

Today is September 8, 2003. We're at Temple Beth El in San Mateo, California, interviewing Hilde Gattmann. My name is Peter Ryan, interviewer, and an opera and shouting is doing the videotaping. Could I begin by my asking you where and when you were born?

I was born in Wurzburg, Germany-- W-U-R-Z-B-U-R-G. September 2, 1927.

And where is Wurzburg in relation, say, to Berlin, or some other big city?

Wurzburg is in Bavaria, south of Frankfurt, along the river Main.

And what was your name at birth?

My name was Hildegard Stahl-- S-T-A-H-L.

How many people were in the family?

My parents and an older brother.

Older brother?

By the name of Ludwig, in Germany, and Louis in this country.

And how much older?

He was four years older than I.

Was he a good older brother?

Yes, he was a very fine older brother, thank God.

What did your father do?

My father was in machine business-- machine iron, stoves.

In factory?

No, selling them. Was a large business. And tools, machine tools. And small tools. It was a rather large business which he owned with his brother.

It was started by his father. And it was started in a small town of Sommerhausen where the Stahl family lived, and where my grandfather and grandmother raised 11 children.

Do you know how long your parents' lineage had been in Germany?

As far as I know, I can't tell you that. I have not-- we have a family tree, but as far back as my nephew went, who did the family tree, I have not found out where they came from.

On both sides?

On both sides.

What kind of a living arrangement did you have when you grew up?

Well, we lived in the city, and we-- my father bought into a building, which would-- we had an apartment, which, I think today you would call a condo. And he bought into it when it was being built. So that was very comfortable. But he also owned the family home-- he bought it from his siblings.

And so that was a weekend place. It had a--

In the same city?

No, in Sommerhausen, which was a half hour away from the city. So weekends--

How big a city was--

Wurzburg? About 70,000, 80,000. It was a medical university town.

It was on the river?

Main, M-A-I-N.

And was there much of a Jewish community there?

Yes, somewhat over 2,000, as far as the synagogue is concerned. I don't know if they were more unaffiliated, but there were some people that came from small towns nearby, also.

Do you remember your early schooling?

Yes.

Could you describe?

It was a Jewish school, parochial school. And it was opposite the synagogue. It was all in, you know, one center. There was a synagogue and then was the smaller synagogue for some people who wanted to have it more Orthodox, and who came from Eastern Europe, mainly.

And so that was also in the center-- center. School building was fine-- we would walk up one flight of stairs. And I started there first grade. And had a wonderful teacher by the name-- a man-- by the name of Mr. Grunfeld. And then, the next teacher was someone who immigrated to Israel afterwards, Mr. Burg.

To Israel or Palestine?

Well, in '38, it was Palestine, you're right. Never met him again, but thank God, both of them got out. Mr. Grunfeld went to London. And then, I had a man by the name of Hamelberger, who I don't remember, don't know what happened to him.

Did you like school?

I liked school.

What did you like?

Most everything. I didn't like art that well.

Art?

Art-- that was not, my forte-- but maybe mainly because the teacher had us do things very exactly, you know. In other

words, our first lesson was to make an oval, and we had to draw a line here and draw a line there. And then try and make this a perfect oval. Well that--

You didn't like that?

--did away with me. No.

Did you not like it because you weren't good at it? Or did you not like the confinement of that kind of work?

I don't really remember it that well. But probably because this took endless time. And I thought it was a waste of time. And it just-- it was difficult to get it just that way. Although, I got a good grade for trying.

But before this school, I was in a Jewish kindergarten, which was wonderful. Not in the same place. And by a Jewish woman by the name of Tandabella-- don't know what her last name was anymore. And a lovely kindergarten setting-- nice kids.

And I had a girlfriend who lived in the same house that we did who went with me to kindergarten. And she was not Jewish. And she learned all the prayers before and after meal, sang Jewish songs. And so we played together and went to kindergarten together.

Do you know why they sent her to a Jewish school?

I think that was the best one around. And also we played together, so it was nice to have a friend.

So they allowed people who weren't Jewish to be there?

She did, yeah. I'm not aware of any other non-Jewish children there.

Was your family religious?

Quite. I think they were conservative. But going to a parochial school, I became the most Orthodox member of my family. I wouldn't even carry a handkerchief on the Sabbath. They had to pin it inside my coat.

So your brother did not get that kind of education?

Oh, no, he did. He was in the same school.

But he wasn't as Orthodox as you?

I think he was not quite-- not at that point. Yeah. We had a kosher home.

Do you remember what it was like in your home, let's say, on Shabbat? What that would be like?

Shabbat, of course, kiddush-- my father made kiddush. And if there's someone who was not with a family, they would come to us. As a matter of fact, my father did business amongst others with an order. And I don't know, they were not Catholic. But the priests would come and shop in the business. And if it was Friday, he would bring the priest home for dinner.

And you know, that's kind of a household-- my parents were always very hospitable.

You had the large meal at home?

Yes.

And what was that like? Was there a lot of talk?

Not an ordinary-- I mean, not an awful lot of talk, but we children knew that we were to finish what was on our plate or else no dessert. My father was very strict, mother was soft-- a little softer. And all he had to do was look at us, and we knew. That was understood.

Finish or else, huh? Was he in World War I?

He was in charge of a field hospital.

Where?

In World War I. In Poland.

So he was on the Eastern Front?

He was on the Eastern Front, yes.

Did he talk about it much?

Sometimes. He-- mainly in a positive way. Not of war, itself, and what he saw, he didn't talk about injuries and things like that. But he talked about what-- we have a friend who lives in Los Angeles whose father, we found out then, was on his staff somehow or other. And they met casually, because our friend's wife was a friend of Eric from long ago, a family friend.

And when my father met him, he said, where do you come from? And talked. He said, well, I had someone from Frankfurt by the name of Gross in my unit. And so we met.

What a coincidence.

Yes, that's right.

What was your father's duties there?

He was in charge of the hospital.

In charge of the hospital-- administrator?

I guess.

Did he have medical training?

No, he had no medical training. My mother did, but he did not.

Were you aware of any feelings about you being Jewish as you were growing up there?

Not until '33. No, we were friendly-- not socially active with the people around us. Actually, the neighborhood we lived in, I don't think they were that many Jews. It was right near the hospital, and a little more out of outskirts of the city. And it was a nice, middle class neighborhood.

And you had friends who were not Jewish?

Who were not Jewish, we played together.

The one who went to school with you?

Right, and there were a couple of others next door. And they had a nice garden there, we played there.

Did your family socialize with the other family?

No, they socialized with Jewish people.

Did you say that your mother had medical training?

Yeah, my mother came from a little town called Tann, T-A-N-N, it was the foothills of the Rhone mountains, almost Heidi country. And there, she finished high school and then was sent to Frankfurt for a year or two of finishing school. But then she worked at first in the office of the mayor of the city-- of the town, little town.

And then, she went to the hospital and got her training there. She didn't have any formal education, but she got her training. Well, she worked there for until she got married.

Nurses training?

Nurses, until she got married.

And she did work as a nurse for awhile? Liked it?

And of course, we, as children, had a wonderful time spending summers in this little town.

Was your family political at all?

No, not politically active. My father was very interested, and he was a very bright man, self-educated. Because in those days, with 11 children, and let's see, about four sons, the oldest one was sent to the university-- he became an engineer. And my father should have been sent to the university, because he was very capable. But he was self-educated, he was very interested in politics, especially what was happening then in Germany. And when he came to this country.

