

My name is Peter Ryan. I'm at the Holocaust Oral History Project, 400 Brannan Street in San Francisco, California. Today is February 7, 1996. And we are interviewing Herta Bregoff. With me today is Elizabeth Ryan, as another interviewer. And on the video is Sean Simplicio.

We can begin. Can you tell us when you were born and where you were born?

I was born May 13, 1922, in Heidelberg, Germany.

And can you give us some information about your family?

Yes. It's time I was born, which was after the war, the height of the inflation. My father was still a civil engineer for the government. And my mother had three older children. I'm the fourth of four children. And to this day, I marvel that they had enough milk, enough whatever you have to bring up a family, because none of us died. But it was very hard times for my parents.

And as a matter of fact, one of the documents I have, which is a marriage certificate, which my mother must have asked for later in France-- we'll come to it-- and it says that my father is Grossherzoglicher-- Grossherzoglicher Bauingenieur Rolf Israel-- Rolf Ludwig Israel Maas. Which is so ridiculous. Grossherzoglich, which means archducal engineer. When he first started, there was still a Grand Duke, because this was before the First World War.

But then later on, the Nazis after 1938 put Israel for men and Sarah for women. So it was a grand archducal engineer, Rolf Ludwig Israel Maas. That's bureaucracy for you. But the document was written-- I'll show it to you later. It was written in 1940. So my mother must have-- I don't know who got these documents. I'm absolutely amazed. Birth certificates, the marriage certificate, which were made out in 1940. And I don't know who actually asked for them.

We must have needed them for the American consulate in Marseilles. But just how this all was done, I don't understand.

So you were born in Heidelberg.

Yes.

And how long were you there?

I was only nine months old when my parents moved. As I wrote in my biography, my grandfather had started a tannery not in Heidelberg, in Karlsruhe-- near Karlsruhe, where we later lived. And my uncle ran the tannery. And it was difficult, and he asked my father to become one of the executive officers of the tannery.

So my father relinquished his position with the government, much to my mother's-- my mother was terribly unhappy about it. Years after, she would tell me how she begged my father on her knees not to do it. But he did it anyway.

Because of the security?

Well, I don't know why he actually did this. I think he was going to be transferred anyway, and he was going to-- he had been much in the field, and he was transferred to another-- or whether it was because my uncle asked him. I don't know.

But anyway, he decided to do it. Maybe it was for security. It turned out to be very, very difficult for him. This was before the Nazis came to power. The tannery was doing badly, and I remember my father being always terribly tense. And it wasn't a good time for him at all. And my mother was very, very unhappy that he had made the move.

And apparently he had been a much happier man before he made that move. But that has actually nothing to do with the Nazis. It's just something which--

So you moved at nine months to Karlsruhe?

Yeah, I was nine months old when my parents moved to Karlsruhe. And that's where I lived until we were deported in 1940.

Your other siblings were male, female?

There were two sisters and one brother. And they will figure later, too.

Right. What was life like then?

Well--

Do you remember the Depression?

Well, yes. I do remember the Depression also. My parents were actually-- also, they worried all the time, which I understand with four children. We were relatively well-off, considering. I know my parents were always worried about money. But we did have-- my mother had two maids.

Of course, these people, these were women who would be homeless if they didn't have a job like that. And they would have room and board, worked like the dickens, and a small, small, small, small salary.

Mm-hmm. They lived in the house?

They lived in the house. They were live-in. And all my relatives had that. I can't remember anything about the inflation, because by the time I was old enough, the inflation was over and so was the French occupation.

When did the French occupation end?

I think maybe 10 years after, maybe 1928 or something like that. I do remember going across a bridge on the Rhine when I was four. There must have been French troops there, because my mother mentioned how she hated these French. But that's all I ever saw of the French occupation.

And about the inflation, there's only one story of my sister, who was-- my older sister who was 10 years old. At the height of inflation, I might have been born or not, she was sent to the store to buy salt or bread. And she started playing. And by the time she got to the store, she didn't have enough money to buy it. And she already had millions of German marks to get a loaf of bread.

Prices were rising that fast.

Exactly. That fast.

That fast.

Yeah.

While the kid played-- well, she shouldn't have, then she didn't have some money. And of course it was hell to pay for the poor girl.

What were they canning in the cannery?

It was a tannery.

Oh, tannery.

A leather--

Leather tannery.

A leather tannery, a leather factory.

When do your memories start of-- you don't remember the French occupation, and that ended maybe around 1928.

Yeah. , Well just around four or five years old. I remember we lived in a beautiful big house which my parents rented. I remember it had three stories. It was very, very nice. And I remember Christmastime we had a Christmas tree, because that was the orientation of my parents. It's all explained in my biography there.

They celebrated Christmas?

They celebrated Christmas. So we had a Christmas tree there. I remember one Christmas in that house, which I just loved. And I remember a very dear woman who was a seamstress of my mother and her daughter who came. And actually then, later when we moved somewhere else, they still came.

And my elder sister-- my mother and elder sister kept in touch with these ladies. And then I took up the contact with them. So anyway, in the meantime, the daughter, who was the same age as my elder sister, and she always came, because the mother, the lady, the seamstress, was a widow. And she was not very well off.

So the poor girl, wherever the mother sewed, and she would come for two or three days, the girl would have to come and eat lunch. Lunch is a big meal. And she was always-- I told her afterwards when I saw her after the war, I said, oh, you were so beautifully well-behaved. How did you manage to be so patient? She said, I had to. It wasn't easy.

So I remember them being there, but that's just about all. And some other seamstress whom I never saw again. A white haired lady, who I think eventually died. As a matter of fact, her name was Weninger. And I always had a sewing machine, it was always Weninger. It makes the same kind of noise, too. So I remember that.

But otherwise I don't remember too much. Oh, and we had chickens in this house. And then I know a cat died in this house. My mother had always very loyal maids. And one of them stayed with us till the day we were deported. And this lady, of course, these were all farm women. They came from poor farm country, and they had to see how they could get by.

And I remember she took care of the chickens. And then we had a cat who must have had distemper. I remember her trying to feed it, and it couldn't eat anything anymore. I remember that in that house. But that's just about all I remember.

Good memories in that house.

Yes, good memories in the house.

Did you celebrate the Jewish holidays as well?

I think-- let me see. We didn't, but I think-- sporadically, I think on the high holidays my father might have gone. I know relatives of my mother did. I know that. I remember them seeing the top hats going to synagogue. And my father maybe occasionally was among them. I don't remember.

But my father, as I wrote in the biography, was very much of a freethinker. He'd come from an Orthodox family, and he didn't want to have too much to do with it. So he believed very much in the Enlightenment. And he was caught in the same trap as some of the people in the Enlightenment.

