

--person's name or the next interview's name.

OK. I would say any time you're ready, Barbara.

OK.

You can begin.

Today is June 21, 1990. I am Barbara Harris interviewing Anna Stern.

Ellen. Ellen. E-L-L-E-N.

Oh, Ellen. Ellen Stern for the Holocaust Oral History Project at Temple Beth Israel Judea in San Francisco. Assisting with the interview today is Burton Meyer. OK. Mrs. Stern, can you start by telling me the date you were born and in what city?

I was born June 3, '24 in Cologne, Germany.

And can you tell me a little bit about your parents.

Well, my parents were quote, unquote, "old Germans" and have lived there all their lives and their parents before them. And my father was a prosperous businessman.

What kind of business did he have?

He was in manufacturing of paper.

And what was his name?

Paul, Paul Heyman. H-E-Y-M-A-N.

OK. And your mother?

My mother was Hedwig Heyman, and she came from Berlin and married into Cologne.

And did you have much family in Cologne?

Well, no. Most of my family was in Berlin. I think I only had a grandmother in Cologne.

Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood? You said before the interview you're an only child.

Well, I was an only child. I had a very nice and unremarkable childhood until '33 when Hitler came to power. And then gradually, all our privileges were being revoked and I had to change schools and had to go to a Jewish school, and could not play tennis, couldn't go swimming, could not go to the opera anymore, all the things we used to do.

What kind of school had you gone to prior to--

Well, I went to a Catholic school and then I changed into a Jewish school.

That's interesting. You were in a Catholic school. Why did your parents put you in a Catholic school?

Well, it was in the neighborhood, and it was a good school.

How were you treated at that school? Did you have a lot of friends and were you accepted?

At the Catholic school? Yes. Yes. With lots of friends, and we were very integrated.

So you didn't really think there was any difference between Jews?

No, no, no, no. We were not very Jewish-oriented.

Did you celebrate any of the Jewish holidays in your home growing up?

No. My parents celebrated Christmas.

Which was very common in Germany in that time.

I believe it was. In the circle of friends, it was common.

You were about 9-years-old when Hitler became chancellor.

Yes.

How quickly did you notice-- how soon was it that you noticed things beginning to change, and what were the first sign?

Within a couple of years, however, I think things changed radically.

You said that you had to change schools. Were you thrown out of your school?

Yes. Yes. There were edicts came down that we had to leave schools. That we could not have Gentile employees anymore or else I think-- they had to be over 55 or so, above a certain age.

Did your father have Gentile employees?

Yes.

And what about in your home?

Well, we had a housekeeper, and she also had to leave. My mother had to do something in the house. Excuse me.

Do you remember-- was your housekeeper someone who had been with the family a long time?

Yes.

Was that a very difficult--

Yes, it was a difficult situation but it had to be done. There was no choice. But at this time, we did not believe that Hitler would stay in power. We thought it was a transient thing.

Was there much discussion about what was happening around you in your home?

I'm sorry?

Was there much discussion with your parents, between your parents and the other adults around you?

Things at this time were not-- they were not discussed in front of children. Whatever that was discussed was-- I was not

privity to the information.

You have friends in the Catholic school, did they just stop seeing you?

Yes, because there was a fear. They didn't like to stop seeing me but it had to be done because they, again-- they had to join the Hitler party and they could not be seen with Jews.

What did you think of the Jewish school when you began going there?

I liked it. I mean, it was a way of life and that's the way it was, so. I think I was quite comfortable there.

But you said prior to that, your family had been very sociable, had gone to the opera and things. You could even get opera tickets then.

Yes. But all this stopped after '33 or '34.

What about your father's business, how was he affected by the change?

He was very much affected because he gradually had to-- he lost his employees and he had to stop working. And in, let's see, '35 or '36, he tried to re-establish his business in Belgium. And it was almost completed, and the last minute something went sour, I don't recall what it was now, and it didn't work out.

Did the whole family move to Belgium?

The whole family was supposed to move to Belgium. This would not have been immigration, it just would have been a transfer.

You said he had a paper mill.

Yes.

What was the name of his business?

