

Nine. I'm talking to Anna Beyer and her daughter, Margaret Kenner. I'm starting with you, Anna, if I may call you Anna.

Of course.

Where were you born?

I was born in Ottensoos in Bayern.

In Bavaria.

In Bavaria.

May we ask you what year?

1898.

Wow. And you grew up there?

I grew up there.

You went to school there?

Went to school there, and later, to high school in Nuremberg.

Did you have sisters and brothers?

I had one brother.

One brother. And so you experienced already the First World War, didn't you?

Yes, yes. My brother was in the World War.

In the first World War.

He got the first-- the Red--

The Iron Cross?

The Iron Cross.

You talk about that.

The Iron Cross-- and my husband too.

What did your husband do, Anna?

My husband was working as a salesman.

Oh, a salesman, huh? And did you always live there, in--

No.

When did you move?

I left Ottensos when I got married.

Where was that?

That was in 1922.

Where?

My wedding was in Ottensos. Yes. And then we moved to Elberfeld.

Oh, I see. And you lived there when you got married. You had children.

I had two children.

Had two children.

I had one daughter--

Sitting next to you.

--my daughter and a son.

And a son. And when Hitler came to power in 1933?

When Hitler came to power, everything changed.

Yeah. Would you care to tell us a little bit about your life from then on?

I can talk about Ottensos.

Yeah.

Everybody used to be friend of the Jews. And everybody loved the Jews. And after Hitler came to power, everything changed. I had an uncle and an aunt still living there. And they were ordered out of Ottensos. So they went to Nuremberg and found a little apartment in Nuremberg.

It was still two uncles survived. One uncle died. And my aunt and my uncle were deported. My mother was living with me in Elberfeld. And when I left for America, she had to go to the elder's home.

An old-age home.

An old-age home--

Yes.

--in Elberfeld. And all the old people were deported to Theresienstadt. And my mother died there.

And your father was already?

My father was dead already, my father.

You lived in--

Elberfeld.

--Elberfeld when Hitler came to power?

Yes.

Can you tell us a little bit, again, what-- could your husband still be a salesman? Was he--

Yes. My husband could work till 1938. Then he came to the work.

When was it?

In [PLACE NAME] died. That was it.

Was it in [PLACE NAME] Was that in the '20s? No.

No, that was not in the-- it was in 1906-- there was '06 or '07. Oh, god, so many Jews. So many Jews they took the concentration camp. And had to stay there until-- a lot of them died there. They were mistreated. That is true. And I got my husband out that I got a permit for Cuba for him.

He was in Dachau.

When was your husband?

He was in Dachau-- in Dachau.

He was in Dachau.

Can you tell me a little bit how that came about? What year was he deported? Do you remember that?

That was '38? '38?

And did the Gestapo come to your house? Did they take him away from his home?

Yes. They went from house to house where Jews lived, where they lived.

And you were not taken with him?

No. Only the men were taken.

Only the men--

Yeah.

--at that time.

Yes.

And did you know at the time where he was when they took him away, where they took him to?

It was to the prison in Elberfeld.

To the local prison?

To the local prison. And of course, all the Jewish women went to the prison to ask. And there was one man there that was nice to the women, who gave them reports what was happening. And one day, he was not there anymore. What they had done with-- he would be-- was--

You mean, he was a prison guard?

He was not a--

By the prison?

He was employed by the prison. And he was punished that he was nice to the Jewish women. And from the prison, my husband went to Dachau.

How long was he in the prison in Elberfeld?

In Elberfeld, he was not long. All the men-- there were so many Jewish men there.

Was it a large Jewish population in--

Yes, it was a large--

--Elberfeld at the time?

--population.

Could you tell me approximately what you think how many Jews were there?

Oh, god.

Well, just offhand. It doesn't have to be a real figure. About thousand-- about thousand, yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And was there a Jewish school, now, that you went to? Or did you go to a--

(Daughter: Well, it depends when.

Well, in--

(Daughter: I started off in public school. And then, of course, the decree was passed that, well, Jews couldn't attend public schools anymore.

What year was that? Remember that?

Margaret: That must have been in '39, I think, wasn't it? 1930-- it was after Kristallnacht that you couldn't go to the public school anymore.

It was-- I think it was before.

Well, after that year.

It was before.

Margaret: It's after Kristallnacht, I thought.

It was before. There was the Kristallnacht. That what I tell you.

Yeah.

That was happening at the--

Yeah. Where were you?

No, it was happening before, because I remember that my mother and I--

Margaret: We spent Kristallnacht at our neighbors, the Jewish neighbors.

Yeah, to this. Margaret: Because Dad was away on a trip working.

No, Dad was already in prison.

Margaret: In prison? I didn't know. See, you kept it from me.

Dad was in prison.

Margaret: And our neighbors came, our Jewish neighbors, and spent the night with us.

Yeah. Yes. There were a few Jewish families together.

All the Jewish men.

Old or young, it didn't make any difference?

Yes.

How young?

The day it started-- I don't know how it happened that they got my husband later, a day later. But my husband went to DÃ¼sseldorf to visit to some business friends. And when he came there, everything was destroyed. We were lucky. At ours, we lived upstairs. And downstairs was family living, the man was an SS man.

Margaret: Mr. Brandt. Mr. Brandt.

Mr. Brandt. The woman left us. And she said to her husband, if you do something to these people upstairs, then I can't live with you anymore. And so nothing happened to us.

