HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

INGE KARO

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Janice Booker
Date: October 10, 1984

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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IK - Inge Karo[1] [interviewee]
JB - Janice Booker [interviewer]
Date: October 10, 1984

Tape one, side one:

JB: Tape one, side one of an interview with Inge Karo on October 10, 1984 interviewed by Janice Booker. May I ask you to repeat: where were you born, when and a little bit about your family?

IK: O.K. I was born in Essen, Germany in 1926, and my family, I guess you would call them an upper middle-class family. My father was part-owner of a store that imported feathers and made them into quilts, sewed them into quilts, and they sold to individuals but mainly I think they sold to hotels and institutions and things like that, the quilts and pillows, and I think he imported them from China mainly. And my mother didn't work and we belonged to the synagogue in Essen and...

JB: When did you come to the United States?

IK: We came to the United States in December of '39. The war started when Germany invaded Poland in September of '39 and we came in December, so we were one of the last to leave.

JB: Before that time what was your life like, before the Nazis came to power in Germany?

IK: Well, of course, very early—I don't remember that much because I was very young—but I think that we had a very pleasant life, a very good life. My parents were comfortable. We had a live-in maid, as most people did in Europe at that time, and my parents went out a lot and traveled a lot and we had a very comfortable life; but that changed. I don't remember the exact date, but I think by 1934 or '35 that changed.

JB: We'll get into how that changed. Did your family experience anti-Semitism before Hitler in any kind of way that you remember?

IK: I wouldn't have known. I would have been too young and they would have sheltered me from it anyhow.

JB: Did you feel that you were generally sheltered by them?

IK: Probably.

JB: You said that you belonged to a synagogue. Was that standard for your family?

IK: Well, I think probably both my grandparents were more Orthodox than my parents were.

JB: Like here.

[1]née Heiman.

IK: But, it was the thing to do to belong to a synagogue; it was the way the system worked in the part of Germany where I lived; each religion had their own school, but we had no choice about it. It was a state school; your taxes went to that school. You had no choice about it, and it was like a combination of parochial and public school. All the Jewish children went to a Jewish school and the Jews were taxed for that. It was not voluntary, and every Saturday after services we were required, they took attendance and we went for the religious school in the synagogue. You had to go; it was part of your school attendance that you went to services, and after services you went and you had Hebrew school on Saturday after services. And it was a very large synagogue and I remember that for the High Holidays my father used to go in top-hat and tails, with the other men.

JB: Really!

IK: And the women sat upstairs; even though it was a Conservative synagogue the women sat upstairs.

JB: It was hard to give that part up, I guess, even if it was not Orthodox.

IK: Yes, well like here they made their own rules. They had an organ, but the women sat upstairs.

JB: What about organizations? In what way did your family live a Jewish life, outside belonging to the synagogue and the schools?

IK: I really don't know whether they belonged to an organization or not but they were always very charitable and my father had somehow or another gotten a reputation that if there were any itinerant Jews in town—there used to be a lot of peddlers and traveling salesmen—and they always knew that if they needed anything to go to my father's store and they sort of, one told the other. They used to call them "*schnorrers*"—I don't know if you know the Jewish expression *schnorrers*—and he got a reputation and my parents did a lot of good. And when, for instance, I don't know the details but there was a time before things got real bad in Germany, when already some eastern European Jews were persecuted and fled to Germany, you know they somehow or other, and I know that the Jewish community in Essen was organized to help the refugees, the eastern European Jews. And I know my parents were very active in that because my father didn't have a car and he didn't drive, but he had a chauffeur who drove the company car and I remember that he, I forget where he brought them, but he transported a lot of these people someplace and they slept in the basement of the synagogue until they moved on to...

JB: So there was a Jewish life; there was no question in your family about that.

IK: I know that they belonged to a Jewish *B'nai Brith* which was also much more social than the *B'nai Brith* is here. You had to be a, people were actually black-balled if they didn't want them; it was a much more social thing than it is here. The children, we had a Jewish Community Center where the children went, and I was very much Zionistic in those days and my parents were afraid that I might go to Palestine so they didn't let me join the Zionist Youth Organization but there was another youth organization, set up purposely I think to counter the Zionist organizations, and it was a Jewish youth

organization that didn't have a Zionist component. They had either a black flag with a white circle or a white flag with a black circle and we used to, and they taught us of course German and Jewish songs, and we went camping and things like that, but the emphasis was not on *aliyah*. You know my parents told me that's what I should join, because they didn't want me to get too influenced.

