

How to spell that anymore. [LAUGHS]

Today is September 24, 2003. We're at the apartment of Inge Peebles in San Leandro, California. My name is Peter Ryan, interviewer, and Anne Grenn Saldinger is doing the videotape today. Could I ask you where and when you were born?

In Berlin on May 16, 1924. Berlin, Germany.

And how many people were in your family?

My mother, my father, when I was born, my mother and my father, and myself.

OK. You want to give us their names?

My father's name was Hyronimus-- he had many first names I can't remember-- Eikelmann And my mother was Else Eikelmann geborne Haushalter. I mean, nee Haushalter.

When you were born, what kind of living arrangement did you have?

We had a huge apartment that had many rooms. And in Germany, the houses, they had very high ceilings. I remember that. Can I refer to my book? Because it's in here.

It would be better if you just say what you remember.

Oh, because I have written it down. But anyhow, what I remember, it had very high ceilings. And the front rooms, some of them were connected, one home with the other, with heavy sliding doors. And I don't remember how many of them there were. But it was a huge place.

OK. What did your father do?

He had his own business, something with office supplies or something. He was traveling a lot. He traveled a lot.

OK. Do you know how long they had been living in Germany, your family, your father's family, your mother's?

All their life, all their life.

And how about before that, their parents, do you know?

I don't know too much about my father's family. Because he died when I was four. But my mother and my grandmother, her brothers and her father all fought in the Prussian army. And so they go back a long time in Berlin.

And I don't know too much about my grandfather on my mother's side. Because he died when I was four weeks old. But I know nothing about my father's background.

OK. Now when you say the Prussian army, are you talking about World War I? Or the Franco-Prussian war?

They go back. I mean, their family goes way back. Now I don't know. I think that must have been World War I when they-- yeah, they fought in World War I.

How did your father die?

I think he had a heart attack or something.

Was he young?

I know he was older than my mother. I think he must have been in his-- let's see. I think that I was born. He must have been close to 50. He was in his 40s.

And your mother? How old would she have been? How much difference in age?

Well, let's see. I'm trying to think back. She was born in-- I think she was-- yeah, she was born in 1898. And I was born in '24. She was 26 years old.

When you were born?

Yeah.

Yeah.

So then when my father died, she must have been 30.

OK. And what happened to the business after your--

My mother tried to keep it up. But then it was too much traveling for her. My grandmother came to live with us, because she had been a widow. And so then it was always just the three of us, my mother, my grandmother, and I.

OK.

And then I don't know. I don't remember too clearly. I remember she was gone, but not as much as my father was gone. And then I think she took a job so that it did not have to be away from home that much. And then our lifestyle changed a little bit.

But then it changed drastically after 1933.

OK. What kind of a neighborhood did you live in Berlin?

Well, I really don't know.

You don't remember?

It was very nice, it seemed, you know.

Was it a commercial area?

No, no, I think it was what you would call, nowadays, you'd call it upscale, you know?

Mhm. And do you remember your early schooling?

Yes. As a matter of fact, I have a picture of my first day of school. Would you like to see it?

Well, we'll see it when we do the pictures.

We'll look at it afterwards.

Tell me what you remember about your schooling.

Well, in Germany, when kids went to school, they got great big--

Cones.

I guess they were cones, just cones, but filled with candy. And I have a picture of myself with it.

You don't still have the candy?

No.

[LAUGHS]

And I remember, it had-- I mean, a lot of steps to go up to it. It was a big building. And I remember that I got a girlfriend right away. Her name was Liesl Lotte.

Jewish, not Jewish?

No, no, that's in my story, too. That comes. Yeah, we were friends all the way.

And then, finally, I guess her father was in the SS, you know. So then he forbid her to play with me, you know. And then, of course, I had to get out of that school, eventually.

Did you like school?

Yeah, I think I did.

What were your favorite subjects?

I don't remember. I know I had a lot of problems. You had to learn to the script writing. I remember I had trouble with that. [LAUGHS] But I like best, I think, was recess.

And going home, huh?

Yeah. I do remember, though, that when they said their prayers, I was sitting. They stood up, I guess. And I sat down. You know, I didn't.

Did that feel funny?

Pardon?

Did that feel funny?

No, it didn't bother me at that time. I just thought it was just a way of life, you know. I mean, I was six years old.

So it didn't bother me at all. As a matter of fact, for a long time, when the Hitler Youth and all this came, and all the other kids, they got special jackets, I wanted a jacket like that. I mean, I didn't understand what was going on.

Was it talked about much at home?

Oh, yeah, a lot of crying going on. I mean, as it went, you know. But then when it affected me then, later on when my friend couldn't play with me, and I had to change schools, go to a Jewish school, yes, then it affected me very much.

Now you went to school, you were six when you went to school. That was 1930.

