

**MEMOIRS OF
DORA PEREL**

Narrator: Mrs. Dora Perel
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Interviewer: Beverly Zweig

This is Beverly Zweig and I'm interviewing Dora Perel on June 9, 1980, for the "Memory Bank" project of the Birmingham Jewish Federation.

Q. Mrs. Perel, I understand that you were born in Latvia.

A. Yes, I was.

Q. Can you tell me a little about your background?

A. I sure will. I will start with my parents. My parents, Ida Jacobson nee Workel and Yehuda Jacobson lived in Jacobstadt, Latvia, a suburb of the City of Riga. It must have been about 1887 when they immigrated to Argentina to start a new life Baron Von Hersch settlement. They took the two oldest children, one about eight years and one about six years with them while leaving the two younger ones - Rose, age 4 and Moses, age 2 with their grandparents in Jacobstadt. The life style in Argentina did not agree with my parent's orthodox's way of living, and after being there a few years they left and went to the Prussian City of Danzig, which was not too far away from Jacobstadt.

Q. In other words, that was still in Latvia?

A. No, it was in Danzig - you know they went to Danzig - they went from Argentina to Danzig.

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. Back to Danzig?

A. Right - back to Danzig. In 1890, my baby brother, David, was born. Seemingly, Danzig was not the right place to settle down. After a stay of three years they went back to Jacobstadt where in 1894, I was born. Not wanting to remain there they decided to immigrate to Germany and with all the six children - I was about ten months old at that time - they finally settled down in Frankfurt am Main. Frankfurt was just what they were looking for - a Jewish city with a large Jewish community.

Q. It was important to you to have a large Jewish community?

A. Yes - and three Jewish schools - two Orthodox and one Reform. One Orthodox and the Reform were high schools - the learning was very...

Q. It was probably very involved with Jewish life.

A. Very much - the Orthodox Jews...

Q. Three Jewish schools?

A. Even so the Reform school - I believe a few times a week, a few days a week - gave Hebrew lessons too, you know. It wasn't quite reformed, you know. And we had beautiful synagogues and very known Rabbis - two Jewish hospitals.

Q. Now that was two Jewish hospitals that you have?

A. Two Jewish hospitals.

Q. In other words, everything was segregated more or less?

Mrs. Dora Perel

A. Oh, yes - that was for Jewish - only for Jews; also a lot of Jewish children attended other schools - non-Jewish schools too.

Q. They did? Did non-Jewish children ever attend the Jewish --

A. No, no, no.

Q. Or go to their hospitals?

A. No, only Jewish children went to the Jewish schools. And, Frankfurt was a very cultural and modern, and beautiful city. We had opera, we had theatre - that played every night.

Q. That was wonderful wasn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you participate in that a lot?

A. Oh, yes - my goodness, I went to the opera when I was 15 years old and my oldest brother teased me - I never forget this you know. And they had special children's operas - what do you call it in German.. (inaudible) oh, for goodness sake.

Q. At any rate it was geared for children to enjoy them?

A. Yes, and artists performed every night - there were very well known violinist and pianist came to perform in Frankfurt. In fact, I remember Yehuda Menuhin - he was very young - I just forgot the name of the pianist - the Jewish pianist - you haven't heard lately about it but he came too - you know - to Germany and we had one of the best Russian bassists. Oh, he gave a concert I will never forget.

Q. A lot of your life circled around the arts? You were very

Mrs. Dora Perel

interested in music and in the arts and that was very much a part of your life.

A. Oh, yes, we had art museums and pictures; beautiful, even so you know as a child you walk - it was very far away from where I lived and the first you saw, you know, when you stepped in, was a big picture of Moses from Rembrandt.

Q. Oh, how beautiful.

A. Yes.

Q. It was very nice.

A. I loved pictures.

Q. So, your Frankfurt was a wonderful background?

A. Oh, yes, we had some of the most beautiful - I got even pictures of the zoo with big hotels and halls there, and the botanical gardens - oh, it was gorgeous.

