

Hans Fischer- REWRITE



Hans Fischer, Vineland, High School Yearbook 1946

Hans Fischer was born in Breslau, Germany in 1928 to George and Johanna Fischer. Hans has a sister named Ruth. He recalled facing some ethnic prejudice as a child but noted that it started to get worse when Hitler rose to power. The first major anti-Jewish event he remembered was the deportation of Polish-born Jews in the city in 1938. The church elders in the city downplayed this event and blamed the deportation on the people's Polish origin and not their religious beliefs. Even as a young boy, Hans became increasingly cautious and did not believe what the elders said.

The next major event in his life was Kristallnacht. He remembered seeing the commotion in the streets on his way to school. When he arrived at the school, he saw a barrier blocking the entrance in the middle of the road. He saw his classmates running and screaming that the school was on fire. He looked into the sky and saw thick, black smoke. Hours later, his father was taken by the Gestapo and sent to a prison camp where his father stayed for six weeks until a family friend could get him out by showing the officers a military reward his father received while fighting in World War I.

After his father returned home, George realized things were getting terrible, and they had to leave Germany. George traveled by boat to Panama with hopes of securing permits for the entire family so they could flee Germany. However, the ship stopped in New York, and it was there George decided to go to Cuba instead. While waiting for their permits, Hans became sick with scarlet fever, which delayed the family's departure. While sick, Hans stayed in a home for children until he recovered. Once recovered, Hans, his mother, and his sister departed for Hamburg accompanied by one of George's friends. Upon arrival, they went to the Cuban Consulate to secure their visas. They then boarded the MS St. Louis, where they headed for Cuba. Hans thoroughly enjoyed his time on the boat; this was the calmest that he had felt in a long time. As they arrived closer to their destination, Hans said there were some rumblings on board that they were not going to be accepted by the Cuban government. Unfortunately, these rumblings turned out to be accurate, and Cuba did not accept the ship's passengers.

The ship only allowed passengers with visas to leave the boat, forcing them to turn around. However, the morale of the passengers remained high. He recalled passing the coast of Miami, where they hoped President Roosevelt would accept them into the United States. Eventually, the boat had to go back to Hamburg. When they arrived, they split the boat's passengers into four groups: one going to the U.K., one to Holland, one to Belgium, and the final one going to France. The family was sent with the French group, and they took another boat to France. Hans was split up from his sister and mother when the family arrived due to his age. He went to a refugee camp located right outside of Paris. While he was there, Hans experienced daily air raids. He and the other camp members had to stay in air raid shelters. The camp ended up dissolving, and he was allowed to return to his mother and sister at another refugee camp. They remained there until his father secured visas so they could join him in Cuba. They left by train and were ready to embark on the journey to Cuba again. They made it on their vessel and set sail to Cuba.

The boat stopped in Southampton, England, because they needed transportation. After all, Nazi submarines filled the nearby water. After that, they departed for New York. While getting their permits to enter Cuba figured out, the passengers on the boat stayed at Ellis Island. They were some of the last immigrants to remain there before Ellis Island closed. Hans stated that being there was like Heaven on Earth. They stayed at Ellis Island for a week and finally made it to Cuba aboard a luxury cruise liner. The family reunited for the first time in two years. They remained in Cuba for a year before leaving for New York. While in New York, his mother found a good-paying job working as a nurse. His father, on the other hand, had trouble finding work. He trained in the law, but he was in his 50s and spoke very little English.

After a while, George enlisted the help of the Jewish Agricultural Unit, and in 1941 he purchased a chicken farm located in Vineland, New Jersey. Hans had positive memories of the farm and lived there with his family from age 13 until he left for college. He felt that his long journey to the U.S. had matured him. He valued his education and saw college as a way to start a successful, fulfilling career. His family remained on the farm until 1959 when his mother died in a tragic car accident.

Hans attended Rutgers University for his undergraduate degree studying science. While he was in school, his family was struggling on the farm. The farm was not making enough money. He would go back home on the weekends to help with the farm. He also stated that his father struggled with adapting to life in the United States. He graduated from Rutgers in 1950 and then attended the University of Connecticut for his Master's degree, and finally the University of Illinois for his Doctorate in biochemistry. After college, Hans became a professor as well as a researcher. He remained on staff at Rutgers until he retired in 2007. Hans married Ruth Hershberg in 1950, and the couple would go on to have three children, Deborah, David, and Daniel. Deborah is a clinical psychologist, and David and Daniel are both researchers and professors. Hans also has eight grandchildren.

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