Yes.

The teachers, did they make any reference to your being Jewish? Or--

No.

--did the other kids?

No, I got along fine with everybody. There was no-- and then it didn't really get bad-- I can't remember now. It wasn't in '33. It was after '33. It was, I think, maybe '35.

Were there other Jewish students in your school?

You know, I've been trying to think. I can't remember.

Do you have any memories of your father?

Yes, I have a few memories, which I have put in my story. That it was always like a holiday when he came home. And he picked me up and twirled me around and [INAUDIBLE] and brought me always presents.

And well, I was kind of spoiled. I was a brat, you know? When I was little, I had governesses, you know. And none of them stayed very long. [LAUGHS]

And I remember a present was a little walking cane. It was black ebony and had a silver handle.

Oh, boy.

And I cherished that. Uh huh. Even though you didn't need it? Huh?

Yeah. And then, of course, I do remember I would go to the synagogue with my mother and grandmother. But I remember when I was little and my father was still alive, he was Lutheran. And we had Christmas trees, big Christmas trees. And sometimes if Hanukkah and Christmas came together, we'd have the Menorah and the Christmas tree.

Now what did you say your father was?

Lutheran.

Lutheran.

Yes.

OK. Was that any difficulty in your mother's family, that she married out of the faith?

You know, I never really realized. Because at that time, it was just my mother, you know? And I don't know. I never inquired, you know? It never came up. And if it did, I really don't remember.

But I know they all got along. Because my grandmother was over at our house quite a bit before she moved in with us after my father died.

This is your father's mother?

No, my mother's mother.

OK.

No, I don't know anything. I think his parents were dead when he was-- because I tried to find out, you know, and my mother didn't even know too much about it. And I don't know whether there was difficulty on his part of the family when he married a Jewish girl.

Right. Were you a religious family, would you say?

Well, I wouldn't say we were over-religious, but my mother and grandmother did go to the synagogue every Friday night. And they observed the high holidays. And I remember my grandmother, she liked to sew and everything. She wouldn't sew, you know, on the Sabbath.

But that's really all I remember. But we were not kosher. We would not eat kosher or anything like that.

And the neighborhood that you lived in, was that a mixed neighborhood? Were there were other Jewish people?

I don't remember. Because the neighbors were, I think, they were mostly non-Jewish, you know. And-- until we had to move, you know.

Now you said a few minutes ago that it was 1935 that things began to change a little.

Well, I think it was. I'm trying to think what grade I was in when I had to go to a Jewish school. And I'm not quite sure. Because let's see. Eight-- would have made it three years. But then the last year, I didn't go to school.

So it must have been about, I think it would be about '35. And by that time, we had moved. My mother had to give up the house because she was let go from her position because she was Jewish.

What was she doing?

I think she was-- what she was doing for my father. She handled the foreign correspondence, you know. I think she worked for a company where she did the same thing. And then she was let go because she was Jewish.

OK. So then you had to move from your apartment.

Yeah. Then we moved. And we moved into a big place that I remember. It was also a big apartment. But this lady that-- all the children she rented it out to different people. And there were quite a few. And they were all Jewish people.

I think we were displaced then. You know what I'm talking about. Because I know there was a real old couple. And then there was another woman, I think she was kind of what you called a spinster at that time. And I can't remember who else.

And this woman had been a schoolteacher. And she was raising her little grandson. Because her daughter and son-in-law-- either it was her son or daughter, I don't know which one, the parents of the boy-- they were entertainers.

And they had fled Germany. And they left the boy behind because of their traveling, you know. And so the boy stayed with her. And she is the one that taught me English.

The boy?

No, the grandmother.

Oh, the grandmother. Yeah, she was a schoolteacher. And my mother paid her to teach me English because my mother was planning all the time to leave.

By that time, we were trying to go to either one of my mother's grandmother's brothers and his family. They had gone to England. And we were trying to go there.

But there was just no way. Then she tried to go to America. There was no place we could go. And that's why we ended up in Shanghai.

Now, when you had to move from your apartment to a different one, were you still in the same school?

At that time, yes, for a while.

OK. So that didn't change yet?

No, but that changed-- I think it was all in the same year. It happened all in the same year.

And what was your understanding of the change?

Well, by that time, I didn't-- I mean it was kind of hazy. I only knew because I was Jewish I couldn't get. For a while, my friend, that Liesl Lotte, she would come still over. And we'd go ice skating still, you know.

And then she came over one day and said-- this is in my poem that I wrote-- that her father had forbidden her to come. And then she sneaked out. And then her mother came one time and said, it's just not-- and the mother was very nice.

And she cried. We all cried. And she said that she just cannot come over anymore. And that was really-- that was to me the biggest.

