

>> Interviewer: Could you start out by giving your name and where and when you were born?

>> Freudenberg: Well, I'm Margot Freudenberg. I was born in Hannover, Germany, the 8th of August, 1907. Yes, you can count. I'm 84 years old.

My father was a physician in Hannover, and my sister, who was 3 1/2 years older than I am, and I, we had a wonderful time when we were children, when we grew up, when we went to school. We had lots of friends, many friends, and we went to parties, and we went to lectures, and we went to school, extra classes and so on.

But one time, my sister came home crying, and I'll never forget, she said to my mother, "They talked about newspapers in class, and one girl got up and said the 'Frankfurter Zeitung'" -- that's a newspaper in Germany from Frankfurt -- "is only for the Jews." And my sister began to cry and asked my mother, "What does that mean?" Well, Mother explained to her that the Jews are a minority, that we are German people and we are Jews. Well, it dawned on her, and it was a good thing that we cried early, got used to it, that we were a minority.

We went to public school, and Hannover was a big city with a rubber factory, with a cigar factory, a cigarette factory, a city of about 600,000 inhabitants. It was about three hours south of Hamburg in the flat country.

My sister got married, to Heidelberg, and I, a few years later, got married to Walter Freudenberg in Essen.

>> Interviewer: Mrs. Freudenberg, could I back you up just a little bit? Could you tell me a little bit more about how your family came to be in Hannover and what growing up was like in Hannover, what kinds of things your family did?

>> Freudenberg: How my family came to Hannover, my grandparents, they were all born and raised in Westphalia, and when my grandfather was 50 years old, he retired to Hannover. He had a piece goods store in Bünde in Westphalia, and he retired, age 50, and my grandmother was 46. That are young people, but he retired. And my mother was with them, and my father, who came from the southern part of Germany near Würzburg and who went to medical school in Geneva, in Berlin, and in Würzburg, he opened up his practice in Hannover. And a young Jewish doctor met a young Jewish girl, and they got married.

And Father was very instrumental in classes, in more studious people, and had always a circle of young doctors with him who wanted to know more about this disease and that disease and wanted to know more about literature. My father was very versed in literature. Hannover had a Royal Opera House, and Father was the physician for the Royal Opera House. It was once a month for a week, and my sister and I went always with him, and we were raised with the most beautiful music.

It was all a dream now when I look over it in my many sleepless nights, how it all could have happened. We were very instrumental in young Jewish circles and lots of friends. We'd make excursions. We went swimming. We went hiking. We went climbing. We had a great amount of friends, and there were Jewish ones and sometimes not Jewish ones, but we were one solid circle of friends.

>> Interviewer: Could you tell me about the synagogue your family attended in Hannover?

>> Freudenberg: Well, the synagogue, there was one synagogue that was in the old city. And it's entirely different from like it is here. You went to the High Holidays. The women sat upstairs, the men downstairs. It was more an Orthodox synagogue. You didn't go, like I go here, every Friday night or Saturday morning. That was not the way.

The synagogue burned, and as far as I know, Hannover does not have a real synagogue anymore. They are going to rebuild it, and I do not know how many Jewish people came back to live in Hannover or how many Jewish people remained. The remained was very, very few, and the old ones came back, and they are dying out.

>> Interviewer: Was there a big Jewish community? How big was the Jewish community when you were there?

>> Freudenberg: The Jewish community wasn't very big. It was not very big in the northern part of Germany, except Hamburg. Hamburg had a tremendous Jewish Orthodox community. But I would say we had about 500 families, and that is high.

>> Interviewer: And what were the families like? were there a lot of doctors, lawyers?

>> Freudenberg: Yes, yes, a lot of academia.

>> Interviewer: So they were professors at the university?

>> Freudenberg: Yes, yes, and we had a university there. We had a *Technikum* there. And it was a good way of living, until.

>> Interviewer: Did you live in a house?

>> Freudenberg: Hmm?

>> Interviewer: Did you live in a house?

>> Freudenberg: At that time, you lived in an apartment and had the office in the apartment; a waiting room and three rooms for my father, and we lived in the back.

>> Interviewer: And did your grandparents live in the city as well?

>> Freudenberg: My grandparents did, in Hannover, yes, until Grandfather died in 1912 and Grandmother died in 1934. But they stayed there.

>> Interviewer: You said you went to public schools, both you and your sister, and there were just the two of you, just you and your sister.

>> Freudenberg: Pardon?

