

**Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001**

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview -- oh boy, what is this? **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum, **Jeff** and **Toby Herr** collection.

This interview is conducted by **Regina Baier** on February 9, 2001, in **Springfield, New Jersey**. This is tape number one, side **A**. Okay, my first question is, would you tell us your name?

Answer: My name now is **Norman Salsitz**, but this is not the original name. So if you ask me from before, I was born as **Naftali Saleschutz**. And the **Saleschutz** is a very long name for **America**, so we changed it to **Salsitz**. But during the war I had a few other names, in the way for each -- for each time. During the war my name first was **Tadeusz Jadach**, a Polish name, then it was **Tadeusz Zaleski**, and then also it was **Anatoli Sherbakov**, which is a Russian name. Then it was also **Lazarus Spillman**, it was a German name. And when I came to **America**, we change it to **Salsitz**, and I'm still **Salsitz**, and I hope it will be **Salsitz** til I die.

Q: That was very short and nice --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but now I have to ask you, of course, a little **[indecipherable]**

A: So that later you will edit this.

Q: Yes, I will edit everything.

A: Yeah.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: And I just want to ask you, say a little bit more about who were you, or what -- why were you **Tadeusz Zaleski** --

A: Okay.

Q: -- at one point. Who were you, and those different names.

A: Yeah, now when I was born **Naftali Saleschutz**, of course they had to give me a name when I was born. I had a lot of names, not orig -- not names, legally names, people called me all kind of names because I was not an angel when I was small. My family called me different, my friends called me different. During the war, when I escaped from the camp and I started -- I escaped to the woods, I had to -- I got false -- it's -- oh, actually, it was not false, it was a real birth certificate from a monsignor and he gave me the name -- I picked out the name because the -- the name belonged to a friend of mine who went with me to school, and dur -- 1939 he was in the army, he was killed. And I picked out his name because he s -- he -- we looked very much alike, like we would be brothers. And his name was **Tadeusz Jadach**. It's a very good Polish name. So I asked the monsignor, so he gave me his birth certificate and I started to masquerade when I was in the underground in the woods, as **Tadeusz Jadach**. Then, during this time, I also belonged to a Russian group, a Russian partisan groups for a short time. So there I got the other document in my name as **Naftali in Russia**, su -- supposed to be **Anatoli**, it's changed. So I liked **Anatoli**, so I got a paper as

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Sherbakov, which is a real Russian name, so I became **Anatoli Sherbakov**. Then, when I d -- was liberated, and I joined the Polish army, and the Polish army didn't want me to have the same name as I had in the underground, as **Tadeusz Jadach**, because there was all political mis -- they didn't believe in the same ideology, so I changed the name to **Tadeusz Zaleski**, it should be similar to my original name **Saleschutz**, so it became **Zaleski**. It could be **Saleschutz** but spelled different like in Polish, because the real **Saleschutz** was spelled like a German name. But then people were afraid that it -- my superiors, that it will have a connection with my name from before, so they said let's have a new name, so **Tadeusz** was okay, it's a good Polish name, so I became **Tadeusz Zaleski**. Then later when I was in the -- in the Polish army, I was in the intelligence, and I had special -- you -- in a special unit, so for a certain time I had to be -- to have a German name, because we had to **interduce** -- to in -- interrogate German officers, but there is a long story in my book about it, so I had a friend, his name was **Lazarus Spillman**, so I made out documents that I am **Lazarus Spillman**. And when I came to **America** -- so I came -- I got back to my real name, **Naftali Saleschutz**, but for **America** the **Saleschutz** was too long. People don't have time to spell, everybody ask how do you spell it. So because I had a brother in **America** and his name was **Salsitz**, so I change it to **Salsitz**. And **Naftali** they thought is a too Jewish name, so I became **Norman**, which I'm sorry til today because I like

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Naftali much better than **Norman**, and this is how I remain. So do -- this is -- this is my name.

Q: This is your many names.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, I want to skip certain things. So-So-Some -- some things that we don't talk about will be summarized in the middle of narration. But I would like you to talk about -- about **Kraków**. Why did you go to **Kraków**, when did you go, and what position did you have? I want to talk about the whole **Kraków** scene [**indecipherable**]

A: Yeah. Whe -- when I went into the Polish army after I was liberated -- I was liberated in the beginning of August 1944, and I right away wanted to go to the army because I figured if I survived the war, I have to fight the Germans, and this was my aim, because my father's last words was, **Nakuma, nakuma, nakuma**. It means revenge, revenge, revenge, take revenge. I figured how can I take revenge? I have to be in the army in a special unit. And then I was sent to a -- from a -- in --in -- the government was in **Lublin**, the Polish government, temporary government, because **Warsaw** was not liberated, and then later I was sent from **Lublin** to **Szeszow**, because **Szeszow** was a bigger town near my town, **Kolbuszowa**, and I know **Szeszow** -- I knew **Szeszow** and I knew the surrounding and I knew the people there. So I was in this time -- we call it **informatzia voickowa**, which means -- this was the political unit

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

in the army. It was -- so a -- when then -- the 12th of January, 1945, was the left -- the less [indecipherable] towards **Berlin**, towards the -- take over **Germany**, because in **Szeszow**, when I was liberated, the front stopped, the front stopped in August. And for six months nothing happened, they stayed in one place, and they made all the preparations for the final push. The January the 12th the war started -- I mean, the [indecipherable] started towards the west, and this was actually the last [indecipherable] til the war was ended. Now I was picked out -- in this time they picked out a group f-fo -- of hundred young, mostly officers, and we were assigned to go with the Russian front. As the Russian front went, we went right with them, and from the hundred, soon as a town was liberated, some of us remained in the town to establish a Polish presence, and to start to organize -- organize security, and -- and civil offices. So each town had some people left, two or three. I was assigned to do the same thing, but til we will re -- reach **Kraków**. When we reach **Kraków** -- so from the hundred remained maybe 50 or 60, and we came into **Kraków**, and I was assigned to the same units, which was the military -- the military intelligence, but my si -- my par - - there were a lot of sections. People had the section with the clergy, people had the section with the civil organization. I -- my section was that I had to do with Germans who lived in **Poland**, or who remained in **Poland**, or Polish people who collaborated with the Germans -- and they changed during the occupation, they made out papers

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

that they are ethnic Germans. And because I spoke German, so I was attached to this unit, and also we had a lot of German prisoners of war, so I interrogated them, and this is how I became the head of the county f -- of **Kraków** for this reason, for this purposes.

Q: I will summarize the story of how you met your wife, because it is a long one --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and we have only 15 minutes.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I would like to talk about afterwards, so what -- so when -- once you had taken care of the columns, that was disconnected, the -- **Kraków** was saved, what were the other jobs? You had a lot of work to do. What was basically ho -- what did you work, and -- and what was the situation in **Kraków**, and what did you do?

A: Well, **Kraków** was -- luckily **Kraków** was not touched. It was not destroyed y -- like other towns. Like **Warsaw** for instance, was 90 percent destroyed. **Kraków** was not destroyed and this is in the book with this -- it had to be destroyed because the Germans prepared for a destruction, and they prepared 287 colu -- places where -- were mined, and the 287 I remember distinctly because this was our main em -- th -- main thing to eliminate those things. So **Kraków** wasn't destroyed, but our -- our da -- duty, what we had to do the first thing, we had to clin -- to get rid of the people who

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

collaborated with the Germans. Mostly Germans they left, the army left, but there were some who remained. But the people who collaborated, now they were Polish people, but during the German occupation they made out papers, and they find ways that their grandfather was from **Germany**, or great grandfather was a colonist. And e -- sometimes even if it was not true. They wanted to do it, why? Because doing this they became ethnic Germans, and the German gave them bigger ration cards, they could get a nicer apartment and they could get a good job. Even the Polish people who were sent away to concentration camps, and they were -- didn't have the rice, they had more rice, and they were the elite during the German occupation. Now, as the Germans left, those people tried to be back Poles, because actually they were Poles, they were traitors. So naturally our aim was to find out, to interrogate them, and to find them. If they came from different towns, if they started having new papers. So mostly this was our aim, and this was also for the security of the government not to have enemies in our place. So this was the main things that we had to have. Then I got an -- a special job. This was -- now we occupied **Kraków**, officially occupation was the 19th of January, 1945. This was official date. I was two days before in **Kraków**, but this was the official date when **Kraków** was occupied do -- by the Russian army. And -- and the only Polish unit was our unit that we came in and that we were the -- the first who were in **Kraków**, and the people looked up to us that we are the liberators. In beginning, or i-i-

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

in th -- in beginning of February, a group came from **England**, and this was the -- organization to study the crimes of the Germans. And the head of this group was **Hewlett Johns -- Johnson**. He was the Dean of **Canterbury** from **England**. He was a archbishop and he was the head. And he had in his group mostly professors from different universities, from countries who were not a g -- who -- who didn't work with the Germans. Like in **Europe** a lot of countries collaborated, and they had armies like **Hungary, Romania**. Those were professors from places that they were always against the Germans, or the Germans were occupying their countries. We had professors from **Russia**, from **England**, from -- from **Argentina**, from all over the world. And I was assigned that I was to prepare -- I had to prepare every day's activity for this group where to go. We went to all concentration camps, to -- like for instance, in **Auschwitz**, we were in **Auschwitz** maybe two weeks after **Auschwitz** was liberated. Everything was fresh. The de -- the destruction of the crematoriums, they we -- still were hot from -- from -- from fire. The clothing of the people that they were -- were killed, and they were still, the blood was still soft, because it wasn't dry up. And then th-the -- the warehouses from children's shoes, and eyeglasses, and [indecipherable] and all those thing. This was just in the beginning. And we found in **Auschwitz** also, about 20 to thir -- 25,000 people who couldn't be sent out with the death marches like they did before the Russians occupied. So I went with this group for about four, five weeks.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Every day we -- the headquarters were in **Kraków** in the hotel, and my job was to prepare the itinerary for the next day. Where to go, how to go, to have the cars and the transportation for the group. And because I spoke a little English, so they picked me out and I was the one that I explained to the man who was in charge of transportation from the Dean of **Canterbury**, and with him, too, and I brought them over to all those places. During the times that we went to the concentration camps, there was a other aim, was the Polish government wanted, is to show them how the people are very happy with the communists who came in. Now this, everything was staged, nothing was the truth. Th -- th -- the -- **Hewlett Johnson**, the archbishop later had a nickname, the Red Dean, because everything -- he was very much pro-**Russia**. When he went, for instance to **Korea** in this -- later, and always he went to investigate, but he always was pro-**Russia**. So what my -- my job was to -- to stage -- like, for instance, we went to a place, to a concentration camp. On the spo -- on the way, when we saw there a group of Polish peasants, and they were dressed in the Polish traditional clothing, which i -- this was all staged. So I said to him, "Well, let's find out, let's stop and find out from the people what they think about the new regime." Because they started to take away land from the landowners, and gave them away to the peasants. So we stopped, and I asked them in Polish, and it was translated. Now those were not peasants that we met occa -- special we met. Those were people who were told to be on this spot, dressed

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

like peasants and they had all kind of m -- pitchforks and other things what peasants use. And I said to him, oh there are peasants, it's good to find out. Now, they were prepared, those were people who were from the government. Tho -- there were -- who belonged to the communist eg -- organizations. And they were prepared what they will be asked, and what they should a -- was -- wa -- should answer. And naturally all of them said how happy they are, that before the war they were discriminated, the peasants. And now they come in and the government is so good for the peasants. And they took away from the very rich people, who never took care on their fields, and they divided, they gave. And she -- they praised -- they praised there the [indecipherable]. And this was everything -- naturally they made the film, and they made pictures, and this was later shown in -- in newsreels, how the Polish population, the peasants are very, very happy with it. But this -- everything was staged.

Q: I want to ask you just one more question about **Kraków**. You also were involved to some degree in -- in food and relief efforts, right, because [indecipherable] people were coming back

A: Yeah, I was -- not officially. Officially I couldn't be ra -- i-involved because the first thing, I was not a Jew. I -- in this time I was not -- **Tadeusz Zaleski**, a Polish Catholic. And the second thing, our job was not to -- to give food to the people, to help people. Our job was to find out collaborators and other things, but through my future

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

wife, because I started to bring her food right the next day when I met her, because there -- there was no -- you couldn't buy food, and people didn't have food. So I use -- and we had everything, because in the army we had everything, so I use -- I took my adjutant or some, and I used to send to her every day, bread and salami and butter and other things. Now, when the people who came out from hiding -- you didn't have yet people from concentration camps, because it took a few weeks til they started to come in. But people came out from hiding, they were hungry, and they were -- they were in hiding for -- for two years, for y -- year and a half. They find out that there is a -- somebody who survived and he is Jewish and he has food. So they started to come to her and asked her for -- for -- for food, and she was glad to give it to them. Now, as she gave them the food, naturally, she notified me. I didn't see her so often in the beginning. She notified me she needs more, she needs more, and I n -- not officially, sent her all kind, and she just -- and she gave it away. Also, I gave her a lot of clothing. As we took over a lot of apartments, where Germans left, or people who were collaborators were arrested, we confiscated their apartments, and we had all the things from their apartments, so I could give it to her, and she used to distribute to the people who came ba -- with their -- with their concentration clothing -- they didn't -- it was winter, because this was in January, February, it was very cold. So I gave it to her and I was very happy and the people find out, and wa -- once somebody find out, there

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

were more and more and more, [indecipherable] I gave it her, she gave it -- she give it -- give it away, and I was very happy I could do it, unofficially. Then later I also find out that there was a woman, and there is a film made about it. They called it, "**My Hundred Children.**" And this woman collected children who were left for -- fo -- after fa -- they were hidden, and also a lot of Polish people who took in the children to hide, and they were promised money after the war, and then later they find out that the parents are killed, nobody came back, so they abandoned the children. And the children didn't have where to go. So the Jewish co -- committee started to collect those children, there was one woman special, and she is in -- in the book th -- what they wrote, "**My Hundred Children.**" She collected chil -- she lost all her family, so she collected those children and brought them into the Jewish committee, and they were on -- they had that [indecipherable], but she didn't had wa -- what -- how to feed them. So she find out about me, because when I came to **Kraków**, and I went right away to two leaders of **Kraków**, one was -- his name was -- he was involved with the Jewish committee, he was a lawyer before the war, his name was **Stulbackt**. And then it was a rabbi who survived the war, not from **Kraków**, but he kra -- remained, and he was in **Kraków**, and he was like the official rabbi. His name was **Steinberg**. So I came to them and I told them, "Listen, I am a Jew. Nobody knows that I am a Jew, but I want you should know. Any time you have a problem, and I am in the government, and I

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

have a big position. If you need something, please tell me, not official, and I will do what I can do.” In this what I -- they always came to me and they brought me problems, and -- and I have -- and now -- in -- in my new books that I writing now, **“Treasure of Jewish Memories,”** I’m describing those episodes fr -- from the -- what a -- for -- from this time. So when -- when I find out that the children are there, they didn’t have what to wear, they didn’t have what to eat, so I sco -- I-I couldn’t give them money, and I -- so we had a lot of sugar. And because sugar the Germans th -- had the sugar in warehouses and we took it over. So I told this woman, I cannot give you money, but if you have a truck -- I cannot deliver it -- you can come and pick out and I can give you as much sugar as you want, and later you sell the sugar. So this way they could support themselves. Then later they needed some clothing. And we took away from **Germany** two large warehouses, because the Germans had warehouses for underwear, shirts and other things, for the Germans, because everything was on ration cards. Now the Poles didn’t get anything, but the Germans got -- oh, and those were I find out where the warehouses are, because when the germ -- before the Germans left, they put all this material in two houses in basements. They were big basements because this was a whole **[indecipherable]** and I find out about it. So we went and we confiscated everything. So I had a lot of this material. I remember there were children’s socks, and children’s underwear, and everything what -- so -- so I brought -- every time I came

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

over to them, so I brought a trunk full of those things and I gave it to them. Now, they knew that I am Jewish, those few people, but the rest, they didn't know. And when I took it out from the warehouses, the people who work with me, they didn't know why I take it away. Maybe they thought maybe I take it and I sell it on black market or something. But I gave it away all to my girlfriend, or to the Jewish committee.