And then, of course, I made another girlfriend when I went to the Jewish school. I had to walk quite a long ways to-- there they called it [? unterbahn, ?] you know, underground-- and take that to the new school. And so then I met a girl named Helga. And she lived near us.

She was Jewish.

Yes. There was a Jewish school.

OK.

And so then she became my best friend. And then, then things got better, when I had her, we had lots of-- and we did have a lot of fun, still, you know. And I have pictures of it.

With that first best friend, did her father tell her not to play with you anymore when you were still going to the same school?

It happened, I think-- it's kind of hazy. I can't remember whether it was. No. Because she still came over when we had moved. But she had to walk quite a ways.

So it was for a little while. It all happened so fast. It seemed to happen all together at that time, you know?

What was your understanding of being Jewish? You knew that this change was happening because you were Jewish?

Yeah, because of this bad man that hated all Jewish people. And then it was gradual. It came so gradual.

Because first a lot of the people-- how shall I say it? They didn't make a difference. But then, a lot of it was afterwards. People that knew us, that were friends, my mother had a lot of friends that were not Jewish, besides Jewish people. And they stuck by us for a long time.

But then I think they were threatened by other-- they were getting so afraid. It must have been something like it was in Russia with the communists. If you talk to them and you go to a concentration camp. And so that's why they all-- you

know.

And then, of course, there were some that right away, they-- I noticed that in school, when I was still in the other school, the first school, that some of the kids really started getting nasty.

How did they get nasty?

Well, they would call me names. Jude, Jude, Jude. And they made it sound like a dirty word, you know?

Did it feel that way to you?

Well, I really didn't understand why it made such a difference. Because to me, like I say, I think it's because my family was not that religious. The religion didn't seem to play that big a part of it.

So I couldn't understand it. They made it sound like because you were Jewish, you were not German. And I couldn't figure that out.

Because you considered yourself German.

Judaism is a religion. Being German is a nationality. I mean, at least I knew that much at that time. And that was very confusing.

Yeah. Do you remember the Olympics happening in 1936?

Yeah, I remember there was a lot of excitement and everything.

Did you know what it was about?

Yeah, about the sports and everything. And everybody was excited about it. But see, there was no television, you know?

Now do you remember whether you were in the Jewish school yet when the Olympics happened? Or did that happen after?

You know, I don't remember. I just can't tell. What year was it?

'36.

So I must have already been in the Jewish school.

When they had the Olympics in Berlin, they relaxed a lot of the laws about Jews stay out.

No, but there wasn't that much. But like I say, in '36, it didn't seem-- except, like, you can't talk to them, you can't play with them, you have to go to a different school. But where we lived, evidently, there was not that much of a harassment at that time. That didn't start till about, I would say, '37.

But in the meantime, I remember there was so much [INAUDIBLE]. We had so much of extended family, aunts and uncles. I mean, I called them aunts and uncles. They were my grandmother's cousins twice removed or something.

But we were all-- and it seemed like there were a lot of people. And they would always, every Sunday, I guess, you'd go over there, or they'd come to the house. And not so much after we moved. We didn't have that much food, you know. But before that, or we'd go to their house.

And then they were crying. And then this one left and this one left.

Left Germany? What do you mean left?

Left Germany.

Yeah.

Yeah. I know I had one aunt. She was a cousin. I remember this aunt because I was into dogs. And this aunt had the most beautiful dog. And I liked to go over there.

And of course, she seemed ancient to me at the time. But she still had her mother living with her. And she had a son, I guess, there was also a mixed marriage or something, or I don't remember what it was.

No, I think they were divorced. He was Jewish, too. And he'd gone to France, the aunt's husband.

And he opened kind of a department store there. And they had a son. So the son emigrated to France. So I don't know whatever became of them.

So did you enjoy the Jewish school?

Yeah, it was fine. Maybe subconsciously, I was probably more comfortable. Because I didn't have to sit down when they said their prayer, you know. And yeah, I think it was comfortable. I liked it.

Now you had to walk a long way to school?

Yes.

Were you bothered on the way to school at all?

Not till about-- I would say, I can't remember whether it was '37 or '38. It seems that there was a year that I didn't go to school anymore. Because sometimes they threw stones at me, you know, and called me-- and then we had to wear those yellow-- I think that started-- I can't remember. I would say it was probably late '37 or '38 when we had to wear the yellow thing, you know?

And then, of course, And things went along. I mean, we lived our life. Then what really hit home, again, too, was that my mother had gotten engaged to a real nice man. And he had a little boy who was a little bit-- I think he was just a little bit younger than I was. And I really liked him. He was nice.

They were going to get married eventually. But then he had an altercation with one of the Nazis or something. And they interrogated him. And he had a stroke and he died.

So that was a very big blow. And my mother then decided. But she tried everything. At one time, she tried to go-- was a name, I've never heard of that name again, name Alexandrette. I think somebody had just made it up.

