



Interview mit

Edith Dreyfuss

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Teil 1

JD: This is an *Austrian Heritage Collection* interview with Edith Dreyfuss, conducted by Jan Dreer and Stefan Haider on 7th August, 2015, in...what is the location?

ED: New Jersey.

JD: Perfect. Please, Mrs. Dreyfuss, may I ask you to tell us your life story?

ED: I was born in Vienna in 1930. In 1938 Hitler came, and my youth stopped. I went to the gymnasium, *Chajes Gymnasium*, which was closed after I was there half a year, but I was very fortunate, because the professors were thrown out...only Jewish professors...were thrown out of the universities, and I had the best professors you could have. When I was not quite...before that, my father was forced to go into a forced labor camp, Lavamünd and Eisenerz, and we were, of course, thrown out three times out of our home. We always landed somewhere else finally. It was one room per family, and it was what you called *Herrschaftswohnungen*, and each had one room. We were four or five families in an apartment. When we finally landed in the Krummbaumgasse, the SS came, we were given one hour to pack. My father was in Eisenerz, and they said that we had to wait until he joins us. We were interned in the *Sperlschule*, 2nd district, and we were each having one third of a mattress to sleep on. My father joined us and we were put into a transport to Riga. He became what you call *Waggonleiter*, and I had fever, but the doctor was only allowed to diagnose death, not sickness. From there, we were let out in Riga, and my father had to stay behind to put the luggage out, and see to it...we were told that we would get it. I was still sick, my mother pulled me to go, my father stayed behind. Very happy SS told us...they said he brought...after they took out the luggage, he was shot, and if they were not all dead, the *Panzer*, or whatever you call those wagons, would roll over them. He was a short man...I hope he was dead. We were in Riga, and when the Russians came...first, we were in a ghetto, and then we went into the concentration camp Kaiserwald, and from Kaiserwald we were sent out to work. I worked for AEG, *Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft*, and I became a welder. I had an unusual education, I must say.

In 1945, we were...or [19]44 was it...we were...from Riga, we were brought to Poland, because of the advance of the Russian army. And in Żłote Pole, we were liberated. It was called a death march. Our SS was a miserable thing, a butcher, but he did not kill anybody – only if you died on the way, but not because he shot you. And the SS were awfully brave – they were drunk – and they said, “We did not do anything bad! You will tell the Russians, would you not?” And we said, “Of course!” Who wanted to die in the last minute? And then, we went back to Vienna as displaced persons. You took a train, a *Viehwagen*, *Kohlenwagen* – you name it –, we went a certain distance and then we tried again, until we got to Vienna. The amazing thing was that everywhere we stopped, we were – I do not know how you call it in English – *entlaust*. Not in Vienna – in Vienna they did not care if we brought lice in. Then, we were in Vienna. They put us into...what was the name...it was a synagogue...*Tempelgasse*. It was very funny, the roof was leaking, but Vienna was destroyed – according to my mother not very much, compared to other cities we went through. We went with umbrellas at night, so we would not get wet.

My cousin in the United States was a captain in the army...he was army, and he made a connection to another American, Lieutenant Hughes, and we got packages. And also, my mother worked for the United...the *Joint Distribution Committee*, which was a Jewish organization. Our people in the United States felt very bad that they did not raise more, holy hell, I quote. And they sent whatever they could, clothes and everything, and my mother worked for them. Besides, my uncle sent two packages every day via Lieutenant Hughes. And then we were allowed to go to the United States, based on our displaced persons status. Somebody in the United States made very good money, because we were put on troop transporters, and when the army was shipped over, there were four bunks on top of each other. We were elegant, only two bunks, 24 to a cabin. And when I came to the United States, my cousin said, "High school is a must", so I went back to high school. By the way, in Vienna I went to the *Wirtschaftsschule der Handelsakademie*, because they gave you a three month probation, and if you were good enough grade-wise, you could stay, so I was there one year. And when I came to the United States, they put me into sophomore, that is the second year of high school, and wanted to leave me for another year, but I bargained that if I would learn English while the others learned German, they would let me, so I only lost one year. When I came out, of course, there was no money. We were in New Haven, Connecticut. There was *Yale* [University], that was male only, and then there was [New Haven State] *Teachers College*. And *Teachers College* said, I would never get rid of my accent...true. And so therefore, I would have to go transfer after the second year, out of town, which was impossible, because we had no money. I could not be out of town. So then, I got married, and my husband was what you term an entrepreneur. He established his business, that my son runs now, and I went to night school, because I wanted to prove, had Hitler not been, I would have been at the university. I got my two degrees, and I did not go for my doctorate, because my husband would have had to send me to Vienna for over a year, and I could not see that I would tell him, "Honey bunny, give me 50,000 dollars, I am going to study. And you can take care of the kids." And so, that is my life, more or less...in a brief outline.

JD: Okay. Let us start with your grandparents...you did not mention them. Did you get to know your grandparents personally?

ED: I knew only my grandfather, because my other three grandparents died before Hitler, so there was nothing. My father was born *im Waldviertel*, and my grandparents on all sides in what is today Czechoslovakia, *Böhmen*.

JD: Do you know--

ED: --my grandfather was murdered in Theresienstadt.

JD: The other one?

ED: The one I knew.

JD: Do you remember any names of your grandparents?

ED: Oh, yes, the one who lived was Emanuel Lustig *und* Mathilde Zinner was...my maiden name was Zinner. I am not sure what my grandfather--

JD: --okay, it is not that important--

ED: --my grandmother I know, Saly Lustig, because I still go...that is the only grave I have in Vienna, and I go there every year.

SH: Is that your maternal or you paternal side, Lustig?

ED: Lustig is maternal, and Zinner is paternal.

SH: And do you know their names, the paternal side?

ED: Mathilde Zinner.

SH: Okay, Mathilde, and the grandfather you do not remember?

ED: Because in Jewish custom, you name after the dead, that they may live, so therefore, my Hebrew name is Edith Mathilde.

1/00:10:52

JD: Do you know if they spoke Hebrew or Yiddish?

ED: German.

JD: German, okay.

ED: I only learned Yiddish in the concentration camp.

JD: Let us go on and continue with your parents and your family life in Vienna, in general. Can you tell me something about your father and your mother?

ED: Oh, yes, my father – and I do not know how to translate it – Handelsangestellter bei der Firma S. Heit am Rudolfsplatz, erster Bezirk.

JD: And what was his name?

ED: Emil. This is why he is here, because my daughter wanted a girl, and when Emil came up, this was a girl. [Lacht.] And we are not sorry.

JD: Do you know any date of birth or place of birth?

ED: He was born...no, it would be 1891 or something like this...my father. But I do not know it for sure...Litschau...no, it was *in der Nähe von* Litschau. My aunt was there. She was an innkeeper...a *Gasthaus*.

JD: What was his occupation? *Handels--*

SH: --you said he was a *Handelsangestellter*. For what company?

ED: S. Heit. But S. Heit was Jewish and *wurde arisiert*...[unklar].

SH: Could you spell it out, the original name?

ED: S. Heit. S...I think, S period...H – E – I – T.

SH: S – period – H – E – I – T. Thank you.

ED: But it does not exist. I went now to the place and I think it is a hotel.

SH: Actually, do you also know your grandparents' occupation? Do you know what they did?

ED: Oh, yes, my grandfather was a *Branntweiner*.

SH: Maternal or paternal side?

ED: My mother's side...on Engerthstraße, *zweiter Bezirk*. I do not know, *ob die Kaserne noch immer vis-à-vis ist*. Because we went over the Danube, and I could not recognize it when my cousin brought me to the old Danube.

