

WERNER SOLOMON

RG-50.150.0036. recorded in 1977

Werner was born in 1906 in Magdeburg, Germany to a liberal Jewish. Although the city had a small Jewish population, there were good relations between the Jews and gentiles. After high school, in 1927 Werner went to the Academy in Berlin to train to be an opera singer. His father had a friend who was an agent for Sol Hurok, and through this Werner went to American in 1929 and 1930 with the German Grand Opera. After he came back to Germany he joined a small company, but after 1933 he was thrown out of this Theater Kamern. He then became a member of the Weinerwehr Jewish Choir, also called "30 Jewish Men" and toured with them all over Europe and Palestine.

He wanted to stay in Palestine, but he got ill and had to return to Berlin. In 1938 he was ordained as a cantor and worked with Cantor Golanin. In 1939, already married, he got the opportunity to move to England with his wife. During Kristallnacht all the synagogues in Berlin were burned; he was saved from being sent to a concentration camp, he believes because he was still working for a Zionist organization, the Hechaluz in Meineckestrasse. His wife joined him in England and took the last boat out of Holland.

Werner again became an opera singer. He had a contract to do Tales of Hoffman for 15 months. He was a member of the Royal Caruso Opera Company until 1947, when they emigrated to America. He became a cantor at a small reform synagogue on 182 Street and Autobahn Avenue in Washington Heights. His wife became a secretary. His brother and sister in law also lived in Washington Heights, but the rest of his family- mother and in laws, all died in Theresienstadt where they had been sent in 1940.

He states that he feels very American, but mostly has German-Jewish friends. He gets restitution, but has never been back to Germany. He is active with Bnai Brith and Free Sons of Israel. He does not agree with fellow Jews that Jewish politicians such as Koch and Kissinger shouldn't be active because people will blame them as Jews when things go wrong. He believes they should be judged as Democrats and not Jews.