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**Summary of oral history interview with Harry Fern
(Part 1 of 2)**

Harry H. Fern, born in Koblenz, Germany on June 3, 1920 tells that he changed his name from Hans Fernich when he became a citizen to get rid of all memories of Germany; describes going to school in a town about 20 kilometers from Koblenz; being brought up like a typical German boy of the Jewish faith and not feeling different from anyone else but being removed from the gymnasium in 1934 along with other students because they were Jewish.

He describes his father having to give up his store 2 years later; playing soccer and water-polo; becoming an apprentice in the shoe business in Koblenz and attending school twice a week for two hours; having a teacher who called his work "Jewish Gutspe"; being struck by this teacher and then hitting him back and down to the floor; fleeing to Cologne with his parents; having his appendix removed in hospital; finding a job on the Reichsautobahn between Bonn and Cologne; seeing Jews being given permission to work as mechanics at the time that the war with Poland started.

He describes learning cabinet-making in a Jewish trade school; experiencing Kristalnacht in 1938; accepting a job in cabinet-making until 1941 until he was deported with his parents to Poland. He describes not adhering to the law of wearing the star and not being afraid.

He describes his father having two jobs, namely a shoe store owner and an interior decorator for special occasions; not having had any siblings. He gives his father's name as Leo Fernich born in Klotten an der Mosel in Germany and his mother's name as Helena Blumenthal who was born in Westphalia. He describes how his father worked as a manufacturer after closing his shoe store; being fired afterwards because Jews were not allowed; and how he and his father worked together on the Reichsautobahn for low wages. He describes trying to cross the border near Aachen with a friend but abandoning the attempt, then seeing that the Dutch police returned his friend back from Holland.

He describes how big synagogues were burnt down during Kristallnacht; describes disliking German Jews who tried to emigrate and belonging to an organization for children of Jewish war veterans; describes having a strong German-Jewish religion; hearing of Roosevelt in the United States not permitting ships with Jews to land and sending the ships back. He describes having a doctor who had also been a famous national boxer who ended up in the ghetto in Riga where Harry's wife was. He describes being deported on November 16th, 1941; having a cousin whose birthday was on November 16th; and getting married on November 16th, 1947.

He describes working in an ammunition factory in Skarzysko-Kamienna in Poland; making schmeltz which was used to press the copper head of ammunition guns; selling cigarette holders to Poles that he had made from the material available to him.

He describes the Russian army getting closer; being transported to work in a new factory in Tschenstochau; being liberated on January 15th, 1945; meeting someone who claimed having played soccer against him years before called Feugt [PH]; having to show that he was circumcised to Russian and Polish police because he could not speak the language; eventually obtaining papers in Russia and Polish which stated that he was Jewish; working in a bakery where they baked for the black market; going to Vienna afterwards and supporting himself by playing soccer and water polo

He describes placing an ad in a German-Jewish newspaper called *Aufbau* in which he seeks certain people whom he thought lived in Los Angeles but who, in fact, lived in Long Beach, California.

(Part 2 of 2)

Harry Fern continues his story and describes how it was important for him to be able to support himself when he came to the USA and not to have to rely on others; explains that he met a girl in the US after six months who had been through a similar experience and whom he eventually married; describes to her his life in Cologne in 1941 and in Vienna in 1945; explains how his marriage helped him finally learn to be able to speak about his past; tells us that his wife's name was Lilo which came from the German names Lisa Lotte; explains that Lilo is now a common name in Germany which is derived from Lisa Lotte; tells us that his wife was deported to Riga; tells us of his two sons, Ralph and Danny and that he has three grand-daughters.

He describes that those in the camp had come mainly from the Lodz Ghetto and that the kitchen was staffed by inmates; he explains that when they were rescued by the Russians, he and his friend were the only two who were afraid to go out because the war was still on; he describes how the Polish Jews adapted quickly after their release because, unlike Harry, they could speak Polish; he describes how he was often mistaken for a German because he wore a German cap and uniform – only once he got in touch with people from the Lodz Ghetto were they able to testify that he was, in fact, not German.

He explains how he “saw a Nazi in every German” upon coming to Austria but that his attitude changed after meeting charitable Christian and Israeli-assist groups; he describes the slow return of his humanity upon seeing a wedding photograph of his parents; he says that he believes many people who experienced the horrors of the camps have not yet gained the necessary self-awareness and recovery.

He says that he has pictures of the Lodz Ghetto which he donated to the Wiesenthal Center; he shows us a picture of his parents and himself taken in Cologne in 1938 before Kristallnacht by an amateur photographer when Harry was about 18 years old; he explains that, at the time, they were living with other Jewish families in a single apartment; he explains how he was lucky to keep the picture with him through the years when other items like sports medals were taken away from him by the guards.

Harry says that he hopes that human feelings and love will always triumph; he believes in the American song which goes: "What the world needs now is love, sweet love"; he explains how he always signs his letters off with the words "With love" and that he spells the word love with the letters L, the shape of a heart, followed by V and E.