I think it was under the name of his father, my grandfather, Godfried Heyman.

So did you ever go to Belgium while--

Many times.

While the arrangements were being made for this transfer.

Mhm. Well, we had-- also we had family in Belgium and we used to vacation there. And I spent quite a number of times in Belgium.

What happened in 1935 when the business transfer was apparently not going well?

Absolutely nothing. My father had to live on his income.

Where did you have income from?

Well, he was quite well-to-do.

How did your daily life change? Did you have to move out of your home, or?

We moved out of our-- we had a home and we moved out of that into an apartment-- into a nice apartment, I must say.

And your belongings?

We kept all our belongings at this time.

What was life like in the apartment? Your father was no longer working.

No, but my father was kept busy. And there wasn't really too much of a change in our daily life.

What about your mother? What was she like? Did she work at all?

No, my mother never did work. My mother wasn't brought up to work and never believed in women working. All she did was play bridge.

And how did her life change after 1935?

Her life really didn't change too much. Her life only started to change radically after we emigrated and went to Shanghai.

When did it-- you said originally that your parents felt nothing was going to happen, and it would be a passing.

That changed thirty-- the Kristallnacht November '38 brought on this change. My father was hidden by a Gentile lawyer of his and so he was not deported. But then we were strongly advised to leave the country as soon as possible.

We had an affidavit for America. However, that would have taken many, many years. So the only avenue open to us was Shanghai, because it was an open port at the time.

Do you remember much about the preparations that were made to get you aboard a ship?

Well, we sold almost everything. And had a hard time getting tickets, which we finally did secure. And we could not take very much along.

We did not dare to take money along or jewelry because you heard lots and lots about lots of people who got caught and were put to death or in concentration camp. So my father did not want to take a chance.

At this time, I was supposed to go to England with my school but my parents didn't want to separate the family.

Do you remember which ship and when you left for Shanghai?

Yes. I think it was the SS Victoria, and we left through Italy, Genoa.

What were you allowed to take with you when you left?

Well, as far as money, I think only a very limited amount. And hardly any jewelry because you had to give all the jewelry you owned to the German government, silver you owned, valuables.

So actually, they were only personal possessions like clothing and things like that. We could not take any household articles with us.

Did your father try any other way to get money out of the country so that it would be waiting for you?

No, we didn't at all.

So you sold everything and left everything behind.

Exactly.

It must have been very difficult on your mother.

Tell me.

How did she adjust to the leaving all her possessions behind?

She had no choice. Not very well, but there was no choice.

What was the date that you left for Shanghai?

For Shanghai, we left in '39. I think it was May '39. No, February '39.

Was it-- how did you get to Genoa?

By train.

And did you have any trouble at the border?

No.

No.

No.

Do you remember how you were feeling? You were just a young girl.

Well, I was excited because I was young and didn't know what was happening. My parents were very unhappy.

This wasn't your first trip on a train?

Oh, no. No.

Let me back up a minute and ask you a little bit about Kristallnacht. You said that's what really brought it home to your parents.

Right.

To leave. What do you remember of Kristallnacht?

Well, I was not at home. At this time, I was in a Jewish boarding school in Hanover. And what I remember is that all the gates of that school were closed because the rector had some ins with some high ranking SS officers and that told them close all the gates and don't let anyone out.

And the next day, we heard about the burning of the synagogues. And I called my parents and I found out that my father was safe.

When did you go to Hanover, originally?

Well, I think that was the last-- must have been '38.

And it was a girls' school?

No, it was a coed school with a boarding school.

Was that a pleasant memory for you being in the boarding school?

Yes, it was very nice.

You were sent there-- were most of the children also there because they couldn't, no longer go to--

That's correct.

So at what point did you come home and rejoin your parents?

Well, after Kristallnacht. It must have been either end of '38 or beginning of '39.

Did they ask you to come home?

Yes.

Did you--

Yeah, go ahead.

Did you know why they wanted you to come home?

Yes.

Were there other children at the school leaving?

Yes. Yes there were. Lots of other children at this point, leaving too.