Q. How large of a city was Frankfurt?

A. City from Frankfurt...that was what I got when I want to talk about-- it was surrounded by parks. From one end to the other, and we had very famous resort places - which were in the not-too-far distance - you could reach - you wouldn't know about Nowheim, where wealthy Russians came at that time - you know. Weisbaden, a very well known place - we had a (inaudible). Oh, a lot of summer resort places. In fact, we had in Weisbaden and in Hamburg, we had (inaudible) - we had houses there - anyway, well that was in Frankfurt - then my father started a bookbinding business.

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. That was...I was going to ask. Tell me, so your father, that was his first business there?

A. Yes.

Q. First thing that he did? He was in the bookbinding business?

A. He really built up to a very well known place; besides his many private customers he took care of the libraries of the two Orthodox shuls and also of the library of the Baron Von Rothchild's library. And one of his customers, I remember so well, was Dr. Nachum Goldman - well, of course, he was a teenager at that time - you know - and he and his parents frequently visited our house. There was always a big selection of interesting books - Nachum always found something to take home to read.

Q. He was quite an interesting person----

A. I would also like to mention that my father went to the daily morning and evening prayers at Baron Von Rothchild's private synagogue at the old Von Rothschild's birth home.

Q. He was born----

A. Where all the five brothers were born.

Q. In other words, he was born in Frankfurt?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And he had five sons?

A. Five brothers of Rothschild - you know they had one later on when

Mrs. Dora Perel

they became bankers and barons - one went to France, the other one to England. You know they are well known.

Q. They went to all different countries?

A. Yes, but this one - you know - one of them stayed in Frankfurt.

And my father went there every....this was in the old part..this birth house..was a very interesting place. It was in the old part of the city.

Q. Was it very far from where you lived?

A. Yes, it was far - it was in the old city - it was ---

Q. In other words, it was an old city and then there was the add on, new type....

A. Oh, yes, the modern.....

Q. And it surrounded it? Or was the old city at one end of it or what?

A. No, no, it was in the middle; its hard to describe....let me see what could I tell you - like here....

Q. Like the downtown Birmingham?

A. The old places (inaudible) 20th street and the others were the more modern.....were built later. They got beautiful stores - beautiful streets.

Q. So he went into the bookbinding business? Do you know approximately when he went into the bookbinding business?

A. When I was a little child.

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. When you were a little child - you had migrated there when in 189...

A. In 1895.

Q. Around the turn of the century?

A. No. He started earlier than that - after a few years there; I was a little child so I can't really....And I want you to know this Rothschild's house - as I said it was in the old part of the city and it was a showplace for tourists.

Q. Oh?

A. Oh, yes. Very interesting place. In fact there was from the stage, you know, it was written "The Five Frankfurthers" - that was what they called it - they were the five Rothschilds. Oh, I saw it on the stage too. Well, unfortunately it was destroyed. I really don't know if it was destroyed during the war or by the Nazi's - that I don't know because the old part when he went, Fred. When Fred and Marion went to Germany quite a few years ago he told me at that time that this section was all destroyed.

Q. All leveled.

A. I imagine the Nazis would have destroyed it. When Nachum Goldman's father, you know, he was a teacher New Hebraish - that's what we called it, meaning conversational Hebrew, and I was one of his students - and I was a teenager - a long time ago, but I remember. They were such wonderful people.

Q. So you were really lucky that you were taught by his father?

A. Now, my brothers and sisters. Would you like to hear about them?

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. Yes, tell me something about them.

A. My oldest brother - I have a picture of him in uniform - he was in the war - they put him into the war leaving his young wife and six children.

Q. What was his name?

A. Wolfe Jacobson. Well, when he came back from the war he was sick, and well - a few years later when he was only 44 years old - he passed away and left my sister-in-law with six children. They had three boys, three sons, who now live in Miami. My sister-in-law and one of the girls - the middle one - they went to America in 1935.

