

## HVT-26

S., Ilse 1918-1998

Ilse S. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-26) interviewed by Musia Schwartz and Kimberly Rimer, July 4, 1994.

3 copies: 1 SVHS first camera; 1 SVHS second camera; 1 VHS copy.

**Summary:** Ilse was born on May 6, 1918 in Illingen, Germany. Approximately 500 of the town's 10,000 inhabitants were Jewish. Ilse's father was a cattle dealer. Her parents raised three children in a conservative Jewish home. The family celebrated holidays and observed the Sabbath. Generally, Jewish and non-Jewish children did not interact although Ilse had one non-Jewish friend. In her youth, Ilse did not experience much antisemitism. Ilse attended a Jewish elementary school and then a high school run by Catholic nuns in a different town. After graduating from high school, she worked in Cologne. Her brother went to school in Frankfurt, and her sister moved to the United States.

A few weeks before Kristallnacht, life became increasingly difficult for Jews in Illingen. Antisemitism increased dramatically, German children threw stones at houses inhabited by Jews and sang songs about Jews leaving their homes and going to Palestine. Nazis began harassing Jews. On November 9, 1938, Ilse returned home from work to find her father being attacked by a group of Nazis. They pinned her father against a wall, but let him go when they saw Ilse. The Nazis vandalized the house and then they took Ilse's father with them. She did not know where they took him. Her mother and friends wanted to commit suicide and they wanted Ilse to kill herself as well, but she suggested escaping as an alternative. Ilse, her mother, and her friends travelled to the German-Luxembourg border. Ilse was the only one who had a passport so the other women could not cross the border. Ilse did not want to leave her mother behind but her aunts, who lived in Luxembourg, convinced her to go. After a short while, Ilse's mother received the necessary documents and was reunited with Ilse. She and her mother made arrangements for Ilse's father and brother to come to Luxembourg. The family remained in Luxembourg until January 1939. Ilse took the first available American visa. She emigrated to the United States with her aunt and uncle.

After arriving in New York, Ilse went to live with her sister in Cleveland. She learned to speak English and gained employment as a housekeeper. Ilse's brother was the first member of her family to join her in the United States. After moving to New Jersey, Ilse and her brother saved enough money to bring their parents to the United States in 1940. Ilse married and had two girls. After Ilse's husband died, she married Albert, whom she knew from high school<sup>5</sup>. Together they later visited their hometown in Germany. Ilse never spoke about her past because she wanted to be free from the past and she thought her children would not be interested.

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<sup>5</sup>See HVT-25