Do you remember much discussion among the children? Can you tell me about--

Yes. There was a lot of discussion and fear. Parents of some children were put into concentration camps at Kristallnacht.

Concentration camp must have been a strange new word at that time. Did you know much about the concentration camps?

No, I didn't. I just learned in a hurry.

And what was your information about what concentration camps were?

A prison. Prison. We did not know of any kind of atrocities. I mean, that came out later. At this time, we only knew that people were sent to prison into those concentration camps.

Did you know anyone who was taken away on Kristallnacht?

Yes, friends of ours.

Were there attempts to rescue them or to get word to them?

Yes, of course there was. At this time, there were-- Jews leaving to paid a certain amount of money and promised to be out at a certain date, very often the very least.

Tell me a little bit about the trip to Shanghai. You were young and on a ship, was that your first trip?

It was the first trip on a ship. It was beautiful because we went first class. It was very luxurious and I had a very good time.

However, when we got to Shanghai I recall there were big trucks waiting for us and we were put into a camp, which was not quite that pleasant. There were huge rooms with bunk beds and 30, 40 people to one room.

Do you know the name of the camp?

Well, they were called-- they were in a designated area in the Chinese part of the city, because Shanghai was divided into several quarters and this was the Chinese part of it, and this was a Ward Road Home, Ward Road Home. That was the name of the camp.

Can you describe life in that camp a little bit and how long-- you want to tell us how long you were there.

We were there, I think, a few months, maybe three or four months until my father found work and was able to move out into one-- I think we had a two-room place then.

At the camp, that huge kitchen was like, it was ran like an army kitchen. So it was very difficult to transition, not as much for me than for my parents.

Some people have told me it was a little like an adventure if they were children at the time.

Yes, definitely. But as I said, it depended upon the age.

And what was your daily life like? Were there schools or was there some kind of [CROSS TALK]

Yes, there were schools. And the daily life fell into a routine. There was schooling. And we had-- there were lots of young people. We had a lot of fun.

What kind of things did you do to entertain yourself?

Entertainment-- talking, playing ball, anything that didn't cost money.

And they were all in this--

Excuse me.

Bless you. They were all in the same situation?

Exactly.

Did you make any friends in the camp that you have retained?

Yes. Yes. I made friends since everybody was in the same situation.

Was there anyone in particular that became a special friend during those difficult times?

Not at this particular time. No.

And what kind of work did your father find when he did find work?

My father did manual work. He had to work as a watchman. His English was rather poor so he had to do some manual work. He tried to get into some export business, but it didn't work out.

And your mother, what did she do during this time? Not much, really. She had no skills. She just tried to keep house as well as possible. It was very difficult on those circumstances.

You said it was a two-room apartment.

Well, I wouldn't call it apartment. There was-- first there were two rooms, two small rooms, and the community kitchen. And later on when the war progressed and money got even more scarce, we only had one room for the family.

So it was more of like a boarding house than a--

More or less. A very primitive boarding house.

How long were you in Shanghai?

I wasn't even-- we left Shanghai in '47.

So you were there during the war. Were you getting news of the war from where you were?

Well, we were there-- yes, we were there during the Pacific War and we got some news via Red Cross of the World War.

How did the war affect you living so close to the Pacific War? What was the effect in China Shanghai?

Very much so. It was-- the Japanese interned us. And they were very cruel. And in order to work outside, we were in this what you call designated ghetto, designated area. And in order to go downtown to work, you had to have a pass.

In order to get this pass, you had to apply at the police station and stand in line for hours and hours under the boiling sun until you were seen by a Japanese official who either granted that pass or did not grant it however the mood strike him.

Very arbitrary.

Absolutely.

At what point did the Japanese take over in Shanghai?

Well, I think the Pacific War started in '41, if I remember correctly. And that's when they took over.

So you had-- 1940 was the most normal year you spent.

Yes. Yes.

At that point, was your father making enough money for food and for--

Well, he was making-- yes, he made enough to scrape by.

What kind of things were you eating?

Well '40, we still ate normally. After the war started, we did not eat normally because then there was hardly any food available or else the food that was available was very, very expensive.

