

>> Interviewer: But she can't hear me.

>> Male speaker: We're rolling tape, so they've got your mic down right now.

>> Interviewer: Yeah. Well, tell her I am.

>> Male speaker: Okay. She can hear you. They can't hear her yet.

>> Interviewer: I can. Okay. All right. Okay. All right. We'll be ready to start in just a minute.

>> Bauer: All right.

>> Interviewer: All right. All right, we'll start now. If we can just begin by my asking your name and where you're from and where you were born and when.

>> Bauer: My name is Martha Bauer. I was born in Kassel, Germany, and the first three years of my life, I spent in Brussels, Belgium. And when the First world war ended, I was brought back to Germany, and my parents divorced at that time. And I grew up in the homes of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and when I was eight, I came to Cologne and enrolled in school in Cologne. When I was ten, I enrolled in a Catholic high school, and when I was 12, when I was asked if my aunt and uncle could adopt me, I preferred to go back to my natural mother. So I went back to Kassel. I always wanted to be a nurse. I was four years old when I started wanting to be a nurse, and while I was in school, people tried to direct me into different directions, but I stuck to my guns. But you had to be 20 before you could start nursing training in Germany at that time, so I filled my time in with other things. And I had my first experience with Nazis in

1933, at the time when I was window decorating in Kassel. And the person noticed that some hoodlums would come to the window, and she took me out immediately, and that was the start, right after Hitler took over in 1933.

>> Interviewer: All right. If I can just ask you to back up just a little. Before Hitler took over, in the period when the Nazis were very active and there was a great deal of conflict between the Nazis and the other parties --

>> Bauer: Yes, there was.

>> Interviewer: -- do you remember -- did you pay much attention to what was going on? Were you politically minded at that time?

>> Bauer: Yes, I paid attention, out of the simple reason -- especially my aunt, who wanted, long before Hitler even got into power, to get out of Germany because she didn't like the political atmosphere in Germany. But my uncle had been an officer in the First World War, and after he had fled Belgium because he was a German, he didn't see any need to try to start over in another country.

>> Interviewer: Yeah. Did you have any personal experience with anti-Semitism in either Cologne or Kassel? Before Hitler, I mean; growing up.

>> Bauer: Before Hitler?

>> Interviewer: Yeah, as a girl, as a young girl.

>> Bauer: I couldn't say because I probably was fairly careful with whom I had friendships, like a child. I knew there were resentments of German-Jewish people to Polish-Jewish people, and that made me aware of -- that there are groups of people who don't like each other, so I tried to be with people who seemed to like each other. But there were lots of the swastika signs, naturally, all along, and I realized that was something directed against us. Our family was anything from very liberal or mixed

to orthodox. The only orthodox person I knew was my grandfather, but otherwise -- I know that I tried different lifestyles. I did try to live orthodox for two years, and it didn't suit me, and very soon, I learned to just reach out to any kind of people, no distinction.

>> Interviewer: Yeah. And so when Hitler actually took over in '33, you were, you were in Cologne at this time, or you were in Kassel.

>> Bauer: I was in Kassel again, yes.

>> Interviewer: You were in Kassel, okay, and you were living with your mother then?

>> Bauer: At that time I lived with my mother.

>> Interviewer: Did you have brothers and sisters?

>> Bauer: I had a brother, and I have a sister. My brother got shot in Yugoslavia, and I got the information through the International Red Cross.

>> Interviewer: Yeah. We'll talk about that.

>> Bauer: He tried to flee from Germany.

>> Interviewer: Yeah, we'll talk about that in a little while. An older brother?

>> Bauer: Yes, he was older. I was the youngest one.

>> Interviewer: Do you remember when, when Hitler took over, what discussions you had in your -- in the house with your mother and with your family about the situation?

>> Bauer: No, not really because my mother, she usually was sick, so we didn't have any discussions with her. And I was aware of what was going on because I was in a *Kaufhaus*. What is *Kaufhaus*? A big store.

>> Interviewer: So, yeah, a department store.

