

Hutton, Irene
RG-50.656*0001

Interview Segment 2 of 2

We had been in Japan. Hubert had gone over the day after Christmas to take over the office in Japan because somebody had a nervous breakdown. We had planned to meet in England, we were invited by Hubert's British boss to come to England. Mid-way through Hubert's stay in Japan, he wrote "Have you found anyone to take care of the kids?" There was only Rick and Edward at the time. I said "I found somebody." The next day, I got a cable from Hubert saying "If you can come here now, get going". So talked the office and the big boss, <name?> wasn't there, but Henry Rothschild said "Go if you can." So I got <name> in for the kids and next day went to Tokyo to join him. This was somewhere mid-February. Stayed in Tokyo and then left together the end of April and went to Manila, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Calcutta. This was all on business. And in Calcutta, Hubert had to go straight to England. And this was the first time I was going to see my grandmother who was still living in Hamburg.

ML: Oh because she wasn't Jewish. She wasn't punished for having married a Jew?

IH: Well, her husband was long dead. He died in 1926, my grandfather so I hardly knew him. She was French and was very feisty and still lived in Hamburg. And spent her vacation in <some place – Russian zone>. I hadn't seen her. This was 1956. Hubert went straight to England and I was going to Hamburg from Calcutta. Got stuck in Kariachi, Pakistan. There was plane trouble and I got stuck overnight and then on to Zurich. My plane to Hamburg had left and there was no way to get there. Everything was overbooked and they could only get me to Frankfurt. This was a long trip. I hadn't thought about Germany, none of this too much. Get to the airport in Frankfurt and there was somehow the German arrogance and all of sudden I could not talk a word of German. Only English. I was really seeing myself from up here. It was totally weird. They put me up in a pension. I come to breakfast and they offered me (some German word) and then they said "roll" and I said "yes, I'll have a roll". Then I got on the train, Frankfurt to Hamburg. There were no flights. And then I was in a compartment. A middle aged German couple comes into the compartment. She sees my luggage with all these decals on it. She says to her husband, in German, "Ask her where she's been." And the husband, using his grammar school English says "My wife wants to know, how old are you?". And I knew that's not what she asked, but at that point, I am thinking to myself "what am I going to do with my grandmother?" My French was not that good, but you know her German was not perfect at all. But this is crazy.

End up in Hamburg, take the bus from the airport to the city. The bus driver stopped at a light. I'm sitting somewhere behind the bus driver. The light changes and there's an older woman with a babushka and she starts stepping off the sidewalk and the bus driver starts giving the gas, then stops, opens the window and leans out and says <German first> "Little mother, I'll wait, go ahead." And this was normal and comfortable and all of a sudden I could speak German again.

ML: Talk about psychosomatic

IH: It was psychological of course.

ML: So when the husband asked you, what did he tell his wife?

IH: How old I was. Then they had a conversation, but I had to go out. I felt too nutty. The airport was all so bureaucratic. But this bus driver was human. And then it was over.

ML: Only time went to Germany?

IH: I visited my friends all the time. But I had my school friends. After that it was fine.

ML: You were literally dumbstruck.

IH: I did not want to be a part of that. I don't remember whether in Zurich I may have even spoken German there. But Frankfurt airport, something set me off, that was absolutely the bureaucratic thing that I wanted no part of. Then I get to my grandmother who was furious at me. Because I had arrived a day late having been stuck in Karachi (which of course I could help) because she had tickets to a concert the night before. And I hadn't arrived in time.

I hadn't seen her since the '30's.