

All right. Ready?

Yeah.

OK. I'm Sandra Bendayan. I'm here interviewing Elsie Rich for the Holocaust Oral History Project. Today is the 29th of September, 1995. And John Grant is our producer. So let's start with you telling-- what was your name when you were born, if it's different than it is now?

Yeah. My name was Elsa Rich. My name was Elsa Schiffman. And I was born in a middle class family. My father had a factory. And we were, I believe, pretty well off. And my mother helped him in business.

So we always had a maid in the house. Not because it was fancy, but it was a necessity when she came home after working in the factory that everything was done and then somebody who took care of the children. At that time, we were four children. 1914 was a very bad-- was a--

How old were you in 1914? When were you born?

I was born 1901.

What was the date?

The date was August 6, 1901. I am an old lady now, believe it or not. Well, in 1914, on January 6, I got a little brother. That was a very good thing. But in February, my father died. He died of pneumonia in 1914. They didn't have the antibiotics. And so anyhow, he died. 1914 was another very important year, because the war break broke out. And I had two brothers-- one, three years older than me, and one, five years older.

So what were their names?

Their name was Billy, Wilhelm, and Max. And pretty soon, they were called into the service, also, they were still very young. And one came to the north front. And a short time after, he was taken prisoner of war by the Russians. And my younger brother, Max, he was on the Italian front. And he was there during the whole war.

And then they were in the mountains. And they were told, the war is over. You can go home. They went down the mountains. And down, the Italian took off their weapons and took them as prisoners of war. He was taken prisoner of war after the peace was signed. And he was there about one year. Then he came home. So we were five children. And my mother was a widow.

You were five children?

There was Wilhelm, Max--

Yeah, because the baby was born in 1914. And what's the baby's name?

Hans, Hans. Yeah.

And then where were you? What number were you amongst the children?

I was in the middle.

In the very middle.

Yeah, then is a youngest sister, Fritzy.

Filzy?

Fritzy.

Fritzy.

Yeah.

OK. And so there were five children.

Yeah.

And so where were you born?

In Vienna. We were all born in Vienna.

You were all born in Vienna?

Yeah.

And you seem to be saying that your father became an Austrian citizen. So where was your family from originally?

He came. You know that we had-- Austria had those little states. He came from Galicia. And he was there a citizen. But then he got married in Vienna, and all the children were born in Vienna. So he applied for Viennese-- it's kind of a citizenship, yeah.

What's your father's name?

Hillel.

Hillel?

Hillel Schiffman.

And your mother, what was her name?

Rose Schiffman.

What was her maiden name, do you remember?

Kerner-- K-E-R-N-E-R.

And was she from Vienna originally too?

No. She came from Kraków. But she was in Vienna. They met in Vienna, got married in Vienna, and lived all their life there until Hitler came.

You said your father had a factory. What was he manufacturing?

Braid, all kind of braids. Braids are used for shoelaces. They are used for hats, to making hats. For sometimes, we made ties and shawls. You can do anything there. You can make certain kind of lace, whatever is in fashion, yeah.

So the textile industry?

Textile, yeah.

And was your family a practicing Jewish family?

Oh, yes, we were a Jewish family. As long as my father lived, we were kosher. And then we were kosher even after he died. But then during the war, there was practically nothing to eat. So whatever you could grab somewhere, you brought home.

I remember, the funny things, first, we had one knife that was treyf. You know what it is. And then, little by little-- and that was right at the entrance of the apartment. And little by little, the knife walked into the kitchen. And whatever we could get, we ate.

OK. So this means-- treyf means-- this knife had been used for non-kosher food.

For not kosher food, yeah.

And little by little, that grew in your home.

Yeah, yeah.

When things became hard.

And since then, I was never kosher again, because--

Did you have your grandparents alive anymore?

No. I never met any of my grandparents. They were in Galicia. My mother's parents were in Kraków. And my father's parents, they were well-off. They were in Drohobych, where there was oil. You know?

And where is this town, Drohobych? Where is it?

It's in Galicia, where he came from.

OK.

The northeast state. Yeah.

Do you remember their names, your grandparents' names, at all?

No.

No.

No.

But you never met them?

Never met them.

Did you have any aunts and uncles?

Oh, yes. We had one uncle in Vienna. I know this. And he came. He was our-- how do you say when the father dies, and he comes and looks after us?

Kind of a guardian.

Yeah. So he came every week to look how we were. And then I remember that my father had two brothers in Berlin. But I never met them. And I don't know.

Well, it sounds like you were, as you say, middle class or maybe even upper middle class.

Middle class, I would say, yeah.

Did you live in what would we call the Jewish neighborhood? Or was it an interfaith neighborhood?

No, since we had a factory, we lived in a workers' neighborhood. And as a matter of fact, in school, I was the only Jewish girl. And for religious instruction, we had to go Sunday morning to a certain place, where from all over, the kids came. And there, I got my Jewish instruction.

So your parents they didn't necessarily go to temple on the Sabbath every week or that sort of thing? No?

Well, from school, we had to go on Saturday to the temple from school. But my mother, well, she had plenty to do without all of this. She had five children at that time. And yeah. What I wanted to mention-- during the war, we closed the factory, because she couldn't get the workers. And she couldn't get the raw material. So we had the factory closed. So she lived on her capital. Yeah.

She had enough money saved that she could do that?

I don't know how she did it. But somehow, she did it.

And when you were growing up, do you remember any instances of antisemitism in Vienna before Hitler came to power?

Not so much, really. Really, you know, when I grew up, that was, believe it or not, under the Kaiser. And under the Kaiser, there were not much open antisemitism. There were, maybe, but we didn't feel it. In school, everybody was nice to me. They all knew I was Jewish. I never made any secret out of it. But they were all nice. I was a good student. I made no trouble. Everything was smooth.

What language were you speaking at home?

German.

German? No Yiddish.

No.

No.

As a matter of fact, up to now, I don't know. I understand, but my tongue didn't work.

Or Polish, even? Your mother never spoke Polish to you.

They never spoke. I don't recall. Maybe if they want to say something what we shouldn't understand, maybe, but very little.

Yes. It wasn't noticeable.

No.

Not where could speak it. Well, you were saying, well, what a dramatically negative year 1914 was for you. You would have been about 13 years old then.

Yeah.

Just starting your teenagery.

Yeah.

And your father died. And your brothers--

And my brothers went to war.

--they went to war.

Yeah.

Do you remember the impact of all those things on you during that time?

I tell you, here, I got the baby brother. And I was very much involved. I thought I have to protect him for everything. And he was my-- what should I say-- my outlet. Whatever time I had, I spent with him and did for him. And my mother was very happy that somebody was here to take care of the baby.

