

**Interview with Jack Bass
October 17, 2003**

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, **Jack**.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: Nice to see you here.

A: Likewise.

Q: Thank you. **Jack**, what was your name when you were born?

A: My name was **Jurgen Jakob Bassfreund**. The name **Jakob** was given to me as a Jewish name because my grandfather's name -- he w-was a rabbi with a title of a doctor, and he -- his name was **Jakob Bassfreund**. And s-since he was deceased already when I was born, I -- this was given to me as a middle name, as a Jewish name, so to speak.

Q: Right. And **Jurgen**, where does that come from, do you know?

A: Well **Jurgen** is -- I don't know how my mother ever got the idea. My father said, "How co -- what happens if he really looks Jewish, and you give him the name **Jurgen**, and he will find out [indecipherable] look Jewish, and he can't be named **Jurgen**." **Jurgen** is actually a Danish name, I believe, it's -- it -- it's a na -- **George** in Danish, or something to that effect.

Q: And did they call you **Jurgen**?

A: No, they used to call me **Bubchen**, which means little boy.

Q: **Bubchen**?

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A: Yeah.

Q: I see. That was cute. When -- when were you born, what year?

A: On September the 30th, 1923.

Q: And you were born where?

A: I was born in **Bernkastel**, at the **Mosel River**.

Q: At the where?

A: **Mosel -- Mosel**.

Q: **Mosel**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh, it's a -- it's near -- it's near the river?

A: Well, yeah.

Q: It's on the river.

A: It's called **Bernkastel** on the **Mosel**.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. And it's very famous for its wines. In fact, you can almost go in every per --
pe -- wine store here in this country, and you'll find wine from **Bernkastel**.

Q: Right. Did you grow up in **Bernkastel**, or in -- or in --

A: No, not in **Bernkastel** proper. We lived about two miles, or three miles out of
Bernkastel, in a small village I would say, it's called **Muhlheim**. That's where we
lived, that's where my father's practice was.

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Q: And your father was a --

A: A medical doctor.

Q: A medical doctor.

A: Yeah.

Q: So how come you were born in **Bernkastel**?

A: Well, this -- when my mother gave birth to my sister, she screamed, so she was ashamed to give birth at the hou -- in the house, and this was the only hospital around, was in **Bernkastel**. It was a Catholic hospital, I remember there were all nuns there. And also my father used to have his patients in there, my father also did surgery.

Q: I see.

A: I -- removing -- a-a-appendectomies, and operations of that kind. Heart operations weren't done in those days --

Q: Right.

A: -- days, so --

Q: So how did you find out that that was the reason why you were born in **Bernkastel**?

A: Because my mother told me.

Q: Your mother told you this. Now, you had an older sister, **Ilsa**, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: And she was how many years older than you? She was --

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A: She was born in 1921, which would make her two years older than I am.

Q: Two years older, okay.

A: She is in **California** now.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She lives in ba -- **Huntington Beach**.

Q: Uh-huh, I see. But I want to get a little bit of a sense of your family --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- life. So tell me about your father. He was a doctor.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you close with him? I -- I un -- when you were a little boy?

A: He did what?

Q: Yo -- your father was a doctor?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. Were you close with him?

A: Oh yeah. My father was a very loving father. He --

Q: Yes?

A: -- yeah, he doted on us --

Q: Yeah?

A: -- I must say, yeah. And my father used to put, let's say, for instance **Lindt** chocolates on our night tables, and things like that. He was a very good father. He was

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very -- he was a good man, too, he had -- I remember I ha -- ga -- my father used to also buy -- when I bought a pair -- he bought a suit for me, he would also buy the chauffeur's son a suit, and he used to buy schoolbooks for -- for him and for me. A very good man.

Q: So he was a generous man.

A: In fact, I understand that there were underpriv -- some o-of his underprivileged patients, who didn't even have any electricity, that my father used to put -- put electricity, and had it charged to him, because he had to see what he was doing, you know, and besides that, he felt that people have got to have electricity, you know?

Q: So he was a generous person? Generous?

A: He --

Q: He -- he was generous.

A: Yeah, very generous.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Very generous man.

Q: Did he have a good sense of humor?

A: Oh yeah, he did.

Q: Is that where you got your sense of humor?

A: I guess so. I guess I have a pretty decent sense of humor.

Q: Now, did he have in -- his office was in **Muhlheim**?

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A: Yeah. He had his office in **Muhlheim**, and he moved in -- I think it was 1930, yeah, he moved into a new house, we had a 14 room house, and the practice was in that building, on the side entrance, and there was the --

Q: I see.

A: -- was the practice there.

Q: So, did you go for walks with your father, or did you build --

A: Oh yes I did.

Q: Yeah?

A: My father had very little time, because during ha -- in those days doctors used to do house calls, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: It wasn't like today, the only doctor came in the house is **Dr. Pepper**. But in those years, they -- my father was called out day and night. In fact, we had a telephone line going direct to the chauffeur's house, and if my father had to go somewhere, he would ring up, and he would come and pick him up wi-with the car and take him to the patient.

Q: Now, I understand that your father was not the best driver, is that why he had a chauffeur?

A: Oh yeah, he was a horrible driver. I don't -- I never drove with him, but maybe I wouldn't be here today if I would have. My mother said that he drove once, and that

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he almost ended up in a ravine, or something. And she said, "You can't drive no more, this is it." She said, "You better hire somebody to," -- because in the beginning, when my father first started out, he used to go to [indecipherable] day he had to go to the woods there, and things like that -- they had wild boars in that area too, you know, in the woods. So it was kind of a risky situation. And it's better to go by car, you know --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- than walking.

Q: So does this mean that you were fairly wealthy, because you had --

A: Ba -- by American standards, I don't think that my father was very wealthy. I mean, we didn't have a -- a yacht in the ocean, or anything like that. My father was very hard working man, and he very seldom took a vacation. I remember even when my mother was -- would take us on vacations to the **Black Forest**, or most of the time we used to go out of -- out of the country, because there was a lot of anti-Semitism, especially in do -- in places near the -- near the **North Sea** where the Germans had the ba -- the ba -
- spas, and places. The fact was that the Jewish newspaper in **Germany** used to print every year a book that have places where Jews are not wanted. And they listed all these restaurants and hotels that did not cater to Jewish people.

Q: And this is before **Hitler** came?

A: Yeah, that was before.

Q: Before?

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A: In fact, i-it's -- I don't know whether it's now and here, there is a -- a place called **Norderney**, which is -- I think it's on the bal -- is it on the b -- I think it's on the **Baltic**. And -- or maybe it's on the **North Sea**, I'd -- I'm not sure now. And they never allowed Jews in -- in that town.

Q: Wh-What was your father's name?

A: **Manfred, M-a-n-f-r-e-d, Manfred Bassfreund.**

Q: And was -- was he equally doting on your sister as well as you --

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: -- he was close to both of you?

A: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

Q: What -- uh-huh. Was he interested in music?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Very much so. I remember that -- I remember the old **Caruso** records that we had.

In those years, used to have a crank tha -- a crank up phonograph.

Q: Right.

A: It was a **[indecipherable]** though. And he had **Caruso** records, he had symphonies, but in those days the symphonies came, each movement was on a separate record, of course. So I'm -- I remember we had **Beethoven's** First, the first movement, and we

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had the opera recordings, so of course tha -- in those days you didn't have complete operas. There were arias, or duets, or so on and so forth, yeah.

Q: So you grew up as a youngster hearing a lot of classical music?

A: Oh yeah, I did, I did.

Q: And did he teach -- did -- did you listen together and he taught you about the music?

A: Yeah, he taught me about the music, and we listened together. And he also -- I remember in those years, in 1932, came out for the first time, a German encyclopedia in one volume, **A to Z**, and it was a very good one, was wa -- well made, and he gave it to me. And I used to love to look up things when I list -- listened to **Verdi**, I would look up **Verdi**. When I was listening to **Meyerbeer**, I would look up **Meyerbeer**. And I learned a lot from it, you know? I --

Q: Did you also listen to popular music, or it was strictly classical music?

A: No, I would say strictly classical -- I'm still to -- well -- I'm still today not a great friend of -- of popular music. I mean, my wife is a big enthusiast of jazz, and you can ask her almost anything, she can tell you when **Louis Armstrong** had a headache, almost, but my -- I am not really into it so much. I can listen to it a certain time, but after awhile, it seems to me very monotonous.

Q: I see. And do you --

A: I guess I'm not that -- understanding it too well.

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Q: Do you have particular instrumental favorites, or is [indecipherable]

A: No, I would say I'm very fond of the violin, the cello, piano.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you go to concerts as a kid, were there concerts in **Muhlheim**?

A: We had a [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah?

A: In fact, that this is the one good thing I got to say about **Germany**, almost every little town had an opera house there.

Q: Really?

A: In **Trier** has an opera house, I mean all tare -- also used to give plays in that but they -- but we had to -- I remember a ber -- a -- a gentleman, we were friendly, my sister was friendly with his daughter, he was a **heldentenor**. A **heldentenor** is somebody who does the Wagnerian waltzes, the real strong voice, tenor, you know. You have to be for **Wagner**.

Q: Right.

A: And yeah, I heard a lot of bar -- good concerts and operas.

Q: Tell me about your mother, what was her name?

A: Her name was **Irma Bodenheimer** by birth. **Irma Bodenheimer** [indecipherable]
Irma Bassfreund.

Q: **Burma**?

A: Yeah.

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Q: Uh-huh.

A: This is wa -- how my daughter got the name **Irma**.

Q: I see.

A: Our oldest one.

Q: And tell me something about your mother, what was she like?

A: My -- my mother was -- I was not as close with my mother as wi-with my father, I -
- I can truly say. I think my mother was not as patient and as loving a person as my
father was. But of course she was my mother, you know, and you have no -- no
options why --

Q: Right.

A: So, I can't say anything bad about her, but I sh -- remember my father more fondly
than my mother.

Q: Was she a disciplinarian?

A: Yeah, among other things, yeah.

Q: What are the other things?

A: You know what, I -- what I mean to say is just, in **Europe** when a woman is
married to an **MD**, she has the feeling as if she's part an **MD** as well, because the
woman is usually called **Frau Doktor**, which is stupid because she's not a doctor, not
at all. My mother Wa -- didn't -- ma -- my mother was not stupid, but she didn't have
the brain capacity to be a doctor. And this isn't -- she used to walk around, you can see

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even, in one picture. She used to have what is called an **esculap**, I don't know whether you know what an **esculap** is. An **esculap** is a snake winding around -- I think was a sign of a doctor. And she had a brooch with a diamond in it that she always wore. So you would know that she had something to do with the medical profession.

Q: But she didn't work?

A: No, no. She didn't work.

Q: Yeah. And did they get along okay, your parents?

A: This was the bad part about it, because since she didn't work, she could dedicate more time of this discipline [**indecipherable**]

Q: Did your mother and father get along, do you think? From what you remember?

A: Yes, to a certain extent. My mother was a little bit on the jealous side, and so on, so -- but this is not neither here nor there.

Q: Right.

A: I mean, I think she's not the only one.

Q: Right, right. And how about your sister? Your sister's two years older than you were.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you close?

A: Oh yeah, we are still close.

Q: You're still close.

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A: I still call my sister almost every week.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. In fact, I just called her prior to leaving, and yeah, we talk on the phone, and reminisce, whatever we remember.

Q: Did you play together?

A: Oh yeah, sure, sure.

Q: Yeah?

A: Sure.

Q: Because often when the -- when you have a si -- a sister or brother who is a couple of years older, they don't want to have anything to do with each other.

A: No, I loved -- my sister always let me win the games, and I was very happy about that, so I played a lot with her.

Q: Right.

A: I remember playing with her, she used to have beautiful dolls, and I used to play doctor. I used to get the -- some p -- p -- hypodermic needles, and things, and I used to give them injections. The dolls were full of water, which my sister did not appreciate at all.

Q: So you actually put water in the --

A: Yeah, in the -- in the syringe, you know, and I si -- injected them.

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Q: So in your head do you think you were practicing to become a doctor, is that what you thought?

A: Yeah, I think so, maybe.

Q: Did you ever go into the office with your father, and watch [indecipherable]

A: No, we didn't th -- we didn't. The only thing I remember in those years, I used to get ultraviolet rays, and my -- my father had an ultraviolet -- what do you call them, sunlamp, or whatever.

Q: Uh-huh, yeah.

A: It was a big contraption a -- in those days, and it -- there was like a -- a leather sofa, you had to lie down on it, and I don't know how long, two or three minutes, whatever, you had to wear goggles, you know.

Q: And what was the purpose?

A: I don't think even that it's that healthy, I mean, can cause cancer and things like that.

Q: And you -- you did that?

A: I did it, yeah, my pur -- my father thought it was beneficial.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: In those years, the concept of healing a person was completely different.

Q: Right.

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A: I think se -- sa -- in those years people did things that are absolutely wrong to do. I used to gar -- get sick very often because probably due to the fact that my father saw [indecipherable] patients, and probably some of the germs carried over into the house or whatever. I used to have a sore throat every hour, so to speak. And in those years, when someone had fever, they would give them something like aspirin, and then they would take a wet cloth, and wrap you up in it, and you had to sweat in that. Which is wrong because it causes people to get pneumonia.

Q: Right.

A: And a -- I -- I remember distinctly, I had quite a lot of sickness when I was a kid. I even had scarlet fever.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And --

Q: So they wrapped you in a wet li -- like a towel over your entire body?

A: Yeah, not wa -- two or three times a day, yeah. And I hated -- I used to scream my head off, but they had no mercy.

Q: No mercy. And this was a hot towel, in order to make you sweat?

A: Yeah, it was a hot towel, yeah. And it was soaking wet.

Q: Right.

A: And then they put a dry one around it, on top of it, and you had to lay there, and if you were lucky somebody would read you a story, and if not, you just screamed --

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Q: -- just [indecipherable] screaming --

A: -- till they took you out after th -- an hour or two.

Q: Did your sister get sick as often as you?

A: Not as often, but she also got, once in awhile, she also used to get what they used to call the **wickel** in those days.

Q: The **wickel**?

A: Because **wickel** means to wind up -- to wind around, you know. You were wrapped up in it.

Q: I see. Did you like school?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember going to school?

A: No, I -- I don't -- I liked school, but I never remember that I went to school where there was no anti-Semitism there.

Q: Really?

A: I mean, already in 1930, the Nazis had a way of getting -- teach na -- national Socialist teachers into the s -- s-school op -- system.

Q: Right.

A: And I remember that there was a German poem, where it was about a tree which wanted to change it's leave, and then God gave him golden leaves, and when the golden leaves [indecipherable], a Jew went through the forest, and he saw the golden

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leaves, and he took them all off in a big sack, he came in with a big beard and sack. And every time when I -- when this part of the ballad was supposed to be said, he -- the teacher would call on me to say it, you know? And the kids didn't want to play with me any more. And when -- I remember even before I went to school, usually when kids fought they used to call each other idiot, or donkey, or ape, or whatever. [indecipherable] called you a dirty Jew, you know? And it got worse and worse, of course, and so we had to -- in fact, I remember that the school teacher I had used to smoke Nazi cigarettes. There was one company in germ -- you know, the Nazis always had for a -- for all their things, these forceful names. Like, the black **core** was the **SS** newspaper. **Der Sturmer**, or the storm man, you know? And the attack -- the [indecipherable] -- the attack. And these cigarettes were called **Trommlers**, and they came, of course, in a brown packing with an **SA** insignia on it. And he used to smoke them. I hope he got cancer from them. But he smoked them constantly, he was a chain smoker. And they infiltrated the system. This was -- I would say that maybe the National Socialists used the most -- the cleverest way of fooling people, and getting -- getting their system working. Because they did it without you knowing about it, you were -- all of a sudden somebody appeared in school, he tried to get the kids to enlist in the **Hitler** youth. And then they used to send -- my father was hated by them, but of course, my father, every time when s -- when they -- they -- they tried to assemble, and somebody would speak, my father told the owner of the restaurant, he said, "If you let

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them speak, I will tell the Jewish people not to buy wine from you.” And then they cancelled it, of course, because they would have lost a lot of money. But of course he was on -- on their black list, on their hate list. And I remember that every time when they used to come and march past our house, they would raise the Nazi flag high up for us to see it, you know? In other words to say, once we get there, we are going to take care of you, so to speak.

Q: So you remember this a -- as a young kid of --

A: Yeah, absolutely.

Q: -- six or seven year -- w-would you say you do -- would --

A: I remember when I was five years old.

Q: Five years old.

A: Yeah. I have a good memory. I don't remember before today what I ate for breakfast, but the order of the -- the things that had happened years ago, I remember very distinctly.

Q: Yeah. Do you re -- do you remember talking about this at home? Do -- did you come home and say they called me dirty Jew, what are they -- what are they saying? This must be --

A: Oh, they couldn't do -- what could they do? They couldn't do much about it. My father ba -- would go to the teacher and complain. You see, my father also used to do in school the vaccinations when we had [indecipherable], and my vaccination is still

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from a -- done from my father, you know? I don't know what kind of vaccination it was, every year, I think -- you know, I was once -- once -- when you went to school, you -- you got vaccinated.

Q: Right. So he would go and talk to the teacher?

A: Yeah. Probably did -- did -- you just -- you couldn't really do much about it, because --

Q: Right.

A: -- it's what -- they weren't themselves, and you know they -- they shout up at places where you wouldn't think they would. You know, it was --

Q: So, in -- in --

A: An infiltration type of thing.

Q: -- in **Muhlheim**, what was the population of Jews and Gentiles?

A: You could count them on your fingers. I would say in **Muhlheim**, there were maybe, all told 15 - 16 Jews.

Q: That's all?

A: Yeah.

Q: Out of a population of what, a few thousand?

A: No, not even that, a population of a thousand, I would say.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

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Q: So it's really tiny?

A: Yeah. A tiny, tiny place. Very, very pic -- picturesque, and very pretty.

Q: So it must have been very uncomfortable then, growing up.

A: It was very uncomfortable.

Q: Yeah.

