

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Jacob Wiener
February 8, 1996
RG-50.030*0425

PREFACE

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JACOB WIENER

February 8, 1996

Q: Rabbi Weiner, when we finished up with your earlier interview, you were talking about after Kristallnacht, in December of 1938, you went to Hamburg and stayed with your sister for about a week, who was living there. What happened after that and at that point, did you know where the rest of your family was and did you have any contact with them?

A: My family was, my whole family was in Hamburg. My brother who had run away from Bremen had also come to Hamburg. My sister, as I mentioned before, had been working with the family in Hamburg, so they were all in Hamburg.

Q: Your father?

A: My father was also in Hamburg. After, about a week or so after the Shiva, my father and I returned to Bremen and we were living in the same house where we had lived before. We were searching the house and we found the bullet which had killed my mother and we found everything upside-down, we put the whole house in order and we were living there and repairing as much as possible. In addition we tried to emigrate and find a place where to emigrate.

Q: And what were the results of that effort?

A: We had written to several people before, but the answers were usually, we have no money, we have no place, we like to help you, but we can't. Now after Kristallnacht, which was on November ninth to the 10th, 1938 of November, we wrote again to these people and we told them about my mother and especially my father's cousin, who was living in Yorktown(ph), Saskatchewan, if he could do anything about it. This time we got a letter from him, that he would talk to the member of Parliament in Canada and find how to get us special permission. And he would then send us what is called a landing card, that we were allowed to land. After a few weeks, we got this landing card.

Now the question was to leave Germany. You needed first of all, permission from the German government and they would be there when we would pack our things. But first of all we had to get tickets to go to Canada. My father went to the Norstorchalloy(ph), which is a shipping company in Germany, and they said, since the Germans wanted us to take a German company, they told us they were all booked up for two years. We did not want to wait for two years, so my father went to Hamburg again and Hamburg had that, Hamburg had a connection with British Airline, with the British, not airline, with the British shipping line, the Koolnot(ph) Whitestar(ph) line and he met a man from there and he said he would get us passage to Canada. However, to get there, we needed first to go by ferry boat, from Hamburg to England and from England to Southampton, we would take a boat to Canada. When the landing cart came, we gave it to him and he prepared us and he arranged for all the necessary things in order for us to travel to Canada. We were traveling five people, my father, myself, my two brothers and my sister. But we needed money for the tickets. In order to do this, we had to sell our house. Now there was one woman, ____ woman, who the Nazi's had planted into our house, she wanted to buy it. Of course she bought it with very little money, just enough money to pay for the tickets. So we had the tickets and we set our date, I mean in fact the date was set by the shipping company, for May 31, 1939. On that day we would leave Germany with the ferry boat. Many other things happened between December and May, 1939. For instance, one thing which happened was in January, 1939. On the 18th of January, which was the Kaiser's birthday, before Hitler came to power, I got it, I was visiting a friend of ours, the family Greenberg(ph) and just about 10 o'clock I got a telegram which said, "Come to Berlin." I didn't know originally from whom it came, but it came from a friend of mine who was working with a Jewish organization, the same I had been working for and I knew that I would go to Berlin and go to this organization. He said to me, my, the family I was working, I was visiting, said to me, "Go there

right away." So it was 10 o'clock in the evening, I went to the train station and the next train was going at 12 at night, so I took that night train. But it was a very uncomfortable trip because there were the Nazis walking in and out and I didn't want to be recognized as a Jew at that time, so I walked around the train. It was what we call a express train, where there is a hallway at the side and then there are cabins in there. So next morning, about seven o'clock, I arrived in Berlin, it wasn't my first time in Berlin. It was a very rainy day and a dark day and I just started to walk. I came to the Brandenberger(ph) gate, which I had not seen for, at all, only in pictures before and there was a sign that Jews enter this at their own risk and Jews are forbidden to enter this, but I walked very quickly through, there was no one really watching me and I walked to this place of our organization, I came to the fourth floor and I saw some friends of mine, they said yes, thank you for coming, we are waiting you, the Nazis have told us that if we make out certain affidavits, which were fake of course, that our friends, young people you see, would have a chance to go to Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, to the Baltic states and they would go there on Hashera(ph), Hashera(ph) means preparation for emigration to Israel. Then they would recognize us and they would go there. So the whole day we were typing out, with the type machine, of course they had no electric typing machines at that time, we were typing out letters with names and birthdays and we said that they had permission, they were accepted to the Hashera(ph) in Latvia, I still have some letters in my files, and we gave them to the Nazis, about 200 people or so were freed from concentration camp and they came out. However, not everyone of these 200 people or so survived, because afterwards the Nazis conquered Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania and you see and then they came into their hands, but some of them might have. So that was in January.

Q: Now, I want to ask you a few questions about what you've just described. First of all, were you at this point, supposed to be identified as a Jew, did you wear a, were you wearing bands?

A: No, no, they didn't have this, only in 1941 they made them, they made them wear the yellow star.

Q: And in terms of this operation in Berlin, what was this organization?

A: It was a Jewish organization called Agoutis(ph) Israel and they were trying, like everyone else, trying to get Jews out. Sometimes you could find a Nazi who was a little bit softer and her would accept such a fake document, you see they knew that it was fake, everyone knew it was fake, because especially the South American countries, Latin American countries were working very much with fake and with money, bribes and so forth, because I went to the South American diplomats very many times and they said to me, "Give us 400 dollars or so on, so much and we will let you out." So I went, oh we don't do it, go to that company, to that country and they were all working together. Many times that's what happened and you know this from your history, people went out and they were not permitted in that country because they said we don't, these are illegal certificates, and they had to be sent back, like it happened with many countries. But the Nazi's were very smart and they recognized the Jew, as I mentioned once before, in the class you see, either by the nose, or by the ears or by the color of the hair or by the form of the head, because they measured them all.

Q: This organization that you were working with in Berlin, was this in place for years, was this an outgrowth of political organizations you were involved with?

A: No, they had nothing to do with politics, actually. They were more or less a Jewish _____ more, I would say more religious kind of organization than another kind of organization. But all organizations tried somehow to bring their members or to bring Jews out, because I can tell you, later on when I, all right, that comes later.

Q: Were you, my question is, were you affiliated with this organization or similar organizations, years before?

A: Yes. I was already, I was already affiliated with this organization since 1934. They had such an organization in Bremen, where I was living at that time, you see and it was at first a Zionist organization with which I was affiliated, however, I separated from them, because of religious reasons and then there was a special teacher in Bremen, who taught us, a Hebrew teacher and he was from this organization, from Agoutis(ph) Israel and I joined him. So I was already affiliated with this organization.

Q: And in 1934, what was the basic theme of the, the focus of this organization?

A: The focus was to work for the Jews to go to Israel, mainly at that time, you see and also religiously, to make an organization where the people, where the Jews especially, became more religious instead of assimilation. It was a question of assimilation. It was a question of assimilation, emancipation. That's why the Zionist organizations, they were more of the type of uniting with the others and of so forth, where as this one was more individualized, by themselves.

Q: And you felt that was important?

A: Yes. Because as I had mentioned before, I said to the teacher when they changed this, the school days, from Saturday, from Shabbat, I said to him that I don't want to come to school any more on Shabbat, because I want to become more Orthodox, like the Germans want to become, in quotation marks, more German.

Q: And this was your, this was really your own past, not your family's?

A: No, because my father was, was not as religious you see, as my mother and my mother came from a religious family you see, but my father did not keep all the laws, but he was just Jewish ____.

Q: Back to Agoutis(ph) in Berlin, was there any risk to what you were doing or was this basically authorized?

A: It was not legally authorized, but everyone did it and the Nazis knew about it was be done, because the Nazis were interested at that time just to get the Jews out, until in 1941, when they had the final solution, you see and they didn't want them to ____ in there, they said, "The world does not take them, the world does not want them." As long as they saw a letter, you see, that another country was taking them, that was enough for them and they would sometimes, not always, let these people go and go there.

Q: When you say you were able to help, maybe, a couple hundred people...

A: Yeah.

Q: How, how were these people chosen from where they, from where did you find them?

A: They were no lists, however we had friends and we knew from our organization, let's say my organization in Bremen at that time, I know names and besides is they had names, each one has names, each one of the people has some names, so they gave them the names and if people gave them different names, if friends gave them friends names, a friend, a friend, a friend, you see. So that's how they were choosing them.

Q: So you helped whoever you could?

A: Whoever, yeah, ____.

Q: And how did you know that somebody was in Sachsenhausen or somebody was in Dachau, or wherever?

A: These people sometimes wrote. If they were in Sachsenhausen, it say Sachsenhausen, near Berlin. Or Dachau near Munich. They wrote and at that time, we knew where the people were, besides this, as I can tell you later, I had some contact with the Gestapo and they told me that, "We have people here in Sachsenhausen," and so forth and forth.

Q: How long did you work with Agoutis(ph) in Berlin?

A: I only stayed there one day, however in this one day, you see, we did a lot of things, because on this one day, we wrote all these letters and we brought them to the, to the Nazis and they let them go, most of them. And then I went back to Bremen. I was still in contact with them afterwards, but this was a deadline, I think this 18th of January was a deadline that they gave us, so we came on that day and made it all final, in one day.

Q: Busy day.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you went back to Bremen?

A: I went back to Bremen. Now one day it happened, we were always afraid, especially at nighttime that they may knock at the door and take us away and it happened one day, I think in, also in January one day they came, an ominous knock at the door in the middle of the night. My brother who were, had, one of my brothers, who had remained in Hamburg and they had sent him to the Jewish hospital in Hamburg. First he was in Sachsenhausen and from Sachsenhausen, somehow, they arranged with the Hamburg, I don't know who, how, but he was in the Jewish hospital in Hamburg. So one night, they knocked at the door and I looked out of the window and I made myself not known, but they continued knocking and I said, "What can I lose?" I go downstairs, I open up. I didn't want to disturb my father, so I went downstairs, I opened up and he came in, not in Nazi uniform, but in plain uniform, civil uniform and he said to him, we have here a search warrant for your brother, Benu(ph), his name. I said to them, "Don't you know that he is in the hospital in Hamburg?" He made as if he didn't know anything, see, but come in and look through. They came through, they put upside-down the beds and this and they're all corner and then in the end I said, "You should have known that he is in Hamburg in the hospital." He said, "Yeah, excuse me" and they left. But they came in and they made a person scared, you know. They could always come in,

middle of the night and knock at the door. I went every morning, about six or seven o'clock, with a bicycle, we had a bicycle, to the synagogue, which was about, by bicycle, 15 minutes away, 20 minutes away and sometimes Nazis saw me, but I didn't mind. So this was 1939, in January. In February, the congregation in Bremen, the Jewish congregation in Bremen, organized itself again and they had a temporary president, vice-president and, but they had no place any more to live, so there was this one family, I mentioned before this family Greenberg(ph) that was a different, a brother of this Greenberg and they had a house in Bremen and they had already left this house in September 1938 and they had sold it, not even sold it, they had given it as a donation to the Bremen congregation. I met him later on in New York. But this was a house in the old city and there were maybe 20 families living in this house now, besides that's the office of the congregation, was also in this house and we organized it. So we re-organized it, the congregation, you made a few things. Number one, I worked with the HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and made translations, I knew a little bit of English, not too much. Number two, we organized some courses for women in sewing and other things like this. Number three, there was a neighborhood congregation in Weisaminda(ph), which is near Bremerhaven(ph), that wanted some people to come and talk to them, so I went there sometimes and talked to them. Number four, we wanted to make a Jewish school again because the children did not go to school. I can speak about this later. And, besides this, number five, they wanted a person from the Jewish community to be a contact ____, going to the Gestapo maybe once, twice, or maybe three times a week and tell them about what was happening in the congregation, so I was elected, appointed. So I went there many times.

