

Henry Cann (2) We got back to Leipzig and I straightened out my things. I found out the Speier Shoe company had been Aryanized, had been sold to an Aryan owner. I didn't have a job. I went down there, and they were polite. They said you aren't working here anymore.

So I returned to my home in the Rhineland. We lived in a small town where most people were Catholic, and the Nazis had a harder time than in some parts of Germany. The Catholic people knew they were going to be next. When the Nazis

were through with the Jews they were going to pick on someone else. In fact, in the concentration camp where I was we had a few priests. Some of them opened their mouth too much in their sermon. Others didn't know they had a Jewish grandfather. That was enough for the Nazis to pick them up and send them to the concentration camp.

These people were worse off than we were, because we knew why we were there. We were Jewish and we knew what was going on. But these people didn't have any connection with Judaism or a background of Jewish persecution. So they were really lost because they couldn't figure out how they got there. Why? We, at least, knew what the story was.



Aunt Rosa and her mother

I came back to my home town. They had not arrested my father. My mother ELSA died in 1931. An aunt of mine ROSA was living with my father. Everybody knew the local Nazis; there were just a few of them. And the Nazis weren't sure if this thing was going to last. So they would go into the neighbor town and do whatever damage they wanted to do. And the Nazis from the neighboring town came to my father and said look, we're sorry; we have to destroy something because we got the orders.

So they messed up the store. We had a shoe store. They turned over the counters, and this and that. And that was the extent of

it. They had to show how people demonstrated. They wanted to have a spontaneous uprising of the German people against the Jews. It was organized. No question about it.

I came home to my home town. One of my best friends, who I went to school with, from the first grade on, was afraid to talk to me. He became a Nazi.

And that was it. He didn't even have the personal gumption to come over and say hello. (He lived on an estate that belonged to the people who made 47-11, the perfume. His father was the head gardener there, for the estate.

When I came with the American army, in 1945, from the bulge, just when the war was over, I went to visit his parents. This fellow had died just three weeks earlier coming toward the Americans, in the Aachen, a place that is just at the borderline between Germany and Holland. When I came to visit his parents in 1945, they had just heard that he had died.

Others, who I went to school with who I wasn't as friendly with, visited me when I returned from the concentration camp. They were big shots in the Nazi party at the time. I don't blame them for that. They had no choice. Nazi was the thing to be. They wanted to show they were on the right side. These fellows who I expected the least from, came over and said: Were sorry things turned out this way. There is no choice for you. No chance for you. If you are smart, try to get out of the country.



In mid-December 1938, I went home. I got my passport. I took my copy of the number I had from the American consulate, because I didn't want to go to Shanghai; I hoped to go to America. I went to the American consulate in Stuttgart: It opens around 8 in the morning. I was right in front of the line. By 8:05 I was back on the street again. What happens is that the Germans who worked in the consulate and the Americans who worked in the consulate there had cooperated. They had given the visas away to people who asked for it with an extra gratuity. Like put an extra \$1000 in a passport. So somebody got my number 5000. And the guy said: You are not in line at all. Your number is 50,000. That was it.

So I went to the Jewish organization in Stuttgart. I had to leave the country and go to Genoa Italy by May 1939, on the way to Shanghai. But I didn't want to go to Shanghai. So they had cases like mine. You reported it to the Jewish organization, (the Mann congress, in Stuttgart.)

The American consul would see the man in charge there for cases like mine twice a month. I went there. They knew the situation. I didn't have to explain it.

(That had been already detected, long before my time; and they sent the Americans back to America and threw the Germans out.). But I had to prove that I had a low number and under regular circumstances I would have gotten a visa to leave the country. (The visas to America weren't all used up because this time the Jews had to leave. Under Hitler, no German who was of military age could leave. But everybody applied at the same time. The number they gave me the second time was 50,000)

I got my visa on the 24th of April, 1939. On the 25th they closed down the consulate for the duration. They knew the war was coming.