A: I could really, truly say that I grew up with an inferiority complex. Because here we got all the time, and think -- you really almost thought that you really were inferior to other people, because they always talked about it. You know, you got -- you got to think. And it wasn't easy to grow up in this area.

Q: Right. Did you all eat dinner together?

A: Yeah, we did, we did.

Q: You did? Did you eat lunch as well?

A: I would say whenever my father had time to join us at dinner, he would. And I remember my father sitting at the head of the table, and we kids would sit left and right, or next seat -- beside of, on the side, and --

Q: And your mother would sit at the other end?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And who cooked, did your mother cook?

A: No, we had a maid who cooked.

Q: You had a maid who cooked.

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A: Yeah. And my mother might have been cooking, I think my mother thought she was a good cook, because she always said she made this cake and she made this cake, but my sister is two years older, she says she just didn't make that cake, our maid made that cake. So I don't know.

Q: And what is --

A: My mother -- my sister was not too fond of my mother to begin with, and wo -- yeah, she probably -- I -- I guess maybe the maid really did make the cake.

Q: Uh-huh. And what was dinner like? Did you have conversations, or was it very quiet?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: It was always s-something spoken about that was of interest. My father did not re -- we did not have to si -- just plain talks, there was some kind of sub -- subject. I remember once asking my father why the river flows in a direction. And he said, let's all think about it, and let's try to come up with an answer.

Q: Really?

A: And then it finally dawned on me, I said it must come from a mountain, that's why it's always going in one direct --

Q: And the -- so he says, yeah, this is the reason why. Because they usually always start in the mountainous areas, like the **Mosel** starts in -- in **Vosges**, and the -- the

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Rhine, this -- or is it the **Rhine** that starts [**indecipherable**]. Now, the **Mosel** -- the **Rhine** is set -- in **St. Totthard** in **Switzerland**, I believe starts.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And -- but they all start from mountainous areas.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you have a favorite food, as a kid?

A: Not really, when it comes to food I wouldn't -- well, I still adhere to the German foods a lot. Like, I like liverwurst for breakfast. I make toast, I let it melt on there. I like that. And I got a big surprise at my birthday when my daughter send me lunke -- you know what a **landjager** is?

Q: No.

A: Well, a **landjager** is some kind of a salami that looks as if somebody sat on it, it's flat, and it's very tasty. And she sent me four, and I saved --

Q: Four?

A: -- one, and I gave it [**indecipherable**] and said to my daughter when she brought me to the airport, and one other thing. And I like -- there's one place in -- in **Birmingham** that specializes in foreign food, so to speak, but it's not like up north, I mean, up north they gets a prolific amount of foods that they can buy from --

Q: Right, right.

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A: I like French cheese, I'm a great lover of cheese. I have to have cheese with every breakfast.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. It could be a b -- a **fromage de bleu**, or blue cheese, whatever you want to call it. **Camembert brie**, Swiss cheese. And every time I take it, my wife looks at me, oh my God, look at the calories, 75 -- this, and cholesterol 25, and --

Q: Did you grow up in a religious family?

A: Yeah, my father was extremely religious, due to the fact that my grandfather was religious. My grandfather you can see on the internet. He -- he was a -- he translated fragments of the -- the **Aramaic Pentateuch**, I don't know what they call that in English.

Q: Five books of **Moses**.

A: Yeah. From **Aramaic** into Hebrew into German, yeah. And --

Q: Is that **Jakob**?

A: Pardon. I beg your pardon?

Q: Is that the person you were named after?

A: **Jakob**?

Q: **Jakob, Jakob**?

A: **Jakob** was, yeah, that's my grandfather.

Q: That's -- uh-huh.

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A: Yeah. And I never met my grandfather, he was already deceased when I was born, but I also never met the grandfather on my mother's side. I might my -- met my grandmother on my mother's side, and that's about the only grandparents I had.

Q: So what do you mean when -- when I ask you the question, were you religious, what does that mean to you?

A: Well, I wasn't religious, we -- I had to be religious. My father was fluent in Hebrew, and on the high holidays, there was a synagogue about a mile out of town, and he would take over the -- the -- the part of the **Chassan**, and pray, you know, before -- of course he didn't get paid for it, but he was to relieve the **Chassan**, that he, you know, that has to pray all day long on **Yom Kippur**.

Q: Right, right.

A: And therefore he used to, so to speak, help out, you know. He said -- we said grace every day, for every meal, my father would say. And of course on Passover, he would read the **Haggadah**, and he [indecipherable]

Q: And you would -- did you observe the Sabbath?

A: Yeah, oh yeah. I was not allowed to write on -- on -- on the Sabbath.

Q: Really?

A: I mean, write with a pencil.

Q: Yes.

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A: Oh no. He was very religious, almost to the point of being uncomfortable because I was at -- my mother was not brought up that religious. I mean, she -- she observed the holidays, and we had of course the kosher household, because my father would have insisted on it. He probably did insist upon it.

Q: Right.

A: But after my father -- my father passed away, it became, unusually fast, un-kosher.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me what happened, your dad -- your father died in 1932.

A: Yes, he died due to an appendectomy, he waited too long. My mother was -- and my sister were on vaca -- were on vaca -- my mother was on vacation with my sister, she visited her relatives in **Saarbrücken**, which is near the French border there, on the -- she had a brother there, and a sister, brother-in-law and so forth. And my father wanted to wait till she came back, he wasn't -- I remember he wasn't feel good, I remember he -- for a doctor unusual things he took **[indecipherable]** extract, and he knew that wouldn't help. **[indecipherable]** an appendectomy. When he finally was at - - my mother was -- went by train, and the chauffeur picked her up, because the -- the regular railway station was also about a half an hour away from where we lived. And it was too late, he developed a thrombosis.

Q: Really?

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A: And he died. He was 42.

Q: So he was such a young man.

A: Yeah.

Q: That must have been a big shock to you.

A: It was, it was, indeed, it was a shock to all of us.

Q: Right.

A: And then already that was in '32, in 30 -- '32 anti-Semitism became already very openly in -- in **Muhlheim**. It was practiced on the open basis, because they all joined the **Hitler** youth, and were a few, they wanted to make **Muhlheim** free of Jews already in those days.

Q: Right.

A: So my mother moved to **Trier** with us. We sold the house -- course, we lost a lot of money on that house. It was a big house -- was a 14 room house, and it had a beautiful garden. And I remember we had a terrace on top of the -- the garage, it was so huge that I used to ride my little car on it, you know? I had a little kiddie car.

Q: We're gonna -- we're gonna have to stop to change the tape, so --

A: Okay. It gives me a chance to have a little drink.

Q: Absolutely.

End of Tape One

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Beginning Tape Two

Q: We ended the last tape when you began to talk about moving to **Trier**, but I want to ask you whether you remember your -- the funeral of your father?

A: Yeah, I certainly do remember. The funeral of my father, which took place in 1933 -- two, there were thousands of people lined up to see -- he was interred in **Trier** of course, because I don't know, my father said he doesn't want to be buried in a Jewish cemetery in **Muhlheim**, because it was out of th-things -- my mother wouldn't have had the chances to go and visit the grave, and all that. So he was interred in -- in **Trier**. And people lined up, because my father was beloved in those years, you know? He had many patients, he saved many lives, and he was very well loved. We had also two more doctors in this little horse village there. One was a drunk. He had a mistress, and he was standing -- always going hunting with her in the lo -- hunting lodges in the forest. The other one was -- he was a good do -- I -- I guess he was all right, but he didn't have -- my father was the busiest of the three, because he was always there. Not because he was Jewish. They [indecipherable] forgot he was Jewish, and [indecipherable] took everything away from the others, which wasn't the truth. The others were -- were not there, I mean, a -- a person go -- is -- get sick, he's going to go to the hunting lodge, you know, to find the doctor.

Q: Right, right. So who comforted you about your father's death, did anybody?

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A: Our chauffeur. I remember he came from the hospital, and I still see he sat down on a sofa that we had in our den, so to speak, it was called a den to -- there was a radio in [indecipherable], and he took me on one lap, and my sister as well, and he said, "Your dad passed away," and -- and he was -- he was crying.

Q: Oh.

A: You know, he felt very bad about it. And I can truly say he's one of the **new** Nazis that I -- now I saw him after the war, and he almost got in a concentration camp because he went into a store and he said good morning. There was a woman who said, "It's not good morning any more, it's **heil Hitler**." And he said, "What happened to the good morning?" And that woman was very upset about that, you know, the Germans loved him. There was actually -- this was almost a sexual affair the women had with him. I mean, he was certainly nothing to look at. He looked like an idiot.

Q: Right.

A: And the women were crazy, that's why he's -- he never got married. He was married to all the German women.

Q: Did your mother comfort you also, or not?

A: I don't remember my mother comforting me really. My mother wasn't of a comforting nature.

Q: That's right, uh-huh.

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A: She was a mother liked to hobnob with society. I remember we lived in **Trier**, above us, our apartment was the French consulate. And my mother was friendly with the French consul's wife, and they used to play cards together. I saw -- I can truly say that our maid actually raised me, more or less --

Q: Thank God -- right.

A: -- because my mother was not often at home.

Q: So that -- so that you -- your father's death was -- left an enormous hole in your life --

A: It did, it did, it did.

Q: -- because of how -- of how much he meant to you.

A: After -- and ma -- my sister's as well, because my sister was even more -- even closer to my father. In fact, my sister at one time used to just go in my parent's bedroom, and fell asleep on the bed, and she slept there all night, because she was always close to my father.

Q: Uh-huh. So you moved from -- from **Muhlheim** to **Trier** --

A: That's correct.

Q: -- a year after your father died, or is it less?

A: I don't think it was -- less, I think it was less than a year. I tell you why I say this, because I remember that I was in **Trier** at the time when **Hitler** became chancellor,

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which was on the 30th of January, 1933, and my father died in '32, in April, so it couldn't have been more --

Q: Right.

A: -- than maybe seven -- six, seven, eight months, something to that effect.

Q: And is the major reason why your mother decided to leave was because the anti-Semitism was getting so great there, or --

A: Yeah, and the house was too big for her as well, I mean what's she going to do with a 14 room house?

Q: It also seemed big even if your father was there, because there were only two kids, right? So it would seem like you --

A: Yeah, but I mean, but probably there were three or four rooms that belonged to the -- to the practice, you know?

Q: I see, I see.

A: We had 10 rooms, was a beautiful house. I still see it in front of me.

Q: Yes.

A: Beautiful home.

Q: You had a lot of fun there.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you left, and where did you move to?

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A: We moved to an apartment in **Trier, Kochstrasse** **fia**, I think it was. And my mother enlisted us in a Jewish public school which existed in **Trier**. And this was already -- I mean there -- there was some anti-Semitism as -- wi -- within the -- in -- within the school, although it was an all Jewish school. But of course, anti-Semitism was there, and then when **Hitler** came into power [**indecipherable**] it was horrible. The -- I remember going to school there was always a guy standing in -- in uniform, was selling **Der Sturmer**, you know, that newspaper --

Q: Yes.

A: -- that anti-Semitic [**indecipherable**] I remember one Jewish woman, tho -- there was a department store in **Trier** which was owned by Jewish people, and the -- the wife committed suicide, and he said, "The Jewess has killed herself," he screamed out, and the thing -- buy **Der Sturmer**. And were a lot of unpleasant things going on.

Q: So -- go ahead.

A: In fact, when I -- you couldn't go swimming anywhere, without it question, because Jews were not allowed in the swimming pool together with Aryans, and I remember that I wasn't -- I wasn't there long because I was already eight. When I was 10 years old, my mother and -- put me in a **Gymnasium**, you know what a **Gymnasium** is?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: This is school, it's -- I tried to explain to my wife, it's a high school and college combined. In other words, as you progress in years, you get -- you get from this into

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the -- I mean, it's a **Gymnasium**. And then when you're 18 years old, you can go to the university and bi -- and this was what it was called the **humanistisches**, which was needed -- if you wanted to be a doctor, you had to go through **humanistisches Gymnasium**. There was also something that was called a **riad Gymnasium**, which was more for engineering and things like that, professions like that. So I went there, that was horrible.

Q: Why?

A: The kids didn't talk to me. The teacher used to come in in the morning and used to raise his hand, **heil Hitler**, you know, and the kids had to say **heil Hitler**. I was the only one standing with n-not saying it. I was red in the face, you know.

Q: Did they tell you you were not supposed to say it?

A: I wouldn't say it, I mean we were not supposed to say it.

Q: Jews were not supposed to say **heil Hitler**?

A: No.

Q: Yes. And were you put in a particular part of the room? Were you put in the back of the room, or you --

A: No, no, I was sitting wi-with all the other students, but th-th-th -- they ignored me, you know, I was like a **persona non grata** there, and they -- in this --

Q: Were you the only Jewish boy in the school?

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A: There were bo -- in -- in this class, yes, but there were maybe two or three more Jewish boys in different classes.

Q: Mm-hm. And there was -- in **Trier** also it's a very small Jewish population?

A: Well, **Trier** had already a larger Jewish popula -- **Trier**, I would say is about a city of -- today, I would say over 200,000.

Q: And then?

A: And then I think it wasn't as large, but there were a lot of -- I remember there were a Jewish dentist there, Jewish lawyer, Jewish doctor. A j -- even Jewish stores were there, you know, there was a lady, a fashion store, very exclusive store, was owned by a Jewish woman. There were two department stores owned by Jewish people.

Q: So do you think there were a few hundred Jews? There were clearly more than 15 or 16 --

A: Yeah, I would say, yeah.

Q: A few hundred.

A: Yeah, I would say it, there were more than -- let's say at least more than a hundred.

Q: Right. So in some way it was a bit more comfortable for you, because the population was bigger.

A: Yeah, yeah. And we had Jewish friends, you know, because the --

Q: Right.

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A: -- I remember when we used to play outside, the kids used to bother and hit us, me at least. Not so much my sister, but me. And so we used to -- used to play in the house most of the time.

Q: And was it a big apartment, or a small apartment?

A: No, it was -- I would say six rooms.

Q: Uh-huh. And your mother is not working, I gather?

A: No, no.

Q: It's you -- she's using the money from the sale of the house?

A: Sale of the house and ma -- the insurance money my father had left her.

Q: I see. So, there's no chauffeur any more.

A: No.

Q: There is a maid?

A: Yes.

Q: There's still a maid. There's still a maid?

A: One maid.

Q: The same one? From **Muhlheim**.

A: Yeah, the one that raised me.

Q: I see. So that is a continuity for you, which is comfortable?

A: Yeah. She loved us very much.

Q: Did she?

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A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I could say she practically raised me. I remember her more ta -- pa -- taking care of me than my mother.

Q: Yeah. So, if it was uncomfortable in terms of school friends, did you learn a lot in the school, or was that ter --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: You did?

A: Well, I took -- are you talking about the Jewish school, or the wa -- that -- the

Gymnasium?

Q: Well, I'm a little confused. You first -- when you came first to **Trier**, you went to a Jewish school, am I right?

A: That's correct, because the **Gymnasium** wouldn't take a -- a child under 10, I think.

Q: Right. So you move when you're nine years old, I guess. Yes, a little over nine.

A: I was a year in the -- in the --

Q: In the Jewish school.

A: Yeah.

Q: So was the Jewish school a good one?

A: Yeah.

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Q: That was go --

A: In fact I would say that the Jewish schools were, in many ways, even better than the non-Jewish schools, the public schools, because Jewish teachers prided themselves, they said, "You have to know more than others in order to come to the fore somewhere, somehow." And the curriculum was very strict, and I used to sit on my homework for hours and hours and hours.

Q: So you -- did you enjoy school?

A: Not really.

Q: But you worked at it?

A: Yeah. The way that the Germans -- th-the -- the Europeans school system follows everything into your head. Let's say for instance you wrote about something, made a mistake, had to write it six, seven pages the same word.

Q: Right.

A: You get tired of that, you know? And you had to do it nevertheless, you had to show it to the teacher.

Q: Now, are you continuing to go to concerts, is your mother bring you to the concerts, or does that stop?

A: Yeah, we had more or less, we -- no, I wouldn't say it stopped exactly, it didn't go to that ma -- there weren't that many concerts in -- in **Trier**, it was a small town, there

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were plays and things. But they had some Jewish plays that -- I mean, Jewish people putting it -- plays in certain places, and we used to attend them, and --

Q: Huh. So -- so you're in the Jewish school from '33 until thir -- for a year, about. So it is 1934 that you go to the **Gymnasium**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you're there for a couple of years?

A: I'm there from ni '34 - '35, and I think by the end of '35, we moved to **Cologne**.

Q: Uh-huh, okay. And why -- why do you move? You move an awful lot in a few years.

A: Yeah, my mother moved, I didn't move.

Q: I -- yes, I understand. Do you know why she moved?

A: Well, let me put it to you this way. The more people around you, and the more Jewish people, the less worry about anti-Semitism. Because if -- if there's a large population, people more or less get lost in the crowd, so to speak.

Q: Right.

A: I guess this must be one of the reason, I don't know why she went.

Q: Because it's not great, I mean di -- i -- th-this -- the Jewish population is considerably larger in **Cologne** than in **Trier**. There are many thousands of Jews.

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, absolutely so.

Q: It's --and it's a much bigger city.

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A: Because they had two synagogues, I believe. There was one in [indecipherable] and there was one -- there was a wa -- yeah, I went then to a -- to a Jewish school there, which was called the **Jawne**.

Q: **Jawne**?

A: I hated that school.

Q: Really, why?

A: I hated that school with a passion, and I'll tell you why. The curriculum concentrated all everything on Hebrew and Hebrew and Hebrew and German, and back to Hebrew, and geography di -- I -- geography I liked, history I liked. I liked -- but Hebrew, it was never --

Q: Never

A: -- never my forte. And all the teachers were religious, they all had the skullcaps, you know, and one of them had a beard. And it was more -- I -- I would say it was almost like a **Yeshiva**, so to speak, you know?

Q: So this was not a comfortable place for you?

A: No, it was not a comfortable place for me.

Q: So let me ask you something. When your father dies, you say immediately, or very fast you're not kosher in the house, and -- and --

A: Not too much, no.

