

Project Kaved, Interview #5

Interviewer and Copyright: Jerry M. Freimark, 1998

Subject: Paul Rosenau

Date of interview: Dec. 11th, 1997

Paul Rosenau

Born: June 12, 1915, Augsburg, Germany

F.: Good Morning, Paul.

Paul, would you tell us a little bit about yourself!

I was born June 12th, 1915, and my twin brother Hugo is also still alive, live both in Rydal, Pennsylvania. And we had a kind of a carefree youth. We, father, was fairly well to-do, he had two incomes. One, from a china factory in Bavaria, which his father founded and a second one, from a cheese and dairy wholesale business in Augsburg. In 1921 Hugo and I went to school, after a year in the Jewish Kindergarten. And we stayed together for the four years in Elementary school and six years in high school. When Hugo dropped out, I continued for three more years to make my *Abitur*, the BA, in 1934. Hitler came to power in '33, and I was the only Jew in my class after 1931. I was the last Jewish *Abiturient* in my school .

As far as my friends are concerned, in Augsburg, I never had any bad experiences. We were at an age already, when, kind of advanced in years, relatively advanced, and had formed firm friendships. Even to this day, I am still in touch with my classmates in Germany. I went over there in '74 for the first time, and right now, I came back a week ago from Germany. There are only six people left in my class.

My youth in Germany was dominated by a the *Kameraden*, a "*Wander Bund*" which was a Jewish boy scout organization then by the tennis club, Private Tennisgesellschaft, Augsburg [PTGA]. We were fanatic tennis players. I was the club champion from '32 to '37. I just came back from Chemnitz from '34 to '37 to play in those tournaments to retain my club championships.

Augsburg itself was, in those days, a town of 150,000 people. It was in the *Bezirk Schwaben*, which is a corner of Bavaria bordering *Württemberg, to the north of the Alps*. The Jewish population in Augsburg in those days, in its hey-day, was 1250 people. We had a beautiful Synagogue, which was built in 1917, which was not damaged too badly during the Kristallnacht because there was a gasoline station nearby and the people were afraid it would cause a big fire in the whole neighborhood.

The Synagogue was rebuilt by the State of Bavaria and the City of Augsburg and rededicated in 1985. The town invited all former Jewish citizens of Augsburg to come back. Hugo and Fred, my brothers went. But I didn't go, because, I had been there the year before and I didn't want to leave our mother alone who was for one year already in a nursing home in Philadelphia.

I don't come from a religious family. We went to synagogue on special occasions only and of course on Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur. The synagogue itself was quite reformed. While the women were upstairs and the men were downstairs, there was no actual separation in social circles. Right now the Synagogue is—(Phone rings. 80) (used as a civic gathering place. Services are held in adjacent civil synagogue.)

F.: Go ahead.

We had an organ in our synagogue and the community was quite well to-do. Through my tennis I was well known in Augsburg, also in gentile circles. I played in tournaments.

In 1934, after I graduated, I went to Chemnitz, Saxony to join my father's sister. I lived there for three years to learn the hosiery trade. Somebody in the family there had a hosiery mill and I knew I had to emigrate. I wanted to learn something practical. I made my *Abitur* in '34. I was the best mathematician in my class. My gentile math professor even made a special petition to Munich, that I'd be allowed to go to the University of Munich to study math. But it was denied. It took a lot of civil courage for that gentile professor (Dr. Bittner) to intervene on my behalf. After the war I contacted him, he was still alive, and sent him some

dollars every Christmas and he wrote back: "Already converted into *Glühwein*". This is wine, warming wine.

In Chemnitz, I only was in Jewish circles. I had no gentile friends, because I didn't grow up there. I had only Jewish contacts. I kept in touch with all the Augsburg friends once I emigrated, also the Chemnitz friends, and have a wide circle of friends all over the world, in Argentina, Australia, wherever you go, I have friends.

I left Germany in October '37, came right to Philadelphia. My father had cousins here who we didn't know. But I wrote to them, Hugo had gone to Brazil in '36, but I rather wanted to go to the United States, because I like the country better. I found a job in the hosiery industry through a lawyer in the family, who had broken a sit-down strike for a manufacturer here. So that manufacturer was a little bit beholden to that lawyer. That's how I got a job. But the job was 12 dollars a week. I really had to work hard to make ends meet. I had but one dollar a week discretionary income. The hosiery industry in those days was making full fashion stockings, which I learned at the *Werkschule* in Chemnitz yet. I graduated from there in the evening. I prospered at the firm I was with. After the war it was taken over by another guy who kept the same name, Artcraft Hosiery. They had a patent on a frame around the heel and we prospered. And I got very nice Christmas bonuses and I was quite successful. But on account of union trouble the hosiery industry moved down South.

