

ERWIN TEPPER

RG-50.755.0008. (recorded 2010 by Steven Pressman)

Erwin Tepper was one of 50 Viennese children brought to America by Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus in 1939. He was born in Vienna in 1931. He was the only child of parents who originally came from Poland. His father worked in retail and studied accounting. He remembers a happy childhood surrounded by a large family circle. He doesn't remember, but apparently was arrested as a 5-year-old for being in a park that was prohibited to Jews.

Erwin's father was hidden by his boss during Kristallnacht but then lost his job and the family was sustained by the Jewish Welfare Committee. His father had relatives in both US and Argentina. A few weeks before Erwin left for America his father went to Camp Kitchener in England. Right after he left his mother went to England as a domestic.

Erwin's memories about being interviewed and accepted to be on the kinder transport are hazy. He doesn't really remember his father visiting the ship when they docked in Southampton. He always had a lot of relatives, so being sent to the United States to see relatives did not seem like a big deal to him at that age. He was told he had relatives in New York and Connecticut.

He remembers a little about being in Camp Shalom in Pennsylvania. He especially remembers banana Jell-O, and the children scraping off the Jell-O to get to the banana because they had never seen Jell-O. The main job in the camp was to learn English, and Erwin remembers being taught by Mr. Kraus. He remembers that the friends Robert Braun and his sister were taken in by the Krauses and eventually went to live with an uncle in Bridgeport.

Erwin was taken to live in the Bronx by his aunt and uncle, who had two older girls. He remembers being put back in school until he was fluent in English. His parents arrived in 1941 and the family relocated to Bridgeport, Connecticut. There he found out that the Braun's uncle Rudolph was their family physician, and he would see the sister Hanni when she helped her uncle in the office. Erwin's father worked as a garment cutter. Erwin eventually became a radiation oncologist. He never found out what happened to his cousin who was not accepted to be one of the 50 children. He felt that the Krauses were motivated to save the children because it was just the right thing to do.