Q: But some?

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A: But we were still not on the threshold of eating pork. That came a little later.

Q: I see. But at 1936 you would have been 13. Did you have a **Bar-Mitzvah** in **Cologne**?

A: Oh yeah, and I had a **Bar-Mitzvah** in **Cologne**, and do you know who my rabbi was?

Q: No.

A: A Dr. **Carlebach**.

Q: Really?

A: And this is one of the **Carlebachs**, you remember the **Carlebachs** at the village gate, the one with the guitar?

Q: Sure, sure.

A: Now, this must have been his grandfather or his uncle, or whoever. And he was ultra, ultra Orthodox, I'll tell you something. You -- he could sniff if somebody wasn't o -- Orthodox. I had to go there because my aunts from my father's side, they were so religious. O-On s -- on the s -- Sabbath, they would sew their handkerchief into the clothing, so because they're not supposed to carry it, you know, all that -- baloney, if I ever heard one. But --

Q: How can you use it if it's sewn into your clothing?

A: I don't know, don't ask me. I was never that religious. I carry it like I carry it now.

Q: Like you carry it now, right.

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A: And I tell you that later, I don't want to get that on -- on tape, my grand -- of course, my whole family attended, except I had one uncle who was also a rabbi. He was what was called a **landesrabbiner**. A **landesrabbiner** is a rabbi not only of one synagogue, but a whole district of synagogues. And he was ultra, ultra, ultra, ultra Orthodox. My Uncle **Heinrich, Heinrich Bassfreund**. He -- he was -- he completely ignored it. He was almost like you would say the Queen of **England**, you bring a commoner to be your future wife or some. You -- you were nothing.

Q: So you were noth --

A: He didn't even attend my **Bar-Mitzvah** because that was not Jewish enough, my ba -- even if it was in a -- in an Orthodox Temple, but I wasn't Jewish enough to be **[indecipherable] Bar-Mitzvahed**, maybe he figured I am actually doing something to the religious atmosphere -- air right in this particular synagogue --

Q: Right, right. How would he know that --

A: -- by being **Bar-Mitzvahed** there.

Q: H-How would he know that you weren't very religious, did he know you?

A: Yeah, of course he knew me.

Q: Oh, he di -- he du --

A: He knew -- he must have known that my mother did not come from such a religious family.

Q: I see.

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A: And that was enough for him. Anyway, he sent me book, a Hebrew book, everything in Hebrew. And this is all the last I heard of him. He later went to **Israel**. He went to **Pethatikyah**, which is a very religious area. I think he o -- he operated a Laundromat there or something.

Q: Really?

A: And I never heard it. I asked him once -- I wanted a picture of my grandfather, he says I don't need it.

Q: Not nice.

A: No. He was not a nice person.

Q: Did you have a party? I don't know what -- what was the tradition at that time when they got **Bar-Mitzvahed**, did you have a party?

A: Yeah, we had a -- we -- not only did we have a party, that party had to be catered by a kosher caterer because my aunts would not have attended if there wasn't a ko -- was a weird family set up to be **[indecipherable]**

Q: So you were very divided?

A: Like a German **[indecipherable]** is a Communist and the other one is a Nazi. This is how the atmosphere really was -- was. I -- she -- they wouldn't have come. And my uncle from my mother's side, they are not religious at all.

Q: So what did they --

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A: He said, if you want to see how religious is, leave 10 dollars on the table and see how fast it is gone on **Shabbos**.

Q: So did they sit on two opposite sides at the party, or did they --

A: No, no, my -- my fi -- my mother's sisters-in-law on my father's side, they were very nice to my mother. The other aunt that I had, the one that was a pr-professor on the -- on the [indecipherable] school in **Fert**, she was -- I would say she was religious, but not that religious, I mean. I think that her handkerchief was already in the pocket, or the pocketbook, whatever. But she was re-religious nevertheless. She knew all about Jewish upbringing because my grandfather was a rabbi in **Trier**. And I understand that my grandmother was supposed to have been a good [indecipherable]. Anytime somebody got sick she made them chicken soup, she went to the house, she was flying around from one Jewish family to the other, see if she can help them, and all that.

Q: Uh-huh. Now, there was no equivalent ceremony for girls at that time?

A: Oh no.

Q: There was -- right. So your sister had no --

A: It -- there is still today, I don't think, in -- in the Orthodox --

Q: In the Orthodox, no, absolutely right.

A: -- cir -- cir -- circles a ba -- a **Bat-Mitzvah**.

Q: So was this day a big deal for you, or a big problem?

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A: I don't know, I -- when I was a kid I had a very good voice, and they all want me to become a **Chassan**.

Q: Really?

A: That would have been the last thing on my mind. I would have liked to be an opera singer maybe, but not a **Chassan**.

Q: Did you study singing?

A: No. But I knew of -- I -- I have a very good ear for music, I -- I hear something on the radio and 90 out of a hundred times I can tell you what it is.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. If it's an opera, or a symphony, a concerto, I can -- sometimes **Phyllis**, **Phyllis** knows a lot, too. But sometimes she gets mixed up and she says to me, and I tell her, no, that's not a **Mendelssohn**, this is just a -- the [indecipherable] concerto, or this is the [indecipherable] concerto, whatever.

Q: Right, right.

A: Yeah.

Q: All right, so you get past your **Bar-Mitzvah**, do you now feel like a --

A: A man?

Q: -- man?

A: No, not like the man at the house, my mother wielded the scepter.

Q: I see.

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A: And I -- I hated that school, believe me. I think I might have converted to get out of that school.

Q: To get out of there. What kind of a kid were you? How would you describe yourself? Were you a -- a very shy young boy?

A: I wouldn't exactly say shy, but I used to love to read, and I could busy myself with things like reading, looking up things, looking at maps. Reading [indecipherable] and s -- Roman history and things like that. Yeah, I enjoyed that.

Q: So you were very serious?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you like to play, or did you prefer to read?

A: Well, yeah. I would prefer -- I would say I prefer to read. Roughhousing was not in my nature.

Q: Right.

A: I was more a -- a gentle type of a person. I used to enjoy talking to people that knew more than I did, and I could learn something from, and I -- I was always interest -- fascinated by people that had a -- acquired a lot of knowledge.

Q: Right. Was it particular subjects that interested you more than others?

A: Well, I would say geography, history, it -- interest me a lot. And if -- arithmetic was not my favorite. Neither was geometry or algebra.

Q: Who did you talk about music with?

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A: I had friends were -- in **Europe** the kids were interested in things like that, you know?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: We used to -- I remember that in 1937 I heard in person **Benyamin Gigli** sing in **Cologne**.

Q: Really? Really?

A: Yeah. And I had to beg my mother and beg almost on my knees till -- that she bought me a ticket to hear him.

Q: And you were only 10 years old? '33.

A: No, in 1937.

Q: Oh, '37 - '37, so you're still --

A: 14.

Q: -- that's a young kid.

A: Yeah.

Q: Huh.

A: I liked girls already, too.

Q: Oh you did?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you date?

A: Yeah, I dated --

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Q: When did you -- when did you start going out?

A: -- I had the -- **Inga Solomon** was a girlfriend of mine in **Cologne**, and I remember I used to bring her chocolates and we used to go to the park together, yeah.

Q: Was she as serious as you?

A: I don't know. Her father was a lawyer, so he probably talked a lot and she didn't have much to say, so it might be that she was a serious type.

Q: I see. So what attracted you to her?

A: She was pretty.

Q: She was pretty?

A: And she was a girl.

Q: I see. And that was enough, okay. So that was '36 or s -- '37?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you're 13 or 14 and you started dating?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: That's pretty good. So why did you leave **Cologne**? You leave **Cologne** in '36, am I right, or '37?

A: I leave **Cologne** in '37.

Q: '37. And you go to **Coburg**?

A: No, I was still in **Cologne**, when I went to **Coburg**.

Q: You were? Why?

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A: I was in **Coburg** in 1936, I would say. When was the coronation in -- in **England**, King **George**, remember the one that abdicated to marry the woman he loved?

Q: Yes, I don't remember the year, actually.

A: That was in 1936, I think.

Q: Maybe.

A: In 1936 were also the Olympic games in **Berlin** and I didn't -- I wasn't there yet when they had the Olympic games.

Q: No, you weren't -- no, you weren't in **Berlin** yet.

A: No, I was in **Cologne**, and then I went to **Coburg**. **Coburg** was a -- a pa -- a boarding school like, a Jewish boarding school.

Q: Ah, so the family didn't move, you were --

A: No, I don't --

Q: -- you went to school.

A: My mother got rid of me.

Q: Let me ask you something, was she dating after your father died? Did she start going out?

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: You think so.

A: Course.

Q: Okay.

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A: She might not have been good mother, but she was human.

Q: Right. Did you want to go to this boarding school in **Coburg**, or did she just say --

A: Not really, no.

Q: -- she just said you're going?

A: I -- I didn't like to go so far away, I wa -- my sister was there, and I was there. But I got to like it, it was nice. It was a nice school, we had -- it was also -- we had Hebrew and things like this. They used a unique way of -- of a Jewish kid attending the synagogue on Saturday. It was like -- was like a villa, and on the bottom and on the -- in the cellar of the -- lower level, there -- we had to take -- we had our -- we had our lockers that we used to play, we hang things up there. We had to go down there and put -- wash yourself, your hands in there. When you walk up one st -- st -- flight of stairs, there was the eating room that was also a synagogue. There was a -- a -- a **Torah** and [indecipherable] and the -- and the -- the li -- the director of the institution was also **Chassan** in there. So ye -- there was no way, you had to go up there and you had to sit through another -- you wouldn't have gotten breakfast, you know.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So we had services every morning.

Q: Every morning?

A: Yeah. I remember the food started already getting a little be -- worse there, but I used to sing for the cooks and they used to give me extra food.

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Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what would you sing, opera?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Arias?

A: Operas.

Q: Really?

A: Like **Marta**, and now today I can't sing any more, so please don't ask me to.

Q: Okay.

A: And **Rigoletto**

Q: And which part did you sing?

A: Hm?

Q: Which part did you sing, the tenor, the baritone?

A: The tenor part, of course.

Q: The tenor part.

A: Yeah.

Q: I see. So the -- would they give you good food?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Oh yeah?

A: I got oranges, and chocolates and apples, and yeah.

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Q: Now, where is your sister?

A: It was a lucrative business.

Q: It was a lucrative -- I can see that.

A: Yeah.

Q: You probably should have continued if you could have, huh?

A: Yeah, was --

Q: Yes.

A: -- you get all the --

Q: Yeah, right. Where was your sister? She didn't go to this school, or did she?

A: My sister was in **Cologne** with my mother.

Q: With your mother, that's right.

A: My mother got her out of the house too, at several occasions, she has to go to cooking school in **Frankfurt**, and I don't know. Our relationship with our mother wasn't a great one.

Q: Wasn't -- no, that's clear.

A: Yeah.

Q: So how long are you at school in **Coburg**? '37 - '38?

A: '37.

Q: Just one year?

A: A year

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Q: A year?

A: Yeah.

Q: So is -- is this difficult for you, this ki -- this moving around so much?

A: No.

Q: You're a kid [indecipherable]

A: Well -- well, I mean, it's a different -- for you to keep up with my moving around so much.

Q: Yes, it's -- but it's not -- wasn't difficult for you?

A: No, no. Except sometimes chronologically I have the date sometimes not exactly at this particular month or year, whatever.

Q: You know, the reason why I say it is because as a young person, you were -- you were a child --

A: Yeah, I was a nomad, I was a gypsy. [indecipherable] the only thing I need was a fiddle and [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: -- I could have graduated.

Q: But you clearly adjusted very well each time. You were able --

A: Yeah, I mean, this is the good thing about me, that I adjust.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: How else would I be here today?

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Q: That's true, that's true.

A: I mean, I wouldn't say exactly I adjusted myself to **Auschwitz**.

Q: Right.

A: I tolerated it, because I had to.

Q: Right. Well, you're going to go to **Berlin** next, and I think what we'll do is we'll stop the tape and change it, because the story will get longer now.

End of Tape Two

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Beginning Tape Three

Q: You moved to **Berlin**. You're -- you're in the school in **Coburg** for a year?

A: Yeah.

Q: So the f -- your mother moves to **Berlin** in 1938, or '37?

A: '37, I think.

Q: So you're still in school? You're still in that school?

A: No, '38 it must have been.

Q: '38?

A: Yeah.

Q: So, before **Kristallnacht**?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Why **Berlin**? Do you have any idea?

A: **Berlin** was -- still had the most Jews, and **Berlin** is -- was a large city where there were five million.

Q: So yo-you think the idea here was if there were more Jews, you would somehow be protected, do you think? Is that what your mother [**indecipherable**]

A: You had more of a Jewish life there. First of all, they had what was called the **Kulturbund**.

Q: Right.

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A: The **Kulturbund** was an institution for s -- privileged by Dr. **Goebbels** to perform music and plays, as long as they were not of German compo -- in other words, if you were a -- a German -- a -- a Jewish pianist, you were not allowed to play **Beethoven**, or **Mozart**, which was -- in those days I mean, was already -- no, but it wa -- that was before. No, I don't think you could play **Mozart** as well, because after -- after they annexed **Austria**, they certainly were not allowed to play **Mozart**. They were allowed to play whoever -- French composers, they were allowed. You could play **Mendelssohn**, who was a Jew himself.

Q: Could you play **Chopin**?

A: A German couldn't play f -- yeah, **Chopin**, of course. **Chopin** wa -- was not German, he was Polish.

Q: Right, right.

A: French -- French Polish.

Q: So could the German pianists, or performers play Jewish --

A: No.

Q: -- composers? They couldn't?

A: That was a no-no.

Q: Oh, okay.

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A: **Goebbels** said, the time has come to an end of a Jewish overdone culture. He says we got our own radio, we got our own plays, we got our own musicians, and we have proven that we don't need the Jews. That's what he said, almost w-word for word.

Q: Why do you leave the school at **Coburg** and go to **Berlin**? Are you finished, is the school done, or what?

A: My mother remarried, and --

Q: And -- and he lived in **Berlin**?

A: She remarried when I was in -- when we were still in **Cologne**.

Q: She did?

A: Yeah.

Q: So who was this guy?

A: She met her second husband at my cousin's **Bar-Mitzvah** who is the one that died in **France**, my cousin **Hans Bodenheimer**, and she met a teacher there, a very intelligent man. I respected him more than my mother, although he was also a little bit of a strict disciplinarian, but he helped me a lot with my homework. He came in handy.

Q: Really? Was he a nice guy? Was he nice [**indecipherable**]

A: Yeah, he was a nice man, he was -- he was a little on the crazy side. He would walk around with Bavarian leather pants.

Q: Really?

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A: Yeah. Was a little bit of a nut type. He was a -- but he was an hi -- highly intelligent man. He spoke French, he spoke English, he spoke German. He was good in mathematics. He was a teacher, you know? But there was a public coo -- school teacher, but he taught the higher grades, he was a very intelligent man. And he knew Hebrew well, too, but he was not religious.

Q: Right.

A: Not at all. I don't think a religious Jew would be seen in leather -- Bavarian leather pants.

Q: So was he approximately a ma -- ye -- was your mother close in age to your --

A: No, my mother -- he was younger than my mother. He was maybe six, seven years younger than my mother.

Q: Really? And was your mother approximately the same age as your biological father, **Manfred**?

A: My -- let me see. She was four years younger than my biological father.

Q: Uh-huh, so she was in her late 30's when your father died.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so it's a few years later, so she's in her early 40's when she met

[indecipherable]

A: Yeah.

Q: Did she --

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A: I guess she got tired of the singles scene, what more can I say?

Q: I guess. But did she introduce you kids? Did you know -- did you know him before she got married, or w --

A: Yeah, I knew him. When I came on vacation from **Coburg**, I was introduced to him.

Q: Uh-huh. And -- and he was nice to you?

A: Yeah, he was nice. He sometimes was a little bit of a disciplinarian, but there was nothing wrong with him, really.

Q: Right. So when you moved to **Berlin**, did he then have a job as a teacher in a Jewish school?

A: Yeah, in a Jewish school, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: He taught in **Berlin** at first, and then he taught in a school in **Halle, H-a-l-l-e**, on -- at the **Salle river**. I don't -- I don't know exactly how far it is from **Berlin**, I would say about an hour and a half, two hours.

Q: Really?

A: And he had a car, and I just see him on weekends, I guess.

Q: So did he live at the school, or he came back every day? Or you don't know?

A: Now he had the room in town, a furnished room that he stayed in during the week, and then on weekends he would come back.

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Q: Uh-huh, okay, so what brought you back from **Coburg** to go to **Berlin**, were you --

A: Oh, I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't know.

Q: But you say --

A: It was my mother's decision I guess, I was not able to make my own decision, especially in **Europe**, a kid doesn't make his own decisions until he's maybe 18 years old.

Q: So if you came back in 1938, you're 15, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: You were 15 years old.

A: Yes.

Q: Your sister is 17.

A: Yeah.

Q: And she's been living with your mother sort of on and off, but more on than off, right? So --

A: Yeah, but -- yeah.

Q: -- where do you live in **Berlin**? In **Charlottenberg**?

A: In an apartment in **Charlottenberg**, at the **Sybelstrasse**. I don't remember if it was five or six. I lived in both, the thing was this, that after -- well, what happened was that

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when **Kristallnacht** happened, my stepfather was in the **United States** on a -- on a trip to see whether he could arrange that we would come over there. And my mother sent him a telegram, she says, "Don't come back." Because of pe-people got arrested there -- left and right there during that time. And he stayed there. He couldn't stay here, he went to **San Domingo**. **San Domingo** was ruled at that time by a dictator by the name of -- do you remember? **Trujillo**.

Q: Oh right, that's right.

A: And he happened to be -- he happened to make the Jews welcome, and he did -- he built barracks for them, or houses, whatever. And Jews lived there for a time.

Q: And what was his name, **Jules**?

A: Hm?

Q: What was your stepfather's name?

