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Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in...(Grustoff?)...Eastern Poland...

Q: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

A: I had three brothers and two sisters.

Q: And did they make it?

A: Nobody made it.

Q: You’re the only one who made it out of the -.

A: I made it, and only – again, I don’t know if this is the – if this what you are looking for but it’s an interesting story, too – I made it because I made up my mind that I want to live. And I was with the Germans a couple of months...when the Germans came into our town, it was a couple of days before Rosh Hashonah. The first day of Rosh Hashonah, I was in shul...it was in the middle of laining and a woman came in and started to yell about her husband (needs translation) and I was at that time, 18 years old...

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in ’21. And when I heard that, I got like all shook up, you know...(needs translation)..there was one (lavatory?) in shul and there was like (one in a) a house and there was a little – an alleyway, and I figure I’m gonna go out and see what was wrong. And as I was coming out the other way, you know, in small towns, you didn’t have no fancy facilities when you had to go, so there was what they call (needs translation - outhouses)....you go down on the road to the mikvah, you know, to the beitel what they call there – what they call there, because they washed...and as I came out from that alley, I saw the Germans approach, coming with the – you know, with their weapons drawn. I got scared and I ran back to the bais midrash. And I was sitting next to my grandfather near a window, and the minute they came in, they started shooting without a word, without anything, they started shooting. Everybody went under the benches, and said, ‘Shema Yisrael...’ and as the shooting subsided a little bit, and I saw one person, another person, they jumping out from the window, and that was like – there was underneath was a – where they have the poor people sleep – it was like two flights up and there was an old (needs translation - #51) and as they jump, I jumped right after them, and I started running and here I heard something whistling in my ears. I didn’t know what it was. Later I realized that these were bullets. Anyhow, run into – until there was a hole in the gate and – in the fence – and I jump out, and I went up there, and I was hiding there, and then a goya came to house, and she saw me lying there, naturally I couldn’t run no more. That’s why I just crawling. So she called her husband to cover me up with straw, and I was landed, and as I landed, somebody stepped on me. You know, people that were running away, that I recognized later in the voice. I said, ‘What’s going on there?’ ‘Oy, don’t ask me.’ Anyway, to make it (needs translation) after all this (inaudible – resided?) and when I came home, like hours later with all different ways you know, like under the town, when I came back...then I found out that after they start the shooting, they ordered everybody out, and they took like boys – under 14 they let go home and men over 65 they could go home.

Q: What year?

A: That was in 1939.

Q: How many Jews were there living in the town?

A: In the town, there may have been like, three hundred, maybe Jewish families. But the whole town was Jews. Maybe three goyim.

Q: Were your parents Hassidim?

A: Ya.

Q: What kind?

A: Well, my father used to be a (needs translation) he used to travel to the (bais a chevras?)...

Q: What kind if work did he do?

A: We had originally (needs translation) something like a bar. Not exactly like an American bar. Selling liquor and beer you know. But I think the main living they made from the Thursdays. This was the market day. And there was a big trading, the cows and the horses. And every time a trade was closed, they went to drink.

Q: Your parents didn’t make it through the war?

A: No. So this was the town, too.

Q: You said that you were running, and they said, ‘Don’t ask,’ and only a few hours later you found out what happened when you came home.

A: Yes. I came and they told me that they made them to take all the Sefarim. I remember that this boy, you know, he used to always to talk about this sefer’s six hundred years old...and they made him carry all this out. And, they made a fire outside there and they burned the (inaudible) and while they carried the Sefarim, they hit them and so on. And there was a time like, I don’t remember, if there was eight – ten dead. (inaudible) and a couple wounded which they took to...another town, to a hospital, because that was a small town, we had no hospital. And, after that, so, it started the business every day they would go out and grab people to take them to work. So as you heard, (needs translation) everybody started to hide. And I was nervous type. I couldn’t take it. And one day, one day is, ehr, I don’t know, there is something going from house to house, and I remember I was just standing there, one second, and my father he wanted to run away or something, and the Germans just saw him run, that they just put the gun right to his throat (inaudible) after Succos, we started hearing news about the part of Poland that the Russians took over, that Jews have freedom. Some people had those radios – the crystals...the neighbors, one or two...and they used to listen privately to radio. And that they could hear Jewish programs, and Jews had freedom, and this and that. And here it was – I remember the eating. We still had food. We had flour.

Q: You decided to go back?

A: ...I don’t go, I was there yet, so, I remember that we had food...(needs translation) you had to listen to the door if somebody’s coming...we decided to make a succah...a couple of minutes before licht benchen, the Germans were walking around and they notice...people putting candles and laughter, and you know...so it started, ‘What is this?’ They want to know what this is all about...once they heard that...they took it apart...and later on we ate. You know you have to sit with the spoon in the (inaudible) tremble.

Q: So what happened – you decided to leave?

A: So then, when I heard that there’s more fear...I said I got to leave. I was eighteen, but by us, 18 – a boy here of 12 has more world – the world that I had at 18 because I never traveled maybe further than like to the next town.

Q: Did you work at the age of 18 or 17?

A: Nay...even if I would wanna work, I was learning from clothes, what they call and then I started – which it was against my father’s wishes – I wanted to learn a trade. I don’t know why...they made arrangements somebody to teach me how to sew shirts. There was no industry in our town...there was those people who sold shirts...they went out to the market...every day in a different town...they’d come back whatever they needed, they cut it right away by hand knife, of course, and they’d give it out to people to houses to sew overnight...shirts (had no) buttons, no button holes, all you needed was a bandle here and a bandle there. Because it was very primitive. I learned for a while to make the shirts, and I got like eight, nine cents a shirt..

Q: So you couldn’t become a millionaire from this.

A: Well I didn’t do it – but to me, it was a thrill, you know, whatever I had, I went to the – there was no banks...but the Post Office...had government bank so I used to accumulate my money and see that the pennies growing...

Q: So, in this case, you decided to go to Russia –

A: I just wanted to tell you, when I started saying I want to go, they wouldn’t let me go.

Q: Who was that?

A: My parents, - I had two older brothers, older sister. So it so happened that things opened up and Jews could start to travel out by train...it came one time that they came and took away the licenses from a lot of Jews to sell liquor and they gave it to the invalids from the first World War, the, mainly goyim...so remained only with the beer which it was hard to make a living, alright, so they sold liquor under the table, (needs translation) finally they decided, when my other brothers grew up (needs translation) they started to, also travel around with textiles, piece goods...every day was in a different town...within a radius of 15 or 20 miles...and...we had a typhoid epidemic...so they closed down that shank completely.

Q: So they didn’t want you to go anyway.

A: They didn’t want me to go. But as things opened up...my mother...went into the rebbe and she tells him, ‘my son’s stubborn, he wants to go away.’ So he said, ‘if he wants to go away, let him go!’ So when she came back with this, (needs translation) we started looking already of ways I’m gonna go. And you know, it’s like I see it as a miracle ‘cause right then something happened that you see that the (needs translation) ...(town leader?) when the Germans came he went away, some place else. Because he was a rich man. And he was afraid...so he was in another town...and he had a son who was a little older than I was, he stayed in our house...and comes a letter from his father that he should come there to Nebulitz and from there we’re going to smuggle over to the Russian side...that was an opportunity for me also...the son...insisted that they took me and a cousin of mine and we traveled to Nebulitz. And at that time I remember that my mother was following the horse and buggy, and begging me, (needs translation) so I said (needs translation) I remember these words I said to her. (inaudible) I made had made up my mind I gotta go. I mean, something was driving me to go. It’s – I couldn’t understand it...

Q: You were in Siberia during the war?

A: Yes.

Q: You didn’t start off in Siberia, right?

A: ...I smuggled the border once, then they caught us...I did it right away again and other occasion I had to be smuggled the border...so I ended up in (inaudible town) when I came to the Russian side. There I was a while -

Q: Did they have an order that all the Jews had to go to Siberia – after you came to (Langbert? inaudible town?)

A: ...when I came to (Langbert?) it was like this. At first, you were free. I mean, they didn’t do anything for you...you got nothing. You lucky if they gave you a room there to sleep on the floor. And this what happened, we had to go to certain place, (inaudible - needs translation)...but there wasn’t even work, you had to –

Q: So how did you come to Siberia?

A: ...they had like a registration, supposedly, whoever wants to go back to Germany, so I registered. In the meantime, I got a letter from home and I burned it...(needs translation – a warning?) they had another registration...I didn’t register no more. They started a rumor, whoever is not gonna work, they’ll send them on to Russia...I managed to get a job...so one day, when I came from work at night, the house where we were sleeping...was surrounded...(inaudible)...and they come over to me, so I told them I work (?) and I show them my paper said that I work on the railroad there. Anyhow, they collected all the Jews, all those they could lay their hands on, and shipped them to Russia. And this is how I happen to go to Russia. They took...all the refugees that they could surround, they took them, and -

Q: Made them work there.

A: Made them, and shipped them out...I was lucky I ended up in a camp where they had families. I was a single boy. And the singles ended up in much worse places than I did...

Q: You just had luck you wound up in -

A: I wound up...with a family. Again, they didn’t give you anything. They brought you into the middle of a forest. And they had the barracks which, they weren’t even finished, and each family got a tiny little room.

Q: And you got a room?

A: I got a room with four single people...we weren’t provided with anything except, we’re gonna work, and right they took us out...to show us how to cut down trees...get them ready for export...

Q: But they fed you?

A: No. You had to buy. They paid you...I used to get paid every two weeks...the transport took about 7 or 8 days...on the train they gave us like soup, and some bread each day, but if you wanted to grab something else, like on the station where we stop...by the time I came to the camp there, I had very little...we went to the commander...he gave us from his own pocket. He happened to be a VERY nice man...finally...the war started with Germany, they released all these people...they gave you a piece of paper...that said you were Polish, that said you were free to go...and you could go wherever you wanted...most of those people they decided and they went to middle Asia. You know, to Afghan, to Georgia, Pakistan, where it was a warmer climate...I went to the central town and I got a job...

Q: In the camp, how hard was life in the camps?

A: Well, I would say that the regime was very liberal, I would call it. As a matter of fact, in the beginning, if you had clothes or whatever to exchange with the – they allowed you go to the nearest village. And the village bread was a commodity.

Q: Would you say that the people there were as anti – Semitic as the Poles?

A: No, they didn’t know what Jews were. They didn’t know. This was very far out. Later, when I was on the field and I was working, we got in the skins...from the cattle...when those the skins were ready to be packed for transport, they came down from the laboratory, and they cut off a little piece from each skin for testing...and there were two girls who started talking, so I tell them, ‘I’m a Jew from Poland,’ she looked at me like this: ‘Jew!’ So I said, ‘What are you looking for?’ ‘We thought that Jews were some kind of cattle’...they didn’t know what a Jew looked like...so I wouldn’t say that there was any. The older ones probably were...

Q: After the war, did you go back to Poland?

A: Yeh...in 1943 I enlisted in the Polish army...

Q: After the war, did you go back to (inaudible – Furstik?)

A: No...by me the survival started, I would say, in 1944...when I was in the army...until we came into Poland...I went from town...all those little towns...it was ?Judenrat? You couldn’t see a Jew. And, I was thinking back, I said, I always thought I’ll never make it to see my parents ‘cause I’m not gonna make it! You know, from all what I’ve been through, it somehow never dawned on me that my parents are not gonna make it, or my family is not gonna make it. So, but by then, I said, if I saw everything was no Jew around, you know my whole thinking started changing...and I didn’t think I’ll see anybody and then was survive for me then started, me started, what do I do from now. What do I do from here. And, I’ll tell you the truth, there was moment when I said, the best thing is to lose yourself as a Jew, you know, settle among the Poles, and you live your years whatever you have (inaudible) I mean, there was no life. Just like to survive, that’s all there is. And, after a while...the towns I came from were still occupied by the Germans ‘cause this was early 1944...one thing, I was lucky. I was never in the real combat. I was in the telephone...and again, I say (needs translation)...’besheret’)...our unit...communications. We grew with the army...the bigger it got, the further away from the front line we were because we stayed always with the highest command.

Q: So what changed your mind when you said ‘best thing is to lose yourself?’