So the HIAS, which was an organization, organized-- they called it the kitchen fund. So they are organized community



kitchens. And we ate somehow.

What kind of things did you eat?

[INAUDIBLE] think of that. Lots of grains, white bread with big pieces of sand in it.

Sand?

Yeah. It was gritty between your teeth.

Very little meat. I remember after the war, a big treat was half an ounce of butter we got for dinner or half an ounce of coffee, which was a special treat. So we really didn't eat very well.

No butter and coffee during the war, not even rationed?

Well-- no it wasn't rationed. It was available, but it was very, very expensive and really only few people could afford that.

Was there a black market?

Yes.

Did you have any dealings with it or did you know of it?

No, I didn't.

Your father wanted to stay away from that kind of thing?

I don't think he was really smart enough for the black market. You had to have a certain know-how, and I don't think-- he was a typical German who only knew a straight laced way, and I don't think that worked in the black market in Shanghai.

No, I wouldn't imagine that it would. So whatever was by the book is the way he--

Exactly.

At this point-- so by 1941, you were moved to a different place.

No, we did not move but we had the choice to move to a different place then. No, I'm sorry. 1941, you're right. We were moved to-- you had to live in that designated area.

How were you notified that you had to move?

Well, the Japanese let you know in no uncertain terms.

And you packed up everything you had?

Well, we lived in that Chinese area ever since we arrived in Shanghai. But people who lived outside the area had to pack up and moved into that designated area.

Was it only Jews who lived in the designated area or was it all foreigners?

No, no, no, there were Chinese and lots of Europeans, of course. And they made-- out of a Chinese quarters, they made a little European city. They established coffeehouses, bakeries, grocery stores. So there was a mini European city.

And you were confined to that ghetto.

You were confined to that ghetto unless you had that pass, as I mentioned before, to work outside of the ghetto.

Did your father obtain one of those passes?

My father didn't, but I did because I did clerical work and I worked outside of the ghetto.

How did you come to-- did you finish school in 1940?

Well, I finished school in Shanghai and I went to I went to a business college.

And how long were you in school at the business college?

Well, I don't think I finished it. Until I got a job, which was around '41 or so.

Can you tell me about the day, particularly what happened to you when you went down to get your pass?

When I went down to get the pass, yes, you had-- as I said, you had to wait in the boiling sun. And there was a little, ugly Japanese sitting behind the huge desk. He looked at you and he said, you are a spy. Said, I'm not a spy. I know you are a spy. I hate you.

And then he said, well, this time you can-- it was an intimidation tactic. At this time, you can get the pass. So sometimes you are lucky, get a pass for three months. Sometimes you got for six months and sometimes only for one month. Completely arbitrary.

And how long was your pass for?

Well, this also depends. However the mood struck the Japanese.

So you got a first pass for--

Well, I had it for six months, and then I also had for three months, and only for a couple of weeks, too.

Who did you go to work for?

I worked for an export firm.

How did you find a job and what kind of work were you doing?

Secretarial work. I think I got it through the Joint Committee.

What is the Joint Committee?

The Joint Committee was a board of old Shanghai lenders, mostly Jews, who had connections with the Chinese community, with the foreign community.

And was their only function to help people find jobs?

To help people, period. Yes.

How did you come in contact with them?

Well, they were a well known establishment. So I applied.

Who did you work for during those years?

Well, one was [PERSONAL NAME] who was a foreigner. I think he was British. And then I also worked for a Chinese, because at this time it gave a Chinese importer status to have a foreigner, white girl sitting in the office.

And how much money did you make and how were you treated during--

I was treated very well and I made enough to make a living.

And you still lived with your parents at this time?

Yes, I lived with my parents until I got married in '45.

How did you meet your husband?

I met my husband in Germany, in that particular school, the boarding school. He was a student there too.

And what is his name?

I'm sorry?

What is your husband's name?

Kurt.

And how did you find each other in Shanghai?

He knew I was living there so he looked me up.

Did you two know before you left Germany that you were going to the same place?

No.

Had you written to him or had it--

No. No. I just knew him.

And he looked you up. Did you started dating--

And then yes, we started dating and got married.

