

Name: **Wolfgang Richard Braun**

Birth date: **December 11, 1922**

Birthplace: **Breslau, Silesia (now Poland)**

Parents: **Paul and Lucie Braun**

Children: **Two**

Grandchildren: **Three**

Dick Braun grew up the only child of a cultured Prussian family in Stettin, Pomerania located at the mouth of the Oder River. His father was a physician who married the daughter of a prosperous chemical engineer. Lucie's father had patented a process for making cold water soluble starch; this process is still used today. Dick's family's apartment featured a large living room that held two concert grand pianos placed back - to - back. Music was a big part of his family life. His family were members of a liberal form of orthodoxy called German Liberal. It was assimilated in practice and close to the Reform movement. "My parents were German through and through." By political persuasion, his parents were confident that the craziness of Nazi philosophy would not be believed by the majority of German citizens for whom they had a great deal of respect. And then Dick's father read Mein Kampf and began to see Germany in a different light. He "took Hitler at his word."

Dick's education began at a private elementary school and continued at a gymnasium or public high school. By the time he was ten, the sense of a Nazi presence began to grow. In 1933, he recalls seeing Nazis marching in the streets carrying banners, and feeling and seeing the Nazi presence in his school. Fellow students would come to school wearing Hitler Youth Movement brown uniforms. Dick said, "I didn't fare too badly; although every once in a while, the whole class would go on an official outing and I was excluded." Outings, hikes actually, were a big part of the curriculum. The outings became a time of tension for Dick. "With individual kids I got along fine, but when they got into groups, then all of a sudden things would get nasty" - including running from groups of students who were threatening him. He finally told his parents, "I don't think I want to go on these outings." Eventually, Jews were not allowed to go on the outings and later they were barred from attending school altogether. Before Dick left his school in 1935, all the teachers were wearing buttons with the Nazi swastika on their clothing identifying their loyalty to the new party.

On May Day, Nazi flags appeared in every window. Anti-Jewish propaganda began to appear in display cases: cartoons, articles, etc. By 1935, with the establishment of the Nuremberg laws, signs began to appear on park benches "No Jews." Dick's father's clinic was off-limits for non-Jews, he lost his hospital privileges; he lost the right to practice his profession. He knew they had to go. He left on a three - month trip to look for a way to escape Germany. The trip took him to England and the United States where he met an aunt and a number of cousins who agreed to sign

an affidavit enabling him to apply for a visa. The only thing Dick's family lacked was a number on the quota system. He returned home in late 1935 with the announcement to his wife and son that they were leaving for the USA. Paul Braun went to Berlin to apply for a quota. The number came up in July 1936, and the family left immediately thereafter.

Once in America, Paul Braun set up a practice in New York where there were already plenty of physicians. "He never became Americanized. He was very German in his outlook...very authoritarian. My mother was much more American. My life in essence has been shaped by the United States - by the opportunities here." Dick married Irene and they had a son named Russell and a daughter, Janis Braun-Levine. Dick and Irene have three grandchildren. Dick is a retired mechanical engineer and an artist.

1931 photograph- Dick with his grandmother and his cousin Ruth on balcony (Ruth was daughter of one of Paul Braun's three brothers). The grandmother died on the way to a death camp when she was 90 years old.