Q: When you think about the time today, you were very busy -- about that time in **Kraków** -- you were very busy, you had a lot of work. Was that special for you, that time of fo -- and if so, for what reason?

A: I think this was the best time of my -- there were two times that there were the best times of my life. And I think this was the best time. One time was the best time when I -- like for instance, when I was in the woods, naturally we starved, it was cold, and it was terrible fear. But if we could do something -- there was one time that we made a raid of -- o-on -- we made a raid, there was a -- a sop -- police station from **Puskov**, from the **SS**, and we made the raid, and we killed them, all of them, so I think this was the happiest day in my life. As a matter of fact in my book there, somebody wrote, and in th -- in -- and what I explained to him it is -- it was like when I had the machine gun in my hand, it's like a lame who couldn't walk, and suddenly he -- he -- he was able to walk. To me, that I was not any more the victim, that I wasn't any more the pe -- the person who was killed, that I could pay back. And this was my life why I wanted to

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

live. To take revenge, which I did as much as possible. In **Kraków**, it was a other, naturally we couldn't go out, we couldn't kill people any more, it was after the war. But for me to see that the people, the Jewish came ba -- the Jews came back, they had nothing, they di -- and even the Polish government was not very, very friendly with them, because individual -- maybe the government as a whole was not anti-Semitic, because in this time it was a communist government, but each individual policeman, each individual clerk, everything, he had this hate in his heart as again the same thing, they didn't change. Now, if I could do something, I was very happy. People that I didn't know, they find out -- they find out that -- that they could do -- through me they went to this rabbi, and if I could help them I was very happy. And also, also, if they needed apartments, and there was every apartment, usually there was a -- a office where they gave out the apartments. Now, if a Jew came for an apartment and even he lived before in **Kraków**, they wouldn't give it to him because the people were very, very against Jews. And they said, "Well, why did you come back?" And they looked at that Jew -- and now I'm writing a new book about the killings after the war, so the title of the book is what they used to say in the title is, you are still alive? I -- and the subtitle is, I thought they killed all of you. This was the first question -- the first that a Pole ask a Jew when he survived. But when -- when -- when they went to this rabbi and the rabbi knew that he could be helped through me, I did it. Now this was a very,

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

very rewarding thing for me. Because if I started a thing, we were killed, and nobody did anything. And this time we were undress -- I'm not talking I personally, but the Jews, and we were undr -- dress over a -- a -- a ditch, and we were killed. Now if each one of them would think, if I would live and if I could pay them back, everybody will do it. Now, after the war, people didn't do it. The war is ended, and everybody was interested to have a bread, to make a living, and to save his family if he had a family. But for me, I survived for two reasons --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

A: -- for me, I survived for two reasons. And this, to -- to survive, you had to have a legacy, you had to have a reason. Th-This gave you strength, otherwise you couldn't survive. And I had two. One was when my father was killed, he yelled to take revenge, and I -- it is now 55 - 60 years later, I still hear his si -- his screams. This was one that gave me strength. I have to live, because I was the youngest, and I was the only one to pay back, pay back for my five sisters, pay back for my -- the sister's husbands, pay back for my nieces and nephews. Who would pay back? So this mean that they were killed, and nothing will happen to the people who did it. So this was one legacy that it gave me strength. To take back the second one was when my mother was taken away to **Belzec** with my five sisters to be killed in **Belzec**, she somehow gave to somebry --

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

body a letter, and I got the letter from this person. I was in [indecipherable] and she wrote to me, you are my ninth child, you are the youngest. You are young, you are strong, you are smart. If somebody will survive, you will survive. Because she believes that somebody will survive. She said, "After the war, go to your brother," because I had a brother in **Palestine**, "go to y -- **Palestine**, go to your brother," I had a brother in **America**, "and tell the whole world what the German murderers did to us." So this is the reasons that after the war, I started to tell, even in the beginning people didn't want to listen. But I spoke, and they thought I have an obsession, some people didn't like it. Later, 20 years later, st -- people started to realize, and they listened. Books came out, movies came out. But I started to speak the first minute I left **Poland**, and I told the stories. And people thought that it is something wrong with me. And this gave me strength to survive. That if we will not be alive, the whole world would know what a cruel thing happened in this time. And for this reason not only I, all survivors, their duty is to write down, and to write and tell the stories. Because everyone survived a different way. Everyone had different problems and cruelties. So for this I am telling, and I am going out, if somebody asked me to go and speak, I don't care where and how and when, I never took money f-for it, and I am doing it because I think this is my duty, that the people should know what happened.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: Before we get to **America**, you had to leave **Czechoslovakia**, or afer -- n-n -- I'm sorry, **Poland, Poland** first. Te-Te-Tell us a little bit more about some time the decision was made, or you -- you and your wife talked about would you stay or would you leave. S-Say something about it.

A: Well, then later from **Kraków**, I was transferred to **Breslau**, and I became the head of the security for **Breslau** for the cow -- for the town. In **Kraków** wa -- I was the head for the county. In **Breslau** I was for the town. And again the same story, in **Breslau** I had a lot of work, because **Breslau**, first thing **Breslau** was 90 percent or 85 percent destroyed, and there were a lot of Germans, and we wanted the Polish people should come in, and they should show that there is -- this became a Polish town, and a -- and we then -- later we gave out in orders that all the Germans have to leave. Now they left, and they had two suitcases, and this was something for me very, very important, because this was a pay back what they did to the Jews. Naturally they -- when they were sent out, when we brought them to the train, we didn't kill them th -- like in the -- in the **Szeszow** where I was and one day they killed 6,000 Jews, sik -- 600 Jews, then thousand Jews, by an **aktia** -- we call it a **aktia**, it means an **[indecipherable]**. But by the Germans nobody was killed, they only had to leave. Now the -- their apartments were taken over by Polish people, and in -- in -- in -- but -- but one thing we s -- in this time also, the -- it started in **Israel**, we knew -- **Palestine** in

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

this time, and we knew **Palestine** will have to -- the Jews will try to have their own country. And as -- I always was a Zionist. I never became a member of the communist party, even they ask me to do it. But my excuse was that I am not in th -- I -- I am not taught enough to know the ide -- the ideology about communism, I have to learn a little more, I have to read more and this was my excuse. And my wife never wanted to stay, because my wife had very bad experience, because when the Russians came in to the -- her town in **Stanislav** -- in **Stanislavov** in 1940 -- in 1939, and they lived under co-communist regime, now the people who were well off were middle class [indecipherable] middle class they were -- th-th-the Russians tried to liquidate them. If they were Zionists they sent them to **Siberia**, if they were rich they took away everything. So from them they took away their apartment, they took away the business. Her father had to be a plain worker, which -- my wife wanted to study medicine, they didn't let her in because she was a daughter of a bourge -- bourgeois family. So she sa -- and then they saw the system is not for her, so she didn't want to stay in **Poland**. And she always said, well in **Poland** you got a king for a night, but the end we -- I don't want. So we started to think -- and I also, when I was in **Breslau**, I start -- well, even in **Kraków**, I started to work in that organization, a Zionist organization. Naturally the people from the organization knew that I am Jewish, and I gave them some protection, and they had to -- to -- to travel toward the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Czechoslovakian border, I helped them. And also, when I was in **Breslau**, I was still involved with this organization, and -- and -- and -- but -- but the end was that we had to leave, til it came a time that my wife said she ha -- we have to leave because the longer we will wait, it will be harder to -- to go away. Now, I left first, and I left very - - not organize in [**indecipherable**] because I went with that -- with a truck, through the border to **East Germany**, and on the way I could be caught, I we -- but it's a long story, but I left.

Q: I want to ask you a follow up question though. Were there other thoughts of why you wanted to leave?

A: Yo -- well, my th -- my thought -- well, see, the first thing my wife wanted to leave, of course, she had family in pales -- in is -- in **Palestine** at this time. She had a grandmother, she had a sister, she has three uncles with her family. So she said, well she had somebody. And I wanted to leave because I saw, even now -- I have a good position and everything, but I had to masquerade. I wanted to be myself. I -- why should I -- if we have a free country, and if we -- the communist regime is so equal, no anti-Semitic, why do I have to hide my identity? Why do I have to be **Tadeusz Zaleski**? Why can't I be myself? And also, being a non-Jew, the people who work with me, the people who were in the government didn't have no secrets because I was one of them. So then I could see that deep in -- imbedded anti-Semitism towards Jews.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

And nobody was a friend sp -- in those -- in this time. Even officially they couldn't go out and say, well I hate Jews, and this and that, but inside everybody was anti-Semite. Now, in the -- there were no secrets from me, so I saw that this will not be a life for me, and also my wife always said that the end will be -- see, in **Russia**, in the Russian system there were three kinds of people. People who were in jail, people -- pe -- he -- people who were in jail, people who are in jail, and people who will be in jail. So the end was I -- I didn't care how big I was, the end was if I do something -- something wrong, see, if I would be a -- a [indecipherable] if I would be a -- a communist, and I will like the regime, and I [indecipherable], so then I would say, well this is my life, and I love it. I wasn't -- I come from a very Orthodox, ultra-Orthodox home. Reet -- not, I wouldn't say millionaires, but a very comfortable home. We were -- we were considered 10 percent of the richest people in our town. And the whole family was very religious, so I was not brought up to be against religion, or to hate people who have money or make a living. I did it because it was comfortable for me in this time. The war ended, I wanted to take revenge, and I could have a job to be acknowledged, but not as a Jew, so this was very bad for me. So I knew that the end would be I will not be there. But longer my w -- my wife was very smart, she said, longer we will wait, worse it be to come out. And naturally I went out first, and she remained and she was arrested because they thought through her they will get me. So -- but I never,

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

never had my mind, because this was not a regime for me. Now, we want to go to **Palestine**. I was registered, and I worked with that group called **Bricha**. **Bricha** was the one who took out people, and they smuggled them to **Italy** and from **Italy** to **Palestine**. Now, from **Poland** the **Bricha** went over to **Germany**, from **Germany** to **Italy**. Now, unofficially I belonged to them, because my dream was to be in **Palestine**. Because even when I was home before the war I wanted to go to **Palestine**. But then later we escaped and we came to **Germany**. In **Germany** there was other -- other problem to go to **Palestine** because you couldn't go officially, you had to go illegally, and you wind out in **Cyprus** in a camp and my wife didn't want to go to a camp, so we came to **America**. We said, we will go to **America** -- which one would come first, **Palestine** or **America**, and if **America** comes first, we'll go to **America**, and if we're in **America** we can always go to **Palestine**. And we came to **America**, and the first money we made in 1949, so we went to **Palestine** -- to -- it was already **Israel**, not **Palestine**. Well, this [indecipherable] but -- but it was -- for me it was too late, because there was no war --

Q: We -- we'll get there, I want -- I just want to -- to -- to --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- follow the chronology a little bit.

A: Yeah.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: Was it difficult to get a visa? Wa -- did you need papers that you didn't have? What was --

A: From where? From **Poland**? From po --

Q: [indecipherable] no, no, no, no, from **Germany**.

A: Oh, from **Poland** you couldn't go no place --

Q: No, no, I know, but --

A: I had to ask [indecipherable] yeah, it was difficult because in **Germany** if -- see, I had a large family in **America**. My father had four brothers and two sisters and they had children. Naturally, they were [indecipherable]. And we always -- and I had a brother. So I wrote to them that I need affidavit, you need affidavit there, oh, my brother said he'd send me, I never got it. So I never got -- so I got -- and we wanted to go at -- if we couldn't go to -- to **Israel**, we want to go to **America**, we didn't want to stay in **Germany**, because for me being in **Germany**, every day it was the biggest torture. Because when I went in in a trolley car, and if I saw every German, I looked at every German, I saw in every German I saw that he was the murderer of my father, the murderer of my family. Every German looked to me the same. And I couldn't stay, so -- and I had a lot of problems, because I remember once I went in and in the trolley car, and -- and I was sitting on -- on a seat, and there a woman, a elderly woman came in, and -- and I didn't get up, and so one young German came in, he says, why don't

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

you get up, she's a old woman, and -- and -- and you are young fellow, why don't you -- so I said well, did somebody get up when my mother came in? My mother was killed. So why should I -- maybe those are the people who killed my -- so we had a argument, then later we had the fight. I remember once we came in in a place and I saw a la -- young Jewish, they fighting with a group of young Germans. I didn't ask questions, I di -- I didn't know why. I jumped in. But so happens that I didn't look Jewish, so the Jewish people started to beat me up. I said, "What are you beating me up?" They said, "Well, aren't you a German?" I said, "No, I am Jewish." So every day -- every day something else. So we di -- we wanted to get out, and we came -- you couldn't go, you needed that affidavit. So I -- my family didn't send it to me, so the Joint Distribution, they gave out -- what they did, they didn't give out individual affidavits, they made a group, let's say hundred people and one affidavit, and the organization took care to show the government that we will not later stay in the -- in -- in -- and not to make a living. So this is how we came. Even they paid -- they -- the Joint paid for my transportation, for the passage. Then later I paid them back, but they didn't know if I would pay them back. But my family didn't do it.

Q: So when you got the visa finally, what -- what happened then? Where did you go, and how was the boat trip?

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

A: When I got that visa, so we were assigned to go to **Bremen**, and from **Bremen** to go to **America**. But in this time, we -- we had to stay in **Bremen** almost a half a year, because it was a coal strike in amer -- in -- in **America**, and the ships -- the boats didn't take us.

Q: Was it **Bremen** or **Bremenhaven**?

