And we went together to the prison. My mother got to see him, but they wouldn't let me. So I don't know why.

They don't give you any reason. They just said no. So I had to leave. And so a few weeks later, I tried again. And it was very difficult to get the permission to go because you had to stand in front of the police station. And they would do anything to make you uncomfortable. Like it was very cold, they said it was impolite to wear a coat while they were talking to me.

So I had to take off my coat. And they said, take off your shoes. You stand in the snow with your naked feet. I mean, you know? Just mean. So eventually, I got the permission to go again. And I went down there. They wouldn't let me see him again. So I pushed the policeman aside when they opened the door, and I stuck my head in and I said, hi!

So his face just lit up. He was so happy to see me. And then he said, I'm so hungry. It was disgusting. It just really killed you. It really was awful. Well, it killed my mother. I know it did. But the trip from Karuizawa to Tokyo, or Yokohama, in this case-- the first one I did at night, because during the day, the planes were strafed by the B51s, the American planes. They used to machine-gun the trains, see?

So people didn't travel the daytime because you're asking for trouble. So I traveled at night. And the train was very, very full. And I was standing for eight hours. You stand. There was no place to sit. And I had a coolie. I had my fur coat on, my fur coat. And I had a-- we still have it. My daughter has it. It's still good, too. And the coolie was leaning against me. And he said, gee, that's a nice fur coat. I want to have it.

He says, I'm going to throw you off the train and take your fur coat. And he was pushing, trying to get me out of the train. And there was a very nice Japanese gentleman in Japanese clothes who made his way to me. And he took me by the hand. And he says, come with me. And he took me-- see, there are always nice people everywhere.

You should never generalize. He took me to a different place. And he says, you better get off the train as soon as you can. So the next stop was luckily in outskirts of Tokyo, and I knew where I was. So I got off. And I took a different train. And then I took a different train to go to Gora.

But then they wouldn't let me see my father after all that. So when I got home, I've tried again. And the next time, I went daytime. And I said, listen, you people up there, I don't want to get shot. They didn't. Nobody shot. They didn't.

The Japanese got mad at me, because as we were going into Tokyo, before we hit the station where I got out, Tokyo was burning. All of one place called Kanda was in flames. And I did it, see? I was the foreigner. I did it.

All your fault.

That's the way it works. Yup, the way it works.

So the first time you went to see your stepfather, you did-- they didn't let you see him.

The second time, I pushed the policeman aside, and I stuck my head in that what they call [JAPANESE] room. [JAPANESE] is just "to visit." And they let my mother in. They wouldn't let me in, so I just pushed. So at least he saw me. And that's what they pulled me up to the director, and he says, you show your face again, and we keep you here, so.

The first time you left, you just--

Yeah, I couldn't get in. They slammed the door in my face.

Did you ever have a chance? I guess you didn't. The second time, you didn't get to talk to him--

No.

--show your face? And that was--

They wouldn't let me talk to him.

Your mother was-- how often did she visit him.

I don't know how often she went. I think she went whenever she could. But she wasn't going. I wasn't there, so I don't know.

You were in Karuizawa?

Karuizawa, yeah. And my daughter my sister never went. She never went to see him. But when the war was over, she says, well, under the conditions the war is over, I think I'll be there when he comes out of jail. And my mother had a fit. She says, no, you don't. I'm going to be there. I said to my sister, are you out of your mind?

So anyhow, he got out. But he was like a-- and he was really-- it's really hard to explain. He was such a gentleman. I mean, he would even-- you come down for breakfast, he would be dressed, tie, everything. He helped you with the chair. I mean, his fingernails were gorgeous. He wore these silk shirts with a silk-- I mean, he was really very, very proper.

And here he was, a slob. He came out of jail. He would eat his food with a spoon, so-- to get it all in real fast. Took a long time for him to get normal. But he never did really recuperate. No, he didn't. These beatings, these beatings, and this kneeling on these things cut his arteries and his veins, so the blood didn't flow the way it should. And it just killed him. Killed him. He died in '55. Yeah. It's very sad, very unfair.

Yeah.

Yeah.

When you went, was there a jail-- were there SS men at the prison, or was it just Japanese--

No, Japanese. Japanese military police with the long swords.

Where was the presence of the SS or the Nazis in Japan?

Well, they were not that obvious. They didn't run around with uniforms very much. They were mostly business people and very high-flown Nazis that didn't wear uniforms. The head of the SS, Meinzinger, he was-- I never met him. He was there, and he had this whole SS thing under him. And he used his influence or whatever to do whatever he wanted to do.

But you don't really saw them. You knew they were there, but you didn't really see them. And I mean, the Germans all stuck together. And they lived very well. That's the way that they looked down on everybody Else I mean, that's what it came down to. And they mistreated whoever they could. And they were very successful at it. And it was mostly the German Jews.

The other Jews that were there that lived pretty well, they were Russian. See, they had protection-- White Russian. And there were people from Romania and other people, Jewish people, up there in Karuizawa. They were nice to us to a certain extent, but then, you know, we weren't Jewish. That always played a role. It did play a role.

And I mean, I couldn't make myself something that I was not. And I didn't intend to, either. But you weren't really Jewish enough for the Jews and not German enough for the Germans. And I didn't want anything to do with the

Germans, and I haven't had anything to do with them since. I didn't even like them while I was in Germany. I really never liked anything when they say this is verboten and you're not supposed to do this, that, or something else.

There's all these rules and regulations where you're not supposed to do whatever it is-- talk to or whatever. I have never liked that. And so I've really always wanted to come to the States, ever since I was a little kid. So that's how it worked out.

When I came to San Francisco, I was at home, and it was just perfect. And I did immediately the two things that I swore I would do. You know what that was? A pair of high-heeled red shoes and a banana split. I had to have both. I never wore the shoes, and the banana split's the only one I've ever had. Yeah, really.

Was it what you thought it would be?

Yeah, it was marvelous. Yeah. My kids wouldn't even eat ice cream when the war was over. They couldn't stand it. They couldn't eat it. It was too heavy, too-- they never had sugar. They looked so healthy. Kitty never had anything but mother's milk, and then just something here and there, whatever I could find.

