

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Henry Cohen**  
**April 23, 1996**  
**RG-50.030\*0362**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Henry Cohen, conducted by Katie Davis on April 23, 1996 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## HENRY COHEN

### April 23, 1996

01:01:02

Q: So, let's begin with you introducing yourself.

A: I'm Henry Cohen. I was born in Manhattan, 73 years ago, I'll be 74 in June, and I think I was born on Henry Street in lower Manhattan, the lower East Side. And I don't know whether I was named after the street or whether the street was named after me.

Q: Tell us about your parents.

A: My parents had a checkered career. They were both immigrants, they arrived from different communities in Lithuania in approximately 1907. My father was married at the time he arrived. And he and my mother met and they fell in love. And eventually they were married. But a lot of sturm und drang<sup>1</sup> over many years. And so I, I, I was born in 1922, I have an older brother, 1919, he's 75, yeah, 75 going on 76 and I have a younger sister who will be 68 and from my father's first liaison, I had an older half-sister and an older half-brother.

Q: What do you know about the towns – the villages where your parents came from and why did they want to come here?

01:03:08

A: Well, my father was born to a baker, and was himself a baker at a very young age. His mother died when he was very young. I've written a piece on this, incidentally, called "A Century of Time." And his father remarried a woman who had two small children. My father, as a six or seven year old, recalled waking up to noise in the middle of the night and seeing, some feet away in the kitchen area, by candlelight, his stepmother feeding her children. He would recall as a youngster, in that age group, six, seven, eight, taking rolls and bread from his father's bakery in the winter and putting it under his coat and running to the edge of town and trading with the Lithuanian farmers for milk and cheese. So it was that kind of poverty. He turned against his father, I guess partly because of that, partly because of the growing spirit of enlightenment, enlightenment that was spreading in the 19th century. And he became an anarchist, and by 15 or 16 he was living in another town, owning a bakery of his own, hiding inside the bakery arms of the anarchist movement – and may have played some role in the Russian Revolution of 1905. Anyway, to escape that life and that situation, and probably the Russian draft, he fled to the United States, leaving behind a wife and one or two children. My mother came from another town, which, before she was born, had a population of about four or five thousand, but

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<sup>1</sup> storm and stress (German); "life's hard knocks," hassles.

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there was apparently a big fire, which she had no memory of. I picked this up at the Museum of the Diaspora in Israel.

01:06:10

The population of the town declined by half – 25, 3,000 people. And she was a child of very old parents who had previous marriages. So, at the time she was born, her mother was 50 and her father was 65. And, thus, by the time she was 15, her mother was 65 and her father was 80, and that was a family of butchers. And so, her mother and father decided to turn over their little butcher shop to a, an older sister who was married to a butcher, and in return for room for their stay, being taken care of in their old age. And the son-in-law, husband of sis– my mother's older sister, said he could take care of the parents, but he couldn't take care of young Sadie, age 15. So she was sent to America. So, it's a story of great poverty, the background.

Q: Can you tell us both of their names?

A: What?

Q: Can you tell us both of their names?

A: Yeah, my mother's name was Sadie Sheftel, I think it was Shayne Rochel Sheftel, was the family name. And my father's name was Avram, Abe, and, I think, I can't quite sort out the grandparent's names. Chana Leah was his mother briefly, until she died. His father's name was Israel Feivel. My mother's father's name was, I had it and I lost it.

Q: You'll remember it.

A: Okay.

Q: And the names of the towns?

A: My mother came from Ivye and my father came from Drozgenik which was a sort of a small spa. Interestingly enough, I've not been able to find material on Drozgenik in the encyclopedia, the Jewish encyclopedia, which has Ivye.

01:09:05

And I, someone at the New York Public Library gave me some alternative names to try to trace through Lithuanian sources. Because for some reason, the Jewish sources don't have it.

Q: What did your parents do here? When you were little, how did they make a living?

A: Well, my father became a baker. My mother became a dressmaker. They happened to meet in a small tenement apartment on the Lower East Side. My father's older brother lived there with his wife who, it turned out, was a niece of my mother's, but older than my mother because she had been born to some older half-brother and they had a little baby at the time. And to keep things going they had boarders. So, there was a group of male boarders in one room where my father stayed. And my mother stayed with two or three female boarders in the kitchen on the floor. And that's how they met and shacked up.

Q: And they spoke Lithuanian to each other?

A: No, they spoke Yiddish, I think. They may have spoken Lithuanian, but I never heard it. Yeah, it was Yiddish all the way. And – but as a result of this upbringing, this parentage, we grew up in a secular household. I was not bar mitzvahed, my brother was not bar mitzvahed. We had a very strong Jewish/Yiddish education through Workman's Circle schools. And my brother even today prides himself that he doesn't read the English version of the Forward, he buys the Yiddish version of the Forward<sup>2</sup> and reads that. And I went through the Workman's Circle elementary schools, high school, and even into their sem– the seminary for several years.

Q: Tell us what that is.

A: Well, the elementary school was somewhere in the neighborhood.

01:12:01

Q: No, I mean the Workman's Circle.

A: Workman's Circle was a fraternal organization that was linked to the Jewish socialist movement, the Bund<sup>3</sup>. And so, in, particularly at the high school level, when I was going, I was taught by very prominent, famous Jewish literary people, scholars. It was in that sense a terrific education and I was taught all the Yiddish classic writers. Mendele,<sup>4</sup> Peretz,<sup>5</sup> Sholom Aleichem, Ash<sup>6</sup>, poets, but not taught Hebrew. And it was an anti-Zionist education because the Socialists out of the 19th century were universalists. Anti-stateism, stateists. And I – when I went into the Army in 1944, I was trained for the infantry, went to Europe, fought in the infantry, the whole German campaign. After the war ended in Europe, I got myself transferred to military government and it was at that time in the summer of 1945, that I began hearing about the Holocaust and reading about

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<sup>2</sup> *Jewish Daily Forward*

<sup>3</sup> Algemeyner Yidish Arbeter Bund in Lita, Poylen, Rusland [Universal Jewish Worker's Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia] (Yiddish); Jewish socialist organization.

<sup>4</sup> Mocher Seforim Mendele

<sup>5</sup> Isaac Leib Peretz

<sup>6</sup> Sholem Ash

it. And suddenly realizing that the political perspective that I had been taught in this Socialist system had really given me an empty political perspective for what was needed after the war. And so I sat down as a young person of 23, and I wrote a letter to one of the senior people at the Workman's Circle complaining about it, and protesting against it, and declaring that I would never set foot into Workman's Circle activity again. Because I felt I had been misguided, politically. And just as a minor passing note, by pure coincidence, in the last month or so, the Forward had a controversy going between the old Socialists and some references in the Forward to Jabotinsky<sup>7</sup>, who was a right wing Zionist, the Socialists regarded him as a Fascist, so you get these articles and letters to the editor carrying on this old struggle with Jabotinsky.

01:15:19

So, I decided to sit down and write a letter to the Forward telling the story that I've just told you. And referring, by saying that the problem isn't the Socialist and Jabotinsky, the problem centers on the anti, the Socialist anti-Zionist poison in general, against Ben Gurion<sup>8</sup> and Labor and Mapai<sup>9</sup> and kibbutzim. So they printed it as the lead letter and the headline was "Socialist Anti-Zionism – Zionist Poison." So, I'm waiting for the responses to come in from the Socialists now.

Q: What, in what way had they misguided you? What did you start learning about or realizing after the war that you felt you had been misguided on?

A: They had trained, they had trained the Jewish side of me, the Yiddish side of me and then not provided me with a coherent political platform for that cultural education. They were anti-stateist. They used to write diatribes against Theodor Herzl<sup>10</sup> and Weizman<sup>11</sup> and that group also. So, here we were in Europe immediately after the end of the war where it was clear that the survivors would have to go to a state and the only ones who were organizing to take them in were the Zionists from Palestine. They were the ones who were organizing the underground routes to bring them to European ports and transferring them to ships and sneaking them into Palestine. America was not open, the anti- there were no anti- there were no refugee immigration laws at the time. So, in that sense, the other thing I point out in my letter is that is a result of coming to grips with this six months later, after I went into UNRRA, I could greet the Chief Rabbi of Palestine with a feeling of love and no mixed feelings, even though I'm not a religious person.

01:18:00

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<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky

<sup>8</sup> David Ben Gurion

<sup>9</sup> Mifleget Po'alei Eretz Israel; Israeli labor party founded 1930.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Herzl

<sup>11</sup> Chaim Weizman

I could go into a mass meeting of 2,000 people and hear Ben Gurion and be exhilarated. And I could deal with a Hasidic rabbi who was in my camp on a fellowship basis and what this opened up to me, finally, by virtue of my rebellion against the Socialists, was my all inclusive Jewish quality.

Q: Just a little bit back because I think we need a few details about your time in the military. How did you go into it? Where did you go at first? What did you see and how did that affect you?

A: Okay. There was period after I got my baccalaureate, well actually, I moved very quickly from my baccalaureate into my masters program of city planning, so I got a deferment or two. But a friend of mine and I were exploring because we knew eventually we'd have to go in. And I remember us going to a naval recruiting station, oh like 1943, let's say. And the fellow across the desk is saying to us, "Do you like a good fight?" And we're; "uh, huh, uh," and, and then he's talking that they need people for LST, for landing ship tanks, you know, to run the boats. And we leave the building and one of us says to the other, "You know, I prefer terra firma, the firmer the better." So, independently of one another we were eventually mustered, not mustered, but taken in and within a month of my getting my master's degree, I was in the Army and in training and then six months later I was in Europe. I arrived at the beaches in France, moved to Belgium. What?

Q: The year?

A: 1944, then, September. And within weeks, transferred to, I was a replacement, transferred to the ninth Division at the Belgian boarder – Hürtgen Forest. And overnight the Hürtgen Forest had some very special qualities; it was a tall forest and what the Germans were doing was shelling and the shells would hit the tops of the trees and detonate and the shrapnel would come down on you.

01:21:06

And one-third of the group that I came in, either left in one day, dead or wounded. So, that was my initiation into combat. But in any event, I guess it was probably by October began the onslaught against Germany. And I was with the ninth Infantry Division. Which it turned out, the irony is, that they were the occupying division of the area in which the DP camp I went later, was in. My battalion, my regiment, were my primary adversaries. And life is very peculiar and funny in some ways. Anyway, so I was in battle for Aachen, Germany which is closest to the French border. I crossed the Ruhr River, Düren. I was in the Battle of the Bulge. We then moved into the Rhine when that was over. And we were in Bad Godesburg which is just south of Bonn. Home to many governmental, German governmental offices. And one night, at four in the morning, five in the morning, word comes through that we've, the American forces have captured the Remagen bridge and they have sent people over it and we are put onto trucks, and by 11 o'clock in the morning we're down at the site and we're crossing the bridge under direct fire from the

other hills. Like the Palisades in New Jersey, crossing George Washington, under direct fire, you could see the tracer bullets as you're running your way across the bridge. And we establish a beach head on the other side. Now, just to step back a bit, because I've since been back there and also a friend of mine in New York, was in the public relations unit of the division that took the bridge originally. And it's an interesting story about the difference between the American forces and the German forces. By that point in the war, Hitler was trying to run the war, removing decision making from his commanders.

01:24:04

In our case, what happened, was that a scouting group from one of the American divisions, moving through the woods, bypassing the city of Remagen, came to the heights there above the river, they look out and they see the bridge is still standing. It was the only bridge still standing. And they get word back to the battalion commanders, to the regimental commanders, to the division commanders, and to the Army group and then to General Bradley<sup>12</sup>, General Bradley reaches Eisenhower at dinner that evening and says to him, "Shall – which battle plan – shall I stay with the battle plan that we're on, or shall I start changing things, because of this discovery of the bridge standing?" And Ike says, "Forget the old battle plan, pour the troops across." Now, that was the flexibility in decision making by able people. And so, Bradley starts giving the signal, "Pour it on, get" – he mobilizes all the different divisions under him, "let's pour it on." And that shortened the war by two or three months. And so – and I've since, incidentally, read historical criticism of the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest – basically, as an infantry private, I adored my commanders. I adored Bradley. I adored Eisenhower. I thought they were the greatest in the world. And, and anyway, I fought all the way to Leipzig. We could have moved on to Berlin. But, as a result of the Yalta agreement, we didn't. And I, I feel great about having been a soldier. I feel lucky that I survived it, that I was never wounded.

01:27:01

It's all luck, there's nothing else but luck that makes a difference between wounded, dead and a standing soldier. I been, you know, battle after battle. I should, also, as an interlude here, indicate that there came a time in early April when we're moving towards the Ruhr Valley, that I got a pass, a three day pass to go to Paris. That was part of the rotation scheme. Letting different soldiers take a few days from the front line. And I went to Paris in April of 1945, a month as it turned out, before the war ended. And I'm walking – I'm choking up as I'm telling you this story – I'm walking along the Champs-Élysées, and word spread that Roosevelt had died. Again, you know, I believe all the things that the Holocaust people are saying about Roosevelt's inaction about the Holocaust, but, nevertheless, he was my Commander in Chief, and a soldier needs confidence that he's being well led, and so it was a very moving evening when word came through that he died. And then two days later I was back at the front. Yeah. Anyway, then because of my

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<sup>12</sup> Gen. Omar Nelson Bradley



prior education and settlement house experience, I succeeded in getting myself transferred to military government. There I was promoted to Technician Fifth Grade. And I had terrific relationships with the military government, I don't know who. We were in, in a county, incidentally, Landkreis<sup>13</sup>, at Günzburg, which was between Ulm and Augsburg, and it happened to be the city, I didn't notice at the time, from which the Mengele family<sup>14</sup> comes. I didn't know this. And as part of my duties for a few months, I set up a hospital for German women who were presumed to have venereal disease.

