

We are at the San Francisco Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project. And today is November the 25th, 2003. And we're interviewing Mrs. Erna Gruschka. Mrs. Gruschka, what was your birth name and where were you born?

My birth name was Erna Ehrlich. And I was born in Elbing, East Prussia, Germany.

And when were you born?

1934.

And do you want to give us a date?

Sure. March the 1st, 1934. And I had a brother who was one year younger than me, and he was born on the same day, except one year later.

OK, all right. And what was your father's name?

Sally. It's spelled like "Sally," except it has an umlaut on the Y. So that was pronounced Sally. Yeah.

Uh-huh. And your mother's name?

Johanna Schleimer. And she came from West Prussia. She was born in [? Rosenberg. ?]

Uh-huh. And their birth dates?

Her birth date was June the 5th, 1905. And my father's was February the 4th, 1902.

Mm-hmm. And do you know how your family supported themselves?

Oh, yes. My father was a horse and cattle salesman and-- buyer and salesman. And also we had a butcher shop. And we apparently did very well, because we had employees in the shop as well as in the house. We had two maids, I believe.

Uh-huh. And did they ever talk about the Depression years?

I don't think there were any depression for us. There wasn't any depression for them. And they never did talk about that, no.

Uh-huh. Did your family actually raise the livestock?

No, he bought-- I should have said, he bought and sold livestock. And horses, I guess, is livestock, too.

And was the butcher shop kosher?

No, it was not. We were kosher, but the butcher shop, because he sold it to the general public.

Sure. Was there a large Jewish community in your town?

I'm not very sure, but I've met a lot of people who are from there. I think it was quite big, yeah. We had a synagogue. Yeah.

You did.

And my father was very active in the synagogue.

And so you were observant?

Yes, my father, even in Shanghai, he still did the tefillin and the morning prayer every morning.

And you attended school?

No, I was not. I was supposed to go to school that September of 1939, but we left in May, so I never did go to school there.

Right. Do you ever remember or have you been told about how big the town was? Can you tell us anything?

No, I don't-- it was quite a big town. It was not a village. It was a big town. And we were very close to what's now called Gdansk, or it used to be called Danzig, and also very close to Konigsberg, which is now called Kaliningrad and part of being-- part of Russia.

I remember-- I don't remember too much. But I do remember having a doll carriage, and having dolls in there, and playing with other little girls.

And they were not necessarily Jewish?

No, they were not Jewish.

Your neighbors were--

Neighbors, yeah.

And your parents were on good terms with the--

Oh, yeah. My uncle-- I had three uncles who lived with us in the house. They were my father's brothers. And my grandmother lived there also. And those three uncles were not married, so they all lived-- we all lived together in a big house. And let's see--

And how about socially? Did the parents get together with the neighbors socially?

Mostly with other Jews. My uncles had friends who were not Jewish, and they used to play cards with them several times a week or whatever. Yeah. And let's see--

Do you remember the house?

Yeah, it was a big house. Because like I said, my uncles lived there also, and my grandmother. And I remember there used to be a big lilac bush in front of the house. And people sometimes would knock at the door. And if you opened, it they would ask whoever answered if they could have a piece of the lilac bush. I don't know what they were doing with it, but maybe they were going to root it and then plant it themselves. And I remember that.

And I don't-- I remember one incident when I think my mother wasn't well that day. And we had a big horse and carriage. We also had a car, but my father used to have the cattle and horses pasture outside the town, where there was lots of grassland. And so he used that to go to see what the cattle and the horses were doing.

And one-- and that day, my mother was ill. And I remember I saw my brother climbing up on the carriage, which was standing there in the big yard. And the next thing I knew, he had taken the reins and taken off with the carriage and the horse.

So I went into the house and I don't know who I told it to that he had taken off. And my father luckily was there that day, and he went after him and then got him back. Because God knows where he would have wound up.

So how old was he then?

He probably was four.

Oh my god.

Yes. He was at that time-- as he got older, he did something, things like that. Whatever he wanted to do, he did it. And so I remember that I guess must have made a big impression on me. Because I remember that. Yeah.

So he was a little bit naughty.

Yes, he was naughty.

And what about you?

I was a goody goody. I was the oldest one, and I always was a goody. I always did whatever I was asked to do. That's why I call myself a goody goody. Yeah.

Do you know whether-- whether your family, anyone in the family, your dad was involved in any politics or any union activities?

No, no. No, no. Coming-- fast forwarding, well, after Kristallnacht, on November 9, 1939, I remember. I don't know whether I remember or I was told that-- I remember in the middle-- to me, I remember that in the middle of the night, it was very dark. And I remember my father saying goodbye. And I was crying.

I was calling him Papa, Papa all the time. And they took him and my three uncles away that night. And then I remember my mother talking to my grandmother saying, I wonder when they are going to come back and so forth.

And we did hear that they took them to Konigsberg, which was the capital of East Prussia. And they put them in prison. They were lucky in that they did not take them to some kind of a camp, like Buchenwald or whatever. And they took them to prison.

And my mother was told that if we got the money to get a passage out of Germany, my father would be let out soon so that he could help with getting the tickets for the ship to take us away. And then after two months, they let my father out of the prison, but did not let my uncles out.

They put them on trial and said that they were accused of listening to the Communist radio station from Russia, which supposedly these men that they played cards with said that that's what they had done. Which of course was a total lie because they never-- I don't think they were interested in that.

Anyway, so they were in there like three or four months. But in the meantime, my mother-- when my father was still in prison, my mother had gone one night in the middle of the night. And some farmer who wanted to buy our pigs and whatever else there was, a horse, because you were not supposed to sell your whatever, your property. You're supposed to just leave it and go.

And she went in the middle of the night so that nobody would detect her, hopefully, and sold the property, the cattle and the pigs and whatever, and got some money, and then told the authorities that she had money in order to buy tickets to leave Germany. And they then let my father out, and he was supposed to buy the tickets, which he did. He went to-- in Germany, it's Hamburg. I guess it's called Hamburg now, Hamburg in English.

And he went there and bought the tickets for-- we had to go to Italy first, and then go, from there take the boat to Shanghai. And the reason we went to Shanghai is that we didn't need any papers or anything. You could just go there. And that's why we did that.

My grandmother would not, did not want to go. And she said she had lived there for hundreds-- her family had lived there for hundreds of years, and she just couldn't see herself leaving. So they practically had to drag her onto the train, and then onto the ship. She just did not want to leave.

So she did not want to go, but your family made her come? Yeah, my father and her other sons made her come.

Let's go back a moment prior to '38 '38. Had your family noticed any anti-Semitism or anything happening before Kristallnacht?

Oh, yeah. They knew. But they thought, and lots of German Jews did, oh, it'll pass. Just a crazy guy, and he'll be gone before you know it. Unfortunately, that's what they thought. And I remember one time-- I don't know how-- I must have been three or four maybe. And I heard all this noise on the street, because our house was very close to a sidewalk.