SH: And your paternal side, what did they do for a living?

ED: Wait a moment...oh yes, they were *im Waldviertel*. Mein Großvater war Hausierer und meine Großmutter hat ein Gasthaus gehabt, weil sie hat eine Mesalliance gemacht. Ihre Brüder waren alle Architekten und Ärzte.

SH: Okay, we just talked about your father, maybe you can talk about your mother?

ED: My mother was a housewife.

SH: What was her name?

ED: Ottilie.

SH: And she was a housewife?

ED: Yes. She was with me in the concentration camp, and she died in the United States when she was two months short of 99. And you never met her.

JD: Do you know her date of birth or place of birth?

ED: Who, my mother? Vienna, 1897, October 20th.

JD: Perfect. Do you remember the exact address of your apartment that you lived in?

ED: The first one? Yes. At that time, you called it *Mittelstand*. I do not know what you call it today. We had two rooms, a *Vorzimmer* and a kitchen.

SH: Do you know the address?

ED: Yes, Sterneckplatz 13.

SH: How ist that spelled?

ED: Stern – eck. E – C – K. Sterneckplatz.

SH: *Dreizehn*? Thirteen?

ED: I think it was *dreizehn*.

SH: What district is that?

ED: 2nd district.

1/00:15:37

JD: Your parents' friends, what kind of friends did they have? How did the family usually spend their holidays?

ED: My father was very much...the holidays? My father had three weeks of vacation, and we went into the Prein, that is on the foot of the...*Raxgebiet*.

SH: Prein, like P – R – E – I – N. How is it spelled?

ED: Do you want a six-year-old to spell? [Lacht.] I was eight when Hitler came! *Es war eine Pension*, that I know.

JD: What was the neighborhood like, can you tell me something about it? Were there many Jewish people? Do you remember anything?

ED: The Sterneckplatz, it was not exactly Jewish, but the synagogues, when we went for the high holidays, could not hold everybody, so my grandfather and my father usually went *im Prater*, somewhere, and rented restaurants. I do not really know. I had...I think when Hitler came, I became very Jewish. Hitler taught me, I am first a Jew, second a Jew, third a Jew, and I am long nothing. And then I am loyal to the country that is loyal to me. He taught me well.

JD: About the family again: Did you get some kind of cultural education? Did you go to the theater or the opera?

ED: At eight years old? No Jew was allowed anymore. When I came back, yes, I caught up what I could. I was practically, every other day, either at the opera or at the theater, maybe a movie. But sometimes the Allies cut...we could not have electricity all the way through, so you might sit in the movie and all of sudden, there was no movie. Oh, and it was very difficult to get tickets for *Schilling*, so if you had two cigarettes on the side, they always had seats for you.

SH: How about the annexation of Austria, did your parents like to go to the opera? What activities did they engage in, in Vienna?

ED: I really could not tell you. My mother liked to travel, into the mountains, and she very much liked Hungary. She had friends there, and I really did not...my mother was very bright, but she was told, if he would send her to university – my grandfather –, nobody would marry her. And so she took courses in foreign languages: English, Ivrit – Hebrew – and...then she took sewing courses, because my grandfather said, “A girl should at least know how to sew a button on.” And I really do not know.

SH: Did she ever take you to any of these places? Hungary or something, when you were little?

ED: Eight years? No Jew was allowed to travel.

SH: But that was after the annexation--

ED: --I told you, we went to the Prein, because my pediatrician, *Primar Spieler*, wanted me to have *Höhenluft*. I am sorry, but you speak German, so I do not have to worry how I say it. So I really do not know.

JD: Let us continue with religious life in your family.

ED: Religious life? The holidays, yes, but...my grandfather was strict about Kashrut, if you know what I am talking about...dietary laws, Jewish dietary laws. But during the First World War, my mother almost fainted, being undernourished, and from there on out, we did not keep it so much.

SH: Were your grandparents actually born in Austria, or did they come from elsewhere to Vienna?

ED: Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie, Böhmen.

SH: Okay, that is where they were from.

ED: Not from East Poland, if you are asking...which I do not mind, because all my friends came...until I was sent to a concentration camp...their parents came from there, and I loved them dearly. They were bright.

1/00:20:53

JD: Was your household kept kosher?

ED: No, I just said...it was...as I said, during the First World War, they changed. My father came from the country, and if you wanted kosher meat, you had to import it from Czechoslovakia. So my grandmother did it only for Passover, otherwise not. Pork, I imagine was not, but my mother had...I remember, at home, we had dairy, meat and pork. The pork was...my father liked *Blutwurst*. [Alle lachen.]

JD: You said that your family only observed the holidays?

ED: Yes, I could not even say, because...you see, if people want to get rid of us Jews, they should leave us in peace, because we would inter-marry and we would really disappear, but I think they like a scapegoat, so they have to keep us going.

JD: Did you get some religious education in school?

ED: Oh yes, Vienna had...the *Pfarrer* came...and I do not what you call...for the Lutherans, and we got a Hebrew teacher, and we all went for an hour, and the poor man...*wir haben ihn gut sekkiert* [geärgert].

SH: Was that in primary school?

ED: No, that was *Volksschule*, public *Volksschule*.

SH: That was when you had that teacher?

ED: Yes, but I went only two years, then we were separated. The Jewish children went into a separate school, and as I said, when I was...what would that be...fifth grade...the schools closed. But I belonged to a Zionist organization, because I wanted very badly to go to Israel – Palestine then. And I have been a Zionist since age nine. Then I became very Jewish.

SH: Do you know the names of your schools in Vienna?

ED: The first one was mixed, it was *Sterneckplatz*.

SH: So, right where you lived?

ED: Yes. And afterwards, I was at *Vorgarten*. I do not know if you know--

JD: --Vorgartenstraße? 2nd district, too.

ED: Yes.

SH: And they were both primary schools, *Volksschule*?

ED: Volksschule, ja. And my mother always said, that I would go to the gymnasium, and I cried bitter tears. – “You want me to go twelve years, when I can be out of [unklar]?” Then, we did not have much money, and I begged to go to the *Chajes Gymnasium*. As I said, at the time, the Catholic gymnasium and the *Chajes Gymnasium* were the two best in Vienna.

SH: And you went to the *Chajes Gymnasium*?

ED: For half a year, then they closed it. But as I said, I became a Zionist, and I went to what we call Palam, *Palästinaamt*, and we had a very young man...he was murdered, because he said he would not leave Vienna until the last of his youngsters would be out of Austria. And he got us professors--

SH: --in your Zionist organization, he got you professors?

ED: Yes, we had a house in Adnergasse. It is a [unklar] now, when you go from the quay, there used to be a street, Adnergasse, it was bombed out, and there they had a house. And there, we had a house and you called it...the groups were called according to where they would go in Israel. I belonged, for instance, to *Gordonia*, and I would have to go to Israel to Daganja, the kibbutz. We were already trained for kibbutz life. And we sold...we went from door to door to sell...we called it *Bausteine*, different colors had different amounts of money. And that was for Israel. When I say Israel, at that time, it would be Palestine.

1/00:25:34

SH: What was the name of your Zionist organization again? Could you spell that?

ED: Now? Then? *Gordonia*. And do not even ask. [Lacht.]

SH: Like G – O – R--

ED: --G – O – R – D – O – N – I – A. That is what it sounds to my ear. But I know the kibbutz is Daganja. It is one of the oldest in Israel. It still exists.

SH: That was your group?

ED: I fell into everything. My girlfriend had come with me, so I came with her. And now I belong to *Hadassah* [Women's Zionist Organization of America]. It is the largest Women's Zionist organization, and we have the best hospital in the Middle East.