01:30:02

And it was in response to the American soldiers who were, came down with venereal disease and they'd have to give the doctors the probable source of their particular encounter. And you'd get a name, and I was the chosen one. I set up the hospital and then I would drive to the particular community and try to identify the woman. I might meet with the local mayor or police chief or whoever, "Who's Daisy around here?" And I'd bring her in. And all the way she would complain, she's "eine anständige Frau,<sup>15</sup>" she's a respectable woman, and so on. And then I'd bring them in, go on the ward. We had a group of nuns taking care of them. They were tested. Then by three days later they weren't giving me any argument that they were respectable women. And, I remember once, a woman, who we finally discharged, came into the colonel or the chief of the group, wanting a letter that she was a her husband was coming back from the Luftwaffe<sup>16</sup>, she wanted some letter attesting to her this and that. And the major, colonel, calls me in and tells me about it and I says, "Look, all you can do is give her a letter."

End of Tape #1

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<sup>13</sup> District (German)

<sup>14</sup> Family of Josef Mengele

<sup>15</sup> a decent woman (German)

<sup>16</sup> air force (German)

Tape #2

02:01:00

Q: Just finish that last story about the hospital with the German woman, the one, what your supervisor said about the letter.

A: Yeah. Incidentally, I noticed in my material here that I, I had a memo in my material that I've just looked at, I haven't even read it word for word. Which is my inspecting a – some hospital facility somewhere in this county we were in, which was a hospital for Jewish displaced persons. I have absolutely no recall about it. If you had asked me had you had any prior contact with Jewish DP's, I would have said "no." Because I've been asked that question before, but it appears, so I have like a five or six page memo of an inspection of this hospital. And I've just done an essay for class about an inspection I made of Harlem hospital in 1961. It's a subliminal yearning I have. Anyway, so, anyway, that county experience was a very interesting experience. And, but then, I had earlier somehow, since when I was trying to transfer to military government, I put in at a number of places, so I was called to serve at Supreme Headquarters in Frankfurt military government. They had higher authority in the contact, so they overruled my local commander and I went to Frankfurt and there, because of my combination of German and Yiddish – two years of German in college, and Yiddish – I was used as a translator of German documents into English.

02:03:16

And then that must have lasted a month or so and I suddenly was told to go to Wetzlar north of Frankfurt to supervise the military government printing plant. That was printing military government documents. It was an old German printing force and I was there overseeing it. And in any event, during the, let's say, May or June period to October, I discovered probably some exchanges of correspondence that the head worker, the executive director of the settlement house that I had lived in for a year and a half while going to graduate school, was in Germany, and with UNRRA and he was in Munich. So, occasionally, once a month, I don't remember, on a weekend, I would travel from where I was to Munich, which wasn't far, and I'd spend a day with him. And then, in November, I learned that he was leaving Germany for, the States. He was going into the State Department Office of Refugee Affairs and so, we rendezvoused in Wiesbaden one weekend, which was zone headquarters for UNRRA, and it was over that weekend, and his name is Dick Winslow, Richard Winslow. He later, a year later, two years later, became the Secretary General to the United States Mission to the United Nations, right after it was formed. A very able fellow. Anyway, over this weekend, he said, "What the hell is someone like you doing supervising the operation of a printing plant, when there would be so much more important things for you to be doing given your background and your interests?"

02:06:03

You see, at the settlement house. my, one of my major assignments during the year and a half I was there, you had to do something in exchange for room and board, it was the South End House, was the second oldest settlement house in the country. It had been founded in 19 – 1892 or 1893. He had to prepare a 50th annual report. He turned that assignment over to me. I went into all the historical files and books and reports and this and everything. I did the draft of the 50th annual report. This is how he and I became so close. Then he did some revision and upgrading and this and that, and it was printed. And then I did other things in the settlement house community, I did a term paper for my master's program on city planning, on the South End planning board. A history of that and what it did. So, he had a pretty good sense of my intellectual and practical interests of experience and then the following morning he brought me into zone headquarters and Gertrude Richland(ph) was there from the Eastern Division. A marvelous woman, she just died about two years ago in Santa Barbara. She later became Chief Public Welfare Officer in Washington, D.C. And they recruited me, signed me up, and they had in mind for me to go to Föhrenwald because the then director was a Canadian woman, a fine woman in many ways, but having inordinate difficulties with the Jewish DP's. She seemed to be somewhat rigid and the plan was for me to come in, serve for several weeks as her deputy, and then two weeks later she would be transferred out and I would become the director. Anyway, then–

Q: Just before we get into that, I would like to just move back and get a sense of what was your feeling, when you were in the infantry, about the war? What did you think you were fighting against, your contact with Germans? And then as the information came out about the Holocaust, did you have any contact with it in anyway?

A: Well, I guess I completely identified with the war effort.

02:09:05

Q: I mean, you can tell from the way I spoke a few minutes ago about Roosevelt, that I had absolutely no question in my mind or emotions about the purposes of the war. I had, I – because of my German Yiddish, even in doing combat periods, I was always being used as an interpreter whenever we'd capture German prisoners. So, I had a lot of contact with German prisoners of war, army, whatever branch they were from. I had a lot of contact with the German civilians. I didn't trust Germans. Didn't matter what they said to me. I was always doing my job. You know. In some ways, I have a one track mind and in the sense of being focused. And – then when we ended the war in Leipzig, I don't remember what date we arrived there, April 29th, 28th – May first – a week or two – week before the end of the war, they started – the commander started sending us across the river which is at Leipzig to a little peninsula there that's formed by another river and we were casing the joint before the Russians arrived and after a few days, there were tens of thousands of German troops running away from the Russians to the American zone. And

we're just a few soldiers, and they're armed and we've got one rifle on our shoulder. We were marching thousands of German soldiers westward across the river. And I don't even remember how we got across the river. And so, I had a lot of contact. And down in the military government and in the county, I had a lot of contact with Germans. Remember, I was having contacts with the Bürgermeisters<sup>17</sup> and the chiefs of police and the health officials and so on and so forth. But, in a certain sense, I was the conqueror, I had the power. And it's interesting to me, Katie<sup>18</sup>, and I don't understand it considering my background, but you've seen some of the pictures. I was, here I was a private and a corporal, but in the pictures that I have of UNRRA, you see the qualities with which I express, I visually express authority.

02:12:03

So, you know, speaking to the DP's, you can see, I don't know where it comes from. And, so, in my relations with the Germans and so on and so forth, matter of factly, I'm never hemming or hawing, or beating the bush, I'm always going about doing my business and I'm, I, not making any judgments about them. This individual, that individual. A woman has venereal disease, we deal with that. I was not with any group that was opening concentration camps, I was not with any group that was dealing with the SS or with the political dimension in terms of the war crimes trials that would later occur. I was not in that. Somehow or other in ways that I have absolutely no memory of, whether it's *Stars and Stripes*, whether American Armed Forces Radio, I learned about the Holocaust. I don't think anybody was sending me the New York Times or the Paris edition of the Herald Tribune, but somehow I was in gathering. And it was obvious from what I did with regard to the Workman's Circle, that it was, it was working on my system. And that I had strong feelings about it. Oh, powerful feelings about it. And when one thinks later about my last encounter in Germany with Dick Winslow and a colleague who was leaving at the same time, Roger Masteude, they were telling me to come in, I didn't jump at it. I asked a lot of questions. It was a gradual, two day, weekend process. I was doing a lot of soul searching, incidentally.. Now that I think about it. Doing a lot of soul searching that weekend on other matters. I was soul searching about what I felt was the inanity and the corruption of many of the American soldiers I was running into. I – at – I mean, remember, I was an educated young kid, a City College<sup>19</sup> graduate and proud of that, MIT<sup>20</sup> graduate and proud of that.

02:15:04

And I was dealing with very – I was a private, I wasn't an officer – and dealing with these people in various situations. And that was not what was giving me my love for America. When I was running the printing plant I lived with some local group of soldiers. I was

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<sup>17</sup> mayors (German)

<sup>18</sup> Katherine Davis

<sup>19</sup> City College of New York

<sup>20</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology

not, I was attached to them for room and board. My unit was in Frankfurt and I could see some of these guys were wheelers, dealers, black market. We were eating venison – where were they getting the fresh deer from? So, here were very close friends, spirits, over that weekend with Dick and Roger Masteude. And I was just getting out all the pain of that experience to them. And I guess it was partly that accumulated pain as well as my Jewish identity that finally enabled them to convince me to do this, and for me to say okay.

Q: Elaborate a little bit on that. You say your Jewish identity. Do you remember how that came into play? Or anything you thought?

A: Oh, well it's hard. It's my second nature. You know it's – people can't understand this about me, because of my secularism and my lack of the bar mitzvah. I never touched foot in a synagogue, literally, until maybe 10 years ago. It was just not part of my background. Now, I do different things that bring me into that, even though I can't believe what they're talking about. For me, it's history, not religion. And I can identify with the history, I can extract philosophical meaning from it and, belief. And be proud of that and share the pain. No, I think that this small group of people has made an enormous, an inordinate contribution to the world and to world civilization. For a variety of reasons and so on. You know, when I was a junior at college, sociology major, I was declared, whatever, an honor student.

02:18:06

An honor student was relieved of having to take certain courses for credit. But, in exchange, the honor student had to do a paper, a two year project. And submit it and that would complete the terms of the thing. And I did a paper on the Jewish ghetto as a form of either adaptation or a form of accommodation to the urban environment. Remember, I was an urbanist. And I spent a good deal of those two years in the library studying Jewish history. Going back almost 2,000 years in terms of Venice and Prague and other places. And up to Louie Wirth's book on the ghetto, he is professor of sociology at the University of Chicago. I – in 1940, 1940, '41, I was studying the various ethnicity data and the incidents of different social economic indicators and medical indicators of Jews compared to other immigrant groups. I immersed myself in that material. It was really in a sense, that piece of work that led me into city planning not vice versa. It was this feeling that if this history and this culture could lead to certain cultural qualities and changes, that made them so much better adapted to the urban environment than other groups, then maybe there's a volitional way in which you could do things in general that would improve the urban environment. And that's when I set in, I didn't know there were masters degrees in city planning at the time. I hardly, barely knew that there was a city planning commission in New York. I began putting it together in my own head. I went out, I found that the University of Iowa was virtually the only university in the country that had two summer sessions back to back. So, I applied and I went out to Iowa and I

started taking courses in what I thought were – one would want me to know in order to put these things together.

02:21:10

I took a course in surveying. I took a course in civil engineering. I took courses in calculus. I took courses in spherical trigonometry. In order, back then, sometime in early August, I'm in the library and I'm looking at the Sunday New York Times and somewhere I come across a little squib that, which indicates that Mass – MIT is going to start offering a bachelors degree in city planning. So, I write the chairman of the program a letter saying, "I already have a baccalaureate degree, but I would like to enter this program if you would give me certain credit for my past baccalaureate," and I get a letter back from him saying oh, they already have a masters program. I wouldn't have to take the baccalaureate, he would, with my background, he would admit me to the masters program. And he was then the one, he gave me a scholarship, and he was then the one who guided me to the settlement house for, so I could live cheaply. My parents or I, we'd survive with food on the table during the depression, but that's how I got to the settlement house. And little did I know when this was happening that the chairman of the program, Fred Adams, was the son of the chief city planner who had, British city planner, who had done the major New York regional plan of 1929, 1930. And, so it was, again, it was in that Jewish context, I mean, that stuff surrounds you and penetrates you. I didn't have to go to shul<sup>21</sup> or synagogue–

Q: Do you remember when you decided to take the job what you're thoughts were? Perhaps some of this was in your mind about, "I do know these things, maybe I could run a camp because I know about city and–"

A: You know, the only part of – I say the only part of the experience that I didn't have, the content was no problem. The human relationships were no problem.

02:24:03

The analytic component was no problem. The listing of tasks to be taken care of was no problem. I come across three pages of notes in my background stuff outlining all the, tasks to be taken care of. That was no problem. The only part of the experience that I didn't have was supervising other people. And – but I should add a thought here – which was, I just think of it, I never, I have not made this connection before, Katie. You have to understand, Sept – September, 1942, I'm coming from the ghetto in East New York, Brooklyn, from the entire ghetto of my life, and I'm moving into Boston, into a settlement house, with a group, not only with the staff, that has no Jews on it, but, but a group of residents who are also living there, none of, no one else of whom is Jewish. I'm the kid on

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<sup>21</sup> synagogue (Yiddish)

the block. And I make a terrific adaptation. They loved me. I was getting such love back from this diversified group of people – all of whom were older than me. It's like what I'm telling you, what I told you earlier, about my mentors. I don't know how they, why, how they attached to me. They saw something in me. I never set out to get them as it were. And here the, we had, there was a Peruvian couple, or Chile, I don't remember. Chile. Oh, no. There was a Chilean couple, a Peruvian guy, two women musical students, one from Kentucky and one from somewhere else. People from Illinois and this and that. And they loved me. It was a supportive environment. So, I guess that experience of who I was in some way played into my ability to move into this international staff and manage with them.

02:27:03

Because you see, in a certain sense, intellectually, intellectually I was their equal. Analytically, I was probably ahead of most of them. Even in my ability to size up political situations. I was probably pretty good. Given, you know, given my military government experience of working, again, with the military. I haven't mentioned that the military government team must have included 15, 20 other people with whom I was relating all the time. Or when I was going into Frankfurt, into SHAEF<sup>22</sup> and related, so I had a lot of relationship experience. So, I guess I overcame the lack of administrative, working with older people, administrative experience. And I must have had some charismatic quality that I don't, still don't quite recognize, 'cause I'm insecure, Katie.

