

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Robert Treuer
October 27, 1995
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PREFACE

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ROBERT TREUER

October 27, 1995

Question: . . . and where you were born?

Answer: I am Robert Treuer, I was born in Vienna, Austria, January 31st, 1926. My family, my parents and I, I was the only child were considered Jewish even though we did not practice the religion, and know I had my grandparents and I am told, my great-grandparents. However, in the European system, such as it was, we were considered Jews, and when I started first grade, and school began with the saying of the Lord's prayer, the teacher rapped an interruption and pointed to me and said you can't say that, you have to be quiet while the rest of the children say the Lord's prayer, and we'll start over again, and they did. I vividly remember March of 1938, when the Nazi's came in. I remember the tension during the days beforehand. I was awakened about two in the morning by SA troops marching in front of our house, singing the _____ song, marching throughout the neighborhood. It was not the first time that violence had come to my neighborhood, but I'll talk about that later. That night, there were very few Jews in this neighborhood, this was the nineteenth district Vienna, Dehrbling(ph) and the part we lived in was Severing(ph), it was near the city outskirts on the edge of the Vienna woods. That night there was a bloody beating of another Jew in the neighborhood, man by the name of Roldt(ph), or Roth, as I recall it. He had been accused of being a pedophile. Whether this was true or not, I don't know. My parents were not bothered, not was I that night. My father operated a very small stationery store, about a block from the house where we lived where we lived, at six _____, it was a two room apartment, second floor. My mother gave piano lessons, either at home in our apartment or going to the homes of others. My father and I did not know this at the time, or as a child, had been in the anti-fascist underground during the years prior to the Nazi takeover in 1938, smuggling escapees across the

border near Czechoslovakia, bringing in underground newspapers from Czechoslovakia, and he and an associate distributed these newspapers. What happened was that he had been very active in the social democratic party, particularly in youth and children's activities and cultural activities until the fascist takeover in 1934 and the fighting that then erupted. My father was involved, he had tried to distribute guns from the back stoop of his store. I saw the fighting, I saw the _____, the national guard is comparable, and the private armies come through the streets, heard the shooting, a sniper shot at my father in our apartment, the bullet imbedded above my head in my bedroom as I was asleep. The fighting didn't last long, artillery was used to shoot at the worker's apartment houses, notably the Karl Marx _____, the kilometer long first public housing for low income people in the city of Vienna, and in other apartment complexes there had been an effort during the socialist administration to provide low income housing. The fighting was bitter. Armored car and carriers and trucks pulled up in our street and went on door to door searches of people's apartments looking for contraband, guns or political material, what have you, and these _____ were repeated. When school resumed after a few days of the fighting, I passed by artillery emplacements on the street corners and armed troops at intersections who waved us children across. I didn't understand the political ins and outs of it, but I understood exactly what happened because the children's home where I'd gone after school, all activities that had been part and parcel of my personal life then as an eight year old were shot down immediately and completely. And stories came back home about, for example two men waiting for a street car at a street car stop, telling a joke, not realizing that the man standing behind them was a plainclothes police who promptly arrested them for telling a political joke, and even as an eight year old, I knew what that meant, that you had to be very careful. Of course my parents were careful in that they did not tell me very much information that by blabbing I could possibly hurt them without meaning to. For example I did not know until many years later

that my father took long summer vacations, during which he established a new identity as an itinerant farm laborer on farms along the Austrian-Czechoslovak border. The growth of the Austrian Nazi party was palpable, although again as a child I did not, that did not register with me particularly. When the Nazis, or when Anschluss came, in March of 1938, and the German army marched in unopposed, either by Austria or any other international community, and apparently with the tacit backing of Mussolini in Italy, the reception that I saw of the German troops, you know the Nazis, by the Austrian population was overwhelming. And for example, many of the active socialists, even those in the underground, switched parties and joined the Nazi party. Some of them warned my father that because they knew, now the Nazis would know about his underground activities and that he and his associate, Ernst Pollit(ph) would be very wise to cut it out immediately. My father, Fritz Treuer, was under no illusions what the advent of the Nazis meant, he knew about the Nuremberg laws, about the persecution of the Jews, about confiscation of property, and he immediately started making efforts to get us out of the country. Some of the rest of our relatives were not as alarmed as he was, my mother's two sisters and their husbands, professional people, thought that well, they were engineers, they had particular skills that were in demand and they didn't, while things might be unpleasant, there was no great danger. My father tried to tell them otherwise and was not believed. He also tried to get three or four Jewish boys together and give us the beginnings of rudimentary military training in somebody's garden behind a house, a high hedge or a wall around it, it lasted exactly two times, two afternoons after school. Somebody saw us, it was reported and one the erstwhile socialists got ahold of Dad and said this had better stop right now or you're going to get nailed. That was the end of that. My accordion teacher, who came to our house in a streetcar, was stopped in the street. He was a very large man, his name was Hamlish, and very curly black hair, he was immediately taken for a Jew by passing by Nazis, who began

