

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Oral History Volunteer Collection

Summary of Interview with
FRED TAUCHER
RG-50.106*0143

Date of interview: April 26, 2001
Interviewer: Gail Schwartz

Note: This summary follows the order in which the interviewee relates his story and thus does not necessarily present the interviewee's experiences in chronological order.

Tape 1 of 4/Side A

Fred Taucher (né Horst Alfred) was born on January 29, 1933 in Berlin, Germany, to Julius and Therese (née Therese Gerstel). Fred's father, born in the United States, believed his American citizenship would save him and his family from the worst abuses against Jews. He owned a tailor shop in Berlin. The family attended reform Shabbat services and observed high holidays. Fred and his older brother, Henri Ernest (né Henri Ernst), attended Jewish grammar school. Fred recalls the restrictions and anti-Semitic abuses they experienced. On *Kristallnacht*, Germans destroyed his father's shop and forced him into slave labor. Fred's mother had a son from a previous marriage who would later (1942) commit suicide.

Tape 1 of 4/Side B

In 1943, Fred's father was sent to Auschwitz. His family fled to Gertrude Nölting, the midwife that had delivered Fred. Although she was a high-ranking member of the Nazi party, Gertrude provided the family with false papers and hid them in her cabin outside of Berlin. She always insisted that Hitler was unaware of what was happening to Jews.

Tape 2 of 4/Side A

Fred's family lived in Gertrude's cabin near Spandau for several months. When neighbors became suspicious, they returned to Berlin with their false papers. From the beginning of 1945 until liberation in May 1945, Fred, his mother and his brother slept in subway stations to avoid Allied bombings. On the day they were liberated his mother left the subway station to find water and was shot in the crossfire between German and Russian troops. The previous April, Fred was arrested and sent to Dachau, a concentration camp, where he was tortured. After two days, Fred was loaded onto a rail car headed for Auschwitz with mostly Russian POW's. During an air raid a few days later, Fred escaped the railcar along with some Russian soldiers.

Tape 2 of 4/Side B

After the Russian escapees killed some Hitler Youth members, Fred removed one of the boys' uniforms. Wearing the uniform, he stopped a car full of SS officers and asked for a ride back to Berlin. There he reunited with his mother and brother. Fred describes in detail his arrest, torture and being shut up in the railcar. After being liberated, the boys could not find their mother; they never again heard from their father. They lived with Gertrude Nölting for awhile, then went to a DP shelter with other Jewish children. An American serviceman who was Jewish had the brothers *bar mitzvahed* in Berlin. They prepared to emigrate to the United States, which angered Gertrude Nölting, who felt they should remain in Germany.

Tape 3 of 4/Side A

Fred discusses the immediate post-war period; also his return to Berlin in 1975. The American Joint Distribution Committee arranged for Fred and his brother to come to America in September 1946. They lived with cousins in Missouri and attended high school.

Tape 3 of 4/Side B

Fred served in the Korean War and received high rankings. He was married to his wife, who was Japanese, for 40 years. He opened a successful computer business in Seattle. He has a son and a daughter, who were not raised Jewish. Fred discusses his trips back to Germany.

Tape 4 of 4/Side A

Fred does not feel German at all, but rather that America is his home. He has an active political life and serves on the city council. Fred discusses his ability to deal with his Holocaust experiences; his feelings toward Germany today; the United States' failure to rescue Jews during the war; marriage and family; his attitude toward Israel; and his activism in child survivor organizations and events.

Tape 4 of 4/Side B

Fred reflects on his and his brother's accomplishments. He plans to re-establish his German citizenship in order to obtain a pension from the German government. Fred's brother does not discuss his Holocaust experiences and has been married three times. The brothers remain close.