Q: Okay, now–

02:28:26

End of Tape #1

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<sup>22</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces

Tape #3

03:01:05

Q: Paint us a picture, then, of that first day you were taken to the camp, were you in uniform – remind us how old you were, what did it look like to you – at first I presume someone might have taken you around – what were your thoughts?

A: Well, the camp, I came in the middle of January. I was wearing a new uniform. An officer style, you know. The camp consisted of about 280 buildings. It was built by the I.G. Farben Company to house slave labor that they were employing in a munitions factory in the woods to the south. The buildings, because it was for slave labor, were not typical detached, semi-detached buildings. They, they had no kitchen facilities, no cooking facilities. The only communal facility in each building was a toilet or two. They, the buildings consisted of one large room on the top floor, second floor, and one small room on the ground floor. Food was dispensed in a kitchen area. People would go, wait on line, get food, either eat it there or come back to the room and eat it. Having gotten rid of the slave labor, the Army took over this village for DP's and it gradually became a Jewish camp before I got there. It was also cold. Bavarian winter is awful. I had spent the previous winter in the Black Forest – parts of the Black Forest. It – we slept outdoors, in, in fox holes. There was a constant flow of soldiers who, what did they call it, black, not black foot, black something or other, they's lose their digits, their toes, their feet.

Q: Frostbite?

A: No, there was another name for it. I was cold, but I never suffered from that. But anyway, these winters are very cold. Anyway, I went around camp, I met the staff. I don't have much recall of that the first few days in that sense. I was absorbing.

03:04:51

Visiting the kitchen, seeing how they cooked. Visiting the hospital. We had two hospital buildings. And I don't remember now exactly, but within a week or two of my arrival, the, the, the cold was so substantial that it froze the pipes leading to the toilets. Four hundred out of 600 toilets were out of commission. The area of the toilets became like a cow barn, like cow barns. It was awful. It was awful. It took several weeks to deal with the pipe problem. As someone said it, "gets worse until it gets better." But, you have to remember, and I'll, I'll, I'll be making notes on this along with, that that was happening to them eight and a half months after liberation. They were living under conditions like that. And, anyway, it was during that period that Jean Henshaw, the former director left. I assumed the directorship. And I should tell you, just somewhere in here, because I can't remember which comes first and which comes second.

03:07:08



There was a subsidiary group attached to the team, we had a few people from Joint Distribution Committee<sup>23</sup> attached to us, we had a group of three, four, five people from the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Remember, this is two years before the creation of the state. We're now into February of '46, and, and also because of my background, I'd never dealt with Zionists before. The Army later accused me of being a member of Zionist organizations, but little did they know I'd never been in the Zionist movement before. But, nevertheless, there's this group. And they, after, we had a large house for the team, over 20 members of the team. They came from Australia, Norway, England, France, U.S., elsewhere, I don't, and Israel, and Palestine. And we had billets. We were billeted in a large house at the edge of the German town, which was called Wolfratshausen. And, and so, and we'd have breakfast there, sometimes lunch, and usually dinner. After dinner they invite me to one of their rooms for a drink or whatever. And it was in the course of that, that I established with them and they established with me, very close relationships. But they, being sophisticated undergrounders, which I was not, at that time, start asking, you know, warmly asking me questions like you are asking the questions. "Where did your mother come from? Where did your father?" But that's all preliminary. They're sizing me up, could they trust me or not trust me? You're not asking me questions like that in order to ascertain whether you can trust me or not, you're asking me questions for oral history. They're asking me the questions to ascertain, can they trust me? And after several weeks of this process, it basically boils down to they trust me. They trust me. Okay. However, in underground activity, there's another rule.

03:10:05

And that is, you never share with anyone anything more than that person has to know. So, the person has deniability. Okay? So, I am not curious and they are not volunteering information. I notice things from time to time around the edges. Okay? For example, one of them says to me one, "I don't know, Friday or whatever, would you like to go to Salzburg for the weekend and hear some music?" And I say, "Sure, but I don't have any – the appropriate papers." He says, "Don't worry about it." And, en route, we drive north, which was not the right direction, to Munich, and we stop in front of a building and they go inside, I'm in the car. I've given them some of my papers. They come out with appropriate visa papers and all of that to cross over and come back to the American zone. We go to Salzburg, we drive to Salzburg. And we had a wonderful weekend. A month later, whatever, one of them says, "How would you like to go to Switzerland?" So, they were organizing my leisure time for me with false papers. I don't ask any questions. I just go along for the ride. These are the Jewish Agency for Palestine. The, Ben Gurion, at that time, was the chief executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. I get to know the zone chief of this group in Munich who years later, almost 30 years later, 25 to 30 years later, becomes, what do they call it, the director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. And, incidentally, and that's like 19– that was in '64, but then I discovered a few years later

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<sup>23</sup> American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

that he lost a son, in the '67 war. So, it brings these things close to home. Anyway, that was the group. But I developed a closeness to the Joint<sup>24</sup> staff, Stanley Abramovitch was a rabbi from England, Becky Althoff was a social worker from New York, and we had a marvelous woman from Norway, Astrid Oksny. I tried to trace her some years ago and I found out she had passed away prematurely. Then in early March, the Americans are blowing up things in the I.G. Farben plant. And in the process, they destroy the water main that is carrying water to the camp. And I start calling desperately for the Army to get water tanks in and do something. We get a few tanks, the few tanks that come in we turn over to the hospital facility. But there's no cooking that takes place during that, toilets again. Then by the fourth or fifth day, I am out of my mind, and I start calling my headquarters and so on. Finally, a general appears and that leads to, but it shows also how in a period of crises, how hard it was to get the U.S. Army to pay attention to a real problem. And now, throughout all of this, these trials and tribulations, we also have a lot of very positive things going on. We organize a theater. We organize schools for the children. There's a yeshiva. We have hospital going, children are being, babies are being born, at an enormous clip for that size population. We – We're running an agricultural training center to the south. Where they're learning how to work on a kibbutz. Now there's little, probably a little military activity on the side, but I don't know about it. But it's a positive education of these people who until the previous May, have lived under the most forlorn situations. The children are giving performances. The adults are putting on plays and they're starting to publish a camp newspaper in Yiddish, and a magazine. And we – there's established a camp committee for self governance and there's, there are elections for membership on the camp committee and 1,000 to 2,000 people are voting in the elections in order to make the camp committee representative.

03:16:22

And I'm dealing with them. And we have over 1,000 people employed in tasks in the kitchen, in the warehouse, in the transportation unit, in the hospital. We're employing people. We have vocational training activity. Machinery and other things; sewing, that's going on. There are a lot of positive emotional rebuilding efforts here. But, the food is basically GI issue. It's canned. It's not fresh. They, the Army, doesn't want to take it out of the German economy. There's three ounces of protein a day. Whether a piece of canned fish or canned chicken or this or that. You have it at one meal, you don't have it at any of the others. So, a black market in food develops. And the Army is beside itself as if its going to destroy the German economy. But who's selling to them? The German farmers. They're probably selling to some of the military government units to, so, but in order to prove myself, my – and, basically, I don't like black marketing. I was telling you earlier how I was reacting moralistically to black marketing among the soldiers. I didn't want Jews to be involved in the black market, it offends me, it's a backwards step in community building.

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<sup>24</sup> American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

03:18:14

So, I have to do something. Now, it occurs to me when I read all this stuff that, "How did they get the cows into the camp?" They were probably leading them past our DP police group that was on duty in the middle of the night. What am I going to do? But, at least once a month, I would get up in the middle of the night. All by myself. I'd drive into the camp alone. I'd pick up a couple of my DP police at the gate and I'd start driving around the camp, looking for lights in the basement. If there were a light in the basement, it meant, usually, that a butcher was killing a cow. And on the 29 days of the month that I didn't come around, word would spread in the morning, "there's meat in 'x' building, 'x' street," and people would start flowing and buying meat. I don't know where they got the money, whatever. So, I'd come in and I'd confiscate the meat and I'd, we'd bury it. We didn't throw it into the kitchen. And I'd put the butchers into the brig. And during the day I'd visit them and I remember one of them saying, "Herr Cohen, you don't understand us butchers. For us blood means nothing. The cows are yours." I'd say to the police, "Give them an extra day." I didn't turn them over to the Army, I didn't turn them over to the German police.

Q: How did you feel, though, about taking food away which you, yourself, just said was needed?

A: I felt awful. I was, but, but, I want to tell you something, Katie, as I read these various memos and records, and having been in, in government for the years – I was, nine years in Mayor Wagner's<sup>25</sup> cabinet – governance is constantly involving you in dilemmas and difficult choices. Impossible choices, hair-raising choices. And it's happening all the time. And if you can't make choices, you got to get out of there. You know, this antigovernment stuff, for me, is in some ways, a lot of nonsense.

03:21:04

Because a democratic society has to have a system where, without killing, you make choices. And, so, in a DP camp, the director has to make difficult, impossible choices. And, so, but, I don't want to get to this too soon in the interview, but, on something like April 12th of that year, a week before Pesach, I went to the Munich railroad station and I sent off a couple of cables to the – to friends in the States. I sent one cable to Dick Winslow in the State Department and another cable to William Wurster a prominent architect at that time, in Cambridge. And I tell them about the food situation. The impossibility of it – no fresh food for Pesach – we got a little bit from the Joint. And the end, the end of my sentence is, "stir up the bees." And I get replies from both of them. But, I hadn't given it a thought at the time, but it's clear to me in – then and in retrospect, that Army Intelligence picked up the cables. And I'll come back to that later. Just on a personal note, during the period we were without water, when the pipe had burst, which

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<sup>25</sup> Robert F. Wagner Jr.

was exhausting period for me, I came back to my office one day to take care of some matters, and a few minutes later, my English secretary, Rose Hafkin, comes in, she says, "Henry, there's a woman outside who says she thinks she's your cousin." And I say, "Well, have her wait few minutes, I've got to take care of this or that," and then a few minutes later I call her in. And now I'm suspicious, I don't know if she's my cousin or not. It would be advantageous to her if she is my cousin. So, I start interrogating her. Anyway, I don't know whether she found out about me through the grapevine, because people are always asking, "Where did your parents come from?" and then when they hear someone comes from that town, well, "Oh, the director at Camp Föhrenwald, his mother comes from there, his father comes from there."

03:24:00

Well, whether there had been some correspondence between her and family in New York, I don't know. She's my cousin. And, she comes from the Sheftel branch of the family tree, my mother's, the butcher side of the family, not the baker side. It turns out she has a brother in the camp to whom she doesn't talk, he's a butcher. He's probably one of my black marketers. I don't know at the time whether he's the one who made the threat. It's a small world. But, anyway, she has a sister in this camp that both of them are living in, just north of Munich and the sister has a young daughter, I don't know, seven, eight, nine, 10. And, I ask her, "How did you survive?" Well, what happened was, the Germans had occupied the town Ivye, and at a certain point they told – word spread, everybody had to come out to the village square with their pots and pans, the Germans needed the metal. My cousin, this cousin, didn't wait for that, she escaped into the woods and lived the rest of the war with the partisans. And her older sister must have left sometime earlier and gone into Siberia with her little girl and spent the war in Siberia. And, so it was a very moving experience. And, she has since, they migrated many years ago to Canada, Toronto, and became very wealthy. Now, another thing involving the black market, the so called black market–

Q: The people who went to the town square, were they deported?

A: No, they were shot, I'm sorry, they were shot. I'm very sorry. Very few survivors from Ivye.

Q: Your mother's town?

A: Yeah.

Q: And the, how about the brother that she didn't speak with? How had he survived?

A: I don't recall. There was other family of theirs in South Africa, Rhodesia. Other brothers.

**USHMM Archives RG-50.030\*0362**

**19**

Q: So, here you were, the director of the Displaced Person's camp, you're dealing with everything, fought in a war, you have family here.

A: No. At the end of the interview, I'll give you another find.

Q: Okay

A: That's not in any of the material that you've read.

End of tape #3

**Tape #4**

04:01:06

- A: Well, her name was Malka and the second names mean nothing because – her sister had an assumed name, Bashke – they were both Sheftels. Now, Malka, somewhere in this process, maybe in the woods or in battle with the partisans or whatever, lost the love of her life at the time, Bashke obviously, lost her husband. And – but, but it's hard to recall now. Malka was probably born after my mother left, and Bashke was probably born after my mother left Ivye, so there was no contact on that score. By the time they would have had any consciousness in terms, by virtue of age, they would probably not even have had any memory about my mother's mother, no longer lived in Ivye. She went, they took her to some town, I don't remember. So, there was a little talk about the family, but I don't really remember much of that. That is – the critical thing was, they were family, they were survivors, they had been through hell, and I didn't really find out too much about their day to day lives.

