

-TITLE-JERRY MOLTON
-I_DATE-JUNE 19, 1990
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-DURATION-1 HOUR 40 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

:00 - 3:00 -- Jerry was born in 1926 in K"ningsberg, Germany. He had an older brother named Staven who was born in 1920. His father's name was Leo Motulsky. However, when Jerry and his family moved to America, relatives already living in America insisted that they change their name to Molton because it was less foreign-sounding. Jerry's father assented grudgingly, mostly because he grew tired of people mispronouncing his name.

3:45: - 5:00 -- Jerry's father was an officer in the German Army during World War I and was proud of his service. His father felt that his status as an ex-Army officer would keep him exempt from the Hitler's anti-Semitic policies. Unfortunately, many Jewish veterans of World War I died because they held this belief.

5:00 - 8:00 -- His father was a prominent attorney in Germany. When his father came to America in 1936, he worked as a menial clerk in Chicago during the Depression. This situation proved to be a "terrible blow for him." The best job his father attained in America was selling life insurance. He died of a bleeding ulcer in 1943. His ulcers, Jerry believes, were caused mostly by the stress stemming from his belief he was failing to support his family. In this manner, Jerry believes his father was a victim of the Holocaust.

8:00 - 10:00 -- Jerry is fairly certain that his father knew what was happening to European Jews during the early 1940's. Jerry and his family were able to keep in touch with family members in Germany until the war broke out. In America at this time, nobody really knew to what extent the Holocaust had reached. They did, however, get "inklings" and had heard reports of many people disappearing. His father was never sorry that he left Germany. He realized "he had no choice."

10:00 - 12:45 - Jerry's mother was the daughter of Samuel and Augusta Kattow. She was born on November 4, 1893 in a small town named Lessing, Poland. She married Leo on September 21, 1919. She and the rest of Jerry's family came to America in 1936. She died in San Francisco in '1987. After Leo's father died, she worked as an accountant. She then became a salesperson and made certain that Jerry would graduate from high school. She never remarried. The loss of her husband had been "devastating," but she was still able to provide for her children.

13: 00 - 14: 20 -- Jerry's brother finished high school in America in 1938. In 1941, he joined the Army and served in the Western Pacific. Because he spoke fluent German, he was asked to work for the OSS. Steven, however, responded that he would "fight for America, but I insist on wearing a uniform." He knew that it would be dangerous to be caught in Germany as a secret agent.

14:35 - 19:20 -- Jerry's uncle, Simon Kattow, died in the Holocaust. He was born in the 1880's. He never married. He was last known to have been in Theresien Stadt, Germany. His previous residence had been in Berlin. Jerry's grandmother was also born in Poland in the late 1850's or early 1860's. She and Jerry's grandfather married in the early 1880's. She also died in Theresien Stadt, and her prior residence had also been in Berlin. She bore two other sons, both of whom died in the Holocaust. George Kattow was born in the 1880's, married in 1939, and perished in Theresien Stadt. Prior to that, he lived in Berlin. The third son was Leo Kattow. He was born in late 1880's. He was last heard from in 1939 in Marseilles, France. Simon was married in late 1880's and had two sons, both of whom died during the war. Samuel Kattow was born to a woman named Johanna. Samuel and Augusta were married in the early 1890's. They had two other sons. One was named Georg and the other Norbert. Both Georg and Norbert disappeared during the war, but the circumstances of their disappearance are not known.

20:00 - 22:00 - Jerry remembers fairly well his last four years in Germany (1932- 1936). Initially, he did not understand the implications of Hitler's ascension to power. At school, though, he began to realize that he was somehow different. If anything went wrong (spitballs, talking, etc.) he and the other Jewish boys were always blamed. It became so common that they learned to accept it. If there were a fight, a fair fight was considered to be three or four Hitler youths against one Jewish boy.

22:20 - 23:20 -- In early 1936, the Moltons moved to Berlin in preparation to emigrate to America. Jerry's parents sent him to a boy's camp for several months to make life easier for the family.

23:30 -- 25:40 He remembers very well Hitler speaking of the German need for Lebensraum and of how Germany had unfairly lost territory after World War I. After the Nazis came to power, he saw more and more brown shirts and parades. He remembered seeing huge parades and swastika flags on holidays on the Kleidhashte (ph), a street located between his home and school on which many Nazi Party members lived. The "Jewish boys" all made sure to avoid that street, for fear of being attacked.

26:00 - 27:40 -- Jerry said he was always treated as an outsider by Germans. He was always called a "damn Jew." It took him a while to realize that 'damn' and 'Jew' are two different words. He was ostracized at school. Only Jewish kids would play with him. He "realized he was different." He never wished that he wouldn't be Jewish.

28:45 - 30:20 -- Around 1935, Jerry sensed tension among his parents. He remembered when his parents visited America in 1935. He remembered his aunts saying that his parents "are in America. They'll never come back." He felt abandoned and cried.