Q. Now, what was your sister's name?

A. My brother was married to Sara Rubenstein.

Q. Now that was Wolfe?

A. Yes, to Sara Rubenstein from Frankfurt.

Q. And now, next was your sister?

A. As I say, the three oldest boys---

Q. They moved to Miami?

A. My sister-in-law of my brother that passed away - as I say, the two oldest boys...

Q. Live in Miami?

A. Yes, they came to America in the middle of the 20's - and opened a pocketbook factor.

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. In Miami?

A. In Miami they have a very big business which they sold a few years ago.

Q. And then who was the next?

A. My sister-in-law Sara and her middle daughter - they left Germany around Hitler in 1935 to come to America - and the two other girls, Rachael and Dora went to, at that time, Palestine.

Q. That was Rachael and who?

A. Dora.

Q. And they went to Palestine?

A. Rachael passed away and Dora lives in Tel Aviv. My sister, Mina, she was married to Adolf Bernstein.

Q. Alright. Did they have children?

A. No, they didn't have any children. They lived in Bonne on Pliein and they moved to Berlin where my brother-in-law and a partner opened a business of information, I guess that is what you call it, which became very, very known, but unfortunately their business was one of the first kind the Nazis closed up for the only reason that they, as Jews, had no right to put out information about gentiles.

Q. That was sad wasn't it? So the Nazis came in and closed them up?

A. Yes, My brother-in-law took it very hard and he passed away. He died in Berlin in 1939---(59 years old.)

Q. That was Adolf Bernstein?

A. Adolph Bernstein. Now my sister remained in Berlin until about

Mrs. Dora Perel

a year later when the President of the Bank that my brother-in-law had done business with called to tell her, very confidentially, that he would advise her to leave Germany right away - to leave everything behind, otherwise she would...

Q. He knew something was going on - coming...

A. Yes.

Q. So he warned her?

A. And he begged her not to tell to anybody that he even talked to her, otherwise he would be arrested, or even maybe killed.

Q. So she did do that?

A. Oh, of course.

Q. Well, who in your family....?

A. My sister left the next morning for Riga. She stayed with friends where she met a few of my cousins who she never knew before. Very unfortunately her safety didn't last long because the Russians occupied Latvia and arrested her as a German and took her to a concentration camp.

Q. So she was interned?.....So she was arrested by the Russians?

A. Yes, as a German.

Q. And she was taken to a concentration camp?

A. In 40 or 41 - I don't know exactly.

Q. How long did they keep her?

A. They took her to the coldest part of Russia where the temperature in winter was below 50°---50° below 0.

Q. Oh, my. How long was she interned?

Mrs. Dora Perel

A. Four years - until the end of the war. We didn't hear from her. This is an interesting story. We didn't hear from her, so we didn't even know if she was alive until a friend of mine from Cleveland - it so happened that my sister stayed with her parents in Riga. She called me up, you know, one day very excited to let me know that she heard that my sister was alive. Her brother, who was a doctor in a Moscow hospital, somehow found out that my sister was still living.

Q. That must have been very joyous for you.

A. Oh, this must have been shortly before the end of the war. Our happiness, our excitement was undescrivable.

Q. Of course.

A. I got in contact with my brother, David, in Tulsa, who was in the linen supply business. His two brother-in-laws, the Weinbergs in Atlanta, they are also in the linen supply business, very big business, so he right away got in contact with the officials they knew in Washington, and asked for their help, you know, for getting my sister out of Russia and for her to come to America. Well, at that time it was not as easy as it is now - they applied for very high affidavits sent to Washington. It took until July, 1950.

Q. Oh, my.

A. After waiting years in Italy and Czechoslovakia for her to get her visa - that was the story.

Q. Its hard to believe.

A. The sad story of my sister, Mina. She came here and she lived for another eleven years.

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. She died in 1961.