I mean, I respect him very much. That was his religion, and I thank him for it. Thank God he was not a narrow-minded

person, didn't force us to anything. But just recently I read the biography of Heine, who was very much caught in this crossfire of the Enlightenment. It was not easy for the Jews to find their ways around it.

And I had actually a lot of identification problems later on, too, which went back to it. But I don't blame my father for that. I think he really believed in the Enlightenment, and that was a good thing to believe in, I think. I still think that. So.

Do you have school memories?

Oh, yeah. I have school memories. I even have some school pictures, but these I didn't bring because I didn't know what you wanted. I have some school pictures at home going back to third grade. And then what really happened after the war, my old schoolmates, I kept in touch with one family. And these old school schoolmates were so anxious to see me. They were so glad that I had survived that they actually sponsored two or three trips back to Germany.

And these were schoolmates from the third grade.

Some of them were from the third grade. Most of them were from high school. Because high school in Europe at the time started fifth grade, and it was a real separation. The kids who couldn't go to high school, like the daughter of our seamstress, she had to go to some other training, no matter how intelligent she was. Because it cost, and the woman didn't have money for the tuition.

So it wasn't based on aptitude but class?

Well, it was much based much on class, but you had to take an aptitude test. But it was really mainly a class thing, who could afford the tuition. So most of these girls I knew from high school. And most of them actually became professional women.

So we're talking about age 10?

Yeah, as a matter of fact, the one who started all this, who lives actually in Switzerland now, she was in my fifth grade class. And she actually came-- we came from the Volksschule, from the elementary school to the high school. And we were in class together and have just written or told of, well, we've known each other now for over 60 years. It may not always be so smooth, but that's what it is.

We were 10 years old when we first met. Some of the others came later. So not all of them go back to 10 years, but a lot of them do.

At that time in the fifth grade, did you have a sense of yourself as Jewish, Christian?

Well--

Neither?

Yeah, well, as a matter of fact, we had yes, Jewish. Because we had religious instruction was a state-funded thing. There was no separation of church and state. So what actually happened was that the priest, the minister, and the rabbi, or the cantor would come to school. And we would all have our little-- and I remember there was one Jewish girl who didn't want to. They had just a free time, because their parents really didn't want them to have the Jewish instruction.

But the rest of us did. And I remember in elementary school we had a Jewish teacher. She was at the school. She was a regular teacher. She was Jewish, and she taught religious school. And she was quite a lady.

In what sense?

Hmm?

What sense?

Well, she lived with a twin. So two twin girls, and they had two twin-- they had twin dachshunds. So with dachshunds. So we would always see them. But I remember her-- somehow her religious school was very good. And to this day, I remember one little Jewish girl saying how she was so thirsty one night. And she told us that God will help me, God will help me, dear God will help me. To this day I can remember that, how that little girl.

Later on, things were not so good. We had a cantor who was not-- who shouldn't have really taught religious school. And I was so mixed up, because unfortunately my father made a lot of fun of this. On the one hand, they sent me to it. On the other hand, they made fun of it. And I tended to be a clown anyway, because I had problems with my identification.

I had a problem being the youngest of those four kids. I had lots and lots of problems. And I tended to be a clown in school. And I made life miserable for that cantor. And later on, when times got so bad, I thought was a terrible conscience about him.

He, however, did actually make it, I found out later. It was another one whom I didn't bother much, because he had much more control over the class, who didn't make it. But that I didn't feel guilty about, because I wasn't involved with that.

So when you were having a bad time later, you thought back on how hard a time you'd given to the cantor.

Yes.

And felt bad.

Well, I felt-- it was not so much my bad time, but when I heard what had happened to everybody and I didn't know where the cantor was, and I thought that maybe he had gone under. I felt terrible about it. But then I found out that he actually had made it to America. Then I felt a lot better.

Mm-hmm. When did you begin to become aware that there was a problem going on in Germany with Hitler and so on?

Well, let me see here. I'm trying to think. I was 11 when Hitler came to power in 1933. Of course, I didn't know all the political machinations. And of course, I did understand that this was not good news.

You did?

Oh, yes. And--

From your family?

Well, yes. From my family. I mean, after all, also my mother, as you will read in the biography, my mother was one of the people who thought it would pass over. But when did I really become aware of it?

I don't know. I was very lucky as far as not personally experiencing much anti-Semitism. Now, a cousin of mine had a terrible time. He was a boy, and he was younger than I was. And he had done an oral history, and he had a terrible time with his classmates. They really gave him a terrible time. But--

Were you aware of that then?

Hmm?

Were you aware of it?

I didn't know that. I didn't know that had happened to him.

Did you know any people who were having things happening to them? In school?

Not so much in school. But I heard I heard some pretty bad stories already by 1934, 1935 of real atrocities being committed, and not necessarily in a camp, but a man being--

As a matter of fact, that was very interesting. There was a schoolmate of mine-- this goes far-- who was once trying to get me in trouble before the Nazis came to power. We were in third grade. She was sitting next to me, and she poked herself with her ink pen. And I couldn't understand it. And then she told the teacher that I had done it.

And the teacher was very wise about it-- must have been second grade, because I remember the teacher-- and didn't buy into it. I cried, and I was very unhappy about it. But the teacher didn't make much of it. But she understood that I hadn't done it and was very wise about this.

But the same girl, a few years later, came up to me and told me how terrible she and her parents felt about all the awful things which were going on in Germany. And I know from her, I heard one of the first atrocities of somebody beaten up by a gang of hoodlums or SS, SA. What do I know?

And then there was another. There was another thing. And that shows how really immature I was. I was only 11, I guess. But we lived in an apartment house. We lived in that until we actually left Germany. It belonged to a cousin of my mother's. And we lived upstairs.

What happened to the nice house you were living in?

We moved. I think my parents couldn't afford it anymore by 1928. So it was a rented house to start with. And I have a feeling that a cousin who was-- they were very well-to-do. They owned a bank, which later they lost, but the family got it back after the war. That he did us a favor by letting us have that apartment upstairs.

It was actually a big apartment, but compared to the others it was less fancy. And we lived up there, and in the floor beneath us lived a man who was a minister for-- a minister or perhaps just a legislator. I don't know.

Anyway, he a political figure for the Catholic Zentrum party. And one day, there was a demonstration in front of our house. And that must have been 1933 or 1934. It was Christmas 1933, '34. And they were yelling. There were all these men out there yelling, Kurtle. That was that man's name, Kurtle. Raus, Kurtle, raus. We want Kurtle. And they actually got this man and put him in a concentration camp.

And what did they-- Schutzhaft, for their protection, they used to say. And there was a little girl who was my age. And my mother had her play upstairs. We had a beautiful doll house which came up at Christmas time and a doll.

It's so funny. A toy, a toy little store, a grocery store. All small. It's funny. It's all tied in with these awful things which happened. They were these lovely, lovely, lovely things which my mother had had as a child.

