

**EI-447**

**ILSE STEINITZ KALMAN**

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**RESIDENCES:**

- **GERMANY: MUNICH**
- **US: CHATTANOGA, TN; NEW YORK, NY; ALLENTOWN, PA**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here today on March 2nd, 1994 with Ilse Kalman. We're in Mrs. Kalman's home in Hollywood, Florida. And Mrs. Kalman came from Germany in December 1939 when she was seventeen. Well, I'm very happy to be here.

KALMAN: Thank you. I am happy you're here.

LEVINE: And let's start by your saying your birthrate.

KALMAN: My birthrate is November 19, 1922.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

KALMAN: In Germany, in ----- very near Munich, in Soren [ph] by Munich, like fifteen minutes from Munich.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you live in that area the entire time until you?

KALMAN: In different places, but near, yes, near the city, near our business. And at one time, a little further out where we went to school. And my father went in every morning to -- to the business, which is like maybe twenty minutes away by train.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

KALMAN: Eugen Steinitz. He did not have a middle name.

LEVINE: How do you spell the first name?

KALMAN: Well, it's Eugene.

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Eugen.

KALMAN: Eugen.

LEVINE: And your mother? Her name?

KALMAN: My mother? Paula.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

KALMAN: Troplowitz.

LEVINE: Could you...

KALMAN: T-R-O-P-L-O-W-I-T-Z.

LEVINE: And did you have grandparents that you knew when you were in Germany?

KALMAN: Yes. My mother's parents, and my father's father lived with us for a while. My grandmother I never knew. She died during the war. During the First World War.

LEVINE: How about your father's father? What was his name?

KALMAN: His name was Julius Steinitz.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about him?

KALMAN: [Laughs] One very funny thing. He always gave us candy that he had in his, in his pocket that he used to reach for. And they were like non-pareils. And we, we never forgot that he really died when I was only three years old. And I do remember him really well. I guess maybe the first few years really leave an impression.

LEVINE: Yeah. And how about your mother's mother and father?

KALMAN: Parents? They lived out about fifteen minutes from Munich. We used to go there by bicycle. My mother and all the kids. On a Sunday, we would just take a ride out there and spend the day.

LEVINE: What do you remember about them?

KALMAN: Well, we lived with them the first ----- I guess the first year when I --- that I, - --when I was born, still. We all lived with them. And then we, we went closer to the city. So I, I remember them well. They had, we had fruit trees and, and, because we kept going out and taking plums off the tree and taking them home. And they weren't that old. You know, I, I didn't feel that they were that old. Of course, they were much older.

LEVINE: Well, were they in the country more or less? Were they?

KALMAN: Yeah. A little bit. Though my grandfather had a store also in Munich and came in every day.

LEVINE: What was his business?

KALMAN: His bu --- he was a --- they had a jewelry store, and he was an optometrist.

LEVINE: Oh. Now what was an optom ---- was an optometrist very similar to what we know today?

KALMAN: [superposed] No, no.

LEVINE: or how did it differ?

KALMAN: No. Not really, because my father was also an optometrist. They were able to fit glasses to what, actually what, what they do here is, they just, you'd need a doctor here to do that. There you have to have a license to do that, but you do it in the store. We had a store. And a part of it was a room where he fitted the glasses, where he could make it dark so they could read the sign. Much the same we do here. But he was able to do that. And then they made the glasses in our store in the back. There was a big wheel where they, you know...

LEVINE: Ground the glasses?

KALMAN: ground the glasses. [Gestures] And so when customers came in they could, from the beginning to the end they only needed to come to us, and they got their glasses. And part of our business was photography. We had a dark room downstairs, which I learned. I went to school for that. And we also sold cameras.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: A lot of Leicas, because people, when people went to the States they used to take, they used to be able to take cameras along. Later on they couldn't do that, but we sold lots of cameras.

LEVINE: So the optician, he was an optometrist...

KALMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: an optician...

KALMAN: Right.

LEVINE: he did everything.

KALMAN: An optician, he did.

LEVINE: How interesting.

KALMAN: He could do everything.

LEVINE: Yeah.

KALMAN: But we had people working for us that made the glasses, because he couldn't be here and there. And my mother worked for him, with him. She did the bookkeeping, so she was always in the business.

LEVINE: I see. So your grandfather had that business...

KALMAN: Not the business that my father ended up with. My grandfather happened to have the same business, but it was in a different part of the city.

LEVINE: I see.

KALMAN: And he actually had a smaller store that he started out with, and he stayed there as long as he was able to.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about him, your grandfather?

KALMAN: Not an awful lot. He was a very straight person, serious person. Not like we're used to grandfathers here. [Laughs] Really not. My grandmother, too. My mother was the only child, and they brought her up very strict. She was never allowed to go anywhere alone. She, until she met my father ---- even when she met my father---- they were always around. They, she never in her life was really alone anywhere. They were just very strict with her. And she went with them every Sunday wherever they went to. They did some mountain climbing and bicycle riding, and she had to go with them. She was always with them.

LEVINE: So would, would you say they were very comfortable...

KALMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: ...financially?

KALMAN: Yes. I would say.

LEVINE: Yeah. And how about your father? Did he have brothers and sisters?

KALMAN: My fa----, yes. Quite a few in fact, but none of them are alive --- none of them came over. He had one brother in England, who I guess went there as a young man, because we went to see him. And my mother went over there a few times. She spoke English and she, you know, spoke English in the business when people came and couldn't speak German. She was a good translator, really. She's ---- she managed the language very well.

LEVINE: Do you remember aunts and uncles and cousins from when you were in Germany?

KALMAN: Yes. Yes. One cousin was in Paris. My father took me there once. I was maybe fourteen. And I met them. And one brother in England. And in Berlin I had one aunt, I had, Berlin. And, but then, you know, after like '35, '36 we didn't travel anymore. So we really lost contact with them because, you know, it wasn't, it wasn't like today. You really don't.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, tell me about your early life. Did you, well first of all, do you remember the house that you lived in?

