

HANS PRINZ
RG-50.154.0022 (recorded 1987, Florida)

Hans was born in 1935 in Hilversum, Holland to a father who played trumpet and a mother who was a ballerina. He had one brother who was 2 years older. He remembers the invasion of Rotterdam because the family was living there in 1940. The city was flattened, and his father could no longer get work. Hans had no schooling because of the war.

The family got an order in the mail to go to the large cultural center, where they were rounding up Jews to send to Westerbork and then the extermination camps. The family went into hiding, all separately. Hans hid with 10 or 12 others at a farm owned by Mr. Pott and where they had to hide in the barn when the Germans came around. He had to leave the farm with his brother and went to hide in Overijssel, but then he was separated from his brother. His brother went to Friesland, where he was in about 16 different safe houses; Hans was in a total of 5 or 6. He stated how afraid he was when he was separated from his brother. He stayed at his last house for almost 2 years with the Kolbman family. He pretended not to be Jewish and was able to go to school and have a fairly normal life.

Hans remembers the Canadians coming into the town to liberate it at the end of the war. He and another girl were the only Jews in the little town to survive. Hans' mother was killed in Auschwitz, but his father survived and reunited with Hans and his brother. But because he had tuberculosis, his father was sent to a sanitarium and the boys went to a Jewish orphanage where they lived for 5-6 years. He said it was hard to leave the people who had hidden him, but he felt comfortable in the "orphanage", where he had houseparents. He learned Hebrew, and his houseparents took him and his brother to live in Israel in 1950-51.

Hans stayed at Yad Mordechai, but he and his brother didn't like that life. His brother took a job in Haifa and Hans was in the Israeli Army for 2 years. After being at the sanatorium, his father emigrated to the US. First his brother and then Hans then went to live with their father in Irvington, New Jersey. He said life was much easier in US than in Israel.

Hans said that most of the "orphans" from the home turned out well. Only 4 people in his family circle survived. Hans worked in New York in the restaurant business and then retired to Florida. His brother was working for IBM. Hans feels guilty that the Kolbman family saved his life by hiding him and he didn't do anything for them. He did reunite with them recently and it was very emotional.