From '33 till about '38, what was life like for you? Did you notice discrimination now?

Oh, yes.

Tell us a little bit about what you remember.

I remember my children, that especially in school, my children had it very hard in school. And Margaret had so many friends around our house. And suddenly, these children were not allowed to play with her anymore.

Margaret: I remember. I can't play with you, because you're Jewish. I can't play with you, because you're Jewish.

Yeah. Yes.

And you had a brother.

Margaret: I had a brother. He left a little earlier than the rest of us. We had people living upstairs above us. It was an apartment house. And the people above us were very well-to-do. Was he an attorney or something, a district--

He was a district attorney.

District attorney?

Non-Jewish.

Margaret: Non-Jewish.

Not Jewish.

Margaret : And their son was a little older than my brother. Stephen must have been about 14 at the time. And he threatened my brother-- if I see you once more next-- on the stairs once more, I'm going to beat the life out of you. And mother had made arrangements that my brother, Stephen, would be able to go to United States with the Children's Transport. And he left before that ever was fulfilled.

You didn't?

Margaret: No. He was lucky. You know, he didn't suffer.

Now, which year did he leave?

Margaret: He left before Kristallnacht, Mother. He left in--

He left before.

So it must be '38.

'33?

Margaret: It was '38.

'35. '36 or-- '36 or '37.

Margaret: '37-- '37.

'37, he left for America. So well, Elberfeld is a fairly small-- is a smaller town, isn't it, and not a very big town?

No, it was a big town.

It was a big town.

It was quite a big town.

And when you went shopping or you-- did you notice any discrimination?

Listen, at the time, I didn't look Jewish. I had blonde hair. And I remember-- and I was wearing a suit with the name [? Biel ?] on my collar. And I went to a butcher store which was-- nobody was in there. It was-- now, I can't translate word.

Margaret: No, tell me in German. What was this, a [INAUDIBLE]?

[GERMAN]. Yeah. Got it. And I went in and bought something. And people yelled at me, shame on you. Shame on you, [? Biel. ?] You are buying in a Jewish store. And the people-- I ran away. And they ran after me. But nothing happened to me ever.

Margaret: They thought he was Gentile-- they thought she was Gentile.

They thought I was a Gentile. I think-- I hope you would know it that I-- I told you, I didn't look Jewish.

Margaret: Was this Abraham's store?

No, it was Steinberg.

Margaret : Steinberg.

Did you do any traveling? Or did you always stay at home? Did you try to go on vacation during that time at all?

Yes. We went to places, like [PLACE NAME] and to little places.

Margaret: Neuwied, we went to.

Yeah.

Margaret: I remember being there.

So vacation time.

To little--

So you didn't notice--

--vacation time.

--any-- --an instance?

We always stayed by ourselves. And we didn't look Jewish. That helped us a lot.

We hear that all the time. Did you plan to emigrate at all to the United States after you sent your son already?

Oh, god. How we wait. How we waited. We were very lucky. I had a close friend who helped us to get out on the-- help us-- gave us every day a hide, every day we-- but at the time, there were numbers for the consulate, I think.

Margaret : Yes. An immigration number.

Immigration number.

Margaret: A quota number.

They called to that. And we had a very high number. So in the meantime, my husband had to go the concentration camp. And then every day, I called America, my friend, to do something. And she bought permits for so many countries. And they all were not worth much, only Cuba. And then I got my husband out. And my husband went to Cuba.

How did you get your husband out of the concentration camp?

Well, I went to all-- at the time, was a different person that I am today. I showed the permit to all the people who had something to say. My husband came-- one morning, early morning, my husband came in the door.

So how long did he spend in Dachau?

A few weeks only.

Only a few weeks. You must have been a very clever woman to achieve his release.

Margaret: She was a very determined lady.

Very determined.

Margaret: And very smart.

I should say.

And how about the rest of your family? You had sisters and brothers?

My brother was in Holland, as I told you.

Yes. And my mother was living with us.

But did you have uncles and aunts? Were you a big family? Or you considered yourself a big family?

My husband was a big family. Because I told you, the one sister had died in the meantime. And all the others with families died in concentration camps. One brother was living in Elberfeld, too. And he was in the concentration camp. He died in the concentration camp.

Margaret: Yeah. Which one?

His oldest brother, Alex. He had two daughters. And the two daughters went to England with my daughter.

Margaret: With me.

Yeah, but no, you tell them.

Margaret: No, that's OK.

Yeah, but in which concentration camp did he die? Do you remember?

Oh, god, it was on my mind. It was in Bavaria.

Maybe it comes back to you.

It was a very known concentration camp. I can't think of it now.

Well, he didn't go to Theresienstadt?

No, no. Oh, Terezin was much milder than any.

Yeah. It was not an extermination.

He told me that the people had [audio interruption] Old men were also naked. It was wintertime. It was--

Oh, I'm sorry.

(audio interruption) Some men were out. And they picked them up (audio interruption) It was (audio interruption)

That was in the concentration camp where your--

And my husband was.

--where your husband, in Dachau.

In Dachau. Ah, that is where. Yeah. Yes.

Margaret: We don't know Alex. He never went to the concentration camp. We never knew exactly how he died or what.

Alex?

Margaret: Alex. We don't know exactly. We never-- he died. And that's all we know.

He died.

Margaret: That was my uncle, yeah.

Yeah.

And he had two daughters.

Yeah.

They went to England with my daughter. The three children went together, all three together.