A: What changed my mind is, when you started to find out that, that the anti – Semitism. That is – and I realize that it’s not gonna help that either. I mean, I says to myself...in the meantime I wrote to my town when once our area was liberated...I wrote to...a goy...there...he never answered...but gave the letter over to the town hall...and I got an official letter from them that nobody survived...in 1944...we were staying on this town...and we got free time to go to a movie...and I heard somebody call...I start looking around...(needs translation)...he tells me who he is...(a friend)...so then I I found out that my family was all done except there was one aunt and uncle that survived...and another aunt with a boy...we used to get Jewish holidays off, in the Polish army, so I tell them...it’s gonna be the high holidays...so I planned I’ll go for 13 days...the minute the war ended...my aunt and uncle say they are going to Czechoslovakia...and I should come. And I said, ‘No.’ We were twelve Jews in a company of 120...and I said I’m not going to desert the Army. And when I came back, they look at me like crazy. And I didn’t really know what happened so much...

Q: Why?

A: Because the papers didn’t print it...

Q: Why did they know?

A: Why? Because they went to shul there in Warsaw for Shavuos, and they told the stories that’s going on – they killed here, they killed there Jews and so on. ‘You had a chance to go, and you didn’t go?’ That they thought I was the biggest fool...and it so happened my aunt and uncle didn’t leave that time but they telling, right after Succos we going...this time I said, ‘alright.’...I took off my uniform...and they got me papers as a German Jew...the German Jews they could go freely...this is how we got out of Poland...and from there we smuggled to the American Zone...from there I ended up in a D.P. camp...(Tseson?).

Q: How long were you there?

A: There I was until 1946, December. I arrived in America March 3rd, 1947. Because they had the strike. The shipping line was striking and I had to stay in a camp until they had the – the ship started to go (inaudible) was delayed.

Q: In the D.P. camp you had your own room?

A: I lived together with my aunt and uncle...we had more like two rooms, I think. But you know, whoever came there, if you knew him, everybody got a bed to sleep.

Q: So then you left, by boat. Did you leave from Bremerhaven?

A: Ya. We left from Bremerhaven.

Q: What was the name of the boat you left on?

A: Marine Marleen...I think the journey took about ten days.

Q: You left on the boat with your aunt and uncle, but you didn’t all have a room together on the boat, did you?

A: ...my uncle didn’t go. I went before them.

Q: How come he didn’t go?

A: His papers didn’t come through.

Q: What kind of affidavit did you get?

A: I got an affidavit that...(laugh needs translation)...as far as coming to America, I came under false pretenses. You never know – I know you’re not gonna talk about it, but -

Q: Except to say, that thousands of people came this way, and the HIAS knew about it, but the HIAS wanted to make sure that people came. So now you traveled with your aunt?

A: No, they came later.

Q: The boat – how was the trip? What do you remember about it. Now, I want to see if you can give me the same details as you gave me about Europe about the boat.

A: Well, the boat – I would say, not adventurous excerpt it was a small boat. You know, once we reached the...English Channel it was very rough. I – uh, everybody got sick.

Q: Did you get seasick?

A: Everybody got sick. Practically everybody got –

Q: Where did you sleep, in a big room?

A: In a big room, and they had those...bunks. Look it was an army -

Q: How many people were there in a room?

A: Oh, must have – oh, I wouldn’t know. Forty, fifty – I have no idea...it was a big compartment, like, with all bunks and sleeping one next to another.

Q: Did you see anyone you knew?

A: Yes. There were some people that I knew just by sight – as a matter of fact I know some people that they here in America, that they were on the same boat with me. One of them is a very rich man. He’s a builder in Squaretown...

Q: So, you stayed on the boat. What were the people like to you? First of all, were they all Jewish – the people on the boat?

A: Well, I wouldn’t know, I mean of course, I associate only with Jews. With friends, so – ya, there were some from the same camp that we...we kept together. I wasn’t interested in the others...

Q: When you got up in the morning, what did you do first?

A: First, we davened. (inaudible) we had minyan. Like a small minyan we used to –

Q: You stayed religious through the whole war? You were able?

A: Well, ah – in Russia, I stayed religious in my heart, but I trefes, I mean, of course, to eat – to survive. I’ll tell you one thing, that in the, in the army, when of course you ate trefe, (inaudible) but somehow, I – you know, I had a...razor blades...and this, in Russia, this was a fortune. So, when I was in the army, very few soldiers had ah, what to shave, so everybody used my shaver. So, on Shabbas, they knew my shop was closed. I didn’t shave on Shabbas. And the goyim, there knew where the sha – and there was other things like, eh, when they came in already from Poland...once they liberated Poland...the Poles...they sent them to the Army, and they didn’t know Russian and if they wanted to write home, they would have to write it in Russian. I used to write for them the Russian addresses. (inaudible) and they knew Shabbas (inaudible) I didn’t write...I wouldn’t say I religious...

END OF SIDE ONE----TAPE ONE.

TAPE ONE------SIDE TWO.

Q: You came back, you found out that your parents hadn’t survived, and your brothers and sisters hadn’t survived, what was your first reaction?

A: Well, ya, a reaction, how should I tell it? It’s, it’s, ah, well I told you the first time that I had concrete evidence that they didn’t survive was when I met this guy -

Q: Sam, right.

A: And I remember there was a little like a (inaudible) where you could go in and this man had, had gone in there first, register, to do something – well, I-I don’t know how to describe it. I must have cried for weeks. I mean, you know, also, I knew already. Because like I said, I got a letter but this was sort of the clincher. You know? There still was some kind of a hope. – I was-s-s-s (MT drags out the ‘s’ in ‘was’) devastated. I don’t know how, uh, what words you use. I was very, very, -

Q: But did you feel like going on after learning this all – after hearing this all – to hear that your whole family is wiped out?

A: It was very hard. It was very hard. Because –

Q: What did you do about it?

A: And I’ll tell you. A lot of times I felt sort of guilty. You know.

Q: Because you went away?

A: Because (inaudible – he is stumbling over words) went away, and this, and, and, it’s, it’s very – it was very painful.

Q: But could they have gone with you too?

A: Yes!

Q: Why didn’t they?

A: Why? Well, now, I’ll tell you – it would take us maybe too much time to go into because people were too much attached to their miserable belongings I would say, because I would say that the very real rich, I mean, we weren’t rich by the sense of the word, but – they had a home, they filled with furniture, they had a bis schmates you know, they were afraid to part with it. Because I – before I went, I argued with my, with my mother mostly, you know my father was a little too (inaudible) you know how it is. You didn’t have the approach to my father as much as to my – and when I used to pleaded that I want to go out, said, ‘Momma, (der hasted mon? translation needed) they were afraid – well it’s hard, to uproot I mean, I understand, I think of it so much. I think of it so much, even until this day. It’s not easy to argue with – you, you nothing, and going to, you’re not likely, like she said to me, (needs translation: Voses stolte, voses de essen?) I mean, you pick up and you going to nowhere, you don’t know what’s goin to be, I mean, it’s not easy...nobody even thought that it’s gonna go a war so fast. But here, to go into the nowhere especially smuggle into Russia, and, and was Russia in itselves was scaring...

Q: Do you think maybe your outlook on life was maybe different than your brothers and sisters?

A: Definitely!

Q: Why?

A: Why” I’ll tell you. I think it has to do with nature, and to a great degree, or maybe a lot times you’d like to say, ‘besheret.’ I mean, I really felt all the time, that somebody was pushing me. That there was somebody behind me in and not just this, in – I mean, I skipped all that – to be at certain incidence, that, that – even with the army where I was here, (inaudible) even in the other particular cases, that I was more like I – like I was spared...

Q: You mean, by accident, it wasn’t in your control?

A: By accident, and my control, definitely not.

Q: So, if it wasn’t in your control, you don’t have to feel guilty.

A: (He grapples for an answer) True, but – ehhhhh – no I don’t feel about that part, but in general, you know it’s – why did I have (Germany?) It’s hard to explain. I mean, I myselves, now I’ll tell you my, my thinking here changed maybe a million times, and my whole outlook of life I would say transformed maybe ten times you know from what it was until what it’s today. I mean, uh, as you go on, and as you live, and as you see things you -

Q: You ask about religion, right? You say you daven on the boat, right?

A: Yes. Right.

Q: Did you feel at any point to question that if there is a G-d, why this would happen to so many Jews, and why it would happen to so many frum Jews, and why it would happen to your own family?

A: Well, I do, not that deeply. I mean, I know it’s a question I question, but somehow, I, I don’t know, I never – I always questioned more why did I survive? You see, and this brings me, which it will come later, let’s say, I – read it like my article (?) I had told you that my mother was pulling the horse and buggy when I was leaving, and she was was (needs translation) and this left such an impression on me, I mean, but that’s and, and, coming – but after the war I sort of was resigned from that in marrying? (needs translation).

Q: Why?

A: Because, it’s, yes, I mean, I-I-I never could forget my mother’s face (his voice catches with emotion) so, but again, like I say, you get transformed. But, an – and then it so happens I married late. I was already 30 when I got married.

Q: You lived here?

A: Yeh...we got married in 1952. So, so it so happens that we didn’t have any children. We couldn’t have any children. You know, we went to doctor’s, this, that and – so, we decided to adopt – I mean, you see, this I’m trying to tell you. At once, I wouldn’t want to know about children. Later, when I wanted children, I just – we didn’t, we didn’t have. So I actually was against adoption, I myselves. Not so much against adopting, because other things, I-I-I was – I saw there could be problems in adopting. You know, it wasn’t that important, I mean, it wasn’t that important to me to have a child.

Q: To your wife?

A: My wife wanted it. She wanted a child.

Q: What were you worried about in adopting. You mean, you didn’t know where the child is from, you didn’t know what its problems are?

A: Yeh, a lot of things. Actually, before we came to adopting...it was another thing. I went to doctors, my wife went to a doctor. And, when they, finally one doctor he said, ‘Look,’ because you know, I went to treatments and this, and my wife went, - so we finally ended up with one doctor. He said, ‘Look, don’t run around.’ He said. ‘Save your heart, you should, you should have kids...’ He suggested artificial insemination. (His voice drops to a whisper) And the doctor’s name was a Dr. Kurland, he had a, uhm, Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. So, to me, I got like, all, ahh, taken aback and astonished. So he says, ‘No, it – it’s permissible. And he knows that, uhh, a rabbi in England permits it.’ So, you know I, ehr, I wasn’t, I wouldn’t I mean to go to ask a local rabbi a question like this. I mean, you know, you didn’t feel comfortable. And, my wife at one time worked for the OU (inaudible) she worked for the OU and we used to get the Jew – they had that magazine, ‘Jewish Life.’ And I even think that I once saw they have some article by Rabbi Brody who was the chief Rabbi and I decided I’ll write to Rabbi Brody a letter and he, uhh, wrote what the din is. I mean, to my wife was a-but me, it started (drops voice – inaudible whisper) I mean, how do you take it. It, is it a sins if not, I can’t do it, and all (inaudible) besides the religious aspect of it, also psychological, also mean, it’s not an easy – first of all, when he told me that, we’ll never have children, I – I would say it was like the second the time was when I found out my parents are gone. I- I was, I was, also totally devastated. By then, you know, it’s like -

Q: You changed?

A: I changed. That’s why I say, you don’t say the same. I mean, things change. That time I wanted already a child because I started reasoning already. Why did I survive? I mean, the time that I’m gonna bring another generation? What was the purpose of my survival?

Q: Do you know why?

A: Well, it, before I didn’t think this way. I had another way of thinking. I mean, you don’t want to know (inaudible) but then you change.

Q: You mean, you felt that everything would end with you. And you would be the only member of your family -

A: Right. Right. And that’s it. So, so again, so if this was the purpose (needs translation) will this satisfy me. There was a lot of questions.

Q: So what happened? What did you do?