JB: And you listened of course.

IK: Well, I was very little.

JB: Did any men in your family serve in the national army?

IK: Well, my father did. My father served in the First World War and I think this was his undoing; he was decorated and he felt that they would not do anything to a veteran with such distinction as he had.

JB: Did your family speak Yiddish in addition to German?

IK: No.

JB: Just German.

IK: Um hum.

JB: Do you remember how you and the members of your family reacted to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933?

IK: Not really.

JB: You were too young.

IK: I was about five years old.

JB: That would be too young to remember.

IK: I don't know if it was as early as 1933, but I think my mother was uneasy much before my father.

JB: Why do you think that was?

IK: I don't know, maybe she was more pessimistic or more aware of things.

JB: It may have been because he felt protected by his service in the First War.

IK: Maybe, and he was, my father was a very good person and sometimes when people are really very good they don't think that anybody else can do something really bad. I'm not trying to say that my mother wasn't, but my father was especially, was very kind-hearted.

JB: Did anyone in your family have any contact with the Council of German Jews?

IK: I don't know.

JB: Do you remember, or I guess you were too young, about the boycott in 1933 or the Aryan Paragraph?

IK: Well, I don't know whether it refers to that specifically but if you want me to go into how things gradually changed as a result of the Nuremberg Laws and things like that...

JB: That was my next question: about the passage of the Nuremberg Laws that was in 1935 and how your life changed.

IK: I don't know what was in response to which law and exactly the time-frame, but one of the earlier things that they did is they said that no Jewish people could have a live-in gentile maid because they were afraid the Jewish men would sleep with them and pollute the Aryan race, so we lost the maid. And then all Jews (this may not be the order in which it happened but it was the order in which I remember) for instance, we had to all turn in our radios because we were not allowed to have radios. We had to turn in all our silverware and sterling things and jewelry and watches. We were not allowed to go to the movies or to the theater and of course you were not allowed to travel and the movement was just very much restricted. One thing I particularly remember because I used to read a lot and I was forever going to the library, and they passed a law that Jews were not allowed to have library cards. I had to go to the library and turn my library card in, and the librarian gave me an argument because she knew me and she knew I read, and it was very painful for me; I had to tell her I had to turn in my library card because I am Jewish and I am not allowed to have a library card anymore.

JB: How did you feel?

IK: Well, I felt very bad. But the one interesting thing is because they had this terrific—as you may know from newsreels—but they had this terrific propaganda, they had the Hitler *Jugend* and the BDM, which is *Bund Deutscher Mädchen*, which was for the girls, and they had a lot of pageantry and flags and banners, and the youth organizations had nice uniforms. And on the one hand I knew that they were persecuting the Jews; on the other hand it was all so appealing that I was really very sad that I could not belong to the Nazi youth organization, and that I couldn't take part in the parades and in the pageantry and the ceremonies, because especially in the early days the P.R. was so great and so glamorous and so attractive and there was so much propaganda, like all the children's stories being published would be stories about the wonderful things they did at these youth camps, so that if you were so indoctrinated by this even as a Jewish child, that I think if I hadn't been Jewish I am sure that I would have joined.

JB: That is understandable.

IK: It was all so attractive.

JB: And when you had to do all of this, turn in your library card and have all of these restrictions, did your father still feel safe?

IK: Well, I don't really, again, they didn't really talk to us that much about it, but after a while things got to the point where they really couldn't hide it any more. Now for one thing when this Crystal Night was, in November when they burned this magnificent beautiful synagogue down and destroyed my father's store. And then some time later (I don't know whether it was before or after) but at first my parents lived in an apartment and then when things started to deteriorate they moved into the...A part-owner in my father's business had a mansion in the suburban part of Essen and my parents moved in there with him. And one day the Nazis came and said, "You have a choice: you either sell us this house for five *marks* (or some ridiculous sum) or we are going to burn it down." So of