Hugo and my parents came up from Brazil in '46. As a matter of fact, mother came in 46 to my wedding and immigrated via Canada. Hugo and father came up in '47. Hugo and Mother came for my wedding. Mother decided to stay and Hugo and father immigrated legally in '47. Hugo had knowledge of five languages, got jobs as export manager and did very well here. My brother Fred did not have to go in the army

I was in the army from '42 to '45, for nearly four years, in the infantry. I came out a sergeant in the infantry. But I did not have to go overseas because I was not protected by American citizenship. [For] Which I applied and received in October '43 in St. Johns, Newfoundland. I was ready to go to the Pacific in September, or

[rather] in August '45, but the atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima, Nagasaki and I didn't have to go to the Pacific anymore. I had enough points to get out.

The tennis club that I mentioned in Augsburg, was a Jewish tennis club, founded around 1922 or so. There were several tennis clubs in Augsburg, but I chose to join the Jewish tennis club because my friends, most of my friends belonged there. Hugo and I were real fanatics in tennis and we played a lot of tennis. And after other Jewish students were dropping out of gentile tennis clubs, this Jewish tennis club, the "*Private Tennisgesellschaft*", really thrived, built an athletic field for track and field and football [soccer] and handball and all kind of sports facilities for other sports and became the center of the Jewish community of the young people, so to say, in Augsburg.

To this day, we all talk in glowing terms of our association in that tennis club PTGA. We had two reunions in 1987 and '92 in Ellenville, New York, where all the former members of the tennis club, the former Augsburg youth congregated in Ellenville for a reunion. It was quite a wonderful event. *1)

Long before these Ellenville meetings, by the way, I got to know a Mr. Römer, *2) Gernot Römer, who was the editor of the Augsburg newspaper, who wrote quite a few books about the Augsburg Jews and the *Schwäbisch* Jews. He is retired now, he continues to write about the Augsburg and Bavarian Jews. Like a good soul, he keeps our memory alive over there. There is a Jewish - Gentile group in Augsburg that devotes itself to reestablishing our memory.

The present congregation in Augsburg consists of about 300 Jews, who came out of concentration camps, or their descendants, presently. Originally it was headed by a Dr. Spokorny, who was a wonderful man. He became senator and he built bridges to the gentile community in Augsburg, was very well respected. (187)

The present head of the Jewish community is an Iranian kidney surgeon, Nejman, who I just met, a week and a half ago. I was not impressed by him. He does not have the wide range or perspective. He is not the type to get along with everybody like Spokorny had. Quite a pity! *3)

Another aspect of Augsburg Jewish community now, is that they have about thousand Russian immigrants that arrived within the last five years. *4) Those immigrants don't have much of a Jewish background. They claim to be Jewish, they can't check it out. They had no Jewish education because in Russia they couldn't practice their Judaism. They gradually want to be absorbed in the community. But Dr. Nejman is quite stubborn in admitting them to the Augsburg Jewish community. He is afraid of losing his job as president of the congregation. Because the Russian Jews outnumber the present Jews. I am personally thinking, in the long run, the Russian Jews will take over and inherit our Synagogue and everything else.

By the way, the city of Augsburg is taking care of our cemetery, which I visited several times. My Grandparents are buried there and younger brother and an older brother who only lived about two days.

I was invited by the city of Augsburg in 1994. Ever since 1985, when the city invited all the former Augsburg Jews, for the rededication of the Synagogue, the city invited six or eight former Jewish residents every year. I was chosen in 1994 to be part of that group in that year. They also invited my brother Fred. No, I rather could have chosen a *Begleitperson*, that was somebody to accompany me, and I asked Fred. Fred's second wife, they weren't married yet. They were engaged and she was sick, so Fred didn't want to leave her alone, so I asked a very good friend of mine, Henry Landman, from N.Y, who was by the way with the first American troops to enter Augsburg. It's quite a story.

Henry and I were wine and dine for a week and escorted all around. As a matter of fact, we both attended a conference in Irrsee, which is near Kaufbeuren in Bavaria, where Dr. Fassl conducted seminars on the former Jewish population of Bavaria, *Schwaben*, specifically. I am in touch with Dr. Fassl who's writing a book. *5) I have a *Tonband*, the tape, of my remarks and Henry's remarks, we were interviewed for an hour by about 300 people in the audience. It was quite a session. And Henry broke down, because he had bad experiences. He was in a concentration camp. He broke down towards the end of the interview and I carried on by myself.

Henry Landman is an old friend of mine. As a matter of fact, during my last years in Augsburg I gave Henry Latin lessons. When I first met him again in the Catskills in New York, I was sleeping (240) on the lawn. All of a sudden, I was woken up by somebody, who quoted something in Latin: *Donec eris felix multis numerabis amicos*. (He, who gives sincerity, can count many friends) I looked up and it was Henry.