KALMAN: Oh, yes. Very well.

LEVINE: Could you describe it?

KALMAN: We, when we came, first we lived with my grandparents, and because we went back there every Sunday, or many Sundays, I remember the house very well. It was a really nice house with lots of trees around. And we always had a great, big dog while I was still there. And they were nicely; I mean, the house was nice. It was really in the country, like. The street was not finished. I mean it wasn't that kind of, you know, it was just nice outside. But when my father, it was just not practical to live outside and have business that far away. Then we had a house that, that was up a lot of steps I remember. It was, it was a, you know, a nice house for those days. And we lived there near the schools, that we could walk to school. And my father had to ride to, to the business.

LEVINE: How did, what did he ride?

KALMAN: Streetcar.

LEVINE: Streetcar. And do you remember, like, the kitchen of the house, what it looked like when you came into that house?

KALMAN: [superposed] Yeah. It was very different from here, you know. We didn't have refrigerators. We had little, a little room next to the kitchen where they kept cooler. I don't know what kept it cool, really, but it was always cool. And, of course, you, you, you lived differently, because you got fresh milk every day, and you, you know, you just didn't need a refrigerator. I, still not drinking real cold. I don't like cold things. And I guess because of that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what about school? What do you remember about that?

KALMAN: That I was the only Jewish kid in school very often. In, in many classes. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, were there not?

KALMAN: But, no. I didn't have any trouble when I was young, you know, the kids didn't know the difference. Nobody, really.

LEVINE: Were there very few Jewish families?

KALMAN: Where we lived, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: I had Hebrew, what they called Hebrew school here now, on Wednesday afternoon when everybody else had their religious school.

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: But I, there were only a few of us from different classes. But I did have, I learned Hebrew, and I, you know, we got our Jewish education.

LEVINE: And you had a sister and a brother?

KALMAN: No, I had three brothers.

LEVINE: Three brothers. And what were their names?

KALMAN: Berndt, and, and Herb, Herbert, really. They were all named after somebody. And Kurt was the one that did not come over. He was two years younger. One was two years older, and then another brother that was born eight years later.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. Let's see. So what did, do you remember any religious observances from there?

KALMAN: Oh, yes. The high holidays. We had to walk almost an hour to temple. We did for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We, we walked, and stayed there all day.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Yeah. I do remember. And I remember my father, you know, you wouldn't

call it religious today, but he would not smoke on *Shabas* (Sabbath) ever. And he smoked a lot. He would never smoke on *Shabas*, no. Like we all have our little thing, I guess.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

KALMAN: And we always fasted. We, before we were, I must have started fasting when I was eleven, it's -- before their *bar mitzvah*. (Male coming of age ceremony) Yeah.

LEVINE: So all your brothers were *bar mitzvah'd*?

KALMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Well, my youngest brother was *bar mitzvah'd* in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where we ended up living. So he, he came over when he was about, between eight and nine.

LEVINE: And how about a *bas mitzvah* (Female coming of age ceremony)? Was that something that was done?

KALMAN: No. No.

LEVINE: No. And how were you, were you treated very differently, just because you were a girl, from your brothers in any ways?

KALMAN: Well, my one brother, the one that didn't come over, had asthma. So he

was sick, so he was really treated more differently than I was. I was such a good kid all the time. I was never touched. I don't remember really being even reprimanded very much. I was just a quiet little girl.

LEVINE: How, how else would you describe yourself as, as a young girl, girl? What, your temperament...

KALMAN: Well, you know, things were so different from how the kids grow up today. It, just, you know, we...

LEVINE: In what way?

KALMAN: Well, we listened, no matter what my parents said we did. There was never an argument of any kind. We ate what we were supposed to eat. We, you know, that was the upbringing. And I think it was much of a German upbringing. It was much stricter than it is. Maybe not today anymore. I don't know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

KALMAN: But it was strict.

LEVINE: And how about food. Do you remember particular German cooking?

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: or dishes that, that you had as a...

KALMAN: Yeah. We, an aunt lived with us, my father's sister. She was never

married. She came with him, kind of. When we, when we went to Munich she stayed there, because my mother went to business everyday, and she took care of the cooking. And we had a maid which wasn't anything unusual there. She was with my mother when my mother was born. She was with her and then she went with her when she got married. She was with us to the, to the end as long as we could have her.

LEVINE: What was her name?

KALMAN: Well, we called her "la " but it was really Maria.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: And she celebrated her holidays, and, you know, we got to know a lot, because she was always with us, day and night. She, you know, but a lot of people had, it's not, it doesn't, it sounds like we had, you know, were very well to do, but people had. They were probably very cheap, because they lived with you and they ate with you and they didn't need much money on the outside. So she, she was wonderful.

LEVINE: Do you remember any; any particular German dishes that, that you?

KALMAN: [Laughs] I felt terrible because, only the terrible ones, really, because my aunt came from a part of Germany that was near Poland, and she cooked some of the food that we really didn't like. She, yes, she made a dish that was made with pears and potatoes. Can you ---- it was sweet, it was really, we hated it. But we ate it. Yeah. The only that, maybe my older brother was not, you know, he wasn't as good as the rest of us, but he got it the second time, you know. You really could not escape doing what you were

supposed to do.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So...

KALMAN: And I, my mother was born in Munich. So she, that's Bavaria, and they eat a little different from, you know, from Berlin. That's where my father kind of came from. Not really from Berlin, he came from the border of Poland. And so he, he was really used to different kind of food. But my mother and we ate like, you know, it's not really sausage, it's, it's like salami, that kind of stuff, but no, no garlic. It's, it's made differently, German, so I don't if you ever ate any, but it's still around here. In fact, here we have a store that sells that kind of stuff, and I still like it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did your mother and father ever tell you how they happened to meet?

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: How...

