Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in South Florida

From Nazi Europe and Back

Holocaust Survivor Herbert Karliner's Memoir

as told to Bobbi Kaufman

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Republished by
The Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies and
The George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies

The George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies
College of Arts & Sciences
University of Miami

University of Miami
The Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

The information in this book is presented in good faith. The words in this book are the words of Herbert Karliner as he recalled his personal experience in the Holocaust. This is his story and his truth.

On the cover: The Karliner family boarding the MS St. Louis bound for Cuba. May 1939.

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FOREWARD

"For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.…

"... I have tried to keep memory alive…I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget we are guilty, we are accomplices."

- Elie Wiesel

As time goes on, the number of Holocaust survivors alive today is rapidly dwindling. With their passing, the incomprehensible cataclysm known as The Holocaust, or Shoah, is fast morphing from a 'lived memory' into a 'historical memory'; from a personal experience of 'those who were there' into impersonal commemorative monuments and museums.

All too soon, there will be no one left to offer first hand testimony of what it was like to actually be there when all hell broke loose; all too soon, even those who knew and heard directly from the victims of the Nazis and their collaborators, will be gone.

It is, therefore, a matter of great urgency that we gather and preserve for future generations as much primary documentation and testimony as possible about the lives and experiences of those heroes who survived the Holocaust, managed to build new lives, and were willing to tell their stories.

Memoirs serve as a very important means of preserving these testimonies. Several years ago, Holocaust survivors began approaching Bobbi Kaufman, asking for help writing their memoirs, describing their lives before, during, and since the Holocaust. She began working with the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach (HMMB), writing the memoirs of Holocaust survivors who were docents and contributors to the memorial. This collaboration was instrumental in her developing a series of in-depth, book-length memoirs. Six books were completed and uploaded onto the HMMB website and the HMMB created lesson plans for each book to be used in teaching about the Holocaust.

Now, in collaboration with the HMMB, the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, and the George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies of the University of Miami, the series has been named Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in Florida. The existing books were graphically redesigned and several new books have been added to the collection, with the objective of continuing to expand the series. The complete series will be freely available to the public in digital form on the HMMB and Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program websites.

Our hope is that this series will make a significant contribution to the growing literature of Holocaust survivors' memoirs and serve as a tribute to their ability to make new lives for themselves while never forgetting.

Dr. Haim Shaked
Director, The Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program
University of Miami

DEDICATION

To my father, Josef Karliner,
my mother Martha Weissler Karliner
and my sisters, Ilse and Ruth Karliner
I will never forget.

Denied entry to Cuba, the United States, and Canada, 909
passengers on the MS St. Louis were forced to return to Europe.
Two-hundred-fifty-four of them were murdered by the Nazis.
My parents and sisters were four of them.
They died in Auschwitz.

— *Herbert Karliner*

LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

I was born in Peiskretscham, Germany, on September 3, 1926. My older sister, Ilse, was born in 1923, my older brother, Walter, was born in 1924, and my younger sister, Ruth, was born in 1927. My parents, Josef and Martha Weissler Karliner, owned a general store and a horse business.

I was born in our family home on Tosterstrasser Street, a main street in our small town in eastern Germany. During the war the name of the street was changed to Adolph Hitler Street. It was a cobblestoned street lined on both sides with stores. Ours was not entirely a Jewish neighborhood. In our town there were about five thousand Jews and one synagogue.There was a railroad station, a swimming pool, and a movie theater where I saw cowboy movies and Shirley Temple movies. There were no cars, only horses with wagons. There were playgrounds with fields where all the children played soccer. In the wintertime we ice skated on a natural pond and rode our sleds in all the snow.

I loved to read. I read books by Karl May, a German author who wrote so beautifully about the American West and about elephants and tigers in India. I loved reading stories about Old Shatterhand and seeing movies with Tom Mix. I was always reading books about America, about cowboys and Indians. I always had the feeling that I wanted to go to the United States.

My brother had a beautiful Bar Mitzvah. All the relatives came, all dressed up. He got so many presents: a bicycle, watches, money. He was always proud of his bicycle. My brother kept five or six pigeons as a hobby. He would take them on his bicycle, go four or five miles away, and release them to see if they would come back home. They always did. He would use them as carrier pigeons to send messages, but just for fun.

My older sister went to a finishing school to learn to be a lady: how to cook, how to sew. Both my sisters took piano lessons. My sisters were like me — very outgoing; my brother was not.

My family owned three buildings next to each other. One was our store and our house, the one next to it was a passageway with a door opening to the street, and the third was a store we rented out. Our store had a glass window that faced the main street. The sign on the window said *Josef Karliner's.* My mother worked with my father in the store. The store sold flour, pots and pans, and grain. We had canned goods, tea, coffee, and poppy seeds we ground ourselves. We had herring in barrels and pickles in barrels. There was no refrigerator, but we would have big chunks of ice delivered and put in the cellar to keep the milk, eggs, and vegetables cold. We imported Jaffa oranges from Israel. When those boxes came we all ran and unwrapped the paper from those oranges because the paper was so soft.

My father's other business was buying and selling horses. We had a barn where he kept three or four horses, sometimes more. One gray horse was my special pet; my father never sold him.

Our store faced the street and our family home was across a big courtyard behind our store. On one side of the courtyard were stalls for the horses. On the other side was our living room, kitchen, and bedrooms. In our house we had running water with a gas water heater, and a bathroom with a bathtub. We took a bath once a week, on Friday before *Shabbas*. Our toilet was in an outhouse. The kitchen had a big wood-fired oven, a sink, and a stove. The different rooms were heated by stoves that were covered with thick, colorful, beautifully decorative tiles. We had a radio so my mother and I would listen to classical music together. Our furniture was dark and heavy. We had a big dining table and chairs and a second dining room just for the children where my brother, sisters, and I had our own small table and chairs. My mother had help in the house, a woman who took care of the cooking and cleaning. My parents would go on vacation, once a year, to a luxurious spa resort in Czechoslovakia, but we children never went. My brother went to a camp near the North Sea with a group of teenagers. I wanted to go too, but I was too young.

Most of the time our parents were working and we were at school, but *Shabbas* was a special time for the family to be together. My mother would make the *challah* and it was

my job to take the big plate to the bakery where they baked it for us. We kids had to wash the floor before *Shabbas.* My mother had two candlesticks she lit on Friday night. We were kosher, but not Orthodox. My father did not wear *tifillin* or go to daily *minyan,* but he did go to synagogue every Friday and Saturday and I would go with him. I would sometimes serve as the *shamash* giving out the *aliyahs*. I could read Hebrew but I didn't know what I was saying. We ate our main meal together at lunch after *shul.* We had herring, borsht, red cabbage, and meat, too.

My father was one of thirteen children. His family lived in Germany. My mother was one of nine children. Her family lived in Nicoly, Poland, a town just across the border from Germany, very close to Auschwitz. My mother was to have gotten married before she met my father, but at the wedding, before the ceremony, the groom, a young man, had a heart attack and passed away. So my aunt made a *shitach*, a match, for my mother to get together with my father. This I learned many years later.

One time, my father's brother, Ernst Karliner, who lived near Berlin, came to visit us. He had an American car and a chauffeur. He promised me a ride in the car, but when my father said I could not go, I was devastated, I had never ridden in a car before. My father was very strict. Strict meant if you didn't listen, you would get it! He had a piece of wood with some leather strips he would use to hit us. My brother and sisters got it very seldom, it was mostly me!

Jews and Christians went to school together. In our public elementary school if we didn't do our work right we were hit on our fingers with a bamboo stick. After elementary school ended at around one or two o'clock in the afternoon, I would go home, eat something, and then go to Hebrew school for an hour or two. I remember we had a cantor at Hebrew school who gave us our lessons. I was a wise guy. I was not a *chochum*, a Torah scholar, so before a test I would bring him a couple of cigars. Bribes. I always got away with it, I passed.

I didn't finish elementary school because when the Nazis came in they threw the Jewish children out. I never went back to school.

