

INTERVIEW WITH ANNELIESE FISCHER

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**Transcending Trauma Project
Council for Relationships
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Interview with Anneliese Fischer, a survivor, November 25, 1993.

INT: This is an interview with Anneliese Fischer. And if you would spell your name please.

ANNELIESE: My first name?

INT: Yes.

ANNELIESE: Is Anneliese.

INT: Fischer?

ANNELIESE: Fischer.

INT: And your address? Where you live now?

ANNELIESE: Oh I live now, well we just moved months ago to Miami, 500 Bayview Drive, North Miami Beach.

INT: And so you no longer have your? (home)

ANNELIESE: No we don't.

INT: Stay in New York you say?

ANNELIESE: We used to live in Kew Gardens for over fifty years.

INT: Over fifty years.

ANNELIESE: Over fifty years.

INT: You came directly when you were first married to Kew Gardens?

ANNELIESE: No, we lived first in Manhattan, but we lived in Kew Gardens, oh, forty six, forty seven years.

INT: Good. And, so and how old are you might I ask?

ANNELIESE: Seventy-five.

INT: You are seventy-five and your birth date?

ANNELIESE: July the fourth, 1918.

INT: July the fourth! Oh.

ANNELIESE: That's why I came to America.

INT: Oh the liberation day.

ANNELIESE: Is always a holiday.

INT: Oh, that's wonderful. And you were born where?

ANNELIESE: I was born in Solingen, which is in Germany.

INT: And you need to spell that.

ANNELIESE: Solingen - and my grandparents, my father, my sister, and brother, they were all born in Solingen. But we moved in 1919: we moved to Cologne, and I really don't know Solingen because I lived all of my life then, my childhood in Cologne.

INT: You moved at what age?

ANNELIESE: One year.

INT: At one year old. So you don't remember Solingen. Okay. And you went to school there?

ANNELIESE: I went to school in Cologne, yes.

INT: In Cologne. And did you have brothers and sisters?

ANNELIESE: I have a brother and sister that were both older.

INT: And their names?

ANNELIESE: My sister's name is Hilda and my brother's name is Heinz.

INT: And how old?

ANNELIESE: My sister is now 81. My brother is 79.

INT: And where? [do they live?]

ANNELIESE: Well my sister lives in Hollywood, Florida, and my brother is in California, but I haven't seen him since I left Germany.

INT: You haven't seen your brother and he is living where?

ANNELIESE: In California.

INT: In California and you've not gotten to?

ANNELIESE: Well that is another story. I come to big story.

INT: Oh that's a big story. All right. And your parents: What did your father do? How did he make a living?

ANNELIESE: He was from- he had inherited his father's factory. We made electric supplies which you needed when you were building new houses; anything you needed for inside the houses. He and his brother, my uncle, they had the factory together in Solingen and in the Black Forrest.

INT: And so they had a successful business?

ANNELIESE: They had a very successful business.

INT: And so you lived well, your family?

ANNELIESE: Yes we lived very well. When we moved to Cologne they had the office later in Cologne but the factories were still in Solingen. We had a maid and cook and everything and a nursemaid for us children. So I mean we lived easy life like you live here now.

INT: And so you are very upper middle class?

ANNELIESE: Yes.

INT: Upper class, yes?

ANNELIESE: Well I don't know. I mean it's hard to remember everything.

INT: And as Jews?

ANNELIESE: Well we belonged to the synagogue and my parents went. They didn't go every week, but to all of the holidays we would go, and we always, as children, we always went along.

INT: And did you go to a religious school or did you study at all?

ANNELIESE: Well it was different there. You see I had to go, for the first four years, we had to go what they call volks school.

INT: Could you spell that?

ANNELIESE: It is volks and school, and that you had to go for first four years. And then after this you could decide. It depended what you had to, this was from the government. You didn't pay for that. And after the four years you could decide. You could either stay there until you were fourteen years old, or you could go to a middle school which was not too expensive, or you would go either to the Lyceum or Gymnasium, depending what you wanted. If you wanted to go to university you had to go to a Gymnasium; or if you only wanted to go until you were sixteen you would go to Lyceum. Those were private schools.

INT: Oh, so you had to pay to go.

ANNELIESE: You had to pay. Those, you had to pay.

INT: And so which?

ANNELIESE: So we, I went to Lyceum because I didn't want to go to university at that time.

INT: At that time.

ANNELIESE: But we had it really all together so we could still decide after a few years if I wanted to go to Gymnasium or to Lyceum.

INT: And your brother and your sister went to?

ANNELIESE: My brother went to Gymnasium. My sister went to the Gymnasium. We went to, my sister and I, we went to same school, but she went only about one more year together with me. She is six years older than I am.

INT: And did they both then go to the university?

ANNELIESE: No, by that time Hitler came.

INT: I see. So tell me what, how old were you and where were you in school when you began to have this?

ANNELIESE: I was there. I mean I was in the Lyceum when Hitler came.

INT: In 1933.

ANNELIESE: 1933 I went to school and I should have gone really one more year, and there the school year starts with Easter, after the Easter vacation.

INT: That's spring.

ANNELIESE: It's in the spring and during the spring vacation my parents decided, I mean we had great difficulties in the school. All of a sudden the teachers became Nazis, and they shouted and all to some of the girls that belonged then to the Hitler Youths, and they decided to take me out of school.

INT: And that year was what?

ANNELIESE: I would have had one more year really to go.

INT: And so, but what year was it that they took you out?

ANNELIESE: Must have been...

INT: I am wondering how long this went on with the Hitler Youth and with the teachers who were becoming Nazis?

ANNELIESE: If I could just figure out. I can't figure it out.

INT: Well if you were born. Let's see, you were born in

ANNELIESE: '18

INT: 1918.

