

**Harvey Moser**

**December 2012**

**RG-50.977.0003**

### **Summary**

Harvey (born Elmode) Moser was 11 years old when he was on the SS St. Louis. He responds to questions regarding the event. In 1933 his parents packed their belongings on lifts and then changed their mind about leaving as felt the situation would improve. His teachers did not show any discrimination toward him. When the Nuremberg Laws were passed in 1933 the Brown Shirts marched past their house daily and sing a song meaning "When Jewish blood spurts from the knife, all will be well" and the family decided to move to a bigger city of Freiburg. They lived in a large house which was occupied by various people during and after the war. It was rebuilt with a plaque commemorating the family. While in the Army Harvey visited his hometown and a former classmate recognized him and offered to have a party for him. He refused as felt some of them might have been nice but others might have been terrible. His parents boarded the SS St. Louis at Hamburg, Germany but he and his brother boarded at Cherbourg, France. After Kristallnacht, there was a rumor that Jewish children would be sent to concentration camps so the two brothers were smuggled into France and lived in a house for a year awaiting a visa for the St. Louis. Harvey thought they had a wonderful crossing on the luxury liner. It was a 10-day cruise and upon reaching Havana they waited six days to be informed they could not disembark. They found out the \$900 visa was bogus as an additional \$900 was demanded at Havana and no one had that much money. A committee was formed that cabled the Joint Distribution Committee who sent a representative who obtained the money but was told it was too late. The ship was commanded to return to Germany which frightened the passengers. One passenger cut his wrists and jumped overboard. He was saved and had to return to Europe with the others. The committee called many countries to take the passengers and England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands agreed to accept about one-quarter each and Shanghai and the Dominican Republic also would take some passengers. For three days the ship went along the Florida coast so they could view Miami and contact the US government. FDR and Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State refused the passengers but Eleanor Roosevelt was in favor of taking them in. Upon landing in France, Harvey's father was taken to a detention camp near Lyon and his mother lived nearby while he and his brother were placed in an orphanage near Paris. Soon the war started and the brothers frequently had to go down to the shelter in the cellar. A year later, his mother obtained affidavits and the family left on the last ship from France to NY arriving May 13, 1940. HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) gave them housing and food for six weeks until his mother's friend found them an apartment in Brooklyn. His parents earned a living by selling office supplies, Harvey went door-to-door selling combs and toothbrushes and his brother worked as a stock boy in the drugstore below their apartment. Harvey was placed in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and when his English improved, he was skipped to his proper grade. He planned to be a Chemical Engineer but his teacher warned him that being Jewish would make it difficult to obtain work so he became a doctor. He was limited on getting

admitted into college because of this discrimination and his limited funds kept him in NYC but succeeded in obtaining a scholarship to Medical College. Harvey's father died in 1943 due to diabetes and its effects and his mother lived until 86 years old continued selling office supplies. Recently Harvey attended a meeting at the State Department with 20 survivors and Ambassadors from the four main countries they had gone to. They listened to an apologetic speech by the Assistant Secretary of State presented certificates to the Ambassadors as few other countries would accept them. Harvey feels the US is a land of opportunity as you can work yourself up and be successful. He felt President Roosevelt was interested in his own welfare. Harvey felt it would be possible for another ship to arrive with immigrants who would not be admitted into the US as they might not fit in with the current population. He feels he served this country as a doctor and his brother served as a machine gunner and received a Bronze star for his intelligence work in the war. Harvey believes that if Israel existed in the 30s there would not have been a Holocaust as Hitler only wanted Germany to be free of Jews. He says Jews should be proud of their faith and if you view harm being done, you should stand up and take care of it.