>> Interviewer: There was just you and your sister?

>> Freudenberg: Yes, yes.

>> Interviewer: And you got to be, say, 15 years old -- did -- how did the political climate start to change?

>> Freudenberg: At that time -- you remember that Hitler came to power the 30th of January, 1933. You remember that?

>> Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

>> Freudenberg: But before, there was an underground. You felt something coming.

>> Interviewer: And this would have been after world war I?

>> Freudenberg: Yes. Now, I go back a long time. But after Hindenburg was Reich Chancellor -- he was an old man. He didn't know what he did, and then he appointed Hitler Reich Chancellor. The 30th of January, 1933, I know so well. We stayed with my mother-in-law, who was ill, in Essen. I went downstairs to get the paper, and I saw the headlines, "Hitler, Reich Chancellor," and I only put my hand against the wall and my head against the wall because I knew what would be coming.

But let me tell you, we really -- we knew what would be coming, but we closed our eyes and ears and didn't think it would come. We were so convinced that Hitler, who was not a German -- he was an Austrian; there's a big difference between Austria and Germany -- that Hitler would be a fly-by-night. And the 30th of January, 1933, lots of people went across the border to Switzerland, to France, to Spain, to Holland, to Denmark, and so on, and we thought those people don't love their fatherland. But they went, and they were the clever ones.

We stayed, and I went to England to the Woburn House. That is a resettlement house. I had two uncles in England, brother of my father, so I went there, went to the Woburn House, and said, "We are a family of three -- husband, wife, and a little boy -- and my parents. We want to be resettled anywhere, just to get out."

>> Interviewer: And this was in 1933?

>> Freudenberg: Yeah -- by then, '34. And I had my papers to go to South Africa, and I came back to Hannover and told my parents and my husband that I have everything ready, we are emigrating. And they were ready to put me in the insane asylum. "You do not leave your homeland! Hitler will be gone in a few months, and we stay where our family" -- we could trace it back to 1700 -- "where our family has always lived as far as we can think." Well, they didn't budge, neither my parents nor my husband. They wanted to put me in the insane asylum. "You don't do that."

>> Interviewer: Can I back you up just a little bit? Could you tell me, when you finished public school and you went on to train for a profession, did you go to university in Hannover?

>> Freudenberg: No, no. I went to Munich.

>> Interviewer: Did you experience any discrimination?

>> Freudenberg: To the, to the university in Munich.

>> Interviewer: Did you experience any --

>> Freudenberg: No, nothing in the beginning.

>> Interviewer: And what did you train to do?

>> Freudenberg: Physical therapy.

>> Interviewer: And is that where you met your husband?

>> Freudenberg: No, no, no.

>> Interviewer: You had met him in Hannover?

>> Freudenberg: I met him through friends in Essen. But I went to Munich and studied physical therapy at that time. It came all through physical education. And I didn't feel anything that somebody was against Jewish people or that the word of Jew was mentioned. But we went on. We worked. We worked very hard. We had to be, the anatomy students with the medical students, and we had classes with the medical students. It was a very, very hard course.

And when I graduated in 1927, I went back to Hannover to teach. And then a friend of mine, I met her -- she came from Essen,

asked me to come to Essen to visit her, and that was about four hours by train from Hannover. And I went there, and I met my husband, and then we got, later on, married. He was 18 years older than I am. He was in the First world war, and he was as German as German could ever somebody be. It could not have happened. And, therefore, it was so hard for me to convince my parents and my husband that something has to happen. And what happened was the Crystal Night.

>> Interviewer: Before you talk about that, could you show -- I think you brought some medals that your husband received --

>> Freudenberg: Yes.

>> Interviewer: -- when he was in world war I.

>> Freudenberg: My husband was in world war I, 1914-18. This is an Iron Cross, number one, that is worn here. And this is to be worn here too. And the Iron Cross number two is -- you wear it here on the side. And this is the *Silberne Falke*, the Silver Hawk, because my husband fought after the war was over against the Communists, and this was what he wore in his lapel. But a letter later on came that this was given to him by mistake because Jews were not allowed to get that medal, to return it.

>> Interviewer: When did that come? When did those kinds of letters --

>> Freudenberg: That came in 19...28.

>> Interviewer: But the letter saying that a Jew got that by mistake --

>> Freudenberg: Came a year later.

>> Interviewer: In 1929?

>> Freudenberg: Yeah. We, we don't have it.

>> Interviewer: So the changes started even four years before.

