

KURT HERMAN

RG-50.755.0005. recorded in 2010 by Steve Pressman

Kurt was one of the 50 children saved by Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus. Born in Vienna, his father and grandfather owned a fabric store. The family wanted to emigrate after Kristallnacht. His father and grandparents were Polish; they were able to get passports to Cuba, but unfortunately, the ship wasn't allowed to land and they were returned to France. The grandparents were ultimately sent to Auschwitz and perished. His grandfather had initially not wanted to leave because he thought having fought with the Prussian army would save them.

For some reason Kurt's parents didn't want him to go on the kinder transport to England, but did let him interview with the Kraus' and Dr. Schless in Vienna and he was accepted on May 10, 1939. Kurt remembers that because there were stormtroopers at the railway station, the parents weren't allowed to wave to them or to cry. When they landed in Berlin, the American consulate protected them from Nazi interference. On the ship Kurt remembers learning English and liking the food. He states half the children were seasick.

When the children came to Camp Shalom in Collegetown, Pennsylvania, they kept busy learning English and playing sports. Kurt was taken in by a Mrs. Leonard of Allentown who had a grandchild 3 years younger than Kurt and a younger child in High School. Mr. and Mrs. Leonard also too in Julius, another kinder transport child. Kurt remembers it was tough in school until they mastered English. Kurt's mother came in September of 1939 and he left the Leonards to live with her; his father came from France shortly after. He doesn't remember knowing the Krauses but surmised they were able to get the 50 visas through their friendship with Francis Biddle in the FDR administration. His parent settled in Allentown but eventually he moved to Philadelphia for better jobs. His parents remained in Allentown and were observant Jews; they all kept in touch with Mrs. Leonard.

IN 1972 Kurt remembers that his wife saw an article in the paper about Camp Shalom and the Krauses. At the time Kurt was working as the CFO at the Federation of Jewish Agencies and he remembers going to a reunion of the now grown children in the 1990s. He then joined the Kraus Perlstein Lodge at Brith Shalom which was named for Gilbert Kraus' father. Kurt eventually became the president, then on the Board of Governors for the organization. At the time of this recording, Kurt had been married for 56 years and had 3 daughters and 8 grandchildren. He speaks at schools about his experiences. He gets a small pension from the Austrian government as well as some money that his father had in a Swiss bank.