

HELGA MILBERG (nee Weiss)
RG-50.755.0007

Helga was one of the 50 children brought to the United States by Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus. She was born in 1930 in Vienna to a father who was a businessman and mother was a nurse. She had one older sister. Helga reminisces about her pleasant life in Vienna where her mother was a great baker and her father had a short-wave radio that all the neighbors came to listen to. She went to a Montessori kindergarten taught by Maria Montessori. Her father thought Hitler wouldn't last, but in the 1930s they were forced to fly the Nazi flag outside their window. Her father was beaten up during Kristallnacht; his business was destroyed and he was sent to Dachau.

Helga's uncle first heard about the kinder transport being organized by the Krauses. Her sister had already moved to Palestine. Helga remembers being questioned in the half-destroyed synagogue. Though she didn't want to leave her mother, her mother convinced her that she needed to save herself so that mother could also save herself. Her father was let out of Dachau one week before Helga left for America, and he was ordered to be out of the country within 3 weeks. The last time she saw her mother was at the train station. They were told not to wave goodbye because it was similar to a Nazi salute.

Helga remembers feelings of being lost without her family. She kept busy on the HH President Harding by helping care for the younger children. She remembers that Mr. Kraus sometimes taught them English aboard ship. When she got to Camp Shalom she remembers being greeted by a cousin from New York. He was Eugene Lukas and his wife Elizabeth; Eugene was a famous mathematician; the Lukas' eventually gave the affidavit for her father to come to the USA.

Helga was taken in by Debbie and Abraham Leshin who lived in New York. They were good to her, but also told her not to talk about her experiences. She stayed with them about a year until her father came for her. She and her father moved to Detroit, where her father's sister and family lived. There was much back and forth about getting her mother an affidavit to leave Austria. Helga was in contact with the Krauses, but never told them about the trouble her father had getting her mother out. She felt very guilty about this when she found out that the Krauses had helped other parents. She found out much later that her mother didn't survive.

Helga stated that the Krauses were real mensches, and she tried to live with their example. She ended up having two sons, 4 grandchildren and a great grandchild at the time of this report.