Do you know how he voted?

No, I was a child. Not how he voted there. I know how he voted here.

No, there. Would there be discussion about what was happening in Germany?

Not really with me or with us. I mean, children weren't told that much after Hitler, because things had to be a little bit secret. I remember him listening to the radio very-- so that no one else upstairs, downstairs, outside would hear. That, I remember.

But per se, political discussions, no.

You say that he was very strict? What else besides the food.

Oh, manners-- oh, he expected top grades, always. And I got them. That was expected. But if you got something lower than that that, you had to explain why. Yeah.

Was your brother a good student, too?

He was a pretty good student. He started school a little young, is what they used to say. And but he got it together. And later on, in this country, he did very well.

So when did it become apparent to you that there were some troubles going on?

Well, to me, I remember when Hindenburg died-- but that was, I think, '34. '33, the very first thing that became apparent to me is that the father of my good friend was in uniform. About one of the first-- brown. And they lived one floor above us. I would go up there for Christmas, she would come down for Hanukkah.

So he was a Brownshirt?

Immediately, immediately.

And I was told that I could not play with Traude, his daughter, anymore, Traude Weiss. I was told by my parents, they told my parents, that communications, everything was fini.

And did it stop? Yeah, completely?

Completely. It was a little embarrassing when we would meet on the stairs, you know, no elevator, for a while. But I remember going out the door and kind of listening, anybody coming down, anybody coming up, you know.

So that you wouldn't meet her?

Yeah, if possible.

How did you understand that, as a young girl?

I guess that I don't know-- I assume that we also talked about it at school. And that I heard these things happen. I was more frightened when I saw more Brownshirts.

Why were you afraid?

Because I must have heard that things were happening at that point. And I had a long ways to walk until I got to school.

Did you go by yourself?

Yes, at the beginning. I went-- I walked about 30 to 45 minutes.

That's a long way.

Yeah, with my little rucksack. And-- but I was lucky sometimes. If I went past-- I had to go past our business, Daddy's business. And if-- we had a chauffeur for the business, also drove us sometimes, because my father didn't-- once Hitler got on, my father didn't want to take a chance and drive in case something would happen.

So we had this chauffeur who would say, oh, I'm going that way, want a ride? And then he would drive me. But the other times, I walked. And so in my walk, I observed a few things.

What did you observe?

I observed other Brownshirts. And I observed the Sturmer-- the famous paper that was put up. I started crossing the street so I wouldn't have to pass it directly.

They had one?

Because I realized what was in there. And so yeah, there were times that I was glad when I got there.

These were anticipations of difficulties? Did you actually have any difficulty?

I was really pretty lucky. Once, a girlfriend and I walked home, Jewish girlfriend, and I walked home. And we were stopped by three or four girls, Christian girls, who kind of harassed us. And but we got away.

From then on, we didn't walk that way alone again. This was after school activities. We had a Jewish gym where we were, and where we had played in Wurzburg. And Wurzburg also had a Jewish teacher seminary. That's why the school that I went to was very good-- it was a demonstration school.

And so-- and we felt pretty safe, of course, at school.

When the girls harassed you, what did that consist of? Name calling, or physically?

Oh, sure, name calling was always involved in that sort of thing. And not more than pushing us, not more, just threats. And don't come this way again, and this kind of thing.

Would the kids at school and talk about what was happening to them? What they were feeling?

I think that they must have, but I don't really recall a lot of that. I know that in this country, we are open enough, we would discuss these things. Whether that was really discussed a lot, I don't remember.

Did you tell your parents about the harassment?

Yes, of course. And from then on, we did not walk alone anymore.

When they started the boycotts, did they boycott your father's business?

Sure.

Right away? First three months?

Yes, well, in terms of signs, things that were written maybe on the concrete, you know, so people would not buy from Jews. But his business went on OK. I mean, they had a very fine reputation. They were very honest and capable, although it became increasingly more difficult, business wise.

Would you hear about that?

I wouldn't, no, he wouldn't talk that over with me.

Did you know that he was having a harder time?

I assumed it, yes. I realized it. And then some of their friends started leaving. One of the people was in the printing business, had his own printing business, and they left fairly early, and they went to Italy. My father-- told you, was an intelligent man-- said to them, if you're leaving this country, then really, don't stay on the continent of Europe. Just go further than that.

That much he knew, that much he felt. And he was right. And these people went from Italy, then they had to leave Italy, they went to Africa. And finally were able to buy a small farm in Africa.

And the man died over there, and the rest of the family eventually came to New York.

Where are they now?

South Africa.

South Africa.

Yeah, it took them-- I think they had to be at the border for months until they were admitted in. And they had a hard time.

So did the family begin discussing, should we leave? Or--

I guess a little bit at that point with us, but everything had to be very secret. I guess, it really took shape when the visa-- when we had to go to Stuttgart to be examined for coming over here. That was the American consulate. That was in '38. And probably September '38.

I found-- we were lucky, we had a very distant relative in New York who was our guaranty. Found a letter that said, wrote to dad, that he had been in touch with the consul, and told them about us, and he hoped that everything will go smoothly. But when you have your visa, don't waste any time, just go quickly.

Now who was saying that?

This was our guaranty-- our American guaranty, by the name of Walter Kahn, who was a very fine man in New York.

And related to whom?

Very distantly to the Stahl family, my father's side of the family.

Were you going to ask something?

When did your parents start even thinking or talking about leaving the country? Do you remember?

I really don't, you know. I was pretty young. Except that-- except that they started-- my mother started getting things for us, slowly getting ready. We didn't go out to buy clothes anymore, but we had a dressmaker who came to the house, so she had little things made for me a little larger. Then I wouldn't wear them right away-- we have to save them, and that kind of thing.

So it came gradually to me.

So you knew something was happening.

Yes, and then I saw that some of my friends, some of my Jewish friends were leaving.

You said you couldn't go and buy things anymore?

We didn't-- we didn't that much. Well, there was a large Jewish store, and that was very much boycotted and closed up. They left, too.

So even the Jews couldn't frequent the Jewish businesses? Was it dangerous to--

One never knew. This was the uncertainty as time went on.

Would your family, or your father, listen to Hitler's speeches?

I think so.

You didn't?

No. Very quietly.

Do you remember seeing any parades?

Sure. The city of Wurzburg had a beautiful palace-- still has it, goodness knows. And there was a huge-- you know, what do you call it?

Procession?

No, a huge area in front of the palace. In the back of the palace were beautiful palace gardens. In front was this huge area, and they would gather there-- Brownshirts, Blackshirts. It was not far from our temple.

What kind of palace was it?

It-- beautiful paintings on the ceiling, and in it, also they had a hidden chapel from the days of the Inquisition. See, this area was known for the art of the Rococo period. And Riemenschneider and all of these artists. And so they had a lot of beautiful things in there.

They were badly bombed, and they rebuilt. That's where all the money went to, I think. That's why they haven't asked us back, yet. That's my suspicion.

Anyway, had a beautiful palace, had a beautiful castle on the hill. It was a lovely area, lovely town-- city.

So you would see some of these processions?

Oh, yes.

Do you remember how you felt?

Couldn't help-- scared. I-- you know. What did I know? At night, they would have these torch parades, you know, scared me. And they would sing, and they would sing these wonderful songs about Jews, also.

And that you heard?

Incredibly frightening?