And I remember going outside and seeing all these people marching. And they were saying things. And I thought about it, but I don't think I ever asked my parents what was that. But now, of course later on as I grew up and I thought about, said yeah, they were the Hitler Youth marching. There were a lot of young people, and that's what it was.

Do you remember how you understood that at the time?

No, I did not understand it. I didn't.

You knew it was something bad?

Yeah. Yeah, well, I couldn't understand why. It occurred to me, why are we leaving? You know, packing and all that sort of thing. And I couldn't-- I never did understand why. But I should say that before we left, someone came from the Kindertransport-- these are the kids that were taken to England-- and asked if my mother would-- my parents would let my brother, who was one year younger, and myself go to England.

And she said-- and they said no. They thought about it, said no. Wherever we go, they will go also. So that's how come I didn't go to England. And I had three cousins who did go to England in the Kindertransport.

And their mother was very lucky in that she was able to follow them. And so they all-- eventually, we all wound up here.

So was your family actually thinking about leaving before Kristallnacht?

No, because like I said, my grandmother would not leave, had no intention of leaving. And my grandmother really was a matriarch. I mean, her sons were in their 30s, but they listened to their mother, whatever, you know? And my father also. Their mother was it.

What do you know about-- you said she had been in the country for many years?

They were born there many generations.

What do you know about the family tree? Do you know about your grandparents, great grandparents?

No, I don't really. My grandparents on my mother's side already had died. I never knew them. The only one I knew was my grandmother on my father's side, his mother. That's the only one I knew.

I think I read somewhere that my family, like I said, originally, hundreds of years ago, had come from Russia. But that was hundreds of years ago. And I mean, one thing with most German Jews, I think they thought of them more as being-- of themselves as being German.

They observed all the Jewish commandments and so forth, but to them, they didn't think of themselves as anything else but German. Jews being of German descent, you know?

And so the family had been there for several generations.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And I should mention this. On my mother's side, her father and her oldest brother had fought in the First World War for Germany, for the Kaiser. So they just thought of themselves being German. That was it.

What happened to your father's business?

Well, of course--

Was that dissolved?

It just dissolved itself, because you were not supposed to sell anything. You're not supposed to sell your house, which we didn't. We just left it. And my mother had to, like I said, go in the middle of the night and try and sell those pigs and so forth.

Was that very dangerous?

Oh, yeah. If they caught you, probably take you to prison for a little while. I don't know. But you weren't supposed to take-- anyone who left Germany wasn't supposed to take any gold or silver articles or jewelry with you.

And not much money.

And not much money exactly. They wouldn't even have had enough money for all for the passages for all of them, because we were four or five-- we were eight people.

So how did you manage that?

Well, we had some money, I guess. And my mother sold the cattle and so forth and got money for that. And so then when my father came out of prison, he went and booked the passages for the ship to take us to Shanghai. And then we took a train to Italy, to Genoa.

And and I remember in the plaza, there were lots of pigeons. That's what I can remember, lots of pigeons flying around everything. And then we boarded the ship, an Italian ship for Shanghai.

Do you remember the name of the ship?

Yeah, Conte Verde. Yeah, I have pictures of-- I don't remember very much of the passage at all. But I have pictures of myself and my brother playing with little Indian girls, whose parents were going to Bombay.

So the ship stopped at Bombay and Hong Kong before we went to Shanghai.

Now, was your father then able to get your uncles out of prison?

Yes. My uncles were like five months in prison. Shortly before we were scheduled to leave, they let them go out. So they were lucky that they didn't take them elsewhere.

When they showed proof--

They showed proof that we were leaving, yes. That's right.

Going back a minute to your childhood, do you remember, for instance, celebrating Jewish holidays?

No, I don't. I remember very-- a little bit of the synagogue, but I don't remember. But we were celebrating Jewish holidays, because I know my grandmother was totally kashrut. I mean, she observed all the kashrut laws. And that's how it was in the whole-- everybody there observed the kashrut laws.

My grandmother even made her own wine for Passover out of raisins. And I remember my mother and my grandmother cooking the chickens. But before you cooked the chicken, you took a match and you had the chicken above the match. If there was any kind of feather left, that would burn up. Things like that I remember.

There's a definite scent.

Yeah, that scent.

I remember the smell.

Yeah, the smell. Oh, yeah. Isn't that funny how-- you might forget everything, but you smell something and that reminds you of-- yeah, very much so. And then we went, took the boat to Shanghai. Ship I should say.

How long did it take you?

I don't remember that.

Do you remember if you had to choose certain toys or leave behind certain toys?

No. I remember they did take my doll carriage stroller and the dolls. That I do remember. But they never asked me which ones do you want to take.

Uh-huh. Do you remember there were other children you could play with on the ship?

Yes, I was saying, I was looking at the albums yesterday in order to get some pictures out. And yeah, I've seen this before, pictures of playing ring-around-the-rosie or something, my brother. And there were, I think, two or three Indian girls about the same age. And we were playing on the ship. But I don't remember them. The only way I remember them is by seeing those pictures. Yeah, and we--

And then we came to Shanghai. And I don't remember landing there. I remember the first night we slept in a bed, in an empty apartment. I don't know how we got there. And then I felt during the night something walking over my face. And I think it must have been a mouse or something.

Oh, my gosh.

They had loads of those over there. The other kind, too. Oh, it was awful. And then, next thing I remember, is that we lived in a house. And what I understood at the time was we bought the upper part of the house. And the lower part of the house, another family lived there. And they were also from Germany.

So I don't know how my parents must have gotten together with these people whom they had not known before and bought the house. And then that's how. We lived in the upstairs area, which was a large room, and then two steps down was a smaller room. And then in that smaller room, my uncles and my father started a sausage factory. They made sausages.

And after a while, they wanted to enlarge the factory area. And there wasn't any room in that house, so they went and bought a house for my grandmother, and my unmarried uncles lived there. And the sausage factory was downstairs. And they lived on a street called Broadway.

That was still-- we lived in Hongkew, the district of Shanghai called Hongkew. And this was very close to the end of the

Hongkew, but then the next district was called the International Settlement.

So because we used to walk there. It was quite far from where I lived. And my brother and I used to walk there to visit my grandmother. And so it was very close to the International Settlement, which was-- and to get from one district to another, there was a bridge, called Garden Bridge. And later after the war, we used to go there and there was a movie house which was very nice. And we used to go there and watch movies there.

And so then I saw more of it, of that area than I had before. Because as soon as the Pacific War started, they had all the Jews had to stay in Hongkew and were not allowed to leave. If you had, for some reason, to leave, then you had to get special permits. You have to go see the Japanese officer who was in charge. His name was Goya, and he was horrible. What I've heard, he was a horrible man.

And women-- in Shanghai was very hot in the summer. It's like 100 degrees or more. And so people wore shorts. Women were-- and men, too, wore shorts. And the women didn't know any better, and they'd come and see him in shorts, he would take water and throw it on them.

And sometimes he'd slap the man because-- he called himself the King of the Jews. So were my--

Wearing shorts was disrespectful?