04:03:15

- I have the impression about the older sister in Siberia. She'd be groveling in the soil, planting, picking, whatever. I guess that in those days, I, I, well, let me put it this way, what I realize now in my dotage, is that for every one who died and for every one who survived, there would really be 10 or 20 stories. So, in a certain sense there are 100 to 200,000,00 stories. And we know only a few of them. And that was not an age for me when I was collecting stories and, and, in a way, it, it, it – the – it – my focus on what I'm about, puts a limit on certain of the human connections from time to time. When people want to be able to tell you and so on, and you're focused and you're doing one, two, three on the list, see? So, I don't really remember that much about that. In any event, the passage of time also dims recall.
- Q: Was there ever a time when you were focused on solving a problem, perhaps a broken water pipe or something, and just somehow the fact that someone was a survivor, sort of caught you by surprise? Perhaps something they said, or the way they looked, facial expressions?
- A: You know – the – a couple of stories sometimes. I don't know if you have that picture in your group. There are four little girls, they're all dressed in costumes. It's clear they've just been in some performance. And two of the four girls, the two little ones on the, each side, left and right, have faces that are so gaunt and with that smile on their face, the visage. The two older ones are smiling. The two little ones, here it is, you know, close to a year after the war, and the quietness wherever they were that was droned into them, hasn't yet enabled them to blossom out. The other, I don't know whether this answers – deals with your question, Katie, but, again, it's an encounter, a very severe encounter. We

had, in our camp, a Rabbi Halberstam<sup>26</sup>. He was called the Klausenburg Rabbi. He was a, from a line of hundreds of years of rabbis, and he was born to be a rabbi. I'm gonna, I'll come back to this in a minute, but I want to skip to the last week or two. I've been trying to find out his first name. I actually had it somewhere on a piece of paper and I can't locate the piece of paper. So, I, I decided I would go to the Brooklyn telephone book and look up Halberstam and make a few phone calls and ask about the Klausenburg Rabbi. And what was his first name. Okay? So I go to the Brooklyn phone book, I have a 1992 Brooklyn phone book, it doesn't matter. Okay? And I see Halberstam, it's almost a column long. And what I see in this listing of Halberstams is how many have attached to their name, "Rabbi." So, you know, with my statistical bent, I do a count. Forty-three percent of the telephone listings are people with the word rabbi in front of their names. That's the Halberstam lineage, okay? I use statistics to illuminate, not lie. I mean that is such a powerful fact, okay? So, anyway, we're back. So, now, he had lost his wife in the Holocaust, and maybe 10 children. This man had suffered. Deeply is not an expression for the suffering that must have been inside this man. And he was in touch with his confreres in New York, and they raised money.

04:10:01

And they piled all these supplies, canned food, dried food, kosher food, clothing, religious articles, books on a boat that came, arrived in Bremen. And the Army would not release the material to Rabbi Halberstam. And the cables must have flown between Bremen and Munich and New York and New York and Washington and political pressure brought on Congress people, on the State Department, on the Army and finally after a week or two, a compromise is reached. They will release his – that material to the director of the camp. So, I am once again confronted with those daily dilemmas, what do I do with that material? Can I – considering the pressure I am under from the Army on the black market, simply transfer it over to Rabbi Halberstam? So, I am summoned to his room. He was one of the very few people in the camp who had a room of his own. Somewhere I have it, well, I won't bother, but probably 10 by 10 would have been a lot. And I'm sitting across him, across the table from him, and he's in a Hasidic robe, big black beard, yarmulke hat, whatever.

04:12:18

Black piercing eyes. And, remember what I told you earlier, I have never set foot in a synagogue in my life to that point – nor for two or three decades later – and here I am confronting the Klausenburg Rabbi, a king – I'm an ordinary administrative bureaucrat. And we exchanged perfunctory greetings. And then in effect he says, "Nu?" I say, "Nu, what?" He wants to know why I don't turn the material over to him. I say, "But Rabbi, if the Army had intended for me to turn it over to you, they would have given it to you directly. But they turned it over to me which means that I can't turn it over to you." He

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<sup>26</sup> Jekuthieh Judah Halberstam

says, "That's not fair." I hadn't yet learned the John Kennedy phrase which didn't come for 15 years later, "life is unfair." I said, "I can't. It would create so much trouble, I can't tell you." He says, "It belongs to me." I say, "I know it belongs to you, but I can't. I will distribute it among the people of the camp. You will get a good share of it, but you will not get all of it." He is so upset. His eyes are piercing through me. I finally say to him, "But, Rabbi, the other people are Jews too, they have also suffered." He basically, didn't give a damn. I teamed something from that, I'd not encountered that before. Here I am, an all inclusive Jew, what I hadn't quite recognized were the meaning of these divisions with unbridgeable attitudes or whatever.

04:15:05

The meeting broke up and I left. And I knew it wasn't fair. I knew, to this day, I know it wasn't fair. The Army shouldn't have done what it did, put me in that position. But, again, I had to make a decision. I had to choose. And, and, I made that choice. I mean, I don't recall that subsequently there were any further ramifications from it, but it was that incident, you see. Constantly. Now, let me just say, not only was the black market, this problem. You've heard - You've about it, you hear me about it. But, the Army was also greatly preoccupied with the infiltration problem. The British clearly didn't want more Jews in Germany. And I have, I haven't gone into that here, but I've been to the National Archives and for selected weeks here and there over the last, during the last five years, maybe in the aggregate I've spent a month or five weeks of time at the National Archives, trying to get some better understanding of the context. And, incidentally, you find some very interesting material there on that. I mean, for example, you come across cables, in late '45, the State Department is cabling all the ambassadors in every country in the world, asking on a top secret basis, "Is there any room in your - in the country you are designated to, is there any room for Jews?" And then you see cables coming back - I don't think I've read all the cables coming back - but substantially, the answer is "no." But, what you get in that period is the sense that Harry Truman and the State Department, under pressure from the British with regard to Palestine, want to explore what are the options? Then in other material, you find the secret memoranda flowing out of the Eastern countries, Poland, Sweden, Copenhagen, relating to the Zionist plot to move people into the U.S. zone of Germany.

04:18:51

And, some rabbi whose been to Poland, meets with the American Ambassador in Stockholm and he's telling him about what he found. Anyway, you come across all this stuff. And some of it is suggestive of a conspiracy. I've been exploring this in order to understand what I was in the middle of, you see? Finally, I don't remember the date now, there's a long memorandum, there are two I think, memorandum from Robert Murphy, whose the chief political officer at the office of military government, he was Ike's<sup>27</sup> chief

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<sup>27</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower



political officer in Tunisia, North Africa, and he's basically saying, "You're not dealing basically with a conspiracy. You're dealing – what you're dealing with is the fact that the Jews don't want to live in a country that was a cemetery to their people, their relatives. They are fearful of the Poles because when they go back to claim property, there are killings. They know that the country is going Communist, they don't want to live under a Communist government. It's in this atmosphere – to get out of this that the Zionists are enabling. It's not a conspiracy, okay?" So, that's at the highest level of military government. You come in at the field level, the second most important issue for this for the battalion leaders, is the infiltration.

04:21:00

So, they start passing rules that we can't give out food cards to people who haven't had prior food cards. We can't give out identity cards to people who haven't had prior identity cards. How do you think we feel if, if in a team, you all have to be Jewish if you're in this team, you're there for social humanitarian purposes. How do you feel being told you can't give out these cards to people who are infiltrating? Okay? Now, I should point out–

Q: How do you feel?

A: You feel awful. And rebellious. And you're gonna bootleg cards somehow. And, and, I should tell you this anecdote. Nevertheless, under all of this pressure, twice a month, at midnight, you can ask – start asking, "When did I get some sleep?" I would go to the camp, pick up a few cops, maybe this time I've had a staff or two with me, and we would start going into every building and every room and taking a count of who is there – name, and who is there. We were doing a midnight check and let's say, we found 2,500 people in the camp. The next morning, word would spread that there was a midnight check. A thousand or more people from all over Germany would suddenly descend on you. They were in Munich to see a relative. They were in Munich to check on their papers. They were here because of that, they were – you don't know which of them are telling the truth and who, and who is lying. So, some end up with duplicate cards. Okay? You're making difficult decisions, right?

Q: So, you're trying to control who's in the camp, but what you're saying said, people are coming in, maybe eight months after the war has ended, and the U.S. Army doesn't want them to, or UNRRA doesn't want them to–

04:23:44

A: No, no. I'm making two – I'm really talking about two categories. I'm talking about the people who are already in Germany and who are, who are exploiting the system by getting duplicate cards so they can pick up the food here and there and move it on the black market and get a little cash. Okay? And the other is the fresh arrivals. Okay? And the Army is against the fresh arrivals. They don't like the duplicate cards, either, but they

don't want any more. Because no matter what Robert Murphy at the top level says – remember the top leadership is smarter, they're more politically connected to what's going on in the States, so they – their attitude to Eisenhower and McCloy and so it's different at the ground. Well, let me just state something else, Katie. You're too young – You have to understand that in the 1930s – I didn't experience the 1920s, I was a child – but in 1930s and '40s there was a lot of antisemitism in the United States. A lot of ordinary citizens had anti-Jewish feelings. They're your troops. It's reflected – if you ask doctors who are, let's say, 75 years old and over, "What was it like getting into medical school in the 1930s?" You'll hear stories. My brother – I spoke to a fellow up on the vineyard who's a professor emeritus of physiology at Johns Hopkins, he graduated as an undergraduate in the '30s, first in his class at Johns Hopkins, was not admitted to the medical school. Went to the University of Maryland medical school and then sometime in the '50s, I guess, became the first Jewish professor at Johns – of medicine at Johns Hopkins. There was antisemitism, this is the – people don't speak about it now. I mean, it wasn't violent, it wasn't virulent like in Europe and certain various places, Germany, certainly Poland. But, there was lots. So when you – when, at the ground floor level they, the infiltration, the infiltrates, are an inconvenience. It upsets the system. They want discipline – order, that's all an occupation force understands. I, I, I, I came across a letter someone in 1948 was asking me would I be willing to lecture at some military training program in the States as part of an effort to enrich an understanding of this. So, you come into here, and it's, it's, it's tailor made for a clash. Okay? It–

Q: What did you want though? As you're running the camp, but you're also, you're Jewish, and as you said, you understand that these fresh arrivals could be fleeing persecution in a place like Poland. So, what do you want?

A: Well, I want more camps. I mean it's no, no big deal. Okay? Let me, I want to address this. In Germany, at approximately the time I was there, there were a few, there were between 90 and 100,000 displaced persons, Jewish displaced persons. Of these, about 65,000 lived in camps and 25,000 lived outside of camps. In June of '46, which is towards the end of my stay, with the Army now for months ranting and raving about the infiltrates, don't give any – incidentally, I wasn't the only camp director or staff protesting these things. The, the UNRRA people in other places were also, we used to get together and organize group protests against some of this – but, in the middle of June, there's a pogrom in Poland, in Kielce – 40 Jews are killed. I think in the next year, after I left, another 100,000 came. These are meaningless figures when you talking, when you're talking 6,000,000 dead, and 100,000 in Germany. Equivalent to one and a half percent. And if you have another 100,000, it's two-thirds of one percent, I think, if I'm doing the, no, it's two, two over 60, yeah, it's, no, it's two and a half percent. I mean – the proportion between what's happened here and the number of survivors, the ratios, makes the – you should want more survivors rather than less. And the political system worldwide has to adjust to that reality. And here we are, a year after the end of the war, and these people are still homeless, without fresh food, I have in one of my memos an indication of some officer in some group situation, in a court or something, suddenly arrests a Jew who's

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there. And he later says he wanted to show the Germans that he was disciplining someone.

04:30:34

Q: We need to change tapes.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

05:01:05

A: Okay, I can't find that particular, maybe on the next break, I'll, I'll find it. Yeah.

Q: What we were just talking about, obviously, there's frustration in your voice about the situation and I did read some other journalistic reports commenting that people a year after the end of the war, a year after liberation, that people were living in very cramped quarters, that had echoes of concentration camps – obviously they were worse. Could you just talk a little more about that frustration. What would you have liked to have seen happening that you could not provide?

A: Well, you see, given the camp itself, which did not have individual kitchens – though gradually, people got cookers and things like that – I would have wanted them to move into the German market and get fresh food a year after the end, the war's ended. What are we getting GI issue for? I would have preferred that they keep looking for more housing facilities. So, in a room, in the large room, of the houses, of the houses, which could be the equivalent of about 350 square feet, which is smaller than 20 by 20, we could have as many as 15 to 20 people living. Four or five families in double-decker cots. Families separating themselves from other families by hanging blankets from the ceiling – including some single individuals living in the middle of family – and people, and so on, and children and so on. They should have gotten more housing. Reduced the population of the camp to, to 2,000 from 4,000, let's say. And the food was a problem. But they, basically, sometimes in a memo here and there you'll see, there are understandable humanitarian reasons, but then they go on to forget that they uttered that word. And it's a completely, it was a completely different outlook.

05:04:24

You see, you also have to remember, Katie, that the GI's were fraternizing with German girls and German women – widespread, extensive. The German types were more gemütlich<sup>28</sup> to them than the Jewish survivor girls and women, who were Eastern European. So, during the day you're out in the field and at night you're with a German Fräulein<sup>29</sup>. I can't tell you whether it's 100 percent of the soldiers or 99 percent that so engaged. But, and the officers, I mean, when I was running – when I was in military government, organizing and running that venereal disease hospital, a couple of officers from some nearby battalion, got in touch with my captain asking him to release a certain woman who was their girlfriend, or one of their girlfriends, I don't remember. And I had to stand up to this at the time, to the captain, he – turns out he was a really wonderful guy, a lawyer from Florida and say, "We can't do it. She's got to stay inside the hospital." But, here these schmucks are bringing pressure on us to release a woman with venereal

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<sup>28</sup> genial (German)

<sup>29</sup> young woman (German)

disease because she's one of their girlfriends. So, this was very extensive. And, I guess, the way in which I've developed temperamentally over the years, because I was a, a, what do you call it, a fast achiever, a young achiever, is fundamentally, I don't suffer fools easily or kindly. I, I have too much experience in extremely difficult situations. I know, I have confidence in my own sense of fairness and my own sense of integrity that, as anyone who has worked with me over the years knows, some of these truths about me, and I know them.

