

Luis (Erwin) Stillmann
RG-50.986*0003

Date of Interview: May 12th, 2017
Place of Interview: Mexico City
Language of Interview: Spanish
Interviewer: Yael Siman
Video recording: Esther and Aharon Cohen

Date of birth: December 31, 1921
Place of birth: Budapest, Hungary

Father: Arnold Stillmann
Mother: Viola Stillmann
Siblings: Only Child.

Luis was born in Budapest but lived as a young child in Mad, Hungary where his family had resided for 300 years. His father worked in the wine business representing a company in Europe. He describes his family Jewish religious life as well as the daily co-existence between Jews and Christians. After his father lost his job, Luis moved with his parents to Kiskunfélegyháza where they found an orthodox Jewish community that assisted other Jews in need. While graduating from gymnasium and attempting to enter University, Luis faced pervasive antisemitism and anti-Jewish laws in Hungary. With the help of the University's Dean, Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi, Luis attended the Faculty of Law at the university in Szeged. His university studies allowed him to avoid military conscription but when the Germans entered Budapest, Luis moved back home where he was moved into the ghetto for several weeks before being sent to a Jewish battalion. He returned to Budapest after spending some time in a military hospital and later on sent to the Hungarian-Austrian border to dig trenches for the German army; he was then sent to Mauthausen and Günskirchen. He tells how a Portuguese passport that he got with the help of his aunt in Budapest saved his life from a Nazi official. He was very weak when the war ended and remembers feeling free but also indifferent. He stayed in Welz where he received food and medical assistance from the American army and worked as translator. He then returned to Budapest and Kiskunfélegyháza looking for his family members and finding out that his parents had perished. He decided to leave because he did not want to live under Communism. He then worked as interpreter at the DP camp in Eibense, and with UNRRA at Ansbach. He moved to Paris and got help from HIAS while he waited for a visa to the United States. With the help of his maternal uncle who lived in the United States, he finally migrated to Mexico in 1947. He came with a tourist visa and had a difficult time changing his status to immigrant almost being deported a few years later. He identified with the Hungarian-German community of Emmuna where he met his wife, also a Holocaust survivor. He returned to Mad in 1990 and a few years later also with his daughters and grandchildren.