KALMAN: They met; they were introduced, of course, because my mother would not have gone anywhere where she would have met a man. But a, a great aunt of ours introduced them. And, so she's really not related to my father, but the aunt, she's related to this great aunt. And they introduced, and it was taken for granted that she would marry him. I mean, that's the only man that she ever----- he was like eighteen years older than she was. And she was more from, her parents to him; she was more of a child than, you know, because she was just from one to the other. She's ---- had always --- -- she always listened. Whatever, you know, whatever she was told, she

did. She, she became that kind of a person that wasn't -----you know what I mean. It's...

LEVINE: Yeah. She was always dependent, or...

KALMAN: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Well, so in other words, the families decided that this would be a good match.

KALMAN: Yes. Yes. They weren't, it wasn't very long after they got engaged that they got married right away, you know, it was no doubt that's how it was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: And it was a, I guess it was a good match. My father was just the type that, you know, was...

LEVINE: Yeah, how would you describe him? What kind of a...

KALMAN: good at that. My father? Just very strict, really. That's how we remember him. I don't remember any bad things, but my brother says that he, you know, he really had a hard time, that he was ----- he hit him once in a while. He, he just, because he didn't really do it. If he would have done as he was told he would not have touch, been touched. I never was. And my other brother, I don't remember him ever touching him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: But he just rebelled, and, and that was just not in my father's book. He just listened.

LEVINE: Now, he was the oldest one, that brother? Uh-huh. Well, I guess that's the way of...

KALMAN: [superposed] Yeah, he's alive. He's...

LEVINE: ...sons.

KALMAN: that's what he remembers more than I do. But I, I do know when he didn't eat, you know, he was just sat down and to eat. And that's how it was. That's how my father was. My mother was very soft and non-demanding. And.

LEVINE: Well, let's see. Can you remember when things began to change?

KALMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: in Germany for the Jewish people there?

KALMAN: Yeah. I guess when Hitler came, you know, Hitler started, got his start in Munich. So whatever happened really happened there. And I do remember very well, when Hindenburg was before him. I don't know if you know any of that history, but he kind of took over and we ----- but nobody believed -----my father always said somebody like cannot last, you know. Or we would have tried to get out of Germany before. But he never wanted to. He had a business, and he really didn't speak English. And he figured, you know, he had four children, and he wasn't just going to go to a strange

country. And I understand it, but it's ----- if we could have thought, if he could have thought differently, we probably would have started things going and, and would have been here maybe sooner.

LEVINE: Do you, do you have any idea of why he thought it couldn't last?

KALMAN: Why Hitler couldn't last? Because then it was, they all said that. Anybody that's so strong, and, you know, comes in like that, they didn't think that he would have that many followers, that, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember when things began to change?

KALMAN: Well, really, in 1933 it started. But in 1935, 1936 things got bad for the Jews. Very bad.

LEVINE: What started?

KALMAN: [interposed] We had no way of coming over though, actually, then. And I should tell you how we really got over. It's just a, really a miracle.

LEVINE: Before you tell how you got over, can you tell any changes that you personally experienced before you started up ---?

KALMAN: I [superposed] was very lucky, I think. I was never with kids that really, you know, in school, because I only went to a Jewish school when it was impossible to go to any other school. They...

LEVINE: Well, how did that happen?

KALMAN: [superposed] they started. Well, the Jews just could not go to school anymore. My brother could not ----- I could not. And so that was really in 1938, I guess. No. Earlier than that. Fourteen, '36, that we stopped going to the regular school. And we ---- I went to a Jewish school that went up to ninth grade. Here, it would be ninth grade. Because I had to just to get the rest of my education. And then I went into my father's business to learn photography as much as I could. And I started in a school, that's what you're supposed to do there. You go three years, three or four years to work, and like two days a week you go to, to a school to learn the trade, what, whatever trade. And that's what my father intended for me. Just to have a trade so that I, you know, whatever happens in life that I would be prepared. Normally I guess most of the girls in my mother's day, they just were going to get married, they didn't have to...

LEVINE: So your father really had a different attitude for you...

KALMAN: He had a different at---- he just wanted me to be ready for anything that, in fact, he also, for one year I went with, to a lady that we knew well, to learn household away from, you know, our regular household. And to get, she wrote a certificate that I would be able to do anything. And I did everything there. I cleaned and I cooked and I, so I, I, you know, when it wasn't, when I wasn't able to do photography anymore because we didn't have the business anymore, then I went to this lady for a year before we came over here.

LEVINE: Do you remember how the bus----- how the, it happened that the business that your father?

KALMAN: Yeah. They destroyed our business. November 9th, 1938, they, you know,

everything was destroyed. Somebody called us, I guess one of our friends, that they had, there were no more windows in our business, how everything was just destroyed. And my father must have gone down there. But even before that he was taken to Dachau, one of the camps. He came back after a couple of weeks, but we didn't really know where he was. And we stayed alone, and then --- then we lived in an apartment. We were not able to keep the house, and we had just, they made it very difficult for the Jews to do any kind of living, really. And we were in an apartment near the business at that time. And...

LEVINE: How was it that your father came back after two weeks? What, what...

KALMAN: They did, they, they just took them in. At one time they took everybody. And my brother, how he escaped, you know, how they didn't take him, we couldn't understand. They just came there one morning. I slept in the bedroom next to my parents' bedroom, so there was only a wall in between. And I heard these guys. I, I----- it was very early in the morning. They rang the bell, and I guess the girl let them in, and it was two uninformed men. They went to my father, and they said, "Get dressed." And I could hear every word. It was just terr----- and I can still here that. And my mother said, "Where are you taking him." And, of course, they said, "Be quiet. None of your business." You know, it was just --- it was so terrible when they came. And they took him away. And we were then alone. They took our key away, and, and we were alone, and, you know, for two weeks we didn't know where he was, really.

LEVINE: What did they do for those two weeks?

KALMAN: He didn't talk.