A: **Kurt, K-u-r-t Schindler**, like "**Schindler's List**." **S-c-h-i-n-d-l-e-r**.

Q: **Kurt Schindler**, uh-huh. Did he try to get your mother and the two of you over?

A: Well, I don't know hi -- di -- bip -- he -- he -- he couldn't. He couldn't even himself stay here.

Q: Yeah.

A: So then when times really got bad, and my f -- my mother divorced him, and she married for the third time, and she married a lawyer. That was Dr. **Rehfeld**. And he's in the book, too, Dr. **Rehfeld**, I saw him yesterday at the Holocaust Museum.

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Q: So you saw his name in the book?

A: Yeah.

Q: So when does your mother remarr -- remarry for the third time?

A: Mm. That must have been in nine -- it was already well into wa -- well into the war.

Q: I see.

A: I would say maybe 1942.

Q: Okay. So you think wa -- your father dies in 1932.

A: Yeah.

Q: Your mother remarries in what, 1936 or '37?

A: Yeah.

Q: After your **Bar-Mitzvah**, or before? After --

A: After my **Bar-Mitzvah**.

Q: After your **Bar-Mitzvah**, okay. So, now you're alo -- you've -- you're alone again in terms of being with your mother and your sister.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you come back, and the decision is to send you to a trade school, Jewish trade school, am I right or not?

A: The Jewish trade school was --

Q: Was later?

A: -- before the war.

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Q: Yes, I know. We're talking about when you first come to **Berlin**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Which is '38.

A: I'm going to a Jewish trade school.

Q: Yes. And that --

A: Was called **ORT**, I think, **O-R-T**.

Q: Yes? From the **ORT** organization.

A: Yeah.

Q: And why is that the decision, because people thought --

A: Because people thought that if they go out of the country, would have
[indecipherable] would be good to have a trade.

Q: Right.

A: I took up woodworking.

Q: Why?

A: I used to do nice things.

Q: Yes?

A: Yeah. And that was in 19 -- I would say that would have been 1937 maybe. But that
-- no, 1938. Beginning of 1938.

Q: Yes, before -- before **Kristallnacht**, eight or nine months **[indecipherable]**

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Q: And you -- had you been doing woodworking as a kid? I mean, you were whittling things, and that's why you went to woodworking, or you --

A: No, I had a choice between metalworking and woodworking, I took woodworking.

Q: And what was -- what would that mean, what would you do? What kind of woodworking would you learn to do?

A: Well, I used to do ga -- pa -- clothes closets, and dressers and things like that.

Q: Oh, so big pieces?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you like it?

A: I liked it, yes.

Q: Did you?

A: I had, in fact, one of our superintendents in -- in **Berlin** still has a -- I mean, they are not alive, probably the daughter has, a clothes closet I made for her -- for them.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: So it really lasted?

A: Yeah.

Q: Now **Berlin** is becoming not so easy to live in as a Jew, even though there's a larger Jewish population.

A: I know. And now that the war's started, we have to work for the war industry.

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Q: Well, wait a second. Were you there for **Kristallnacht**?

A: Yeah.

Q: What do you remember about it?

A: On **Kristallnacht**?

Q: Yeah.

A: I remember the next morning not knowing about it, and I came outside, and I just came to the corner and a German started, or tried to beat me up. And I ran home again. That's all I remember of **Kristallnacht**.

Q: So you don't remember see -- did you see the damage?

A: No.

Q: No, you didn't.

A: Not really. I saw a few stores, and -- at the **Wilmersdorferstrasse**, I saw glass and things, but I -- I really didn't see the active --

Q: Right.

A: -- destruction of the synagogues, or the -- or the -- the stores themselves. I saw the aftermath. I mean, when I went by subway to -- to work, I only saw the burned out -- the big synagogue burned out for [indecipherable] see, there's an **EL** there, going past there. **Berlin** has **EL**, subway, bus and streetcar. Used to.

Q: Between ni -- between 1933 and '38, you're between the ages of 10 and 15.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Yes. Do you hear about concentration camps? Do you know about people being arrested --

A: Yeah, of course.

Q: -- and taken to concentration camps?

A: Let me put it to you this way. People knew already about concentration camps before that -- the annihilation camps were done.

Q: Right, right.

A: I mean, everything -- people used to say, don't talk about it, otherwise you are going to go to **Dachau**, or -- or something like that. I remember distinctly in **Cologne** there was a Jewish butcher, he had a very unique butcher store, everything was done on a **band**. Like, you [**indecipherable**] in this department, he would wrap it up and it goes to the next department, and so on, so forth. His name was -- there were two names there, maybe he had a partner, or maybe that was his name. His name was **Katz Rosenthal**. And we were -- we would buy the -- our meat there, and all this. And I remember there was a young kid that used to sell **Der Sturmer**, he would stand in front of and photograph the people. It was all done by the party, you know? Photograph the people going in that store to make sure that no German would buy in that store. And this guy lost his business because he had a extremely busy store, and he had good merchandise, good meats, and everything. I think that he was actually a Dutch Jew. I'm not sure what makes me say that, but I remember that people used to

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say **Katz Rosenthal** came from **Holland**. And I remember there was one woman, she came out, she said to him, I want you to know something, you took my picture, you wasted the film, I'm Jewish. He called her a dirty Jew bastard, or something like that.

Q: So w -- you must hear about people leaving **Germany**, right? People who are -- are leaving -- do you -- do you as -- even as a young person, say to your mother

A: Yeah, of course I saw people leaving, but it was not easy to get out.

Q: Right.

A: It was very hard.

Q: Right.

A: I mean, some people tried to go across the Swiss border, they were always sent back again. And they ended up the Gestapo catching them, going into concentration camps --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- of being killed there already. And at first the concentration camps were not an exclusive Jewish institution, you know. They used to take Communists, anybody that didn't like the regime, or had different ideas, and opinions. You loo -- used to belong to a trade union that was maybe a little bit on the left side, they all of a sudden disappeared mysteriously. One guy disappeared, and he se -- he got it to -- his wife -- his widow got a letter, he died of appendicitis, and he had the appendix removed from

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before he got in already. I mean they were not too thorough either sometimes, they were --

Q: Right.

A: -- actually really stupid people. Dumb people. The only thing they were smart in, killing. This they had worked out to perfection. But otherwise, if one can -- I mean, even when I was in concentration camp, the roll call there, to count up 150 men, sometimes they take two hours because they were so wicked in arithmetic, they never came out [indecipherable] didn't know.

Q: Do you remember all the restrictions that came in each of these cities, the restrictions?

A: Oh yeah, of course.

Q: You can't ride on the subway, you can't walk through the park, you can't --

A: Oh, of course.

Q: So what -- what is it you remember?

A: It started of course with the **Nuremberg** Laws at first, you know, no Jew was allowed to have an Aryan girlfriend. And no Jew was allowed to le -- to practice law, and no Jew was allowed to treat non-Jewish patients. And then came already -- some cities had already prohibited Jews to go to motion picture houses. Like **Magdeburg** was one of them. They had -- they had signs made up like le -- little metal shields at the door, what said Jews not allowed. Restaurants wouldn't allow Jews, many of them.

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I was once in a restaurant in **Cologne** with my mother and my sister. Well, I look very Jewish, my sister didn't look [**indecipherable**] and neither did my mother really, but they saw right away that we were Jewish because they saw me. And the waitress came -- first we wait about 15 or 20 minutes, then the waitress finally come over and said, "And we are not allowed to wait on Jews, would you please leave?" So we left, you know? I mean, you go to a restaurant to eat, not to sit.

Q: Right.

A: And then, in 1936 it eased a little bit due to the Olympic games, you know, there were many foreigners there, and now all of a sudden there were no outrage in the street, or something like that [**indecipherable**]. But as soon as the Olympic games were over, everything went back to normal, and in fact it got worse. That was in '36, the Olympic games. In '37, well, in '37 of course you couldn't go swimming, course I mentioned that already. You were not allowed to go to the movies any more. And you could [**indecipherable**] to show movies, and there were concerts by the **Kulturbund**. I had a friend who was an actor at the **Kulturbund**, Fellow from **Austria**, by the name of **Fritz Grunne**, he -- he didn't look like a Jew at all, I mean I ba -- I wouldn't have believed it. And he was not religious at all. I remember he used to have a bicycle, he used to ride around **Berlin**. His wife objected to that, because you're an actor, you ride to work in a -- on a bicycle, I mean how could you? But he was a hell of a nice guy. I think that he -- he did hang himself in -- in **Grunewald** on a rope that they found him

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dangling. He was a young man, he was maybe 25 - 26. He killed -- in fact of, if -- the unusual part is he told me he was called to **Neubabelsberg**. **Neubabelsberg** was in **Berlin**, the **UFA** studios. The **UFA** of course at one time, was owned by a man by the name of deesel -- du -- **Deusterberg**. He was the head of the **Stahlhelm, Stahlhelm**. It was also a para-Nazi organization. Then of course **Goebbels** took over the -- the -- the film industry, and they made a picture, was called, "The Eternal Jew." And he had to go -- he told me he had to go and dance with a woman, and he was photographed while he was dancing. That was what they told him, then he had to go there. It was an anti-Semitic picture now, I think what -- I think -- I believe it was **Veit Harland** who made that picture, he made also "**Jud Suss**", and -- and all these other anti-Semitic motion pictures.

Q: Do you remember what you were thinking at the time? Did you think at some point this will stop, and it'll -- you'll just have this Jewish community?

A: No.

Q: You didn't.

A: I didn't think it would stop, but nobody would have thought it would end like that, you know. I mean, we thought -- first of all, it was a way of dis -- deceiving people. People all of a sudden had to leave, they were resettled. They were evacuated. They had working permits to work and live free in **Riga** in **Poland**, you know, and after the war ver -- after the war started, and nobody knew what happened, these people just

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disappeared. Nobody never heard of -- I mean, never heard because we didn't bother, but we never heard of many -- during the war you didn't hear of people anyway, because foreign countries, you know, they were occupied countries. You wouldn't dare to write to a country like that to find out --

Q: What happened.

A: -- you know, they would have thought you're a spy. In fact, before I left to a concentration, we all had to sign the paper that we had to leave **Germany** on account of s -- espionage activity or something like that.

Q: Is this right before you were sent, or earlier?

A: Before I was sent.

Q: Wa -- before you were sent?

A: Yeah.

Q: Now, you're in school, in this trade school for about two years, am I right? Before you're sent to forced labor?

A: Yeah, it --

Q: Forced labor comes in '41.

A: No, forced labor come in '40, I think.

Q: Well --

A: Maybe it's '41, I don't know.

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Q: No, you're right, it starts in '40, but you are not brought into forced labor until 1941, am I correct?

A: Yeah. I worked in a -- in **Berlin** in a leather factory.

Q: After the woodworking?

A: Yeah, well --

Q: You did the woodworking, and then what?

A: Then I wa -- we had to go to the -- to the labor department and they assigned you a job.

Q: And it's labor department of the Germans, or the Jewish community?

A: No, the labor department of the Germans.

Q: Of the Germans.

A: And you had to go there, you know, and you had no choice, I mean, you couldn't say you don't like it.

Q: So you're working in a -- huh. So you're -- so you're working in a leather factory?

A: Yeah.

Q: And doing what?

A: I was sewing German knapsacks and things, but I was quite good at it, too.

Q: So you're very good with your hands?

A: With two needles -- yeah.

Q: And who is working there, Jews, and Gentiles? Everybody?

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A: Oh -- Gentiles too, but a Jewish -- the Jewish department was separated from the Gentiles.

Q: I see.

A: The only person Gentile there was the supervisor who saw that we were get to work. The -- the non-Jewish department was in a different room, you know, a different room.

Q: Now, this is before the war starts?

A: That was during the war already.

Q: That was during the war. But --

A: Because the war started in **Europe** in 1939.

Q: '39, right. So are you taken out of school in order to --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to be sent to this leather factory?

A: Yes.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, absolutely. And --

Q: [sneezes] Excuse me.

A: **Gesundheit.**

Q: Thank you.

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A: And the conditions there were not too bad. I mean, they were -- the supervisor I had was -- the first one I had was pretty decent. And then he was drafted into the na -- in the German navy. A marine or whatever they call it. And then we had a Nazi supervisor and he was all right, he just said to be careful what you said, you know?

Q: Right.

A: But he didn't bother with us, he -- as long as you did the work he didn't bother you.

Q: And were you paid?

A: Yeah, half of what the Germans got paid.

Q: Half of what the Germans got paid.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you -- but you did get something?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And you're living with your mother?

A: Yeah. Now our -- our apartment has shrunk to one room -- two rooms.

Q: Two rooms, from six.

A: Yeah.

Q: And there are other people living there?

A: Yeah.

Q: And people you know, or not?

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A: No, you don't. Well, one who was living there was the actor from the **Kulturbund** I told you about.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And the original owner of the apartment, which wasn't my mother any more, we moved from number five to number six, or from number six to five, I don't remember exactly which was the one that they mo -- lived in first, and which was the last one. But it was either five or six, the -- they were both, five and six we lived in. And that was already during the war. And my mother has worked in the same leather factory that I worked in, which was good. So we used to go to work together. In those days you could not -- you were only allowed to use transportation to go to work and back, for a Jewish person.

Q: But not for pleasure, you couldn't

A: Oh no. Oh no.

Q: And was there a special car for you?

A: No, special car they didn't have. You weren't allowed to sit down.

Q: You weren't allowed to sit down?

A: But -- no, you weren't allowed to sit. Even if the train was completely empty, you couldn't sit down. You had to hold onto the strap.

Q: Now is this the first time your mother is working, that you know?

A: Yeah, yeah.

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Q: Was this difficult for her, do you know?

A: No, no.

Q: It wasn't?

A: Not at all. She was a very good worker, yeah.

Q: Did that surprise you?

A: No.

Q: No. It surprises me.

A: Not -- nothing my mother did surprised me.

Q: No. But it had to be an adjustment of some kind, a woman who had not --

A: Well, I might only say then, she adjusted extremely well --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- to the circumstances.

Q: Right. Your sister got to **England**.

A: Yeah.

Q: How did your mother arrange that, do you know?

A: My mother wrote away to a children's hospital in **Newcastle-upon-Tyne**, which is near the Scottish border out there somewheres. And they sent her papers to come over.

In fact, my sister came over and she was -- almost when the bridges were burning already. It was in July of 1939. The war started in September.

Q: Right.

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A: The trains were so crowded with **Wehrmacht**, that they lifted my sister through the windows, she couldn't have gone in through the doors in the train. That's how crowded the [indecipherable] trains were. And she went to **England**.

Q: Was she trained to do --

A: She was not trained at all

Q: -- she was working as sh -- no.

A: She was not --

Q: And why would they be willing to take her, do you think? Do you have any idea?

A: She was a -- they took -- amazing at it might sound, the British took in more Jews than the -- the **United States** did.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And it's a much smaller country, you know. The British took in quite a [indecipherable]

Q: So what about you? How come --

A: I was -- I was on the cusp. I was too young, and I w -- and in other words not old enough, they wouldn't take me. The Germans took me.

Q: Yeah, I understand. But there was something called the **kindertransport**, where they were sending children to **England**.

A: Yeah. I was -- I was too old for the **kindertransport** --

Q: And too young for this other.

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A: And too young for wor -- I couldn't have been a nurse, you know, I don't think so. But I was too young for the **kindertransport** -- too old for the **kindertransport**, rather.

Q: Right. So was this difficult for you to separate from your sister?

A: Yeah, I missed her. I missed her, beca -- my sister and I, we were very close. When my sister used to go on a date, I used to hide it from my mother. I used to tell her I went to the movies with her, or something. Or my sister gave me money to go to the movies.

Q: Right.

A: And I -- sure, I missed my sister a lot. I still call her today, every week --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- we call -- we call and speak to each other. And my -- what did I want to say now? My mother had sent her away, and my mother also was negotiating to go to an English doctor as a maid, for ch -- in this family.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But it never came to pass. I also was close to come to the **United States**. There was somebody from a Jewish organization who sent me papers, but there was -- you know, since everybody tried to go out there was a long waiting list of people to get visas. By the time my visa came up, there was war already. The **United States** had entered the war, so there was chance for me to get out any more.

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Q: Right, right. But your mother clearly was trying, and had some ingenuity in getting your sister out.

A: Yeah.

Q: Finding that particular place, and --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So that was pretty good.

A: Yeah. Well, you have to -- you have to do sometime something good, right?

Q: Sometime, right. Okay, we're going to change the tape.

End of Tape Three

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Beginning Tape Four

Q: **Jack**, did you ever get depressed during this period?

A: Now, or you mean --

Q: No, not now.

A: During that time?

Q: Yeah.

A: You were in a constant state of depression so to speak, I mean how would you feel if you can't go to movies, you can't go out after eight o'clock at night in the summer, and things like that. Of course you feel depressed.

Q: Were you scared?

A: Yeah, sure. Everybody was scared, I guess.

Q: Okay.

A: It's only normal, I mean you didn't know in the street when you were -- somebody would pick you up, or somebody knock on the door, you didn't know whether it was the Gestapo, or **SS**, or whatever.

Q: Did you sleep okay?

A: Yeah.

Q: You did? Did you have nightmares?

A: No.

Q: No. So it affected your waking hours, but it doesn't affect your sleeping?

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A: Yeah, no I -- I didn't dwell on it so it would affect me at night really. I mean, you were on constant guard, so to speak, but --

Q: Do you -- do you think the adults around you were more nervous than the kids? Did you notice that -- that --

A: Well, it depends upon the type of person, you know, some people they're always nervous, you know.

Q: Right.

A: And some people were, of course. Some people were.

Q: You were taken for forced labor --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in 1941, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: And is that when you were taken to -- you were taken to a factory?

A: Yeah.

Q: And which factory was the first one? It wasn't the leather, it was -- were you working on shelves?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I was -- in the leather factory was the first one, yeah.

Q: The leather factory was the first.

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A: **Klopfer** was the name, **K-l-o-p-f-e-r**. And they were -- they did work for the -- for the government, you know, with -- for the army.

Q: And so how long are you working there?

A: This is what, '41?

