

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Eichengreen, Lucille

Date of interview: 8/14/1990

Summary: One interview on two tapes: the first covers her early childhood through the end of interment at Lodz ghetto, and the second describes her time in the camps up until the present day. Photos at the end of the second tape.

Ms. Eichengreen was born Cecilia Landau in Hamburg, Germany, on February 1, 1925. Her parents, Benjamin Landau and Sara (Baumwolspinner) Landau were Polish nationals, born in Sambor, Poland and living in Germany. Her father was a businessman working in import/export—mostly wine wholesale. The family traveled between Germany and Poland for the first sixteen years of Ms. Eichengreen's life, and she attended a private Jewish school beginning in 1930. Her sister, Karin, was born in 1930.

The first incident of anti-Semitism that she remembered occurred in April 1933, soon after Hitler came to power. Her family visited a German resort in Batschwalter, and the owner of the resort, who did not realize Mr. Landau and his family was Jewish, stated that he was happy that Hitler was "taking care of the Jews." After that, Ms. Eichengreen stated that things had changed; she remembered that the German children would ostracize, harass and assault the Jewish children. As Polish nationals, the Landaus were not subject to the German anti-Semitic laws (Nuremberg Laws, etc.), and felt somewhat safe. In October 1938, her father was sent back to Poland (literally "pushed over the border"). The rest of the family remained in Hamburg, but began attempts to get a visa to go to Palestine to stay with family. In May 1939, Mr. Landau received a four-week pass to return to Germany to move the family out. The family remained in Germany, and they shipped their belongings to relatives in Palestine while waiting for an exit permit. When the war broke out on Sept. 1, 1939, the Gestapo arrested Ms. Eichengreen's father and, after four weeks, sent him to Dachau. After that time, the family was forced to wear the yellow star, buy food in special stores, and all Jews were subject to harassment, beatings, and arrests. Mr. Landau died at Dachau and the family received his ashes in February 1941.

During this period, Ms. Eichengreen had graduated school and found work. In the fall of 1941, the family received notice that they were to be relocated and shipped east as part of a group of around 1000 Jews. They spent a couple of days in railroad cattle cars, and emerged at Lodz Ghetto. She spends some time describing the ghetto—the overcrowding, the hunger, the search for work, and the connections necessary to survival. She had some dealings with Chaim Rumkowski, the Jewish head of the ghetto. Ms. Eichengreen's mother died of starvation in July of 1942. Six weeks later, her sister Karin was deported, probably to Auschwitz, and was never heard from again. During and after this

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time, Ms. Eichengreen worked as a secretary for a beautification project, for the statistical department, and then for a kitchen. She developed jaundice while at Lodz.

In January 1944, the ghetto was liquidated, and she, along with many others, boarded a cattle car for Auschwitz-Birkenau. She spent two or three weeks at Auschwitz before being inspected by Mengele (part of a group inspection, not personal) and selected to go to Neuengamme-Sasel. She performed manual labor there for a while, and eventually got an office job where she processed documents. She remained at Neuengamme until the end of March 1945, when she and others were put onto trucks and sent to Bergen-Belsen. When they arrived, there was no work to be done, and the British army liberated the camp about two weeks later. She describes the lack of comprehension on the part of the British; for example, they gave tinned pork to starving people, which caused digestive problems (many fatal) among the inmates. She herself had many health problems at this time (kidney trouble, typhus, and infectious boils). She worked as a translator for the British, and gave them the names of 42 Nazis who had worked at Neuengamme—she had memorized them in the course of her office work there. The British tried these people, and Ms. Eichengreen testified against them in court. Soon after this, in December 1945, she began to receive death threats and left Germany quickly. She traveled with a British officer to France, and from Paris was able to get a visa from the US Embassy in February 1946.

She moved to Sunnyside, Queens, and stayed in New York with a friend from school until she was able to support herself by sewing, then as a secretary in Manhattan. She met her future husband at a dinner party—she had known his parents in the Lodz ghetto and he asked her for information about them. They married at the end of 1946, and in 1949 moved to San Francisco where she worked and then had two sons. Her husband died in 2003. She is the author of "From Ashes to Life: My Memories of the Holocaust" and "Rumkowski: And the Orphans of Lodz."

At the end of the interview, Ms. Eichengreen describes her inability to forgive the Germans, particularly the older generation. She has run into several of the individuals from her time in the ghetto and the camps, and has a network of friends and acquaintances from that period that she keeps active. She shows and describes some family photos at the end of the interview.