I played outside every day. We played marbles, we played with knives. We held the knives on our shoulders near our head and flipped them to the ground. We played with a big round ring and a stick. We had a *dreidle*, a top. I had an old bicycle my father bought for me. I played soccer with all the neighborhood boys, but as the anti-Semitism grew I would kick the ball and the Christian boys would kick me. One time at the movies they wouldn't let us in because we were Jews. We were not asked for identification, they just recognized us as Jews. My mother said, "We will take the train to the next town and go to the movies there." So we went. We had to be very sure there was no one there who knew us.

KRISTALLNACHT AND THE THREAT OF WAR

We didn't hear any news about a war coming, but we knew something bad was happening. My father's brother, Paul, lived in a nearby town where he had a furniture store. In 1937 he was arrested and sent to Dachau. A few months after his arrest, I went to visit his wife, my aunt Hannah. While I was there, an SS officer came to her door, handed her a box, and said, "Here is your husband." That was when we began to understand what was going on. My aunt did not survive the war.

At around six o'clock in the morning of November 10, 1938, my father walked from our house, across the big courtyard, and into our store to open up as usual. All of a sudden I heard him screaming, "Somebody broke into the store!" We all ran downstairs. In our store, and in all the stores, all the glass was broken. Everything was looted, everything was upside down. Then somebody came running to us saying the synagogue was burning. My father and I ran to the synagogue and sure enough there was a fire. They had made a bonfire with all the prayer books and the Torah. My father wanted to save the Torah, but the Brown Shirts kicked him around so he was not able to save it.

Then, somebody else came to us and said the Gestapo was picking up all the men. We didn't know what to do, so we ran back home and waited. In the morning, the Gestapo came to the house and picked up my father. As far as I remember, my father took only a jacket with him.

The Gestapo took all the men away at that time. One man, a lawyer in our town, was proud of his German Iron Cross. When they came to pick him up he said, "You cannot do this. I have an Iron Cross. I fought with you." They took him anyway.

Cleaning up the store was rough going. First of all, we had to close-up the window. A man who used to help us with the horse business came to help us get some wood and nail it up. There were a few items left, but the store could not stay open for business. My mother tried to find information about my father, but it was difficult because the Gestapo shut off our telephone. So she sent me to take the first train I could get to the next town to see what was going on. There, I went to my aunt who told me, "They are all in prison here." So we went to the prison and I was able to speak to my father. There were thousands of people in the prison. Men from my town gave me messages to bring to their families. I said, "I'll go home and tell them to come back here themselves." I took the next train to my town and went to each family and told them where to go to see the men in prison. Because there were no more trains that day they went first thing the next morning. Unfortunately, by then the prisoners were all gone. They were taken to Buchenwald.

My father was in Buchenwald and the only way to get him out was to get him a permit to leave Germany. After a while, my mother was able to obtain a permit for him to go to Shanghai. (Our family on my father's side had gone to

Shanghai before the war.) After three or four weeks in prison, my father was released. He did not talk about it, not at the time; he was very depressed. My mother was very strong.

The local farmers used to buy things in our store, but they didn't have any money so my father would mark down in a book what they owed and the farmers would pay us back with butter, eggs, wheat, and grain. After Kristallnacht the Germans took the book and covered it with ink so we could not see how much was owed. My father would send me out, on the old bicycle he bought for me, to go from one village to another to see if the farmers would give us some money or food. Sometimes I didn't get anything. Even though my brother was older, my father always sent me to collect the money. I was twelve years old.

Soon, the Gestapo came and told us we had to sell the house and the business. A neighborhood boy came running and said, "I'm going to buy your store!" We had to sell it for pennies. People who had been our good friends changed completely.

We were trying to leave Europe. We had our quota number to go to the United States, but it was such that we would have had to wait years and years. After Kristallnacht, leaving became an emergency. Since the visa to go to Shanghai was for my father alone, my family needed to seek other means to emigrate.

Somehow, we got permits to go to Cuba. The thought of leaving was very hard for my parents. It was very difficult for them to take four children out of Germany and go to a different country where they didn't speak the language, to start a completely new life — it was very, very hard. I, on the other hand, remember being glad to be getting out of there.

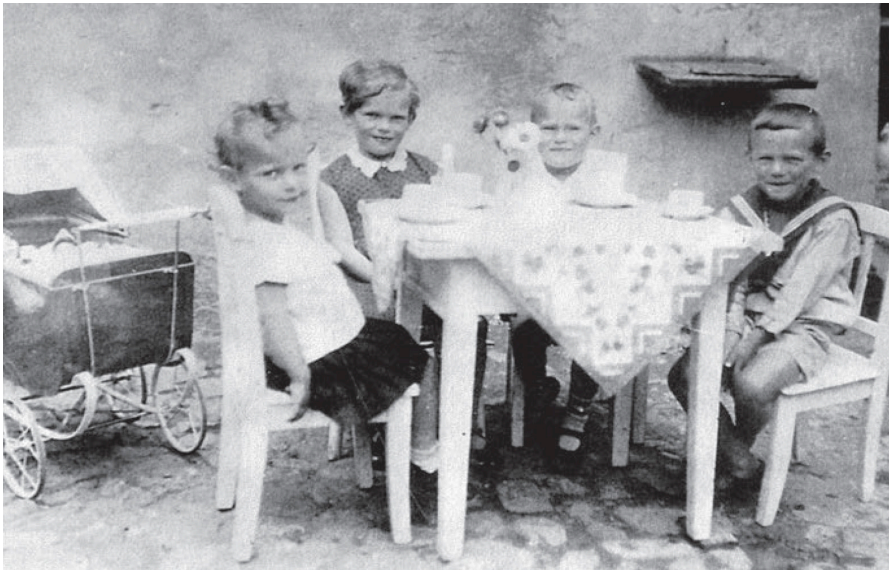
From the left: Walter, Ilse, Ruth, me, Cousin Gerda, Cousin Horst standing.

Ruth and I.

The Hebrew School class.
Front row from the left: Walter, Ruth, Rabbi Shifton, a classmate, me.
Back row second from left: Ilse.

My mother with her brother Walter Weissler.

My paternal grandparents.



Ruth, Ilse, me, and Walter in the courtyard of our home.

Ruth, me, Walter, Ilse in our hometown.

My family's store and home in Peirkretscham, Germany.
The window was broken on Kristallnacht.

Standesamt [illegible]
Register Nr. 125

Gültig nur zum Zwecke der Taufe

Bescheinigung über Eintragung eines Geburtsfalles

Vor- und Zuname: Herbert Karliner

Geburtstag, Ort und Wohnung: 3. September 1926, —
Peiskretscham, Altmarkt 11

Vor- und Zuname, sowie Stand und Religion des Vaters: Josef
Karliner, Kaufmann, mosaisch —

Vor- und Zuname, sowie Religion der Mutter: Martha Karliner
geborene Weissler, mosaisch —

Peiskretscham, den 8 ten September 1926.

(Siegel) STANDESAMT PEISKRETSCHAM

Der Standesbeamte.
In Vertretung: Falkenberg

VIII. 6.

Bemerkung: Das Reichsgesetz über die Beurkundung des Personenstandes und die Eheschließung vom 11. Februar 1875 bestimmt im § 2: „Die kirchlichen Verpflichtungen in Beziehung auf Taufe und Trauung werden durch dieses Gesetz nicht berührt."

My original birth certificate.

THE ST. LOUIS

The MS St. Louis was a German luxury liner of the Hamburg-Amerika Line that carried more than 930 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany to Cuba. When the ship set sail from Hamburg on May 13, 1939, all of its refugee passengers had legitimate landing permits for Cuba. However, during the two-week period the ship was en route to Havana, the landing certificates granted by the Cuban director general of immigration in lieu of regular visas, were invalidated by the pro-fascist Cuban government. When the St. Louis reached Havana on May 27, all but 28 of the Jewish refugees were denied entry. The American Joint Distribution Committee tried to negotiate with local officials, but Cuban president Federico Bru insisted that the ship leave Havana Harbor. The refugees were likewise denied entry into the United States and Canada. On June 6, the ship was forced to return to Europe. Captain Gustav Schroeder refused to take the refugees back to Germany. While the ship was en route, England, Belgium, France, and Holland agreed to take in the refugees. Only those who were accepted into England would find relative safety. The others were soon subjected to Nazi rule after the German invasion of Western Europe in the spring of 1940.