>> Bauer: Department store, yeah. I couldn't think of it. That's right. And I knew that there were people who wanted to protect me and people who didn't care on the outside who tried to get in to do something because it was known that this store belonged to a Jewish person.

>> Interviewer: So you were working there.

>> Bauer: Yeah, I was working there. Yes.

>> Interviewer: You were working in the store, yeah.

>> Bauer: I had to fill in the time until I was 20.

>> Interviewer: Right.

>> Bauer: And after I left there, I was very conscious that things were going to change, and many of the Jewish young people tried to prepare themselves, either by thinking of, at that time, Palestine, or trying to get into professions which would be useful for émigrés anywhere, so I was very conscious that we had to prepare ourselves to get out.

>> Interviewer: Where did you think you could go, or where did you -- where was your -- where would you have liked to have gone if you could go?

>> Bauer: At that time, I thought about Palestine, but -- I even tried to learn a little bit about gardening in order to prepare myself, but that didn't materialize either, so I prepared myself to go into nurses training. In Germany, in Cologne, there was a Jewish hospital which served a community of about 100,000 people in Cologne, and about 80 percent of the patients were really non-Jewish people, and it became a completely Jewish hospital only in 1938, when, from one day to another, all the non-Jews had to leave, and all the other Jewish patients from other hospitals were dumped on us.

>> Interviewer: So you began your training in what year?

>> Bauer: Well, the interesting part was, in spite that I knew that Germany took away the privilege of taking state board from Jewish nurses, student nurses, in 1935 already, I went into training anyway, and by 1937 when I graduated, from one day to another, we were notified we were going to take state board. And so I have the privilege of having a certificate from a Jewish hospital with a nice swastika on it. And there were only six nurses all together. As far as I know, I'm the only one who survived and can show this certificate.

>> Interviewer: Do you actually have it?

>> Bauer: Yeah, I have it.

>> Interviewer: Would you like to, perhaps, hold it up for the camera?

>> Bauer: Well, let me see if I can get it out from here.

>> Interviewer: That's a certificate.

>> Bauer: How do I hold it?

>> Interviewer: Yeah, if you could just hold it, hold it up high. Is that okay? And that actually has a -- and that's an official --

>> Bauer: It's a swastika.

>> Interviewer: -- official document with a swastika.

>> Bauer: Yeah, uh-huh.

>> Interviewer: On your graduation.

>> Bauer: Yes.

>> Interviewer: How did you feel to get -- I mean, how did it feel to be doing that, to be going and doing your training? Did you feel that anything in your life was normal, or was it all -- did it all feel very unreal to you at that time? Do you remember?

>> Bauer: No, it was not normal. We knew from 1935 on that things were not normal. It was known, for example, that people had to move everything out of the attics, and we knew this was going to be preparation for war. We knew that in 1935, they built underground shelters at the cathedral, so -- that was not supposed to be known, but somehow it came out, and everybody who knew about it took that as a sign.

>> Interviewer: So as early as '35.

>> Bauer: Yes. We -- especially my aunt and uncle who lived in Cologne, they tried to get as much information at that time from the outside. Radio was forbidden to get from the outside, so the curtains were drawn, and you sat in front of a little radio with the voice way, way down, trying to make out what Holland had to say, what England had to say, what Paris had to say. My aunt and uncle spoke fluently German and -- fluently French and some English, so we got information. And before the Germans walked into Czechoslovakia, we almost prayed that something would happen, that other nations would come in, but as you know, nothing happened.

>> Interviewer: Nothing happened.

>> Bauer: So, well, I felt I was needed in the hospital, but on the other hand, because of my profession, I had the opportunity to get out. Somehow, England asked in 1938 for a thousand midwives and registered nurses, and they didn't care from which country, as long as they came from somewhere. And I was lucky enough to apply and had permission to immigrate to England. I went to Margate, the southeast coast, not too far from Dover. So I was on the English side when the European war started.

>> Interviewer: When the war broke out. When did you actually -- when did you arrive in England?

>> Bauer: April, 1939.