So they began, they went to Stuttgart to apply for--

Well, they must have sent an application before, yes, that was where we-- at the consulate where we were examined, made sure that we were in good health. And then, I guess they got their visa that way.

How long after did they get the visa?

I think very soon after. I think this was the sign that you-- if you pass the physical that you were OK. And left. And I think it was in September that we were there, it was November that we left. But we still were lucky enough, we packed a lift-- a crate, a huge crate.

I probably should mention that we had a beautiful piece in the family, which was a hand-carved cabinet, huge. It was in the family home at the top of the stairs. And the date on it was, I think, 1776. It had been in the family for 100 years.

My father had it taken to someone who would refinish it-- it was painted black. And they found out that, in taking the paint off, there was very beautiful wood underneath, natural and walnut, whatever. And so this man had it for a year, refinishing it. And I guess maybe my parents thought this would be a good transfer, possibly, I don't know.

But it had been in the family all this time. And you could take it apart, it had a cornice, and two sides, and then the

underneath. While it was with this man who refinished it, evidently somebody was looking for a piece like that for one of Hitler's villas. And very much wanted it. And the man told us that.

So we were of course concerned if we could get this out. So when we were getting ready to leave, my parents took the cornice and put it in another room-- took it off. Opened the cabinet wide.

And when they came to check what we were taking-- you know, we had to pay three times over what anything was worth-- mother put all the linen, and all the underwear, and all the whatever else into this area, so the people who came to check that came and went straight for the material. Never-- nobody ever looked at what a gorgeous piece that was. So they packed.

You were able to take it out.

And were able to take it out. We never thought that we would get that lift, never, because we got on the ship in Le Havre in 1938, November 9th, Crystal Night. So we figured that this was gone. Two months later, we had got a phone call that it had arrived. So we were very lucky in many ways. Not that material things matter that much.

So were you on the ship when Crystal Night happened?

Yeah, but we didn't know it.

Ah, right.

We were on-- about for one week. And when we arrived here, we had a lot of letters and telegrams waiting for us from our relatives.

You came to New York?

Came to New York. I grew up in New York rest of my life.

Was it hard for you to leave Germany?

Not that hard anymore. I was sad at leaving my piano behind-- my dad bought me a little piano accordion to take along. No, by that time, I also realized that we had to move on. But then, I think I was just 11 years old, and I think that was probably also, you know, a little feeling of adventure.

I wasn't afraid of what I would find. I was a bit afraid until we had crossed the border into France. Because we went by way of France.

You took the ship from where? From--

From Le Havre, the Ile de France. We had relatives in Paris, so we spent four days in Paris. We were in Paris when this man in the German ligation was shot-- which then started the-- and they had an excuse.

So you knew that? But you didn't know--

No, not until we got to New York. My parents didn't know, either. Yeah.

Now, before you left, what about other family, relatives, and aunts, and uncles, and cousins?

Had a grandmother lived with us-- my grandfather died in '36, my mother's father. And then they moved grandma there. And great-grandma-- great-grandma was still alive and lived to 102. She was in the Jewish home, and in Wurzburg, we also had a beautiful Jewish home in those days.

And grandma and I-- she would usually take me along, we would walk another half hour walk, to the Jewish home just about every day to visit grandma, great-grandma.

It was her mother?

It was her husband's mother, it was grandpa's mother, who was very dear. And I loved her very much. And she's the woman who taught me how to knit and how to crochet.

Grandma didn't want to come to America?

Didn't have a visa.

Didn't have a visa.

Couldn't get one for her. And she went to live with another daughter in Nuremberg. Unfortunately, nobody got out. The first thing my father did when we came here was to try and get visas for everybody, and the--

Including the great-grandma?

No, great-grandma was in the Jewish home. No, no, she wasn't ready to travel that much. Although she was in pretty good shape. But grandma of course, and he tried, my uncle in Nuremberg, was a teacher and a musician-- choir director at the synagogue there, that had an organ.

And so dad tried to get him out. Oh, he had a place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where they needed a headmaster at a school. But the Germans wouldn't let him go.

So my father spent most of his time-- mind you, we arrived here with \$4 a piece, \$4 a head, a family of four. And he spent a good deal of time trying to find out-- trying to get people in through Cuba. And lost some money there.

Someone must have lent him some money there. Nothing worked. Their numbers-- they all had numbers by that time, you know, but their numbers were too high. Couldn't get out.

So they all applied. Now these were your father's sisters and brothers?

Sisters and brothers.

And what about your mother's side?

My mother's side-- one sister went to England. Their daughter went on the Kindertransport, and then they were able to follow. The other sister was in Nuremberg-- was married to the teacher. And I had a cousin who didn't make it there-- age two years older than I.

And so that family didn't survive. Then, there was a single brother, Uncle Sidney, who went to France early on. And he was one of the people we visited on our way to the ship. And he somehow was in Africa, in the Foreign Legion, for a while. I guess he wanted to fight the Germans, whatever. And my mother always hoped that he would escape and save himself.

While he was there, the family from Paris had to flee, and they fled to the South of France on foot and on bicycle. And--

Excuse me, because of the invasion?

Yeah, the invasion of the Germans. And Uncle Sidney came back there-- found them, somehow he knew where they were. And there was a very nice police chief there who said to the family-- they wanted to know what would happen to him. He said, you know, if orders come for him to leave, that he has to go, I will come to you and we'll sit down and

have coffee. And he should go out the back door and into the woods.

He was a very decent fellow, Uncle Sidney. And they had coffee. And when they were through, Sidney was standing there with a little suitcase.

I'm sorry, say again?

He was standing there with a little suitcase ready to go with the police, because he didn't want to cause them any harm. He was afraid that they would have to pay for his disappearing. So he was killed in Majdanek. Didn't make it.

So instead of escaping right then, he thought they would be penalized. So he stayed. And then was picked up, or--

Yeah, very quickly. And transported, and the end was Majdanek.

As well as his parents, then?

His mother-- oh, his mother went with the people from Nuremberg. And they ended up in Riga. My cousin, who was very musical, played in the orchestra in Riga until she was killed.

They took them from Nuremberg to Riga?

Riga, yeah. I think, it's possible they took people from Stuttgart to Riga, also. I think when we were back there, that's what we were told.

There were quite a few that were sent from Riga.

Yeah.

Do you remember crossing the border, the German border?

Yes.

What was that like?

Terrible. My mother and I-- and I guess my brother was with my father-- my mother and I had to dress completely naked, and they examined us everywhere that you can imagine. My brother, same thing with my father. But my father was carrying some papers, and I think they're the ones that I brought, were he got an Iron Cross for the First World War. His position, then.

And they found the papers, and then they left him alone. They just had him take his coat off. But the three of us. And then, we were across-- we weren't quite sure, you know, it didn't seem real yet.

So then, we went to a little cafe there, and my parents had been studying Ivrit, as well as English, in order to get ready to go. And so then, they wanted to order a cup of coffee-- that's all. Maybe some chocolate for us, all the money we had.

And mother was so excited, she didn't know what-- she'd got the languages all mixed up. And but the waiter was very nice, and he let us sit there to wait for the next train. And we weren't really sure until we were in Paris. We were afraid to go outside because we didn't want to make a mistake and be on the German side again, you know. It was--

But once we were on the train and heading for Paris, it was a great relief.

So you had taken a train to the border?

Yeah.

And your trip, how was that?

Stormy, in November, everybody was seasick. My father and my brother went to the captain's-- it must have been a captain's quarters-- there was a service there. And I guess, as my brother used to say, everybody came in the door holding a handkerchief, you know. That was the worst area.