ANNELIESE: On the six years, five and a half, I started school.

INT: And so that would have been about 1924.

ANNELIESE: I was about ten years when it started there, then. Fifteen years I was.

INT: You were fifteen, so if you were born in 1918 and fifteen would be about 1933. So very soon, as soon as this began to happen your parents pulled you right out.

ANNELIESE: Almost. Almost because...

EDWARD: ...because it was very uncomfortable, no?

ANNELIESE: It is very uncomfortable and besides you were not allowed to have maids anymore. Mother had a very bad heart.

INT: Oh, and she was not permitted to have a maid.

ANNELIESE: No, and you were not to have.

INT: The Germans were not permitted to work for Jewish people.

ANNELIESE: So they decided that I should help my mother at home.

INT: Now do you think that that was an excuse to get you out of the school or your mother really needed your help?

ANNELIESE: Well I mean we had still somebody coming in for the hard work. I mean that, you know, day work like you have here. Well it was, I mean partially an excuse and partially they really think that it would be better for me to be out of school.

INT: Right, but I'm wondering if they protected you from feeling that the school didn't want you, and so they said no, we need you at home. Do you know what I'm asking?

ANNELIESE: Well I guess my mother did need me, really, but I mean she didn't let me help very much because after a year, (almost) I hated it at home.

INT: (laughs) Oh, who likes to do housework?

EDWARD: So what did your sister do?

ANNELIESE: What?

EDWARD: What did your sister do?

ANNELIESE: My sister, Hilda, was working. She worked; she was working.

INT: And she was able to maintain her job? She didn't lose her job?

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

INT: And your brother was in university?

ANNELIESE: No. He finished by that time with school and he was like apprentice somewhere. He was out of town. So I wasn't, my sister, well she came home every when she was working. She was in a lawyer's office and she was at the [...] and she was secretary, from the secretary from the racing club. They kept her first there.

INT: So did she feel the effects of this Hitler movement in her work or was it more evident in the schools?

ANNELIESE: I think in the school it was much more evident because the teachers all, they had to go with the times and many of the girls- I think that was only a girls school; they didn't have boys and girls.

INT: And did you personally experience [anything]?

ANNELIESE: Oh yes, I have.

INT: Now what was that like?

ANNELIESE: Only because all the friends I had before, I mean we didn't make any difference in school with, between religion or so. I mean we were all friends. And all of a sudden they didn't invite you anymore. They didn't, they were afraid to come together with you.

INT: And you must have had some feelings about that.

ANNELIESE: Oh sure. I mean I had Jewish friends and I mean thank G-d that I still have the same ones. They are here, but it was difficult.

INT: So that was in 1933, but I see from this card that you carried that you didn't leave until 19...?

ANNELIESE: '39.

INT: So what happened then in 1933? What did your family do?

ANNELIESE: Well, my father, first, I mean they after a while they had to give up the factories.

INT: It was taken over by the German government?

ANNELIESE: Yeah. I don't know exactly what happened there, but then my father- they had the office; they had in Cologne and they was like- something like jobbers. They still, they didn't manufacture anymore but they sold the things. And then later on he did it on his own, my uncle, but those electrician, they had to sign not to buy from Jews. So it became harder and harder. Some still did.

INT: So do you remember, after all you were fifteen years old at that time? Yes?

ANNELIESE: Yes. I know we had quite a large house and my father then had all his stuff in our basement and he worked and made them from our house.

INT: But do you remember conversations between your parents, or was there talk about what is happening to the Jews? Was it talked about or?

ANNELIESE: Yes. My, also the best friends of my parents were gentiles, but they really, they kept their friendship.

INT: They stayed friends.

ANNELIESE: They still are best friends till all this, I think, all of this I remember even when I left. My father belonged to the Masons and...

INT: So they were well liked and they were accepted by....

ANNELIESE: They were accepted, I mean in the Masons, at the school where he belonged to.

INT: I see.

ANNELIESE: I don't think that he personally at that time felt it that much, and not with his friends. And my mother, I don't know. I really don't know that my mother had. I mean there was this one gentile, so she and her friends, one day we had some Jewish friends when she visited.

INT: And then - but you say your family then left and they went...

ANNELIESE: No, they didn't leave.

INT: You went to Holland yourself?

ANNELIESE: No, I mean when I was, after I was home for about a year, my aunt came and asked me if I want to go to a niece of hers for a year. She always took like Au Pairs, I mean but in Germany.

INT: I see.

ANNELIESE: And I wanted to get away from home. My sister went to Switzerland for a year right after she left school and I couldn't do that anymore. And I, somehow I guess for every teenager it is hard to be together with your parent, and especially she was so close and was your mother. So I did that, but after nine months somehow my brother found a job for me in Cologne.

INT: Well where were you for those nine months?

ANNELIESE: I was still in Germany in a very small place. But I mean those were we really considered them relatives. They were not blood related to us. It was a niece of my aunt, my mother's sister from marriage.

INT: You helped in the house with the kids?

ANNELIESE: I helped really with the children and I was supposed to learn how to cook. So, but I really had, she had two little boys and they had a store there. So I had to take care of the boys, and I mean I enjoyed it.

INT: So that would have been sort of 1934, 1935?

ANNELIESE: Yeah, it was just before I was sixteen. I wasn't even sixteen.

INT: And so in that town, that small town did you also have a sense of how strong the Hitler movement was?

ANNELIESE: Oh yeah. I mean even one, that I remember there was one of the boys I had a crush on, let's say. And he followed me one night, I had to go to the shoemaker and I maybe shouldn't say that on there.

INT: Just a minute, I'll turn it off. So you were telling me about this experience when you were sixteen, and had been in this small town, and this young man was waiting for you outside.