And so my mother asked the little girl coming up. And I remember I resented it a little bit. My mother-- of course I didn't really put all these things together. I was pretty immature, I must say. And my mother said, I don't want to hear another word out of you. She's coming up, and she's going to play here, and you're going to behave yourself. And I did.

Who was the little girl? Kurtle?

She was Kurtle's daughter, Kurtle's little daughter. And I think what happened, they then moved away very fast. And I don't know whether he was released or whatever happened to him. But I do remember. I do remember these people around the house.

This was in Karlsruhe?

That was in Karlsruhe. All this is in Karlsruhe. Because once I lived-- moved from Heidelberg to Karlsruhe, we stayed until we were deported in October 1940.

OK.

So we stayed at the same place, in the same apartment. So that's where that was. Yeah.

Do you remember boycotts in the stores?

Yeah, there were some boycotts and I certainly do remember, but that was a little later. By that time, I was a little bit more grown up. In '35 and '36, some of the restaurants and coffeehouses putting out signs "Juden unerwünscht," don't want any Jews here. They have that "Juden" sort of in Hebrew letters, sort of pretend Hebrew letters. You could read it, but I remember that very distinctly.

Boycott of stores? I'm trying to think. I do remember we had a very nice-- at first we had a Gentile physician. No, my parents had a Jewish physician before the Nazis came to power, who died of a stroke as a very young man. And then we had another Gentile physician who was OK. He was a general practitioner.

And then my father, he left that tannery in 1931 because my uncle couldn't afford to pay him anymore. And he became an insurance agent. And we had contact with a Jewish doctor, and he wanted us to have a Jewish doctor. He was a very nice man. It was actually fairly late in the-- it must have been in the very late '30s.

I came back in 1938, there was an infantile paralysis outbreak. And I remember coming back from the house of my mother's cousins, of whom I will speak later, who lived in the Palatinate, in a beautiful old house from Napoleonic times.

I had stayed there already four weeks longer because school wasn't opening. And I came back, and I got a very high fever. And my parents were very scared, and they called this doctor. This is the only time I really remember him coming. And he was very, very nice. And luckily, I didn't have-- I probably had the infection but I didn't have any paralysis from it. I was very lucky.

But very soon after, he lost his license. So I remember he couldn't practice anymore. He lost his license. But that was in 1938. By that time, I was 16 also, a very immature 16. And I'm trying to think. I hadn't thought about these boycotts at all. But you're absolutely right. They were going on.

But some of the things one sort of took in one stride. Every day was bad news of some kind or another. Yes?

What do you remember going on at that time, if not the boycotts? Other kinds of incidents or?

Well, there was of course, always a feeling of uncertainty. I remember a lot of people--

How would you know that?

I'm trying to go back a little bit, because I think there's some things which are important here in 1936. I was 14. We didn't have religious school in the school anymore, but we had to go out to our synagogue in the Kronenstrasse, which was quite a bit away. But it didn't matter. I had a bike.

And I remember meeting a boy then whom I liked very much. And he actually-- he was much, much more mature than I was. Yeah. And he was going to go to America. And I remember he told me every day you stay here is a waste. He was a son of a widow, and he had taken early responsibility, and he had a younger sister.

And he did go to America. And he was killed during-- he went back as an American GI and was killed in the war. I remember that. But I-- oh, and I remember I had another friend also from a religious school. And I went to her parent's

house, and I remember her father, I think, had lost his job.

I guess later he was-- that must have been after 1938 that he was in a concentration camp. They did make it to America. And his mother, his wife and the mother of my friend, she was very unhappy about what was going on. And I think he had lost his job.

I mean, these were people who were very, very severely affected. In our case, it was sort of strange. My father had left government service in 1922. And as I told you, my mother was very unhappy it. Then he worked for nine years for my uncle, and it was a very unhappy time and there was a lot of economic pressure there.

So when he finally became an insurance agent, it wasn't such a big deal. He wasn't doing very well. But there must have been some money somewhere. I mean, my mother had been very well-to-do before the First World War, but then they lost it all in the inflation. But they had some money somehow.

So it wasn't like with this girl's father who lost his job and that was really a bad, bad, bad, bad thing. With my family, it was just a little different there. And of course, my uncles kept going. They kept going to go to the bank. They were two brothers, and they lived very close together, and you would see them in the morning going together.

They both sort of stepped out, and they were short men, very nice men, both of them were. And they would go to the bank until 1938, Kristallnacht. And then they were taken to this concentration camp. They had to sign the bank over. That was the end of that.

But before that, as a matter of fact, I remembered something very interesting. I remember that in 1937, actually, my parents-- we had gone to a place in the Black Forest for several years. And then there was woman there, who was a wonderful cook, a very big woman. And she was married to this man who was sort of a real farmer.

And for some reason or other, my sister, my middle sister, who was always a little flirtatious somehow, spent a lot of time with this man, which really was a stupid thing to do. I don't think anything went on between them, but still, the woman got very, very jealous. And she turned her husband in to the Gestapo. So my poor sister, she was hauled out and looked whether she was still a virgin.

You mean for consorting with a Jewish woman?

Yes, uh-huh. Which he had actually not done. But somehow or other, she had gotten in the hayloft or some crazy thing, which meant something different to her than to them. And so anyway, the woman had turned her husband in. She was just very jealous. It was an unfortunate situation.

Luckily, my sister, nothing happened to my sister. And I actually thought I saw the man in Karlsruhe. I couldn't believe it, and I probably was right. He probably was called up before somewhere, too. I don't know if anything happened to him.

But of course, we couldn't go back to this place. We had gone several years in a row and it had been very lovely. This was just very typical how things were going. We'd been on the whole very lucky and nothing had happened to us. And also my father had really different thoughts about the whole thing than my mother, but things were just sort of going on.

What were his thoughts, your father?

Oh, well, actually I wrote this in my biography. After Hitler invaded Austria, he knew that Europe was lost. I mean, he was very sharp about it. He was already-- in '38, he was-- let me see. He was already 61 years old, I guess. Or he was just turning 60.

And of course, he couldn't start anew anywhere. He was not that type of person. I couldn't have done it either. I couldn't have done with my parents. They're much too much of a stick in the mud.



And I remember that so he actually was very, very actively pursuing getting his children out, his older children out of Germany. He had some contacts in America. And this is what you will find in some of these papers.

It's absolutely amazing. He contacted these people. The people responded. And then the American consulate would constantly-- the consulate is so sorry, regrets to inform you that it's insufficient. And that went back and forth. And my father just pursued this. Absolutely amazing, just absolutely amazing.

But the consulate doesn't come out very good. And there were things later, about Varian Fry, too, how he was not acknowledged at all by the government, and there are feelings that they were not as unsympathetic as one wished they would have been to the Germans, as one wished they had been, and not as sympathetic to the Jews as they should have been.