And everybody got seasick, except moi. I was afraid to eat, so I didn't eat for a day and a half. And then, one of the ship people said to me, you have to eat something. You eat a potato first, and then you can eat anything you want on top of that.

And from then on, I had a good time. There were some other kids, and you know, nobody went up for tea but a few of us youngsters.

Were they fleeing the country, too?

Yeah.

So there were a lot of refugees on board.

Yes .

Did you know any English?

Very little. I had a little bit at school, kind of Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall. And with a British accent.

You had a British teacher?

I had a teacher who spoke the King's English, Queen's English, whichever. But I learned very quickly-- we learned very quickly. We were put into what was then called foreigner classes in the system, New York system. And we must have had a dozen different nationalities in there.

And a teacher who only spoke English. She was a marvelous teacher. English and charades-- she was very good with her hands in telling.

I know once, my brother and I were put first in the same class, and I guess I must have talked to him at some point-- she didn't want me to talk. But I only knew the word, speak, when she said, don't talk, I didn't know what she was talking about. So then she demonstrated, you know, don't talk. I learned.

Then Louis went ahead was through junior high school and got into high school very quickly.

Where were you staying?

In New York?

Yeah.

We lived in an apartment house.

Did you have-- you didn't live with the person who vouched for you?

No, no, they put a certain amount of money in the bank for us. We didn't touch it, not one cent. What happened is that my mother started work the first week we were there. She hadn't worked since she was-- since she was married. But she had a certificate from her training.

She took a little refresher course from someone before we left, and then she took private cases. I had an aunt and uncle and two cousins who had come to New York the year before. And my brother and I lived with them 151st Street, and my parents, they had rented a room for them, also in 51st Street, the other side of Broadway.

151st Street?

And that's where was our home, first-- our first home was 601, 151st. And then my parents went to sleep over there. Middle of the night, my mother gets up and turns the light on, and sees cockroaches all over the wall.

Welcome to New York.

Right, never had a crawly-- you know, in her life. Everything was so neat and clean. Well, they moved out of there very fast. As soon as she earned some money, we were able to get that apartment.

How did they adapt here, your parents?

My parents were wonderful. They really did very well. They spoke English very well, both of them. They wrote and read English. They learned and they said to us, once we started going to school, they said, we want to learn English. And we have to learn it through you, because we have to work.

So we speak English at home, as much as we can. And when someone comes to visit that doesn't speak English, then we speak German. Well, of course, took a little while.

That's very unusual. I haven't heard many parents who did it that way.

Oh, they were terrific people. My mother went to work. My brother and I kept house. My brother was 15, I was 11. And my mother would write-- the first few weeks, she would write recipes down for me, what-- we're going to be talked over, what we're going to cook, and I would follow that. And I soon learned how to cook.

So you began your social work training early.

Yeah. That early. I would iron, and my brother would do the hard work-- floors and whatever else needed to be done.

And at first, my mother would take jobs that were 20-- well, they call them 24 hours, 20-hour jobs, so she would live there, and have four hours a day to come home. Well, depending on where she was in New York, you know, she might have spent two hours on the subway going back and forth. It was pretty hard.

And daddy was trying to look for work. He wanted to be independent.

What kind of work did he get?

He wanted to stay independent. And so-- well, you know, the refugee community talked to each other and tried to help each other out. Somehow, he got a few things, like a few pens, flashlights, and things like that he would sell, but he would go to Center Street, the center of the machine business, at lunchtime, and try to make some connections.

Eventually, he got back into the machine business. In a very different way-- he was a representative, became a representative of some places. And he did-- he was doing all right in those days. And he kept a small office. Pardon?

Did they miss Germany?

I never heard a word from them. I know of other people who-- and I know some women who said, you know, it was so much better there, and I wish-- never heard a complaint.

Generally speaking, they were positive people. Very positive.

Was that typical of them not to complain?

I guess. I guess so. I guess so.

That was a good example.

Yes, it was.

How was it for you in school?

Once I got the language, I moved right ahead.

How long did that take?

Not terribly long. They put us, both my brother and me, into fourth grade when we arrived. And then I-- fifth and sixth, I must have done very quickly. And then I got into my age group again. And junior high school, we had seven classes in junior high school. Seven was the lowest, grade wise.

And I, by eighth grade, I was up in 8-2 and 9-1-- I mean, I worked my way up quickly.

Did people make fun of you for your-- did you have an accent for a while?

I must've. Oh, actually, I was in junior high school, I had to get up and give a little speech. And the teacher said to me, oh, Hilde, I didn't know you had an accent. And then asked me about my-- so I must have lost it by then pretty well.

My brother was 15--

Yeah, harder.

Harder, but when he came back from the army, it was pretty well gone.

Talked like a GI, huh? Was he in the war?

And he was sent over to the Pacific, of course.

Naturally, where he could use his talents.

Yeah, he was with the engineers in New Guinea. And invasion of the Philippines and invasion of Japan. And yeah, and when he came back, he went to the Pratt Institute of Technology in New York.

Good school.

Yeah.

How long did it take before the family lived together?

Oh, that was just a week or so. Didn't take very long. Maybe took a little longer than that. But as soon as we could rent the apartment, that was it.

So were you able to bring in any money?

Money? No. No. Nothing. No.

Had your father worked until the end, or was he forced to--

Well, until the business was sold. You know, there was a lot of back and forth. And by the way, the business was sold at about a quarter of what it was worth. These two gentlemen who bought it came really almost at midnight-- they came at 11 o'clock at night and they said, our price or no price. And that was it.

When did that happen?

'38-- '38, around--

Shortly before--

Yeah, before we left. Must have been the summer of '38.

Was there any restitution for that kind of situation? Where you had--

Dad got some restitution, yeah.

For having to sell the business at such a reduced--

Both that and the house, the property, yes.

So how long did it take for you to feel like an American?

Good question. Never thought about it. I just sort of fell into line. And I guess when the war started, mom and I went and worked Red Cross, folding bandages, you know. And then I did a lot of volunteer work-- I was still going to high school-- I did volunteer work at Jewish Memorial Hospital in New York.

Your brother was drafted early?

My brother was drafted fairly early. And well, I guess once we got our citizenship papers, I felt much more.

How long did that take?

Five years. And until then, we had to get permission two months, I think it was, ahead of time to travel to see my brother. I know we met in Philadelphia once, and Washington DC once.

Travel was not easy in those days.

On the train, no, no. And before he was shipped out.

Before the war started, did you keep in touch with anyone in Germany? Was there a correspondence?

The family, of course, you know, my parents did. In terms of friends, no, my best girlfriend went to Israel a year before us about that, or maybe half a year before. And I was in touch with her. And we still meet when we go there.

Excuse me, what?

We still meet when we go there. Linda knows-- is in touch with them.

So you went up through high school in New York City? And then what?

And then I went to evening school at City College for a semester or so, and married very young.

How young?

19.

That's pretty young.

And then my husband had to go through school. And I went-- I worked while he went through school. And until he graduated.

What was he studying?

He is an educator-- education. He was a teacher, principal. And head of department at CSM after a while. And is teaching-- he's still teaching.

Still a teacher?

Teaching adults, yes.

Must like it.

His subject is current world affairs. So that seems to be in demand. He has a good following.

How did you come to be a social worker?