pulling his hair, beating him up and so on, although I think he would have been big enough to take care of any two or three of them. It was impossible, they were armed. That was the last accordion lesson. Hamlish incidentally, and his wife managed to escape, I'm not sure exactly how they came to New York, they subsequently had children born in this country, one of whom is Marvin Hamlish, a musical arranger.

Q: I wanted to ask, before the Anschluss, and you mentioned specifically that when you were in school and you were sitting in, you were in the classroom singing and they stopped, the teacher asked you to stop, was that the only incident that was before March 1938?

A: No, the only incident of anti-Semitism that I experienced?

Q: No, there were many, that was just a representative?

A: That was a representative, there were many, and on the street there was the usual bullying. My parents took the attitude that whether it was racial or not, I had to fight my own fights, which I did. The anti-Semitism was generic and general and you picked up on it in many subtle ways. It was not usually violent, except as when kids fought on the streets, although I do remember one incident which may give you the flavor of it, is before the Anschluss, some of us kids were playing in the street and I was, chasing each other, reckless, I didn't look, plunging across the street head first and ran into a bicyclist hard enough, I bent the front wheel of his bike badly enough so he couldn't ride it. I got some good cuts and bruises out of that one, but he immediately found out who I was, knew who my father was and he was a local Nazi, remember this was before the Anschluss, and he marched me and his damaged bike to Dad's store and swung enough weight by virtue of his party membership so that before Dad could even attend to me and take me to the emergency room, which was done later, he had to pay the man off for the damage to the bike, cash then and there or else, and the or else could and probably would have been beatings, damage to the store, what have you. After

the Anschluss, and very quickly saw, there was such an explosion of uniforms, Hitler youth and so on, amazingly fast. There were round-ups of Jews in the streets, made to scrub the streets. This happened to a distant relative of ours, and elderly woman, not in good health and when some of the people standing around made remarks about that to the storm troopers who were conducting the street scrubbing, one of them walked over to the woman and said, well I think maybe you can get up and leave, it seems you're not Jewish, and she said, yes I am, I'm 400% Jewish, all four of my grandparents are Jews. A similar thing happened to my mother who was rounded up between piano lessons, on the streets of Vienna, and she was blonde, blue-eyed, petite. If you wanted a poster girl for your Aryan woman, she would have been it, and again when she was down there scrubbing streets, people started to mutter that these stupid SS men, SA men didn't know what they were doing, look at this, and one of them told mom to get up and get out of there and she said, no I'm Jewish, I belong here the same as the rest of these people, I'll go when they go. And I think that was a very short-lived, street scrubbing. It wasn't always that kind.

Q: So immediately after Anschluss, you immediately felt an impact on your personal lives?

A: It was immediate and it was massive. In the popular support, and you heard nothing against it, no one spoke against it, and my parents got busy, my father particularly. Remember him telling my mother that it was only a matter of days before the Nuremberg laws were applied, as indeed they were, and that they had to do everything possible to get out of the country. Now I later came across, in my parents personal papers, and then they're both dead now, correspondence to Bolivia, Mexico, Chili, anywhere possible to get out. What eventually happened was that my mother found employment as a housemaid in a rural English household, I think through an employment agency. Through a refugee agency, a place was found for me in an English boarding school, an Orthodox Jewish boarding school which would take me in, because the law at that time was if you were an

adult you could enter England only if you had proof of employment, if you were a child, you had to have proof that somebody would take you in, well my mother's employers would not allow a child, however the place in the boarding school sufficed for me. We were taken to the railway station, the _____, the west railway in Vienna by my father and a few family friends, I had no brothers or sisters and took the train through Austria, Germany, exiting Germany at _____ through Belgium and then to take the boat, the channel boat to England, except that at _____, the train was stopped, all Jews were taken off, rounded up and surrounded by heavily armed police, SS and others, and the train pulled out and left. The reason for that, I don't know, it could have been that one person on board the train had tried to smuggle contraband out, at least that's what was said. We were standing in a cluster approximately, I would guess about 40 or 50 refugees with our luggage, such as it was, and tightly hemmed in by armed guards. My mother, Mia Treuer and I, were in the middle of this cluster and she took a quick look around, clamped my hand in hers and we each had a suitcase in the other hands and whispered to me, she said, don't look, don't say anything, come. And she marched through the middle of this packed little crowd, between two guards looking neither left nor right and they looked a little surprised and she kept right on going, I with her, into the restaurant, station restaurant, where I had the first cup of coffee in my life, and we sat very quietly, she and I at that restaurant table, nursing a coffee. I don't know what happened to the rest of the refugees taken off the train. We sat in that cafe for hours until the next train came, at which time I was ready to leap up and run for the train, and with one look at my mom and I sat right where I was. People got off that train, other people got on and she didn't make a move. I was just bursting with impatience because I knew I was waiting there. And at the last moment she said, very abrupt, come. We grabbed our suitcases, out the door, up the steps of the train and it started to move, it was moving as we found seats in the train and seconds later, we were out. I owe her my life. Not only in the sense

