

Henry Sontag was born (year unstated) in Lemberg (?), which was then Austria, then became Poland and is now Russia). His parents moved to Vienna after persecution by Cossacks, where they remained until the Germans invaded in 1938. His father's name was Maurice (Moshe), mother's name was unclear; he had one brother (Eli) and three sisters. His parents perished, but his siblings survived the war. Henry's formal schooling stopped at 14, after which he attended vocational programs.

His older sister left after the Anschluss ending up in England. His younger sister went to Italy on an Austrian passport. The Germans considered Henry a Polish subject, though the Poles did not agree, effectively making him stateless. His youngest sister was sent to Auschwitz, but survived and ultimately was liberated from Ravensbrück. He makes reference to his wife, who was Polish, but says they were married, "not legally, but married."

He worked at a Jewish publishing house, but it had to close after Hitler came in. He escaped with his brother to Belgium but they were captured and returned to a jail in Vienna. There they learned that they might be sent to Oranienburg concentration camp, but managed to escape to Brussels when Henry's brother was less guarded while under treatment for a heart condition. They fled Brussels again two weeks later when the Germans invaded, but were captured and sent to prison, eventually ending up in a French prison camp (Saint Cyprian?) in Pyrenees-Natal. The camp, run by the French, had horrible conditions. They were offered their freedom to join the French Foreign Legion, but most declined. Henry tells the story of meeting a Mr. Felsenburg while in Saint Cyprian, who had been an important journalist in Vienna. His arm had been cut off, perhaps while he was in Dachau. Typhoid broke out in the camp. He escaped during a storm when the guards were under cover.

He went to Toulouse to find his wife, but then went to Belgium until 1941. Returning to France with his wife he worked with the French Underground, part of that time in the Jura Mountains. But, he left the Underground as the commander wouldn't work with Jews. They made it to Switzerland, but the authorities wanted to send Harry back, while keeping his wife and son. They relented and went to a labor camp where they received minimal pay. His brother was able to escape to the Dominican Republic on one of the last Jewish refugee ships in 1941.

After the war, they returned to Belgium where his wife had citizenship. But, they were detained periodically still experiencing various hardships and threatening situations. Henry and his family stayed in Belgium until 1951 when they joined his brother in the DR until the disturbances in 1958. He applied again for the United States and discovered that his visa had been approved previously. On moving to the U.S., his wife died in 1963; he then married a woman from Uruguay (originally from Austria), settling first in Los Angeles, and then moving to Phoenix.