A: So, I wrote – I decided I’ll write to this Rabbi Brody. I got a reply that he cannot answer (this?) I should go to (inaudible) Rabbi Soloveitchik. And I said to my wife, look, that’s one thing, that if I EVER do that, this is something that this must stay strictly confidential. You don’t talk about it. Not to your mother – her father wasn’t alive any more, to nobody. This is something that’s got to be between the two of us, and the doctor. I don’t want – should be nobody. So, and, while I was waiting for the reply, from Rabbi Soloveitchik, ya, so I went and wrote to Rabbi Soloveitchik...then I found out that she had a discussion with a girl friend and, and she just told her that, that we are considering (his voice drops) artificial insemination. And, well, after that, I got a reply that I should come that and that date, to Yeshiva University and Rabbi Sovoleitchik will see me. But once she had blurted it out, I said, look, now (inaudible) if there’s gonna be one person, that is gonna know about us (grapples for words) that shouldn’t then the whole thing is over . And I said, so I don’t know what the, eh, the din is, but I heard sometimes they did allow, some – I mean, this wasn’t to me, ‘cause it was already immaterial. Because the same thing was with the, with the abortion laws, if I, used to figure and start talking about abortion I used to say to my wife it’s like this: IF I know that the child will never know that he’s adopted, I wouldn’t be against it. But, if not, I mean, I felt it’s not gonna – am I gonna support the (needs translation) but the thing is, that this was (inaudible) like I used to say, that what you don’t know, don’t hurt. Because, now we went to Steven Weiss first. We went to counseling, (inaudible) and they asking the same question also. ‘Would I tell him’ and I said, in my opinion, I said I would not. That I feel that if the child don’t know, and if it’s raised – so she brought a, suppose he’s gonna find out – or it is gonna find out through somebody else, what are you gonna do? Well, it is a valid question. I wouldn’t say no, but I felt that, ‘if you don’t know.’ So anyway, they refused us on account of because I was too old by then. You know, I was about forty when I started.

Q: Refused to allow you to adopt?

A: Ya, because I was too old. They said they wouldn’t give me. I mean, they should give me, you see, you know, they had an agency there -

Q: Steven Wise, sure.

A: Yes. So they – when they said that I was already too old. I mean, that was at least the official refusal.

Q: You think it might have been because of the way you answered them?

A: Maybe, maybe other things. I don’t know. They saw maybe I didn’t see things the way my wife saw. I don’t know. Anyhow, this was – so – it couldn’t be started privately. And I sort of accepted –

Q: What year?

A: in the late ‘50’s...

Q: You were 24 when the war ended in ’45.

A: Right...I was 30 when I got married...my son was born in ’62...I mean the one that I adopted...his birthday was the first day Chol Hamod Pesach...

Q: So you adopted...privately...

A: I was able, we got a lawyer...he was a crook...finally we got a child...and we had to go Chol Hamod. We got the word maybe the first day after (Pesach)...

Q: You have one child?

A: One child. So, of course, I came around as far as this. I figured (inaudible or translate word) if you adopt, and everybody around you knows how you gonna keep it a secret. I mean, if I would – have the means, to pack up and go somewhere I’m not known, I felt it would be better for me for the whole situation. It so happens with the child we ran into something is wrong there. He was fine when he was young, nobody saw anything. But when he – we gave him a yeshiva – and he was – and I wanted him to be in a Yiddish speaking Yeshiva on Eastern Parkway (YEP), and I would say, by eight – nine years I hear trouble with learning disabilities...in the beginning, I took it as laziness...but I really didn’t know to what extent things were going on in the school...the school then, wasn’t at the level that they should have been...but they knew he was troubled in certain ways...I moved from East Flatbush...to...Sheepshead Bay...and a friend (son’s classmate) came for Shabbas...and tells me...(my son) stays in the hall a whole day. ‘What do you mean he’s in the hall the whole day? ‘He disturbs the class so the teacher sends him out.’

Q: So you ask, ‘Why didn’t you tell me?”

A: Ya – but I heard that, so Sunday right away I go right down to the Yeshiva, ‘What’s going on here, I heard so and so - ?’ ‘We... we can’t keep him in class, he yells out,’ so I said, ‘So how come nobody called me up to tell me look they have a problem with my son?’ There was nobody to talk to...I’m not blaming them, but things were bad, you know, so we started ourselves with counseling, and go for counseling, alright in the beginning, had a problem with my wife, she wouldn’t go to counseling, you know, she was worried about ‘what people gonna think of me’ and she was willing to give him up and that’s all, ‘cause, you know she’s a German, ahhh, type of Jew. And her, (inaudible) there was more important, you know, the ‘looks’ what people are gonna think of her, is more important than – and I used to have arguments with her, ‘What the hell do you care what people gonna think?’ I mean, we have a sick child here. Finally we had to go. We went for counseling and then, we had the – all the counselors, we had the religious counselors...so then this doctor, he said that (inaudible) is coming out with a special school with, like for, this type of children. And we got him into that school. But it didn’t last long. And they closed down. And he started (doing?) – he had some teachers that he liked. And he did not bad, actually.

Q: What was his disability? What couldn’t he do? He couldn’t read?

A: The trick is, he couldn’t concentrate. Actually, the thing was that I saw that he knew, but he just wouldn’t admit it. He wouldn’t do us the satisfaction (inaudible) Like you take something, I used to learn with him chumash, so he would go along. And my wife, she handled the other, you know, like the social studies, this and that. And she would sit with him, and (needs translation) you ask him a minute later like he never heard of these things. Like he never heard of these things.

Q: He could have a conversation with you?

A: Oh...yea, but he – but once you see, when like I say, from the beginning I didn’t realize that I deal with – that I deal with – that there’s some kind of sickness involved. I thought he got lazy, so I got stern with him and this and that. So, the more angry, if I’ll punish him with something it got worse. You think that you punish somebody so they’ll learn, they’ll know better, and this case, it worked just the opposite. The more he was punished, the worse it turned. So, finally, what happened is...we went to – for counseling. I went quite a while for counseling. I the meantime he was like 12, bar mitzvah’s coming up, we start make plans for bar mitzvah. So, I realize you can’t force him already by then and I said, ‘Sam, what do you want? Do you want a weekend bar mitzvah, do you want this – ‘ He wants a weekend bar mitzvah. Because, I said, ‘you know for a weekend bar mitzvah because for a weekend bar mitzvah you may have to learn to lain, and so and so’ (inaudible) it doesn’t have to be a weekend ‘No,’ he wants to have a weekend bar mitzvah. So, you know you have to make it at least more than a year at a time had it in Belle Harbor, Washington Hotel and we engaged a rabbi to teach him the reading. And I saw, when I ever wanted to listen to something, it was like, maybe, yah, and then we went to this counselor and he started to say, ‘maybe it’s too much for him? Maybe he can’t take it.’ So I said, ‘Look,’ so, again, you want, gornish, I mean, I said, ‘I don’t care, but I got my nephew to do the reading and so one, so he’ll say the haftorah. It was like two weeks before the bar mitzvah, and I went with him to this rabbi that gave him the instructions and he hardly knew what to say. The rabbi tells ‘Look, don’t be afraid (inaudible) he knows most of it and do you think that people are going to care how he says it? So, just let it run as it goes and so on. Well, we are a little, uh, well sure enough when the (inaudible) they call him up, and he said by the way it’s going to be this week’s translation we picked a small haftorah...so, he said haftorah with the brachos that everybody opened their mouth. In other words, he knew. But somehow he wouldn’t show – whether in spite, or he didn’t trust – I don’t know. But everybody was surprised the way he said it. And the same thing I noticed – things that he wanted to know – songs with the English, with the Hebrew, we used to send him to Camp Aguda he used to go in the summers. We be sending him to Israel...to (inaudible – yeshiva in Israel – illegible in original transcription...) twice.

Q: You sent him to pretty religious places.

A: Yes, because, I tried...I learned one thing. The more you put in, the more of a chance that some – I would take the example from myselves. I mean, from what I’ve been through in the war years, in Russia, and in the Army, and me, it was so baked in, you know, it so ingrained that Saturday I would work, you know, and I would sing the Shabbasdica meals to myselves. It was in me. A lot of things. And I figured that if you put in, there’s a chance something will remain.

Q: Where did he go to high school?

A: He went...to already a special school...(MT trying to think of the name of the school) Mandelwitz – principal of the religious part of the Yeshiva...so he went to this school and that’s where he finished. He got, like a, equivalency diploma.

Q: What became of him after that?

A: What became? No good. No good. Ehr, ehr. I had to throw him out from the house. As a matter of fact, this lady when we went for counseling to this, their was a Rabbi ?Helbistom? – Avenue M in Brooklyn. He was part of the Torah Umesorah and later, when they closed down, I kept going to him for counseling.

Q: He was a psychologist?

A: He’s a psychologist.

Q: He lives in Queens?

A: No. That time he lived in Brooklyn. He moved since. Avenue M was his office. He had a little ?sheikel? there and in there he had his office.

Q: What was he? He was a counselor?

A: He was a counselor.

Q: Psychologist?

A: Psychologist, ya.

Q: What did he say?

A: Thanks G-d, as far as with – somethings got progressively worse with school, and with everything. And, he got bad. It changed a certain things that was impossible. And he said to us one thing. ‘Throw him out of the house cause you have no other choice. Throw him out of the house.’ He says, ‘He’s no good, and - .And, you know, you don’t do things like this so fast.

Q: No, not if you’re the parent. Easy for someone else to say.

A: Exactly! So we struggle. We struggled. Once. We had to go for a weekend bar mitzvah and he was home for Shabbas. He was already (inaudible) He must have been at least 16 years old or so. And we come home Saturday night, and my wife started looking around – she takes a look in the oven and she noticed that the oven was used...so she said, ‘You know, he used the oven today. That the oven was – ‘ ‘Ya,’ she starts yelling, ‘he moves out today...(inaudible).’ We started looking around. I mean, of course we had left him food...so I go down and I look in the garbage and sure enough I find two empty trays there like a, I don’t know, whatever these trefe prepared, dishes...Chinese food...I don’t remember...I mean, I saw that there was a big problem...(needs translation)...alright, he used the – maybe he didn’t use dishes, but the spoons he used and we have to kasher (inaudible). And then, I remember once, Yom Kippur, he goes with me to shul, and then, all of a sudden he disappears from shul.

Q: How old was he?

A: He must have been then, about 16, 17.

Q:: And this, what happened when you came home...the oven – he was older?

A: This was before that. This was before...I mean, I didn’t leave him home alone after that. This was maybe a year later...and he disappeared, so I looked around and I didn’t see him. When we came home – Ya, and he used to take money. Whatever he could lay a hand on. He would take money. So, finally, erev Yom Kippur we went to shul. Whatever had, I tried not to have too much money. But you have to have some money on you. So I locked up in my, like a – in an office cabinet, you know. I locked it up with a key. I come home from shul, Yom Kippur (inaudible) I see he broke open this thing. He took whatever there was. And he went some place. (inaudible) and I gave him a stern warning, and said, ‘Look. If anything like this happens again, that’s it! You have no room in this house. I mean, if I can’t leave you, and know that there was – and sure enough, a short time later, I come home and I see walls and, the, the, and the – I mean, the walls were punched in. Holes in the walls, the doors, and this. (inaudible) a lot of damage. I don’t know if he was – I could never find anything on him. (inaudible) And that must be shortly after that, and I went down – and I had prepared myself – so already, a lock I went downstairs. I changed the lock outside. And he came there like 2 o’clock in the morning. We don’t let him in anymore. And the next day I went to work, you see, he rang the bell, he saw there was no answer, - I went to work. And he thinks he wants to come in and take clothes. My wife wouldn’t let him in. So he started to knock at the door, break down things, so she called police. The police came and she let them in, and he came up with them, and she showed him, ‘Look, this is the kind of (inaudible) he left us. I, uh, we can’t keep him any more.’ The policeman told him, ‘Look, you want your clothes there, pick up where you can, and go and don’t you ever come back to this place again.’ And, that, but, we didn’t wash off our hands from this. My cousin told me, ‘Look, you can’t do that. He is a sick person. Alright, he can’t live in the house is one thing. Cause he’s a sick person. So you can’t just abandon him completely.’ And we had, like money, that uh, I would give him let’s say, birthday, this or whatever, that I had him count. You know, I always tried to interest him in things. He had a nice couple of thousand dollars in his name. And, you know, before, let’s say two, three years before, any little thing I tell him, he going – ‘I’m going away, and I’m never coming back.’ Later on I said, ‘Fine. Good. Pack up and go.’ I said, ‘As a matter of fact, I’ll give you all your money, and GO!. I don’t want to see you any more.’

Q: Do you feel you didn’t love him?

