

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Galant, David

Date of interview: 2/12/1989

Summary: David was born in Paris, France. He provided no details about his life there except that he was a teenage student at a college in Paris. He mentioned that his father (name or age not stated) was involved with several Jewish welfare committees and his older brother (name or age not stated) was leader of the student council in Paris, France, and later in Nimes, France. He said that his neighbors in Paris were neutral; they neither hated nor loved the Jews in his neighborhood. He remembers that the first time he realized that the Jews in France were in trouble was when they started deporting Jews from other parts of Paris in 1941.

Towards the end of 1941, David and his family fled Paris and arrived at Nimes, France where they stayed until 1943. Here, his brother obtained a degree from the University of Montpellier and David attended school at the National College of Nimes. By March 1943, he and his family were warned that Germans were coming close and that they should leave. The family left in March 1943, and arrived in Nice, France. David could not recall what he and his family did in Nice but he noted that they were arrested by the Italians and taken to San Martin de Visube, Italy (unsure of spelling) where they remained until September 1943. Because of his brother's connections, David could travel freely within this city. When the Italians surrendered, David and his family were ordered to go to the Italian city of Cuneo, at which a train would be waiting to take them to Rome, where they would disperse among the Italian population and wait for the Allied Army to save them.

On the way to Cuneo, the Germans heard of their plan and intercepted 300 of the 1000 people planning to make this trip at Borgo San Dalmazzo. Italy. They were captured in December 1943 and sent to the Dransee transit camp in France. From there, he was deported from France to Auschwitz with about 1100 others, where he and his family arrived on December 10, 1943. According to his limited memory of their arrival at Auschwitz, he was with his parents, his three siblings, and two of his aunts, one of which had a baby. He vividly remembers meeting Dr. Josef Mengele who put the family through selections, the point at which his father was sent to the gas chambers (his brother fell victim to the same fate later on) and he and his brother were separated from the rest of the family.

He and his brother were sent to the Monowitz (Buna) sub-camp within Auschwitz. This sub-camp consisted of a factory, originally built and owned by I.G. Farben industries, that produced rubber for industrial purposes (hence the name Buna) and which employed English POWs, a few German citizens, and mostly Jews doing forced labor. He worked at this camp as a bricklayer from December 10, 1943 to January 1945.

In January 1945, the Allied Armies were getting close to Auschwitz, so he was sent on the Death March and arrived at the Dora processing camp in Germany

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and was promptly sent to the Nordhausen camp where he worked to build railroads from January 1945 to April 1945. In April 1945, American and Belgian soldiers liberated Nordhausen. After liberation, he returned to Paris, and then to Nice where he found his aunt and a cousin who managed not to get captured in their confrontation with the Germans in Italy in 1943.

In June 1946, after contacting some family he had in Oakland, CA, he came to America. At this point, the interview draws to an end with David saying that he has nothing more to say about this topic.