A: **Bremenhaven**. In **Bremenhaven** we were there in there they made like a staging area in a school, and the people you were staying there, they gave us to eat, but we couldn't leave. Now, it was also a very unpleasant place because that ger -- when -- when you got -- when you had to go to get the visa, Germans got the visa very fast. But course, by us, there was in this time, the consul and the co -- they -- they -- they didn't let the Jewish people who wanted to go to **America**, they didn't let them to -- to see the consul. Why? Because they demanded documents, birth certificate, and **[indecipherable]**. Where did the Jews get documents when they came out from death camps? So every day in the consulate, there were hundreds of Jews waiting that nobody could reach the consul. So there was one secretary and she made a business out of it, and for 200 dollars, she made that you could see the consul. Now people start -- who had money started to pay her, and everybody knew that she takes money. Now the first thing we didn't have the money and we didn't want to pay, why should we pay her? So because my wife spoke English, I spoke a little English, I said, we have to

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

take it in our hand. So there was that general consul, I remember his name was **Clarke**. And this **Clarke**, we said we have to see him. So once when he went for lunch, we stopped him. And my wife said she wants to talk to him, and she -- he explained -- she explained to him that it is impossible, there are hundreds of people who want to go to **America**, and we cannot go because this woman demands 200 dollars for a person to let her see -- and she -- she was a partner with one of the vice-consuls, there was [indecipherable] and she was a partner and she sent it to him and they got im -- they got the visa. So she told this -- everything to the **Clarke** and I was standing there and he listened and listened. So he said, well I want you should come to my office, and we went there. And we explained, and I remember that when we left, so he came to us and he put the hand on our head. He said, "Well, do you know, children like you we need in **America**." And he changed the whole rule. Instead before you needed -- she -- this woman said, "If you don't have the documents, I don't let -- I don't make the application." So he changed the rules, and the rules were you needed two witnesses. And when the two witnesses gave a statement that they know you, you come from this town, and everything, the two witness was -- so everybody got two witnesses. One was a witness for him, then later he was a witness for them. And then the people -- we were -- we ca -- we came them every day. Then later the people knew that we made this change, and they were very happy. Even til today some people who

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

are here and they always remind us that we went and we had the guts to speak up. And this way, we -- this woman was fired. They -- the -- the consul -- the visa consul was still there. It so happened that we were assigned -- I remember he had one leg -- he was a -- a invalid, so we were assigned to him because the general consul didn't take care on all the children, so -- on all the people, so we were assigned to him. When we were assigned to him, and -- and he didn't ask us too many question because we had the two affidavits. Then later he said to raise the hand and he swore us in. So I was afraid because I almost burst out in laughter, because he was the one who was a partner with this woman, and now he is giving me this thing. Well, we got the visa and we had to go to **Bremen**, in **Bremen** we got stuck for six months. And then later we went on the -- on the liberty ship. Those were the ships, the name was **Ernie Pyle**. This was the last time that the liberty ship, and unlucky we were cause it was in the winter, it was in January, and -- and underw -- underway it was a terrible storm, and the ship, the boiler, everything broke and we almost drowned. And everybody was so sick, that I was laying on the -- on -- on the **[indecipherable]** the -- the people, the men were in the basement, what maybe 201 in -- in -- in this hole. Now the women were 20 - 25 in their cabin, when -- and I was so sick I was laying out -- outside on the deck. And I pray to God it's -- the ship should sink. I couldn't take it, I didn't eat. So my wife, in this time she put on a woman's housecoat with the woman's pajama and the kerchief

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

on my head, and she took me in in her room. And the people in her room knew and -- that I am with her and I slept there, and this was a little better. But what -- we were very, very angry that the German people who went to **America** in this time, cause a lot of German went to **America**, they had family here, they had the big, best cabins, because they had money to pay. And they -- the people from the company were German, so they had cabins and they were sitting and eating and drinking and dancing. And we were laying like -- like dogs in -- in -- so this was very, very unfair. But this how they came. So mo -- not only on our ship, on all the ships. So the German people had all the privileges because they were normal people and they got people who gave them those places, and they could pay for it. So then we came to -- we came to [indecipherable] we arrived in **America** January the 17th, and -- and -- and we were so sick. So then later, a night before, somebody said, tomorrow morning we arrive in **America**. So I -- I as -- how -- as sick we were, everybody di -- dragged out the -- the - - the -- the best suit, with the best coat, and we were [indecipherable] and we waited half a night, we were just staying on the deck waiting for the Statue of Liberty. And when the statue of -- when we saw the Statue of Liberty, everybody from us started to cry. Even today [indecipherable] we saw already the Statue of Liberty, and this we -- we are in **America**. Now wa -- wa -- wa -- this was not the end. Then later when we -- we went that -- they said to take out the valises and everything, so we took it out on the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

deck. Everyone to his initial, **N** to **N**, **S** to **S** and so on, and then later they came to check. So the American customs, they opened the valises, they [indecipherable]. And we were staying there in -- where -- where the [indecipherable] then a [indecipherable] a heavy set guy in the -- in the -- in the lumber jacket comes in and he goes around and he ask where is it, where are the **Saleschutz's**? Sa -- so we were very much afraid, maybe -- figured maybe something is wrong, and they would ship us back or something. We didn't say anything in the beginning and later he said, "Well, their should -- was supposed to be two people with the name **Saleschutz**," yeah. So my wife was standing there, and she said, "Yes, we are **Saleschutz**." And "What's wrong, what's wrong?" We were so afraid. So he said, "Nothing is wrong." And he got up to my wife and he kissed her, he got up to me, he said, "You know, I am," -- and we thought this is some official, he said, "I am **Yagi, Reisel's** son." Later he became **Jake**. In **America** [indecipherable], "I am **Yagi** and I find out that you are coming, so I came in here." Now he could go in -- in the -- yeah, right away, when we were standing, and all the people didn't know what -- what to think. And he right away called the custom man and the custom came and he didn't open anything, he just put in a piece of paper on this and he called a longshoreman, and he took the two suitcase we have and put them in. And he -- all the people are waiting, they're waiting, and we were taken out, and they -- they thought, who knows, that probably we are the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

president of the **United States** and so on. And we ta -- he took us out in the -- right on the sidewalk when we took us out, a car was waiting and we went in in the car and this was -- my brother was waiting in the car, they couldn't park there, but through him they parked. So we find out later, and w-we said, this **Jack** he had -- he became **Jack**, he had a luncheonette on the -- on -- by the docks. And everybody ate by him, and they knew him. And when he find out that we are coming, so he came in and he took us out. Naturally this was a very surprise -- and a pleasant surprise in **America**. And later we find out he was a very nice fellow. And this is how we arrived. We arrived -- this is the 17th of January in 1947.

Q: Were you sick on the boat all the time, or did you also --

A: Sure.

Q: -- all the time?

A: Yeah, I was sick right the second day. I didn't eat all the whole time. My wife wasn't sick. Now, we were sick in the **[indecipherable]** that was terrible sick, so she somehow -- she didn't have -- I -- I couldn't eat anything, and -- and so she em -- met a r -- a sailor and he was a black sailor, so she told him I am sick, so he used to give her an -- an apple, a banana, something like this, she brought it to me. But I was -- I was very -- I couldn't -- I was very sick, do it -- all the time. Di -- and -- and the trip lasted 14 days.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: So now you are an American and one of the first, most pressing things was to find work for you. Tell a little -- tell a little bit about the work process. Did you have help from your family, how -- what happened?

A: Well, the way -- the work process, first in **America**, I had the very unpleasant thing -- see, my brother took me to his home, and I stayed with my brother -- he had his own house, and I stayed with his house two weeks. After two weeks he said that I have to look for an apartment, because in **America** two weeks is enough, and then later you [**indecipherable**] the family -- and so -- so I brought with me 200 dollars. 200 dollars I brought, they were hundred dollar bill, two hundred dollar bills, but they were the long hundred dollar bills, maybe you remember they were the long one, not the new one in there and so my brother said we'll go to the bank, we'll put it in the bank. And we went with him to the bank, to his bank. And the girl who took it looked and looked, and she called the manager, and the manager looked at it and he said those are counterfeit money. He said, well by right I have to call the **FBI**, and see, because if you just came over, maybe you should -- maybe with the ring, but he's going to do us a favor. He did us a favor and he took a match and he burned the 200 dollars. He said, "I will not call anybody," and later of -- well, today, I am very sorry that he did it, because I'm a -- a -- a coin collector and a bank note collector, so today those -- this money was made in **Auschwitz**, they had Jewish engravers and artists, and they made false

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

money. And **Germany** used this money all over the world. So today, a hundred dollar bill which was counterfeit and was in **Auschwitz** is worth 10,000 dollars. But they burned it and this was my -- so then I had to look for a job. Now before -- before looking for a job, so the family got together. I had uncles and I had cousins, and some cousins were very rich. So we got together and they said, what should we do with the boy. It means me. I was in this time 27 years. My wife and -- got a first job she got in - - to make ties. But she didn't know how to sew, so she worked there one week and the woman said, "You know, you didn't make enough, even half what I'm going to pay you, and I -- you can -- you can leave." But she went and she got a permit to be a Hebrew teacher, yeah, so in the beginning she got the permi -- a temporary permit and later **[indecipherable]** she got a -- so I lived on her -- on her salary. But I -- we found an apartment, it was very hard to find an apartment, so Italian man took us in in his apartment, he had two rooms. And he -- we were in one room, and he didn't want to take money for being **[indecipherable]** so he said you stay here, and we were there, and it was a very bad in a -- over a factory and then -- and we had a lot of mice. We had a small kitchen and he had his bedroom. We had in the living room we slept in. Then later he left for **Italy**, and I remember his name was **Rosario**. He left for **Italy**, and then he said -- he gave us over the apartment, it was very hard to find apartment. Now I had to get a job. So I didn't have a trade, and my English wasn't good, so a

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

cousin got me a job in the same house in a ink factory. And the ink factory was very, very bad for me, because there were 11 people. There were 10 blacks, I was one white, which is all right. But the boss, the owner, to the -- when the black boys came in he used to tell them good morning. When I came in, I said good morning, he never answered.

End of Tape One, Side B

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

A: -- now I had to get a job. So I didn't have a trade, and my English wasn't good, so a cousin got me a job in the same house in a ink factory. And the ink factory was very, very bad for me, because there were 11 people. There were 10 blacks, I was one white, which is all right. But the boss, the owner, to the -- when the black boys came in he used to tell them good morning. When I came in, I said good morning, he never answered. And then -- and then he disliked me from the first minute. And I knew that I will not be able to be there long. So I had the friend -- and I almost got crazy, I wanted to commit suicide, because here -- from **Poland** I was a big shot and I came over here and I was nothing. I -- I couldn't make a living. I made a -- the first job, I remember I made 21 dollars a week. And 21 dollars a week, my wife, as a teacher, she made more than double. So what -- and about 21 dollars. So I knew that I will not stay there long. So I went to my friend, he was a psychiatrist and he came with me on one **ship**. He was the head of **Graystone** Park, that is a mental hospital. And I told him that I -- I'm going crazy, I will commit suicide. So he said, "You have to quit the job because you cannot," -- what my job was, I f -- in a ink factory I filled out every -- there were three trays with ink. I had the gadget and I put in and I fill up the ink, all day staying there. So I was thinking and I will li -- I -- I lived through the whole war during every day. So he said, "You have to quit, you have to go to have a job, you should work with your

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

mind. Not like this.” So -- so he -- so -- in -- in -- in -- to quit, I figured before I quit I have to take care of my boss, who made my life miserable. So I took care of him -- well, not -- then -- do you want me take -- how I take care?

Q: You could just --

A: All right, so I worked on this -- in the factory and -- and this man, he made my -- he gave me -- he start to call me a very bad name. He was Jewish and he was from **Poland**, but he was already here 25 years, yes, so he was a big shot. So -- and -- so I was -- like for instance, I don’t know if I told you this the last time, we also made -- by ink, we also made mucilage, the glue. We were -- you know what mucilage is -- is, yeah? So we made this, and when we made it we had to put in a big container, powder with water and this had to boil. But while it was boiling you had to mix it, or otherwise it would burn. So I used to mix it, so he comes in and he’s -- calls me bad names, he said not to mix it from the left to the right, but from the right to the left. I says, “What’s the difference?” He said, “Because I want it so.” So I said -- and he showed me how. So we made one batch his way, and it took 15 minutes longer than my way. So I said, “You see, mine goes faster.” He said, “Still I want my way.” And he -- he abu -- he -- he abused me, so I said someday I will teach you a lesson. And -- and when -- when -- we had this cage, it was about like a room with the ink that we put in in the bottles the ink, and when it was empty, so we washed it out, so when it was

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

empty, so I took a -- a stopper, a cork from the mucilage and I put it into the spigot in the inside, and then later we filled it up with water, and we -- with powder, and with the mechanical mixer. And then when I started to put in wa -- it didn't go. It didn't go. He couldn't understand why, so he went up on the ladder, and this was like a -- like a -- like -- like a ha -- like a room. He tried with a wire to push through. More he pushed, worse it was, and then later he couldn't reach it, he put -- put -- he took a box, put in the ladder on the box and th-then try. I don't know what happened, this was a full -- it was maybe thousands of gallons of ink, and something happens that he bent over and he fell in there. He almost drowned and he started to yell, they pulled him up. As they pulled him out and -- and -- and -- and bi -- he was still dripping with the ink, and he gave me a name -- there is a expression, and -- for a refugee or a [indecipherable], they called him a greener -- a greener [indecipherable] but he gave me two names. He g-gave me a greener **tookas**, it means a green ass, that's how -- and this how he called me. And I was very angry [indecipherable] so when -- the minute we pulled him out, so tha -- the first thing he said, "Nobody did it but the greener **tookas**." So -- so then -- and then he didn't know how he fell in, but he was on the lad -- on the ladder, I -- so happens that I went through and -- and I did it. But he didn't know. So he said you fired. So I s -- this was on a Wednesday, I remember, I said, "No, y -- I cannot be fired." He said, "What do you mean you cannot be fired?" I said,

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

“Because I quit last Friday.” So I lost a few days, he never paid me. So then I went into other jobs and like I said, I had so many jobs, but each job --

Q: Ho-How many jobs did you have, and how --

A: Oh, I had -- I had about eight, nine jobs, I don't know. Because each job or -- you see, there were two reasons that -- or I was -- I wanted to -- a device to make it better, or to do something, so they said well what -- he's going to tell me, the boss, he had to teach me. And then I -- ye -- also, when I -- when I went on a job, the first day, the second day, I always was thinking, how long will it take me to take over this business, you know? This was in my mind, or -- not to take away th -- to be in this business.