Q: Yes.

A: I would say a year.

Q: You worked there for a year. And you are now wearing a Jewish star, am I correct?

When you're there, or at some point in that year 1941, they ask -- they tell you you have to wear a Jewish star?

A: I had to wear what?

Q: Jewish star. The star.

A: Oh, that was -- the Jewish star came out in 19 -- I would say maybe it was long before then, no? 1940, maybe. 40 --

Q: So it was '41.

A: '41.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Maybe so. I remember I was wearing it, but I don't remember exactly --

Q: Did you have to wear it on your coat, clearly, yes?

A: Yeah, you had to wear it on the outer garment under the heart.

Q: One the left side?

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A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. And when you were in the factory, did you have to have it on with your normal clothes?

A: I don't think so. I think you took your coats off. Yeah, maybe you did have to have -- you go ha -- you had several of them, you know, and you had to sew it on. I don't remember that exactly, but I had it in the factory, and I -- I would think maybe yes. Now that I think about it, I think that the people are wearing it, yeah.

Q: Okay, right. Can you see the factory in your head?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did it look like? What did it **[indecipherable]**

A: Was a long row of benches with men and women, Jewish men and women working. They had in front of them a t -- a wooden contraption that was like two pieces of wood that came like a -- at the end like a claw. And that's where you put the leather in. And on the bottom, there was like a pattern, this wasn't a pattern, this was a piece of wood that was connected to this with a leather strap, so when you put your leg -- your foot on it, it would close this up, and it would hold the leather when you went sewing it.

Q: Huh. And so what were you actually sewing?

A: It's a good question, I was sewing a lot of things. I was sewing what was called **geschossbänder**, which was -- which means -- I think that's what they wrapped the

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grenades in. It was a green piece of some kind of material, and on each end you had to sew in a piece of string. I would s -- ma-maybe even say more a piece of rope, so it's came to a U on each end, you know. I don't know what it was for.

Q: So it was -- it would hold s -- th --

A: A gescho -- it was called **geschossbander**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Shooting bands, or bands for ammunition, something like that.

Q: So how were you trained to do this? I mean, did they train you all when you were sent to the factory, or they just --

A: No, you b -- you looked up at your -- what you did how the others did it. And in fact, I was so good at it sometimes I had to make the samples for the **Wehrmacht** --

Q: Really?

A: -- to inspect because they had inspections there. I had to make the -- the samples, you know, because you had to stitch it. Now, when you stitch leather, it comes out like this.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I was very good at it.

Q: When you stitch it with a machine, you mean, it comes out like --

A: No, not with -- by hand, by hand.

Q: By hand? Oh, everything was by hand.

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A: Everything was by hand. The mir -- there were ce -- certain things done over there by machine, but not -- what I was doing was not -- was all done by hand, and what the people were doing where I was working was all hand work.

Q: So, in 1940 --

A: You had an awl --

Q: Right.

A: And you would piece the tru -- you know, the -- drill the hole through it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Then you would put the needles in, and --

Q: And pull.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were 18? 1941.

A: Oh gee, I was older than I thought I was.

Q: Right, 1941?

A: Yeah.

Q: You were 18 years old.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were there other people as young as you? Were there 18 year olds and younger?

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A: Yeah, my friend **Martin** that I looked up yesterday on the lists in the things, he was there, my friend **Martin Braun**. We were very good friends, very good friend, very witty fellow. You would have liked to have him --

Q: Yes?

A: -- interview him. He was really something, this guy. Funny.

Q: And you made him as a friend in **Berlin**, is that where you met him?

A: Yeah. And then we found out that we lived almost the ca -- ba -- around the corner from each other. It's a -- at this time we had already exclusively Jewish friends, I mean Christian people didn't bother with you no more. I mean, you would meet -- like I had to go to -- let's say to the superintendent [**indecipherable**] and he -- I talked to him or so, but nothing -- nothing political over there right now, so you had to be very careful, very cautious about that. And -- but I would say 99.9 percent of your friends were all Jewish people.

Q: And did you know Germans who were kind, who were hating the Nazis

[**indecipherable**]

A: It a -- ap -- well, un-unfortunately not too many, but I should not say that they were all that bad. The last job that I had, I -- I finally ended up -- well, I had two more jobs, they were -- were -- chronologically, I don't know how you fit that in from wa -- '42 to '43, but I worked in -- also in a factory that made airplane paint.

Q: Airplane paint?

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A: Yeah, in **Weisensee** in **Berlin**, suburb of **Berlin**. It was -- that place was -- I mean, the work was hard, but I was able to do it, I was young. I did nothing all day but I-load up p-pa semis, you know, with --

Q: With the paint?

A: -- paint barrels, yeah. And the supervisor was a real Nazi, him in uniform, and he -- when my girlfriend picked me up once there, he told me he doesn't want to see no Jewish people in that area, and if you -- next time he sees her, he's going to report her to the Gestapo. He was a real weirdo, this guy, he didn't even -- he had a Polish name, and we -- but he was German.

Q: Is this -- this is a different girlfriend than the one we talked about before.

A: Yeah, of course, that --

Q: I mean, there were many, I gather?

A: Yeah, there were many.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But --

Q: Were any of them serious, was this a serious girlfriend?

A: Yeah, the last one, **Ellen** was serious.

Q: Uh-huh. And is that the one that you were talking about here in **Berlin**?

A: Yeah, that's the one I'm talking about in **Berlin**.

Q: Uh-huh. El -- her name is **Ellen**?

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A: It was **Ellen Wolf**, she -- also she died right in **Auschwitz** there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I have a picture of her too, you know.

Q: Yes, we'll see it later.

A: And -- wh-while I was working there, I wa -- I had an -- an inflamed appendix, and I had to go to the hospital, and a -- a German hospital was not allowed to -- to take you in. The only thing a German hospital was allowed, let's say, if I were to cut my hand off or something, they would allow t-to put a bandage on, but you could not go to a German hospital. In those days the only vehicle I was allowed to take to work was the streetcar. And I'll tell you what that is if you have an acute appendicitis and you have to take the streetcar from one end of **Berlin** to the other. Every time that st -- car started to rattle, I could -- I felt that my insides were falling out. But I made it to the Jewish hospital which existed all during the war, that's wa -- the hospital was located at the **Iranischestrasse. Iranian Street, Iranian.**

Q: Right, right.

A: **Iranischestrasse**, and while I was there, they operated. Dr. **Knopf** did my operation, I remember that very well. They had also a cute -- a cute little girl there, she was a nurse by the name of **Ruth**. I liked her. But I was there about two days, all of a sudden, that -- the police came up and took the bedsheets home [**indecipherable**]. They needed them for the Germans, not for us, so we had to lie on the mattress. But it

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wasn't that bad, you know. And I was lucky it happened to me, because in **Auschwitz** it would have been a horrible operation.

Q: Right, right.

A: If they would have operated to begin with, you know? Some people were operated, but they didn't -- did -- they -- f -- you could f -- they had no anesthesia there that was really effective, because they saved that -- we were considered like vermin, we were nothing, you know?

Q: Right, right.

A: So some people said they felt the knife go in and everything, and they were in such pain. But I was lucky it happened just prior to my perv -- going into **Auschwitz**, you know, going to **Auschwitz**.

Q: Really. And how long were you in the hospital?

A: I would say about four -- four days.

Q: That's all?

A: Yeah.

Q: And then you went back to work?

A: I was very comfortable there, because my girlfriend lived there.

Q: She lived there, how come? She worked there?

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A: Well, because next to the hospital there was a home for girls that had no parents. I mean, she had parents, don't misunderstand, but the parents were divorced. The mother had a boyfriend, and they went to **Shanghai** and left the kid there.

Q: Left they kid?

A: Yeah. And -- and **Ellen** took that very serious, she always says, "My mother left me here to die." Because they knew more about it than we did, there were so many Jewish people there, and there was the hospital, and they had more connection to what was going on in the outs -- in fact, I had a friend, and his mother was a maid, and she had the cleaning woman at the Swiss consulate, that's the job they gave her. And she saw the Swiss ca -- newspapers were in German, you know? **Switzerland** has three different languages. It's -- the [indecipherable] Italian Swiss, near **Tyrol**, and there's the German Swiss, which is the -- and then there's the French Swiss, you know? But the ger -- the -- the papers -- the papers from **Geneva**, they were only in -- in -- in German -- **genf** -- yeah. And she -- he said to me, "You know something?" He says, "I've a -- my mother read in the paper that -- you know where the Jews are going? They're going to **Auschwitz** and get gassed." We laughed. We didn't believe it, I mean that sounded, you know, it's -- it's would be the same thing if you had said to me now, if I come out -- if he -- out of here, I get arrested. I just -- I didn't fathom it at all.

Q: But **Ellen** said this to you?

A: No, this -- this guy --

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Q: This other person --

A: -- that worked with me.

Q: Uh-huh. And so there was no -- there was no conception on your part that -- that -- that --

A: No, there was no -- well, I -- I knew that people disappeared, but we didn't think that they going the gas chamber, they said we -- they resettled, they have to work there, they have to do road work, have to do this, but they are treated nice, you know. I mean nice -- they were treated they got enough to eat and all those -- that's what they told you. And that's why so many Jewish people went there, they said we got resettled, I mean, after all, you're waiting so long, and we always afraid, and now the time has come, now we are going, you know?

Q: But what did you think when **Ellen** --

A: It didn't know what was on the -- at the other end.

Q: Right. But **Ellen** said, I -- obviously before deportation --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that my mother left here --

A: Left me here to die, yeah.

Q: -- here to die.

A: I don't know why she said it. She must have heard -- because since she was -- in other words, the to -- here was the Jewish hospital, next to there there was an annex

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where they had an old age home, and there was another ann -- another annex for children that had no parents, you know, and she had no parents, because the father was divorced, he couldn't take care of her, and wa -- di -- ch -- and the mother went away with her boyfriend to **Shanghai** and left her there. And she always used to say to me, "I hate my mother, she left me here to die."

Q: Well --

A: And she was right.

Q: Yes.

A: She was right, she -- she was left to die. And she did die.

Q: When y -- when you were working in the leather factory, was your mother there with you?

A: Yeah.

Q: But when you went to the airplane factory she wasn't?

A: No.

Q: She's --

A: But I'm -- **Ellen** was also in that factory there, with the bi --

Q: In the leather?

A: Leather factory, yeah, that's where I met her.

Q: Right. But she also didn't go with you to the f -- to the airplane factory?

A: No, no. You couldn't just go, you had to be assigned.

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Q: Right.

A: I mean it was -- it was like winning the lottery. You could go maybe to carry cement, without knowing, or you could go to a job where you had to -- pub -- sort Band-aids, it was -- all depended what they had need for.

Q: Right.

A: And some people went to go to the potato harvest, they were shipped to 50 - 60 miles out of **Berlin**.

Q: Right.

A: And so on and so forth.

Q: So all of you were as if you were pegs in a -- I don't know, in a plot. It didn't matter, you were -- who you were with, or whether you were with your mother, or your --

A: No, they have wa -- n -- no bearing on the thing whatsoever.

Q: You were just -- right, right.

A: It was just where they assigned you to. So I was assigned to the -- and, as I said when I was in [**indecipherable**], I came out of the hospital -- that's what I wanted to bring out -- I came out of the hospital, and of course I walked a little slower than usual, and the boss saw me, and he fired me. And I had --

Q: That other guy?

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A: Yeah. And I was lucky, the railroad needed people. S -- **Unharda barnhof** was one of the big railway stations there, and also passenger station, the railway stations being separate from the passenger stations. In other words, this might be the railroad station, this is the passenger -- the -- the -- where they unload the -- the wa -- the trains, freight trains. And I worked for a guy -- a man there, he was called -- he was what is called an **umpman**, he was in charge of the whole thing. And he liked Jewish people. I mean, he was always nicer. And I remember one day just before Christmas he told me -- he says to me, "**Jack,**" -- **Jurgen**, whatever, "come to my office, I have a piece of furniture to move." And I went in. He says, "I move -- I called you away, you don't get anything to eat." He gave me a piece of cake and a sandwich. He says, "I haven't got much to give for Christmas because we don't get anything." But he said, "What they do to you is awful." And he gave me the sandwich, and he gave me the piece of cake. Unfortunately later he got killed by a bomb that hit the station when he was on duty.

Q: So there were small, little things that some people did --

A: Smaller. There were also smaller things that sometimes would find somebody when they were on the subways, say somebody would run for the train and push some food stamps in your hand, you know?

Q: Just a stranger?

A: Yeah, you never knew who it was, you know? But it was very rare, very, very rare.

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Q: But i-isn't it --

A: It took courage in a way.

Q: Yes.

A: It did took courage, that much I have to say, because you could never tell who was watching you.

Q: Right.

A: I was once riding in a si -- in a train, and I -- in an elevated train, and they always had signs there in German, **Vorsicht Belgesprachen Feind Hort Mit**, which means b-beware of speaking openly because enemy is listening in, and somebody scraped out the word enemy and wrote Gestapo. [indecipherable]. You know? I mean, it took courage for people to do that, because you could never tell, that there were eyes and ears all over the place, and you didn't even know about it.

Q: Wasn't there a time when the ration cards -- th-the ration stamps were all the same, and then at a certain point they would put a ji -- they put a **J** on the ration stamps?

A: Yeah.

Q: So that you couldn't get --

A: The sa -- ration stamps were -- had all printed so a red letter **J** on every stamp. And when [indecipherable] the stamps, yeah. And of course, I remember once -- I had a very lucky break once, when they gave out for Christmas, people were allowed to have coffee, got some kind of a ration of coffee. My mother gave in, too. Well, somebody

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came out, Jews cannot have it. We get a letter from the police department. Mrs.

Rehfeld, or what -- well -- yeah, Mrs. -- well, I don't know whether she was **Rehfeld** yet, or **Schindler**. Who could keep up with her? And -- has to ap-appear at eight o'clock at night at the police station. So I went with my mother. The police officer -- it was a station that no Jew wanted to go to. It was in the **Krollmanstrasse**, in **Berlin**. They were non -- if you stand there waiting, a police would come and push you, and you would fall, and all kinds of things. Well, there was this guy sitting there, and he said, "You -- you have a letter," he says, "where are you from?" My mother says she is -- that she is from **Saarbrücken**. He says, "I'm from **Saarbrücken**, too," he says, "what cr-crime did you commit?" She said, "I gave the stamp in." He said, "Screw them." He s -- tore it up and threw it in the wastebasket, said, "Go home." Was a lucky break.

Q: Right.

A: She could have gone to camp for that. She would have had one of these Nazis there, that real wild ones. There were a few decent people.

Q: Right.

A: I'm not saying that all of **Germany** was bad.

Q: Yes.

A: But I would say 95 percent of them were bad, I mean that you can, in -- in **France**, or in other countries also, the French were not too good to the Jews either, but there

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were always people that would hide them, that would do this, would -- would do that for them. Or at least children, they would take children in to hide them, or -- not in **Germany**, you didn't find that.

Q: But did you -- did you know that in **Berlin** there were Jews who were hiding underground?

A: Yeah, of course we knew. We didn't know where they were. But there were Jews hiding.

Q: Di-Did you think about that as a possibility, or --

A: No, I had nobody to hide me.

Q: You didn't know anyone to do it --

A: No.

Q: Right.

A: Absolutely not.

Q: But certainly starting in 1941 when they -- when they took you in forced labor, the deportations out of **Berlin** start. So did you know about deportations?

A: Deportations started in '41, I believe.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Yeah, I saw, for instance, people who had worked with me at that leather factory already, they went to **Riga**, they went to what was at that time, and the Germans occupied it, was called **Litzmannstadt**, which is **Lodz** today, you know. Or it used to

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be **Lodz**, anyway. Was called litz -- **Litzmannstadt**, and these people ju -- just disappeared, you didn't hear from them no more. So you thought that they're out there, and that they can't write, they have to work, and thing, and but nobody thought that they would go in the gas chamber, they would be shot and -- and -- and -- by the hundreds and by the thousands, nobody knew that.

Q: But at the same time, you certainly didn't want to be deported?

A: Oh no, nobody wanted to be deported.

Q: Right, you -- right.

A: I mean, after all, I mean you lived somewhere, you were wi -- in your house, and with your -- in your apartment, with your mother or with your parents, whatever the case might be. You don't want to all of a sudden be shipped to **Riga**, or somewhere.

Q: Right. Do you -- do you feel a difference between when you first arrived in **Berlin** in '38, and when you're in forced labor in 1941 and 1942? Do you feel that things are getting somehow worse?

A: Oh yeah. You saw them getting worse, you didn't have to feel it even.

Q: You saw?

A: I mean, they had the benches, no Jews allowed, and you -- you were not allowed any more to use public transportation.

Q: Right.

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A: And things like that you weren't allowed, out in the street after eight o'clock in the summer.

Q: So everything is getting tighter and more difficult?

A: Oh definitely.

Q: And -- and what about your food?

A: Well, we got very little food. During the war you had to either -- if you had some money, you could try to get some food on the black market. To go -- some people, Jewish people that had connections [indecipherable] they wouldn't tell you, but if you gave them money, they would get you, let's say -- they had tea tablets, you know, that you could buy, and --

Q: Tea tablets?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is --

A: It was pressed tea that were pressed, it looked like an aspirin pill, but it was brown of course, and when you dissolved it in hot water, became tea --

Q: I see.

A: -- you know. It might not have been the best of teas, but was tea.

Q: But it was something, right.

A: Was not Pekoe in Pekoe tea, but it was some -- some kind of a tea.

Q: Were you hungry?

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A: Yeah, quite often. Quite often I was hungry, because my mother said to me, you know, I was a finicky eater when I was a small kid, very bad. I -- in fact, once it was so bad that the doctor insisted my mother would weigh everything that I ate, to make sure that I got enough food in me. And my mother said to me, "Years ago, when I had the food, you didn't want to eat. Now you want to eat and I haven't got any food to give you." And then my mother was not the type that would s -- I don't know, she was thin, and she didn't -- maybe she didn't eat that much. And I know other friends, they used to buy on the black market, they had chickens, and all kinds of things that they would buy, steaks. We never saw anything like that. I mean, I didn't. And you know, I was hungry, sure. You get nothing but beets. And people run out already of fantasies how to make these beets, to make fat, you di -- or oil you didn't get. So we had to -- I don't know how they made the beets, they cooked them, I guess, in water. Water was still available.