ANNELIESE: All right. He was waiting for me outside and I was very proud of it, enough to be only sixteen. I had nobody else there. So he brought me there to the shoemaker and his wife used to be a maid of my cousin. And instead of letting the shoemaker bring me home, I said no thank you because I didn't want to tell him that he was waiting for me. I forgot his name by now, and he brought me back and we had to go through a field and he started to get fresh, so I took the shoes and hit him over the head with them.

INT: So you had a very strong feeling about what you would permit people to do to you and not.

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

INT: So he got too close, you hit him.

ANNELIESE: I hit him. I really hit him hard. (laughs)

INT: (laughs) So hard. Where did you hit him?

ANNELIESE: Right on the head.

INT: Right on the head. So how do you think that you got this kind of personality?

ANNELIESE: But wait a minute, then I got home and I started crying because I was really, I mean he ripped my blouse a little bit. And, then they went to his parents, they knew exactly how he was and even it was maybe under Hitler. His father came with the son; he had to apologize to me.

INT: Was he Jewish this boy?

ANNELIESE: No.

INT: No. He was not Jewish.

ANNELIESE: No, he was not Jewish.

INT: But his father came and made him apologize.

ANNELIESE: He made him apologize to me and they, I mean they used to come under our window and sing sometimes and gave it. That was, I mean the house where they had the business, the other maid and I, we had our rooms; we were separated from the rest of the family. So they knew exactly we were along there. I mean they couldn't get in and very often they would come, a group of boys and they started singing there.

INT: But this family was Jewish?

ANNELIESE: Oh yes.

INT: ...that you were with, and how did they feel about you socializing with a young man who was not Jewish?

ANNELIESE: But they didn't know that.

INT: They didn't know.

ANNELIESE: I didn't socialize really with, that was the first time that he came and you know, that greeted me, and said hello to me, and I mean I knew him like in the small place you knew almost everybody, and especially if you like somebody. So you know by sight and he knew me by sight, so I was very proud when he wanted to go with me there.

INT: So I was starting to ask you before then, so how did you get this kind of personality where you would hit him and not permit him to take advantage of you and, was this part of your growing?

ANNELIESE: I don't know. I think, well I think that I got home, my parents, my mother when I left I think it is not like today that they need to tell us everything. But we were permitted, I mean my mother was very good. I mean we didn't. I mean at the first time when I went out maybe there wasn't a curfew, but she allowed us to go out, I mean this boyfriend, but then we came home. We had to come into their room and tell them what we did, where we had been and everything. And I would have never been able to look at them if I would have done something which wouldn't have been right. And somehow I always felt, myself not to go so far. And I don't know, somehow it wasn't.

INT: You had a lot of self-respect and you also respected your parents.

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

INT: And you didn't want to do anything that they would be ashamed of.

ANNELIESE: That's right.

INT: Yes.

ANNELIESE: I mean even if I was there, I had seen some gentile's friend, boyfriends, one even he went in the army, but that we had to do very secretly, I mean even my parents were not supposed to know.

INT: What would your parents have said or done about that?

ANNELIESE: They would have been very much afraid because they call it "ruschenshandy" because...

EDWARD: Ruschenshandy

ANNELIESE: They call it "ruschenshandy" if you mix with somebody even if you don't have sex together they still call it "ruschenshandy." You are not supposed to go, I mean either boy or girl or girl and boy, if one of them would be Jewish and the other is a gentile. So

INT: So that was disapproved of, but you still did it a little bit, secretly.

ANNELIESE: Yes.

INT: Because you were a teenager.

ANNELIESE: I was a teenager, yes.

EDWARD: It was different than here. You thought that this was Gentiles, not here you do, there you didn't. They were very nice. You should get everything (?) good. So you saw that the best ones were gentiles too. They were nothing wrong. They had to be

INT: But mixed marriage, when you...

EDWARD: No.

ANNELIESE: Well they had mixed marriages also that time.

EDWARD: But not as much as now here.

INT: But not as much.

EDWARD: No.

INT: And then so you were there for about nine months and then your brother got you...

ANNELIESE: Well my brother got me a job in this shoe store, first as an apprentice, and they wanted- it was funny. Those were Jewish people who just took over a shoe store which I couldn't understand. They had a different one in a different place in a different city and they wanted me eventually to take care, manage that store. And after three days they told me they want, they had all gentile girls working there. They wanted me to tell them everything what they would say about them or so. When I heard this I left them.

INT: They wanted you to tell them everything

EDWARD: She should be a spy.

ANNELIESE: To spy on the other girls.

INT: Spying on the gentile girls.

ANNELIESE: On the gentile girls because they were Jewish people who took the store over.

INT: I see. So you would...

ANNELIESE: And that is one thing I did not like. Because, I hated that. So when I heard this I just said no thank you. That is not for me.

INT: Do you know why they wanted you to do that?

ANNELIESE: Well, they were afraid, I mean after all for Jewish people to take over a shoe store at the time, this Hitler.

EDWARD: Christian is very difficult; they could make it hard for them.

ANNELIESE: I don't know how many years they kept the store because I don't think they could, they must have taken it.

INT: So this was already 1935, perhaps.

ANNELIESE: 1935, 1936 in around. And then I...

INT: Things were getting worse. Anything changing?

ANNELIESE: I mean everything. I mean businesses became harder and harder because the gentiles were afraid to go to Jewish stores.

EDWARD: Even if they wanted to.

INT: Well, but did they pass a law that they were not permitted?

ANNELIESE: No, not then.

INT: Not yet.

ANNELIESE: No, not yet. And then I meet, I got to a friend. I got as apprentice, I mean there they have apprentice. You have to learn for two years in the office.

EDWARD: Three...[?]

