

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

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Name of Interviewee: Angress, Hans

Date of Interview: 8/21/1990

Hans Angress was born on April 14, 1928 in Berlin, Germany. In 1937, Hans' father was forced to quit his job as a banker, and the Angress family had no choice but to leave Germany. The family ultimately ended up in the Netherlands (Holland) with the hope that the country would remain neutral and therefore safe. Hans remained in the public school system until 1941 when he was forced to attend a Jewish school. In 1942, Hans' father was sent to prison and then to Auschwitz, where he ultimately perished on a forced death march. Without their father, the family was forced into a ghetto in Amsterdam. The family managed to escape from the ghetto and was hidden by a German woman; she eventually took them to the Dutch Underground. The family separated in order to better their chances of survival. After the war the Angress family was reunited. In 1947 Hans and his older brother received visas for the United States.

Summary Version 2

Name of interviewee: Angress, Hans

Date of interview: 8/21/1990

Summary: Hans Angress was born on April 14, 1928 in Berlin, Germany, to Ernest Herman Angress and Henny Kiefer-Angress, who also bore two other sons, Werner Karl Tom and Fred (Fritz). Hans recalls the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany at a very early age; one of his first memories of anti-Semitism was at the age of six, when everyone at his school was doing the fascist salute and he was the only one excluded. He specifically remembers not wanting to do the salute. By 1937, Hans' father was forced out of his job as a banker, and the Angress family had no choice but to leave Germany. As a result, on May 27, 1937, the family spilt up. Hans' father and one of his brothers fled to Czechoslovakia, then to England, and finally met up with the rest of the family in Holland. Hans' father took their money out of the country despite German prohibitions. The Angress family gathered in Holland with the hope that the country would remain neutral and safe.

On May 5, 1940, Germany invaded Holland. Hans remained in the normal school system from 1938-1941. Then he, with many others, was forced to go to a school for Jewish children from 1941 to 1942. Anne Frank was one of Hans' schoolmates. She was one year younger than he. Hans considers his class to be "fortunate" - seven survivors out of twenty-three. After this interview, Hans discovered the Dutch book "Absent" by Dien Ke Hondius, about the Jewish Lyceum in Amsterdam from 1941-1943. The author's research indicates that 12 members of his class survived.

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After the invasion, there was a fear in the family that Hans' father would be arrested because of the money he took with him from Germany. In 1942, the Germans came to their house to arrest him. He was not home, however, and the Germans informed the family that they would be back the next day. Hans' father had twenty-four hours to go into hiding. Instead he decided it would be best for the family to surrender. "A mistake," Hans comments. His father was immediately sent to prison, and then to Auschwitz. After the war, someone informed Hans of how his father died but was reluctant to give any detail; he perished in 1945 on one of the many death marches from Auschwitz. (Note that after this interview Hans obtained a death certificate stating that his father perished on Jan. 19, 1943 in Auschwitz.)

Without their father, the family managed to survive many German raids. In 1943, they were forced to move into the ghetto in Amsterdam. By this time, Hans' oldest brother was no longer in Holland. His other brother was working with the *Judenrat*. One day this brother learned through the council that most remaining Jews were to be deported that night. Hans remembers his mother being very gutsy, and ordering a taxi in the ghetto. At that moment the Angress family took off their Stars of David for good.

They went to a friend's house for help. The woman was a German non-Jew who owned a fur shop. Her boyfriend was a German police officer. Still, she hid them in a small room where she stored furs. Hans recalls having to be very quiet, especially when her boyfriend stayed the night. After a few days, the woman took them to the Dutch Underground.

The underground immediately decided that the family should separate. The family was able to move around freely because they didn't "look Jewish." His mother worked at a boarding house that was occupied by German officers who thought she was a German maid. Hans was placed with a Dutch family until the end of the war. This was the family of Peter Kooy, who has also been interviewed by BAHOHP.

The family lied to others and said that Hans was an orphan from Rotterdam. Since the town of Rotterdam had been bombed, all records were destroyed. Because of this it was easier for the Underground to forge papers for Hans. Although Hans felt that most people probably doubted his story, he believes most of them didn't care because they hated the Germans. Since he was missing out on a lot of his education, the Kooy family (his Dutch hosts) got him a tutor to try to keep up. He was not permitted to have any friends outside, so he occupied himself doing household chores and helping out with the underground as much as possible. The Kooys were active in the underground. One of the men in the family was supplying the British with information about the Germans. Hans did what he could for the underground, such as making deliveries. Food was scarce, but because of their connections, they had sufficient supplies.

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At the end of the war the Angress family was reunited. At first, Hans was not sure if his oldest brother survived, but he was one of the first American soldiers to enter Holland after its liberation by the Canadians. In 1947, Hans and his older brother got visas to America. His mother later moved to England and remarried.

On September 24, 1987 Hans wrote to Yad Vashem to recommend the Kooy family for the designation of Righteous Gentiles. In 1989 the Kooy family was given this award, Israel's highest Honor, at the Holocaust Center of Northern California in San Francisco.