That's it. That's it. Right. And in 1940, about a year after we came to Shanghai, my brother, my youngest brother was born. His name was Julius. And so one of the things I remember was I was six years older than him. So like I said, my parents had taken my doll stroller. When he was very young, they put him the stroller, and I would take him for walks.

In the doll stroller?

Well, from what I remember, it was a pretty big stroller. Yeah, well. Yeah. And so I we used that. And then when he was about three months old, he got very sick. He had pneumonia. You have to remember, there were no antibiotics or anything like that. So I remember my mother being very upset at being afraid that he would die. But he made it. So--

What was the medical care like? Do you remember?

Yes. We had doctor came to the house and examined him several times. And there was a-- you could see doctors, and there was a hospital that was for the refugees. But if there was anything special, they would not come to your house. If you want them to come, you want a doctor to come to your house, then you would have to pay extra. Yeah.

So he came to our house. And, well, he made it anyway. So Then when he was three years old, he got meningitis. So first it was very hard. See, these were all European doctors, educated in Europe and so forth. So they didn't know anything about tropical disease. They knew nothing about it.

And it took them a long while to figure out that he had meningitis, which is an infect-- the kind that they had over there was an infectious disease. And that was during the war. And they would not let you keep people in the house or put them in other hospitals if they could give the disease to someone else.

So the hospital for infectious diseases was in another part of Shanghai. And they took him, but they wouldn't let my father or my mother go, because they didn't have a permit to leave the area. So my father had to go to this Goya, this Japanese guard, because he didn't want my mother to do it.

And they would only let one parent go at a time. So he went and got the permit to go and visit my brother. And so he went there. And there wasn't-- he said the nurses were very nice. And they apparently took good care of him as best as they could. And he was only three years old at the time.

So my father bribed the nurse to really, really look in on him more. And I don't know what he gave her, money or whatever. And he made it. It was all right. There was another little boy who was 10 years old with him in the room, and

he died.

So I understand there are different degrees of meningitis. Some aren't as bad, apparently. The ones you had in Shanghai were bad. Shanghai, there were all kinds of tropical diseases.

One of my uncles got cholera. And like I said, there wasn't any antibiotics. So all they did to him was, he wasn't in the hospital. And they gave him, I think, fluids with salt in it, because apparently you lost all your potassium.

So he made it, too. We were lucky. And then when I was seven years old, I went to school. My brother was only six, but I was seven. I don't know why they waited so long. But before that, my parents wanted us to learn-- of course, we spoke German. They wanted us to learn how to read and write German.

So they sent us to private school. There was a teacher and her husband about a block away from where we lived. And they gave private lessons in German as well as in English when the kids had a hard time with their English, which that's what we learned. When we went to school, we learned English.

We started to learn English. And I never heard one English word in my life up to that time. And so I learned German, how to read and write German, which I can still do. And then when I was seven, I went to school. And I was put in a class ahead of my brother, even though I had I never went to kindergarten, because they put me in first grade and my brother went to kindergarten.

And so I learned how to speak and write and read English. And I don't remember having any hard time with it. Seemed like it was very natural. I learned it very quickly.

So the language in the school was English?

Only English.

Everything was taught in English.

Everything. We were not taught German at all. It was like it just wasn't there. And then I think probably a year after I started school, my father enrolled us in Hebrew school. My brother, he went to Talmud Torah. And it was only for boys. And I went to the one for girls, which was called Beit Yaakov, which means the House of Jacob. And that's how I learned to read Hebrew as well as to write it. And I learned all the prayers in the prayer book.

And I enjoyed that. I enjoyed. I'm very thankful my parents still took me to the school. And so I learned. We learned a lot about Judaism and all that.

How about Chinese?

No, only what we picked up on the street, which were curse words. And just--

Enough to get you along?

Pardon me?

Enough to get you along.

Yeah. Well, yeah. Well, you made signs to the Chinese. And after a while, they picked up pidgin English. And so we talked to them in pidgin English mostly, to the vendors and shopkeepers and so forth. And really did not have very much to do with the Chinese, I have to say that.

They lived-- we lived among them, but we didn't have much to do with them. I mean, I enjoyed being in Shanghai. To me, to a child, this is all very new and exciting and all that stuff. But it must have been terrible for my parents. I mean,



these were European educated people. All of a sudden, they're there. They're in Shanghai.

To them-- I think to them going to Shanghai was like probably for me to go to the moon. But maybe I know more about the moon than they knew about Shanghai. I mean, it must have been horrible.

Do you remember your mom or dad complaining or being upset?

No. No, they never complained. That's one thing about my family. We just never complain. Sometimes it's bad if you don't do that, but they don't. My father became the salesman for the sausages. And the way he would take the sausages to the delis or other shops was by bike.

He had-- in the back of the bike, he had wooden, like a huge wooden box. And that's where he had the sausages. And then he would pedal the bike from one store to another. And that's how he would sell it.

And how about refrigeration in this very hot climate?

There was an icebox. They would come to the area to where we lived. We used to call-- where we lived was a lane. We used to call them lanes. They were like, OK, this was the sidewalk. And then we would probably not call them an alley. And then you would go in there and there were houses on each side of that area.

Very narrow?

Quite narrow, yeah. But it was all concrete. The road was concrete. The ground was concrete. And then at the end of this lane, there would be the garbage dump. That's where you dumped the garbage. And then every day, some Chinese would come and pick it up.

We did not have any WC, flushing toilet. I don't think I should go into this.

That's OK.

Should I? All right. So we had a pot, what we called the roof garden. But it wasn't a roof garden. It was like a concrete area. It was right on top of the first story. And then when you went down the stairs, that's where the room was. And so, well, you would use that pot whenever you needed to.

And then every morning you took it down. And then these Chinese would come with the container and they would take that away. So I don't remember thinking of it as being unusual.

No, of course you were young. And you could get used to it.

Yeah, that's it. Children get used to almost anything, I think. For my parents, it must have been horrible. But everybody did that. That's the way it was.

Someone told us, they called it the honeypot?

Yeah. Yeah. Awful. So you've heard that story before. Well, it was-- yeah, but I didn't think of it being that unusual. That's the funny thing.

During the Japanese occupation, did you get enough food?

Oh, yes. I have to say, I was-- my family was very lucky, in fact, because of my father having the business. And we always had enough to eat. I never was-- now, you'll hear a different story from my husband. He lived in a camp. They didn't have their own house, and he was hungry many times. This never ever happened to us. And always have-- I always had enough clothes to wear.

Now, do you know if it was hard for your father to get the ingredients to make the sausage?

No. They went every-- that was my father. Another uncle went every morning to market, and there was a special area, and got all the ingredients that they needed. But for my father it was very hard, because he had the temperature in the summer was like 100 degrees or more. It's a tropical climate. And he was pedaling.

And he used to wear a little-- many men there wore like a little towel along the-- around their-- kerchief around their neck, so the perspiration would go into that towel. So it was-- it was very hard for him. That I do remember.

How did they get the ice? I think you started to say.