What did your husband report about Dachau when he came out? Did he talk about it at all.

Not much. Not much. Not much, only that they had terrible treatment.

The Gestapo men went around.

What kind of a car do you-- is it interesting to you? What kind of car do you have? And of course, people were afraid. They told him they had a new car. So they took the cars away from them for nothing.

Margaret: And that's not the worst.

That was not the worst.

You mean in-- that couldn't have been in Dachau, though?

This was in Dachau.

With a car?

It was in Dachau. They--

Margaret: They got the information in Dachau and then--

The information-- they got the information in Dachau.

Margaret : --and then went to the homes.

And then they went to their home places and took the car?

Margaret: Well, the same thing as you had to report all your jewelry. You had to bring all your jewelry to the police station, Mom. And they took all your jewelry.

And on Yom Kippur, we had-- Yom Kippur, they wanted the radio, our radios. And we had to bring-- on Yom Kippur, we had to bring our radio to the police station too. The jewelry, we had to bring too. They didn't come and get it. Same all.

Didn't you have to bring silver objects?

Everything, everything we had, especially jewelry.

Margaret: You had already shipped out some of the stuff by that time, didn't you? You had sent a lift out with our furniture and stuff. But Heddy took some of--

Margaret: Is that what-- is that why you still have some things left?

-Heddy took some. But it wasn't most of it.

Margaret: I know your jewelry was all gone. I know. That's not of importance.

And tell me about your family a little bit, your sister.

I had no sister, just one brother.

You had just one brother. And he went?

And he died in the concentration.

He died in where?

He died in Auschwitz.

Oh, in Auschwitz. When did he get deported? What year, do you remember that?

Margaret: It was after Hitler invaded Holland, because he had fled to Holland. And he was safe.

Yeah, yeah.

Margaret: And then when Hitler got into Holland--

Then he was caught.

Margaret: --they caught him. And then he got--

And then they deported.

And you knew that they took him to Auschwitz?

Yes.

Margaret: Mother traced it through the Red Cross after the war.

After the war-- after the war, I traced it. And I found out that he died in Auschwitz.

Margaret Yeah. We all went out in stages. My brother went up first to the United States. Then my father went to Cuba. Then I went to England. And my mother and my grandmother was left. And in order for mom to be more protected, she moved in with my uncle, Alex, which was my father's brother. And they lived together so mom would be a little more protected.

And that was in Elberfeld?

Margaret: That was in Elberfeld. Am I right, Mom?

Yeah. Yes.

Margaret: And my father's-- I had one cousin in Mayen. That's where my father was born.

Mainz?

(Daughter): Mayen-- M-A-Y-E-N.

Mayen.

Margaret: Mayen. He was born there.

On the Ruhr. It's near the Moselle.

It's not Mainz?

Margaret: No, no. Mayen-- M-A-Y-E-N, yeah. And I had my cousin, Ellie, who was about a year and a half younger than I was. She, her mother, and her father were killed. Then I had an aunt, who was single. She died. My uncle, Herman, had married and just had a new--

Two children.

Margaret: --had a-- babies.

Babies.

Margaret: They left.

They-- where?

Margaret: No, I mean, they disappeared from Hitler.

Oh, they were deported.

Margaret: Deported. Then I had two other cousins in Telgte Eric and Kurt, in Telgte.

They died in concentration camp.

Margaret: And their father.

Their father died too. And this is the sister which died in--

Margaret: Normal death. Anna: Yeah, normal death.

You were saying, now, of your combined families-- your husband's and yours-- how many family members died in the concentration camp? Could you say that at all?

I can't.

Margaret: I've never added it up.

I never dared to count them. I only know that my father-- my husband never had a happy day in America since he knew that all the sisters and brothers were gone. Every day, he talked about one of them, at least.

How many synagogues did you have in Elberfeld?

Oh, they were very Orthodox.

Did you belong to an Orthodox synagogue?

No. I belonged to the Conservative. This was a big, a really big synagogue.

And when did you stop going? Was it still before Crystal Night?

No, it got closed. It got closed.

Margaret: Didn't we have schools? Didn't-- we could attend lessons there for a while? Remember, when we couldn't go to regular school anymore?

Yeah, I know, in a room or so.

Margaret: We had a room there, wasn't it--

Yeah, somewhere, we had.

Margaret: --where they established--

Margaret: A school for the Jewish children.

--a school for these children.

Yeah.

Margaret: And then I was lucky. I left. I went to England.

Yes. And for a while, she couldn't go to school.

Margaret: Yeah, not at all.

She was not allowed to go to school anymore.

Margaret: You know, the worst is that for years and years-- talking about myself-- I felt very guilty that I got away so

easily. I mean, I was never really touched. And I lost so much family.

Right. I hear that so often, unfortunately from survivors. Can you tell us, Anna-- can you tell us a little bit about the life after your husband left for Cuba, I understand, right?

Yeah, for Cuba.

You were alone--

I was alone with my mother.

--in Germany.

Oh, my mother.

With your mother, right.

With my mother. What year was that?

That was until-- that was until I left for America in-- I think I left America-- I left Germany in 1939 or '40--

Margaret: '41.

'40-- '40, '41. And my mother-- and then I had-- that was the hardest thing what happened to me, to put my mother-- to leave my mother.

Your mother was how old then?

My mother was high in the 70s. And I remember that I said to my mother, that this time, I'm worried about my family away from us. And now, I'm going to be with a family and have to leave you.