course they signed the bill of sale and sold the house. And when they were threatening to burn our house down, across the street from us was the family of a Dutch diplomat lived there, so they invited us over and said we could stay in their house because we would be safe there because they wouldn't burn a Dutch house; and unfortunately once Holland got invaded that whole family got killed too. They had a daughter of about 40 or so, among the first ones killed.[2] Then another thing that happened was that some time in the early 1930's my father had three brothers who lived where he was born, and who were, some of them were cattle dealers and some were butchers and they all of a sudden they were[3] on our doorstep because they had to run away from home because they would have been killed. There were roving gangs of farmers who were beating up the Jewish men, and they didn't realize. They thought it was just an outbreak of local anti-Semitism, and they came to my parents and they thought they would be safe there. And they didn't realize that, because somehow or another these things weren't publicized so that when something happened in your town you thought it was just happening to you. You didn't realize that it was all over the country until things got real bad and they thought that they could come to my father's place and be safe and they didn't realize that things were no longer safe at our house either. And then, the other thing they did, we had a very nice school and then they told us we couldn't go to that school any more. And then they sent us to a school, oh someplace on the outskirts of town and we had to take the trolley-car to the end of the line to get there. And when we got off the trolley-car we found that there were hundreds of people lining the street, and the reason they were waiting for us is they had never seen a Jewish person before, and they had heard only, they weren't vicious or anything. They were just, at that point they were just curious and they had seen these propaganda cartoons where they made the Jews with the long nose, and with the horns and hunchbacks and God knows what else and they had all come out. It was a big event in their life to see the Jews, what the Jews looked like, but they didn't do anything to us. They were just curious at that point.

JB: Did you ever see any of those propaganda cartoons?

IK: Oh yes, they had, you couldn't avoid it. They had big, I don't know what you would call it, like frames on poles several feet big. They had these propaganda posters on every block and enlarged so everybody could see them. And then after that then for a while school, we went to that school and then, they closed school all together and for the last couple of years in Germany I didn't go to school at all.

JB: During this period of time when you and your family were experiencing all of this and seeing the cartoons and having your school closed down, did you think about leaving Germany?

IK: Yes, we thought about leaving Germany fairly early, but it wasn't that easy because the first thing you had to do was you had to get a number. It wasn't like now where they bring the people over; you had to get a number from the American Consul and when

[2]Editorial correction by interviewee: This should be 14.
[3]Editorial correction by interviewee: Only one brother came to Essen.

your number came up then you could emigrate. And by the time our number came up they had made it more difficult and they had said you had to have an affidavit from somebody in the United States that they would be responsible for you in case you didn't find work or got sick, so that you would never have to go on welfare. So since we didn't know too many people in the United States that was rather difficult. But there were wealthy American Jews who took a chance and issued these affidavits and as far as I know, none of them, it never cost any of them anything. In fact, somebody in Chicago gave my parents an affidavit for the whole family and of course we never asked him for any money. And then what happened was you had to go to the consulate, which was in a different city, and it was already by that time very hazardous to travel. And we, all our papers were in order, and our number came up and the visa was satisfactory and my parents bought the ticket. And they bought the tickets from a Jewish travel agent (and this again is a good example of how the German mind works): this Jewish travel agent was a terrible person. He took the money for tickets, not only from my parents but from a lot of other people, and he never bought the tickets. And the Germans, when they found out about it, prosecuted, they tried him, prosecuted him and put him in jail.

JB: That's amazing.

IK: So anyhow, so then, by the time my parents, you know, found out that they didn't really have tickets, then they upped the ante again and they said, "You have to pay for your tickets in American dollars." Well, where were my parents going to get American dollars from? Because by that time my father had long lost his business. He had lost the house. They had taken, they took all the bank accounts. They stopped, whatever investments you had they stopped, so where were we going to get tickets from? And this is why we left when, why we already almost didn't get out, because of that man.

JB: During this period of time, how did you personally react? Did you think that this was the worst that could ever happen to you as a child?

IK: I had a mixed reaction which I suppose is natural for a child. We had a beautiful home and I didn't want to leave. Now I didn't, the thought of leaving your friends and leaving your home and emigrating I didn't like. But on the other hand, even though my parents tried to protect me, you couldn't help but know that the threats were very real, because people went, by that time the concentration camps were only a rumor. We didn't really, every once in a while the word "concentration camp" was mentioned, but what you pictured real, you didn't picture what it actually was. You just pictured some place where people were being interned like a jail, not the, you didn't know that people were going to be exterminated, at that point. But people were arrested. Once my father had to hide because somebody had, a gentile had heard that the Gestapo was looking for him, so my father hid. And then towards the end my mother always had us dressed, you know, she wanted to do something, poor woman, but what could she do? So she came up with the idea that in case they sent us some place cold we had to always wear three or four sets of underwear and extra sweaters, so that if we couldn't go home and pack at least we would

