

Interviewee: Hugo Rothfeld

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Interviewer: Alejandra Nudman

Hugo Rothfeld was born in Borautz (?), Rumania in 1918, on June 11. In addition to his parents, Jacobo Rothfeld and Cecilia Marcus, there were 4 children. Hugo was the second of the children. A maternal uncle lived in Chernivtsi, where the family moved in 1939. All together immigrated that year to Chile.

Chernivtsi had a large Jewish population. and had a rich Jewish life. They spoke German more than Rumanian (having belonged to Austria before WWI) Religious life was intense and there were many synagogues. Jewish life was well organized. There was a Jewish council which served the entire Jewish population, headed by the most important rabbi at the moment. They were in charge of all the festivities, welfare, etc.

Hugo went for the 4 elementary grades to the only Yiddish school there was. Then he went to the gymnasium, the Orthodox Lyceum, being one of the few Jews to finish. He never experienced anti-Semitism. After that gymnasium, Hugo went to another one. (He had to transfer because he had a problem with another student that harassed him.) Thus, he finished his 8 years of study.

By then, the rumblings of the war were felt. Hugo's father decided to emigrate. It wasn't easy because they did not have many means. Father was an employee, and the children were studying. Also, no country wanted to get Jewish immigrants. There were only 3 to grant visas: Bolivia, Ecuador and Chile. They chose the latter. The only point of departure was Hamburg, where they had to wait 8 days to take a ship to Panama. The trip to Panama on the "Cordillera". Continuing to Valparaiso, Chile on the "Santa Barbara".

Life in Chile. Participation in sports (Ping-Pong) and in Jewish life. His active participation in the YMCA.

Hugo became a Mason in 1949. He achieved all the positions there, except for Venerable Master.