A. She died in 1961. She lived partly here and partly in Miami and now I come to another very sad story. My brother, Moses, the one who was not married - and I am very, very sad to talk about it - it upsets me very much because he could have lived here and could have come to America if one of the American employees in the consulate in Stuttgaeten hadn't sold his visa to someone else..

Q. He had one and it was sold?

A. He had one, got his visa and he got already...they ask at that point - they said if he could get his visa...if we can tell him we can prove...(at that time you didn't fly, you went by boat)...if we had already his ship's card and we had everything arranged. We sent a telegram to Stuttgaeten of the consulate and the ship's company, here, the very well known travelling company, they, too, sent to let them know Moses already had a ticket for this and this date to come to America but he didn't get it. His visa was not the only one sold - it was a crooked business over there.

Q. They made a business of it didn't they?

A. They did it for quite some time until Washington became aware of it. Moses was not married and he was in his early 50's; he perished by Hitler.

Q. Oh,----oh,. Where was he sent? Do you know?

A. No, I do not know. I never could find out. And I tell you, it is so hard to talk about and I can't even watch the Holocaust - the pictures, you know. When I was in Israel I went to - what do they call it?

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. The place where they have all the different concentration camps?

A. In the back, they have pictures of the people in concentration camps - I couldn't look at it.

Q. Of course not.

A. Every time you know I had to think of one of my sisters with her little babies---and my mother - in -law she perished in Teresenstadt.

Q. Your mother-in-law?

A. Yes, my mother-in-law. My father-in-law passed away in 1930.

Q. But your mother-in-law did die in a concentration camp in Teresenstadt?

A. Now I come to my sister Rose. She was married to Edward Minen, here in America. She came to America in 1909. They had two children. One is Isadore Minen, who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is not married. And one daughter, Ella, married to David Bloomstone - they have two children - Ida Jean and Edward. Now I come to my brother Dave, who was born in Danzig. He came to America in 1910. He was married to Pauline Weinberg from Atlanta. They have one daughter, Charlotte, who was married to Paul Kanter. I don't know, you may have known his mother. They lived here. They had a restaurant.

Q. I don't know. Did they just have one child?

A. Yes, one child. And Charlotte has four children - Joey, Judy, Kent, and Charles.

Q. Pretty names.

Mrs. Dora Perel

A. Ages. Joey, I believe, is going to be 24. Judy going to be 23. Kent going to be 20 and Charles was 17.

Q. That is Isadore?

A. No, Isadore is not married. He lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is the one - you know - I showed you the drawing of the house.

Q. Oh, yes, he is the one that did so well - he is a bachelor. Now, tell me some more about your family background.

A. I want to finish first with my youngest sister. My youngest sister, Martha, she was married to Neugebauer, it's a hard name, they have five children. Julius the oldest is married, has one daughter and a son; Esther, his sister, lives in Miami and has four girls. She is married to Bernard Horowitz. Now, my brother-in-law, Jacob - he lives now in Israel. While coming to Israel he had quite an experience. He left Germany in 1939 on his way to then Palestine. The boat he was on was torpedoed.

Q. He was torpedoed?

A. Yes, and sank with all the belongings of all the passengers; luckily he and all the passengers were rescued by an Italian ship and were taken to a concentration camp on some island - an Italian island. I forgot the name. Not having heard from him in years, we didn't think he was still alive until about the end of the war when my husband and I went to the Alabama Theatre here in Birmingham to see the movie "The Watch On The Rhine". While they were showing the commercial I tell you it was really interesting and very sad....I went with my husband to see "The Watch On The Rhine"....

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. During the intermission they showed something?

A. Yes, during the intermission they showed a short film, I believe it was from a minute, they showed an English soldier opening the entrance of a concentration camp and showed the heads of the people as they came out one by one, and I can hardly describe my feelings - my excitement...my surprise...when I recognized....the second man coming out of the camp as my brother-in-law. I cried out loud "That's Jacob": Because I was so excited, tears were running down and blurred my vision.

