

**Time-coded notes of Interview with Henry Hartmann  
November 20, 1986**

01:00 Born in 1926 in Kimnetz (?). Long family history in Kimnetz. His grandfather was born there, but prior to that, father's side came from the East. Mother born in Schrimm in Polish corridor; when it was ceded to Poland, her family moved to East Germany where two of her brothers lived.

02:00 Kimnetz is an industrial town of approximately 350,000 people. His father was an attorney; he had to work his way through university. He graduated just before WWI and was rejected for service due to health reasons.

03:00 His father was very eager to serve his country; he was a very loyal German. He was eventually permitted to serve and fought on both fronts. He told Henry and his brother stories of the bitter cold on the eastern front. He was shot in the leg and received the iron cross.

04:00 His father and mother had met before the war and then married after it in 1920. He adds here that the reason he was originally kept from the army was merely because he was kind of thin, undernourished.

05:00 He was 6 years old in 1933 when Hitler came to power. He remembers hearing the street fights, the slogans everywhere, photographs in the paper of the bloody fighting. There were 4 different Chancellors in one year until Hitler forced his way in.

06:00 He was never aware of anti-Semitism before the war. He can't exactly say when he became conscious of it - it was "slow" and "insidious". His parents were very protective. He does remember some incidents in school. Ironically, he looked Aryan so he didn't encounter much anti-Semitism.

07:00 He attended public school and spent his afternoons at religious school at the synagogue.

08:00 His family never seriously considered emigration. His father was a lawyer, war veteran and a firm believer in German justice and government. He was a very strong German patriot. There was a feeling in the family that it would all pass over; it would settle down.

09:00 They lived a more "relaxed" way of life in that area of the country. "Slow-moving". The extremism didn't really affect them till the party made it directly felt. He compares the "polite anti-Semitism" in his neighborhood to that of the U.S.

10:00 There was a slow withdrawal of Gentiles from social interaction with Jews. Most of his friends were Jewish anyway, so this didn't really affect him. The violence and the taunting began to increase gradually. He remembers seeing Der Sturme - little black books that were put all over the city.

11:00 They were full of anti-Semitic caricatures, cartoons and articles. The Jews would read it in sheer wonderment. He remembers that they were no longer allowed to swim in the same pools.

12:00 His father was given another title from the government - "Notar" - but it was taken away from him. This was the first thing that really affected him. His parents tried to shield them from the hostility. They traveled abroad a lot - to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc. They couldn't stay in hotels in Germany anymore.

13:00 The anti-Semitism was "insidious by its slowness". He didn't really notice any acceleration after the takeover in 1938 of Austria.

14:00 At first, the build-up of the army was generally welcomed as a status thing, a re-awakening of German power. Germany had been terribly down-trodden as a result of WWI so people rationalized the build-up "for defense purposes", etc. Then, sudden emigration of Jews to Poland mortified people.

15:00 His mother received a phone call that such a train was coming through Kimnetz and was asked to come and help. He'd never seen his mother so devastated and haggard as when she returned. She told about the trains with arms sticking out the windows and starving people. She spent all her money and watched the Germans stand idly by.

16:00 She would only talk about it in bits and pieces. A few days later, they learned of the shooting of a German embassy official in Paris whose parents had been on these trains. There was a general feeling of uneasy after that.

17:00 There was really nothing further until one day en route to school, on November 10, there was a knock on the apartment door. It was the Gestapo to pick up his father who was still asleep at the time. They were "polite" and, maybe because his father knew the police chief.

18:00 His father was respected in the community. They were merely "following orders". They dressed his father warmly and he hugged them and that was it.

19:00 Three more times that day, bands of Nazis came. He and his brother were told that they could no longer attend public school. The Jews then organized their own schools. When his father was taken away, his brother was away studying in Berlin. His mother feels she made a mistake in not telling him right away about their father because he only imagined the worst.