And during that period, she wasn't working.

No, because the factory was closed. But nevertheless, I remember, every morning, she went to meet the mailman with the day's mail from the boys. And well, she was very upset about the whole situation.

Were there any hardships that you had to go through? You said there was little food, for example.

Oh, we actually had no food at all.

No food. How did you get any food?

Well, everything was a ration. But that was not enough. I remember one incident, my brother was maybe two years old, the little man. And we had a little bit milk, which we shook in the bottle till you got a little piece of butter. And he had a little piece of butter-- bread and butter in his hand.

And we walked on the street. And a soldier came and took the bread-- what he wouldn't do if he wouldn't be so hungry-- took the baby's piece of bread and ate it. That shows you how hungry people were at that time. Yeah.

Do you remember at all what you might eat of a day, for example? What was your food for the day?

I don't know well. Everything was rationed. Fat was rationed. Flour was rationed. Sugar was rationed. Whatever was in the house, my mother cooked a little bit and fed us. That's all. I don't remember. That is too far back.

Do you remember whether there were any other hardships that you went through because of the war?

During the war?

Yes.

Oh, no. No, no, no, no. I went to school. I finished the regular school in 1915. Then I had two years business college.

And then I got an office job. And I worked all the time from that time on.

And your older brother, who was taken prisoner by the Russians, what happened to him?

Well, he was in Russia. And when did he come home? He was there a long time. He worked on the big railway, a railroad that goes through Russia in Siberia. And it took a very long till he came back. The one from Italy came back before.

You said roughly about six months or so, he was captive?

He was one year in Italy.

One year?

Yeah.

But this one, I don't know how many years he was in Russia, but a long time.

Maybe five years?

For sure, yeah.

More than that?

Yeah, I know five years, for sure.

Five years for sure.

Can you talk about his experiences in Russia at all?

Oh, yes. He made a lot of friends. He spoke it fluently. He was a young fellow, so he learned the Russian language. And when he came home, he found a lot of friends. And we had nice musical evenings with his Russian friends. I remember that.

And well, 1918, now, we are maybe '20-- 1923, yeah, my mother had already the factory open. And at that time, everything, business was very good. Whatever you had there-- because during the war, everything was eaten up. Everything was used up. So we were really in dire need of everything. So business was pretty good.

And that's another thing. Before the war, we delivered to England goods. And then the war broke out. And they stopped the payments. But after the war, they paid us back everything plus interest. So we got a nice start for the business again. It came very handy. This was very good. In this way, the British are very correct. Yeah.

Did you own the place where the factory was?

No. We had it rented. Rented.

You rented it from someone?

Yeah.

And then what happened during those years that the factory was closed?

During the years that--

No, no, we paid the rent.

You just paid rent, but nothing was happening?

Yeah. Nothing happened.

And your home-- did you own your home at that time?

No, no, no, no. At that time, you see, in Austria, it was different altogether. Here, everybody has a home. There, everybody rents. Everybody rents, yeah. Especially in Vienna, you have those big houses. And you have a landlord. And you pay.

So you were able to open the factory up. Your family was able to open the factory up again right after the war?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

And when you said you were working ever since you finished school, what kind of work were you doing?

After the business college?

Right.

I went into the office. I did office work. And then I heard of a place. It was not a government place, but it was a private undertaking of the government. And I worked there. This was a place where they rationed the food-- the flour and whatever they had. In there, I worked. I got a much better pay. And I worked there till they closed.

Were you able to get any advantages of getting more food that way?

I would say no. No, no. That they didn't want. They didn't want to get a bad name. But things are getting better little by little. And after the war, there was the Hoover plan, if I remember right. So there came food and flour. And it got a little bit better.

And your younger brother, did he ever talk about his experiences with the Italians as a prisoner of war?

In Italian? Well, he was a very good soccer player. And somehow, he could play there. And they liked him very much. As a matter of fact, they liked him so much that when he came back, they contacted him. And they got him a very good job in Italy as a coach.

And did he take it?

Yeah. And he spoke perfect Italian. And he was there, I guess, two or three years. I don't remember. Had a very good experience. And then, I'll skip a few years. When Hitler came to Austria, he contacted the Italian people again. And they said, right away, he can come. And everything will be all right. And he went to Italy.

What year was this?

No, but this was 1938. He went to Italy. But in the train, the Germans came in and investigated. Any Jews here and so? So he turned around and sent. When he came home, he said, I wanted to get away from it. If I have the same thing there, no use to go to Italy.

And the next day, he went to Switzerland. He walked over the-- to eat. And he stayed in Switzerland until I could get for him a visa to America.

So he knew right away that he wanted to leave Austria, as soon as Hitler came?

Oh, yeah. My brothers, all three, because in 1938, my kid brother just-- he became a doctor. He had the last promotion before Hitler in February. You know, would he have missed this date, he would be out of luck.

But he became a doctor in February 1938 and went to Switzerland right away. And in Switzerland, he couldn't get a visa. So then he transferred to England. And finally, in England, he got a visa and came to America.

And then your eldest brother, well, he came back from Russia.

Yeah.

And did he work in your business at all?

Yeah. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He was working in our factory, yeah. And what about you? Did you ever work in the factory?

Yes. After I told you, I was in this private place of the government, but then there was no distribution anymore, because everything was open. So they closed the place. And from that time on, I worked in our factory.

What kind of work did you do?

Everything-- office work and every machine, wherever they needed me. Yeah.

Did your mother ever think to remarry?

Well, with five children, I don't think so. At least, I don't know.

She never did, though.

No.

You just kept working in the factory until Hitler invaded?

Till Hitler came, yeah.

And what about you during those years? You were in your 20s. Were you going out with young men? What were you doing?

What I was doing? I tell you. I was a very, very serious young girl. I was at that time my own grandmother. I went to lectures. I went to the theater. I learnt as much as I could, really.

Well, my sister went out with a young man. And this man's mother died. He was her dance partner. So this young man didn't go dancing anymore. But in that time, a girl alone didn't go dancing. So I went with her. I was kind of a chaperone. And at one of these 5 o'clock teas, I met my husband. And that's it.

And what was his name?

Henry Reich-- R-E-I-C-H. But when we became American citizen, we dropped the E. And now, we are Rich, Henry Rich.

So that was your life pretty much through the '20s. When did you get married?

I got married in 1932. I was 30 years old.

And so your life during the '20s had continued on pretty much the same as it had been? Anything special that happened



during that period? Nothing special.

