

**Time-coded notes of Interview with William Frankel  
December 9, 1986**

04:00 Rabbi Frankel was born in Vienna in 1922. His parents were refugees from East Austria-Hungary who settled in Vienna in 1914. His father was a rabbi.

05:00 He has several recollections of anti-Semitism beginning in 1935-1936. Austria had a fascist government as well, however, it was opposed to Hitler and union with Germany.

06:00 He went to elementary school for four years and then attended a private Jewish school from the age of ten until he was eighteen.

07:00 He therefore knew people of the same background; he did not have any non-Jewish friends. He remembers well the day Hitler came to power in Germany.

08:00 There was a plebiscite scheduled in Sushnig to respond to Nazi pressure. Hitler was determined to not let this take place.

09:00 There had always been some anti-Semitism prevalent, however, up until now it had been of a religious nature. Now it was quite clearly of a purely racial nature.

10:00 Those Jews who lived comfortably did not pack their bags and leave. There had been no precedent to emigrate. He does not recall the presence of any German Jewish refugees in Austria-Hungary before Hitler's assumption of power. Those who did choose to leave Germany went to other countries like Israel or Palestine.

11:00 He says that history has always had its ups and downs. This was clearly all down.

12:00 He recalls the day that the Nazi marched through Austria. They were listening to a radio at the neighbor's house, the Austrian national anthem was played, and then a foreign voice was heard. It became immediately clear that the Nazis had taken over the radio.

13:00 The next day hundreds of German planes crossed the Austrian skies. That same afternoon the troops arrived. The following day Hitler arrived in Vienna where over a million people gathered in the streets to hail him. Hitler soon forced the government to accept certain conditions and the Nazi party was restored to status in Vienna.

14:00 From then on, serious pressure was put on the Austrian government.

16:00 His father was a rabbi and not a businessman and thus, at first, the Nazi conditions did not affect him as harshly as they did others. He remembers that the middle aged Jews were forced to clean the streets. He was fifteen years old at this time.

17:00 The next event was the expulsion of all Jewish students from state schools. As his school was the only private Jewish school intact, those who were expelled were invited to study at his school. It therefore grew to be very large.

18:00 The year 1938 was the most important year of change in his life. Individuals were arrested, some of whom were released and some of whom were sent to Dachau. Many came back at first, yet there were those who returned as ashes.

19:00 He discusses the events of November 9 & 10 and refers to the assassination of von Ratt.

20:00 He remembers the morning of November 10, 1938. There was a temple in his backyard. When he awoke, the Nazis were destroying it and soon thereafter set it on fire.

21:00 Their synagogue was completely destroyed. There were no remains and five months later the lot was completely emptied.

22:00 The Nazis then began to confiscate apartments. His family was able to keep theirs but had to take in another family of three. He did not leave his house for several days. The newspapers then began a violent attack on the Jews.

23:00 The years of 1935-1936 were not extremely bad for the Jews. They were not nearly as bad as the years beginning with 1938. It was then that long lines began forming in front of the consulates of many different countries. He and his family stayed for six more months before coming to the United States.

24:00 About half the Jews got out. The other half did not. His father died in Jerusalem. After the burning of the synagogues, they would sometimes gather in a Jewish hospital to worship.

25:00 After the events of November 1938, the Jews knew that they must get out. Not all foreign embassy officials were friendly. Sometimes they took away the Jews' visas.

26:00 He had planned to go to Palestine after finishing school that school that year. However, Goering imposed a head tax for those Jewish youngsters who were planning to go to Palestine. Therefore, he had no choice but to stay with his family and hope to go to the United States.

27:00 Members of the clergy were able to enter the United States without an affidavit if they were offered a position by a congregation.

28:00 His father was offered the position of rabbi at a small congregation in the eastern part of New York. It was so small that the Naturalization Service originally claimed it was too small for consideration. However, with the help of Senator Robert Wagner and one other congressman, they were able to get permission to enter.

29:00 He recalls the day he left Vienna. He took the train from Vienna to Zurich. He felt tremendous relief when they crossed the border.

30:00 He was only able to finish the school year through June 1938. For the next ten months he waited, with the hope of coming to America.

31:00 Some Jews tried to cross the border illegally at night by paying off a guard. This was very dangerous. His mother was a nervous person; his father was more adventurous. Yet, they decided not to risk their lives; their visas were expected any day.

32:00 He recalls being attacked by three non-Jewish youngsters while he was on his way to the synagogue with his father.

33:00 The only real contact he had with a non-Jew was that which he had with the janitor in his apartment building. All the families in the building were Jewish. They did not experience any major problems with the janitor or his family.

34:00 Most of the people who lived in his building were older people. Very few were still in their working days.

35:00 After 1938, there were very few options available to these people besides to leave. To pick up their things and go.

36:00 March 12, 1938, long lines formed in front of the foreign embassies. They closed at twelve o'clock for the weekend. Those who got in before then had a better chance of leaving the country if they were from Vienna.

37:00 In July 1938, the Nazis were making fun of the various foreign governments who used every possible excuse not to accept Jewish refugees. This proved to the Nazis that they would get away with what they were doing.

38:00 In 1938, the plan of action was the expulsion of the Jews. It was not until 1941 that the policy changed from expulsion to extermination. It was very difficult to comprehend- World War One had only taken place twenty years ago. Russia had been the enemy and now Germany was the enemy. It was such a flip-flop.

39:00 Even when Hitler was in full control, many Jews honestly thought that it would prove to be a transitory phase. Many thought that there would probably be a world war and Hitler would be forced to focus his attention on that and might leave the Jews alone. They did not feel necessarily that this was the last word.

40:00 His parents had come to Vienna in 1914 because they were running away from the Russian invasion of Eastern Europe. The Russians were the enemy and the Germans were the saviors.

41:00 The taking of the Jewish businesses, as the German economy was in such bad shape, offered great opportunities for S.S. and S.R. soldiers. Hitler had written in Mein Kampf from the beginning that he would destroy the Jews. He was on his way to preparing the masses.

43:00 Late 1938 meant the end of self-deception for the Jews. Any doubts about the Nazis capacity for evil were dissolved.