be warm. And towards the end the Nazis moved into this house but they let us stay in two rooms until we emigrated. So the Nazis were living in most of the house and we had, four of us had two rooms and use of the kitchen where we stayed until we could emigrate. So you couldn't help but notice. And of course you had to be very careful if you went out that people didn't know you were Jewish. And it was funny, I had very long braids and once some man stopped me on the street and complimented me and said I looked like a German girl is supposed to look, because that was the fashion. The youth organizations all wore braids. Anyway, we didn't have school, and there were food shortages.

JB: What did you do?

IK: They tried to have some of the teachers teach us but it didn't work out too well.

JB: So, what did you do with your time?

IK: I really don't remember. They did try to have classes for us, and you know there was a great fever in getting ready for the emigration. You got a lot of advice on what to take and what not to take. And I know my parents, so I would have a usable skill (which was probably the worst thing they could have done because I am very inept when it comes to sewing), they sent me to an old lady who taught me how to make artificial flowers out of material so that I would have a skill. My mother learned how to make candy, so that when she came to the United States she could make a living making candy.

JB: Did you have grandparents?

IK: Yes, my mother's parents were still alive.

JB: Were they going to come with you?

IK: That was a very sad case. My grandmother fortunately died before things got too bad. My grandfather, who was born in the United States because my great-grand-parents emigrated to the United States (my grandfather was the youngest child, he was born when they were up in years), and when they got old, they got homesick and they wanted to go back to Germany and since he was still a child they took him back. And because he served in the Germany Army they couldn't let him into the United States. So, it was very, very sad that he was stuck and he was about 70 then and what could my parents do? It was either stay with him and all of us die, or go leave with the children and you know, leave him, because they could not get him out. And he was sent to a concentration camp and died.

JB: Do you remember feeling frightened during this period of time?

IK: Sometimes, but I think it really wasn't real. Now one thing that we all told each other is that they would run after us and call us dirty Jew and our answer always was, "I am not dirty." In other words, we were taught that if somebody calls you a Jew, that is not an insult, but if they call you dirty that is an insult.

JB: During the period from 1933 to 1938 did your family have any contact with non-Jews and how were they, how did they behave?

IK: Well, my father had some contact because he had non-Jewish employees. And they sometimes at great risks to themselves they did what they could, but they couldn't do much because they were not influential people and they had to be very careful, but this is for instance how he was warned, how my father was warned that the Gestapo was looking for him, by one of the employees. And they would sometimes try to bring us some food, to help in what way they could. It wasn't much, but I think the social acquaintances they didn't have any contact with. Because people, I can't necessarily blame them because you had to be so careful because the children were taught to spy on their parents and the neighbors were taught to spy on the neighbors and if you had Jewish, contact with any Jews, *you* might get killed. So we really didn't have that much.

JB: What happened to your family during Crystal Night?

IK: Well, of course my father was affected very dramatically because he was in the store and they utterly destroyed the store. And then, of course once they burned the synagogue everybody in the Jewish community heard about that. And then they also, I don't think that was the day they came to burn the house down but a lot of my parents' friends they came to the apartment and they beat them up and threw them down the stairs and that happened to my father's brothers.

JB: After that time was your father able to work?

IK: You know, I don't know whether he ran the store for the Nazis, because the store was taken over too. Now whether he had to run the store for the Nazis or he was just at home, I really don't know.

JB: How did you support yourselves?

IK: Well, everybody as much as you could. You took your money and you stowed it away before they closed your bank account because it was a progression. They started out with little things like the radios, and people could read the handwriting on the wall. So as much as people could, you took money out and hid it away and things like that.

JB: After the invasion of Poland, did that change your family's situation any?

IK: Well, first of all we realized that it was very urgent and that even before the invasion of Poland we had a total black-outs under war conditions—not just the Jews, but everybody. We had total blackouts. You had to have an air raid shelter in your house and they came to inspect it, that you had, you had to have sandbags. You had to have the windows blacked out. You had to have supplies, and almost every night you spent in the air raid shelter. Now in those days the British were stupid; they had air raids and instead of dropping bombs, they dropped leaflets. But of course when the siren goes off in the middle of the night and you go in the air raid shelter, you don't know what they are dropping. I know when we first came to the United States we lived in New York for a little while and as you may know, in New York there are sirens going off in the street every five minutes, and it took us a long time before we didn't react to the sirens. And the food shortages, there were food shortages.