31:00 - 31:45 -- A typical day in Germany involved going to school and hoping he wouldn't get beat up or be blamed for anything that happened wrong in the classroom. He would tell his parents what happened to him but: eventually realized they did nothing for him. He spent the afternoons and evenings doing homework.

32:00 - 34:00 -- In Berlin, Jerry spent several months in a Jewish boys camp. He attended classes, and most boys had their own room. He stayed there until shortly before his family left Germany in early November, 1936. Although his father had lost his right to earn an income as a lawyer, he was able to support his family during this period with his sizable savings. He could bring only a small amount of his wealth out of Germany.

34:00 - 37:45 -- Other relatives left as early as 1933. One group had owned a store in K'ningsberg. When Hitler came to power, Jerry's relatives' store was sacked a couple of times. They had to give up on running the store. They emigrated to Holland and built a successful business in Holland. Jerry remembers a conversation his father, who had reservations about going to America, had with one of the relatives in Holland in 1936 as the family was making its way to England. His relatives tried to convince Jerry's father to stay in Holland, but his mother threatened to go to America with the children if Jerry's father remained in Holland. Fortunately, Jerry's father, whom Jerry thought would have felt more at home in Holland, agreed to go to America.

38:15 - 40:45 -- Jerry remembers being very seasick during the voyage to America. The name of the boat was the Aquatania. It was originally a German boat which had been given to the British as reparations for World War I. The Moltons landed in New York, where they stayed for a few days before moving on to Chicago. Jerry was overwhelmed by the skyscrapers and by the fact that he could not speak the language. The Moltons moved on to Chicago because other relatives had already settled there.

41:00 - 43:00 -- Jerry started school in America at the first grade level even though he was ten years old because of his poor English. As his English improved, he skipped grades and eventually caught up with his classmates of his own age. His childhood was fairly normal, but as he became 13 or 14 he became aware of the problems his father had in supporting his family. He realized, though, that many of his friends were in the same boat. He found the frugality "character-building."

43:00 - When his father died, he did not drop out of high school (which he attended for another year and a half) to work. After graduating from high school, he attended a junior college and worked a part-time job at night. After graduating from junior college, he was still uncertain as to what he wanted to do in life, so he took a full-time job. Because he was short and because of the curvature of his spine, he was declared "4F" and, hence, could not be drafted. He became embittered because he would not be able to enjoy such benefits as those stemming from the G.I. Bill. Also, when applying for a job, veterans were always given preference over him. Though he was not angry at the veterans for receiving employment, he still considered this situation "unfair" in light of his original desire to serve in the armed forces.

46:20 - 47:30 -- After the war, he worked in a machine shop for several years but decided he had no future in this endeavor. He heard, then, of a program Gov. Stevenson was creating to allow partly handicapped people to learn a vocation in which they could support themselves. He became familiar, then, with "freight traffic management," in which he spent his entire career.

47:30 - 52:15 -- Jerry met his wife in San Francisco in 1957, where he and wife were visiting mutual relatives. It was "love at first sight." His wife's mother was also born in K'nigsberg and had known Jerry's father. In fact, Jerry's father was his mother-in-law's first crush. Jerry and his future wife corresponded regularly until they married in August, 1958. They first moved back to Chicago. At this point, he thought that he would need a university degree to advance any further in his career. He applied to several colleges in the Bay area. Jerry felt that as a husband, it was his duty to support his wife. So he looked for a day-job and hoped to attend school at night. He was unable, however, to find a job and thus attended school during the day and relied upon his wife's support.

He graduated from UC - Berkely in 1960. He then took a job with the federal government. He refused to stay in school to get his masters because he did not wish to keep relying upon his wife's support. Though he did not get rich working for the government, he was able to support his family.

52:20 - 55:15 -- Jerry's wife was born in Bremerhafen, Germany. Her name was Ingeborg Rosenkal. Her mother's maiden name was Martha Neumann. Inge was born in 1925. Her family moved to Berlin in the 1930's and moved to Holland, where they were caught by the Nazis in 1940. Inge had developed juvenile diabetes in 1934. Before the war, Inge's family lived in a small Dutch town on the German border, which was one of the first to be overrun by the Germans. Inge's family went underground very shortly after the occupation. She survived four years underground, despite being insulin-dependent. She had found a pharmacist who was willing to give her insulin. She had to sneak out of her hiding places in Amsterdam at night to get to the pharmacist's house, where she would receive her injection. She had to do this on a daily basis.

55:15 - Inge's family was caught by the Germans on November 1, 1944. The family included Inge's mother, her stepfather, and her brother. Inge and her mother survived only because the SS officers had fled the oncoming Allied armies. They had left orders to the noncommissioned officers to shoot all the Jewish men they encountered but had said nothing about the women. Inge's stepfather and brother were shot in view of Inge and her mother. The allied armies liberated the area twenty-four hours later. Jerry thinks somebody informed on the family. In Holland, there were many people who would risk their lives to help Jews and other persecuted peoples, but there were also many anti-Semites who would inform the Nazis of any Jews of whose whereabouts they knew.