SH: How long were you part of that Zionist organization in Vienna? When did you start?

ED: Until I was what you term *ausgehoben*. That was the term that applied to us when they evicted us.

SH: Right, but when did you start going there, to the Zionist organization?

ED: When I was eight or nine, because like...probably your grandparents had no place to go, but to the *Hitlerjugend*...well, this was our niche.

SH: So when you were eight or nine, you joined.

ED: Because it was the only place you could go! I had a friend in the *Handelsschule*, and she said to me...and I respected her, because everybody said, „Wir waren keine Nazis!“ Wir wissen es doch. Komisch, dass der Hitler durchgekommen ist. [Pause.] Let us leave it.

JD: Let us move on a little further to your childhood in Vienna. You told us which school you attended. What were your classmates like? Was there anti-Semitism or what was going on there?

ED: It was a mixed bag, but I did not understand it, really. I did not understand it.

JD: So you did not understand what was going on at this time?

ED: I only remember, I was in my bed and my mother said to my father, "Emil, where will we go?" And I saw my crib on the street, and I am in it, and we had no place to go. Because whoever it was, wanted to have the apartment. And when I came back to Vienna, my mother said, "No." I said, "Yes." I made sure he lost his job at the *Rundfunk*, and she was evicted. And then I went to make sure that the apartment was empty. And I had the shock of my life, because we had wallpaper and it looked so nice, and they had the walls painted...I should not say anything about it. [Lacht.]

SH: Were there any particular friends that you might share with us that you had at school in Vienna?

ED: Afterwards, yes, we called the group...we were speaking Hebrew. My mother also had me go private, to take Hebrew lessons. Unfortunately, I forgot 95 percent. And the group was called Kozar, and we went together *am Kahlenberg*. And I do remember, once we decided we would go on *die Alte Donau...segeln*. And we got into the middle and did not know how to come back. And unfortunately, *Juden waren verboten*, and one of us yelled, "Schma Jisrael!" [Lacht.] God knows, nobody heard us. A young man hopped into our boat and brought us back to shore.

SH: When was that, roughly? What year, when you went sailing?

ED: It must have been between [19]39 and [19]40. It was *verboten*, what we did. Also, when you were a Jew, you had the star. [Anmerkung der Redaktion: Der Judenstern musste erst ab 19. September 1941 getragen werden.]

SH: Did you wear it regularly at that time?

ED: Yes. Not...we hid...I do not know what we did. I only know that we had a curfew at nine o'clock, and I showed up five minutes after nine, and my mother was very upset. And in later years, she told me she was very proud that I did not let myself be...*knechtet*.

1/00:30:47

JD: Your friends, were they mostly Jewish or non-Jewish, at that time?

ED: *Rassenschande*...you would not be caught...oh God!

SH: And how about before the annexation, before Hitler?

ED: I was eight years old, I did not feel it.

SH: But did you have friends?

ED: The Sterneckplatz was not Jewish, because my grandfather was in Engerthstraße, and my mother wanted to live near there. So therefore...the Leopoldstadt was more Jewish, so I had a very mixed bag of friends. In fact, some of them were very democrat, because I was once asked...Hitler was already there, and a woman came by and asked me, "Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes." – "I could have told it right away." So my friend, who lived in the same house said, "And if I would have told you I am Jewish, you would have said too that you can see it before?" So, not everybody was, but...did you see the film *Woman in Gold*?

SH: *Woman in Gold*...actually, we were asked before. Unfortunately not. We wanted to go see it several times, but we never did.

ED: You should go see it. I saw it here. I saw it only once. The nice thing is, they showed the *Belvedere*, a beautiful overhead shot, but otherwise, it brought too many bad memories.

SH: But how did you like the film content-wise? Was it historically close enough to reality?

ED: Very real, and the actors were superb, but then again, she got an...what was it, for Queen Elizabeth? What do you call it? Not an Emmy...an Oscar.

SH: Helen Mirren, you are talking about?

ED: Yes. She was very good.

JD: How did you spend your spare time? You told us that you were part of a Zionist organization. Was there any other political organization you joined?

ED: No. And we were not politically taught.

SH: Any other things that you did with your friends in Vienna, at that time? Any stories that you want to tell us?

ED: We liked to go together as a group, and my mother said, "I cannot understand for the life of me, how you can do it." We each brought a sandwich, and we each divided it between the seven of us.

SH: Where did you go to eat it? To a park?

ED: I really do not know. We were very careful, because we did not want...oh, I know where we were...where I was happiest...on the cemetery. They got us out, because...*Zentralfriedhof*, *Viertes Tor*, they got us there, and they made us a little swimming thing. And they used to...what do you call it...*kleine Gärtnerei*...lettuce etc. And that was delivered to the *Ausspeisungen*, and we were out there. And that was very nice, because no HJ [Hitlerjugend] was there. And you never knew, when they would pull their little daggers.

JD: Are there any special places in connection to your childhood memory that come to your head sometimes?

ED: What do you mean by that?

JD: Maybe like a special place, a special street...no? Okay.

ED: No.

JD: Do you have any questions to add to that?

SH: What were you going to go on with?

JD: With political attitudes and incidents.

SH: Okay.

1/00:35:28

JD: What attitude did your family have towards political parties?

ED: Social democrat.

JD: Social democrat, okay.

SH: Were they actually party members?

ED: No.

SH: But would you say they were very political people, or rather not so much?

ED: No, my mother was lukewarm, as far as it goes, and my father liked to discuss politics with my aunt. But this is not...this is like today, I would tell you, I do not like the Christian...I do not care for [Donald] Trump. That is only my opinion, but not...

JD: And the family attitude towards Zionism?

ED: Not the family, me!

SH: But what was the family's attitude, your parents' attitude? What did they think about your participation?

ED: My father's attitude, unfortunately...my mother wanted to emigrate to Australia. She said, "As far away as you can go." – "With a little child", he said, "I am not going." And then he said, "People who have a [Friedrich] Schiller and a [Johann Wolfgang von] Goethe, they do not do that!" He paid with his life.

JD: What was the reaction of your parents to the rise to power by the Nazis in 1933?

ED: I just said, my...no, [19]33, I would not even know, I was three years old. I could not have cared. I cared if my father took me on Sunday morning to my aunt, and we stopped at the...on the Praterstraße *war ein Bonbongeschäft*, and I could always go behind the counter, and in front, I picked always dragées...*zehn Dekal[gramm]*.

JD: Did your parents actually tell you what the Nazis are or what their intention is?

ED: No.

SH: I think, in the questionnaire we have, you wrote: „Vor dem Kind spricht man nicht.“ In German.

ED: Yes. We used to have maids from Czechoslovakia. My mother and my father...Waldviertel is on the border to Czechoslovakia.

SH: Yes.

ED: So, they spoke, but they could not write Czech. And if they did not want the child to understand anything, they spoke Czech. And he blames me now, “When you do not want that I understand, you speak German to Mama.” And he is up since seven, he has been working a full shift.

JD: Have you made any experiences with anti-Semitism before March, 1938? Before Hitler came to Austria?

ED: I would be much too small. That would be more than crude, if you ask an eight-year-old, or a four-year-old...I only knew that my mother was very upset when [Engelbert] Dollfuß was murdered. But I know more through my college education about that period than really recalling.

JD: Yes, that makes sense. So you did not actually witness like Jews cleaning the streets or something like that?