Did you move into your own house at that point, in your apartment?

Well, it was, I don't know. That was a room about the size of that table. That was the one house or apartment.

I guess it afforded a little privacy though.

Yeah.

With kitchen facilities, joint kitchen facilities again?

Kitchen facilities, no because there was no gas. So most of the time, we had to eat out. We ate at my parents'.

They had a little, like, a hibachi in the front hall which you could use.

Pretty primitive.

Yes, I'll say.

It must have made you very creative about survival.

Yes. But since everybody was in the same boat, you really didn't feel so bad about it.

Did his parents have--

No, his parents did not-- they did not, couldn't leave Germany. But they were waiting until their son's, husband got out and his father got out. And they wanted their sons to be established and they didn't want to leave everything they had. And so it was too late for them. So they went to Auschwitz and were gassed.

Where was his family from and what were their names?

His family was from a small place in Westphalia, [PLACE NAME] and their name was Stern.

Do you know their first names?

Leo Stern, Anna Stern.

So he and his brother came out together?

No, they did not come out together. I think his brother came out first and then my husband came out.

And what kind of work did your husband do when he came to Shanghai?

He worked as a painter, house painter.

And how old was he at the time when you got married?

When we got married, he was 24.

Did you continue working once you were married?

Yes. Yes.

Tell me, what was your daily routine like? What was the most-- what were the most difficult parts of living in Shanghai at that time?

It's a difficult-- the most difficult parts were the air raids. It was a tremendously scary experience because I went to shelters.

Were they frequent?

Frequent enough. Yes. Yes. Actually, yes. I mean, those what the Americans want.

And with the one scored a direct hit by mistake.

Where were you at the time?

I was in our apartment and we ran over to see whether my parents were OK. And on the way, I'll never forget it, we saw a Chinese dead, half dead, dismembered.

Were your parents OK?

My parents were OK.

It must have been very nerve racking. How did you cope with that day in and day out?

They have no choice, you cope.

Did you have a network of friends by then in Shanghai?

Yes, we had. Yes, we had very good friends.

Were they mostly Jewish?

Only.

Only Jewish.

Jewish, German, or Austrian.

That must have been something of a change since when you were a child you were used to a more mixed group of people.

Yes, but, I mean, on my formative years they were all people with the same background I had, more or less.

Was there a religious community also in Shanghai? Was there a shul or--

Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah, we had synagogues.

Did you participate in the Jewish life at all in Shanghai?

Not very much. We went-- my husband went to synagogue, I never did.

Was he from an Orthodox family or--

From a conservative.

Did you have children when you were--

Not in Shanghai.

Not in Shanghai. What do you remember about 1945 when the war ended?

When the war ended, a tremendous relief. We were very happy, very carefree because we could see that the future opened up.

What did you think you would do?

Well, go to the-- my husband had a family in the States and at this time we were married, and we wanted to come to the United States.

Was that an easy thing to do at that time?

Yes. Yes, because he had an affidavit. And within two years, we were on our way. After the war, my husband worked for the American army and things were very, as I said, very carefree and a lot of fun.

What kind of work did he do?

He worked at the PX.

Suddenly you had things available to you--

That's correct. Even C-Rations were good.

Tell me about coming to the United States. When did you--

When we came to the United States we were supposed to go to Philadelphia because our family was in Philadelphia. But when we arrived in San Francisco, it was one of those glorious May mornings. Everything was bathed in sun. And said, we stay.

And that was it. And there were lots of employment opportunities in '47.

Were you fluent in English when you left, before you left Germany?

When I left Germany, I knew English but I wasn't that fluent. In Shanghai, of course, I became fluent.

And so you found that that May morning in San Francisco was very deceptive. They weren't all like that.

It was gorgeous. And I never did regret it.

It is a beautiful city. And how did you establish yourself here? You didn't have any family here.

No, we didn't have any family. Well, as I said, there were lots of employment opportunities. We found an apartment right away. We both found work. And that was it.

What kind of work did you two find?

Well, I would start work in an insurance company and my husband was a painter. He worked for Solinsky and Company.