Q: Were you and your father living in this Jewish house, community house now?

A: No, we did not live in this Jewish community house, we lived in our own house, but many people had no house any more, especially people from the small communities outside, you see.

Many people in Germany, most people, most Jews in Germany, did not live in the big cities, they lived in small hamlets, how do you call it, villages and they came then to the bigger cities to be safer. So they appointed me and I went to the Gestapo and I never knew whether I would come out because _____ Gestapo was a big building which had no sign outside. You didn't know that it was a Gestapo building. It was in a section of Bremen, they had and Bremen was a medieval city and it had a trench around it and around the trench was a street which was called Amvahl(ph), it means _____ in the war, there used to be war in medieval Germany, the cities had a wall around it and when I came there I had to push a button on top and the door would open and I would go in. And when I went in, there was a big picture, a man with two fingers on his lips that said silence, schweigne(ph), quiet. And then someone would tell me, "Come upstairs." I didn't know who it was, but I went upstairs. So I went upstairs, I went into this office and it was all cluttered around with all kinds of things and this man was sitting there and his name was Mr. Parchman, I still remember that P-a-r-c-h-m-a-n and he was nobody, an illiterate person _____. And he said to me, "Sit down." Of course they address the Jews as Uder(ph) in German and they were very, very rude. Sit down. Then he took out and I remember the first time I came, he took out a bunch of pictures and papers and he said to me, "These are the pictures and papers which we rescued from your house." Rescued, you know. Was not rescued, they confiscated it. I said, "Can I have them?" So he gave me a little bit, not everything.

Q: Why were they so nice?

A: They did not want to be complete, you see, every person, even the worst person in the world, sometimes has a soft moment. So he also had a soft moment at one time. He gave me a little bit, but what I asked him then, most of the time when I went to him, I asked him, "Can you get this person and this person," I've got a few names of people from the Jewish congregation who were in

concentration camp, "I want this person to get out, can you get him out, will you let him out?" And that was the main purpose in the first part of my contacts with them, to save people, to let them out of concentration camps. Sometimes he let them out, but not very many times, he said, "What's he going to do, where's he going to go," so forth. The second part of my contact with the Gestapo was to have permission to make a Jewish school, because the children didn't have any more school, they were forbidden to go in German school, even in Jewish school, no schools. So what do we want to teach them in the schools? I want to teach them how to leave Germany as quick as possible, because that's what you want. So what would he teach them? I will teach them English and geography and certain things which they might be able to use after the emigrate and also I will teach, I will give them a little bit of exercise, gymnastics or so, you see they have to be strong when they leave. So they went on, they said, "We have no place for German children and besides," says, "when do you want to teach the children?" In the morning you are not allowed to teach them, he told me, because then German children are being taught and German children cannot be taught at the same time when Jewish children are being taught and the other way around. So I, I negotiated with him for a long time and he didn't want to give us a Jewish school or a place, then I said to him, "What about a place," and I found a place, "near, near that hotel there, no one is there, it's not a school building, but it could be used as a school building and we can use it in the afternoon." "When do you want to teach the children, what time? Because the German children go to school until three-thirty in the afternoon, you can only teach them from four until about six or six-thirty." I said, "Okay." So finally he agreed and we had this place to take the Jewish children. Now I made a list of Jewish children, we had about 40 Jewish children at that time, boys and girls in all ages, up to 15 or 16 years of age and some of them came from small villages outside. But the question was teachers, we had no teachers. So I knew some merchants, you see and I said to them, you teach him

this, you teach him this and I'll tell you what to do. So we, we had a few teachers, you see and they were not trained teachers, but I said the school should not be like a very slow, a very low elementary school, but more like a middle school or so, like a little bit higher school and that's what it was. So the school opened on April 12th, 1939. We left Germany in May 1939, end of May, May 31, 1939, so I was there just two months, but during that time, I hired a teacher, one of my, one of my colleagues from _____ seminary, where he was, had learned to be a teacher and he became my successor and the school stayed until about 1941, I think, when all the Jews were in Bremen, were sent to Minsk and Pinsk, in concentration camps.

Q: Couple questions, I guess about school first. You said there were about how many students who were able to?

A: 42.

Q: And were they all ages?

A: All ages.

Q: Anybody who could, come?

A: Anybody who could come.

Q: Do you think that that school was helpful in terms of morale, in terms of education?

A: Yes, it was very helpful I think, because the parents, I mean when we had our first meeting and I gave them the introductory talk about what the school was going to be and what we would be teaching and so the parents also came and it was very helpful and in fact, I met two of my students from that time in New York later on. In fact, one of my, one of, no, at least two students who I met in New York, they are now married, you know and their husbands came to my classes here, which I gave here in America. So, it was helpful, I think.

[end of side one, tape one]

Q: I want to ask you a few questions about the Jewish community house. Do you think that everybody living together served a purpose other than just a place to live?

A: Yes. First of all, it was safer, they felt safer being together, you see, being among friends, being among people of their own kind, I mean, that already makes them feel safer. And besides this, if they had any problems, they had right away in that house, people whom they could ask and turn to, because these, and these, their Jewish community you see, had contacts with getting food, getting other things and so forth.

Q: Did the Germans periodically come to the house, visit the house?

A: They knew about it. I don't remember any more, if they came, because I wasn't living there, you see.

Q: Did people get around much or did they largely stay at home?

A: No, at that time it was still possible to walk around, to go places, it was possible. The first time that actually, I mean that was long time ago, if they remember the first boycott, which was 1933 _____, but at that time, you could go, you could walk around, of course you had to be careful and the Nazis were not all, Nazis, you see. There were also some Germans who still thought, it will pass over.

Q: But when you walked on the streets, wasn't there a certain element of fear, a certain element of risk?

A: Yes, you felt things might come, as I mentioned before, especially during the night. The Nazis were using what is called two things. They were using deception and dehumanization. That means they were deceiving people and make believe it was not so, it's not bad, you can do what you want, you see, so people went around, but they were never safe if something would happen to them. So they were careful and they walked around usually, not by themselves, but with a friend, with others.

Q: Did people get beat up or anything? Or just grabbed and taken somewhere?

A: That happened usually during the night when no one saw it, because Nazis did not want to do anything during daytime, actually. That's why all the time, they were still a little bit reluctant to do things so openly, because they didn't want the world, the press to know about that, that they do it openly. They wanted the world to know and to fear that whatever they did is by law. Therefore they made a law, Jews cannot go to school any more. They made a law, lawyers cannot have practice in here any more and things like this, they wanted to do everything by law.

Q: Now, to your knowledge, the people who were living in this community house, did they have plans, were the plans to try to emigrate, what did they think was going to happen?

A: At that time, after Krystallnacht, the whole world saw and the Jews also knew, even those Jews who still loved Germany and they lived in Germany for a long time and they had family trees and they had ancestors, they saw that you cannot live in Germany any more. So everyone from that moment on, worked on emigration, to find out the place where to go, because they knew there was no, that's why I called my school the Dead End school, it was only toward an end, because we knew we wouldn't exist forever. There would come a time, you see, when we would have to close and we did close afterwards.

Q: One more question about that house, because I'm just trying to get a sense of what the daily life was like at this period in Germany. Did they, there was a school, people had to make arrangements for religious activities or for getting food, or was there any culture or cultural activities, anything like this?

A: Well, they had _____ services, religious services in this building, they had some classes, you see, I also gave some classes as I said before, for translation for English and so forth and _____. However, the community in Bremen consists actually of two types of Jews, there's one type of Jews

which were the German Jews who were born in Germany and who lived there a long time. Then there were, was a little community, a little bit away from Bremen of Eastern Jews. They call it in German _____, who came from eastern. I was very friendly with them, you see, because I went there many times. They had their own community. But they had all their culture alive, because when they stay together, you see, they either were learning a few subjects or they were preparing for emigration, they were taking your job, they were learning a language, they were learning something else.

Q: Okay, your work with the Gestapo. Initially you said when you went in, there was someone who took you up to Mr. Parchman. Were there always the same people there that you dealt with, or were there different officers there all the time?

A: They were all different, but I had this particular person, Mr. Parchman. I always saw him, most of the time. He was _____ in charge of the Jews _____ problem. He was in charge and so I had to see him because he was the one appointed by the Nazis to have the contact with us. So I always saw the same person.

Q: How would you describe your relationship with him?

A: I never knew what he would say. I never knew what he would say, but I never knew whether, whether he would let me go out again. I never knew what kind of questions he would ask me. But I told him all the time, as I mentioned before, I was working on two, in two areas with him, first of all to get Jews out of concentration camps, number two to have a school. And that was my main relationship with him and he was sitting there with his feet on the table and, and trying to degrade me, _____ sit down and things like this, but I did not really play, play a game with him to say that I would do everything what he wanted me to do or so, but, but you have to know what, about what

you want to say and you have to feel what, how he would react. I never knew how he would react, but I just was normal, normally, _____ normal. I don't know if is this what you mean.

Q: Well, I'm trying to get a sense of how you, instinctively knew how to handle yourself, whether he was particularly abusive and in what way and how you responded to it.

A: I tried not to make him feel embarrassed or attack the Nazi system. I just talked from my point of view, that means when my point of view, the point of view of the Jews you see, that we are here now and I know that you don't want us here and we want to leave and that was always my basic philosophy, my basic philosophy was let the Jews out of the concentration camps, so that they can leave Germany, let us make a school, so that we can prepare them for emigration. It was always, my philosophy was always to get out of Germany and that's really what he wanted, so I actually played on his wavelengths.

Q: That was smart. Was he ever physically abusive?

A: No.

Q: Just verbally?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Now were you able, did you have access to special information because of this position or job, that you were able to then take back to the Jewish community?

A: Yes, for instance, sometimes he would tell me, we let these people out in three days, or this person is now in the concentration camp. He would give me some names sometimes, but most of the time he didn't want to give information, he wanted information from me. He wanted information, you see, what are the Jews doing there? I mean, do they have money, do they emigrate and things, well how far are they, do we have services, what do you do? He wanted from me, but I got something from him too.

Q: Did you tell him whatever he wanted to know?

A: I sometimes told him and sometimes not. For instance, he asked me, from where are these? And he showed me all the things which he had taken out of our house _____. He asked me, "Do you know this, do you know this?" So I said to him, "You know better than I do, because you took it out. So where did you find it, what did you do with it." No, I never, no.

Q: Were there any other Jewish people who would go to the headquarters or just you?

A: I would go there regularly, I don't think anyone else would go. He would sometimes come, I don't even know if he would come to the president, I know Mr. Ostrich(ph), I think his name was, I don't remember his name. If he wanted something, he, but I was the one who would go there, I think I was the only one who would go there.

Q: One other question, you said you never really knew what was going to happen when you went there, were you ever really caught off guard? Were there some close calls and big surprises, good or bad?

A: I don't remember anything of this sort. No, he always considered himself a nice guy, quotation mark, by letting me go again and when I asked for instance, my brother should come out of the concentration camp, I mean, he let him out of the concentration camp. I don't know now, it's too long ago, whether it was, probably a both combination of him and the Jewish hospital in Hamburg, somehow a combination, I don't know how they worked together and he came out. But I never had a clash with him in that way that he surprised me with something or not. He surprised me the very first time, that he had all the things, I was surprised that he had all these things which he had taken out of our house.

Q: Now, you were at this point, I'm trying to figure out, how old you were, about early 20's?

A: Yeah. 21.