ANNELIESE: I got a job in the big paper factory there I went to all the different departments. And there I really - Well I finished the two years and I stayed there a little longer and I mean there even- there I mean we had a lot of Gentile people. That's when I had this Gentile friend.

INT: Yes, now let me go back a little bit and to talk about the relationship in your family with the grandparents.

ANNELIESE: Well my grandparents, I really didn't know.

INT: You never knew your grandparents?

ANNELIESE: Well like my father's parents died before I was born. My grandmother I cannot really remember. My grandfather, my mother's side her father was also dead before I was born. My grandmother must have been still alive. I can't remember her.

INT: But did they live, had they lived close by? I mean

ANNELIESE: No, my mother was born in Breman.

INT: Oh your mother came from Breman.

ANNELIESE: From Breman and her parents lived in Breman. I only remember I visited them there and I had slight remembrances of my grandmother coming down the steps. That's all I really remember.

INT: But were they religious as well...

ANNELIESE: They must have been religious because my mother said she was very unhappy when she got married, she didn't have milchig and fleishig. [dairy and meat dishes etc.]

INT: She didn't keep kosher?

ANNELIESE: Kosher, but she did keep kosher until the first war, that they didn't have anything to eat, then they changed.

INT: I see.

ANNELIESE: She had a kosher house and somehow they forgot with her silver that she didn't have bowls so she must have bought it then.

INT: I see.

ANNELIESE: And I think her grandparents had two different kitchens yet, so they must have been quite religious.

INT: Two different kitchens?

ANNELIESE: Two different kitchens.

INT: Complete kosher.

EDWARD: They were really religious. They were (?).

ANNELIESE: So my parents were not. We belonged to the Conservative.

INT: Your parents belonged to the Conservative.

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

INT: And all right. So how did the children in your family get along, you, your sister, your brother at that time?

ANNELIESE: With my brother I don't think, I don't know, that well. He always, he was two and a half years older, three years older than I am. My sister is six years different. So I mean with her I got along fine. The age difference was too big.

INT: But with him there was maybe more competition or?

ANNELIESE: No, not really. I mean she was really very good in school and everything. I wasn't that good.

INT: You were not that good in school?

ANNELIESE: No, I mean she was very good. In languages she had a letter in Greek and French.

INT: She was very good in languages?

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

INT: And, so your brother, you didn't get along too well. So what was that about?

ANNELIESE: Well, I don't know. He always wanted to tell me everything what I had to do.

INT: He wanted to boss you.

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

EDWARD: They all did; your sister too.

ANNELIESE: Well my sister, one year my sister really wanted to boss me, but when I needed help with something, she was there for it.

INT: And your friends, did you have any very special friends growing up?

ANNELIESE: Oh yes. (?) was very good. One friend I still have. I make from the first day of school together and we still are very friendly.

INT: And did she come to this country?

ANNELIESE: Yeah, she also she came before I came here. She came here to the country.

EDWARD: But you have many Gentile friends.

ANNELIESE: What?

EDWARD: You have many Gentile friends.

ANNELIESE: Yeah, I have many Gentile friends. I mean those I lost like was completely, I mean (?).

INT: Was that painful for you?

ANNELIESE: Yeah. I mean the one which I was very close with I met when we board my sister away. I mean my sister left about two days before I left Germany, and we went to see her off, and I happen to see this friend of mine. She lived on the corner with her mother, and her mother made her stay with me and not talk to me. She was afraid to come to meet me. But her mother told her to come and you are not going to talking together. And that was the last time I ever saw her. I was completely contactless.

EDWARD: The rest of those young people (?) because they spying on their own parents.

INT: They spy on their own parents.

EDWARD: And so your sister left two years before, no two days.

ANNELIESE: No, two days or three. She went, she was married, or she got married in Germany and she went with her husband right away to America.

INT: Her husband was Jewish?

ANNELIESE: Her husband was Jewish.

INT: And that was in what year?

ANNELIESE: The same year that she went just a few days, '39.

INT: in '39.

ANNELIESE: And she went January '39 and my mother's birthday is also January and I didn't want to leave her at the same time because I knew...

INT: You were already twenty.

ANNELIESE: I was twenty years old by that time and I knew how painful it would be for her, you know, to have us both go at the same time.

INT: And your brother, did he go?

ANNELIESE: My brother, well no. You had to get quota numbers to go to America. It is not so easy to get here, not like today. You have to get quota numbers and we had no relatives in America. So my sister knew she could get through her husband to America. His sister was already here. And they had, he had some relatives who gave him that everyday. So we, my parents, I mean they really were very, self, what would you call it? Selfless.

INT: That's a very good word, selfless. The children came first. They wanted to have you...

ANNELIESE: They wanted us to register for the quota number and they waited maybe four weeks, six weeks, then they registered. That's why they never left Germany. It was too late.

INT: They registered you first. By four to six weeks later it...

ANNELIESE: Yeah, because they figure that my sister and my brother-in-law couldn't give them all at the same time, the affidavit because my brother-in-law had all the parents out, and they made it out. They came out.

INT: Your?

ANNELIESE: My brother-in-law's parents.

INT: Your brother-in-law's parents.

ANNELIESE: But my parents never made it. But this is also, we, maybe they could have done it but this was also my brother's fault.

INT: Because your brother's fault? Why is that?

ANNELIESE: That's why I never saw...

End side 1

ANNELIESE: After my sister left, a few days later I went to England. After the Kristallnacht I, I was there still for the Kristallnacht in Bershuto.

INT: You were there for Kristallnacht? that was in 1938.

ANNELIESE: All right, maybe I should talk about this. My sister was already married and I was with my parents and we had a house in Curren Amphed.

INT: And where is this?

ANNELIESE: Curren Amphed where we lived all my life in.

INT: In Cologne?