>> Freudenberg: Oh, yes, it was all underlying.

>> Interviewer: And it started bubbling up.

>> Freudenberg: It bubbled. It bubbled. And some people didn't realize that the bubble will burst one time.

>> Interviewer: So when you came back from England and your family refused to leave, what did you do then? What happened then?

>> Freudenberg: I couldn't do anything. I just had to stay.

>> Interviewer: And you were working as a physical therapist.

>> Freudenberg: Yeah. But I couldn't work anymore. I could work only with Jewish people, and my father couldn't work anymore. He only could treat Jewish patients and nothing else.

>> Interviewer: And what about your husband? They were only letting him treat Jewish patients also?

>> Freudenberg: My husband was a merchant.

>> Interviewer: I'm sorry. Okay.

>> Freudenberg: Yeah.

>> Interviewer: And so your husband had a business.

>> Freudenberg: And the business was sold out. They took it.



>> Interviewer: They took it.

>> Freudenberg: They took it.

>> Interviewer: So what did he do?

>> Freudenberg: Nothing, until we tried to emigrate. You couldn't get a job.

>> Interviewer: When did you try again after 1934?

>> Freudenberg: After 1934? In 1936, you know what happened in 1936? The Olympic Games, and it was glorious. Nothing happened. Everything was wonderful. But when Hitler refused to shake hands with Jesse Owens, I said, "Oh, oh," because Hitler said before in one of his speeches that Jews and Negroes are like vermin and they are filth and they are not -- they are a race, but not a human race. That were Hitler's words.

>> Interviewer: And so in 1936, there was a time that was peaceful for a while, and then it got very bad.

>> Freudenberg: And then it really started. And then it started. Jews, we had to get...a *Kennkarte*. This is to go and go to the post office and say I'm -- women had to get the second name, Sarah, Margot Sarah Freudenberg. Men had to get the second name Israel. In Germany, you don't have two names. I was just Margot Freudenberg, but now I'm Margot Sarah Freudenberg, or Walter Israel Freudenberg. And you had to have a picture with the left ear exposed. Why nobody knows, but the left ear was exposed. Otherwise, the picture would not be accepted.

>> Interviewer: When was your son born, Ms. Freudenberg?

>> Freudenberg: Hmm?

>> Interviewer: When was your son born?

>> Freudenberg: My son was born in '28 -- no, '29.

>> Interviewer: So in 1936, he was a little boy in school. Was he allowed to go to school?

>> Freudenberg: He was. He was. In the second school, that was a Jewish school. But after he finished the first grade, the school had to close. No Jewish schools were allowed to operate anymore.

And when he was born, he had a wry neck, torticollis, where his head just was in this position, and it had to be operated on. This muscle had to be lengthened to get the neck straight. I could not get a doctor in Berlin, where we lived at that time, to operate on him because they were not allowed to operate on a Jewish child.

And somebody told me about one doctor who just finished his residency in England, a young orthopedist; I should go and see him. And I saw him, and I said -- when we had to go somewhere, we had to say, "I'm Margot Sarah Freudenberg; I am Jewish." And I said it, and I said, "My little boy has that and that, and my father saw him, and I think he needs to be operated on. Can you do it?" "Yes, bring him at midnight in my office."

Well, at midnight, I marched the little boy through Berlin, and he said, "Yes, it has to be done right away." And then he said, "I know one small hospital, and the matron just came back from England, and he will take him. Now, I'll let you know in a few days when I can meet you in the hospital that he will do it. I will do it." In a few days, I got a call to be at midnight at that hospital because people were not allowed to see me walking in the street and entering that small hospital, and the matron was very, very nice. And that was the 3rd of December, and the

4th of December, there came an order out that no Jew has to be in the street, they all have to be at home, and we thought we all would be rounded up.

>> Interviewer: And what year was this?

>> Freudenberg: '37.

>> Interviewer: '37.

>> Freudenberg: And the doctor operated. And, again, the next day at midnight, the cast -- he had a cast from here to the hips. The cast wasn't right. He told me, "I have to get him out at once." One of the nurses told the *Gauleiter*, the main man there in the Hitler Youth, that there is a Jewish child and they'll take him away if I don't get him out right away. I couldn't take the streetcar, and I had to walk, and it was December, and it was snow and cold. And I walked, and I got that little fellow out, the cast still wet, and I walked him again until we came back home and I put him warm. And the doctor, the last thing he was there, said, "I have to see him in six weeks. You have to meet me at midnight at that-and-that church."

