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Name of Interviewee: Apteker, Herman

Date of Interview: 10/1/1999

Herman Apteker was born on October 9, 1915 in Dresden, Germany. After the death of his father Herman was assigned a male “guardian,” which was a German requirement for children whose fathers had died. The “guardian,” Dr. Avraham Borg took Herman to synagogue and was the primary basis of Herman’s religious education. Herman attended public school in Dresden where he faced anti-Semitism even before the rise of Hitler. In 1933, he went to Czechoslovakia with the Young Maccabees in preparation for emigration to Palestine; he arrived in Palestine in April 1933. In 1938, Herman married and had a daughter, and when the war broke out he was conscripted into the British army where he worked as a commissioned officer at the Lebanese border. Herman remarried in 1949 and in 1953 he and his wife left for the United States.

## Summary Version 2

**Name of interviewee:** Apteker, Herman

**Date of interview:** 10/1/1999

**Summary:** (Deceased 7/24/04)

Herman Apteker was born on October 9, 1915 in Dresden, Germany. His father, Elieser, was in business but died when Herman was only four years old (Herman does not know the cause of his father's death). After Elieser died, Herman's mother began a wholesale business, selling clothing, out of the family's six or seven room flat. Both of Herman's parents had immigrated from Ukraine at the turn of the century. Herman had four older siblings (three brothers and one sister), but one brother and the sister died as children. As the youngest of the three surviving sons, Herman became his mother's favorite and remained very close to her for the remainder of her life.

Because his father had died, Herman had a male "guardian" (this was a German requirement for those children whose fathers had died). The guardian, Dr. Avraham Borg, would take Herman to synagogue and was the primary basis of Herman's religious education. As for his secular education, Herman attended public school in Dresden, where he faced anti-Semitism even before the rise of Hitler. Herman remembers both teachers and students displaying anti-Semitism; one of Herman's Jewish friends wanted Herman to protect him because Herman was "hot blooded" and thus would not be beat up as much. Herman knew that he wanted to leave Germany the minute Hitler came to power. In 1933, he went to Czechoslovakia with the Young Macabees, in preparation for immigrating to Palestine. He spent 10 or 11 months in Slovakia, taking part in agricultural training, where he found the Jewish families to be "exceptionally nice." His mother came to spend a week with Herman in Prague before he left. At this point, she had ended her wholesale business and was renting out rooms in the flat. One of the tenants was an SR man who became the family's 'Shabbos Goy' (a non-Jew who performs all of the actions -- like turning lights on and off -- that the Jews cannot do during the Sabbath). Herman's mother's last words to him in Prague were, "don't leave me behind." Herman arrived in Palestine in April 1933.

Once in Palestine, Herman became very ill with dysentery and malaria. An Arab man he met in the hospital helped Herman get a visa so that his mother could leave Germany and she, along with Herman's older brothers, did eventually immigrate to Palestine. When he first arrived in Palestine, Herman lived in Haifa, working as an unskilled laborer. Once the riots began in 1936 (between the Arabs, Jews, and British), Herman became a temporary policeman before a British officer offered him a job in the immigration office. In 1938, Herman married and had a daughter. When the war broke out, Herman went to work for the British army (in an office) until he was conscripted into the Israeli army.

For one year, while serving in the Israeli army, Herman worked as a commission

officer at the Lebanese border. There he became friendly with an Arab officer on the Lebanese side. At about 0:57, Herman describes his unique relationship with the man.

Herman was divorced in 1945, when his daughter was four years old. He later met his current wife, Olga, a refugee from German-occupied Prague, who had been protected by the Turkish consulate during the war. They married in 1949, at which point Herman had returned to his job in the immigration department at Haifa.

In 1953, Herman and Olga left Israel for the United States. At 1:25, Herman discusses the procedure of leaving for the USA. After arriving in San Francisco, Herman got a job as a cutter in a small drapery company, where he was employed for 12 years before working in the registrar's office at City Hall. His mother died the year after he and Olga immigrated to the States.