

Unauthenticated

Interview with John Friedmann

By Anthony Young

A: My name is John Friedmann, I was born October 19, 1913 in Vrbove, Czechoslovakia.

Q: Is that in the Bohemian/Moravian region?

A: Right now it is in Slovakia.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about the town, and growing up in the town, and what it was like there?

A: Well, when I was born there I was about three months old and my parents moved to Vienna, Austria. In Vienna, Austria I went to schooling and my father went to the military and it was a very rough time, the same time what we have now in the United States. And so actually after the school, I had five years elementary school, three years high school, after that I had to find me a job so I couldn't find something so my mother went with me to _____, Vienna. And we find in a linoleum business they had a sign out there "apprenticeship". So in we went into the apprenticeship business there until we find out that the name of that manager was Lisplau, which was actually somehow related.. It was a coincidence. Anyhow I started my apprenticeship as a salesman. That was for three years, a guarantee of a half year, a guarantee as a salesman. After my apprenticeship when the salesmanship was to end, they released me and that was the end of that business. My mother said I don't want you to stay around in Austria, why don't we go out of Vienna. So, which would still be Austria; naturally. So we went out of Vienna, we went to a train and we just picked one town. And in that town my mother said O.K. Now you can see how good you are as a salesman. So, I had a special deal with a fabric of linoleum, I had a special deal and so I made some sales in that town. Later on it was not good that way so we went to the city of _____, in upper Austria.

Q: O.K. Can we stop for a second and let me ask you a question. You said when you moved, your family moved to Vienna three months after you were born?

A: Yes.

Q: And your father, did he move to Vienna because of the military or was he drafted?

A: Oh, no, he moved. The whole family moved to Vienna.

Q: What was your father doing for a living at that time?

- A: The father's name, Adolph, Adolph Friedmann.
- Q: What was he doing, what was his job?
- A: My father was an electrician, a camera man. What they do there in Czechoslovakia, they went from city to city and he was showing in the restaurants, he rented the places, he showed the movie to the people at that time. So, my mother was collecting the money at the entrances.
- Q: So she was helping your father in his business?
- A: In that business. Correct.
- Q: What was your mother's name?
- A: My mother's name was Rudolphina and her maiden name is Reisman.
- Q: And you said that you went to school in Vienna?
- A: In the third district of Vienna.
- Q: Did you go to a Jewish school or a public school?
- A: No, to a public school.
- Q: Do you remember when you graduated from primary school, or elementary school?
- A: Well, that was about in 1926, around 26, 27.
- Q: And you said you had three years in high school?
- A: Three years, yes.
- Q: And then you were in the linoleum business and the apprenticeship?
- A: Yes.
- Q: O.K. I'm sorry, I just wanted to clarify a few points. How you said that you were with your mother. At this point you said that you and your mother decided to go to a small town in Austria? Where was your father at this time?
- A: O.K. My father, when I was 13 years old he divorced. I was with my mother then in _____, Austria. In _____, Austria. I opened me a little shop in linoleum, and every Wednesday they had a market there in the city, so anytime, if the business wasn't good I took the linoleum and put it on the market for sale.

Which was very good because. So anyhow that went on. Actually until Hitler came, let's have it that way.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about the town?

A: The town was a town of 6,000 people and there was one Jewish lady there who had a business of ski equipment and I was the second Jew. There were no Jews in that town.

Q: You were the only Jews, you, your mother and that woman?

A: That's correct. Actually, I had a lot of friends there, which I still have. So that went on, like I said, when Hitler came into power. I had to give up the business, I had a car, I couldn't drive anymore. I had to put my license back. So that was the end in 1938.

Q: That was in 1938 when the Germans annexed Austria?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: How was the business, was it a good business for you, the linoleum, in the town?