A: It was hard then. Maybe that, that we didn’t love him. I think that by then I realized that there’s something wrong with him. I wouldn’t say so. You know, there’s one thing. We tried to think maybe because we – Ya, if we told him that he’s adopted, maybe, yet, I don’t know, three-five – I don’t think you could understand what it means. But we – finally we were advised telling him at early stage tell him, and he never showed any concern, whether adopted, or not adopted. But when we moved – so apparently this didn’t bother him, because when he got new friends, he told them he’s adopted. So they didn’t want to believe him. So he called the whole gang in front of the house and calls, ‘Daddy,’ I come up on the porch, ‘Isn’t it true that I’m adopted?’ I say, ‘Yes.’ ‘See?’ He told me he didn’t care. I mean, there was something – you say maybe he would be ashamed or concerned. He wasn’t. But when the counseling, during the counseling, you know, they try to get to it. They never could come close to him. To anything. I remember when he was younger, and when he went to his first doctor, so, he mostly would play games with them. So, as long as he played games, everything was fine. He didn’t get out much. But when he get down to serious talk, he closed up. And later, he would tell me, ‘What’s it his business – why should he ask me all these questions.’ So, I said, ‘You know, Sam, he wants to – he’s trying to be a nice guy, he wants to know what the problem is.’ He would never open up. Nobody could come close to him.

Q: So what’s the story today?

A: So the story, is, the story is finally, then he was out, I gave him little by little his money. What did he do – he goes no other place but the – there’s a Golden Inn Motel in Sheepshead Bay, he paid forty dollars a night or something like this, that goes back a nice number of years already.

Q: So he used up the money?

A: He used up the money very fast and he comes to me. And I said, ‘I’m sorry,’ I said. ‘I told you. You, you spend – ‘ Finally I tried to get him a room. Like a furnished room. So I gave him, he went and took the check, he didn’t want to stay there. He enlisted in the Army. One day he comes, he enlisted in the Army. Fine. I was very happy...

Q: He was a strong fellow?

A: He’s. he’s ah, he’s very muscular, you know, and all that. So they took him right away, and I didn’t think that they gonna take him. But apparently they’re not too bright there, I guess...he’s very good looking. Believe me, you talk to him , you’ll never know there’s something wrong with him. He can tell you jobs he’s doing, and how important he is. So, and I was happy. First of all, I wouldn’t have to – because even I threw him out of the house, I didn’t sleep much. I was going, ‘where’s he sleeping, what’s he eating, what’s a this – then he used to come around, and I said, ‘Look, Sam, you wanna eat supper once? Anytime. But you cannot sleep in my house’ I said, ‘this is final.’ Cause he tried, you know, like, eh, you threw him out the door, he would try to come in the window. All kinds of gimmicks. I said, ‘Forget it.’ You know. And at one time even, I took out an Order of Protection. To keep him out of the house. ‘Cause I realized that he cannot live with us. This was one thing. You know, help him is one thing. But have him in my house was impossible. So he enlisted in the army, and after like two, three months, he calls me, ‘Hello, Daddy.’ ‘What’s the matter?’ ‘I’m coming home.’ ‘What do you mean, you’re coming home?’ ‘Well, the food here, it’s not kosher, I spoke to the Chaplain, and - .’ All of a sudden he became kosher, and things like this. And he’s gonna come back, and he’s gonna go enroll in college and things like that he’s gonna do. Well, I knew the whole talk is, is nothing. But I couldn’t stop it either. I said, ‘Sam, try to stay there, maybe – ‘ ‘You know, but you don’t understand, they don’t – they send me out.’ I mean, they realize - as a matter of fact he go his discharge paper. It was an honorable discharge, but, I remember like, it said there something, like, ‘marginal’ – he’s not unproductive or something, that was it. They finally realize that they can’t do much with him. So he came home again. And he thought that he’s gonna walk right into my house, and I said, ‘Sam, forget it. I told you, you cannot stay in it.’ We got him a furnished room. And my cousin always used to tell me, ‘why don’t you file for the social security disability, this, that – And, I, I don’t know. First of all I was working, and I know it’s gonna take a lot of time. And I didn’t have time. And I didn’t believe it. But when I went on (inaudible) I lost my job, and I went on social security. And even then, I didn’t do anything for maybe two – three years. But, finally I said, it’s no more – and he didn’t really work. He didn’t do anything. And I said, ‘What can I lose?’ I went down to social security myselves and I told him that this and this is the case. I support him, and I can’t do it on what I get on social security, I cannot. And they file paper, and all that – they refused all the time until it came to a administer the lower judge. So, the lower judge , when I came in and he would go the papers and I came in there, he says, ’You did a good job with him.’ So I thought he’s trying to give me the needle there. So I said, ‘Look (inaudible).’ He says, ‘No, I’m very serious. I mean all you did for him. That you tried everything possible.’ And he says, while we’re here, we’re gonna –

Q: I think you had a lot of patience with him.

A: I had a choice? What should I do? The only thing is, to throw him out and wash you hands of him. We couldn’t. We couldn’t.

Q: I would say, you say you had no choice. You’re Jewish. Somebody not Jewish, they wouldn’t have said, ‘Oh, he’s my son!’ They would have said, ‘Goodbye.’ Right away. They wouldn’t have put money in the bank for him -

A: Well, when we started putting money, he wasn’t that bad. You know...it didn’t interest him. He just needed money to spend it now. The rest didn’t interest him.

Q: So, who were his friends?

A: Now, don’t ask me because I don’t me ‘cause I don’t know them. See, I mean, he is now 28...

Q: I mean, when he lived with you. Did he have bad friends?

A: In the beginning, as a matter of fact, no. He found friends, like, let’s say, his type of friends. My wife used to say, ‘How can he be any good if he, uh, what can learn from these friends. Look at the friends...’ I said, ‘Look, it’s not that these friends are bad. This this is what you look for.’ I mean, he well, this came as a natural process by, because. you see, like I said with the bar mitzvah and then with the school, from the beginning, (needs translation) some used to call him, what the homework was, and so on. Whether he knew it because my wife worked so hard with him. But later on, you know he went to a lower class. And then, you know, all his friends grew up, went to high school (inaudible) and he was further down, down and out. He had nothing in common any more with his original friends. So, I don’t know what kind of friends now. I don’t even know where he lives exactly. The last time – and that was my biggest problem – every Monday and Thursday he had no place where to stay because noise, I don’t know. Every time I was busy looking for him, just a shelter. I didn’t care much – but he should have a shelter...

Q: But it’s very hard in a Jewish community for people to talk about their children. When you don’t know how -

A: This I’ll tell you, I didn’t think much – I didn’t have as much as a problem, because I say like this: ‘I don’t care what people think about me.’ I mean, this is my nature. I say, ‘Look, this is what I am. You like me – good. You don’t like me? –

Q: Let me go back to when you first came here. You were on the boat. You talked, I suppose, with your friends, -

A: Yes.

Q: You thought about America?

A: Yes, but not too deeply. I’ll tell you, we didn’t know what to expect. The only thing I remember, which made an impression, I was in the D.P. camp, and there was Rabbi Lookstein, and so he painted the American Jew. I’ll never forget that he says, the custom was that every Jew had a ( illegible in original transcription copy) in shul. Know what I mean by a (illegible in original Transcription copy) in shul(needs translation) It was a long bench, but you get an assigned seat (needs translation) I mean I didn’t understand what it meant. Whether it meant that all the shuls were mortgaged. (needs translation). And another thing, when, already from the HIAS, they had a man like that was in Bremerhaven...when we get the assignments for the boat. So he had a speech, and he started telling, ‘Do me a favor,’ he says, ‘don’t tell your relatives that you coming,’ he says, ‘on the boat, ‘cause when you arrive they may have moved by then.’...he meant in a joke but –

Q: To every joke, there’s a little bit of truth...you mean, you were already afraid that the people here, even if they send you an affidavit, they weren’t so excited.

A: Exactly. And that turned out to be truth. Because –

Q: Why? What do you mean”

A: Why”. What I mean. You see, the papers were sent to me by an uncle – not the uncle that was suppose to be with my brother, incidentally – it was sent by another uncle, actually he was married to my mother’s sister.

Q: How long was he here in America?

A: He was here a long time – he came before the war. As a matter of fact, he came before the war to take his wife over and she couldn’t make it because she had glaucoma.

Q: But you knew him?

A: Oh, yeh, I knew him...I saw him once or twice...he was the man, he sent me the papers and a son of his, at the time was a rich man.

Q: That’s who came to pick you up?

A: No. Other cousins came to pick me up...he made the headlines in the Times one day. He kidnapped his son, you know, he divorced (inaudible) and he run away with him to Israel...that must have been in the late ‘40’s or early ‘50’s...so he happened to be a rich man, and he of course signed the papers, so the main papers I remember I still have some place...so I didn’t care much about who came...but this uncle that was married to my mother’s sister...he was a very nice man so he sent me the papers. And he was one, when I came to America, and I had that uncle that the brother was working in the movies. He was a movie operator. Mayfair on Broadway. So Shabbas he comes, and wants to take me to the movies. And I say ‘Shabbas?’ So he says, ‘America (needs translation)...’ And I say, ‘No (inaudible).’ I didn’t even know what to answer him. But I thought, the first Shabbas I wasn’t gonna run out to go to the movie because as I was in Germany, in D.P. camp, I started to come back to religion a little because I always missed it. You see, that’s one thing. Wherever I was, I never forgot that there was a Jew in me. And I never forgot the lifestyle in the home at each holiday. Even to this day, any holiday that comes, I just – I get so depressed. Just the memories, you know, what you’re missing and all this.

Q: Just like when you were a kid you mean.

A: A kid – 16, 17, but going back to childhood, all the way to –

Q: What about your wife?

A: Well, my wife, she’s different . She was 8 years when she left Germany.

Q: She came before the war?

A: In the war. She left in 1940 Germany. And they went through Russia...

Q: She went through Shanghai?

A: No. Not Shanghai...Haping in Japan...

Q: China...it’s controlled in Japan...

A: ...they went with the, she told me, the Transerbian train all through Russia...

Q: So then she came to Seattle.

A: Right.

Q: Does she have family in America?

A: She has sisters. The parents are deceased and brother passed away. The brother and sister came before the war.

Q: So when you came here, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came?

A: Yah. It didn’t mean anything to me.

Q: Ya – why?

A: I don’t know. But we didn’t understand it. You see, I’ll tell you a lot of times there’s other questions that bothered me. I mean, also I have an (inaudible) like, let’s say, when I was yet in Poland, and I told you I decided to lose myselves. But it – I read the paper that there was the what they call them terrorists or patriot, that there – that certain things were happening in Palestine, ya.

END OF TAPE ONE----SIDE TWO.

TAPE TWO-----SIDE ONE.

A: ...our town was a very religious town.

Q: But not Zionist.

A: Right. There was a Mizrachi, there was a (?illegible in original translation?), a Zionist organization – more than once I remember, after mincha, maariv, the whole shul got together and they went down to try to burn them, to burn books, and they did this. I mean to be a Zionist, was very bad. To be an Agudist – my oldest brother became an Agudist (inaudible) and he started to wear long pants. He was considered like a Kolladica – off the wall – a no goodnick. (needs translation).

Q: It was like being a Zionist?

A: Not exactly...(needs translation)...

Q: Today, what shul do you belong to?

A: I belong to an orthodox shul on Ocean Avenue and Jerome.

Q: Do you go on vacations?

A: Ya, of course.

Q: Besides now. Besides Pesach.

A: Ya, we try to go. Florida, Israel, we went three times already.

Q: And how do you feel now about Israel?

A: Ahhh. (inaudible)...

Q: You changed?

A: Yah, but I’m coming to this about I myself says to me, ‘How could I have, years ago – ‘. But to me, is in behind –

Q: That’s very strong?

A: Yah...(inaudible and needs translation)...the Agudah...my sister belong to the (?minos?) and they made some kind of party for Chanukah so my sister was singing (inaudible) mo –a tzur...the whole town was talking about it...but my father was angry like I – I remember that he was ready to what, I don’t remember. My mother just tell him that because (needs translation)...

Q: Dressed like a Hassid? Your father?

A: Oh, yah, yah.

Q: He had a (illegible in original transcription) on Shabbas?

A: (needs translation).

Q: So he was a yid midt (needs translation)...

A: (needs translation)...being in the business, he wasn’t ashamed, you know, he wore long pants...most people, the Hassidim, they used to wear like knickers...and I know the story when my mother had yortzeit...my father wanted to daven Shabbas and my father was a known Baal Tefillah...they wouldn’t let him...because he had long pants...

Q: So – when you came into New York Harbor, the customs people, were they nice to you? The immigration people?