No. I worked in the factory of my mother after my marriage. Everything was-- yeah. What I wanted to bring out-- in Vienna, we had bicycles, which is not usual for Jewish people. And when Hitler came, I was very happy on my bicycle, because whenever I saw a gathering of people that they collected Jews or so, I could turn around. And so that helped me a lot. Yeah.

Why was it that it was unusual for Jews to have bicycles?

We liked to go on Sunday trips out. It was so nice on the bicycle. And we figured.

But you say it was not common for Jews to have bicycles.

No, not for Jewish people.

Do you know why Jewish people didn't have bicycles that much?

Maybe they had cars, I don't know. But you know what it is. Jewish people like to sit in the coffee house. And there were not much Jewish bicycle riders. I couldn't say that.

What was the culture like and the life in the coffeehouses? You say that they would go often to the coffeehouse.

Well, this is like a club. You come together. There is gossip. There, we talk about what happened in politics, what happened in the city. And it's like to meet friends. You don't entertain. You don't invite them to your house. You go there and you meet them. And that's it.

Did people go every day?

Yeah, oh, yes.

Every day?

Oh, yes.

What time, like the end of the afternoon?

Well, I came home from work maybe around 6 o'clock. At 8:00-- at 7 o'clock, I was in the coffeehouse till 10 o'clock. And we talked. My husband played cards. I didn't play anything. But you have a lot of magazines there. You get all kinds. You can read, have a lot of interesting stuff, talk about it, and yeah, that's it.

So it was like a social club?

Social club, oh, sure.

Do you know why people didn't invite other people to their homes?

It was not usual. I don't know. If there was an occasion, you made a dinner party. But we met in the coffeehouse. There was no use to bring them home.

Were your brothers having you a bar mitzvah?

Well, my two oldest brothers, yeah, but not the Hans, the little one, no.

Do you know if they were circumcised, all of them. Do you know if they were circumcised?

Certain?

Circumcised.

Oh, yes. Oh, that's for sure.

All three of them?

All three.

The little one?

Oh, yes, because he was born in the hospital. And they do it right away there. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Well, it sounds like, as you say, once the First World War started, you gave up being kosher. And you've never really taken this up again. Through your life, have you had a religious point of view? Do you believe in God or not? Or what would you say your religious belief?

Yes, we always observed the High Holidays. And yeah, I would say I believe in God. You know, I am a very lucky person. Sometimes, I wonder, so many things are going my way, even without my doing. I wish something, and in no time, it happened. So I figured, somebody is protecting me-- maybe my husband, maybe my father, maybe my mother. I don't know, maybe not.

Maybe.

OK.

So it's a possibility.

I have no direct answer.

Yes, yes. I understand. So life was going along, as you say, rather well in the '20s.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

And you got married.

And we went dancing with my husband. And I mean, we had a good life. We had it not easy, but we had a good life.

What would you say the difficulties were, when you say it wasn't easy?

Well, in business, you know, there is-- what should I say? You have, really, to give the best thing to the lowest price, because there's competition. In business, you have to be tough. It is not really easy.

But we tried. We made it all the time. And it was OK. Listen, we were I wouldn't say thrifty. But we were not spenders, either. We just did what had to be paid. And then we had everything. We had everything. Yeah. But nothing-- no luxury, not a very good life.

And what kind of work did your husband do?

My husband was in the metal business, you know what kind of metals he had. And he was doing all right. And his father helped him with his business. I mean, his father worked for him. Things were going all right till, I told you this before, one Sunday afternoon in '38, then is that we heard the Hitler speech.

What did you hear? What did Hitler say?

Well, he will exterminate the Jews. He promised what he did. He really put everything very open. But nobody believed it.

Was this speech coming from Germany?

From Germany, yeah. No, because in Austria, they said, it can't happen here. But it did. Anyhow, in January, we heard about his plans. And my husband said, we better make our plans, because I don't think we can survive in Austria.

And he went to the American consulate and found out what to do in order to go to come to America. And they told him that he has to register, because they go by the number. And the good thing was that we were two months ahead of all the other people, because we registered two months before.

When was that?

In the American consulate? You got a number.

When did you register?

In January.

Right in January.

In January. And in March, Hitler came. So we were two months ahead. But nevertheless, it took us till August, from January till August till we finally got the visa and could leave Austria.

What kinds of things were you thinking after Hitler came to power in 1933, when he was already talking about his plans for the Jews? Were you discussing the politics at that point, as early as '33?

Well, we were thinking, how could we get-- the sooner the better, we could get out.

So immediately, you believed him.

No, we couldn't leave, because where we had to go. And then my husband had his parents. But when he went to the American consulate, he found out that aged parents of American citizen can come to America beside the quota, outside of the quota. That was a great relief to him, because he had his sister here in America, who was an American citizen. So he could pack his parents and send them to New York.

How was it that she was an American citizen already?

Well, she as a young girl, she wanted to go to America. There were aunts here. They were part of the family here. And she wanted to go. And one day, she went. And then she got married here and became a mother. She had three sons. And she was a citizen.

And what was her name?

Frieda-- first Frieda Reich, and then Frieda Blue. And she came to Santa Rosa too. She's buried in Petaluma.

And when Hitler first came to power in 1933--

In Germany.

--in Germany, yeah, I'm sure that, in short order, people in Austria knew what his thinking was.

Yeah, but they always said, it can't happen here. That was the ongoing, oh, it's Germany. Yes, Germany, but it can't happen here.

When did your family first become scared or aware of what Hitler's real plans were?

Well, I tell you, I mentioned to you before that we lived across the street from the illegal Braunen Haus, where Hitler had a headquarter before they came to Austria officially. So we saw too much going on, coming and going. And it was no pleasure, really.

What did you see? What did you see?

OK, well, first of all, they evacuated a lot of elderly people that lived there, because they needed their office space. And then the whole movement-- coming and going on the motorcycles. And even the way they looked at it like.

Do you remember roughly when they took over that building? About when?

When they took over? I don't.

That building. That building. Do you remember?

I don't know. All of a sudden, they were there.

But it was before the invasion and the war.

Oh. yes. They prepared there. That was the illegal center of the Hitler party.

Before Hitler.

As a matter of fact, we had workers, very nice people. They were very nice to us. Later on, we found out, they were illegal Nazis long before Hitler came. You know, he worked his way in Austria. But we didn't know.

Was there any point along the way where your mother or your parents were Zionists? Were they ever Zionists?

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Never had any thought to go to Palestine?

No, no, no. No, no.

Before 1938, were you hearing how the Jews were being treated in Germany, how Hitler was treating the Jews through all that five years in Germany?