JB: What did you do about them?

IK: We really couldn't do anything about it. Nobody could, and this was not just Jews. Nobody had any, I mean, unless you had an in with the Nazis or something. Everybody was in the same boat as far as that goes.

JB: Tell me about the emigration, how you found out that you could leave, and that whole process.

IK: Well again, I don't know all the details but the Jewish newspapers and the Jewish community had, you know, they publicized it, whether they sent out bulletins or they had meetings, everybody towards the end, everybody was all wound up in emigration. A lot of people went to Palestine and some people went to Latin America. And this was the whole topic of conversation: how to, and what your number was, whether you could get an affidavit. And there was a great deal of fear. When you had to travel to another city to talk to the American Consulate, they rejected people under the most awful pretexts, that you, really it was very capricious. So, it was a very frightening thing when you had to talk to the American Consul, whether they were going to accept you or not, because they really did not, you know, it was completely up to his own discretion. If he didn't like the way you looked he could think up something and say you couldn't come to the United States because... And then as I say, everybody was trying to figure out how... In the beginning you could send money to the United States but not towards the end, so some people sent money to the United States. And you got a great deal of conflicting advice of should you take your furniture, should you not take your furniture, what kind of furniture should you take. And people were trying to take things with the idea that once they got to the United States they could sell it so they would have some money. And this, everybody, this was a consuming thing, besides trying to avoid getting arrested or beaten up. The only other topic of conversation was how you could manage to get the necessary papers to get out, and what you should do so once you got out you could make a living.

JB: Did everyone you knew want to come to America?

IK: No, because a lot of them wanted to go to Palestine and did go to Palestine.

JB: How did you finally find out that you could emigrate and what did you do? How soon were you able to?

IK: Well, once you got your visa from the Consul, now, I don't know whether, it probably came in the mail but I really don't know, because now again, these were the things that the adults took care of themselves. I mean, I knew what our number was and I suppose we heard from the United States, from people in the United States when we had gotten the visa. And when my mother's brother finally managed to borrow money from somebody so we could, who had already emigrated to the United States ahead of us, he got the money from someone. Somewhere he borrowed money to pay for our tickets in dollars. So once we got, I suppose once we actually had the visa, I think we had the visa before we actually had the tickets. Then it was just a question of, once we got the dollars, of buying the first available tickets and leaving. And actually we left from Holland. And do you want to know about that trip?

JB: Sure.

IK: I don't know the mechanics of how we were notified. I really don't know. So, we had put what things we still had left, they put into huge wooden, huge wooden crates, boxes, room-size crates which were called lifts. And the Germans were very particular about what you were allowed to take and they had inspectors there watching you pack. And while you were packing in these lifts they would take things out that they thought might be valuable or that they didn't want to go out and the rest you were allowed to take. And the lifts of course were shipped separately, and with my parents' luck when the harbor, where they were, got bombed, that they were all burned up so we never got any of that stuff. And we just took the suitcases that we could carry and we took the train to Holland, and which of course also already was under wartime condition because Germany was already at war with Poland by that time. And when we got to Holland we stopped at some kind of a displaced persons camp in Holland for Jews and visited those people. And...

JB: [unclear]

IK: No, so those, I don't know, somehow the Jews were emigrating. I don't know why these Jews had to stay there, whether they didn't have papers. And the Dutch-

Tape one, side two:

JB: This is tape one, side two of an interview with Inge Karo.

IK: They were refugees but it was the Dutch somehow. I don't know whether they were in transit or whether they didn't have papers or what it was. Anyhow, it was a camp. I remember that my father had a cousin (a branch of our family was Dutch and they came to see us off) and he was in the Dutch Army and, you know, certain things stick in your mind. And he said, "Don't worry, the Germans will never invade Holland, because as soon as we see them cross the border we will open the dikes and we will flood the country and they will never invade Holland."

JB: You had no difficulty at a border crossing or anything like that going from Germany to Holland?