I told the people in Irrsee, that Henry and I were in the center of the young Jewish group, in the PTGA. I was champion in tennis, and, Henry also played tennis, but he was very good in sports, high jump and things like that. They all told me, they couldn't have two better (248) representatives of those days, those times, in Irrsee in 94, none better than Henry and me.

The sports club in Augsburg, the PTGA, was not politically associated. But most of the parents and the Jews in Augsburg, were *Freie Demokratische Partei*, that is Stressemann's *Partei*.

When I came to Chemnitz, of course everybody lived under the shadow of the necessity to immigrate later on. Chemnitz was a highly industrial town. The youth group I joined there, was part of the *RJF*. We were a very isolated group, isolated from the rest of the population. But we had friendships. Everybody belonged there and I had friends. I was 19 years old when I came to Chemnitz, but the age of friends extended from 15, 16 to 21, 22. We were small in number, so age didn't matter that much. We were a big group of about 80, which was gradually whittled down. Every year people emigrated. Manufacturers sold their businesses. It was just a gradual liquidation of the Jewish community.

As far as Augsburg is concerned, the same thing happened there. Some businesses were sold in 1933 and '34 already. They were the smart ones. My father liquidated his business in '35 or '36. We had no real trouble. They tried to get Fred in the *Kristallnacht*, but Fred had already gone, had already left for the United States. They tried to get father, but mother convinced the Gestapo agent that wanted to get him, that he had malaria. Father slept with his mouth open and looked awful. And that saved Father's life, he would have been in Dachau.

My relatives in Chemnitz, a family by the name of Neumeyer, were a very prominent and one of the richest people in, the richest Jews in town. They only went to synagogue on Rosh Hashonoh and Yom Kippur. As a matter of fact, my cousin's, Lu Neumeyer's wife, (282) was Irma Neumeyer. Her uncle, Joseph Kahn was president of the Jewish community there. He also had the hosiery mill where I worked for three years.

The Chemnitz synagogue was not as nice as the Augsburg synagogue. It was about the same size. It was completely destroyed in the *Kristallnacht*. Now there is only a *Gedenkstein* there, a stone in memory of the former synagogue there. There is a group in Augsburg right now, headed by Mrs. Kellermann. I had a letter from her this week. They are concerning themselves very much with the Jewish past in Augsburg and *Schwaben*. They like to build bridges to the Jewish community. Spokorny was responding, but the present congregation is not too responsive. I hope they will appreciate the good will of that group.

When I lived in Chemnitz, I realized that sooner or later I'll have to leave too. Hugo left in '36 for Brazil. In the beginning of 1937, I wrote to some first cousins of my father. There was a professor Milton Rosenau, was a professor at Harvard, (public health) for 25 years. By that time he had retired from Harvard and had accepted a chair at the University of North Carolina. I wrote to him. He sent my letter on to the family in Philadelphia. The lawyer here, Mr. Frankel, sent me the affidavits, signed by Simon Rosenau and Richard Rosenau. Simon Rosenau was a first cousin of father, who looked exactly like father, could have been a twin brother of father. They never met. It was an uncanny resemblance. My first job, as I said, was in hosiery for 12 dollars a week. I tried to make my way. I was transferred to Perkasio soon and from there to Elkton, Maryland. From there I was drafted in January '42. (314)

My first residence in Philadelphia was in a German-Jewish boarding house, run by Mr. and Mrs. Stein at St. James Place, near 22nd and Walnut Sts. They had maybe about 10 boarders like me. It was quite a dinner party every night. It took an hour and a half to get through dinner. I came home from work exhausted. By the time dinner was over at 7:30. By 8:30 I was so tired, I could hardly do any-

thing anymore. At seven o'clock, I started in the hosiery mill already the next day. I did not join any Jewish organizations here.

A year later, a cousin of mine, Robert Harris, got me into a local tennis club and I resumed playing tennis. I made my friends through tennis again, here in Philadelphia. I went to number three in ranking at Logan Tennis Club, which is a very good local tennis club. A men's club of about a hundred people and is one of the best tennis clubs in Philadelphia. I still have trophies from there. The last one in 1948, or so.

When I was in the army, in Newfoundland, in the coast artillery outfit, there was not much to do, and some of the people wanted to go to OCS, Officers Candidate School. I was good in math, so I sent for some math books. I gave them lessons in trigonometry and calculus. Because they needed that, to go to OCS. I, myself, was no citizen yet. I didn't become a citizen till '43. At least I kept my gray cells working. I did not play any bridge in those days. That came much later.