>> Interviewer: April, '39.

>> Bauer: Six months before the war started.

>> Interviewer: So you were -- were you in Cologne during the *Kristallnacht*?

>> Bauer: I was there, yes.

>> Interviewer: And what were your experiences then?

>> Bauer: Well, I was in the hospital, and naturally, we didn't know what was going on in the city. We only knew that people tried to get into the hospital, and we managed to hide about 200 people in the cellars of the hospital, thanks to a dentist, whom I did not know, and I was only told that this happened. He had his building opposite the gate, the entrance of the hospital, and that he would stand with a rifle in his window and dare the Nazis to get in. So we were spared, but naturally, we had the problem of how to feed 200 people without alerting that there are more people.

>> Interviewer: That they were there.

>> Bauer: And naturally, the cellars had to be emptied in order to have normal quantities of food and whatever was necessary for the patients.

>> Interviewer: What happened to those people then?

>> Bauer: Well, a friend of mine -- I put my uniform on, my dress uniform, and somehow I got him over the border to Holland, and my aunt and uncle, who had come to the hospital, they went back home after that. So three of my own people were more or less saved at that time.

>> Interviewer: Yeah. What were conditions like in the hospital? Were there enough supplies? Did you -- was there medicine? Was there enough medicine?

>> Bauer: Yeah, we still had enough medicine at that time. And we had lots of cancer patients, and among the doctors and among

the nurses who were willing, there was this unspoken understanding that when a doctor says half a cc of morphine, that we would give one the double amount because some Nazis later came in and wanted to take some of the patients out of their beds, and we protected the patients by making them sleep. And naturally, we got many people in who tried to commit suicide, and we did not do any major efforts to bring them through. So that was the atmosphere in the hospital.

>> Interviewer: It must have been very difficult.

>> Bauer: We had, until 1937, Seventh-day Adventists working in the hospital, and they had to leave. They couldn't stay with us. Naturally, they chose to be in a Jewish hospital because Saturday was our Sabbath, so -- they were forced out, very much to their regret because they were our friends.

>> Interviewer: When you got permission to go to England, how did you break it to your family? I mean, were they -- they must have been pleased for you.

>> Bauer: They were very pleased that I could get out and helped me in every way they could. At that time, Jewish people were still allowed to take some of their possessions, so they saw to it that I had linens and enough clothing and pictures and books. So I went out with those things, but one thing we couldn't have, and that was silver. In 1937, all the Jewish people had to take in whatever they had on jewelry or household good of silver, but in 1939, when I went out, you could have two pieces of silver, so I chose two pieces to take with me.

>> Interviewer: And you have them here.

>> Bauer: I have them here. No one would eat with such big forks anymore today, but this is solid silver, and my aunt had a full set of 24 for everything and lots of other things, and I do remember that I went with my aunt, helping her. My uncle had angina pectoris, so he couldn't help. But my aunt and I, we packed all the things in suitcases. We had to take a taxi in

order to get to the place where we had to turn them in, and I do remember my aunt, when she took her necklace off, it's the very last thing, and just handed it over, and they took it and threw it away, just like that. But things didn't mean much to me. I still had the feeling that it meant so much to my aunt to part with those things, but I was not attached -- not yet, at least -- at that time.

>> Interviewer: So you arrived in Margate, and how long did you remain in England?

>> Bauer: Only one year. I was at this hospital, and about six hours before the European war started, I begged the matron of the hospital if I could call my people, and I did. That was the last time I heard.

>> Interviewer: That was the last time you spoke. Who did you talk to then?

>> Bauer: To my aunt and uncle.

>> Interviewer: To your aunt and uncle, yeah.

>> Bauer: Uh-huh.