So she tried to get bookings to go there. We didn't even know where it was, just to get out of Germany. And then that fell through.

So then she made reservations on the-- or not reservations. She tried to get information about taking the train to Shanghai, you know, via Siberia on the Orient Express. And we were all planning on doing that. And then they shut that down.

So it was, you know? And all this time, what I remember mostly, the relatives coming together and where it used to be fun, it was just crying all the time.

Can you tell me how, after your mother lost her job, how did you survive economically?

I don't really know whether they had some money saved up. I don't know. I can't really tell you that. Whether my grandmother had a pension, or what it was, I don't know.

Because at that time, there seemed to be so many other issues that money really didn't matter. As long as you had something to eat, you know? And I think maybe that's why we moved into this smaller place.

I can't remember. This is where I don't know. I must have blocked a lot of it out.

Because it seemed we moved earlier. But I think, then, it was after she lost her job. So I just really don't know.

But that's why we had these close quarters. You know, my grandmother was very unhappy. She'd been a very wonderful cook.

And even though when my father was alive, we did have servants to help, she always did the cooking for us. Because she loved to cook. And when we moved into this place, she had to share the kitchen with other people. And she was very unhappy about that.

So it was in the air in the family that you were trying to get out of Germany.

Yes.

You knew that.

Yes.

And would it be upsetting when she tried one venture and it didn't work and then another?

Oh, yeah. I mean, it must have been. I never realized it that much. I was just thinking back. And it must have been very hard for her to be, so to speak, the man of the house. At that time, it was hard for single mothers.

But not only did she have to take care of me, she took care of my mother, and then the responsibility of getting us out of Germany. And so it must have been very upsetting.

Now was it intended that the grandmother would come with you?

Oh, yeah. We were always together. Because she moved in with us when my father died.

Oh, OK.

So there was always the three of us. There was no question about--

All three would go?

Yeah. And then I remember this. The little boy that was the son of the man that my mother was going to marry, I guess he was a widower. And the boy was sent to England on the Kinder Express.

And we never heard from him again. My mother couldn't keep him. It was just hard enough for us.

And I do not remember now-- when she came back one day so excited. She had tickets on the Terukuni Maru, a Japanese ship, to go to Shanghai. And now this becomes hazy.

I don't remember whether it was before Kristallnacht or after Kristallnacht. Because we left in January. And Kristallnacht was at November.

And then I wrote a poem about-- that was terrible. I mean, the noise and the screaming and the hollering and the glass breaking.

What did you see? What did you hear?

Well, can I read it from my poem? Because I just--

Your poem, yeah, sure.

Because I-- Where is it?

I woke to thundering footsteps and sounds of splintering wood and shattering glass outside my door. And then I covered myself with blankets and I started praying. And I heard the muffled screams. That's why I put the blanket, so I couldn't-- people screaming.

And I was praying, don't let them get my mother. Don't let them get my mother. And then I-- and then it seemed to go on forever. And then finally it was quiet.

And my mother and my grandmother were just huddled together and were crying. It was just-- you know. And so now I don't remember whether my mother got the tickets to go away afterwards or not.

Because I remember it took a long time. We had to get the passports. And the passports were issued in '38.

So I have a feeling. I probably would tell you the date.

Well, we can figure that later.

But anyhow, then we were packing. And then one of my grandma's cousins that she was closest to, I called them aunt and uncle. And they had a boy. He was five years older than I was.

And when they heard that my mother had gotten tickets for us, they cried. And she came to my mother. You can't leave us behind. So my mother went and tried to get-- she got them passage, too. And so we all left. And then I remember when we were getting ready to--

If we go back now to Kristallnacht, if you could tell us a little bit more about what you remember, what you saw.

OK. If I can read this here. This is part of this poem.

I covered with blankets gone over my head. They couldn't muffle the terror-filled screams of neighbors dragged from their beds.

On this cold November night, petrified, with limbs like lead I prayed. Please, Lord, don't let them take my mommy. Please let them go away.

Finally, dead silence. Storm troopers had done their grisly deeds. Then it was not a good morning. Windows marked with yellow stars of David, sidewalks wet with red painting spelling Jude and the blood of Kristallnacht [INAUDIBLE]-
- Kristallnacht [INAUDIBLE].

So that's what we found, you know, the blood and that paint mixed together, running. And it was just--

Were you near any synagogue?

I don't remember. Because we walked to it. So it must have been close by.

But we didn't go anywhere after that. You didn't go out?

No.

No. How did you spend the year that you were out of school? How would you spend your time?

I think this lady that was our landlady, I was taking English lessons from her and trying to learn English. And my girlfriend would come over, Helga.