57:00 - 61:45 -- Inge and her mother moved to America in 1947. They lived with an uncle in Philadelphia who had left Germany before the war. He had opened a women's dress shop. Inge and her mother were both unhappy in Philadelphia. Inge worked in the dress shop, which was located in a German district of Philadelphia that was still very pro-Nazi. Her uncle never really cared about Judaism and never let his customers know he was a Jew. Eventually, Inge learned of a school that would train her to become a child nurse. She became, then, a nurse's aide in infant care. She decided to move to San Francisco after seeing the Clark Gable film San Francisco. Initially, she had trouble finding a job as a nanny or a nurse's aide and worked, instead, as a short order cook. Fortunately, she did eventually find a job in her specialty, where she worked until she married. Inge and her mother, who also moved to San Francisco, were aided financially by restitution payments made to Holocaust survivors by the German government.

62:00 - 65:15 -- While working for the federal government in the 1970's, Jerry became involved in a U.S. government project in which American engineers would build two air bases in the Negev desert to replace the ones in the Sinai that were about to be transferred to Egypt. The Israelis demanded a seven year period before returning the Sinai so they could replace the bases. President Carter considered this period too long and offered to have American personnel build the bases. Jerry and his wife lived for two years in Israel until the bases were completed. This was one of the happiest periods of his life. An American Jew, he was able to assist Israel by playing an instrumental role in building bases in an area that had been nothing but sand and stone.

67:30 - 68:00 -- Jerry and his wife moved back to America after the base project was completed. Jerry, however, opted for early retirement in 1982 because his wife, whose health was deteriorating due to years of insulin shots, needed constant attention. In 1986, she had to move to a home. She died shortly before the interview was filmed. Jerry and his wife had two daughters during their marriage. Both are married and both have had children. Fortunately, Jerry's wife was lucid enough to enjoy her the company of her grandchildren.

68:00 - 71:20 -- Jerry's wife often had nightmares about the Holocaust. Jerry usually did not inquire into the exact nature of her nightmares. Also, he also did not insist on having her relate to him her most painful experiences. His wife did tell him, though, of the false papers and false ration cards on which she and her family relied during the occupation. In the beginning of the marriage, she told some stories, but after approximately three years, she decided it would be best to "bury the past."

Frequently during the occupation, her papers were examined by German soldiers. Her family also had to move constantly. She and her family hid in such structures as false cellars, very similar to the ones depicted by Anne Frank. Inge never spoke to their daughters about her personal experience, though they did educate them about the Holocaust.

71:30 - 75:00 -- Jerry feels that survivors should tell their stories and that more museums like Yad Va Shem should be opened. He also believes that Israel should continue to commend gentiles who aided Jews during the war. The media should also remind the public of anniversaries of certain horrible events. He also feels that the Holocaust should be taught in the schools. Jerry was shocked that in his children's history classes, the Holocaust was "glossed over." He feels that many non-German Western leaders may possess a "guilt complex" over the West's (excluding Germany's) indirect complicity in the Holocaust.

75:15 - 76:45 -- Jerry occasionally gets into arguments over America's role in the Holocaust. Many Americans, Jerry says, feel that America's primary role was to win the war, and ergo had no special responsibility to save Jews. Jerry also criticizes the British for recently returning Vietnamese refugees interned in Hong Kong back to Vietnam. He also criticizes Britain's lack of assistance to the Jews during the Holocaust and the manner in which many German Jews were interned in_____

77:00 - 81:00 -- He also believes that when America refused to continue criticizing the British after the British suggested that America take the Vietnamese refugees, that perhaps the lessons of the Holocaust have not been learned. He feels that America has a duty to accept as many refugees as it can absorb. He feels that accepting immigrants made America great. Historically, he also feels that the British insistence that France not respond to Germany's invasion of the Rhineland was perhaps the greatest tragedy to befall the Jewish people. Appeasement, he believes, was a primary cause of the death of 6 million Jews.

84:00 - 87:00 -- The main lesson of the Holocaust, Jerry believes, is to "never forget" and to use those events as a reference when relevant issues arise today. He also affirms that the Holocaust has shaped his outlook on life. "It is a part of me."

88:10 - 95:00 -- Jerry does watch Holocaust histories. He feels that some are very well produced. Addressing current events, he feels that the American media underplays Arab violence against the Israelis and overplays Israeli violence against the Palestinians. He also criticizes the Bush Administration's recent recognition of the PLO. He contends that Americans do not understand just how precarious Israel's existence is and the manner in which Israelis constantly feel besieged by hostile Arab states.

96:00 -- Jerry concludes the interview by relating how his parents desired intensely to sever their connections with Germany and assimilate totally into America. His father's inability to master English hindered him in this endeavor while Jerry's own ability to shed his German accent has helped him assimilate.

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