There came-- an ice wagon came, and they sold it, and you told them. I don't know, if you want-- how much you wanted it for, and then they'd cut this out for you. And as kids, we used to run after the wagon and get the water-- put our hands-- put our hands under the wagon, you'd get the cold, cold water.

It was cold.

Yeah. So you had to be very careful that you didn't do anything where you would get diseases, horrible like we weren't allowed to drink water from the tap. We were not allowed to drink tap water. And like most everything had to be washed. Even if you had got a banana, the banana had to be washed first, or any kind of fruit had to be washed.

I once went with my mother. There was a big market not too far from where we lived. And my mother went there I don't know how often to the market, maybe twice a week or so. And one-- it must have been during the summer, and I went with her.

And she had bought bananas. And I wanted a banana, and she says to me, we haven't-- I haven't washed it yet, so you better not have it. But I bugged her so much that she gave me the banana, I guess. And I peeled it and ate it. And a couple of hours after I got home, I was so sick. I was throwing up for hours.

So apparently there was some kind of--

A spray or something.

Spray, or no, I think some kind of insect or something. And I was very sick. I remember that. So that's what you had to be so careful about.

Did you have any hot water?

Oh, no. Not in the house.

Not in the house.

Because the way my mother cooked was, first we had a little stove where you put coal in there. And that's how she cooked. And then later on, we had hot plates. Where you have a hot plate and you have to burners or something.

But not enough water for a bath?

You couldn't. We would go and buy the hot water. On the corner of most streets, there was a shop where you could buy the hot water. You went there and took your containers, and then took them home again.

So for the bath, we would get a bath once a week. And at the end when we were done, then the the dogs got a bath, too.

You had dogs as pets?

Oh, yes. I'll show you one of the pictures. There's a dog with us. The dog's name was Peggy, and then later on she had puppies. And one of them we kept, and his name was Blackie. Because he was all white, and he had a big black spot where his tail started. So as he got older, the black spot got bigger.

And I was just in love with that little dog. And when we left Shanghai, we had to let them be put out-- put down, I should say. Because the Chinese eat dogs.

I know.

And they wanted our dogs. Oh, yes. They wanted our dogs.

So was it unusual to have pets?

No. We had two, and my uncle-- one of my uncles had two, also. Yeah, so no. We had pets. Well, because in Germany you had pets. Yeah, go ahead.

Did you have a lot of playmates?

In Shanghai? Yeah. Well, the kids I went to school with. But I had a two best girlfriends. You always had playmates, but then you had best friends. And I had my next door neighbor. She was a best friend. We became very close, and then I had another girl, a best friend who I went to school with. And she lived on the other side of the street, where I lived a little bit further.

And the funny thing is, about five years ago, I got a telephone call one day. It was Erev Yom Kippur, and I was home. I had taken off from work in order to get dinner ready. And the phone rings and somebody says to me, are you Erna? I said yeah. She said, please sit down.

And I said, yes? She said, I'm Sonya, which was my best friend. So after 53 years, we got back together. I've seen her several times since.

And she lives in this area?

She lives in Cincinnati. No, not in this area. Yeah, but I went to visit her once. And then we got together. We met in Las Vegas. And we've had Shanghai reunions. So she's come to those, and I have also.

So Shanghai, I enjoyed it. But I'm sure it must have been so hard for my parents. One thing that we kids did a lot was go to the movies. We enjoyed going to the movies.

Of course, for a while we had American films that had probably been made 10 years before. But then during the war there weren't anymore American movies. So they showed Chinese movies. And I went to some of them. I couldn't understand what was going on, but I guess it was better than having nothing. I don't know.

Anyway, so in Shanghai, there was quite a community. We were only like some say 18,000, some say 20,000. But they had an opera. They had comedians and so forth. And I went to some of those performances. I enjoyed them.

And we had the school, and the kids put on performances. And then the Hebrew school that I went to, we had a Purim play, and I was Haman in one of them, and I have pictures of that. And so we had a full cultural life, which was nice.

And during the war, the Japanese decided that we should learn Japanese in school. And so we did. I learned how to write the Japanese characters, which are very similar to the Chinese, because that's really where they got their writing from, the Chinese. And I learned that. And I knew-- I remember a few words but not very much.

Because we just did it because we had to, not because we wanted to. And I should say that the school I went to was called SJYA School, which means Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School. And that was built by a man named

Kadoorie, who lived in Hong Kong. He was an Iraqi Jew, and the family I think had lived in Hong Kong for a long time.

They were very wealthy. In fact, he came and visited us like 20 years ago. I belonged to congregation B'nai Amoona. And he came and visited us because it was founded by Shanghai people. And so that was-- I thought of him as being a tall man with black hair.

Because he was short.

When I saw him again, I said, god, he's a little man with gray hair. This was like 30 years after I'd seen him the last time. So yeah. And we had teachers who were German, Austrian, as well as Russian Jews. And we had a wonderful school programs. I mean, I learned so much. We learned so much.

Once you graduated-- it was based on the English system. So once you graduated from that school, you could then take a test to get into Cambridge or Oxford in England. So I mean, we learned so much.

I know my kids went to school here, and that we were so advanced, really. That's because we had to learn what we were told. There was no elective stuff. You learned the classes and the books and so forth that you were given. And I learned-- I also took French, which you had to take. So I knew how to speak French a little bit, which I forgot most of it now, but what a terrific education. Really good.

And then they had a mistress. Was a lady called Lucy-- what was her last name? Horwich. And she also was here in San Francisco. So I mean, all that time when we were going to school we were scared of her.

And so I met her over here, and I went to her and I said, my name is Erna Ehrlich. And so she said, oh, I remember you. I said, you do? Yeah. But I had a hard time talking to her, because as a child I was afraid of her.

Because people would say, oh, she can do all these things. She can hit you on the hand and whatever. But I met her over here and became quite good friends with her. A very lovely lady. So really weird.

So how old were you when you were able to leave Shanghai?

I was 15. I just turned 15. And a year before I had left school, and my parents wanted me to go to business college and learn shorthand typing and bookkeeping in order to eventually get a job wherever we went. Because at that time, they already knew we couldn't stay there because the communists had taken over big parts of China and were coming towards Shanghai. And that's why we left.

Otherwise, your parents weren't anxious to leave?

Well, where would we go? At that time, before 1948, we couldn't even go to Palestine, you know, which was called Palestine at that time. It's only after 1948 that you could go to Israel. So we were told that we could go to Israel. And we didn't need any papers or anything. So I didn't need any permit, so that's why my parents decided to go to Israel.

Your parents, the business had done pretty well?

Oh, yes. Yes, it had done well.

Did they sell to local, to the Chinese as well?

Chinese don't eat sausages. No, no, this was all for the Europeans. Yes, only to Europeans. And yeah, they did well. They had employees in the factory, other refugees that were employed. And my father was a very wonderful person.

Every once in a while, he would bring-- there were lots of men, bachelors who had no family or anything. And he would bring someone that had met somewhere and bring them home for dinner. And I remember the holidays we always had a guest, maybe one or two other men that had no families. And so he would do that. He would ask them to come to our

house.