When you were saying that you couldn't have done what your parents did, are you referring to this persistence?

Yeah, and altogether, too. I couldn't have done it. Yeah, persistence of my father. Yeah, I couldn't have done it. I don't think I could. And also, later my mother did. I think I couldn't have done it. I don't know.

Why do you say that?

Oh, I don't know. I just think I couldn't have. I don't know. So anyway, I-- but I was telling you about how we had gone to this place in the Black Forest. So in 1937, it was decided, well, we couldn't go there anymore. 1937 or 1938. I've forgotten. It must have been earlier in 1938.

And my parents actually went to Italy, got visas to go, passports to go to Italy. And so did my uncle Paul, the one who owned the building. They used to go to Italy.

And the interesting thing was, I saw a-- no, I participated in a family reunion of this Uncle Paul, the banker who lived downstairs, and Uncle Victor was his brother. And they have lots of offspring now in the United States.

And that offspring has family reunions. And they had one in-- I think in '91 here in-- '91 or '92 in-- no, no. It must have been '91, probably. Here in Asilomar. And one of the-- actually, a daughter-in-law, Paul's daughter-in-law, or her husband had already died, and my cousin, Paul's son, had already passed away, but just recently.

And this woman was half Jewish and lived in Berlin and had had an absolutely terrible time. Because the Gestapo was after her father all the time to divorce her mother. I think her mother was the one who was Jewish. And I remember she said at this reunion, she said, I couldn't believe it. Here I was trying to survive, and the Gestapo was after my father and after me to dissociate ourselves from my mother. And they were worried if they could get passports to Italy.

And it is sort of-- it's really crazy. It's really crazy, but that's the way it was.

They gave you passports to Italy for vacation?

Yeah, I didn't go-- yeah, for vacation. My parents, my parents and my brother. I didn't go on that. And my sister, my elder sister was already working in Hamburg. She was a pharmacist, and she was working with a pharmacist in Hamburg.

And my younger sister and I, I don't know what we did. I'm not quite sure what we did for that vacation, but we did something else. So anyway, they went to Italy. And I think that's what it was.

It's not-- but it is sort of interesting how everybody was sort of trying to-- well, I guess you do. You just pretend that it's not happening, because you can't do that much about it.

And I had this one aunt who knew very much what it was all about. As a matter of fact, through her, I certainly was aware. Because she was very, very unhappy. They listened to the French radio all the time. This was the lady who lived

in the Palatinate.

She was absolutely beside herself with what was going on. She knew what was going on, and she just couldn't contain herself talking about it all the time. But people really didn't want to hear about it.

Who would she talk to?

Just the family. And there-- as a matter of fact, there was a boycott. Now, since you bring up boycott, she had an orchard. And I don't-- I think I've forgotten when that was. She had an orchard. Must have been in the mid-'30s sometime when we were visiting.

My sister and I used to visit there a lot. We were allowed to stay there, and it was a wonderful. It's really a wonderful place. And sort of in a countrified way. And I remember there was a girl, a girl about my sister's age, a little older than I, who was standing there with her camera taking pictures of all these people who went into the orchard to buy food.

And I know my aunt obviously was very-- the cousin, my mother's cousin was very, very upset about it. She was right. It was very upsetting. I mean, she was right altogether. Only she can't do anything about it. I don't know.

And then I had another aunt on my father's side, her name also was Lili. She was exactly the opposite. They lived in Baden-Baden, which was a little bit better then, because they were still-- the Germans were trying to keep up a little bit of a front.

And they had a nice apartment there. And she was a wonderful-- I remember going there visiting, and she had a lovely spread with little sandwiches and so on. And she never talked about it. And when the Nazis came to deport her in 1940, she had enough stuff to take her own life.

And she never said anything about the Nazis. Never said a word. I mean, when somebody-- you know things are not good, but she didn't say anything. She just did it.

Did you have many family over there?

Did you have a lot of family?

Oh, yeah. There was a lot of family. Because as I wrote in my report, my mother's family had been there a long time.

How long?

They had come to Karlsruhe sometime in 1720. And Karlsruhe was a relatively new town. It was only built around that time. And somehow, some margrave, or whoever-- at the time, it was a margrave, was apparently a fairly enlightened prince, and he allowed the Jews to move in.

And so that family, and that family thing goes back a long time. And they'd been sitting there and being well-to-do. And they intermarried all the time, so the property wouldn't get lost.

So they were doing OK. They had been there for a long time.

How about on your father's side? Where did they come from?

I'm not quite sure where they came from. It's very interesting because my mother always used to say, oh, Maas, like the river in Holland. These are Sephardic Jews. They came from Holland. Well, this wasn't true at all.

My father found out that his great-- his grandfather, great grandfather, was named Moishe and had changed in Napoleonic times, when everybody got names, had changed it to Maas. But they must have been there in Napoleonic times, which also is early 18th-- 19th century. But they had been around for a while.

And they apparently lived out in the country, and they had horses, and they had a stagecoach which belonged to one of the princes or something. I'm not quite sure. And there were some old cousins of my father, who still lived in that little town.

And I found their graves in Mannheim a few years ago. I don't know what-- they were apparently not deported to Gurs like the rest of us were. And I don't know what actually happened to them in their old age. But they were already very elderly, and the old house was really falling apart.

They had raised-- they had raised my father's nephew, who was-- his mother died in childbirth back in-- he was 30 years old. Back in 1892. And these cousins-- actually, the spinster cousins were bringing him up. And somehow he got very much involved with the church. He became a very devout Catholic. And the Catholics eventually helped him out of Europe.

And he was here in the United States, the Catholic University in Washington. I think he was 3/4 Jewish. But these old ladies, and I remember he would come and visit before he left Germany, a few times would see his old aunts. Because after all, they had brought him up, and he would always say, oh, it's a tragedy. The house is falling apart. They don't have enough coal for the winter, and this and that.

I remember that. But I never met the old ladies. This was something-- they didn't live so far away, but I never met them. So anyway, my father's family-- and it so happened that my grandfather actually had gone to America in 1838, believe it or not, on a clipper ship still.

And he was a lot older then. He was 100 years older than I was. And because he was 55 years old. So my father, my father was 45 years older. And he actually stayed until the Civil War broke out. He was in the South, and he did very well.

And then apparently he didn't want to get involved in Civil War, and he went home. And he met my grandfather-- grandmother, who was a lot younger than him. And he wanted to marry her. And the great grandfather, the father of my grandmother, didn't allow him to go back to America.

But there's a question of whether he actually wanted to go back or not. So he actually stayed in Europe then. In Mannheim they lived. And apparently he never could get quite back used to European-- he was apparently a rather eccentric man.

And as I say, my father-- and they were Orthodox. My grandmother-- that was all my grandmother's doing. And he was very fond of his mother. He never said too much about his father. And then he went to gymnasium. And then actually he went to the technical-- the Polytechnic there in Karlsruhe. That was before he knew my mother.