My husband said that I was a social worker long before-- I always wanted to go to school. And at first, we thought that I could take a few courses maybe when we first get married. And of course, that didn't happen. Then I raised a family and took care of our elderly parents.

I wanted to go back to school. I always took a few courses at CSM. And finally, at the age of about 50, I got my opportunity. And I went back to school.

Where'd you go?

San Francisco State. Had enough units to go up there. And I had to first finish my BA. And then got my master's.

Now, when you come to California?

In '47.

Why?

When we got married. That's when we married. We met in New York.

Was he from here?

Our fathers were friends way back. And when my brother was--

Way back, you mean in Germany?

In Germany. My father-in-law knew me when I was five years old. He would-- he was a traveling salesman then, and he was a businessman. And when he would get to our city, he would come and visit. Because our fathers were friends.

So when my brother was sent to San Francisco to go overseas, and he called home, my father said, well, my friend

Julius Gattmann is in San Francisco, give him a ring. And they were very nice to him.

And so we sent Eric, my husband, a package, like we did to a lot of other boys. And we started corresponding. And then he was transferred to a camp in our area-- because Camp Richie-- before being sent over to Germany. He was in the military government after the war. And every eighth day, he had a day off, and every eighth day, he would come and visit us.

And every-- I was still in high school, every eighth day, my mother would write an excuse. I had a lot of colds that year. Right, and then, when he came back, the family invited me to come out here for summer vacation. So I did, and that's when we got engaged.

So he was only 21. It's amazing.

Now, when you came out here, did your parents remain in New York?

They came to visit us. They liked visiting here. And we went east after a while to visit them, but you know, with children, with little children, it's not all that easy.

And finally, when my dad died, mother stayed there until 1970. And that's when my brother died. And then she came out here. He died at the age of 47.

He had-- he was diabetic.

Had what?

He was diabetic. And I guess he must have had-- died of acidosis. He had an infection that the doctor sent him antibiotics, you know, over the phone. But finally ended up in the hospital because he was so sick. And they worked on him for 12 hours and couldn't save him. It was very sad. Very sad.

I have some nice memories-- he came out to visit with the family and we had a wonderful time.

But he kept living in New York?

In New York. He has two sons, who were lovely young men. Both of them became doctors. Both of them went to MIT-- first. That's the mechanical part of the Stahl family. And then they went to medical school. And they're pretty terrific guys.

One of them is a neonatologist.

A what?

Neonatologist-- little preemie babies. With specialties with their intestines. And the other one is internal medicine.

So after your father died, your mother came out here?

Not immediately, after my brother died.

After your brother died.

In 1970-- my father died in 1964 at the age of 74. And my brother died in 1970. And '71 is when my mother moved out here.

And did she move in with you?

No, she was independent. She lived at the Hillsdale apartments for about 10 years. And then, she became ill, and she lived with us for a year. She needed assistance and so I had somebody.

And then she became very ill, and then she unfortunately was in a convalescent hospital. But in those days, it was not too bad. It was very nice, actually.

I guess that's when I was going to school. And we would see her every day. My husband and I would take turns seeing her every day. And so that was kind of sad.

How did you come to pick social work?

Ah, the question. I didn't really answer before. I had a very good model. Before I went back to school, I was in charge of a senior group at Temple Shalom in Burlingame. Actually, I worked for the Jewish Community Center, and there were a couple of groups I was active with.

I got my mother involved in a senior group. And then, I got myself involved. And I had a very good model-- a social worker who worked with our group at Temple Shalom. And I was impressed by her.

And when I went back to school, I thought, well, that sounds like something I'd like to do. That's how it happened.

And it proved to be--

Mm-hmm.

--something that was good for you?

Mm-hmm.

What kind of work have you had?

I'm a medical social worker. And I used to work in medical offices before I went to school. And so I try to combine everything. And my undergraduate-- first year undergraduate time was at Mills Hospital here-- Mills Peninsula now, but Mills. And on a rehabilitation unit-- people who had strokes and who had head injuries.

And my second year was with what was called Catholic Social Services then, now it's Catholic Charities. And so I did whatever came along. At the time, actually, they had a stipend to start a program of elder abuse prevention. So they didn't have anybody who was doing that, and I was asked if I would like to do that.

And that's what I did with them.

So this was what year?

'83, '84.

That was pretty early for people to be in touch with that issue.

Right, and I started this program, and it's still in existence today.

And needed more than ever.

Absolutely. It was quite an experience for me. And then it was Mills Peninsula Senior Focus-- I was the first social worker there. And after a year and a half, my caseload was over my head. And so I decided to leave. But Gene was ill at that time, my son-in-law, and daughter needed some help. So I took a few months.

And then, I worked at Easterseal for six years. And my regret is that I couldn't work longer, because I had problems of my own-- I had a complicated hip surgery. And four surgeries in five years. So I decided I better take care of myself.

And that's when I stopped. So my regret is that I couldn't work longer-- didn't work longer.

When did you stop working?

'91.

Have you wanted to work during this time?

'92-- '92.

Have you wanted to work during that time after that?

Yes, in a-- yeah. Well, it took me quite a while. I had my last surgery in '96, and it took me a while to recover from that, also. So I like what I'm doing now.

What are you doing now?

Interviewing for the Holocaust project. Yes.

How did you come to this?

How did I come to that, Anne? Well, I heard that the project had moved down here, and that a friend of my daughter's was the director. And actually, I had applied to Spielberg, and I thought that they would like to have me because A, my professional background, and B, the fact that I speak German.

But they didn't want me at that time. They probably had enough people already. And so then I came here.

And we're lucky to have you.

Have you been back to Germany?

Mm-hmm.

When?

The first time we went back, I was very reluctant about that. It was about 20 years ago. Maybe more, maybe 25, when my husband had a sabbatical. And both of our mothers were still alive, so instead of taking six months, we took six weeks in Europe.

And we went-- it was in the spring. So we discovered spring everywhere we went, it was beautiful.

But he wanted to go to Germany because he was there as a soldier. And his feelings were not quite the same as mine, because they were lucky enough not to have lost anybody of their immediate family there. But he wanted to go back, and I reluctantly said, OK.

My husband's also a student of Martin Buber, the philosopher Martin Buber. And I had read, in preparation, but I had read some of his writings. And I remember that in '50-- I think it was '56 or '58, Martin Buber went back to Germany and accepted a literary prize, which the Israelis didn't like very well.

But I read some of what he said. And that sort of helped a little bit. And when we came to Germany, the first day we were in university-- down Heidelberg. And there I met the rabbi who was in charge of Heidelberg, and general area up

to Hamburg. And he was an American, and he was interesting to talk to.

His wife was someone who had immigrated to Israel, and who had actually worked with Buber. And who now was teaching Judaism at the University of Heidelberg. So I decided, well, if these people can do this, I can spend a couple of days here and there.

So we went to Heidelberg, we went to Stuttgart, where Eric still has a couple of people who had worked for his father in the office-- Germans-- and who he had visited during the war, after the war, and very nice people. So that-- I was ill at ease, but we had dinner there.

And there was a very elderly gentleman, the brother of the woman, who at the end of dinner rose up and said to us, don't ever think that we were all with him. And he repeated it a couple of times. I guess he felt my reluctance.

And I accepted that. And then we went to Wurzburg, where I came from. And just for the day-- we had rented a car and we drove. And we sort-- of I knew my way around, and Eric drove. And I showed him a few places.

What did that feel like for you?