A: They didn’t bother much. As much as I can remember they came aboard, and I don’t even think that we had any papers. I think the HIAS must have been somebody from the HIAS a representative, and that he had all the papers. And they just stamped them. As far as I can remember, because I still have the paper that I got coming off the boat. I think I still have the steamship ticket. I keep it as a souvenir.

Q: You know, there are these survivors, that made it really big, you know, you see their names...how do you think they did it? They came to America, they had nothing. Then they became millionaires. They became real estate builders. Where do you think that they got the strength to do that?

A: Well, ehr, I would say, it takes – there’s different types of people. That’s a good question which I many times – you see like I, myselves, was never dreaming of big monies. It was never important to me. I was in business too. I was never successful. But – because I was in the needle trade and that was – first we started the business in the time from the Korean war.

Q: What did you start?

A: I was in the – I started – I learned shirts home. To make shirts home. But a home is – we didn’t have no electricity in the town. I didn’t know to already handle an electric machine. So when I came here, the first job I got was this uncle that send me the papers. His mehutten was making a better quality shirt. It was on ?Herzal? and Dumont? Like a stall.

Q: Brownsville?

A: Yeh. I was living in East Flatbush. I was living in 52nd Street with an aunt that was here a long time in America and Lenox Road. And I used to walk to work. And he got me the job there, to sew shirts. I had to learn how to operate an electric machine. And I wasn’t much of a (needs translation) but I was young, and I learned fast, especially the American way. And I started with $35.00 dollars a week. And, after a couple of months, I saw that I surpassed all the other workers there as far as production. And I could see, and I knew, that they made more money than I did.

Q: Why?

A: I was young, and there, the older ladies there mostly. I could see what they produced, and what I produced, you know. Alright, of course, it took a couple of months, so in, like after – Pesach, I started going to night school. And I met there, there I first met up with some other newcomers. The greeners, so to speak. ‘Cause otherwise I didn’t see much in my neighborhood where I lived, didn’t see much. But once I came to school, I met -

Q: What school was it?

A: It was on Eastern Parkway. I don’t remember the name...

Q: Night school?

A: Night school to learn English, ya. So then we start talking, so this one tells mehe makes so much, this one makes so much, and I only make $35.00. So I went and I once talk to him and I says, ‘I want a raise.’ ‘No,’ he can’t give me, and this, that. I say, ‘Don’t wanna give me a raise,’ I says, ‘Next time I’m gonna leave ya.’ And one of the –

Q: This was the mehutten?

A: I’m a mehutten to my uncle. Well, I spoke to my uncle about it. I said, ‘Look, it’s –

Q: So, you went into business?

A: No, not right then. So, one guy there from – that I met, he told me, he took me the job, and right away I made $55.00 a week...

Q: Not bad.

A: Not bad. Especially at my (inaudible)...so, but the needle trade, I worked maybe, I don’t how many weeks and it got slow. So it got slow, so I started looking for job, as soon as somebody else told me about another job when I came to a job and I made over $100.00 a week. This was in 1947 – 48. It was a lot of money. And they made the Eisenhowers – they used to work for the Army. The Eisenhower jackets...mine came out beautiful...and I made good money. But again the same thing. The season only lasts so long...and I remember the union guy came up. Walked over to everybody asking about did you join, do you have a book...to me he didn’t come. So I didn’t know what that meant...when the season finished,,,the boss comes over to me and says, if you want, you can stay on until we open the next season. I have odds and ends to fix up...I – ‘okay’...I went down to $40 or $50 I don’t remember...then came a holiday...and he didn’t pay me for the holiday. So this bothered me. As a week worker, he paid them all...me he didn’t pay for the holiday. So this annoyed me...so I left him. And again I found another job...I met a friend...and we planning to go into business...

Q: But eventually you sent into business.

A: Eventually, I went into the shirt business.

Q: How was that?

A: I didn’t do too good ‘cause it was in a bad location, I guess. It was in Washington Manor in Brooklyn. I didn’t have enough work. So what we do, we started taking in blouses. In order to fill in. Once we start getting blouses, how many blouses can you make in a small place...so finally we went out and bought a small factory all the way down in East New York. So, we were both single. And...we made a living...we work and work, and one guy didn’t pay us, and we start putting in money to pay the workers and finally, he went bankrupt...finally, he (my partner) was in the National Guard...and they started talking that his unit is going to be drafted to be sent away to Korea. At the same time I met my wife and started making plans to get married and I figured that what we drawed there in that business, can’t get married on it. So we decided, look, he wanted out too, and we gave up the business. And, so, I started looking for jobs...I could have had ten jobs (inaudible – work on Shabbas?). I didn’t say anything. I didn’t mention. In other words, I’ll see, if they like me, they’ll keep me. Like once I remember I had lined up a job. They like me. He says, ‘You know what? We have another factory in Utica, New York. And every Friday we go out there. I would you to come along to see our plant there.’ I said, ‘ When we gonna be back?’ ‘Oh, by 8, 9 0’clock.’ And that was like before Pesach...and I said, ‘No, I’m sorry. I would have to be back Friday before sundown, because I don’t work on Saturday.’ ‘Oh, I’m sorry. You can’t work for us.’ So, (inaudible) we take it like this. Finally, it was like a week before Pesach and I answered an ad and I come up to a place, and...I told them the truth. I made blouses and this and that. So he asked me about this. ‘Don’t worry,’ he said, ‘I’ll teach you. I mean, whatever you have to know, I’ll teach you. I see that you understand the business. I’ll teach you. Alright? Come in Monday.’ So I said, ‘No, ah, I’m in the process of moving,’ which it wasn’t all the way a lie ‘cause I was in the process of moving, but I wanted to postpone it ‘til after Pesach. I didn’t want to tell him that next week is Pesach. So he says, ‘Come in Monday.’ I said, ‘No,’ he says, ‘I need you, this and - He tried to explain to me that there were two brother – in – laws owning this, and the other fellow was running the factory and he was running the other department there, and he needs somebody badly. I said, how can I? So I had no choice. I said, ‘I’ll tell you, there’s another thing. If I come in early, I don’t work on the Jewish holidays.’ I think Thursday and Friday must have been...Pesach...he says, ‘that’s okay, come in for the three days and then we’ll see.’ So I came in, I worked the three days, and then of course, I and I come back Monday and there the girls...came in early before the boss...they all looking, ‘What you doing here?’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ ‘Oh, we thought you gone already.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Oh, we had here so many men already, nobody lasted more than two days. And you lasted three days so we figured you gone already, too.’ So I said, ‘No, I don’t work on Jewish holidays.’ So, then the boss comes in, calls me in and gives me my pay for the three days, and says, ‘Look. If you gonna stay with me, I’ll pay for the Jewish holidays too.’ And I worked there over five years. He was a very, very nice man, and he paid me and so, but, again, after five and a half years...it was too hard for me, for one man to handle...everything fell on me, and I used to tell him, ‘You know, it’s too much.’...in the meantime, my old partner, we started talking, you know, to go into business again. So finally I decided I’ll quit this job and try business again. I figured, well, the uncle tried. So we tried business, this time also from the beginning, we had a very rough time. First of all, we didn’t go in with enough money...(needs translation) First of all, we did contracting...it was a union place, and it was all settled with the manufacturer you get so much, you pay out so much, you’re left with so much. So as long as he gave us enough work, it was alright. We could make a living from it. But if he got slow, we had to go fishing for work some place else. We go to the association, the union, they were sending you places, go here, go there. We would come there, let’s say, we settled for a skirt, we used to get fifty five cents. We had to pay out, I don’t remember, forty three (cents) or something like this, and here they offer us forty cents for a skirt, thirty eight cents...finally we had to look for work for ourselves. So we went into the better houses where we could get over a dollar for a shirt, so that was already good...he paid us, we had no problem but he didn’t pay his dues to the association...(needs translation)...the guy went out of business and one day the union comes to us, whatever he didn’t pay, we have to make good for it. Then we worked for another guy, and he owed us money. So, by right, if the association sent us there to take work, they were suppose to be responsible for the money. They didn’t do anything, so we stopped paying out dues to the association. So they threw us out...so I said, ‘alright, so I’m not a union man anymore, because we never signed anything with the union, it was only through the association.’ It went on for a while, and we worked, and, alright, they did nothing for us, so we worked. One day, when the new season start...we start to manufacture our own jackets. It was hard from the beginning with no credit, nobody knew you, it was, I remember one case where we ordered some merchandise, and they sent it out with the truck, and we were suppose to send them a check. When the truck comes, ya, then he calls one morning, ‘when the truck man comes please tell him the first thing to call, it’s a very urgent matter. Let him call the office.’ He calls the office, they tell him, ‘Don’t deliver the merchandise,’ they didn’t get the check. So they wouldn’t give us – so he says he’s taking – so I says, ‘What’s the matter?’ So, he tells me. ‘You didn’t send the check.’ I said, ‘Look, we send you the check.’ So, finally give...the truckman another check, and about two days they got the original check, and they saw that we didn’t lie to them. So he calls up, ‘Alright,’ they were German Jews (needs translation)...he says from now on, your credit is (inaudible)...once you had credit in one, you know, it got easier. So, we started working up our business (inaudible) so all of a sudden, we started making plastic jackets, like knits, all kinds of things. It was a good – eh, we could start working up a little. But one season we can’t sell...a jacket...we start to go around to department stores, looking for styles...we saw there, beautiful jackets made in Japan. The store sold them for less than what we would have to charge them. In the meantime, we kept on enlarging...and all the money we made went into enlarging, and we put into equipment, and we had already a nice big place, and here business drops off...money, you couldn’t make. ‘Cause if you worked up a short season, and then you had to stay three months closed, until the next season...so we decided to give up. I went out from the business it’s already over twenty years. We finally had to give up the business.

Q: You had to give it up. So what did you do in the last twenty years?

A: So, then I started looking for job. But again, after all this experience, I mean, I wasn’t gonna become a foreman in a factory. So I started looking something –

Q: An operator?

A: Operator I gave up a long time, because I was a foreman in the other place. I was a foreman, and that was a very good (inaudible) and I really learned a lot. So, I started thinking, first of all, I went to F.I.T., I figured I’ll learn pattern making...but meantime I got a job as a quality control man...also, see, this was years later and Shabbas wasn’t as much of a problem and I got the job...

Q: What about your wife? Was she working all these years?

A: No. She worked when we married like I mentioned, she worked for the OU. And she worked for Barton’s for a short time.

Q: What did she do for the OU?

A: In the kashrut division. In the office...and then she worked for Modern Tours. It was a tour on the East Side...

Q: So she worked, and you worked, so what did you do? You worked in quality control - ?

A: This was before. As a matter of fact, when I started the business, if my wife wouldn’t have worked, I couldn’t have think of going into business. But in the beginning, I actually lived off what my wife brought home. But when things got better, and we started talking for adopting a child, so she stopped. That time she didn’t work. She was home.

Q: You are married to her for how long?

A: Thirty seven years. We got married in ’52.

Q: Remember I asked you a question –

A: Yah, I was coming to that about how the other people, how they – I was coming to that – that I see that (inaudible) people that money is all important to them. To me it isn’t. I – I mean, it’s not that I don’t want money – I was always was let’s say, striving. To have a comfortable living. But I never dreamt of millions. It didn’t mean anything. I saw it went so fast.

Q: What’s the most important thing?

A: To me, it’s like now, to be able to live in comfort, without worries.

Q: You’re retired now?

A: I’m retired.

Q: What do you do during the day? Let’s say, you get up in the morning – describe to me just a typical day.