LEVINE: He never told.

KALMAN: He never talked, but we do know that some of the men just when they were standing in line, whatever they had to do, they just fell over dead. One of our friends, one of his good friends, he saw. That, that he talked about, but not, not, he came back shaven completely. And he was, he was, not the same...

LEVINE: He had a beard before?

KALMAN: No.

LEVINE: No.

KALMAN: No. But, I mean, his hair was all long.

LEVINE: I see.

KALMAN: He had always had a mustache, but he never had a beard. But it was terrible to see him. He was like broken, when he came back. He was never the same after that. But they did, you know, my mother went to the S.R., to the, you know, where she could get some information and she couldn't. [Pounding in the background) And she was very, you know, in those days she was really very strong when I think of she had all, we were grown up, but still. We were there. They came, and they, they ----- the S.R. came into our rooms, you know, and they went to the, we had a library, a beautiful library of beautiful books. And all the Jewish authors, they just took them, and they just tore the books, and it, it was, it looked so awful. It

was just, and they did whatever they could do. And, and they seemed to enjoy what they were doing. You know, that's how I always felt.

LEVINE: And then they took the keys of?

KALMAN: Well, they took our house key at, when they took my father; I remember we didn't really have a key to lock the apartment.

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: And they took food, whatever they could find, you know, we had.

LEVINE: Hmm.

KALMAN: You know, that, those are terrible memories that I never, I guess I didn't want to remember.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. Sure. Well, so then you were put, actually put out of your house?

KALMAN: Well, no, we still lived in ---- when he came back we still lived in that apartment. And I guess the business was gone. And we knew that we wanted to leave. We wanted to come over here. But you couldn't just come, because you needed, you know, papers, guarantees ----- that we would never be a burden to this country. So my father just looked in, like impossible places. And in Oakland, California there was a Steinitz. He didn't know him. He didn't know of him, and we, he wrote to him. And he said we will never, you know, ask anything of you if you will just give us the papers. And he did. And this man was not Jewish. I never met him

because we could never go to Oakland. We stayed in touch with him for a long time. But that's what you ----- you just needed a guarantee. And I think he had to go to the bank and guarantee that if, you know, he had to have certain things. And he sent the papers. And because my father was born in the part of Poland that was Polish at one time and German at, you know, before the war and after the war, so our quota to come over here was bigger than his quota. Poland has a very small quota. We had, they let so many a year in here. That's how it was. And so he couldn't come with us. But we felt that we should go. I mean, I guess he felt that we should go while we could, and then he would come, you know, maybe a few months later. But this was already the beginning of the war. I mean, when I was over there the war was already on. So we did come. I know he would never have my mother; he would have never let her go, because he never thought that she could manage. Because I, my big brother, my older brother went immediately because they took all the guys to concentration camp. So as soon as he had his papers...

LEVINE: He went first?

KALMAN: [superposed] and the fare, he went a few months before us. And then we went and got, you had to be examined to be sure that, you know, everybody is okay. And my brother, my younger brother, the one who has asthma, didn't make it. He, I mean, he wasn't, you know, he had like a fallen chest because of the breathing, but he wasn't sick, you know. And if he had come over he could have worked, really. But the Americans wouldn't let him in.

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: Because, even, because we had really no money to speak of. They took everything, they, one day they took everything but my mother's wedding band. We had no jewelry, nothing. So we had no money. So we couldn't guarantee for him. But we thought that when once we get over here we would be able to do something, that he could come. But, you know, it was so soon that my father, my father never came over, because his quota didn't come up before the last ship came over here. So he, he was killed and my brother was. And all the relatives, I mean, I really don't have any relatives here.

LEVINE: Wow. So when you were leaving, your, your father and your brother were, were still?

KALMAN: They were still there, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you have any communication after you left with?

KALMAN: A couple of letters. And then in 'forty, I guess maybe the last letter we have in '42. My brother, my older brother burned ----- who, you know, enlisted in the army, when, when they were, when the last camp ----- I guess the Americans came into the camp and, you know, to free everyone...

LEVINE: To free...

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Then he went back to Munich to see what, you know, what he could find

out. And he did find out that on the way to the transport, my father was transported to the Czechoslav ----- Czechoslovakian border where they were probably, you know, killed, one way or another. We don't really know that. That he, he was taken to the transport ---- that my brother died on the way to the transport. He just didn't make it, which was good. You know. At least he wasn't burned or whatever they did to them. So that's how, that's all he could find out. And he, we have a date that we feel that's when it must have happened.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. Wow. Do you remember anything that you were told in the letters?

KALMAN: Nothing. He wouldn't write anything. Nothing. Absolutely not. And over here, you know, we didn't know a whole lot what was really happening there. There was no communication actually. And after he wrote the last letter, which we didn't know was the last letter ----- but once they went on the transport...

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

KALMAN: went on the transport. And this girl that stayed with us all these years...

LEVINE: Yes.

KALMAN: Maria, she kept it touch with my father which could have, they could have killed her for it if they would have found out. But...

LEVINE: She wasn't Jewish?

KALMAN: No.

LEVINE: No.

KALMAN: No. She wasn't. She had, she, she died eventually. But we sent her money from here as long as we could. She helped my father; this is what my brother found out from friends. We, we had gentile friends over there, but they couldn't let it be known that they knew us. But my brother found out from them after the war was over that she brought him a blanket at one time. Because things were very, I guess for the Jews, you know, they couldn't buy anything or have anything. And she took her life in her hands when she did that because if they would know that she went to ----- that's really how it was. If you were in any kind of contact with Jews you would - ---- you didn't live if they found out.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember anything about the communication with Steinitz in California?

KALMAN: Other than we just kept writing him and thanking him for what he did, which, and it turned out, you know, it wasn't really anything because he didn't, but it was a lot...

LEVINE: He didn't have to do anything.