And do you have a family here when you got here?

At this time?

You raised your--

Then, yes, I had family here.

And how many children--

I have two daughters.

How did your wartime experience change your perspective on life?

Well, it's changed and all of us were changed our perspective as to food. I will never throw out food.

Yes.

And that hasn't changed.

Were you very hungry when you were in Shanghai?

Yeah. Yes.

Were you hungry?

Yes, hungry.

How did you find the reception in the United States when you--

Very nice, very warm. People from San Francisco worked with us, people who arrived in '33. And they were very helpful. They showed us around. They showed us-- they gave us some pointers where to look for apartments.

But we really didn't need any help because we had jobs right away and were able to establish ourselves.

Did you get involved with the Jewish community when you first came here?

No, not really. No.

How did your experience under the Nazis change or did they change your feelings about Judaism?

Well, I became much-- yes, I believe I was very much aware that I'm a Jew, not the religious aspect.

If anything, did you tell your children about your experiences-- your two daughters-- about your experiences in--

Well, I told them all about our experiences. My daughter went to Germany once and did not feel very comfortable there due to my talking.

At what age did you start telling them about--

I'm sorry?

At what age were they when you began talking about how it was?

Well, I was, I mean, since they were maybe 10, 9, 10, something like that.

And did you celebrate-- here in the United States, did you celebrate the Jewish holidays?

Always.

So that was a big change from--

Well, I was not in favor of celebrating Christmas ever since I was thinking. Because I remember we had the Christmas tree and I made a big fuss about it. I didn't want it in the house.

How did your parents react to that?

Well, they were-- I think they complied with my wishes the next year.

Why was it that you didn't want a Christmas tree in your house?

Because at this time I was active in a Zionist organization.

Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Not really too much. It was a [NON-ENGLISH] if I recall. And it was a fad.

How did you first hear about it going to a Catholic school?

Well, that was after the Catholic school. It was in the Jewish school. It was the thing to do.

But you never wanted to go to Israel yourself?

Not really. It was a more social thing than anything else.

[INAUDIBLE] sort of film. Do you remember-- I know you were young but when Hitler was running for office, do you remember political rallies or--

Certainly, yes.

What were those like?

Scary. Scary. Very noisy. Very scary. You did not dare to go out on the streets. I remember those rallies.

At the time, did your parents think that he was going to be elected?

Well, they already can't-- that I wouldn't know

Was your father in the German army in the First World War?

Oh, yes. Iron Cross.

Do you know where he served?

No. Yes, I do. I think at the French-- near France somewhere. That's why he did not understand that anything could happen to him because he was an officer decorated with the Iron Cross.

Was he in like the reserves at the time?

No, no, no. He was active.

He was an active army.

He was active army.

And then he was-- was he asked to leave the army after the Nazis took over?

Well, no, after the war was--

--already through.

He was through.



When you said that your privileges were curtailed, did Gestapo or police actually come to your house and tell you not to do these or?

No. No those were this was said over the radio that Jews cannot have, for instance, employees younger than this age. No one-- police did not come to the house. Those were all orders. Mostly we heard it over the radio or of the newspaper.

And you accepted it. I mean--

Yes.

I think on Kristallnacht when your father was advised--

To disappear.

He was told before Kristallnacht?

Yes, I mean the afternoon of Kristallnacht, he was advised to go into hiding.

And was this by a non-Jewish--

That was by a non-Jewish lawyer.

When you first heard of concentration camps and people being killed, how did you hear about it, initially?

Word of mouth. Yeah, people were whispering.

Before the Nazis took over, did you generally feel that the legal system in Germany was fair?

Well, I mean, I had no opinion but my parents felt very comfortable. They felt very German.

When you were on a train going from Germany to Italy, were there German soldiers on the train?

Yes. Yes, there were German soldiers on the train.

Were you bothered by them?

We were-- well, no, I mean they scrutinized our papers. We were scared, but nothing happened.

When you first arrived in Shanghai, when the boat landed, who met you? Were there Chinese army troops?

