

Interview 9 (file RG-50.219.0009.01.01) – Fred Manasse

Language: English

Born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1935. He had an older brother born in 1931 and a younger sister called Myriam. His father, who was very involved with the Orthodox Jewish community in Frankfurt, owned a women shoe factory in Offenbach, next to Frankfurt. His family spent summers and most holidays in Baden-Baden, in the Black Forest, where his grandparents from his mother's side had a kosher hotel.

In 1939, his father arranged to get him and his brother out of Germany by train. His father had a ticket to travel from Hamburg to Cuba in the St. Louis and intended to make arrangements to reunite all the family from Cuba.

In 1940, he and his brother arrived in France. They first lived in a humble house with other children for almost a year. In May 1941, they moved to an orphanage organized by the Swiss Red Cross in Château de la Hille, in Montégut-Plantaurel, France. In the orphanage, there were around 50 Christian children and 100 Jewish children. He was in the orphanage for more than two years. During that time, his brother worked as an apprentice in a bakery in the town of Varilhes, and joined the French underground, the Maquis.

In 1942, the International Red Cross arranged a visit for him to Camp Gurs, where his father, grandfather, aunt and uncle had been sent. Within three months of that visit, he received a card from the Red Cross saying that his father had been sent to Auschwitz, where he died.

At the end of 1943, he and other children, including his brother, were sent to a Catholic convent. His brother escaped from the convent and, with the help of the French resistance, came back after a few months – around March 1944 – and helped him to escape as well. They were in Toulouse for a couple of days, and after that crossed the Pyrenees to Spain, where they were in a farm for a night. They took a train to Barcelona and stayed two months hiding in a safe house owned by the Rubenstein family. After that, they went in a train to Portugal with the Rabinowitch family (54:38). He and his brother were in Estoril for six months, until his uncle sent papers to emigrate to the US. During their time in Portugal, his brother had his bar mitzvah on December 1st. On Christmas Day, 1944, a woman working for the Joint Distribution Committee and HIAS took him and his brother to the Lisbon harbor, where they boarded the Serpa Pinto ship. After two weeks, they arrived to the US, to Philadelphia, and immediately took a train to New York, where his uncle lived.

In New York, he and his brother were in a foster home in the Bronx for two months, and later lived in two different foster homes. His brother went to Haaren High School in Harlem.

He never knew what happened to his mother and his sister. His mother at first managed to escape to Switzerland, but after that he does not know. Some people in his mother's family – L****???? family (time stamp: 00:21:25) -- went to Strasburg, where they survived and became very wealthy, owning the second largest box factory in Europe. Some of his family went to Australia and opened a French restaurant in Sydney. One of his older cousins went to Sao Paulo and this cousin's daughter, an artist, lives in Germany.

He became an American citizen at age 18, got his PhD at 26, and taught at Princeton in his 30s. He is also a sculptor. He has a daughter in Boston and a son in San Francisco, Mark Manasse, a computer scientist. He also had a mentally challenged son who died at age 49.

His brother, who became a clinical psychologist, had three children, two of them adopted. One of his brother's sons, Jon Manasse, is a professional musician.