Well, oh, yeah, people that traveled, they told us stories. Oh, yes, but we always said, it can't happen here. So we, OK, in Germany. But it can't happen here.

Once they took over that house across the street, did you see any brutality happening to any of the Jews?

Brutality not. But truckloads of merchandise came. But they just took away from Jewish stores and gave it away to their people.

Did they ever take anything from your factory?

Well, they came. They took the typewriter. And they didn't bother us too much, I must say.

But they took something?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yeah. And then, as I said, I left in August. And my mother lived in this house from 1913 till 1939. And we had a very nice landlord. But finally, he had to give in to the party that no Jew can live there. So my mother had to leave.

And pretty soon, she went to-- where did she go to-- England, because she had a brother in England. You know, those times were very tough. It was too tough to get a passport. You had to stand in line for hours and hours, because almost everybody wanted to get out somewhere.

Why do you think your husband just instantly knew that he should leave Austria?

He did not instantly knew it, because he felt it in business. You see, there was a drive going on, don't buy or sell-- buy from or sell to Jews. There were already the drive go. And he felt it in business. And he didn't feel comfortable in this position.

Do you know about when that drive started?

Well, there was a big exhibit at Christmas 1938-- don't but from Jews. When they started, maybe they started half a year before already. It has to be organized and then planned. Yeah.

Did you notice that your non-Jewish neighbors or friends were treating you any differently at that time?

No. No. And even I was surprised to hear that some people were illegal members of the Nazi Party. And they were nice to us. You know, so many people say, well, if everywhere would be like you, it would be all right. But that's not true. The people were nice. The Jewish people had no reason-- I mean, everybody makes business in a different way. Maybe some have different. But in the average, Jewish people, I find them very nice.

And your two brothers, had they already left Austria at that time?

Oh, yes. They left. They left right away, all three left the same week Hitler came. They just left.

March?

They marched over the border.

But you said Hitler invaded Austria in March of 1938.

In March of 1938. I guess it was either 11 or 12.

And your brothers left right away?

Right.

What was your sister doing?

My sister was with her husband.

In Vienna?

In Vienna. And she was a dressmaker. And he was working. He had a good job. I don't know. Yeah, he had a good job with a Jewish firm. And right away, the first day, they came there to his boss and took out all the value, you know, what

they had, because they had a lot of business with Switzerland, and France, and so, took all the money. They just took it.

Did your sister and her husband plan to leave Austria at that point too?

Well, as long as I was, yeah. When we were in America, they wrote us that we should try to get a sponsor. And we did. We found, finally, a relative of his. And he gave us an affidavit, you know. It took us so much work before.

Now, they just come in, and they are in, and that's it. But at that time, it took a long-- it took a lot of work and-- what should I say-- a big effort to find a sponsor, and do all the paperwork, and this.

Can you describe the day that Germany invaded Vienna? Do you remember what happened?

Well, when they invaded, that was, in my memory, around 6 o'clock, when Schuschnigg was on the radio. And then the German. And he was speaking to the people. And the Germans came in and threw him away. And this was a sign for all the Nazis to start to act.

We came to the street to go home after we heard this announcement. And every house had this long flag, from the roof almost to the ground, with the Nazi, with the swastika on every house. And there was a traffic stop and go. Every vehicle was on the road, because every Nazi had his-- what should I-- direction where to go and what to do. And that was the starting.

And then the next day, or two days later, I wanted to go to my in-laws. And I came. I was on the bicycle. And I don't know. At that time, they said, it was Hitler who came to Austria.

But later on, they said it was a double, because he didn't come himself. A double came. So I don't know whom I saw. But I saw one of the Hitlers. And I was all in the middle of these people. I'm telling you, it's frightening. It was frightening.

But I got there. And I wanted to shop something for my mother-in-law. And I did. And I went to the next jewelry store. Right away, a Nazi came in. As I told you, I have a bicycle. And I had a culotte. And somehow, I didn't look Jewish to him. So he came after me and said, you are not Jewish. How come you are shopping in a Jewish store? So I said, oh, yes, I'm Jewish. But he didn't do anything to me.

Were you at all scared after this invasion?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, because you were not safe in your own home. You were not safe.

Did you see any acts of brutality from the time of March till August?

Well, I saw people washing the sidewalk, and you know, and then Jews picketing their own stores, don't buy from Jew.

They were forced by the Nazis to carry those picket signs?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Did you know of any Jews in your town or your neighborhood that were rounded up by the Nazis?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And some disappeared. And it was scary.

People you knew?

Yeah, yeah.

Disappeared?

Disappeared, yeah.

Were there any other restrictions that you remember that the Nazis put into effect?

Listen, we restricted ourself, because we wanted to have as little contact with the Nazis, with outside in possible.

So you stayed home as much as you could?

Yes. Yes, and then we had to do things. I mean, we had to buy the fare for my parents-in-law to America, and to bring their papers in order. I mean, we had-- and then we were very fortunate. I was shortly married. I married in 1932. And this was 1938. And my furniture, we are built in very nice. Well, if you establish yourself, you think it's for a lifetime.

And my husband had a business friend. And his daughter was supposed to get married. And he was once in our house. And he bought our furniture, which he shouldn't have done. But he did it, anyhow. He paid for them.

Yeah. And then we had carpets, good carpets. Then we went to the guy who sold it to us, oriental carpets. And he said, well, I know what you have. And I pay you back the price you paid. So in certain people were really-- what should I say-- they has a conscience. They were nice people.

They had integrity?

Yeah.

You did not have any children by then?

No.

No. Listen, with Hitler around the corner, who would think to raise children?

In any case, it was you and your husband, basically.

Yeah.

And what kind of plans did your mother have for herself at that point?

When I left, she had no plans. I don't know. But after the Crystal Night, you know this notorious night, then she knew she cannot stay there. Then she had two brothers in England. She contacted them. And finally, she got to England. And then she came to America to stay with us.

So life for you between March and August must have been pretty hectic.

Oh, and how. And how.

Just trying to get rid of your--

And then, you know, the other little thing, everything was so, so hard to get. And the Jew was the last. So it took a lot of time to straighten things out the way they wanted it. And that's it.

Was food hard to get again at that point? Was it hard to get food again after the Nazis came? Or do you remember?

I guess we lost our appetite. I don't even remember that with the food. I guess food was here. We could get food, yeah.

Could you go to the coffeehouse anymore?

Oh, yes, we went. We went. Not for long, but just to check, and to see, and to talk to few people. And we stayed a lot at home, from home. Yeah.

What did your husband do about his business?

My mother had a factory, she just left it.

And your husband, what did he do?