We booked passage on the MS St. Louis. I think we found out by word of mouth how to get visas, passage, etc. All of our belongings had to be packed in containers and sent ahead to the ship. My father built several big, tall, wood containers to take all our things on the ship. He put locks on them and used straps to hold them together. There were packers for hire to help us prepare to leave. The Gestapo watched the packers carefully as everything was placed in the containers. We took whatever we could: our radio, clothes, dishes, linens, a bicycle. We took my sisters' trousseaus. They had all the blankets and dishes for when they would get married. I put in my books, my Karl Mays. We also put in a little electric refrigerator we had bought. The furniture was too heavy to take. We were not allowed to take money, only things. We could take anything we wanted, but we had to pay one hundred percent tax on each item. We could afford the tax, so we took a lot of things.

I remember we bought a lot of cigarette lighters which were very popular. At the time, Leica and Kontak cameras were very popular, very expensive. My father bought three cameras: two Leicas and one Kontak, and hid them in mattresses to go on the ship in the containers. He was planning to sell the cameras and cigarette lighters to make some money when we got to Cuba. They would all be stolen in France.

My aunt, Mary Handler, and her husband, were also preparing to travel on the St. Louis to Cuba where their son already lived. I was at her house when her belongings

were being packed to take on the ship. My aunt whispered to me, "You see that man, the Gestapo? He's watching the packer put my things in the containers. When he gives you the sign, you take these jars of jam and give them to the packer so he can put them in the container." He gave me the sign and I went with the jam and gave it to the packer. All of a sudden the Gestapo says, "Let me see that." So he takes the jam and he looks at it through the light. And you know the *kup* (clever head) I had? I said, "How silly of my aunt. Why is she taking this to America? They have much better jam there." The Gestapo thought the jam was worthless and allowed it to be packed. They got away with it. And what was in there? Diamonds!

Carrying only our suitcases, we traveled by train from our town on the Polish border to Hamburg, from one end of Germany to the other. We stayed the first night in Breslau where we had relatives. In Breslau we picked up my uncle, my mother's brother, Walter Weissler, a dentist, who was also going on the St. Louis, and we all traveled on together.

My father's brother, Fritz Karliner, and his wife Mary, came with us to Hamburg, but they did not go with us on the St. Louis. When we arrived in Hamburg my uncle took us children on a three or four hour long sightseeing cruise on the Hamburg Braman. It was fun because it was my first time on a ship. We stayed for a day or two in a hotel in Hamburg before boarding the St. Louis. That was fun because I had never been in an elevator before. I don't know

how they did it because the war had already started, but Fritz and Mary Karliner somehow escaped from Germany. They went to Portugal and from Portugal to the States. After the war, Uncle Fritz helped me and my brother get to the United States.

We boarded the St. Louis, on May 13, 1939. I could see my parents were very depressed leaving all their life behind. They did not think they would ever return to Germany. For the voyage we had to pay for round-trip tickets. Nobody knew why. We had to pay it, so we paid it. We may have figured they were going to pay us back when we got to Cuba. Afterwards, we understood: it was already arranged that we were going to go back to Europe. Otherwise, why would they ask us to pay for a round-trip ticket?

Boarding the ship was very well organized. There was a band playing as we got on. My sisters were in a cabin with four girls. My brother and I were in a very small, crowded cabin. Most of the people getting on the ship were well-to-do. I would say ninety-nine percent were Jewish. We were people fleeing the Nazis, not people going on vacation. We were all refugees. There was a passenger named Ashkenazi, whose wife was not Jewish, who caused trouble for us later on.

Captain Gustav Schroeder was very stern, but he treated the passengers very well. We were always treated very respectfully. Absolutely! When we had Jewish religious

services on the ship, Captain Schroeder would have the picture of Hitler removed from the room where we prayed. I saw the captain twice. I liked to play around in the lifeboats, to jump in and hide, until the captain caught me and told me never to come back there. I was very fascinated by the telegram room; I would go in there and talk to a German officer, a young man. The second time I saw the captain was when he found me in the telegram room and said, "You are not allowed to come in here."

Most of the crew were good to us, but not all of them. One of the crew was Gestapo, a courier for the German secret police. In Cuba he got off the ship and had a conversation with the Gestapo in Cuba. The captain knew about it and told him, "You better straighten out, otherwise I'll put you in jail."

The food on the ship was excellent and the entertainment was very good, too. There was dancing, movies, and concerts. Sometimes the refugees entertained themselves. Some people were comedians, some were singers or musicians. Some had their instruments with them. We had ping pong and we had boxing. There was horse racing with wooden horses on tracks. We would throw the dice to determine how far the horses would go forward. Above the hold, where they stored all the containers and suitcases, they put a very strong lining to cover the whole thing and then filled it with water. That was the swimming pool. Sure, I went in!

I did get seasick. Most of us got seasick at least one time — especially in the English Channel. After that it was nice. We had good weather the whole time. I have a picture of my mother with a blanket over her so it must have been cool, but I always had shorts on. For me it was a great trip, but my father was so depressed. On the ship was the first time he talked to me about what happened in Buchenwald.

I was up at five o'clock in the morning the day we arrived in Havana. I was outside with my suitcase — all ready to get off the ship. We all lined up. We sailed in, and it was gorgeous: the Copacabana, the palm trees, the beautiful white buildings, a big wide street. I was so amazed.

The ship went to the dock. There were a few passengers who had visas, official visas, and they were allowed to get off the ship. Nobody else got off the ship. Strangely, today some people say we never docked the ship. I say, "Yes, we did dock the ship at the beginning." I was sure and I'm still sure. Then the police came and said we had to wait. We said, "Why do we have to wait?" They said, "We have to check your papers." I don't know how long we were at the dock, but it was not very long because after a while we went from the dock out into the harbor, maybe five minutes from the dock, where we anchored.

While we were in the harbor, all the relatives already living in Cuba came in boats and talked to us. Their boats surrounded our ship. Then, young kids came swimming near the ship. We threw money to them. They caught the

pennies and threw oranges and pineapples to us. The fruit was so delicious.

There was a man on the ship who was a lawyer from Breslau, Germany, my uncle's hometown. He was with his wife and his son and daughter. I don't know if he went crazy — he had been in a concentration camp — but he cut his vein in the bathroom then ran outside and jumped overboard. I saw the blood and I saw him jump overboard. Everyone was screaming like crazy. A German soldier, high up, happened to see it, too. He jumped in and saved him. Then, a small boat came and took the man to the hospital. He survived in Havana but his wife and his children were not allowed to get off the ship. They went to England and after the war they were able to go to Cuba.

When the remaining 907 refugees were refused entry to Cuba, Captain Schröder directed the St. Louis toward the United States where he circled off the coast of Florida waiting and hoping for permission from authorities to enter the United States or Canada. Both nations refused. We came very close to Miami Beach. This is how I saw Miami Beach. I said to my parents, "Someday I'll come back here." I figured the only reason the captain went so close to Miami Beach was to be close enough for people to jump overboard and make it to shore. But the Coast Guard came and chased us away. We headed back to Europe.

The refugees formed a committee on the ship to try to make plans. There were three hundred families that vowed

they were not going back to Germany. There were whole families who were going to jump into the ocean rather than go back. When the captain heard about the plans he came to the committee and promised he would not take us back to Germany. He said he would instead scuttle the ship on the coast of England so they would have to come pick us up and give us refuge.

On the return voyage we started to have less food and less water because they didn't expect us to be going back. I don't remember the food being rationed, but it was not as good and there was not as much to eat. The weather was not as good as it was going. My mother held us all together, she tried to maintain a normal family life. We expected everything to work out safely. Absolutely. Our parents did not talk to us about future plans. My mother was the strong one. She was holding up pretty good, but underneath I knew…

While we were on the way back to Europe, Morris Troper working with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT) obtained an agreement with four countries: Holland, Belgium, England, and France, to accept us — temporarily. On the deck of the St. Louis there was a table where we lined up and were told which country we were to go to. My family was assigned to France. I don't know how the assignments were made; I think it was just random because we didn't know anyone in France. If we had a choice, I think we would have chosen England because we had relatives there.

My uncle, Fritz, was assigned to go to Belgium, but he made some arrangement to go with us to France. My aunt and uncle were assigned to England.