A: It was very good. The business was very good but so what actually happened in 1938 when Hitler came one day in April, a gendarme came to my house and said --I was actually been a landlady. I rented the place and she came there and they asked for me and she said, John, I know him. He was not a friend. I know that gentile. In a town like that you know everybody. So he asked me first, he said; my name was Hans actually, you know. So he said I come for you I have to arrest you. I said why? He said are you Jewish? I said yes. Can you tell me that you are not Jewish? I cannot tell you that I said. So he said, O.K. I have to arrest you, we're going to go to the railroad station and I am not going to put a handcuff on you. I have to take you to Linz, in Austria. So, that's the way it was. We went to the railroad station, came to Linz and in Linz he put on the handcuffs and he had actually the order from the Gestapo, So we went to the jail there, this was a normal procedure at that time they put all the Jews in that place and we just waited for several days. Then they told us it would be better if you Jews would get ready in the morning, he said, we're going to go to the railroad station. O.K. so all the Jewish people that were there, we're lining up, we went outside, we went to the station, we waited a long time until the train came in, then when the train came in, all the SS came out from the train there to the station. They put a line so we cannot escape, we had to go through that line to the cars. What happened then, we had to, the first time I see somebody was going there, the SS trooper the rifles upside down tried to hit anybody who was walking there .so that was already a little punishment. Well, when I saw that I run right through that thing, they couldn't hit me at all. So anyhow, we went in the cars, the trash, and all the windows were blocked, you couldn't see where you were going, it was

dark outside. They put the lights in the compartments. About 10 people in each compartment and they put on the light and they put the light extra strong on. I don't know how they did it. Anyhow, they said everybody has to look up in the light. Don't put your hat on. If you put your hat on you get something coming. So everybody was looking, some people just couldn't keep their head up in the light. You almost get blind when you were looking. You had to keep the eyes open. If you close the eyes they hit you, you know. So you couldn't do that so you have to look up there. Anyhow, after about two hours they quit that business, but we couldn't go to the bathroom. Some people had, we were driving the next day in the morning, some people had to go to the restroom, but there was no restroom.

Q: So you were on the train overnight and then into the morning?

A: That's correct. So we were staying in that car and some people had to make their business right where they were sitting, they just couldn't hold it up. So then in the morning after about nine, ten o'clock, it was in the morning we find out we came to _____ and that time, I never was there before, and so they took us out there and put us in cattle cars. They put us in cattle cars and made it real crowded in there so there was no place to move around. Either they want to save the cars, not have too many cars. Whatever it was, it was a cruelty thing. We still couldn't go to the bathroom, some people had to clear out one corner in the cattle cars and we let them all go in that one corner and after then we stopped at a station. The station which we didn't know the station, I don't think so, somebody knows, we didn't know at that time where we was. We went out of the station, we were allowed in the restrooms at that time and we find out this was Dachau.

Q: Right outside Munich?

A: Yes. So in Dachau we just took all our clothes off, we had to get the clothes which they use in the concentration camp, the striped clothes. It was not built up completely. It didn't have nothing to do for us.

Q: So it was still in the process of being built?

A: In the build up, yes. So what actually happened, they took, they give us some bags you know where you fill it with straw so you can sleep on it, make a mattress on it. Everybody has to fill it themselves. And they had a bathroom there. It was everything new. It was for us, it doesn't look too bad, it didn't look at that time like, we didn't know what it was. We saw something it was built. So they took us a whole bunch of the old Jews together there. There was not too many at that time there and they brought up to a place where they have in the street some rocks. A pile of rocks lay. So the SS man said everybody take one rock and march that way. O.K. so everybody took one rock, some were small, some were big and we took the rock, it was not very heavy, we went to the bathroom about a mile and then they said O.K., now put the rocks on that place and make a pile. So

we put the rocks on that, we go to another pile, pick up another rock and put it on the pile. They had nothing to do for us.

Q: This job was just to keep you busy?

A: Just to keep us busy. O.K. so anyhow that was the beginning there. After we built up more blocks there and I was in one of them. I think it was 26.