My husband, yeah, he had a place where he had to store things. He just left it.

Couldn't sell it?

No, no, no, no.

Just had to abandon everything.

Listen, we left, each had one suitcase, \$10 board grant. Whatever we accomplished up to this date, in 1938, was left there.

The government would not let you take anything out? They wouldn't let you take any of your goods out? No.

No, no, no.

So when it came time for you to go, what did you do then? Where did you go first?

We went to Amsterdam. In Amsterdam-- yeah. And we had booked a passage. We could pay in Vienna with our money. And we had to wait, I guess, two weeks for the next boat. So I sold a ring. And that kept us for two weeks going. And that's it. Then we came to America.

Got off in New York?

To New York, yeah. And she came to my sister-in-law. And she had three children and her parents, which wasn't there. So really, it was too much. We were crowded. And it was 1938. It was the Depression.

My husband was very fortunate. He got a job pretty soon, because he knew a lot in his business. And he found a man who needed someone like him. And it was pure luck. And I couldn't find anything. So I started to work in households. But I brought my money home. And then when we knew he has a job, I have a job, we got an apartment. And my parents, you know, they moved to us. And it was all right.

Did either one of you speak English, you or your husband?

Well, I knew school English. Because in business college, I learned English. And I knew I could order a cup of coffee. I could understand. Up till now, I am very good in spelling. And this, I think, I learned back in Vienna. I think so.

And your husband, did he speak any English?

Not before, but he picked up pretty soon. Yeah. Yeah.

And when did your mother finally get to the United States?

My mother came in 1943. And she came right away to California. Yeah. She was at that time 70 years old.



And when did she leave Austria?

In 1939, but I don't know the exact date, because I was not here anymore. I know when she went to England. You see, this is very funny too. My mother had five children. And she was really never alone. And she went no place by herself. She was always with someone.

But when she had to leave Austria for the first time in her life, she really went by herself. And she was helped in Holland, I guess. They kept her overnight. And she couldn't use her ticket or something. But she made it. You know, under pressure, it's unbelievable what you can do. Yeah.

So as an older woman, she--

Yeah.

--had to jump in and do this.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I admired her very much for that. Yeah.

And your sister, when did she get to leave?

Well, they walked over the border too. They walked first to Switzerland. And from there, they went to France. And my sister was a dressmaker. And when you are a dressmaker, you always can make some money. They had a room rented. And she worked and things. And he helped too. He could sew. He picked him up. You know, under pressure, you do anything. And everything was all right till Hitler came to France.

Then they finally found a place in the attic where they could stay. And one day, the Gestapo came up to the attic, not for them, but to look for the son of the landlord, who-- I don't know, he did something to the Nazis. Anyhow, they were behind boards. And they saw the thing. You know, if somebody would have coughed, it would be their end.

So the son was there, but behind the boards?

No, my brother-in-law and my sister were behind the board.

Oh, they were behind the board.

And a Nazi came up to look for the landlord's son. But I don't know where the landlord's son was. I don't know. But anyhow, my sister got away with it. And well, my sister is four years younger than I. And when she came to America in-- I guess in 1940, she had white hair. That was living underground, under the pressure.

She had been living underground all that time, from '38 to '40?

No, not all the time. I don't in what year Hitler came to France. I don't know when he came. I forgot it. I can find out.

In any case, she was living underground. Well, probably '39. So she was living underground.

In '39, she left Vienna.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And from '39 to '40, she was in France?

I guess in the '40s, Hitler came to France.

And when did she get to the United States? 1940? When did-- maybe 1950. 1950, she came.

So she might have been in France throughout a good part of the war underground.

Yeah. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yeah.

Was she always hiding out in this attic room?

Hiding here and there.

And turned her hair totally gray.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So finally, in 1950, that was when the war was quite over for a while.

Yeah, then finally. I took a long time till--

Did they have any children?

No.

No. And so you got yourselves, you and your husband, jobs in New York. And eventually, you were able to get your own apartment. Did you never have children? You've never had children?

Well, I tell you, when we came to America-- no, I never had children. Every member of my family was in a different country. At that time, I worked in a factory already. I made a quarter an hour. And one air mail later to went to Europe cost a quarter. And then you had to send a little parcel, something to eat to them. And so we had so much on our head that-- and then in the meantime, I grew too old. That's it.

That's it.

That's the story.

Has this been a regret to you? Or has it been OK?

Well, I didn't know that it will turn out all right, you know. You come to a different continent, everything is so different. And the language-- I could talk a little bit, but still. And I don't know. At that time, I didn't have the guts for children. And then the time was over.

Yes.

I had always a lot of obligation in my life. So I don't know with that. You cannot tell. That's the way it is. And I have to deal with it, that's all.

Yes. Did you get any involvement with the Jewish community or in the Austrian community when you--

Well, I am Hadassah member for many years. As a matter of fact, I am a charter member with the Santa Rosa Hadassah. And I belonged to the temple. I am not fanatic, but I help whenever they-- I never say no if they ask me for something. That's it. And now, I don't offer so much help. I figure I did my share.

You did. So how did life go for you in New York? Did you get yourself adjusted?

Oh, life in New York, it was so-- yeah, it was all right. We had a lot of friends there. And what did we do? Let me. What did we do special in New York? Well, I didn't go to the movies. I know that. But we went sometimes to the theater.

When we came to New York, we went to evening school. And from evening school, they organized a trip to Washington, DC. That interested me. And I could go. And then after a while, when we were in New York, for \$40, we bought a car. And for \$20, we bought new tires for the car.

And the way we went, every three minutes, we were away from New York. And we saw everything around it. And I was eager to learn a little bit more about America, and how they live, what they are doing.

Were you getting any news from what was happening in Austria and Germany throughout those years of this?

Oh, yeah, I was always in contact with my family all the time. And then the news-- news is the best business. They sell news, you see. Today, we did OJ trial. They were big doing at the White House. But on the front line is OJ. And in the back page is the White House deal. And that's how it is.

So did you have any friends or relatives left in Austria that you could write to before the United States entered the war?

I tell you, the Jewish people left. And in the Gentile people, to tell you the truth, in the Austrian Gentile people, I was not interested, because they were worse than the German. They turned out to be real beasts.

When did you first realize that, that they were going to be worse than the Germans?

From everything that happened, everything that happened. As long as the Jews-- till 1938, even in Germany, the Jews had a fair-- not good, but they could have the business and the existence. Then they started to arrest after '38. The German started to arrest and Austrian arrested also. And they sent to the camps and those things. Oh, it was terrible.

Do you have any sense of-- when did your grandparents die? You never knew them, but they were alive in Galicia and Kraków.

