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Summary

Lothar Leopold Meyer who was born in South Africa on November 9, 1939. The first part of the interview concerned his parents escape from Nazi Germany; the second part of the interview was about his involvement with documents from the International Training Service.

Leopold's father, Julius, came to South Africa in 1936 from Germany because it was the only country that would take him. He came from a small town on the Moselle river. His family were the only Jews in the town and had lived there for several generations. His father was the youngest of six children. All his siblings were killed in the Holocaust. His mother, Hermina (Levy), had a sister and a brother and parents still in Germany. Her sister and parents survived by coming to South Africa. Her brother went to Israel and was killed the 1948 War of Independence. Leopold was raised by his maternal grandmother until he was five while his parents worked. German was his first language which he spoke with his grandmother.

After earning enough money in South Africa Lothar's father wrote to his brothers in Germany asking which one of them wanted to come over to South Africa. The brothers said they were fine in Germany but that the "girl" he had been dating in Germany, who would become Lothar's mother Hermina wanted to come. Twice more, including right after Kristallnacht, Lothar's father wrote his brothers with the same invitation. Again, they said they were fine but that Hermina's sister, and later her parents wanted to come, and they did. Lothar later found out through Yad Vashem that one of his father's brothers, David, and his wife and child were sent to Belzec and killed, but he never found out about the other brothers.

As an adult Lothar was told that there were documents in Europe held by an agency known as the International Training Service (ITS) that might reveal what happened to his father's other siblings. At first, the ITS was unresponsive, but when he went through his congressman and then the U.S. State Department and ultimately the German chancellor he was contacted by ITS. The ITS was made up of eleven countries and was housed under the international Red Cross. They seemed more interested in preserving the document than in distributing the information. Ultimately, however, they agreed to copy the relevant documents for him and later to digitize them so that they would be available. The USHMM later acquired digitized copies.

Asked why it was important for him to know what happened to his uncles, Lothar said that he wanted closure. He also did not understand why they did not want to leave Germany. He also could not understand why neighbors of his father's family, who took over the family's house and had been friendly, never spoke up against the Nazis.