A: Yes. I go to shul. I go to minyan. Then, you see, it’s also, I help out a lot. You see, this is part of it. Why I retired at 62. Normally I had planned to retire at 62, because also, I said, (needs translation) ‘I don’t need so much,’ I mean, G-d willing, if we be healthy, we, we feel, my wife in this respect, we agree. We can manage. (? As a man I’ll tell you something just interesting in confident? Inaudible) Is, ah, so – and, I had planned to retire at 62. but, you know, I plan, but there’s somebody else here who plans differently. So my boss, which I happened to have a good job, I worked there for about 13 years. And, you know, we had two lofts also he had in Manhattan, and all of a sudden...they tripled his rent...so he decided to move out to New Jersey. Harrison...he didn’t last a year there. Apparently, I don’t know whether this was planned, because it was a good way to go into bankruptcy. I don’t know. Funny, it was the last year, like, it’s Succos, something, he comes over to me – ‘From now on,’ he says, ‘You’ll give me every week, you’ll make out a list of petty cash what you spent, you give me a list.’ In other words, instead of a raise, he’ll give me like in cash – very nice of him. He, in general, he didn’t throw out with money. This enough, I was a little suspicious of it. But then a lot of things, I saw a lot of piece goods start disappearing. The end of the year, like in October of that year, all of a sudden, ya – see in the summertime I couldn’t take vacation because that’s the height of the season so, - so here I had made already plans like mid – week to go to Grossinger’s. Because I would never go to Grossinger’s on Shabbas. I was there once when my son was in Camp Agudah. And I didn’t like the atmosphere...but mid – week, I had chance to go to Grossinger’s. So, and I want to go, and he comes, ‘No, I need this and I need that,’ and I was that time supervising the sample, and we had a couple of girls making samples because the production itselves was like after the season. So I didn’t want to take this, but we made samples for the following year. And I said, ‘I’m sorry, I made reservations already. I have to go.’ So I go away, and I come home from vacation, while in the night, that morning, before I was suppose to go in to work, he calls me up, ‘Mark, don’t bother going in, I’m closed up the shop.’ So, alright, I had this uncle, so I went there. So they told me that on a Monday, people came in, and they just literally, they took the girls on the chair, they carried them away from the machine, they packed up everything (MT laughs.) He had, ya, it was on Thanksgiving, I remember, usually, the Friday after Thanksgiving, some times they wouldn’t go in. This time he says, ‘Look, you must come in because (inaudible) insurance,’ he’s, a, - I knew the guy, he has a place, where he sells machines, and this and that – ‘for insurance purposed he has to make an inventory this, so, Myron so – so’s coming in, I – I, say, please be there on Friday.’ So, I come, and this guy comes, and so – he writes down everything what’s there. Ahk, for insurance, for insurance. So I said, ‘Was lucky the place wasn’t (inaudible) maybe he needs insurance.’ But he was already backing down. He’s holding everything. (inaudible) ‘so I have no job.’ I said like this. ‘Look, I’m approaching 62. I’m planning to retire. What am I gonna look then, for a new job? When I came here I was in...the ‘40’s, so it was easy to get a job. At 60, I said, ‘where am I gonna start looking for a job? First of all, is, I’ll collect unemployment, until I – then I’ll retire at 62.’ So he gives me, ya, but the reason I decided to retire at 62, because it was too hard on my wife. You know – once my son reached like 10 or 11 years, you know, she went back – she started with a part time job, then –

Q: So then you retired, right?

A: Yah.

Q: So, what do you do?

A: Well, I’m coming. The reason I told you this, because I decided I could help my wife a lot in the house. She, like this, she came home late so on a Thursday night to prepare everything, the cholent, so that it should be easy for Shabbas. Friday she would come home, just to put in, just to warm and so and so. And I had a knack for cooking. It’s a little hobby for me. So, I used to help in the house a little. So I say, ‘Look, you know what? If I retire, I’ll help you. It’s gonna be easier for you.’ What I’m trying to show you is that the money wasn’t that important to us, so, (needs translation) so, this is how I started. So then I was walking around...I started looking, I saw they looking for somebody like in the neighborhood, in a shirt place, for help. I go in, they offered me bupkus (needs translation) but I figured, to go in for a couple of hours or so, it’ll keep me busy for a couple of days. So I worked like three days for a while. As a matter of fact, my wife goes to – she works in Brooklyn College.

Q: What does she do there?

A: She in the library...she is in the technical services, it’s called. Cataloguing the books and things like this. So she works like 12 years already. So, she has a car, she has a parking in the college, so it takes a couple of minutes to go to work. She used to drop me...it was very easy...but I got tired of that to and I decided, ‘Look, it’s enough. I reached my –

Q: So, now, -

A: So now I’m retired. So what am I doing? This is what I’m doing. In the morning I get up, I go to minyan, then I come home, it’s like this. I bought material, I made for my wife some clothing – like I said, I help out. I cook for Shabbas. Alright, she cleans the chicken, let’s say, Thursday night she cleans the chicken, she gets every detail – and I cook it and I make the cholent...

Q: Do you and your wife go out during the week ever?

A: During the week, not much.

Q: Do you socialize?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Do you have friends?

A: But socializing is like this. We had several circles of friends, you know, we used to get together in this house every Saturday night, and that house, but unfortunately, the time takes it’s course, you know. This one lost his wife, and this one lost her husband, so those couples broke up.

Q: Were your friends mostly survivors?

A: Yes...Maybe not the wives, let’s see, because like we have some friends that the wives were born here in America. But the men are survivors.

Q: Do you think that American Jews can ever understand what happened to the survivors?

A: No. I don’t think so.

Q: How do you see them?

A: I’ll tell you the truth, I see them as ordinary people. I don’t think anybody could imagine, anybody could picture, what really happened. Even as a survivor, or even after that too. What you go through. I mean, I don’t expect that of people to understand such a thing. I mean, I myselves, if I wouldn’t be there, I’ll, I’ll give a fer instances. When I was in Russia, and it was in 1943. You know, in Russia, the radio, some had like a horn, you know on the wall, and when they decided to play on the station there, you could listen too. And the same thing where with the post office was, they had like a loud speaker, and you could sit there and listen to news. So I remember that was in winter time and when they started give some news about the Warsaw ghetto, the uprising, you know, and all this and there were people there where there from Poland, you know, and all this, ayyy, thought propaganda, they want us to join the army. I saw the massacre Rosh Hashanah. For me it was easy to believe. And I, I, (inaudible). Nobody would believe it. So how can I expect people here in America who never saw hardship. Who never came CLOSE to any – why should they understand it?

Q: Do you think they are prejudiced? Do you think they are prejudiced against people who come from Europe? Against greeners?

A: I wouldn’t think so. Maybe at certain times, they say the ‘greener have’ but I don’t really think. I don’t think so. If you want to say, you can say the same thing now. In other words, there are a lot of Russian people and they come in here and you’ll see they did in weeks. They are on the way in going. They have nice jobs. They in business, and this and this. Some of them, ya, that they – I – I can hear something talk and, ‘Oh, they just like for especially the elderly to come, and the the ?wife? to get the ?society? whatever.’ They want your (inaudible) what’s coming. I wouldn’t say this is something. But on the whole, I don’t see that they should be ?jealous?. I think mostly at my age, (inaudible) I myself, too, that they are so fast on – I mean, it’s different. But apparently it doesn’t work, because I would see people that come from a free world, and they were business people and so on, they come here, it’s to step in. But I, I myselves can’t understand it. They – they’re not in business for themselves. If they can help you, how well they know the tricks of the trade. And by the way, when I worked in the shirt place there lately, and there was a young man, a Russian. And I discussed this with him, and I said to him, ‘How is it,’ and you know, the language that he used, and he speaks Yiddish incidentally. He’s a young man in his early thirties. He says, (needs translation)...you should excuse me, I don’t want to be crude. He says, (needs translation). He says in Russia, (needs translation) if you didn’t know how to do it, you couldn’t survive. And he tells me how (illegible in original transcript copy). So I asked him, I say, ‘If it was so good, how come you came?’ He said, ‘Because you don’t know how long it’s gonna go on. You don’t know when they’ll catch you.’ (inaudible) So but here, that’s what he says. That, that they had – he says, ‘All those tricks.’ (inaudible) They know ALL the tricks of the trade, you know. And you would think, ‘How did I - .’ So he says, ‘You had to live like this there. You have to. Otherwise you couldn’t – (inaudible).

Q: When you think back, you know, you didn’t have an easy life. Not the way you described it to me. You had a pretty tough life. What is it, what achievement, or what that you did, would you say that you were most proud of?

A: An achievement? Well I would say that my biggest achievement is that I managed to remain sane. I – I really mean it. That I can have a family – ahhh – alright, we have no children, but with my wife, the kind of life we lead. I – uhh, we’re not millionaire, but we managed to live like menschen, sort to speak. (voice drops very low) Socially and this and that and this is – uhhh, I mean after all that I think it’s an accomplishment. I mean, financially, it was hard on me - to me this is, it’s not important. It’s not that important. Look, it’s only important to the degree that I need to support me for what I want. That I can go on living with a certain degree of dignity, let’s say. My wife says that’s what counts.

Q: Do you feel you have an optimistic nature?

A: Not really, not really. I’m rather, I would say, I was very – I would say to a certain degree, this changed too. But, ahh, I was pessimistic. If you’ll tell me like for the outlook for the future I don’t see too good an ou----.

Q: I was going to ask you next. What do you see for the future?

A: I, I see, and especially for the Jewish, also, it’s encouraging to see, (kinahora needs translation) you know, I get such a kick out – when I came to America to live, so I was religious. I wouldn’t dare walking around with the yarmulke in the streets somewhere, or go to a job with this on. (inaudible) here I see those young doctors, lawyers, there. You know, in all the the yarmulkes, I even years ago, when I saw a person with a yarmulke, I had such a warm came in my heart. I said, ‘Oh, this is the future of Yiddishkeit,’ you know? I mean, this how I saw. And, well, other people, you know, they would criticize my beard, (inaudible) and tsitsit (needs translation) so I used to have arguments with people. But I would (needs translation) If you believe in democracy, and if you believe that this is a free country, why shouldn’t we be able to, to walk the way you feels. I mean, this how I see it.

Q: So, what are you pessimistic about?

A: In general. I’m pessimistic about the way I’ll tell you. The way I see life now. The homosexualism. In the open. Now, I think this cannot lead to, to, towards, to a better future. I mean, we can argue, yes. (needs translation) Well, look, it wasn’t in the book of (inaudible) I mean, if it’s written (inaudible) it existed. But some – I said, if it was, it was under the cover. People – here, it’s nothing to talk about, ehr, we just live together, or something. Or, or we are (inaudible) that homosexuals that they can go out and have demonstrations, and fight for their rights – to me, I see this as degrading. It’s storm. I mean, it’s storm in coming. That’s why I look at it.

Q: What?

A: It’s storm in the coming, I said.

Q: Storm coming?

A: Storm! Storm! Sodom and Gemorra. Sodom and Gemorra. I mean, I say, (needs translation) That’s how I see it. It’s not that I’m such a fanatic religiously, but just, ehr, as human beings, I think there has to be a certain – even one is not 100% - at least, a degree of biesh – You know, the shame. And now, there’s no shame. And, and I don’t think this gonna lead to anything. I mean, I am very pessimistic about –

Q: And this crime too?

A: Crime is another thing. But crime was always there. I mean, not to this (inaudible) crime doesn’t disturb me so much. Not that I like it. But this is somethin – it’s a phenomenon that it’s new. And it’s so open that people have no ?hibition? no more. There’s no – Oh, even divorce. The rate of divorce, the rate of divorce among religious couples, this is something that that it’s disappointing. I mean, I don’t think so. And I’ll tell you another thing that I have many times like in my – our circles. I – I have something to say, that people think I am crazy. Is, is about women. First of all, I – like a, take the women’s lib, the (gentile’s?) women’s lib I wouldn’t even discuss, this is a (needs translation). But among religious women, with their own minyunim alright, this I wouldn’t think this is gonna bring, chas va shalom, to the – world should collapse, you know.. But, it shows you that the respect of, of law, you know what I mean? If you’re religious, why accept what’s written, and, - look, they don’t ask anything from you, be happy. But, ‘No,’ they insist they must daven, they must lay tfellin, I think all these things eventually, they have to lead to – to worse things. That’s how I see things. I’m not ever think that I don’t like, in Jewish circles. And I say it, I have cousins but they were, they, they the cousin he’s a doctor and the wife is a doctor. And he had a lot of women going, you know, religious women. And I say, that’s not good. It’s not because the doctor’s that it’s not good. I say, and I can understand that each individual women, if she wants to be a doctor, I mean, she has every right to be. Ahh doctor, or whatever she wants to be. But I say, eventually, this is gonna affect the nature of the life. The nature of life in the community. Because, you say, I believe a mother, is at least when the kids are young, should stay with the family. And he says, ‘Until you become a doctor and leave the kid there with a svartze, or with a Polish woman, and, I don’t think that this is ahh, it’s gonna bring up a better generations. I doubt it.

Q: Do you think that what happened in Europe could happen here in America?

A: Well I would say, like some pessimists would say that they see it coming. I wouldn’t say that that I see it coming. But it certainly could happen. I don’t think that any place in the world (inaudible) especially with such a, kine hora, a Jewish kibbitz – you know. That ah, well –

Q: You don’t think that anti – Semitism in America is the same as the one in Europe?