that she gave me birth. The trip through Belgium on the train was uneventful and the channel crossing eventful only by my getting sick to my stomach. Took the ____ train to London where my father's brother was waiting for us. I don't know how he got out, I suspect he was in London illegally, but I don't know the circumstances. He met us at the train, took us to a hotel. As we rounded the corner to enter the hotel, roof to floor, Nazi banners are flying there and I panicked, I was terrified, I didn't know what had happened, were we back in Germany or what? But it turned out some sporting event and the Nazi team was being hosted in London. The next morning my mother took the train for her employment out in the country side. My uncle took me to the school where I was to attend. Turned out to be an Orthodox Jewish school. The headmaster, my recollection is a black coat, white shirt, black tie, a black hat, full beard. Looked me over as I was brought into his office and said this boy is not a Jew. My hair was _____. My uncle assured him that I was. I was quizzed on my knowledge of Hebrew which was nonexistent, although in a cram course, an effort was made to teach me something before I left. It hadn't taken. And although my knowledge of English was very limited, I only had a few words at that time, I understood very clearly that he wouldn't take me. Because this was a strict religious school and he could not violate the integrity of the school. My uncle pleaded with him, first time I ever heard my uncle plead with anyone. He was a mountain climber, kayaker, skier, and boyhood idol of mine. But he pleaded, he said there was a real risk and a danger that if I were not where I was supposed to be I would be deported and no questions asked, it would be immediate, and his pleading must have had some effect because the headmaster of the school did consider it and he asked one more question, I didn't understand the English, it had to be translated for me, and the question was, was I circumcised and the answer was no, and he said, no we can't take him. Not even for one day, not for two days. We left. Just how my uncle found another boarding school, I don't know if this one was religious

secular. I don't know, but before the end of the day he had found another school that would take me in free, there was no money. What little our family had had been sequestered and we had no money. This school turned out to be a snake pit. My first night there, sleeping in the large dormitory with many other boys my age, one started screaming in great pain, and I tried to find out from the boy in the bed next to mine what was going on and I didn't understand the English, and he pointed at his appendix and I knew what that was, the boy had appendicitis and he screamed for a long time before finally some of the staff showed up and the gist of what they had told him was to turn over and pray. Well I understood that clearly enough, I found myself in a place where if you had appendicitis, you prayed. The next day the other kids went to various classes, I had no English, they told me to hang around in the kitchen and I did. I was raped before the day was out, by a staff member. I told no one. I felt responsible for what had happened, it was my fault. I didn't ____ find out until long afterwards that this is a common reaction of victims, of child victims of sexual abuse that the child takes on the bad feelings about what happened. It's a simple phenomenon, I know it now. During the magic years of childhood, the adult can do no wrong and if something happens between a child and an adult that is wrong, it cannot be the fault of the adult. And I was a very small, pint-sized 12.

Q: So your mother was living separately from you obviously, she was working away from?

A: Yes, she lived with the people that she worked for out in the country. I'm not clear just exactly where in England, she worked for a Major Woodiwiss, who was a widower with I believe some children and she was expected to keep the house clean and take care of the children.

Q: So you really had no one close to you that you could talk to about this?