KALMAN: it was a big thing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Because if it hadn't been for him, because we had no relatives that were really, you know, that worked here or came here. About the same time, was when most --- most people tried to get out of Germany in the end.

LEVINE: Now was he a person who had come from Germany himself?

KALMAN: No. No. He was an American. He was not Jewish, so he wasn't even related to us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: But I guess it was enough to just send the guarantee, and that, that made him, you know, he was an honest man, and he, just a nice guy.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, so did you, did you notice a kind of metamorphosis of your mother when she all of a sudden had to take charge?

KALMAN: Yeah, but she didn't really, because we were already old enough. I was seventeen. I went to work immediately. She still stayed home a little bit with my bro ---- my brother was very young then. He was only eight or nine years old. He went to school and she, then she started working, yes. She worked, too. She worked in a cigar factory, which was really for her, you know, but she was able to. And, and she cooked a little. I worked for, for a family that also came from Germany, had two children. I worked from seven to seven, and very often...

LEVINE: [superposed] This is in Tennessee?

KALMAN: stayed at night. This was in Chattanooga. Yeah, my brother had a friend who, a life long friend, really, who he went to school with, who had gone to Chattanooga and started working. He had no family. The family was all killed. He only had a, had a brother and parents that were killed in Germany. So he, when we came over and my mother came to Chattanooga, he then lived with us.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Now this is your oldest brother?

KALMAN: With my oldest brother, and this boy was exactly as old, and we're still friends. He's still in California. We always, you know, they're still together, whenever I go out I see him. And he was really like a brother to me.

LEVINE: So when, so when the Steinitz in California was, would vouch that he make sure you weren't a burden, then your brother wrote to his friend in Chattanooga?

KALMAN: No. They, they were in contact all the time. But he, he, as soon as he came over here, he went to Chattanooga. My brother, he got him a job, then, re-reading tires, which he knew nothing of. You know, he, he was supposed to be an optometrist. He was going to be, you know, if he would have stayed there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: So he went there, and he lived there, got a room there, and lived there. And then we came probably four months later. And we got a little apartment. [Coughs] Chattanooga, they were very nice to us, the Jewish

people, because they didn't really have any refugees, you know. I mean --  
-- nobody went to Chattanooga.

LEVINE: What was like, what was it like? I mean, what were the differences in Chattanooga compared with what you had. had?..

KALMAN: Well, we got to New York, and everybody said, you know, get out of New York, because there were so many refugees in New York. They, they didn't want you to stay there. So they paid for bus trip to Chattanooga. It's the longest trip I ever took. It was cold in the winter, and we didn't have, really, warm clothes. And-----

LEVINE: Well, tell me, I guess we should back up a second, when you were leaving? Do you remember leaving?

KALMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: What, what was that like?

KALMAN: It was a very sad, but not as sad, because I really thought I was going to see my father again, you know. If I had known, I guess I would have felt quite differently. But it was still sad, because we left, you know, left my brother there, and my aunt, and just everybody that I knew.

LEVINE: And, and so you, you left Munich. And, and then where did you go?

KALMAN: Right. We came over Denmark. I had a cousin in Denmark. We spent the night in Denmark. And she married a man in Denmark, only by name, only, really, so she could stay there. She never lived with him, but she

was there as long as I know we stayed in contact. She was about as old as my mother, so she was really older, much older.

LEVINE: Now, was that something that was being done, that Jewish women would marry someone, was that...

KALMAN: They did that a lot. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so, so that was really a way of saving them?

KALMAN: Yeah. In a way, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Yes. He, she, but she never, we knew that she wasn't really married ---- married, so...

LEVINE: Yeah.

KALMAN: but she could stay there. And she made her living there. And-----

LEVINE: Now, now was that something that someone would do...

KALMAN: I think, no. She...

LEVINE: in order to be nice?

KALMAN: she must have, she had, yeah. I would say. I mean evidently he, he was never in contact with her after that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: How would she know, who...

KALMAN: Oh, somebody must have, you know, knew a Jewish organization that makes you meet people. They saved a lot of people that way. So we just saw her. We hadn't seen her in ----- you know; she hadn't been in Germany for a long, long time. So, and then we came over with The Drottningholm. That's a big Swedish ship.

LEVINE: What's the name of it?

KALMAN: Drottningholm. I don't think it's any longer in existence. And...

LEVINE: It left from Sweden?

KALMAN: It left from Denmark. Sweden, yeah. From...

LEVINE: Do you remember the port?

KALMAN: [Not understood] No, I really don't. No.

LEVINE: I don't know either. Well, did you have any contact before you left with Jewish organizations that were doing any?

KALMAN: [superposed] No.

LEVINE: any kind of?

KALMAN: No, because we really didn't feel that we needed, you know, they did, as soon as we got to New York, a relat ----- not really a relative ---it was a second cousin or something, came to pick us up, that we were in contact with. They had also come from Germany, though. So they had really no, you know, I don't what kind of shape they were in. But she came to the ship, and that's how I got to Ellis Island. They must have asked her question. I don't know what she said, but whatever it was it was the wrong thing. And so we, that's how we were taken to Ellis Island ----- which was a really bad experience for me at the time. Because there were two big guys that took us, it was just like being with the S.S. again, you know. That's how it felt. In a car. Just us, actually, and those two men. And they were very nice, but, you know, we really had still that feeling that we didn't know where we were going ----- which we weren't ----- we thought we would stay, you know, in New York, until we got in contact with someone. So, that's where we spend, but you know.

LEVINE: Well, why do you think you, I mean, what was the reason...

KALMAN: [superposed] Because I think she was, when, when they must have asked her questions about herself. And she wasn't an established person that, that, you, lived there very long.

LEVINE: I see. So she was originally, you thought she was going to be your sponsor or something...

KALMAN: She was just going to pick us up, and...