Strange, strange. You know, Wurzburg had Roentgen, the man who discovered X-rays, did that in Wurzburg, also. So I showed him that area of the house, and then there's a park around there. And the Jewish home was still standing.

How about your father's store?

Saw a few people. Well, that was taken over by Mercedes. Mercedes had a big plant area next to them-- not plant, actually, show room-- next to that property, and that was taken over very quickly. I think they had their eye on it. So that had changed.

But they had built a small synagogue in the replica of the old synagogue, which was another part of town. But they had built that adjoining the old age home. And so we worshipped in there. We were actually there a couple of days. And we met the head of the community now-- then.

So there were some Jews living there?

Yes, I met one man, a Mr. Katzman, who used to have a restaurant, and who emigrated to Israel. And then came back to Germany, because whatever money he was getting, a restitution, I guess-- it was worth more there. And he was living there-- something I couldn't understand. But at least he remembered my family, and you know.

And then I went over to where the Jewish teacher seminary was. And they had just named that building for the director, whose name was Stoll, S-T-O-L-L, renamed it. And it was, I think, a boys' school. That was standing.

The hospital, which was next to the old age home, was gone. And of course, we went to the cemetery to visit the grave of my great-grandmother, who, according to them, died a natural death. And she was the last name entered into the book-- the keeper of the cemetery showed me. Because we had paid her everything ahead.

But then, I saw--

When did she die?

She died in 1942. But then, also, then I saw a lot of markers, about 40 of them. And I asked about them. Well, the keeper didn't know, really, but I could figure out, they all had a name and 1942. So that's when people were deported out.

I was grateful for every one, every marker I saw, because I think I could figure out that who was left in the home, and who was left in the hospital, and people were kind to them. I may be wrong, but I think that's the solution. And I was

glad for that.

Did you meet anyone you knew?

Other than that, no. We stopped at the house where I lived, and a white-haired man, stately looking, came down the street and asked if he could help us. And I wouldn't talk to him. I said, no, thank you. I said to Eric, let's drive off.

I was afraid that maybe he was the father of my girlfriend. She survived. I can't tell you why I felt that, but he looked the age, and the white hair. And you know, I felt very weird.

We were back again in-- we were invited to Stuttgart about five years ago, where my husband comes from. And we went. And that was a real emotional roller coaster.

Why?

There were 50 of us who had been invited, came back. They treated us absolutely marvelously. Of course, it was done by the combination of the Jewish community and from the city of Stuttgart-- I don't know what they call them, the Christian community. And they worked jointly.

And they just were very good to us-- to be welcomed by the mayor. By the way, the former mayor was the son of Rommel.

Was what?

Son of Rommel. Rommel, who was the-- in the--

Rommel.

Rommel in the desert, Desert Fox. We met him. And he's a-- he's a very-- very pleasant man, he was. To be welcomed on city hall, on the steps of city hall. For me, it was a terrible feeling-- it was nice, but it was a terrible feeling.

To think that Jews were gathered in other places, and not so much different. You know, I mean, that's always there. You don't lose that.

So special musical presentations, and you know, just celebrated. A time I felt terrible, in a way, they took us to an old age home. And I thought, my God, who thought of this? Because here is the age group that we don't want to talk to.

We made up our minds-- I made up my mind-- I didn't want to talk to anybody over a certain age, because I knew they might have been active, and they may not have been. But that was difficult. I didn't want to be there at all.

And you know, there were some people who were very sensitive, and we could see that maybe they weren't quite what they tell us they are now. Maybe that wasn't quite so. But we were mainly interested in speaking to younger people and to the teachers. And that's what we did, in smaller groups.

And here is a generation that wanted to know what happened, because their parents and their grandparents wouldn't tell them what happened to the Jews. And so they wanted to know experiences of the people.

Did they get to hear?

Pardon?

Did people tell them what it was like then?

Oh, yes, of course. Yes, in different groups. I mean, we had people come from all over the world, really-- from South

America, from Israel, from you name it, from Cuba.

Did your husband know any people in the group before they--

No.

No. And did he know people in Stuttgart?

He still knew a few people. And there was somebody read in the paper that we were there and came, and had dinner with us-- a very nice man. And was just really terrific. But now I forgot what I wanted to say there.

Anyway, and then we also went back to Wurzburg, which my husband likes so much, because it is an attractive place, and it's a city surrounded by vineyards and the castle and the river. It's on the romantic route-- whatever they call it.

Is that anywhere near Trier?

No, Trier is Rhineland.

OK.

I think my grandmother lived in Trier for some years before she got married.

None of your relatives, distant or otherwise, survived in Germany or went back to Germany?

Unfortunately not. One of my classmates survived. He was at Theresienstadt-- Terezin, where two of my uncles were on the Judenrat and couldn't save themselves and their wives, either.

And he came to New York, eventually. I could talk to him. He and his father, actually, his father was a cook in Theresienstadt, he was in the restaurant business before, too.

And no, unfortunately, nobody survived.

When did you find out what had happened to family?

In '46-- about '45-- I was working, '45, '46, I was working in a medical office in New York, Central Park South. And some of the doctors were from Nuremberg. And we knew the rabbi knew us, and they got word that the Muller family went to Riga, had been lost.

And so they called me to tell me, age 18, and I had to break it to my parents, to my mother. Although suspicions were there, because we hadn't heard anything positive at all.

My mom almost had a little breakdown when she realized what had happened, and stopped working for a while. And I would take her out and take her swimming, and try to-- so but she got back on her feet and she remained strong.

Now, the community in Stuttgart invited your husband back, so you went with him? Did Wurzburg ever invite you back?

Not yet. That's why I said I think that they put all their money into their palace. They were bombed quite badly and they destroyed a lot. And I think that's what happened. I don't know.

Actually, I have to find out now-- the last time we were there, they were tearing the old age home down. It was empty already, and they had planned a marvelous Jewish center area that would include elderly and activities for younger people, and all of that.

We were at the Jewish Community, and goodness knows, I always contribute something. But I never had any information from them. However, the mayor of Wurzburg sends a yearly card, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, you know. And this latest mayor seems to be very thoughtful, he included all kinds of clippings from the paper-- how this work is progressing. And the fact that the Jewish community got the property of the synagogue back-- which was interesting.

Now, the big synagogue that you talked about, had that been--

Destroyed, totally.

When was it destroyed?

Empty-- '38, Crystal Night, yeah. It was right next to a-- Catholics have a big property there. And it was next door. And when we were there, there was only a little plaque, you know, the usual little plaque that was there. But they had maneuvered to get that property back.

Now, I don't know where these new Jewish center housing various activities, whether that's near the old age home-- that's where I thought they were going to build it.

Is there much of a Jewish community there?

It's grown again, but from through surrounding towns and influx from the east-- all of Germany. A lot of people coming from Russia, from Poland, and various eastern countries. So I guess there-- I have someone here who is in close communications with them. So I think I will find out more of what has happened.

Eric thinks that we're going to be invited.

How long did it take when you came to America to stop dreaming in German?

Don't know-- never thought about it. I think I thought in English very quickly. I mean, that's how I communicate with friends at school. And anything I should tell you is that my parents, you know, we were kosher. And when we came to this country, and as you know, we didn't have much money.

So I got a shopping list, and my mother told me where to buy at the butchers. I said, but they're not kosher. We had a kosher butcher downstairs on Broadway. And my parents said, you know, kosher butcher charged, I don't know, tremendous-- much more.

And said, we can't afford this. But we promise you that when we can afford it, we'll buy kosher meat again. And I said, OK. So I went ahead, and--

Did it trouble you?