IK: No, because of papers; they wouldn't let you out unless everything was in order and again as long as everything was in order they didn't care how they got rid of the Jews, and they were perfectly happy to let you emigrate as long as they had gotten what they could out of you and your papers were in order. Because even I think during the later stages of the war they were going to let Jews get out of the camp. They didn't care as long as...The difficulty was all before.

JB: You left by ship from Holland?

IK: We left by ship from Holland and of course the ship also was under total blackout conditions. In fact, they didn't even throw the garbage overboard because U-boats could have seen and trailed the ship from the garbage. And a couple of times they had drills; they said there were U-boats and they were afraid the ship would get sunk. And all of the passengers had to go in the lifeboats. It was not a pleasure cruise.

JB: How long did it take?

IK: I think it took about either seven to ten days.

JB: When did you first hear that Jews were being killed in concentration camps?

IK: I think not until we were here during the war. All we heard before, every once in a while there would be a rumor, but we didn't have, I don't think they were exterminating yet in 1939; they were just rounding them up. They hadn't really started to exterminate anybody.

JB: Once you got to this country and until the war was over in '45, did you have contact with other family members and friends in Germany?

IK: No, not until the war was over.

JB: Did you know of any Jewish resistance groups in Germany? Did your family know of any? Did you hear of anything like that?

IK: No.

JB: During this period of time you were still young; later on, do you feel that the experiences that you had strengthened any of your feelings about Zionism, about Judaism, about identification?

IK: In some ways I would feel that if I would not continue to be Jewish, I would play into the Nazis' hands, and of course while I had no control over it, I feel that any Jewish person, younger Jewish person who marries a non-Jew is, in a way, this has sort of from that point of view, it has strengthened it. And as I got older and more idealistic I no longer think that living in Israel for me is realistic; when I was young, I thought it was. And the only other thing it has done for me really is that I don't have a feeling that it can't happen to me, you know, like people usually have, about traffic accidents or disasters, that it always happens to the other person. We lived for too many years, it was too perilous, and you were all those years of constantly looking over your shoulder and not knowing when you came back whether your parents would be there or whether somebody would come in the middle of the night and take you away, and then your friends and acquaintances disappearing, that I think creates a feeling of insecurity, even as much as my parents undoubtedly wanted to protect us and the fact that when you were ten or eleven years old you don't realize a lot of things.

JB: How do you feel the experience affected the rest of your life?

IK: Well, it obviously affected it very profoundly because now, if I hadn't been Jewish, I would have been in Germany during the war and we might have gotten killed in the bombing or whatever, who knows? And if the war, if Hitler had never come, I would have had a very much different life because I was scheduled, for instance, to go to Switzerland to finishing school in the very near future, so, and certainly economically, it was a drastic change from being very comfortable, because when we came to the United States I think that my father had $2.00 and the clothes he carried and that was it.

JB: What happened to your family when you came here?

IK: Well, we stayed in New York for a couple of, I think we stayed in New York actually until December and...

JB: Where?

IK: We stayed with an aunt of my mother's, and with my mother's brother, who was my uncle. They shared an apartment in New York and they were not very well off either, but they let us stay with them. And fortunately my father realized that it was not a good idea to stay in New York. In fact, most Jews just stayed in New York. He didn't want to stay in New York. My grandfather, the one who had been born in the United States, his sister who had stayed here and had married an American, they lived in Niagara Falls, New York, and they invited us to stay with them until my father found a job. And they thought he could find a job in Niagara Falls. And he never really, he had a couple of temporary jobs but he never really found employment there even though some people, and there were some very wealthy Jews in Niagara Falls and they tried. And it was very interesting because unlike New York, we were the only refugee family in Niagara Falls so we were a great curiosity and people came to see us. And I was a great sensation in school which I didn't appreciate because I was very shy. And they, I remember they found a Boy Scout the first day to take me around, which was very nice except I didn't speak English and he didn't

speak German. So I don't know how much good he did me but it was a nice thought. They tried, they really didn't know what to do, but they did try.

JB: Where did he finally find work?

IK: That he found through, I think through some Jewish agency. There was a man in Philadelphia, a Jewish man who manufactured quilts and mattresses and things like that, and my father found a position with him. Of course not at all like he had been doing. In fact, he was a factory laborer, and then finally they made him a foreman. So, that's how we came to Philadelphia, but that was the only employment he could get. Because if you remember, before the United States got into the war, we had a lot of unemployment.

JB: After the war, were you able to locate any survivors of your family or friends?

