

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Buchler, Alfred

Date of interview: 11/14 & 12/12/1989

Summary: (Deceased) Alfred Buchler was born on January 17, 1927, in Vienna. He was an only child and lived with his parents. Alfred remembers switching schools often as a child, and as a result he was often leaving behind friends and having to make new ones. His father was a businessman and worked with wholesale knitted goods; he came from a religious family, but Alfred's mother did not. Alfred says that as a child he simply accepted certain things as normal - there was some anti-Semitism, but it wasn't anything that they were particularly worried about. He remembers Kristallnacht, and says that it was after that that he could not attend his public school and switched to a Jewish school. He was always a very good student, and it was at this time (around 1939) that he started teaching himself the accordion.

Alfred's father tried to get them visas to Brazil, and then to Chile, but neither worked out. They were finally able to get visas to go to Shanghai; this kept the family from being deported in 1940 when the Germans started rounding up the Jews. On the journey to Shanghai, Alfred played the accordion and earned money that was then used to support them in Shanghai. Once they were there, they lived in a one-room apartment in the refugee quarter. Alfred went to a Catholic school, and he remembers this time as a very happy one. Although he could only leave the ghetto at certain times, he felt he belonged in his school community - he had several good friends and spent most of his time studying. His best friend there was a Muslim boy from India.

He remembers rationing and some bombing during the war, but says that even when the war ended his mother still tried to hide the news coming out of Europe from him. He eventually went to the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Harvard University.