Well, anyway, some guy, I told him to co -- to correct, do this, and then I -- yeah, I -- I -- you see, I was always -- home I was a businessman. I was not staying there just to work and not to -- well, anyway, after about a year and meanwhile -- and my wife got the job, so she -- from her money that we -- she made, so for one week we lived for two weeks, because we lived -- pay -- rents we didn't pay, and everything was so cheap and we didn't go out. I remember I had to make a phone call, it was five dol -- five cents, we had to think twice to make the phone call. And -- and after -- after -- I even had my own business, I worked in a -- in a remnants place, we used to export remnants. I didn't call them remnants, I called **remnantses** because there were a lot of them. So one is a remnant, a lot is **remnantses**. So I --

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: I -- I want to -- I want to ask you two specific questions -- two specific stories --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- because they were important, I thought. The first story was about when you went to your cousin to the factory, to ask whether you would have a job, and there's a whole story connected when you finally met **Joe Siegel**. Maybe you can kind of tell that story.

A: Oh, you me -- yeah. Well, so I went and I looked for a job, but I -- one uncle is -- who was very nice, he was a poor uncle, and he never made a living, cause everything was on his mind, the whole family. So he was very nice, so he went with me, and there was one cousin, and he -- and -- and -- and they had the largest silk company in the **United States**, lining for [indecipherable] silk. Ven -- they were very well known, and -- and so I went to -- to the f -- to -- to them Sunday morning to visit the father, to ask my job. He said, "Well, I am retired, but my son is the owner now from the how -- from the business you go to him." So he -- so I went over the next day naturally, I got dressed in my best, a European coat, a European suit, a European hat. And naturally it was not like in **America**. So I came in, there was a beautiful receptionist, and then she ask me what I want, so I -- my English, I said, "Well, I'm a cousin of -- of the -- your boss," and his name was **Saleschutz**, they never changed the name. I wanted -- so she told him and I went in. I went in, he was sitting by his desk, he didn't go a -- didn't get

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

up, he didn't shake hands. He looked at me and the first words he said, "What do you want?" So I told him, I saw yesterday your father and I need a job, I just came from -- no, the girl asked me who are you. I said, "I have the same name as your boss. His name is **Saleschutz**, I am **Saleschutz**." Because this was before I changed my name. So then he said what do you want. So I said, "I came and I need a job." And he -- they -- they had about 300 people working there. So he looked and looked at me, and he took out a wallet from his pocket, he took out a hundred dollar bill, put it on the table, and he said, "Take it, and get off my back." And when he said to this, naturally I didn't take the hundred dollars. Now, the tears filled up my eyes, and I -- I -- I couldn't -- I couldn't answer anything, and I couldn't cry. It was like -- like sometimes you fall down from a -- from a ladder and -- and then -- and I was standing there, and -- and the minute I was standing there, when he told me this, and this went through very fast in my mind, and what would I do if he would come to **Poland**, and -- and -- and he will say this is my cousin. So I -- I visualize that I was in this time in -- in the army, I will make a -- a review, I-I put him on the reviewing stand [**indecipherable**] the army, we'll go there, through will salute, and I'll tell everybody this is my cousin. But here he said to me, take the hundred dollars, get off my back. So I didn't take it. Then, when I didn't take it, he took it back, and put it in in his wallet, and he said, "Well, another thought I'm going to give it to United Jewish Appeal, let them do what they

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

want with this money.” And I run out, and as I came to this receptionist [indecipherable] room, I burst out in -- not in crying, but li -- I couldn’t breathe. And I run out, she said, “What’s wrong, what’s wrong?” So I said nothing’s wrong, and I would run out, and I was staying in the hallway, and I was crying. I was 27 years old and I was crying. A man goes through, and -- and he said, “Hey mister, what’s wrong, what’s wrong?” So I said to him, “Are you an American Jew?” He said yes. So I said, “You know, you should have been in **Auschwitz** and be killed.” To him. So he said, “Why you say, why you curse at me there?” He says becau -- so I said to him, “Why should my father -- father be killed because he’s a Jew, and you live here, and you have everything.” I didn’t know what I am saying, it was a -- so he said, “Hey, why you cursing me?” I said, “I don’t know.” So he says, “You know what, you ate lunch?” I said no. He said, “I want you should come with me, I’m going to eat lunch.” So I went with him. And I stop crying, and I remember we went into a luncheonette. And the first time I had this -- and he -- oh, he ask me what do you want. I said, “I don’t know, I will have the same thing you have.” So I remember he ask [indecipherable] cheese with the -- with the vegetables with radishes, with onions, with -- all chopped up together. And I liked it so I said I will have the same. And I ate, ate, I felt better. So he -- so he said, “You want the other one?” I said, “No, one is enough.” He said, “Now tell me, why did you curse me, why did you cry?” So I told him the story. I told him

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

he's my cousin, and yeah. So he said, "It so happens that I am one of his customers." I said you should go -- he said, "You come with me. And I want you should hit the son of a bitch in his nose, in his face, but I want to see blood." He said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to you, I will be with you." I said you go and this guy deserved -- so I said, "No, I only can tell you one thing, so long as I will be alive, I will never speak to him." He gave me his card, and I remember his name was **Louis Siegel**, and - and he gave me, he said, "You come and see me when you feel better." And I came to him and he used to buy -- he used to get re -- well, now **remnantses**. And he used to see it to people who use like **[indecipherable]**. And how did he get? He got -- he got these remnants -- remnants illegal. Why illegal? Because when they send over to a converter material, and when they dyed it, and then after the dyeing, always shrunk maybe one percent, two percent. But he was a partner with the guy from the dyeing and he shrunk five percent. So from each piece he got a piece of six, seven yards. And he got those things. Now, he paid 40 cents a -- a pound, and he sold it for four dollars a pound. So he said to me, "I'm going to give you every week a case of remnants." And he gave me the address where to sell it. And he told me how much to s -- for how much to sell it. And he said to -- to me, "I will charge you what I pay for it." A stranger. And I went to him, and I did it once, maybe once a week, maybe once a month, how much he told me to give it, and I took those things and I dragged it to the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

place -- to the wholesale place, and I accumulate nice money. And he was always happy, he told me, this is what you have to get [indecipherable]. One day I come into him, he was sitting, he was not sha -- yeah, this was when I want to -- when I came to him, it's the first time that I saw a shirt white on white, I never saw it before, so I looked at him and I said something, a beautiful shirt, yeah. So and one day I come in and he was sitting there not shaved and this and that, so I said, [indecipherable] what happened? He said -- he said to me, "I'm in trouble. I'm in trouble, and the police is after me." And he lost everything. And he lost everything, so I lost everything. But he was the nicest guy in the -- he had a strange -- I never saw him [indecipherable] family, nothing. So then later I started on my own to buy, but I didn't have money to do it. Now, there was a question about my name. Now, th-the -- my -- my family -- yo --

Q: Let me -- let's -- let's skip that qu -- that one because I would like to ask you something else. When you were a peddler for a long time --

A: Yes.

Q: -- 20 years ago, you told me last time one story where you walked up the stairs and you overheard a young mother talking to the child. Could you tell that story?

A: Yeah, well then later I had this [indecipherable] job, this job, then later somebody told me what do you have, what do you need the job, I will give you a good job. And

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

he had the wholesale place on in the -- on the east side that peddlers used to buy by him dry goods and this. So he said to me that -- and there -- and now then I met a lot of people who were peddlers and everybody in this time they made money. So he said to me, "Well, don't look for a job, I'll tell you what to do. I will give you merchandise and you go out, and I will tell you, and you sell it on payments, and you don't have to buy the merchandise. And -- and then -- then later you will collect, we will split the profit." So he says, "How do you like it?" Said -- so I said, "I like it very much under one exception." He said, "Well, what's the exception?" I said, "I will -- you will give me merchandise and then later we'll be partners." I said, "I will get the merchandise, but I don't want partners." [indecipherable] So I -- they gave me some credit, and I started to -- to go to **Jersey** City, because in **Jersey** City there were Polish people. And then the problem was that all my customers lived on the fifth floor -- on the fourth floor, there were no elevators, and I had two suitcase, and I had to drag the suit -- I couldn't leave them downstairs, so I dragged them upstairs. And one time I came into one Polish woman, and she was a young woman maybe 28 - 29 years, and the door was open, and I hear she yells in it's -- the child cries. So she -- she -- and she didn't know I am in the doorway, and she started to scream on the child, she said, "Stop crying because if you don't stop crying, the Jew -- the Jew will come, he will take you away in his sack." This what she told to the child. So the child stopped crying. Then

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

when -- when -- then she goes out, she saw me, sh-she was a little -- not worried, but she [indecipherable]. So I asked her, "Tell me, how come that you said to the child, stop crying because the Jew will come and take you away in the sack? So I mean, how many Jews did you see that they come around and they grab children?" She said, "Well, I don't know, but I remember when I cried, my mother used to tell me this. I always was so afraid that I stopped crying. So I am telling it to her." And what I understood that this child will grow up and this child will tell it to her children. And this is how the -- the heritage from -- from those people who didn't know why she said, but she said it. So then, b-being a peddler, I -- I made out very well. And I remember the first day, I have to tell you [indecipherable] becoming a peddler, I used to make 21 dollars a week. So then later when I became a peddler, so they told me some -- some man told me, he brought me to a man, and he said to me to buy children's socks. So I bought hundred dozen children's socks in two suitcases. And I paid -- I paid two dollars a dozen. And I went to **Jersey** City. In one day I sold a hundred -- everybody had children, and I sold them for three dollars a dozen, three dollars a dozen was cheap. And I made a dollar a dozen. And I sold in one day, hundred dozen children's socks, and I made hundred dollars profit. When I made the hundred dollars profit -- this was the first day, I remember. So I said -- people used to say that in **America** money is laying on the street. It is laying on the street, but you

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

have to know how to pick it up. I said, this is for me. This is my country. If I could make the first day a hundred dollars a day, so I will -- I will remain a peddler. And started to sell socks, then underwear, th-the dresses, then curtains, and I wind up the end with furniture. I sold only furniture, I had the warehouse. So this was the beginning of being a peddler. So I was about 10 years -- 10 years a peddler til I became a builder.

Q: Let's go back then, at one point you did go to **Palestine** -- or to **Israel** at that time -

A: Yeah.

Q: -- I would like to -- to get a sense of what it was like to be there, and what your family said to you, because you were still thinking of moving.

A: Yeah. When we -- when -- it was 29 -- in 1949, I was in **America** al -- almost -- almost two years, and I accumulate enough money to go to -- also my wife in this time was a Hebrew teacher. And there was a special in the Hebrew University, there were special courses for American Hebrew teachers. They -- they wanted to -- to make it a higher level. So sh -- we went and we did the train -- this was the first time there was a plane to **Israel** in '49. In the -- before there were no plane -- planes. So we went in the -- today, takes six hours to go to **Israel**. In this time it took us 36 hours. We went -- we stopped in **Newfoundland** -- **Newfoundland**, we stopped in **Shannon**, we stopped in -

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

- in **Switzerland**, we stopped in **Rome**, cause they had to refuel, and -- and then we came to **Israel**. I remember -- and they had a lot of problems, the people who were with us in the -- on the -- on the plane, because we stopped in all those places, so we went down. And every time we went down we couldn't go up because we didn't have per -- papers, we only had a piece of paper that we are -- and we just came. So it took long, and they didn't like it, but anyway, we came to **Israel**. And I will never forget the -- th-the feeling when -- when the plane came over **Israel**, you s -- look out through the window, you see s -- yellow sand, yellow sand. Then later, suddenly you see like a nice green, garden. And this was **Israel** [indecipherable]. And when we were [indecipherable] we started to sing, and -- and then I went down, so I lay -- kneeled down on the ground, and I started to kiss the -- the -- the earth, and we started to cry, and -- and -- and it was -- the family was waiting for us, my wife's family, my brother was family and they took us home. And t -- they were very happy as -- naturally it's the first time that -- that my wife saw her grandmother after the war, that she survived, and my brother, and with the children. Now, we came -- we wanted to remain. And we said we have nothing in -- in **America**. We -- I make a living, but we have no ties. Th-The -- the rooms, we had the same room where this Italian guy gave us, and we wanted -- and then it was very bad in **Israel**. I don't know if you know what means **senna**. **Senna** was a time that -- that everything was on cards, you

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

couldn't buy this, you couldn't buy this, and the people didn't made money -- it was a very t-terrib -- because they had all the new immigrants, there was no industry. So we said to -- I -- I said I always wanted to -- to live in **Israel**, and I -- so we -- so the family got together, and they said, "You -- you came too late." Why too late? Would you come when you wanted before the war, I could be very imp-important in the war. They didn't have professional soldiers, I was, and -- and I wanted to fight for **Israel**, but the war is ended, and the -- everybody -- so what will you do, you will come over here, we will have two more mouths to feed, we don't have food. And we then -- what will you do, and you -- says you are in **America**, you establish yourself a little bit, you making out all right. Go back, make money, send us the money. And this was the reason why -- and my wife wanted to stay because she had there a sister, and her sister was starving, she had the farm, and they didn't have what to give to eat to the chickens, it was -- it was terrible. So we came back and -- and this was -- th -- then later we went every year, every two years, but this was the re -- the reason we went over, because we wanted to stay. Because I s-said if I survive the war, I have to g -- I have to live in **Israel**. And even til today, my biggest regret, if you ask me about regrets in life, my biggest regret is that I didn't go to **Israel**, not in this time, but before **Israel** was established. Because if I -- who would -- who had to go? I was 27 years old. Who had to go to **Israel** to fight, if not a survivor of the Holocaust who was 27

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

years old? And special when I had the schooling what the Russians gave me, the schooling that I could ba -- so even til today, I always say this is my biggest regret. And I have articles in this new book about those things.