Q: 21, you were taking on a lot of responsibility, it sounds like you had guts and good instincts. What do you think prepared you for this?

A: I have a philosophy you see, if possible to make a compromise and I had to make a compromise, in school for instance, when I went to the Nazi school. And besides this I made a compromise when I went with the Zionist youth club and, and when I went to Frankfurt, I studied at the _____ in Frankfurt and then afterwards I went to Wurzburg and I tried to bring people closer and make them accept it and so forth all the time, so I think I had this kind of thing, even I talked to the Nazi teachers in school, I always tried to compromise in a certain way, but not give up my principles, because when the teachers told me that you cannot go to school any more, I mentioned this already before and I just said to him, "We are on the same wavelength, you be a Nazi and I be a Jew." So you go your way and learn more about Germany and I am a Jew and I want to learn more about being a Jew.

Q: Do you think that you got any of this common sense from your family or you just learned it on your own in the way you were brought up?

A: Part of it, of course, I got from my family, especially my mother. She came from Hamburg and she was always welcomed and she was always recognized and tried to make people friendly and in our business you see, when people came to our business buying and selling, for repairs and so forth, she did favors for all these people. She wrote letters for them. At that time, we didn't have typewriters, so people wrote longhand, she had a very good handwriting, so she wrote letters for them. And my father, who came from Russia, also and then of course myself, because since I went to a non-Jewish school, I had to do, excuse me, since I went to a non-Jewish school, I had to be able to live together with them and to talk to them you see, not only about myself, but also about them

and so forth. So I had a lot of friends and even had so many friends in my class that even after _____ came to _____, they wanted to make me class president, but I didn't want to.

Q: So you worked with the Gestapo and the Jewish community until you were able to emigrate?

A: Not through them. The reason they, as I started to tell you before, we wrote to all people and we got the landing cards from my cousin, from my father's cousin and then my father arranged for us to emigrate, so it really came from the outside, it didn't come from the Nazis.

Q: Right, but you worked as a liaison with them until the time when you left?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else you feel you want to say about that period in Germany before we talk about your emigrating?

A: Yes, there is one thing, we started the school on April 12th, 1939 and I went there every day, I don't, I think we only were allowed to be in the school two or three times a week and then when we had to give up the whole house, our whole house, so I was there when we packed, we packed the van and the man was standing there. Some people tried to slip in certain things, but I was afraid to put in anything else. I wanted to put in some newspapers from Germany, where they spoke about the Nazis, one paper I put in, about there was a law that Jews were only allowed to have certain names and my name was not Jewish enough and therefore I had to add the name Israel. Girls and women, who had no Jewish name, according to them it was not a Jewish name, had to put in Sarah. My sister Elisa(ph), Elisa(ph) Sarah. My brother's name, Abraham was not a Jewish name, Abraham Israel. Joseph was not a Jewish name, because they had a Nazi the name of Joseph, Joseph Goebbels(ph) and same thing even though Rosenthal, Rosenberg is a Jewish name, but he was one of the philosophers of the Nazis, Rosenberg. So, _____. Then another thing about this, when we left, before we left, we had what we call, what they call in German achmeldon(ph), it

means to register, to sign yourself out. You sign in and you sign out. You sign out, so you had to sign out before you left Germany and go to the police and fill out that you signed out. So I went to the police and I said, we are leaving on May 31st, I want to sign out. He said to me, "Fill out this form." Filled out the form and he said, "But you didn't fill out your address where you're going to move to." I said to him, "I don't know it yet." So he said to me, "Never mind, we Nazis will soon conquer the whole world and we will find you there anyhow." And they were really sure of themselves, that that would happen, you see? I said to him, "I hope not."

Q: This is maybe an unusual question, but was the fear in Germany at this point great enough that you actually thought there might be danger elsewhere, or did you feel that once you got out, you'd be safe?

A: I only thought about one thing, I said to myself, I want to be as far away from Germany as possible, because one day there might be war and they might conquer the countries around here, so therefore I thought that the Baltic states were too close and even England I thought was too close. So when we, when we went to the United States, I thought, that's better, because it's further away.

Q: So tell me about the process of your leaving.

A: All right, we packed everything and we left from Hamburg, as I mentioned before, I had nearly forgotten this, but I found my passport, it says we left from Hamburg. And we saw our relatives still, on the last day and then we were supposed to go by ferry, that passed on the Wednesday, I think, Wednesday the 31st of May, in the evening. And we went by taxi to the ferry.

Q: And this was, who all was in this ...?

A: That was my father, my, and all four, all four of us. And we came to the port and, but our taxi had to do a detour because on that day, it just so happened that Goering(ph) gave a speech and we had to have a detour and he gave a speech on that day that was the first time that I heard it in

Germany, where he acknowledged and told the world that they were good friends of Franco, Spain you know, and that he was sending them soldiers and sending them all other things, you see, they were supporting them completely. So we went on, we came to the ferry. Before we went on the ferry, they examined us. I have to tell you that we were only allowed to take four dollars out, each person, four dollars, it was 10 ricemark(ph), 10 marks, German marks, four dollars. It was all we were allowed to take out and then we had nothing else because the rest of the money which we got for the house was for the tickets, for the, for the boat tickets. So my father they examined completely, I don't know why they didn't examine us completely, they just made a checkup you see, like this. And then we came to on the boat.

Q: Now other than the four dollars a person, what kind of mementos did you take with you, what did you pack?

A: When we packed, we packed clothing, a certain amount of clothing and we packed a few books, which I had and also, I forgot to mention that the rabbi in Hamburg, at that time, Rabbi Kalibar(ph), who was later, who didn't want to leave Germany and he was afterwards killed by the Nazis, he gave me a _____, it means a Torah scroll, which I took along, but not, but which was put in the van. The van was sent separately, we took only along a little valise, you see. So we took a few things along, not too many things and a few pictures and jewelry. Personal things.

Q: So you got on the boat...

A: Now this boat was about 1400 tons, was a small boat and it was a very nice sailing from Hamburg to England, through the North Sea. First it goes on the river Elba and then it comes to Cookshaven(ph), which is at the, as the Elba flows into the... and up to there it comes to a certain island, which is called Helgaland(ph), which was completely submerged during the war, but now it's up again. And up to that time, we felt _____. After that time, we all got seasick, especially me,

because the North Sea is a very rough sea and we were supposed to be there on, when was it, Thursday evening, but we didn't get there until Friday morning. And we landed, we landed in a little village in England, Grimsby, Grimsby, G-r-i-m-s-b-y, it's a little bay, Grimsby Bay, it's in central Britain, I think and we went there, we landed there and the, the company, the ship company had made arrangements that from there they would pick us up by train and bring us to London over the weekend and a Sunday we would continue from Southampton. We landed in Grimsby, England and we went out and I think we took a hack out, spent our first money and then we took the, we were late to a train, British train and very fast, went all the way down to London and in London, the current Whitestar(ph) line had a bus for us, I think us and other passengers who would be going from Southampton and showed us around London, saw the tower, the financial district, etcetera. And then they brought us to a hotel, a kosher hotel, this was the first time since 1933 that we had meat again, because the meat was forbidden in Germany. _____, the _____ was forbidden, right? One of the first laws that Hitler made in 1933. So and we had a good meal there, in the hotel and also there was a synagogue nearby, which was bombed out later, on the _____, it's called the Great Synagogue and we saw that at that time. And on the day of Sabbath, the Shabbat, we went for a walk, it was in east end in London, east end I think it's called and not far from the tower bridge, we went to the tower bridge and we maybe walked over there, I don't remember. So we, so we went there and was very nice there. Then on Sunday, we continued by, was it train, I think a train, to Southampton, yeah there's a port from where our boat would be going. We came to Southampton and we went on the boat, was a 14,000 ton ship and the name I remember was Alaunia, A-l-a-u-n-i-a, which was bombed during the war I think, and sank. And about three o'clock in the afternoon, we left.

Q: The other people on this boat, were they mixed, were there a lot of refugees or Jewish and non-Jewish?

A: There were Jews and non-Jews, but there were a number of, a great number of refugees, because we found out later on there were some refugees who came from Poland, from Russia, from other places and to, we, they also went to Canada, because this boat went to Canada and, and my family still had contact with them after they had left the boat in Canada. So we left at three o'clock, I even made a poem about it, May 31st of 1939, the sky was clear and heaven fine, to make believe here governs right, but it was not so. So we went on this boat and it was supposed to be 10 days to come to Montreal, Canada, but it took 14 or 15 days because in summer, the boat goes further north and that's a shorter way, supposed to be, on the globe, but about in a few days later, we came into the section of the icebergs, because we went too far north and the boat was standing still for two or three days in the ocean, in the Atlantic Ocean and we saw many things, we couldn't go up any more, because there were fish jumping over the boat, all right, that's not of importance, but we were all a little bit seasick, not as much as on the North Sea and then we came to, finally, passing by Labrador and ...

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

A: I just talked about our trip from England to Canada and that we were kept for three days in the ocean, because of nearing the icebergs. So finally we came to, past Newfoundland, Labrador, we came into the Saint Lawrence River, the big river in Canada, to bring us to Montreal. We first stopped in Quebec and in Quebec, someone came to the, to the ship in, from a Jewish agency and told us that he would expect us in Montreal and then bring us directly to our destination. Now most of the other Jewish people who were on the boat, knew where they would be going, they knew they would be going to relatives whom they knew already, in Montreal, or not far away. And these relatives would be there to expect them and they would be arriving. The trip on the Saint Lawrence River was a very wonderful trip and we enjoyed it. Continuing, we came finally to Montreal, but the trip was very slow and instead of coming there in the afternoon as we had expected, we came there in the evening about nine o'clock. And there is a certain regulation that if a ship comes to port after nine o'clock, I don't know if this is in all countries, but were there, if a ship comes after nine o'clock, then the passengers can either depart, go off or stay on the boat until the next morning. The others, most of the others had relatives waiting there, but we didn't know anyone in Montreal and so we preferred to stay on the boat. Next morning, we got ready to disembark and the man came again from the, from the JIAS, it's called, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society and he said to us he would take us and he would first bring us to a little hotel, not hotel, to a little restaurant for breakfast and then he would bring us straight to the train station and where we would leave by train to our destination. Our destination was Yorktown, Saskatchewan, that's where our cousin was living. However, it was a Friday morning and we wanted to stay in Montreal if at all possible, at least over the Sabbath and we asked him, so he said no, that can't be done, because we have strict orders from the Canadian government, that all the refugees, greenhorns, they are called at that time, greenhorns,

