

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Barasch. Samuel

Date of interview: 11/13/1990

Summary: Samuel Barasch was born in 1901 in Holoyuf, Galitzia, near current day Limburg, Russia. Samuel's father died when he was only 9 months old. Samuel grew up with two siblings, a brother and a sister. His brother, Max, left home at a fairly young age to study in Vienna. Samuel's sister, Schifra, was married in 1912 to an Austrian soldier and also left home. When World War I broke out, Samuel was still at home in Galitzia, working to support her. Shortly after the war ended, Samuel was invited to join his brother in Vienna. With the help of his brother-in-law, Samuel left for Austria in 1919. Life was hard for Samuel in Austria; he worked 48 hours per week for only 1 schilling.

In 1933 Samuel married Miriam Reis in a Vienna Orthodox Synagogue. Samuel began working in his wife's garment factory producing and attaching buttons. Around this time, Hitler invaded Austria. Samuel recalls that the first few months following the invasion came with little change. After Nov. 9, also known as Kristallnacht, things got much worse very quickly. His brother was sent to Dachau. Not long after, the situation worsened for Samuel and his family. Samuel and a friend attempted to flee to neutral Switzerland. When they arrived in Basel, however, they were quickly sent back. Back in Vienna, Samuel and his wife began making more plans for escape. They planned to be smuggled from Cologne to Belgium for 600 Belgian Franks. This plan was risky, but Samuel and Miriam felt the risk of staying was greater.

The Barasch family traveled to the border between Germany and Belgium where they were smuggled over the border and attempted to start a new life in Antwerp. In 1940, when Hitler invaded Belgium, Samuel and his family attempted to flee again, this time to France. When news of the German invasion of France reached them, they returned to Belgium, but this time settled in Brussels. Shortly after arriving, their apartment was sealed up. They met Wanda, a German woman who offered them refuge in her basement. A local Jewish Committee arranged for their son to be safely placed in a Catholic orphanage.

The Barasch family remained in hiding for the final two years of World War II. Once they were liberated, Samuel and Miriam were faced with the challenge of finding their son. Once reunited with their son, the Barasch family remained in Belgium until 1948 when they immigrated to the United States. They settled in San Francisco, where Samuel worked for Serta and Miriam worked for Levi Strauss.

At the end of the interview, Samuel discusses his feelings about current events in Germany, including discussion of a German reunification. Samuel explains his fears of a united Germany, saying that he thinks the Holocaust could be repeated.