

Summary of Oral History: ROLF MANFRED

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Rolf Manfred was born in a small town in eastern Germany on May 12, 1929. He was one of the fortunate ones to come to Oswego, New York in 1944. His father owned a print shop and small newspaper but was forced to flee to Danzig (now Gdańsk, Poland) in late 1937. Shortly after his father determined that it was necessary to escape Germany, but he could not get visas for his family. After Danzig was occupied by the Germans in 1939 his father again went to several embassies, and much to his surprise the Italian embassy gave him a visa. The family went to Venice and stayed there until Mussolini entered the war in 1940. Mr. Manfred's father was interned in a tiny town in the boot of Italy where he and his mother joined his father. Happily, when the British arrived he and his family were among those chosen to go to Oswego, New York.

At the camp Manfred went to dances, played ping pong, and joked around with friends. But, Manfred spoke mostly about his success at Oswego high school. The principal and his teacher were kind to the refugees, and he attributed his later successes to the learning he received there. He was able to go on to college in Toledo, Ohio and later on to graduate school at Ohio State. He studied engineering and specialized on rockets. But eighteen years later Manfred got bored, changed jobs, and went to work for USAID in Kazakhstan.

He had very good memories of his time in Oswego, and imparted many stories to his four children. Looking back, Manfred believed the Oswego experiment was a way for President Roosevelt to make amends for the St. Louis and was also the beginning of an effort to allow refugees to come to the U.S. Now (1993), however, he thought it much more complicated because of the "flood" of refugees wanting to come.