And I have to say about my father, he was a wonderful man. I thought that most men were like that. But I found as I grew up, I found out, no, that's not the way it is. But I thought my father was-- and when I met people who knew him, and they always said what a nice man he was.

And he also was a big joker. He used to make jokes and make you laugh and all that sort of thing. So that's how I think of him. Anyway, then we came--

And did your mother have to work in the business?

In Shanghai? No, my mother did not, no. No, she stayed at home and took care of us and everything.

And what happened to your grandmother?

I'm coming to that. So then we decided to go to Israel, my father and my parents. My grandmother came with us, of course, and my uncles also. Two of my uncles had gotten married in Shanghai. And one had a child.

And so we went on a ship to Israel. Well, we were not allowed-- the ship was not allowed to go through the Suez Canal because Egypt, they wouldn't let us go through. So we had to go all the way around South Africa. It took us-- the time we left Shanghai was January the 1st, 1949. And we came to Israel February the 17th, 1949, which is 47 days. It took us 47 days to go from Shanghai to Israel.

now was that a UN ship?

Yeah, a UN ship, right. Leased by the UN, a Refugee Board or whatever they were called. And so we came--

And you were not allowed through the Suez Canal because it was--

Going to Israel. Jewish refugees going to Israel. Yeah, that's why they would not allow it. So we had to take the long way. And the way the ship-- on that ship that we went from Shanghai, it was a big ship. And we had big--

I think it was a troop carrier, because there were like seven or eight women were in one cabin. And then that's only women. Then the men was the same thing. There were men in one cabin. Of course, there were many cabins. I don't know how many were on the ship, but there were a lot of people.

And my grandmother was with us. A then one day, she didn't feel well. So they had a special-- like a hospital. They took her there. And my mother would go there every morning and see how she was doing. And one morning, she came there and she had passed away during the night.

So now we had left-- this was we had just left South Africa. In South Africa, we had stopped in Cape Town. We were not allowed to go down. And some Jews came to the port, and they would wave to us and call out, but they were not allowed to come up either. And we weren't allowed to go down.

But that was shortly after my grandmother died, so we didn't want her to be buried at sea. My uncles didn't want that, and my father also. So we thought maybe my aunt from England could come and bury her in South Africa. But she couldn't come, and so we decided to take her with us to Israel.

She was put in a lead coffin, and then in, I think, two other coffins. And then we put her, I guess, somewhere where it was cold. And then I think she died like January the 15th. And so it was like another month before we came to Israel.

So when we came to Israel, of course that cost extra. It costs a lot of money to do that, but that's what they decided to do. So then when we came to Israel, she was buried. And my father had gotten-- in Shanghai, my father had gotten ill. He had a heart condition.

So about a year before we left Shanghai, he had to stop working. Because pedaling on the bike, that was too much. So my brother took over his job as much as he could. He was only 14. No, he was 13 at the time.

So he had to leave school. And I would go in the evenings and get the orders for the next day from the shops. But I couldn't go out all over, because some of them were quite far.

You had just started working.

I started working. That was after school. But my brother had to leave school totally. So that's what we did the last year that we stayed in Shanghai. Because my father was very ill. He had heart attacks and didn't have the right medication.

So they did try. The doctor to try to get some medication for him, but it was very expensive and we had to pay for that. So then--

That was in Shanghai.

That was in Shanghai still. After the war, it was easier to get medication than during the war, but it was still hard. And so--

One more question about then. Did your brother have a bar mitzvah?

Yes, he had a bar mitzvah when he was 13 years old, which was in 1948. I remember the bar mitzvah. And we had people over to our house. My mother got long tables, and she and another neighbor lady did all the cakes, baked all the cakes and everything. And we had a very nice celebration.

First, we went to the synagogue, of course. And then after that, we had a celebration in our house. So he had a very nice bar mitzvah. And then we left Shanghai. And we took with us things that were worthwhile, that we could use. And we had a big trunk.

And I had a typewriter. And I remember I still have the typewriter. And I put our name on the-- I printed our name. Excuse me.

I printed our name on the typewriter. One of these days, it'll be an antique. Maybe it is already. My parents got me that typewriter, a brand new typewriter, 1945. It was a Remington.

So that brought with you.

I brought it with me in Shanghai, Canada. I mean, Shanghai. Israel, Canada, and then over here. I still have it. So I think I still used it over here, too, for a little while. And--

Did you want to go to Israel?

Was I asked if I wanted to go? I wasn't asked. You did-- we were brought up according to the European "you did what our parents did and that was it." Never occurred to us anything else. We did what our parents said we were doing, and that's it.

You didn't think about whether you wanted to go or not?

No. I could never think of myself as being away from my family. But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed Israel. By that time, I was 15 when I came to Israel. And--

So you arrived in Israel. What port did you arrive in?

Haifa. But we were-- according to the immigration department, we were supposed to go to Ra'anana, which was closer to Tel Aviv. But all my other uncles were in Haifa also. So we didn't want to go there, so we just stayed there in Haifa.

So actually the first thing, though, that your family had to take care of was burying your grandmother.

Bury my grandmother. That's right.

Were you close to your grandmother?

Very.

Like I said, she was a matriarch of the family, and her sons listened to her. And I did. We did the same thing. I loved her. I loved her. I remember going to her and visiting her, and she had long gray hair. And she wore it in a bun, combing her hair, and doing a hairdo for her. Yeah.

And so then we came to Israel. But--

That must have been difficult.

Well, it was very difficult. My father got very sick. Apparently, the long sea voyage was not good for him. It was too long. And they took him to a hospital, and he had another heart attack.

And they thought that he was better. And he came home and he was better, but pretty soon he had another heart attack. So he wound up in the hospital again. And then he came home. And it wasn't long afterwards. I was-- I think I was at the entrance of the tent, and he was down.

We had stairs going down from the tent, and he was down there. And all of a sudden, I saw him falling. And he was all blue in his face. And that's the only thing I remember.

My mother said, go run and get the doctor. So I ran up the hill and tried to get the doctor. Well, they came but he was dead. So then we buried him next to my grandmother.

This was in Haifa?

Yeah, it was in Haifa. Yeah, it was. I mean, it was horrible. There we had just come, and my father is gone.

So it was just a couple of months?

Seven weeks.

Oh.

So now we knew we had to get jobs. Because what else was there? There was nothing else. The way we lived was-- they-- I think for a little while we got-- we got meals. They cooked a communal kitchen, and you got meals there. But after a while, that stopped.

So we had to go and get work. I went to--

Where did you live?

We lived in a tent, which-- in an area which had originally been used for British soldiers. Well, the British were in Palestine. So that-- the British soldiers had been camped there. And we lived there from February to November of 1949, which was like nine months.

In November, it started raining already. So it wasn't very nice being in a tent. Anyway, so there were some barracks in that area. And they went and divided the barracks where the soldiers also had lived into three parts, so that they were three rooms.