Q: Right.

A: And there was no such thing as -- well, bread you got very little, very little. Butter, maybe a -- like three or four pads of butter like you get --

Q: Little pats.

A: -- [indecipherable] the store.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And of course I was hungry, I mean, I was a growing boy.

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Q: Right. When did you lose the maid?

A: The maid I lost in 1936.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah. My mother just couldn't afford it any more, I don't know if she -- I don't know what c-caused her to make --

Q: So did you not -- did you end up not being able to see her, or did --

A: I couldn't see her any more, she want back to **Saarbrucken** --

Q: Oh, I see, I see.

A: -- and I was in **Cologne** at that time, I think.

Q: The maid was not Jewish, I gather.

A: No, no. Oh, there was also a law, the maid had to be -- well, and they wouldn't --

Q: They wouldn't allow it.

A: -- have any things to do with my mother, but if there was a house over there, was a Jewish male, a maid had to be a certain age to be employed there, you know.

Q: That's right. They had to be over 45.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. You are still living at home, right, going back and forth to work?

A: Yeah, yeah.

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Q: Are you -- are you getting weaker physically --

A: N --

Q: -- in those two years?

A: Maybe a little bit, but not t-to the extent --

Q: Not too much?

A: -- like in **Auschwitz**, you know. **Auschwitz** wa -- the -- was really the -- the end of it, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- because you got nothing there, I mean nothing to speak of.

Q: But you have friends, and you have a girlfriend, where d -- where do all of you go?

Wh -- ho -- how do you have social life?

A: Oh, this is a good thing you mentioned, I got to explain this to you. I had a -- I used to walk. I used to walk for hours. I used to walk from my house to the **Iranischestrass**e, which was some trip. I would say it took about at least two hours to walk it, but I was young, I could walk it, I did.

Q: And why --

A: And in the morning when I went to work --

Q: Yeah?

A: -- at a certain subway station, I used to meet **Ellen**, and **Ellen** used to come to our house too, you know.

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Q: And you --

A: And you couldn't use -- I remember I ha -- one lucky break was I had one friend who lived in an area where I had to use the -- the subway that I always used to get to the **Unharda barnhof**, and what I did is I would walk to the **Unharda barnhof**, I would go up, use the tickets for this, so I came from **[indecipherable]** I worked there, and then right to the -- to the end where he lived, you know? You had to use ingenuity in those days.

Q: And how could you get on?

A: Well, I had a card. Y-You had a -- you ha -- you had the -- the ticket, you were just only allowed to use it --

Q: To go to work.

A: -- when you go to work, so the -- who would know? I would take along a briefcase, you know, with this -- with -- that I used that --

Q: As a --

A: -- and -- and make believe that I came from work, which I didn't.

Q: So when you were going to see **Ellen** and your other friends, your male friends, who also may or may not have had girlfriends, did you meet in people's houses and have a party?

A: Yeah. We used to meet in houses, and have parties. I mean, first of all, I had one friend -- **Ellen** had a friend, a girlfriend, her mother was half Jewish, and we used to

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meet at their house, and we used to have a little party. We had the phonograph, we used to dance to records, you know, and yeah, we had parties in people's houses, as you said.

Q: And were you still able to read, did you -- ye -- did you have to give up books?

A: Well, we had books in the house.

Q: You had books in the house. And was there a -- a library that was just for the -- the Jews, that there --

A: No, no.

Q: There wasn't. So it was only the books you --

A: We had a -- in -- in **Germany**, it -- they have libraries, aside from the public libraries, they have private libraries --

Q: Right.

A: -- where you rent books and you pay for it. And next to us there was a family, they hid, during the **Kristallnacht**, they hid some Jewish people in their back rooms, and they always gave me American books and things to read, you know, and this is how I got books. There were some people who were decent, you know?

Q: Right.

A: Very few. You could come -- you can tell that I can remember most.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: There are not too many.

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Q: So could you read English?

A: A little, sure.

Q: A little bit.

A: I took English in school, yeah.

Q: So that was good. Okay, I think what we'll do is we'll take a break, and we'll start with your evacuation.

A: Yeah, okay.

End of Tape Four

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Beginning Tape Five

Q: Were you smoking before the war?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: When did you start smoking?

A: Oh, I was maybe 16.

Q: Why did you start?

A: Because I enjoyed doing it.

Q: Uh-huh. And you were still able to get cigarettes?

A: Yeah, then there was -- you were still able, before the war, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: But after the war started, after '39, was it harder?

A: Oh, you couldn't e -- cigarettes were rationed. We used to get some weak cigarettes that must have been from occupied **Greece**, they were horrible. They tasted like cardboard, they were terrible.

Q: Cardboard, really.

A: There was earlier a good Macedonian tobacco that they used to have, but before the war, yeah, I used to smoke a little.

Q: Did you drink?

A: No.

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Q: No?

A: Never drank.

Q: Really? Okay.

A: I never had the desire for it.

Q: When we ended the last tape, we were close to the deportation to **Auschwitz**. So you were working in factories for two years.

A: Yeah.

Q: And there are a number of deportations starting in 1941, and then in '42.

A: That's correct.

Q: Are you worried that -- that it's obviously going to get to you?

A: Well, eventually, yeah, of course we were worried that it would get to us eventually. But you always figured a ba -- at first they used to have a lot of people that were originally from **Poland** and **Russia**, Jews from **Poland** and **Russia** they would deport. I don't know, a -- they deport of course, young Jews as well. And at the beginning they all went somewhere to **Latvia** and place. **Lodz**, I remember it was -- it was another place, but of course we -- everybody worried, you know.

Q: Right.

A: It was a tight situation, and you can't never tell who was next, you know?

Q: Did you think in some ways being German Jewish would be helpful?

A: No.

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Q: You didn't?

A: Oh, of course not.

Q: Not any more? Because you weren't German any more.

A: No.

Q: According to the -- the German government.

A: We were stateless, actually.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, was the -- there was something called the **Fabrikaktion**, which was the -- the -- the **aktion** --

A: The **Fabrikaktion**, yeah, that was when they took from the factories and the workplaces.

Q: Yeah, is -- is that how you were deported?

A: I was deported because gr -- I don't know whether it was called the **Fabrikaktion**, I was deported because that was the year when **Goebbels** had promised **Hitler** to make **Berlin** Jew free. It was -- the -- the **Grossaktion** they called it, in fact they were so busy, I was picked up wi -- I was working at the station, I had seen my mother ba -- be -- we went to -- she went to the subway, and I went to the -- to the other train, the elevated trains. And was the last time I saw her. And when we got to where we first were, all of a sudden they said we should go to the -- th -- another spot on the -- on the

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-- the station, and there the SS was there, and loaded us up in trains, you know -- in -- in trucks.

Q: So where were you working at that -- at that --

A: At the -- at the -- at the railroad station.

Q: So you had gone from leather, to --

A: To painting.

Q: -- painting.

A: Well, I mentioned before, I said that I -- didn't I mention that I was walking a little slower and I got fired from the --

Q: From the leather you got fired, right?

A: No, no, no.

Q: N -- oh, from the painting.

A: From the painting.

Q: You got fired because you had the appendic --

A: Yeah, that.

Q: -- appendicitis, yeah.

A: Yeah, that.

Q: So then where -- so what was your next job then? Was it --

A: The railroad station.

Q: The railroad station.

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A: Yeah.

Q: What were you doing at the railroad station?

A: Loading and unloading freight cars.

Q: Uh-huh. And that's where they -- they moved you onto trucks?

A: Yeah. In fact, I was moved by the **Leibstandarte, Hitler's** own guard, because they were so busy hunting Jews that it took every **SS** available.

Q: Uh-huh. And how many of you were taken in these trucks? How -- how many do you remember? 50 - 100, or more?

A: I don't remember exactly how many were taken in each truck, but it wasn't a long ride to begin with, it was only a 15 minute ride maybe, to get to the -- to that area where they put us in the -- we used -- it used to be schools, Jewish schools, which were not allowed any more, and they used them as -- just for us to s -- it had s-straw mattresses on the floor and we would sleep on them.

Q: Right.

A: And --

Q: So where did they take you?

A: They took me s -- in -- in **North Berlin** it was, I think, rosenth -- no, not **Rosenthalestrasse**. What was that called, that [**indecipherable**]

Q: Was it **Putlitz**?

A: Hm?

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Q: Was it **Putlitz** that they took you, or not? **Putlitz**? No.

A: No, that was the railroad station.

Q: I see.

A: You mean [**indecipherable**]

Q: That's where -- that's where you ended up being deported from?

A: Yeah.

Q: So, where you were evacua --

A: I -- I could have been the [**indecipherable**] **Hamburgerstrasse** --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- or, I don't know, I guess it was one of -- one of these things. I was not with my mother, my mother was arrested separately. There was a girl, a friend of **Ellen's** and mine who worked also with us in the leather good factory, she was half Jewish, and she was also arrested, but she got out and she told me after the war, that my mother was in that things -- in that camp there, waiting to be deported.

Q: So were -- were you in a large room, wherever this was?

A: I-It had -- each -- each classroom had people sleeping on the floor in there, you know?

Q: I see.

A: And there was a doctor and his wife, they committed suicide, we found them dead in the morning, he must have injected himself with something. A lot of people

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committed suicide. Most people don't realize that a lot of Jewish people -- I knew another doctor who also committed suicide. He was a tip -- a pediatrician.

Q: And how did most people commit suicide as far as you know, with poison?

A: Taking pills, or --

Q: Taking pills?

A: Yeah.

Q: So do you think they d --

A: Or cut their th -- cut their wrists, or --

Q: Uh-huh. Do you think they knew what was happening, or thought this was going to happen, or this was just too much --

A: Well, I ge -- I'm not sure whether they knew, but they probably figured the worst to happen.

Q: Right.

A: And I would imagine that -- well, there are some people -- you know, there are some people they right away -- they can't cope right away --

Q: Right.

A: -- but they're not [indecipherable] the -- the -- they -- they -- it so -- it so happened they figured right, you know? But I don't know whether they really knew, perhaps, or saw documents proving that there would be gassed.

Q: Right. In this group that you were in, were there any friends of yours?

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A: Yeah.

Q: So were you sticking close together, so whatever happened you would be together?

A: All the people who got arrested from that railroad station were there, and the -- I -- I knew them all, because we worked together.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: Also was in there a friend of mine -- you know, I -- I can't at the moment think of his name, but I -- I shall at a later -- probably a later time remember the name, and his wife had given birth to a baby, and she was still in the hospital. And he got word out, he paid somebody, because some of the half Jewish people, they were like **[indecipherable]** they were doing things for the -- for the people. And he gave him money and he went to the Jewish hospital and told his wife about it. And his wife immediately came and the baby, she was -- she wasn't even in the hospital a day or two.

Q: When she came --

A: And we had already prepared for -- for -- to having a little celebration, we had taken food rations and put them away, so we have a little party. And she came to the -- to the staging area where we were -- all were. And she died, you know, she was killed, and the kid was killed, and he died later. **[coughs]**

Q: Are you okay?

A: Yeah, I'm all right.

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Q: You're all right? Okay.

A: What happened was that -- in fact, I saw him, he was a very strong fellow, he used to -- he could lift, and everything, I mean he was stronger -- a real strong guy. When I saw him die in **Buna**, he was like a unbelievable hardly to cri -- you could hardly recognize him. He asked me for a piece of bread, and I didn't have anything to give him. And I felt terrible about it, because if I'd had -- even the piece of bread wouldn't have helped him any.

Q: No. H-How many --

A: He was called -- what they -- th-they used to call him **musselman**, you heard that expression.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: **Musselman** was somebody who was already emaciated to a point where there was absolutely no help any more. And those were the people that usually got gassed, that they used to see them, and they would herd them onto a transport and gas them.

Q: Right.

A: And he -- his wife pa -- I mean, it was -- was horrible, just awful. I never saw the baby -- I mean, I saw the baby, but I don't remember seeing the baby, because the baby was only a couple of days old.

Q: Right. Do you remember how many days you were waiting to be taken on a train?

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A: Yeah, I think it was about two or three days, and then finally the **SS** was standing, I remember when you looked out the window, you saw the **SS** there with machine pistols, and [indecipherable] I saw them right there with their lead group, **Hitler's** guards, you know, that they had in the chancellery.

Q: That you should come.

A: And -- and they shoved us into the -- those trucks, you know, they had like a canvas around them, put us in there, they brought us to that railroad station there. I remember it was in the winter, and it was snowing.

Q: Tell me a couple of things. What did you eat when you were there? Did -- had -- did you bring food with you, or --

A: No, we had no food that we brought with us. I think the Jewish congregation gave us some bread and soup, or whatever there was.

Q: So it was now you're in a worse situation than you had been used to, because you were not getting enough food anyway. But now you had even less.

A: Yeah, but I'll tell you something, your mind wasn't really thinking of food at that time, you know, because now we really knew that we were in the pickle, and we didn't know where we were going. And we -- it was so abrupt, I had seen my mother in the morning, and we were working, all of a sudden they took us away, you know?

Q: And what about toilet facilities where you were staying? This is before you get on a truck, in this -- in this --

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A: In -- the toilet facilities -- remember it was a school, they had toilet facilities.

Q: So that was --

A: I mean **Berlin** was a town, th-they had sewerage, and wa -- there were toilet facilities

Q: Right, right. So yo -- when -- were you wearing winter clothes? Were you wearing a jacket?

A: Yeah, I was wearing a jacket --

Q: And did you have the --

A: -- because I was working outside.

Q: Right. So you had good shoes for the winter?

A: Yeah, I had boots.

Q: So that was lucky.

A: Yeah, but they were taken away from me.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I mean, you had to strip --

Q: Right.

A: I got these wooden shoes with a canvas top there.

Q: Right, right. So tell me -- you were in a freight car, yes?

A: Yeah.

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Q: And do you have any idea about how many people were in each car? In your car, forget each car, in your car?

A: Yeah, I would say at least 70 people. In other words, so many that we couldn't arrange to sit down.

Q: So you were standing?

A: We -- we were trying everything, we p -- between sip -- spr -- spread our legs and have somebody else sit in between. And there were always people, about 15 or 20 people who were still standing.

Q: Standing.

A: So what I did is, I didn't sit down at all, I stood near the door there, and held onto that iron rod.

Q: Does that mean you were near the -- the little window?

A: I was near the little window, I was near that door that rolls --

Q: Yes.

A: [indecipherable] work -- that runs on a track.

Q: Yes.

A: And I was standing there for all the time.

Q: And do you -- do you know how long the trip was?

A: Yes, I'd say about two days.

Q: Two days?

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A: Yeah.

Q: Did you get any food, any water?

A: No.

Q: Nothing?

A: No. We got nothing. We begged the SS to give us, because it was snowing, and we could have gotten snow, that would have helped us, you know? They didn't give us anything.

Q: Did people die?

A: Yeah.

Q: Anyone you know?

A: No, at that time, not -- nobody I knew.

Q: Was this the first time that you had been near people who were dead, besides your -
- your father at a funeral?

A: Yeah, I would say so, yeah.

Q: Did you -- did you react in any way?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: You got so many things on your mind, once you get there, you know, in that situation, you get really numb, and you -- you don't feel any -- anything at all.

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Q: What were -- were you thinking about anything when you were on the train? Or were you --

A: Yeah, I was thinking I would have liked to know where we are going.

Q: Uh-huh. And did you talk with people and say where do you think we're going?

A: Yeah, of course.

Q: And --

A: And they used to say, I think we are going in an easterly direction, which was toward **Poland**.

Q: Right.

A: And we passed -- you could sometimes see -- they had this little slot there, that window, had like barbed wire on it.

Q: Right.

A: But you could see some things. You could catch -- at night you couldn't see too well, but in the daytime. And we knew we passed **Frankfurt-on-the-Oder**, not **Frankfurt** on [indecipherable], **Frankfurt-on-the-Oder**, which is on it's way to **Poland**, so -- going east, you know?

Q: Right.

A: And then all of a sudden the guy says where we were already near the [indecipherable], he said there was a sign to -- **Nach Auschwitz**, so and so many kilometers or something on the road. Then we knew where we were going. And then --

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nobody knew of course about ausch -- I knew about **Auschwitz**, but I -- because I heard that story. But I still didn't believe that they had gas chambers there, I mean, I -- I thought it was a labor camp, you know?

Q: Right.

A: But we got there, I think it was nighttime. It was darker now, and they opened up the -- these sliding doors, and they told us **raus, raus**, you know, out, out, out, and beat us up riz -- it c-came as a big surprise, you know, because I had never been beaten up by anybody before.

Q: Right, right.

A: I mean, I didn't do anything bad. And -- and we -- we went out there as fast as we could, and that's when th -- they started to form the lines, there was an **SS** man there, and -- where the door -- where they had the door [**indecipherable**] said, "You go on this side, you go on this side." This side, go over this side, this -- well, I don't know, I was going on the side he told me, I didn't know where I was, and where wa -- wa -- the other side must have one the -- been the gas chamber, but I didn't know, I mean, I just went on the side because I was told to go there.

Q: Right.

A: And then all of a sudden, while they were still waiting there for the gas chamber procedure, trucks came. And they loaded us on those trucks, and jus -- they brought us to **Buna**.

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Q: And this is a -- all men?

A: All men --

Q: All men

A: -- yeah, all men. **Buna** didn't have a wi -- didn't have a women's camp. **Auschwitz** and **Buna** were me -- a m -- m -- a male camps, and **Birkenau**, or whatever they called it in Polish, was a women's camp. And **Birkenau** was also where the gas installations were. They also had one in the main camp, but I don't -- I don't know whether they u -
- they had used it at several occasions, but I think it -- it went out of use when I was there already. I don't remember any transports there, I mean, possible that there were some when I wasn't there, when I was at work, I don't know, but I've never seen any there in -- in our camp. Course that's see that we -- we smelled it, you know, we -- in **Auschwitz** you could smell that for miles, and people who knew that s -- they were burning people. Even the -- the Polish people knew about it, you know, so they were not in the ca -- not a lot of them were not in the camp, but little town of **Oswiecim**, **Auschwitz**, you could smell that, you could smell it all over the area. It was a --

Q: Did you -- did you realize very quickly what was going on?

