

Collection #  
SC 2929  
DVD 0244-0245

**GERALD PAUL  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW, 2011**

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 1 folders, 2 DVDs (1 master and 1 copy)

**COLLECTION DATES:** 1 November 2011

**PROVENANCE:** Indiana Historical Society project, 2011-

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

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**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:** Paul Harris Stores, Inc. collection, 1971-2001, M 1021, OMB 0127, BV 3784, CT 2152-2153; Dorit Paul interview, SC 2930, DVD 0242-0243

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2012.0120m0002

**NOTES:**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gerald Paul was born on 28 September 1924 in Witten, Germany where he lived with his mother and father, Leopold and Selina Paul. Gerald Paul faced many challenges growing up a Jewish child in the 1930s Germany. While attending the Gymnasium, a classical, college-preparatory school, Paul was one of two Jewish students. His teachers constantly demanded he answer questions and then whipped him if he didn't know the answers. When life for German Jews became increasingly difficult, Paul's family moved to Indianapolis, Indiana because his father had family there.

During his teens he began working for the Star Store and eventually for The Real Silk Company. He quickly learned English and graduated from Shortridge High School at the age of fifteen. His natural skills in customer service and the retail clothing business ushered him to sales and management at Real Silk, eventually managing the "seconds" store. Meanwhile, he attended Butler University and the Indiana University extension in Indianapolis. After meeting her on a blind date during a buying trip in New York, he married Dorit Selig in 1954, and eventually they had two daughters. The same year, Gerald and Earl Harris opened the first Paul Harris store in Plainfield, Indiana. The store was successful and became Gerald Paul's life work. By the time Gerald retired in 1995, the company included Pasta and \$5-\$10-\$15-\$20 Place stores. Paul Harris Stores alone occupied locations in thirty-seven states. Paul helped to revolutionize clothing retail by creating a Paul Harris line of clothing and collaborating with Chinese companies to make Paul Harris designs for a reasonable price. He continually traveled during his career in order to learn about best practices in other countries and share those of the United States.

During these trips he and his wife amassed an extensive collection of contemporary and traditional artwork. They collect mostly contemporary art, and their collection includes pieces by Betty Woodman, Willem de Kooning, and Antoni Tàpies. IUPUI Herron School of Art and the Eiteljorg Museum of Western Art and the American Indian both named galleries in honor of Dorit and Gerald Paul for their continual support of the arts at each organization. After retiring, he taught retail at Purdue University. He continues to share his skills through boards and committees with organizations such as Dance Kaleidoscope, Hooverwood, and the Indianapolis Arts Center.

Sources: Materials from the collection

Paul, Gerald, with Victoria Barrett. *My Business Life Cycle: How Innovation, Evolution, and Determination Made Paul Harris Great*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

Folder 1 contains the transcript of an oral history interview with Gerald Paul and a life history form. The DVDs contain a WAV file audio recording of Mr. Paul's oral history interview (1 master and 1 copy). Mr. Paul was interviewed as part of the Indiana Community Builders Oral History Project (ICB), an ongoing project collecting oral histories of outstanding individuals who continually work to advance Indiana. The primary goal of this project is to collect life stories from remarkable people whose involvement in Indiana philanthropy, business, politics, religion, and education continues to enhance the Indiana community. Through these individual lives, we can witness the development of Indiana's recent past. IHS believes collecting these reflections also extends our capacity as Indiana's Storyteller because we can better understand Indiana history from a personal and professional perspective. Including both perspectives illustrates each individual's contributions to Indiana and their personal connections to all Hoosiers. Interview topics include: growing up in Germany; influences provided by family; elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education; employment experiences; challenges and successes faced; philanthropy and volunteer work; and change of Indianapolis/Indiana over time. The interview was conducted by Kendra E. Clauser on November 1, 2011 in Mr. Paul's business office. Clauser has been the Project Archivist for ICB since April of 2011.

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### CONTENTS

Gerald Paul life history form

CONTAINER

Folder 1

Gerald Paul oral history interview, transcript

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Time (hh:mm:ss)</b>	<b>Transcript page</b>
Germany in the 1930s	00:00:00	Pg. 1
Coming to the US/Shortridge HS/learning English	00:02:37	Pg. 2
Working at Star Store and Real Silk	00:05:38	Pg. 3
Opening Paul Harris with Earl Harris	00:11:02	Pg. 5
Purchasing globally	00:17:44	Pg. 8
Paul Harris in the US	00:27:06	Pg. 10
Art collecting	00:43:35	Pg. 14
Philanthropy	00:46:30	Pg. 15
Family	00:49:44	Pg. 17

Gerald Paul oral history interview, audio WAV file on  
DVD (1master and 1 copy)

DVD 0244-0245