I don't know from where the name greenhorn comes. Maybe green as the ____ is green. So what happened? So the greenhorns have first to be, have, cannot stay where they want to stay, they must go to their destination, because there's an affidavit that these people guaranteed that they would take care of them and the government will not take care of them, the Canadian government did not want to take care of them, they just wanted them out as much as possible, because Canada was not so friendly to the greenhorns, because I know about internment camps in Canada, where people from England were sent to and stayed there for many years. Okay, so my father and we, and we children, all left and he brought us to a small restaurant and we had breakfast there and then he brought us to the train station. Now the train in Canada at that time was a Canadian Pacific Train, railroad company I think it was and it was a small shack, I wouldn't call it more than a shack. It was a small shack and it was in June, on June 15th and it was very hot in Canada, we never had such heat before in Germany, was very hot and winter's very cold, summer's very hot. And we were sitting there and he, I don't know if he gave us a ticket, or somehow we stayed there, it was about 10 o'clock in the morning. So we thought of how, what can we do in order to remain in Montreal, so we remembered one thing, that we had written to relatives in Montreal, my father had a cousin from Ekatarinaslav(ph) in Russia, who was a tailor and who had moved to Montreal and we had written them, but the letter had come back to Germany, addressee not found. So we said, maybe he's, he's still living there, my father said and he was sure that he was still living. Maybe we can find out, but how can we find out? So about 10:30 I think it was, there was a desk in the train station and two nuns came in, because Canada, Quebec is Catholic, you see and two nuns came in and they put on a light and the light said, traveler's aid. So my father said, "Maybe these nuns can find out if this family's still living here." So he went over to the nuns, but the nuns didn't speak English and we didn't speak French. So what language are you speaking in. So they knew Russian, my father

spoke Russian to them and he told them that we think there is a family living here, if they knew that we would be here, they would certainly take us in and we wouldn't have to go to Yorktown(ph), Saskatchewan. So the nuns said, but what's their name? Said Kaplan. There are many Kaplans, come to find out, Caplan with a C, Kaplan with a K. What's the first name? Burr(ph) Kaplan. What's his profession? He was a tailor. What's his mother's, his wife's name? Bebe(ph), I think. So they came and they took the telephone book I think, or address book that they had at that time and they went through it and they called up all these people and they called up and people came to the the phone and they said, no, I'm not from Ekatarinaslav(ph), I'm not a tailor, etcetera, etcetera. So they called up 15, 16 people, then they called up someone and there came a young boy at that time, of my age, from the phone and he said, I don't know, but I'll call my mother, so he called his mother, his mother says, "Yes, my husband's name is Burr(ph), he's a tailor, he came from Ekatarinaslav(ph), what are you calling about?" They said, "There are some people who are claim you are relatives and they want to talk to you." Okay, so made my father talk to them and my father right away recognized him, he seen him, he, not he, his wife, they hadn't seen each other for, at that time I mean, 15, 20 years and she said, "What? You're here? I have a son who is a pharmacist, his name is Jackie, so I call him and have come right over and we take you into our house." So we waited about 15 or 20 minutes and then he came and he came and he took us all and we went to, we went to the Kaplan's and we stayed there for a few days and in the mean time we did not go to, to Canada. But, what happened was this, in the mean time, about 11 o'clock, we had received a telegram, I don't know how it came to us, it came to the JIAS, probably, because the JIAS had sent them a telegram that your refugee, your family is here and we are going to send them right on to you, so they had sent a telegram, Western Union, I still have the certificate and they said to them, "Stay where you are, we cannot support you here because we had droughts for several years." They

were farmers and I was supposed to be a farmer and the young fellow at that time, who was about my age, I would be his farmer, you see and I never had seen the family, just recently, last year only, I met him. Now he is 72 years old. At that time he was 20. So what happened is, stay there. So he said to us, the man from the JIAS said to us, that doesn't matter because he promised to let you stay there and the Canadian government made us promise them that we will send them all back there, but this is ____ how we stayed there, through America, because the ____ out about it. I don't know what happened to the tickets, but we stayed there, so we stayed in Montreal.

Q: That's amazing, it must have been an amazing experience finding your family in Montreal.

A: Yeah, see it came by mail and the mail said, not found. In Germany they say Unbekund(ph), not knowing thing. And I only remember this because my mother had shown them to me and my father was sure that they were still there, but he didn't know where they were and if they were still alive and if they were living there, but that was of course, at that time.

Q: Must have been an emotional experience, reuniting.

A: Yeah. So we were living there for a few days and then they got us an apartment, not an apartment, a room, I think for 18 dollars a month, a month and it was a shaky room, but anyhow we were staying at and in the mean time, to get settled there, we needed a job and other things like this. My brother got a job right away. My brother got a job in a hardware store because and because he worked with toys and he invented certain toys at that time, you see. He got a job right away. My sister, was very hard for her to get a job, so she kept the house for us for the time being and my younger brother went to school there or something like this and my father, who was a bicycle mechanic couldn't find a job here and I couldn't find a job here, but, but somehow there was an employment agency, the Baron de Hirsch(ph) Institute in, in there and I got a job, we got a job the first time, I got a job to bring flowers, like carrying flowers, bring, like a messenger. Bring flowers

from here to here. Second time I got a job in a kind of a bicycle store to clean up the cellar, they had had a fire, but they had a fire after us too, so we had to leave again, I don't know. How much did they pay, they paid one dollar a day, one Canadian dollar a day, that was a lot of money then. Then finally I got a job in a chicken factory, not chicken factory, chicken business and I didn't like the smell, didn't want to go there. Besides this, at that time, they wanted you to work every day and I didn't want to work on the Shabbat, _____ want, couldn't get the job. Then I went again to, there was a Jewish newspaper in Montreal which was called The Eagle, the Atler(ph). I went to this place and they would put an ad into their paper, but they told us, why don't you see Mr. Bromfman(ph), you know this Bromfman(ph), the father of this Mr. Bromfman(ph). He has a Seagram company, the year, big, what's it called, liquor company, whiskey company. Go to Mr. Bromfman(ph), so we took a long, a long trip by bus and we came to Mr. Bromfman(ph) and we told him and they told him that there are refugees and they have a job and so he said he has no job, but he was also, he was also the owner of The Eagle, he was also the owner of The Eagle, so we didn't get a job from him, however, I went back to the Baron de Hirsch(ph) Institute and they told me they found a job for me in Saskatoon. Saskatoon is in Saskatchewan. Very good paying job, 15 dollars a week. That was very much because what most people, 10 dollars a week was the average. So I went to, I said to them, "Okay, what do I have to do there?" They said, "You have to do this, and have to do that and you have to be a man of everything, you have to be their hausen(ph) cantor(ph), you have to read the Torah, you have to teach them, you have to do everything, for 15 dollars a week." I think I took it at that time, I said to them, "I will, I will think it over", but in fact I didn't want it. Then...

Q: Now why didn't you want it?

A: First of all, it was too far out and was too many things to do and I wanted to stay in the big city, I wanted to stay in Montreal or some other big city.

Q: And with your family?

A: Yes. So what happened is, my father found, in Montreal, another cousin. His name was Fevel(ph) Pastillnik(ph) and Fevel(ph) Pastillnik(ph), he was already a little bit older, not too old he wasn't, only like 50, 60 years old. So he came over to us and he said to me, "You went to Wurzburg, to the seminary, as a teacher, you see and you were in _____, go to the United States. That's the only, because in Canada there isn't much Yiddishgad(ph)," Jewishness, "you go United States." And at that time, just at that time, they closed it. Up to that time students could come very easily to the United States, but it was closed in 1938 or 1939, that you needed more than just this, you needed a reason, other things. So, I didn't think much of it and I said, "What can you do?" But one day he called us up, this Fevel(ph) and said, "I saw in a Jewish paper, there was a Yiddish paper, written in Yiddish, it's for the Americana, the American and it said on the front page of this," unfortunately I don't have that paper any more, I had it for _____. "On the front page of this paper is a big picture of refugees, who came to Baltimore and some of them came from Wurzburg", from where I had studied, and he said he wants to show it to me and if I recognized any of them. I had no interest in that, but I said to myself, "What can you lose? Go to him and look at it." So I went to him one day, it was in August, I think it was in August and, and he showed me the picture and I recognized a few people on these pictures, I recognized them. Besides this I read the article and it mentioned a certain Kalibar(ph), Rabbi Kalibar(ph), not that Kalibar(ph), related to them. And he said to me what I do is, what I should do is, I should write to this yeshiva(ph) near Israel _____ College in Baltimore, it's still existing. And I should tell them about this and see what's happening. So I wrote to them, it's in here, and I got an answer right away and the answer said, "We will accept you. We will accept you. We will give you an affidavit and just come in. Go to the Consul and have it verified." Now at that time, to get permission to go from Canada to Britain ...

Q: To the United States.

A: To the United States, was the Consul in Montreal, the American Consul in Montreal, he had the final say, not the Justice Department, they didn't have a Justice Department yet, the Naturalization Department yet, that was only instituted later. But go to the American Consul in Montreal. I went to the Consul and it was a very nice man, it was a British man, because at that time, Canada was not it's own country, it was a dominion, British dominion.

Q: Even in Montreal?

A: Yeah, actually, it was a British dominion, it said here, a commonwealth, but it only became a country by itself in 1942. Then it was independent of Britain, but at that time it was still dependent on Britain. So I said to the Consul, I told them my story and he was very receiving, accepting it and he said to me, "But you don't have a valid passport, number one, number two, it's not so easy for students to get to the United States now, number two, you don't have citizenship at all, you are not even a Canadian domiciled person, because you lived here less than six months, because we came in June 15th and this was August. You lived here less than... and you only gained citizenship, domicile in Canada, after six months, so you are not domiciled person, so I cannot let you go." I said, "But I promise that I will come back, because my family is here." He said, "Still." So he said, "I will do something special," he said. "I will call my consul together and discuss it with them and then you come before this consul and they can make a decision." So he made a, he called his people together, I don't know who was his high officials and I talked to them about the story and they said to me, finally and they, and they sent me out and then they called me back and said, "We made a decision, we made a decision that we will let you go, as a student, until February, because you're, that means 60 days before your passport expires. Your passport expires in April 21st, we will let you go until February 21st, under the condition that when you come to Montreal, when you come to

Baltimore, you will have your passport extended by the Germans." I said okay. So I made the arrangements, and so I had the permission here now to go to Canada, to go to Baltimore, however, how will I get there? So I went again to the JIAS and I had no money and the JIAS gave me 30 dollars, I think. That was the amount of the trip. I went with Greyhound bus from Montreal to Baltimore.

Q: Now, let me ask you a couple of questions for the record.

A: Yeah?

Q: When you said you didn't have any citizenship, maybe you can explain why you didn't have a German's passport, why you were stateless. Because certainly you were born in Germany.

A: In Europe, especially in Germany and all the countries, you have the citizenship of your father. My father was born in Russia and he was a Russian citizen at one time. However, in, shortly before the first World War I think, he came over to the, he came over to Germany, to Breslau and to other cities in Germany and he stayed there and he got married in Bremen, 1916 he got married and then he stayed there and he had, he was working and he had his own bicycle business and motorcycle business. And then in 1921, 1922, 1923, when Russia became Soviet Republic and they made it law, I think in 1933 was the final law, that anyone who left Russia before it became the Soviet Republic, has to return in order to retain his citizenship and my father didn't want to return to, to Russia, because he just escaped because in the very beginning of the century, they would capture the Jewish children and let them work for 25 years in the army, cantons(ph) they were called. So he didn't want to return, so he lost his citizen, he became stateless.

Q: So technically, how'd you stay, had you been able to stay in Germany and you had had a child there, your child would have been a German citizen, although...

A: No.

Q: But you were...

A: My, all my family is stateless. Only if you buy the German citizenship, because there was a time, at the end of the 1920's that you could buy the German citizenship for 50 marks and they came many times to my father's store and said buy, become a German, but my father said no. Germany is the source of all anti-Semitism, I don't want to be and it was good, because afterwards they took it away from them anyhow. So he never bought German citizenship. He remained stateless all his life and when we came to Canada, they became Canadian citizen, not I and when we came to America, I became American citizen.

Q: So you arrived in Baltimore by yourself?