ED: My uncle, my grandfather's – maternal, that is – son, was a *Kriegsinvalide* from the First World War, in the *russische Gefangenschaft*. And he went down, where he grew up...and they wanted to arrest my grandfather, and he went down and he told everyone of those...gentlemen...he told them off, what he thought of them. It seems funny, but they let my grandfather go. And my father...that was on November 10th, [1938]...and my father was not taken to Dachau, because our janitress was an illegal Nazi, and she said she never thought that would be, because the only tips she got at Christmas and New Year's, were from the Jewish...what do you call it...*Bewohner*. And so she only gave out the old names, so they would not be taken. Unfortunately, my father escaped, because if he did not have escaped...my two uncles went to Dachau, and my father said they had to be sent abroad first. And then, it was too late. And I hate to say something, but the American consul is accessory after the fact that my father died. Because we had an affidavit, which was supported by sixty-four thousand dollars, and in 1939 sixty-four thousand dollars are more than a million today, and there was never an affidavit given, and the consul said, “Not enough security.”

1/00:41:20

SH: Who provided the affidavit for your family and when did you start the process of obtaining it?

ED: My uncle was out already, in New Haven, Connecticut, with his wife, at that time.

SH: In 1939?

ED: Yes, because in 1938 he was taken to Dachau, and you had only a certain space to get them out or else. And he was there, and my aunt was crying, and her *große Angst war*...she was crying, and she said, "My family is going to die." And they gave the affidavit. You gave a guarantee that you would not be a burden in the United States.

SH: So, your uncle, after he was in Dachau, came to America, and then he provided an affidavit for you?

ED: Yes, but as I said, the American consul...the State Department was known to be anti-Semitic...not now, that I do not know. And he said, it was not enough.

SH: So, the affidavit was for all of you, you and your parents. Did you have any siblings?

ED: No, when they saw me, they had enough.

SH: So you had an affidavit in 1939, and when you asked for a visa, you were denied, so you had to stay.

ED: Yes.

SH: How often did you try or how long did that process take?

ED: When you were denied, you were done. Afterwards you could not, because first, your money was *beschlagnahmt*, and then you had to bring in your jewelry. And by the time you were done...Cuba was the last to let you go, but you had to give them, I think, 5,000 dollars. Where should we have gotten that? We were never rich. We lived a very, very comfortable life.

SH: And you said, an uncle provided the affidavit?

ED: No, not the uncle. The uncle got an American grocer.

SH: So, who provided the affidavit for you and your family?

ED: A grocer, a Jewish grocer.

SH: And your uncle just asked him to provide that and they did it to help you?

ED: They saw my aunt cry, and they wanted to know why.

SH: Now I understand the story, I missed that part. Now it makes sense.

ED: Then he said, he would give it. And he gave it a second time, although we did not need it, because under [Harry S.] Truman, you came in under displaced person status. You only had to have a relative. And

as I said, I could not stay...I did not want to hear that they were all so good. I respected the...I made a friend of her, who said, "You would have been in the Hitler Youth, if you had not been Jewish." And I respected her much more than those that wanted to tell me God knows what.

SH: Your relative who was already in America, was he an uncle of yours or of your father?

ED: My father's brother.

SH: What was his name?

ED: Zinner.

SH: His first name?

ED: Rudolf.

SH: Rudolf Zinner, okay.

ED: I guess my grandmother must have liked *den Kronprinzen* Rudolf.

1/00:45:08

JD: I want to continue with two important dates. First, the Anschluss, and then the Reichskristallnacht. The Anschluss, what effect did it have on your family?

ED: I would not know. I told you only that whoever was employed at the *Rundfunk*, she wanted the apartment. My mother said, she was in the middle of scrubbing the floor, and she said, "You can have it."

JD: Were there any other properties confiscated?

ED: We were not rich enough. We were...how should I say...we had a nice apartment, my mother did not have to work, we had a maid, who was there ten months, because for two months she had to go home...they had a small *Gärtnerei* or something, and she had to help there. And we did not own a house or anything...a *Zinskaserne*, an apartment. And my father went to work, and I was supposed to get a good education. I was supposed to go, for one year, either to France or England to learn the language, and I was destined to go to university, for whatever I preferred to take up there.

JD: The Heldenplatz speech, were there any--

ED: --no, we did not even have a radio. My uncle, who was in America, already had a radio.

JD: So your family got their news via newspaper?

ED: Yes, my father read the newspaper, I remember.

SH: Is there anything else about that time that you remember, like propaganda or marches, parades, or other speeches?

ED: To Sterneckplatz they did not come.

SH: And you did not--

ED: --no, they went Ringstraße, the main streets, not...like when the Pope is coming. The Pope is not coming to the side streets of Philadelphia.

SH: But you did not happen to walk by either at some point?

ED: My mother would have seen to it that I would not be near it, because it would be dangerous.

JD: Did you feel that the climate in society changed from that date on?

ED: Yes, you could say it. Both my grandfather's maid and our maid had to leave, because they were not allowed to work for Jews.

SH: And when did they leave? Right after the annexation?

ED: When it was said that she could not work for a Jew.

SH: When was that, in [19]38 or [19]39?

ED: It must have been [19]38 still, because the Anschluss was March, [19]38, right?

SH: Yes, March 12th.

ED: And I imagine...it was whittled away. And also, my father had a very wealthy brother in Germany. Was it Regensburg? I do not know where. And my father said, if he lived there, it could not be all that bad, because Hitler came in [19]38 and in Germany, he took over in [19]33.

JD: Let us go to Reichskristallnacht...the Crystal Night.

ED: Oh, 10. November.

JD: Do you have any memories from that specific night?

ED: My father lost his job, and afterwards he went...I think first, it was Lavamünd and then Eisenerz, I am not sure. But I know he was in both places.

SH: So, what was that again? Your father lost his job the day of the Crystal Night? That very day?

ED: Yes.

SH: And what happened then?

ED: Then he was in a forced labor camp.

SH: That day, he was arrested?

ED: No, I do not know right away...he was not arrested. They sent him...I do not know where he went. I really have no recollection. Did he go to an unemployment...state unemployment and then they said, "This is what you are going to do."

SH: So he went to do forced labor after that. For how long?

ED: Until we were deported in...I was twelve...it must be [19]42.

SH: So...deportation, essentially, in [19]42?

ED: In the early months.

SH: Early [19]42?

ED: Yes.

1/00:50:20

SH: And what happened between Crystal Night and that day? Were there any other incidents? Were there maybe humiliations directed against you, like scrubbing the streets?

ED: My mother never did, she was never caught. We were only caught when we had to go to the Sperlschule. That was...otherwise...

SH: You went to where?

ED: Sperlschule, im zweiten Bezirk. That is where you were collected for transport.

SH: Okay, that was in 1942?

ED: Yes.

[Übergang/Schnitt.]

SH: How is that spelled?

ED: S – P – E – R – L. Schule.

SH: In the 2nd district?

ED: Yes. When I came back, they wanted to put me there for *Hauptschule*.

SH: When you came back after, in 1945/46?

ED: Yes. – „Edith Zinner, steh' auf! Und wir sagen alle, wir sind so froh, dich hier zu haben.“ I lasted one day...too stupid for words. Do not forget what I went through. I was an odd thing. In one way, I was 90 years old, and on the other way, I wanted a teddy bear.

SH: I think in your questionnaire, you are also writing about being forced out of your apartment. When and how did that happen?

ED: If a Nazi came and said...any Jewish apartment or Jew was *vogelfrei*.

SH: So when did that happen to you? Where did you go to?

ED: I do not know, it must be after the Kristallnacht, because our janitress did not send my father out...so it must have been.

SH: How often were you forced to leave, do you know?

ED: Yes, we went from there to Untere Augartenstraße, and from Untere Augartenstraße to Krummbaumgasse, and from Krummbaumgasse *sind wir ausgehoben worden*.