And, well, getting a university education and getting all this, this is where he got all this Enlightenment stuff from. Got very much involved with that, but he didn't have much money. And my mother had some money before the war when they married.

So his family actually was quite poor. I mean, relatively speaking. I don't think the grandmother might have had a maid, but it was a different scale from what my mother and my mother's family had.

Did you get caught up in those Enlightenment ideas?

Well, I think I still do have some. And I certainly did have a lot of identity problems which go with them. And only now when I picked up the signer thing did I realize how much of an identity thing that causes. And yet, I'm not really sorry that I wasn't brought up strictly Jewish either. Because I can't go that route either. So--

[LAUGHS]

So you've got to-- but it took me a long time to get it straightened out. And I think it's taken its toll on some people I have had contact with in my life, particularly my oldest daughter, who is mentally not well. And I cannot help blaming myself a lot for this.

Hmm. Did the Nuremberg laws mean anything to you at the time?

Oh, yeah. They did. Because, again, just a ridiculous thing. My mother always employed two maids. One was the chief one, I guess the cook who had the little kitten and the chickens, who actually was really my mother, in a way. I was very attached to her, and she did a lot of raising us because my mother did other things.

And then there was always a younger girl along with them, who would have lower salary, even a lower salary. And she would do some cleaning, and the other one would do the cooking and the shopping And so on. And I do remember that the maids had to-- nobody over-- under 45 could be employed by a Jewish-- by a Jewish employer. That was part of the Nuremberg laws.

So at first it looked as everybody had to go, not only the younger one but the older one, too. And of course, that was terrible because she'd been in the house now for-- around 30-- that was in '36. So she'd been there for 15 years.

She was-- let me see. Yeah, uh-huh. So that was-- no, for 25. Wait a minute. When did she come now? Oh, 15 years. She came in '21, I think. That would make it 15 years. It seemed so much longer.

Anyway, the younger one did have to go, but the older one could stay because then they said if they had been already in the house, they lowered the age limit to 35, so she could stay. She was 41 or something like that at the time.

So we did know about the Nuremberg laws, definitely, and about the whole Rassenschande thing, we knew about that. But I don't know.

How about Kristallnacht? What memories do you have of that?

Oh, that was bad news. That was just bad. But at that time, even I had grown up a little bit. I was 16. Well, for one thing, they did pick up my father. They did pick up my uncle. And of course, we didn't know what was going to happen with them.

My father did come back that night, and he didn't really say much. But uncles were kept, and the uncles actually went to Dachau. And that was bad, I mean, to see them come back. That was really bad.

And then another thing happened. Those two maiden ladies in the Palatinate, not the ones in Baden-Baden, the ones in the Palatinate, they had this old house from Napoleonic times, which they had kept beautifully. And at first, the Palatinate was bad anyway. It depended what kind of a person you had, what kind of a Gauleiter you had, what kind of a person was in your particular district.

And the guy in Baden happened to be fairly moderate. Of course, you know Nuremberg was Streicher. I guess that was Franken. In Palatinate, some other guy was.

Anyway, these poor ladies had to be out of the Palatinate by midnight that night, and they couldn't get anybody to take them. And I remember my father, it must have been midnight of November the 10th. And my father just had come back that evening.

And then 3:00, 4:00 in the morning, the bell rings again. And I see my father still he was in his nightgown. And we went downstairs. We lived way up. And there was these poor aunts. They had been driven out of their house.

And I remember my father really taking them in beautifully. I thought that was remarkable. So we took them in for a while. But then I think they wanted to go back.

Were they his sisters?

No, they were my mother's cousins. And let me see. And so they stayed with us for a while. But then they-- and I think their maid, whom I met again after the war, also was around. And I don't know whether she called or somehow they went back. But they had gotten people moved into their house.

And this cousin who did the house was so pretty, did everything beautiful. Old fashioned, but so-- and they got all these people moved into the house, and all their stuff was in two rooms, I think, where they could be.

And they had a dog, and the dog was killed by the Nazis. And they had an absolutely terrible time, an absolute terrible time. I think one of the aunts came one more time. And then we sort of-- and then I guess they were-- I guess they went to Mainz. They went to an old age home in Mainz, which was not-- and therefore they were not deported.

They got out of this terrible situation they were in with their house, which lasted for-- well, must have lasted for a year and a half or something like that, until they got out to Mainz into a Jewish old age home. And from there, they actually went to Theresienstadt. And they died there.

My mother after the war, I think she found out that they died there, but that was all. And the maid they had actually did go and see some in Mainz, which was took considerable courage to do that. They might have--

I think they actually might have stayed in Mainz longer than 1940. They might have stayed till '41 or possibly even '42. And this woman actually went and saw some them. And after the war, I finally made contact with her again, and she told me about that. So that was very sad.

Did you actually see destruction in Kristallnacht?

No. I think-- the synagogue I think might have been burned down. I'm not sure. I didn't see too much destruction, tell you the truth. I myself had to leave school, which was very painful to me at the time. I was very much-- I had really a crush on a real neat teacher. And oh, I was really very, very unhappy about that.

So I was so involved with my own things that I didn't really look around much. I knew this thing about my aunts, which was terrible, and of course that my father had been picked up. And my two uncles actually had to stay. And that father of this girlfriend of mine who I mentioned earlier, he was picked up.

And the way these people came back looked absolutely awful.

Mm-hmm. Did it scare you?

Well, I guess it scared me. Also I've always been a chicken about finding out details about such awful things. To this day, I don't like to hear details. So I never heard details, but you heard this and that, and just looking at these people was enough to convince you that this wasn't good.

How long were they away?

Well, actually some of the uncles, I think, were kept for six weeks. And then I had this young cousin, who had had a baby in 1937, who later came to live with us. And her husband, her husband was picked up. And I think he also had to stay for about six weeks.

But somehow or other, he got to England very fast. And then she moved in with us. And she stayed with us for a while. And then there was a terrible thing when the war broke out, and that was terrible with her, too. But she actually did survive the war very miraculously.

But just going back to school, I remember the principal who also was a moderate, incidentally, came in. And of course that means he was a moderate in his behavior. He still-- they all wore their big buttons. They all were party members

and so on. But I think they really didn't have much choice.

So he came in, and he asked me out. And he told me he was very sorry, but he had to tell me I couldn't come back to school. So--

Was it a mixed school?

Yeah, it was. Well, I was the last Jewish kid there. All the other Jewish kids had left for some reason or another. So I was the only one left there. And as I told you, most of my classmates were pretty decent. One of them was a little far out, but she never took it out on me personally. And she felt terrible after the war when I saw her again. She was just absolutely--

And I think it reassured her to see me. And I have come to other conclusions about what pushes people in these situations. I mean, I haven't figured it out. I wished I did, but I know a lot of things can happen to a lot of people. I had long come to the conclusion that it wasn't the Germans. Otherwise, I would never have gone back to Germany.