No, no, no, no. People from the Jewish community in Shanghai met us. Old Shanghai lenders, as they called themselves. And they transported us to our quarters because we all-- we came there without any money, without any means of support.

The camp of the port that you were originally at, was that-- who was running that camp?

Those people, those Shanghai lenders. And that, this was mostly American money.

When you were in Shanghai, what was the language used? Like when you were working, did you speak German at the job?

No. When I was working, I spoke English. At the house, mostly German.

And did you have contact with the Chinese there?

Yes.

And what language did they speak?

English.

Did you speak Chinese at all?

A little bit.

Were you in Shanghai when the Japanese army actually entered and took over?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, during the time of Pearl Harbor. Yes.

Yes. What was that like?

Very, very scary because all of a sudden you saw Japanese with an open bayonet running around the streets and shouting orders in Japanese which you don't understand. Very scary.

What did you-- what time of day was it? Where you at home or at work?

No. That was in the early morning hours when they attacked Pearl Harbor. I mean, we heard about it. Or when they sunk it. Because they sunk several ships in Shanghai harbor. This was in the very early morning hours.

So you were home with your parents?

I was home with my parents.

What did you do? Just stay indoors or?

Nothing. I mean, waited until we heard something.

What kind of activity was there in the streets as the Japanese were coming in or people--

Well, people were milling around and then Japanese shoot them into the homes because the Japanese know what was going on. So it was a couple of days of utter confusion.

Was there a curfew initially?

Yes, there was a curfew. And the curfew was enforced by our own people. The Japanese recruited young Jewish men and they had to enforce the curfew.

What did they do to enforce it? Were they given guns? Did they patrol?

I believe they gave-- no, they didn't have guns. I think they had clubs. But they had to enforce it because they, again, would have been subject to severe punishment by the Japanese.

When the Japanese were in charge, did Nazi officials ever come and visit where you were?

Not to my knowledge.

Were there are rumors that the Japanese were going to--

Yes, of course. They were very friendly with the Germans.

The company that you worked for, the export import company, was that a special target for American bombers?

No. No.

What type of exporting and importing did you do?

I don't recall that. I already don't.

And then you were also in Shanghai when the American-- did the American army then entered to take over from the Japanese?

Yes.

Was that a more peaceful--

Yeah, it was wonderful.

What's the word-- did you hear about the atomic bomb being dropped or?

That was much later. We heard much later about that.

What about the emperor of Japan's surrender, were you notified of that?

Also not immediately, until a few days later.

Did the Japanese peacefully transferred authority to the Americans when they came in?

Yes, to the best of-- well, no. Was it peaceful? No. Not peaceful. They had pockets of resistance.

So there was actually street fighting?

Yes. There was some unrest going on. Also what happened for instance that the Jewish people, the Germans got hold of those Japanese officials who were in charge of giving the passes and they wanted to stone them. And I think one got killed, the other one escaped.

Do you know what happened to the other, the Japanese officials?

Yeah, they were imprisoned by the Americans.

Was there any trials of them in Shanghai that you--

Not that I recall.

You never testified?

No. Uh-uh.

When you got to San Francisco, did you have any contact with the organized Jewish community in San Francisco?

Not when we-- well, we joined the temple. Go ahead.

As recent arrivals, did you need any help--

Well, as a recent-- yes, as recent arrivals, they call it the people from '33, Germans who came to the States in '33. They were very helpful.

How did you get in touch with them? Did you not--

There were right there when we arrived. They were the right there.

Did you have any trouble with the American authorities because you decided not to go on to Philadelphia?

Oh, no. No. All I had to sign is that no one's responsible for me. That's all.

And then, was your husband-- from being a painter-- was he involved with a lot of the building up of San Francisco?

Yes. Yes. He was at this time, he was very busy and he worked for a large outfit, and he had been always working.

Did Dolinsky build houses where there had been just sand dunes?

Yeah, out in corner. Mm-hmm. You mentioned that-- I think your words that after the Americans came and liberated Shanghai, that you were, quote, "living it up." In what way were you able to live it up?

Well, buying things which you were not able to-- getting nylons. I remember that was a big thing-- little luxuries which we never had and freedom.