And we got one room in the corner. And there was a big area, a big room. That's where we slept and ate. And then there was a little room off the big room. That was a kitchen. For take showers and so forth and use the bathroom, there was another building where everyone went there. Everyone used the showers and toilets.

So I went to work. I became a sales clerk in a department store. And I was in a toiletries department, where you had perfume and toothpaste and lipstick and things like that. And I liked that. And my brother, who was 14, became an apprentice electrician. So he learned how to be an electrician.

It's good. He liked it. We liked it. And then I met kids my own age or older. I became good friends. And I met a girl who had been born in Shanghai, and her whole family. And we became good friends. So we had fun.

Plus the boys started looking at you and you start looking at-- not boys, men. So that was a fun time. So I liked it. And my mother got a part time job as a housekeeper to a German-Jewish family. And that's the first time in her life that she worked outside the home. She had never worked before.

So my uncles, all my family, they all left to Canada. And then we were all-- we were all alone. And she certainly felt all alone. Besides us, having us, she was all alone. And we spoke Hebrew. We learned the Hebrew and everything. And my youngest brother went to school.

And so she couldn't-- she couldn't learn how to speak Hebrew. It was too hard. And after a while, she said we should go to Canada, where the rest of the family was. So I went with her to the Canadian consulate, and talked to them and everything.

And they said, well, it's going to take a while to get the right papers and all that stuff. We tried. We also went to the American consulate. We still were on the Polish quota. The German quota was very good. They let a lot of Germans. You're born in Germany, they let a lot of Germans go to the United States. But not if you were on the Polish quota. It was only like a few thousand every year, I think.

So that was still-- still couldn't do that. Because my mother had a brother at that time in Baltimore. He had been hidden during the war, and that's how he survived it. And he already was in the United States in Baltimore.

And he said he would send us the affidavit, which you needed. But we were still on the Polish quota, so there was no way that we could go to the United States. So I worked. And I worked, and we went to Montreal. We then went to Montreal. And I worked there.

I was a clerk in a bakery. And my brother worked as an electrician again. My mother did not work. And so then pretty soon we were alone in Montreal, because all the rest of the family, they had left for the United States.

What year did you go to Montreal?

We left-- we went to Canada in 1952. So I was a little over three years in Israel. And we stayed-- in the meantime, my uncle sent in Montreal-- my uncle sent us the affidavit. And we had to go to the American consulate and get everything, the papers ready and so forth. So it only took us 15 years to get to the United States. That's all.

Anyway, so and--

So had you tried to get to the United States earlier?

Oh, we tried in Germany, I think, before. When we knew we had to get out we tried, but like I said, they were on the Polish quota. And we tried in Shanghai. I went with my father to the consulate.



So you got to the United States in '50--

'2. No, no, '54. I got to Canada in 1952. And we were there for 18 months. And I came to the United States in March '54. I'm still here. After I was here about 10 years, I thought I should be moving on again. But then where else are you going to go?

So I think I've gotten from-- gone from one country to another, I've gotten a love of traveling. I love to travel. We have been quite a few countries. Went back to Europe. We went to Hong Kong and so forth.

And I'm lucky that my son works for United Airlines. So it makes it easier for us. Far easier for us to go. But now you can't go-- you used to go on standby. Can't go standby anymore. Planes are still too full, so we've given that up. Can't do that anymore.

So I was very, very lucky. I think I was very lucky that I had the parents I had. We went to Shanghai, and our family was intact. And then we came to the United States and Canada.

Tell us about how you lived in Canada.

We lived in a big flat.

And you worked again?

I worked, and my brother worked, but my mother did not work.

What did you do in Canada?

I was a clerk in a bakery store. And every day they'd say, come on, Erna, have a piece of cake or an éclair. At that time I loved éclairs. I would have it. And I didn't put on any weight. Now if I did that, oh, boy. I'd put on weight.

But when you're in your-- I was in my late teens, it didn't bother me at all.

Sure.

And then my brother worked. And of course, the weather in Canada is very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. I did not like the climate at all. And then my--

It was a difficult adjustment?

The climate, you mean?

No.

Altogether. No, that's one thing with me. I always get used to things because you don't have much choice. After you go from one country to another, what choice do you have? You have to get used to things.

Well, you had good plumbing now, and you have good facilities?

Yeah, well, in Montreal, you had good plumbing. Yeah. That's about while I was--

Were you helped it all by the--

No, we were never helped. Never.

Any of the Jewish organizations?

No, the UN, I think, paid for the ship from Shanghai to--

Israel.

Israel. Yeah. But otherwise, never been helped by any Jewish agency. Never. I got my job in Montreal by looking in the paper, looking at the ads. And that's how I got my job. And I think my brother got it the same way.

And then we came over here, and we first stayed two weeks with one of my uncles in their apartment. And then we were looking for an apartment. We got an apartment. So after two weeks, we moved into that apartment.

Where was that?

On Hayes Street. 2085 Hayes Street.

So you came directly to San Francisco when you came?

No, we first came to New York. We went by train from Montreal to New York. And then when my uncle met us and we then took a train to Baltimore, Maryland, to my mother's brother, which she hadn't seen in 20 years or something. So of course, that was very nice for her.

And we stayed with them for about a week. And then we went back to New York, took the train from Baltimore to New York, and then took a plane to San Francisco. Because the rest of the family was here, and so--

Uh-huh.

So that was nice when we came here. That's the most family we've been together with for a long time. And my cousins are here, too, the ones who were in England. They also had come here. And so that was very nice.

And then I looked for a job. And one thing, I earned my own living as well as helping my family since I was 15. And we were very close, myself and my two brothers and my mother. We were very close.

So what kind of a job did you find then in San Francisco?

I found a job as a clerk in an insurance company, on Sansome Street. And after a while, I got a job as the secretary to the claims manager, because I've taken shorthand typing, right? And I still remember That I still have my books and everything.

And that was nice. I enjoyed that very much. And then in the meantime, my brother met my husband, whom he had known from Shanghai. And he brought him to the house, and things-- we became friends, and then went out and so forth.

And then he was drafted, and we corresponded while he was drafted. Then he came back to San Francisco and asked me to marry him. And after a little while, we got married. And we have two children, a son and a daughter, and three grandchildren.

So that was it. So and now we are retired. Which took me a long time to get used to being retired. Because I had worked eight years before I had my son, and then I took off when I had my children. I stayed home.

And then after that, when they were-- I think my daughter was nine years old, I went back to work. And I worked for 27 years, also in an insurance company. I was an administrative assistant. And I enjoyed that.

Mm-hmm.

And my husband talked me into retiring.

How old are your grandchildren?

10, 8, and 6.

Oh.

Right now, they're on a Disney cruise, going to the Caribbean. So they are enjoying themselves, I'm sure.

Do you see a lot of them?

Yes, they live in Belmont.

Mm-hmm.

So we see them often, yeah.

And your children, what are their names?

My children's names are-- her name is Catherine, but we call her Cathy. And my son's name is Ralph. And all their middle names are after my parents. Her name is Catherine Anne. And my son's name is Ralph Sally.

