

-TITLE-MARGARET BERLIN
-I_DATE-AUGUST 9 1990
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-DURATION-2 HOURS
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

Tape 1

1:01:00 Margaret was born in Augsburg, a small town in Bavaria. She lived a very happy and quiet childhood. She had one brother, who was eight years older than her. Her father and uncle owned a men's sports ware factory. Her mother's mother lived with them. Her father had been a bookkeeper for another firm and then inherited his father-in-law's business. They lived in apartments. Very few Jews owned houses.

1:03:30 The family took vacations every summer to the mountains Austria and Switzerland. Margaret didn't see the seaside until she was 16. He town had approximately 175,000 residents. only 1,000 of them were Jewish. There was no Jewish school, and up until the age of 10 she felt no anti-Semitism. She had both Jewish and Gentile friends. The only thing different between her and her Gentile classmates was that she got off from school for Jewish holidays.

1:07:00 She felt fairly assimilated into German culture, yet also understood that she was Jewish. She went to religious school and attended temple services during the Saturday afternoon religious services and the high holidays.

1:08:20 She first felt anti-Semitism in 1931, when she was 10, a children's summer camp in Bavaria. She remembers hearing remarks about Jews and seeing swastikas, which she knew were symbolic of Nazism. She didn't know much. Everything cam gradually.

1:11:00 Her father was a World Was I patriot. After Hitler came to power, he was very disturbed. Yet he believed very deeply that it wouldn't last. Maybe this is why he didn't emigrate soon enough.

1:13:05 She attempted to talk to her parents about her anti-Semitic experiences, but they did not wish to do so. She had spent 4 years in elementary school, before attending an all girls gymnasium to prepare herself for university.

1:16:20 She was expelled from school in 1937 because she was Jewish. She did not finish her education.

1:17:35 Anti-Semitism was a very gradual process. There were more and more rules all the time. She never read MEIN KAMPF but was aware that Hitler promised great things.

1:20:10 She remembers a student organization "Haben Kinder" which explained why Aryans were physically superior. She remembers joking with one of her Jewish girlfriends and the Jewish girls had bigger breast measurements.

1:22:25 Margaret remembers finding out that her best friend passed along a note which stated that Jewish students should be excluded from all activities. She remembers reading signs seeing signs that said 'keep out' of swimming pools.

1:26:00 Jewish people weren't allowed to go to the movies. Margaret wasn't sure how the authorities knew they were Jewish but everyone was afraid to get caught. She doesn't know anyone that did.

1:29:25 The Jews did not want to cause any trouble. In her town, they formed a sports club for Jewish youth. Doctor's practices and business in the town began being boycotted.

1:13:00 She was expelled from school in 1937 at the age of 16. She then went to a find Jewish household to learn cooking skills.

1:35:00 Her father had to sell his business. He was no longer allowed to keep it open. At this point, Margaret's parents wanted her to emigrate. She saw no future for them in Germany. Her father still hoped that would blow over and things would eventually be ok for him, his wife and his mother-in-law.

1:38:30 Margaret then registered with the American consulate. Her brother, who was already registered, left in 1938.

1:41:05 On November 10, 1938 the Gestapo came for her father and her brother. (who had already gone) They left her father go because he was old and weak.

1:43:40 Her brother had several cousins in American but was still unable to get a work affidavit. The wife of Rabbi Stephen Weiss (maiden name Waterman), who was a close friend of their relatives in Germany got him an affidavit. He was then able to leave.

1:48:10 Her relatives were originally taken to Dachau. Margaret knew of the camp as being for political prisoners, especially communists. Jews in the earlier concentration camps were told that they would be released if they proved they could emigrate.

1:50:00 She remembers November 10, 1938 very well. the Jews were rounded up and taken to their synagogues. They were made to watch as the synagogue was burned down. They were shots in the streets. That was the day her father was first taken in.

1:52:10 Some towns people went to Hamburg. it was supposed to be a safe place. She stayed home scared.

1:55:25 When her father came home he attempted to enroll as a teacher in a Kitchener camp in England. This was an old army camp that now functioned as a Jewish haven. He was rejected. Margaret tried to go too. Some English Jews they had met in Switzerland, had a child and took her in as their housekeeper.

1:57:10 Her father took classes in English and color photography as he prepared for emigration. For a short time she could communicate with her parents from England. After the war started, she could only communicate through the Red Cross in 25 words or less.

