

TITLE- Paul Richards
I DATE- May, 3, 1990
SOURCE- SFHOHP
SOUND QUALITY- Excellent
IMAGE QUALITY- Excellent
DURATION- 1 hour,15 minutes (on-screen timer jumps around)
LANGUAGES- English

00:00:04:25 Paul was born in Schenkensfeld, Germany in 1914. His last name used to be Reicheimer(ph). He changed it when he applied for citizenship because his wife felt it was easier to pronounce. He has one brother, four years older than him. His brother lives in Lisbon Portugal.

00:00:05:24 He didn't remember much anti-semitism as a child. A few remarks but nothing too hurtful. When Hitler came to power it got worse but Jewish merchants could still earn a living and non-Jews were on the side of the Jews.

00:00:07:10 It was in 1933 that the anti-semitism worsened. Hitler wrote a book which made it clear that Germany should "without Jews". In his small town they didn't hear much about the earlier anti-semitism throughout Germany. Most Jews didn't want to leave because their communities were quite old and they felt the anti-semitic problems would pass.

00:00:09:01 Paul's brother saw trouble coming and left to Paris. He didn't try to convince his family to come with him because his father came from World War I and felt no one could touch him. This was a common attitude of the people. The first anti-semitism he noticed was that Jews started losing their jobs and restrictions were put on some of the things they were allowed to do.

00:00:08:22 On the night that he was arrested two policemen came into his home and asked him about "Crystal Night"(ph), when two German officials were killed by a Jew in Paris. They said that the Jews were responsible for this. The previous night Paul had seen his synagogue in flames. He was arrested the night after "Crystal Night"(ph), November 9 or 10, 1938.

00:00:09:12 He heard on the radio that synagogues were burning all over Germany. Then he saw his own. At that point they thought that all hope was lost. They did not know what would happen to them.

00:00:09:27 Many people watched the synagogue burn but no one

made a show of resistance. Some clapped their hands.

- 00:00:11:16 When arrested, he was brought to a cell with 25 other prisoners. Nobody would tell them what was going on. The next day they were brought to a train station in Sachsenhausen(ph). He knew that this was a concentration camp. When they got to the camp they were forced to wear signs which read "We are the destroyer of the German culture. We are responsible for the death of Vonradt(ph)", the German vice Consulat killed on Crystal Night. The first day they carried signs and marched for hours. Some were beaten. Then they slept on the floor and were given something to eat.
- 17:36:32:23 At Sachsenhausen(ph) there were 40-50 thousand Jews and other political prisoners. The Jews had a Star of David on them so the SS knew they were Jewish. The homosexuals had purple ones.
- 17:36:32:27 The first night in the barracks, the SS men picked three prisoners outside. Then the prisoners inside heard eight gunshots. They assumed that the eight prisoners had been killed. A few minutes later the eight prisoners were walked back inside. Paul said this was done to scare them. He said that this camp was not a mass killing. People were punished by beating, not death. They also were punished by withholding food and water for a day.
- 17:36:33:24 He managed not to eat any pork while he was in the camp. He would trade any pork that he got with a non-Jew for some bread. He didn't eat completely Kosher foods but at least didn't eat pork. He described the work they did as unproductive a pile of rocks and then moving it back.
- 12:00:41:22 Some SS men were less cruel than others but he didn't see any that were nice. The worst guard was the lagerfuhr(ph), the head of the camp. His name was Pananovski(ph). He read that he was hanged when the American troops liberated the camp.
- 09:46:52:27 He was in the camp from November 10, 1938 until January 28, 1939. Incidentally, he was released on his birthday. He says that was purely coincidental. They let him out by signing an agreement which said that he would leave the country within three months. At this time, they were releasing everyone except those about whom they found out bad information.