Q. Yes.

A. Neither my husband nor I were 100% sure that it was my brother-in-law, so the next day we told this to our children. The next day, Fred, my son, went there and said he recognized, since he knew what to look for, he recognized and said it was Uncle Jacob. Well, that was not enough. My daughter went to see him too, you know, and she went too, there.

Q. What a wonderful thing.

A. After that she went to the manager of, you know, the Alabama Theatre, Mr. Faulkenberg, I remember his name, and she told him the whole story and he was so touched that he gave her the negative of the film.

Q. That was very nice.

A. I later sent it to my brother-in-law. Now, my sister, Martha she was Jacob's wife - she still lives in Israel, she and the four children were still in Germany and they were suppose later to follow Jacob to Palestine.

Q. Your sister, Martha?

A. Yes, but unfortunately, this is a very, very sad story. Esther, the little girl, she was 8½ years old, she's the one that lives now in Miami, has the four girls. She was 8½ years old in 1939, when a Jewish children's transport took Jewish children to England, and they took Esther. And I still got the letter.

Q. It was sad wasn't it?

A. I still got the letter my sister wrote. She said, "Even though it takes part of my heart out, I wish they had taken the three boys too". She and the three boys perished.

Q. Did they have four children altogether?

A. Five - the oldest was in a kibbutz.

Q. Oh, he was already in Palestine?

A. You see, at that time it was the most important thing, you know to let the men and boys go first.

Q. The rest of them all perished?

A. Those memories are overcoming when you talk about them. No one can even imagine what hasn't gone through the brutality, the cruelties, of the Nazi regime - you know at that time - ---. No, it wasn't at that time, what did I want to say, I'll come to it later.

Q. Let's talk about you and let's talk about what your life was.

What kind of education did you have?

A. Well, I really can't remember too much of my childhood. I loved to go to school, I remember. I loved to read every spare minute I had.

In my homelife, you know, my upbringing was strictly Orthodox in my home and in my school. We had Hebrew everyday in school; we had Jewish history every day in school, and I cherish the memories of the warmth of our family life. There are wonderful memories of the Friday nights, Sabbath, the Holidays which we celebrated with such holiness, that is unforgettable. I am forever grateful to my parents to have instilled in all of us, my sisters and my brothers, the love and devotion and respect for each other, and we always had a very close relationship.

Q. Well, it's wonderful memories to draw from.

A. The memories are, well, just unforgettable. In fact, my relationship to my nephews, my nieces is very, very close. Well, I became engaged in August, 1917. It was during the first world war. Germany fought a losing war, times were bad. Everything was rationed - clothing, shoes, food, etc. And no housing available. The war finally ended in November, 1918, and we got married a few months later in February.

Q. February, 1919?

A. Yes, 1919. We were lucky. We got an apartment in a new built apartment house.

Q. That's the same way it is here?

A. Yes.

Q. People are lucky if they get an apartment in a nice new building.

A. That's right. I know I remember Hitler and the war, and a lot of things were rationed, this was a winning country and they were a losing country, you know, it was worse.

Mrs. Dora Perel

Q. So you got an apartment. Do you remember how many rooms you had?

A. I had, well, in Germany they don't call the kitchen a room, so I had 4 rooms and a kitchen.

Q. That was very comfortable?

A. Yes, oh yes, oh, sure. We moved after Ida was about a year old; so I was married about 3½ years, we moved to our own house, apartment.