When was your stepfather released? Was that after the war?

After the war, yes. Oh, yes. No, not right away. I mean, it was several month, yes.

Then were you getting any more news in '44 from Europe or about Europe? Was there any? Did you have any idea what was going on--

No, you had no-- nothing. We were just completely isolated, completely isolated. The newspaper only wrote things like the Germans were winning, the Germans were winning. I mean, it was-- I knew nothing until they dropped the atom bomb. When they dropped it, I danced a dance of victory.

You know, it's a very strange thing what happens to you physically when you're under stress. You don't even know what's going on. And when this guy from the Swedish consulate or delegation or whatever, he came over. And he said, they dropped a bomb on Hiroshima, and the whole of Hiroshima is gone, and the war's over. Oh, Nagasaki-- that was Nagasaki. Nagasaki. Or Nagoya was it? Nagasaki-- yeah, the second one.

And he says, you know, the emperor just made a speech, and he said the war is over. And I felt like a weight fell off me, I mean, really physical-- a physical feeling of a weight being removed from my chest. And I said, wonderful. That's terrific. And I'm going to take my revenge. And I had a ball after the war. I took my revenge wherever I could. I pulled some real billies. I can tell you about it someday, really.

What I really liked after the war, but seeing all the other stuff that I did-- the head of the police in Karuizawa was very mean. They made me stand in the-- and when the war was over, and they knew they had lost, and I had pulled a few things with a few officers that I knew. They took me to the police station to get some food and [INAUDIBLE]. I'll tell you about some other day. But he still had a car, and I had my bike. And every time he passed me by in the car, he would get up and bow. I loved it. And I would go

[BLOWS RASPBERRY]

That son of a gun. Jeez. Terrible. Yeah.

Where were you when you received that news that the--

Karuizawa. Karuizawa. And Ludi left right away. He went down to Yokohama. And he was the first one employed by MacArthur. I met MacArthur, you know?

[INAUDIBLE].

Yeah. Oh, well, it's nothing much. He was just at a party. And he wrote a letter for me once. I should have kept it. Well, Ludi got sick, you know? He'd had all these problem. And eventually, I moved to Tokyo. And I had quite a nice place to live. And Ludi left for the United States.

And I was alone for six months with the three kids. I had three by then. Every time I moved, I had a kid. Well, anyhow, the Army had occupied, of course, Japan. And so they used to come to my front door and say, "General Willoughby wants to have this domicile." And I told them, General Willoughby-- that's too bad. He's out of luck because I'm living here.

But they were very persistent. I mean, this happened all the time. So I knew MacArthur. Say, hey, do you know Colonel Wheeler? So I went to see Colonel Wheeler. And I said, do something. I don't want people to walk in my bedroom, you know? And so he talked to MacArthur. MacArthur wrote a letter. And he says, "Irene is allowed to live in this house as long as she darn well pleases. And until then, you stay out of her house." So I used to just show the letter. It was like a laxative, you know?

It worked wonders. So I stayed in that house until I left for the States. And I even when I left, I was lucky, because I knew all these generals, and General Willoughby and General Maxwell and whatever, MacArthur, and all these people. And of course, I was young and pretty and full of hope in those days, so you got away with more than you do now.

But they got me on a ship to go to the United States that was really not an immigration ship. It was a troop ship. They had a few Americans on it, and he got me on there. So I had a hell of a time, though, on that ship. With the three kids, I mean, it was terrible. And I had no servant. I had all these servants, you know? I was used to it.

They cried when I left, and I should have cried. I mean, they were standing by the ship and crying. I should have, you know? It really a hard trip. And Kitty was all over that ship, and Nick. I had packed in the bathtub. And the steward would come running. Oh, Mrs. Frank, Miss Frank, Nick is walking the rails on the second deck. I said, what do you want me to do, drown the kid? What could I do?

One woman came up to me, and she said, you are such a courageous woman to travel all by yourself with these three kids. And I looked at her, and I thought, she doesn't offer any help. And I said, lady, did you know there was a law against drowning them? She never talked to me again. And she never talked-- every time she looked at me, eeeeh, you know? No, terrible.

There was one Jewish man on the ship, Manasseh-- I don't know his last name-- Manasseh. I used to know him in Karuizawa. He was kind of enamored with me a little bit, I think. And he was on that ship. I don't know how he got on. He was not German. He was something else, I don't know what.

And he had connections for candy and such. And he fed Kitty candy. I have more pictures of Kitty with her cheek sticking out where she's eating candy. And he helped me a little bit. He would hold Patrick for me for a minute or so while I had to get Nick or whatever. But it was ridiculous.

I never slept. I never ate. I had to cut the stuff for the kids. And I mean, they would take the food away before you have a chance to eat. So I lived really on bread and apples. Yeah, it was very-- Kitty would try to sneak through the PORTHOLES you know? Thank God she was chubby. She couldn't get through.

I want to go back a little bit to '44 again to-- was your brother-- your stepfather-- was he released when Lou's brother--

No.

--was released?

No. Lou's brother was never released. He died.

That's right.

Yeah, he died. And Ludi went by himself. And it was a very, very sad occasion. And I know it was the beginning of July, either that or end of June when he died. He was starved to death, and he had blood poisoning and everything else.

And he was already half rotted when he got there. When Ludi came back. He was in shock. I never saw him like that, never. But, no, my father was still in there, my stepfather. Yes, he was still in there.

During that period when your stepfather was in jail and things were pretty bad, were you ever-- did you ever encounter any kind of attacks or--

Not physical attacks. No, we didn't. We just had the police come and check and look around the house and help themselves to whatever they liked.

How often did that--

Oh, quite often. And they would play with the kids. They liked the kids. My kids were very cute, you know? Kitty was a really cute little chubby baby, and Nick was just adorable. I mean, he was very, very platinum blonde and blue, blue eyes and cheeks, red cheeks. And I don't know how he stayed that healthy because I fed him the most extraordinary things that you don't feed a child as a rule.

