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Summary

George Frankl was born on October 16, 1931 in Budapest, Hungary and stayed there until the Hungarian uprising in 1956. He grew up in a close family with his mother, father and older brother. His father was a sculptor but earned a living as a grinder and polisher since as a Jew he could not show his work; his mother was a homemaker. Since there were quotas on Jews for high school he was only allowed to finish grade school. He believed that antisemitism in Hungary came with the "mother's milk." Even in the best of times there was antisemitism. He did not have a strong Jewish life because, he said, Jewish life in Budapest was very fragmented.

Until 1942 Mr. Frankl remembered very little about his daily life, since his father was very busy. Family life was disrupted. In 1942 his father was taken to a labor camp and he only saw him occasionally when he was allowed out. Gradually, life for Jews became more difficult as more anti-Jewish laws were passed including the required wearing of the yellow star. Mr. Frankl remembered that life got worse when the Nazis arrived, and as Jews were being sent to ghettos. To avoid this, his mother went into hiding under horrible conditions. Frankl was then left alone with his brother, so they were sent to a Jewish orphanage, under the partial protection of Raul Wallenberg and the Swedish embassy. He gave Wallenberg credit for saving thousands of Jews. He stayed in the orphanage for several months and then went to a hospital because he had caught Scarlet Fever. Hungarian authorities were very concerned about the spread of disease so he was protected there.

The Russians arrived while he was in the hospital. His brother was hiding out in the streets at that time. His mother somehow found out where he and his brother were and came to collect them and take them into her hiding place. He never heard from his father again. Frankl, his brother and mother eventually were able to go back to their home, but it had been ransacked. His mother could only get a job that paid little, so he and his brother had to go to work when he was only thirteen. But he also went to night school and eventually finished high school and a college degree in Chemistry. It was still not possible, however, for him to get a good job since he refused to join the Communist Party.

In the chaos of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, Frankl was able to escape to Austria and then to the United States with his new wife. His life in the U.S. was very good, and he was able to practice chemistry professionally. But even in the U.S. he was passed over for promotions because of his accent. This was the first time he told his story since he tried to tell a Jewish group shortly after he arrived in this country and they did not believe him. Frankl also did not like to recall his bitter memories, though he has told his two daughters the basic outlines.