All right, the six weeks were up. I met him at midnight. He was there. We put two chairs together. We put him on the chair. He cut the cast off. He said, "The neck isn't straight yet. I have to put another cast on, but here are the scissors. In six weeks, you cut it off. I never will see you again because they know now I treated him and I will be followed very strictly." Well, he gave me the scissors. I paid him. I thanked him profusely. I walked him home, and after six weeks, I cut it off. And the last words the doctor said, "You are a physical therapist. You ought to know what to do." Well, I treated him, and the neck is fine now.

But that was such a terrible thing. You got your ration card. You got your Kennkarte. You had to show this every time wherever you went. And whenever we tried...to...to get our passports in order, this was, again, the J stamped in our passport and, again, the picture with the left ear exposed right like this, and my name is Margot Sarah Freudenberg, née Strauss.

We lived in Berlin because, then, my husband couldn't get out early enough. Everything had to be done yesterday. But it didn't go that fast, and we tried to get passage to America.

>> Interviewer: Let me ask you a question. What changed his mind? What made him decide to leave?

>> Freudenberg: What changed his mind -- I tell you what. The 9th of November, 1938, was Crystal Night. A few days before, Mr. Grynszpan, a Polish Jew who lived in Paris, got a letter from his family that they all had to be transported to a concentration camp and "Take care of yourself." He was so angry that he went to try to see the ambassador. He couldn't see the ambassador in Paris, and he asked to be seen by somebody, and the third attaché, Vom Rath, came to see him, and Grynszpan pulled the trigger and killed him.

And this was great for Mr. Goebbels, who was Hitler's hangman, because he had a good reason to do something else against the Jews. He ordered that all the synagogues and all the stores had to be destroyed and loot and burned. It was a Friday night, and I had to go to service Friday night, rain or shine. My husband was ill. He was in the hospital with a big operation. He could neither walk, nor anybody could do anything with him.

>> Interviewer: Now, how had you gotten him in a hospital? Were there still Jewish hospitals?

>> Freudenberg: No, there was not a Jewish hospital, but one hospital, another small one, would take him, and a Jewish doctor, who was brave enough, operated on him. But he could be there only a day. Then I had to get him out. And my boy, I had hidden him every day somewhere else. And I brought him up with lies. I said, "when they ask you where your father is, 'I don't know,' where your mother is, 'I don't know.' Say always, 'I don't know.'"

>> Interviewer: And you were hiding him at that point because people --

>> Freudenberg: Hiding him every day somewhere else because all our friends wouldn't take us. "No, no. No Jewish child. Not you." And one day I didn't find him, and there was a circus in the neighborhood. And I looked around there, and there he was, doing something with the straw, with the animals. And I found him there. Another time --

>> Interviewer: Could you tell me, Ms. Freudenberg, why you had started hiding him? what happened?

>> Freudenberg: Well, I had to be on the road all day to hide my husband, to hide myself.

>> Interviewer: why? what happened?

>> Freudenberg: Because then they called me. They didn't call my husband. They couldn't find him.

>> Interviewer: who called you?

>> Freudenberg: The gestapo.

>> Interviewer: So this happened in 1937?

>> Freudenberg: Yes.

>> Interviewer: And was it --

>> Freudenberg: '38.

>> Interviewer: In 1938. So until 1938, you just lived in your house, or your apartment?

>> Freudenberg: We lived -- yes.

>> Interviewer: And then in 1938, was there a particular -- this was right around Kristallnacht that they started looking for you.

>> Freudenberg: Yes.

>> Interviewer: Because of any particular reason?

>> Freudenberg: No. Oh, no, you never heard a reason. You never do. And Friday night, I have to go to service, and I went to the service. There was a wonderful rabbi, Dr. Joachim Prinz [phonetic], and we were ten people at the service, and he said, "I have a feeling something will happen tonight. I want to see you all here tomorrow morning. If the synagogue isn't there anymore, I just want to see you." Well, I went home. I collected my little boy. I had hidden him.

>> Interviewer: Now, were you still living in your home at that point?

>> Freudenberg: Yeah.

>> Interviewer: So you were just hiding him during the day in case the gestapo came?

>> Freudenberg: Yeah. And then the gestapo came and got me, and I had to be there 24 hours.

>> Interviewer: Had to be where?

>> Freudenberg: At the gestapo. And I had to stand up, and I answered only what they asked me.