A: Oh, they are the same, but it’s different in, in a certain place. First of all, Jews here, they have power. It’s not like in Europe. In Europe Jews, they organized, I mean, they have organizations, but it was different. You didn’t have Jewish politicians that they could protect us, and here they politicians, I mean, I think they do some good. I mean some are –

Q: Do you like Kissinger?

A: Kissinger – well, I have mixed feelings. Why? Well, I’ll tell you. I don’t think that we know the whole truth about him. Like, at one time you know, I thought that he was the one that he was pressing on Golda Meier, and the others like to relinquish this and that. I don’t know if we know the whole truth what was going on. What would have been the consequences if they wouldn’t listen, but he threatened, or what – I mean, if I’m gonna give an opinion, I mean, I would have to know more background...

END OF SIDE ONE---TAPE TWO.

TAPE TWO---SIDE TWO.

Q: Did you like Reagan?

A: Yes, to an extent. Of course, I didn’t approve of everything he did, but, incidentally, I am a registered Democrat. Always was a Democratic. But since Nixon, at the second time, I think, I’ll voted for Nixon and since then, I –

Q: You came to New York. Do you think that things would have turned out different for you if you had moved to another part of the United States?

A: It’s hard to tell. But, ah, well, coming back, I’d like to make the point about staying religious, and of course you had asked me, and I told you about my uncle, about, I told you he wants to take me to the movie. But while I told him ‘No,’ the other uncle, the one that send me the papers, came like, the next day or so. And he started talking and he says, ‘Look, Marcus?, I know your family, I know, I mean even with my parents, (inaudible) I know who are. And who you come from. And let me tell you one thing. Like he was a religious man. He says, ‘I’m not gonna tell you what you should do, ‘cause you are a free man. But let me tell you one thing. If you gonna make up your mind, that you want to remain a Shomer Shabbas, you’ll be able to do it.’ He says. ‘Don’t let anybody tell you that it’s hard, that it’s this, and this.’ And I took this to heart –

Q: Let me put it to you another way. Forget about if you lived elsewhere in the United States. If you had your life to live over again, from the time that you came here to America, is there anything you think you would have done a little differently? Is there anything you wouldn’t have done, or anything, if you did it, you would have done another way?

A: You mean, since I came to America?

Q: Since you came to America. With family, with business.

A: Ya, I understand. I – I really don’t think so. I mean, ahh, I don’t think there was much – ‘cause I, what I usually say, I would probably make the same mistakes over. I mean, I really mean it. Whatever we did, I’m not a guy that does things harshly, you know. We considered every move I made I considered, that doesn’t mean I came to the right conclusion.

Q: With the child you couldn’t know.

A: Well, with other things too. Like with business. You start a business, do you know how it’s gonna work out? I mean –

Q: Do you think you would have gone to school more? Maybe studied more?

A: Had I known then, what I know now, how important education is, maybe I would. Then’s a question, ‘Could I?’ I mean, ahh, you know – I think when we came here, my nerves were shot. I mean, like most of them. Some managed to go for better education. Higher education. I don’t think I was geared for it..

Q: Are you friendly with the relatives you do have?

A: Yah, most of them. I’m certainly not on bad terms with any of them. But you see, there was a, I would say, a gap about – with the religious ones. I mean, mostly that came after the war we are all – all religious. Those that were here before, I mean, the elder aunts in other words, they’re gone. And the cousins, they’re not religious.

Q: How many cousins do you have?

A: How many cousins? It’s hard to tell ‘cause some of them I don’t even know if they still live.

Q: I mean, that you see.

A: That I see? Oh, it’s very few. Because like I myselves have very little time. But I have cousins – actually the one uncle that survived he has a son, and then the aunt. So they have the two sons, one is a psychologist, he is at Maimonedes, and the other one has a business of his own, he’s in the microwave – so that’s two. And then I have cousins – well, these are those from Europe, that’s it. And then the American cousins, with some them, we are close sort to speak, but,...

Q: Was there a chevra from your town?

A: There was when I came. There was something. I went once but it falled apart...

Q: Do you belong to any survivor groups today?

A: No, no.

Q: Do you ever think of joining them – like this Ben Mead, American gathering –

A: No. I’ll tell you –

Q: What do you think of those things?

A: I sort of – maybe I’m too individualistic. I mean, I don’t like that somebody should control my thoughts, you know, my ideas. This way, I never joined – I like I said once, I was anti – Zionism meant nothing to me. But after a while, I really was a very strong supporter of the Agun, let’s say. But I never joined any organization. Even if I had certain sympathies with them, ‘cause I like to be liking them. I have my independent thinking. I like to hold on to it.

Q: Maybe you feel they’ll take it away.

A: Right.

Q: I n your shul, you friendly with the rabbi at all – besides saying ‘Good Shabbas.’

A: Well, ah, it’s a (MT laughs) funny question you ask me because with our rabbi, we are a little – he’s already in his eighties. And we’re trying to get him to retire, so I can’t say I’m friendly with him. I used to go to his shuirim and like it, but there’s – he’s already, really, it’s not that the age that that’s why we wanted him to have a – because he’s not really functioning so, and he didn’t want to retire.

Q: When in the early years, people came over from the other country, and they saw each other, and they felt they had something in common with each other, did you ever get together with people, like go to a certain park on Shabbas, or certain cafeteria, a certain club or school, where you got together with other immigrants.

A: Oh, yes, when I was younger, yes, especially in the single years – There was a park on Rochester Avenue we used to go with to, Prospect Park, a whole group of boys, we kept together, go to Prospect Park, and – my wife I met in front of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. We used to – whole groups, like I lived in East Flatbush, it was quite a distance. But like, Simchas Torah, (inaudible) a whole group of us would go to Hakkofot to the Lubavitcher and we met a group of girls, and we started talking in front of the Lumavitcher – and so I know it’s not in you concern, but it’s a very interesting story how my wife and I got together. It’s a, -

Q: No, it is interesting –

A: Well I’ll tell you something, this what I say, you know, I’m a very true believer in (needs translation) ‘cause, it – like, I skipped a lot of things, because you know, (needs translation) so I didn’t give you my whole story with the – how I...

Q: Does this help you? When you had problems –

A: Oh, yes, definitely.

Q: My question is, when you had problems with your son, did believing in G-d help you? Did (needs translation) help you? Did it help you get through some of the –

A: Well, maybe it get, maybe it help me get through my agony. And of course, my son it didn’t help. But –

Q: I mean, if you went for counseling, that didn’t help much, right?

A: It didn’t. Well, it didn’t help much as far as my son is concerned. But it helped a great deal as far as my wife and I were concerned.

Q: It did help?

A: Yes, because you know, this – that whole thing caused a lot of friction between us. I mean, I’m sure you understand that ummm, I blamed her for a lot of things. I thought she demanded too much of him, or she did too much for him. You know, she’s a very good person. Whoever knows her will tell you she’s a (needs translation). She’s a very good person. And I always thought she did too much as a child, I thought she didn’t let him grow up independently. I don’t know if it would have turned out differently, but I used to have arguments with her about she did this for him, I mean, I don’t even gonna mention things, because I don’t think this is what, ahh – but, so – but the counseling definitely helped.

Q: But (needs translation) also helped you. You had a tough time.

A: Well in a lot of things, I mean, I know, I don’t know how you see these things, but to believe in your rebbe, so also, I could not attach myself now to become a Hussid like that to a rebbe that, that tell this. I don’t know. I have observed some - -

Q: I wouldn’t say this, but I would say this, now, that you sit, in 1989, and you know that 6 million Jews died in WW2, and you know that a high proportion of them were frum –

A: Most of them. I would say 90%.

Q: Because the non – frum ones came here already.

A: Right.

Q: It must cross your mind to ask yourself, ‘How could a G-d who’s a G-d of rachamin, of mercy, of compassion, how could HE allow it to happen.’ And what I want to know is, when you think about it, do you ever think about – well, do you ever question it? And if you do, do you ever have an answer?

A: Oy, I have no answer. Well my answer is, that we can’t ask questions. I mean, I – I –

Q: In other words, you have emunah?

A: It does, of course, it crosses my mind, and why, I ask always, like, let’s see, my – my father, my brothers, were they better than I was. Why? So of course there’s questions. But I say, (needs translation). But what can you say? I really believe that’s – I – why did I survive? This is another question, of which I can’t understand, why was I – because of that, what I say, I was just left from like, like, by the handle – some would leading me away from one thing to the other.

Q: But on the other hand, you decided on your own to leave that town and go to Russia.

A: Right.

Q: Nobody led you to do that.

A: True. True.

Q: You said you were driven.

A: Yes. Right.

Q: But you had the initiative to be independent?

A: Yes. I – yes. But then there’s so many incidents I mean, it’s gonna take days, I’m afraid, to – it’s a whole – (needs translation) truth

Q: That’s luck, you mean?

A: That certain things that happened, some people would - would describe luck. I don’t think it was luck. It was everything practically, like, ehr, that it led one to the other, one to the other, one to the other.

Q: Go back to what you were saying, about how you met your wife.

A: Oh, yeh. But I just want to bring one thing up about emunah and this, and so on. Before my emunah was set, when I remember when I was in the D.P. camp, and I wouldn’t say that I was already – that so hard set, you know, (inaudible) about – but, I tried to come back. Let’s say, my first job in the camp there, I took in the Kosher kitchen, so I shouldn’t have to go work in the so and so on. And I remember that there was a whole group of guys that they worked there in the magazine and I went there like to pick up the products for the kitchen. And, uh, (inaudible) about working in the kosher kitchen, you know, and so on, then it start making (needs translation), ah, (needs translation) and then there were two boys, coming – they came from another camp there, with the beards, and peyas, you know, I think they were (needs translation) whatever, and I saw that I – it (inaudible) I went over and said, ‘ What – what’s the matter?’ (needs translation) that’s what they said: ‘What kind of religion is it?’ They said, ‘Look what Hitler did – you wanna know something (needs translation) he won over you not over them. That’s what I told them. They survived (inaudible). They conquered Hitler. They didn’t give up anything (inaudible). Can you imagine that if your father would live, how he would look? Did he, did he have a beard and peyas before he was killed or, or (inaudible).

Q: I think what you say makes a lot of sense.

A: I said, I said, ‘They conquered over Hitler. (needs translation) They didn’t change one iota. They dressed like they dress, they dress, (inaudible).

Q: When you give money today, do you give money to Israel? Or the Yeshivas?

A: I give to Israel. I give to Yeshivas, as a matter of fact, I – I figured maybe it’ll come to the – you see, I had a big problem. I’m not an ?oysha? you know? But, look, for all these years, work, my wife, and this, we have a couple of dollars. And, to me, it was a big problem what happens after 120 years. I mean, I don’t know, maybe every person would think, in my – is it – listen, am I gonna live it to my son? To him, like I said, he can go over money like, ahh, money like, ahh, within a month he can spend everything what he has. This, this is the kind of person he – like, an incident I’ll just throw it in, I finally managed to get for him social security. He’s getting social security on my social security...so then there was always my impression. What happens after 120 years? Leave it to him? (needs translation) so I had an idea I should try to get some kind of organization that I’m willing to leave everything to them. In other words,, when, after hundred and tvenze (Yiddish – 120 years) provided they should provide for my son monthly, or whether private or whatever, for his life that he should get whatever. Now I tried it to here, there, and I’ll tell you, I called Lubavitch. And I made them a proposition. Look, (needs translation) I give to quite a few Lubavitcher institutions...Chabad, Yeshivas, the Hebrew Fund which originally it was (inaudible) and we adopted a child through them, it was – we gave. I think maybe more than, than a lot of people that have much more than I do. I mean, uh, in this respect I say, my wife, she’s also very ?charitable?. Whatever I’ll say, agree, she’ll never argue with me, so so when I came up with an idea like that, (inaudible) so I called Lubavitch (needs translation)...’What you do for me?’ ‘We’ll call you back.’ ‘Ya, they call me like you call me back.’ Then (needs translation) I’ll be honest with you, (needs translation) if I would only give my money to a Yeshiva, I would give it to the most religious (inaudible)...’cause like I said, I always believed that the more extreme you are, the more of a chance is survival. I mean, I really, ahh, I would like to see that the Jewish, ahh, nation should survive. You know, (needs translation) and I would go to the most extreme. So I tried with Lubavitcher...(needs translation)...it would have suited my purpose, but I saw they not businessmen. I mean, I couldn’t do it. So, finally...and believe me, I was nights, laying and thinking...this while I had other problems with him that I had to worry about, so this was one of the problems. So finally, I thought of Yeshiva University. So, also, I’m a slow doer, let’s say, I’ll think of something, I don’t rush into things –

Q: You’re a cautious person?