I'm sure he was hungry at times, but I guess he was used to it. And I used to go out in the meadow in the morning and pick weeds, dandelions, and boil it for him. I used to drink the water. And once in a while, we'd get an egg, and I'd give it to Nick. Little bit of sugar I had, I gave it to Nick. He got all the food.

The one that had the least was me. I had the least. I really did, because Ludi got some from the embassies or whatever, and I just-- there wasn't any food. It was really terrible. I think one more year, we would have died, because-- I never was so slim and beautiful as I was at that particular time. I see in pictures, my arms are little sticks, you know?

I mean, I was never very heavy, but I was always a little bit more on the chubby side. When I got married, I was more chubby. But then after polio, I never really gained as much as I did before. And I've always stayed within 110, 115 pounds. But I don't know. I weighed, I don't know, 90 pounds maybe.

While there, were you ever affected again, or did you have any recurrences?

Of what?

Of polio?

No, no, no, I never had any-- no, I just have after effects of some kind. And my left hand-- you can see my left hand is misshapen. See this? This muscle disappeared, and this finger doesn't straighten. I had massage for a while. But the guy that massaged, he got bombed or something, and he got killed, so that took care of that.

And there was no way of getting therapy of any kind. I had a lot of pain, nerve pain, from it, and my left leg. But my leg is fine. But my arm is a little bit-- but I don't dwell on it.

Right.

Yeah.

Did you have any people around you to help you? Did you have-- was there anybody?

No. No. And I was always worried when my husband left the house to go teach. I never knew whether he was coming home. He would give me a kind of a cutoff point. If I'm not home by this and this, you'd better go to the police and find

out. So several times, I was on my way, and then he would come home anyhow. So we were lucky in a way, you know?

I mean, I was lucky. I didn't get killed by a raid. I didn't get killed by the B50 whatever they were. And I mean, I didn't die of whatever diseases. I got a very bad poisoning once from bad food. I mean, the food you ate was incredible. I mean, even what they gave, their rations, the rice, the little bit of rice they give you, it was mixed with broken spaghetti kind of looking noodles.

And there were all these bugs in it and worms and stuff. And so I used to put it out on a piece of paper, newspaper, in the sun. And they didn't like the heat, so they would all go bye-bye. And the worms would go bye-bye. And then I would cook it, and we'd eat it. Yes. I wouldn't touch it now, but you eat. I mean, we had a French lady living with us for a while who got burned-- who got bombed out in Tokyo.

And she had no place to go. So we had this big place from this Chinese lady. So we said, well, you can come and live with us. I don't care. So she came and stayed with us. And she was very-- a very nice woman. One night, I made an omelet, I mean, if you-- pancake-- no grease, black flour, no nothing to put in it but a few apple peels that I put in it. And she was sitting there. And her face was full of tears.

And she says, this is not crepe, she said. [LAUGHING] I know. I said, you're right. And you're right. This is not crepe, she said. Yeah, well, that's the way we've survived it. We're really lucky. I mean, I could have ended up in a concentration camp, in a bordello, or God knows what. I could have had to commit suicide like the rest of my family.

And I think I survive partly because I'm a very nasty kind of an outgoing person. I mean, I don't give in very readily. I mean, even with all the kids that I raised, they all turned out terrific, really.

Did you or your mother know if your father knew that you were in Japan?

He knew I was in Japan, of course. He paid for the trip. And he said, don't ever ask me for anything else again.

So he never tried to contact you?

No. But when I went back-- when the war was over, and I-- then he contacted me, and I found out where he was. So he wanted me to come and see him. So I went to see him. And it was around Christmastime. It was around my birthday time. And he said, did you want a birthday present? And I knew he didn't want to. I mean, he was stingy, my father.

I said, yes, I do. I do want a birthday present. Let's go downtown in Frankfurt. So we went downtown, and we went to the shoe store. And I bought the most expensive pair of boots you could buy in the shoe store, Bally boots. And I still have them. That's how good.

And you know that I've walked in those boots-- not these boots. They're kind of brownish. They're very nice boots I walked in those shoes in Alaska, in Switzerland, in the snow, in the rain, and I have never had to resole them. That's how good those-- they still have the original sole on with the design on it. You know the little-- that's the one, there. My father had a fit. They cost a lot of money.

They lasted 50 years.

That's right. That's right.

Were you having-- and I guess you're so occupied with trying to feed yourself and your children. But did you ever have thoughts, whether positive or negative, about where's your father, or can he help?

No, no, no, I never did, really. After my parents divorced, I mean, my relationship with my father deteriorated very badly, because he wanted a son. And I knew his wife was pregnant. And I thought, if he has a son, I know what's going to happen. And that's exactly what happened. When I was a child, he raised me like a boy.

He called me Hans Johan, and he cut all my hair off. I had a boy's haircut and leather pants. And I was loud mouth and naughty in school. And my father thought it was wonderful. He thought it was just wonderful. And any time I did something nasty, and, I mean, disobedient or whatever, he thought that was fine.

The only time he didn't like it was when I started to smoke at 12. That, he didn't like. But otherwise, I got away with a lot of stuff. And my mother was always climbing the walls, you know? And she says, you wait till you have kids. They'll be just like you. So my kids didn't have a chance because listen, I did all that. You know? [LAUGHS]

But when he had the boy, then everything went to the boy-- everything, education, everything. And I mean, I wouldn't have minded so much if he'd been-- he was a cute baby. And I went to visit once when he was a baby, and I was about 15 or something. And I took him for walks in this little buggy. But when he got bigger, he looked like his mother, and he acted like her. And it just-- and there was a lot of backbiting, you know, behind the back.

And she was making remarks to my father, and, I mean, I heard it. I mean, she spoke German, so naturally I heard it. But she wasn't very nice. And so as a matter of fact, I think my half-brother, there, he said to Nick-- Nick talked to him on the phone or something. And he says, you know, I'm sorry I never see Irene. I never hear from her.

And then as an afterthought, he said, I guess she didn't like my mother. Kind of funny. Yeah, but I didn't like him, either. I didn't like him. Kind of funny. I always thought he was a homosexual. I really did. But he did get married. Maybe he was both. Yeah. I don't know.