>> Interviewer: Where was your son?

>> Freudenberg: I don't know.

>> Interviewer: No, but I mean was he -- he was not with you?

>> Freudenberg: No, and I don't know where he was. And the 24 hours there, I had no idea if I ever see him again, because they picked up children. And they asked me question and asked me more question and where I want -- if I want to emigrate and what my father did and where I went to school and if I hate them and if I do anything to him, if I would help them -- impossible question.

And one time, the first SA man in the black uniform, he said, "I can't do anything with that woman. She is too brave. Get her out of here." They opened the door. I tried to get out. I got a good kick in a certain part of the anatomy, fell in the street. And there, around the corner, there were Jewish stores where they wrote down "pig Jew," "nasty Jew," "dirty Jew," "smelly Jew," and so on, on the pavement. And they gave me a brush to kneel down with all the other women to clean the street. I got a toothbrush. It was a brush. And I was kneeling down, and when the words didn't disappear quick enough, I got a good, swift kick in the anatomy again, and I was beaten badly. Finally, they let us go. They knew we couldn't clean the street. But only women. And I don't know if you can see it, the lower one.

But when I came and collected my little boy and then I collected my husband, then he really realized we couldn't get out fast enough. I had two uncles in England, and one of my uncle came, and we got permission to enter England only as aliens. We could not stay in England because England is an island, and --

>> Interviewer: How did you get permission to go to England? What did you have to do?

>> Freudenberg: My uncle did it.

>> Interviewer: What did he have to do? Did he have to buy your way out?

>> Freudenberg: No, he didn't buy. He went to the police station, and they wanted to arrest him because he spoke perfect German, he was born in Germany, but then he said he stands for us. That's to let us go. We had already a quota number. Do you know what that means? No. At that time, every country in Europe had a quota to come to America. Let us say Germany had 300 people, Hungary had 150 people, Belgium had 100 people, and so on. It all went by quota, and you got your number. And we had our number to come to the American consul in Berlin the 7th of September, 1939.

>> Interviewer: Okay, I need to back you up because we skipped over Kristallnacht, and I want you to talk about Kristallnacht.

>> Freudenberg: Well, let me finish.

>> Interviewer: Okay.

>> Freudenberg: Okay, all right, let me go over. The next morning --



>> Interviewer: This was after you'd been to synagogue on Friday night?

>> Freudenberg: Yeah, after. The next morning, I collected all my bones, and I went to the temple, to the synagogue. And Dr. Prinz was standing there. He said, "Margot, you are the only one. All the other one committed suicide." It was much easier to commit suicide. If I wouldn't have had that little boy, there would have been no question. The suicide rate in Germany was tremendous, and I can't blame anybody.

>> Interviewer: Tell me what you saw on Kristallnacht. Were you in the street, or were you home, or where were you that night?

>> Freudenberg: No, I was not in the street because the SA in the black uniform -- in the brown uniform and the SS in the black uniform were continuously in the street. If they couldn't burn the synagogue, if they were too close to any other valuable building, they dismantled the synagogue stone by stone, but the synagogue had to be gone. The fire brigade came and trickled just a little water on the building, only to satisfy the foreign correspondents and the photographer. But they didn't stop until it burned, and into the ashes came the Torah rolls and all the prayer books.

>> Interviewer: And this went on all night long.

>> Freudenberg: That went on all night long. And they accomplished what they wanted to do all night.

>> Interviewer: And the next morning when you went, your synagogue was gone.

>> Freudenberg: Gone. But Dr. Prinz stood there, and when he saw me, he said, "You are the only one who lives." I said, "I have

to do it for a boy I have.” And he begged us, the day before, not to do anything.

>> Interviewer: What do you mean? You mean not to leave?

>> Freudenberg: Not to commit suicide, because that went around in Germany very much. Now let me finish when --

>> Interviewer: Well, if you could tell me, what happened to that rabbi? Do you know what happened to him?

>> Freudenberg: He went to America. I never saw him anymore. He was, I think, in New Jersey, and I think he died several years ago, a very fine rabbi, a scholar, and a very human person.

>> Interviewer: So after Kristallnacht -- the incident where you were taken by the gestapo, was that after Kristallnacht or before?

>> Freudenberg: That's after, after. When they wrote down on the pavement all those dirty words.

>> Interviewer: And that was just afterwards, and that's when your husband realized that you needed to leave.

>> Freudenberg: Yeah. Then he couldn't get out quick enough, and my parents too.