SH: Krummbaumgasse? K – R – U--

ED: --M – M. Zwei M, krumm und Baum. And over there, that was always more the Jewish--

SH: --yes, how were circumstances of life in these new apartments that you were sent to?

ED: We were always lucky. We were with very nice, bright people with varied interests.

SH: These other places that you lived at, were you alone? Was it an apartment for you and your mother? Who did you stay with, there?

ED: No. You had an apartment with, let us say, five rooms, *Salon* etc....before. So each family got one room, and then we had a *gas rechaud*...I do not know what you call it now, and each one of us had their own one sitting in the kitchen to cook on.

SH: And that was in Untere Augartenstraße and Krummbaumgasse?

ED: Yes, those would have been too expensive for us to live in alone...before Hitler.

SH: Were you assigned to these apartments?

ED: I think so. I think you went to the *Wohnungsamt* or whatever. Because nobody really wanted them, because it was difficult to heat them, very expensive.

SH: That was after Kristallnacht that you were forced out of your apartment?

ED: Yes. I do not know how long I lived in each one.

SH: Your father, he was doing forced labor?

ED: He was away.

SH: He was not staying with you there?

ED: He came back on furlough... *Urlaub*.

SH: Occasionally?

ED: No, he was not allowed. It was a forced labor camp. It was not that you liked to go there.

1/00:55:18

JD: And after the third apartment, you had to go to Sperlschule?

ED: Wir sind ausgehoben worden. They threw the stuff down the stairs.

JD: You were thrown out and sent to Sperlschule. And after that, you got deported?

ED: Yes. Remember, you said to your mother to call me a second time at [Hotel] *Imperial*. Because he said that *Omi* was sounding awful. I got back into the old neighborhood by accident, and he heard me on the phone, and he said that he is calling Vienna a second time, because he wants to know if I am alright.

SH: How were you notified that you had to go to Sperlschule?

ED: They all of a sudden came and said, "Pack up and go!"

SH: There were no letters or something?

ED: Come on!

SH: I mean, some people were notified via mail to report to a certain place or something.

ED: Oh, to report, yes. You reported to...they used the Rothschild Palais. When my mother, I think, had to go...I had at home a form from my father, I got it from the [Israelitische] *Kultusgemeinde*.

SH: What happened at the Rothschild Palais?

ED: You had to register, and you had to say what you owned – for your own protection.

SH: Were you allowed to bring anything when they came to your apartment?

ED: Yes, we were given one hour to pack. But it did not matter at all, because we never got the luggage. So it did not even matter. We did not even see it, because when we were in the Sperlschule...I do not know if it

is still...in the United States you have one mattress. When I was a child, it was divided into three parts. Still? And each was allowed one third on the floor. You must admit, I had a very good education.

SH: You?

ED: Yes, you do not get that so easy.

SH: Right, that is true. When did your father come back from forced labor? Was he with you at that time?

ED: He came back around March or so, [19]42, and that is when we were shipped to Riga. There were three transports going to Riga, I was told 3,600, and 36 of us came back to Vienna.

SH: So he came back to live with you for a couple of weeks, and then you were deported?

ED: Yes, I do not know how they did it, how the bureaucracy worked...for me it was only the end result.

SH: Do you know the date, when you left Vienna? It was early 1942?

ED: I tried to keep a diary, and my mother made me burn it, because she said the SS would kill us, if they would find it. So after the war, I tried...after I came to the States, I tried to get something out, so I do not know if I have it...or I do not. Okay...we were *ausgehoben*, 13th December, 1941, *evakuiert von Wien*, 7. Februar 1942 und wir sind am 12. Februar...and I am speaking German, because I have written it in German...we arrived in Riga. Am 25. August [19]43 bin ich ins Riga-KZ Kaiserwald gekommen. Am 20. Juni 1944 bin ich von Riga abgefahren. Ich bin--

SH: --20th June, 1944.

ED: Pardon? Am I being too late? We arrived in Thorn [Toruń], in Poland.

SH: On what day?

ED: Am 24. Juni 1944.

SH: And where did you arrive?

ED: Thorn, Polen. You will not have the names anymore, because like you used to say Danzig, and you do not have Danzig anymore.

SH: Right, but we could figure it out, I guess. Can you spell it?

ED: It was Thorn, T – H – O – R – N.

SH: Thorn, alright. We will find out.

1/01:00:34

ED: Wir waren in einer...wie nennt man das nur? Elaine, when we were in Puerto Rico, what do you call that? I showed you. I said it reminded me of Thorn.

EL: El Morro [Castillo San Felipe del Morro]?

ED: El Morro, yes. But what was El Morro? But never mind.

EL: A castle? No, it is not a castle...a fortress.

ED: A fortress, thank you.

EL: You are welcome!

ED: In Thorn, we were brought into a fortress. We were underground, and once a day, we could go up, because the fortress had grass on top, and you were brought up for air, for an hour or so. But we were underground, because the Russians were already nearby. Und am 26. Jänner 1945...Goldfeld [damals im Landkreis Bromberg] genannt...die Russen haben uns befreit.

EL: Freed by the Russians.

ED: Und am 20. Februar sind wir weggegangen von Goldfeld, weil die erste Armee, die gekommen ist, waren polnische Offiziere, und viele waren, als Polen vom Blitzkrieg überrannt worden ist...sind in die russische Armee gegangen. Und sie haben uns gesagt, wir sollen verschwinden, bevor die Russen kommen.

SH: So, on 26th January, you were freed by the Russians, and when did you leave? You said another date?

EL: What was the date after that, Mom?

ED: I do not know. I have only here, that I left Bromberg on 6th April, 1945. And that was already, I believe...that was already near the demise of the Third Reich.

SH: What place did you leave in Poland on April 6th?

ED: Bromberg.

SH: How did you get from Thorn to Bromberg? With the army that freed you?

ED: We went...the German army left, and we followed behind...behind the German army.

EL: In what? On your feet?

ED: On our feet. If we could get there...what do you call it?

EL: Kohlewagen?

ED: A *Kohlewagen*...we climbed up...I told you, I had an education that you do not get so fast...or a *Viehwagen*.

SH: But you were not with German SS or anything anymore, after the front moved? You were with Russian or Polish soldiers?

ED: No, not the SS...we were liberated by the Russian army.

SH: So you went with them and followed as the front progressed?

ED: Because my mother badly wanted to go back to Vienna, because if my father would be alive, that is where he would be. And if anybody from America...they would look for us there. So my mother wanted...that we should go back to Vienna to see what was left.

SH: Okay. We moved kind of fast now from leaving Vienna to there, so we go back a bit, and then I can ask some more detailed questions. You said on 13th December, you had to leave your apartment?

ED: Yes.

SH: December, 1939 or 1940?

ED: When I left the apartment in Vienna? To go to the Sperlschule?

SH: Yes.

ED: 13. Dezember 1941.

SH: And then in February, 1941, you were taken to Riga. So a bit later?

ED: Yes.

1/01:05:08

SH: I was a bit confused, because earlier you said 1942. So it was 1941 then, I guess. [Anmerkung der Redaktion: Der einzige Transport von Wien nach Riga in dem Zeitraum ging am 6. Februar 1942.]

ED: No, I said...this is from memory. As I said, my mother made me destroy it, because I even said that our *SS-Oberscharführer* liked to train his little dog to bite us in the ankles.

SH: So your father also came back from forced labor in [19]41?

ED: From forced labor, and he went with us, and he was murdered in Riga.

SH: What happened between 13th December and 6th February, after you had reported to Sperlschule? Where were you? In a prison in Vienna?