>> Interviewer: And when -- once the war began, then --

>> Bauer: Well, before -- I have to say, the English people, my experience when I came over there, no one talked about war. They didn't believe there would be a war. The general public, the patients and the nurses with whom I talked, they thought I was wrong. I tried to tell them what we had experienced in Germany. They said, "No, it couldn't be. There cannot be a war." And -- but we sent back to the hospital because it was, more or less, later on front line -- during Dunkirk, it became, more or less, front line. While we were sent back in the hospital and we had the gas mask drills, the instructor took time until the nurses put back their caps and used their lipstick. It was all in a very informal way because no one thought it was going to happen,

and then actually, Churchill went on the radio and announced, and at the minute he had announced the fact that England was in war with Germany, the siren went. Naturally, there were no German airplanes in the air, but it was something to make us think. And we had to take all the patients out of the beds and into the cellars, and we had to do all those things. And naturally, when the real thing came, no one took time. And then when Dunkirk came, all we did was really sorting out the living from the dying ones. We even didn't have time to change sheets or anything because we had so many to come.

>> Interviewer: So you were there just as they were bringing the people evacuated from Dunkirk.

>> Bauer: Just at this time. But at that time, the friend I had tried to take to Holland, he was the one who thought he could leave Holland to go the Dominican Republic. He knew about a settlement to be established and had asked for me to come. So I applied for the Dominican Republic, and naturally, this person did not get out because the Germans marched into Holland in May of 1940.

>> Interviewer: But you did.

>> Bauer: Well, I was on the English side, but I had already gotten my visa, and so then, the organization -- and I really didn't know who was all behind. That was all like in a dream. They knew that I was a registered nurse, and I knew they didn't have a registered nurse over there, and there were 13 young people and some pregnant women from England who were going to the same settlement, so they asked me to be the nurse going out. And that's how I got to the Dominican Republic.

>> Interviewer: How did you travel from England to where the ship was sailing from?

>> Bauer: I can't recall the name. Sometimes the name comes back, and sometimes it doesn't. We went from Glasgow and traveled to New York, and we were on Ellis Island. And I had, by

that time, an aunt in America who tried her level best to say, "Stay in America. Go from here to Canada and then try to come back legally." But I was so used to when you say you do something, you go all the way, so I went to the Dominican Republic.

>> Interviewer: What were your feelings when you first came into New York Harbor? Do you remember that, how you felt?

>> Bauer: Well, I was glad for everybody who could get off the boat and was permitted to get in. I probably had the wrong impression of America because America for me was always New York, and I knew I did not want to be in a big city like New York, but I was happy for anybody who could get in, very happy because I wanted to -- I wanted to get out of Germany just like my aunt, but I had to play with the time.

>> Interviewer: How long did you remain in New York before you went to Dominican Republic?

>> Bauer: For a week.

>> Interviewer: For a week?

>> Bauer: And just like my husband, I felt that we were treated very well.

>> Interviewer: You were at Ellis Island as well?

>> Bauer: Ellis Island, and, well, during the war in England, we were permitted either one pat of margarine each day or one pat of butter once a week. So now we came to Ellis Island where you got all the butter you wanted! In England, in the hospital, when we wrote the orders of the doctors down, we didn't have paper. We wrote it on the inside of our aprons. And then we came to Ellis Island. We had napkins every day! We had a fresh paper bed -- tablecloth every day! We couldn't understand at that time that there were people who were unhappy. So the contrast was so big, and naturally, we knew that America was not at war at that

time. We felt that America should do more, but it was nice and peaceful.

>> Interviewer: Yeah. And so this was in '40 by now.

>> Bauer: It was '40, uh-huh.

>> Interviewer: And when did you actually arrive in the Dominican Republic?

>> Bauer: October of 1940.

>> Interviewer: October of '40. Had you been in touch then, since that last phone call, when you managed to speak to your aunt right before the war began?

>> Bauer: Yes. We still could write letters until America entered the war. And at that time, I tried to get my mother out of Germany, and I did the same thing for my aunt and uncle, and they had the visa, they could have gotten out, but on the day when they were supposed to travel, no Jewish person under 65 was allowed to get out because they could be used for work. My uncle was -- he could have gone because he was over 65, but he didn't leave my aunt. And so my mother came out, and I managed to get her to the Dominican Republic, and then I managed to get her to America, and then she died here in America.