Morris Troper met the ship when it arrived in Antwerp, Belgium. They had to get the passengers off of the St. Louis quickly because the St. Louis was scheduled to go on a cruise to the Caribbean and New York and it was late for that cruise. The first people to get off the St. Louis disembarked in Antwerp and were sent on to Holland and Belgium. Then, a transport ship, a German freighter of the Hapag Line, came to Antwerp and the people assigned to France and England were transferred to that ship. That ship took us to Boulogne, France, where my family got off. When we arrived in Boulogne, porters at the French dock carried all our suitcases and did not charge a penny for doing it. The last group went on to England.

The children's home organization, the Jewish Children's Aid Society, Oeuvre de Secours Aux Enfants (OSE), met our ship at Boulogne and asked all the parents for permission to take the children to a children's home. My parents had a choice — if they didn't give permission for me to go to the children's home I would have stayed with them and I wouldn't be here today.

My brother, younger sister, and I were taken right away to a children's home in Montmorency, north of Paris. In a group of about thirty kids, we traveled by bus from Boulogne to Paris. It took about three or four hours.

My parents were sent to an apartment in a village in Mirabaud in the Vienne Department of France. They could not take all their belongings with them to the apartment, so what they could not take was stored in a barn in Mirabaud. My family planned to reunite in this village if we were ever separated.

Boarding the St. Louis. My father is second from the left. My sister Ilse is behind him. I am behind Ilse's right shoulder. My mother is behind the man holding the Torah.

With my father on the St. Louis.

My mother and Ilse on the St. Louis.

Walter on the St. Louis.

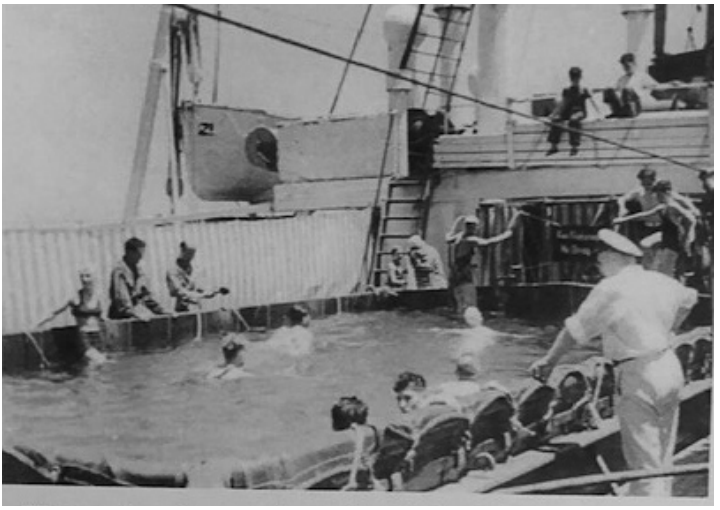
Ruth on the St. Louise.

Ilsa on the St. Louise.

On the St. Louis – Bottom left: Uncle Walter. Far right standing: my brother Walter. I am standing behind the woman sitting second from the left of Uncle Walter.

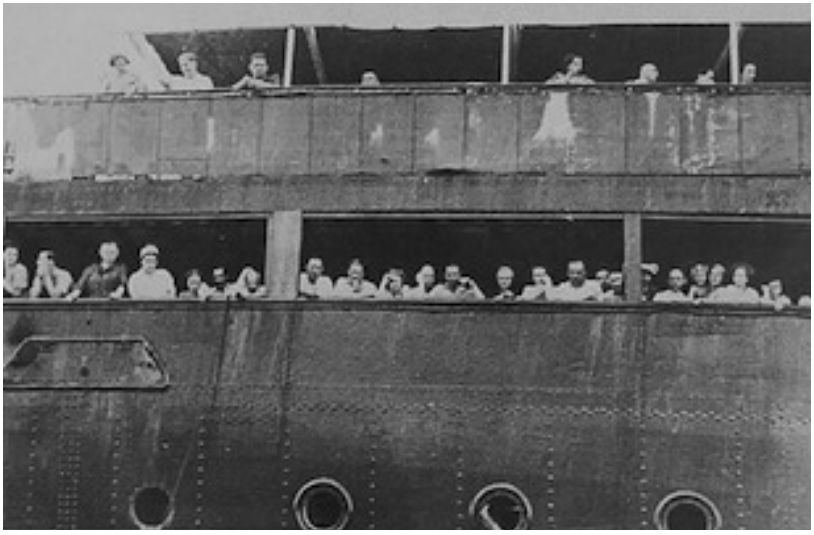
On the St. Louis — Third from the left: Uncle Walter. Fifth from left: Mrs. Goodman from my hometown. My father is seventh from the left standing.

On the St. Louis – Front row from the left:
Me, Harry Goodman, Henry Schansky,
Standing: Moses (he moved to Poughkeepsie),
a boy who moved to Israel, Eric Schiptz, Walter, Hans Fisher.



The swimming pool on the deck of the St. Louis.

Playing with wooden horses on the deck of the St. Louis.



Passengers on the St. Louis.

HAMBURG-AMERIKA LINIE

(Compañía Hamburguesa Americana)

No. 2033

Touristenklasse

Clase Turista

Tourist Class

Motorschiff / motonave / motor vessel } St. Louis

am / el salir / sailing } 13. Mai 1939

von / de / from } Hamburg

nach / a / to } Havana

Name des Reisenden: / nombre del pasajero: / passenger's name:

Herr Dr. Walter Weissler

Bezahlter Fahrpreis / Precio pagado — Fare paid

RM 500.—

Steuer — 5.—

Hafen ab. — 3.75

RM 508.75

My uncle, Walter Weissler's ticket for the St. Louis.

Relatives came in small boats to greet us when we entered cuban waters.

On the left my two sisters. The child in white with a hat is Sol Messenger. He became a doctor.

Getting off the St. Louis – From the left:
Children: Ruth, Charles Mandel, Charles's sister
Standing: Ernst Weil.

Getting off the ship in Boulogne, France. Ilse and my mother are just to the left of the center of the picture.

THE WAR YEARS

In 1912, the original OSE was created in Russia by doctors to help needy Jews. In 1923, the organization relocated to Berlin, Germany. Fleeing Nazism in 1933, it relocated to France where it became the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (Society for Rescuing Children), retaining a similar acronym, OSE. In France, the OSE ran children's homes often called "Chateaux," which were actually large mansions. These homes were for Jewish children of various ages, including infants, whose parents were either in concentration camps or in hiding. By May 1939, the OSE children's homes held more than 200 refugee children. Everyone knew the children living in the homes were Jewish. The children were schooled and trained according to their age. To prepare children for possible future dangers, the OSE paid special attention to physical education and survival skills. Herbert was issued an official French identity card with the word JUIF (Jew) written on it in red letters. He would be in three different children's homes. When he arrived in France he lived in the first home in Montmorency for six months while he studied French. In the second home, Chaumont, he was put to work in a bakery..

When the French raided the second home, Herbert was relocated to a third home, Masgelier Children's Home. When that became unsafe he went to work for a farmer using the false identity, Paul Braun from Alsace.

The first children's home I was sent to in 1939 was outside Paris. There were about 100 children in this home. My little sister and my brother were with me; my older sister stayed with our parents. One day in 1940, my parents came to visit us. They thought the home was too rough for girls so they decided to take my little sister back with them. They thought us boys could handle it. My parents sent us packages — shirts and pants and things — until the Germans came in and that was finished.

We were fed at the chateau. The young children had lunch at school but at night we all ate together. There was a big dining room with lots of tables with about ten children at each table. Most of the time the cooks didn't have time to peel the potatoes, so we had to peel our own boiled potatoes. We had a number sewn into our clothes so when we gave our things to be washed, they knew whose were whose. The OSE even took us to the barber in the village to get haircuts. We had religious services and did a lot of singing. We sang Jewish songs, Hebrew songs, and French songs. I became very friendly with a little boy, Charles Mandel, who also lived in the children's home. I had a bicycle to use to go to a farm to buy some food for the home, so I would sometimes take him with me. His mother and sister lived in the children's home, too. His mother was so wonderful, helping us and caring for us. She was not Jewish but her husband was. Their entire family survived. Charles Mandel now lives in Palm Beach, Florida.