ANNELIESE: In Cologne, yes.

INT: And this was the street or the area?

ANNELIESE: Yeah, the area and a suburb. Was a suburb and we had those were two identical houses. We had neighbors which were Gentiles and the daughter, they had gotten married to somebody who had belonged to the Nazis. He was in the SS. And I had been sick before for a week I must have had the flu or something, and, but anyhow they came. They called us up and warned us that they only are one block away from us.

EDWARD: Gentiles.

ANNELIESE: The Gentiles called us up, we should rather leave the house and go away. So when we passed there was a bakery store. We usually bought something and they were Catholic, and they saw us passing by and they opened the door and they said I should come in. They knew that I had been sick. They asked I should come in. They would let me in. They would not let my parents come in because they had boys, you know, and upon his working there who belonged to the Hitler Youth. They were afraid that if he would see all, he would see all of us, he would...

INT: Find you.

ANNELIESE: Yes. So, but I am alone would be different. So they let me stay there. This time it was, I mean it was a very brave thing to do. And my parents went to a park until it was dark and they never came to our house. I mean that we had to thank our neighbors for. They never came to us. And we weren't even so scared how my sister, my brother all made it out.

INT: Then what were you afraid of? That they would harm you, they would take you away? What?

ANNELIESE: They took a lot of people away to concentration camps.

EDDIE: To the concentration camps.

INT: They had already been doing that?

ANNELIESE: They started around that time that they took people. My cousin was taken to the concentration camp. And now my girlfriend was engaged that time, her fiancé was taken to the concentration camp and the...

INT: But you didn't know at that time where they were going?

ANNELIESE: No.

INT: You knew they were being taken.

ANNELIESE: No, we didn't know. But they would come to the house and they would (interruption). You see my sister and I came here in April in 1940 and my sister was here. They saved me. I got my ticket in England. I mean it was very hard. I didn't have enough money either to pay for my ticket, that I mean this doesn't matter. They gave it to me there from the highest.

INT: And, but did you know where you were going in England or you just were going to?

ANNELIESE: No, I got this from my aunt. I mean she told me if I wanted to go to see.

INT: She was in England?

ANNELIESE: No. Two daughters of a friend, very good friend of hers, they went to England. For girls it was easy and they would go like au pairs or maids, anything, and the people would ask them to come; like if given an affidavit, you would go there.

INT: So this was in 19-- , after Kristallnacht, this was 1938, '39?

ANNELIESE: Yeah, that was November was '38 because I left in '39, in January. I could have gone even sooner, but. But anyhow, so my sister, I came here and when my brother came he got married in the meantime, but she got married. I think my brother only because she knew he

could get eventually to America. She was, I was waiting with some boy, he had a whole group of about five friends which they had just their girlfriends. They changed around sometimes, but she happened to be girlfriend from one of the boys. Then all of a sudden then she saw my brother came after the Kristallnacht, he came back from where he worked; he was in Erchaphed.

And this is your brother, and we never used to be, we were always together like in group most of the time, at least with all of the girls. And all of a sudden I came home and she invited us together, me and my brother alone. And anyhow, after I left for Aughtenbus already, she used to send me mail, letters, and magazines, she kept on writing to me, the nicest letters and she dated my brother all of this time, not the other boy anymore. Anyhow we sent them the tickets, my sister and I. We had to borrow money to do this because they couldn't leave over Holland or Belgium, they had to go all of the other way, China, to come. They landed in San Francisco.

INT: They went through Shanghai.

ANNELIESE: Yeah, they landed in San Francisco. We asked them that time to come to New York.

INT: This is your brother and?

ANNELIESE: My brother and my sister-in-law.

INT: And this is his wife?

ANNELIESE: And his wife.

INT: And they went from Germany and to Shanghai?

EDWARD: Shanghai to San Francisco.

INT: To San Francisco.

ANNELIESE: And we asked them to come to New York and because my brother learned before he came special to cook, he learned it so that he said go as a couple. You can make money. Whatever you make you can save.

INT: But you were already in New York?

ANNELIESE: We were, I came here in April and they came in October.

INT: With your sister?

ANNELIESE: My sister was married.

INT: Oh I see. But she had, when she left she went to the United States.

ANNELIESE: She went right straight to the United States.

EDWARD: They got their visa.

INT: They got the visa. You went to England first for one year and then from England...

ANNELIESE: From England I came here.

INT: You came here.

ANNELIESE: And I went to my sister then I got a job with a child.

INT: I see.

ANNELIESE: And, because they said if I am working in the office I need a home, and they cost me more money, and they were afraid with my English would be too hard. I mean I was trained to do office work. I could have done bookkeeping. Anyhow I went to a child. And we saved the money and whatever we had we gave for my brother and his wife with the tickets to come. And we said he could send, we could send him more that they could come to New York and they wouldn't make any problem. They could get a job here. They wouldn't. He said no and he said send ...this letter already to my father that he gave him there everyday. And he is responsible for him if he wouldn't be working, he would have to take care of him. So my brother answered him if he wants to do that he could send him back from where he is coming, from where he came. That was the first time. So we were corresponding. I used to write to him and this was, too, Rosh Hashanah because I felt he is my brother. He didn't come and ...

INT: He stayed in California.

ANNELIESE: He stayed in San Francisco and when he came back my parents could have gotten a visa to come here.

EDWARD: They needed all of the car fare.

ANNELIESE: They had to send, they had to come ... the same way like my brother. They needed also he had to send the ticket, otherwise they couldn't get out.

EDWARD: If they would have gotten the ticket they could have gotten out of Germany, that is the idea.

ANNELIESE: That time I was working, and I was supposed to see my sister in the evening and I brought the money to get the check in the afternoon to send right away to, my brother said: "Send me the money; whatever you have," and he will get the rest.