Q: Were more and more people coming in after you arrived? Were you one of the first people to arrive there, were there people there already?

A: This camp was a camp, at that time, everybody came. Communists, homosexuals, religious people, big owners from big factories and things like that. Everybody came in there. We had our yellow star, the criminals had their green star, the homosexuals had an orange star, you know, and so on. Everybody had a different star. That was the way they were identified. Anyhow, there wasn't very much to do to us. We had an SS man and the SS man said, O.K. The SS man took us behind the barracks, he make us some kind of contest of running. He built two columns, one of the columns was A one of the columns was B and we had to see which column can run faster the distance which he is giving us. That was actually the business at the end. Then we were all finished, then he taught us some songs, we had to run around. It was all no punishment there, it was just a concentration camp in the build-up. And all night we all had stars on the jacket. There was a canteen, in this canteen we still could buy something if somebody had money. So some of the people, we went down, we buy something then they discontinued that, we couldn't do anymore and I had a bright new jacket, I didn't have my star on it yet, so the people said, well you have a brand new jacket you can go in the canteen for us to buy something. So I went for them. I took the chance and bought something for them. That went up to July 1938.

Q: So you were there for about three months?

A: From April to July. Then we get the order one day in the morning you all get up take your good jackets and everything out we give you some other things to wear. You are going to be going away from here. We came again on the transport. This time it was not a cattle car, this time it was a regular car.

Q: A regular train car with seats and everything?

A: Yes, a regular train car, but it was very strict in there, the SS were hitting us. You were not allowed to speak, you were not allowed to move your head. One of the SS men when I just look at somebody else and turned my head, he hit me with the upside down pistol right on my head. That came certainly after three hours' train ride. The commandos came and said, don't hit anybody anymore. Hitting I not allowed. So, O.K. that went all the way until we came to Reimar, the city of Reimar. So after we came on the station, everybody had to run out there, we were

not allowed to walk out and outside after the railroad station there was already trucks waiting for us. In these trucks we were all stuffed in there, they had no backing on these trucks, you know, no gates. So we were standing in there, there was not very much to hold, one was holding onto the other. So, we went to another camp, which we discovered was _____. That was in July. So we came to Buchenwald which was a very bad situation. When we came we were hot we were hungry, they gave us a loaf of bread. We thought, oh, this is good so we find out in the evening that the loaf of bread has to last until the next morning. And in the evening, in the morning you get the bread, in the evening you get a soup, whatever you call it. And so that was the procedure. So in the morning always you got the bread, in the evening you get the soup. In the evening you had no bread. So it was a very bad situation. You had nothing to eat. It was not a big loaf of bread, it was a small bread. So, I was a good feeder that time, not too bad. Most of the people which came from Dachau was not too bad a shape. But over there we got in a bad shape because it was a lousy situation.

Q: Can you explain to me a little bit about Buchenwald, what it was like there and how it was situated?

A: I'm coming to it. We had a couple, what you call it, who was looking for the people in the barracks, you know, and he was a communist. So he was not very much for the Nazis anyhow but he said he gave us some warnings, and in the morning he said you people going out and right in front of the barracks he had a latrine build, which was just trenches in a big hole and that was the latrine. Further on we went to work so he gave me a pick and somebody got a shovel and we had to dig the ground there.. We didn't know what's going on anyhow. Anyway that's the way they kept us busy there. So, one day, a guy said to me, he said, why you're working too hard, why don't you take the shovel and give that other one the pick? It didn't work out either because these people were not trained to have some, what you call it, equipment in the hand. I was coming from the country so I was a little tougher than they were. You get some blisters. So the next day, one day in the morning, a guy said to me, hey, come over to our command, we have a good commander. O.K. so I was shifting over, which was not allowed but I did it, I went to the other commander, the commander was a criminal. He had a green star. And he said hurry up, he had about 375 people there in his command. Every two people get a platform of wood, about 3x4, you know, and has two handles in the back, two handles in the front, and one man in the back and one man in the front carry the platform. The platform we had to put sand on it at that time and with that we marched a mile or two miles, whatever it was in the time, and when we came there with the sand we dropped the sand there, we took some stones, we took it back to the other place. On the way over there we were passing on the places there were some trees there. One day we came there was three people hanging there. There was three hanging there.