I did my Bar Mitzvah at the children's home. There were three children's homes close by, and when we got to be thirteen, fourteen, years old — Bar Mitzvah! We did not get to learn the whole service, we just learned the blessings for the Bar Mitzvah. We were maybe eight boys and each one did his blessing. The rabbi was there, and the mayor of the city, who was Jewish, was also there. My parents were not there; only my brother was at my Bar Mitzvah. Afterward, we got presents: a prayer book, *tefillin*, a *tallis*, and a hammer and a saw. The OSE said to us, "With this we will teach you people in the children's home to be carpenters." I could keep nothing from my Bar Mitzvah because when the Germans occupied France I could not carry anything with me while I was running and hiding.

On May 10, 1940, Germany attacked France and quickly defeated the French army. France and Germany signed an armistice which established a German occupation zone in Northern and Western France, and a "Free Zone" governed by the French Vichy Government in the southern half of France. The Vichy Government actively collaborated with the Nazis.

When the Germans invaded France I was still in the children's home learning French. When they started to bombard Paris, the OSE took all the children and moved us to central France.

They opened up three homes in the Department Creuse. One was the Chateau Chaumont where I was taken. There were about 125 children in this home — little ones, too, four and five year-olds. They sent the younger children to school. The villagers needed help because all the men were either prisoners of war or in the army, so, instead of sending us older children to school, the Jewish organization sent us to work. So we were all grown up — I was thirteen years old! My brother was sent to another home to learn to be a carpenter. There was an opening in the bakery so I went to work in the bakery. I had to do it, so I did it. In the beginning, most of the time my job was cutting wood into small strips to run the stove. In the evening, after the baking was done, I would put the wood into the oven to dry. Then I had to clean the stove. I started at four o'clock in the morning and worked twelve, fourteen hours a day. I worked in the bakery for over two years.

I knew nothing about baking, but little by little I learned just by being there. They taught me how to make French bread. We had a big table where we made the dough. Then we would then cut the dough and scale it — weigh it so each loaf would be the same size. Because we could not get much butter, we did not bake much pastry. I baked the bread for the children's home. On their way home from school the children would stop at the bakery, take a loaf of bread, and carry it up the high hill to the chateau. Half of the bread would be gone when they got home — they ate it on the way! The bread was delicious.

While in Mirabaud, my parents were trying to find a way to go through Spain and Portugal to get on a boat to go to the United States, but they couldn't make it happen. They wouldn't leave without their two sons — a nightmare. I found out about their plans much later. When Germany defeated France, the village where my parents lived became occupied by the Nazis. On orders from the Nazis, the French put all the Jews of every nationality, even the German Jews, into camps because they thought they might be spies. My father was sent to work in a salt mine in France where he got very sick with kidney problems. He was eventually released from the work camp.

At that time I went to my boss at the bakery and said, "I want to see my parents." When he wouldn't let me go. I thought, "I'm going to go anyway." The village where my parents were was very far from the children's home and transportation was very bad. I walked, hitchhiked, and took the bus. I was sleeping in the woods, hiding from the Nazis. I crossed the border into the occupied zone and arrived to visit my parents. While I was there, a man, a non-Jew, from the village came running, saying a German soldier was coming. We grabbed whatever we could and ran into the woods because we were afraid he was looking for us. A few hours later, the people in the village came to tell us all was clear.

I stayed with my parents for two weeks. When it was time to leave, my mother was very worried about me sleeping in the woods. She gave me some money and told me, "First

thing, you go into a village and you go to a hotel." So, like a good Jewish boy, I listened to my mother. I went to a hotel. When they asked for my papers, I said, I didn't have any. I paid the money and they gave me a room. At three o'clock in the morning the Gendarme, the French police, came and put me in jail. They wanted to know where I came from and where I was going. I didn't say anything about my parents; I just said I lived in the Jewish children's home. The police called the OSE and they vouched for me. The police sent me back to the children's home. It was the last time I ever saw my parents.

After my visit to my parents I went back to the children's home and continued to work in the bakery. Then something changed. There was a roundup. The Germans decided they needed ten thousand Jews, so they sent the French police out to pick us up. In August 1942 they conducted a raid on Chaumont children's home and arrested all the children over the age of sixteen, including me. I was held in a camp, in a barracks, for a few days, but I was lucky: because I had my original papers with me, including my official birth certificate from Germany, I was able to prove that it was one week before my sixteenth birthday. So, they let me go. Friends who were over sixteen were gone, they never came back.

When I was released, the organization, the OSE, gave me false papers saying my name was Paul Braun. Until then I only had my original papers from Germany and my official ones from France. When I was released, the OSE sent me

to another children's home which was not too far away, Masgelier Children's Home. This was the third children's home I was in. It was a big home; some of our bedrooms were for ten people, some for twenty people.

Because at that time if you worked on a farm they wouldn't pick you up for forced labor, the false papers the organization gave me said I was an agricultural worker. So now instead of a baker, I was a farmer. I worked at the children's home raising carrots and other vegetables. I would sometimes go by wagon to the village to buy additional food for the children.

Two of my friends and I wanted to run away and go to Switzerland. We wanted to go by ourselves without the help of the organization and without a guide. We were ready to go, when one day while we were playing some sports, one of the boys fell and broke his arm. That ended our plan to go to Switzerland.

In 1943 we were expecting a roundup by the French police; we knew they were going to come to get us. Every night we stood guard outside the children's home, watching in two hour shifts. It was a long way from the street to the children's home, so we had time to run to the home to alert everybody if we saw the police coming. We slept at night all dressed up in our clothes and hats and jackets. All the children were ready to go at any time. We each had a blanket, and in the blanket we had some honey cake and some sugar.

When the police did come, we just had time to run away. One boy, who was my age, had asthma. I remember his breathing was so loud that he had to put something over his mouth so he would be quiet. We had to run because the police were not far from us and when he couldn't run anymore we had to carry him. After the war I learned that he survived in Switzerland.

After that, we didn't go back to the children's home again. We were just looking for places to hide. We would pick up mushrooms and dry them so we would have something to eat or I would go into a field and steal some carrots, apples, or fruit. I've been hungry, but not really hungry. I was very, very lucky

I was with two other boys, one named Julien Bluchstein, when the organization, the OSE, sent us on a train toward Spain. Young people working for the state were given uniforms, so I was given a uniform. We were on the train when the Gendarme, the French police, began checking our papers. I was blond, blue-eyed, and I had my false papers given to me by the organization. They asked me for my papers and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "We are going to the farm. We were told to go to this farm to work there because there are no men working there." So they let us go. There were a whole bunch of boys on the train, but in each compartment there were just a few Jews. All of a sudden, I saw the Germans walking out with two boys who looked very Jewish. I was trying to find out what happened to those boys. Other boys told me the Germans were very suspicious so they made them take their pants off. They were

circumcised. They were arrested and killed.

We got off the train at the Spanish border where we met our guide who was going to take us across the border. The plan was to cross the Pyrenees Mountains and walk across the border. But the guide said, "I can take you, but I wouldn't advise it because once you cross the border the Spanish police are going to stop you and they are going to send you back. In the past they would send you back to France, leave you at the border, and you would run away wherever you wanted to go, now they take you to the Gestapo." We didn't want to take a chance. We didn't speak the language and we didn't know what was waiting for us there. We had to make our own decision. We said, "No, we are not going." When we couldn't get into Spain we went from Lyon to Annemasse trying to get to Switzerland ourselves, without the help of the organization. We crossed the border into Switzerland and were caught by the Swiss who sent us back to France.

Now there were no more children's homes because the Gestapo was looking for the children's homes, too. We were on our own when some Jewish French scouts, Zionists, from Alsace-Lorraine, took us in. They had already taken in many French refugees. There wasn't enough food for us, and we had to sleep in a loft with the rats, so a group of us Jewish boys began living in a little shack in the woods. In the daytime we cut wood to make a living. It was wintertime and it was freezing so we would burn some of the wood to have heat in the shack.