A: Yeah but there, before I arrived in Baltimore, there's something else. I, all right, when we came to the border, to the American border, they examined all my luggage and I had Tosefa Torah, which I spoke to you before, with me. They didn't know what it was, but I explained it to them. So we came then, to New York, first we come from, we stopped in New York and we stopped in New York in the middle of the night, 11, 12 o'clock at night. And my father had told me that he had a friend in New York, Eiseman(ph), whom he had once saved in Germany, he was in the prison and he had given him an affidavit and he was able to leave Germany and he went to the United States already, in the 20's. And he had sent us an affidavit at that time, we could have gone to United States in the 20's, but my mother didn't want to go because she had all the relatives in Germany. So we missed up on that opportunity. But when I came to New York, I said, "I'm going to call up this person." I didn't know very much about New York, we, we, at the Madison Square Garden, I think, we, there was a Greyhound station. So I called him up in the middle of the night, of course, I didn't know very much. So then I said I have to wait until the morning. Then in the morning I called up again, six or seven o'clock now and at that time they didn't, not everyone had a telephone, there was

probably one telephone for the whole apartment house and people had to be called and come down to that place. It's a little bit of history. So I call them and I said, "Is there a Mr. Eiseman(ph) living in this building?" and the woman said, "Yes, yes there are, I'll call him, I'll call him." And he came down to the phone and he heard me and when he heard me, he said, "Where are you? You are going to stay here for a few days, I want you to stay here for a few days" and he will come and see me. "So where do you live?" This Mr. Eiseman(ph) lived in Brooklyn and I was in Manhattan and I didn't know the distances here, I thought maybe in half an hour he can come over, he said, "No, it takes me at least two and a half hours." Long distances. And it was 1939, they had the World's Fair in New York at that time, I don't know if you remember. So he said and he wants to show me the World's Fair. So I waited there in the Greyhound station and finally he came over, his wife was home, I think and his daughter, they came and they came and they picked me up at 10 o'clock or so and we went to a kosher restaurant there and then he took me to the _____ and I stayed with him maybe at least overnight, one night, I don't remember any more how long and then next morning, I continued to Baltimore.

Q: Let me ask you a question. You came to, first to Montreal and then you were treated to the World's Fair?

A: In New York.

Q: Right. Did it seem at all strange to you that everybody was enjoying life and going, you know and celebrating and having a good time, when so much, so much was going on in Europe that was very different?

A: Yes. And I forgot to tell you something. When I, when we came to, when we came to Montreal, I forgot to tell you something. At that time I was still, in Jewish they call it the year of mourning, one year of mourning after a parent dies or _____. I was still in the year of mourning after my

mother. I came there, we came there in June, 1939, my mother had been killed in November, 1938 and I went to the synagogue to say Kaddish and I came to the synagogue and I wanted to say a certain prayer which we usually say if someone is saved from a danger, they say a certain prayer, which is called Gomelbenchen(ph), you see and there were all people there and they said, "You don't have to say that." I said, "Why not?" "It's not so bad in Germany." Because, I could not understand, as I was completely disappointed, that the people here in, in Canada and in the United States, did not think it was as bad as it really was, because I don't know from where they got their information, because these people, these old men who were there and didn't want me to say it, I said it anyhow. All right, they were not religious, that's one thing, but they did not believe that it was that bad in Germany and that it was America that we were saved, we were far away from Germany now. I could not believe it. And then in America also, they enjoyed thems...

[end of side one, tape two]

A: So I couldn't understand the people in America and Canada, they were enjoying themselves, were having a good time, and that they did not want to believe, or did not believe that it was so bad in Germany.

Q: Did it make you angry?

A: I was disappointed, because I, I, I saw everything, like miracles happened here, that I had come out, we had come out, that we found relatives, that I was able to go to Baltimore. They were all miracles, because I never thought of that.

Q: Did, did a lot of what you observed seem frivolous to you?

A: Yes, I think they did not feel with the people in Germany. I mean, it was quite different in America at that time, even though America is nowadays probably the best country to live in in the whole world, but it seemed to me at that time at least, that it was more a detached kind of

relationship, that the people had with each other and not a kind of very close kinship relationship. Because everything went like automatically. Business-like, more business-like. And we have, in our family, I mean they're talking about, about family life, but we had more a family kind of relationship, not only with the family, but with other people, too. The people who came from Europe still had this kind of relationship, to a certain extent.

Q: Did you feel a responsibility to let people know what was going on in Germany and in Europe? Or to warn them, to give them information?

A: Whoever wanted to know, I told them. I told the British Consul in Amer, in Montreal and I told after that, the Canadian Consul, the British Consul in Baltimore, I told, also spoke about this, I talked about this and these people be more interested in knowing about it. But the people who really should know about it, you see, they're not so much interested in this.

Q: What other first impressions, before we talk about Baltimore, what other first impressions did you have of Canada and the U.S.? Do you remember? I mean, was there any culture shock, or?

A: I knew that, that first of all, religion was completely different in the United States and Canada than it was in Europe or especially in my section, even though in Germany, many of them or most of them are not religious, you see. But here it was also different, as I said, it was more, how do you call it, stylish. That means, organized and not so, what we call in Yiddish, Haemish(ph), Haemish(ph) means having a close bond relationship, okay? My relatives, I mean my father's relatives, the Kaplans, you see, were very, were very friendly and they had ____ this kind of relationship, a warm relationship. But in other circles, it was just to a certain point, as I said before, when I went the synagogue and I saw these people there, they more or less were for themselves, more or less. They didn't care so much about what was going on anywhere in the world at that time. And I think that was also one of the reasons why the United States didn't recognize what happened

in Germany until much later and Roosevelt had a hard time to convince them to, to do something about it, the War Relief Fund and so, they came all much later. I hope it's not true, but that was true at that time.

Q: Were you able, once you came over here, to get any direct information from Germany, from Europe, to sort of contin, follow up on what was going on?

A: While I was in, while I was in Baltimore, let's say, I wrote to relatives in Germany and I got a few answers, but all these answers were censored, because all the letters came back with censored by so and so and so and so. And in the end, I didn't hear anything any more at all. And some people in Germany gave me pictures, I should do something about it, but I couldn't even do anything about myself.

Q: When you stopped getting any information, did that alarm you at all?

A: I knew that bad things were happening there and I knew it from some people, again from my organization, Agoutis(ph) Israel, because when I was in Baltimore there was one man, who came every week from Washington and he had cousins there, he was my roommate, next door roommate you see, came every Thursday to go back to what, he came from New York, excuse me, not from Washington, he came from New York and stopped over in Baltimore and went to Washington to do something about it. And he had very much information. So I knew that what, that what was going on, that it was not good and he was working in it, in this organization very much. I knew things were not good. But I knew, the way the letters came to me from Germany, from the, indirectly, I knew what was happening there. And they'd all try, instance, so and so is on vacation. That meant he was in the concentration camp. Or when they wrote for instance, we had to change, that means that they displaced them and sent them to another place, you see. I think once I sent a 20 dollar

mark, which I had just how some ____, I never heard of again, it was against the law, I sent it in an envelope. 20 mark wasn't really so much, but still.

Q: So in your first several months here, were you thinking about the big picture or were you determined just to get on with your new life?

A: No, I, there were two things, or three things. Number one, I wanted to see if I could not get anyone out, but I had no money and the organization had very much trouble here, even in the United States, because they didn't want to be involved. America got only involved in 1941 and the thing is, and, and, but everyone, every refugee, the refugees, they adored Roosevelt. Later on they found out he wasn't that, not 100 percent, because whenever he got something to talk about the Jews in this conference, you see, he put it on the bottom, he didn't talk to it very much. But on the other end, they didn't have anyone else to adore, so they adored him, pretty much and they thought he would save it in the end. I don't have to talk about history. But when I wrote a poem I came here, you see. I was very much in favor of the United States and I thought it was the only country, you see, where we could be able to do anything. Hm? It's the land of the future, you see, okay?

Q: Oh, this is your poem? Why don't you read it?

A: I only want to read the last two paragraphs over here.

Q: Okay. This is a poem you wrote, when?

A: When I came to the United States.

Q: Okay.

A: Or when I came to Canada, but it's too long, I only want to say, it ends like this, "Land of future, our future. Everything we bring to you, seeking refuge we are coming, that is all we have in view. To be treated in this country, ____ rights, like you, the same. Not despised, disdained, detested. That's our truly, that is our honest aim. Continent of mankind's future, world of sun and hope. Far

off war and things of fight, on the western semi-globe. God bless you. From a land of terror, we were forced to flee. God bless you America, you're the land of the free. That's on, at the end of our whole voyage to America, you see.

Q: Was it tough leaving Germany, even though you knew you had to?

A: As I said, my mother never wanted to leave Germany, all the Jews in Germany, loved Germany very much, it's a beautiful country and we traveled around there and it has nice sights and nice scenes and nice countrysides, but we saw there was no future in Germany. Not only was there no future, you would, you would be killed in Germany. So we left and we were leaving, just with the intention to find a better place, as I said here and to have more opportunity because there was no opportunity left.

Q: When you were on the boat...

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were you thinking about the fact that you had, unfortunately lost your mother and she wasn't traveling with you?

A: That was one thing, yes. But, but the further away we came from Germany, the more we thought about new opportunities. And of course we were sorry and sad for those people who couldn't come out and who we had left behind. But we couldn't think of very much because now we had to be on our own and make our own. Some people left with money, very early in the 30's, but we left with no money, four dollars.

Q: So, we digressed a bit, but you were on your way to Baltimore and you had stopped at the New York World's Fair for a few days and what next?

A: Then we came to Baltimore and I arrived in Baltimore and I called up the college, I called up the college and they were very friendly, they said, "Take a taxi and we'll pay for that," and the taxi

brought me through Baltimore. It was a very long trip, I never was in such a big city, because Bremen, where I come from, is a much smaller city, you see. So I came there and they greeted me when I came in and they were very happy and I was happy to come there. So I came there, I met some people whom I had seen before, especially this Rabbi Kalibar(ph) I met and many others and also the one who was the executive director, he's still there now. I also had met in Germany, maybe his relatives, not him. So it was different, so I very quickly got adjusted to it, they gave me a room you see, with two, two other roommates. It was on Garrison Boulevard in Baltimore. And I started learning there.

Q: Were there other Germans there or was it mostly just you mixed with Americans?

A: They were, they were all kinds, they were mostly Americans, but there also some people who had learned in Europe, in Poland and Russia and there were some people who were of German origin.

Q: But not other refugees?

A: Not at that time, however, I saw in the newspaper, which they showed me, and I might have met them afterwards, I don't remember, they also were brought over by, by the college from Germany and ____ in the newspaper. My name was also in the newspaper that I'm someone else from Strasbourg. Then there was the Rabbi Schwab(ph), who recently passed away, he also came from Germany and I knew him from there and there were a few people of German origin.

Q: Now, you were training to be a rabbi?

A: Yes.

Q: Was that your intention when you were at the seminary in the Yeshiva in Germany? Or were you just learning then?

A: Then I was learning and I became a teacher, a principal.

Q: So your intention when you were 17 was not necessarily to become a rabbi?

A: It was in the education field, mainly.

Q: I just wanted to get that background.

A: Yeah. But then I decided I want more in the educational field than being a rabbi and later on I was also mainly in the educational field. Social work and so forth.

Q: Did you, did you have a congregation, I mean, did you practice as a rabbi?

A: Yeah, I was at one time, I had a job in Mountindale(ph), New York and in New York, assistant rabbi and that was probably mainly it.

Q: In an Orthodox congregation?

