

RONALD HAUSER
BORN: 1927
STUTTGART, GERMANY

Ronald Hauser was born in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1927 as the son of a pediatrician. He had an older brother and a sister. Although the family felt very German, he remembers a growing concern even before Hitler came to power. He had few Jewish playmates but some good non-Jewish friends. While he remained in Public School as the only Jew, other Jewish students went to a synagogue school. After Kindergarten, he felt no longer part of the social life. He shows a photograph of one of his report cards.

Both sets of his grandparents were still alive and he developed warmest feelings toward his mother's parents. In school, some teachers were antisemitic and often beat him up, although he did not connect this with religious prejudice until much later. His brother and sister had similar problems. He felt quite isolated and never told his parents. His brother had won some school sports event in 1935, where a teacher had allowed him to participate and had received a pin with a swastika. He shows a photograph of this pin. Subsequently, such participation was no longer permitted.

The family made emergency plans and bought a one-room isolated cabin in the country; it was never used for this purpose, but they spent some vacation time there. For religious instruction he had to go to a nearby synagogue. The rabbi there treated him badly because, as he later realized, he had continued in the German school system. The family also had only minimal religious observances at home and, probably for these reasons, he never related to religion.

He stayed in school until one week before the family left for the United States in 1938. The German Immigration quota was oversubscribed and originally, they had planned to go to Chile. However, his parents were born in Alsace-Lorraine and could come under the French quota. His grandparents stayed behind. Two had died before they left and the others died in some camp as well as most of his other relatives. The entire family used to meet once a year, but those who survived the war are now scattered all over the world. He has little contact with any of them. One

cousin, a well-known writer in New York even denies any relationship.

The family settled in San Francisco and his father reestablished his practice but he is not close to them. After finishing school, he was drafted into the Army but is afraid to put down roots anywhere.

Now he tries to be close to his children. They know about his life but he has not stressed it until the last few years. He never used to collect family photographs but is beginning to collect and is now more interested to understand his psychological reactions. He has been back to Germany many times but only to look at places and not to see people.

In the United States, he felt good right away and related well to other kids in the school, but he does not have many Jewish friends. His first year was spent in San Francisco but his parents then moved to nearby Vallejo. When the war started, they became enemy aliens and could not stay there because of military installations close by. They moved to Napa where his father reestablished his practice. Although he was not allowed to leave the area, he traveled illegally with the football team of his school and never told his parents.

He feels very fortunate but also feels a guilt of having survived. There is no drive to get together with scattered relatives and only recently made contact with cousins in France. He may try more contacts but finds it difficult. His grandfather used to be the family historian and stressed the need for someone to keep track of family members. His children also are affected. They know no relatives and have no sense of a large family. However, such breakup of families is now quite common in the United States.