>> Interviewer: And your uncle came, and you were ready to go to England.

>> Freudenberg: Yes.

>> Interviewer: Then what happened?

>> Freudenberg: But we had a quota number. Nobody knows it anymore. It's not like now when America opened the doors and lets all the Cuban come in and the lepers and the murderers and the sick people and the AIDS people and so on. At that time, you were examined very carefully, and since my eyes are bad, they send me to a doctor, if I have an infectious eye disease. I wore glasses since I am 12. Because they were very particular who they let in, that nobody comes in who is sick, that we are not a burden to America.

>> Interviewer: And so in 1938, then you went through that process.

>> Freudenberg: And we got our affidavit for America from one gentleman who was working in the department store the Freudenbergs had in Essen. But nothing was right for him, and he complained about everything. And then my father-in-law --

>> Interviewer: What do you mean, he complained about --

>> Freudenberg: About everything: the merchandise and the people and so on. He was just -- he a crabby man. And my father-in-law said, "Now, I have a brother-in-law who has a store in Albuquerque. Perhaps you can go to him." And he went to Albuquerque, and he peddled oil, and he finished as director of Standard Oil. And when my mother-in-law was 75, he wrote, if he could do anything for the family Freudenberg, let him know. And my mother-in-law wrote back right away, "Please give my children an affidavit that they can go to America." And he said, "I will, but that will be the 76th affidavit." Nobody could enter unless you have an affidavit that somebody stands for you, in case something happens, that you are not a burden to America. And...he gave it to us under that condition, that we never would ask him for anything. He was at the boat when we came to America.

>> Interviewer: So you did not go to England?

>> Freudenberg: Oh, yes.

>> Interviewer: You did go to England?

>> Freudenberg: Oh, yes.

>> Interviewer: When was that?

>> Freudenberg: We left in...June '38 -- in '39.

>> Interviewer: And when you left Germany, were you able to take things with you?

>> Freudenberg: We took -- you were allowed to take 10 German marks. That were about 2 1/2 dollars. with that, we came out, and a suitcase we had with our clothing. And we had a lift van where we put our furniture in, but when the lift van was packed, the SA man stood by that we did not put anything valuable in it. Our silver had to be given away, and they broke the knives and so on. They broke the silver. Our jewelry had to be given away, and we got a piece of paper that Margot Sarah Freudenberg gave a ring; nothing else. The insurance companies refused everything for Jewish people. The Jewish people had to pay a penalty for the Crystal Night of about a trillion marks, and that means that all the money everybody had was confiscated, that you got out with 10 German marks, 2 1/2 dollars.

>> Interviewer: Now, this was you and your husband and your son and your parents? So your parents didn't have any of their possessions anymore?

>> Freudenberg: No.

>> Interviewer: And did you go by boat from Germany?

>> Freudenberg: We went by boat to England, yes, Hamburg America Line. We went by boat to England. But before, we stood in line to board, and all of a sudden, over the loudspeaker, "Family Freudenberg, hold back." well, we went back. And my husband and my boy were put in one cell, and I was put in another cell. And you were examined from top to bottom, every hole imaginable, if you put some precious stones somewhere or so on. Your teeth had to be x-rayed, that there were no stones in it. And can you imagine a woman examining you and a woman who hates you? Those guards that examined you were really very, very bad. I don't want to use the words I would like to use.

We heard "gang plank up." That meant that we were kept back. And before that, I always told my boy, "Don't open your mouth unless somebody asks you, and don't cry." well, he behaved like a little man with my husband. But "gang plank up," we were left behind. All of a sudden, I heard, "Family Freudenberg can go, gang plank down." We were the last ones to go on board. And it was a German boat, Hamburg America Line, going to England, and we couldn't say a word. My boy grew up that I said, "Don't talk; don't say a word." well, finally, the next morning, we were in England. We all kneeled down and kissed England. We kissed the ground, that we really made it in one piece.

We were in England about nine months. Then we got a -- then the war broke out. We came at the end of June, and war broke out the first of September '39.

>> Interviewer: While you were in England, did the Jewish community support you, or how did you live?

>> Freudenberg: Who? My fam -- no.

>> Interviewer: Your family.

>> Freudenberg: We were not in a -- my family. They rented a little apartment for us and gave us some money to live on.

>> Interviewer: And you lived in London?