Q: Now in the -- while -- while you are working in the early years, in -- in very -- first year, or second year in **America**, too, you were also training for combat. Can you tell about that a little bit? You -- you meant to go and fight [**indecipherable**]

A: Yeah, well, when I was starting in the first year, so I belonged to undergrounds, which from like they were illegal -- illegal organizations. You probably know there was the **Haganah**, but there were more radicals, it was the -- the **sten** group, the **atsel** where **Begin** was. So I belonged to those organizations, because I was in my mind -- my mind was, eventually I want to go. This was before **Israel** was li -- was established. So we -- we had -- there was one man, he sa -- he was a major in the British army, he's no -- his name was **Weiser**. He actually was from **South Africa**, but he was in British army. And he came to **America**, and he organize, and he called it **George Washington** Legion. And the **George Washington** -- because there was once a **George Washington** Legion that they went in to fight for **Ireland**, but this was before. So he organized this and he got people together, he wanted to organize it here, and to -- equipped -- to be equipped here, and to go to **Palestine** in this time to fight as a unit. And he -- we worked, and we -- we had meetings every week, and I remember

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

the meetings were -- there was a hotel, **Algonquin** Hotel in **New York**. We had to have the meetings, naturally. I went to the meeting, now everybody in mostly **Mosul** they had people who belonged to this that were veterans, who came back from -- American veterans, who didn't have what to do. They came back, some were Zionists, some were not Zionists, that they wanted to do something. Also, we had a -- a lot of black soldiers that they came, and tha -- this was a opportunity. So we ha -- and I were -- and they establish a staff, and I was picked up, in the staff I was picked out -- I was made that I am the head of the military police, because my background in **Poland**, so lo -- and I was very happy, and we worked and wer -- and then it was -- he tried to get the permission from the American government, and they refused him. They said that you can go individually, but not as organization. A-A-Again, individually, it means illegal. But not as our -- he wanted to have a organization equipped, and money should come from **America**. So when I -- when this happened to them in this time, I also -- I started -- I belonged -- this was liquidated, so I belonged to the **atsel**, to the extreme revolutionaries, they're from **Israel**, so I belonged and then I wanted to go and they prepared. And my je -- I worked, but also my job was that we collected guns from veterans in **America** and we sent them over. Now, the guns had to be packed. So we had a place, by some Jew who he -- was a furrier on 27th Street, and I went there after I worked, I went over ev-every night, and what we did, we -- we cleaned the guns, and

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

we put them -- we packed them in barrels, and we closed it, and then there was camouflage [**indecipherable**] material, and -- and this had to go to **Israel**, to pal -- to **Palestine** in this time for the people from the **atsel**. And then one day we were packing this and the police came in. Somebody in -- squealed, I don't -- we didn't know what, and they arrested us. They -- we were there about eight, nine people. They arrested, they confiscated the -- the guns, and I was taken to jail.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

A: -- And one day we were packing this and the police came in. Somebody in -- squealed, I don't -- we didn't know what, and they arrested us. They -- we were there about eight, nine people. They arrested, they confiscated the -- the guns, and I was taken to jail. And I was in jail a **herely** -- I -- I just came from **Europe** and I was a stranger and I'm already in jail. And I was there overnight, and the next day a group came, and the police, and started to interrogate us. And then after they ask me questions, they let us go. So they let us go, the reason why is because there were a lot of influential Jews in th -- with the police together. Well, now, legally I didn't have to look here, we pack [**indecipherable**] everything was illegal, but they let us go, they said to go out. So -- but I still went there, and they prepared us to go illegal, through **Marseilles**, to **France** to go to **Israel**. I even -- we had a cousin, she was a nurse in the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

hospital, and I talked her in, and she said she will go with us. And then one day -- one day I came there and they said well, Sunday morning you transport is going, and -- and I came home, and I said to my wife, I am going, and she was against it. And I started -- I took what I could, a -- a knapsack, and I -- and she said to me, "If you are going you must know one thing. You are going but you cannot come back to me. I will not wait for you, and I don't care what, because I know you will go, you will be killed. And -- and -- and -- and I don't -- I lost too many people in -- in -- in **Europe**, and I don't want to have [indecipherable] so you -- you can go, I cannot stop you. But you cannot come back to me." Well, I felt very bad, and we had to meet in this hotel, we had to meet Sunday morning and then a truck had to take us in -- to the -- to a boat, to go to -- to ma -- to **France**, and from **France** to **Israel**. And I got what I had to take and I went there -- over there, and -- and then they -- when I was there, so I was thinking wa -- what my wife told me, and I said I am not going. They were very much surprised because they liked me. Now, my cousin, th -- ma -- **Marilyn Petranka**, she went, and she was a nurse during the war, and she met a -- a young English doctor who was Jewish, and they fell in love, and they got married, and they live now in **Canada**. They have children. But she was in during the whole war, because they needed nurses and she was a registered nurse. And I never, never went. This was -- this was before -- before '40 -- it was in '40 s -- in '47, the year that we arrived to **America**.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: In those early years, who were your friends?

A: Well, first I have to tell you -- I don't know if I told you about changing my name, this is very important. I don't know if I told you the last time?

Q: Yeah, you di -- you -- you told already on the other interview, but I didn't -- I --

A: Yeah, okay [indecipherable]

Q: Who were your friends in this?

A: Well, th -- in the beginning, all my fre -- you see, my family, I had a large family, and my family was very, very not helpful. Like -- also, we came to **America**, you see - - wh-when we wanted to go to **Palestine** in this time, and I wanted to go to **America** if we cannot go to **Palestine**, because I said that all the cousins are my age. Why? See, my father was the youngest from -- from the brothers, I was the youngest from us. And they had children and the children were my age. I said, I have cousins. This uncle has children, this uncle has children. So they were -- we will be close. They were very -- they never invited us. We were strange to them. And -- and in -- th-they were -- the children were rich, they didn't give me jobs. And we asked them for it. Now, the reason why is because they looked on us with the eyes as they will see their parents came when they came in 1885 - 1890. When they came in 18 ni -- in 1890, they came from a village. They never wore shoes in the village. They were not educated. They came over here when they were 14 -- eight -- 14 - 15 - 16 years, and they had to start

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

in -- in the -- in -- they never made out of -- of their life something. One was a presser, one was a tailor, one was a button hole maker. The children already were educated -- were [indecipherable]. So they looked at us, they didn't realize that we had a progress. **America** also had a progress. **America** in 1947 was not the same as in 1885. But they looked at us with the stories what their parents told us -- told them. So we were never their friends -- they were never -- which we expected to be liked. For instance, there is one woman, she still a -- she's 94 years now, and she was my first cousin, her name was **Frances**. And I was already six months here and I didn't see **Frances** and I knew the stories about **Frances**, because she was a older woman, she was already 32 years and she wasn't married. So my father, everything was on his mind. So he always, my father, when he had problems, when he thinks [indecipherable] so he used ta -- take his beard, and he used to chew his beard. So when he chews his beard, so we said, "What's wrong?" He said **Frances**. He got a letter **Frances** wasn't married, she's already 32 years. He always worried about **Frances**. So when **Frances** -- when I was [indecipherable] then later she got married, she had a daughter. I was six months, so once I called up **Frances**. I says, "**Frances**, I'm already here six months, and -- and my father always worried about you, and I wanted to see you." She was a daughter of my father's sister. So she said, "Oh yeah." This was a Sunday, and I had already -- I spent five cents for a telephone call. She

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

said, "Yeah, I would like to see you too, come over sometimes." So I says, "**Frances**, why should I come over sometimes? Today is Sunday, I don't work, my wife doesn't work. Why can't we come over today?" Because she lived in **Brooklyn** too. She said, "Oh, I already have some friends coming to my house." When she said to me this, I-I - I -- I didn't say anything, I hung up. Now, if she had friends, this was the best time to invite us, we should be -- and we should know fre -- so what, she was afraid to show off with the -- the greener animals, or those things, so this was their feeling. Now, my wife was more educated than they. Now, for instance, in the beginning they were very -- they were angry at me why I -- I got married. So my wife was beautiful, she was very intelligent, she spoke seven languages, and everything -- they didn't -- so -- so they said -- even my brother said to me, "Why do you have to rush? You are a young fellow, you are not so bad looking, you could marry here a woman. All right, maybe she would be a -- a divorcée, or a -- maybe she'll be a little older, but she will have two houses, she will have a business, you wouldn't have to worry, you wouldn't have to start for scratch, why do you have to marry?" Now, I couldn't understand instead to be happy, that I brought over my wife, that she was prettier than they, she was more intelligent than they, she was smarter than they, she survived the war. So they said, why did you have to rush, why ya -- and I was 27 years. You see, th -- the -- there was no feeling, there was no understanding. There was only this one elderly -- the -- the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

one, the poor brother, **Shulem** we called him. He was the one nice guy. From the rest, there was no -- see, my wife's family was different. My wife's family took us in like -- like a family. Why? Because they knew them. My wife's family came in '38, so whe -- they lived in **Berlin**. So they knew them, they used to come and visit them [indecipherable] they knew them how they lived, they knew them how they went to school, they knew them they were different people. So they took us in like we would be their children, even til today.

Q: Who were your friends then? Did you have any friends at all?

A: Yes, I had friends, mostly we had friends survivors. We fre -- we had a few friends who were survivors, right away I was involved in a group, and people that I knew from **Poland**, and also people who were very appreciative what I did for them in **Poland**, and -- and we remained friends til today. And -- and the only thing is that now all those people are dying out. They're dying out but -- but we still have this, and even today, mostly we -- we are close mostly with people who are survivors. We have some who are not, neighbors, this, but i-it's not a deep friendship as -- because they cannot understand. And -- and -- the -- the -- the -- look, I belong, see I-I'm -- I am different than my wife. My wife, she b -- she does -- if she belongs to organization, she just pays the dues and that's it. And if I belong to organization, I have to be active. I used to be president from my **Kobulshovera** [indecipherable] from the town. I am still

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

president from the Israeli Red Cross. I'm president from here, I'm president -- why? Because if I am involved, I have to be involved, otherwise I don't want to bother. My wife -- now, from all those groups that -- that I am involved with the organizations, we have friends, but we are, I don't know, so close as with the people who are survivors. For instance, last year I had a very big -- things happened. I bi -- the **B'nai Brith** -- you know what **B'nai Brith** -- and I used to be very active, and I am still -- and we have a -- a board from the local **B'nai Brith**, and -- and once a month we have a meeting, and -- and then once we always make a, once a year, on one of the meetings we have a film. And we show the film and the people come and the m -- the membership, not only the board. So when th-the president said, let's have a film, I saw a film from **Woody Allen**. And **Woody Allen**, a wonderful comedy, let's have a film from him. I -- I don't like **Woody Allen** as a human being, I don't like him as a Jew, I don't like him at all, because he's too -- he's -- so I said why should we have **Woody Allen's** film? It so happens that I got a new film, it's called, "**The Rescuers**," maybe you saw it. And "**The Rescuers**" is a wonderful film, it is -- the first is a Polish girl, a Polish woman who was -- took a -- a Jewish boy for two years. The father of the Jewish boy was a doctor, the mother was lawyer, but anyway, they became -- she was a nanny for the boy, and they were taken away and they were killed, and they gave the boy to the -- this woman. And she promised them to -- that she will save it. And it

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

shows the whole film how she save it, her problems she had. She survived the war and the boy went to pales -- to **Israel**, and she went with him to **Israel**. She never changed her religion. She's Catholic, but she wanted to be with the boy, and the boy is happy, he studied. Beautiful story. And then the second story is about the French woman, a French woman, she never ge -- never saw Jews. And in her village there was -- they -- they started -- those were -- how you call the French that they who -- who --

Huguenots?

Q: [indecipherable] Huguenots.

A: Yeah, so they were very friendly and they took in about 40 Jews, Jewish children, and the whole village tried to save them. And this girl, she was a young girl, worked -- a secretary by the bishop. And -- and -- and she helped -- and she saved about 40. It's a beautiful -- you know. So I said let's show the -- it's not a bloody thing that people don't want to see. It is a human interest, like two girls, two persons, two women, how they saved the Jews, it's very beautiful. And when I said it, let's have this film. So one guy was sitting there, he said, "Stop with this crap of the Holocaust. Only I hear is this crap the Holocaust, Holocaust, I have it til here. Isn't it time we shouldn't talk about the Holocaust?" When he started to say crap, crap, Holocaust, either I -- I was so numb that I couldn't answer him, I couldn't believe it. Then later when I felt better, so I opened my mouth. I said, "You call the Holocaust crap? Six million Jews were killed.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

It was just yesterday, I'm still alive. A million and a half children. And -- and you should say it on a Jewish -- in a Jewish organization, **B'nai Brith**?" And I -- and -- and, so he said, "Well we suffered too." I says, "When did you suffer?" She -- you -- you didn't have enough steak, you had to eat chicken?" Because they would not have - - and I walked out and I said, "I am not coming here any more." Now, it didn't -- not so much that this idiot said stop with this crap, with the always -- there were 18 people, and nobody said a word. None of them opened their mouth. And after this I wrote a letter to the international president, he never answered me, and to the people I didn't go back. So I -- and those were mostly American who -- I said, you have here your family, your fathers, your mothers, your children are here, your grandchildren are here. Those people didn't suffer. And [indecipherable] for him, it is enough. We talked about the Holocaust enough. So -- so you ask about friends. I feel comfortable when I am between somebody -- now, I was very active -- now I'm not so active. We have the **Vagra**, the **Warsaw** uprising organization. Every year -- every year we make a commemoration in the -- used to be **Madison** Square Garden. And I was the chairman from the arrangement and security. And I was -- I was very much involved, because we had all people survivors. And with survivors I can feel -- today in the morning somebody called me up, a man, and he tells me a story, her survive. He was very happy to talk to me, and I was happy to talk to me, because we went through different

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

ways, but we always went through the same. He lost a family, I lost a family. So but -- but American Jews, they are s -- now, there are some that they -- like for instance, in our Temple, they're making a commemoration about the Holocaust. Few people come, and it's not -- they didn't want to go through it.

Q: Let's make me the connection to the beginning then, when you came to **America**, when you spoke, and you always spoke, I think.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did -- did people know about it, did they want to hear about it?

A: They didn't want to hear it. No, they wanted -- they always thought that I am obsessed and they didn't want to hear it, and they -- they avoided me. They avoided me because I spoke about it. They didn't want to know, and -- and -- and they didn't want to hear, and I always spoke, and I told them stories. Some people didn't say anything -- I mean, the survivors -- then, because they didn't want to listen to people. Then later, in -- in -- in the 70's, in the -- with **Eichmann's** trial, films came out, then the people started to be a little more interested, and then they learned about it. But in the beginning -- like for instance, my family. They didn't want to know. They -- now, I have a other -- I had the man that he had the nieces and nephews and he ask me all kind of questions, so I ask him, you ask me all kind of questions, but you never ask me about the nieces, about your nephews, about other -- oh yeah, I had in mind to -- to ask

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

you this. I said, "But you didn't." They didn't want to listen, they didn't want to hear. And they -- when I tell stories, they said -- they avoided me, because I am obsessed with the Holocaust.

Q: And that was from both, that was American and then non -- non-Jewish, but also Jewish community didn't really want to --

A: Well, the non-Jewish, it was -- no, I was not in contact so, about non-Jews, and I didn't -- I didn't tell them, but I'm talking about Jewish from organizations when I -- we came. Then later, it became our -- I'm starting to be invited and -- to schools, to public schools. Now, for instance, the 27th, what is -- next week. The [indecipherable] I have to go to **George Washington** University, I was there last year, and they invited me again, I should come to speak. So I am staying there two days, and -- in **Washington**. Now, a few months ago I was invited to **Norfolk, Virginia**, to speak there for a Jewish central organizations. Now, I spoke in one school, then later there are three schools, so each one invited me to his school. So I was [indecipherable] instead one day, I was there three days. Also they invite me that I should speak because I don't take money for it. Like for instance, in same school in **Norfolk, Virginia, Elie Wiesel** was there about two weeks before me, and he took 25,000 dollars. So -- so I said -- he spoke a half an hour, and I didn't take anything and I spoke three hours. So -- so I told them, there is no business like show business -- not

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

show business -- like -- not show-a -- like **Shoah** business. You know, **Shoah** is -- gets 25,000 dollars. Look, somebody said, he is at the normal price, but still, takes a lot of money.