Q: This is near the camp?

A: Yes.

Q: Near the entrance to the camp?

A: No, no. On the trees where we passing through was three people hanging. They were dead already. They were hanging with their head back up on a rope. So actually it broke their neck.

Q: This is in the town where you were working?

A: That is in Buchenwald? It was outside or inside the camp?

Q: In Buchenwald?

A: There is no inside, outside, there is only inside.

Q: So you worked all the time inside Buchenwald?

A: In Buchenwald. Buchenwald is the concentration camp. It is not a town.

Q: O.K. I understand. I wasn't sure if they were taking you out of town to work or if it was all in.

A: It was all in. That's the way they keep the people busy. Some people are hanging there, our kapo said to us, don't look at them. If I see you looking at them, you gonna get punishment. So we went straight through, we didn't move our heads. We saw them, we come straight, you know. Oh, that was awful. So that people changed and maybe when we come back another two or three weeks again there was another bunch hanging there.

Q: Did anyone know why they had been hung?

A: In a concentration camp is no why's. In the concentration camp is only you do, don't why. There are no questions. This is something strict like a, I don't know, I cannot explain it to you. People, who are murderers or something like that, only this kind of people can do things like that. Who would hang people with the hand in the back on a tree. This is a specialty. O.K. That was over there. So I was there till the 15 of October.

Q: 1938?

A: In Buchenwald. But between this time my mother was worried about me. She was in Vienna.

Q: She was still in Vienna?

- A: Yes. She wrote to the commander of Buchenwald that she said my son is in your concentration camp, his number is 9158 and I would like to know what actually happened to him. That was a special thing. It was a card with an answering, you know. At that time they had postcards where you can make them hang together on the other side was the answering. She mailed that card, she get an answer. The answer was that I was transferred to the criminal police in Linz in Austria. I was transferred. But she didn't know nothing. That was on 8/11/1938.
- Q: So she wrote to Dachau?
- A: Yeah.
- Q: And then you were transferred?
- A: No, it didn't go to Dachau. She wrote a card.
- Q: She wrote a card to Dachau to find out about you?
- A: She wrote a card to Buchenwald.
- Q: Wait a minute you said you went to Buchenwald in July.
- A: No. I went in July that is correct. But she thought I was in Dachau, but she didn't know I was transferred to Buchenwald.
- Q: So when she wrote, she still thought you were in Dachau?
- A: No.
- Q: When did she write the card?
- A: She wrote the card on 4/10/38.
- Q: Which is October 4th?
- A: Yes. October 4th. She wrote the card there. They mailed it back that I was not there anymore and was transferred on 4/10/38 to Linz, and that is in Buchenwald. She knew I was in Buchenwald. She took a chance because I sent her some cards, but she didn't receive any cards anymore. So she was asking. So I have these two cards here which is evidence, which was signed by the commander of that name, it was Koch (?) He was SS _____. So I have this card here to document, you know. And, so anyhow she knows already I was going to leave Austria. I was going on a train. What actually happened, on the 13th of October in the night was the Apell, you know, they put everybody on a big place. All the blocks together, and certainly they called my name. When they called my name they said tomorrow morning you have to go for a medical. So I heard it, I didn't

know what's going to happen, I had nothing wrong with me. So I came to my block and they said. Oh, you're going out, you're going out. You're going for a medical, you're going out he said. But do not tell him that you heard something. Don't tell him nothing. Tell him you feel fine, tell him you're O.K. you feel wonderful. Tell him whatever you want but don't tell you got something wrong with you. So the next day in the morning I went to the medical I did like the block, like the guy told me to do it and he said O.K. you go in the next room over there we going to supply you with some clothes. We haven't got your clothes from Dachau but we have to give you some other clothes there are. So, they supplied me and the next day in the morning, on the 15th I was going on a transport, I was going on transport, on the way to Linz, Austria. That transport took about 14 days, 15 days.

