

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

**Name of interviewee:** Boas, Edith

**Date of interview:** 3/3/2004

**Summary:** Edith Boas was born on June 25, 1908 in Berlin, Germany. Her parents were Marcel and Betty Boas. She had one younger sister, Unt who was 3 years and 3 months younger. Her father worked as a manager of the Great Theatre in Berlin, while her mother stayed at home. Her early memories are very vague and she can not remember a lot from her past. One thing from her childhood that she remembers was when Germany was in World War I, she would watch the soldiers march down the street. She always remembered her mother saying that she hated war and was so sad to see them go. Her father was not in the war. Though he enlisted, he was not able to go because of heart trouble. Later in the War he worked in the canteen, where the soldier's got their food. She attended Christian school until the age of 16 or 17 and then started schooling for photography. She first had to become an apprentice for three years to be certified and then studied more in order to be a master in photography.

In 1935, when Edith was 27 her mother died of breast cancer and pneumonia. After her mother's death she married, under special conditions because her husband was able to support her. She met him because her mother was a diabetic and he worked at the lab Edith's mother would go to. Then two years later, in 1937, her father died of heart trouble. Right after the death of her father, Germany was starting to close the borders and her husband moved to Shanghai with the Jewish transport. She did not want to go with him, but found this an opportunity to get rid of him.

In 1940 she started to get worried about the situations with the Jews. She was sent to work in a factory in Berlin where she worked from 1941 until 1943. She worked upstairs and worked eight hour days. Then in March of 1943, she was told to sweep the factory, which she never did, and that was the day the SS came to take the Jews away. She successfully escaped the factory without them seeing her and she ran to see her boyfriend George, whom she had met through the factory. George was a French prisoner and worked in a factory next to hers. She knew now she could not go home so she went to a neighbor from a previous house where she had lived with her parents. She stayed there for a year and even went outside and walked the town. She said she was able to do this because she did not fit the stereotype of what a Jewish person looked like. Then one day when she was out walking she caught the eye of a woman who used to live in her apartment complex that she once had a fight with. After seeing her, the lady told the Gestapo and reported that Edith was alive. She then got a call from one of her Christian friends telling her to leave. Next she moved in with a woman who worked at the factory but was not Jewish and she lived with her until the end of the war.

After the war was over she met up with George and was loaded into trains to France. There she was arrested for being German and she was taken to

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French prisons, the Prefecture then later to Moberge, and then to Poirche. After this George found her and she was released.

She lived with George for two years until her number came up and she was able to move to the United States. Her sister paid her way to move to San Francisco where she lived with her sister and her sister's husband. She later moved out and got a job as a photographer in the city. She moved on to hold many other jobs and finally retired at the age of 67. She stayed in touch with George but he married another woman after Edith left, because he said she could support him. Since leaving Berlin, she has returned for visits on two occasions and she says that she still misses it and has no real hatred towards the Germans.