It didn't trouble me that much. I just decided that they knew what they were-- my parents knew well enough. I wasn't-- I don't think I was a very rebellious kid. Except I moved from New York to California. But that's later on,

I had the sense of working together, that together we're going to make it. And I think maybe my parents presented it that way. And they did, as soon as they could afford it, we bought at a kosher butcher. We're not kosher now anymore, but we were then.

But you still kept a kosher household when you first came?

Here?

I mean, when you came to New York.

To New York, oh, yeah. Milchig and fleischig and all that sort of thing.

How about when you got married?

I married a man who has a good Jewish historical background, but not any of the other-- I'm trying to think, no, I don't think so. Although, I didn't cook ham, and I didn't-- you know-- any of that.

Does Germany have any place in your mind and your heart?

No.

No.

Not in my heart. I mean, my childhood experiences, yes, I remember. And the little town where my mother grew up, you know, went back there last time, also drove a car. And went to the cemeteries, you know.

Every time we got there, the skies opened up. It rained. And I didn't know what to think of that. Yeah, somebody was crying.

Right after high school, then, you said you started working. What kind of work did you do?

Medical office. I was-- yes, I was with some doctors on Central Park South. Who, all of them came from Germany, a couple of them from Nuremberg. And learned-- they still did their own X-ray. Not all of it, but sometimes, you know, simple things like chest plates, and things. Somebody must have brought over their X-ray equipment, I think.

Were five doctors in the office, but not all the time. So usually two at a time, one or two at a time. And they taught me a little lab work, so you know, easy things I could do. And then, I worked on Park Avenue with Dr. Minz, and the next year-- and I guess I wouldn't have left him if I hadn't gotten married. He was very nice to work for.

And there I was with a GYN and surgeon. And then I came out here, and I started at the Emporium. The first day, sale in the basement, you know, yardage, where you had to still figure percentages. And that was fine for a little while until I got a job at Green's Eye Hospital on Octavia. And it's not there anymore-- Octavia and Bush.

I was there until our first daughter arrived. And my husband went to school, so every morning, he would pick up some other people who were going to Berkeley and drop me off at Green's Eye Hospital. And pick me up again in the afternoon.

And that's why my schooling came later, much later.

And then, you had children? At '51 Linda, '54, Lesley, and-- then my-- two daughters. Two daughters, nine grandchildren.

Do you notice any difference in your feelings when you interview people who have come from Germany, anything like your story?

I feel a certain amount of empathy, of course. It's fascinating, because everyone has a different story, and everyone is unique. Yeah.

One of the things that strikes me in listening to you is that your family adapted much, much better than most of the families out there. And I'm not sure why that is. Certainly the language helped a lot. And then, this idea of, we're only going to talk English in the house. That was a wonderful way to help the process.

I'm very proud of them.

That must have been something about their character, also.

They were very fine people. My father was the patriarch of that whole family, you know, 11 children, and I mean-- siblings.

Was he the oldest?

No, he was not the oldest.

How did he get that job?

You know, something happened here and there. I didn't know-- somebody else didn't want to bother with other people. He was very-- always very helpful to people, even in New York when we didn't have much ourselves, but people and once he started in business, he had connections, eventually. You know, and young men would come if they needed a job, and he would know something in that particular field, the machine business, or in tool and die making, or-- and the house was always an open house.

And again, you know, Passover, and holidays. Families--

So he would help other refugees, as well?

Of course.

Get started?

Yeah, we lived in what was called then later on we moved to 839 Riverside Drive, which was around 158th Street-- that was called the Fourth Reich. You didn't know that? Yeah, a lot of the refugees lived in that general area. I went to George Washington High School at 180th and 81st Street.

And that's what it was about. And we had to support each other. I guess I got some of my social work ideas right there. You're right.

Did you talk much with your daughters as they were growing up about your experiences?

Mm-hmm, they heard little stories here and there. I think that when Linda went to Israel and Yom HaShoah came along, she went to a kibbutz up north, you must know the Holocaust-- they have a Holocaust museum?

[NON-ENGLISH]?

Uh-huh. And she did that for a couple of times. I was impressed. Linda didn't say that much about her feelings about that, but then I understood. I was proud of her.

Do you think your early experiences have influenced your life in ways?

I think so. It took me-- I think that it influenced my trust of other people. I think that has gotten a lot better now, but at first it took me a while to feel comfortable with people, to trust them. To open up to them. That sort of thing stayed.

And I think it came right back to-- the origin, I think, is the fact that this little girl suddenly couldn't be my girlfriend anymore. If people do this, I must have thought, if this is what happens, then how can you trust people?

Do you ever try to talk to each other? That little girl and you?

No, it was very definite.

You were told by your parents, and she, obviously, by her--

And you know, after all, he was a Brownshirt, and he didn't want to have any difficulties. Didn't trust.

We had neighbors on the same floor who were pretty decent to the very end. As a matter of fact, somehow, they got the message out that on Crystal Night they were still looking for my father, they would have liked to have taken him along. And that came from these people who lived next door to us.

And so they let you know that they'd been looking for your father.

So you think it influenced your feelings of trust.

I think so.

Anything else? Did it influence your feelings about mankind in general?

Oh, I hate to generalize. You know, I had hoped that mankind in general would have learned something from that period. But as we see now, many people have not. I felt very happy that we were in this country and everything.

I didn't really get involved, and am not really involved, that much, in politics, but today, I understand, I see a lot more. I'm a lot more interested than I used to be.

About politics?

Mm-hmm. Probably because I'm exposed to it through my husband's work. And it influenced it in such a way that I know that we can't-- I'll never forget what happened. But I also know that I can't dwell on it. That we have to move on. And that's been the general feeling for me.

Do you think something like this could happen again?

I hope not. And of course, we have to remember that in the case of Germany, the government was involved, you know? It wasn't just people, a few people. Yeah, the government has to allow it, right? But they were involved in so much more.

Government, or the church, or some higher force says, OK.

Yeah, right. I hope not. Of course, we have a Holocaust in a different way in Africa. I just-- sometimes I can't believe what's happening-- that one country. And in other countries. But--

Are you still optimistic?

Depends on what. It depends on what. I'm grateful for our family. I think we're very lucky. We have lovely daughters, lovely sons-in-law. We lost one son-in-law, unfortunately, at the age of 45, Gene Frank. Hmm?

Like your brother? Like your brother? Dying very young?

Yeah, Gene-- they think it was an aneurysm, but we don't know because no-- didn't examine him. And our daughter married again, and a very lovely man, who's a psychologist. And very happy.

Psychologist?

Yeah, I knew you would say that. And they're very happy. And we inherited three lovely grandchildren. But he had--

So you've had your ups and downs.

We've had ups and downs.

Well, I want you to know that we feel very lucky to have you as part of our team here.

Thank you. And I'm happy to be here.

And we really thank you for granting us this interview.

Thank you. Thank you.

Is there anything that you want to add, or anything that you want to pass on to the future generations, in terms of what you've taken away from your experiences?

I think an awareness is something that we must have-- an awareness of our immediate surroundings, and an awareness of what is going on not only around us in our country and the world, because things can change so easily. I think we have to work for our beliefs. And can't always sit by quietly. And I just would like them to enjoy life and appreciate the moment.

And when I'm not here anymore, I want them to celebrate my life because even though there was all this sadness and this trial and everything, I've had a good life. I married a good man and I have wonderful family. And I've been able to do things that I've wanted to do, even though a little late. But at least I got there.