Boy, you can't pick your family. You can only pick your friends, you know? But I'm very lucky with my family. I mean, my husband is very difficult. I mean, I have a very hard time with my husband. But with the kids, I have a wonderful relationship with my children. Yeah. I really do.

So when your mother went to-- your stepfather got out of-- he was released in '45, was it?

Yeah.

OK, so--

'45 or '46, I don't know. Yeah.

But in '44, were you aware at all of--

That he was there? Yeah, that he was in jail?

No, I mean of the war in Germany-- that the Allies were now--

Oh, we heard rumors. We heard rumors. Yes, we heard rumors. And I mean, we knew that something was going on, because they were bombing Tokyo. And they were bombing Yokohama. They were bombing all these different cities. And every time they bombed, I said, goody, goody, wonderful.

I was kind of worried, because that house that we lived in that time from that woman, it was very close to a factory that was way down the street there where they were building airplanes. And the B59s used to come over and-- B29s. And they used to-- reconnaissance planes. And they used to look down, you know?

And I said, they're waiting till it's finished, and then they're going to drop a bomb. And then we're going to get blown up. But they never got finished. They never got finished because the things started to rust and rot. And no, they were running out of raw materials and everything, you know? I mean, they were really running out of everything.

Did you have shelter from the bombs and the air raids?

No, nothing. No. Nothing. They didn't have any air raids up there in the mountains. They are only down in the cities.



They didn't bomb. Karuizawa they didn't bomb, although I wish they had once in a while. Some of those Germans up there-- they were really awful, awful people, really.

No, and it's a strange thing, you know? I mean, I felt a lot of people treated me very badly. And I accepted it because I felt sorry for them. I mean, I figured it does not dent my ego at all. But my husband had never experienced this before. And I know he went someplace to pick something up from somebody. I don't know.

They were German people. I don't know what he had to do there. And they wouldn't let him in at the front door. And he came home, and he says, can you believe that? I said, yes, I can. I said, you don't know the first thing what really goes on. He doesn't because he was in Japan. They're people that hadn't lived in Germany and knew what was going on. They missed it.

I have an aunt that lived in Chile-- the brother of my mother that married this very nice lady that lived in Chile all during the war and all this Nazi business. She went back to Germany when her husband died. She lives in Freiburg. She's perfectly happy there, and she's Jewish.

She didn't feel uncomfortable at all because she never was-- she doesn't know. She doesn't know. I said to her, how could you live amongst these people? I don't understand. Well, she says, they're very nice. And she was working for this professor, and she just really enjoyed her life. See? So it has a lot to do what you see and what you hear, yeah. Yeah.

When did you find out about your grandmother committing suicide?

Oh, they sent a telegram.

Oh, immediately before you went?

Yeah. They just said [SPEAKING GERMAN] or something like that. My mother just had a fit. I mean, it was just terrible, terrible. You know, it's-- the older I get, the more I think, gee, what a terrible thing to have to do when you're perfectly healthy, you know? I mean, if you're senile, and you're dying on the vine someplace, it's a different thing.

But if you're a perfectly healthy, wide-awake, intelligent person that enjoys life and loves to study and read and do that, that you have to kill yourself with rat poison or whatever she took? I mean, this is-- as far as I'm concerned, that-- I don't ever want to go back there. I'm never going to go back to Germany. I did go back while my father was alive once in a while. But I never liked it.

The moment I hit Frankfurt Airport, I thought, ugh, I don't want to be here. I don't want to be here. I don't want to be in Switzerland, either. They were just as bad. They wouldn't let the Jews in when they came fleeing. They wouldn't let them in.

My sister, she gives me this big-- she said to me, the way you treat your Blacks, it's just really terrible. I mean, look what you're doing to the Blacks. I said, we're doing our best. We're trying. We're learning. We're doing our best. I said, how would you do if suddenly you had, let's say, 100,000 Black people come and want to go into Switzerland? She says, what? She says, we wouldn't let them in. I said, well, you've done that one before already once. Yeah, they're very, very-- no.

On August 6th in '45, when the Allies bombed Nagasaki, where were you? Were you at home?

I was at home up in the mountains, Yes

Did you receive a notice both times with the bomb, with the first bomb and the second bomb?

I am not sure. I am not sure. I only remember the one where he said the war was over.

Right.

And I still-- I had a maid living with me that was supposed to help me. But she was-- you had to have a maid, because the police wanted to have information, what you were doing. You see there? And so it was my pleasure to go to the maid and say, you just lost the war. And your emperor, the holy emperor there, he just said he caught out and gave up.

And she immediately went to bed and got sick. And the rest of them, they all were gonna go out with pitchforks and kill people. They were going to kill us up there. We found the paper where they had it all written down. I contacted-- I guess they were going to kill all the foreigners. I don't know all the foreigners, but at least I know that my name was on it.

And the CIC came up to Karuizawa with a captain, and a whole bunch of soldiers came up and took over the hotel. And he told me-- I went to see him when I didn't have anything to eat. And I said, the police station is crammed full of food. Would you kindly do something? And he said, yes, ma'am, I would love to do that.

So I got in the Jeep with his-- some soldiers and the guns and this captain. And we went to the police station, and we robbed them up everything they had. And the police were scared to death. And I enjoyed every minute of it. Anyhow, he told me that they found documents that they said that the foreigners were eating the food that should go to the Japanese, and they were going to kill us. And they were up there.

About two days before the bomb was dropped, they were up there. The [JAPANESE] or the Japanese with the long swords. And they were going to chop our heads off, I guess. They would have had a hard time, I tell you. I never opened the door without a butcher knife in my hand. I didn't. And you know, I have a hard time killing a fly, but I would have used it. I would have used it. I'm very defensive of my kids and my life, too. Yeah.

Was your husband with you when the war was over? Were you all together?

Yeah, we were together. And he went down the next day when we found out the war was over, when MacArthur came in. So he went down because he knew that he could work with them. And he spoke Japanese, and he spoke English, and he spoke some German. And he was a big help. So he got himself the job. And then he worked for the public relations.

