

## **RG-50.002.0090 HANS FISHER**

### ***Summary of Oral History—Dr. Hans Fisher***

Dr. Hans Fisher, born in 1928 in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland), describes his family (mother born in Breslau, father Polish) and childhood with his younger sister; experiencing random antisemitism in the mid-30's: attending Jewish day school (Zionist) as observant Jew; the roundup of Polish Jews of Breslau in 1938 (schoolmates included) and deportation to Poland; father applying for Certificate to enter Palestine—all furniture packed in lift; the summer of 1938 and November 9-10, 1938—Kristallnacht—when his father (soldier in WW1 and a lawyer) was taken to Buchenwald by Gestapo; father released, then left on January 19, 1939 with visa for Panama but instead went to Cuba; his father never discussing Buchenwald until day he died; enduring scarlet fever; staying in a Jewish children's home; leaving on train for Hamburg; waiting in Cuban consulate in Hamburg for visa and permit; waiting in line for permit but mother never got visa; May 13, 1939 walking on to MS St. Louis ship to Havana, Cuba; picking up passengers (including close friend) in Cherbourg; first class passage with plentiful food; rumors of problems on docking in Havana; seeing Morro Castle from the boat; father waiting in little row boat in Havana; only visas allowed to be taken off boat; playing checkers while the boat moved back out to sea; seeing Miami; speaking of President Roosevelt; voyage back to Antwerp, Belgium; passengers' debarkation choice of England, France, Belgium or Holland; friend being liaison between Jews and Gestapo in Antwerp; ferry to French port; being separated from mother and sister (sent to Laval in Mayenne department); being sent to camp in Montmorency, France run by OSE (Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants) from June to October/November 1939; sleeping in air raid shelters; joining family in Laval; relating Laval to a medieval town with peasants coming to look at the Jews to see if they had horns; father securing visa to Cuba; leaving by train (December, 1939) to Le Havre; boarding DeGrasse (older boat) with Spanish loyalist refugees to Southampton to await other boats; mother enduring sea-sickness; playing ping-pong on deck with a Spaniard; staying on Ellis Island awaiting transfer to Havana; 4 day trip on luxury liner to Cuba—living for one year; February, 1941 arrival in New York; maternal grandparents death of starvation in Theresienstadt camp; wife's aunt survival at Theresienstadt; Bar-mitzvah in New York—synagogue on Broadway (91st or 93rd); Jewish Agriculture Society loaning father money to buy a chicken farm in Vineland, NJ—October 1941; discussing university studies in science (biochemistry) at Rutgers (1950), University of Connecticut (MS), University of Illinois (PhD); voyage to Chile to visit relatives—large German Jewish contingent in Santiago from Breslau; parents' experience on farm; father being a typical Yekke (also Jecke)—German Jew; mother's death in 1959; feelings of being a Jew first, nationality second; discussing Edith Stein, Einstein, biochemists, German Jewry, relatives' trips to Palestine; discussing universal outlook in troubling times in order to make value judgment—relating to grandfather's belief during war that no one would hit an old man; survivors' contribution every day in present society; beliefs that Judaism is a way of life