A: My uncle did come to visit me. He had made it plain to me that I could not stay wherever he was staying and I had the impression that he shifted places to stay every couple of days. This is what

makes me think that he was there illegally. There was a small handful of Austrian socialists there who tried to help each other and apparently he would sleep with one family one night or two and then move on and I didn't tell him what happened to me. He could tell quickly enough that something was out of whack but he didn't know what, nor could he do much about it except that he did get me out of there. He made connections with another Vienna socialist who was the director of a refugee camp for Spanish orphans, these were the orphans of _____, the surviving children from Basque, Spain, and the British while they would not help the Spanish Republicans, did put up a tent, a temporary tent camp in Kensington Park in London. Home of Peter Pan, I'm told, and the Viennese socialists whom my uncle knew and who it turned out also knew my father, they made a deal and my uncle came and got me from that snake pit and took me to the tent camp where the director of the camp met me at the gate. He said are you Bobby Treuer? I said yes. I was carrying my tiny, little red cardboard suitcase, which I still have, I said yes, he said, you are Fritz Treuer's son? I said yes. He said I know a Fritz Treuer from Vienna. He said run, and I ran. I ran through the gate and into tent city and dark haired, dark skinned kids saw another dark hair, dark skin kid coming and they enveloped me and I disappeared into one of the tents. They didn't speak German, I didn't speak Spanish, none of us had much English, we all spoke survival. We supported and loved one another. One day there was news of a Republican victory in Spain, I don't know how it got it, and there was an impromptu torchlight parade and we ran around the perimeter of the camp, was so happy, somebody was fighting for us, and they won. We ran around there until we dropped. It was only four or five days later and the black bordered envelopes came, the typical European death notices were bordered in black, the envelopes were, and mail call, and one kid after another came and picked up his mail, and each of us felt we had died a little bit because we knew enough about defeats, I had known about them ever since 1934, one fight after another. One escape after another

and finally a smell of a little victory somewhere and then the death notices, oh yeah. There's an incident that happened to me in Vienna before we left that I want to tell you, two of them. I was riding the streetcar, forget whether it was on the way to school or from school, and a bunch of Hitler youth spotted me, and they must have seen the Jewish insignia on my streetcar pass, and one of them said, get him, and I leaped off the streetcar, ran in front of it, there was one coming the other way and the motorman was clanging with his footbell because the two were just about head to head and I had ducked in front of that one and ran. I remember correctly, I ran across the street, over a wall and onto the grounds of the _____ House, a hospital in the 19th district in Vienna, but by ducking between the streetcars I lost my pursuers, by the time both streetcars were gone, so was I. My kids ask me, well, my American boy and kids have asked me when I told them about this, if they would have killed me, and I don't know. I tell them I didn't stick around and find out. And another incident that comes to mind, about the same time before we left Vienna, I had to go to the dentist, to get some cavity filled and the dentist had to leave the office for a few moments to do something, get something, and I happened to notice some publication from the Nazi party lying on that round tray where he keeps his instruments. I was a nosy kid, I want to find out what they were telling him, and they were instructions to dentists, what particular political points were to be made by the dentist in discussion with the patient while he was treating them and the instruction to bear down with your drill to reinforce a point. Clear recollection.

Q: This is, you took this to mean that he was also involved in torture.

A: No, the use of pain to reinforce.

Q: Right.

A: Is all, I didn't take that to be any more torture than I thought dentists customarily dished out.

Now you said you wanted to ask me some questions?

Q: Yes, I wanted at first to talk about your father, you mentioned before Anschluss, before he was involved with the Socialists, but at the time you didn't know that, that was something you learned afterwards?

A: It was something I learned afterwards.

Q: But did you remember anything about him going to meetings or friends that he was . . .

A: He did, now during that _____ between the time the fascists took over in 1934 and the Anschluss in 1938, he did take me with him to visit friends sometimes and I remember one time he was visiting a friend and, who played a Victrola or phonograph for him of some Schubert _____, and they were saying oh, we better keep the volume down, this one is forbidden. It was a Schubert song, I forget now, _____, Your Thoughts are Free, well that was forbidden, and one of the things that happened shortly after the 1934 putsch that I remember, the Austrian government had negotiated and art exhibit of _____ cartoons and prints with the French government, and the arrangement had been made before February 1934, but the exhibit arrived much later and it couldn't be canceled, it would have been awkward, and the workers of Vienna turned out by the thousands because they couldn't be stopped from going to see it and of course these were political satire and was a way of expressing how they felt, and they stood there by the thousands in absolute silence, not knowing who would report anyone for any comment, to view the _____ exhibition in Vienna. There must be other memories lurking in the back of my mind about things that my father did then, but.

Q: You said he was a shopkeeper, that was his, what kind of?