Q. About 1922 then?

A. Yes, about 1922 or 1923.

Q. Can you describe it?

A. Big apartment house, I had about 7 rooms, well, those are all memories....

Q. Apartment house?

A. Now I want to tell you about my wedding.

Q. Now that sounds exciting - let's hear about that.

A. During my wedding dinner, which was in a Jewish hotel in the heart of the city on the main street - it was my luck you know, it was.... we had a revolution going on and the revolutionaries were marching in the streets across you know all the main streets in the city singing and shouting and breaking big department stores' windows, plundering--- it was so tumultuous and it was so frightening, you know, my life, really I went through so many so such excitement, terrible excitement

Q. It wasn't dull! The revolutionaries were plundering but they didn't interfere with your wedding?

A. No, no. That they didn't.

Q. Good.

A. During this revolution it was just the time when the Kaiser Wilhelm and his family, you know they lived in Berlin they fled from Berlin into exile. I believe it was all of them I think. Well, anyway, the police and army finally brought order to the country after they arrested the troublemakers. I even remember one of the troublemakers...I think was Jewish...Rosa Luxonbourg, I never forget this name.

Q. Oh. So then they had a period of comparative quiet?

A. Yes - until we got the inflation (inaudible). I believe I told you that I was a pretty good student and I loved to read.

Q. Yes.

A. Having had access to all kinds of good and interesting books at home I am sure that helped a lot to satisfy my hunger for reading.

Q. What about your husband? Was he also interested in the same things you were? Reading and...

A. Yes, he could remember all what happened you know, I can't remember. If he would have lived now he would have remembered everything - the names...And to top off all this...the chance I had, the access I had to all the books, you know, after (inaudible) two years of business college...

Q. Oh, you went to business college?

A. I got a job as secretary at the largest Jewish publishing firm of Southern Germany where I had another chance of choosing the best books to read.

Q. That was in a Jewish publishing firm?

A. The excitement on my wedding day, you know was only the beginning to another excitement. On April 20th I was pregnant with my first child.

Q. That was exciting.

A. Yes, I was visiting my mother who I went to see most every day. She lived about 15 or 20 blocks, we don't have blocks like here, its streets, but let's say 15 to 20 blocks from where I lived. On this day the French army occupied Frankfurt and surroundings and ordered a curfew for 5 o'clock in the morning until about 6 o'clock in the evening. No buses, no streetcars, no carriages, I had to walk and hurry home before the curfew started. Luckily my husband who knew where I was came after me and we met about halfway. Was I happy to see him!

Q. Were you expecting your child then?

A. I didn't know then that my baby decided to arrive that evening; that it was the last day of my pregnancy. Well, I had troubles. I was just ready to go to the hospital but couldn't leave the house due to the curfew, and even the doctor who lived only a few houses away was afraid to come over. My husband called the police, who in turn called the French Office and explained the situation, but to no avail.

Q. No cooperation at all?

A. I tell you, the French were like the Germans anyway. They didn't care to do a favor, you know. I had to wait until 6 o'clock in the morning - the next morning - luckily, Fred obliged and waited until I was at the hospital.

Q. Well, I think that was very nice of him. (Laughter.)

A. He is still a good boy.

Q. So, he arrived on the 21st of April - the day after?

A. No, he arrived the 7th of April - his birthday is the 7th of April.

Q. 7th?

A. On October 21, my daughter, Ida was born. I had no troubles with her.

Q. No curfews?

A. No curfews...I don't know, I can't even remember if the French were still there. Anyway I had no trouble.

Q. How much younger was she?

A. 1½ years. My husband who was a chemist gave up his job. When he and his brother joined - well, his father had a cigarette factory which he must have opened a cigarette factory about 1915, around that time.

Q. So, your husband and his brother joined their father?

A. Yes, the cigarette factory was named at that time R. Perel & Sons. Well, Germany still suffered from the losing war...the economy was bad and we had the most critical inflation, not inflation like we have it

now here, it was real critical. Prices for food, clothing, etc., went into the tens of thousands and millions of marks, we had only paper moneys at that time; I really can't even remember how long it lasted.

