

Interviewee:	<u>SILBERSTEIN</u> , Walter H.	Date:	November 16, 1999
Interviewer:	Marcia Goldberg		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Walter H. (formerly Horst) Silberstein was born in Berlin, Germany on January 6, 1931. The first eight years of his life he lived in Berlin. For the next nine years he lived in Shanghai, China. His father was a well-known criminal lawyer. His grandfather was a banker in Berlin. They lived a very comfortable life in a non-observant Jewish family and at home they spoke German. After *Kristallnacht* Walter could no longer attend his regular school. In May 1939, warned about an imminent round-up, his family fled Germany. Walter's two grandmothers, parents and his dog left for Italy on an Italian luxury liner, *Conte Rosso*. After a two week trip they arrived in Shanghai.

Walter describes his life in Shanghai: his school, his friends and his fairly comfortable life there. Walter belonged to the boy scouts and the Jewish Recreation Club. His father had an import/export store and also spent time on relief work for the Kitchen Fund, which supplied meals to refugees in the Hongkew Ghetto area. The family lived outside the Jewish ghetto area in the French Concession sub-division and did not experience much antisemitism. Walter had his Bar Mitzvah in a synagogue in Hongkew. In 1947, because of a fear of communism, the family left by plane on a roundabout trip to San Francisco, United States. They had U.S. visas under the German quota and they were helped by the Joint Distribution Committee and the Red Feather organizations.

Walter credits his years in Shanghai, living among a diverse population, as having shaped his tolerant personality. He had made many friends there and organized their reunion in 1993 which he called the "Rickshaw Reunion."

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939-1945 - Berlin, Germany
World War 1939-1945 - Shanghai
World War 1939-1945 - Personal Narratives, Jewish
World War 1939-1945 - Psychological aspect