A: Oh yeah, once I was there, then -- and they told us, they said, "You know, you're lucky you're here, because all the others there at the station, they already dead, they already gassed and burned."

Q: And did you s --

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A: So we knew what was going on there.

Q: And did you say, oh my God, this guy was right. [indecipherable]

A: No, I didn't say anything, I took it -- but I don't know.

Q: You just took it?

A: Yeah. And I remember the first meal they give [indecipherable], they got tattooed, you know, I had to stand in line and --

Q: Now are you at **Buna** when they register you, and not in **Auschwitz**?

A: Well, **Buna** is part of **Auschwitz**.

Q: I -- no, no, I understand that. But it's **Auschwitz III**

A: It's **Auschwitz** -- **Auschwitz III** --

Q: Yeah, it is ausch -- yes.

A: -- or **Auschwitz II**, I forgot already. And yeah [indecipherable] we had to go to the bath house, and they shaved us, and then we had to take a cold shower, and then they put some kind of a kerosene on our bodies, I guess to prevent lice, or flea -- they had them anyways there, but it was a procedure. And then we had to go --

Q: And they shaved your whole body --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- not just your hair, yeah.

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A: Yeah, and then we had to go to -- to be tattooed, so I was standing there, and waiting, and I fell asleep, because I had -- this was already the third day that I was standing on my feet.

Q: So you fell asleep standing up, while waiting, or you sat down?

A: No, I stood up. I didn't know the line had moved, and I hadn't moved with them. All of a sudden somebody hit me in the face, my head turned from one side to the other. And they put a tattoo on a --

Q: Do you remember them putting a tattoo?

A: Yeah, **106377**.

Q: What is it?

A: **106377**.

Q: Did it hurt?

A: Yeah, it hurt. But I didn't feel it that much because we were in the -- you were so shocked, you know, in a state of shock, almost. But you could feel it, it was bleeding too, you know, the blood came out with the ink together there. No, there were some people that got sick from it, you know, they got the infections from it.

Q: Right.

A: And then we got the prison garb. Pair of these boots, you know. **Kapo** took my boots away from me.

Q: So you got wooden shoes, yeah?

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A: I got wooden shoes, yeah. And these wooden shoes, they were one size, you know, th-there were no such thing as different sizes. And they were very hard to wear because they rubbed, you know, the thing rubbed on the -- used to get all kinds of infections on the -- on your -- on the boot -- I got kicked by an SS man, and they used to have these nails on the [indecipherable] right away. He tore off a piece of flesh, and it start to bleed. You can't do nothing about it, and so I covered -- paper ban -- paper bandages for the prisoners there, as long as the supply lasted, and I put it around it, and I went to work, and I put the sa -- my socks on the bed. And at night the thing was stuck -- my sock was stuck to the -- to -- to -- to the open wound, you know. And you had to tear it off, so that it never really healed, it took -- festered for months and months and months. I was lucky, a lot of people died from where they -- they got infections and they had to take the foot off, and all kinds of things. But I guess in -- in that instance I was lucky, because eventually it started to heal. It's still a little purplish today, but it is -- course, it's healed, after so many years. And -- and then firs -- I remember the first time they gave us food, it was sauerkraut with rotten apples in it.

Q: Sauerkraut?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: That was the meal. Was some kind of kraut, must have been sauerkraut. And I couldn't eat it. You should have seen -- I couldn't understand how fast the other guys,

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they were fighting over it, hitting each other, they p -- but in a minute it was gone, you know. And I didn't he -- I couldn't understand what was such a big attraction, you know, this bowl of sauerkraut. But later I knew what it was, that these people were starved, you know? And they looked it, too.

Q: Did you --

A: But you can't pay attention to these things at first, you know? It's just the way -- didn't want to eat it, and somebody else ate it. That's the whole story behind it. Then we got -- in the morning we used to get the bread. That was the big occasion, yeah, two slices of bread, whatever it was. And you had to eat it fast, because if you didn't watch that bread, it was gone, someone would steal it. Also, there was rules, and anybody who stole bread would be hanged, you know? And they did it, too.

Q: The Germans had this rule?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But you -- you were still people that tried, and people were desperate, hungry, you know? You know. And you've -- there was no way of really keeping that bread. If you took it with you to work, you wo -- it fell apart in your pocket, you know, because it was so [indecipherable] I don't know what it was. I don't know even

[indecipherable] the SS is sure what it was. It was something that they concocted there. And for lunch, we had a soup, about a liter. You know what a liter is? A liter is

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less than a quart. Everything that he -- when they cooked for the SS, and all the other leaves that were rotten also, they made a soup for us out of. They also had some kinds -- they used to take -- from the fields they used to take some kind of a growing thing there and they put that in the soup, and that's like little greens [indecipherable] in the soup, I don't know what it was. It was some kind of a weed, I would imagine. And that was the -- that was the lunch, that's all you got. And then you had to wait for the next day to get something again.

Q: So there was no supper? Nothing at night.

A: No, no.

Q: Only breakfast and lunch?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were some people getting packages -- not Jews, I mean, were some --

A: No, Jews didn't get packages, Poles did.

Q: Right, but the -- the Poles did, but I mean these people --

A: Yeah, and the Germans.

Q: Did any of them share?

A: No, no. They didn't share anything. If you were lucky, if you cleaned the bowls for them, they would leave a little bit for su -- of something in there, whatever it was, you know? You didn't get anything to share.

Q: Did it shock you the way people were behaving?

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A: Yeah, it was kind of unusual, you know, to me, but [indecipherable] the people -- I'll tell you something, people went in, their character actually never really changed. There were those that were decent people, they acted like human beings. There were those that were just like animals, you know? They probably were in real life like that as well, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I imagine. And I had seen people that used to fight and steal, and you couldn't report -- I wouldn't report them, because I knew if I report them they -- they going to die. And then, besides that, it was not too good to talk with these **kapos**, because it's -- whatever mood they were in, they would hit you, or wouldn't believe you, or kick you, or whatever. So you pretty much kept to yourself. But there were some people who were pretty rough, you know? And the roughest of them all was the **Sonderkommando**, the person that [indecipherable] had the gas and burned the j -- the Jewish people, you know. I mean, they didn't gas them, they put them in the gas chamber.

Q: Right.

A: And the **SS** used to put the gas in on the top, you know?

Q: Right.

A: But we had every day this -- the **SS** used to try to instill into us not to try to escape or something. And no, you couldn't escape from **Auschwitz**, it was just impossible.

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First of all, you had an inside wire that was electrically charged. Then you had a -- a -- a wall that was made out of -- like the **Berlin** wall, like a plat -- **bitum**, or plaster, whatever you call that. And then you had the guard towers. I mean, every street in the concentration camp was watched -- you know, on each end there was a guard tower, you know? The **Auschwitz** camp itself was not even that large, but they concentrated so many people in one spot, and that's how they could hold so many people. And then they were the outside camps, you know, part -- **Auschwitz I, II** and **III**. So you hold that -- and besides that, even let's say, even if a person would have been able to get out, where would they have gone? Would have gone into another concentration camp, cause there was **Birkenau**, there was **Buna**, there was **Auschwitz I**, the main camp. And there were concentration camp all over the place. And besides, the **SS** were always on the lookout for something to happen, you know? They had dogs they would let them loose there. So there were only two people that I know of that got out of that camp, that was **Rudi Vrba** and his friend. He got out because he was privileged. In other words, he worked for **Kanada**. **Kanada** was the place where all the goods came together [**indecipherable**] the people they robbed, the suitcases. And they found diamonds, they found all kinds of things, food. And they assorted it. Of course, sometimes the **kapos** did trade with the **SS**, you know? They said the **SS** would give them something, food, and they -- and they would give them the diamonds or whatever. And privileged people -- there was a -- ba -- a better class in **Auschwitz**,

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like on the outside world, there was a dynasty. I mean there were people who had [indecipherable] and then there the real poor, like me. Like a lot of others. So **Vrba** got out because he got ahold of Russian tobacco, and they tra -- they somehow soaked that in some kind of an oil, and the dogs would not smell it, the dogs would not bark. They were hiding i-in the -- in the -- in a wooden shed there -- not a shed, it was like some kind of wooden thing that they had piled up, and they were inside. And of course when they were missing, the sirens started to wail, and they went -- but the **SS** almost caught them. The guy says to, "Did you look in that thing there?" He says -- he lifted up one board, said, "There's nobody in there." So after three days they gave -- give up the search, and that's when they went out at night, and fled. But aside from that, I don't s -- remember anybody escaping from **Auschwitz**.

Q: I'm afraid we have to stop and change the tape.

End of Tape Five

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Beginning Tape Six

Q: Actually, I was going to say on -- on camera, there were a few other people who escaped, and there was another pair that escaped a few weeks after **Wetzler** and **Vrba**.

A: Yeah.

Q: And they met up together in **Bratislava**. So they all were together.

A: Oh yeah, I think I read that in a book.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. But not too many --

Q: No, not a lot.

A: -- if you -- if you consider how many people were at **Auschwitz**.

Q: Absolutely. What sort of work were they making you do in **Buna**?

A: Oh, when I got there first, we had a roll call in the morning, and they these **kapos**, they were usually from German penitentiaries, you know, they were pa -- killers and all kinds of criminals. And he pulled me over to his side there, and they -- there were people standing already, and then you had enough people, he -- we marched out, we got to a place that was full of cement bags, and it was -- I remember there was a small, miniature railroad track, and they had these little **lorries** on it, they were like came to a point at the end, and opened wun -- wide on the -- on the top. And I don't know any more, I don't remember what these were for, but I -- we had to take the cement bags from one end, the **SS** was standing on one end, and the **kapos** were standing the other -

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- we had to take it just -- somebody put a cement bag on your back, you had to run over to the other end and put it there. And on the -- then you had to run back again to get the second wa -- one. You know, the people died in that p -- in that [indecipherable] you could -- just couldn't keep it up. I kept up as long as I could, you know, and I -- all day, when I came back is -- into the camp, I thought I'd die of -- I was such exhausted, you know. But second day I made sure that this **kapo** wouldn't get me. I figured if this is the worst, I mean it can't get any worse than that. So went [indecipherable]. What happened is we had to build the **I. G. Farben Buna** plant there, that's right, it was called **Buna**. **Buna** was an artificial rubber product, was used for s-shoe soles and things like that. We had to carry metal rods that were very long, I remember, and they were a part -- I would say at least 20 -- 25 prisoners to one rod -- to wa -- that's how long they were. But when you worked there, there were p-parts where you had to climb up the hill. When they climb up the hill you had all that weight on you. It was agony, believe me. You had to carry that things, and then th -- you had to go up, and you were glad when you were on top of the hill that you didn't -- some of the weight was already distributed more, on a regular basis, like. In other words, the other ones were carrying it as well. And that's was all there was to do in this camp, there were -- there was one Italian that made gas out of rotten foods, or what -- I don't know what it was. Rotten t -- [indecipherable] it stank terrible, it was -- it was called **faulgas**, and **faul** means foul, you know? Gas. And there were no cushiony jobs th --

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in -- in **Buna**, at least not at the time when I was there, and in **Buna** they had latrines.

And I remember one night -- first of all there was -- t-they gave you a

[**indecipherable**] pockets for people to urinate in. And the last one that came there, and it was full, had to go -- and nobody wanted to go and fa -- with the cold outside.

So if you didn't go --

Q: You had to take it outside?

A: I go there once, and I figure oh, still good enough. All of a sudden I got hit over the head, and the **kapo** was there, "Get out with that damn thing you son of a bitch." And he threw me out, you know, [**indecipherable**] was kind of thing. So I figure since I'm in the toilet already, might as well empty myself completely. I sit down, all of a sudden I feel some -- something touching me on the shoulder. I look up, there's a guy hanging on the -- on the -- on the blankets, i -- pi -- hung himself, you know? And he was dancing on my shoulder when I was sitting, you know? And it did -- did not phase me because it was nat -- that was a natural thing. I mean it's like, if you go in the swimming pool, you expect to get wet, right?

Q: Right.

A: And when you in -- and when you're there, you expect to see these things, I mean, that -- hangings. Then they had something that was called sport. After work -- well, I - - I don't know whether I told you that we had to, when we made the bunks, the bunk consisted of a straw mattress, and a -- and a wedge pillow, a very thin wedge pillow,

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and a blanket, of course. Thin blanket, to be sure. And in the morning when we made that bed, that had to be done in the military fashion. There were two guys that started from the first bed to the last one, they had the string, and these pi -- these wedge pillows and the -- and that blanket, they had to perfectly align. There had to be a crease in it, you know? So that they all fit in the crease [indecipherable]. So I don't know, we p -- goofed, or somebody goofed. I don't know, maybe I goofed, I don't remember exactly. That means you have sport. After they came back from work, they s -- bunks [indecipherable] so and so, you're all going out for sport. Well, the sport consisted of carrying a very long ladder. That ladder was almost as long as from this end here of the room to the -- to this end. And each person had to take one of the sprockets, one of the things oh -- in his shoulder, we had to run across and sing, and we had to say, "We are supposed to be clean, we are supposed to make our beds right, we are not," -- all this. And that went on -- depends how -- what mood they -- they -- the **kapo** was. It was a very cold day, and he was cold himself, it didn't last as long. But on the sunny day, believe me, you could -- could go on for hours.

Q: So you would keep running back and forth, singing this song?

A: We had to ro -- run around with it.

Q: In a circle?

A: Yeah, well -- [indecipherable] the whole camp area there.

Q: I see, I see.

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A: And --

Q: And would everybody be watching? Who was there, who was watching this?

A: No, you di -- don't have to watch it --

Q: Just the **kapo**.

A: Just us.

Q: I see.

A: It was a punishment. And this was one of the lesser punishments, the worse punishment was when they gave you 25 beatings, you know? They -- you heard about that.

Q: Did you ever get that?

A: No. I was lucky. I almost got it, but it wa -- the Russians were coming already, they couldn't do it no more, because it was a very cold winter, that -- that wi-winter of 1944 and '45. And I was working outside. I was carrying up bricks, unloading bricks, and was very cold, so one of the guys said, you know, "Let's go inside in wa -- in the factory and warm up." So we did. Well, we came out [**indecipherable**] wrote our numbers down. Report tonight to the **kapo**, the 25. Well, it didn't -- it didn't go back to ca -- I mean, we went back, but they had no time to do it, because the Russians were too darn close.

Q: I see.

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A: You could hear already the artillery, and you saw the fires of the grenades and everything. So I got away with it. But in **Auschwitz**, they had very -- in --in -- especially in **Buna**, the very cruel method. When I got to **Auschwitz**, they had all kinds of ways of killing people. With the spades, or they lay them down on the ground on their stomach, and they take a -- a broom, or a -- a shovel, and the -- the -- the **kapo** would step on him and break the guys nec -- neck. All these things we had. Then we had to bring them in. At night we had to bring the dead in, you know, they had like a little carriage there, a little wagon -- four wheel wagon -- two wheel wagon it was. And that's where we put the corpses in and then we had to -- because everybody had to be counted where -- there was no such thing -- if somebody died, he had to be laid out during the roll call.

Q: So that they could count.

A: They would take the count, you know, because otherwise how would they know that nobody escaped?

Q: So how did you have s -- strength at the beginning to be carrying these --

A: Because I had done physical work all this time.

Q: Before?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

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A: On the railroad station, all o -- but eventually, also, I lost a lot of weight, you know? And when you lose a lot of weight you got to be careful because they got those selections in the camp. They would call a -- they would close the camp up completely, nobody can go in to work, and out of -- out to work or anything. And then you had to undress in front of the -- the shower room there, which was in essence a barrack with two doors on each end, you know? And you had -- you knew what -- what this was all about, because we knew they made the selections, we never -- once you in the camp you know all about it. So we had to undress completely n -- completely naked, and you had your shoes in your hand, that's all. They march you through that -- you had to run through that thing, and there was the SS standing, one guy had the cane, and he had the t -- the end that -- the handle end out, and if he saw somebody that he thought was not able to work any more, he would pull him by the neck over to the side, take his number, and he had to stand there. And you walked through it, you know, it -- it was like a Russian Roulette so to speak, in -- in a different fashion. And I remember I walked through there, I -- y-you die a thousand deaths because you know what's happening there. And I used to s -- f -- take a deep breath, make my chest come out --

Q: Your che -- uh-huh.

A: -- whatever there was left of it, and I ran through it. I was lucky, I di -- they didn't. When I was on the other side I thought I -- I'm -- I was a free man again, you know, this was almost how it was because you knew you wouldn't die, and --

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Q: How -- how often did they have selections there? Do you remember?

A: Oh, about four or five weeks.

Q: Every -- every four or five weeks?

A: Yeah. Sometimes they had it even more often. It all depended how the demand for -
- for -- for prisoners was in the camp. If they had an overcrowding, then I -- I mean if
there were too many within, they figured, oh, might as well take people that are new,
they've still got strength to do work, you know?

Q: Right, right.

A: And we get rid of the old ones.

Q: So how many month were you in **Buna**, do you think?

A: I got there in February, I say about six or seven month. Torture that place was. I
don't know, I had some friends that stayed there during the whole time.

Q: What did -- what did you -- when -- when you were in the barrack, or even at work,
did you guys talk about anything?

A: No, we were actually not supposed to talk.

Q: You're not supposed to talk?

A: No. We -- we would talk though, I mean -- but we didn't talk about that. That was
not on our mind, and our mind was where you get this piece of bread, that -- where
you can find potato peels, or whatever. I remember we used to take potato peels, and --
they had in -- in **Auschwitz**, they had a -- in **Buna**, the had a heating system that piped

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the heat in from one central point into the barracks. And we used to take the potato peels, and make a little bowl out of them, and roast them on there to make them hard.