Q: You did tell me in the first interview about a story when -- when you heard in synagogue that a rabbi -- rabbi said they didn't really know what was happening, and you had researched it, and you saw --

A: Yeah.

Q: Could you tell that story?

A: Yeah, this was in the beginning, and the -- when I spoke about the Holocaust, and so then the rabbi said, well the people, they said, we didn't know. We didn't know if it -- I say -- in the -- so if we didn't know -- and so I went to the [indecipherable] daily [indecipherable] and they had microfilms from -- so I picked out microfilms from the time, from 1942, because there where the mass killings started. And in the microfilms I had all articles, every day, this camp and this camp in this town, this [indecipherable]. They're making copies -- I made copies, and I came back to -- to the same synagogue, and I said, "You didn't know? Here it is. You knew, but you didn't read it." If -- there was an English paper, and if the English paper put it in on the 15th page, a little this, so -- but in the Jewish paper, it was always written down and -- and in the -- and you -- you knew it. Now, there is also -- there is also -- I told them

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

that people were not interested, because in the same paper, it was -- well, 3,000 Jews were killed in this town. In just the next page, it -- it says 3,000 stocks were -- were sold yesterday on the stock market. In the same breath, you speak about 3,000 Jews, and 3,000 shares of stocks from this company. But in the beginning -- and I -- I -- my br --

Q: So -- so you think it was difficult for people to -- to unders -- to kind of put it together, or --

A: No, e -- e -- well, not that it was differ -- difficult, they didn't want to believe -- and nobody could understand, even til today, how could a thing like this happen. Here, when -- when you see a -- even now, when you see a disaster in **India**, it's a terrible disaster, where 12,000 people, 14,000 were killed. It was a disaster made by God, not by people. And here, when you take a town, like my wife's town, in one day they killed 12,000 people. Killing 12,000 people for -- for no reason at all. And this was in every town, not in one town. How can a human mind comprehend this? Now, a -- a -- it's a -- it's a -- I don't know if sa -- you heard about it, there's a Dr. **Gross**, you know, a gr -- he's a professor in -- in **New York, NYU**. He's a very good friend, because he edited one of my books. So this Dr. **Gross**, he's from **Poland**, his father was a judge in **Kraków**, a Jew, and he married a non-Jew, a Polish, and she helped him to survive. He was born after the war, he started in **Warsaw**. Now he came here, he's here. Now,

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

he made the study -- he made the study about -- about killing of -- so there is a town, **Jedwabne**, a small town near **Warsaw**. In **Jedwabne** were 18,000 Jews -- no, a thousand eight hundred -- 1800 Jews. In **Jedwabne** in one day, all the Jews were pushed in in a barn, and they were all burned to death in one day. Now, **peppel** -- people knew that this was in the time of the Germans, that the -- that the Germans -- that the Germans did it, right? So -- but this was -- he went, and he -- he -- he had some inclinations that it wasn't done by the Germans, so he went to **Jedwabne**, he found there witnesses, Polish witnesses. Then he found out that two Jews from **Jedwabne** survived there in **Israel**, he went to **Israel** and he wrote the book, I have the book, and he -- the book is called -- just came out, it's called , "**Sasiedzi**" in Polish. "**Sasiedzi**" means Neighbors. And he describes that the 1800 people were killed by Poles. The Pole -- the Germans were there, they were standing there, they saw it, but they didn't interfere because they were very happy somebody else is doing it. So the Polish people killed all the Jews from their town where they lived together three, four hundred years. And they burned -- they pushed them in, and then he described the owner of the barn, and the owner of the barn said he didn't want to do it, that they forced him. Some were later arrested. They pushed them in, they poured gasoline and they burned all alike. Now if you -- in -- in the -- in the book is so -- now, wh-wh-what he describes, that before they pushed in, there was a child. The Poles were standing with knives and they

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

took out the eyes from the children, and they threw in the children. Now, they knew that they will be killed. Why did they have to do it in the -- it's such bestiality, such terrible thing. Now, the book just came out, so I told him the book has -- I want to translate it. He said, "It's being now translated into English, and into Hebrew." So it will come out maybe in a month or two months. But the English version came out last month.

Q: Did -- did you want to have children?

A: I wanted to have -- when we got -- when we got together in **Poland**, we didn't want to have children. Course we beli -- we spoke about it, and we decided we don't want to bring in children to such a world because we wouldn't know what happened in -- and like my sisters, all the children, they were killed, so why should we bring in children into world? And then in -- so we didn't want. Then later when we came to **America**, so we figured we are now in **America**, it's a different country and everything, we want to have children. So it took us 11 years, we -- we didn't have a child. After 11 years we ha -- we wanted to adopt, but I didn't want to adopt on the black market. So we went to a doctor, and the doctor to see if there's something wrong with me, or with my wife, and the doctors, well they said, there's nothing wrong with you two. So we don't have the children. So we want to ad -- adopt not with black markets and we went to a legitimate **Steven Bryce** adoption. And we want to adopt, we made the application, it

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

took about a year, and they gave a case worker -- a worker, and she was very nice, and -- and she told us that they will approve it. And one day, which was before Thanksgiving, she came to our house, and this time we lived in **Brooklyn**, she saw the apartment, and we showed her we have one room reserved, and we going to put it for a -- for a child. And she and I made already in this time a good living. My wife was a teacher, and I had a good business already. I still was a peddler. And she said, "I think you will have a very good Thanksgiving," because they were ready to give us a child. And we says, "Well, we prefer if we can get a girl." We wanted to have a girl. And then, before -- before about two months and before she said that probably we'll have it, she -- they switched her and we got the other worker. And the first minute when she came to house, we saw right away that she's not the same person. She looked at my wife and she was -- we saw that she is very jealous. And the way she talked to my wife, and my wife was maybe prettier, we had a nice apartment. And -- and she was not so nice as the other one to us. And then later we got a letter that we were rejected. It was a very terrible shock to us. And the reason why we're rejected is because they don't -- they -- they don't believe that we, after going through so much, that we are normal people, that we will be able to bring up a child like in a normal home. And this was the terrible thing. I had people who wrote letters, people who I helped very much - - like, for instance, there was a Dr. **Rosenhow**, he was one of the biggest professors in

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

the world, and I did a lot of things for him. He was in this time a professor in **Columbia**, he was a very -- a international known eye doctor. So I told him this, so he wrote a letter, and some other **[indecipherable]** what I did to him -- for him. And -- and there was other men, but then they said once it's rejected, nobody can correct it. But nothing wrong with us, the only thing that they don't think that we will be able to bring up a child. If -- well, anyway. So then I said I have no -- I have no choice, so we find somebody that we can get a child on the black market, and we got in touch with a woman from **Philadelphia**, and in this time she said for 8,000 dollars we can get a child. And so we agreed, and I gave no money in advance. She said the minute when they was here -- we told her we want to have a newborn child, and if -- a -- a girl, and if she will have it, I will come and pick it up and gi-give her the money.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

A: -- well, anyway. So then I said I have no -- I have no choice, so we find somebody that we can get a child on the black market, and we got in touch with a woman from **Philadelphia**, and in this time she said for 8,000 dollars we can get a child. And so we agreed, and I gave no money in advance. She said the minute when they was here -- we told her we want to have a newborn child, and if -- a -- a girl, and if she will have it, I will come and pick it up and gi-give her the money. We received a letter -- a -- a telephone from her, so she said, "Come to **Philadelphia**, a child was born today, in three days come, you can pick up the child." When I got the cel -- telephone, about four days before, my wife went to the doctor, and he made a rabbit test, and he says that she is pregnant -- well, a few days before. Naturally we told her that we change our mind, and **Esther** was born. Then after -- after this she was pregnant about three times, she had miscarriages. Cause I wanted to have a large family, cause we were nine children. So she -- so that we were thinking about adoption, then later we decided no, because if we have one our daughter, we'd -- we didn't think that we will have the same feeling for some -- for adopted child. If we wouldn't have our own, so maybe we could adopt two. But once we have our own, so we thought we will deprive **Esther**. So she was -- a few times she had miscarriages, and this is it.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: Did you have particular hopes or values that you wanted to instill in your -- in your child, for **Esther**?

Q: Hopes and values? Yes. Hope of -- the first hopes and values is to -- to install in her a value of Judaism. Not a value of Judaism, about religion, God, but to be proud being a Jew, what the Jews did. This what I am proud, what the Jews did, fa -- through the 4,000 years since **Abraham**, what they did to human beings, what they did to the world, including the 10 commandments, including **Jesus**, even. That -- how come that -- that -- even with the Catholics, when they believe, said God picked out **Mary** to have a child, that God is a father, how come she didn't go to a -- to a Spanish woman, or to a Polish woman, or to a Irish woman and have a child -- if -- if I would believe what a Catholic believes. And to have a child with -- with -- with one of those nationality. So why did He pick out a Jewish girl, to have a child with a Jewish girl? So probably there is something more to it. Now -- which I don't believe in all those things. Now, I believe in **Jesus**, far as a human being. Now, he was -- if **Jesus** wouldn't be made now, the religion was made 200 years later they started to write. If **Jesus** wouldn't be made a God, he would be a prophet by the Jews, because he was a - a -- a -- a man that he tried to help the underdog. His friends were fishermen, shepherds, prostitutes, all those things because he wanted to help them. He was a very ethical man. And so I believe in this, but I don't believe that **Jesus** had anything to do

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

with God. I mean, he was a religious man. **Jesus** was a **Nazere**, a naze -- I don't know if you know what means a **Nazere**. A **Nazere** means that he didn't want to have too much pleasure from a life on this world. Like -- like he -- he never cut his hair, he never drink whiskey, he never had a woman. Well, those were as people, and **Jesus** was one of these. You -- you cut it off?

Q: No.

A: Now I -- I don't know if I told you last time I had a grandfather. My grandfather was a very, very pious Jew, he was a very learned Jew, he was very well known that he was one of the biggest scholars. In 1875 he wrote a book, and the book was in -- in -- **Jesus** in -- [indecipherable] means **Jesus** from **Nazareth**. He wrote it in Hebrew, and this book was never published. And I remember we had one manuscript home, written by hand, beautiful written. I would give everything if I would have to take that book, but the book got lost. And he wrote it in -- in this time, a Jew to write about **Jesus**, it was sacrilegious because the Jew -- the Jews even didn't want to mention **Jesus's** name. So he wrote about him, and he -- this what he explained. He explains that **Jesus** was born, and he was -- he had a very, very hard childhood because all his friends they used to call him names because he was born out of wedlock. So they used to call him -- in Hebrew is **mumser**. **Mumser** means somebody who was born in -- without a father. So a -- he was very bitter because he knew that he was born -- his

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

mother was not married to je -- to **Joseph** in this time. But as a human being, he was a wonderful human being. He was very compassionate, as -- but so f -- and he was very religious. So to me that the Jews -- this what I try to -- what the Jews gave to -- to the world, now take in -- in our time, the biggest doctors, the biggest thinkers, the biggest musicians, everything is Jewish, I am very proud of it. I'm very proud of our heritage during all the time of the religion and their history. But I stop a little when it comes to God, I stop because I have questions, and I don't know if I believe in God, if I don't believe in God. I don't want to think about it, but if I believe, I'm very angry at Him. Because if -- like they say, if He rolled -- runs the world, and if He rules everything, how -- where was He when they pushed in 4,000 people in a cha -- in a gas chamber in **Auschwitz**, and the -- the crying and everything, He didn't hear it. If He didn't hear it, and He didn't help, so probably He couldn't help. And if He couldn't help, well who -- who needs Him? So the -- but I -- but this isn't -- but **Esther** is more religious that we are, because she doesn't have this experience. She doesn't ask God why didn't He do this, why didn't He this, why didn't He help my mother. So she is more religious, not the way religious she wi -- not to eat pork, she will eat pork. Not to drive on Saturday, she will drive Saturday. But, as a Jew, she is religious and I told her if she will have children, if the children will go to a religious school I pay for it, and I do. For all the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

three children, they go to **Saloman Schachter**, I pay for it. So I am very, very proud what the Jews accomplished.

Q: Did you talk to her about --about your war experience, about the Holocaust?

A: I spoke to her about the Holocaust, but I -- I think -- this what my wife's opinion is, that I -- I spoiled a lot, because I started to talk to her too early. I started to speak to her when she was small, and then she was so fed up that she tried to push it away. Even til today, there are organizations from second generations and this, and we told her to join, to be active, she is not. And this what she said, because she was exposed too early to it. And then later, she tried to push it away. But I -- she knows it from since she was four or five years. And then later when I did with the grandchildren, she told me the same thing, not to try to spoil it, and not to try to influence and talk so much about it when they are too small.

Q: What -- how -- how did you tell it to her? Did you make it into some kind of bedtime stories --

A: No, no, I didn't, not the bedtime stories. But I told her that -- that I may -- about the five sisters I had, and about the children. Now there is -- there is -- in the sign -- the new book I'm writing, there's some stories comparing **Esther** with the -- with my sister -- sister's children. See, my sister's children I love so much that -- like they would be my children because we lived together. We lived together, we always -- we -

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

- especially in the ghetto we were together. And the children [indecipherable] and they looked up to me. If I went out from the ghetto I took off my band there, and they looked up to me, and I always brought them one, when they didn't have no -- an apple, they didn't [indecipherable] or a plum or something when I came from a trip, or something, I smuggled it in and I gave it to them, so they waited for it. And -- and I was an -- the hero for them. Naturally in this time I was not in the underground, but still, I was the one that I -- that I brought them something, candy, a piece of chocolate, in the ghetto. But later, naturally, they were -- and they were very young, like -- like one sister I had a girl come three and a half years and got killed, and one was two years. One -- the other sister had a boy three and a half years and the other was two years. And then I had a niece, and the niece was three years younger than I. And my brother had the three children. One was 12, one was 10 and the girl was eight when they were killed. But I was very, very attached to the children, and -- and now it's thinking back it's like -- like I almost -- we all were very attached, the whole family, because we lived together and my father -- if I had a sister got married, he didn't let them move away from our town, they stayed in our town, he opened a business for the new son-in-law. Each daughter got -- he bought them -- he gave them a dowry, and then later he bought them a house. He was well off, he could do it. But we were like --

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

like -- even when they married, the -- there was no difference, they were like they would be home.