ED: No...yes, we were incarcerated. It was in the classrooms, I do not know how many of us--

SH: --and there you stayed on the mattress?

ED: Yes.

SH: Okay, now I get it. And then, on 12th February, you got to Riga?

ED: Yes, and there we were brought to the ghetto, and next to us, Jewish men were kept. And they were told that, because we came, their wives were murdered. They said, the streets ran with blood, and they hated our guts...because they said, we were at fault that their families were murdered. That is what the SS told them. They did not know that we did not want to be there. Of course you got your hair *geschoren*, you got into a prisoner dress...I am only sorry that I left mine in Vienna, that I forgot.

SH: You do not have it anymore?

ED: No, and I regret it.

SH: Can you tell us more about what was going on in Riga? Are there any events that you would want to elaborate on?

ED: You tried to work. If you did not work, you were already dead. So I became a welder. Did you know, you can...when you are very hungry, you can take a piece and put it on the welding iron, and it tastes like nuts. Do not try it now! You get very *erfinderisch*.

EL: Inventive.

ED: Inventive, thank you! [Alle lachen.] She speaks German, only not grammatically correct.

EL: I can translate.

SH: Would you like to introduce yourself? Just a few words for the tape?

EL: Sure! I am Elaine Dreyfuss, Edith Dreyfuss' daughter.

SH: Okay, that is good enough, thank you!

EL: Anything else?

SH: That is alright. Did you work in a factory, or in the ghetto there?

ED: In a factory, AEG...*Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft*. That was after, when we were in Kaiserwald, *im KZ*. First, we were in the ghetto. My mother--

SH: --first you went to the ghetto. And then you went to Kaiserwald, what was that?

ED: That was the KZ.

SH: Also in Riga?

ED: We were told that where the ghetto was, that was before...Harlem is still too good.

EL: Harlem has regenerated itself.

ED: Das war das Verbrecherviertel. That is the right expression.

EL: Ghetto?

ED: No, the ghetto was created *im Verbrecherviertel*.

SH: On 25th August, you were sent to Kaiserwald? And then, from there, they sent you--

ED: --yes, went to AEG.

SH: A – E – G?

ED: A – E – G.

SH: Okay. Do you know what that stands for?

ED: Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft. I do not know, it was a *jüdisches Unternehmen*, but it was *arisiert*.

SH: And you worked as a welder. What kind of parts would you make?

ED: I understand it was for telephones. I do not know...it was wired. And it was...that is where my eyes got a little bit myopic, because the *Scharführer hat nicht gerne Augengläser gehabt*. You tried not to be noticed, if you possibly could.

1/01:10:12

SH: So you were with your mother at that time?

ED: My father was already dead.

SH: You wrote in the questionnaire that--

ED: --my mother wanted to commit suicide, and I said, I was too young to die. And she felt ashamed, and she suffered good for it, because she gave me the scant food...she gave me part of hers. She was my daughter's size, and when we finished, she weighed about *48 Kilo*.

SH: I think you wrote up your father's story in the questionnaire, of how he had to unload the luggage from the train. Let us maybe go back one step. How was the train ride? Would you like to describe it?

ED: We were...I do not know how many. You could not go out, and as I said, medical help was only to declare people dead.

SH: And then, when you arrived, your father had to stay behind to unload luggage?

ED: Yes, my mother said, "Let us go, Edith!" So we went. And, as I said, somehow they put us into...I do not know how...I was very sick. I had a middle ear infection.

SH: When did you get that, on the train or before?

ED: No, on the train. I got it on the train.

SH: Did you recover from it, if that was possible?

ED: Yes, in the ghetto. There was a Jewish doctor available, and he was allowed to see me...only not on the train. That is how I met Miss Paula Sandor. She was a nurse there.

EL: Who was the lady that recognized me at the airport?

ED: You?

EL: Remember, she thought I was you.

ED: Oh, Rita Hirsch. She was a friend of mine.

SH: You left Kaiserwald, the KZ--

ED: --no, we were shipped out, because the Russians advanced. At the time, I think, the United States had already declared war, and we knew that it was the end.

SH: So you left Kaiserwald, again on a train?

ED: On a *Viehwagen*.

EL: *Viehwagen* is an animal transport.

ED: Kettle cars.

SH: And you were accompanied by SS?

ED: Yes, that was always like that.

SH: You left on 22nd June, 1944, and you arrived in Thorn, Poland, on the 24th. It was like a two day trip--

ED: --and from there, we walked, because there--

SH: --in kettle cars to about where?

ED: To Thorn.

SH: And in Thorn, you stayed in a castle?

ED: No, in a fortress. They did not get out, to work anywhere, because they could not.

SH: So you were just held there? There was no movement?

ED: Yes. But it was a very short time, and then we were in Bromberg. The Russians overran the...it was awful. I did not see it, but my mother said, she went out, and there were all these young boys, dead, in German uniforms. She said it was just awful. They were stiff and dead. And some of them had removed

boots or something. People stole from the corpses. She said it was simply awful. And we stayed with a peasant, who's family had left him, so he would take care of the cow. And the old fool said to the Russians, that he hopes the Germans are coming back. He was very German. My mother said, "He is too old, he does not understand what he is talking about." She saved his life. Can you imagine that? You leave your father for a cow.

SH: That is very hard to imagine.

1/01:15:12

ED: Oh God, did I get sick.

SH: You left Thorn on foot?

ED: Yes, that is what is commonly know as a *Todesmarsch*.

SH: And how far...you got to Bromberg, which the Russians overran.

ED: I do not know. The Russians had it very simple. We Americans had Nurnberg, and we worked with our constitutions. And the Russians said, "Lift your arm! You have a tattoo...shoot you." They expedited justice very fast.

SH: How was the situation in Bromberg, on April 6th, 1945, when the Russians finally arrived? Did the German guards just take off, or did they try to destroy evidence?

ED: I do not want to be so nasty, but whatever they said about us Jews, that was what they were: *feig*.

SH: So did they just run with their own troops or was there a reaction?

ED: They ran, because they were drunk...and they ran. As I said, the only word that can describe them is *feig*. And if a Russian caught them, they handed out justice very fast. [Pause.] That is why I do not understand, why Austria wants us, unless they want to change what I am saying. [Lacht.] Because I would not want all my sins to be recorded.

SH: Well, we can, I guess, try to talk about this later, if you do not mind. What I was going to ask: In Bromberg, how was the actual encounter with the Russian troops? Were you held?

ED: No, the Russians left us, and I was close to sixteen, and I looked like a very young twelve-year-old. And in Russian, a little one is called *malutka*. And *malutka* always got a whole lot from the army's food, because *malutka* should have some more weight.

SH: In Bromberg, did the Russians come when you were already there?

ED: I do not know, I was sick again, and I had hallucinations. I saw my little...what I had in Vienna...a little glass full of orange juice always dancing in front of me. I really had hallucinations. My mother really dragged me, because she said she would not leave me. And as I said, I do not know how we got into that old man's house. I think when you are desperate, you do not ask many questions.

SH: When was that, actually? After or before 6th April, when you were in the old man's house?

ED: That was before April. It must have been between March and April, somewhere. Because this was put together afterwards, so it is not exact.

SH: So it is from your memory, I understand.

EL: I did not know you had it.

ED: By accident...and it would have no interest to you, because I wrote it in German.

SH: Do you think we could get a copy for the archives of your notes?

ED: You could make a copy and send it back to me.

SH: Or you make a copy and send it to us.

EL: Yes, we will send it. Do we get a copy of what you are putting in the archives?

SH: Yes.

1/01:20:02

SH: After the Russians were there, you followed the troops, right?

ED: We followed behind the German army.