You could move all over the city?

You could go wherever you wanted to go.

What about your parents? Did they come to the United States with you?

They came to the United States, I think, a year after we-- yeah, I think they came '48.

How well did they-- were they living pretty comfortably in Shanghai once the war was over?

Comfortably, I wouldn't call it. My father sold everything during the war that was he had. So they scraped by.

What did he do with the money from selling the family's possessions?

Eat.

So it was mostly used up-- or was all used up--

Exactly, yes.

--before you got to Shanghai?

Mm-hmm.

And was he still working when he came to this country?

When he came to this country, yes, he started to work. He worked in janitorial outfit. But then he got some restitution from Germany. And he was able to live quite comfortable off that. And he dabbled in the stock market. And he did all right.

So his last years were more comfortable than those--

Yes, definitely.

--middle years?

Yes, yes, were definitely very comfortable then.

How did your parents-- what kind of ways did you see them change after having gone through the hardships that they hadn't been used to in Germany?

Well, I didn't notice too much change. But then again, I was very involved with myself and young. So already, to me, it was such a gradual getting older.

And your mother, how did she adjust to the United States?

Well, in the United States was much happier, because there, she had a decent style of living again. Even so, she did work here, because I think they bought the cleaning store. And she worked at this cleaning store.

She had become accustomed to working by then?

Not really.

No.

[LAUGHING]

It just happened?

Yeah.

Did it change how they felt about Judaism, having gone through the experience of being forced out of Germany?

Yes. Well, they also became much more-- I mean, not religious, but Jewish-oriented, yes.

Were you close to your parents when you were a child?

I was always close to my father.

Did you do things together in Germany and have--

Yes.

--time together?

With my father.

You've mentioned you played tennis and went to opera. Was that mostly with him?

Yeah. Yeah, this was my father. Did you have other cousins or any other family?

In Germany? Yes, I had cousins. But I didn't see too much of them. This was not a very close-knit family.

Did any of your other relatives survive, do you know?

I happened to meet one cousin here in San Francisco by chance. I think the rest did not survive.

You had relatives in the United States, though, before the war.

My husband, my husband's relatives.

But you'd mentioned that your family might have been able to get an affidavit to go to the United States.

That's correct. Yes. My father had a sister. But she had passed away, meanwhile.

So you never saw her, then?

No.

Did you ever ask for any kind of restitution from Germany or accept any kind of it?

I wasn't entitled to it, because I did not work in Germany.

How do you feel about the unification of Germany?

Fearful.

Do you think they're the same people they were--

Yes.

--50 years ago?

What makes you say that?

Experience.

Experience knowing Germans?

Knowing Germans, reading about Germans. Yes, I'm very fearful about unifications. I'm fearful that Germany is going to be too strong a power.

Have you seen things on news reports of East German reaction and West German reaction to reunification?

Yes, that's correct.

And what were some of those things that brought back the fears?

Well, antisemitism. And I don't think this has been too much change.

Is there anything-- do you have any other questions?

Having lived in Shanghai, are you interested still in following things in China that have changed?

No. Shanghai to me was never home. Shanghai to me was a way station. And I was never very comfortable, due to the fact that I didn't speak the language.

Have you ever gone back there since the war?

No, I haven't go. Lots of my friends went back to Shanghai, but I really was not interested.

You also mentioned, before the interview, that you haven't gone back to Germany. But you've traveled widely in Europe.

Yes.

Can you tell me why it is you don't want to go back to Germany?

Well, because my memories are not very pleasant. And there's still a lot of hatred in me.

Has your experience affected your health in any way?

No.

What about your husband? How does he feel about Germany?

He feels the same way I do.

Have you been to Austria?

Yes, unfortunately.

Unfortunately-- I was going to ask you. Your feelings were rekindled [CROSS TALK]

Exactly, yes. That was against my better judgment.

OK. Is there anything you'd like to add about your experience that you would like recorded?

No, I don't think. I think that pretty much covers it.

OK. Thank you very much. It's been--

OK.

--[INAUDIBLE].

Well, I hope I was helpful.

You were wonderfully helpful.