And I had a parakeet. And I would teach him to talk. He talked up a storm, you know. And I don't know. I don't remember. It was just-- it was just--

At what point did you stop school?

I can't remember. I don't know whether it was before Kristallnacht or after. I think it must have been after Kristallnacht. So it really wasn't that long. It seemed like it was a long time.

Was the school closed, or just became difficult or dangerous for you?

I don't remember. I can't remember. I think it was just too much. I think I shut out a lot of things. It was too much for me to comprehend.

And then when we had to pack, you know. I mean, my grandmother had all this beautiful crystal and everything. And then when the packers came, they had these great big wooden crates.

And some of these Nazis came to supervise what we could take and what we couldn't take. And I had to leave all my dolls behind. Well, I had one, my favorite doll. And I just sat there and I glared at this guy.

And I decided to take this doll. I wouldn't let him take it. And my grandmother was just-- you know, I mean, when I'm thinking back how hard it must have been for her. She was in her 60s. And having lived in Germany all her life, having had her father and her brothers fight for the country, and then being told you're not a German anymore.

And then we got the passports. And we all had to take the middle name of Sarah. And then the passport say Jude, you know. I've got the passport here.

So you remember packing and then Nazis came to supervise.

Oh, God, yes.

And there were things that they would not allow you?

Oh, there was a lot, and then all the jewelry. And then my grandmother found out even her wedding band, the gold wedding band, they had put in a phony one and kept it.

Did they allow you to take the crystal?

Well, some of it, some of it made it and some of it didn't make it. As a matter of fact, we used that during the war to sell it to Japanese just to get by.

And so what happened to your dolls?

I don't know. I only took one with me.

The rest you had to leave behind.

Yeah.

How did you-- go ahead.

Yeah, what was that like for you?

Oh, it was just terrible. But like I say, we were so shell-shocked still from Kristallnacht, that we tried to just-- I think at that time it was just get out, you know? And then, like I say, it seemed forever, and it seemed to have gone real fast.

It just went. Saying goodbye, leaving my doll behind, and saying goodbye to my best friend. And I never know what became of her. It was very, very traumatic.

I think it was very much like it was happening to somebody else. It wasn't happening to me.

How did you actually get out?

Well, we had to get, like I said, we had to get permission. And we had to get the passport. And then we went to a train.

And there, again, I've got some-- you know, I can't remember. But I remember when I was sitting down to write this down, I remembered that we had some bad moments. Because the train was so full, crowded.

Where was the train going?

To Italy, to Naples, to where we were supposed to get--

Going to?

--to Naples.

To Naples. And then when we got to the border, then the Nazis came back on the train. And it was just like there was everybody stopped breathing. What is going wrong before we got out? We didn't really relax till after we were out of Germany.

What were they doing when they came in?

Well, they just checked passports and papers and everything else. And I think they searched the luggage that you had on you and stuff like that. And then when we came to Italy, I don't know.

My mother must have had money. Because I don't remember how-- like I say, I was not concerned with money at that time. I didn't care. I thought it was grow on trees, you know, as far as I was concerned.

And I remember that when we went to Italy, we had a few days. And this was a nice time of relaxing. We went to the Isle of Capri, and relaxed, you know. And then we went on the ship. Now my poor mother was seasick all the way on the ship.

How about you?

Oh, I enjoyed it. And then I enjoyed being on the ship. There were some kids. And I had my first crush on a guy on the ship, you know.

And my grandmother did not get seasick at all. And so then my mother had gotten my aunt and uncle and their son also on board. But when she went back, they got, at that time, she got-- they would have gone steerage. She got what was

available.

But it happened we were what they called First Class. So we were up on top. And then when she went back, she couldn't get any more tickets for the same level for them. So she had to get second class.

So we were kind of separated. Because we could go down to see them. They could not come up to see us. That's how it was on those liners.

But then I remember on the ports where we stopped, then we would get out. And my mother would recuperate long enough, you know? And I remember we were in Port Said. I don't know whether it's still called that--

Port Said in Egypt.

Yeah. They were sitting there. And they had the guys were sitting there with their fezes on. And they wanted to-- they talked to my uncle. And they wanted to buy us. And we got out of there in a hurry.

[LAUGHS]

What was the name of the ship, again?

Terukuni Maru-- was a Japanese ship. Oh, it was beautiful. And they made the dinner now. I don't know. This was, like I say, we were up in first class.

And the menus were printed on fans. You know the fans? They were beautiful. And everything was decorated Japanese style. It was very beautiful.

And you knew where you were going?

Pardon?

You knew where you were going?

Oh, we were going to Shanghai. Yeah.

Did you have any idea what that would be like?

No. We had a little idea when we went to Singapore. At that time, when we got there, Shanghai was very dirty. I understand it's been cleaned up a lot now, you know.