And my mother was a very grateful woman. Said, you have to go. But I-- and in fact, she promised. She said, I'm coming after you. My mother, oh, will come. My husband had given affidavit for my husband-- for me and my mother. But my mother couldn't go. My mother was not allowed, didn't get a permit.

Margaret: Was my grandfather still alive or not?

No. Oh, there, your grandfather?

Margaret: Berger-- Berger.

No.

No.

He was dead a long time ago.

Your mother wasn't well enough to leave, right?

No, she didn't get a permit. I was a wife. And at that time, everything was very sharp.

You mean from the American side?

From them as well.

From the Americans.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes. So you as a wife could go--

I could go.

--but you could not take your mother?

My mother. The affidavit was the same affidavit for my mother as for me. And she had to leave behind. She had to stay behind.

Do you remember what month you came in '41?

Was it before the war-- the Americans came into the war?

Oh, before the war. I came before the war.

Margaret: You came in January 8, because it was my birthday. And I said, that was the best birthday present I ever had.

Yeah. But I came to America-- when I came to New York, I lived for a few days with a friend of mine. And my first thing was to call my child.

Yeah. Of course.

And this for her birthday, we both couldn't talk.

That's very moving. Do you still remember what went on during those two years in Germany before you left, let's say between '39 after the war broke out in Europe, and--

I tell you something.

--the time you left?

We were-- we had to go to work. On the way over, my Margaret said to me, was so hard for you to go to work in a factory. And I said, was the best time. We were only Jews in one room, only Jews-- big businessmen or so many. And everybody was so happy that we were together, we could talk together, and were occupied.

What factory was that?

I think we made the zippers.

Were you trained to do that then? They trained you there?

Oh, yes.

And in fact, I think we had to make the piecework.

Oh, piecework, you had to. Were you paid?

Huh?

Were you paid? Yes, we were paid.

During the war?

Not much, but we got paid.

And who owned the factory? Was it a German?

I don't-- it must have been a nice man. This must have been nice man, because you Jews-- I have to say it here, we were treated very-- had a foreman. He was very nice. And the owner master been a good man too.

Right. You were all, you said-- you were only Jews?

Only Jews and a foreman, non-Jewish foreman.

Non-Jewish foreman. There weren't any foreigners from--

No, nothing, only Jews.

That gave you a good feeling, didn't it?

Yeah. And I worked there until I left for America. I had to get up-- I remember I had to get up very early in the wintertime and take the bus. And during the war, the buses were overcrowded. But everybody loved to go to work.

You did not have to wear a star at that time?

No. Right after I left--

It started.

--in '41. My mother had to wear a star.

Yes.

Yes.

And may I ask you, what happened to your mother?

My Mother died in Theresienstadt.

Oh, she was deported to Theresienstadt.

Yes, she was deported.

And do you remember [INAUDIBLE]?

That was a awful-- the hardest thing for me. When I was still in Germany and I heard that people were deported to concentration camps-- not that they were deported, they had to stay in line, old people with a little nothing what they could--

Suit or panel?

A little suitcase, a little thing, and had to stand for hours. And when they got on a train, they couldn't sit down. They were in a--

Margaret: Cattle train.

--cattle train. This I heard when I was still in Germany.

In Germany. So you knew about it?

When I heard that my mother had gone, that was the thought that followed me. How did they treat my mother until she got to the concentration camp? That was an awful thought.

But when you were still living in Germany, did you hear anything about camps?

So little things. You know, I don't know, little things. No, really, nothing-- nothing real.

Nothing really. Just sort of rumors, like rumors?

Rumors, the rumors-- but nothing, really. Some of the German people said afterwards, I didn't know what happened in the camps.

Yes, yes, yes.

Did something from us and needed something. And suddenly, when Hitler-- and Hitler came along, we were enemies. And we were standing in line. And somebody from-- I don't know who anymore-- he said, I wanted to talk to Mrs. Seneca. You are Mrs. Seneca? He thought I was Mrs. Seneca. She looked more Jewish than I. That was a funny thing. At the time, we laughed about it.

Oh, well, it was good that you could laugh about something.

Margaret: You have to or you don't survive.

Well, I'd like you to talk a little bit more about life in Germany before you left, if there's anything--

Listen--

--you can think of.

--do you know that I--

Margaret: Well, Mother, they made uncle-- for instance, Uncle Alex, he had to-- they couldn't shop in his store anymore. He had to go bankrupt.

They had to close the store.

Margaret: They had to close the store.

Yeah. Let me have my-- I need a tissue.

What store did he--

He had curtains and whatever you needed for beds. He had a big store.

And they forced him to close it?

He had to close it. And he was a poor man after that.

Margaret: Yeah.

There you go.

Margaret: Oh, thanks. That's nice of you. Thank you.

You're welcome.

And did you have-- the rest of your husband's family, did they all--

So I tell you something, my-- I came to America in 1932--

'41.

--'41. And little after that, we got a letter. We corresponded, of course, with the family. We got a letter from a sister, younger sister. And she wrote, help us. Can't you help us to get to America? We don't want to go the way Alex went. So we found out that Alex had to go to the--

Who is Alex?

Alex was the oldest brother, who died in the concentration camp.

Your husband's oldest brother?

Oldest brother. And my husband was very close with his family. And afterwards, they all had to go to the-- they all died in the concentration camps.

Have you ever been back to Germany?

No. No.

Margaret: You never wanted to go?

No, I never wanted to go.