Q: Let's -- let's go back to **Esther** for just a minute. Was -- she was an only child, and she also did not have any -- did she ask for grandparents --

A: She oh -- **[tape break]**

Q: -- ask you this again. Talk about her missing grandparents, and --

A: Yeah, when she was small she was very unhappy because she always ask question, how come all her friends have grandparents, have aunts, and she doesn't have. And came Sunday they came to visit. So as a matter of fact, she had a friend across the street, and -- and they -- she had two sets of grandparents. So she ask how come she has two gr -- sets, and I don't have even one? So naturally we told her that they were killed, and where are they, they are in heaven. So then later she made up with this friend that she said she should give her one set of grandparent. So they said yes, we adopt you. And every time when they came over here, so she went to visit them, and -- and -- and she se -- but she knew that it is not grandparents, but she knew -- and they said we -- we will be your grandparents, and -- because **Ellen** has two sets, so you will have one. But she always was very unhappy that she doesn't have grandparents. Then later she got older, so she realized then -- then -- in the beginning, when then en -- she was very small, so we told her where are they. So we said they were killed, bad men

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

came and killed them. And -- and -- but then later, naturally, when I told her about the -- about the war, so maybe I told her too earlier, and she was like pushed away because she le -- realized it when she was four or five, six years. It was a little too early.

Q: I want to ask you another question that has to do with your jobs again. So later on you went into contru -- into construction business, and you made good money, you had a successful firm. And then your family kind of liked you in a different way.

A: No, no, they -- I didn't say that they liked me, beca --

Q: No, no, I'm sorry. You -- you to -- you just told me a story that they made you president of the family circle --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: -- I just wondered whether you could say --

A: Yeah, well, no, because you see, in **America** the money talks. So they di -- I don't think so they liked me more, maybe some hated me more, because they were jealous. So they -- because -- and I give you other example, I had an uncle and his son went here to college, and he hardly made a living. So they came to -- when I moved in in the new apartment, and -- and I had new -- right away new furniture, so I told him, well, we try to fix it up, but we not finished yet. I purposely said it. So she -- so I see she jumped in there to her husband, she says, "See, see? And my son went to college and look at him. He just came over here, he has already a beautiful apartment, he has a

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

business, and he is already fixed up.” Now, they were very, very, very jealous, but they said when they spoke to somebody else, and they said, “Oh **Norman** is doing all right.” So they always said, “Oh yeah, we put him on his feet.” Which they didn’t do anything. And there are occasions that -- that -- what they did. Like for instance, I had one cousin, and they -- he inherited from his father, he had a very big factory, and they made all kind of children’s underwear. So -- and I -- I was in this time in the remnant business, so -- and he had s -- in the factory he sold remnants, so I went to him and I said to him, I buy remnants. Now h -- and he sold it to a dealer, so he probably charge 50 cents a pound, and later I bought it and I paid four dollars a pound. So I said why can’t I buy direct? And he was a cousin, so he said, “Well, I would sell it to you, but you have to bring me a statement from the bank. See, we do only business with somebody who could send me a financial statement. If you bring me the bank, that you have in the bank 25,000 dollars, and [indecipherable] we will do business.” So I said, “I don’t have 25,000 dollars.” So I had to buy his remnants and pay instead a half a dollar, I had to pay four dollars. And I made a very small profit, which I could make a lot of profit. All right. Then about 10 years later, when I was already selling furniture, I established myself, so this man opened a lot of -- a few discount houses. So once I went in and I said to him, “You know, in this discount house you don’t have furniture. I’m -- I sell furni -- why don’t you give me a call and then I’ll bring in kitchen sets and

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

other things, we can make a lot of money, you will be a partner.” So -- and I will have -- and I could make a big business. So he said, “Yeah, well it’s a very good idea, but you have to bring me that you have in the bank at least hundred thousand dollars, otherwise how could we do business with you?” So I said to him, “You know what? In five years I will come back to you, because this way I will make money. The first time you wanted 20, I didn’t have it. So now I have 20, you wanted hundred, I don’t have it. Maybe in five years we come -- I will come to you, you’ll ask for a half a million dollars, but I already will have the hundred thousand dollars. So I will keep coming to you and I will raise my capital.” Naturally, he never let me have the furniture, and I never did it, and -- and it’s -- and this -- this how it was. Is a -- now there I have a other --

Q: T-Tell me -- tell me the story though about the family circle, because that’s also very telling.

A: Oh, well the family circle, then when I started to make a good living, and then we had a family circle. Before nobody wanted to know me, and [indecipherable] would - - wanted to -- to have anything to do with me -- with it. Then later, one -- one time when we had a meeting, we had a meeting once a month in a restaurant. They had to pick out a new president, so they picked me out for a president for -- for the family circle. And there were a -- a lot of people. And then to make a president, so two people

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

came to me and they took me under the arm, they ca -- they went with me to the podium, and then -- and they introduce me, and I am the family circle. So in this time I brought my wife the furs -- mink stole. And mink stole was very fashionable, but in the beginning this was very expensive, not everybody had it. So I took my wife's mink stole and I spre -- and I spread it and I hold it, and I said to meet the new president of the family circle. They looked at me. So I said, "Yeah, the mink stole is the president, but wouldn't I be able to buy my wife a mink stole, I would never be a president of the family circle." So naturally they didn't like -- also they didn't like it because a lot of times I said something what they didn't like. So ab -- but I didn't care. So -- so I was -- I was a president for the -- for the family circle. And --

Q: Let me -- let me ask you this because it -- it fits right now with what you sort of said. When I ask you about the achievements -- I mean, you have had a long work life here, and you have built things. You have a family now, you have built things. When I ask you what -- what do you consider the -- the achievements here, in this country, for you?

A: Well, the achievements in this country, the first thing is that I had a daughter. This is the main -- th-this is the highlife -- the highlight, because wouldn't I have a daughter, my life wouldn't be worth anything, because why did I survive? To have a continuation. The Jews lived for so many years, and I had to have a continuation. Now

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

she -- I have a daughter, she has three grandsons. So it means that **Hitler** didn't win the war. With me he didn't win the war, because his -- to win the war, it means to an -- an -- to destroy every single Jew, and with me he couldn't do it. Now, we had a town very few -- only -- only four people survived out -- from my town. Now all the people when I look back -- when I look back and I -- there were families, the families stretched 300 years, nobody survived. And then when they killed the last one -- so it means they just destroyed everything. And with me, I didn't. My father had me, and I have **Esther**, **Esther** has the children, and the generation goes on. I -- I'm very -- a little disappointed in -- not disappointed, I feel bad that I don't have a son, and the reason why, because by Jews, there is a sect, and we call it **kohanim**. The **kohanim** descend from the priestly family. Now this started, the first **Cohen** was **Aaron** -- a **Cohen**, **Moses'** brother. This is a -- 4,000 years. And a son came after the father, after the father, and it was never change, because the Jews how -- not religious -- I mean, they were not religious, but this they obeyed, that a son should be a **Cohen** after a father. Now this went on for 4,000 years til it came to me. Now, I don't know how many forefathers were killed because they were Jews, probably a lot. My father was killed because I -- because he was a Jew. But I remained, and I took his place. Who knows, maybe his forefathers were killed by the Crusaders in the [indecipherable]. We don't know. So because it lasted for so -- for 4,000 years, and it never -- the string,

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

the lineage was never cut off. And so not being a **Cohen** is cut off by me, because a daughter is not -- she herself is a **Cohen**, a daughter of a **Cohen**, but her children are not any more. So this I am a little disappointed, because I would like this lineage should be long, and it should be til the end of time. But it isn't, but I am happy. And they are -- they are the three boys, and -- and they should know that they are very proud to be Jews. And if -- if -- if one of them would marry out of religion, this will be the worst thing for me, I don't know if I could survive it. Not because era -- oh -- I bel -- I told you this before, not because about not being religious, but not being a Jew, because there was a man, there was a nation, they want a -- nea -- hel -- a -- destroy all the Jews, and I said no, I want to be alive. And through me -- not only me, and others, said we are going around, we going a -- we are here, we establish a country, we in -- in **America**. We are Jews, and we did so much for -- for the world, that I want the continuation should be.

Q: Maybe that's already enough, but if you have other things that you consider an achievement --

A: Well, this is a achievement about having a family. So now, also achievement is that I will leave a few books. And this is very important for me because -- see, I don't make money on the books, and I'm not interested to make money. And if -- if -- if I get from wha -- book, I get some royalties or something, I send it to the mu -- to the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

museum right away, because I don't need it, I may -- I have enough. But to leave a heritage -- now, if I will leave my daughter, a other -- other thousand dollars, or a other five thousand dollars, and I will leave her a book, I much more in -- in -- I -- I'm much more happier. Why? Because the grandchildren will know, well my grandfather wrote a book, and what do I write, I don't write jokes, I don't write -- I write something from the -- our survival. Like -- like if I would have the book from my grandfather who wrote about **Jesus**, even -- I -- I -- I cannot imagine how he could have courage to write a book like this. But still he wrote it, he had -- he -- he went out and he -- he had guts to do it. So this is also that -- that my -- my s -- my -- what I did with the books is very important. And also that I am **[indecipherable]** my wife, and -- and my wife is -- I think we are -- we ra -- we are in love, e -- even we have frictions **[indecipherable]** and -- and the frictions are because she doesn't tie down the toothpaste like I want it should be down because it's loose. So we -- we have those kind of arguments. Not because it's important things, but small thing **[indecipherable]** like -- like she likes, in winter for instance, I have a busy day because the whole day she opens the window and I close the window. She wants a **[indecipherable]** minute I come in, I go out, the window's open. I close it. So those are -- those are the -- the -- the frictions. But as a whole, I think we agree on everything. We agree with the -- with the -- with the grandchildren. We agree with our daughter, with -- mostly only small things that

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

otherwise -- and -- and this -- this is a achievement, the achievement is that I am alive, that our generation, our heritage is alive, and I am giving -- I prepare a lot of things, the only worry I have is that they will not continue, or they will destroy it. Now, for instance, I told you before about the stamps. I collected the stamps over 50 years, and I have the most beautiful collection. I don't want to sell it, I don't want to give it to a museum. I want my grandchildren should have it, because it is -- the stamps gave me a lot of pleasure. I collected it, and it's worth a lot of money if I sell it, and now I get nothing, practically for it. As a matter of fact, I told you before, I bought today two albums. I said million times I wouldn't buy any more, but it comes out something, I buy it. So this is a -- this is a very -- a very -- a pleasant thing, and -- and I -- I belong to a lot of organizations. Now I started to give up because a lot of times in the evening there are meetings in **New York**, and -- and I don't go. Even if I want to go, my wife doesn't let me go. So this is very rewarding, that I am getting acknowledged, I'm getting plaques, I'm invited to speak. And life goes on. This what is inside me, nobody knows, because every night -- there is not a night that I shouldn't thi -- see, I am -- I am the **United States** almost 50 years. 50, or more? '47? More than 50, yeah. I never dreamt about the **United States**. Now, I went through, I have my life here and family. You always dream from your life. I never had that dream about the **United States**. It doesn't mean that **United States** was bad for me, in the contrary. **United States** was

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

very good for me. Always when I have a dream, it's always a dream from home, before the war. Dream from the Holocaust, and -- and -- and -- and -- and -- and I never -- I never -- and I'm thinking about life here. I never dreamt about it. Maybe this is the way it should be, that you don't dream from -- from good things where you are alive here, but you dream from before. So th-th-the -- I live with the past, and this is very -- it's not good, but I live with the past in, all right, luckily my wife is also a survivor. Would I have an American survivor, probably we couldn't live together -- I mean, with American person, because I don't think so that somebody would take it. But with her, she has the same problem as I, when she dreams, she dreams also about her family, about her ho -- about her youth. And -- and this how we going on. I -- I -- I am very much interested like I told you in the Temple, I'm not religious, but when it comes to the high holidays, I perform, and I -- I conduct services, I'm singing with the choir, I teach them. Because this is something that it's in me, it's a heritage, and I don't want to let it go.

Q: That was -- that was very important, yeah, you didn't say that in the other interview. I've only two quick questions left --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and then maybe you can play a little music or so.

A: Yeah, okay.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: I would like to ask you though, what did it mean for you to be in v -- when did you feel comfortable in **America**, sort of , and -- and what did it mean to you to live in this country? What does it mean to you be an American?

A: W-Well, to be in **America** is -- when I came over here, I was very unhappy. And I was unhappy for a few reasons. I will give you an -- an article that it was just published. The first thing, I was very unhappy, I came to a country -- see aft -- would I come straight from a concentration camp, I would be very happy because I would have to eat, I wouldn't be chased. But I already went through a period after the liberation, til I escaped, I became already -- I had a chauffeur, my wife had a cook, and I have a bodyguard, and I was em -- a-and I was admired, and I had a position, I don't -- so then, after this, when you came down, it -- and I fell down so drastically to **America** that I was nothing. What do you mean nothing? I di -- we didn't know the language, I didn't know the people, I didn't have a trade, I didn't have a job. And -- and it was not so -- this that you became -- you became worthless. So in this time, for this reason, I wanted to go also to **Israel**, but I figure **Israel** it will be -- a -- its -- was a dream, yeah. And -- and -- and in this time I con -- considered to -- to commit suicide a few times, because I figured what -- why did I survive? What was -- well, then later I started to make out all right, and -- and -- and I started to belong to organizations and I saw that **America** is giving me more than I ever dreamt, because I was not ex -- am -- nobody

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

called me Jew, no -- I was not beaten up, and I could do anything I wanted. So I saw that **America** is -- and also, e -- I was -- I worked very hard, and I co -- saw -- then I bought a house and I could buy a car, and -- and all those things, so til **Esther** was born I was satisfied, but it was missing a child. Now, when **Esther** was born, so I think everything was completed.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

A: -- with regrets what I didn't do, before -- I told you before the regrets. So you couldn't go back, you couldn't turn back the clock, but I was very happy. So **America** meant a awful lot t-to me. I just wrote an article, I will give it to you, and I called it "**My Three Homelands.**" And I describe the three homelands, **Poland**, amer --

Q: I'm sorry, could you say it again, there was a --

A: No --

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: You called it your three homelands.

A: Yeah, "**My Three Homelands,**" and I describe it that three homelands, **Poland**, for instance. **Poland** was like a stepmother, and I loved **Poland** and I wanted to be a patriot, but **Poland** didn't let me love it. I wouldn't -- I wanted to go to the army, and I

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

-- I couldn't -- this before the war. And -- and -- because I thought we live in p -- in **Poland** -- Jews lived for thousand years, my family lived for 300 years, and I thought for 300 years we could become citizens, but we didn't. So then I describe -- I will give you this article -- then I describe my second homeland is **America**. **America** took me in, and nourished me, brought me back to health, and **America** did everything to -- for me that I never dreamt that **America** would do it for me, so I love **America**, but my third homeland is **Israel**. It's that my soul is in **Israel**. Even if I live in **America** it doesn't mean -- I love **America**, but **Israel** is my -- my real home, it's that -- now, when I was the first time in **Israel**, so we had an organization, and after the trip they ask me -- and I spoke about it, and so they ask me who do you have in **Israel**, why do you -- and I was so happy to be there, even if I had there a brother. So I said, "Well, I had an awful lot of friends in **Israel** and I met all my friends. And I was -- I went home." Who are the friends? So I told them my friends was the **Rumbaum**.