But Singapore was also very dirty. And here were the Chinese. And my mother said, I don't want to go to Shanghai. They spit.

[LAUGHS]

I can see her saying that. And so we were very apprehensive. And then when we got to Shanghai, I don't remember now.

Well, I got sick. When we got to Hong Kong, I was sick with my throat. And I think I had strep throat.

But the ship doctor, he didn't want to be-- I think it started-- now I think I had already, oh, what do you call it? Oh. Diphtheria, you know?

And so he didn't want to be quarantined. So I stayed on the ship. I couldn't go see Hong Kong. I've always regretted that.

And so when we came to Shanghai, I came down with diphtheria. And I had to go to a hospital, to an English hospital.

And that was very traumatic for me. Because here I was, away from my mother and grandmother for the first time. And they couldn't come see me, just through a little window, through a screen window.

But I think it was called-- what was it called? The Joint Committee or something, they met the ship, you know. And they helped the refugees. And we found lodging in a hotel in a part of Hongkew. It was, of course, right across the bridge from the international settlement. And so we got lodging there.

Was that in the English part?

No, that was already in the Japanese, on the Japanese side already. But it wasn't part of Hongkew where we would have to move later, after Pearl Harbor. This was very nice.

And as a matter of fact, we made very good friends there. The Japanese always felt very protective to us because of three women alone and the age of my grandmother. They honored her, you know. So they were very protective of us.

So what were your impressions when you first got there?

Well, it was kind of scary. Because to get to where we were-- well, most of your transportation was by rickshaw at the time. And the rickshaws could only go to the end of the bridge. It was called Garden Bridge, that connected the international settlement with Hongkew.

And at the end of that bridge, there was the English consulate. And they had the-- you know, the soldiers there with the big-- you know, in their Scottish uniforms?

Mhm.

And then on the bridge, halfway on the bridge, there were these soldiers who came on this side. And then you went a few feet. And there were the Japanese soldiers standing with drawn bayonets. And see, they had already occupied. They had Hongkew. That was their part across the bridge. And the other one was still English, you know and French settlement.

But like I said, we were very comfortable. We were made comfortable. And then, when I got home from the hospital, then I went to school in English. And I went into high school. So I don't remember how it is.

But I went to-- it was called Sheffield High. And it was quite a ways. I had to take a rickshaw to the foot of the bridge, and then walk across, and then take a rickshaw on the other side to go to school, and then also the international settlement. It was a long ride.

So was that a British school?

Yes.

Taught in English or German?

English.

English. Did you know enough English?

Well, yeah. I learned. I was very lucky. I learned fast. I learned English very fast.

And then I learned Japanese. I spoke Japanese fluently. I picked up the Shanghai dialect. I picked up French. And now I can't even remember German anymore.

[LAUGHS]

Forgot it all.

Great. So you spoke some Chinese as well?

Yeah, the Chinese-- the Shanghai dialect. Because you needed it for the coolies, to direct them. And then, when I was 14, I remember 14, yeah, then the owner of the hotel that had taken a liking to us, he told my mother he wanted me to come and work after school.

There he had, like, a coffee shop in the international settlement called the Tricolor. And he wanted a cashier. And here I was 14 years old. And he told my mother that I would be taken by limousine home, that she didn't have to worry, and they would take good care of me.

So my mother said OK.

Did you want to do it?

Oh, I had a ball. At 14 years, I was a cashier. I had to learn to use the abacus. I had to convert all the different currencies into yen, you know. And it was a ball.

And then, especially, when this guy had a daughter. And she would come and sit with me. And she wanted me to teach-- she's the one, really, that taught me Japanese. And I taught her English. And we had a ball. I mean, I really enjoyed that.

She was English?

No, she was Japanese. She was the owner's--

Oh, Japanese owned.

--daughter. Yeah.

OK.

Oh, she was so much fun. And we really had a good time. And then this went on till Pearl Harbor.

And then we got a call that morning. And they said, don't go out. Don't go out of the house. One of our friends called us.

And the night before, the day before, we had gone to the movies in the rickshaws, into the international settlement. And coming back-- oh, prior to that, it was very sad when all the American soldiers, you know, they left before Pearl Harbor. They were all pulled out of Shanghai. And we saw them marching down the street.

And it was really bad. Because we had friends. I mean, we had a lot of friends. We made friends with the first Marine Corps was stationed there. As a matter of fact, this is in my book, too. We were invited there for a lunch, things like this.

And we went-- we'd also gotten to, prior to Pearl Harbor, when things were still going not too bad between the foreign relations. there was there. Through this Japanese guy, we were invited to a big gala out there near the school in [? Sheffield ?] Park. It was a beautiful place.

They had a big dinner for all the different embassies, and for the people from the embassies. And it was beautiful. And that was just shortly before Pearl Harbor.