I had come to the conclusion that the Germans were no better, no worse than anybody else. A very wise friend of mine-- at the time, I didn't agree with him, and I always felt bad that I couldn't tell them later that he was right. He was 10 years older than I, and he and his wife had had good experience in Germany.

They had been in the [NON-ENGLISH] and this and that. And he said to me, well, you know, it was a particular historic and economic and geographical situation of Germany, which brought this whole thing on. Which I think he's absolutely absolutely right about. It was just--

And at the time, I argued with him very stupidly, Too but then later on, I really felt--

What was your position?

Oh, I said, oh, no, no. I've been in camp and you haven't. Something stupid like that. He didn't say anything more. He was much too dignified. And later I thought, what an ass I was. He was absolutely right. And as I say, I would never have gone back to Germany if I hadn't really come around to that conclusion.

And I tell you, I'm very glad I did. I'm still very much at odds with some of my American Jewish friends because they can't see it my way. But I'm very glad I did, because going back to Germany, seeing these people again, and of course they knew who I was. I didn't have to explain anything.

It was, in a way, easier to go back to Germany than to some of the places where I was in America, where this thing was becoming a little hairy, too. And it's been a very rewarding experience. It's been very nice. I have no status competition with those ladies, so we come back and we sort can relate on a personal level.

And one of them had married a very, very nice man who seemed particularly anxious to see me, who had a lot on his mind. And he gave me a diary he had written up, because of course he had been in the war. And when the Germans were doing well, well, of course, those guys, they were young guys. They were feeling good about it. Obviously.

But he had come from a modern family. They weren't out and out Nazis by any means, but he felt bad about that much involvement he had. The end of the war, something very interesting happened. Somehow, he was in the eastern zone. And the Russians were beginning to take prisoners, and he was running to--

You know how things go when you are in a situation like that. He was running to another side where there was a group of people, and somehow the Russians left them alone. And I don't know where he got civilian clothes from, but he buried his uniform and all his papers, and he had civilian clothes and a bicycle.

And from wherever he was near Berlin, I think, he bicycled back to the Rhine, which must have taken a week, at least a couple of weeks to do.

And he had known this school friend of mine. They were practically engaged or were engaged. And so her father was still doing things, and they were still halfway intact. And so he went there, and they got married. And they were a very devout, very devout couple. He was a very, very nice and sensitive person.

And he was very, very anxious for me to come and visit. And last year, he was particular-- oh, you must come because we're not getting any younger. So last May, I went again. And in June, he died of a heart attack. He had already had heart attack trouble before.

But I felt he was-- it was a big thing for him to make contact with me, to let me know how he really felt. It meant a great deal to him. And so that was a very-- it was a very rewarding experience. I'm very, very glad I did it.

Mm-hmm.

And so. Hmm.

So what effect did the outbreak of the war have on your family directly? When--

Oh. Oh, that was-- anything after Kristallnacht was bad. I mean, by that time you knew they meant business. And then all these deportations were going on from the east. And the Victors, there were these two brothers, Paul and Victor, who had the bank.

And he had married a younger wife, and she was very involved in sending things to Poland. Somehow these packages got through, and she was in touch with these people. She had a lot of news. And it just wasn't good. You knew that.

As a matter of fact, to tell you the truth, I got so that I really expect to be deported any time. And I think I had my ski boots and my ski stuff ready. I wasn't much of a skier, but I had a little ski outfit. And I actually wore those to France, because if you go to Poland, you better be warm.

And even so, when they actually came, of course, you get actually frantic. But nevertheless, I had thought of this for a long time. And the outbreak of the war was particularly traumatic, because this young cousin with her one or two-year-old little boy was staying with us. We had become very, very attached to the little guy. He was a very small, very, very sweet kid.

And her husband called her from England to by all means go. And she didn't know what to do. And I remember I was one of the ones. And I all through the war I was thinking, how only could I? I told her not to go.

Actually, we probably told her the right thing. Because she could take very little money with her, and she probably would have been caught in the Netherlands or something like that. I doubt that she actually could have made it to England.

But I blamed myself tremendously, because I didn't know where she was. I was sure she was killed. And what actually happened, she had been with us for several months. And then I think-- there was also a bomb scare. Everybody was worried that the town would be bombed, since that would be the first thing they would do if they didn't.

And I remember taking her to the station. She was going to go to Berlin. There was a Zionist organization who had an estate near Berlin somewhere. And they were training Jewish kids to go to Israel-- to Palestine at the time. And the reason they did this was to embarrass the English, because the English had such an awful Palestine policy.

So the Germans kept this thing going to embarrass the English. And she actually was invited or somehow had made contact. And she and her little boy went to this place near Berlin. And I remember taking her to the train station. It was just absolutely bedlam trying to get her on the train.

And I wasn't very effective, I'm afraid, but she did get on the train to Berlin. And she stayed-- she stayed in this place.

And then I guess in the meantime, we were probably deported. I've forgotten. Don't know how long she stayed.

I saw her again long, long after the war, much-- I didn't see her until 1982. I knew that she had been saved, and I visited her in Israel in 1982. That was the only time I ever went. And of what actually had happened to her was here she was with a little boy, who by that time was about three or four years old. And the Gestapo are-- either an SS officer or an army officer, somebody or police officers showed up to take her and the little boy away.

And they wanted-- he wanted to separate them, but she cried so bitterly he couldn't do it. Bless his heart. Bless his heart. He couldn't do it. So she was actually put into a prison in Berlin. And she stayed there for quite some time.

And then I don't know. Somehow, in the meantime, her husband had gone to England and was-- actually, the English took the Jewish fellas away. He was a German Jew. And he somehow ended up in Palestine. I don't know how that came. Most of them went to Canada. He might have been in Canada but ended up in Palestine.

And she was exchanged as a hostage for some German order, German religious order. After all, from the Crusades on there were some religious orders there. And she was exchanged. And I think it was a trade of the Jewish refugees, maybe 2 to 1 or whatever. But anyway, she was exchanged with her little boy.

And I don't know how she got out. This was still in 1944. How she actually got out of France and ended up in Palestine I don't know, but she ended up in Palestine on her husband's birthday. They had been separated for seven years.

And the child was with her?

And the child was with her. Now, wait a minute, that must have been after the war. If they were separated for seven years, that must have been after the war.

No. Let's see. When did he go to England? Well, that would have been early '46. Maybe it was after the war was over. I'm not quite sure. She had so much to tell me that I didn't get all the details.

And unfortunately, I didn't have a-- I wished I had taken it down. And so she actually-- she made it. It was absolutely amazing. She and her little boy made it. But very often it was a decision of a-- a personal decision of an official.