A: He ran a little stationery store, little bit of candy, which was too high for me to reach and ran a typing and mimeographing service in the back of the store, and one of the ways in which they distributed the underground newspapers, which by then were printed in Czechoslovakia on tissue

paper, was that he did a lot of typing, mimeographing for a man by the name of Leon Schalit, who was the official translator of Galsworthy's works into German, and what Dad and his associate did was slipsheet the underground newspapers into the book manuscript to be returned to Schalit, and Ernst Pollit(ph) who helped my Dad, had to make almost daily trips back and forth between Dad's shop and Schalit's home, and this was a means of getting the newspapers out. Ironically, a high Vienna police official lived in the same building that housed my dad's store and had two armed guards standing in front of the building all the time and they would check Pollit(ph) periodically and find out what he was carrying, but the packages were so big and heavy and clumsy that they didn't want to bother with him and they saw him every day, so they were never caught for that. During the first days of the fascist takeover in '34, the underground newspaper was printed on the presses of the largest newspaper in Vienna. After that paper had finished it's first run, the printer stayed behind and ran off the underground newspaper. They got away with that for months until some bookkeeper upstairs in the office found out that the electricity bills were higher than they used to be and they got caught. Yeah. Well one thing leads to another, I remember my father meeting with some streetcar motorman and the discussion was how to distribute underground newspapers at a big football game, and they came up with this system that the streetcar line ended next to the football stadium and that the motorman had a few minutes between runs and they used, they would ball up the newspapers and fire them over the outside walls of the stadium with slingshots, and they fell amongst the audience. Not a very efficient system, but what can you do? You wanted to ask some?

Q: Oh sure, again about your father, you mentioned it was, this was after March 1938, or was it, maybe I didn't understand, but he during the summertime went and he created another identity, you said, as a?

A: Yes. He did this before the Nazis came, he had a pretty keen sense of what might happen, and I believe continued that after he had shipped Mom and me out of Vienna. He closed the apartment. All the goods and contents had been taken anyhow by the concierge's daughter and son-in-law, he was SS, they took the whole apartment and Dad just disappeared and I believe he lapsed into that identity, but in mean, had to come back again frequently to process his papers for his exit. Now, his recollections to me _____ Vienna visits, were that he had to stand in a long line at a hotel in Vienna, downtown Vienna, I believe he said it was the Imperial if I remember correctly, had been taken over by SS, to process exit visas and what have you. He said as he got there early in the morning, two lines had formed, he stood in the one he believed he had to go through, and the other line were elderly couples and it turned out that these people were undergoing compulsory divorce if one was Aryan and the other one Jewish, they were compelled to be divorced and he described to me not only the utter silence in which both lines inched forward, but the weeping, the old people as they came back down, not knowing where to go, what to do, with whom they could be. It was pitiful, absolutely pitiful. During that time also, while my father was back and forth between Vienna and his farm laborer identity, he had to pass a medical examination, which revealed him to have a hernia. The Nazis wouldn't let him out unless that were operated on. He underwent the operation and was not given anesthesia and pleaded with the doctor for anesthetic after the incision was started and the doctor put the scalpel down, he said, you have your choice, if you want your exit papers signed, you'll let us go ahead, otherwise I can sew you up right now, and Dad said go ahead, and he eventually fainted. He moved from room to room when he was in Vienna and went through _____, and had to come back to Vienna once again a couple of days before he had a ticket to get out and get into England. Again I don't, job as a gardener or a houseman or something had been found for him. The morning he was to leave, there was a _____, the street was sealed off, the

trucks pulled up, they were going door to door. They came, and he was renting a lower room for one night in somebody else's apartment and he heard them coming and he was on the way out, and they came to his apartment and they were in the room before his, and he watched them through a crack in the door, didn't know how to get out and suddenly they were preoccupied with finding a World War 1 bayonet in somebody's dresser drawer and the man to whom it belonged was anxiously explaining what this was and so on, they were all clustered around him, so Dad marched out of the room, snapped a Heil(ph) Hitler salute and they didn't turn around, they said Heil(ph) Hitler, he walked past them or out. We'll never know whether they were looking for him or anybody in particular but he got out. Got out, came to England and he and Mom wound up working in the same household. Now maybe I'd better backtrack because by that time, I was no longer in England.

Q: You had left England just shortly after the Anschluss, the middle of 1938?

A: We left Austria, my mother and I, in August of '38. Anschluss was in March. My Dad didn't come out until November, December, something like that.

Q: Just right after _____.

A: Yeah. Let's see, they left me at the Spanish children's home, the Basque children's home, but that was temporary.

Q: I wanted to, if I may, I'm just . . .

A: Yeah, go ahead.

Q: I wanted to ask, you went to the first, you essentially could not get into the first boarding house, which is an Orthodox Jewish.

A: Yes.

Q: And the second one, what you said was, I wanted to ask about that, that was obviously very difficult, how long were you there? Just a few days or?