Q: It took you 15 days to go from Buchenwald to Linz?

A: From Buchenwald on transport. From Buchenwald it took that long. It was on a cattle, what you call it, not passenger car.

Q: A box car?

A: What do you call it?

A: A box car?

A: On freight cars, it was hooked up on freight cars. And we go from one town, next town we went out, they put us in the jail, they gave us a breakfast, they put us back there, we continued. Then there was the next town. So we went about at least twelve, or ten or twelve towns before I came to Linz, Austria. I came to Linz, Austria on the evening of November 5, 1938. I arrived there. When I arrived there it was, like I said, criminal police came to me and said John Friedmann, are you hungry? I said sure. So he said today we have a special day, we have a herring and I give you a double issue because you went that long way. So he give me that was it. So he said to me, what are you going to do if I going to let you out of here? I said, what am I going to do, I'm going to see if I can get out of Austria as fast as I can. So the man said, that's all I want to do here. The next day in the next morning, at 7 o'clock in the morning, he said, O.K. John, go ahead get out of Austria he said. So he released me. I didn't have any money to go back to my town, so I went to the Jewish organization in Linz and I said I need some money to get on the train. He said we don't have very much money, but for the train he said, we give you that. So they give me the money, two gildas to go from Linz to _____, where I meet my landlady, where she had my money, some of my money there, so I was all right. So after about on the 7th, I went to Vienna. When I went to Vienna in 1938, so here comes actually the story of the Kristallnacht. Every time I have to report to the police department, and to go up there.. So the first time I go up to the police, the man said to me, where are you, where have you been? We waiting for you such a long time, we get the report

you're going to come, but we didn't receive you. We going to keep you here. We cannot let you go. We going to check out what you have to tell us and we cannot let you go. My mother went with me. She went right away to get some food out there, to buy some food. The man was going on the phone and it took about two hours my mother came back after and after about two hours they called me in the room and said well, we find out that everything you said is correct, you can go home. So my mother said, O.K. now we have to eat the food at home. That was about on the 8th, on the 8th of November they told me every second day I have to come there. I don't have to come every day. So on the next day, the morning, I went out, I said to my mother well, I better go back to my town, get all my things over there what I have left, come back to you then. So, that was on the 9th of November. I didn't see very much of the Kristallnacht actually, but I was there. So I was there, coincidentally, I took a train, it was 9:30 in the evening, went down to my town. It was an overnight train, you see, when you took the train there in the morning at 6 o'clock, it arrived in _____. So it went all the night. So I came to my landlady in the morning then and she said, oh, I'm glad to see you. I said, what's wrong? She said yesterday, it was the 9th, a gendarme came and asked for you. I told him you are not here, you are in Vienna by your mother. So, that's the way I get out of the Kristallnacht.

Q: You happened to be back in your other town?

A: That's correct. So that was the point from that. But the main thing is not coming up about how do I get actually out of the concentration camp. That would be interesting for you too.

Q: Yes.

A: So my mother had some friends before. Under them was a criminal inspector, and she told him, to the criminal inspector, she said my son is in the concentration camp in Buchenwald. You have to do something to get him out. So he said, I don't know what I can do, but I will try. So what he actually did actually, he was asking the Gestapo that to release me from Buchenwald which I didn't know before that, that the criminal police had a case against me, so they need me there. He made an application to the Gestapo, they released me from Buchenwald on the 15th of October and I come from Linz and the Gestapo inspector was informed already from that guy and that's how I get out from there. Because the friend of my mother, he did the job, a good job. So now we are now on a _____ again and in April, when Hitler came in.