So she made it all right, but the beginning of the war was bad. Then my parents and I, we actually went to Frankfurt. My mother had some-- the widow of a well-to-do uncle of her living in a beautiful house in a suburb of Frankfurt. And she said we could come and stay. And she was very loyal. She would have let us stay.

What really happened was then came the thing with the food stamps, and she didn't have enough food stamps. And my mother called-- that was very interesting. We had a very loyal butcher and a very loyal baker. We had a very loyal, of course, greengrocer.

We had some very, very loyal people. Other people had terrible experiences. But so my mother actually called the butcher. And the butcher said-- or the butcher's wife. And she said, oh, everything is quiet. You can come back. They all called her Frau Baurat. Because of the Bauingenieur thing of my father.

So oh, You can come back. And also we actually did go back. Frankfurt was absolutely awful. We stayed there in a Jewish-- before we went to the suburb of my aunt's-- of my mother's aunt there, we stayed in a Jewish-- and these people were well-to-do, but the feeling of gloom was absolutely terrible.

These were all the Jewish people who really knew that they were trapped and was awful. That place I never forgot.

Did you know that there were deportations then?

Well, there were deportations constantly to Poland. That was already going on.



When did that start?

That must have started after the fall of Poland.

OK.

And so we're talking September '39. So that was going on all the time.

Was your family worried that would happen to them?

Well, we never talked about it. I was very worried about it. I was certainly very aware of it. But we met a wonderful friend in the camp, who became a great friend of my mother's. And my former husband actually did a beautiful oral history on audiotape, which I still have. She became quite an elderly lady.

And I remember she said on her tape she couldn't believe it when people said-- she had just asked for another apartment, and people had said, oh, yeah you can get the apartment. She couldn't believe it that she was deported. I don't know. She was a very smart lady. I don't know what she was thinking about, but she was very surprised that it happened.

Well, I tell you, I wasn't surprised at all. I mean, by that time, we really had sort of an idea of what--

But your family never talked about it?

No, we never did talk about it.

Who would you talk to about it? You were sure it was going to happen. Who would you talk to?

Well, I don't know. I didn't talk to anybody about it. I just thought about it. And I just did my thing in my head.

Just kept it all to yourself?

Yes, I didn't talk to them about it, no.

Did you know at that time what it meant to be deported?

No, I really didn't. I knew from this aunt who was saying the things that people were cold and hungry and she was sending something all the time. But I didn't know. And I think really nobody really knew until the thing was in gear. The Germans themselves didn't know.

No, I didn't. I knew it wasn't good.

So did you stay in your apartment after the war started?

Yes, we stayed. And I remember one night, everything had to be darkened. And that was before we went to Frankfurt, as a matter of fact. Some people rang, and we were afraid it was a Gestapo. It was apparently some people who were trying to get in for looting.

But we got very, very scared. That's when we went to Frankfurt, but then we came back. But see, my uncle, Uncle Paul's wife had gotten very, very sick. She had cancer, and he actually took her by ambulance to Frankfurt where she died en route she was so sick.

And when we had this family reunion, which I spoke about earlier, Uncle Paul's sons had already left Germany, so they didn't really know, and they wanted to know the details about what had happened to her mother-- to their mother, because they were so upset about the whole thing. And--

Where did they get to?

Oh, well, actually one went to Switzerland. And the other one went to the United States. Other one got training in Switzerland, then went to the United States. And he actually was in the United States Army and had considerable difficulty getting-- believe it or not-- getting his citizenship even after he was serving in the army.

So he also hadn't had such good experiences in Europe, and he felt rather bitter. Which I can't blame him for.

So when did you begin to realize that deportation was going to affect you?

Oh, I don't know. But it's funny that you just mention this. Because I remember very distinctly standing in a certain spot. In our kitchen was a little alcove, and I was saying to myself-- and my father was doing all this writing back and forth, and my poor brother and sisters were trying to respond and the other people. Everybody was trying so hard to get--

And I thought it could never be. I didn't believe that we would make it. But then I didn't really know exactly what the alternative was. I was just afraid. But I just didn't think we would make it.

You remember that moment?

Yeah, that I remember very distinctly. That I remember very distinctly.

How did the-- so you were deported then?

Yeah, we were deported. That actually-- what happened then, so we lived on. And as a matter of fact, it was an interesting time then, what we did. We became very close. In the meantime, Uncle Victor and Marianna. That's the woman who sent things all the time to Poland, they had to give up their house, which was in the neighborhood, and moved in with my uncle, who was now a widow in a big apartment.

And I remember we went often downstairs because of air raids. So we went downstairs. And I remember just waiting out the time. And we read English together. We did a lot of things together. It was very nice. We were very-- we all were afraid, and of course Uncle Paul already had this terrible experience. Victor and Paul had already been to a concentration camp.

But somehow the men played Skat, and we sort of--

This was when?

That was in 1939 and '40, before we were deported.

That was the time of the Phoney War?

Well--

Between the British and the Germans?

Yeah.

Because you were saying you had to go downstairs for the air raids. Did they actually bomb?

No, they didn't. They didn't, as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact, it was really ridiculous, because the British were very defeated. Well, they were defeated early in 1940. So I guess that went till 1939, '40, we used to go downstairs.

I also had English lessons. I totally forgot that. And my mother had an older friend, this woman in her 80s, who gave my brother English lesson, and my sister, I think, and to me. And I didn't go to school anymore, so I went there twice a

week. And she was willing to have me.

She was not a Jewish lady. She had an absolute-- and she loved English. She had absolutely atrocious pronunciation, but it was fun. And then she-- the way I really learned, she gave me *The Forsyte Saga*. And at first, I couldn't understand a word, and she said don't look it up in the dictionary. Just read.

And after a while, I got so engrossed that I couldn't put it down. And all of a sudden, I knew how to speak English. That was never one of my problems. I had trouble understanding a lot in the beginning when I came, but I always could speak.

And I'm not a linguist. I can't speak French or-- anyway, this woman was very nice. And I was with her until we were deported, I think. I think I used to go there by bicycle all the time, and she used to not think anything about it.

She wasn't afraid to give you lessons?

No, she wasn't afraid. And then we had a wonderful gymnastics teacher, who also came to us until the very last. She was outspoken about her feelings. She was Catholic, and she didn't like what was going on at all.

As a matter of fact, when we first started having gymnastics lessons with her, which was in the early '30s, my mother did say-- maybe it's the mid-'30s, my mother said, well, aren't you afraid? Don't you have to howl with the wolves?

And she said, my dear Mrs. Maas, if in the beginning fewer people had howled with the wolves, Germany would be a different place today. So she was that kind of a person.

I saw her after the war. The English teacher, of course, died sometime during the war. She was an old lady. But the gymnastics teacher we had contact with after the war. She visited here. We visited there. So she was a great lady.

How big a city was Karlsruhe at that time?