Q: It's a time warp, I'm not sure. I would think some weeks, I'm not sure how long, nor can I say with accuracy how long I was in the Spanish children's home. No sense of time. But you realize even that wasn't secure, because I was there illegally, and unbeknownst to me, the Society of Friends, the Quakers were working on my situation and found a place for me that was both safe and legal, and that was Newtown Boarding School in Waterford, Ireland. I made the trip, I believe alone. Arrangements had been made for an Irish Quaker family in Dublin to meet me and they in turn put me on the train from Dublin to Waterford. I thought myself very competent and capable and _____ and doing a lot of traveling on my own and coping with a lot of different situations, I have a clear recollection of arriving in Waterford, Ireland, late evening, it was very dark, little misty, damp, sooty at the railroad station, there were four or five trains and hardly anybody got off the train and this huge man stood there waiting for me, a very ruddy face, fairly tight curled white hair, and he said, are you Bobby Treuer, and I said, yes I am, he said, I am Mr. Marsh, I'm the headmaster of Newtown school, and he wrapped my hand in his big paw and he led me off, and I knew I was safe. I was safe not only in that place, I was safe with that man. And Newtown school, which had been in existence, well now it's almost 200 years, they had almost gone out of business by the 1920's, early '30's, so many schools of that kind did and Marsh, I later found out had come along and said, if you give me a free hand, I will run the school and not take any salary until such time as I can get it to pay for itself. He had very strong educational ideas, that education had to be both practical, hands-on, personal involvement and a sense of community, and each child had to be challenged and allowed to develop their own talents and abilities to the max. A lot was expected, but it was within your own terms, it was the first time, the first time in my life that I had a taste of freedom, where I

was accepted and valued as an individual, encouraged to define and identify myself. And quite literally, Newtown school and the Quakers, Mr. Marsh, not only saved my life in that they saved me from deportation, they saved my life spiritually. Started me out on a long journey of finding my own worth. Let's take a break.

Q: Okay. [pause] I just wanted to ask about the incident at the school, when you were raped, did you know the person well? It was just the second day you were there.

A: It was the second day I was there, he was working in the kitchen and before I knew it, I don't know, I can't recall just how he got me into the men's latrine, I recall the latrine, smelly, narrow. Afterwards I felt that I had lured him there, and that couldn't have been. That could not have been. That was my recollection, that was my feeling at the time.

Q: Were you able to make any friends there, or was it?

A: No.

Q: And you don't really . . .

A: I was a solitary, and again I don't remember exactly how long I was there, it was, it had to have been a couple of weeks at least. I remember Uncle Richard coming to get me on a Sunday to take me on an outing, he took me to Hyde Park, he tried to explain to me people speaking on their soapboxes, I was totally _____ by then and he was really leaning on me hard to learn English, and constantly looking over his shoulder. That was a bad one, that was a bad time. And the damn thing is that when you've been victimized, and especially as a child and you take it on yourself, what happens is you wind up like as though you're wearing a neon sign on your forehead, you assume the victim personality and that makes you vulnerable and you get hit on time and again, and it did happen time and again.

Q: So that wasn't the only time, and was that repeatedly there or was it just?

A: No, that was a one time incident there, but there are many forms of victimization. I was sexually abused or assaulted or whatever you want to call it on at least two other occasions. Not in that school, but over subsequent years. And I think it had less to do with my being physically small than with my body language and how I felt about myself. I think that's commonplace for victims. I've had to do a lot of work on that, but it helps to talk about it, and it my talking about it helps somebody else, I'm glad to do it. I have taken four of my seven children back to Austria. I've taken them to Dachau, which of course is in Germany, near Munich, I've taken them to Mauthausen, which to me is the epitome of horror, and in Mauthausen, ah, the quarry, yeah. But at Mauthausen, there are the instructions on what to do with the pregnant women when they were brought in, and the instructions said, up to the eighth month, abort them. After the eighth month, kill the child. That was done through suffocation, injection, smash the skull or use them for medical experiments. God damn it. Hell, I wanted my children to know, they were wanted, and that there was a time when infants were killed and the children were killed. And my father's mountain climbing partner, his name was Shreiber(ph) wound up at Mauthausen, and we found out what happened to him, he was a strong man, he was short but he was strong mountain climber, he and Dad, the Alps, and _____, and he was one of those who had to carry the 50 kilo boulder up those 186 uneven steps to the top and they pointed him aside and had him walk over to the precipice and dump the boulder over, so he could carry it up again. And as he went limp after dumping it, they pushed him in the small of the back with a swagger stick and he went over the brink, and he died. That's Mauthausen. And I wanted my children to see that place and I wanted them to see the pretty town, with the neat houses and the window boxes with the flowers, so that they would know that the people who killed the babies and who pushed people over the edge of a precipice went home after work and played with their kids in their pretty little houses with the window boxes and the flowers. I wanted my

children to see the beauty of Austria and the mountains and the people and the horror. And I hope, I pray and I hope that I can, that I have taught my children that the capacity to harm another human being exists in each of us. _____ And this does not excuse the holocaust, where society evoked and made possible and

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

Q: . . . the camp where you stayed briefly and who was in control of the camp, who was running the camp and then a little bit about your life there and what, day to day life.