>> Freudenberg: In London. And then war broke out the first of September 1939, and we were volunteered as air raid wardens, and we were taken because we were German. But they took us. They asked a lot of questions and so on. We were air raid wardens. And then my boy -- the first thing I was, I got my boy to school.

>> Interviewer: How many years had it been at that point since he had been in school? He had been out of school.

>> Freudenberg: So much that he was always limping behind. He graduated when he had to graduate, but limping behind, just making it because he lost so much time. And I had no time to tell him what to do. I was hiding. I was running.

well, we went to England, and then we got a letter to come to the American consul in England in February.

>> Interviewer: And this is 1940?

>> Freudenberg: '40. And that our quota was -- our papers were transferred via a neutral country -- and always a beautiful neutral country -- Switzerland. Switzerland transferred all the papers to the countries where the people were.

>> Interviewer: I don't understand. Explain that to me. So your papers went from Germany to Switzerland to England? What --

>> Freudenberg: Because Germany and England were at war.

>> Interviewer: I see.

>> Freudenberg: And neutral Switzerland volunteered to have the papers from Germany via Switzerland to England.

>> Interviewer: And these papers would have been your identity papers, your birth certificate?

>> Freudenberg: Well, that we could enter America.

>> Interviewer: I see.

>> Freudenberg: Our regular visa to enter America.

>> Interviewer: I see.

>> Freudenberg: And on the 13th of March, 1940, we finally left. And war was going on, and they told us, "You are convoyed." Well, we were convoyed, all right, by seagulls. That was all.

>> Interviewer: Did you come over on the Cunard Line?

>> Freudenberg: No, Cunard America could not go. We went on an English boat going to Halifax, having loads of gold on board, a great target for a U-boat to torpedo. My husband and I volunteered, and we were...taken to look out for U-boats left and right. We got binoculars and so on, and we had four-hour watch. Well, the U-boats were all over us, and you didn't know whether the enemy one or a friendly one. And one day, I said, "Oh, there is one," and I reported it. It came up; it was a French one. But we came from England to Halifax, zigzagging 13 days.

>> Interviewer: Were there other Jewish families on the ship?

>> Freudenberg: Yes. First of all, it was a freighter, "Samaria," and we had thousand men on board to bring English

boats from Canada to England. It was so crowded. Yes, there were a few Jewish families, not too many. There were a lot of people, Canadians that wanted to go back or Americans that wanted to go back.

We were not allowed to take a bath. We were not allowed to go around without our life belts. And I'm unmanageable without a bath. And I got a bath and had my life belt right next to me. I just got a bath and soaped myself and then dressed and got the life belt on again. I did that twice in 13 days.

We arrived in Halifax and then went down the coast to New York.

>> Interviewer: In the same ship?

>> Freudenberg: The same ship. In Halifax, they got the gold off. It was meant for Canada. What else they got off, I don't know. What else was in the holds, I have no idea. I have the feeling there were lots of valuable things in it.

>> Interviewer: In the time that you and your husband and son were in England and then on the way to America, did your son finally feel that he could speak about --

>> Freudenberg: Oh, yeah, he went to school, and the third day, there was the headmaster outside. I brought him to school, and the headmaster was outside, and he said, "I want to talk to all the mothers because we have to have a rehearsal. When war breaks out now, we have to be out of the city. We don't want any children in the city." They had three times rehearsal, and the fourth time, he didn't come back. And he said, "I will post a piece of paper, where we are, on this tree, but none of you ever is going to find us." Well, he was gone. I knew he was in good hands. And I didn't see him all the time before I had to go in February to fetch him to go to the American consul in London.



>> Interviewer: So he was evacuated to the country?

>> Freudenberg: Evacuated to the country, with the nicest people. The man was a plumber. No heat in the house, just a little stove. He and another Jewish boy had the room way under the ceiling, under the roof.

>> Interviewer: In the attic?

>> Freudenberg: In the attic. And the water -- it was winter then -- was frozen that they couldn't wash themselves, which was delightful to those two boys! They didn't need to wash themselves and so on. They thought it's wonderful. But when I came to get him, and the other boy too -- because I told the parents I'd bring both of them back to London -- I said, "When did you have a bath?" "A bath? I didn't have since we were here. They don't have a bathtub here in the country, and the water was frozen, and I didn't wash myself." Well, that was just for a little while. Then he got a good scrub.