And then afterwards, he ran the Foreign Correspondents Club, which was an interesting place to go to-- lots of interesting people there. But our marriage was so lala in that time. It still is so lala, but I mean, I stuck it out. But he stayed in that place, and he got lots to eat, and I didn't. And it was kind of a-- it was a big mess. After the war, everybody went kind of crazy I think.

And I mean, I was up on the bluff there in this half burned-down house. And I had all the soldiers who'd come to the door. They thought it was a whorehouse or something, you know? I said, well, three doors down, you have the Russian. And the maid that I had that was supposed to stand in line for food, she-- when a Black guy came to the door, she would say,

[SCREAMS]

She wouldn't even close the door, you know? I mean, it was terrible. It was terrible. So then eventually, I went to Tokyo.

Did you hear about the end of the war in Europe before Japan?

You know, I can't remember. I really can't remember. I might have heard something, but we didn't get much information. I mean, there were no newspapers, no radio. So the only thing you could hear sometimes from the legations or from the consulate, they would say something. But I mean, I even didn't mix with them very much, because I didn't want to go to jail. I didn't want to be picked up because my kids needed me.

So your husband went immediately to Yokohama--

Yes.

to try to find work. And you stayed in Karuizawa?

Yeah, for another few weeks, I think.

And then he came?

He came to get me, and we went to Yokohama, and he dumped me in that house with really nothing. And he took off to the Correspondents Club. And here I was with two kids.

With-- oh, two kids?

Yeah, two kids. And, well, I met some very nice people, and they helped me. And they got me-- they organized everything. The American Army is very good for organizing things. They organized beds and they organized clothes and they organized food and boxes of oranges and boxes of apples. And then I got real sick with bad tonsillitis, very bad infection. And they got a doctor that came and gave me a penicillin shot or something.

So but Ludi was never there. I mean, he'd come every two or three weeks and pop in and say hello, and how you doing? And where'd you get the bed? I said, would you like to know? No, I mean, it was really bad. If he hadn't gotten sick, I think we would have separated then. But he broke his neck, and it was terrible.

Oh, the Jeep?

Yeah. And I just couldn't-- I mean, it was like ordained. Every time I wanted to leave, something happened. It was really funny, you know? Really funny. So that's when I moved out of the house in Yokohama. And I went to Tokyo. And I stayed with him in Tokyo.

And I nursed him, and I took care of him. I was pregnant again by that time. And I nearly had a miscarriage for about a month because I was lifting him and stuff. And so poor Patrick was hanging on for dear life. Yeah.

So how long [AUDIO OUT] You work with [INAUDIBLE]

Well, first he was hospitalized in Yokohama. By that time, we had moved to Tokyo, I think. And he was in a hospital in Yokohama. He started to have all this terrible pain, so they put him in the hospital.

And I had to go back and forth to see him in the hospital, which was very easy, because all I had to do was go out in the street, and the car would come to a screeching halt with some American. And he says, where can I take you, honey? I said, you take me to the hospital. So they would take-- I had rides with judges and whatever. Once I was-- a huge truck that drove me to Yokohama.

A military vehicle?

Yeah. Yeah, fantastic. It's really-- I mean, it was what they called the occupation honeymoon. I mean, you could have a face like a mud fence, and you'd have everybody-- especially if you're a European, you know? I mean, the first time I was at the station in Tokyo-- I think it was after the war. And a bunch of soldiers came that had been in the jungle.

And when they saw me, I mean, it was like Miss World Beauty. A blonde woman? My God. That's the way. The poor guys. It was terrible. It was nice for me, but Lou didn't like it very much.

So after Yokohama, you went to Tokyo?

Tokyo.

And he was working with the correspondence--

Yes, right.

--Club.

Yeah.

And what was that like for you?

Well, he was-- when he got better. Well, when he worked for the Correspondence Club, I was in Yokohama. Then he got sick, that's when I was with him in Tokyo. He couldn't work. He was flat on his back. And so it was miserable.

But I went out once in a while, you know? I knew some people, and they would invite me to-- for a get-together or something. And I would tell him that I just have to get out. Then I went to the hospital and had my baby in Tokyo, Patrick. And in August, the hottest time of the year-- no air conditioning, no nothing. No medicine, nothing-- I mean, that's the way I had all my kids, just as-is, like it and enjoy it.

And the Reverend Mother there, the head, she was the doctor. And she was a very, very nice woman, very warm-hearted woman. And she was a very amusing middle-aged woman. After I had the baby, she came and saw me in the room. And she was laughing. And I said, what's matter?

She says, you remember what you said to me? And I said, no, I don't remember what I said to you. She says, well, Reverend Mother, what the hell? You're lucky you don't have to do this. She said, exactly like that. I thought I'd die. Things weren't nice when you're in pain, yeah?

And that was when? End of '45?

Yes.

[INAUDIBLE]

Yeah, no, that was in '46, I guess.

I want to go back to your stepfather.

Yes?

When was he released?

I am not sure when it was, but it was not right after the war. It took a while, which really made me very nervous.

Why? Do you know what--

We couldn't leave right away. I mean, I had no place to go, and I had two little kids. And Lou wasn't that interested. I mean, he had his brother that just died, and it was bad news. The whole thing was very bad news. And there was a lot of bad feelings between my mother and my husband because his brother had testified against my stepfather under torture.

I mean, you couldn't hold it against him. I mean, he was probably-- would testify-- and he was kind of a weak person. And I tried telling my mother. I said, you know, you can't hold it against this man. You can't hold it against him. But they tortured my stepfather because of that, see? So there was a lot of-- and my mother never forgot it. So my husband and my mother were not--

Not good friends.

No. No, they didn't like each other. No, which made it hard for me.

You're always in the middle.

You're always in the middle. It makes it very hard, yeah.

So do you remember under what circumstances they finally released--

Well, my mother went there and picked him up, yes. I don't know what the hell they left him. They just let them go, I guess. They had to, I guess. Most probably, the Americans just made them.

The Americans?