A: So – must be. (Laughs and needs translation). Anyhow I got up the nerve, or maybe I didn’t have the nerve, I didn’t think, so – I called up the Yeshiva there, and I told whoever I spoke to what’s in my – purpose of the call is. So he says, ‘Alright, we’ll have somebody call you.’ So Rabbi Dubrinsky called me, I spoke to him on the phone briefly, but we made an appointment, and I went down first by myselves, and I really made a very good impression on him. ‘Cause number one, I saw he wasn’t out to grab, - He made a very good impression – a gentleman. And I told him my problem, and this and that, and, so this actually was the easy part. To leave everything – after 120 years, I would say this was an easy part. But you see, my question was other things. You know, we only human beings. And then I said it to this Rabbi Dubrinsky, I said, ‘What can I do” Like, G-d forbid sickness or something, and you know how it is. Before you don’t exhaust the last penny, you can’t go in on the public – I mean, I would like to know what happens then, and then, if I leave nothing for my son, what happens to him (needs translation) I – I, this, this is – the – We discussed about annuities and this, and I think I found a solution which I should say, that after this year, I probably (inaudible) maybe 300 %. It was a big load off my head. Because first of all, I established like annuities in my, you know like scholarships in my parents name. And my wife’s parent’s name. And then I – which it’s going to be like a scholarship in my brother’s – my whole family, which it’s like a unitrust...where I committed myself...in other words, after we are gone, if G-d forbid, I mean, if there is no...estate left...as least that’s what’s gonna build up...as long as he’s gonna be alive, he gonna get this. Alright, it’s not much. But, G-d willing, if we live on, and my – and we pay in, and pay in, so – I’ll have security at least, a certain amount for him, after we are gone. (needs translation). I say, under normally circumstances, we are not big spenders (needs translation)...this year we didn’t even go to Florida, because my wife had a bad case – last Shauvos all of a sudden she went blind in one eye. She was operated. I mean, when you look at her, you wouldn’t even know.

Q: Is she okay now?

A: She is not – the right eye she sees very, very little...and she, to her, it’s yet psychologically...

Q: Nobody can tell, though, right? If they look at her?

A: No. You don’t know. You see, that’s the thing...it turned out it was a detached retina and she was operated on.

Q: How did you meet her? You were going to tell me.

A: Yah. Coming back to the how I meet her. Originally I told you I met her the first time in front of the Lubavitcher Simchas Torah. So, I - we were there a couple of friends. And I, at that time, my mind wasn’t yet set on really ahh, getting married or anything. So another friend of mine, and, and, she seemed like a nice girl. You know, she was younger, about 17, you know, that was of the time I think in 1948, after the creation of the state, and there was a whole discussion there between, you know, about this and that. She prepared a good impression but I wasn’t prepared, ready, besides, I thought she was young, she was 10 years my junior. So I said definitely I wouldn’t even think about it. So my friend took her out. They went out for a while. Then, I don’t know, they stopped seeing each other. So then, through another friends, I met a boy – incidentally, his father was from my town, I knew his whole family there, a religious fellow – and I had a friend I met in the night school, we’re friends ‘til this very day...so he comes from a town...called Ullinoff. So my wife’s mother also comes from Ullinoff. But she left Ullinoff when she was a baby, and went to Germany. So, I don’t know, come and talking one to the other, and so when I told this friend that, you know I met a girl that her parents were (inaudible). So he once went over there, spoke to his mother...then we started talking with this guy that his father was from my town...he sees a girl, and suddenly he’s into it. He says, ‘You know, incidentally, her mother comes from Ullinoff,’ You know, he said it to my friend...the way he described it, and I said, ‘I think I know the girl.’ And I told him so and so this is the name, and ‘Yes, how do you know?’ So, alright. So in other words, there was a connection here. That he knew the same girl, and this was going on and I still was not interested. And then, one time, they going out quite a while, and nothing happens. So once I decided it’s time – time is running out, I mean, maybe I should try to settle. I should - (inaudible) and I always liked this girl, but like I said, she was younger than I. And I didn’t think – so once he says to me, ‘Why don’t you take her out once.’ It seemed he wanted to cut out, and he just – didn’t have the nerve just to leave like this. So she after she made a party there, I should come to the party. And I didn’t know she arranged another girl. He was supposed to be paired. We didn’t go we stayed in the house. And, I was that time in business, and Sunday morning, I went into the place, and sure enough, she called me up, and she says, ‘ Nu, how do you like Barbara Sokol?’ I said, ‘ Why do you ask?’...(needs translation)...I’m not really interested in dating her, but how about if I take you out...’ ...so we sent out...this is nothing unusual I would say. One day she calls me up, ‘You know the father of this boy that she was going out with passed away,’ And being that he was my landsman, would I care to go for a shiva call, and she wants to go. Well, we made up...we’ll meet and we’ll go together there for a shiva call. And there...there was a man coming there selling the corrugated boxes. He was living in the same house where I lived that time with my uncle, we davened in the same shul, he always told me, ‘Do I have a girl for you! Do I have a girl for you!’ And I told him I’m not interested, (needs translation). And the same thing, when he came there, he always told (her) he ‘Has a boy! He has a boy!’ She didn’t know who he was talking about, and I didn’t know who he was talking about. So that day, when we made up to go there for ac shiva call, he comes to her place again to sell boxes, and again he started talking to her about the boy. And...she says, ‘Isn’t his name sometimes Mark Tepper?’ ;Yes, how did you know?’ I’m seeing him tonight, we going for shiva.’ I mean, it’s a funny thing that he tried to shadekin us, for months, her, and he, and I wasn’t sure – and here we was suppose to go for a shiva call, and then she asks me, is this so and so, and I say, ‘Yes, how do you know?’ So, in other words, that was, and then, what’s funnier than that, that, ehr, I remember when I was in Germany, and there was this Rabbi ?Vogelernta? who spoke and he told us stories about Seattle, when those Russian Jews arrived, and what didn’t, and spoke to a child, ask a certain questions, and when I heard she was in Seattle, you know, I asked her, (inaudible) she says, ‘Yes, that was me’...

Q: Well I think it all goes along with your basic philosophy.

A: That’s right. That there’s something with besheret. This is what I’m trying to say.

Q: Do you think that there’s something different about the German Nazi’s than other nationalities, like the Poles, do you make it a point, for example, not to buy anything from Germany?

A: I must say, I do not. I do not. I don’t think it’s – number one, I don’t think feasible. Let me say – or, I’ll put it this way. Israel is flooded with German merchandise. And, I –

Q: How do you feel about Germans today?

A: Certainly no great love for them –

Q: I mean, do you see them at all as Nazi’s? The ones that were born after the war.

A: I understand. Well, I wouldn’t call them Nazi’s, but, uhh, well, it depends. I – I would say that the younger ones, I don’t know if they know much on their own, that, that – speak the hate, but uhh –

Q: Do you think that there’s something special about the Germans, that only they were capable of doing this?

A: No, no. I think the Poles were just as capable, or maybe even worse. I think that the fact that all the concentration camps, or the extermination camps, they weren’t all in the – is no accident.

Q: Do you think Jews will disappear from here?

A: Pardon me?

Q: Do you think that Jews will disappear from here in America?

A: No. In a way – I don’t know, in the very, very far future, I don’t know what to say. It’s not bright. Let’s put it this way. When I look at the intermarriage, what’s going on – it’s, it’s not ahh, the only, I would say, conciliation is that, (inaudible – needs translation) that there’s also growing a Yeshiva – you see, I see with each Yeshiva young men that comes out with a doctor or a lawyer and they raise such a beautiful families. (inaudible) So there’s some hope there, but if this is gonna be able to offset the loss, this is a big, big question. It’s not bright. It’s not a bright picture. Just, ahhh –

Q: What did you think of Watergate? I remember you mentioned Nixon before.

A: Yeh. Well, Watergate, I think it was ahh, stupid of Nixon and the whole thing was stupid ‘cause he didn’t need it. He could have won the election without all that. See, if you ask me already this question, I – I would come a little closer and take now the North case. Now, my personal opinion is that Reagan knew all about what was going on. Alright, maybe not to every dollar. Whether he stashed away a dollar or not, this I don’t know. But the basic thing, I’m sure Reagan knew about it. And I believe he had to deny it. And in my opinion, they did nothing wrong.

Q: Big deal.

A: Why? Alright, it’s against Congress, you understand, I say a Presidents, then he feels strongly about something, and he can’t it through Congress, he has to do it somehow. I mean, I, like this, I say I feel a leader has sometimes to go out on a limb to accomplish what he wants to.

Q: What about a local politics?

A: I’ll come to that. But just – I would like, just one more point. Because why do I say all that? ‘Cause I remember I read a book...and he writing about Roosevelt when he started to help Churchill and send his armaments to England...it was also against Congress...maybe he ( illegible in original transcription). It’s true, I don’t see no big deal. If this was ahh, he thought that it’s was important to help the country, so he had to do it.

Q: What paper do you read in the morning?

A: The Times. I buy the Times every day except Shabbas.

Q: How come you don’t read the Daily News? Or the New York Post?

A: The New York Post, I’ll tell you. I bought it one day this week, because I don’t know, somehow the guy didn’t get the Times. It’s to me it’s a schmata...Murdock – I think he was ?terrible? to Israel, and so on. And I thought that we should support th – th ah paper like this. But I didn’t find – I mean, the format I don’t like it. The way they put the news together with the stupid story...

Q: Do you ever read a Yiddish paper?

A: Ya. By the – I subscribe to the (inaudible). Ya. The Forward’s I could never read it. Before that ehr – alright, that was the uh, the (needs translation) since I came to America...

Q: Tell me something. You read the (needs translation – Morgan?) when you came to America. Do you remember that did the (Morgan--?) have any articles about survivors in the early years?

A: Not so much about survivors. They would write certain things about uhh, what happened in Europe I would say...

Q: Do you read books?

A: Yah, not too much lately. But I like to read. If I read, I like to read historical. Novels don’t interest me. I like to read historical books.

Q: Something that’s true?

A: Not necessarily true, but makes sense where I think I think I’ll learn something that –

Q: Are you encouraged by the fact that people talk more about the Holocaust, that they show the films, I mean do you think that it’s very important?

A: Yah, I think that’s ah – that’s good. I – I, because I don’t think that you should be forgotten. I mean, it’s ahh, or ignored.

END OF TAPE TWO---SIDE TWO.

END OF INTERVIEW.

INTERVIEWER NOTES:

I would to add at this point, that Mr. Tepper, is a man who claims he is a pessimistic type of person, but he really doesn’t present himself as one. And was it with a certain degree of enthusiasm that he approached me in the hotel and said he wanted to conduct the interview. He dressed simply in a white cloth ivy league cap, thin windbreaker type jacket, and inexpensive, unpretentious but comfortable walking shoes, and he is – the one interesting thing that I found in the course of the interview was that he didn’t object to telling me the whole story about his son. And told me that he doesn’t care what people think about him. And he’ll just tell it the way it is. BUT he was very nervous about telling me about how he came into this country. The way he came into this country was that he had a man who was his uncle, claimed to be his brother, and sent him an affidavit, and the man claimed that this Mr. Tepper was his brother. And as a result, he was able to get an affidavit because they accepted in Europe, just the statement of the letter that said, ‘You’re my brother.’ And that’s how he came into this country. And he was afraid, even 45 years later, that since he came in this way, that he might get into trouble for it. He also assured me that HIAS knew very well what was going on, but that they didn’t care, because they just wanted to help people to come in. This was, of course, in ’46 before the whole process had become much more sophisticated. I think it’s important to mention this. He is an interesting man, a man with patience. It is also interesting that he remembered what happened to him during the war, much more clearly than he did the things that happened to him after the ware. It’s almost by rote repetition, he is able to categorize and chronical things, but when it comes to America, he has a little more difficulty remembering – certainly the early years of his arrival into the country. Nevertheless, it was a very interesting interview.

END OF NOTES.

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