

WALTER HORN
RG-50.150.0019. Recorded 1977

Walter was born in Berlin in 1901. He became a traveling salesman in buttons and buckles in 1922. His family was religious and kept kosher. He doesn't remember any problems at first and gentiles did not seem happy with Hitler, but slowly things changed. He said that restrictions were felt in the provinces before they were felt in Berlin. By Oct 1938 you had to have a certificate to travel, which made it impossible for Jews. In November 1938 he was caught in Bad Harzburg, where he was vacationing. It was Kristallnacht and all the windows of the hotel were broken. Walter was caught and sent to Buchenwald for 2 months. His brother was able to get him a ticket to Shanghai so he was able to get out of Buchenwald. He said the camp was pretty terrible, but not as terrible as it became later.

Walter was among the first refugees to Shanghai. Eventually there were about 18,000 refugees. His brother came the next year, but then died of typhus. His parent came via Siberia but they died that year also. Walter's sisters had gotten affidavits for America. At first Walter lived in group quarters called Heimes. He made a living selling, peddling, etc. He knew English and many of the Chinese he knew spoke English. In the Heime area were hospitals with good doctors, theater, and close friends, although there were also many diseases.

With the outbreak of war in 1943 the Japanese made them go into the Hongkew ghetto. He said the Japanese were strict but didn't particularly discriminate against Jews. He names a very strict Japanese, Mr. Goya. When the war ended he wanted to leave Shanghai because he felt the Chinese were too competitive and it was hard to make a living. He waited seven years to get his papers for the US. He also tried to emigrate to Australia but was denied. He was finally sad to leave his case friends in Shanghai, but was glad to be met in New York by his sisters and cousin. The first month he stayed with his sister in Washington Heights. He got a job at pears on 14 Street through his brother-in-law. Gradually he got back into selling buttons etc. He joined the union and worked at Blumenthal and Company. He was married in 1950. He didn't find the adjustment to American too difficult and enjoyed going to concerts and opera. He belonged to the Leo Baeck Lodge, a group from the Bnai Brith. He never returned to Germany.