05:07:22

And so, when I get this kind of stuff – as my own confidence builds – I get more and more indignant. Maybe I was too young to be politic about some of my reactions, though, I don't think it was too much. There was one incidence described in the charges against me that I – that this officer says to me, something that they can't do better on housing for the DP's than they do for the GI's. And his – and I did this – the, the charges in front of a few enlisted men – and the claim is that I said to him, "Fuck the GI's, I'm only worried about the DP's" Now, later I go and I rendezvous with this officer, and I discuss the situation with him. And he denies that there were any enlisted men in the vicinity, in our vicinity when we had that conversation. And he also agrees that the essence of our conversation was that the GI's are young men, they're trained to live under very difficult and trying conditions, so it won't be terrible, it wouldn't be terrible if you didn't have quite appropriate housing for them. But, here you're dealing with survivors from concentration camps that have suffered so, who aren't trained for this kind of thing, who are families, children, wives. You can't make a comparison between what you do for the GI's and what you do for the DP's. So, in effect, that conversation gets turned around as a charge of my being uncooperative, using disrespectful language, etc.

Q: I want to go back, just before we move into that and ask you: You were beginning to describe an atmosphere among a lot of the GI's that they essentially sympathized, I think this is what you were saying, more with the German people in a way, than they did with the people you were working with, displaced persons, the raggedy looking person coming from Poland.

05:10:10

A: Katie, in the – in some of the material you have, I have, I have, I have inserted certain quotations from official documents that I have found in the Holo – in the National Archives. Which is critical of the Jewish DP's. "They flaunt themselves in front of the German police who they know can't do anything about them. And they do various things which will incur the wrath of the German population and which will encourage them to feel that Hitler after all was right." Now, that's an American officer writing that sentence in 1946.

Q: Do you remember hearing things that, or feeling that tone, or witnessing something like that?

A: I, I, well...

Q: Do you remember hearing things like that, or feeling that tone, or witnessing something like that?

A: Well, I'm not sure that I heard those words, but I'm sure I heard things like it, and I've witnessed various.... Look, look at the other thing that – another, another – we haven't covered the famous riot. Well, I should precede this – though I'll come back to it – with a little bit of an outline, just so it's put into time context. I send the cable to the U.S. on the food situation, "stir up the bees," April 12th. Within one week to the day after that, the battalion commander arrives for a five day intensive inspection. There has never been a five day intensive inspection. They come for a few hours here, here they drop in, send someone else. Five days of inspection. That's undertaken on the 19th of April. And, let's say it. goes 'til the 24th of April. From my memorandum, I can see, tell, that there's a very active period from about May the ninth to May the 14th in which the Army is asking for my head. With all these different charges on Zionism and so on and so forth.

05:13:03

I should add, unrelated to me and unrelated to Föhrenwald, on about May the ninth, there's riot in the camp at Landsberg. There's also a riot in another place, I think, Starnberg or something. Then on the evening of May 22nd, it's a Friday night, most – I and most of my team at our billets in Wolfratshausen the weekend is beginning. And, after dinner we start getting messages on the phone, there's trouble here, there's trouble this, someone is reported hurt at the German movie theater in Wolfratshausen. We send someone out to look at it, no trouble at the movie theater at Wolfratshausen. Then, at some point, I see somebody in the car area of the house, gesticulating and so on. And, he says there's trouble here, there's trouble there, I don't quite know what it all is, but what I do at that juncture – is I instruct two of our staff to stay at the billets in case there are anymore phone calls – I take two people with me. I'm going to the German police station to find out what's going on. I send the rest of the staff to the camp to see what's going on there. OK? And here is what we discovered – and I'll tell you what this is, what this brief summary is based on – the following morning I instructed every staff member, let's say 20, 22, to prepare for me a chronological report of the night before, where they were a certain hour, give me a half hour later, half hour later, and tell me what was going on. Wherever they were. So I have a series of these memos which give me a panoramic view of the situation. And here is what happened – the sense of what happened. The essence of what happened. It's a Friday night, a couple of drunken American soldiers are going up the stairs of a building in the German village. They're going to the third floor where they've got a couple of girlfriends. On the second floor is a Jewish family that's living outside of the camp. They have some friends who are visiting them from the camp, there

may have been four or five people there, I don't know, remember. The American soldiers stop off at the second floor. And they start coercing the people, they move around with their knives or bayonets. They have their guns out. They're telling one guy to play his harmonica. They're asking, "Are you Jewish? Are you Jewish? I don't like Jews," he says, and he rams one guy in the chin with the butt of a gun. Hits another guy in the head. One or two of these people got out of the apartment and got back to the camp. There are some 1,000 or more people in the camp theater watching a movie in the blackness, in the darkness. And one of them runs into the back of the theater, into the darkness, and he starts yelling, "A shchita!"<sup>30</sup> "slaughter" – this is the classic phrase – "Me harget yiddin in Wolfratshausen!"<sup>31</sup> "slaughter, they're killing Jews in Wolfratshausen." And the group gets up. Now, then other rumors start. As people are moving towards the exit, that a Jew was seen kidnapped by Germans in a truck travelling south. So, people commandeer trucks and they start chasing something. They start stopping vehicles, passing and taking Germans out and beating them up. Some start moving north. I go to the German police station and I meet an Army officer there, and I tell him, we start piecing it together. I tell him, "Look, you put your soldiers a mile or three-quarters of a mile north of the camp. Give me a chance to contain whatever is going on." And, at that point, I get back to the camp, and by that point, my staff and the DP, the DP police are, have a cordon and are getting them back. And then we have a midnight curfew, everybody off the streets. The official report on this incident, which I find in the National Archives, I didn't know that this existed at that time, describes the riot and indicates that there is evidence to indicate that this riot was generated by, or in behalf of, Mr. Cohen the camp director. And there is no reference in his report to the American soldiers. Okay? So, what am I supposed to do? Passive, "bleh, bleh." But, but, this riot, you see, follows by 12 to 15 days, the Army effort to get rid of me. So, when the riot occurs, this officer who's writing the report, is linking it to the Army strategy to get rid of this uncooperative son-of-a-bitch, Henry Cohen. Now, from my point of view, the riot and the story, you know, some of it, beating up the innocent Germans. I cry inside, but for me it's a symptom of how close to the edge the pain still is, a year after liberation. Remember, May 22nd, the war ended May eighth a year earlier. For me it's a sign of how close to the edge. The riot in Landsberg, the riot here, the riot there. Our people are suffering. Look where they're living, look what they're eating. Look how they're being treated. And they're living among Germans.

05:21:02

And the Army, at that level, has absolutely no grasp, no empathy, no understanding of this. It's, it's, it's unbelievable, I can't, I indicated in that memo, here we are 50 years later, and I can't comprehend of that Army attitude. I can't comprehend it. I mean, I, I, I'm a soldier, I understand law and order, I understand discipline, I understand all those things. But, for such stupid, biased, inadequate people to be running the occupation. One worries about, one has to worry about a lot of other things that happen under their tutelage. See, it's not my combat experience where I question Army orders or anything, I feel proud to

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<sup>30</sup> slaughter (Yiddish)

<sup>31</sup> They are killing Jews in Wolfratshausen (Yiddish)

have been a combat soldier. Fifty years later I am proud that I was able to do that, that I fought in the war. What makes me sink into the ground is the American soldier at peace. And lacking, it's, it's quite possible it's different in today's Army than it was then, I don't know enough about what – how they handle Haiti or Somalia, not Somalia, at Somalia wasn't that great. There's no seykhel<sup>32</sup>, intelligence, subtlety at work, you see. You see, in some of the stuff you've read where Margaret Gerber is talking about my personal qualities, one of the things that she's saying is that the DP's trust him even when he comes down on them, they know what's at his soul level. And they will take it when he's harsh with them. And these guys don't have it at the soul level.

Q: So many questions. Let me ask, we're talking about a year after liberation, and, and certainly memories often surface around anniversaries. I wonder what kind of airing did those emotions ever get? Any kind of formal way? Was there counseling? Were there some kind of communal sessions where people were able to pray about the end of the war? What did go on in terms of letting people get some of this out?

A: Well, I don't – yeah, I don't know to what extent, we had a lot of social workers on the staff. And, so, I don't know to what extent. You know, now we make much more to do about group therapy and group process and all of that.

05:29:30

But, but, I don't have any easy visualization of it, Katie. I keep struggling with my writing class as I did in certain respects with Lustig<sup>33</sup> or with you, you'll see that, the writing part is what I'm saying. I want more than the facts, Ma'am, and I stay with the facts. You see, where I can't tell you anything from memory, I won't, I won't speak on it. I can only speak on that which I can draw. If I don't remember, then I can only speak on that which I can draw from my quote, unquote, "factual materials". And I, I, I frustrate people like you no end.

Q: I'm not frustrated. Actually, you've intrigued and tantalized, that's all. One story I'd like you to tell us, and perhaps it actually in some way, does answer my question for one person, is the story of the young girl who insisted on singing to a group of your visitors. I wonder if you could tell us–

A: Well, one of the therapeutic things that was happening all the time were visitors. Rabbi Herzog<sup>34</sup>, the chief rabbi of Palestine. Writers, singers, the Anglo-American Commission, they come and they spend a day and they're giving people some hope that maybe they can have an impact on something. If LaGuardia<sup>35</sup> sends Ira A. Hirschmann as an emissary to look over things, people get hope from that. So there was a lot, a constant stream of

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<sup>32</sup> sense, intelligence (Yiddish)

<sup>33</sup> Arnost Lustig

<sup>34</sup> Rabbi Isaac (Yizhak) Herzog

<sup>35</sup> Fiorello H. LaGuardia



visitors. On this particular occasion, we were visited by H. Leivik<sup>36</sup>, a writer-poet, and Emma Schaver<sup>37</sup> who is a singer from Detroit.

05:27:10

And we put on a concert, a program for a couple of evenings, and that also is lovely. Anyway, following the – at the end of the visit, the morning that they were leaving, Leivik and Schaver are having breakfast and a young girl comes in. And she walks over to their table and she says, "I want to sing to you." And Leivik says, "What do you mean sing? Do you write songs?" And she says, "No, I sing." He says, "You know we are in a hurry, we are doing another camp." She says, "Well, you'll come a little later." And Leivik says to her, "Who are you, where are you from? Are you alone? Is anyone here with you?" She gave up on him, she goes against the wall, and she introduces the song she's going to sing, the Shavler, the song of the Shavler ghetto. And it's a song about a mother who has to give her child away in order to save the child. It's a very sad song. And then she sings other songs. And then she's asked – then they do ask her some questions about herself, and she says where she's from, she lost her whole family, she's all alone, she's now 15, 16, she's been to 17 concentration camps, when she was released she went to a city, she developed typhus fever there and she gradually worked her way west to camp Föhrenwald, and then she sings some more. And Leivik danced, Schaver – you know, and this is one of the experiences of their lives. For them to unanticipatedly come across this. Then they come in – they're leaving – they come into my office, there are two women sitting in front of my desk complaining about the food, and I say to them, "Look, I'm trying whatever I can do to make it better," and they say good-bye. Leivik, in leaving, says to Emma Schaver, "He's telling them he's trying to make it better, but he probably doesn't believe that himself, that he'll be able to."

End of Tape #5

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<sup>36</sup> Halpern Leivik

<sup>37</sup> Emma Lazaroff Schaver

**Tape #6**

06:01:01

Q: The young girl who sang to the visitors, tell us little bit more about her song she sang. Did you ever hear her sing it afterwards?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Did you ever meet her?

A: I don't remember. Probably did, but I don't really remember. The – [interviewee reads from notes] "it's the song of a Jewish, the pain of a Jewish child whose mother has to give her away to non-Jews in order to save her from the fire. The song is full of endless pain." And the – let me – on a side thing just, you know, sort of an interesting difference in perspective, while I take in things largely macro with incidents satisfying my macro I don't focus on macro, micro. I focus on macro – the task at hand, one way or another. And, what was I coming to? It slips me. I wanted to say something to you about that.... Oh, yes! When I was leaving the camp, I let word out that if anybody wanted to write letters to relatives in the United States, I would take them with me and I would stamp them in New York. So, I had, I came back with hundreds of letters and many of them were not sealed, so I took the liberty of reading some of these letters. Not a single letter, that I read, was talking about me or camp administration.

06:04:30

Every letter was micro; what was happening to me, family, who's this, that, so on. Completely different perspective. So, I recognized all these years that often, what I may do, what I think is for the public good, the people for whose good it is are oblivious to what I am doing. They live in their own little worlds. In my career as a university dean and students, the same thing applies. The students are in their little thing. They're not concerned with the dean, if they happen to be somewhere where the dean shows up, they get up and they'll shake hands with him. Or if I phone somebody and he knows it's me, it's a respectful response, but basically, those are different worlds. And I'm aware of that.

Q: Tell us what it was like on your level, on the macro level, on a day-to-day basis. What would happen in that camp? When would you get to work? What was the rhythm about that camp which sounds like it was some sort of small town?

A: Yeah. Well, for one thing, one of the things in the memos that I get, is, and the district director refers to this at considerable length, how we were probably the most visited Jewish DP camp in the zone. He was using that as an argument to tell the military about how much distraction I had to cope with from task. But we were getting, we were getting

visitors – I don't know if every day, I can't remember, I have no calendars from that period of time, but an awful, a tremendous flow of people coming in and out.