>> Interviewer: But your brother, then --

>> Bauer: He died in -- I was in England in contact with her in 1940, and he tried to get out and didn't make it.

>> Interviewer: Got as far as Yugoslavia and didn't make it, yeah. When did you meet your husband?

>> Bauer: Well, the exact date, I cannot tell you, but he had malaria, and he needed a nurse. So naturally, he became the patient, but there was something else. He was the only one who played the piano and had a piano, and I did calisthenics with pregnant women, and I enticed him to play for the calisthenics.

And I also gave some little lessons to schoolchildren, and he played then. So I got to know him, and he got to know me, and then we decided to marry.

>> Interviewer: And this is in forty --

>> Bauer: '43, yes.

>> Interviewer: When did you -- I don't suppose you spoke Spanish before you went to the Dominican Republic; am I right?

>> Bauer: No, and I did not learn as much at that time as my husband. I didn't have time because I worked 12 to 14 hours every single day, and we had, in the beginning, nothing really, and we built up a medical department. And naturally, other people came in with mosquito control, and we got some help from America in establishing VD clinics and all that kind of stuff. And we delivered -- we had a delivery room, and we had a regular little hospital by the time I left, which was -- for me, it was really a wonderful experience, an experience other nurses usually do not have. But you asked about the Spanish. I learned enough Spanish to talk with the expert we had. We had a Dominican doctor who had studied in France, and he spoke only Spanish and French. I knew very little French and less Spanish, but we understood each other very well in a professional way. And this Spanish -- Dominican doctor had to help our young doctors to deal with the tropical problems, sicknesses and ulcers and whatever, they never saw in their homeland. We had three young doctors on the staff. There may have been four because one was married to a doctor, so she was counted in halfway. So I worked, but experience as a nurse there, to see -- they were all young women with their first babies -- to see them through their pregnancy, through each delivery. I stayed with each one the whole time, regardless if it was a few hours or two days, and then to see the children -- I gave all the immunizations to the children, and the ones who lived in barracks, a kind of barracks, when the children were sick with a sore throat, they had to come back to our little hospital, so I

knew of all the children. I really knew all 75 very, very intimate, and this is something, this continuous nursing, it's something very few nurses can experience now.

>> Interviewer: So you actually had experiences that you never would have dreamt, I suppose, when you were doing your training, dealing with tropical diseases and all sorts of things.

>> Bauer: No, no, and naturally, I got a foundation in public health there, not knowing that it was public health.

>> Interviewer: You became an expert, and you didn't even know it. So by this time, you had a child then? When was your son --

>> Bauer: In 1945 --

>> Interviewer: In '45?

>> Bauer: -- was when he was born.

>> Interviewer: Do you remember when the war ended, where you were and how the news came to you?

>> Bauer: It came over radio. We did have a radio, and we knew it was a big experience, but we didn't -- see, war didn't touch us. Oh, yes, it touched us in one way. When America didn't have penicillin yet, but the troops which were stationed in the Dominican Republic, they had already penicillin, and they let us have some penicillin, so I experienced the use of penicillin the very first time, what effect it had. But otherwise, we knew it was over. We knew we could try to get in contact with -- we tried International Red Cross, but life itself didn't change at the settlement except everybody had a fever, Now we can get out. We can try to get where we want to go.

>> Interviewer: And where did you feel you would go then?

>> Bauer: well, I would have stayed.

>> Interviewer: You would have stayed.

>> Bauer: But -- I really loved it there. I missed cultural life, too, but since nursing was the main thing -- and we got so much contact with the natives, and I liked to work with the natives over there. But naturally, when Felix could get his artist's visa, there was no question. We had to -- we didn't have much. We ate in the hospital kitchen, and we had a room, but otherwise, we didn't have many possessions, but what we had, we had to sell in order to pay for our tickets to fly because there were no ships. We would have gotten a ship because that would have been cheaper, but there was no ship anymore, no connection, and so we had to flew.

>> Interviewer: So you flew from Santo Domingo then?