Yeah, I'm sure they did. I don't think they would have let him go unless the Americans went there. And I went back there once with a girlfriend who had been incarcerated there. When she got out of jail, I made her come and stay with me up in Yokohama while Ludi was in the Tokyo place there. And she stayed with me.

And they had stolen all her-- whatever she had. Money and her pearl necklaces and everything was all at that jail. So I got in touch with this Colonel Wheeler, who was MacArthur's aide. And he had a girlfriend by the name of Browning or something. And she was a captain nurse. So she was about my size.

And I said, could you lend me some of your clothes and with the bars? And she said, oh, sure. What you want to do? I said, I need a car. So she got me a driver and a car. And I had this nurse's uniform and the captain bars and the whole [INAUDIBLE]. And I took my girlfriend. And I said, let's go get your pearl necklaces, and we did.

And you got in the prison?

Yeah, we did. I spoke good Japanese those days. I couldn't do it now. But I told him, I really told him off. And they all had it hidden away someplace. And she got her stuff back. And a few days later, the head of the prison came in one of those Black Maria things. And he said, would I mind if he brought his kids over to play with mine?

And I said, I most certainly would. I said, don't show your face around here. I don't want to see you. They're terrible. They came to my-- the Japanese police came to my house and tried to threaten me.

When was that?

After the war.

What happened?

I told him to go to hell. I said, listen, you lost the war, just-- you know?

He threatened you.

They threatened to beat you up or whatever. I said, I'm going to report you. There's a whole bunch of-- there were military police just down the street. I said, would you like to take a walk with me down-- you know?

The Americans.

Yeah. They like nothing better than for me to walk by there. They'll be hanging out the window, hollering and whistling. So I told him, I said, if you show your face again, boy, you could be in trouble. So they never came back. But they had-- it took them a long time to realize they lost that war.

They didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to hear it. But the whole thing with this Jewish business-- what brought on that. I went to Japan, it's because of that, this Jewish business. I would have-- very obviously, I would have left

Germany eventually anyhow, but not under those conditions.

And I doubt whether I would have gone to Japan. I would have come to the States because that's what I liked. I saw every American movie they ever made in Berlin. I saw it. I just wanted to be there.

When you were in Berlin, right before you left for Japan, were you fantasizing about you wish you could come to America?

Oh, absolutely. That was my goal. I wasn't going to spend my life in Japan. No. I mean, it was interesting. It was an interesting interlude in many ways. I mean, the culture and the way they're thinking-- I know Japanese people very well. They can't pull anything over me because I know how they think. And most Americans don't.

The way they-- I mean, I see the politics that's going-- it just kills me to see it. But I would have never stayed there. I would have visited. I mean, I'll go-- I've been to many countries, but I don't want to stay there. I want to be here. I kiss the airport when I come back.

That's great. What about when Lou worked in the Foreign Correspondents Club? You said that you were able to go to parties? And--

Yeah, once in a blue moon.

Did you have any stories, anecdotes?

Well, I met interesting people. I met Eisenstaedt, the one that did the pictures for Life Magazine? Yeah, he took pictures of me, but my husband tore them up. He says he didn't want other people-- [INAUDIBLE].

I said, they're worth a lot of money today. You should have left them. They were nice pictures, not with nothing here. But I was kind of pretty at that age, you know? And then he thought, I'll take pictures of me, so he took pictures. I met all kinds of correspondents, all kinds of them.

Did you meet them at these parties?

Yeah, parties. And when I got there, I mean, you go and have a drink. And they come around and talk to you and tell you what happened here and there and the goings-on. And you have some interesting conversations and had some very good parties, especially with the Russians-- vodka.

People dance on the tables, you know? I mean, wild parties, wild. So I knew Ludi was having a good time there. He was having a good time. He never admitted it, but I know he was, while I was-- I had nothing to eat, I mean, just really bad [INAUDIBLE].

What kind of conversation did you have with Eisenstaedt?

Hmm?

What kind of conversations did you have with Eisenstaedt?

Eisenstaedt? Well, I didn't talk to him that much. He just wanted to take pictures. And he said he took a lot of pictures during the war, and he traveled around with the troops. And he was a very-- they were all interesting people, every one of them, every one of them.

The Russians were kind of-- they were mostly drunk. I mean, really, they can drink a lot. It's like, really. But I enjoyed the Americans, of course. I was used to being with Americans because I'd lived in Japan a long time. And I had a lot of American and English friends. Some of them wanted to marry me. I maybe should have, but I didn't. But I had no problem speaking English because I spoke English with my grandmother many times.

Can you describe your meeting with General MacArthur?

Well, he was just at a party, you know? He was very stuck-up person. And his wife was stuck-up. And his son was a teenager, or he was about 12, and he was an absolute rotten kid. He was rotten. When MacArthur would come in, I mean, he was always on stage, you know? Really. I mean, I never talked to him as such. I just met him. I was introduced to him.

And Colonel Wheeler said, I would like you to meet Irene. And they gave a big party at the embassy once, because-- I had my dress-- I had a dress made. And I wanted to party, so they made a party so I could wear my dress. That was when Lou was gone. He was already here. Crazy. Crazy.

Did MacArthur go to that party?

No, he wasn't at that party, no. But it was-- I had a lot of fun, but, I mean, I really did. I had a lot of fun, but it was all more or less harmless, you know? It was-- I had to watch it. I don't know why. I'm kind of-- people always think I'm-- I'm really not what they think I am, you know? I had one guy climb in my bedroom window while Ludi was gone. It was the Russian guy. How terrible.

Yeah, it was really terrible. I mean, it's funny how people pursue you. He was-- all the time, wherever I went, there he was. And he was a married man. I liked his wife, very nice wife. And he got all kinds of stuff from Shanghai or something during the war. He went-- he brought me shoes and perfume. I said, what do you think I tell my husband where I get this stuff? You out of your mind? I said, give it to your wife. Crazy. Crazy. Crazy.

So when did Lou go to America?

He went in '47. '47-- he went in January, I think, or something like that, and I came in July. I nearly didn't. I really didn't. But he told me some big lies, and when I got here, I found out they were lies. He said he had a house in the Richmond District, and he had a good job, and he had everything prepared.

