

Interviewee:	<u>STERN</u> , Harold	Date:	September 10, 1981
Interviewer:	Nora Levin		
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SUMMARY

Harold Stern, formerly Helmutt, was born August 31, 1921 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, the only child of middle class Jewish parents. His father came from an Orthodox background and his mother was raised in a non-observant home; as a family, they belonged to a large Liberal Congregation, the West end Synagogue in Frankfurt. Harold describes the educational system and antisemitism pre- and post- 1933. He discusses the *Kultusgemeinde*, his Jewish education, upbringing, and his studies at the *Philanthropin* (a Jewish secondary school), which he attended in 1935 due to increased Nazism and antisemitism experience at the public *Gymnasium*. His mother continued the family business after his father's death in 1930, but had to give it up (1937) as a result of the Nuremberg Laws. He describes the "aryanization" of a shoe manufacturing company and other businesses where he was apprenticed/employed. Despite having an early quota number, Harold's attempts to emigrate with his mother to USA were thwarted because their affidavits were not accepted by the American Consulate in Stuttgart. In March 1939, Harold left for England through the aid of family friends in England and Bloomsbury House, while his mother remained in Frankfurt. He describes life in London, working as a factory trainee, residing among British (non-Jewish) working class, until June 1940 when he was picked up and interned in Huyten, a camp near Liverpool, with other German Jewish refugees. In July 1940, he volunteered for transport on the *Dunera*, a ship supposedly bound for Canada but re-routed to Australia. He discusses in detail the desperate conditions at sea, harsh treatment by British soldiers, and refugee behavior during the ten week voyage. From Sidney, he was transferred to a barbed-wire enclosed compound in the Outback, in Hay, New South Wales. He refers to the internal camp leadership which emerged, the development of cultural and educational activities. He details help given by the Australian Christian Student Movement (under Margaret Holmes), Jewish Welfare Board, and Jewish people of Melbourne. Later he moved to a camp in Tatura, Victoria that had better conditions. After 20 months of internment, he joined the Australian army, the 8th Employment Company, where he did transport of munitions. He was discharged in 1946 or 1947, after serving 4 1/2 years in the army.

Harold kept contact with his mother and knew that she reached USA in late 1941. Through the help of a non-Jewish woman, she obtained a visa in September 1941, left Germany on a sealed train (to Berlin), journeyed through occupied and Vichy France and Spain to Lisbon, boarding one of the last steamers from Portugal to America. Her brother, however, was arrested by the Gestapo and never seen again. Her sister, a musician, later hospitalized in a sanitarium was "ethanized".

Harold immigrated to the USA in 1947 under the German quota. In 1959, he moved to Philadelphia.