SH: You were on foot at that time?

ED: Yes, because before you came to Vienna, the only bridge that was intact, was the Reichsbrücke. All the other bridges were...*am Donaukanal*, if you went, you went down, because you could not arrive over...I forgot which bridge was possible to go over. Ich glaube, die Marienbrücke. You went underneath.

[Übergang/Schnitt.]

SH: One thing that I forgot to ask: When you were on that march from Thorn to Bromberg, were you ever thinking of fleeing, to get away from your guards and take off in some direction? Because I read that is how some survived.

ED: I do not think so. No, because they would shoot. And we did not want to be shot, because you knew it was nearing the end.

SH: Could you be certain at that time, that if the Russians got to you, they would be able to free you?

ED: The Germans were bombed right, left and center. We were standing in a *Bahnhof*, and all of a sudden we heard the bombs coming. I mean...sheer luck that they did not hit us. It was sheer luck...AEG was bombed...they did not bomb the one where we were. I really...it was a matter of luck. My mother was very good, she said, "The more bombs, the better!" And I said, "I do not want to die! I do not want to die!"

SH: Did you receive any food or water on the march, from the Germans?

ED: Not that I remember. When we were allowed after eight hours to rest, maybe we got...I really do not know. I only know that when I saw the peasant's house, he had milk, and on top was *Rahm*, and God, did I get sick from it. My stomach was not used to it. We got *Hühnerfutter*. The soup was made from *Hühnerfutter...in Riga, im KZ*.

SH: How long did it take you to...your mother's objective was to get to Vienna, right?

ED: Yes, the objective was to go back and see who would be left – meaning human beings, not money.

SH: How long did it take you and how did you get there?

ED: I do not know.

SH: Do you know when you approximately arrived in Vienna?

ED: Yes, I know we went over the Reichsbrücke, but I do not know quite when.

SH: The month, at least?

ED: Do I have it here? I know that my grandfather lived...had the store in Engerthstraße, and that is near the Reichsbrücke. I do not know if you are familiar with it. His store was already made into an apartment. In other words, the door was cemented over or whatever you call it. And the shoemaker with whom my grandparents were good, Andrassy, was still there. Do you still have time to take the bus?

SH: It is alright, we have some more time. I think we have another half hour, that should be enough. When you finally got to Vienna, what was the situation, and where did you stay at?

ED: As I said, we went to...we always went to the Jewish *Kultusgemeinde* or whatever, and we got a slip of paper that allowed us to use the train, without paying. And when we arrived in Vienna, they brought us into the Tempelgasse, and we stayed there, and--

SH: --so where did you stay in Tempelgasse? In a synagogue?

ED: No, it...*in der Kristallnacht*, they burned down the synagogues. And the Tempelgasse had a beautiful synagogue, but the house where the...what do you call it...the servant and the rabbi...the personnel live, the house was still there, in some condition. And we were put there, until we would...and we were told we could find an apartment, and go to the *Wohnungsamt* and see that...I do not know what you call it...*uns anmelden*...whatever, I do not...

1/01:25:36

And as I said, you could get...we got, in the Servitengasse, *eine Wohnung*, because *Leutnant Hughert ist zum Amt gegangen und hat gesagt, er will die Wohnung, die Wohnung ist frei, er braucht sie*. Er war ein Wiener auch, so hat er kein Problem gehabt, sich zu verständigen, und wir haben die Wohnung bekommen. Sie haben ihn sogar zum Major erhöht.

SH: When did your mother find out that your father was not actually in Vienna?

ED: My mother did not want to declare my father dead until she got...he was *Handelsangestellter*, and *sie hat eingereicht um die Pension und um Wiedergutmachung*. Damit sie die Pension bekommt, musste sie meinen Vater für tot erklären.

SH: And then she did it?

ED: Yes, because she had to. And she ended up here, and when she came over here, she had a heart attack.

SH: After you got to Vienna, you had your apartment?

ED: Yes, in Servitengasse.

SH: In Servitengasse. How long did you stay in Vienna?

ED: I went one year to the *Wirtschaftsschule der Handelsakademie und im zweiten Jahr war ich schon weg*. Ich habe...habe ich hier die Ankunft in Amerika?

SH: You attended *Handelsschule*, and what was that again? Wirtschaftsakademie?

ED: No, it was called *Wirtschaftsschule der Handelsakademie*. Handelsakademie haben sie uns nicht aufnehmen können, weil wir nicht genug...*we did not have enough previous schooling*. And the *Wirtschaftsschule* was a two year course. And my uncle wrote, "What are you going to do with shorthand in German and typing? See that Edith gets a *Handwerk*." So, Edith was sent first for Swedish massage, where my mother paid for twelve week courses. I was sent to hairdresser's school, and I came here and I made money with both.

SH: So you attended school in Vienna for a year, roughly?

ED: Roughly a year, yes.

SH: You said something about *Hauptschule*. How long were you there? For like a day?

ED: One day! Can you imagine somebody, who come from where I come, turning up to... So I met my girlfriend from before, whose mother was *Christin, und hat einen Juden geheiratet*. And afterwards she became...returned back to Catholicism, and kept three people on her ration card. So I saw Erna, and Erna said, "I am going to the *Wirtschaftsschule*!" I said, "How did you do that?" So she said, "When you come from...when you had no schooling during Hitler, they take you on three months' probation. If you can do well, you stay."

SH: So that is essentially what you did too?

ED: Yes. It was not very hard. Hitler was more interested in having his young people reared how to kill. After all, you needed soldiers for those blitzkriegs. Do you know how many he murdered? You should not say only the Jews. They should consider the Russians, Americans, the English, the Germans, the Poles...he murdered them all, because those were senseless wars.

SH: How was the decision to go to America? How did that come about?

ED: Because displaced persons, Truman declared, could come without a quota, as long as they had a relative. So my uncle, of course, vouched for us.

SH: So you and your mother decided to go to America as displaced persons?

ED: Yes.

SH: Do you know when you arrived in America?

ED: No, we were on route very long, because they had a strike in the United States, and we did not get it. Oh, in New York, I arrived on 14th March, 1947. We were in Bremen until February 27th. We left Vienna the 14th January, 1947, we arrived in Munich 18th January, we left Munich the 22nd, we arrived the 24th in Bremen, and we left Bremen on the 27th. And as I said, it was a troop transporter. I think it was called *SS Marine Flasher*.

1/01:31:21

And everybody was seasick, but I was not. And if you were seasick, you got an orange, and I wanted an orange, so I claimed I was seasick. And what I did not know, I got a pill for the seasickness. The stewardess wanted to get rid of us, so she gave us sleeping pills with the orange.

SH: When you first arrived in the US...why were there these delays on your journey? Why did you have to stay in Munich, and Bremen, and so forth?

ED: It was after the war. In Bremen, we thought it was...the railroad was going there, on top. It was not the railroad, it was the houses...the houses were bombed, and lorries were put on top, so they could get rid of the debris.

SH: So it was just not easy to travel?

ED: Absolutely not. And you travelled in transports, really.

SH: When you finally arrived in New York, where--

ED: --my uncle was there to receive us, and he did not even let me finish my chocolate ice-cream, and I wanted it so bad. [Alle lachen.] He then took us to New Haven. They did not allow...if you had a relative in the United States...okay, let us say this: It was arranged either by HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] or by the *Joint Distribution Committee*. They were Jewish organizations, that paid our trips, that paid for our transports, and that saw to it that we got with our relatives. And if we could not get with our relatives, they saw to it that we got to hotels. Since my uncle was there, we went to Connecticut...New Haven.

SH: Could you maybe sum up your education here, and your professional life?

