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Summary

Julius Bendorf was born on January 4, 1915 in Ober-Ramstadt, Germany to Joseph and Dina; he had one younger brother, Manfred. His father was a butcher. The town had about 35-40 Jews with one synagogue. Julius attended a public school and then a local alt-schule. Before 1931, until the Nazis came to power in Hesse, he saw few anti-Semitic incidents. He worked at a private bank in Darmstadt starting in 1931. In 1936, his father had to close his shop when his meat quota was suspended. The bank that employed Julius was closed in 1938.

His family considered leaving Germany, but they couldn't show sufficient assets to go to England, Australia and Palestine, and they were too far down on the U.S. quota list. His family's house was ransacked on Kristallnacht. Manfred and Julius were sent to a work camp in Paderborn, Westphalia until April, 1940 and then onto Bielefeld until March, 1943, when they were sent to Auschwitz. When Manfred injured his leg working to build the Farben factory, he was sent away and never seen again.

In January, 1945, they were marched for days to avoid Russian troops to a train that took them to Buchenwald to make airplane parts. A group of 5,000 were again moved by train in a series of stops to avoid Allied soldiers, ending up in Dachau with about 950 survivors. Julius was suffering gangrene from a gunshot wound but survived when American soldiers arrived two days later. He remained in hospital until October, 1945.

He stayed for a while in a displaced persons (DP) camp before going to Frankfurt. He visited Ober-Ramstadt where he learned how his parents perished. Julius purchased his family home back from the man who had earlier extorted an unfair price, and then sold it to someone he preferred. He remained in Frankfurt working for the military government before immigrating to Chicago in January, 1948. He describes his lack of success in gaining reparations from the German government.

He married an American woman in 1963 and has two step-daughters.