IK: The ones that didn't emigrate didn't survive.[4] The only immediate family: my mother's brother, came here, he survived, and one of my father's brothers and his family came over; the one, again, he, because my father's brothers, because they stayed in the country, were physically very robust, and as I said they were cattle dealers. They lived in a village. They were physically very robust men and one of his brothers had had a motorcycle accident and he had a slight limp and they wouldn't let him into the United States because he had a slight limp so he and his entire family was killed. The other brother managed to come here; the third brother, who was, who never married, very early in the game went to Argentina and he lived in Argentina for many years, but, except, other than that the whole immediate family got killed. Then we have another very interesting story. My, I am not exactly sure, but my father had a half-sister who married a Dutchman, and either her daughter or her granddaughter, when the Nazis came, her mother put her in a baby carriage and pushed her through a hedge into the neighbors' yard hoping the neighbors would keep her so she wouldn't get killed. And that whole entire family got killed. And the girl was brought up and wasn't told. In fact, she came over here two years ago; she wasn't (she is now married and has children) she wasn't told until she was an adult that she hadn't been their real daughter and what her family background was.

JB: That must have been a shock to her. But she located you?

IK: Because of my father. My father somehow or other managed to track her down but the, her parents, the people who raised her asked my father not to contact her. He honored their wishes, and then after the parents died, somehow or other, I don't know whether she found the papers, or maybe they arranged for her to see the papers after they died, and she read the letters that my father had written and she contacted us.

JB: What other circumstances or incidents do you feel that you want to be recorded?

IK: Well, there was a terror, I mean it's really hard to describe the whole atmosphere of, of hate. Whether it was in the newspapers, it was in the movies, on radio,

[4]Editorial correction by interviewee: Several cousins on my mother's side of the family did survive.

and the constant vicious, vicious things that they said about Jews, not just for hours and hours on end, and there were billboards and the rallies and it was just always attacks on Jews so that you, you really got to the point that if you walked out of your house... Oh, and one very important thing that I forgot towards the end was that they passed a law that every Jewish man had to take the name Isaac[5] and every Jewish woman had to take the name Sarah. And we had to wear the yellow stars, the yellow *Magen David*. So, of course you can't stay in your home all the time; whenever you went out you really felt that you were really in peril because even before that you somehow felt that people could tell you were Jewish, even those of us who had always been told that they didn't look Jewish. And you had this whole general atmosphere of hate. And you didn't, and one thing that people don't understand now I think, they say, "Well, why didn't the Jews fight back or do something?" is that you really had no place to go even if you admit, which I'm not willing to admit, that most Germans only went along because they were afraid. I think that was a percentage of people out of the whole that were afraid, but I think most of them were in it heart and soul. There was no place you could go. There was no refuge. You couldn't get across borders and there would not have been anybody to help you, so that you really were completely isolated and completely trapped and there was this whole atmosphere of danger and malice and hopelessness and never knowing what. And then of course they started this business of that even if you had only one Jewish grandparent you were considered Jewish. And my parents knew people who had never considered themselves Jewish and who thought they were safe and because they had Jewish ancestors, sometimes they didn't know about it, but the Nazis found out about it and they started persecuting them. I don't know because people were arrested already long before we finally left. Now why my parents somehow or other avoided getting arrested I don't really know because my father came very close to it a couple of times. In fact, once the Gestapo actually took him and interrogated him and let him go, now whether it's because somebody interceded for him or because he had such a good reputation or whether it was just luck, I don't know. But it came close quite a few times, and somehow or another he always got off.

JB: What did they interrogate him about?

IK: He never told me.

JB: I see.

IK: Now somebody, one of the employees from his store came and ran to my mother and said, "Your husband has been arrested by the Gestapo." And she actually, she went to the Gestapo headquarters to look for him. How she got him I don't know. They didn't tell us everything. They didn't want to burden us with those things. Another thing we did is of course everybody took English lessons. But you learned the English English, not the American English.

JB: So when you came here you still couldn't speak?

[5]Editorial correction by interviewee: This was Israel, not Isaac.

IK: I did speak but there is a big difference between learning it and speaking it. As a child you pick it up fairly quickly, and in fact in the school in Niagara Falls they sent me to the speech therapist to lose my English accent.

JB: Is there anything else, Inge, that you want to include?

IK: Not really. I really don't know if it amounts to anything. I don't remember that much.