While we were living in the woods I found a farmer in the nearby village and asked him if he needed some help. I was fluent in French at that time. He said, "Yeah, I need help." So, I went to work for him. His name was Fillion. Two boys went with me. One, a very good friend, is still alive in Paris. The other also survived and went to college in France. There were other boys working with us, but I don't know what happened to them because we all had false names at the time. I did not know anyone's real name.

While I was working on the farm I was using my false papers from the Zionist organization listing my name as Paul Braun. I still had my French papers with my real name and the word Jew stamped on them. The French papers were a booklet that opened up like an accordion. To travel from one city to another in France you had to get permission to travel, so the booklet had to have many pages. It was pretty thick. When I went into hiding I wanted to keep it, so I hid it in the epaulet of my jacket.

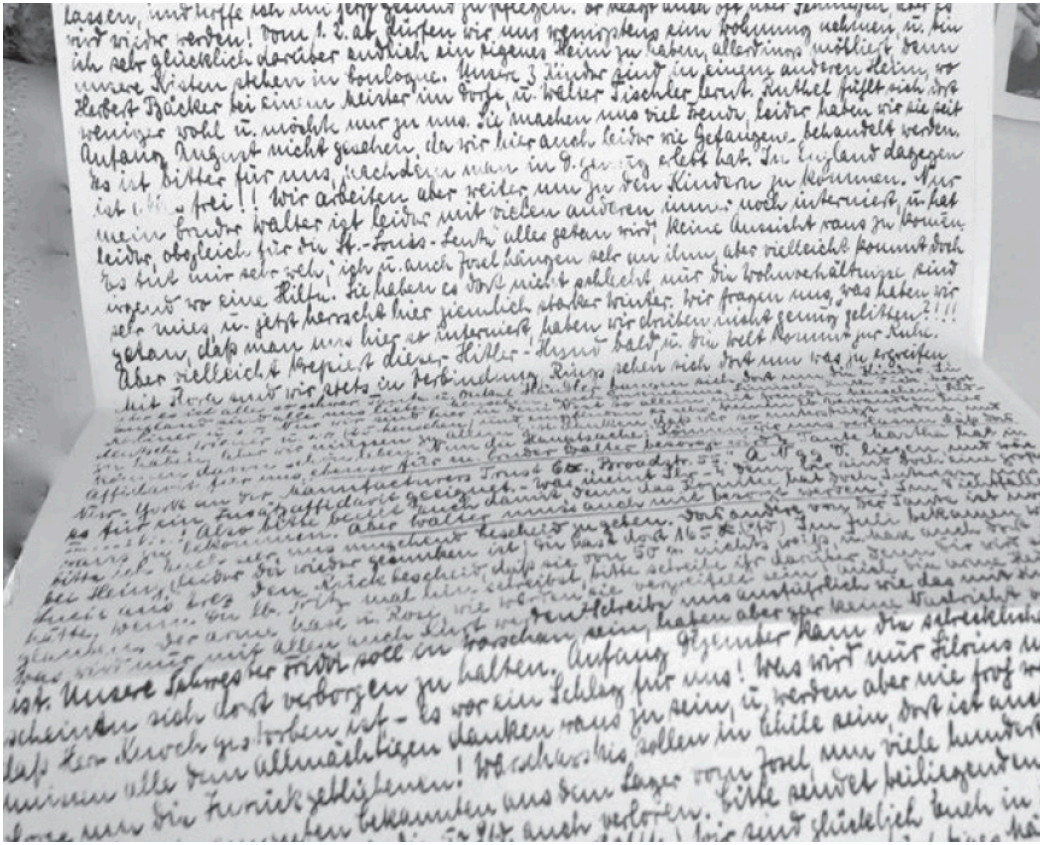
The farmer never knew I was Jewish. I went to church with him and whatever he did, I did. Still, he knew something was not right because I got letters once in a while, in German, from my brother and from my uncle, and a couple of times the letters were open. Fillion couldn't read them, but he was suspicious of something. Thank goodness I told him I was born in Alsace-Lorraine where we spoke both German and French, so I got away with it. The farmer thought I was crazy because every Friday I took the pigs' feed bucket, filled it up with water and took a bath — like I did at home every Friday before Shabbas.

We worked very hard on the farm. The grape vines were on a hill so we had to care for them by hand because we couldn't go up the hill with a plow. In the springtime the carrots and cauliflower grew so fast we sent them to the stores early to get more money. We had orchards of peaches and pears. We ate the fruit, oh yes, and how! I loved the fruit. It was exceptionally good.

Sunday was the only time my friends and I met. We would go to church and after church we had time to get together. The farmer had a young horse he let me ride. I loved that horse. I jumped on the horse and my friend took my picture with an old-time box camera we had. I was on the horse when, all of a sudden, a truck came by and the horse got scared and ran with me. I didn't have a saddle on that horse, nothing. He ran with me and when he came to a fence he stopped and I went over. I tore not only my suit, but also my skin was gone. My pants were ruined, but the papers in my jacket were safe. Those papers are now on display at a museum in Paris. I slept in the farm house attic and worked on the farm for a year and a half — until the war ended.

Ilse and Ruth in France.

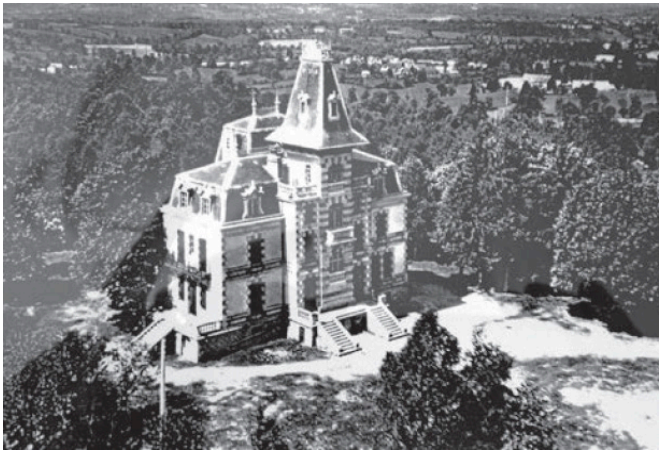
My parents in Maraud, France 1939-1942



A letter my mother wrote to her brother while in France in 1940. She writes about being disappointed that their aunt and uncle in England did not send them the money they needed to escape from France.

My mother in France

The children from the St. Louis going to the OSE Children's Home.



Chateau Chaumont, the second children's home I lived in in France

In the children's home in France, age 16.

Charles Mandel and I in the first children's home in France.

Madame Mazur at a wedding of two children who were in the children's home.

While working on Fillion's farm. I am the highest on the ladder.

On Fillion's farm. I am with the horse, Coco, that threw me over the fence.

While working on Fillion's farm. My mouth is stuffed with apricots.

On Fillion's farm separating the grain by hand. Julien Blustein is standing on top of the wheat.

While working cutting wood in the forest. The village of Treves is in the background. I am second from the right. Julien Blustein is on the far right.

Cutting wood in the forest. I am in the center.

Working while living in the third children's home.
I am third from the left in the front row.

Walter in the Vichy Fascist Youth Movement uniform.
I had the same uniform.

My official French identity papers with the word JUIE stamped in red.

Working with young people who survived Buchenwald at the Chateau de la Borie near Limoges, France, 1946. I am second from the right standing.

LIBERATION

When I heard the bombardment I knew the war was over. When we learned the Americans were coming from southern France on their way to Lyon, my friend and I were on our way there, too!

Without saying anything to anybody, we ran away from the farm and walked to Lyon. When we got there the army was in chaos because they had to get across the river and it was almost impossible to cross the Rhone River because the Germans had blown up all the bridges except for one. There were cars and trucks and tanks and they all had to go over that one bridge. So, we ran over and jumped on a truck, an American truck, and we got across the river. We were on the other side! I wanted to join the American army but they didn't accept me.

I went to an American officer and told him who I was and I showed him my false papers. He took my papers and marked something in them saying they were false. Those papers are gone now. He told me to go back to the organization, the OSE. The OSE took me and said, "Don't go to the army. Stay with us because we need people to help us find children hidden in convents and on farms. Plus, we need a translator." So I stayed with them. Whenever the organization got information and they were not sure it was accurate, they would send a few of us older guys to investigate. If the OSE had some leads that in this village

or in that convent some Jewish children were hidden there, they would send us to look into it. They got me official papers so I could travel all over France looking for children who were hidden. We were about eighteen years old at the time. We were talking to nuns and priests. The people hiding the children would not let us talk to the children and they wouldn't give them to us because they didn't know who we were, actually. Once we found a child we would tell the OSE and they would go to get the child. Most children came out voluntarily on their own. They were happy to get out and to start looking for their parents.