I think so. My grandmother in Kraków was alive, was all right.

She was alive by the time of the war?

Yeah, I think so. But I really don't.

You never knew what her fate was, then?

No.

No.

No, no, no, no, no. So you were settling yourself in, trying to learn about America. And how long did you live in New York?

4 and 1/2 years.

And then what?

And then we decided, the family from Vienna decided, we go to Los Angeles. We load our vehicle, and we going to drive back West to Los Angeles.

Why Los Angeles?

I don't know. When I was a young girl, I heard once, it was Christmastime, I remember. And in Vienna, there was a paper with the first page, the beauties from Hollywood. They're all in bathing suit. And in Austria, the snow was that high. And I could not imagine how could it be so warm. And here we have it so cold.

Anyhow, that was a long time ago. And I always wanted to see Los Angeles. So one day, we figured on Los Angeles. But then that was in 1943 during the war.

There was a 45-mile speed limit on the route. And we didn't go 46, because my husband said, he doesn't want to be held back somewhere that he gets a ticket or something. He wants to come to California whenever the time comes.

And in California, he contacted a friend, which he knew. And his friend said, we should visit him. Since we were free to do whatever we wanted, we came to Santa Rosa, then stay here. Never went to Los Angeles. We liked it here.

I got a job right away. I was working on jeans, on a sewing machine, peace time-- bzz, bzz. And he had his truck. And he started a business to, a sack business to buy the sacks from the farmers, and have them repaired, and sell them again. And that was it. It was very good business.

How did he have them repaired?

Sewing, patching.

Oh, just that way.

And you have a sewing machine, you patch him up, and into a good sack again.

So you went to Santa Rosa as if you were going on the way to Los Angeles. Then you never got there.

Never got there.

That means I was in Los Angeles, all right, but I would never settle there.

Santa Rosa must have been a very tiny town at that point.

Yeah, it was a farm. People went in summer to pick-ups. And there were many poultry places. And I remember, on 4th Street was a bakery. And the salesman used to brag, he knows everybody in Santa Rosa. There's not one person he doesn't know. You see, he couldn't say that today.

No.

No. It was small city. Yeah.

So this was '43, you say?

'43. And where was your mother by then?

She came in 1943. Then we bought a ranch. Then we bought a ranch. I became a chicken raiser overnight. And you know, in Santa Rosa at that time was an army base and a navy base. And the wives of the army and navy people, they all came to Santa Rosa and lived there. So there was nothing to rent and nothing to buy.

Finally, we bought behind the El Rancho, very close to Santa Rosa, a ranch, which belonged to a man. He bought the ranch because he thought, when he has a ranch, he doesn't have to go to the army. But he had to go to the army and had to sell the ranch.

And there was a three bedroom home on the place. So we bought it. And we went to work. And one day, my husband

said, we have the equipment. We have everything. How would it be if we started raising chicken? Let's try it.

We got all the information necessary. And we fixed up the place. And we started the first race. And as it is, we had beginner's luck. The first race was just wonderful. We had made a nice profit, everything.

So we decided, if it's a good business, I stay home and tend to the chicken. My husband has a business. And this way, we work together. And I became a chicken raiser. We had our ups and downs in business, sure enough. But it worked all right.

Were you selling the eggs or the chickens?

No, no, no, no. We were meat birds, only meat birds. Yeah.

So that's what you did, you stayed home with the chickens?

Yeah, stayed home with the chicken. I was very happy. I said good morning, and then they all came running, because I brought the feed. So it was nice.

And by this time, 1943, your mother has come to the United States. But did you leave New York before she got here? Did you leave New York before your mother got to the United States?

No, no, no, no. We were already here in Santa Rosa. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine-- I called up a friend of mine and asked her to pick up my mother from the boat. And she lived in her house a little bit, a while. And we sent the money for the ticket. And then my mother came.

Did she come to California?

Yeah, came to California.

Did she live with you?

Yeah, she lived with us for a while. And then she lived with my brother, Max, who was not married. And he came to California too. Yeah.

And where were your other brothers?

Willy was in England. He was in England. But he came to America too-- in what year, I don't know. He had already two children. And he was in New York. He lived near the airport, near the LaGuardia airport. He made the plans.

Like an architect?

He made the plans.

Like a draftsman?

Draftsman. Draftsman, yeah.

And what about your other brother, Hans? He was a doctor. He came to New York. From the army, he came to California. And he contacted a few places about a job. And they told him-- yeah, he had a New York license. We have jobs, but for our boys, not for New Yorkers. So he had to go back to New York. And that's it.

He stayed there?

Stayed there, yeah.

When the war was over, did you or did anyone in your family ever get any reparations for the loss of your business or other things?

My mother got once about \$4,000. And my husband didn't get-- well, he died too young, he died too soon. And I get a pension. I had to pay a certain amount, I don't know, to fill the empty space, and I get my pension from Vienna.

When the war was over, I guess, by then, you heard through the news or people you knew of all the atrocities committed by the Germans. Did you ever have any opportunity to go back to Austria?

Yes. I was back-- as a matter of fact, I went with Renee. My husband never wanted to go. And I thought so too. But she really, she talked me into go. And I went. And I didn't contact people. It's a beautiful country, just too bad that they got so taken in by Hitler that they had to do it. Because that's on their conscience.

When you went back, when did you go back to Austria?

Last time I know for sure, I was 1984. But I was there maybe 1983-- '94, I was with-- then May '83, I was with my brother. My brother is married to a Hungarian wife. And we went in 1938 to Vienna and from there to Hungary. And I was there three or four times.

How was it for you the first time you went back?

First time, you know, I really-- I didn't talk. I went to places, but I didn't talk to the people, because it's against me.

Do you have any sense whether they're still antisemitic or not?

Oh, yes.

They are?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

How do you know that?

Well, we were once, for instance, in a restaurant. And we could talk. We talked English. And we could talk German. So somebody asked us, how come you speak so well German? And how well you speak English.

So somehow, we told him, 1938, we left Austria. So he put two and two together. It's not very hard. So he made excuses. We didn't know. The people did not know about it and so.

And well, I tell you, if it happened, if you are hurt, you don't like excuses. And they hurt many, many people. Yeah. I had two cousins, very nice ladies, they did no harm to anybody. They were killed by Hitler. You know, one day, they got a card, they have to come to the railroad station. And they were shipped to, I don't know, Auschwitz, over there, and never came back.

Did you have any other relatives that were murdered by the Germans?

At that time, I had only those two cousins in Vienna. And they were kids. Yeah.

