

EDITH COLIVER

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Edith Coliver was born Edith Simon on July 26, 1922, to Fritz and Hedwig Simon in Karlsruhe, Germany. She had two younger brothers, Harold and

Ernest. Her father was a banker and the family lived an observant Jewish life. Edith remembered that life began to change when she was ten; in 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power and Jewish shops had to place a yellow Star of David in the window. In 1937, Edith was no longer allowed to attend public school in Germany because she was Jewish, so her parents decided to send her to London to live with family friends and attend school.

A year later, in 1938, Edith and her family moved to the United States on a visa that Fritz had managed to obtain. After a month in New York, the family moved to San Francisco via the Panama Canal and arrived on Halloween in 1938. Edith attended George Washington High School and was a member of the first graduating class. She then went on to study International Relations and Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. She lived in the international house which made her feel at home because some of the students were also from Germany.

After her graduation, Edith worked for the Office of War Information serving as a propaganda analyst in Washington, D.C. When the war ended in 1945, Edith went to work for a U.S. Senator from California. She learned that the war crimes trials which were to take place in Nuremberg, Germany, needed interpreters. Edith had been an interpreter for the first United Nations Conference in San Francisco earlier that year and felt she was qualified for this task. After interviewing with the Department of Defense, Edith left for Germany.

At the end of September 1945, Edith arrived in Nuremberg and spent two months working at preliminary trials and practicing her translation skills. She participated in many trials while she was there, including the trial of Hermann Goering, a high-ranking Nazi official. Edith remembered Nuremberg as a defining experience of her life that made her recognize how fortunate her family was that they left Germany when they did.

Edith traveled in Germany after the trials were over and met her future husband, Norman Coliver. They were married in October 1947, in San Francisco. Shortly after her marriage, Edith was hired by the Stanford Research Institute. Norman was also hired a few years later to work in Italy. They spent one year in Milan before returning to San Francisco where Edith obtained a job working for the Free Asia Foundation. Her job sent her to the Philippines and Taiwan to assist governmental organizations working for democracy. Edith and Norman have two daughters, Susan and Lillian. At the time of Edith's interview in 1999, she had been retired for seven years after forty years of service with the Free Asia Foundation.