And my daughter was there for one day.

Margaret: No, it was more than one day. I went to Freudenstadt. I stayed overnight in Freudenstadt. I couldn't stand it. I just felt there's so many-- and the older generation was there. And they looked like the real German Nazis, you know. And we felt very uncomfortable. And then we went to DÃ¼sseldorf. And we couldn't wait to get out. We left.

I think you visited my father's--

Margaret: I went to--

--my father's grave.

Margaret: Yeah. We went to MÃ¼nchen.

And went to MÃ¼nchen to visit my father's grave.

Margaret: Yeah. We went. And I thought they were-- first of all, to find the Jewish cemetery was almost-- it took us over half a day.

Nobody knew where it was?

Margaret: Nobody. We called up the-- we called up the city. We don't know. We called up the congregation and couldn't get through. We called wherever we could. Can I get your glasses off so that they don't--

Margaret: Then we finally--

--bang on the--

Margaret: --found out--

Thank you.

Margaret: --where it was.

--microphone.

Margaret: And we took a taxi out. And he didn't know. And he had problems finding it. And then we finally found the cemetery. And the lady who was there took a-- told us where the grave was. They looked it up. They-- you know, the Germans, they keep excellent records. And we went to my mother's-- to my grandfather's grave. And the grave was in bad conditions.

How was the rest of the cemetery? Was it--

Margaret: Neglected.

Neglected?

Neglected. So I left some money that they should fix the stone, you know, fix it up, so you could--

Margaret: And they fixed it.

--identify it. And they sent us--

And they fix it up. We got the--

You know that for sure?

Margaret: They sent us a picture.

We got the pictures.

Margaret: They sent us a picture of it.

And when did your husband die in America?

Yes, in America. On April 3 in Redwood City in '73, May '73.

And did you have any of your relatives? Did any of them except for your husband, who got out of the concentration camp-- did anybody else get out of the concentration?

Not that I know.

Margaret: Nobody. Nobody.

Not that I know-- any were in a concentration camp, who were in the concentration camp.

What about your husband?

Well, that was very early in the game.

Well, that was a different thing at the time. More people got out. I remember Leo.

Margaret: Leo Moll got out.

Leo Moll got out first. He was in Dachau too.

Margaret: You could get out if you could leave within three days. And you got 25 marks. And that's how you got out.

You could take along, what you mean.

Margaret: Yeah, you could take along 25 marks.

If you had \$100,000-- 100,000 marks, you had to leave it. Only could take 10 marks.

Margaret: Was it 10? I'm sorry, I exaggerated. Yeah. I exaggerated. I made them rich.

10 marks, yes.

Margaret: And Mother, you were lucky. You were supposed to go with Omi and me on an earlier ship.

Oh, yes. When my husband-- the permit to Cuba was for my husband and for my mother, was the whole family.

From the Cuban side?

From Cuban side. And we couldn't leave so suddenly. My husband left suddenly. He came out of the concentration camps. And a few days later, he had to leave. And we went. But we were not ready. So the next ship, we wanted to use, made everything ready, and couldn't make it. And a friend of ours was on the ship. And then they couldn't land.

Margaret: That was actually--

They closed. And suddenly, they had closed it. And all over.

The famous Voyage of the Damned, this was.

Yeah.

Margaret: You know, there goes fate.

Yeah.

And he, this friend--

And you were supposed to go on this.

Margaret: We were supposed to go on that.

And we-- with my mother and my daughter, we were supposed to go.

Margaret: That's fate, isn't it?

And we were very friendly with these people.

Margaret: Who was that, Mom?

Huh?

Margaret: Who was it that went on there? Who was it?

Oh, it's gone so.

Margaret: All right. You'll tell me later.

It was over-- they lived over-- the Pinkus, they lived down--

Margaret: The Pinkus.

No, that's the Pinkus, they lived downstairs.

Margaret: Oh, those are the people whom we stayed with during the--

Yeah, that's right.

Margaret: I can't think of her name now, either, she had two-- she had that little boy.

One of these nights, I was thinking about them. And I can't-- it doesn't matter now today. But the family never heard of him.

They did not survive?

Yeah. Oh, there were so many people on this ship.

And what was the reason why you couldn't go?

We were not finished. We wanted to take things along still. You always said, if you only could go to America, we would be satisfied to live in a little room--

Margaret: Man isn't like that.

--in a little room, with nothing, only to be free. But when the time came, we wanted to take things along and couldn't get ready. And this was our luck. Otherwise, we would have gone the same way as our friend went.

And as you say, that's--

Margaret: It's fate, it's fate.

That is, yes.

And you were in England, Margaret, at the time, right?

Margaret: No, when this happened, I was still with my mother, because my mother, my grandmother, and I were supposed to go. And I left right after that. I went to England--

Oh, you went right after that.

Margaret: --with my two cousins. Yeah, we went on the same children's transport.

With your family, it's so difficult for me to remember who went when.

Margaret: Oh, we all went-- yeah, we all went at different stages.

You know, we are very lucky people that we had good, close friends. That we are in America I only have to thank good friend of mine. She wanted us out. She did everything.

[INAUDIBLE].

Her boss gave her a big every day. He is a stockbroker. Now, he's gone already.

Margaret: Mr. Rocker.

We had-- yes. We had a half a million dollar every day wait from him.

And you did not have family in America, did you?