EDWARD: This was to save the parents.

ANNELIESE: (?) I didn't even want to wait until the evening to get to my sister. I send him the check off the same day, whatever we had. And you know my sister gave it then to me and whatever the two of us had we sent to her sister. Six weeks later he returned the same check which we sent him without putting one penny to it. He couldn't get the money.

INT: He sent the check back to you? He never even sent that amount onto your parents?

ANNELIESE: Nothing.

INT: Then what happened to them? So...

ANNELIESE: After the six weeks they took them out of their house they lived and they disappeared into a concentration camp.

INT: And you never heard again, nothing from them? And after the war?

ANNELIESE: They died in the concentration camp.

INT: But did you ever get any information as to where they went or where they?

ANNELIESE: My sister did and I keep on forgetting it. My mother, I think lived about one year in the concentration camp. And my father lived a little bit longer. They probably needed him to do some work.

EDWARD: The actual case is, the parents died in (?).

ANNELIESE: My sister and I, we went then to the HIAS and they would have helped us.

EDWARD: But the sister...

INT: So how difficult for you and your sister; so what happened? What were you feeling and thinking and at that time?

ANNELIESE: We were furious.

INT: You were so angry.

EDWARD: The sister says, "I have no brother, that's it."

ANNELIESE: You see my brother, no. My sister went once before I went to San Francisco and my sister didn't want to see him, my brother. My brother-in-law went there where he was working. He was working in a restaurant and my brother did like he saw him just the day before. So he said if you want to see your sister we are there in that hotel. He came. He talked like nothing ever happened and everything was all right. But then we never heard again from him

and I told Karen once she should call him up, but she couldn't get him. My cousin called him and he said on the telephone he was very nice. My friend called him up and he was very nice on the telephone.

INT: How did you hear that your parents were taken away? Were there still relatives in Germany?

ANNELIESE: We had somebody at first, yes. I mean this niece of my aunt, she was married to a Catholic one, I mean they first took them to a building where they collected all the Jews and they stayed there I think first for a little while. And from there they sent them to a concentration camp. Why they went there? They went there to help them.

EDWARD: Bought them some food.

INT: And you don't know what camp or?

ANNELIESE: You know my sister told me, I mean she found out from the Red Cross.

EDWARD: Theresienstadt. This was the best.

INT: This was the best?

EDWARD: The best.

ANNELIESE: I don't know how my mother could stand it for one year because she had a very bad heart.

INT: But you children were all, your parents wanted you out. They knew that it was dangerous. They made arrangements, whichever way out.

EDWARD: First the children.

ANNELIESE: First the children. They wanted us to get out. And they were not that old. I mean I remember my father celebrated his fiftieth birthday, so it was short. I mean they were in comparison, you know, young when we left.

INT: But you and your sister say you maintained a very strong relationship that close.

ANNELIESE: Yes, I still do. I mean I still get together. I am still very close with her. But when I said something to her, I saw my brother once. He came, no, he didn't come to Philadelphia.

EDWARD: No.

ANNELIESE: He didn't come. But we were in San Francisco. We found the restaurant where he used to work. She raved about my brother.

EDWARD: He is such a nice man.

ANNELIESE: He is such a nice man.

INT: Who said this, your sister?

ANNELIESE: No. In San Francisco.

EDWARD: The restaurant, the fish. They liked him very much.

ANNELIESE: He got friend, first he became a Muslim. He turned in a Muslim, too.

EDWARD: Because she have parents...

ANNELIESE: I didn't know. I thought that she is Jewish because she had only, she was only together with us, all the Jewish people, and she worked also for a Jewish Lawyer. She was there in the office.

INT: So your brother's wife was not Jewish.

EDWARD: No.

ANNELIESE: I don't know if she was or wasn't Jewish or not.

EDWARD: She became a Muslim. She couldn't be Jewish.

ANNELIESE: Her mother probably was Jewish, I guess. And her father maybe was a Muslim. Her father came here to America which I didn't know. My brother must have come once to New York to pick him up. He never even got in touch with us and that time my sister,

INT: Is he living as a Muslim now, your brother?

ANNELIESE: My brother became a Muslim and he, at that time he liked the Muslims much better than to Jewish people.

INT: Well they were not persecuted.

ANNELIESE: Well I don't know. I mean that was already...

EDWARD: I don't know.

ANNELIESE: ...almost the end for me. I mean I really, I used to write him. It was Rosh Hashanah and he is my only brother and the family.

EDWARD: The brother.

ANNELIESE: I thought he really lost our address. I had one aunt in Israel, my father's sister, who was very, very nice. Every time we went to Israel, [we stopped?] in Houston, to see her. I am in touch with my cousins. I mean at least we have some family here.

INT: And so you know in your family when there was a problem, a conflict or a problem how did they go about solving the problem? Who made the decisions, your mother, your father?

ANNELIESE: My mother would say, "Go to father and ask him." My father would say...

EDWARD: In Germany her father was the head of the household.

ANNELIESE: My father would say, "What did she say?"

EDWARD: Actually the man was the head of [the family?]

ANNELIESE: But then he would always answer, "What would mutte say?" So I think they both...

EDWARD: Discussed.

ANNELIESE: Discussed. You know my parents never were fighting; at least never in front of us. Never. Never.

EDWARD: Yeah, in fifty-two years of marriage we never fought.

ANNELIESE: Well that, don't say that. My mother told us to never go to bed without making up.

EDWARD: So that's what we do.

INT: So you maintain very good (?) relationships. So this must be very hard then coming from a family where there was this feeling of affection and closeness, and then your brother did this thing.

EDWARD: Such a miserable thing.

INT: Such a thing that he abandoned your parents.

