

RG-90.060.0001

Summary of Oral History Interview with H el ne Spierer—ENGLISH

H el ne Spierer, born on August 11, 1924 in Geneva; speaking of her family's origins; Ch ne-Bougeries near Geneva, Switzerland; her mother born in 1896 in Ch ne-Bourg; her father born in 1887 in Izmir (Smyrne), southern Turkey; speaking of her father's tobacco company; her family; her grandfather Siegmund's wife, n e Auerbach—daughter of the first chazzan of Geneva's synagogue; ancestors in common with Michael Lew; her grandfather Siegmund working for the "l'h pital Rothschild" in Geneva; speaking of her grandmother and her mother Vittoria; her father's voyage to Germany; "...we wanted for nothing..."; her father Hermann; speaking of her home; her maternal grandfather; her mother's cousin in Milan; her father being in Milan for his business; her mother attending theatre; the Smyrne fire—her paternal grandparents' home destroyed; the King of Greece honouring her father and his brothers for their role in saving Greeks during the Greco-Turkish War; Volos—her father hiding Jews; a building in Volos named after her family—the Spierer Building; her father's death at age 40, just after the birth of her brother; writings about her father; anti-Semitism; the Golden Dawn movement; her father making a fortune, but also having health issues; the business in Trieste; the Trieste port—Austro-Hungarian Empire; the Morpurgo family (Jewish); Franz Kafka working for the Morpurgo insurance company; politics; Mussolini; her schooling—a math professor that was adored; speaking of the house staff—including Marie (the cook), Nanny (the governess), Vittorio (the chauffeur); speaking of communism; her address in Trieste—11 Via Cadorna; her uncle Leon; not very observant as a family; the Trieste rabbi; her brother and cousins; her life in Trieste; the Swiss consulate in Rome; the Tabac Spierer industrial company; Nuremberg laws—very similar in Italy; losing the right to attend school; her schooling in Switzerland and subsequent return to Italy in 1940; Mussolini's return; neo-fascists; Mussolini's speech in Trieste in September; the Pope and Mussolini; September 23, 1943; concentration camps; comparing Trieste to Germany; capturing Jews in Italy; the truth about the Holocaust; April 14, 1944—SS coming to her home; deportation lists; the Pope; H el ne Spierer and her mother being arrested; soldiers; passports; deported with the Swiss painter Gino Parin; transit camp—Fossoli   Mod ne; the woman at the Swiss consulate; heading north; the black market; her grandmother being at the border; H el ne was 19 years old; her mother's courage; being transported by train towards Germany—19 people in H el ne's cattle car; well-known Jews in the transport; the Spierer name being well-known in Greece; the train arriving on May 20, 1944—a four-day trip; arriving in Bergen-Belsen; barracks; being transferred to B le; wearing the yellow star; sickness in the camp; H el ne and her mother being liberated in July 1944; Parin dying in the camp; bombings; finding her family; her brother Simon and his schooling; her mother converting in 1947 at the Ch ne-Bourg church; the Tabac Spierer company—lasting for two generations; her mother being tortured by the SS—"...c' tait inhumain...et voil ..."