

Summary of Oral History: Jules Wallerstein,

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This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer 05/2022

Jules Wallerstein, b. Fuerth-Bavaria, Germany; father, mother, sister were on Voyage of the St. Louis; Jules discusses his early childhood - Jules and non-Jewish friends had to part but Jules did not endure Anti-Semitic taunts from them but in Kristallnacht - Nazis enter their home. His father is taken to the Gestapo and then to his jewelry store. The store's front window is broken. The SS steals a stamp collection. Jules then recalls hearing kids chant "Dirty Jew" but a non-Jewish friend of his father chases kids away. His uncle received a visa from Cuba. His family books on 5/13/1939 St. Louis ship out of Hamburg (Tourist Class), having to pay "Jew Tax"; first impression of ship, hearing voyage theme song "If I Have To Leave My Town," searching for 1st Class kids to obtain cookies; in preparing for voyage, father had 4' x 4' shipping containers lined with tin to prevent bugs from entering, concerned about Cuba's malaria, only allowed to take one table setting and one watch per person, as much clothing needed. Upon boarding the ship, authority discovers tin linings, suspicious of diamond smuggling, rips opened lining, none found; pleasant voyage to Cuba, movie nights, Jewish services; bust of Hitler in dining room, captain requested to cover, treated them "as tourists, not as refugees or as Jews"; Interview returns to discussion of the time following Kristallnacht, SS took inventory of jewelry store, 100's of watches, Jules snuck one away, father makes him return to not jeopardize their lives; arrival to Havana Harbor 5/27, seeing avenues lined with palm trees; receiving vaccinations (smallpox included); 100's of little boats encircle ship shouting for friends/relatives onboard but passengers denied entry; seeing German sailor rescue a suicide, a Mr. Leventhal according to Jules' memory, who had jumped overboard; spending their only 10 marks on telegrams appealing to ambassadors for entry into US; memories of passing Miami Beach, passengers denied entry, ship turns back to Europe; rumor all passengers might commit mass suicide than be returned to internment camps, Jules feeling as if "It was the end of life"; guards begin watching ship's railings for jumps; ship allowed to drop off refugees in other countries including Belgium where Jules' family disembark; father later interned in France; family transported in a cattle car, internment in Marseilles; family departs Casablanca on Portuguese ship to the US. The entire immediate family had survived. They arrived in the US on Jan 1942; thoughts on loss of inheritance from father's jewelry store that had been handed down from father's father; father becomes dishwasher in US, mother a chamber maid; closing thoughts, lessons of the Holocaust, Jules' concern, "Same thing could happen again."