A: You know, memory is like a strobe light, you get a little illumination here and there and the other place and I can't really give you a daily routine and the only thing I remember about the camp management was that an Austrian socialist and his wife, whose names I don't even remember, I seem to recall that the older Spanish kids assumed responsibilities for keeping it organized and keeping it running, I don't remember any staff in particular. I remember Sundays, Sundays, well-meaning Britishers came to take children out for an outing and this was a bit chaperoned in that one or two would always go along, nobody would be alone, but clearly recall an older English person, seemed older to me, must have been a middle aged man, who obviously was enamored of a very pretty Spanish girl who must have been 16 or so. And we kids talked about it amongst ourselves, and I remember saying to one of the older Spanish boys, this is not right, I said, besides her boyfriend here in camp is, I forget his name, and the older boy looked at me and he said, yeah, but if he will, he meaning the Englishman, will keep her here, or marry her, she'll be safe. And the rest of us are going to have to go back, and we'll all be dead. And even at 12 years old, I felt the moral imperatives there. It was wrong. A young person was being exploited and allowing herself to be

exploited for her safety. Yeah, we buy, we buy our survival in many ways, and I was judgmental and critical as a 12 year old, for only a very short time. A matter of seconds, but that strange rapport and that love I then formed with those Spanish peers of mine, has off and on touched my life several times. It's hard to define or explain. When I was what, 15, 16? I worked for a few weeks one summer for the Pioneer _____ Corn Company, _____ corn, even though I was short and it was very hard for me. I worked the fields _____ a migrant laborer, and it was hard work, it was beautiful work, but I couldn't keep up, but somehow that rapport clicked, I never spoke to the migrant Mexican workers about my experiences, but the rapport developed and they would finish their rows and come down mine.

Q: To help you?

A: Oh, yes. So that I could keep up, and would not be fired. Although I tried as hard as I could.

Q: What year was that when you were in the camp?

A: '38.

Q: Still '38?

A: '38. And then I was in Ireland from '38 to '39. And the means of our coming to the United States, when affidavits had to be given, were that my Dad had written to, I think still from Vienna, he had written to an acquaintance of an acquaintance in New York, asking for help to get an affidavit, a sponsor, and this person had already overextended himself, could not furnish any more, didn't know what to do, and what he did do was on a 3 x 5 card wrote Treuer family are in need of sponsorship and an affidavit, and something to the effect that the family was in jeopardy and he put the card up on the bulletin board of the New York Athletic Club, going to a luncheon there. When he came out of lunch, the card was gone, somebody had taken it, he didn't know who, and rather promptly my father, still in Vienna, received the proof of affidavit and the visa and went through the

visa application and his _____ and so on and so on. And ultimately he got out to England, there was a long delay for him in England because somebody lost his passport there, at one of the embassies. But finally all the papers were gathered and a telegram was sent to me in Ireland to come back to England forthwith, and I made that journey alone, Mr. Marsh saw me off, he said do you want me to go with you as far as the boat ferry, and I said, no, what for? But he saw me off at the ferry. Wonderful man. To the train, took the train to the ferry. Met my parents in London and took another train to Southampton. We had to board a German ship flying the swastika because that's how they got the last of our money, it was an unpleasant trip and ironically the boat was virtually empty, not because at that time the Nazis wouldn't let you go, because nobody'd let you in.

Q: Do you consider your father extremely lucky in that he simply just wrote an acquaintance of an acquaintance, who put a 3 x 5 card up on a bulletin board and, or do you think there was something else there that you're just not, especially given, as you said, the political situation in the United States at the time, with regard to immigrants.

