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Summary

Max Arnott was born May 6, 1921 in Friedland, Germany. He had a twin brother born four hours later. His father was born there as well; his mother was also from East Prussia. They married in 1919. Originally, their families had come from Lithuania. He had two brothers and 1 sister. His father owned land and worked with horses. Max considers that the family was well off.

He describes his early education. Max didn't sense any antisemitism until Hitler came to power. German was spoken at home and they kept kosher. After Hitler came to power, Jews were excluded from the state schools and their gentile friends kept their distance. His father did not think Hitler would stay in power long and, therefore, didn't consider emigration.

After Max left school in 1934, he worked on his father's farm, and then onto England in March 1939 after Kristallnacht where he and his brother had visas for farm work; they were there when war broke out. His sister had joined them in England in mid-1939. His father was forced to sign over his property to the Nazis for little or no compensation.

As German nationals, in September 1940 Max and his two brothers were sent to Australian internment camps in Hay and Tartura. Max cited mistreatment by the British while in transit, but Australians treated them well. Max and his brother joined the British Army in November 1941; they also wanted to return to England where they felt they could better help their parents, whom they knew still survived in Germany. After their arrival, they were able to visit their sister in North Wales who was part of the Land Army.

The brothers were part of the Pioneer Corps and were deployed to France after D-Day. Max was near the Ardennes when the Battle of the Bulge happened. In September, he learned from a relative in Switzerland that his parents had been in Theresienstadt for two years. He later learned from the Red Cross that they were sent to Auschwitz on October 9, 1944. His other relatives from Germany also did not survive.

Before demobilization in 1946, he and his brother become part of the Nuremberg interpreter pool. Max was then posted to Hanover where he met his wife, Myra (née Bloch). Her parents had been deported from Berlin in 1942, but she was able to hide out in Hanover. They married in London in 1947 and went to Australia in 1948. They had two children, Leslie and Evan. Max worked as a fabric cutter in various positions. His siblings also moved to Australia.