So and all my nieces are called-- one of them is called Anna. And that's her first name. And the other one, her middle name is Anne also. So--

So your mom also came out to San Francisco.

Yes. She died in 1965. So my parents-- I did not have parents for a long time.

Mm-hmm. And-- my brothers also passed away.

Mm-hmm. But they also have lived out here?

Yeah. One of my-- the older brother passed away 11 years ago, and the other ones 7 years ago.

And I'm sorry. been through a lot as a family.

I still haven't gotten used to that.

How do you feel that all of your experiences have affected your life? I mean, going from--

Well, I think they affected my life in that I became stronger, I think. That I knew I had to do things for myself, and I couldn't leave it up to other people. I was like a substitute mother for my youngest brother. Because I took-- my mother couldn't speak English very well. So I had to take him and register him in schools and all that sort of thing.

And we were-- like I said, we were very close. And I used to talk to my brothers every week. And then on the weekend, we'd go and we'd have dinner together. Or they'd come to my house or I go to their house or something.

And we moved to San Bruno, let's see, 30 years ago. We used to live in San Francisco, so we moved to San Bruno. And shortly after that, my older brother moved a few months after that also to San Bruno. And then my younger brother moved about two years later. So we were all in the same area.

And like I said, we saw each other very often.

Very lucky.

Yeah.

How do you think your attitudes and values or personal interests stem from your experience?

Yeah, I think so. I love-- I'm very interested in politics. And in Shanghai, always, I read a lot. I read many, many books about history. I liked historical novels, also. And in fact, I read about Abraham Lincoln, several books, when I was in Shanghai. I used to be a voracious reader.

I remember once one summer I read *Gone with the Wind*. Another summer, I read *War and Peace*. So I read American history, several books. We used to have libraries in Shanghai, and I would go and get books there all the time and read a lot.

So really my education has been self-education, mostly. I mean, I had the education I got in Shanghai, which was very good. And I also being self-educated by reading an awful lot.

Mm-hmm.

And I took *Time Magazine* for many, many, many years. And that's where you get all the politics and what's going on in the world and so forth. And I've always been very interested in that. Quite different than most Americans, who don't seem to be very interested in what happens in the rest of the world.

And I believe in being self-reliant, and being responsible for your actions, And knowing that, whatever you do, there is always some kind of a consequence. You have to think of what the consequence might be.

And that's what you get out of having to be self-reliant. You just believe in that, because that's the only way you can exist. How else could you? There's no other way. So I think I've installed that in my children.

Being interested in history, were you disturbed by the reunification of Germany?

No, I wasn't disturbed. I was hoping they'd take away the parts that are now Poland and Russia and again make it part of Germany. I don't think the Germans that now live in Germany had anything to do with the Holocaust.

The ones that lived at the time of the Holocaust, they knew everything. When they said they didn't know, that was, as far as I'm concerned, is a bunch of garbage. Because we went to Germany, and I went to Dachau. And that was right-- I mean, it was in Munich. It was a suburb of Munich. So how could they not know what was going on? There's no way.

And they say, oh, we didn't know. That's rubbish. But the ones that are there now, I think most of them, the ones who are more antisemites, I think, are the ones that were in East Germany than the ones that were in West Germany, Western Germany. Yeah.

Why do you think that is?

Why is that? Because the Communists told them the ones who lived in Western Germany did all the horrible things they did in the Holocaust, and we didn't do anything in East Germany. Because that's what the communists told them. It's a bunch of malarkey. Yeah, but--

So you went back to Germany?

I've been there twice. Right, yeah. Not that I went to Germany. We went to France and Italy, and that was part of the tour. So the funny thing is, I felt completely at ease. And I didn't think I would, nor did I want to. But my husband didn't

feel that way at all.

I don't know. I felt completely at ease. Maybe if I knew more of the people maybe I wouldn't, but I know another woman who goes every year to Germany to visit friends that she has from, what, 70 years ago, 60 years ago or something.

So you felt at ease. Did you actually visit your town where you were born?

No. First of all, at that time, it was-- it was Poland at that time. It's Poland still now. And for me to go there, I wouldn't be-- and I said my cousin went there, who was 12 years older than me. When he was like 17 when he left Germany.

So he remembers much, much more than I do. And he said he couldn't see anything that he remembered. It was just totally destroyed.

Do you know what happened to your house?

Destroyed. He went back there. And I remember the address where we lived. Zweiundvierzig Sternstrasse, which 42 Stern. Let's see.

Stern.

Stern. Not "stern." Well, yeah, Stern, I guess, the name. Stern Street.

Mm-hmm.

I remember that. But it wouldn't do me any good to go there, because I wouldn't remember anything.

Do you fear another Holocaust could occur?

You have the right leader who could hypnotize people, I don't know. I mean, I don't know how Hitler did this. I think about it, but I can't figure it out. Because the Germans are such-- they were such cultured people. How can you-- how can you turn around from one way and become something entirely different?

For me, I've thought about it for many years. It's very hard to understand. Very, very hard. I don't understand it. I don't think I ever will. But I've come to the point where I can't look at any more of these Holocaust pictures. It just upset me so much. Very horrible.

Have you talked about your experiences to your children, grandchildren?

Yeah. Yes. I think they understand, but not entirely. I mean, they were both born in this country. And for them, it's so hard to understand.

I once asked them if they thought that anyone, any of their friends or whoever they meet are antisemites and have made any remarks. And they told me, no, of course not. They just couldn't understand that. I said, are you sure? Yeah, I'm sure. So that was their answer.

But I made sure my children always knew that they were Jews. We were members of the synagogue. They went to Sunday school. They went to Hebrew school. They had their bar and bat mitzvah and they were confirmed.

And my son, after he married, he became a member of the synagogue without me saying one word. He did that himself, which makes me very happy. And my grandchildren go to Sunday school.

OK.

So, for me, that's very important.

Do they go to the same temple you do?

No, they don't. They go to Beth El. Well, they live close to Beth El, about 5 minutes away, I think. And for them, that's good.

Mm-hmm.

So I've been in this synagogue a few times. When the kids participate or something, then they usually ask us to come. So that's good. I like that. My daughter, unfortunately, lives in Kansas now. So we don't see her too often. We'll be going for Thanksgiving to her, but we're leaving Thursday morning.

Mm-hmm. OK.

She doesn't have any children. Only my son has children. And they're cute little monkeys. That's what I call them, the little monkeys.

Those are darling ages. So do you feel American?

No. I feel like-- I don't know. I feel like I'm internationalist, I guess. I don't feel very American. Oh, I believe in what America stands for, but I didn't go to school here. I went. I took a few classes at City College in San Francisco. I didn't have time to take-- I had my children and then I couldn't take it. In the evening, I didn't have time.

But like I said, I've read a lot of American history books. And so I know a lot of American history. Probably more than a lot of native born Americans.

Mm-hmm.

I have talked.

Have you experienced anti-Semitism here?

