

Summary of Oral History: Rudolph H. Weingartner

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This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on [05/2022]

Rudolph H. Weingartner b. Heidelberg, Germany to Jacob and Greta; younger brother; his grandparents b. in 1860's Southern Germany; father's father cattle dealer, mother's father cigar maker; father, exporter of toilet goods; Rudolph attends public school for a couple grades, age 9 begins Jewish school; pre-war rise of Anti-Semitism, divisions among Jewish, non-Jewish children, being pushed down stairs for being Jewish, seeing the "brown shirts," seeing Anti-Semitic signs such as "Jewish and Dogs Prohibited," restricted from vacationing in certain hotels; father's business taken; parents reluctance to flee because little sister had been placed in nursing home from birth injury; 1935 Nuremberg Laws; morning after Kristallnacht 11/9/38 enroute to school, coming upon store where its contents had been strewn across the street; memory of synagogue burnt out, walls remaining, able to retrieve father's tallit; 11 or 10 Nazis enter home, father arrested, sent to Dachau; prior to father's arrest, little sister had passed (3 years old) so parents had pursued US immigration through the American Embassy in Stuttgart, which would assist father's release; father's experiences at Dachau enduring frostbite, starvation (father b. 1896 had fought in WW1); German government required approval of each item in shipping containers; travel from Heidelberg to Holland to London, finally Queen Mary ship via Amsterdam to NY 3/9/1939; father's parents enter US 08/1939; mother's father didn't want to immigrate because he couldn't speak English, he was killed at Theresienstadt, mother's mother died of natural illness, all parents' siblings able to flee but much of the extended family did not get out; on a fellowship, Rudolph returns to Heidelberg 1950, which ends up being an unpleasant visit after witnessing lingering Anti-Semitism; Weingartner discusses Germans' view that Americans had a lax approach to bringing up children and Rudolph's belief that Germans' authoritarian culture was underneath the Nazi government; subsequent return to Germany, visiting non-Jewish friends who had helped the family flee, putting their own lives at risk, his piano teacher and one of his father's co-workers.