ANNELIESE: Yeah, he did. He really did. I mean first thing that they were both working, they have no children and my sister in-law now is working. She was from the Greyhound Bus Company, she was the manager in the office there. So she must have gotten a good salary.

EDWARD: (?) they both, her sister is right. She said, "I have no brother." She has every right to say this.

INT: And so your brother in a way perhaps lost his belief in G-d and Judaism, turned away from it.

EDWARD: No, he never was.

INT: He never was. In the beginning he never ...

EDWARD: Ah, you don't know.

INT: You don't know, but so how did this affect your feelings about G-d and about Judaism, and your parents were lost and...?

ANNELIESE: I didn't lose my belief in G-d. I still feel very strongly that there is a G-d.

INT: And your sense of Judaism remains strong.

ANNELIESE: Yes.

INT: And so how were you able in your mind to put together the fact that your parents were lost, how many people were lost, but there is a G-d, and you've maintained your strong belief in Judaism?

ANNELIESE: I really don't know.

INT: Did that come from your parents? Was this instilled in you in your early years?

ANNELIESE: I don't know. Its funny, my parents, I mean they went to the synagogue on the holidays, but I know they didn't fast on Yom Kipper, and we didn't celebrate Hanukkah. They celebrated Christmas.

INT: Oh, they did?

ANNELIESE: And when I went to Hebrew School I asked them to please celebrate Hanukkah because I didn't want to lie. I didn't want to tell them please celebrate Christmas and not Hanukkah, and I remember the first day, time it happened to be Hanukkah was Christmas together, and then they gave all the Christmas decorations away and the last minute my sister and I, we felt so sad about it because it was so beautiful to have the Christmas tree.

INT: But your parents listened to you.

ANNELIESE: Yeah, they listened to them. My sister and I went out the last minute; we wanted to buy a Christmas tree.

EDWARD: It was a different relationship here you had very good Gentile friends (?) not like here, close, close and very few in America.

INT: Well some people do. Some people.

ANNELIESE: Like my aunt, they had first Hanukkah and then they had Christmas. They had both.

EDWARD: See the Germans are first German, then they are Jewish. That is a different story.

INT: Yes.

EDWARD: That's the whole thing.

INT: That's the thing. Now during that time between 1933 when Hitler came in and the Kristallnacht, and then when you left in '39, did your parents talk with friends, and other family members, and people who were planning? What were they doing and what kinds of actions did they?

EDWARD: Have you recorded this?

INT: Yeah, we are on the tape.

ANNELIESE: Back open on the tape.

EDWARD: All right, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It should be on there probably.

INT: It is very important, you see, because then it shows that some people that what effect the war may have had on them. We don't know. Your brother may have just distanced himself from it and said I'm not related to any of those people.

EDWARD: Correct, that is how I feel about him.

INT: Maybe he feared that he would die if he was connected.

ANNELIESE: Yes, but we really blame him that my parents were killed.

INT: I understand that.

EDWARD: I blame him.

INT: Yes, because at least he could have sent the money to them.

ANNELIESE: I should have come to him and asked him to do something.

EDWARD: I didn't have much, but I could have given some.

INT: But you were going together at the time, the two of you?

EDWARD: Yeah.

ANNELIESE: Yeah.

INT: And did you discuss this?

EDWARD: She was ashamed to ask me. That is how I was English. If she would be a German, a (?) she would have asked me. But she felt embarrassed that she has a problem that...

INT: You had your pride.

EDWARD: That's right. That's right. She went down to the HIAS; they would have given the money too.

ANNELIESE: We would have gone right away to the HIAS, my sister.

INT: So how did you and your sister cope with this loss of your parents? I mean you must have.

ANNELIESE: I don't know. We were both so shocked, I think. It was very, very hard.

INT: It had to be.

ANNELIESE: It was, we just, that's why we couldn't forgive my brother anymore because we really blamed my brother for it.

EDWARD: You did. I do. Your sister too.

ANNELIESE: I did too.

INT: And so how did you cope? I mean did you go to synagogue? Did you talk with one another, there were like friends? How did you manage with this big feeling?

EDWARD: She talked to me.

INT: She talked to you. And what did you say to her?

EDWARD: I said to her you have no brother. You'd be ashamed. He killed your parents. He did. I (?).

INT: So this is something that to this day you still hold very strong, yes?

EDWARD: Sure.

ANNELIESE: When we were in California he wanted us to come to him, and I say no, that he wouldn't go.

EDWARD: I wouldn't.

ANNELIESE: I mean he moved away from San Francisco.

EDWARD: To me it's not normal. Why? Because when we got married, I wanted to get married, she had no money, no money.

ANNELIESE: Because we had to pay back.

INT: She didn't come with a dowry, is that it?

EDWARD: Without a dowry.

ANNELIESE: I had a few things.

EDWARD: She had a few things, but she had no money because every money she makes she gave back her-

ANNELIESE: I had to pay back for my father's ticket.

EDWARD: But she gave money for the ticket for her father.

ANNELIESE: I had to pay every month back for my father's ticket which he never paid back.

EDWARD: So she, but before we got married she was very - I tell you before we got married she wrote to him, "please, you owe me so and so much money. I want to get married. I need some money."

ANNELIESE: I wanted only twenty-five dollars from him.

EDWARD: So do you know what he wrote back? You won't believe it but he did. "Your brain must be right out from the heat or frozen from the cold." Not something that I could share with, love from your brother. This is not (?).

ANNELIESE: I didn't want to show Eddie the letter.

INT: Did you have any suspicion before, I mean during your growing up you said you were not so close to your brother and was he not so nice in those days, also? Anything different from your- ?

