

Harry Adler - PHOENIX TAPE

I was born in Berlin in 1924, My father, Abraham, my mother, Malka, were originally from Poland. They lived in Austria after World War 1 and by 1924 they were established in Germany. My brother, Paul, who is three years older than I am, lives in New York City.

My first remembrance is starting school at seven years old in Germany. We were living in East of Berlin; father was in the piano business. In 1932 at the age of 7, I went to public school. The Nazis burned part of the factory. In 1932 we left Germany. From there we went to Paris. In Paris I went to the primary and high school. My father was an apprentice furrier in Austria. He went into the fur business in France and we lived there from 1932 to 1939. We were not part of the Jewish community and I had very little Jewish background. We had a Shabbot meal and went to synagogue on the high holidays. I did not go to Chedar. When it was time for my bar mitzvah, it was during the war years and it just passed by. There were small synagogues, all on a very small scale.

I received my education in France. I did not feel any antisemitism. We blended right in. In 1938 my father decided to go to Poland for business purposes. We settled in Poland. My brother was sent to London to an uncle. I was sent back to Paris to live with a friend of my mothers because I did not like the school in Poland. I lived with a Russian family. I lived with them for about a year. They spoke Russian.

In 1940 Germany invaded France. Father and mother returned to Paris. I did not see my brother until 1943 when he was in the RAF in England and I was an American soldier. Mother, father and I went to Marseilles and tried to get a ship out to the U.S. Grandfather was in Massachusetts. He tried to get us visas to the U.S. My father did not realize the political implications of Hitler.

Germany occupied all of France. We left for Lisbon by ship. There were approximately 40-families on board. We stopped in Algiers, Casablanca. The Vichy Govt. issued an edict that all French vessels were to remain in quarantine in French ports. We were not able to continue. They put us up in a Foreign Legion Camp at the end of the Sahara Desert. We were put up in barracks. We told them that we had a grandfather in Massachusetts who would be responsible for us and they let us out together with others. We stayed in Casablanca for 4 to 5 months in 1941 waiting for a ship to come in to Lisbon. A Portugese ship came and took us from Casablanca to Lisbon. We went to the American Embassy and received visas to go to the US to grandfather. We arrived in New York in 1941 just before Pearl Harbor. Grandfather had a large junkyard in Mass. We remained there for two months and then went back to N.Y. and went into the fur business in 1942. I went to high school and graduated at night and worked with my father during the day. I graduated in 1942 at 17, George Washington HS in Upper Manhattan. We moved to the Bronx. I registered for the draft and I joined the Army in 1942. Basic training in Kentucky, Texas, Phoenix. In 1942 I had desert training in Yuma; I worked in a field hospital as a company clerk as a corporal. I spoke English, French . German fluently. I met a man who needed an interpreter in his unit. He arranged for a transfer to the 29th division. Instead I was transferred to the 5th HG in Pennsylvania ready to go overseas. in 1943. I was attached to G3 Section of the Corps HQ. I was the colonel's driver and interpreter and became a sergeant. In 1943 I was shipped with the Corps HQ to England. The unit planned for the invasion of France. We were the advance

echelon to go with the frontline and turn over the various towns that were liberated to the special detachments that were trained in England to begin civil affairs operations in those towns as they became occupied.

Corp. HQ arrived in Normandy one day after D Day. We were on the beach facing the Germans. We remained with the frontline in an intelligence gathering capacity. We were not an occupying power but administrative.

In 1944 we went to Germany. There our roles changed. We became an occupying power. We were in close cooperation with the Intelligence facilities. We administered the towns.

I was in Weimar with the 3rd Army (Pattib) when I heard about Buchenwald. I received a pass to go to Buchenwald and went there in a jeep . I was there 1 1/2 days after it was liberated. I saw the bodies, the cadavers, the sanitation. It takes a long time for a camp to be cleaned up. What I saw was an awful spectical. I was there 6 or 7 hours. I dont think anyone was prepared for what they saw there.

Then my unit went to Czechoslovakia. I spent two weeks in Bechtesgarden and returned home in Nov. 1945 to New York. I went into the fur business with father and went to New York University at night under the GI Bill. Father died in 1954 and I liquidated the business. Paul came home in 1946. I was married in 1951. I went into the travel agency business. My brother did the same. In 1959 I went to Geneva where I did business with PX On Board a SHIP. I returned to the US and went into the automobile business and then in 1964 went into drapery business in Houston and then moved to Phoenix . In Phoenix I am in the wholesale drapery business. In 1966 I went into business on my own, furniture business. My wife became a social worker for 11 years before she retired. My daughter lives in Israel on a moshov and is married and has two children. My son is a Harvard graduate, is married and lives in Santa Monica.