Well, I'm sure they'll celebrate your life after you're gone, but how about while you're still here?

Oh, yes, we have lots of celebrations. They're wonderful. We just had one last weekend for a couple of birthdays. And they're very good to us.

I'm sure it works the other way, too. You're very good to them.

We try to be there when we can. Yeah.

Thank you so much for telling us your story.

Thank you.

We appreciate it.

Thank you.

That's my great-grandmother, Hannah Jungster, who was born in 1840, and lived to 1942. She was 102 years old, darling little lady, who taught me how to knit and crochet. She lived next door, in the house next to my grandparents. And on the third floor of the grandparents' house, one could cross over into great-grandma's house.

And as children, we had a lot of fun doing that. And visiting with her.

My maternal grandparents, Clara Jungster and Leopold Jungster. They lived in Tann, a little town at the foothill of the Rhone mountains. And grandpa died in '36-- he had not been well and had several surgeries. And grandma lived with us until we left, and then to Nuremberg to other daughter, Laura Muller, And was deported to Riga, unfortunately.

She was a handsome woman.

This is Tann, the town of Tann where my mother was born. That was called the marketplace, the fountain in the middle

of town at that time. Grandma and grandpa's house was just down the street from there. And this is my father and a friend on the outside of Tann.

This was the archway that you drove through or walked through when you got into town from the road.

This is my grandfather, Elias Stahl, and I have a feeling that this might be his granddaughter, Betty, with him. And it must have been a birthday-- it looks like somebody was celebrating something. He was a wonderful man.

And the story is told that when the depression came, and all the money was devalued, one of his sons found him going out the door with a suitcase full of money because he wanted to help the townspeople and the people who lived around them, and who were his friends, he wanted to help them out, not realizing that unfortunately that money was worthless because of the depression. He was a good man who always did good things for people.

Here is a family reunion, which happened about every summer, when the three daughters of my grandparents came for the summer with all the children. So there were five children. And grandma, grandpa, and great-grandma. And my mother, Bertha Stahl, my aunt Laura Muller, and my aunt Dinah] Hirsch.

Now, here are the cousins-- there is Ilse Hirsch, this is moi, I, my brother, Lou-- Ludwig Stahl, my cousin Susan Muller, and my cousin, Norman Muller. Grandma used to bake huge cakes, huge sheet cakes of fruit. She was a wonderful cook.

And can you imagine her cooking for this whole crowd, and the fathers who came to visit us on the weekends, without any of the electrical implements that we have today? It was a fun vacation every year.

My father in World War I-- he was in charge of a field hospital in Eastern Europe. I think it was in Poland. And there he is in full uniform.

This certificate says, in the name of the fuhrer, and then the Reich Councilor is chancellor, businessman Justin Stahl in Wurzburg is given this, an Iron Cross, in remembrance of the First World War. And it was ordered-- this was ordered from Hindenburg.

However, as an honor for those who fought in the front-- well, actually, this was sent to my dad in 1935. And the irony, of course, is that in '35, he could just as easily have been shot as a Jew than received this. So in the name of the fuhrer and the chancellor, that's the irony.

Now, dad was evidently carrying this Iron Cross and this note in his coat when we crossed the border in 1938 to leave Germany. We crossed the French border at Metz. At that time, my brother, and my mother, and I had to undress ourselves completely, and were searched thoroughly, as thoroughly as you can imagine.

But my father only had to take off his coat. And when they saw the papers he was carrying-- and I think it included this piece of paper-- he did not have to undress anymore and no one searched him.

This, I think, is the same that you can wear in your lapel to signify that you got the Iron Cross, that he could have worn. Might have worn then.

This is my mom, of course, in probably in her late teens. Maybe heading towards 20. Having some fun and showing her- - lifting her dirndl skirt. So risqué.

My parents in their younger years. I think maybe this was an engagement photo of-- and I don't know if mother was already Mrs. Frau Stahl, or if she was still Miss Jungster, Fraulein Jungster.

My brother and I about 1937, I would guess, '36, '37, in Wurzburg. And we were four years apart in age. He was sweet, he was very nice. We had a nice relationship. I didn't bother him too much and he didn't bother me too much. We got along fine.

And here we are again in 1938. We were at a pensione-- a Jewish pension along the River Rhine because one didn't go to hotels anymore. And so there was a whole group of us who were staying at this place, a bed and breakfast and meals. And during the day, we would hike along the Rhine and visit some of the castles, or pack our lunch, and maybe stop someplace where we could have drinks, and there were picnic tables.

And that was a wonderful vacation. My aunt and uncle and their children from Nuremberg came along, too. And we all enjoyed each other's company.

This was my uncle Sidney Jungster who emigrated to France, then was in the Foreign Legion in Africa. Came back to the South of France where the family had fled to, and would not escape as he could have to the forest, and came back and waited to be taken by the police. And he died in Majdanek concentration camp.

My father and his sister and Emma Jungster, and her husband, Isidor, and their girl, I think this is, this must be Patina in Tann. Aunt Emma was deported, and her husband died a few years before and is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Tann.

This is a Hanukkah festivity of the girls gym in Wurzburg. These are all the girls in the school, I guess. And a few little boys down here. I am the very last one here, one of the smallest-- next to the teacher, of course, always next to the teacher.

And when I look at this, I wonder what became of many of these girls who I knew, or whose faces I knew. This was my girlfriend, Ella, who is in London, and Marianne [? Dessaur ?] went to Chicago, I think. But I don't know where some of the others are. And I just hope this-- Angelica went to New York-- but the others, I just hope they all survived. And I know they didn't.

Thank you.

This is Sommerhausen, and it says here, [SPEAKING GERMAN], which means, it's the business house of the Stahl family iron works, et cetera. The business was really down here. And the living quarters were up here. And here was a large area, when you enter these doors where they must have had, I don't know, storage, or whatnot.

This house is gone today, the house across the street, and it's a parking area. And this has been extended, this tower, and there's a little theater in there. It's a very picturesque town-- people take care of their property, and of course they have flowers on the windows, and make it look very pretty.

Our garden was way on the other side of that tower outside the town. And the house there looked the same five years ago when Eric and I visited. And we think the mayor is living in it now.

This is a picture of my mom and I, and I think it was taken in Central Park one cold winter day. But the warmth, I think, is reflected in the picture. We were very close, my mom and I.

My family from Nuremberg-- Sebald Muller, Laura Muller, and Susan Muller, and Norbert Muller in Germany. Norbert is the only one who got out on a children's transport to England, and then the United States. He lives in New York. And the rest of the family was done away with at Riga.

That handsome man is my brother, Louis, and I think this was taken probably after he got out of the army after being in the Pacific.

In America?

In America, yes, of course.

Our wedding picture, May 8, 1947. Julius Gattmann, my father-in-law, my husband, Eric, and my mother-in-law, Bertha

Gattmann. My father wasn't feeling well, that's why he is not-- he's not on the picture. But he delivered a beautiful speech at this wedding dinner. And that was a happy day.

My parents on their 40th anniversary. And they were here in San Mateo. And this picture was taken by Bodnar on 25th Avenue. And obviously, you can tell they were happy. They were happy to be here and they were happy to have their 40th. And we all had a good time together.

This is the family, and the dog, Fritzie, who Linda got for her eighth birthday. I assume that this must be maybe 1959, 1960, that this picture was taken.