No, we didn't. We had an old aunt, very old aunt. She was far over 80. This lady couldn't do anything. We never knew this lady. But when my son came to America, she behaved like a grandmother to my son. She was awfully, awfully good. She lived in Boston. And my son was near, was in Boston too. And she was like a grandmother for him.

How old was your brother when he came to America?

He was just after bar mitzvah.

Margaret: He was about 14.

About 13 or 14?

Yes, that was it.

Very young age.

Oh, this was so hard for him.

Margaret: And he lived with an American family.

And that was the reason we got out of Germany, that we had a close friend. And I want to say something now. I wanted to say something else what happened to us.

Well, just relax. It'll come to you.

Oh, she-- Emma

Yeah, well, she was Emma [? Grunschreib ?] at the time. And Mr. Rocco was-- the man who gave the affidavit, Margaret: he lived in New York. He was a stockbroker. And he was very active in-- after that, after the war, to get-- to

smuggle arms into Israel. He has some book he's--

There's a book.

Margaret: There's a book where he's mentioned, yeah.

There's a book. And his name is mentioned in the book, what he did for Israel.

That's really-- how long was your husband in Cuba then?

A year. Oh, just a year?

Yeah. And then he--

And he got the affidavit from that friend you mentioned?

Yeah, from the friend. And then he could give me a affidavit.

Then he--

Yeah.

--started yours.

Yeah.

And then you came just--

But the first affidavit Rocco gave brought us the whole family.

Margaret: Oh, I don't--

And we couldn't get out.

Margaret: --I don't know.

And then my husband went away. And then he could. And he gave affidavit. He wanted my mother out too. And my mother didn't want to go.

And your German passport, did it have a J in it?

Yes.

Did you have to also adopt another name?

No.

Margaret: Sarah. We all were Sarah.

Oh, Sarah.

Margaret: Of course. We were all Sarah.

Sarah.

That was not yours.

This was not my name, no. It was Sarah.

It was the time, yes.

Yes, now, I remember. When you wrote your name, you had always to write-- you had to write Anna and Sarah. Yes. Oh, so many things I can't think of now.

It's a long time ago now. It's 42 years go.

Yeah, it's such a long time. Sometimes, I think of people.

Did you have a German identity card? Did you need that when you were living there? Did you have to get an identity card at all? Do you remember?

I can't remember. I really can't remember. Yes. You were marked. In any way, you were marked. Somebody who talked to Jews was watched. People were watched. I talk to parents, or parents talked to me and say, they're afraid of our children. My husband and I, we don't dare to talk in front of our children, because they were taught in school, whatever your parents do and say, you have to report to us.

Now, you said you lived in an apartment house right?

We lived there.

And every apartment house in Germany has a caretaker, right? They call it a portier, right?

I have to say, people liked us.

Margaret: We didn't have a portier in our apartment house, no.

We didn't have one.

Those, I understand, were very dangerous comings and goings.

No, we didn't live in such a big house.

Margaret: It was locked. It was a small one. It was locked. And you just had to press a button to the house. It's OK, Mom. It doesn't hurt. This is just a connector.

So there was no danger from that side?

No, no. We had Nazis in our house. But the only one who we were really afraid of--

Margaret: Was Punt.

--was this-- no.

Margaret: Oh, the [NON-ENGLISH].

But he didn't allow it. She was a very mean woman.

Oh, she lived in the apartment house?

Margaret: Above us.

Above us.

Above you?

They lived above us. And we moved in at the same time. And we were very good friends. She always came down and needed something. And suddenly, when Hitler came along, she became our enemy. And she was a mean woman.

Margaret: And didn't he--

And her husband, he was--

Margaret: He used to drink. He came to our apartment by mistake once.

I just wanted to say it. In the middle of the night, our bell was ringing. It was at the time and my husband was in the concentration camp. And the bell was ringing and ringing. So I had to get up. And I still see my mother behind me. And he was standing out there. He was drunk.

Her husband?

This is Seneca--

Margaret: Yeah, upstairs.

--this district attorney. He was drunk. And he said to me, don't be upset. Nothing will happen to you. He was nice. But she was-- do you--

Margaret: She was a bitch.

--know what a glove-- she was a very mean woman. Well, she was the only one we had afraid of.

You were afraid of.

Margaret: And her kids.

But in fact, our landlord came and said, she told me, you have to leave, -- said, I have to throw you out. You should move. But you stay here as long as I have say something about it.

How fortunate you were--

Yeah. Yes.

--in that respect.

When I think back, we had a lot-- we had a lot of nice friends.

Margaret: We were friendly with the neighborhood, with the neighbors.

Yes. We were good to the people.

Margaret: And they reciprocated.

Yeah.

And did you find that your friends, the non-Jewish friends-- you had non-Jewish friends?

Oh, yes.

Did they back away from you at all, some of them, when Hitler came to power and all that [INAUDIBLE]?

Of course. Some were very careful. Let's say very careful. I remember that girl's mother once called late at night. And I went down. And so she wanted to know how we are. But she was afraid to be seen.

Did you have rationing at home?

Yes. Oh, yes. Yes. I bought in a delicatessen store for years. And when the time came, the Jews didn't get much. He said to me, listen, you get everything that other people get too. Only go to my wife. Yes, there were some nice people. I have to say, there were some nice people, at least in my life.

Well, that's good to know, really. Not all of them, really.

Margaret: Not all of them were.

Yeah.

They were so horrible.

And some of them were very ungrateful, people my husband helped a lot. My husband was a very good man. But this is life.