Q: April of 1938?

A: That was in 1938. So that was when they arrested me actually. All right. So now, where was I?

- Q: Let's see, you had gone back to _____ to get your things and that's when Kristallnacht happened that evening. Did you return to Vienna after that?
- A: After that, yes, O.K., after that I returned to Vienna and I tried to get out of Austria. I had about until December.
- Q: You had until December to get out of the country, is that right?
- A: Yes, that's correct. So what I went, I went to the Jewish organization in Austria, Vienna, and I asked what I can do? Well, he said we have something working on here, which goes to Palestine. You want to go there? I said, well I want to go there, it's fine, I'll go there, I'll go anywhere I can go out. So I said, what about my mother? Well, your mother, you cannot take, only young people. We only can take young people. So I said, what am I going to do? There was a little letter in the hall and it says on that letter, the only way out is through the free port of Shanghai. That's the only way you can go. So, O.K., so there was no other way left. So we tried, I tried to get a passport, when I applied for the passport..
- Q: Who did you apply to for the passport?
- A: Through the German Gestapo, You applied for the passport there and when I came there a guy tells me, don't tell him you're a salesman. Tell him you're a mechanic. He says, you know something about cars he knows I was driving around cars. I was fooling around with them. Don't tell him you're a salesman. So after about three days, standing night and days sometimes, I don't want to get involved in that business, so after that we get the passport. I had mechanic in there.
- Q: And your mother also got a passport at this time?
- A: My mother did not get a passport. No she didn't. She couldn't go.
- Q: She couldn't go? Was there a reason she couldn't go to Shanghai?
- A: What actually happened, we went to the travel bureau, there was no tickets available for Shanghai. The only chance I had to Shanghai, there was one ticket left, which was going from Naples, Italy and the boat was going from Genoa, Italy. So I had to catch that boat in April. To catch that boat in April, I had to go by train over Italy to Rome, Naples and when I came to Naples, a day later came the boat. So on that boat I had that one ticket. But my mother couldn't go. I went to Shanghai on December the 27th, I came to Shanghai.
- Q: Let me ask you, when did you leave Vienna for Naples?
- A: I leave Vienna to Naples on December the 10th. Something like that. December the 9th or 10th.

Q: Then the boat left?

A: The boat left when we came to _____, 14 days' ride.

Q: And you arrived in Shanghai December 27?

A: I arrived in Shanghai, like they said to us, oh, that Shanghai is bad, they had people sleeping on the streets. Jewish people said before don't go there. So we came there, we come with the boat, we saw all the skyscrapers there, everything was there. We said, how bad can it be? It cannot be that bad. So, anyhow, but my mother couldn't go. So what happened, we went there, they took us in a building from Victor Sassoon, Victor Sassoon Building, they give us a whole level of the building.

Q: You had one whole floor?

A: Yes, one story. It was a high building. So they placed us there, they gave us cots to sleep there, then later on they opened up a kitchen and I was working in the kitchen there already, but my mother still couldn't go. So what did my mother actually make to come to Shanghai. There was the time when Hitler said that all the Jewish people have to put the gold and silver, put it on the certain place, you cannot keep gold and silver for you.

Q: When did this happen, do you remember?

A: January 1939. So my mother just couldn't get a ticket. She didn't have that much money left to buy the ticket. So what actually happened, she had a lot of jewelry left, but you couldn't sell it that time because everybody took advantage of the Jews. So she went to a travel bureau in a very popular place, a big one, he had a porter standing out there. So she went to the porter and said, listen, I have here a bag of gold jewelry, I have to deliver it to the SS anyhow, but I would need a ticket to Shanghai, my son is there. If you get me that ticket I will give you the gold. The man looked in the bag to see the jewelry, he took the jewelry, he said O.K, come tomorrow, 9 o'clock. Next day, in the morning, my mother came there and he said, here is your ticket for Shanghai. So, actually I was happy she came to Shanghai.