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: and maybe if she had said, yes, I am, maybe we would have just gotten off the ship like most people did. But until they found out that everything was okay, and they must have gotten in touch with the Steinitz in San Francisco, in Oakland, then, you know, everything was okay. But we were in Ellis Island over New Years, I think, after, right after Christmas, because it was all Christmasy still. But we stayed in this huge room with, I don't know, probably fifty beds or more, and it was not a good experience to come to.

LEVINE: And how were you treated there?

KALMAN: Not badly. You know. We got some food, and, and, but we slept on cots next, you know, just in a big, great, big room.

LEVINE: [interposed] was it dirty?

KALMAN: Well, it wasn't clean, it wasn't new, you know, it was, it was old, and, and...

LEVINE: Do you?

KALMAN: And not knowing what, what was going to happen ----- because we didn't know if we'd stayed or if they were going to send us back. You know, we actually didn't know what was going to happen.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember anything else about that, those days at Ellis Island?

KALMAN: No. Not a lot.

LEVINE: Any experiences?...

KALMAN: I try to forget, really. It wasn't a good experience. And maybe if I had known that in three days we're going to go, it wouldn't have been so bad. But we really didn't know what would happen.

LEVINE: Yeah. So then when you were told you could go...

KALMAN: Then they got us a b---- then the Jewish organization, what's the name?

LEVINE: H.I.A.S.?

KALMAN: Yeah. Gave us bus tickets to go to Chattanooga, because they were happy that we were going.

LEVINE: Were they instrumental in any way...

KALMAN: No. Not otherwise. No.

LEVINE: No.

KALMAN: No. We got, I think we each had ten mark. I think that's the money we got at the time to take along. And as soon as we got to Chattanooga, we got jobs. We worked immediately.

LEVINE: What did you do?

KALMAN: Got a little apart ---- I went, I went to this Jewish family that spoke German all the time. And really worked really hard. I mean worked all the time. It's like ---

LEVINE: Cleaning, cooking...

KALMAN: Everything.

LEVINE: Everything.

KALMAN: Everything. I really did everything. And I decided after about ten months, I guess, that I didn't want to stay there, because I didn't learn any English, which was really important to me. At home we tried to speak English. My mother spoke quite well.

LEVINE: How did your mother know English?

KALMAN: She, in school. She learned in school, and she kept it up. And my father, every so often she went to England to just, you know, with my uncle. [Crashing noise] And she would speak English only, and she was good at languages. Very good at languages.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: So we tried to speak at home, too. And I, so then I went to, photography was my business. I went to a, I applied at a few places to see if I could work in photography.

LEVINE: And...

KALMAN: And I did find a job, yes. And we made reproductions of --- that's what they did. They made reproductions. And I worked there for a year. And that wasn't really my business, either, because it's not what I had learned to do. And then I went to a photo-finishing store. That was, that's where I worked for a long time, as long as I was in Chattanooga.

LEVINE: So your father really had prepared you for any...

KALMAN: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: ...contingency.

KALMAN: Yeah, I was happy that I knew what I knew, and I, when I came to, then I went to New York with my brother after the war. He wanted ---- he didn't want to come back to Chattanooga. It was too small for him.

LEVINE: This was your brother who, who...

KALMAN: Who was in the war.

LEVINE: ...was in the service?

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: And, so I, I went to New York, and, and there I found a job right away on

42nd Street. And we made that, that was great. (A telephone rings) It was a, so...

LEVINE: (voice off-mic) I wonder if we should ---- let me stop here for a second. (Pause in tape) Okay, we're resuming now. Let's see. You were, we were talking about when you were in Chattanooga, and, so your mother worked there, too?

KALMAN: My mother worked in a cigar factory, and then in a wholesale place. And she, you know, what little money we, we all --- my brother worked re-treading tires. He, and from there he enlisted, so he never really had a different job.

LEVINE: And then you had one other brother?

KALMAN: And I had another brother who was younger. He lived with us in Chattanooga. He was like nine when we came, and, let's see. He, he was *bar mitzvah'd* in Chattanooga. They did, they did do that. They were really wonderful to us. The Jews there were wonderful. They had, you know, this wasn't the big thing. Like in New York there were so many that I guess they couldn't do for everybody. But they were really nice to us.

LEVINE: Was there a...

KALMAN: [interposed] So they had a nice *bar mitzvah*...

LEVINE: a small Jewish community in Chattanooga?

KALMAN: Well, not so small. It, yeah, comparatively, because the whole city's not

so big. But we had nice experiences there. The Jewish people were very nice to us, really.

LEVINE: And was your brother like the only child in the school that, that had come...

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: over?

KALMAN: Yeah. They were all Americans. And he, he was like, he should have been, I think when we came, in third grade, and he started like in first, because he didn't know English. He really didn't know English. Within months he was in third grade.

LEVINE: And then was he instrumental in any way in teaching English to the other family members?

KALMAN: Well, we all did. You know, once I worked I with Americans, I, there was nothing else to speak. So I, we, we all really learned. And I went to school at night, I did, when, once I had a different kind of job, I couldn't have done that my first job. But once I had hours. I also worked in a delicatessen from seven to seven, but then I went to school at night while I did. And I took bookkeeping and typing which, you know, taught me the language, too.

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: So, I -- I liked it. I wasn't ever going to be sitting behind a desk. It's really not my kind of thing. But I --- it did help with the language. And so that's

how I worked. And then I was in photography, which, that's where I stayed until I got married.

LEVINE: Well, then, did you meet your husband in Chattanooga?

KALMAN: I met my husband on the way coming over. He was on the same ship I was. Only I was seventeen and certainly not thinking in, you know, terms of anything. He came to Allentown. He had relatives in Allentown. And I went to Chattanooga.

LEVINE: Allentown, Pennsylvania?

KALMAN: Yeah. And we corresponded so to speak. I mean, like, a New Year's card, *Rosh Hashanah* card, at *Rosh Hashanah*, and that, maybe twice or three times a year. And I went up to see my friends in New York once, and I told him I was going up, so he came up to see me. It's not far from New York. And I met him again after six years, after we had come over the same day. December 7th is when we left Germany, and December 7th is when he came, because I remember it was my mother's birthday. He came to Allen ---- to...

