

-TITLE-HILDA RICHARDS
-I_DATE-5/3/90
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-
-IMAGE_QUALITY-
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

0:00-4:00 November 1917 birth of Hilda Collins in Frankfurt, Germany. Dad had own business. Sister and brother in -law went to San Francisco in 1936. Hilda later joined them in 1938. Stayed with sister. Attempted to find work, got job in hat factory. She broke her leg and had to quit job. Got next job in bakery where she worked for 5 years. meanwhile father had been arrested back in Germany and had been placed in concentration camp. sister and she pooled money to get parents out of Germany. Father by stroke of luck was released and parents got out of Europe in 1940.

4:00-7:00 They found a small apartment in San Francisco for parents. Mother became house cleaner. Difficult job for her because she was older and was not use to menial work. Father sold scarfs and hats. Late 1940's fire in parents house, afterward they moved in with Hilda. Father and mother worked hard and stay afloat. The eventually brought a house on 25th Ave. Hilda in this period was working long hours in bakery, 8 am to midnight each night. No social life so she quit. Started work for office in San Francisco and worked there the next 24 years.

7:00-10:00 She married her husband, Paul in 1948. She retired from office at 49 and took care of father who was old and sick and husband who was ill.

Retirement - "interesting and busy".

Question: Tell about growing up in Frankfurt? Did you go to a public or private school?

Ans: Not public - not sure - thinks it was private.

At 15 in 1933 she was not allowed to go to school because she was Jewish. Didn't care, went to school that taught how to run a household.

10:00-13:00 Later years in school "unpleasant". Some teacher were German and had a lot of "strange ideas". After 1933 wasn't allowed to places she wanted to go (parks etc.) had to stay at home, social life limited.

Question: Father was in sales, what did he sell? Was your family well off? Was the family very Jewish?

Ans: Father had business with 2 brothers. in 1928-1929 went bankrupt started up again making bridal vials. The family was middle class.

13:00-16:00 Mother was from a good background, her family lost most of it's money in 1928-29 depression. Father came from very little money. Family not very Jewish. Sister and she in Jewish organization. possibly because they feel debt because they got out of Germany largely unscarred.

16:00-19:00 Question: Any Jewish education?

Ans: Yes, she did not like it very well thought. Lots of yelling, teacher could not keep control of class

Question: Any gentile friends? How did they treat you?

Ans: Between 10-14, yes. After that school split up Jews and gentiles not as many.

After school she went to Switzerland to learn french, she enjoyed it very much.

Questions: What kind of signs did you see after Hitler came to power?

19:00-22:00

Ans: At work party members would wear their uniforms and try and throw their weight around.

Questions: Were you afraid?

Ans: No she was not, she was thinking more about leaving for the united States. Her families life did not change that much. The only incident that frightened her had to do with a camera her parents gave her. The parents needed money. This transporting of a camera was illegal. When a Nazi official came to inspect her belongings for the trip he heard that she had a camera. Hilda's mother had given it to a friend for safe keeping, luckily. The official searched but found no camera and she was allowed to leave.

22:00-25:00

Question: What was your family allowed to take out of the country?

Ans: Dishes, silverware etc. Her parents were just allowed the clothes on their back.

Question: Did you know the mayor of Frankfurt was Jewish?

Ans: No

Question: How did your father end up in a concentration camp?

Ans: They went from house to house and arrested all male members of the family.

Question: Which camp did your father go to? Did he tell you much about it?

Ans: Not sure, thinks he went to Buchenwald. No, he did not tell her anything about the camp.

Question: How long was he there for?

Ans: 2 months.

Question: How did you and your sister get the idea of raising money?

Ans: Mother wrote and asked us to.

25:00-28:00 Question: When you left in June of 1938 was that before Kristallnacht?

Ans: Business was reduced but not destroyed until Kristallnacht

Question: How difficult was it for you to leave Germany?

Ans: Not very difficult, she wanted to follow sister to America. She believed she could have a better life there. Besides family she had nothing to keep her there.

28:00-31:00 She had very few friends in Frankfurt and most of them wanted to leave as well.

Question: How did your mother fare after your father was arrested?

Ans: Very weak, fought to have him released and set plans on how to get out of the country.

Question: Tell us about your grandmother?

Ans: They were very close. She was very conservative in a religious sense.