Yes. When I first came here, I didn't-- after you're in Israel and everybody's the same as you are, you just-- it doesn't occur to you that other people would be antisemites. And in Shanghai, the Chinese would say [NON-ENGLISH] which means Jews are thieves. But I don't know where they got that from. They didn't know what Jews are. They had no idea what Jews are. I don't know where they got that from. They used to say that.

And I came to Israel and every-- after a little while, everyone is a Jew here. And that was so nice feeling that. But over here, when I first came here and went for an interview, the guy said-- the interviewer says to me, so what school did you go to? I said I went to school in Shanghai.

He says, you mean you didn't go to Lowell? I said, what's Lowell? I didn't know what he was talking about. He's trying to find out if I was Jewish or not. I said no. I said I don't know what that is. Because at that time I guess there were a lot of Jews in Lowell.

So that's how he was-- I mean, that's how he was trying to figure out if I was Jewish or not. At the time, I didn't know what that meant. So I figured if I found out Lowell, what a school that was and so forth. Yeah.

So in Canada, they were so anti-Semitic. Awful. There was another boy when I went for an interview, and he says to me, did you go to whatever school? I can't even remember what school it was. And I said, no, I didn't. He says, are you sure? I said, yes, I'm sure. And later on, I found out it was a private girls school where lots of Jewish girls went to.

That's how they try to find out. They couldn't come right out and say are you Jewish. That's how they try to find out

whether you're Jewish or not. So I don't know what it's like in Montreal now. Probably worse. Because now in Montreal you have to speak French, mostly. And then the government offices, all you speak is French. And every document in Quebec has to be sent in French and English.

And the French always were more anti-Semitic than anyone else. Which I understand they still are in France.

Are there any-- you mentioned a few things, but I wonder if there's anything else from lessons that you've learned from your experiences of having to really move all over the world that you would want to pass on to the next generation?

Well, I think one has to be-- we don't-- if you have to be strong, you have to be strong. You have to make yourself do things that you don't like. And in order to go to Canada, we had to first go to London. We flew from Tel Aviv to London, and had to go there to the Canadian consulate.

I went there several times and sign papers, sign papers and fill out papers. And I had to do that. And I was only 18 years old. And when I started in Israel to get the papers, I was only 17 years old. But I had to go and do all that because my mother's English was not-- nor did she speak Hebrew. It was not that good.

So they wouldn't speak Hebrew to you anyway in the consulates. They would not. So I had to do all that. And then when we came over here. I had to go with my brother and register him for the school. I used to help him with his homework.

So I had to take on responsibilities that someone my age ordinarily would not do, would not have to do. So and I always did what was I was supposed to do. I always have done that.

And I never had the excuse of saying, well, I didn't know what I was doing, or I couldn't do that or something. I just had to do it, so I did it. And that's what you have to do in life many times.

Yeah. So when people say, oh, this poor thing. This thing happened to him or that thing happened to her, and that's why she did this or that, and I don't get it. I don't understand that at all.

And you should feel sorry for them? I feel sorry for people who are ill. Yes, I do. But otherwise, if you're not ill, then you should do what has to be done for yourself.

No reason not to take responsibility.

Exactly. Yes. You're done?

Is there anything that you want to add?

No.

OK, well, we'll get the photos on in a minute.

OK.

But I want to thank you very much.

Oh, you're welcome.

For telling us a very full story of your life.

OK, this is my uncle, my mother's oldest brother. And his name was Helmann Schleimer. And the last time my mother and I saw him was in Berlin, just before we left in 1939. We visited him. And he was killed in the Holocaust.

And I had a cousin in the British army. After the war, he went to Berlin. And he found out for us that he had-- what had

happened to him. And he'd been killed in the Holocaust.

And he had-- it's not funny, but it's so ironical. He had been a soldier for Germany in the First World War against England. So he did that, and that was his-- that was his reward. He was killed. They killed him.

Mm-hmm.

So--

Do you know where he was taken?

No, I don't.

But this other man helped you find out information?

Yeah, that's my cousin. That was my cousin.

Mm-hmm.

So that's also my mother's brother. His name was Zeigfried Schleimer. And he also lived in Berlin. And we saw him also before, just before we left Germany. He had married and had two small children, which were about ages 2 and 4. He and his wife as well as his children were killed in the Holocaust.

OK.

Yeah, this is a picture of my family, where we all lived in the same house. This is my grandmother, my parents, my mother and my father, and my three uncles, who lived with us. They were all unmarried at that time.

And my brother, myself, and the middle is my cousin, our older cousin, who now lives in California, also. And then the other picture is--

What were your uncle's names?

OK. Max, Leo, and Herbert were my uncles' names. My father's name was Sally. My grandmother's name was Henrietta. And my cousin, her name was also Erna, the same as mine. And my brother's name is George. And then--

And that was taken--

Probably-- I'm guessing now, probably around 1937.

In your town?

In Elbing, where I was born and where we lived, yes. And the other picture is of my brother and myself. Probably in '38, I think, when I was four and he was three years old, also where we were born and lived, in Elbing.

OK, that's a picture of my grandmother, also taken in the town we lived in. And she must have been, I think, in her mid-70s at the time. She was the matriarch of the family. And I loved her very much.

And she was with us in Shanghai, and then she died on the way to Israel, and was then-- and we took her with us to Israel and was then buried in Israel.

And her full name?

Her full name was Henrietta. Her maiden name was Hirsch. And of course her last name was Ehrlich. As we all are.



That was my maiden name.

This was your father's mother.

That's correct. It's my father's mother, yes.

These are my parents, Sally and Anne. Everyone called my mother Anne, although her full name was Johanna. On board the ship going to Shanghai. The ship's name was Conte Verde. And I don't remember too much about the voyage, but I have pictures that show me on the ship with other little girls playing.

So that was in 1938, May 1938.

So was that after?

No, this was leaving Germany on the way to Shanghai.

So after Kristallnacht.

After, yes.

So that might have been in--

May 1939.

'9.

As we arrived in Shanghai, June the 4th, 1939. And my mother-- the reason I know is my mother's birthday was the next day, June the 5th, so I always know that day.

Mm-hmm.

This is myself and my two brothers. George is the older one, and then Julius is the younger one. I think he's a little over a year old in that picture. It's probably 1941. He had been born in Shanghai, in May 1940, and as well as our dog, Peggy.

And I remember where that was taken. It was taken in-- we used to call them camps, Wayside Road, and a photographer was there. And he had us pose, and then he took the picture.

OK, this is my son, Ralph, and my daughter, Catherine, whom we call Cathy. This was at the wedding of their cousin.

Do you know what year that was?

Oh, gosh. Let's see. Probably five years ago. So that would make it 1998, I think. These are my three grandchildren. Karen is the oldest, and she is 10 years old. And then Mark is eight years old. And then there's Amy, the little one, who was six years old. It was taken in Hawaii a year ago. So that's 2002.

That's great, the next generation.

Yeah.

And on that note, we thank you again.

You're welcome. I can't believe we've been talking all this time.

You did a great job. Thank you.

You're welcome.