09:46:55:27 His parents were in a different camp. When they got out, they went to see his brother in Lisbon, Portugal. Paul took a boat to Shanghai by himself. They understood on the boat that it would be difficult to make a living there. Paul worked in a grocery store and did some baby sitting. There was an old Jewish community in Shanghai made mostly of Russian Jews. He lived mainly with German and Polish Jews that came over with him.

00:28:38:22 He lived in a big building with 120-150 people. It was similar to a dormitory. There were about 18,000 Jews in Shanghai. The social life was good. There were lecturers, comedians and other entertainers.

00:28:39:18 He was in Shanghai from 1939 until 1947. When the Japanese took over China, the Jews were forced to live in a specific area or district. He didn't know about the extermination in Germany at the time and didn't find out until '45 or '46, when the war was over.

00:28:40:13 The Japanese were vicious. They would beat Jews if they were found beyond the circumscribed region of Shanghai. The Chinese, on the other hand, were nice and sometimes helpful.

00:28:41:18 There was a Jewish organization in Shanghai that helped the Jews with food and other things. They were very poor so this was quite helpful. When the Americans came at first they didn't believe they were being liberated. The first American liberator he saw was Rabbi Fine(ph), a chaplain. They were told it would take a while but they would get out of there. They had three choices: the United States, Germany, or Palestine. Some went to Germany and Palestine, but most went to the United States. It took over a year for Paul to get to the United States. This was paid for by the organization whom they were supposed to repay. Paul did repay the organization.

10:51:57:13 After the war, Paul looked for his family. There was a book with names of many Jews which facilitated family members meeting up again. He didn't find his family. He did receive a telegram which said that his parents were alive.

10:51:57:22 Paul met his wife in San Francisco which is where he went from Shanghai. He changed his name at her request.

00:00:01:04 He got a job soon after he arrived despite not knowing English.

02:24:01:15 The town Paul grew up in, Schenklengsfeld, had about 1,200 inhabitants; 20-25% were Jewish. His father owned a small textile store. His mother was very religious and his father was a conservative Jew. There were good relations between the Jews and non-Jews.
Paul's brother lost his job at his bank and decided that it was a good time to leave Germany. He left in 1933. He showed a book that was published in Schenklengsfeld two years prior to the interview.

10:01:54:10 A typical day at Sachsenhausen(ph): they got up at 6:00 am, got one or two pieces of bread and some water-like coffee, marched. They created jobs for them to do. Some washed windows. The barracks were immaculate. At lunch they had more bread. Twice a day there was roll call. If someone was missing they would stay in line until the person was found.

10:01:54:28 The camp was very quiet unless someone was being beaten. No one said much. There were undercover SS men posing as prisoners listening to what the other prisoners were saying.

00:00:01:12 He didn't see anyone killed in the whole time he was there. Some people did die for health reasons.

12:11:11:23 The people and the barracks were extremely clean. He didn't see anybody risk anything to help someone else nor did he see inmates attempting to hurt each other. There were no women at the camp when he was there.

12:11:11:24 In order to leave Germany, Paul first went to Italy. From Italy he went to Shanghai by boat. The boat sailed for 4.5 weeks from Italy, through the Suez Canal, to Bombay, Singapore, then to Shanghai. Most of the people on the boat were Jewish.

12:11:12:17 Many passengers had come from concentration camps, but there were also many non-prisoners on the boat. It was obvious who had been in a camp because they had the shaved heads.
The travel agent in Italy gave him the choice of going to England but he couldn't afford it. The only real choice was Shanghai.

He didn't go to Portugal because his brother could

only get a pass for his parents.

- 13:57:08:29 Paul's parent's died in 1942 and 1943 of natural causes.
- 13:57:10:26 Paul was in the town of Soest when he was arrested. The police came right into his home and took him to the police office. He lived in Soest for eight years where he worked in a department store.
- 00:47:01:21 The organization that helped them in Shanghai was the United Nations Rehabilitation Organization Administration (UNROA). Of the people that went back to Germany, most were elderly. Some were judges or rabbis that were able to get their old positions back.