31:00-34:00 Hilda was sad to leave her grandmother, she wrote her letters. Her grandmother was more of a modern woman than her own mother was. She and her son were transported to a concentration camp in 1940 when she heard this. Her uncle (same one who was killed with grandmother) was a Jewish leader in Frankfurt. Family asked him not to do that because they were attempting to get he and grandmother out of country but he refused. He wanted to stay there and take care of his mother.

34:00-37:00 Question: Talk about the rise of Jewish culture after the crackdown in Frankfurt.

Ans: She didn't know much about it, she had already left.

37:00-40:00 Question: Talk about your parent leaving the country?

Ans: Parents did not want to leave in 1938, they felt that it would be over soon. "They had more to lose than I did. Hilda never could understand the ethnic characterization that the Germans did of the Jews.

Question: Did you ever have trouble getting food, (getting into a grocery store)?

Ans: No it wasn't that bad.

Question: What made you sister leave Germany?

Ans: Sister's husband had job working for his mother. it was not a position he liked to be in and he wanted to get a fresh start. They wanted to go to live in America.

43:00-46:00 Question: Talk about your family in the United States?

Ans: She proceeds to name every person who she is related to in the U.S. and where they live. Relatives cousins/uncles/aunts etc.

46:00-49:00 More family information.

Question: Do you know much about the work your uncle did for the jews of his community?

Ans: Not much of an idea. uncle seemed to be a go between for the Jews and Nazi organization.

49:00-52:00 Question: What did you and your grandmother discuss in your letters?

Ans: Nothing political only family matters. Who was doing week, who was seeing who, etc.

52:00-55:00 Question: Do you remember nazi demonstrations, parades?

Ans: To a degree, she tried to avoid them. If she was there when one passed and saluted and it was found out she was a Jew she would get in trouble. If she was there and didn't salute she would still be in trouble. No win situation, so she avoided them. When she heard music she went other way. She tried to block out most memories of Nazi activity when she came here, that's why her memory is so poor.

Question: Do you have any problems - nightmare, guilt etc?

Ans: No, she and her sister have same attitude they concentrate on present, they can't change the past.

55:00-58:00 Question: You got invited back to Frankfurt by the government - would you go back?

Ans: have visited Europe 7 times since, have gone to Germany 3 times. She was curious to go back to Frankfurt to see what it would be like. It was completely different, many building bombed out architecture American style. She and husband only stayed two days though. She has no problem going back because she left before the real trouble begun.

58:01-1:01 She had no feelings of hurt or fear by going back.

Went in 1988, she and husband have friends in europe who they met in S.F. Friends tried to convince them to move back to Germany, but she never would.

1:01-1:04 I looking forward to going back to Frankfurt again for a longer stay. She was interested on what they would show them. Would see more of city than prior three trips.

Question: You say you would never go back to live in Germany, why?

Ans: She feels rooted in U.S. since she has been there so long. After she was in U.S. she read how badly Germans throughout history have treated the Jewish people.

1:04-1:07 Question: Are you upset by the unification of Germany?

Ans: Somewhat worried. They will have economic trouble the east. Worries her because whenever there have been economic trouble Jews have been blamed. Germany was in better shape in the 1990 than they were in 1933. Young people more internationally oriented.

1:07-1:10 Question: Do you feel that another Holocaust in possible?

Ans: She wishes she could be convinced to say no, but certain conditions need to occur it to possibly happen. Not in same 'camp' manner as before. She feels Jews could suffer mistreatment through in future.

Question: Tell more about the group you are going with to Frankfurt?

Ans: The city of Frankfurt invited she and her husband and they will go from June 7 to June 21.

Question: (Backtracking) How do you know your grandmother and uncle died in concentration camp?

Ans: She was sent a postcard from relative telling her that.

1:10-1:13 Question: Will you try to confirm that information when you go back to Frankfurt in June?

Ans: No way she can confirm it, most of the people would have information have died. She will never be sure.

1:13-1:16 Question: Did your husband apply for restitution?

ans: Yes

Question: How much did it cost you to leave Germany in 1939?

Ans: Do know, she left the country with 50 marks.

1:16-1:20 Question: How did your experience and your parents experience effect your view of Judaism?

Ans: It effected her view 'very much so'. She feels strongly that one has to do something for other people. She feels need to help others. She considers herself more Jewish than religious.

.END.