So then they had two boats left in Shanghai, two English boats, [INAUDIBLE], and I can't remember the name of the other one. And some of the sailors had waved to us. We were coming from the movies. We were riding in rickshaws.

And they waved to us. We were going. And the next morning, they were all dead. They had sunk the ships.

The Japanese? Yeah.

And then, of course, then hardship began all over again, you know? And so that went on for a while.

Now you had a job. And did your mother have a job?

No, in the meantime, my mother, yes, this guy had helped her open a coffee shop, a little coffee shop deeper in Hongkew. And this was good. Because that happened to be then in the sector we all had to move to. And so that was really nice, you know.

And so then when Pearl Harbor happened, and I couldn't go over there anymore, then we went off to the shop. And then we would go there every morning. And then I'd help in the shop with tables, you know. And my grandmother would sit in the back.

And we had a lot of Japanese customers and some of the soldiers. And they would always end up at the back table with my grandmother. And it was so funny. They talked to her in Japanese.

And she would sit there and smile. And she talked to them in German. And--

[LAUGHS]

And nobody understood?

Well, when I came, they would always talk about their mothers to my grandmother. That was what they were talking about. And then when the time came that we had to move to Hongkew, they came.

And I think this was Pearl Harbor, after Pearl Harbor. But they interned all the English and any foreigners. They put them in a prisoner of war camp.

But we were supposed-- you know, Hitler had declared us stateless. So the Japanese put us in this compound, like a ghetto. We couldn't get out without-- you know?

So even before that actually, you had to stop going to school?

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I know when we had to, after Pearl Harbor. And so then we had to move. And we were lucky.

But there was no rooms, you know. I mean, this was such a small. And this was the worst part of the Chinese, very poor section of Hongkew, but we were lucky. There were rooms upstairs from our coffee shop. But they were already occupied.

But there was one little tiny, I mean, a real tiny place, smaller than this. And the three of us moved into that. We got bunk beds. My grandmother and I slept in the lower one, my mother in the upper one, you know?

But we tried to keep the coffee shop open a little bit. Because the refugees came in. And some of the Japanese soldiers still came in. And then it finally got worse.

And then my mother had met somebody else, again. And he had been a opera conductor in Halle, Germany. And my mother had met his sister on the ship coming over. And they'd become friends.

So then she met him. And he was employed at the Russian Opera. But he had to go over there. He had to get permission from the Japanese to go across the sector, to go to the Russian sector to perform.

And one day he had to renew his permit or something. And they had a guy, a Japanese guy named Ghoya. And he was-- you heard of him?

Mhm.

He was a real short guy. And I guess he had it in for tall people. This man was very imposing, very tall.

And so he got mad at him. He jumped on his desk. And he slapped him in the face.

And so then that night he went. And I think he had to take a bus to where he could take the rickshaw across or something from the opera. And then it hadn't gone very good, the rehearsal. I think they were rehearsing for-- oh, I don't remember which opera. We used to go to the opera, as you know, quite often there.

And so when he came back on the bus, he was upset already. The rehearsals hadn't gone good. Because all the good talent, most of them had been interned or something, or had left. And so after being upset with this Ghoya, then he had a brain hemorrhage on the-- so my mother didn't have much luck.

Aw.

You know, he died. So that was very sad.

And died very suddenly then.

Yes. And so that was it. And then we had to close the shop, finally.

Couldn't get supplies anymore?

No, we couldn't get anything. And we couldn't even-- then we were rationed. We got, I think, so many ounces of bread. We couldn't get rice, because the rice was for the Chinese, or the Japanese.

We lived practically on sweet potatoes. I can't look another sweet potato in the face.

[LAUGHS]

And then it was pretty hard.

So was there any income coming in after they closed the shop?

No. And I just don't know how we managed. I just don't know. Because my mother had some money. But I remember that you weren't supposed to have any foreign currency. And my mother had taken baby powder cans and stuffed it in there to hide it.

So she had smuggled out some money in different ways.

Yeah. So anyhow, this one night I remember, this is in my book, too, this was funny. There's a knock on the door. Now we had these people lived upstairs, this guy.

And he was Jewish. And he had an Iranian wife. And they had a little girl.

And that night, there was a knock on the door, on the shop. And we opened it carefully. And here comes this great big sack. And these guys were running away, these Japanese soldiers were running away giggling.

And here was this sack opening. And here were these great big crabs crawling all over the place, up the walls. They

were trying to do something good for us, giving us these crabs. We'd never seen live crabs before.

And I was standing on a chair, screaming and my mother was screaming. My grandmother got a broom and she swept them all out the door. And the coolies were having a fight over these crabs. Because we didn't know what to do with them.

So the next morning, the guy from upstairs comes and says-- you know, my grandma, my mother told him about it. He says, oh, we should have put the crabs in the bathtub. And then we could have had a good meal.