It happened that in 1933 my sister married an English fellow, and she moved to England. She met him on an excursion, was introduced to him, talked to him. visited, him in England. And married in 1933. My father and aunt had their papers to go to England and live with my sister. My sister knew some people in the Labor Party. She was active, politically. She got the visum.

HILDA HOMER

Especialy since they were older people and they wouldn't be a load on the labor market. They wouldn't work. That part was secured. They went before me, to England. They had to leave because the time had come.

I applied for a visum to go to England. I had applied before but they said "Oh no. You cant go until you can prove to us that you have the American Visum." Who needs Jews. The English didn't need any. The Americans didn't need any.

(That was the. time of the St. Louis, the ship that was loaded with European Jews. They went to Cuba, and Cuba wouldn't let them in. They came to the American coast, near Florida, and America wouldn't let them in. They had to go all the way back to Belgium, where they started. The Jews who were on there, they went back to their countries. England took about 300 of them. Those were the only ones who survived. America could have said yes and could have had them land here. But that didn't happen.)



So I got a permit to stay in England for one month. Only on the basis of having the American Visum. Or they wouldn't have let me in. So I had a chance to say goodbye to my father and sister.

And in the middle of July I went to the states on a small ship, the *Westerland*.

You were only allowed to take out 10 Marks, which was four dollars. And Germany supervised what you took out, your suitcase full of stuff. So you wouldn't smuggle anything out.

I landed in New York. I had a cousin in New York who came a year before. And he found another cousin who lived in America (New York), a Mr. Ulmer who had a cigar factory here. He had given so many visas already; he could only give me a partial visa. How many visas you gave was based on your financial situation. Or at least how much money you want to admit you have.



So I found out another family. They lived in Eugene Oregon. They were third, fourth cousins of the family, but they were wealthy enough. They helped me with my visum. That's why I got my visa. They guaranteed my security. If you came here you had to be financially independent, so you didn't become a ward of the state and they didn't have to pay you something.

One of the sponsors, the person who gave me the additional guarantee, met me at the boat. I promised him in a letter: I want nothing from you. He picked me up from the boat. I knew a little English. He said you want to send a telegram to your father in England that you arrived, don't you?

I did. I wanted to.

He said that is 81 cents. He was trying to be helpful, but I didn't want anything from him. Maybe I was just trying to prove a point because I wrote I didn't want anything from him. I didn't need anything from him.

On the boat I met a family from Seattle. Not Jewish. We were talking to each other. This man says: Oh, if you ever come to Seattle, well find a place for you. Just don't worry about it. That was at the back of my mind.

I came to New York. New York was the end of the line. You didn't have a ticket-to go any farther. All I had was ten marks. Fortunately my cousin took me in. He was a young fellow too. I lived with him in Brooklyn for a while. This cousin, Mrs.



Kaufman, the people from Oregon who gave me the visum, They came from Germany too. Twice a year they took a buying trip to New York. She came to New York a month later. She gave me about 3,4,5,6 addresses. These are people I buy from. Go there. See if you can get a job.

I went up there. One guy gave me a job. I think it was \$9 a week. That was enough to live on in 1939, to eat and drink. I got a room with a Jewish family on 110th street in Manhattan. They also didn't have anything. I paid \$3 a week for the room. I lived with this George (my cousin) until I had the job. The fellow gave me a job as a shipping clerk, packing coats into boxes in the summer without air conditioning. A shipping clerk. It was stinking hot at the time. They called you at twelve O'clock because they first got ready. So they would only have to pay you from 12 to 5. They called you at 5 o'clock, so they paid you from 5 to 7. It wasn't a thing like they called you at 8 O'clock and you went home at four. They took advantage of you. I was happy. Because all I wanted to do was come to America and make a living. I didn't know there was a depression on. Because if you knew there was a depression you wouldn't get a job.