06:07:11

Military, one sort or another, the medical officer of the battalion going to visit the hospital, or this guy coming. Jewish leaders coming; rabbi, other rabbis coming, so, a lot of the pictures of that – I should say this, a lot of the pictures that you see at the Holocaust Museum and the ones that I have, are not really pictures of every day life or, and/or suffering, they are largely celebratory pictures; the Macabbi<sup>38</sup> games, the theatre performances, the visit of the General, the visit of Rabbi Herzog, that is, they're, they are the pictures are not really a representation of daily life in the camp. But, basically, I don't know what time I got there, you know, eight-thirty or nine o'clock, presumably, we had breakfast at our billet. Could have been one or another staff meeting, meeting with different people, you know, you're supervising 20 people, you have the hospital, you're having group meetings, you're going out to look at this or that. Occasionally, you have to go to Munich to check in or to district headquarters. I used to on occasion, visit the house where the district staff lived and have dinner there. It was an easy way, or an easy evening to compare notes on one thing or another. Also, there's a constant flow of administrative directives that are coming in. Food, clothing, transportation. There's a lot of bread and butter stuff that goes on. And, incidentally, there are times when, among visitors of the camp, I have pictures from Catholic charities coming with supplies and food. So, they were also helping out. And then there are celebratory events. Pesach<sup>39</sup> comes, you have to organize a Seder and there's a flag raising ceremony at Hochlandslager, and who should be invited and meetings with the camp committee, in groups or individually, the chairman of the camp committee who, incidentally, was a wonderful man. I used to always see him when I went to Israel. He passed away prematurely. He was, he became a high school principal in Israel. And I still see, incidentally, the two surviving members of the Jewish Agency staff in Israel when I go. And they're now in their 80s. And there's Amram who lives in New York, he's in the travel business.

Q: His name is?

A: Huh?

Q: His name is?

A: Amram Zur, Z-U-R and—

Q: Can you tell us about—

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<sup>38</sup> Maccabi World Union

<sup>39</sup> Passover

A: Let me, I want to tell you just as a by, something happened a year, two years? Two years ago. The two survivors in Israel, Zviah Lahar, who is a nurse, and she became the chief of nursing for the – one of the major kibbutz movements. She's now retired. And she lost her first husband in the Jewish Brigade during the war. And then she married a man, I forget his first name, Lahar and they live in Kibbutz Givat Brenner in Israel. And the other person is Liowa Lak who is really the chief of the team and a very wonderful man.

06:12:27

And he, along the way, worked with Goldie, Golda Meir when she was in Russia and he was helping develop contacts with the surviving Jewish community in Russia. Then he worked with some agricultural technical agency and so on. Two years ago, following the Hebron Massacre, there's a message on my telephone from Zviah, I get back to her, and Zviah is in tears about what happened. And she's calling me incoherently, "Henry, come help." I mean, there was no logic to it. But it says something about our relationship. "Come help, help." That says was that something about the sense of suffering she was experiencing as a result of that massacre. And these are people who were lost in the war and on. And, you know, you experience what we – i.e. what Israel is now Lebanon – and most of the world does not understand the complexity of that are at work here, in terms of – but I also, while I'm on that, let me before we were on camera, about Lustig saying to me, in an interview 15 years ago, "You know, Jews live in a camp. They go from concentration camp or a, a camp in Germany, and then en route to Palestine, the British get them into camps in Cyprus. From camp to camp to camp." And I was thinking about it last discussion I heard about the choices between Peres<sup>40</sup> and Netanyahu<sup>41</sup> – Likud<sup>42</sup> Labor<sup>43</sup> – that if the Israelis elect Peres, they will be electing a leader who because they, if they agree with him, will work to remove the walls of the camp Israel.

06:15:22

And if they elect Netanyahu, they will elect a leader who builds the walls of the camp. So we are still struggling with the camp metaphor, from camp to camp to camp. And I think you know where my feelings are. But, I've got to be non-political, 'cause I'm not a member of any Zionist organization.

Q: What was your feeling when you were managing that camp? Did you have liked it to essentially disappear as you managed it? Or did you see it as a kind of, still a very necessary refuge? Even though it had all these problems?

A: Yeah. Well, of course, simply put, for me, the solution was that, hopefully, there would be developed a state in Israel. I didn't know by what name. That all the refugees and DP's

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<sup>40</sup> Shimon Peres

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Netanyahu

<sup>42</sup> Union (Hebrew); Israeli parliamentary bloc.

<sup>43</sup> Mifletet Po'alei Eretz Israel

would go there and the camps would dissolve. I, you know, I saw some going to America, some going to Australia, where there were relatives, and so on and so forth. But, to me, the bulk would be going to Israel. There was a poll taken in the Spring of 1946 by the Anglo-American Committee<sup>44</sup>, this is from their report, they – I think this is part of the poll, [interviewee reads from notes] "In our camp the vote for going to Israel was about 90 percent or more. Zone-wide, 70 percent wished to go to Palestine." So, that was the overwhelming desire at that time. I should add that Föhrenwald was actually the last camp closed in Germany in about 1954. At some point in the process, I didn't keep up with it, UNRRA went out of business, was taken over by the International Refugee Organization.

06:18:11

But, then it was turned over to the American Joint Distribution Committee and as they closed other centers, they brought surplus into Föhrenwald. And then it was closed, finally, in something like 1954.

Q: Did you ever get the sense that people got attached to it, even with its problems, because, after all, it was a sort of safe haven? It was home?

A: I don't, no, I never, never got that feeling. I think people felt some element of safety there because on UNRRA, because of the Jewish Agency. There were also occasionally people around from the Jewish Brigade – which is a separate, I don't have much on it, because I didn't know much about it – but, remember, they were being organized in kibbutzim, there was Hochlandslager, so there were, there were organizational structures that were providing some protection for people there that – and to that extent, it probably had a wholesome effect. I mean, if, you've seen the picture from the Maccabi games, have you? I mean, God, this is a year after the war, and you see these young people doing these acrobatics and exercises, it's nothing short of amazing. Well that's morale building activity.

Q: What was your sense of what was going on within the people in the camp? Were they recreating their lives in their previous homes and villages? Or were they creating some new type of life that they hoped would be their life in the future and in a future state?

A: I think that Föhrenwald was a completely interim matter. I know this from my own relatives. I know this from other people whom I've known. They came to Israel, they became part of that country and either went to kibbutzims, stayed in Tel Aviv, went to Jerusalem. If they were religious, they went to Bené Beraq you know? They were like immigrants in any country, there was a period of adaptation and absorption. And Föhrenwald is a passing experience, about which they may have some benign

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<sup>44</sup> Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine

remembrance or not. Like this young woman, it, for some reason it – in her life it figures very importantly.

06:21:26

Q: The young woman you've been writing to?

A: On the computer, yeah. The man who's in Los Angeles, I've had one or two exchanges with him, but he hasn't felt the need to go further, so, you know, it's a very variable thing. I should also say that I and others who returned were writing articles about this experience for three or four years after we returned. And giving speeches at different Jewish, or other, organizations, so we were sharing our experiences then in different ways. What's, what I find interesting now from a few friends, and I don't know to what extent it's reflective, but a few friend whom – to whom I've sent the speech I gave a year ago in Great Neck, have written me saying they've shared it with their children. That is, people in my age group have a strong need to share these experiences with our children. So, they used my experience which is reflective of their life to a certain extent, to share it with the children.

Q: Have you shared this with your children?

A: Yes, yes, yes. And, I haven't had much feedback from them. They, they haven't verbalized feedback.

Q: Tell us about the first Seder at the camp when you were in charge. It might have been the first Seder after liberation.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Would you tell us about that – what did it look like?

A: Well, we had, I don't remember the dining room area, but we had long tables all decked out. I don't remember who led the service. I have pictures of me with different people there, including members of the team; Chaim Hoffman, who was the head of the Jewish Agency in Munich, was at our Seder. And, we fed them gefilte fish as far as I can recall. Where we got some of the food to feed them, I don't know, I didn't ask. And there were Army people there and I don't think they knew what the hell they were eating, so they probably thought it was GI food also. That is, a piece of gefilte fish to them was like a can of K-rations.

06:24:22

They'd never had it before, it was from some other can. Maybe they were even happy to have never have had it before. But it was a very buoyant, very friendly, very lively

occasion. And I don't remember who had the afikomen, I don't know who stole it or found it, I don't remember any of that. But, we, you know, I see pictures which show these group dinners, different celebratory dinners. And though, that is, our commitment was to do positive things to raise morale. And we did a lot of it. You know, I don't like these traumatic stories – to, to bury, the fact is we had hundreds of children in schools and teachers teaching children. We had a Yeshiva. Oh, and I came across an article, where – of Leivik's – where he devotes a piece of it to going into the Yeshiva in Föhrenwald and it reminds him of his childhood. So, we had that going here. So, there was a lot of things.

Q: A question that I didn't get to ask about just day-to-day living and you were describing the rooms being so small and privacy. How were married couples able to be intimate? I mean, how, what, do you know anything about that? Or how did people make do?

A: I have deniability. No, but look, let's face it, Katie, I told you the story about my father as a six year old boy. His mother has died, his father is remarried, he has a stepmother who has two young children and he's occasionally awakened by some noise in the middle of the night. And in the candle light he sees this stepmother feeding her children.

06:27:04

Now, that's a guess to me, that he lived in very close quarters. So, he was experiencing in 1897, sex among adults at night. So, I think that a lot of these people who came from shtetlach, really had that as part of their background. I, I've never talked to any of them about it. But, it's an interesting question and it's an interesting issue. But, I think it was probably going on all the time and, not only with the children hearing it, but unrelated people were hearing it. For us in America, it's quite a strange kind of experience, but, when you live – what do you think Indians did in a teepee, or Italians in their little hovels? I think that was the world before we began building houses with more than 1,500 square feet. And apartments with more, with four rooms.

06:28:32

End of Tape #6

Tape #7

07:01:17

A: Now, give me a minute. Hi. This is a list from – of the camp that I have which lists all the aspects of the camp and in some, in the top group, next to each, almost every line, I have the staff assignments. So, [interviewee reads from notes] "Number one, overall, administration. Coordination of staff, Cohen. Personnel actions for staff, including voluntary agencies, Gerber and Hafkin." Hafkin was my secretary, Gerber was assistant director. "Administration of DP's in the Landkreis, " outside of the camp, "Oksny, " who's the Norwegian woman. "Public relations, Cohen, Gerber, Hafkin, Robins," who was another assistant director. "Total space requirements for," I'll stop reading names, "for billeting of staff for DP's, other accommodations; warehousing, laundry, etc. Sub-centers; Hochlandslager," which was for the kibbutzim, "and Dorfén," I think that was some kind of sanitarium. Then "police court, organization of street officers, registration, administrative information, delegated to welfare, reports and statistics." Then next major heading, "Physical plant; equipment, water, sewage, electrical facilities, heating, building, equipment maintenance, road repair, radio, telephones, sign painting, etc. gardens." Once you read it, you realize what goes into this. Even, even I'm impressed. "Welfare, information and tracing, group work, recreation, cultural activities, education, adult, children, library, religions, newspaper and radio, vocational training, religious affairs, child welfare, family welfare, case work including psychological, home visiting, hospital welfare inch, including occupied therapy." I don't know whether that's a typo. "Employment, DP's in the Landkreis, amenity supply distribution, gardens, immigration, rep, supply, securing requirements from staff, uncover new sources of supply, supplies, report on incoming supplies, recreation, requisitions submitted, items surplus materials, suggest possible uses, wooden thing." I don't know what "Warehouse, storage of supplies."

07:05:00

"Centralization of supply storage, physical distribution in case of food – bulk only, determine method and timing of distribution, periodic listing of inventories, no responsible for Joint unless submitted to common pool, Joint Distribution Committee, health, sanitation, hospital, Dorfén, " which is a sanitarium. "Hochlandslager, dispensary, sanitary inspections of kitchens, general kosher kibbutz, homes, food magazines." That must mean food storage, not a magazine. "Special diets; sick, undernourished children, pregnant mothers. Street cleaning, sanitation committee, gardens, parent counseling on rearing babies, sex education, health education. Messing foods; planning means preparation of food, serving of food, cleanliness of kitchen, security of food in preparation. Transportation; providing vehicles as needed, allocating use of vehicles, securing vehicles as needed, keeping vehicles in repair, allocation of gasoline.

Q: Want to hold until those sirens pass? You were running a town.



A: Yeah. Incidentally, I have other handwritten notes. "Food; conditions under which served, no fresh food, compare to Germans. Black market; Hochlandslager cigarettes what roll do they play in the black market? Engineering supplies; brushes, roof paper, nails, toilets." This is a little more detail than there. "Medical supplies;" I think it says "hormones, amenity supplies, obstetrical, requisitioning procedures, teeth." We'd have problems with dentists. "Sanitation supplies, housing, density, morality." You see? That means it went through my head. "Lack of community space, Landkreis responsibilities," that's the county burden, "no clear cut definition. Clothing; sizes, U.S. clothing. Employment; no incentive. Police work; extra territoriality. Abnormality requires intelligent rehabilitation programs. Staff billeting and moral."

07:06:03

"No place to go to relax. Army relations; some soldiers do not understand the almost inevitable and natural clash of interests and resent it. Riot, their demand for my removal, transportation, encourage a system of scrounging." [interviewee ceases reading] So there are these recurrent things, Katie. I, I wanted to mention something, when all of this trouble was developing, a number of us began to become concerned with one of the members of the team, a Dutch woman. Her name was Maria Van Bimbergen. She was supposedly the daughter of the chief justice of Holland before the war. She had – as far as I know, was the only one, one the team among the women, who had an Army officer friend, boyfriend fraternizing. And, as the charges kept flowing, particularly on some of the more confidential issues, we began worrying about her reliability. And we began complaining to Headquarters about her. And I notice in the memos that it's in my memo, and I think reference to her is also in Margaret Gerber's memo to the District director. And I came across something which refers to her at a certain date, seeing her walking in Wolfratshausen with this Army lieutenant or colonel or whatever. So, we, this was a great source of concern to us. And UNRRA didn't act on it, and that was a source of concern to me.