So my mother said, yeah, if you hadn't been too chicken to come down and see if we needed help when we were screaming. But you stayed holed up up there and didn't come down. So you missed out on a good meal.

And you know, by that time, we would have given anything. But we'd never seen. Crabs were always, you know.

The Japanese soldiers had brought them?

Yeah, to give us some food.

The ones who used to come to the coffee shop?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they brought us some food by the back door for quite a long time. And then the bombardments came then. When the war in Germany was over, then they concentrated on bombing Shanghai.

Now did you know much about what was happening in the war?

Well, just about little bits and pieces, yes.

How would you get the information?

I don't remember. People, word of mouth, so I don't know how. Some of the Chinese that maybe-- I don't know. I really don't know.

But then we know that then the planes would come, every day between 11:00 and 1:00 in the morning. And a lot of people would go. There was only one place that had shelter.

There was a jail. And people would stand in line. But we didn't go. Because I was too claustrophobic to be in that many people.

So when the air raid sounded, we would go-- the only place that had a cement ceiling was a bathroom. So we got in this tiny bathroom. And we'd all sit on the rim of the bathtub. We stuffed raincoats over our heads for the flood.

And I remember one time the bombs really hit close by. Ours was the first house that stood in the whole block.

What would you cook on?

You know, I can't remember. I think it was hibachis.

And who would cook?

But there was some electricity, though. We had electric lights. There must have been-- in the shop, we had.

But there wasn't much to cook. I think during the war what happened was-- well, my grandmother cooked before Pearl Harbor and everything, when you could get food.

But I think during the war-- oh, this is what I remember. They had a camp. My grandmother's relatives, they couldn't find any housing. They lived in the same hotel. They couldn't find any housing.

So they had made a camp for all the refugees. It was a camp. It was quite a ways from where we were, quite a walk. And they served food, like a soup kitchen.

So we would go there with pots and go get the food. And I remember one time, my mother and I went. And we were caught in the air raid.

And we tried to get into one of the Chinese shops. The shops didn't have glass panes. They had wooden slats. And during the bombardments, they wouldn't take out all the slats. They would just leave a little opening for the stores.

So my mother and I tried to get into the store. And the Chinese pushed us back out. They wouldn't let us get in.

So we dashed home. We made it home. But it was kind of hairy.

How many air raids were there?

Oh, it seemed every day for quite a while. And then we heard the air raids stopped. And we heard that the Japanese had surrendered.

But the Japanese wouldn't admit it. And they still kept us confined for about five days till after it was over. And then, finally then-- and then it was nice.

We had met some guy at the camp, you know, where we used to go. We used to go there also for-- that's actually where I met my future husband. They did have some dances on Saturday at that camp.

And there was one guy and his family. And he got to talking to my mother. And he had had a bar in the international settlement that he had lost.

So he approached my mother. And he says, you know what? There's going to be a lot of servicemen coming and everything. They're not going to be interested in coffee and cake.

So we opened a bar. He became a partner. And we opened a bar.

Where did you get the liquor?

I don't know how he got it. From the International settlement, you know? I mean, things started to become normal again after that. Because it was '45. And I didn't leave till '47.

Now after you had to close the coffee shop, what did you do? Could you work at all?

What we did, I don't remember who it was. But I knitted. And I used to knit a lot.

But there was somebody that paid my grandmother and I to roll the yarn, roll it. And I remember sitting there on that bed, with my grandmother there. And I'm this side. And one was holding and the other was rolling. And we got paid for that.

[LAUGHS]

But I don't remember who paid us and who it was. But I remember that so distinctly. I mean, some of the things are so fuzzy. I have blocked out some of the real bad things. And there's a lot of funny things that stick in my mind. And then when we got married--

I wanted to ask what kind of social life you had.

Well, like I say, the only thing was going to that camp. And until it got real bad, we went. And they had dances there on weekends.

Did you have friends?

Yeah, we had friends. But it was hard. Everybody was afraid.

When the bombardments started, that wasn't very long, you know? But it just seemed that that seemed longer, because it was such a hassle. Up till then, when there was a thing, my-- had-- we would go a lot to the camp there.

Because they had a lot of things going there. There were a lot of people we made a lot of friends. Well, we didn't have the coffee shop. There was nothing to do.

Was their romance for you?

Well, that's why I'm saying, I met my husband there, you know, my future husband. And then, of course, when we opened the bar, then I was having a ball when all the soldiers came.

Americans?

Yeah. And my future husband's name was Carlo. And we were, so to speak, going together.

But all he talked about, that after the war-- he'd been caught because his parents were in New York. He had had papers and everything to go. And then Pearl Harbor happened, and he couldn't go. And so all he talked was going to New York.