

Interviewee:	<u>METHNER</u> , Harry	Dates:	October 15 & 17, 1999
Interviewer:	Gerry Schneeberg		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

## SUMMARY

Harry Methner was born in Germany on July 21, 1922 into an observant Jewish family who had moved from the Polish Corridor to Berlin in 1901 or 1902. His father was a cook and later a kosher butcher and sausage manufacturer. Harry shares his childhood memories of his schooling, and changes that took place in Germany during the Nazi rise to power. He shares sequence of events that led his family to seek options for emigration, including being warned by a non-Jewish acquaintance. Harry describes the damage done to the family store during *Kristallnacht*.

Harry and his family left Germany with their property and assets frozen on December 26, 1938 on a German luxury liner. He explains how his family got to Shanghai in April 1939 after an attempt to go to Cuba and a 90 day stopover in Singapore where his father worked as a kosher butcher for an Australian farmer. He briefly mentions that Jews on board ship received help from Dutch, English, American and local Jews.

Harry describes living conditions in Shanghai, tropical diseases, as well as life during the war in great detail. His family had almost no contact with the Russian, French, English or Sephardic Jewish communities. He worked with his father selling strictly kosher food and as a photographer's assistant documenting Hongkew Ghetto inhabitants for the Japanese. He also worked with a so-called "Sanitary Group" that helped Jews who were wounded when the ghetto was bombed by American planes on July 23, 1945. He belonged to a Zionist youth group, *Brit Noar Tzion (Hanoar Hatzioni)*, led by Rabbi Teichner. Once he was in the United States, Harry and his friends started a youth group with the same name as they had in Shanghai for Jewish immigrants from middle Europe, which was very successful. He relates how his life changed once the American forces arrived, especially after the Japanese surrender. After the war ended, Harry worked for the American Army.

Harry left for the United States on October 17, 1947 and moved to Rochester, N.Y. He got a job at Eastman Kodak on October 31, 1947 with the help of the Jewish Family Service. He married a Holocaust survivor. Harry managed to get his parents to attend his wedding in New York while they were in Ellis Island on a transport ship bringing Jews from Shanghai to Italy. He was able to bring them to America two years later. The entire family, including his children, moved to Denver, Colorado. Once Harry found out about the concentration camps and the relatives he lost, he realized that there was a place much worse than the Shanghai he once hated.