

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Farber, Leah

Date of interview: 4/22/1991

Summary: Leah was born in December 1914 in Niedzybrozie, Poland. She lived there with her parents, grandmother and two brothers. Her father died when Leah was 12, and she went to live in Vienna with her uncle. Her aunt and uncle owned a store in Vienna, and Leah recalled that the store was taken over by Nazis shortly after the invasion of Vienna on March 6, 1938. Leah recalled an afternoon when two SS men approached her and asked for her passport. They took it, and ordered her to a Nazi headquarters. She was released the next day and allowed to return to her aunt and uncle, but the Nazis kept her passport.

She learned about Jewish émigrés to Shanghai, and she and her fiancé decided to get married and then leave Vienna. The couple left Vienna in 1939, and on February 3 boarded a ship from Italy bound for Shanghai.

They lived in Shanghai for a year, working in a restaurant. They struggled, Leah said, because they were poor, and life was difficult. She said she and her husband did not consider living there permanently.

The two fled Shanghai for the U.S. in 1940, aboard a Japanese ship. She wrote letters to her family until 1942, after her parents had escaped Poland to Russia. The letters stopped, and Leah still doesn't know what happened to her family.

She and her husband settled in Modesto and he studied law while she worked. They moved to San Jose, and helped her husband's brother and his children flee France.

In 1979, Leah traveled back to Europe for the first time. She visited her father's grave in Austria and went to her village in Poland, but the village no longer existed.