A: Yeah, different congregations in New York, but they were much later. Because I stayed in Baltimore from 1939 to 1945 and in 1944, I was ordained as a rabbi and I learned there many years, with many other people and during the war, I can tell you, during the war, even in the United States, I was considered an alien, what do they call it? Enemy alien and I had to get permission to go from Baltimore to New York, each time, from the Attorney General, it was a woman, I went to her many times, put a stamp in the passport or so, something like this, gave me a special card. When I traveled from Baltimore to Yonkers, near New York, I also needed special permission. And I needed every year, an extension of my passport. So now that comes to this point. All right, they had told me in Montreal, when you come there, get your passport extended, yeah? I go, I'm there. So I said to myself, who can extend it, it was made out by the German government, go to the German consulate. At that time, 1939, yeah, Canada entered the war, I left, I left Canada on the fifth or sixth of September, Canada entered the war at, on the seventh of September, September, day after. So I came there, the German consulate, at that time, America was not at war yet, so the Germans still had the consulate here. But I had no money to go there because it was 15 cents

already at that time, a bus in Washington, Baltimore. In New York was five cents a subway. So I got the money, I went to the consul and I said to myself, "I have to be very careful when I go to these people." So I went up there. So they, so it was lunchtime. I didn't know that they have lunchtime in America and that there is such long lunchtime and they go out and no one is there. But there was someone there, so I said to him I wanted my passport extended if they can extend it. They said, "Yes, leave the passport with us." I said to myself, "No, I don't leave anything here." I take it with me and said, "I come back another time." I never came back. I went to the Canadian consul, because I came from Canada and I said to him, "I cannot get this passport extended, but I only have permission here until February 21st, so if he cannot get permission for me, extension of the passport." So he said to me, you see, and this is interesting that he made a mistake and that saved me. He said to me, about, he did not ask me about domicile, he just said I came from Canada and he gave me permission to stay until June. Did he give me permission? Then I had no more permission and he said he cannot give me permission any more because I wasn't in Canada and he has no longer authority to do this. So I go to Washington and I told them, "I came here on this passport that cannot be extended and I'm studying, I came here as a student and I cannot return to Canada because I didn't gain domicile and I cannot return to Germany because they are at war" and if I can stay here longer. So he gave me, Washington gave me permission for one more year and they waived my passport requirements and every year, only every year I had to write to them for another year extension and that I did until the end of the war. And then at the end of the war, I made a, during the war I made a request to become a citizen. It was 1943, but I couldn't become a citizen at that time because it was the height of the war, Stalingrad. He said, "Did you do anything for the war effort?" So what could I do, I wasn't in the army, but I bought war bonds, but that wasn't enough, so they said, "No, you cannot become a citizen now, but after six months, you can reapply."

So I reapplied again after six months and the situation got better, then I got the FBI to help me and finally, in 1945, I got what's called first papers. At that time there were first papers and second papers, now you can right away become a citizen. Anyhow I had to wait five years in between and then in 1951, I became a citizen. When I became a citizen, I changed my name. Why did I change my name? First of all, my wife didn't like this name, in the meantime I got married, 1948, so.

Q: In Baltimore?

A: New York I got married, because I didn't tell you that after Baltimore, I went to New York. So I said, this is a Russian name and people cannot pronounce it and I cut off the beginning and the head and the tail, like, like a herring and I keep the middle. The middle is Wein and I don't like one name, one syllable names, so make it Weiner, so they make my name Weiner. It's in my naturalization papers. During the war, I tried to do many things. I tried to be and I was even, air raid warden too, at one time, but then they told me, you are an enemy alien, you cannot be an air raid warden, so okay, I said okay, _____. During the war, I also went to night school to learn English and I had a very famous governor of Maryland, who was a teacher, McKelton(ph), I don't know if you heard of him. He was a tall man and he used to say a word, he said, "Winners are never quitters, quitters are never winners. So go on with what you want to do, don't quit. If you quit, you cannot win. Winners are never quitters, quitters are never winners." So I liked that and many other story, but that's not about this. So I stayed in Baltimore and then in 1944 when I got ordination, _____, I had many friends there, I met other people too. I was working also with the Agoutis(ph) Historic movement there and I, groups of children and to others and I send children to camps in summer and so forth, I did this all there and I instituted something in Baltimore, three things I instituted there because I thought, it is in the American heir that they are a little bit, so big, at least it was at that time, to be a little bit more distant. So I wanted the people in the Yeshiva to be a little bit

closer, so I arranged something, they had only a loan fund, so I said, "There are some people who cannot pay back a loan, we make it the charity fund and give out forthwith, money." Number two, I made arrangements with the doctors who would give free service to the Yeshiva boys. Number three, I arranged with some people to give clothing, free clothing, at that time people took second-hand clothing, today they don't take it any more. Number four, I arranged in the morning to wake them up, I ran through those _____. Number five, I instituted a fund for medicines, because at that time everyone had to buy medicine, no one could do it. I said, if you join this club for 10 cents a month, 10 cents, we give you aspirin or whatever you need and Number five, Number six, I institute something on the end of Shabbat, to make, to invite certain number of people and to have them give a little talk and since we invited only certain kinds of people, only, we invited only certain numbers, so everyone wanted to be invited, so they came around. And I'm still friends with some of these people who took over, one of them is now in Philadelphia, Rabbi Rosh Hasheva(ph) and _____ too, a good friend of his.

Q: So you were trying to build a community that you felt didn't exist in this country?

A: It was probably here, but not to that extent.

Q: Were your efforts successful?

A: Yeah, they were very much successful there. Okay, now, what comes now, after the war?

Q: Yeah, I think what I want to do is just, kind of an outline form, you don't have to go into great detail...

A: No.

Q: But tell me a little bit what you did after you were ordained, you went up to New York, you got married, what, what choices you made maybe and why.

A: All right, first I got a job in Yonkers, through, also is through a friend of mine in Baltimore and it, that was like a teacher, principal and a little bit of a rabbi, because they haven't, they hadn't had, no, wait a second, ____, no, yes, Yonkers was an orphan home. At that time they called it orphan home, now they call it child care agency and this orphan home in Yonkers, there were about 200 youngsters of all ages, from six to 18 and I was put in charge of the people in between, between 10 and 13 and most of them were children who, where the parents had sent them over from Europe and, in to give them safety and then the parents would come over later. I still know some of the children there. And I was giving them services every day and so to say like social work, psychology and things of this sort, that was in Yonkers. In Yonkers I earned, how much was it, I think 100 dollars a month, but they gave me also, free food, you see and lodging and the person in charge was not Jewish, but he was a very nice person. I remember him. Then I found an ad in a Jewish paper that they needed a teacher and principal and rabbi-like, in Mountaindale(ph), then come to my job in Mountaindale(ph), they had a number of people who applied for this, but I was, I was selected and I stayed in Mountaindale(ph), it's in the Catskill Mountains, and I met very interesting people there and after two years I said I don't want to stay there any more. First of all, these small communities, they wanted a change of face. After two years, it's too long for them and I also wanted a change. Then, I got a job in Newark, New Jersey...

End of Tape 2

Tape 3

A: Okay, after Mountindale(ph), I had a job in Newark, in fact I had a few jobs in Newark, in the morning and the afternoon in the Yeshiva and in the afternoon school.

Q: Teaching?

A: Teaching. Then I got a job with _____ of teacher's seminary in Brooklyn and I was so to say, in charge of the office and I also gave some courses in psychology and so forth. And besides this, I worked in, I worked in Brooklyn at the teacher's seminary, also, with the State Department to bring over girls from Sweden and they brought over about 500 girls from Sweden, who were stranded there after the war. Sweden was neutral during the war. Finally, I also had a job in the _____ in the afternoon and I also had a job in the business as an office manager, first in the burlap company and afterwards in a shipping company and finally I decided to get one job, so I heard something about the city of New York, they needed social workers and I had gone to school here at the teacher's college, I got a degree from teacher's college and I became a Social Worker in the Department of Welfare at that time. Afterwards called the Department of Social Services and I started with them in 1956, I just jump over a little few things that are not so important and from 1956 on, I was with the Department of Social Services for 31 years, until 1987. I had all kinds of jobs in the Department of Social Services, starting from social worker, to Supervisor one, Supervisor two, Supervisor three, Assistant Director, training division, foster care and adoption, child abuse and child neglect, all kinds of things and I also wrote certain papers and certain articles for the, for the Department of Social Services. I wrote a book about how to get grants and, I don't even remember any more, I wrote a lot of things for them. And I was in different offices, I was in offices in Brooklyn and Bronx, in New York, until then, finally I retired, in 1987. After I retired, that means 31 years, I just skip over it, then in 1987, I joined the, what's it called, the Jewish Education Society in New York

and I was giving talks to different groups. Then I joined, the seniors too, I gave groups to senior groups all over the New York and Coney Island, Brooklyn and all over. In family and family counseling service, it was in the family counseling service of that department, that talked to families and you gave also individual counseling and I worked to the Training Institute for Psychologists in New York and then in 1987, 1988, we decided to move from New York. I wanted to move at a time when I can still walk on my two feet, before I get too old and we moved to Silver Spring. We have three children who were born, 1949, 1951 and 1953, a son and two daughters. My son is an actuary(ph), the other daughter used to be a journalist and the third daughter is a mathematician and statistician. Especially my son and younger daughter are very good mathematicians, they made the highest score in the tests, in the Regent's Tests, I think it were called. But I started to work also beside this, with different organizations, writing stories for children or writing articles, or giving talks or learning Jewish subjects and I still do this, I recently gave a talk on, on ____ Therapy, by Victor Frankel(ph), I gave this many times here, in the JCC, Jewish Community Counsel and I also gave it in other places and it was very well attended and I gave other courses, you know, on Jewish subjects. And now, coming to today, I'm still giving courses here and there, one week in this synagogue, one week in that synagogue and during the week with individual people, people come to hear, from Montgomery County, from _____, from Baltimore, from all kinds of places. And I'm still writing and trouble is, I have written many, I have written many of these things in _____, that means in certain parts and now when I want to write the whole story, I have to integrate it, it's not always easy. But I hope one day it will come out complete. I always think about more, so I can never finish.

Q: Why did you choose the kind of work, which really you made your life's work, with Social Services and then an education?

A: Because I, for two or three reasons, number one, I'm interested in education and in learning more, like the perennial student, who always wants to learn more and I study a lot, with books and other things and I wanted to bring the people closer together. And, family life and, it's much easier, I wrote in my book too, it's much easier to learn how to hate than to love and then to be together and I know, there's so much, so many bad things happening in the world, with drugs, with crimes, all kinds of things, but we have to get in positive outlook to everyone, we have to do something which is positive, which helps to advance. Hate only brings you down and you have to bring something out, you see, which advances you, brings you closer together. I like to know people and what kind of life they have and what kind of life they made for themselves. And when I gave them advice, I always gave them advice to do something positive. I even tell them, if they are not successful in one subject, not to stay with it, to go into another one. I had a typist once who didn't know how to type, so I helped him into another job. See, if you just let them go and you don't show any concern for it, it doesn't cause for good relationship.

Q: How much do you think that the choices you made reflected your earlier experiences?

A: First of all, I saw the relationship in my home and also with my family and I saw also with other people that if they were close together, it was more successful and more helpful to them than if they were separate or hating each other or doing something which was negative. I don't really know anything else, it must be in the genes of a person, you see, to do certain things, I don't know.

Q: I mean, I have to think that some of the choices you made after the war, your value system, had to have been affected by your experience in Nazi Germany.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: I'm trying to, and you've probably thought about this...

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Somewhat, to try and get a sense of how those early, very, very difficult early experiences, affected the way you are today, the way you became, the way you lived your life.

A: Mm-hm. When I left the school, the German school, I went to a German school until 1936, the teacher asked us to write down what we want to do after school and why we want to do it after school. So there were two things which interest me, number one, I figured out if I would stay in Germany, what would be possible, what would be open to me? There was nothing opened to me, not in the non-German world, only in the Jewish world. So I decided to go to the Jewish teacher's seminary. In fact my teacher helped me select that. _____ number one. Number two was, I saw many people suffering in Germany, Jews especially and, so I thought I wanted to help them somehow. Because they have, they have the same fate, they have the same fate that we have. That's what I think it is, it might be more, but at this moment I cannot think of anything more. I might come to think of more.

