

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Catz, Frank J.

Date of interview: 7/2/1997

Summary: (Deceased)

Frank Catz was born in Holland on February 15, 1919 to James and Louise Catz. He had two brothers, Hans (who was the eldest) and Theo (the baby of the family). Frank was brought up with no religious influences, yet he always knew he was a Jew. Frank's first memories of what was going on in Germany were in 1934. He remembers hearing about it on the radio and through the newspapers.

When Frank was 17 his parents sent him to boarding school in Switzerland. It was during this schooling that he learned to speak French. After boarding school, Frank was drafted into the Dutch Army. He went in on January of 1939 and was supposed to get out in November of 1939 but because of the war between England and Germany, Frank was stuck. In order for him to get out of the Army he needed to get a job in the Dutch colonies. It is at this time that he began to work for his Grandfather's import/export business. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Frank was drafted into the Dutch East Indies Army. At the time when Germany overran Holland, Frank was in the Dutch East Indies. All of his family except his Grandfather stayed in Holland.

In 1942 while working in the East Indies, Frank became a prisoner of war and was sent to Japan. He was put in a POW camp for five and a half years. He remembers this time as not being bad but different from the lifestyle he was used to. He says that the Japanese were not abusive towards the prisoners (unless they did something wrong) and had no idea what a "Jew" was. He does recall the fact that he lost almost seventy pounds during those five and a half years (he weighed ninety-six pounds when the camp was liberated). After the camp was liberated, Frank went back to the Indies and the Army.

Upon returning from Japan, Frank learned the horrible outcome of his parents and brothers. He learned that his parents had decided to leave Holland and go to Switzerland. On his family's way to Switzerland, their train was invaded by the Germans and was rerouted for Auschwitz. Frank's brothers were able to escape before the train arrived at Auschwitz. His parents on the other hand were never seen again.

Frank's brothers went on to live their own lives. His older brother, Hans has since written a book on the whole experience he and his family encountered during the Holocaust. Unfortunately, Frank's younger brother, Theo died in an airplane crash in 1948.

In 1948, Frank decided it was time for him to start a new life so he moved to New York. During his time in New York he met and married his first wife,

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Irene. They had two children and in 1949 they decided to move to San Francisco. While in California, Frank worked in the export business and then onto building apartments. In 1974, Frank's wife, Irene lost her battle with cancer. Two years later, Frank married his second wife, Helene. From this marriage, Frank acquired a stepdaughter and stepsons. Frank and his wife Helene have enjoyed watching their children and grandchildren grow.

When asked what kind of effect the Holocaust had on him he replied by saying "pride." Frank says he is proud to say that he survived such a horrible event. He also says this negative experience has made him into a positive person.