

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS IN KENTUCKY INTERVIEW PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION

Alexander Rosenberg

Residence: Louisville, KY.

Length of interview: approximately 3 hours.

Date(s) of interview: 6/13/00

Related resources:

- Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation video interview, conducted on 6/3/96 (see summary below)

Evaluation/further information about interview:

Followed up on things that were not discussed in Shoah interview (see summary below). In particular, his reflections on life in the US and in Louisville.

Summary of Shoah interview:

Born on 3/8/27 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Lived there until '33, when his family moved to Berlin. Father was an investment banker. In '37, family went to Holland. AR and his brother put in Quaker school in Zwolle for about 6 months. After parents established residence in Amsterdam, moved there. Started high school in 1940. In '41, forced out of school, and made to go to a Jewish school. Chaos—never knew when there would be a raid. By that time, had to wear Jewish identification star. By '42, commercial activity had ground to a halt. Ran errands on his bicycle for the underground.

Some family history/background given, and fates of various relatives discussed. 8 in his immediate family were killed during the Holocaust.

The German invasion in '40 was scary to everyone. AR's family did not hide or try to hide. They were caught in a roundup once before actually being deported. Does not recall shortage of food in '41-'42. There were nightly raids. When family got caught in a roundup for the second time, around Sept. '42 or '43, they were deported to Westerbork camp. There for about 4-6 months. AR contracted polio there. No brutality, no family life. Doesn't think there was a lack of food. Does not remember details.

Deported to Bergen-Belsen on a 3rd class coach train, with parents and brother. First work assignment was to dig up tree stumps. Later job was to split them.

Brother Walter now lives in Vermont. He has been active in the Anne Frank foundation. AR in his "isolation in Louisville" has not had opportunity to get involved.

Food in Belsen plentiful in beginning; rations gradually reduced. Incidents of cruelty/brutality common. Almost everyone had dysentery. Describes being beaten for smuggling food. Remembers that on Easter Sunday, 1944, there was an air attack while he was splitting wood. Some time after that, was transferred to railroad detail, and worked there till the end, unloading rail cars. Stole food of incoming transports of Jews.

The situation grew worse and worse as the war came close to ending. Ridiculous overcrowding. One day 2,500 prisoners, mostly Dutch, and including AR, marched out, crammed into train for a "ridiculous safari". Stopped in middle of field, dug potatoes,

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and then traveled on. It was 4/10/45. Traveled through a few cities and towns, including a bombed-out Berlin, which “delighted us no end.”

Overtaken by Russian army, a unit of Cossacks, members of which gave them bread. American trucks later allowed in to haul prisoners out to DP camps.

Parents died in US, of natural causes.

Taken to DP camp in Leipzig, then by Red Cross trucks to Holland in June or July of 1945. Graduated high school in Amsterdam in '47. Lived there until 1947, then came to US.

Had nightmares for a long time, in vivid colors—and weird dreams. Usually sees the best in people, rather than the worst. Knew English from high school. On arrival in US, moved to Flushing, and got job at Mt. Sinai hospital. Went to City College at night. Graduated in '51, with a degree in Chemistry. Married in 1954. Has 3 children. Job transfer to Louisville.

Photographs shown.

Is dismayed that 51 years after Holocaust, the world has learned nothing. Yugoslavia, Africa, Laos. The world is unwilling or incapable of stopping genocide.