And when we got here, there was a cold-water flat in [PLACE NAME] Street, and he didn't have a good job. And I was very upset, very upset. But I let it go. And of course, I got pregnant immediately, because Ludi and all that. And so I had a miscarriage, and I was sick for a year. It was terrible, just terrible. I nearly died. And I had three kids.

And then I got pregnant again. And I said-- you know, and I used everything that is to be used not to get pregnant, because he's a Catholic, and he won't do anything. So I-- everything on the market, I used it. Didn't work for me. I mean, the twins I had on a diaphragm-- brand new, brand new-- twins.

Anyhow, I got pregnant with the twins. I didn't know it was twins, and thank God, but I got pregnant. And that's when I put the ultimatum. I said, Ludi, I don't know whether you want to go and rob a bank or sell your soul. You're going to buy me a place to live. And if you don't, I'm going back to Japan.

Japan?

Well, my mother was still there, you know? And I knew a lot of people in Japan. And there was no war. And I thought I can always go from there, you know? And he knew he would lose his kids because I would take them. Well, we looked around. We couldn't see anything.

So one Sunday morning, he-- well, it was really something. We went to look for a house. And his mother and father had arrived in this country. She was a British woman, and she was sitting in the back seat. It was a Sunday. She didn't like me. Well, it's all right. I didn't like her, either. But anyhow, she said, I never heard of anybody going out and saying I'm going to buy a house today on a Sunday. I said, well, there's a first time for everything.

So when we found this little place, which was not really what I wanted, but anyhow, it was fine. It was in the avenues,

and it was a little house. It was not very big. And I didn't know I was going to have twins. So we bought it with a down payment, all the money we had. Plus we sold the car. Plus we took a loan for improvement loan or for the down payment.

We had no money and no furniture and no knives and forks and spoons and nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. When I came to this country, I was naked, naked, everything burned away. So we bought that house. Then I fell out of a car, and I nearly lost the twins. I fell out of a truck. I've done crazy stuff in my life, yes? I still have a scar. You can see it.

And so you left in '47, and your mother and stepfather?

Came later. They came in '50-- '54, '55, something like that, yeah.

I was curious. At these parties and socials in Japan in '46, was there any talk about what had happened in Germany in the concentration camps there?

These were all people that had fought in the jungles. We didn't have the troops that were in Germany and in Russia and in France. They did not come to Japan. See, these people came out of the jungles, Burma and places like that. And they were preoccupied with the Far East.

So you never even got any information. The only information I would get-- in magazines, you could read something, you know? But the guys really didn't know either very much. I mean, they knew the war was over, but they hadn't been there. They'd never been to Europe.

When did you first hear about Auschwitz, the gas centers, the--

Let me see.

--[INAUDIBLE]?

When did I hear first? Well, I think really most of it I heard here in the States, here in the States. I met, people, Jewish people, that had lost relatives there. The real knowledge of it I got when they opened up the camps and found all these terrible, terrible things that happened to people.

That is when I really realized what a concentration camp was. I didn't know. But the people that lived next door must have known. How can you not know? How can you not know? I mean, but you know, I tell you something, you go to Germany, and you can scratch forever. You won't find a Nazi. You won't find a Nazi. Nobody was Nazi, nobody.

When I went back in '53, no Nazis. There weren't any, none. But my father took me to a party where they were ex-generals, German generals and everything. And being I speak the language. And they weren't sure that I did. They talked very freely. And they were very anti-Semitic. And the thing they said, like, Hitler was a marvelous person. And he made two mistakes. He lost the war, and he didn't kill all the Jews.

And I said to my father, don't ever take me to a place like that again. I kept my mouth shut to keep my father from being embarrassed. But I-- and that is the way it is in Germany. You talk to anybody. They only did things because they had to.

Of course, you do things when you have to if you have children. I think I would have done-- most probably sold my body eventually to feed my children. But if you didn't have it that bad, I don't see how you can cooperate. I don't know my-- father that he did whatever I think he did. I don't know. I don't want to malign his name in case he didn't, but I don't see what else he did there.

But I think he should have not gone to-- he should have said, I don't want to leave Germany. He could have made some stupid excuse. "I don't feel well." "I'm an old man." "I don't want to." I mean, there are ways and means where you can finagle yourself.



But I think he liked the idea of wearing the uniform and the big-- he never went in the First World War because he said they said his heart was too small, and he couldn't stand the strain or whatever. And he always was very patriotic and that kind of nationalistic feeling, which is so stupid anyhow. What is this patriotic business? It's a bunch of baloney. All it does is make trouble. Well, nobody wants to listen to me.

I want to talk about your journey from Japan to America, unless there's anything more on Japan that you want to add?

No, there's really nothing, nothing much that one can really talk about that was in any way politically interesting to whatever you are looking for. I don't have that kind of experience. I was never in a camp. The only thing was this prison experience. But the Germans that were nasty-- I avoided them. I just--

So you didn't come into contact--

Well, the only contact I had was when I went to try and get a carrot for my kid, and they treated me accordingly. So I mean, I just didn't go back, although there were some-- there was a family. I told you, the man that went to jail with my father, that one who worked for him-- Ludi's brother, another man, Mr. Reis and his wife. They were both half-Jewish.

And they had a man living with them who was a close friend of Mr. Reis, Heinz, who was not a Nazi, but he was Aryan. And he used to go to the German club and get everything he can. And he would bring it home, and I got some of that there also. There is always somebody, you know? So one should never generalize, really.

But otherwise, in Japan, I mean, there's nothing much that I can add. I mean, I was really quite non-knowledgeable. The trip across the ocean was miserable. It was-- I think took, I don't know, nine days or something. Went to Hawaii first. And somebody from the Hawaiian newspaper came up on the deck.

And he looked around, and he took a picture of me. And I was on the front page with my two-- with my three kids. I still have it-- nice picture. I was young and pretty and full of hope. Yeah, sure. Anyhow, Nick and Kitty were cute, and Pat was a big fat baby, you know?