Q: When you moved over here, what did you see as your greatest challenge, as your difficulties, if any?

A: Before we moved over here, we had to make a decision when we want to move and where we want to move to. When we want to move to I already told you, I wanted to move when we are, still can work and do something. I did not want to retire completely. When I gave my retirement speech in the Department of Social Services, I said to them, "Retire means to put on a new tire, to put on a new career. Retirement means a new career and people in their retirement usually are more busy than before." Where we want to move to. So my son, who lives in New York state, I didn't want to move there, because they have a lot of business to do with themselves, they have their own family and they wouldn't have any time for us, not that I want people to have time for me, but they're busy with themselves. The second reason I didn't want to move there is, there wouldn't be any chance for

me to do something else, to get a job for something else. Cleveland, my daughter lives in Cleveland. I didn't want to move there, the Cleveland climate is too cold. So we moved here. That's our youngest daughter, she is here, living here and I think we could give her some help and also here would be the possibility to get another job and I got some other jobs here.

Q: But actually what I was trying to understand is, in your moving not so much to the Washington area, but to the United States, you know, a long, 50 years ago. What, over the years do you think has been more difficult or more challenging for you in terms of adapting to the American lifestyle. I mean I know it's a long time now, but if you can think back.

A: Do mean that originally why we wanted to come to the United ...

Q: No, not why you wanted to come, but once you were here and living here, what, do you remember what ...

A: What was most difficult to adjust to?

Q: Or most challenging for you?

A: First of all, there were already in America at that time when we came here, there were already groups of equally minded, equal minded Jews, were already living here. There were already congregations, certain places and therefore it made it easier for me and therefore I might be able to find a job through them and I did. And there is more possibility and opportunity here than other places. It was not as hard, as difficult to find connections, see and to study and learn something.

Q: So what you're saying is adjustment really wasn't that difficult?

A: No, well, not too difficult here.

Q: Do you think that there were certain events in the history of the last 50 years, that impacted you or that you thought about in a different way because of your experience in Germany? Whether it

was the McCarthy hearings or the Civil Rights movement or even the Japanese internment centers, I mean were there events here that you had a particular, particularly strong reaction to?

A: Yeah, for instance, as I mentioned before, during the war...

Q: You don't have to be so close to the mike, but you keep turning your head away from it.

A: Yeah. During the war, that we were considered enemy aliens, despite the fact that we were saving, they were not, they did not make a differentiation between those who came here because of their own personal persecution and those who were actually went along with the Nazi system. They didn't make any difference here, they just considered everyone who came from Germany in the same category, the Japanese too. That was one thing. And then, afterwards, I mean the McCarthy hearings and so forth, the un-American committee, see that it's not American again, not too much American. I mean that was a, a leftover, I would say, from what the thinking was here in the beginning of the 40's. Is means that they very much believed in, in pure American and anything which came from outside of America, like Russia, and the Communists and so forth, was considered, you cannot live with it and you have to fight it. So I think, but then the people understood that the most important here is actually to do something for the country, when Kennedy, when Kennedy came. I don't know if this is the right answer, there is no right answer to it.

Q: That's okay. I'm just sort of wondering if there were certain events over the years that had a very unusually strong impact on you and, or that you identified with or that made you think in a new way?

A: Okay. All right. At one point, at one point I could have gotten a job, I was even offered a job already, in Portland Oregon, I was offered a job, in 19, 1956 and I got the contract in and everything like this and I thought everything would be okay and I would be able to do this, to go there, to start a school and certain other things and I discussed it with some of the friends here and some intelligent

people, if this is country that's reliable, if I can believe it and they said, "Yes." But what happened is, I made already arrangements for the plane to go there and the condition was, my condition, that I would go there for three months on trial and if I like it, I stay, if I don't, and fulfill the complete contract, if not I would come back. But just the day before I was leaving, I was told that they changed their mind there and they don't want to make a school there, they want to make some kind of a social program or who knows what there and I had already given up my job, which I had here. I had two jobs, I had the job in the Hebrew school and I had the job in the burlap factory. And fortunately, the burlap factory, they took me back right away, even though I had canceled with them, the Jewish school did not take me back, but I didn't mind and the Portland, the one who had signed the contract gave me 50 dollars, which was not very much for the whole contract, which they signed, so then I decided, I'm not going into this field any more, because you cannot believe them and I wanted to go on something which was safer. Then I found out about the city of New York and I went into the Social Work System with the city of New York.

Q: Now, when you said, a few minutes ago you mentioned Kennedy.

A: Yeah.

Q: Why did you?

A: Because Kennedy, in his speech, especially the first speech we'd seen, don't do what the country wants from you, do what you can do for your country, you see, that people should work more for each other instead of against each other and always expecting things coming to them, you have to in, put some input, you have to do something and I wanted some input also, not all, that's why I wanted to make my own school and my this and all kinds of things. Some input, not just just on the receiving end. This is unfortunately, naturally, people like to be served, but that's not how we can build up something. So that's just the kind of input, and when I came here, for instance, that

synagogue, they didn't have a certain class, so I instituted a class there. When I came here, they didn't have a certain kind of information sheet, so I instituted an information sheet. When I came to Wurzburg, they did not have a newsletter all the time, so we instituted a newsletter and ____ to the ____ and we told them some stories about, I would like some input. Giving something see, more giving than taking.

Q: What, do you feel, as a Jew, absolutely safe?

A: Safe in what respect?

Q: That, that not, that what happened 50 years ago would never happen again, that you are free from anti-Semitism, whether institutional or personal?

A: You can never feel 100 percent safe, you can only, as an actual thing, you cannot be safe. In your mind you can feel safe. You can say, I have done what I do, what I've wanted to do and I have done this and that's how it will go, it will be, it will be. Things may change, things change all the time. The only constant in this world is change. So it will constantly change and I don't think that anti-Semitism will ever stop. Because I see it, whether it's in Israel, whether it's all over, you see, there are always people who are very self-centered and they want just what they want and they do whatever is necessary in order to get what they want without thinking about other people, hurting other people or harming or killing other people. So therefore, I can only feel safe in the way, what I'm doing. If you believe in a certain thing, you believe in this and then you feel safe.

Q: Do you think that, that Jews need to remain vigilant?

A: Vigilant? Only so certain respect. Let's say if someone is a very fanatic, it wouldn't help them. You can only be, be vigilant in your own approach and what you are doing yourself, not vigilant in respect to, in regard to other people, that will not help very much. Because one war brings upon another war ____, like it was in, in Germany. First the war of 1870 brought about the war of 1914,

brought about the war 1939 and so forth. So one war brings about another war, so to bring about peace you see, that's actually what our intent is, the intent. Everyone talks about peace, but no one does anything about it, like the weather. It doesn't happen in the world today. We have many arenas of war and people talk about peace and it continues. In Israel, all over.

Q: Well, let me ask you this, in terms of history. You left Germany in 1939, you knew it was scary?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You knew it wasn't getting better.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But I suspect you had no idea what you would learn later. That must have been somewhat shocking to you, yes? I mean what would you, when you finally learned what really happened over there?

A: You cannot always think of the worst, you, you think something will happen you see, how much will happen, I don't know and then you have to be guided, like I did, by some principal which is basic, by some basic principal which you believe by. If someone has a belief, then he knows something, then he, then he, then he feels safe. If someone had religion, for instance, he says, this is what I can do, so much I can do and not more and the rest I may, I may leave up to God or someone else. I can do only my best, what I can do and every person's limited, can only do certain thing. So I will try my best. But then you really have to try your best.

Q: But I think what I was asking is, when you got tangible information about the atrocities in Europe, what was the impact on you?

A: I felt very bad about what was happening and I felt that something had to be done about it and the question, who could do something about it and how can you help, but it is not up to one person,

it has to be a group of people and before you change any person's, before you can change any person, before you can ask any person to help you, he has to have in his mind that he wants to help, really. So you have to find out what is in his mind, you know and by talking to them and how bad it is. Many people didn't believe it. And I see it many times, there are still people today who don't believe it. People only believe it if it hurts themselves, if it hits themselves, hits them or their family. So therefore, I think the most important thing is education and therefore I was always in the educational field, I wanted to be in the educational field, because the work education means to bring out _____. Not revolution by force, but to bring it out for other person, every person has something unique in themselves, which other person doesn't have and bring this out.

Q: Was there a sense of celebration or satisfaction in the birth of Israel, or is that just something that you...

A: It was a momentary victory, momentary, because...

[end of side one, tape three]

Q: What we were, you know, I was just asking you about Israel and you... Let me ask you, I mean clearly your religion has always been important to you. Do you think that it helps you get through hard times, or that it affected the way you lived your life?

A: I think it helped me a lot of times and I also think that it helped me, not to get too involved or too much engrossed in thinking that this is very good, it wouldn't change. There is still, there is still things that will change and not that this is a final answer, like what they are doing now in Israel? I don't think that will be the final answer. There's a progress going on, life is movement, it continuously moves. It was good at that time, for instance, that many people needed someplace to live and this was provided. But, as they saw in Germany, that the most pious person cannot live in

peace if the evil neighbor doesn't want it. That's what Goyter(ph) said, he was a great German poet. So you have to live with others together and sometimes the others don't want peace.

Q: When you were living in Germany still and there was really a constant fear of not knowing what was going to happen next, did you pray a lot?

A: You see, in the beginning, as I mentioned, I only became more religious after my bar mitzvah, even though we kept chabiss(ph) to a certain extent and my mother kept kosher food, household, but in wasn't such a problem, you see, we didn't think of it so much, we thought it would always remain like that. Because I had friends, non-Jewish friends, we playing together and we didn't think of, so much about it. Neither did they think so much about it, the difference between Jews and non-Jews, until the Nazis came and made it a policy, everyone has to think about it.

Q: How about after your Bar Mitzvah and times were getting worse then?

A: Yeah.

Q: That you, when you, did you pray for a sense of support or?

A: No, I said the regular prayers you see, what we always say.

Q: Nothing special?

A: No.

Q: But you continued, you continued to pray and to believe in the value or the power of prayer?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is there anything you can point to, that might explain what gave you special strength, special skills in, instinct, to get through all of this? That you carry with you?

A: I know one thing, that, I was the first born in the family, you see and usually the first born, gets more attention from the parents, like in my case and they sent me to a school of higher learning and they gave me piano lessons training. Not my sister, she always complained about this and so, so in

order to give them a kind of feeling you see, of a little bit more than someone else, because like honoring your parents, you respect your older brothers and sisters. But I didn't take advantage of it. Probably it made me feel a little bit, a little better, I don't know, you see?

Q: It may have made you a little bit more of an activist, of a leader, which it seemed like you were.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: When you think back to Germany, are there any images that still stick with you, that haunt you?

A: As I said, no I didn't say it but...

Q: But now you will.

A: As you know, my wife doesn't want to have any connection any more with Germany and _____. I say, there were certain things in Germany which were very nice, you see and we would, and I would like to see it, I would like, let's say, for instance, go back and see where I was born and where we used to live. In fact we once went to Germany, since, since we immigrated here, but that was only one day, but I don't know what the German mind is now, but I remember one thing, that after the war, our neighbor, non-Jewish neighbors, wrote to my father a lot and they and I still have the letters, in German, that they were good friends and they are sorry for what happened in Germany and so forth and of course they wrote, also said, they suffered a lot, but that's not comparable to what the Jews suffered, because anyone else, even I tell most of the young people, too, anyone else who suffered, if he would accept the Nazi policy, would not be persecuted any more, Jews were persecuted whether they did or not and it was a purpose, so therefore I'd like to know, what the German attitude is now. When they asked me this question in the museum, you see, how I feel, I ask them how do you feel?