Q: So she did follow you there?

A: She took the chance to give the man that gold. At that time she said, I have nothing to lose. If I gave it to them, I have nothing. If I give it to him, if he helps me, which he did, that was the only way to do it. So she came to Shanghai with the _____. I was already working for the organization, I came on board, there was a Red Cross man already and she came there, it was a happy reunion naturally.

- Q: Was there a group or organization that helped you settle in Shanghai when you got there?
- A: There was no settling in Shanghai. Everybody was his own. Either you stayed in the organization, it was like a camp, and there was several made up. There was about three of them made up there. Or, if you find a job, then you can get a job. O.K., so when I came to Shanghai, they asked me, oh, you're a mechanic? O.K., so one of these rich Jewish people was there, he said, I have a Fiat, I need a clutch, can you put her in? I was the first day in Shanghai. He said if I can put it in. Naturally I can put it in. That was a simple job for me, I did that for my car.
- Q: So you were able to do it?
- A: Yes. I came to him, I did not have tools, so he supplied me with tools, whatever they could get, and I proved I could put the clutch in for him. O.K., if you can do that we see that you can get a job. So, which I did. I was learning, it took me about three months to learn Chinese. To get a job you have to speak Chinese in Shanghai. There's no other way out. So I spoke the language fairly. Then I get a job from the city government, the British government of Shanghai. I was a supervisor for the trash dumps. Trash collection. So they had about eight _____ at that time and so I worked with them as a supervisor, I used my Chinese as good as I could, and after about three, four months they came to me and said, John, we have to release you. We get a guy coming in from England and this is our man, we cannot hold you anymore. So, O.K., so I went, I had connections already. I went to the bus company where a Jewish fellow was in charge. I said I need a job, he said there was no question, right away he hired me. I was working for the Shanghai Bus Company. I was in charge of a German fellow, but he was not so political. He was just a German. So I got the job there at the Bus company, I was working as a mechanic at night, night shift, started at 11 O'clock in the evening, 7 o'clock in the morning I was off. So I worked with the Bus Company, changed to motors, changed to generators, everything what I had to do over there. Later on there was an opening on the test bench, where you tested the motors. If they are good overhauls, you know. So there was an engineer, his name was _____, he was a Jewish fellow, so he got me there as his assistant. So I worked over there in the Bus Company for three years, until the Japanese told us that we have to go to a ghetto. O.K. What is the ghetto? The ghetto was a district across the bridge of the Yangtze River, called _____. And that ghetto there, there was really about maybe 100,000, 200,000 Chinese. All living there. So they put us in there. We had to mix with them, we had to live with them, we had to stay there, there was no out. we get the passes if you work outside, which I did. I worked outside in the _____, I get the job for the Toyota Company.
- Q: The British at this point had left and the Japanese had come in, or were the British still there?

A: No, the Japanese came in they went out.

Q: When did the Japanese come do you remember?

A: Let me see, 1942.

Q: As soon as the Japanese came, did they set up a ghetto?

A: The Japanese came, they set up a ghetto. We only could get out with a pass. At first I was working for a French company, I was working for Citroen Motors, and working then and we were building. They had an order from the Japanese to build hundreds of motors which they put in suicide boats. Boats that go against enemies, naturally. And these boats were built without a clutch. It was straight hooked up to the propeller. So when you start the motor, the boat was shooting already. Only have to get the direction that it supposed to run in the boat. That was in France, then, like I said, I got the job in the Toyota Company, which helped me get a pass out of _____, out of the ghetto. So I was going out of the ghetto at the time when, because as a mechanic, there were not very many mechanics. There was only six, seven mechanics.