Q: I think most countries are pretty tight about letting immigrants in, I mean there are lots of stories about that, I am not going to wax metaphysical about the stranger that took the 3 x 5 card off the bulletin board. I'm not a reader of palms, I don't have God's hand or a reader of palm, how do I know? All I know is this man did, we didn't know who he was, name meant nothing to us and when I got, somebody who lived across the street from us, when we were living in Vienna and Dad looked down his nose at the guy because Dad was a socialist and this guy was a pompous businessman. _____ in German, one who undertakes great and grandiose things, and who was trying very hard to get out and this man took out an advertisement in the London Times, and he explained that he was in Austria and _____ and he was looking for an, you know an entrepreneur is what _____ means, and looking for the place, and wouldn't you know it, he gets not only a letter,

but a visa and passage money from a whole community in Australia, a small town, saying they're in dire need of his services, they will take his whole family, they _____ the papers, here's the passage money, come right away. We had been looking for an undertaker for a long time, _____ literally translated as undertaker, he undertakes great things and when it was pointed out to the man across the street that in English and undertaker isn't quite what he had been used to, he had a crash course in embalming and showed up, well that's the fickle finger of fate fact. The man who furnished our affidavit, did not meet us at the boat when we landed in New York, he had his agent, a man by the name of _____ meet us at the boat and it was late getting in that night and he met us very formally and he explained that Mr. So and So was happy to furnish an affidavit and enable us to escape, but expected that we would make no demands on him and my mother, oh I could see this one coming a mile away, my mother bristled and said it was never our intention to ever make demands on anybody for anything and thank you very much, we were deeply grateful, we would repay him promptly as soon as we have earned the money, for any expenses he has had. In my parents papers, I found a letter from this man to my Dad and Mom. It was dated September 1939, a short time after we came to this country and my parents first jobs were scrubbing floors in New York offices on their hands and knees. And the letter said, I am in receipt of your check for, I think it was one dollar, some cents. I realize how hard it was for you to save this, to spare this money. I never expected any financial reimbursement. I will accept your check as payment in full. Signed, Louis Sarnoff(ph) He eventually became good friends with my parents. You never know when you reach out to help somebody else, you never know. I'm sure Mr. Marsh never knew what he had done for me, beyond the most physical, or what others had done for me. This year for the first time, and this is 1995, after 57 years, for the first time I was able to go back to Ireland and to thank Newtown School and the Quakers for saving my life, for getting me out of there. Why and how, why?

Q: Mr. Marsh has passed?

A: Oh, he's been dead many years. Look. After coming to this country, my parents worked terribly hard, well I worked too, I went to work starting at 13, one job after another and then they went in the family kitty you know, so what? You did what you had to do. But we scraped pennies and we collected money to get my Mom's sisters and their husbands out. And we just about had it together including papers and tickets, they would have had to come out over the Transylvanian Railroad to Shanghai and then that route, but they got rounded up in Vienna and shipped and exterminated. And we tried to get that other sister and her husband out of _____, and their son Heinsie(ph) he was about a year older than I was, you know I'd kind of grown up together and they got them too, before we could get them out. Now Heinsie's(ph) sister Nellie, also my cousin, she got out. She wanted to hike out with a youth _____ to Israel. Her parents didn't want her to go. It was too unsafe or things can happen on the way, and Nellie said if you don't let me go, I will get myself pregnant. They let her go. And that was some awful trip, but they made it out, into Israel. And Heinsie(ph), well they got Heinsie(ph) the same time they got his parents, and he died in the camp three weeks before the end, before Liberation. They said, the records that we got from the Red Cross after the war said Typhus, who the hell knows?

Q: How were you able to find out about the fates of your family who stayed behind? I mean obviously your cousin who was able to hike out, did she, you know she could tell you about your family before they were deported, but were you able to get word out about their fates, or the fact that they were deported and where they went, or was it really not until after the war?

A: Not until after the war, not until after the war. I think. I'm trying to remember whether we had some roundabout way of finding out they'd been shipped, but that was, or sent to concentration camp. We knew about Shreiber(ph) early on. I think somebody got out of Mauthausen and brought

word back to my Dad. Now Dad's partner in the underground before, between '34 and '38, Ernst Pollit(ph) was like a cat with nine lives. I don't know how many times they caught him and he escaped, once he, the cattle car, the train was bombed and this was in Belgium, France, he was being shipped, the train derailed, the door sprung and he got out and ran. That was only one time, I don't know how many camps he got in and out of and finally worked his way through and across the Pyrenees into Spain, and they got him there. Survivor. He finally got on a ship, Dad and Mom tried to help get him into the States, but somehow he wangled a way to Canada, got on board ship in Spain, Ernst Pollit(ph) did. Who does he meet on that ship? His wife, who had thought him dead, he had thought her dead. Crazy. No rhyme, no reason. Don't ask me to assign the hand of God to any rescue. I'm not God's _____. I'm only a witness. I am a survivor and a witness. Take a break.

Conclusion of Interview