So was it--

Very difficult trip, because we were-- it was still a troop ship. People slept like 20 people in one big place. And I had the three little kids, and they weren't used to sleeping in beds where they don't fall out. So I had to stand up half the night, keeping them in bed. And Patrick in the buggy, and I used to shove the buggy back and forth.

And at last, I would go to sleep. And somebody would come in there, and they'd slam those metal cupboard doors. And the kids were-- I mean, it was very, very hard for me. It was very hard. I was exhausted by the time I did.

I assume it was pretty easy to get visas to get to America?

Well, it was, because I was stateless, and I had good connections through MacArthur and Wheeler and-- oh, yeah.

Did you have to go through all those connections? How did you get--

Well, I just talked to him. And I said, I want to get on a ship. I want to leave now, so you arrange it. So he did.

Was that to Wheeler?

Yeah, that was Colonel Wheeler. I guess he talked to MacArthur. I don't know. But he arranged it, and he just arranged it.

He got four visas?

Yeah. I met somebody. I met a general by the name of Willoughby that was the head of CIC. That's the military-- like the CIA, you know? And he spoke fluent German, I mean fluent German. I said, where did you learn that? It was a party. I met him at a party. And he helped me in some ways.

I knew some German people that had helped me on the sly while I was in Karuizawa. They used to bring me food at night. It came from the German club or something. They used to bring me. And they had these people. They were two different families.

They had him on a-- yes. They had them on a list to send them back to Germany-- de-Nazification or something. And they didn't want them, but they wanted to come here. So I talked to General Willoughby. And I said, get them off the list. And he did. He did. So they're here in the States, yes.

So then you got on the ship. And it was nine days?

Oh, it was terrible. It was terrible. So when I got to San Francisco, Ludi came on the ship. And he went crazy in five minutes with the three kids running around on the ship.

What was your first impression when you docked at the-- Did you dock here?

Yeah, San Francisco. I said, this is perfect. Let's stay. I loved it. I loved it. I thought it was perfect. I liked the people and the climate and the open-- you know, everything was open. And people smiled. And I thought, this is wonderful. I'll stay. I'll stay. And I've been happy ever since. I really feel comfortable. It's a little bit-- it was a little bit like Berlin, international.

People weren't narrow-minded. I mean, if I'd landed in Louisiana, they probably would have tarred and feathered me. I mean, I couldn't live in the Midwest anywhere. I just couldn't. But this was perfect, yeah. So I was really very happy from that point of view. I wasn't happy with the place I lived, and I wasn't happy with what was going on.

But eventually, I made my life. And when we bought the house in South City, it wasn't what I really wanted, but it was fine. It worked. Kids turned out OK, so I'm lucky.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And did you have a lot of contact with your mother--

Oh, yeah.

--were here?

Yeah. When my mother came here when my-- after my stepfather died, she lived in Burlingame in a little apartment. And I went to see her regularly, or sometimes every day if I could. She was not feeling too good with her heart, and she was having trouble. And I mean, it was very difficult, because I had seven kids, you know?

And I tried to explain to her, I can't-- Jonathan's coming out of kindergarten. I've got to get home. And she said, oh-- when I had Jonathan, she said, "That's a catastrophe." Oh, God, she says, what a catastrophe. So it was very difficult. And sometimes in the middle of the night, she would call, having a heart attack or something.

And I'd dash down, shaking like a leaf in the car. My foot would shake on the accelerator. I mean, it was terrible. And I had to get the ambulance and get her to the hospital. And then she'd get out again. And then it happened again. And then it happened again. It went on for four years.

She stayed with us for a while. But she couldn't stand the noise of the kids. She just couldn't stand it. And I mean, I

wasn't about to shush the kids just because my mother didn't like it. So eventually she found this little place through her church, a Methodist church, or something. And so she lived there, and she was quite content, although she was very depressed.

And she was always crying. And she thought I was neglecting her, although I did my best. Even your best is not good enough, I guess, because I was very busy. And I had no-- we had no money, you know? I couldn't help her money-wise. And she didn't have very much money, because all our insurances disappeared-- the ones in Germany, the ones in Japan. She didn't have any, you know?

And then she got in touch with these stinkers in Hamburg, these lawyers, to get some kind of money back for restitution or something. And they were all a bunch of Nazis up there. They really are Nazis. And they would ask questions that you can't answer.

What do you mean, you want money? Can you describe what you lost? What did your mother lose? How much was the fur coats that she had? I mean, how can you-- I mean, it's ridiculous. So later on, I was told I could get something back, because I burned out and everything else. I don't want anything to do with them.

No. I said, I'm not-- I couldn't even have traveled to Germany, because the Berlin mayor, the mayor of Berlin, says people that have been thrown out of Germany and mistreated could come for free. And they would have hospital or hotel service. I wouldn't. I said, I don't want anything. If I want to go to Berlin, I'd go my own money. Don't want anything to do with them, nothing.

Did you go back just to see your father?

Yes, only to see my father.

When is the first time you went back to Berlin?

'89.

1989-- the first time.

I went with my daughter. She wanted to go. And she wanted to go to different places. We went to Budapest. We met Nick and Michael in Budapest. We had a fun time. And we went to Berlin. And I said, I want to walk around and see what I can see. And we walked down Kurfürstendamm, and--

What was it like now?

Different. It looked-- I would have known it. But all the rest of the town looks different. I mean, they had the church, this Kaiser Wilhelm [GERMAN]. Yeah. But it looked slightly different, too.

[INAUDIBLE].

And it was funny to speak German to all these people. And the Berliners are still crazy people. We went on a sightseeing bus, and the guy was a complete nut. I mean, he was really funny, funny guy. I enjoyed it. And I eventually found the street that I had lived on, although it didn't look at all like that street. It was all rebuilt, I guess.

And I said to Kitty, there used to be a little church around the corner where I went on Christmas Eve with my grandmother, I think, two years in a row. It's the only time I ever went there. And I said, let's go. And sure enough, the church was there. But I think they rebuilt it. And there was a woman there who said, would you like to join our-- whatever-- congregation?