Rumbaum is -- is a scholar from the Middle Ages, who is buried in the **Tiberias**.

Maria Balanessa, a other sage, who is buried in -- in -- in -- in -- in **Tiberias**. There -- the founder of **Kabbalah**, of mystic, was buried in **Meron**, and so on and so on. Those are my best friends. I lived -- I was brought up with them. Then, the new generations that are my friends is **Theodor Her -- Herzl**, the founder of **Zionism**, and **[indecipherable]** who was a soldier and officer who was killed in **Israel** in --in the

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

beginning. So you see, those people were my friends, and I went to visit th -- with them, because I lived with them. And then we had the patriarchs, in -- in -- **Abraham**, and a -- naturally they were not alive, but I went to them. And then I had my adopted mother. My adopted mother was **Rachel** in **Bethlehem**. Every Jew knows that **Rachel** was the adopted mother. So I went to there -- to them, and I spoke to them, and this was my highlight for it -- so for this reason my soul is in **Israel**, my reality, my natural life is in **America**. And my dream was in **Poland**, but it was never continued because the Polish people didn't let me. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So about -- th-thas -- I ge -- I --

Q: Boy, that was very good, that was **[indecipherable]**

A: Well, I -- I have to give you -- I have to -- well, this -- this how it is.

Q: That's very important --

A: You see -- you see, I'm --

Q: -- you did not say it that way -- see, that's why it's good sometimes to go back and **[indecipherable]**

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you see -- you see **America** -- **America** naturally I have a lot of complaints to **America**, but we are allowed to have complaints, where I can speak up. I remember when I came to **America**, I was very unhappy I told you, because I didn't make a living, and I wanted to commit suicide. Then later when I started to make a living, and when I went to **Florida**, and I -- and this I will never forget, and my wife

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

went to **Miami** to buy a pair of shoes, and we go in -- we went in in a store and I wanted to go to the bathroom and I see it's written for whites and blacks. I wanted to drin -- I couldn't believe it, I couldn't understand that in **America**, so I went back and there was a full -- the store was full with people, and I started to yell, again I talk a lot, so I started yell don't buy here shoes, I wouldn't let you buy shoes. And she asked me why. I said go and you will see. There are two fountains, two toilets, what do you mean this is for white and blacks? You cannot -- you cannot buy here. And I pulled her out and she didn't buy the shoes, because for me it was something new. On the way home we stopped, I th-think, in **North Carolina**, something like that, and we went in a restaurant and with us was there a girl, she was from -- a Jewish girl from **Yemen**, she was dark. We were sitting by the table and we -- we ordered some food. So I made a joke, I made a joke and I said I hope they will not see -- recognize you who you are, because -- made believe that she is black, you know? And the waitress heard it and two minutes later, the -- a manager came and th-th-th -- he said you wa -- and they were -- they threw us out from the restaurant because we were with this girl. And she was Jewish. So when they threw us out, I didn't want to go, then they called the police and we went out, and there were two police motorcycles. And they ask where is your - - where is your cars, I told them. They said, you leave the town, we will escort you, and if you don't go right away, we'll arrest you.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: When was that?

A: This was in 19 -- in 1949. 19 four -- '49 or '50, yeah, '49. So they went behind us, we were out -- ou-out from the town, so they turned back. And I described this in one of the vignettes. And this was a terrible thing for me. I couldn't understand how come that -- that -- that here in -- in **America** that I admire so much, and -- and there are people -- see, in this time, for me, the-the-the-the -- when they -- we called them Negroes in this time, that they suffered and I could see them as I was a second class citizen in **Europe**. So this was very, very, very -- it -- it was terrible for me. I -- I -- I remember I had later, and thi -- I had later in -- in **Hoboken** houses, so I had houses and there one -- one house -- you see, all those stories I have written down that will be in my -- in the book. Yeah, so there was one man, he was the president from the **NAACP** in -- in -- in **Hoboken**, he didn't pay me rent, I went for the rent, we had an argument, he beat me up. And -- and -- and I went -- I want to go to police. So then I was in this time chairman from the **ADL**, from, you know, Anti-Defamation League from **B'nai Brith**. So I told the stories, I said I want to make a case out of it because the **ADL** and the Jews they emancipated, in this time the blacks, they gave them lawyers to be -- they marched. So they made -- they made a complaint and I was called to -- to the headquarters from -- in **New York** from the **NAACP**. So we were called to listen to the story and they called the man who was the president from their

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

organization in **Hoboken**. So th-the story was that he took -- so I told them, he beat me up, I came for the rent. So he said, "Yes, I beat him up," he was a big, husky guy, "because he came in and h," -- and I told him, "you effing nigger, give me the money." This -- this what he told them, for this reason he beat me up. So I ask them, can -- can I ask him a few questions? Yeah, yes. I said, What kind of a house was it? Eight family house. Who lived in the house? All eight were blacks. Wer -- what floor were you living? He say, on the top floor. What time of the day was it that I called you this name? It was eight, nine o'clock at night. No white people and I was there with my mechanic because we had to fix something. So I -- I -- I ask him those things, so I said to the people, I said, "Now, do you think that if I will come to his house, it's a eight family house, all are blacks, he lives on the top floor, nine o'clock at night, and I came in and I will tell him this what he said, and I will be alive, I will be here, huh?" So they asked then the -- my mechanic, he was Ukrainian, and he said, "I just came in to fix something." So they thought that he is lying, so on the spot -- on the spot they said you don't belong to the organization any more, you're not a president and you -- we don't believe you. And I -- so I was very, very pleased with their decision. And they were mostly -- they were about half Jewish lawyers and half were blacks, because Jews gave them lawyers. So you see, there was a lot of -- of things in **America** that I disap - - disapproved, and -- and I liked. Like I disapproved what they did for black people,

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

because I couldn't believe that there should be a discrimination; after all, we are in **America**. The same thing I didn't want to be discriminated as a Jew. Well, those are the things that I have everything in the -- in the -- in the book, yeah.

Q: Do you think the world has learned from Holocaust?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so. The world has learned that our environment -- when -- when people who are involved learn a -- Jews learned a lot, not so much about the Holocaust. Let's say -- let's talk about Jews in **America**. The Jews in **America** are a little different now to what's **Israel**. They are closer to the **Israel** -- to **Israel** on account of the Holocaust, because they know that we -- would we have **Israel** before the war, probably more than half of Jews will be alive, because they will run out and they will have a place where to go. They didn't know where to go. So now, this is like a insurance policy. A lot of Jews -- well, the young Jews I don't think so, because they think we are in **America**, **America** is mine. We have **America** in our pocket. And it's not true. So -- but the other people, the elderly people, they figure well, this a insurance policy that in case something happens we have where to go. So the whole world didn't learn anything, because as you can see, we have now not on the -- on the so -- so strong as the Holocaust, we had **Rwanda**, we had **Bosnia**, we had **Cambodia**. So there are a lot of places that it was repeated. It was not so repeated like the Holocaust, like I said to you before. Why? Because it's not done by the Germans.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Would the Germans be in those places, it will be done completely. But those people were not capable to make it so complete as the Germans, because everything what the Germans did, it had to be perfect. So they did perfect with the Holocaust also. So -- but they didn't learn in case something happened it will be the same thing. Now, **America** for instance, there are so many nationalities, but we know the time for **McCarthy**, I don't know if you remember this, it was almost. But, there were courageous people who stood up, and they started to bring this in the -- t-to the world and they -- and he was thrown out. But as -- y-y -- also because it was good times. God forbid if there will be bad times. They will look for a scapegoat. They will look for a scapeg -- and here in **America**, the first scapegoat will be the black. We have somebody who is behind us. And the next scapegoat will be a Jew. There is even a story that a Jew -- somebody said to a Jew that all -- all the disasters are on account of the Jews. Everything, all troubles are the Jews. So -- so then he said, well give me one example. So he said, take the **Titanic**. The **Titanic** si -- under the Jews. So he said what you bring the Jews, what have to do **ya-ya**? He said, well the -- the -- the **Titanic** was destroyed by a iceberg. So he said, this what I mean, iceberg, **Greenberg, Goldberg**, they are all the same. So this is -- this is -- the man said it and he believed it. And there is -- and then a other man said about the -- about the Holocaust that all the trouble in the world, all the trouble in the world are on account of the Jews, and account of

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

bicycle riders. Every trouble what's on the world are -- is guilty the Jew, or the bicycle riders. And people, when you tell it to them, they look at you and they ask, why bicycle riders? What have bicycle riders to do with the destructions with this?

Nobody'd ask why the Jews. Nobody said what do have the Jew -- in the country, if there is a disaster, the first scapegoat is the Jew. So nobody -- when you tell the story, and I tell the story to a lot of people, nobody ask yet, why the Jew. But everybody ask, why the bicycle rider? So there you have the answer, and if you ask -- if it co -- if the world learned a lesson, the world didn't learn no lesson. The Jews learned a lesson.

The Jews who survived learned a lesson. I don't think that the Jews in **America** learned a lesson. There are some Jews who th -- know there was a Holocaust. But the majority Jew, what, they go to **W-Wall** Street, making money, coming home, going -- going to -- to a nightclub, going to the movie. Do they think about the Holocaust? No. The Holocaust was done for somebody else, and it was done in a other's time, and it is not for them.

Q: Very last question, and then I'd like you to sing because --

A: Yeah, yeah, sa -- okay --

Q: -- I'm sure you still have some voice left.

A: -- okay, yeah.

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

Q: In the later years, 70's, 80's, or s-s-s -- yeah, 90's even, anything that happened in this country that was of importance to you, that you f -- that had impact on your life, that you thought was important? Political, cultural, anything.

A: Well, i-in this -- well, I told you, I'm not talking now about personal things, because naturally personal things I improved.

Q: Yes, I know.

A: I improve them materially, and all those things, but it -- it-- there were things that -- that is -- well, like for instance, take now. Take now, I am very much -- I'm very much disappointed in the results of the elections. This is just happened yesterday. Now why am I memb -- why am disappointed? Because I know in **America**, in such a democratic country, and I know that the elections were st-stolen, and -- and it's not stolen, I -- there -- some lawyer was on television, he said it was not stolen, it was robbed. And it was robbed because we know -- now, if you go to a bank, and you give them a hundred dollar bill, and you said cha -- exchange it to me for wo -- single ca -- single bills for hundred. And you go away from the ta -- from the window and you start to count, and you see it's only 65 dollars instead hundred. You will go back and I say, you know you cheated me, you gave me 65. So what will he say? He said let me count it over. And he will count over, he said, he's right. He will give him extra 35 dollars. Now here, if it was wrong, if -- if it was right -- so why do they have to be

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

afraid it will be counted over? If it's right, so he's right. But they didn't count it over because they knew it was wrong. So this I am very much hurt. Forget about the democrats or republicans. If it will be the opposite, I will be hurt the same way. So a thing like this, I am very, very much disappointed. Disappointed because I love **America**, I love American democrats e-even if it's not hundred percent, but at least we can speak about it. In this, you cannot even speak. And then later the -- the -- the ca -- the Supreme Court in **Washington**, they make the decision. The Supreme Court has -- i-is not created to make a decision about elections. The Supreme Court is made for -- to make decisions about something else. You see, be-because you ask me, those are the things that just happened yesterday. So a thing like this, I am disappointed because I feel **America** is mine. It's not a thing that I am living in a strange country, is a -- in a foreign country like I lived in **Poland**. In **Poland** everything they did, I had to take it for granted, this is the way it should be. But not in **America**, this is my **America**. The same thing it's your **America**. Who are the Americans? We -- and this is -- and then there are -- there are a lot of places, a lot of where I c -- I could give you a lot of instances that it is the same way I -- when I see injustice and it's done in **America**, I feel very bad, because I feel it is mine, and there shouldn't any injustice. ... Mostly songs that I sing -- course, it's a very popular song, because this is from my operetta, it's made by **Goldfarden**. And the operetta's name is **Shilamis**. **Shilamis** is -- was a

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

story about the ancient **Israel**. And it's a -- and there is a song is [**speaks Hebrew here**] means almonds in raisins. And you -- this is a lullaby. And my daughter knew about it because I always sing it, she didn't know what the words are. And -- and this they -- this they -- the song is about the Temple, and they described about the Temple, and they -- I always lo -- I love older -- ol-older songs, but this is special with my daughter. [**sings in Hebrew**] There is a hymn of the Jewish partisans, you probably know about it. So I always, when I speak about the Holocaust, I always sing this song of the Jewish partisans. Yo -- you -- you heard it, you know [**sings**] [**phone rings**] I always -- but this is English. This is always -- I sing this when -- when I just was in a place and I sing Yiddish songs and there was one woman, and she said, "I'm -- I'm listening, but I don't understand." So I said, "For you, I have a beautiful Jewish song, but it's in English." So she was so glad, so I said this is, "**My Mother's Sabbath Candles**," did you ever hear it? It's a beautiful song, I like it. Okay? [**sings**] "My mother's Sabbath candles that make our home so bright, that faithfully she light them with a prayer each Friday night. And then around the table, we gathered and we heard my father chant a Kiddush, his heart is everywhere. Our humble home became a mansion in that mystic low. Our hearts filled again with hopes and dreams of long ago. Through all the tragic stories of **Israel's** darkest nights, they never dimmed the glory of my mother's Sabbath lights." My mother's Sabbath lights, I'm sure that all of you

Interview with Norman Salsitz
February 9, 2001

remember your mother's Sabbath lights, and if she was anything like my mother, she used to do this. First you put in a **babushka**, a **fichila**, or a kerchief over her head and light the minimum of two candles. And if your mother was as religious as mine, she also lit a candle, an extra candle for each child in the house. And even an extra candle on top, just for good luck. With her hands, she covered her face, and made a traditional pray -- prayer, because this was the closest she ever got to God. "And then around the table, we got it and we heard my father chant the Kiddush, his heart is everywhere." **[sings in foreign language here]**. "Our humble home became a mansion in the te -- mystic glow. Our hearts were filled again with hopes and dreams of long ago. Through all the tragic stories of **Israel's** darkest nights, they never dimmed the glory of my mother's Sabbath lights. My mother's Sabbath lights." **[end song]**

Q: That's wonderful.

A: You like the story?

Q: Oh yeah, I love it.

A: **[indecipherable]**. This is all different cantors. And here I have some live alleg -- live a glance, I have a whole cassette, but I am looking for the ones that **Herishman -- Herishman -- Herishman Herzig**. This is also Israeli, beautiful.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Conclusion of Interview