ANNELIESE: I don't know, let's say when I was already teenager and we wanted, I mean after Hitler already we had some Jewish places where we could go dancing, and so I would meet my girlfriends. And I didn't want to go in alone and my parents, my mother said to my father my brother would go to same place and we had to go in the tram. He wouldn't go together with me there. I had to go in the front and he would go in the back. He didn't want to be seen together.

INT: Was he ashamed of his family because they were Jewish?

ANNELIESE: I don't know. I don't think so. I just don't know. But then otherwise he married, I don't think he knew, that I feel my brother is Jewish. I mean we all, we all took for granted that so is his wife.

INT: They were married by a rabbi?

EDWARD: We don't know.

ANNELIESE: I don't know. I wasn't in Germany anymore. But as soon as they were married I didn't get any more magazines and hardly any letters.

EDWARD: She caught him and that's it.

INT: So during the war you were here in the United States.

ANNELIESE: I was first in England. I was in England.

INT: First in England '39 and then you came here in?

ANNELIESE: 1940.

INT: 1940. And...

ANNELIESE: I was in England with a family and he was a teacher in the Jewish school and the whole school was evacuated the day before the war broke out. And he (?) me as a helper; for every ten children they needed a helper. And the day before my parents called me up in England. That was really the last time I had talked to them and my parents also wrote over Holland to me. I received mail and its funny. I had to go to tribunal? How do they call it, tribunal? While I was there, was near Oxford in a very small place and I wasn't a spy, a German spy. And they knew that I was sick there. They knew everything. They said well, if they knew they would forgive me, but I should show the letters to the people I was staying with.

INT: And what is the Holland connection? I'm a little-

ANNELIESE: Oh the Holland connection was really nothing. The Holland connection I had to stay overnight 'til one of our, this was a very good friends, their son was there working and I had to tell them some things which his parents couldn't lie to him.

INT: I see.

ANNELIESE: They want me to tell him. You know there are many things you were not allowed to hide in the letter because they would open.

INT: What kinds of things?

ANNELIESE: That I forgot. But I stay overnight there and then the next morning I went to the same train, and my brother-in-law's brother was in the train, and a cousin of his, and we all went together then to England. And that is blocked out completely.

INT: You don't remember the trip?

ANNELIESE: I don't remember that trip at all. I met somebody there; I mean one of the girls which one of them got married later. I just forgot completely. The whole thing somehow. It was a shock for me to leave home.

INT: Yes.

EDWARD: Naturally.

ANNELIESE: I think the first day it didn't come down to me so much when I went to Holland. But then, you know to come to England to completely strange people. They were nice; they wanted to be my parents. They wanted to be like mom and dad to me while I am there and they always called. I mean they took me every place, but they were really nice to me, but still it was strange.

EDWARD: It was all strange, all this.

ANNELIESE: But

INT: But you survived.

ANNELIESE: I survived.

INT: And what did you say to yourself during those years while you were being a housemaid? After all you came from initially a very-

EDWARD: Well-to-do family.

INT: A very good well-to-do family and you had to-

ANNELIESE: Well I think I was trying to get out, you know?

INT: Yes.

ANNELIESE: I wasn't the only one who did this. I had another friend of mine, she took a job there, was one of the neighbors so she came. I mean she had changed the job later because she got better pay. I didn't get paid very much, but I had to stay with those people because they were very nice to me, and they really cared for me like a daughter, [and I feel hoarse (coughs).] Anyhow, I figured I knew that I would come here to America eventually, was only a matter of time. So I rathered to stay there.

INT: But there was a strength in you that you did leave even though it was hard, and you did work as a housemaid even though you knew that it wasn't what you wanted to do, but this was a way to survive, to do what you needed to do to get-

EDWARD: To survive.

ANNELIESE: It was the only way for me to get out. I mean first my aunt taught me if you ever want to go to England, I can help you. She had friends there who would get me something. As a girl, I mean for girls it was very easy, not for boys.

INT: But who made the decision? Did you make the decision?

ANNELIESE: I made the decision.

INT: I will leave.

ANNELIESE: I made the decision (?) it was mine. And my parents were all for it.

EDWARD: Sure.

INT: And, so, but they didn't say to you, "You will leave." You said to them, "I want to leave"?

ANNELIESE: Yeah. I mean after the Kristallnacht I talked it over with my parents and I told them it's time to go.

INT: Yes.

ANNELIESE: And rather stay in England until I could go to America.

EDWARD: But also they couldn't go.

INT: And your parents said we will come too later.

ANNELIESE: Yeah. They were the hoping. My parents were hoping. We were all hoping to see each other again, definitely.

INT: So you had that hope, while you were leaving, you had the hope we will all be together later.

ANNELIESE: Yes.

INT: And you maintained that hope?

ANNELIESE: Sure.

EDWARD: Only they had a brother that got killed.

ANNELIESE: I mean my parents were killed. My aunt and uncle got killed. Another aunt and uncle. I mean they all got killed.

INT: How many? And the aunts and uncles, did their children also get out?

ANNELIESE: Yes, the children.

INT: They all sent the children out.

ANNELIESE: They all sent the children out. My aunt and uncle, he's - I mean my uncle said he would take the last plane to get out.

EDWARD: Because they were German; you don't understand?

INT: Yeah.

ANNELIESE: I mean but my cousin (?) and two of them took the children to Israel and the other one went here to America.

EDWARD: You couldn't go to Israel as the, we've got money, we've got the visa. [meaning unclear] You need 20,000 pounds to get the visa and they kept that as you could come to America with money they let you in.

INT: But your parents had money but then over that long period of time they lost the money?

ANNELIESE: They lost a lot into the inflation and everything. They lost a lot then.

INT: And so you remember then your standard of living when it became less and less?

ANNELIESE: It became less but we really didn't notice it that much. I didn't notice it really.

INT: But still you-

END SIDE 2