LEVINE: New York?

KALMAN: to New York then. And, and we got together again, and three months later we got engaged. He came, and, and we just corresponded. And then I, I lived in New York for a while. I stayed in New York. Because when my brother came back he didn't want to come back to Chattanooga. So we both went to New York, got a job in a, in a ----- well, we were printing for magazines. Developing and printing for Life Magazine, and some famous

magazines. And it was very interesting.

LEVINE: You and your brother?

KALMAN: Yeah, he was, he wanted to always get in a dark room, even in Germany already. He didn't want to be an optometrist. But that was likely what he would have, you know, that's what would have happened had we stayed there. But he, he wanted to always be a photographer, so he, he, I got him a job where I worked, and he did some printing, and he stayed there.

LEVINE: So you and your brother had an apartment together?

KALMAN: No. I had a room with a family, just a room. And we ate at the same place. There was a lady in my building on the top floor. She cooked just for maybe fifteen, twenty people. They just came for the meals. And so we met there every night. And then he went to his, he rented a room, and we kind of, you know, we were together all day.

LEVINE: Where was this? Where, where were you living?

KALMAN: In Washington Heights.

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: 186th Street I think it was.

LEVINE: And...

KALMAN: We had a nice life. Every day took the subway or the bus, took, you know,

a girl alone, you know, today you can't believe that. You could never do that. But I took the bus by myself. I went by subway by myself.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then your mother and younger brother...

KALMAN: They were still in Chattanooga.

LEVINE: were still in Chattanooga?

KALMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: Then when I got married they came up, too. They lived in Allentown. They, I got them with a very *kosher* (ritual diet] lady. [Laughs] We weren't. But this lady, an old lady, she had a house, and she rented a room to my mother. And she could use the kitchen. And so she lived there for a while.

LEVINE: Now was your husband also German, coming here for the first time?

KALMAN: He came from Hanover. Yes.

LEVINE: And...

KALMAN: He was on the same boat. And he had a brother with him who was exactly as old as I was. And he was really eleven years older. And, you know, I never knew that. I never ask him, because he really didn't, he didn't look that old, he was playing tennis, he was really very active. And I

never thought of it, really, until we got married. And then it didn't matter.  
But...

LEVINE: What, what was your husband's name?

KALMAN: Walter Kaunitz.

LEVINE: K-...

KALMAN: A-U-N-I-T-Z.

LEVINE: And, let's see. So then you went to Allentown?

KALMAN: Yes. Then I came eventually, came to Allentown.

LEVINE: Now when did you hear, do you remember how news came back to you?

KALMAN: Through my brother. You know, through, when the time he was over there, he said they kept records of everything, the Germans. He actually knew where he was killed, and...

LEVINE: Oh.

KALMAN: they, he did find out what happened to them. That's how he knew that my, you know.

LEVINE: Did your brother say anything about being there as an, he was an American soldier?

KALMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: Did he...

KALMAN: He was a paratrooper.

LEVINE: Yeah, a paratrooper. Do you...

KALMAN: Uniform. (She indicates)

LEVINE: Did he ever talk to you?

KALMAN: Yeah, at time, I mean after the war. During the war we very often really did not know where he was. We used to get messages from his commanding officer that he's okay, but because he couldn't even write where he was. And when he ended, he once took a uniform off a, off a dead soldier, because he spoke German without an accent. He spoke English with an accent. And he got into, behind the border, and got messages to the Americans. So he was, you know, when he was caught it was terrible.

LEVINE: He was caught?

KALMAN: Because he was like a spy, he, yes. He was in a, in a prison. We didn't know that, but he was.

LEVINE: Oh, my. And did...

KALMAN: And then in the end he was, well, once he escaped and he came back to

his people...

LEVINE: Troop, his sol --- his troop or whatever.

KALMAN: wherever they were, yeah. And in the end he was, they, they came to the camp...

LEVINE: And liberated them.

KALMAN: and liberated them.

LEVINE: Wow.

KALMAN: Yeah, he's got, you know, then he really wants to write this book. But I hope he's going o you know. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Wow. He must have been a courageous kind of person.

KALMAN: Just a, you know, I, I don't know. Sometimes I wonder. You, you think of it that way, when you think of it, he's so crazy. He does such crazy things. He's always been like that.

LEVINE: Oh, he's the one who was rebellious as a child.

KALMAN: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: He just did what he thought what he wanted to do, and that's.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, how do you think the whole being born in Germany and, and coming here, when the war had already started and being Jewish, how do you think that has affected you since that time? What?

KALMAN: I think maybe we appreciate life more. You know, you look at it and you always say, that's what some friends say to me, that I have a wonderful outlook, but I don't really think so. But we've gone through so much and we're still here to tell, you know. I...

LEVINE: Talk about...

KALMAN: I hear these people...

LEVINE: Talk about how you feel about talking about it. [Laughs] I mean, or remembering it.

KALMAN: The last time, terr --- the first time absolutely terrible. I didn't know I felt that bad. I've never really talked about myself that much to, to people like you, or people, like friends that find out that I came from Germany. You know, they'll ask certain questions, and I'll answer the question. But I had never, like my daughter wanted to know certain things, and I, they have the tape; I didn't even ever hear it. My son has it, too. I came away from there and went home. I mean, I was on the way to the airport. I just finished and went to the air, I was dressed to go, the suitcases were standing there. And it was like...

LEVINE: Where were you?

KALMAN: My, in my daughter's house. She said, "Come on. Let's sit down, and you're going to tell me."

LEVINE: And this was...

KALMAN: It was unprepared, and I had never spoken into one of those things. And I just said what came to my mind, which is not as thorough as, as you just did that. and It's, I don't know how much it's going to bother me afterwards, but after that I went on the plane and I cried all the way home.