SIDE TWO

A: (Something is missing). Jewish Young fellows, I hired them as apprentices, I have the authority from them, which are still in America here. So after Toyota closed up in downtown L.A., of Los Angeles, it was in the French section, Dickie said we have to go with the bus the next day and the Nissan Company takes over. That was the Datsun Company. Nissan/Datsun Company they call it in Japanese. So they hired us, O.K., so what was the hiring, every half month they give us a bag of rice and they give a little bit of pocket money. So it was better than nothing. My mother was still there. It worked out all right. It was not great, but when you are able to work in your profession, it was good. So, anyhow that was going on until the American came in.

Q: Which was when?

A: At the end of the war. When the Americans came in I applied for a job. They hired me as a foreman in the ATC, the Air Transport Command and I was a foreman for the trucks, after six months I was there I didn't like it because I couldn't get further, so I went with the Air Force, I was a _____. That did not last too long and finally I get a job in Nanking. In Nanking for the American to build a radio station. XMHA Radio Station in Nanking. At that time the headquarters of General Marshall. I went over there and my mother stayed in Shanghai. I was employed as a power man, I had to make the power for the radio station that they can run the transmitters. They didn't have enough people so I was running the power and then I was helping the radio stations to build, before

the radio station was open, I helped put the towers up, about 45 foot towers over top of General Marshall's building there, and General Marshall was on the first floor and the second floor. I was on the third floor over there. They gave us the lodging in the Headquarters and it was working all right for that part. Then I always had a job, I never was without a job. Always had a job. That went to 1949. 1949 we heard that the communists are coming across the Yangtze already, we had to get out of Shanghai. So the Jewish organizations told us, it was a very short notice from one day to the other, tomorrow, at 10 o'clock assemble all the organizations and we are going to Canada. So we I just took an army bag and I put everything what I could. Money I couldn't take, they didn't let you take money out of there, so whatever it was we went the next day in the morning with Alaskan Airlines out of Shanghai. When we crossed the river they were shooting already at the airlines, at the transportation here, then we came to Fairbanks, Alaska. Fairbanks, Alaska and there we get a transfer plane after we waited a day over. We went on a transfer plane to Seattle. We came to Seattle, it was not allowed that we can get off the bus because we didn't have any documents, so they took us in the bus then, they were running the buses to Vancouver, from Seattle to Vancouver. In Vancouver, already some of the Jewish people there who were working for the organization, they were waiting for us already. I found a lady there, she was Mrs. Gould and she said, oh, you are a mechanic. I said yes. She said why don't you drive, I don't like to drive that car. So, she was sitting next to me, we went all around Vancouver. I was driving the car. The next day she said, you just can drive, if you want a car, drive through the ton you can have the car. Don't worry. I said what about the license. She said don't worry, they aren't so strict here, you are a good driver. So we stayed three days in Vancouver after the three days, we were going on a train, we went to Toronto, Canada. Now we came to Toronto, Canada the 29th of May 1949, and right away they gave us some quarters, we didn't have any money, they paid for the first two weeks until we get some money made there, until we get some employment. I got right away employed for the Austin of England. So right away I got Austin of England employed and well, that was the beginning Canada, then when I was working there I met my wife, we got married in Canada and in 1950. We just had our 43rd anniversary.

Q: Just this year? That's great! When did you move to California?

A: I came to California in December of 1950.

Q: So you only stayed in Toronto for about a year?

A: A year and a half, 1951 I came to California, about two years later.

Q: Let me ask you a question about Shanghai. You mentioned there were skyscrapers. Was that something different for you? You hadn't seen skyscraper in Europe?

A: No. At that time there were not such buildings. There was no skyscraper buildings at that time.

Q: So Shanghai was a different looking city to you?

A: Oh, it was a ten million people city. There was people sleeping on the road, they were sleeping here too. Everywhere in the world. There was always poor people. But like I said in conversations not bad.

Q: O.K., I think that's all the questions I have. I'm going to shut off the tape now, O.K.?

A: O.K.