

RG-50.493.0071

Summary

Stella Loeb Ungar, survivor of Nazi Germany, was born on September 21, 1927 in Lauterecken, Germany near the French border. She had one sister, who was eighteen months older, in addition to her mother, father and grandmother, who lived in the upstairs apartment. The town was very small and there were only two Jewish families. To attend synagogue her family went to another town about ten kilometers away. Ms. Ungar and her family celebrated the holidays at home. During the summer, she went to a Jewish camp and learned a little Hebrew there. Before Hitler came to power (she was only five), she did not experience antisemitism from her friends. She had a happy childhood, but when the Nazis appeared in the town the amity with neighbors ended. Her father owned a tobacco store and Nazi guards were posted in front so no one would shop there. They were later taken off after a gentile friend intervened, but people stopped coming to the store. According to her father, antisemitism always existed in the town, but it became obvious when the Nazis came to power. In school friends stopped playing with her. The family mostly stayed at home.

By 1937 Ms. Unger's father decided that it was time to leave Germany. Fortunately, she had an aunt in the United States who sent for them. One of the leading Nazis in the town tried to convince her father to stay saying that nothing would happen to him, but he said that he could not stay when his family was leaving. They were fortunate to get visas quickly but were able to take little with them. They took an American ship, not wanting to help finance a German ship, and landed at Ellis Island. After some initial problem because her father had lost an eye during WWI, they were allowed in. They took a train to Terre Haute, Indiana where her aunt lived. The Jewish community helped them with hand me downs and a job for her father. But Ms. Unger and her family found it somewhat humiliating. They soon moved to Chicago where Ms. Unger went to high school. There, for the first time since 1933 Ms. Unger felt at home. She remembers fondly her teachers and librarian who helped her perfect her English.

She returned to Germany in 1988 but felt that an underlying current of antisemitism remained. She was very appreciative that the orange County ADL was doing these filmed interviews, since, she believed, that people had to know what happened.