LEVINE: Do you think it's a, do you think there's any benefit to talking about it?

KALMAN: Well, they do. My son thinks I should have done this a long time ago. That it's not good, but, you know, I listen to all these people now on ----- yesterday when they were on television, and some of them said they could never talk about, and they don't want to talk about it. And I think that I really, maybe I didn't really want to remember. I never tried very hard to remember. I know that, but, you know, when people ask me, I just answer the question, and it, it went away. That time it didn't go away. It didn't go away, and I guess maybe afterwards I felt, when my husband saw me, he, he wasn't with me, he said, "What's wrong with you?" I just, you know, for days felt terr ----- I felt terrible. I didn't feel good. You know, my son thinks when you get things out of yourself you really feel good. I don't know that I really felt good. I felt very sad. Because I hadn't, you know, I hadn't, I think of my father all the time. I, I think, you know, it comes to mind what he was like, what, but I don't think of that part that much. I try to remember him, you know, the way he was to me.

LEVINE: Hmm-hm. You...

KALMAN: And, and to me he was just only good. He, I felt very close to him. Really closer than to my mother, which is maybe is unusual, but...

LEVINE: Well, he taught you photography, and...

KALMAN: Well, he, he, not only that, but he, he seemed like he was a, I don't know, the person that I could just relate to much better. My mother was brought up very cold. I hate to say that, but they had no, you know, like today they say you should have contact, you should have bodily contact. They were just, you know, my, both my grandparents, I never saw them holding hands or anything, you know. There was just no, no, and she never felt close to her parents. You know, they took very good care of her. They sent her to the right schools, she had a good education, but you know, that kind of thing.

LEVINE: Yeah.

KALMAN: When you see parents and grandparents today with their grandchildren, it's just so diff ---- and I feel very different about my grandchildren. You know, I --- I could never be that ---- it was really cold to ---- we never felt. We just went there, but it wasn't anything that maybe we even looked forward to. I, I don't remember that much, but.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, well, I guess, you covered it over, or you didn't deal with it for so many years that when it came out...

KALMAN: I didn't.

LEVINE: it was so much...

KALMAN: And now, you know, but now it, why, this has come out of a lot of people now. [Coughs]

LEVINE: It seems like it's in the, of the times, that this is something...

KALMAN: That the '90's brought?

LEVINE: that is being, is being discussed more, and worked on more, and. Well, I guess it's a difference of temperament, of whether someone wanted to...

KALMAN: Yes. I think so, too. [Coughs] Well, I didn't want to do bad things for my kids. You know, I thought, what, you know, my son said, "I don't know much about your whole life I don't know." But I didn't think it was, you know, it was really that good. No, nobody's fault other than, I mean, not the family's fault that we had to live they way we did, and have to be afraid to open the door, and you know, all those things are, you don't want for your children, and you wouldn't, I just never thought it was important that they'd know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, you certainly came through a horrendous phase of history.

KALMAN: Well, yeah. Yes.

LEVINE: How, so how about this phase of your life? How, how are you...

KALMAN: Now?

LEVINE: feeling now?

KALMAN: [Laughs] Amazing. Just that, you know, everything seems so far away, which it is. It's fifty years away, that part of it. Then when my husband died ----- I really felt ----- I lost lots of faith, you know. I just felt it wasn't fair. He had, he was healthy, and he was fifty-three, and the children were twelve and seventeen. And that was really tough. We had a business that ---

LEVINE: What, what was that?

KALMAN: Photography. My husband was a photographer.

LEVINE: Oh. So...

KALMAN: Yeah. But, I mean, he was really a photographer, which we weren't really, you know. We dealt in cameras and dark rooms and whatnot. He was all the way. He took the picture, and then we made it, so I, when I was left with the business I really didn't take the pictures. I could take a passport picture, but I didn't really take portraits. I made them. I was working in the dark room, and I could do anything in the dark room. But I really didn't, I kept the business, and I finally sold it, and I stayed with the man that bought it. He wanted me to, because, you know, with the customers, and I, it was a nice going business.

LEVINE: Where was the business?

KALMAN: In Allentown --- on the, one of the main streets, 7th Street. And we, we ---

-since Ted really bought the building that we were in, because we were going to remodel ----- I mean, everything was planned, and, and my husband got cancer suddenly, and there was nothing that, nothing they could do.

LEVINE: What are your children's names?

KALMAN: Vicky Lee and Steven. And he has my father's name, Eugene.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: But Steven is his name.

LEVINE: And you have grandchildren?

KALMAN: Yes. Five. My daughter had three, two boys and a girl, and my son has two boys.

LEVINE: Before we close, we're getting close to the end of the tape, is there any advice that you would have to give to a new immigrant who would come to this country?

KALMAN: New immigrant? No --- no ---- it's, I feel that if you know the language, and if you're willing to speak the language, that's very important. I feel those people that come over the border who never get an education and half the people in businesses today can't speak, too, because they don't speak English. I think it's very unfair. I feel that if anybody wants to come live in this country the least they can do is learn the language, right? Because today they come in whether we want them or not. But I think

that's a very important part, is the language. Of course today it's different, you know.

LEVINE: And how do you feel about this country as, as someone who did immigrate here?

KALMAN: Oh, I think it's wonderful. I really do. I mean, there's so many opportunities if you're willing to learn, and, and to work.

LEVINE: And what would you say you're most proud of, or satisfied that you...

KALMAN: The children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KALMAN: And the grandchildren. I think it's the most wonderful thing that we have. And I feel terrible that my husband never got to see them. He loved kids. And that was, his main photography was really children. He started with children. So that's...

LEVINE: Okay, well, we're going to close now, and I want to thank you so much.

KALMAN: You're most welcome.

LEVINE: You were a most interesting interview. I've been speaking with Ilse Kalman. And we're here in Hollywood, Florida, March 2nd, 1994, and this is Janet Levine signing off.