Q: Do you ever dream about Germany?

A: No, not any more.

Q: When you did, were there certain recurring images?

A: It was only during the war that I dreamt about some people I knew and I didn't know what would happen to them.

Q: Now, your wife is also from Germany?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Besides the fact that she's a lovely, wonderful, woman, was there a certain commonality, a certain bond that you felt because she was also a German?

A: No, because I met her when we were still in Germany, she did not remember this, but I did, do. Because when I was in Germany and I was going to the Wurzberger school, to the seminary, at one time, in the last year, 1938, beginning of 1938, they wanted a foreign language to be taught and the question was, do you want Spanish or French. The majority wanted Spanish. After the majority wanted Spanish, they asked, is there anyone who can teach Spanish. I had had correspondence with Spain, a friend of mine, so I knew a little bit of Spanish, so I said, I'll try to give a Spanish course. So I was appointed the first Spanish teacher in Wurzburg. And in order to make it applicable and have people join this course, I gave a sample lecture in a big auditorium and she was one of the students there. She didn't even know that. And then we met again when we came to America.

Q: Well the reason I ask is that it seems a lot of survivors marry survivors, a lot of survivors from one area in Europe, later marry somebody from that same area of Europe and I'm wondering if there's a logical reason for that and why you wouldn't have necessarily married somebody who was American, or?

A: No, there, and a few reasons for it, number one, first of all, people like to marry someone who, with whom they can converse, I mean, who is on their level and maybe even intellectually, culturally and so forth and when I came to New York, my wife had an aunt there who knew this

family, you see. In fact I knew some, I knew of a cousin of my wife's, whom I liked, but she was killed in the Holocaust. And then one day when my wife came here, she made the contact and, so that's, we had met before as I said, but not knowing it and that's how it came about.

Q: So it wasn't a matter of either more comfort there or less comfort with somebody who doesn't understand where you came from and what you went through.

A: No, it came, it came automatically, you know, it happened this way, just to happen you see, it is true, you see, that both people try to marry someone who is from their own background or so, unless someone cannot find anyone at all here and I know people who are going to Iran, or go to other place and marry there, but usually they try to find someone. Also I liked her family and the family gave me some, something, yeah, helped.

Q: Well I guess, you know when you had talked about initially coming over here and being surprised that most Americans were clueless about what was happening in Europe and they didn't care and they didn't even want to know, it would seem to me that it might be logical that you'd want to spend your time with people who had your same sensibilities about this.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You know, that's the thing _____ was trying to get at.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I guess I have one more question. Do you think there's any way that the Holocaust could have been avoided?

A: Not the way in which the German government operated at that time. Because in the 20's, when they wanted to establish a democracy in Germany, _____ a democracy, most people were not in favor of this democracy, or they didn't care and therefore, one government after the other fell. That was one thing. Number two was, the Treaty of Versailles, in 1918, 1919, did not intend to create a

United Nations, or what we have now, in the League of Nations. They did not want to, they did not want to bring people closer, but they wanted to separate people and they made different countries, small countries, which didn't exist before. They made this a country, this a country, they made all different countries, before it was all united. And all this encouraged someone like Hitler to bring them together again and to tell the people, you see, don't worry about it, you are not treated well, the Versailles Treaty didn't treat you well and there's inflation and you can't get anything, no jobs, nothing. I will bring the sun. But he could only do this by having a scapegoat and he took the Jews, because the Jews are very, very passive in this way. So therefore, from this point of view, giving him the power, people gave him the power, so that Holocaust came about.

Q: And the passivity of the Jews, did it play into this? Should they have resisted more strongly?

A: No, the Jews don't resist, you see, the Jews try to go along with the government, whatever the government is. In fact, even here in America, after Truman I think, they mention the name of the president in every prayer. Roosevelt especially, Truman. After Truman, I think. They did not want to, they accepted whatever, whatever the government said. Pray for the welfare of the government, so they accepted it. What should they have done? What should they have done?

Q: Is there something wrong in our teaching?

A: It has to be honest. The first thing that happened, what Hitler did, it was in education. He changed the, all the pictures in the books of the kindergarten and who knows what and put in the Jews with the big nose and with hook and this kind of thing and such a person you have to hate. You can put everything into a child's mind, a child doesn't know the difference between right and wrong. They learned this only much later. So therefore, if a child does not get the right information from the beginning, everything goes wrong. And that's why this _____ of the _____ and other things, taught them wrong. Education is very important.

Q: But what about our education as Jews? To make us stand up a little bit quicker?

A: What should they do? The Jews education does not, does not emphasize war or things of this sort, or hate or, even the Christian religion you see, says love your neighbor like yourself. And many religions teach, say this, but the difference is, we say and I don't know if I should say it, but we say, that's a way to act, not that's a way to think only. Roosevelt said it. Roosevelt knew _____ only in mind, but not in action. Same thing also with religion you see, to love your neighbor like yourself in your mind, yes, but in your action, not. The action has to follow what you say in your mind, if not so, not so. So that's what they have to teach the children here, to really act, to be together, to be friends with each other and so forth, to have more kind of realistic system, not just in your mind.

Q: Well, getting back to your saying that Jews as a people are passive...

A: It seems so.

Q: They're supportive of their community or their government, that they're passive. Should we be less passive, should we be more attentive to what's going on and act?

A: There are certain, in certain areas in which you should not be passive, but that I cannot say and make everyone responsible for, that is, there are certain laws, let's say the 10 Commandments, you see, they should be more active in those, not to kill, not to steal and so forth, you see, and just be more active in that, not only the Jews, everybody. Because what's going on now with the drug scene, with the killing and so forth, they don't believe it. So, so there are certain, certain laws which, which every person should understand, logically. And that they should teach them and not only teach them to think about this, I want to, I don't want to preach here, you see, you see.

Q: I don't have any other questions, is there something you would like to add, that I haven't asked you?

A: Except, I don't know if I gave you everything, because it's impossible, there are too many things to be remembered and too many things which happened, but, if you want to build a world of peace, that all people want to do now, at least they say so, then, then we have to, then we have to give everyone the equal opportunity, but it's unfortunate that many times, as soon as someone gets a little bit higher, he wants the whole, he wants everything you see, people aren't satisfied with a finger, they want the whole hand. And, we wrote once, an essay, we ____ wrote an essay in school, when I was in the Nazi school and the essay was called, German loyalty. The Germans were always loyal to their leader, not only were they loyal to their leader, also they wanted to be on top of everybody. And they believed in the Darwin theory, the survival of the fittest, we have to be the fittest, the Germans said. Now if everyone thinks I'm the fittest and he will always subdue other ones and have weaker ones whom he destroys and that's what I want to end with. The teacher once, once asked me, he brought it out in a class and he said, "The Germans are superior and all the other races are inferior, because we are the strongest, we are the tallest, we are the blondest, we have the bluest eyes," and so forth. And, and he said to me, this was a Nazi teacher, "What do you think about it?" I said to him, "There is nothing in this world superior or inferior, everyone can rise to a high level, everyone can go low. But there is one thing in this world which the Nazis don't recognize and that's that every person's different and you don't realize the difference between one person, everyone contributes something you see and you cannot put him down because he's different and him down because he's different in this way and he's different in that way." Same thing like happens in America now. Everyone's different, they can all contribute and as long as they contrib, as long as someone thinks I am superior and you are inferior, I am a majority and you are a minority. Once a person in my office told me, "The Jews are not a minority," he said to me. "Not in New York, " I said, but maybe another thing. So I asked him, "When does a minority stop to be a minority? I

asked him. He couldn't answer that. But someone's, if someone works under the logical thinking that he's a minority, then he will always strive to be a majority, we always strive to majority and there will always be a fight going on, but the only time someone thinks I'm different, I have certain things which you don't have and you have certain things which I don't have, then they will live together in peace.

Q: Okay.

A: Accept it or not.

Q: Thank you very much. You mentioned a Nazi school and I'm wondering at what point you were in a Nazi school?

A: I think I made a mistake, it should not be called Nazi school, but German school. Because when Hitler came to power, all the previous directors and teachers were either asked to become members of the Nazi party, or leave the school. So the director in my school, where I went, the _____, had been with the Social Democrat party and he was dismissed. And from then on, there were two kinds of teachers, the teachers who were members of the party from long time ago, the early numbers, all the early numbers had priority or a later number. But they came all in with the Nazi emblem, which was like a lifesaver and there was written NASDP, National Socialist Democratic Workers Party, that's how they called themselves, with a swastika in the middle and one teacher came in with a Nazi uniform and whenever a teacher came in, the students get up and says Heil Hitler, when the teacher leaves the classroom, Heil Hitler, they all stand up. But that was, that was already before that they would stand up, but that was respect for the teacher, because you were, you were supposed to have respect for the teacher, the teacher was a high official in Germany.

Q: So this was in 1933 and did you, what, did you stand up, did you have to stand up to salute ____.

A: I stand up, but I did not have to lift the hand with the Heil Hitler salute or the Nazi salute, but there was, when you came into the building, there was a teacher standing and everyone when he came in, would lift his hand. I didn't have to lift my hand, but then on the other hand, some people who didn't know it, would beat you up if you didn't do it.

Q: Were you ever beaten up?

A: No, not for that. But I tell you, I saw a boy on a bicycle, he met a Nazi and he lifted his hand and he fell from his bike, so they said on the bike, you don't have to lift your hand, just make, sit up straight. But this teacher came in and one of these teachers who was from Strasbourg, Alsace-Lorraine, which was French and German again, he called me over, his son was in my own, in my class, in my class, same class as I am. He said to me privately, "You know, I am not actually anti-Semitic," he said, "but in order to keep my job, I have to put this life saver on," he said to me. And, and this other teacher I told you about, he gave a course in Assencunder(ph), it means knowledge of the races.

Q: And you went, you took this course?

A: I had to take it. The only thing is, afterwards they changed, that I didn't go on Shabbat any more to school, so this teacher was an older teacher, he was 65 at that time, he called me over and he said to me, "If you don't come to school on Saturday, I'm going to teach Hitler's Kampf, Mein Kampf, the book on Saturday, so you do, are not there. And if you miss anything, I will give you the, I will tell some student to give you the homework," see there, but still, some teachers of, from the older class, you see. But they had to be members, you see and if you had and if not, they could be dismissed. Now him they probably left, he was going anyhow, retirement age 65 there, he left. That's okay, but, but I help as a teacher, you see, when he gave this kind, so I asked a question, what makes it _____. Why does he know everything? So they taught that he has intuition that comes

from himself Hitler does not believe in manifestation from above, because there's no one above him. No God, no nothing, he didn't believe in God, even though he was Catholic. So there's no manifestation from above, everything comes from the blood and soil and it goes up to him and he knows it by intuition. What they call a, I forget already the word in German, but it's something like a combination of blood and soil.

Q: What'd they teach you in the race class?

A: They taught me similar things and they also taught me that the German race is superior. Why? Because when God created the world in he interprets the bible, but not the correct way of course, he created man and then they believe in Darwin's theory, that the fittest survive, only the survival of the fittest, so that means the fittest survive and we are the fittest. The Jews are not fit, that's why they have to be eradicated. And about this, what I mentioned before about inferiority and superiority and which I don't believe in, I believe in the same thing, you see, but difference, differency, differentiation, but I don't believe in superior and this other thing. And finally, oh, not about that. I was the only student of 700 in that school, that was a big school.

Q: The only Jewish student.

A: The only Jewish student.

Conclusion of Interview.