(The boat people come here. They all get a job. They don't know there is a recession. It's still the land of opportunity. You see this gal standing here on the weekends on the light on weekends selling flowers for a dollar. She doesn't know there's a recession. It is only the Americans who know. So they don't work.)

This guy who gave me the job told me: My father came to your father fifty years ago from Russia. He came to your town. (It might not have been my town.)

He was dirty. He didn't have any money to go on the railroads. He walked and got rides. And he was dirty, and he was Jewish. So your father said come on to my house, wash up, clean yourself, have a meal. Down the street is another Jewish family. He tried to pater him. (get rid of him.) Now, you are the son of that guy who gave my father a meal. And I gave you a job. I just want you to know these things.

(And he was right. Exactly right. That's what happened. The German Jews thought they weren't Jewish any more. They were far above that. They were first, Germans and then had the Jewish religion. Until Hitler showed us that there is no such thing. You're a Jew. You're a Jew. You're a Jew.

And you're all together in the same boat. And the guy gave it to me pretty smart, pretty cleverly. And he's right. You can't argue with that. As a matter of fact, I think Hitler made better Jews out of the German Jews and out of me than anyone could have done.)

I worked there for a while. Many times I went into the cafeteria and didn't eat that piece of watermelon for ten cents, in order to save the dime. It was depression time. You could have gone to the Jewish organizations and asked for it. But I didn't do that. I was young and could help myself. I didn't need any help. Others needed the help. But that was a different story. I did this for half

a season. And that fellow took Rachmoonas on me. (pity). He said I'll take you upstairs to Mr. so and so and he'll give you a job. Because they are packing evening gowns. So I went there.

I didn't like the idea of this thing. So I wrote a letter to the people in Seattle. I said, Look, I don't like New York. I would like to come to Seattle. If I get there, can you do something for me?

They wrote back: We certainly do, we certainly do. We will turn you over to the Jewish Agency and see what they will do for you. I did go to the HAIS, the Jewish aid society. I said I need the money to go to Seattle. I'll give it back to you when I go to work, when I can afford it.

They said who is your sponsor?

I says, I don't want to give you the name of my sponsor because I promised this man that I wouldn't take anything of him. He has nothing to do with this.

They said, well never contact him. We just need him to fill out the space on the application.

I gave him the name. The next thing I hear was a call from this guy Mr. Ulmer, who was considered a big shot. He lived in Westport Connecticut. People knew him. He had a factory. He was a rich man. "How can you dare go to an organization, asking for money, without asking me first?" He was very enraged because I didn't come to him. Not that he was going to give me the money. He was disturbed because people would think he has a Jewish cousin and he wasn't going to help him.

In the meantime I quit the job in New York. I had friends in White Plains New York. They got me a job in a country club as a bus boy. It was a much better life. We worked for a half a season. Then the whole company went, for the winter, to Florida. We worked in Coral Gables Florida in a very fancy hotel.

HENRY BUS BOY

When I returned there was a letter from the Sunnydale Country club in Ardsley New York. I was to report to the draft board. When I came to the country I registered for the draft in that small town near White Plains. The town had a quota of two people. I was number one. I don't know who the other guy was.

I went there, and had to go to a Dr. Fehrtig. (A doctor who makes you ready.) In three weeks I was in the army. I reported to Fort Dix.

In Germany I also registered for the draft. As a Jew you had to register period, on account of your age. I didn't know I was color blind. They showed you this book. Green dots with a background of red dots. Over there they said "You're just faking."



The guy said you do 50 knee bends. There were about 16 people over there. And I figured, what the hell, nobody's watching me. And I stopped.

That guy jumped into me. He said "Hey, you haven't done as many knee bends as you were supposed to do."

I had to register in Germany. They sent me a slip: You got into the ersatz reserve. That means the reserve of the reserve. They used the few Jews they had to dig trenches in front of the infantry. They were expendable.