Is there anything else you can think of-- your experience, your impressions?

Margaret: Not really. No, I can't think of much of anything anymore. We were lucky, at least I was lucky. I got out before it got rough. I got out.

Oh, you suffered, Margaret. You suffered.

Margaret: Oh, because I didn't have any friends. That was very rough.

Yeah. But we made it as good for you and as nice for you as we could. I remember when you wanted a blue skirt and a white blouse--

Margaret: I couldn't have it.

--like the Hitler girls wore, you know.

Margaret: Oh, you did uniform.

A uniform. She wanted it.

Margaret: We were little.

And she said, why don't I get one? And I said, Margaret, because Hitler doesn't like us. But in time, you will get a blue skirt and a white blouse.

You felt left out, right?

She was.

Margaret: Oh, very left out.

She felt left out.

When you joined in the activities.

Margaret: I felt it in school. I felt discrimination in school.

She was a child who loved people, who loved be with children. It was very hard for us to keep her away.

Margaret: I was a very lively individual, drove my poor mother crazy.

Yes. She was very lively. Your granddaughter goes after you.

Margaret: Exactly. She climbs all over, yeah. I used to climb the trees and the lamp posts.

Yes.

So when you came to America, where did you land, in Boston, did you say?

No. No, it was a Lowell.

Margaret: No, you landed in New York.

I landed in New York. That's where I called my daughter from, from New York. And the next day we went to Lowell. And god--

Margaret: That was a reunion.

--I can't describe it, to see your child again.

After how many years were they?

Margaret: '39 through '41.

Yes.

Two years then.

Margaret: But it seemed much longer.

Of course it does.

And you lived where then?

Margaret: I lived in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Oh, you lived in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Yeah.

And then when did you come out here to the West Coast?

Margaret: Oh, my husband moved out here for-- my husband and I moved out here first. And my parents were back East. And then when they retired, we kept pestering them, why should you live in that climate? And why be so far from your grandchildren, from the children? So we persuaded them to move out here.

That's a good move, wasn't it?

Yes.

It was a good move.

Margaret: That was a good move.

Margaret: In fact, she's a great-grandmother now.

Yeah. That is her daughter.

Can't believe it.

That is her daughter. And she said to me, when I played with the child-- it was last week when I played with the child. She said, did you play with me the same way as you play with--

Margaret: Rachel.

--Rachel? I said, dear Jeannie, I couldn't. I passed this time. We were so far apart. I missed it.

Margaret: Yeah. You're making up for it.

Huh?

Margaret: Well, you're making up. You have a special relationship. My granddaughter is 16 months old. And she's crazy about her great-grandmother, always has been.

And I'm crazy about her, of course, too.

Yes. And you live now where, in a home, did you say, part time?

In a retirement home.

Margaret: Yeah, in San Francisco?

It's a new-build retirement home. It opened last October.

Margaret: It's in Redwood City.

Oh, in Redwood City, I see.

In Redwood City, yes.

Well, you came quite a long way.

Margaret: Well, I felt this was important.

Yes, you're right. You're right.

And I saw this building going up. It was in my neighborhood. I always walked a lot. I changed a lot in the last few years. I was always walking all over. And I saw this building going up. And I said to myself, I never will go in there.

But you feel comfortable now.

Then in December, I had a heart attack. I couldn't live alone anymore.

Yeah.

My daughter thought I couldn't live alone anymore.

Margaret: It was the best thing you did, because she has a private apartment. It's one of those homes where you have--

Oh, yes.

Margaret: You lock it. She has two bedrooms. And one is a den.

You have your furniture.

Margaret: She has her own furniture. So she can have breakfast and lunch. And she just joins the rest of the group for dinner.

Yeah, that's a bit nicer now with this.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Margaret: Because you still have your own dignity. You're not herded into one little room like a little animal, you know, you're out to pasture.

It is nice, yeah. It is very nice, yeah. Yes, very like that.

Margaret: And she's close to me and close to both granddaughters.

You're very fortunate now, I think, to have a great-grandchild. Must be a--

Margaret: Two. You have two great.

I have another great-grandchild, but they're far away.

Your son has a--

My son's son.

Oh, your son's son.

My son's son. Where's your son living now?

My son lives in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Oh, that's quite far away.

Yeah. But he and his wife-- my son is retired already. And he and his wife came to Redwood City to help me moving. Well, my daughter-in-law and my son did all the moving. Margaret: You shouldn't call her daughter-in-law. She's like a daughter.

She's a daughter. She's a daughter. I really call her my daughter.

Margaret: Every mother-in-law should be treated the way my sister-in-law treats my mom.

Like a mom.

Margaret: Yeah. It's a two-way street. It's a two-way street.

Absolutely. Anna, is there anything else you'd like us to know or would like to talk about?

If I remember something, I will write it down, maybe. I'll come back.

Did you ever keep a diary in your life?

No.

You didn't.

My daughter.

Margaret: I have diaries.

No. I should have.

After so many years, it's difficult to.

Yeah, to remember.

The memories.

And there are a lot of things you want to forget.

Yeah, exactly.

It hurts.

Margaret: That you block.

Especially when you couldn't help.

Margaret: Well, what was difficult for Mom was that we were all in different countries. My father was in Cuba. My brother was in America. I was in the--

England, then America.

Margaret: --England. And then, of course, when England went to war with Germany, she couldn't write to us. And we had relatives in Holland. So she would write to Holland. And they would pass the mail on to me. Then when my father went to the United States, then my mother wrote to the United States. My father would send the letters to me from-- yeah. It got kind of complicated.