Q: That's interesting because in thinking about speaking with you, I know I'd hear about what this situation camp was – but I guess I didn't really anticipate hearing that you would have to fight for the people over the treatment of the people. In other words, that you had to become, or you did become, an advocate. You had to choose sides in a way. Do you agree with that?

A: Oh, no, I didn't see it as choosing sides. I mean, some of the things that I was doing was almost measured choices, if you want to say down the middle. Like, my mid– like my midnight checks. Or the – three o'clock in the morning looking for a meat, for a butcher, once a month or twice a month, which left them 28 other days.

07:11:23

Or my encounter with Rabbi Halberstam in down the middle. That is, I – even with those things – the Army was complaining like crazy about me. But I think, incidentally, if you were – which you are not going to do really, but historians will, look at the files on some of the other camps. Whether or not they led to the removal of the director or not. You'll see similar themes being played out. Because I have folders based on meetings we were having at headquarters where we were being briefed about not handing out cards and new cards. On how among us we were upset by it and protesting it and so on. So, I wasn't the only one. And there was, for example, at Landsberg, you had older, older people in charge with more experience, like Lee Srole<sup>45</sup> who was chief welfare officer. And they would get into the New York papers and Leon, what's his name, the head of the camp, so this was going on different places.

Q: Did you ever feel torn between your allegiance to the U.S. military and your allegiance to being a Jew – and the Jews in the camps?

A: I never had that conflict. I just, it wasn't my allegiance to America that was at issue, it was my refusal to deal with stupid people. Who happened to be American. I mean that was never a problem for me. If I'm dealing with a – if you're dealing with one of these gun groups out in the west who raise the American flag and you protest against it, it isn't that you're anti-American, you're against that mentality. So, I've never had that problem. And I'm not a radical, politically. I'm a centrist. So, I don't have any problem with that.

Q: What was the most difficult thing about your job?

A: I think when, when one comes down to it, the most difficult thing about it was dealing with the U.S. Army of occupation. Dealing with the DP's wasn't as difficult. Dealing with Rabbi Halberstam wasn't that difficult. I mean, you know, the riot was difficult, but it wasn't – I could understand it.

07:14:50

And, I remember once, I don't know for what reason, the DP's went on a hunger strike protesting something. I convened a big meeting in the auditorium, hundreds of people there, and I, I set out to break the strike. And I say to them, "Listen, I would rather be a teacher in Brooklyn than director of this camp." And they laugh and that breaks the strike. That was the relationship I had with them. That was not difficult. I had, I had confidence in my ability to deal with that. And they had confidence in me. I notice in the stuff around the Army effort to get rid of me, that there's a memo from Becky Althoff who worked – there were two memos from Becky – she worked for the Joint, attached to the team, and one is to Leo Schwarz, the head of Joint in Germany, to alert him to what was going on up there and enlist him in the effort to offset the Army. And the second, was talking about a small group meeting to plan a strategy, a group strategy, about

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<sup>45</sup> Leo Srole

retaining me and protecting me. And that included Becky, some of the Jewish Agency people and one or two other staff people. And then they had a large staff meeting the following morning and they wrote someone wrote a petition or something, and there are like 18 signatures on the petition. So, that was not my difficulty. My difficulty was this anomaly of being an infantry soldier in the 39th Regiment and confronting this problem with those schmucks who have no understanding. I mean, look, one of these guys comes on an inspection during Pesach. I guess it must have been that guy who came for five days. And we walk into the kitchen. Now, the kitchen is closed for Pesach. They've been giving rations in one way or another. And, I walk with him into the middle of the floor in the kitchen it's empty and there's a pile of human defecation on the floor. And he, for him, that's a sign of poor administration and poor sanitary control. We walk to the johns and there's defecation in the john on the floor, maybe on the toilet seat, I don't remember.

07:17:48

We go outside and behind there against the wall, there's some defecation. The stupid guy, how does he think I feel about that? I understand how he's feeling about it. But he's not giving a thought, that is he's not giving a thought that, if I had my way, if I had found it two hours earlier, we would have cleaned it up. But the place was out of use for two or three days at the time. So, it happened. Nobody was going in there, so we didn't find it. You know, I won't tell you the whole story of this, in 1961, I am in – I'm working with my Mayor Wagner's office, I'm a senior management consultant on administration and I'm handling health, welfare, youth and so on. The Deputy Mayor calls me up – I won't give you the whole story – gives me something, "Take care of this." It's about Harlem hospital, conditions in the emergency room. I've been in the mayor's office then five to six years, so I know what weight I have, okay? And I've been heavily involved for two years in dealing with various problems of hospital administration. I call the Dean of the Columbia School of Public Health, whom I've been working with very closely for two years, and I say, "Help me out on this one, I'll rendezvous with you at the emergency room at Harlem hospital." We go there, I won't detail what we find. At the end of the evening, 10 o'clock at night, nine o'clock at night, I call the Commissioner of Hospitals at his home in Staten Island, and I tell him where I am, what I have found and what I am doing, what I'm going to be doing about it immediately. And he raises his voice, "What the hell are you doing there? You're not Commissioner of Hospitals, etc., etc." I just say back to him, "What the hell have you known about this? Have you acted on it? I'm acting because of dereliction." Anyway, over the weekend, we took care of the problem and [inaudible] I report to the Deputy Mayor on Monday - "All taken care of." On Wednesday, the Amsterdam News 60 comes out blasting us because it's a crazy paper, okay? Ten days later, the Mayor announces that he's promoting me to Deputy City Administrator and 10 days after that, he's announcing that the Commissioner of Hospitals has resigned and he's appointing the Dean of the Columbia School of Public Health as Commissioner, okay?

07:21:20

So, I sort of know what heft and weight, and so on, is. I didn't know it all in 1946 in the camp. But, there's something in me historically, my development, which has enabled me, not that I don't take crap, but gives me some inner strength not to always put up with it. And that was what was involved here. Maybe I was too – whatever. But they were too – worse, you see. And I should add that two to three weeks after I left the camp, there was another riot situation, a march on the town, and one or two Jews were killed by the soldiers because they wouldn't retreat. That is, when facing a gun, they went forward, not backwards and we knew that. And we knew that we had to deal with them within the family so they didn't see us with guns. And they didn't see the Army with guns. And when they saw the guns, they got hurt. And I have newspaper clippings on that incident. So, I'm satisfied it wasn't a personality matter. Now, I have a memo that Ira Hirschmann, who was LaGuardia's emissary, Hirschmann had been a Senior Vice President in department stores in the '30s. He must have helped raise money for LaGuardia, later they became very close. During the war, Roosevelt appointed him with some special Ambassadorial rank to be stationed in Turkey, and Hirschmann was arranging for the escape of Jews from Hungary and Bulgaria into Turkey.

07:24:05

So, he was, in his own way, an old hand. And LaGuardia sent him over, he wanted to get rid of General Morgan<sup>46</sup> because of the British influence on the European operation. And he spent the day with me. And I quickly realized he was a guy I could trust and I get – put it all out to him. And in his memo, which is in June, "the Army is out to get Henry Cohen." He starts out, "Henry Cohen" – this is something I didn't get until he came across it 1981, and he called me about it, that he had it – "Henry Cohen, director, who appears to have done a heroic job under impossible conditions is now under fire from the Army. They made an investigation here, found the sanitary conditions unsatisfactory, which is correct, and in addition they felt that Mr. Cohen was pushing the welfare side too much, was neglecting the other side for the rehabilitation of the people. A devastating report has been sent to Headquarters by General McBride<sup>47</sup>, Ninth Division Commander, and they have asked for Mr. Cohen's removal. The staff has protested and the entire community had a mass meeting, as, as the people have developed an affection for him and his understanding of the problem. Not like the U.S. Army. It was two days after this mass meeting that a riot occurred at this camp. This is a concrete example of the Army bucking the job of rescue, failing to support and permit people who understand the human side of the problem to function'. The people in the camp chose to go on a complete hunger strike unless Mr. Cohen was retained. He will probably be removed by the Army."

Q: Ultimately, what did happen?

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<sup>46</sup> Sir Frederick Morgan

<sup>47</sup> General Horace Logan McBride

A: I don't know the answer to that, Katie. What I find in my material, is a letter of resignation dated sometime in May, and it's a two or three page letter, and on top of it, it's marked "void." Then, I also note, these cables the, I mentioned to you, from Samuel, Professor Samuel Joseph, Chairman of the Sociology Department, at City College, offering me a teaching post in September – "Reply in by Wednesday." I don't remember, I have no indication of how I handled that.

08:01:04

A: ...very little in my records during the month of June, all the action seems to have been in May. Very little in my records – yeah, all '46. Very little in my records, other than the Hirschmann memo, which is something like June 10th, but then, I notice a cable dated June 26th from Professor Samuel Joseph, City College. "Are you planning to return shortly? Have two or three courses open. Will hold up until you cable me." Then, in a more detailed cable without a date that I can't recognize – I have the real cable, but I can't read the date he sent to my brother who was in Munich, nearby. In which he actually outlines which courses and where and what days, "must have your answer by Wednesday morning for program printing, regards." Alright. Let's say it's the same day, June 26th. June has 30 days, 44 days. Then, I have July 10th – sorry, July 2nd, six days later, resignation from UNRRA. Now–

Q: Your resignation?

A: My resignation. A very brief memo. "I should like to inform you of my decision to resign from UNRRA, and am herewith giving one month's notice. According to our discussion today, this decision is a tentative one." And I don't understand that. "However, I want all steps to be taken so that in case I finally and definitely do decide to resign after a short," something or other, "there will be no delay in departure." Okay?

Q: Sir, we need you to sit up.

A: Yeah, on July 15th, which is roughly two weeks later, there's a memo which indicates that I've left the camp and I'm now reporting directly at Headquarters. And on that same day, July 15th, I go off for seven days of annual leave to Scandinavia. And I had a marvelous time. And in Stockholm, I visited relatives of one of my father's closest friends. It was marvelous. I'd never been to Scandinavia before. Anyway, so I'm back roughly the 22nd, 23rd. My resignation is effective on August fourth. And on August fourth I am issued, and I think I initiate, travel authorization from Munich to Washington via London. But now I'm going to give you a treat that you weren't expecting. In Paris, I arrived for a few days en route, and, and aunt of mine had sent me the name and address of a cousin in Paris.

End of Tape #7

Tape #8

08:04:56

So, I go to this address and I find this Sheftel cousin running a butcher shop. And, oh, was that a wonderful experience. And she has three chil– young children. They survived the war in the Alps, but her husband was taken and killed. And I see these, her children – she died about eight or nine years ago – I see her children to this day whenever I go to Paris. And they're a wonderful family. So, the Sheftels are really something, aren't they? So, that's the end of the story. I got back, presumably, I don't know, went by boat from, I think, from Liverpool, to Canada, then back to the States, so I must have arrived the third week of August or so. I must have gone down to Washington, back to New York, and I started teaching in September.

Q: Any sort of debriefing or anything?

A: I, there must have been something in Washington, but once back in New York, I kind of, I was in touch with a number of Jewish organizations and have different speeches I gave on different occasions.

Q: How did it change you? How do you think it Shaped you, rather than changed?

A: Well, I don't really know. I – you know, it probably strengthened me. I don't recall – and I, I'm a person who can do a lot of soul searching – I don't recall ever really soul searching about the circumstances of the departure. Incidentally, I, I, my supervisor, Helen Matousek, I – she was in New York for many years before moving out to Seattle. So, I used to see her frequently. And we rarely talked about the old days, specifically. She'd been through it all with me. I should tell you, there is one little story on one of the meetings out in their headquarters. After dinner, she and I would sit aside, and she said to me, "Henry, most people live their lives with the glass half full. You live your life and may always lived your life with the glass overflowing."

08:08:09

So, she had my number. Sam Zisman, was a city planning consultant, it turned out. So I used to run into him, he was from Texas, I used to run into him at Planning – National Planning meetings and we had a good relationship. I used to see Richard Winslow. I don't know if I told you this story. There was the summer of '67 – '47, by then he was the Secretary General of the United States Mission to the United Nations in New York, and I still hadn't resolved my housing. I'd float from one rental to another, sub-rental to another. And I was subletting an apartment on East 94th Street, way east, which is those days was really old, old tenement. And I had a four story walk-up. And his family used to go to the Cape for the summer, so anyway, somehow or other, he decided to move in with me. It was next door to a laundry that was spewing out a lot of smoke. And every

morning we'd be leaving this slum building in our seersucker suits, going to our respective jobs. Roger Masteude, I was very close to him and his family for 25 years until he divorced and went west and his wife went west. But, I'm still in touch with him within the last month on the phone or by letter. So, I'm in touch, I've been in touch with a number of these people and, how did it shape me? I don't know, it probably added something to the experience and so on. Added to my heft in certain ways as an administrator and experience and politically. What's interesting, basically, is in my younger years in New York City, I really wasn't close to the mayors, with O'Dwyer<sup>48</sup> and Impellitteri<sup>49</sup>, but with Wagner I was. And with Lindsay<sup>50</sup> I was. I wasn't the closest confidante, but I had a personal relationship with them. And, in each of these relationships, I was able at different times to talk – what I regarded as turkey – to them. If I felt it needed to be, certain things needed to be said, I would say them. And, I remember one meeting with Lindsay, had some problem, and when he left the room, my then boss, said to me, "I don't think you made yourself very popular."