Four-hundred-fifty boys liberated from Buchenwald concentration camp were brought to the OSE home in France. The organization sent me to help them because I spoke French, German, and Yiddish. In the morning I would wake them up to exercise. I would work with them for many years. You know who was in that group? Elie Wiesel and the future Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Lau. The first time I saw Elie Wiesel many years later here in Miami Beach I said to him, "I don't know if you remember me." All of a sudden he grinned and he said, "Sure I remember you. I threw shoes at you! I didn't want to get up in the morning." Now, every five years 'The Buchenwald Boys' get together in Paris or Israel or here in Miami Beach.

During the war, my brother was not with me. He was always in a different city, a different place. We were in touch by mail, but not very often because we had to be very careful. When I was liberated I went to Paris where I was reunited

with my brother and my uncle. We knew our parents and sisters had gone on a train, but we didn't learn until after liberation that they had been killed. We learned that our mother, father, aunts, and sisters were all arrested and that in October 1942 our mother and sisters were deported from Drancy. The only thing I know, and it's been reported, is the date of their deportation from Drancy and its direction: Auschwitz. We got the information from the Red Cross. The Germans kept good records of who went on the trains.

At the time my mother and sisters were deported, my father was hospitalized at the Rothschild's Hospital in Paris, about four hours from Mirabaud. They treated his kidney problem for another few months, but he got worse and worse. He wanted to write to his brother, but he didn't have paper to write on. He was a very clever man, so whenever he got an envelope he opened it up, turned it inside out and used it to write letters to his brother who was hiding in the south of France. To send the letters my father used a special address, some special connection they had, something like a Jewish underground. After the war my uncle gave me the letters and I gave them to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. My father was taken to Auschwitz. He did not survive.

After liberation, a little later, not right away, I went to the village where my parents had been living. Our family had

planned to reunite in this village if we were ever separated. I went to the apartment where my parents had lived and found nothing of ours, nothing at all. I learned that the town had stored all the refugees' belongings on a farm. I found the farm, and the farmer told me, "One day some German trucks came and picked up everything." It was all looted by the Jewish man named Ashkenazi who, with his non-Jewish wife and son, were on the St. Louis with us. They were sent to the same village as my parents. When the Germans occupied France, the wife's brother, who was a pilot in the German air force, came to visit her very often.

When my parents and all the other Jews were suddenly deported, the Ashkenazi family was not. Ashkenazi had been with the German police, but when the Germans were defeated he tried to join the French underground. That is when the French police arrested him and his wife and put them in prison.

I knew my sister had had a friend in that village who was a police officer, so I went to see him. He went with me to Ashkenazi's apartment. The police had sealed it, but this policeman opened it for me. That was when I found my parents' belongings. Some of our things were still there including the bicycle from my brother's Bar Mitzvah and the little refrigerator we bought. I found some pictures but did not look for my mother's jewelry or her candlesticks. My brother and I sold the refrigerator in Paris.

I didn't have a youth. I had nothing. If I was lucky I had a pair of pants and a shirt. Now I had freedom. It was the most important thing to me — to be free.

LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

My father's brother, Fritz Karliner, survived and went to Connecticut. He must have found me through the Red Cross which had my name as surviving in the children's home. He sent my brother and me papers and money to come to the States. In December 1946 we went to Connecticut on a small American ship. My uncle found my cousins who were in Shanghai and brought them all to the United States, too.

I went to night school for a few months to learn English, but I learned the most when I went to a movie or read books and the newspaper. I worked as a pot washer and nobody I worked with spoke German or French, so I had to learn English. I'm proud, I never thought I could do it. I have an accent, but Henry Kissinger also has an accent and look what he accomplished!

At night school I met a man who had a car. When he said he was going to Miami for the season, I asked, "Can I go with you?" So, I went with him. I had always wanted to go to Miami Beach ever since I saw it when I was on the St. Louis when I was twelve years old. I got to Miami Beach

and went to work first at Hoffman's Cafeteria and then at the Governor Cafeteria on 10th Street and Washington Avenue where I learned a lot from the pastry chef. My brother stayed in Connecticut.

On September 13, 1950, I was drafted into the United States Army. First I was sent to Ft. Devens in Massachusetts where I was trained in artillery, how to fire howitzers, guns. It was okay, but I didn't like having duty at night because it was so cold. When they needed volunteers to work in the kitchen for Thanksgiving, everybody jumped at the chance, but I jumped further. They put me in the kitchen, and they liked me so much they never let me out. They sent me to Ft. Edwards near Boston to a cooking school.

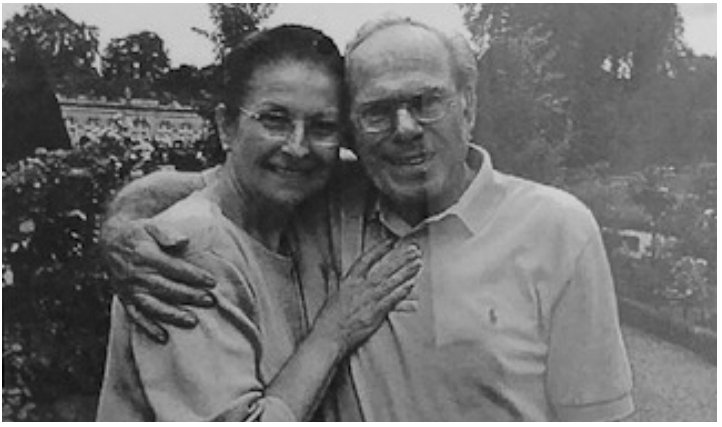
The army needed people in Germany and France. Since I was not married, I was in the first contingent that was to be deployed, but they always kept me back to teach other people how to cook. Finally, it was only me left. When there was nobody left who was single, they had to send me. I passed my interpreter test for French and German, but there was an opening in a group leaving for Korea, so they sent me to Korea. First they sent me to Korea, but that was only for a short time. Then they sent me to Japan and then back to Boston. After I was discharged from Camp Kilmer, New York, I went back to Miami.

In the United States Army.

While serving in the United States Army in Korea and Japan.

A picture I sent to Vera while we were corresponding before we were married.

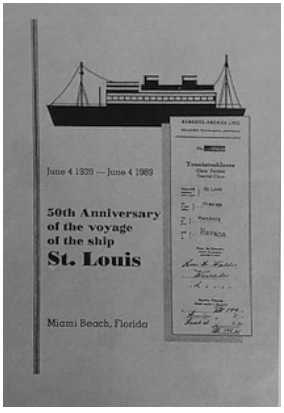
As a pastry chef at the Fountainbleau Hotel.



With Vera.

With Vera at my family's former home on a visit to Germany. 1990.

The nephew of Captain Schroeder of the St. Louis presenting his uncle's hat to me. The hat is now in the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.



The invitation to the 50th Anniversary Reunion of the voyage of the St. Louis.

A reunion of the OSE in Paris in the 1990's. I am the third from the right next to George Goldblum.

Holocaust Survivors David Mermelstein, Israel Joe Sachs, and me at the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial.

With my uncle Walter in Paris

George Goldblum, a founder of the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach

With my uncle Walter in Switzerland on the way to Italy for vacation, 1957

With Eli Wiesel on Miami Beach

My family today. In front: Michelle, Jonah, Jessica. Standing: Zachary, Amir, Debbie, Vera and I.

During the Second World War anybody who was drafted and sent overseas automatically became a citizen. When they were going to send me overseas to Korea I said to the army captain that he had to make me a citizen. He sent a telegram to Washington and the answer from Washington was, "Korea is not a war, it is a police action." So I had to go to Korea without being a citizen. I was working at Dubrow's Cafeteria on Miami Beach when, one day, the FBI came looking for me. They wanted to know how come I didn't register as an alien. Since I was not a citizen, I was supposed to register every year. I said, "I'm sorry, but I was in Japan and Korea so how could I go register?" They said, "Could you prove it?" I said, "Sure." They said, "Come to the office tomorrow and bring your discharge papers."

