

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Alfandary, Robert

Date of interview: 6/18/1997

Summary: Robert Alfandary was born on October 3, 1929 in Brussels, Belgium, into a wealthy merchant family involved in the trade of selling oriental rugs. He was a Turkish Jew who had little formal schooling, private tutoring replacing the latter. The family business was located in Berlin, and the family also had an apartment in France. Although he resided primarily in Belgium, he became fluent in Spanish, French, German, and after the war, English. He experienced little anti-Semitism while growing up, remaining safe in the shelter of his family estate by the wit of his shrewd father.

While in Paris in 1941, he became subject to the Nazi edict that all Jews had to register and subsequently wear a yellow Star of David patch on their chests and band on their arms. Two years later, his father disguised the family's Jewish identity by fabricating identification papers with a false nationality ("Djugut" or "Djougout"), which would have made them an Aryan sect of Muslims. Alfandary also went to a Christian school to further hide his identity. This false identity motivated Alfandary's sharing of his story. In Linenbeek, Belgium, in 1943-1944, his family sheltered resistance members, and the family remained almost completely safe from German persecution. The only member of the family to die from the war was Alfandary's uncle Rafael, who was shot. The liberation in early September was quiet, the Germans abruptly leaving for their homeland without further Jewish persecution.

Alfandary mentions a man by the name of Vermist (sp?) who worked for his father. Vermist disguised himself as a Flemish Nazi to be a part of the resistance.

After the war, Alfandary's father wanted him to become an engineer, but poor school marks resulted in a change to an agricultural focus at Utah State University. He quickly changed to political science and entered the Army upon graduation. He owns his own life insurance company and has four children along with a new wife named Sue.