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Summary

Herbert Jonas, born 5/21/15 in Dusseldorf, Germany. Father, Rudolf, born in Dortmund, Germany and mother Erna, born in Danzig, Germany. Paternal grandparents, Ferdinand and Clara, were born in Dortmund also where the family had been since the 1700's. Maternal grandmother, born in Worms, Germany, was in the real estate business. Her son went to CA to pan for gold in 1905 but returned to Cologne, married a Catholic woman. He hid from the Nazis until very shortly before the war's end and was deported to Bergen-Belsen where he was killed. Another son, a chemist, committed suicide in 1936 (?) before the Nazis could take them. Jonas' father was a publisher before WW I worked in a munitions factory during WW I and later in Rheinisch Metals. He went back to publishing 1920 until the Depression began in 1929. Then worked on the Berlin Tageblatt newspaper until 1934. Father and Mother left Germany and went by sealed train (dates very sketchy as Jonas says this occurred in 1941 and later says 1934) through France, Spain and Portugal and on to Berkeley, CA where father worked for Palmolive Peet until he died in 1945. Sister Gertrude, born 8/17/18, left Germany for CA in 1938 after spending 2 years in the Hachshara Agricultural Training Camp in preparation for going to Palestine. Mother's family members lived in Aachen near the Dutch border over which they later fled even though area was somewhat more tolerant of Jews. Some were killed. Father's uncle Alfred Jonas owned a department store in Dusseldorf, but fled when Nazis took over in 1933. He died and wife and son taken in 1940 when Holland invaded. Two daughters escaped and hid.

Jonas left Germany in 1934. Earlier he had wanted to go to Palestine. He also worked in a department store in Berlin for Nathan and Wilfred Israel. Wilfred later founded Bet Shamin and Kibbutz Hachshara in Israel. Jonas went by boat to CA, worked on a farm and went to college, earning a B.A in 1941 and a Ph.D in 1950. Worked as a civilian employee of the Navy Department during WW II and married in 1942 after becoming a citizen a year earlier. A friend, Edsel Zarainey, a member of the Hechalutz movement (Zionist), organized a Jewish underground and moved to Palestine. In WW II he joined the Jewish Brigade and parachuted into Hungary where he was captured and killed. Jonas still sees antisemitism in St. Paul, MN as his wife was called a "dirty Jew" by a neighbor. He belongs to the Leo Baeck Institute, an organization which he belonged back in Germany along with his sister.