>> Bauer: Yeah, to Miami.

>> Interviewer: To Miami. Was that your first flight? I suppose it was.

>> Bauer: Very first one, with a one-year-old child.

>> Interviewer: That must have been an adventure.

>> Bauer: As a matter of fact, we left the settlement on his birthday. We had, naturally, over there many bugs and many ants and all kinds of things, so I never let him step on the ground. So our son, when he stepped on the ground, it was American soil.

>> Interviewer: Oh, that's incredible. And so from Miami, you made your way to -- by train? How did you get to South Carolina?

>> Bauer: Well, we wanted to get to Due West by train.

>> Interviewer: Yeah.

>> Bauer: And when my husband got to the ticket office, the man told us, "Man, I'm here 25 years. There is no such a thing as Due west." Fortunately, my husband knew enough geography, so he said, "well, what about getting me a ticket to Columbia, South

Carolina?" So we got the ticket to South Carolina, and then we tried to be in the very cheapest hotel near the train station.

>> Interviewer: Here in Columbia.

>> Bauer: In Columbia, and then we wanted again a train to Due West. But then they advised us that there is such thing as a bus, so we got on the bus, and we got to Due West.

>> Interviewer: And there, you've remained.

>> Bauer: And there, we've remained. Due West has been very good to us. We feel very thankful that we found a place. We started with nothing, but by now, we have a comfortable life. We haven't forgotten our friends. My husband and I, we had an experience last year. I don't know if he told you. We were invited by the city of Cologne, as part of their restitution service, to be guests of Cologne. What I didn't know was that I would be interviewed over there, so I had an interview. But to accept this invitation, I had to ask myself, do I really want to go back?

>> Interviewer: Had you been back in all those years?

>> Bauer: Well, we -- on trips. Not in Germany.

>> Interviewer: Not in Germany.

>> Bauer: My husband and I, we never learned to hate, but we didn't know if that was theory, or if we could translate that into practice. And I wanted to prove it to myself, and so that's why I went back to Cologne.

>> Interviewer: Did you prove it?

>> Bauer: I never learned to hate, no. I wish, I wish we could let it be like a seed for wanting for peace, for understanding. But naturally, you have it here in America too.

>> Interviewer: Is there anything else that you'd like to add, or I think you've --

>> Bauer: Well, I was impressed with something they sent to me from Cologne. They do quite a bit of research in Cologne, how they worked out lesson plans for the children from 1933 to 1935, in order to instill into the children in school that the most important thing was to think Hitler is right with whatever he's doing and why you would hate Jews. I want to go back -- you asked me what I experienced -- if I had experienced it. I had some experience after '33. I could not walk with my aunt in the streets because she was very blond, blue-eyed, and according to description by the Germans, I looked very Jewish. So they would come up to us and really be very ugly to my aunt, "How can you walk with a Jewish girl?" And then already during school time, in 1933, I had to protect my friends. I said, "Don't walk with me." I let them go to the other side of the street because I didn't want them to be in any danger because of me. So we recognized what was coming.

>> Interviewer: And so when you were back in Cologne just last year, how did it feel to be back in Cologne after all those years?

>> Bauer: First of all, Cologne has changed. Cologne was, before the war, a city of 800,000 people. In spite of all the big losses they had during the war, they are now 1 million. The -- where my aunt and uncle lived in a very nice surrounding in one of the nicest parts of Cologne -- well, when I was there, the houses were just single with gardens, you know, with room between. I tried to go back. It's a one-way street now. Houses are close together. They built another story on it, and it became a house with apartments, which it wasn't. So the picture as such has changed. We had something like a ring around town to a botanical gardens. They are all gone. That is not anymore. But the inner city is restored to almost what it was. And naturally, the Rhine doesn't change.

>> Interviewer: So some things remain the same.

>> Bauer: Yeah.

>> Interviewer: Yes. Okay. We'd like to thank you very, very much, and we appreciate your talking to us and coming in and talking to us.

>> Bauer: Thank you.

>> Interviewer: Thank you.

00:41:00