My first job was at M St. and Erie Ave. at Artcraft Hosiery Mill. I was going from machine to machine, examining the product, measuring it and looking for defects. As a matter of fact, I gradually became expert in quality control, and after I was in Perkasio, they sent me to Elkton, Maryland, where I was assistant manager of a hosiery mill. I gave out the yarns and planned the production. After my army service, the people who bought Artcraft Hosiery Mill, Mr. Klugelman had died and Mr. Samson took over that firm. I became in charge, I got in charge of quality (345) control. I went to dye houses and got in touch with eleven mills from there. I had a fairly good and responsible job.

The hosiery mills moved down south, as I said, in 1950 or so. We hung on a little bit longer because we were a very good firm, but since Hugo and father were here, and the Rosenau family was reunited again I did not feel I wanted to leave again.

I gradually bought a delicatessen. I worked from '56 to 64 in a bad neighborhood. I was rioted out off business in 64 and I bought another delicatessen at 24th and Hunting Park. I was very successful there. I worked hard, from 6:30 in

the morning to eight at night. I was too tired to spend the money on me. I retired in 1973 and [I am] now in my 26th year of retirement and am enjoying the fruits of my labor.

F.: How long did you stay at 12 dollars a week?

I got my first raise after about two months. And I proudly told Simon Rosenau and his wife, that I got a raise. "How much are you making now?" I said, "I am making 15 dollars" So Ida said: "Is that a day?" "No," I said "a week." So she said: "Can you live on it?" They had no idea. I said: "I have to."

I had no bad experiences as far as anti-Semitism, because in Augsburg I had formed firm friendships and in Chemnitz, nobody knew me, only the Jews. So I had a fairly easy time. When you look at Henry Landman and folks like that, who had a hard time.

Hugo met a friend of mine in Augsburg in 1935, a classmate of mine, who told him: "Hugo, why don't you leave Germany?" That was Stael. Last week I spent a week with his widow in Germany. This Dr. Stael was a guest of mine in my Jewish tennis club in Augsburg. We were good friends, until one day he got an anonymous letter, that if he continues to play at our Jewish tennis club, he may as well convert. That's how they (373) watched the people. I did not find out about that until after the war. In '74, when he told me about it.

In one of my reunions with my classmates, one fellow, who went right in the army in '34, became a member of the general staff, a fellow by the name of Asimont, he told me, that as a former German officer, he was ashamed to sit next to a former Augsburg Jew. He was the only guy who really expressed his sentiments that way. The others just said: "I am glad you got through it all." But Asimont was the only one to actually say he feels ashamed.

In October 1933 we had a, what-do-you-call-it, *Tanzkurs*, dancing lessons. It was after Hitler came to power. Hitler came to power in January '33. Our dancing class started in September or October. There were two Jewish girls beside my *Tanzdame*, besides my date, in that *Tanzkurs*. One was the... of Dr. Widmann. And last week, when I was in Augsburg, that Dr. Widman sent regards to that Lotte Brunner (néé Selig) in Argentina, in Buenos Aires.

In 1933, after Hitler came to power, Lotte's father told Widmann to come and see him. He told him, he did not hold him to his promise. Under the circumstances he should not jeopardize his future. But Widmann, that is honorable of him, said, he would not think of turning down Lotte, just because she is Jewish.

Asimont and Dr. Widmann only came back out of Russia in 1949 or 1950. They were captured by the Russians. Russia, in spite of the Geneva Convention, kept these German captives over there much longer than they should have, to help rebuild Russia. Russia lost a lot of people during the war.

In conclusion, I would like to say, I live at Rydal Park now, in a Presbyterian home. There are about 15 Jews here out of 400, *7) and some Jewish per diem residents in medical. I am getting along very well with everybody. I don't deny my background. I can't on account of my German accent. They all like me for what I do and what I am. I run the bridge, her now. Altogether, on looking back on my life, I think it wasn't bad, although I could have done without a few experiences. (407)

End

Minor changes in the transcript vs. the tape are edits and additions by the interviewee.

Numbers in parenthesis refer to the numbers on the tape (in inches)
Update, personal communication of Paul Rosenau Jan. 2000:

Updates are inserted as endnotes:

- 1*) P4: Only 21 people are left out of 30.
- 2*) P4: Mr. Römer wrote about 7 more books about the Augsburg and Swabian Jews.
- 3*) P4: Dr. Nejman was voted out as head of the Augsburg Jewish community in 1999.
- 4*) P5: The present congregation is [comprised] mostly [of] Russians and numbers about 700 Jews.
- 5*) P5: The interview is coming out in book form.
- 6*) P7: The present tennis club (.... uses the former PTGA courts) installed a plaque there in honor of our memory.
- 7*) P10, In 2000 [there are] over 20 Jews now at Rydal Park