When you went back to Austria, did you go to Germany also?

We went through Germany, because we came-- we arrived in Frankfurt. And we got a car there. And we drove to Austria, to Vienna.

But you didn't spend any real time in Germany then? Or did you? Did you have to spend time in Germany?

Well, I tell you, for instance, Renee-- Renee's roots-- her mother comes from Czechoslovakia. And she has other relatives in Czechoslovakia too. And when we were in Austria, every time when we were in Europe, we went to Czechoslovakia.

Now, when we were there, it was under Russian rules. You know, you have the impression that you cannot please there. Nobody is laughing. People are so tapped down. At least at that time, it was. When we left Czechoslovakia, we felt that we are in a different world. And only somebody who experienced it can tell you about it. Maybe it's silly. But that's the way it is.

I think I'll say here that Renee is your friend, Renee Newman, who is also a survivor--

Yeah.

--that you're talking about.

Yeah. You know, her mother comes from a place where there was a big Jewish community, with schoolings, and a synagogue, and everything. When we were there, two people-- two people left. That's all that's left from them. Can you imagine?

Two people out of about how many, do you think? How many? Two people out of about how many, do you think?

Oh, well, a big community.

Thousands?

Oh, yeah, a few thousands, a good few thousands, sure.

Could some of them have emigrated to other countries, too, that survived it?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, that could be, because there's always a way some slip away, you know, and you lose track or so. Yeah.

So how long were you in the chicken business?

From 1944 till '74, so 30 years. Yeah.

And you said your husband died early. When did he die?

He died in 1976. Yeah, 1976. He was 44 years old.

What did he die from?

He was a smoker. And he had emphysema. And that's it. But you know, when you were young, it was so stylish to smoke. And everybody smoked. And that's it.

So you had already retired from the chicken business by then, though.

Well, we were retired, yeah. And when he died, a short time later, I sold the ranch. I sold it, because the place was too big for me. And then no use. So I found an apartment. And ever since, I live in the same apartment, now 19 years.

And I have a happy life now. I cannot complain. I think I'm very lucky. I'm in good health. I can do what I want. I am independent. I haven't \$1 more than I need. I cannot spend too much, but that's OK. That's OK. I don't need much.

Have you ever gone to Israel?

I have been in Israel, yeah. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But now, my traveling time is over. Maybe for two, three days, yes, but otherwise, I like to stay close to home. Yeah.

In thinking about that part of history, do you think something like that could happen again, something like the Holocaust?

I hope and pray it won't happen. But you have no security. You have no security. Look what happened in Croatia and there, what happens in the whole world, how they kill people. I don't know. Nobody values life anymore. He doesn't value the others' life. His life, yes, but not the other's life. And this is a very, very bad time. I don't know. Nobody knows what the future will bring.

You say it's a bad time. Does it have in your mind any comparison to those days in the '30s?

You know, sometimes, I can't understand how a nobody, like Hitler was in the beginning, how he could get such a power over people. And even, I must say, in America, there were plenty for Hitler. Plenty.

So I don't know. I don't know what he had that so many people supported him and found his ideas so good. I don't know. I wish I knew. Then I would be smart. No, no.

We don't know what the future has in store for us. We just have to deal and be happy that in America, at least, they don't let the skinheads and those people grow too fierce. And they keep them down a little bit.

I was thinking back in those months when you were in Austria after Hitler came to power, that must have been a very fearful time for you.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Did you ever suffer any after effects, like nightmares or anything like that, from that period of fear?

I tell you, I was lucky. I was together with my husband. And this was a big relief. At least we were always together in our trouble. Many, many men were arrested. And the women were not together with their men. But I was lucky in this way.

So it wasn't overwhelming, then, I guess you're saying, to you. Wasn't overwhelmingly fearful.

You see, you always expected something like a bomb to explode. And you didn't know where to go, how to avoid it, because it was terrible time.

But you never had any nervousness, or nightmares, or things like that afterward?

Not me. But my sister, she has a nervous tic. Do you know about the tic? And this is from the time she lived underground and under pressure and so.

Is she still alive?

Oh, yeah, she lives in San Francisco here, in Post Street. Yeah.

And your brothers, are any of them alive?

My brother lives in New Jersey. This is the doctor. Unfortunately, he's now sick. But he lives there. And hopefully, he--

Your other two brothers, have they died?



They died, yeah.

Can you think of anything else that you might have forgotten that you would like to add or any stories you would like to tell?

I really don't know right now. I'm sure at night, I will have plenty to tell you, but you are not here anymore. That's what it is. Yeah. Do I want? I really-- ask more questions.

OK. Well, how did your mother adjust when she came to the United States?

Remarkable. My mother seemed to be a remarkable woman, because she always managed. And with five children, and you know, as it was, without business, when we had the business closed, and two boys in the army, and one in Italy, and one in Russia. And so I mean, somehow, she managed.

How did she spend her life after she got here, since was used to getting up? How did she spend her days when she got here? She was used to go into business and being active.

When she got here, then pretty soon, she moved to my brother, who was single. Then she was a housewife. She did shopping, she did cooking, she did cleaning. And she looked over his bills. She always figured it, whether it was right. So she kept herself busy. She was reading.

And evening, they were-- he had his place next to ours on Colgan Avenue. So my brother was a bridge player. He went evenings to play bridge. My mother came over to my house and watched television. And my husband went to junior college to courses. So everybody had something. You know, we really manage very well.

It sounds like it.

Yeah.

Is there any message you think you might want to leave after your experiences, anything you can think of?

You know, Hitler was so unexpected. I guess the whole world was surprised by his might by his doings, even if they tried to understand him in the beginning, all of a sudden he was at war with the whole world. And he was victorious. God forbid if he would have won. I am telling you, the ocean wouldn't be big enough to take all the dead people, what he would have thrown in the ocean.

I don't know. Nobody expected him to come to such a power and to be-- wherever he went, he was victorious-- in Netherlands, in France. The English were very much in trouble on account of him. He bombed London to pieces.

During those years of '33 to '38-- from '33 to '38, were any refugees coming from Germany to Austria?

You know, just to tell you one affair, we were in-- I don't know what, in 1930-- let's say it was 1935, we went to the countryside. And there, we met a German family. And they told us what's going on in Germany, and that, for instance, on the park, it was a sign, Jews and dogs not allowed, and things like that, and that they fired all Jews from the jobs, and all those things-- comparatively minor things, no killing yet.

And they went back to Germany. And they wanted to wait it out. They thought, Hitler will disappear, or something will happen. It will go away. And everyone can get back to normal life. But it didn't.

But their words made a big impression on you, it sounds like.