ED: My education here is, that I went to high school, I graduated high school--

SH: --when did you graduate?

ED: One year later...it must have been [19]49.

SH: [19]49.

ED: Or something like that. I do not know.

SH: Did you speak English before you came?

ED: My mother had me...when I was in Vienna, while I was at the *Wirtschaftsschule*, my mother paid for French, piano lessons, and English...private.

SH: So you know some English?

ED: You can figure out...a cigarette was more important, saccharin was gold...never mind the *Schilling*.

JD: And how was she able to pay for those lessons?

ED: Yes, she worked for the *Joint*, and she got paid with dollars converted into *Schilling*. We had money at that time.

SH: That was after you had come back to Vienna, when she worked there?

ED: As soon as the Jewish organizations could get through, they sent whatever they could.

SH: To Vienna?

ED: Yes. It was the same with the Ethiopian Jews, they gave 500,000 dollars like nothing, because we wanted them out from Ethiopia.

1/01:35:00

SH: You graduated from high school, that is where you stopped--

ED: --high school, yes. Then I got married. And my husband said, I should go and...we belonged to a synagogue. In America, the social life goes through churches and...he wanted me to take lessons there. And I said, "Before I go to those glorified Bible courses, I go back to..." Because I went at night, until I married, to college. So I transferred my credits, and I went to *Rutgers* [University]. I got my bachelor's at *Rutgers*, and then I went to *Campbell* [University] to get my master's. As I said, for the PhD, I did not even want to go anymore, I just wanted to prove a point. And, as I said, if you ever get married and your wife tells you, "Give me 50,000 Euros so I can go to the United States, up on the Empire State Building", I am sure you will tell her my story.

SH: I am not sure if I...when did you first go back to Vienna then?

ED: When? From the camp, or afterwards?

SH: After, when you already were in the US.

ED: I had a cousin, with very nice Jewish children. They could not go to the circus. She took me, and it was with her. She was a *Mischling*. My aunt was converted. And she took me, and when I could not get any news from her, I wanted to see what it was, and she had...what do you call it...dementia. She remembered everything from before. And this is how I started to go to Vienna yearly.

SH: Because I was kind of confused...did you ever go to Austria to study at university?

ED: No. Only the *Wirtschaftsschule*--

SH: --because you have a degree in Austrian history, so I was a bit confused by that.

ED: No, the reason that I have studied the Habsburgs is only, because I wanted America...first, they said, you have to have a major. Good, I figured, I had an A in history, so history was my major. They said, "You get political science as your minor." Good. Then, I wanted to have American history, because after all... – "No, you speak perfect German, and you can read German, the US field is overrun", so I got the Habsburgs, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That is why we are so good friends, Maria Theresia and I. [Lacht.]

SH: Maybe you want to sum up your professional life a little bit?

ED: My professional life? My husband lost the last job he had when he was 40, because there were problems in the United States, economically. He said, "No longer", and that he would open his own business. So he could not afford a secretary, so I became the secretary, and now I am the secretary to my son.

SH: And what business did he open up?

ED: Metal finishing.

SH: Metal finishing?

ED: You see this? You put something on top to protect the metal.

SH: Oh, I see. And the business still does that?

ED: My son took it over when my husband died of cancer, when he was 59. And my son was 27. And she never wanted anything to do with it.

EL: I have my own business.

SH: And it is still metal finishing?

EL: Yes, and she still works full-time.

SH: Okay. Because, you remember, when I called you, there was a workplace--

ED: --I told you, I play the rich bitch in Vienna. [Alle lachen.]

SH: Okay, I see.

ED: You would not want to...you are driving, I do not pay the gas, but when we go to dinner, that is mine. And I tell him, "You are no better than my daughter." [Alle lachen.]

SH: Alright, so I think this is the last point that we could address: What do you think about how Austria did after the war and how Austria dealt with what had happened?

ED: It is very unflattering, I would not say it.

SH: No, please go ahead. This is about your opinion.

ED: What I call Austria? Austria is the prostitute who yelled, "Rape!" It is very unflattering. I enjoyed going those six days, but six days, I have enough. But, as I said, maybe they will not let me in this time, who knows.

SH: And do you think Austria made any progress since the [19]50s or [19]60s?

ED: I think, Austria is enormously bright, that it does not want to wage war, that it wants to be the Austrian Switzerland. But I think, Austria capitalized on [Kurt] Schuschnigg...*Gott...wie hat er es gesagt...Gott...something Österreich.*

1/01:40:20

Schuschnigg hat etwas gesagt. And that, I think...Austria...you should see...I do not know if they will allow that film in Vienna, in Austria.

SH: *Woman in Gold*? It has been shown there. Definitely. I do not know anyone who has seen it, but they definitely show it.

ED: I saw it here.

SH: Because I asked, do you think they made any progress?

ED: I do not mind anymore. When I used to go, when we on our trips, with our *American Express*...we went every year to Europe. And if I was in Austria, I became belligerent. If I saw a dirt spot, "Come up and clean...*der Saujud', er lässt keinen Fleck am Boden.*" I was belligerent. Now, the people who could have hurt me – I am 85 –, most of them are dead. And why carry on for the next generation? Like my friend Ralli in Frankfurt...he went three months to Israel to work, in order to...what do you call it, what Ralli did...to make atonement for what was done. I said, "Ralli, you were two years old! You are not at fault!" I do not believe in generational...so as I [unklar], I enjoy very much, my cousin by marriage. The other one is very upset that a Jew came out of the family. Der arme Doktor Löffler. And her kids are awfully nice. Why should I carry a grudge? What can a one-year-old do? The great-grandmother...and everybody was not...you could not say...I only said, when I was told not everyone was like this...I said, "You always said, 'All the Jews'. You never said, 'This Jew did it'." When a Jew did it, the Jews did it. I said, "Now, the others did it." It is always quid pro quo.

SH: Alright, any more questions?

ED: I am sorry, I am turning to him. I am not a public speaker.

JD: No, that is absolutely fine.

ED: Although I speak a lot.

JD: How many time have you been to Austria since you came to the US?

ED: I go every year, six days. My cousin Adia, we did not hear from her, and all of a sudden, after two years, she sent us a card as if she had talked to us yesterday. And I said, "What is wrong?" And I got her on the phone, and she is simply demented. And since then...then, when one year, when she was not well, her niece by marriage...that is my cousin Gerli...wrote me, and we met at the [Hotel] *Imperial im Café*.

EL: And it became yearly.

ED: It became a yearly...if you are in Vienna...and I am still living...if you are in Vienna, Memorial Day, here, on Monday, Memorial Day weekend...I am there from Monday to Sunday, *Hotel Imperial*.

EL: Every year the same, Memorial Day weekend.

ED: Yes, Hotel Imperial.

EL: Tuesday, Wednesday, pick her up.

ED: I got into *Hotel Imperial*, I said, "How is the [Hotel] *Intercontinental*, Adi?" She said, "I am salesman, go there." I said, "How do you feel about the *Imperial*?" She said, "The *oberen 10.000*." [Lacht.] – "Aha, that is for me."

SH: Alright, so would you like to ask the last question?

JD: Yes, sure. Is there any kind of message that you would like to leave for Americans, for Austrians or for the younger generation?

ED: Do not wage war.

SH: Great, alright.

JD: Thank you very much, Mrs. Dreyfuss, for your openness and your participation in the *Austrian Heritage Collection*.

ED: You are welcome! And as I said, if you are in Vienna, and I am in Vienna, please come and have *Jause mit mir...nicht im Restaurant, nur im Café*.

SH: Okay, we will. Thank you so much!

[Ende des Interviews.]

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