Oh, I think-- I think it was 100,000 or something like that.

100,000?

Yeah.

Because you seem to have had experiences where the baker was loyal.

Yeah.

The butcher was loyal.

Yeah.

So there were people who were willing to take the risk to sell you things--

Yeah.

--and to try to take care of you--

Yeah.

--at risk to themselves?

Yeah, well, I think at the time probably that was-- I don't know how risky it was. I certainly don't want to belittle it. It

wasn't like people trying to feed the people in the Polish ghetto where the Gestapo just pulled them out and shot them. I mean, I think it was nothing like that. And people, nobody really said very much.

Do you know the fate of those people that were helping you?

Well, I think-- let me see. The butcher's store was still there, but I don't think after the war. But that was many years after. The greengrocer, something tragic happened to them. They were killed in a bomb attack. And so the whole family. The son came back and the whole family, his young wife, and child, and his parents, everybody was killed. That was very sad.

They were very strong Catholics and good friends of our devout Catholic cook. So they did it for-- they were-- but I don't even know where politically the baker and the butcher stood. They just kept selling us meat. And I know the butcher had absolutely wonderful first-rate meat, which we got all the time.

So but it's afterwards I found out it was not typical at all. It was very unusual.

Were you deported after the German victory in France?

Oh, yeah. It was part of the armistice agreement. And that was around--

It was part of the armistice?

It was part of the armistice agreement. And the strange thing is, I read in a German newspaper beforehand, but I didn't know it concerned us. It said something, that the French had to accept some people. And it turned out that the people were the Jews from Baden and Alsace and the Palatinate, the whole western-- on both sides of the Rhine there. And they had to take them in. And that's exactly what happened. And--

Do you know how many people we're talking about?

That I really don't know.

How far were you from Alsace?

We were just across the line from Alsace.

Uh-huh. Very close.

Very close. It's hard to tell. I think some of the books I have at home, which I really didn't want to lug because I just can't carry so much, might have some of that in it. I don't know how many people were actually involved.

So part of the armistice agreement was that German Jews would be sent to France?

Yes.

Deported.

Yes.

Lose your citizenship in Germany?

Well--

What was your status to be in France?

Yeah, that's actually a good question. We were called [NON-ENGLISH]. They had to give us-- but we-- the Jews really didn't have much German citizenship anyway. Everything was stamped with a J. And food stamps and everything. We didn't have-- it hadn't gotten to the yellow star yet. That came later.

But trying to think. Oh, certainly we didn't get any French citizenship. And what really happened was we were in a number of French camps which had been built by the Spanish loyalists. And the French just barely let them exist there. The French weren't really very nice to the Spanish loyalists at all.

And they were still in the camp when we came. And they had to move on, and I don't know what happened to them. So we actually moved into their camps. Crazy. Absolutely crazy.

Where did your-- did you stay together as a family?

Oh, no. The women-- and so my mother and I stayed together, but the women and the men were separated. So my father actually was with the two-- with Paul and Victor. And we were with Marianna, my mother and I. And it turned out my father died very early in the camp.

But the rest of us actually came to America together. That was quite an odyssey. But--

Maybe you could name your siblings at this point, so we know who everyone is.

OK. Well, I had-- my older sister-- well, my elder sister was 10 years older than I. And her name was Eva. And she passed away in 1980. And my brother's name is Henry Maas. He's still alive.

And then I had a middle sister, Gertrude Maas. And she also passed away. So I lost the two sisters. I just have the brother. They have affidavits. One of the papers is their affidavits with their names on it.

And my brother is seven years older than I am. And he just turned 80, I guess, last year. He's going to be 81. And then this middle sister, she died early. Strangely enough, she died in an auto accident in France. She was only 48. And she was about three years older than I was.

Do you remember the actual day that you left Germany?

Oh, yeah. That I do remember extremely well.

Could you describe that?

Well, I tell you, as I wrote-- they came about 9:00. It was October 22, 1948 at 9:00.

How much warning had you had?

Well, there was no warning at all, except sort of a gut feeling that you knew it was going to come. And we had no warning at all. They just appear at the door and that we had to be ready in 20 minutes. And, of course, that put us in a considerable flurry there.

But strange thing to happen, we forgot some very important things, like taking something where you could drink out of. But I had my warm clothes. And they did say to bring silverware, which we did. Each one brought some silverware, but we didn't need it all.

And I remember I had-- my father had given me a copy of Goethe's Faust. I remember I took that. And I don't remember what much else I took. And my parents took some things, but my father, of all things, the only reason I know all these things which I have is that my father took those papers and put them in a briefcase and took them to France with him.

I didn't know it at the time. I didn't know that until years later, when I came across those papers. Years later. And then

the cook, I saw her after the war. And she said something that the Gestapo didn't want him to take the papers, but somehow he managed to take some of them.

And he took them to France with him. And my mother took them from there. And it's just amazing some things I have. I don't even know. They were done in 1940, and I don't know how they got there.

So anyway, my father apparently took that. And I don't know what my mother took. And I do remember our dear cook leaning over. She was such a devout Catholic, and she leaned over the banister as we left and she said, God protect you, God be with you. She prayed for us all during the war, and it helped.

So anyway, that I do remember. And then we were taken to the station, to a place of the station I'd never seen. But later, years later, when I went back to Germany, accidentally got off on the wrong side of the station, and my friend who wanted to pick me up was on one side of the station, and I was on that other side of the station where we actually had left. That was very amazing.

Anyway, we stayed there for a long time. And then we finally got on a train.

You stayed at the station long?

Yeah, we stayed in the station long.

Hours?

Yeah, I think it was hours. Then we finally got on the train. And let me see here. Oh, some family. This has nothing to do-- they were there, too. That apartment we lived on-- lived in was actually divided. The apartments downstairs were all very large. Ours was a little smaller. It was still plenty large.

And then it was divided with a glass door. And on the other side of the apartment were the sleeping quarters of the maids. And there were four or five rooms. And I remember one of the rooms later on, I guess after '38 or '39, a family moved in with a boy just about same age as myself.

We became a little bit friendly. Not very much. And that whole family lived together in that one room, and we still had our big apartment. So that was a little strange, but I didn't even think too much about it at the time. Typical.

And I remember they were with us. I mean, there were just loads of people. Some of the people I knew, and some of the people I didn't know at all. I remember there was one family who was very Orthodox. And they had seven children. And some of the little ones had been just born maybe a year or so before.

And I remember those kids being there, and the father carrying a big milk bottle with him. And--

Did they use regular passenger trains?

Yeah, we were very lucky. In that respect, we were lucky. We were not on a cattle train.

Do you remember your feelings as you went on that train ride?

Well, when we were going west I remember I was tremendously relieved. I had apparently enough sense of geography to know that we were actually crossing the Rhine.

Did that feel safe?

Well, it felt a lot safer.