

WERNER COHEN

Volums 1

Side 1

Born in Essen, Germany on December 8, 1921; Mother;s name was Hedwig Cohen Nee Passmen; Left Germany four weeks after seventeenth birthday; Spent four to five weeks in Dachau concentration camp; Mother got him out on condition that he would leave country in four weeks; Able to do this as he had attended Jewish High School (Yavni) in Cologne; Director of school had set up a transfer connection with Jewish congregation in London; Guaranteed transfer of thirty children age thirteen to a hostel in London; He was attached to this group and it saved his life; Early school training was in a Jewish School; Essen had two thousand Jews; Entire population was three quarters of a million; Attended Jewish school through fourth grade and then went to Goethe Gymnasium which espoused German value system; Upbringing had been that of a German - except that he was prohibited from joining the Hitler youth; Raised with constant reminder not to act "too" Jewish; Was raised to believe in thoroughness, punctuality and obedience to all authoritarian figures; Complete lack of self-assertion; Germany exists with a slave mentality; Sublimated assertion to excellence in other areas.

Family was irreligious as Mother was educated in a Catholic finishing school; Close friend (not Jewish) married Dr. Gardner, a pediatrician; Had been very close friends until Dr. became very involved in Nazi party; However, at Mother;s plea they arranged for his release from Dachau; Sent to Dachau as a result of Crystal Night; Had traveled to school in Cologne but was sent home due to pogroms; Returned to Essen to find his own home ransacked; Father in protective custody; Mother freed father but Gestapo took him instead; Stood at attention 48 hours without moving or relieving himself; Older ones died, however, treatment was worse at Auchwitz; Anti-semitism in Germany was endemic; Most of his upbringing was in hands of German women; Often felt and heard anti-Jewish remarks; Father transferred Jewish values as his Mother was indifferent; Swore to marry a Jewish woman; Met wife in Baltimore; She had lived four years in

Terrizenstadt and in Auchwitz before that; Brought up in the country with Orthodox Jewish values; Attended Jewish Seminary in Wertzberg which gave her strong foundation in Jewish religious thought. Had been one year in Displaced Persons Camp and then emigrated to Baltimore; Material things offered by her relatives there were meaningless; He has spent much time trying to help her psychologically; Wife had need to be strictly orthodox; Husband went along with it; Has three daughters all married and strictly orthodox-many grandchildren.

Corresponded with parents during war from London via Red Cross; Mother became widowed; Father probably died of lack of insulin as he was diabetic; Parents had been ultra-nationalists and didn't believe what was happening to them; Mother had had opportunities to leave Germany and serve as a domestic in England but was reticent to do so; She never realized what would happen.

He was well received in London by Rabbi Louis Rubinovitz who demanded that congregants pay a weekly fee to maintain hostel; Concerned with furthering his own education; More prominent families aided him and he passed matriculation exam; In 1940 he was at Isle of Man; English people gave little emotional support; Needed much willpower to survive; Congregation also rescued sister who arrived four weeks before war broke out; He became a PhD in chemistry.