Well, you know, funny, my husband was always somehow clear-thinking and clear-seeing. He could see difficulties in business. He could see that they considered Jewish people as a second class of people and maybe even lower. So that

was no place for us, you know. But the Germans thought that, well, it will go away like a bad sickness. And then we are back at the normal place again. And it didn't.

Well, how about you? Did you feel ready to leave Austria at that time too? In 1938, did you think, yes, we need to leave Austria?

Well, I was eager to get out under the circumstances.

You were?

Yeah. Oh, very eager, living across the street from this place and seeing all what happened, oh, no, I was eager to get out. Eager to get out.

But your mother she had the business. And so she just didn't feel it was time.

She stayed. She stayed. We didn't know how it develops. Then came, in November, the Crystal Night. And that made every Jew, I guess, to decide, we have to leave. We have to leave. And some could leave. And the others went to the ovens, unfortunately.

Did your mother talk about what her life was like in Austria after you left?

No, no, not much. She had to leave her apartment. And she moved to my sister. What she did all the time was, I don't know, really. No. I don't know.

Well, let me just ask you again if you have anything you want to say as a message to people about those times. If you don't, that's fine. But if you do, feel free.

No, I don't think. What should I say?

Whatever you'd like.

If you want to live a good life, be good yourself. Be good to everybody else. I don't know. Just don't have any bad thoughts and don't do anything bad. Then you have peace of mind. And that's it.

Well, thank you very much. I want to thank you very, very much for coming and doing this interview.

Oh, you're very welcome. If you get something out of it, I don't know.

Yes, we very much appreciate you doing this.

OK. What is it? Oh, it's 2 o'clock.

OK.

OK, well, after we got finished, then you remembered that when you went back to Vienna to visit, you were rather astounded when you were looking into the Jewish community.

Yeah. At my last visit in Vienna, I went to all the places where I knew there was a synagogue. Right now, there are houses there. There is not even a sign that there was ever a synagogue there. So they just don't want any thought of the Jews. That's all.

Do you think they don't want any thought of the Jews who were so abused in the '30s, or they don't want it now, either?

Well, I think they feel guilty. They feel guilty. And it is not a pleasant thought to have people around which were

harassed, which were mistreated, their relatives were killed. So the less Jews that are around, the less they think about it. And they feel freer without them than with them.

Do you know if there is any kind of a Jewish community in Vienna now?

Jewish?

Is there any Jewish community left in Vienna now?

There is. There is the one synagogue in the inner city. And I guess they couldn't destroy it because it's so between the houses. And this one is left.

And right now, they have services. But there is the police in front. And they look into your pocketbook, whether you have a weapon or so. It is, what should I say-- the air is not as free as it used to be. There is one.

And about the Jewish people, I was in touch with a few Jewish people. They complain that they are too few there. And there is not much to do. If you want to have Jewish company, it's hard to get it. But that's the way it is. Who wants to live there among enemies? It's not a pleasant thought.

Are the Jews that live there now, do they complain about being harassed in any way?

I don't think so. I don't think so. Officially, it's not allowed, because they welcome Jews back. They want them back. But only a few come, yeah.

Do you know whether Austria has hosted Jews from different towns back again, like Germany has?

I heard about it, but I never went.

Were you never invited?

Well, you have to apply to get the invitation, because they don't know where you are.

And you had to apply?

I didn't apply, yeah.

Also, we were talking about, and you say you're willing to expand on, the idea of whether something like the Holocaust could happen again. Or as you just saw in the paper, what's the world coming to?

Yeah, what's the world coming to? If the scientists cannot give the answer, and they are smarter than I am, so how could I give an answer?

You could give the same kind of answer, I suppose.

We don't know. We have to deal with it when it comes. And we have to be more forceful if an enemy like that comes, that we keep him down from the beginning. We don't let him grow like we let Hitler grow.

And as far as I read, the authorities, like President Roosevelt, Churchill, and all the other big shots, they knew very well what happened to there. And the Jewish communities here, they asked them to bomb the railroad station so that they cannot bring people there. But they didn't do it.

So they have had other reasons, military reasons, and so they had tons of dangers to it. I don't know whether it's true, but I read an article that once, Churchill got an offer from the Nazis. For a certain price, they will release a million Jews.

And the answer he gave was supposed to be-- I was not there-- what would I do with a million Jews? So that's the way it is. So we don't know what the future has in store for us. We just can hope for the best. And that's it.

Well, here you are. You've lived almost a century. Do you see that--

Unbelievable.

Do you see any differences over that period of time in the way people behave?

Well, I tell you, under the monarchy, under the Kaiser, people had to behave. Like here, you have free speech. I, my opinion is, for instance, that OJ is one of the lowest person that exists. You see, under the monarchy, you couldn't say anything like that. You couldn't express what you thought, because the other could say, it's an insult. And he could sue you for insult and so on.

People behave better under pressure. But they behaved. I had never any difficulties under the Kaiser, yeah. You know? I worked, in 1918, in Vienna, in a place near the Hofburg, the seat of the Kaiser.

And during our lunch time, we went to see the changing of the guards. And maybe a week before, Kaiser Karl resigned, I was there. And a lot of people were there. And the Kaiser and his wife came on the balcony. And we all were-- at least I was very much for him. For me, he was my Kaiser. I was 17 years old. And they applauded him.

And a week later, we went to another place in the same neighborhood, where the Republic was called out. As a matter of fact, and I saw the same people I saw there. So I figured, I know the people have no-- what shall I say-- no conviction.

Either they are for one side or they're for the other side. But that's it. They are with the majority. Here, they applauded the Kaiser, they acclaimed him. A week later, they claimed the republic and were glad that they got rid of the Kaiser, the same people.

Do you think anything's different now? Do you think people are the same or changed?

No. No, no, no. There, you see, that's it. And then there's one thing, the people like the winner. Whoever wins, that's my man. That's it. So I don't know.

Did you ever get any sense of what the Austrians felt about the fact that Hitler had come out of them? I don't know, no. I don't know.

Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything else you would like to add?

I don't think so. I don't know. Well, those were trying times. And I'm glad it's over. And I was quite sure that he killed himself in the bunker, because a man with such a-- what should I say-- he wants to be always on top. And he could see that everything was gone now. He knew he couldn't survive.

I knew that. And was so sure he killed himself that he would not show up somewhere in Argentina or so, like people suggested. I knew that was the end of him. Yeah. And thank god that it was the end from him. And I hope we forget about Hitlerism altogether. And the world will be better from now on. Yeah.

Well, thank you.

You're welcome. OK.

Thank you very, very much.