

## RG-50.031.0124

### Summary

Ernest Gustav Kohlmann June 1, 1926 ("10 min to 12") Wesel, Prussia to father Martin & mother Frieda (Frederica on birth certificate-nee Marx), sister, close uncle Dr. Eugene Marx (married non-Jewish woman); parents' families trace back in Germany 1600s (mother's in Rhineland), family self-identified as German, then as Jewish; father had curtain/carpet business, "Mother (an accountant) "had the brains," father spent time in South Africa; Ernest (age 10), family move to Cologne (1933) "to mitigate anti-Semitism," Ernest enters Jewish gymnasium; uncle "beloved doctor" had affair with non-Jewish woman (1934), sent to Dachau, Nazis shave his head, former patients apply pressure on SS & uncle is freed; discussion 1936 Olympics; Nov 10, 1939 "big change" Kristallnacht, synagogue burns, mother presents box of valuables to upstairs neighbors (Kuster & Zollner, mother/daughter), hands over Ernest who is placed in a wardrobe, told to "Make no noise," next day, able to return to family apt "Fear pervaded the place"; chauffeur "loyal servant" shelters Ernest's father; interviewer inquires about sister's experience, at time of interview, Ernest, brother & sister not able to discuss Holocaust with each other; Ernest's Yavneh Kindertransport-1<sup>st</sup> transport, Dr. Stein (Hebrew teacher) assists Ernest (Stein didn't survive Holocaust), mother not allowed to come to station, discussion on abundant items boys were able to take on train; boys "quite cheerful about getting out of Germany....stone lifted from my shoulders crossing into Holland, their hospitality beyond praise"; arrival to London "hellish view" of coal fog, Ernest (age 12) & 7 boys from different backgrounds placed in one room "some depressed but camaraderie among us"; Ernest returns to an anti-Semitism endured in Cologne but encounter further when transferred to England; enduring hunger in London, "treated as a puppy," sent to "slum school," marched into Netherwood Rd., SS sign was on one wall 1939, boys armed themselves with knives; boys taken to Bedford, moved around to various Christian families Neal (Mr. Harris oversaw moves), spending a week or month e.g. families Jones, Peck; able to correspond with parents "then silence"; towards end of war, Ernest approaches Cambridge for entry, endures anti-German rhetoric but accepted, volunteered as a roof spotter for German planes, led to interest in flying, joined OTC (Operational Training Unit), becomes pilot (not in combat); Ernest's disdain for Refugee Committee refusing payment of a room, found work, employer "a Methodist" who paid for decorative art technical school; after 6 yrs. in England, coming into acceptance that parents probably had been killed (father's death confirmed 1945); discussion re: what would become of Yavneh classmates; discussion on parents' separation in Riga; toward end of war, receiving letter from uncle that mother was at "death's door" with typhus, receiving letter from dying mother; at time of interview, never learned how father died; becoming officer/US Army; meeting wife Eva in espionage work, marriage 1947; Eva's parents survive Holocaust; Ernest finds work as decorative artist, wife Eva, in designing knitting patterns; Eva decides to have children to assist replenishing those who had been killed - daughter Patricia becomes psychiatrist, son Tim, a tankman in Israeli Army, both eventually move to US; returning to Germany 1988, when "German towns invited survivors to shake hands"; invited by German Historical Museum to speak on "Attitude of Britain Towards Germany" after war; sister (b. 1924) who survived, would move to Skokie, IL.