Q. Well, how did their business do?

A. Our business was pretty good, I tell you, as it was here everybody, even here, I remember after the war here, everybody, the cigarettes were scarce, and they gave everything for cigarettes.

Q. They wanted something for pleasure?

A. Yes, for pleasure and (inaudible) we could have anything in exchange for cigarettes.

Q. Oh, you used that for barter?

A. Yes, and business was good. I got a picture of...I showed it to you, I believe, picture where we had the best customers...

Q. And, also, didn't you give away some very interesting ---

A. Yes.

Q. Tell me about that.

A. We gave away some little cups, leather cups, real leather cups with little dice to play. I am so sorry I don't have any....

Q. As a souveneir?

A. It's like ash trays but in the middle was in a cup, you know.... in cup also dice, turnaround so you could play and we had customers who, like say like here, Ford company--car company, we had Opel that

was - I believe it was the biggest --

Q. Opal?

A. Yes (inaudible) a few more on the picture they got their names on their cigarettes. They gave it away as presents and they were boxed in pretty boxes.

Q. In other words, your company manufactured them, cigarettes with their names on it for them to give away?

A. Yes, with their names on it for special occasions as Christmas, or for other occasions. I remember when it was, must have been around 1922, when they started to excavate the Tutkamen in Egypt.

Q. Yes, yes.

A. And he made beautiful boxes - with - what was his mother-in-law's name...her head was once on this box...they sold so fast, you know, beautiful in 100 (inaudible) cigarettes in the box.

Q. Sounds very artistic, very pretty.

A. Yes. Well, then in 1930, the Nazis - slowly, slowly started to make talks. But no one believed that they would last. Well, unfortunately, no one took them seriously, no one could foresee the tragic, the destruction it brought to the country until it was too late.

Q. You couldn't imagine anything like that being possible?

A. No one would have even believe that this murderers, atrocities could happen in the culture of Germany. April 1933 was Fred's Bar Mitzvah day, it was the Sabbath after Passover, he was born on Passover, but on Passover you couldn't celebrate a Bar Mitzvah the Sabbath after Passover. On this Bar Mitzvah day, the Nazis started boycotting

all the Jewish stores downtown. They photographed all the people who went into the stores. It was so frightening, a frightening situation, so we invited only the close family to the Bar Mitzvah dinner in our home, which was catered...we were afraid the Nazis would see people and....

Q. You didn't know what to expect from them?

A. We were afraid they would think we had a meeting and it was not allowed.

Q. Yes. So you had a limited amount of people.

A. Very limited. Also we had to set up chairs and tables, we had two dining rooms, one of the buffets, you know and lunch, anyway we would have had quite a different celebration. We were living through a very nerve racking, dangerous time until we finally came to America. We didn't have to be afraid any more when we arrived here.

Q. Tell me about....

A. First of all I have to tell you my husband and my children came here in 1936. In April, 1936. In fact, Fred celebrated his 16th birthday on the boat. Well, at that time no one flew, no airplanes.

Q. And they came ahead?

A. Yes, they came and I came two years - two and one-half years later.

Q. So you came in 1938.

A. Yes. Well, anyway we didn't have to be afraid - let me tell you, when I came here, my husband rented a house first on the Southside and furnished everything; and also I was so spoiled while living in Germany,

I was very spoiled, my friend, that now lives in Cleveland, we were talking about when we came to America we would be so happy to have a few rooms only but to be free. We had a nice home, three bedrooms, living room and dining room, breakfast room, bath of course, very well furnished - but after six years we moved on the same block but we bought a house.

Q. You didn't rent any more at that time?

A. Yes, we bought a house, new furniture, in fact, this was my first living room.

Q. What business was he in?

A. My husband went into the coal business.

Q. Did he go into the coal business right away?

A. No. When he came...as I said, he came with the two children, he and Fred lived with the Blocks...no, he lived with my sister and brother-in-law in Florence, Alabama for a short while...