So I went there and they asked me if they could use me as an interpreter for French or German. I said, "Sure, anytime." But they never did call me. In 1953 when I had been in the States for five years, I wanted to become a citizen. I went to school to learn what I needed to know to become a citizen when, all of a sudden, a new law was passed that anybody who was in the Korean War can automatically become a citizen. So, that is how I became a United States citizen.

In 1956 or '57, I went back on a visit to France. I wanted to do something for the OSE because they did so much for the Jewish people and for the kids who were in hiding like I was, who were separated and orphaned. I went to see Madam Mazour, a director of the OSE, who I knew very well, and said I would like to help some people — pay for their education or to bring them to the States. One day, I

got a letter from a girl in Paris named Vera who told me that Madame Mazour asked her to correspond with me. (Like me, Vera was cared for by the OSE during the war.) Vera said she already had very many correspondents, but we started to correspond anyway. (I don't know how, because I made so many mistakes in French, but I made out.) Vera and I corresponded for three years until I finally went to Paris to meet her in person. We were married in Miami Beach in 1961.

BUILDING A BUSINESS

I always wanted to learn how to bake really good pastry. I never went to a bakery school, I just went from one bakery to another and taught myself. I worked every job I could. I was working at a Jewish cafeteria on Miami Beach, but when there was a job opening at the Fontainebleau Hotel for a kitchen helper I said, "I'll take the helper job." I worked from early in the morning until eight or nine o'clock at night. They saw I could learn things. After six months they put me on the night shift working in the famous Boom Boom Room. I was promoted again and then I was a pastry sous chef. I learned to bake by working there with pastry chefs from Switzerland, France, and Germany. I worked at the Fontainebleau Hotel for twelve years as an assistant pastry chef.

After a while, I wanted to go into business for myself. I was always pretty good at math, I knew I could run a business, and I was always a go-getter. I became partners with a friend

I had made while I was working for the OSE organization in France right after the war. I first met Ludwig Schusher (he later changed his name to Lou Scott) in 1945 when I got a call from the OSE in Paris asking me to pick up a very sick boy at the train station. They told me he had been in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. When I met him at the train he was skin and bones, and could barely walk. I had to carry him back to the children's home where I was living. I put him next to my bed and I took care of him. I was working in a candy factory at that time and once in a while if I had a few candies I would give them to him because he needed it. We got to be very close friends — closer than brothers. He regained his strength and came to the United States in 1966. Together we opened Michelle's Pastry Shop, named for my daughter, in North Miami. I worked seven days a week, eighteen hours a day. I made very good pastry and little by little I was successful.

One day, I spoke to a friend who used to work with me at the Fontainebleau Hotel. He was working for Marriott supplying food for the airlines. He called me and said, "Can you sell me pastry and rolls?" I said, "With pleasure." Every morning I delivered three thousand rolls and all kinds of cakes. That's how I started my wholesale business. We did a good business and I didn't have to stress so much about my retail business anymore. I retired in 1987. I don't miss it.

MY LIFE TODAY

Every year I make a party in Miami for the people from the OSE children's homes in France. I started it forty years ago when I had a large home. People came from Canada and New York. The first year we had ten or twelve people. The next year there were twenty people, then thirty people. One time we had sixty people. When I couldn't host it at my home any longer, I held it in a restaurant and had it catered. We still get together.

In June 1989 I arranged a fiftieth-year reunion in Miami Beach for the people who were on the St. Louis. I was the first one to do a reunion of the St. Louis in Miami Beach. I put an advertisement in the newspaper in Hamburg, Germany, saying, "If Captain Schroeder is still alive..." I got a letter from his nephew saying, "No, he passed away." So I invited this nephew to come. He came and presented me with the captain's hat. The hat is now in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. One time, I went back to Hamburg and met the captain's sister. She had a whole book of his life story. She gave me some pictures. The captain was married, but had no children.

I am still very involved with the people who were on the St. Louis. In December 2009, I was a chairman of the 70th Anniversary of the MS St. Louis Voyage Passenger Reunion and Commemorative Event in Miami Beach. In December

2012, at an event marking the 73rd anniversary of the St. Louis voyage, I handed United States State Department officials a letter urging legislation that would aid getting restitution of Holocaust era insurance claims.

I work with students at the University of Miami in a program where insurance restitution money is used to pair students with Holocaust survivors. I am very much involved with the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach. When George Goldblum, a Buchenwald Boy as well as an OSE child, gave money to construct the memorial, asked me to watch over the memorial, and I do. I am a board member of the memorial, and I volunteer there every week.

Vera and I have two daughters. Our older daughter, Michelle Fishkin, a dental hygienist, has one daughter, Jessica. Our younger daughter, Debbie Kafka, and her husband, Amir, have two sons: Zachary and Jonah. Debbie works for a law firm and Amir is a pilot. We are very lucky that our children and grandchildren live very near us. Vera and I have a wonderful life together. We have many friends and many interests. We travel all over the world for vacations and often go to Paris to visit her brother.

My brother, Walter, passed away in the summer of 2013. He left the organization, the OSE, a large donation to thank them for saving his life. I will do the same thing because thanks to them I'm here today.

ABOUT THE WRITER

I began writing for Holocaust survivors in the 1990's when survivors I met on The March of the Living asked me for help writing about their feelings on returning to Poland for the first time. Later, survivors I interviewed for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation asked me for help writing down all the things they did not speak about in their interview. Soon, other survivors began approaching me seeking help writing a book about their experiences in the Holocaust. I met with the survivors, recorded our numerous conversations, organized and wrote the stories in the survivors' own words, printed the books, and then handed the books to the survivors as my gift to them. The books were written solely for the survivors and their families; they were never intended for publication. They are being published now because my friends, Carol and Jaime Suchlicki, recognizing their historical value as first-person testimony, introduced me to Dr. Haim Shaked to discuss finding a wider audience for the books.

Thank you to Dr. Haim Shaked director of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies at the University of Miami for agreeing to publish the books and for your guidance and patience as we worked together on this project.

I am grateful to the March of the Living for introducing me to the world of Holocaust education and finding a role for me in it.

Thank you to the Shoah Foundation for choosing me to be an interviewer and for mentoring me through more than thirty interviews of Holocaust survivors. Your training led me to do the work I do today.

Thank you to the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach for encouraging the docents at the memorial to work with me to write their memoirs. I appreciate your confidence in me and your respect for my work.

Thank you to the my dear Holocaust survivors for sharing your most painful as well as your most joyful memories with me. Thank you for answering questions that no one should ever have to ask or answer. Thank you for trusting me to write your memoirs accurately and respectfully. It has been my honor and pleasure to work with you.

—Bobbi Kaufman

"The ship, the St. Louis, came very close to Miami Beach. That is how I saw Miami Beach. I said to myself, "I will come back here one day."

— Herbert Karliner

Seeking refuge from Nazi horror after their grocery store was destroyed on Kristallnicht, the Karliner family booked passage on the MS St. Louis sailing from Hamburg, Germany, to Cuba. Denied entry to Cuba, the United States, and Canada, the ship returned to Europe where the family was granted temporary asylum in France. Herbert and his brother were housed in OSE children's homes and then hidden in the forest until liberation. Their parents and sisters died in Auschwitz.

Herbert went to work for the OSE searching for Jewish children who had been hidden on farms and in convents during the war. He also worked as a translator and teacher for the Four-hundred boys liberated from Buchenwald. Eli Wiesel was one of his 'boys.'

In Miami, Herbert became a successful baker - a trade he learned as a child laborer in France. He and his wife have two daughters.

There is a concept in Judaism of a positive commandment, something that is time dependent, something that must be done *now*. One must, accordingly, applaud this important effort by the Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program of the University of Miami to collect and publish Holocaust survivors' memoirs as there will soon—too soon—come a time when the last survivors will be no longer. Sadly, tragically, this testimony is not only urgent but timely because the world in which we live echoes their world and the quality of their witness. The very nature of their survival has much to teach today's generations. One must express gratitude for this project and in the sagacious words of Hillel say: "If not now, when?"

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