

H. HENRY SINASON

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



Heinz Henry Sinason was born Heinz Sinasohn to Harry and Selma Sinasohn on August 26, 1925, in Berlin, Germany. He had a brother, George. Henry's father, a decorated German World War I

veteran, was a sales representative for a large textile mill. In addition to being in the boys' choir at his synagogue, Henry enjoyed seeing Yiddish films at the cinema.

In 1931, Henry started school at a Catholic elementary school. In 1935, due to the escalating antisemitism of their non-Jewish classmates, Henry and his brother, George, transferred to a Jewish elementary school.

On November 9, 1938, Henry witnessed the events of the Kristallnacht Pogrom. The following night the Gestapo arrested Henry's father. Enraged at his arrest and placement in a concentration camp, Harry showed his military decoration — the Iron Cross — to the camp's administrator. By coincidence, the officer had been Harry's regiment leader during World War I. He released Harry by giving him a 48-hour leave pass.

Upon his return home, Harry made immediate arrangements to immigrate with his family to the United States, aided by relatives in New York. However, the extended waiting period made the trip impossible, so Harry and Selma sold their jewelry and bought two tickets for Shanghai, China, the only destination available to them. After sending their sons to live with an aunt and uncle in Paris, Harry and Selma left for Shanghai in late January 1939.

After Henry's uncle was placed in a French labor camp, the brothers were sent to a series of children's homes where they stayed busy by attending school, learning French, doing chores, and conducting their own religious services. Fearing for their safety, eventually Henry and George buried their identification papers and returned to their aunt's home.

During the summer months of 1941, after being placed in another children's home in rural France, the brothers were allowed to immigrate to New York. Due to financial constraints, only one could go at a time, so Henry gave the first spot to his brother and followed a few months later. His trip, which should have taken eight days, lasted three harrowing weeks. Henry's ship finally arrived at Staten Island in New York in October 1941.

Then sixteen years old, Henry lived with his extended family in the Bronx where he worked at a bakery while going to night school to receive his high school diploma. In 1945, as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army stationed in the Pacific, George visited the Jewish ghetto in Shanghai and reunited with Harry and Selma who moved to the United States in 1947.

In 1949, Henry graduated from college. Shortly thereafter, he married June Meyer. They had two children, David and Carol. Henry later earned a master of business administration and in 1986 retired as a senior manager from Chase Manhattan Bank in New York. At the time of his interview in 1996, Henry lived in Laguna Hills, California. He and his ex-wife had three grandchildren: Adam, Joshua, and Matthew.



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