08:11:28

But, to me it didn't matter, I had to say what I had to say. And, with Wagner, the interesting thing, we used to have lunch every year or two until his death, and in 1986, I think, I had, I had read a book, I had read a book about his father, the senator, and I, I realized for the first time as a result of reading it, that they were an immigrant family. You know, for me, he was Yale and Catholic, upper scale, and all that, I'm still the ghetto boy, and – but I suddenly realized that his father was an immigrant, too. And I learned about the family' And it – I'd never heard him speak about it. So, I had lunch with him in '86, and I took this up with him. And I said, "Bob, this is the year of the immigrant, I think you ought to found – find an occasion where you can speak on the subject." And he did. He got an award that year from CUNY<sup>51</sup>, and the first paragraph of his speech was on his immigrant background. So, I've been able to do, to be direct. And Koch<sup>52</sup> I had never worked for Koch, but if I see him on something, not recently, but I, I might say to him – I did at dinner one night, in his third year – "Don't you have anybody on your staff who knows how to let people you're firing off easy? Do you have to always get PR to let someone go? What about getting it once every other time, or once every third time, do you need it every time?" Then I took up some cases with him. "They were nice people. Why did you have to do it?" So, you know, in the old days they used to talk about, they used to divide people into people who have the gyro– their inner gyroscope? And I happen to be a person like that. And, if you want to deal with me, you've got to – and it's uncomfortable – you have to put up with that part of me if you want to get something out of me. And I can do a lot of good things.

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<sup>48</sup> William O'Dwyer

<sup>49</sup> Vincent R. Impellitteri

<sup>50</sup> John V. Lindsay

<sup>51</sup> City University of New York

<sup>52</sup> Edward Irwin Koch

Q: I wonder when you think about the experience in terms of, we just talked about how it shaped you, but what it did to your personal perception of being a Jew? Working with the displaced people and, you've written about the stories, etched faces.

08:14:32

A: Yeah, you know, I was so formed in that way, that it's hard for me to see other, the other increments which, I'm sure there are. But, in 1949, when I was in England teaching, I ran into some of my Israeli friends, either in London or Paris or whatever. So, they arranged my trip to Salzburg and Switzerland, so they arranged, on the next holiday at the University – they used to run six week, trimester, six weeks in between – They arranged for me to go on an immigrant boat from Marseilles to Israel – and Evelyn<sup>53</sup>, along with me. And then, not all the time, but half the time, they were putting us up in different places and so, I had the experience then of coming in on the Kedmah. Into the Haifa harbor early in the morning and seeing that Haifa amphitheater. Few people see it these days because no one comes in by boat, but come in by airplane. What an experience. So, I was in Haifa on the first anniversary of establishment of the state. I stood on a roof watching the parade and I lectured city planning at the Technion<sup>54</sup> and one or two other places. And, went to kibbutzim and they arranged for a Föhrenwald reunion at WIZO<sup>55</sup>, the Woman's Zionist Organization. They got announcements out in the press and radio. Three hundred people turned out' So, there are these different increments and I don't, I haven't subaggregated it, you know?

Q: Do you remember anything about that reunion? What someone said to you?

A: No, you know, so overwhelming. You know, I remember on that particular visit, I was riding on a bus and suddenly a man turns at me, extends his hand, and says, "Herr Direktor."<sup>56</sup> You know, that's a pretty heady experience. You know, you need some compensation for all the "sturm und drang." So, I've demonstrated I can take the "sturm und drang" and I'm entitled to some of the things that come with it. You know, it's like combat, hat – I don't get much out of that, I didn't get anything out of Ninth Division – but what I got out of it was my own sense of inner satisfaction at having served. And, but it's, it's an interesting part of history because there were really so few people around and it tells one so much about institutions – good and bad.

08:18:15

And, but I'm sure most of the people, whether they came to the United States, I ran across one fellow for many years, who went into the engineering area. Another fellow was a dermatologist. I came across a letter just yesterday and I went to the phone book to see if

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<sup>53</sup> wife of interviewee

<sup>54</sup> Israel Institute of Technology

<sup>55</sup> Women's International Zionist Organization

<sup>56</sup> Mr. Director (German)



he was still around and I didn't see his name. I saw his second name, but not his first name. I may call some of the relatives. But, in that sense, you can't recreate it, you can't remember. And yet, it has to be an important part of the history.

Q: Do you know anything about what it is now? Has it been razed?

A: Oh, I'll tell you, no, it still, it's been reconstructed as a, as a, some kind of community. Because Susan Levin – who was born in the camp in about 1948 – visited it about three years ago. I ran into her, she told me. But, what's happened in 50 years, as in most urban areas, is that the city has spread. The urbanization has spread. The suburbanization is part of the urbanization, so I have an impression that today it, that area, is simply a stop on whatever rapid transit system Munich has. So, she – yeah, anyway, she went there, I don't know if she knocked on a door or not. No.

Q: Just a couple–

A: Yeah, but I've been back to Munich, I had no interest in going back.

Q: You mentioned there being a lack of community space at the camp. Therefore, what, what did people do? Where did they congregate? Where did they sit around and gossip? I mean – or did that not happen?

A: Yeah, well, there was a big community center. There was a big kitchen facility. I don't remember now what the lateral space around the community center was. So I mean – so people are talking when they're standing in line waiting for food. " There were programs in the community center and the theater – I don't know whether every night, I don't remember that – but, they must have been fairly frequent. On the other hand, there is also evidence that people didn't rely completely on the movies we were showing. They went to the cinema in the town. Incidentally, I, I, I neglected to say this, it hadn't occurred to me at the time, on the – at the time of the riot, one of the things that I realized was that there would be Jewish DP's in the cinema. By the time the movie was over, they would, word would be getting around. I didn't know what would be happening to them when the movie let out. So, we took a batch of automobiles en route to the police station, en route to the camp, and we stopped off at the cinema and, during a break in – when they were changing the film, I made an announcement that when it was over we'd pick them up and take them back. Most of them left then and there, they didn't wait for the end of the cinema. So, anyway, people did different things. They went to Munich, that is, they – you know, I'm not – there were–

Q: They could come and go?

A: They could come and go, they, they were, they had friends or relatives in other places. So, there, there was no computer, so people learned to be in touch with one another by conversation. I noticed in the camp newspaper there are several pages of listings of

people looking for people from different places. So, that was another communication system.

Q: What else took up their time? I mean, did people get work during the day? Or, you said at one point – I'll just ask it that way.

A: Well, most people were working. Or they were in classes. The only ones, other than the black marketers, but they were working, too. They were outside handlin<sup>57</sup>. Just as a word, I came across in my notes, reference to the chief of police, allegations with regard to him and the black market came to me and I let it go. That was a big one, whatever it was.

08:24:07

Q: The DP police?

A: Yeah, I let him go. And there were some charges about the chairman of the camp committee. And I went to the camp committee and I discussed it and they suspended him. I don't have any further record of what happened. So, people were engaged, remember food took time. You had to wait on line three times a day. Not everyone was waiting, people would come back to the families. Now, there were the women and the pregnant women, and they had children. They were taking care of children. So, there were some, we had, we didn't have space for a mikvah, you know that's a ritual bath. So, you know, there were problems, but it isn't as if people were locked in space. See, that was a big difference between this and the concentration camp. They had a little money, they – you know, however they got it, could move somewhere or other. I don't remember how we dealt with the money problem. We may even have had a truck that went into Munich twice a week or – for some hours. I don't remember.

Q: You told a story earlier when the man came from the Army, when he went into the kitchen and somebody had defecated in there. Why would they do that? Why wouldn't they go to the toilet? Is that something?

A: I guess, I guess that's part a function of the breakdown of the inner self. Now, I know no one in this room has ever felt an overwhelming impulse to go to the bathroom, to urinate or to defecate. I know that no one in this room has ever had the experience of letting a little go in the underwear. But even under such pressures as that, people with an inner discipline, shoot desperately to a place where they can let go. Alright? So, one has to assume in these cases – not with the freezing in the winter, that was a different situation, I – but, here Passover, in April, one has to assume that someone or several, had certain impulses and there was not enough of an inner discipline to move them to an appropriate place to discharge. That's my, how else can I explain it? Can you think of another explanation?

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<sup>57</sup> trading, doing business (Yiddish)

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08:27:30

Q: Very long line to go?

A: What do you mean?

Q: That they had gone to the regular toilet and might have to wait?

A: No. By the law of averages, no, in a normal situation, by the law of averages, there are two or three bathrooms per building, the buildings are very close, so if this is lined up, it wouldn't have that.

Q: So, you're saying that somewhere in that person's experience, perhaps, you know, whatever that experience was, before liberation, that they just kind of lost some of their—

A: Yeah, the starch, in the system. They were beaten down so much. They had to lose some of the starch. But what's interesting is on certain things they had starch and other things they didn't have starch. On certain things they had stubborn resistance capability and on other things, they didn't. It takes awhile to reform the personality. And—

Q: You saw that happen?

A: Yeah, but yet again, my vantage point doesn't enable me to see it person by person. It isn't the matter of it disable – doesn't enable me, my attention wasn't drawn to it person by person.

08:29:10

End of Tape #8

Tape #9

09:00:54

Q: What did you learn from the experience? Running the camp?

A: Well, one thing, probably, you asked me about Jewish matters before. See, I'm, I'm an amalgam of Jewish and universalist, and, and humanist. And, I believe very strongly in this. But, I also believe that one of the most powerful engines in homo sapiens is the existence, and probably the necessity, for the "we/they" relationships. So, when I think about the "we/they" relationships in the context of my being Jewish and universalist, it means to me, in terms of Jewishness, pride, fullness in certain ways, identification, values. But, in a certain sense, as "we," we shouldn't kill them. We should find a way of relating to the "they." All "they's" should find ways of relating to the "we's." So, in a certain sense in the camp, the "we" part was strengthened, as, as against the need for balance in the "we/they" phenomenon.

09:03:20

And the Army that I was dealing with – which I don't generalize to the whole Army, became the they, more than the Germans – became the they, in a sense – and that probably does make me feel a little uncomfortable – because for me, I strong – I believe strongly that all people need to have a "we" relationship, but they shouldn't convert that "we" relationship into a hostile, hostility to "they." You see? I mean, if you take for example, that thing I went through quickly with you, about Harlem hospital, where I was going in to do a lot of good, and did, the outcome in the Amsterdam News three days later, five days later was from their "we" into an act of aggression against the "they." And it was so, so uninspired, so uncalled for. And, so you get this all the time, and, and because, sometimes it's because of the way in which they act. That is the Katyúsha<sup>58</sup> rockets make our we act in certain ways. And that distresses me, even though I accept the counteraction. But, I basically prefer for the walls to come down a little bit more among people. Even though they need for their well-being, a "we" relationship. So, in, in – at UNRRA, because of the behavior of some of these officers and soldiers, they were building up some of the walls in me that I feel uncomfortable with. But, hell, even Rabbi Halberstam had a little bit of that, right?

09:06:03

So, I – but I've learned – what I've been leafing all my life, is the complexity of the "we/they" relationships. I mean, people today focus, among other things, among a million things, focus on Sri Lanka. I've been watching the Sri Lanka phenomenon for 20 years,

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<sup>58</sup> Lorry mounted multiple rocket launcher (Russian)

now. I always find these things that are illustrations of that, that bother me, disturb me, but show how difficult it is to deal with.

Q: I'd like ask you to show us this picture that hangs in your hall, and—

A: This picture is me speaking to the hundreds upon hundreds of people collected for the Maccabi games. Which was an athletic festival in, I don't know, probably May, because the weather was fine. It could have been June. And, we had hundreds of younger people engaged in acrobatics and all kinds of athletics and it was a really a marvelous day.  
[technical conversation]

A: This is me pointing something out to General Frederick Morgan who was the head of UNRRA in Europe. He had been Eisenhower's Deputy British Commander during the European invasion. He was the highest British military officer. And, and I took him to the hospital, there are other pictures of him in the hospital and the vocational training facilities and in different parts of the camp.

A: Okay, this is a picture of a Rabbi, I believe it's Yitzhak Herzog, who was the Chief Rabbi of Palestine. He came to spend the Sabbath weekend with us. And, the camp was just in a state of exhilaration over his visit because, for the people in the camp, this was a new beginning, new life. Now, I just want to point out, at his right shoulder, is an American by the name of Rabbi Wohlgelerinter.

09:08:48

I've never, never figured out whom the hell he was representing, but he was around all the time. Now, when you look beyond Rabbi Herzog's right shoulder, partly cut by his hat, is the Mizrahi Rabbi, I can't remember his name. He was a marvelous human being. We used to call him the red rabbi because he had red hair compared to the Rabbi Halberstam, who had black hair. Then at Rabbi Herzog's left shoulder is Gustav Lachman, who was chairman of the camp committee, a wonderful man. He became a high school principal in Israel. And then beyond his left shoulder is me in Army dress, or UNRRA dress. I should add that Rabbi Herzog was the father of Rabbi Chaim Herzog, who was the President of Israel. And, some years ago when I went to Israel, I put together an album with the pictures I had of Rabbi Herzog and I got an audience with the President. And we went over it, he was a young soldier, he was approximately my age, he was in the British Army, and he remembered clearly that visit of his father to Germany. So, we had a wonderful 15, 20 minutes together reminiscing. This is a picture of a flag raising ceremony in Hochlandslager. Where we were training some three to 400 young people as agricultural workers in kibbutzim. Standing in back of me is the Jewish Agency team. To the right as you look at the picture, Sarah Entin passed away, unfortunately, early.

09:11:12

Next to her is Liowa Lak, whom I've spoken about before. And next to him is Zviah Lahar, whom I also spoke about before. She was the one who called me after the Hebron massacre. This was around Passover time. And again, a lovely occasion. What can I say about this picture? The thing that I always react to when I look at a picture like that, is how much eagerness and smiles are on the faces. Because that's the thing that I most want to see. And you see it in there, including that head in the back who is raising his chin so he'll get into the picture.

09:12:11

End of Tape #9

Conclusion of Interview