This is-- is that we are not relatives-- these were our friends, old friends, Auerbach. We wrote to Auerbachs--

Margaret: To the Auerbachs.

--to Hannah Auerbach.

Margaret: They didn't make it, either.

I think they-- her husband died. And I think they didn't-- they were in Holland.

What did you do in England? Did you go to school there too?

Margaret: Yeah. I was very-- I was lucky. I lived with the principal of a county school. So I went to school. And my cousins had it very rough. My oldest cousin was 16. And she was exploited.

Margaret: She worked for an English professor who treated her like a slave from morning to night, not enough to eat. And her fingers were raw from having to do the laundry. I mean, tell me about the nice British people. I was lucky. I mean, I was well-off. But my cousins, my two cousins had it real rough.

They were how old, 16?

Margaret: 16 and 14.

So young. And the 14-year-old wanted to work too?

Margaret: Oh, yeah. And she had never worked before. She'd had a heart condition in Germany. And because of it, she was very pampered. She had never even combed her own hair.

She had a governess.

A governess to take care of her.

Yeah. Who took care of her.

Margaret: It ruined her life. She has never really done anything with her life because of this. She never--

She was too spoiled.

Margaret: She couldn't take responsibility.

She escaped the Nazis, so to speak, and then she got from the frying pan into the fire, for as far as she was concerned.

Margaret: Yeah. Her older sister always took care of her, sort of always.

Oh, yeah.

Margaret: Yeah, she still does.

How long were they over there?

Margaret: When the war was over, they went as interpreters to Germany, you know, when the English and the Americans went in. And then when they were in Germany, my older cousin met a Dane, and fell in love, and married him. And then they all went to Denmark. And that's why they're living in Denmark now.

Oh, they're living in Denmark.

Margaret: They're living in Denmark now, yeah.

The younger one will come.

Margaret: Ruth is going to go.

Ruth is coming.

Margaret: And Ruth turned Catholic. And that's my younger cousin. She turned Catholic. And my older cousin basically has no religion. She went to temple in Denmark. And the Jews in the temple were very haughty. She was very poor. She was very, very poor. And the congregation was snobbish and wouldn't accept her.

Margaret: So her children now are Gentiles. She said, she herself feels Jewish, but her children don't know anything about Judaism. They all married Gentiles. And they're Gentiles. Hitler accomplished what he wanted.

Right. Did you know English when you went to England?

Margaret: Very little. Very little, yeah.

But you came to school there. And you--

Margaret: Yeah.

--were talking.

Margaret: Yeah.

Caught on.

Margaret: Caught on, yeah. When you're young, it's easier.

Oh, yes, it's easier.

Much easier.

What you tell me about your cousin, when they're 14, and they have to work, in a house and all.

Margaret: Oh, they were very, very exploited, especially Margot. I think Ruth was not as exploited as Margot. Margot was the older one.

And she became such a lovely woman. The last year, they visited us.

Margaret: That's one thing.

She and her husband. I never knew her husband.

Margaret: I won't give Hitler the satisfaction of losing my-- with left relatives. I make sure we get together all the time. Yeah.

It's very important.

Margaret: Oh, it's the only thing that we Jews have is to look out for one another.

I know. Were you brought up religious, in a religious way?

Margaret: No, my mother was Conservative. But I'm not religious. I can't say I'm not religious. I'm not kosher.

I mean, your upbringing was-- at home, did you?

Yes, we did.

Oh, yeah.

You cooked Friday night?

Oh, yes. We did.

And you didn't keep kosher.

Oh, yeah, we were kosher.

Margaret: Oh, yes.

Oh, you kept kosher.

Oh, yeah.

Oh, we had kosher.

And you had the kosher-- you were able to buy it and everything?

Oh, I could buy it. I told you, I came out of the store, of a Jewish store what to buy-- butcher store.

I mean, you could get the kosher.

Of course.

Margaret: Well, we're talking about is later on, Mother, after I left, and you were left with Alex and my grandmother. Could you still get-- I don't think you could get kosher at that point, could you?

I really-- I can't. Steinberg was still open.

Margaret: He was still open?

I think. I think after we left, Steinberg was-- it happened. This was-- what I went through happened after we had gone.

Margaret: Had a big store, huge.

No, but this-- oh, this. He didn't make money anymore. He only had--

Fine.

--it open for some Jew-- for the Jewish people, as long as he could.

That must be one of the hardest things-- you were kosher and kept a kosher household. You couldn't do this anymore.

Yeah.

Margaret: Well, and my Tante Rosa went vegetarian because she couldn't get kosher meat, remember?

Uncle Martin, Hilda's father. Hilda's father became a vegetarian because--

Margaret: I didn't know. I knew about Tante Rosa-- oh, and Hilda's father too, of course, and his wife too.

Did you become a vegetarian too?

No. No.

Margaret: But they lived in a smaller town, you see. So it was much harder. Of course, we lived in a large city. And it was a little easier.

You remember about how many people were in Elberfeld? I can't think of where this is.

Margaret: I don't know. It was actually Wuppertal-Barmen. They were sister towns.

It was a big city, a nice city. It's where the--

Twin cities?

Margaret: Yeah, twin cities. And that's where the monorail was.

Yeah.

Margaret: Yeah. It's near Cologne and Düsseldorf, in that area.

I know the area.