

ROBERT BRAUN
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Robert, born in Vienna in 1928, was one of the 50 children brought to America by Mr. and Mrs. Kraus of Pennsylvania in 1938. His sister Hanni was also among the 50. Their father's family lived in Vienna for 600 years; they were in the wine business. Their mother was catholic but had converted to Judaism. Robert reminisces about a happy childhood with his family that included one older sister. He remembers that changed abruptly in March 1938, and after Kristallnacht his school closed completely and his father's wine cellar destroyed. His older sister moved to Palestine and he and Hanni stayed in the house. His mother got a certificate of her Catholicism and ancestry, and for that reason his parents were allowed to stay in their apartment and were two of the 180 Jews left alive in Vienna after the war out of 180,000.

Robert and his sister Hanni were chosen to be two of the 50 children sent to America with the Krauses and Dr. Schliess. Robert remembers the trip to Berlin and then Hamburg to board the SS President Harding as a wonderful time and he had his first ride in a car. On the ship they had a great time and were able to eat whatever they wanted. There is an iconic photo of the children in front of the Statue of Liberty when they landed in New York. After a time in a Camp Shalom in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, Robert and his sister found out that they would be living with the Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus and their two children. Robert states that he and Hanni were treated exactly like the Krauses own children and had a good experience for two years. He went to Friends Select School which he enjoyed.

After the two years, Robert and his sister went to live with their cousin and his wife in Bridgeport Connecticut This was a big change; the Krauses were very wealthy and had chauffeurs and maids; his cousin Rudolf was middle class. After graduating high school in 1946 Robert went to college and dental school, although he says he really didn't want to be a dentist. He was drafted and went to Korea as a dentist. Robert remained a dentist in Connecticut.

Robert was able to get letters from his parents until the US entered the war, then there was no contact and his parents never got his letters either. When Hanni turned 21 in 1947 she was able to get an affidavit to vouch for their parents and bring them to America. Hanni married a fellow pharmacy student. His older sister Martha helped found Kfar Blum Kibbutz in Israel, but eventually she and her husband also moved to the United States

Robert reminisced at length about his life with the Krauses and told of their daughter Ellen's early death, and the sad death of Gilbert from a brain disease. He had contact with the Krauses for many years, especially at Christmas and in the summer at their house in Long Beach. He also talked about his feeling that Austria had difficulty facing up to their role in the war and when he went back to Vienna he felt people denied that Austria was complicit with Germany, while the Germans have been very open about apologizing for their part.