20:00 His father spent a day or so in the local jail and then was shipped to Buchenwald. They tried to reach his uncle and go to his business in a cab, but they couldn't get through because there was huge crowd watching the local synagogue burn.

21:00 They heard that the rabbi was arrested and beaten horribly. They went back to their apartment and two more times, the Nazis came looking for his father.

22:00 One experience that he remembers positively: the Germans had to replace the window of a department store, only because it was largely American owned. Ironic. As a 12 year old, he didn't have any idea why all this was happening.

23:00 He thinks his mother held up remarkably well for all they had to go through the day his father was taken away. She even went to the police station to inquire and they told her to get immigration papers. She was a "powerful" woman who dealt with the emergency.

24:00 For him, it was a total collapse of everything he had known. The hatred, the rejection, the disaster. It was, and still is, a nightmare. His parents did not survive it. His dad got out of the camp in December of 1939. They got affidavits to the U.S., but had to wait for the Corda (?) of 1942. Both his parents would die by then, though. His mother disappeared.

25:00 The kids went to England through the immense generosity and caring of the English people who allowed all children to come as long as there was someone able to take care of them till they were 18.

26:00 When his father returned from the camp and they were all still in Germany, he never spoke of his experiences. He was like a walking skeleton. He didn't look like the same person; he was devoid of hope. His only hope was the children, so they did all they could to get them out.

27:00 Around this time, he had make-shod Bar Mitzvah, without the studies to go along with it. His schooling continued hazardous.

28:00 His brother returned from Berlin shortly after Kristallnacht. He owes his brother for finding someone to help them at the refugee camp, where they were prior to going to England.

29:00 His papers were processed and he left the refugee camp. The man who had signed them for him hadn't really understood what he was promising (to care for a child till age 18). But a lady found someone else and he arrived in England in May of 1939.

30:00 His parents' hopes were that the children would go to America. His brother contacted the American embassy and tried to get a visa with their affidavits to the U.S.

31:00 Brother also contacted the Dutch embassy to try to go there himself; he was in the refugee camp longer than his brother. Their father had been sent back to the camp by then - to Dachau. The family tried to obtain tickets to Shanghai, but mother wouldn't leave without their father, who was at Dachau.

32:00 Through the Red Cross, she was sent a letter saying she needn't write anymore to his father. They told her not to worry and to be brave.

33:00 After war, they found out she was ordered to deport and they don't know what happened from there. Henry came to the U.S. in 1946; he previously served in the British National Guard.

34:00 He's never returned to Germany since, mostly for financial reasons. He'd like to return to his hometown and pick up the pieces. His brother can't understand why he would want to.

35:00 Germany is still an open chapter for him. As for Kristallnacht and its meaning for him. The utter meaningless of it, no purpose, an abomination, a disaster, an incredible commentary on what mankind is capable of doing to one another.

36:00 He doesn't remember much expression of human decency from non-Jews after a certain point. He remembers that their maid was a Gentile and shocked by the whole thing.

37:00 The principal of his school was a decent, old-fashioned type who fought to keep the Jewish children in school. When he couldn't prevent it any longer, he called the families and told them himself.

38:00 There were covert expressions of sympathy. But the non-Jewish Germans were in fear. One woman even said they'd lost control of their own children (the Gentiles). The general feeling was to not say anything.

39:00 They just weren't willing to pay the price to help the Jews. The Germans have tried to make some reparations, but he hasn't received any compensation for what he went through. He received a paltry \$2,000 which is nothing compared to the loss of his parents, his father's pension, etc.

40:00 It's a national disgrace.

41:00 Two of his uncles got out and three aunts disappeared without a trace.

42:00 His son went to Israel to work on a kibbutz and stopped off in Europe to meet family. He went to Dachau to see where his grandfather had died and left the next day. He has no desire to ever return.

43:00 His memory of his father is of a staunch, patriotic German. He wants to understand where his father was coming from.

44:00 In honor of his father, he might consider visiting Germany again. His father was a Social Democrat, one of the first groups targeted for extermination.