1:59:50 In 1943, she last heard from her parents. She does not recall the exact wording of their last message. She knew that her grandmother, aunt, uncle and parents were deported to Auschwitz in the beginning of 1943. Her brother conducted a thorough investigation after the war. None of them survived.

2:04:05 Margaret her a letter which describes in detail the life of the towns Jewish residents in the last months of the war. She had not been able to finish it, it is so graphic.

2:04:05 Margaret has a letter which describes in detail the life of the towns Jewish residents in the last months of the war. None of them survived.

2:06:00 Jews were no longer allowed to live in normal houses, so all of the remaining town Jews moved into her father's three apartments. There were 10-15 people to a kitchen. This wasn't even the worst. They were eventually all moved to barracks and starved before being taken away.

2:09:30 Her mother was 53 and her father 66 years old. When she goes over her medical history, it is very hard to figure out what will happen to her later in her life, because they died so young.

2:1:20 Before they were taken away her father worked in a balloon factory and her mother also helped out with the war effort. They were just happy to get work and didn't want to cause any problems.

2:14:10 When her parents were finally taken away to Auschwitz, they were in possession of an exit VISA to America. The problem was the Atlantic travel was banned and the only way to get to America was through Russia and the orient and across the Pacific. They would have had to pay in American dollars, and neither Margaret or her brother had the means to cover their costs. They felt helpless and very frustrated.

2:21:20 Margaret lived with a very nice family in England on the coast of Essex. They called her Fraulein. She gained a lot of weight. She wasn't used to doing housework. Her main chore was taking care of their little boy.

2:23:00 After a year and a half they ran out of money to pay her. She was let go on three days notice. She wanted to go to England and become a dressmaker but this family arranged her with another in the Midlands. She needed police clarification because Lemington was not a coastal town.

2:24:15 The three days she waited in London were the loneliest and most miserable of her life. She was in a horrible area and felt very desolate because although she phoned many people, she couldn't get in touch with any of her friends.

2:27:00 She stayed with a nice family near Coventry for a year until they couldn't afford help. She then moved on to another family.

2:28:30 There was an International Refugee Club in Coventry. She joined and met a lot of Jewish Refugees. She met her husband in this club. Her husband had a very bad war time experience. he had been released from a concentration camp, and then spent the remainder of the war in Coventry which was very badly bombed out. They met at an IRC meeting. They married 1 and 1/2 years after they met.

2:31:05 Margaret joined the Civil Nursing Reserves. She worked in such unsanitary, high risk hospitals that she was lucky not to catch TB. Luckily she was transferred back to where her husband was located. They married in 1942.

2:32:45 After a basic training course she began working in pediatrics. She became pregnant with her first child in three months and was excused. After the war was over, Margaret and her husband moved back to London. There was no more war work to be had. Every job application had lots of red tape and paperwork. Her husband started a job in war damage repairs, especially furniture repairs.

2:37:05 In 1951, she began trying to convince her husband to move to the U.S. He thought that he was well enough established in his job an that 30 years old was too old to start again. She eventually convinced him.

2:39:30 After the birth of her second child, they came to the U.S. Although they stayed briefly in Hartford and New York with her brother and other relatives, they decided to San Francisco in 1956.

2:41:40 Her children are Ok, because Margaret did not suffer personally. During the war Margaret often dreamt of the atrocities that were happening to her parents. She is convinced there is some correspondence. Its hard to say how her brother handled his parents death. He conducted the investigation that confirmed their deaths, but then died of a stroke in 1958.

2:44:00 Margaret deals with the past by realizing that she has to go on living. She remembers the wonderful time. with her parents. yet because she is human, she can't forget. She hopes, but is not convinced that it won't happen again. In France, German and the U.S. there it and always we be anti-Semitism.

2:46:10 In 1978, a reunion of Holocaust survivors from Augsburg was arranged in the Catskills. It was very enjoyable. They spoke of good times. She still doesn't talk about her war experience with her husband. There is no sense dwelling in the past.

2:49:40 She got involved with this project when her friends put her on a list. She feels that it is worthwhile and hopes that it will do some good. She hopes to show the tape to her children, because sh hasn't told them the whole story. They know some facts but few details. She thinks the tape will be helpful, especially to her grandson, as he tries to understand. The hope of the world is in his generation. Being a grandmother is like a new life for Margaret. She hopes she has more grandchildren.

The last several minutes of the tape are spent with Margaret identifying her father, mother, aunt, uncle and grandmother in various old family photos.
.END.