Q. And then when you came...

A. Ida, my daughter, lived with the Blocks - my cousins, Blocks, in Quinton, they had two girls the same age, until a few months later when my husband and the children moved to Birmingham with the two children and then when I came, into the house.

Q. That must have been a wonderful reunion.

A. Oh, my God. Well, I tell you, when we came here...

Q. When you saw your son and your little girl.....

A. And don't forget I hadn't seen my brother for 12 years, he came in 1926, you know to Germany, and I hadn't seen my sister for 28 years.

Q. Which sister was that?

A. She was suppose to come to Germany with Ella, with her daughter, to leave Ella, like to select one the son. Isadore for about 1½ years - but when Hitler came, it was too late. So I hadn't seen her for 28 years.

Q. That was a wonderful reunion.

A. But she lived only 4 years more and then passed away.

Q. Now, which one was that? Which sister?

A. That was Rose.

Q. She only lived until about 1942?

A. She passed away in 1942.

Q. What were your impressions of America when you came here?

A. Well, I have to tell you about this. Also, we didn't have to be afraid any more...to get arrested...only to be a Jew...or to go into a store with a sign on the entrance on the windows saying "Jews are not welcome". You were free to speak openly, but what was on our minds, my children could go to school and finish their education. Free to live, free to work, free to breathe. Fred finished high school after being only 11 months in this country and graduated college after 2½ years of attending here, Howard College, it's now Samford College.

Ida, too, finished high school in a short time. She went to New York attending Hunter College for a while, to study interior decorating. After she got married she opened, well, she went into her own business—the import business. Well, she's very smart. As I said, you know, my husband went into the coal business and stayed for a short while, I mentioned this before..and stayed with my sister. I came in August in 1938, and became naturalized on March 30 '44. I even got my number, I have to look it up first. Would you like to have my number too?

Q. Not necessarily.

A. When I saw my sister and when I saw my brother, well, I tell you... as happy as I was to be here free and united with my family, after 2½ years longing for them, my husband and children...to see my brother after 20 years...to see my sister after 28 years, meeting their families for the first time...getting to know my cousins I have never met, these were thrilling moments.

Q. I'm sure they were.

A. And yet the transition still wasn't so easy. The worries about my dear ones who were left behind, knowing that their fate...that they couldn't leave this murderous Germany...would be horrible, you know, gave me sleepless nights and terrible nightmares. Even now after 42 years many nights I can't fall asleep, memories of those long gone but not forgotten times of torturing and I get bitter in retrospect. Why, I am asking, did the world let this happen. The United States, England, France, they all knew what was going on. Their claim they weren't

aware of the tragic circumstances is unbelievable; they all had their embassies, their consulates, I am sure they got their own CIA...we were working in Germany, saw for instance...they must have seen business people, business men, and other prominent business people lead through the main streets downtown, like prisoners - humiliating, carrying signs saying "I'm a dirty Jew", "I'm a swindler", "I'm dishonest", etc.

Q. Tragic.

A. These same prominent people are given brushes to clean the streets... on open trucks coming through arresting young men either walking or in the streets, or sitting in some coffeehouse - when those Nazis run in hollering "Juden Raus" meaning "Jews have to leave"...

Q. Get out?

A. And they arrested them and having the embassies, consulates employees or the secret agents never read the sign on all the store windows "Jews are not allowed to come in." I am sure that they are neither blind, deaf, not having heard about the horrors, or seen...I can hardly write about it...I, I tell you, my granddaughter, she asked me to write about everything she wants to know...she even asked me to write a book...but I just can't even write about it.

Q. Because it is too horrifying?

A. I really could say a lot more about all the fears, anxiety throughout our living through the Nazi regime...there would be no end to it. While I'm talking about all of this very sad and tragic memories, my tears really are running down, I can't say any more.

Q. I want to thank you for the privilege of letting us tape this. It has been a real wonderful interview. Thank you so much.