But then when we came to America, they asked us what we can do, and I said, "I'm a physical therapist." "What is that?" And I told them to rehabilitate people to walk better, to have less pain, to be more mobile. Well, they had no idea. At that time, physical therapy came into being. I don't want to start the history of physical therapy. But we --

>> Interviewer: Where were you living in New York?

>> Freudenberg: My sister came. She rented one room for us: my husband and Henry, my boy, and I. And that had a little stove that we could cook, a little stove like this that we could cook.

>> Interviewer: And this was in New York City?

>> Freudenberg: Yeah, in New York City.

>> Interviewer: In Manhattan?

>> Freudenberg: On the 35th Street West. But everything was just a paradise to us! The little room with a little stove and the little shower and the little bathtub was just heaven to us because we were in a free country and we could talk and we could say something. And I'll never forget, when we arrived in New York, my boy looked at me and said, "Mother, can I talk now?" I said, "Yes, you can." "And can I cry?" I said, "You can do that too."

But there are other people out where the children were in a bunker and where the children put -- when the mother put the hand in front of the children and the children just finally turned to stone catacomb. But my boy, a real boy, he was eternally grateful when he could talk and when he could say something. There came one lady, a schoolteacher, with a box of 5-cents Hershey bars, and he looked at -- I said, "Yes, what can I do for you?" "I hear that you are just newcomer. I want to bring that boy a box of Hershey bars." And Henry said, "I can't take it because we are allowed only one Hershey bar a month for all three of us. My parents didn't eat it, and I ate it, and to have 20 Hershey bars in one box -- please, take it home." He was -- that was impossible to have a box of Hershey bars, and that lady was so nice. She said, "No, that is for you. Eat one a day."

People were lovely when we came to America. We were not the first ones, we were not the last ones, and there are many people before us and many people after us. And there is such a...amount of goodwill between people, and there is a certain amount of indifference or hate. When we came, we went to synagogue the first Saturday morning, and we looked different. Our clothing was different. Our way of talking is different. Still, after 51 years, it's different. And one lady came to us, "we didn't ask

for you. We can't use any refugees. Get going. March. Get going." I said, "We have no money to go." "Well, there is no place for you to earn a living." And I said, "We have to stay, and you will not be sorry that we stay. One day, you might be proud that we came. One day, you might say, 'Oh, somebody came way over from Germany on account of Hitler and showed what people really can do.'" And that lady, after I established myself, she tried to latch on to me, and I killed her with kindness, so much kindness that she really was ashamed. Up to this day, nobody knows who she was, and I take it into my grave because I will not say to the family they did it. But I never forget it.

But there were other people that stretched out the hand. They were so warm to us. They tried to help us. All our stuff that came over in the lift when we packed in New York -- which was our latest, last belongings -- were terribly destroyed on the "President Harding." She had a hard crossing, and salt water came into the lift bin, destroyed everything from the furniture to the linen, to the dresses we had. Everything could be just thrown away because they stood at the foreign-trade zone for ten months until we could get them out. It was not insured anymore because it was insured just for the crossing, and they thought it was taken off. My uncle in England insured it. He said, "Only for the crossing, and then it was not insured." We lost everything that way.

But nothing really mattered. When we came to America and we saw the beautiful streets and we saw the beautiful churches and we saw the sky and the ocean and the air and we could do what we wanted to do, we could walk around, we could -- the first -- we came in April, and in August, we had a terrific hurricane in Charleston, and we were so overcome by Mother Nature, my husband and I, we went to the Battery to look at the waves, and it was just a spectacle! Until somebody came behind us and said -- that was a policeman -- "Get out of here! This is dangerous!" well,

we wanted to see something Mother Nature -- which we really had not seen the last few years in Germany because, when we looked, everything was just full of fear, "Do we make it?"

>> Interviewer: Could I back you up just a little, and could you tell me what happened to your sister and your parents and your in-laws? Did they -- did all of them come over?

>> Freudenberg: Well, my parents came to England half a year earlier than we did, and they came half a year later when we did.

>> Interviewer: To America?

>> Freudenberg: To America. And they stayed half a year with my sister in Greenville and half a year with us in Charleston.

>> Interviewer: Well, how did you and your sister come to South Carolina?

>> Freudenberg: My sister came in 1937 via Cuba to America.

>> Interviewer: How did she happen to leave earlier than you? She just went?

>> Freudenberg: I'll tell you why. They lived in Heidelberg, and one school friend of my brother-in-law's, who was a high SS -- in the black uniform -- officer, went to my brother-in-law, said, "Ludwig" --

01:03:11