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Summary

Ulrich Camillus (U.C. or Uli) Knoepfmacher was born June 26, 1931 in Munich, Germany and grow up as an only child. Both parents were from Vienna, Austria. His father was Georg, his mother was Hilda (née Weisz). His mother's family, Strassman, owned a brewery in the Czech Republic. His father's family was also from the Czech Republic. Ulrich describes parts of his family history, including a reference to the golem, and his family's Stammbaum or genealogy. His parents married in 1922 and eventually moved to Munich for Georg to open a branch office for the Porr Company, but they returned to Vienna when Ulrich was still young. He describes some of his memories of Vienna including Hitler's visits to the city.

Prior to the Anschluss, Ulrich's family felt their existence was not in danger though they knew antisemitism was rampant. His Volksschule barred him, and he transferred to a Jewish school; the curriculum often touched on preparing for emigration. To gain an exit visa, his father took a job with a Dutch mining company, as manager of a mining operation in Bolivia, leaving in May 1939. Ulrich discusses the emigration efforts of others in Vienna, including the Rudy and Katie Weiner family, who were among his relatives. His family departed on a Chilean ship, containing almost all refugees, landing in Arica, Chile. They then traveled to La Paz, Bolivia and settled in Obrajés, Bolivia. He describes his feelings and observations on arrival, and the local attitudes towards the war. He describes encountering widespread sympathy for Germany.

His family, joined now by his grandmother, moved to Oruro, Bolivia to be closer to the mine; far fewer Jews lived there. He describes some of the living adjustments the family had to make, including the importance of foreign radio broadcasts. He describes the trickling in of Jewish refugees at the war's end, and how most of these refugees were relatives of existing residents and many moved on to neighboring countries. Ulrich describes the difficult bureaucracy and petty corruption of local officials.

Ulrich was accepted at the UC Berkeley architecture school and while at school he developed an active interest in English literature. Ulrich discusses his sense of alienation from the American Jewish community while at the university, specifically his sense that Jews like his cousins, the Weiners, didn't accept the full impact of the Holocaust. He discusses his feelings about seeking reparations and his visits to Europe, including places such as Prague, Vienna, and Theresienstadt. He describes some remaining antisemitic artistic elements still visible in Vienna. He concludes with a description of the Holocaust Museum as a wound that cannot be left to heal in order to keep its impact fresh, and its lessons for the US.