Q: That was a delicacy.

A: It was a delicacy, it sure was. And water you couldn't drink there because it contained th-th -- that typhus bacteria, is all kind of things. The water was actually red when it came out, I don't know if --

Q: Red?

A: Yeah. There were a lot of sh -- people that said that's the blood of the Jews that's running through it, but this was not the case. The case was that the Germans must have bombed the water mains, and -- and probably somehow the rust and everything went in there, or whatever. We knew -- there were some people they couldn't help it, they drank that water. Some of them nothing happened to even, but a lot of them died of dysentery, I think it was, or to -- and then you used to go to bed after ti -- they have lice and fleas in this place you wouldn't believe. You laid down, there was like a whole army creeping over your body, you could feel it. It was like a never-ending army of -- of fleas and lice. You could get rid of them, if a flea hops, and you -- used to get them, you had only one shirt, you know, you had to wear that shirt at night as well, in the morning you got up, the fleas were in the shirt, you had to go to work. It was terrible, it was very painful, because they bite, you know, and the -- I don't know what they had to eat there, because we didn't have certainly nothing to eat, but they

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found something. And then they -- all of a sudden they said they needed some people for **Auschwitz**, and I figured, as I said, I'm not going to exist here any longer than over there, so I volunteered for the things, I told a couple [**indecipherable**]. One day a Red Cross wagon showed up, I said, "Oh my God." That's already a bad sign, the Red Cross wagon were very closely associated with the -- with the gas chambers. Had to go in a -- we had no choice, we got to **Auschwitz**. They brought us --

Q: And you -- you're talking about **Auschwitz I** now, right?

A: Yeah, the main camp.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I got in there, they put me in the -- what was called the hospital, it was the **krankenbau**, the building for the sick. So I went in there, the **SS** doctor comes and says, "You don't look bad." I said, "No, I feel very good, I would like to go to work." He says, "Get the hell out of here," he says, "go to block 18." And I went to block 18 and I was out. But some people were not that lucky. There were some of that they were taken right to **Birkenau** and they were attached to an incoming -- there were always tr -- there were always trains coming in. That place was as busy as a -- a bee's nest. You have no idea, one train went out, another one came in. That depends on what countries people came from. The Hungarian Jews came at the end, and it was a unusual situation with them, you probably heard about it, they were treated like they had the families were together, that their hair wasn't cut, and all of a sudden, after six,

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seven months they took them all out and gassed them. Kids, and the -- and even the -- the -- there wa -- there was a guy that told them, a Hungarian Jew there, a young fellow. He loved those kids and -- and a -- he -- I think he went -- he committed suicide there.

Q: I think you're talking about the **Theresienstadt** camp with **Freddie Hirsch**.

A: The who?

Q: The theresien -- **Theresienstadt** family camp --

A: No, no, no, no, no, I'm talking about the **Birkenau** camp.

Q: No, no, no. No, no. The -- they were in **Birkenau**.

A: Oh yeah, they came from **Theresienstadt**, yes.

Q: Fro -- from **Theresienstadt** --

A: Absolutely.

Q: -- you said **Hungary**.

A: Y-Yeah, from **Hungary**. And I remember that night, I was working the night shift in **Auschwitz**. My friend **Itzhak Klein**, the gynecologist and I, we worked in a woodworking factory, they made the beds for the -- bunks for the **SS**, whatever. It was a very modern outfit. All the shavings, the wood shavings were sucked out onto a big pile on the outside, there was a -- a motor that sucked the thing out. There were shavings and things. The **SS** used it a lot when they burned Jews in the open pits, you know, to -- on a rainy day they couldn't start the fire, they would come over, we had to

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load it up for them, you know. And they were the -- and one of them said once to me, "Don't take it -- don't give me all," he says, "leave some for yourself." This was a nice way of putting it, you know?

Q: Was nice, wasn't it?

A: Well anyway, the -- I went in there, and that night, when the Hungarian Jews were driven into the gas chamber, you could -- it sounded like a jungle, it was horrible. I can still hear it today in my ears. They were screaming like lions, like animals it sounded like in the jungle, you know? A horrible noise. But that didn't help them any, they had to go in. So th-this was the -- one night they gassed and burned 14,000 people, can you imagine what the -- how many people that is? And later when they caught -- when the -- when the Poles caught up with the -- with **Hoss**, the -- the camp commander. There was a **Rudolf Hoss**, and there was a **Rudolf Hess**. **Rudolf Hess** was as deputy fuehrer, he does not -- I -- I'm not talking about -- he was already in prison in **England** at that time. I'm talking about **Rudolf Hoss**, the camp commander, and he said -- he said, "Well, I c -- I couldn't kill more people," he said, "because the machinery would have suffered and broken down, and we couldn't take that chance, we had so many more Jews to kill." But was horrible that night, I remember it. We went on top -- that building had three stories, and from the third floor you could see the ovens, ya -- the chimneys, and the fire was coming out there something -- it looked like something was on fire, you know, the building was on fire. Yeah. And it stank too, oh horrible,

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horrible smell. It smells like if you would take a steak and you put it on a fire without -
- and it starts burning, you know, that flesh smell. It also went in our hair, because the
ashes -- this is very unhealthy climate up there, it is like they got a lot of wus --
stagnant waters there in that area. And the -- the -- the ashes, you know, the ashes
settles because if there was a low ceiling, the ashes would come down, and goes for
miles. Would settle on our head, we were shaven. Used to come back at night that we
had a whole -- whole thing full of ashes on your head, you know, from the burnings.
You couldn't take showers there, it was only one shower a week, you know, and it was
all there was. And you just had to do like this, you know, till everything came --

Q: Till it came out.

A: -- most of it came out. And --

Q: C-Can you go back for minute? When the -- when the doctor kicked you out of the
hospital, when you first went to **Auschwitz I**, he said go to barrack 18?

A: Yeah.

Q: What's barrack 18?

A: Barrack 18 -- all -- all the barracks had numbers --

Q: Right.

A: -- th-the lower floor was 18, the top was 18A, I think I was in 18A. And they had
the -- they had this up -- a -- woodworking thing, it was a good [indecipherable]
because at least in the winter you could -- you had to go inside, because you had to

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take that thing in. What we did is we had a wooden box about this size, I would say, and this high, and it had two handles on each end. And **Itzhak Klein** would ha -- go in the front, or me in the front, and he was in the back, we would fill this up, bring it inside, and use it in the heating system, they had central heating there. We would s -- put it in the ovens there, in the -- in the regular ovens, you know, to heat the building. And so at least you had a chance -- when it was -- it's bitter cold there in the winter, a chance to warm -- get -- get warmed a little. We used to go back and forth, and then of course we had to deliver some of it to the **SS** when they needed it for the burnings there in the -- the open pits, because even though they had, I think four of -- six at the end, I think six **gamma** -- gas chambers, it didn't have enough facilities to burn them all at one time. So they -- they went again to that system where they had these holes in the ground like they dug holes or **[indecipherable]** eight or 10 feet in deep, and there - - that's where they would throw the -- throw the -- the people in.

Q: So when you say woodworking, you really mean taking pieces of wood to various places, so that you could heat --

A: They would use these -- these shavings, they would put some kind of an oil on it, okay, **[indecipherable]** and set it on fire, you know?

Q: Right. Did you get more food than at --

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: No. The same food?

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A: Yeah, because I was not actively p -- working on the -- wi-with the corpses. I was only loading up from that -- from that woodworking place there. I didn't go over them, they only brought the -- the trucks and we loaded them up, yeah.

Q: But the work wasn't as difficult as it was in **Buna**, or was it? Was it -- no.

A: No, it was not as difficult as in **Buna**, it was much, much better than in **Buna**.

Q: Mm-hm. And how did your fr -- this -- this is -- was this friend **Klein**, was he with you in **Buna** and he came over, or you --

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I met him a-at **Auschwitz**.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. He wer -- I -- no, I don't think that he ever was in **Buna**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He was in a -- because he came from the ghetto in **Plaszow**, or whatever, a camp there, and they brought him to **Auschwitz**, I think they -- I don't remember anybody from there in **Buna**.

Q: Did you at some point escape the gassing? Were you protected somehow?

A: Yes, I -- I did, I was very lucky. I -- when I worked in this woodworking shop, the Poles, you know, are very anti-Semitic, and -- but they -- I mean, Polish there was the main language spoken, I couldn't speak Polish, it's a hard language to learn. I was

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lucky I could -- I was able to -- to repeat my number, you know, because every time you got bread, or you got soup, you had to tell them, you know, **106377**, and then they would get. So I gave them the number in Polish [**indecipherable**] they were very happy about that already. And one day there was one guy, he was -- one Polish guy, he was walking around like a **Beau Brummel**, here, his un -- his prison garb was tailor made, and he had a -- a cap that had -- was hanging over there. And he say, "Hey, what's your number, number, number?" He could hardly speak German. So I gave him my number, so he put it down. So the other guys who were -- "You know what it is, they're making the transport for people that go to gas chamber." Well, I was lucky, i -- this -- but in this woodworking place, the **kapo** I had was a guy by the name of **Konrad**, and he was in it first in the penitentiary, I think he killed his wife when he was drunk, or some kind of a thing there was. It was rumor [**indecipherable**] people used to say that. He was very good -- very good guy to us. And I went to him, and I said, "You know, they just took my number, what am I going to do?" He says, "You do nothing," he says, "you know what to do? You go to work with us at night, they're going to pick them up at night, and when you're there, they can't pick you up." So I walked out with them. And I worked during the night and when I came back they had already the uniforms, the -- the -- the prison garb. They [**indecipherable**] came already back from the laundry, they had already -- they were already at the laundry, because they had gassed these people that they took the numbers from. But this -- the

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Polak was not happy to see me there any more, but there was not -- very little he could do about it.

Q: Yeah. So that was very lucky.

A: Because the **kapo** was higher than he was, you know, and if he wanted me on the -- to work, that was it.

Q: So that was very lucky.

A: That was lucky.

Q: Was there --

A: Anybody who was in this camp had to be lucky. If you weren't lucky, you are not here.

Q: Right.

A: It's just as simple as that. [**indecipherable**]. When you go in that camp, you have to complete -- your life has to be completely re-oriented. You have to know where not to go, where not to stand, the same thing when we used to go to work. The **SS** used to play -- a guy would walk there, it was li -- the **SS** was here, the outside we were about 12 -- 10 - 12 prisoners there. Would take the guys cap off, and throw it in the field, and said, pick it up. Well, once you out of the thing, he took the p -- his rifle, and he sh -- he told us to lie down, he would shoot the guy. I mean, this what the games that they used to play. Entertainment. So I -- I knew already I never, ever went as the outside man, the last man next to the **SS**. I always went inside. Cause inside there, usually he

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didn't. It was more convenient if you on the outside to grab the guy there, right there, and throw it out. So if you're inside, he's not going to go into the be --

Q: [indecipherable] your hat.

A: -- line of prisoners there and take somebody's cap off.

Q: Do you remember the a -- the orchestra playing when you went out to work, or not?

A: The what?

Q: Orchestra.

A: Oh yeah, yeah, of course, who wouldn't know the orchestra. We had a very good orchestra. We had all Jewish musicians and we had the Polish conductor, very good conductor, conducting the things. They used to di -- di -- di -- di -- we used to have concerts on Sunday when we weren't working. We had a f -- very fine Jewish guy from **Italy**, wa -- a wonderful tenor, he used to sing tenor arias. I mean, there was such a contrast in things that were happening there, you know? It was just unbelieva -- this was in the same [indecipherable] -- where the orchestra was playing was the same place where the next day they would hang all the people or beat them up. It was right in front of the kitchen, the kitchen was like in a horseshoe fashion made, it was buildings here, here, and here. And there was a big, wide opening that was very good for a stage, for anything you wanted to do, you know? So the orchestra used to play there, but the orchestra also used to play when we used to go out to work. If it was in the summer, they would play outside. If it was in the winter, or it was raining, they

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would play inside in the windows, they would open the windows in that room where they were playing. So we went out, we marched out, they were playing marches, you know. And we would march out, and then we came back with the -- the dead, they usually had waltzes, and things, it was a ridiculous, really unbelievable things that happened there. "The Merry Widow," "Land of Smiles." All these things they used to play. But it was a good orchestra, nevertheless.

Q: Was it helpful in any way to hear the music, or it was just ludicrous?

A: Well, I still enjoyed hearing music, I mean --

Q: Is it -- yeah.

A: It was something I mean -- I remember I -- when I used to see the birds fly, I always said, why can't I fly like that? Fly over the wires there. It was a t -- it was a tough time, horrible. Not even these museums and the books can really -- even my speech cannot really reflect all the things which happened there, and you cannot -- of course you cannot feel it, because it didn't happen to you. I even today it -- don't feel it any more to the same extent. I mean, you get hit with a -- with a -- with a rubber ber -- hose, you feel it. And those pe -- people suffered terrible. My friends -- is there still time to talk, or -- my friend **Rudi Koln** got there, and he was also in the same b- barracks that I was in **Auschwitz**, and he con -- **contacted** a -- a bladder illness. When he went to the bathroom down there, sometimes a few drops would fall out of him, and the **kapo** saw it, and he got **Stehbunker**. If you are -- **Stehbunker** was a -- a little

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wooden contraption, almost like a telephone booth that's -- except much smaller, and they had nails on the bottom pointing up, and you had -- you had to stand -- after you went to work, the SS would co -- and the guards would go to that, and they would put him and then he had to stand all night there. In the morning took him out, had to go back to work, you know? He didn't last long, unfortunately. He had -- I saw him -- all of a sudden -- h-he -- he had bad luck there, he -- something went wrong with his eyes, his eyes started to tear, he couldn't see any more. He ended up somewheres you know? I never seen him there, he died [indecipherable] because he never got out.

Q: We have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Six

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Beginning Tape Seven

Q: **Jack**, did people talk about food, did the -- did the -- the men in the barrack talk about food?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: Yes? What did --

A: It was the main topic of the day was food, and it was a bad thing, people used to say, oh, then my mother used to make goose livers, and **[indecipherable]**. It was horrible.

Q: It was horrible?

A: Yeah.

Q: But clearly they didn't think it was horrible, they wanted to talk about it?

A: No, they wanted to talk about it.

Q: But you thought it was horrible?

A: Yeah.

Q: So what did it do to --

A: Some people used to tell them to shut up.

Q: Really?

A: Because made their mouth water, there were no -- no goose livers or anything like that, even remote resembling goose livers.

Q: And were you one of those people that told these guys --

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A: There were goose pimples, yeah, but no goose -- goose livers.

Q: Did some people have a sense of humor in **Auschwitz**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you know some of these people?

A: Yeah, me.

Q: You.

A: Yours -- yours truly had the sense of humor. I know there was one guy that used to perform at night sometimes, when the **kapo** wasn't around, he would --

Q: What would he --

A: -- recite plays or something like that.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: And were you telling jokes?

A: No, I wasn't telling jokes, but we talked, you know. And --

Q: So, did you make people laugh?

A: Yeah, sometimes.

Q: Yeah?

A: There wasn't really that much to laugh over there.

Q: I would --

A: Even the jokes were not funny any more.

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Q: Right. Did you -- I know you were in some way depressed, and in some way you were terrified, but did you also have some positive outlook that somehow you would get through this, or you would --

A: Well you had to have. Without a positive outlook, you would have never made it through there, because you always -- you -- you did not try to get overly optimistic, but you -- a little bit you would say, well maybe the war is going to end soon, we going to get out and all that. But at first when I was there, there was not even a chance to -- no invasion yet, or anything. The Russians were still hiding in sh -- in -- it was a little bit after **Stalingrad**, you know. And it seemed to be endless, we thought we were doomed there forever, you know, to be there till we die. But we had one guy there, and this guy was always optimistic. He used to tell stories that were unbelievable. The Americans are already in **Stuttgart**, and takes a couple of more days, you don't have to worry about it no more, you know, this -- and wa -- the -- the Americans were in **Stuttgart** like I'm in **China**. And you -- oh, I just -- this guy told me there, this Polish worker told me the Russians are already in **Kraków**. **Kraków** was only 20 - 30 miles away from **Auschwitz**. Oh tha -- that's great. Af -- "another day," he says. "**Jack**, believe in me -- **Jurgen**, another day, it's all over." He was very optimistic. He got out, too.

Q: He did?

A: He did get out, yeah.

Q: Did he -- you think he did this on pur --

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A: He was like a newsman.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He bor -- except that his news was slightly on the distorted side.

Q: Do you think he believed it, or he was saying it because of --

A: Oh yeah, he believed it.

Q: He believed it.

A: There's some people that believe everything you tell them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I remember working once in the store and people asked me about a warranty, and I used to make a joke, I said, "The warranty is one year, or till you get out of the store, whichever comes first." And people said, "Gee, that's really great." Because people don't listen when you tell them something.

Q: Right, right. What else do you want to tell us about being in **Auschwitz**? Were you in **Auschwitz I** after **Buna**, the whole rest of the time you were in **Auschwitz**?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You never went to **Birkenau**?

A: No. I never -- I saw **Birkenau** from the -- from the -- from the building, but I was never in **Birkenau** proper now.

Q: You were never in **Birkenau**?

A: No.

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Q: Do you know why?

A: Because I had no business in **Birkenau**. I didn't have no business in **Auschwitz** either, believe me --

Q: Yeah, that's what I was --

A: -- figure that way, but **Birkenau** was actually a -- a women's camp.

Q: No, there were men there. A lot of men.

A: No.

Q: Oh yeah.

A: They had -- the **Sonderkommando** was there, the ones that burned the people.

Q: No, it was a men's camp there.

A: There was? I didn't know that.

Q: Yeah, oh yeah.

A: But -- but they -- they -- they -- they --

Q: But they didn't send you.

A: -- but they were not were not together with the women?

Q: No, they're two camps. There's a men's camp, and a women's camp.

A: Oh, oh, oh. Yeah, that --

Q: Oh yeah, yeah.

A: But this must have been in the later stages. I don't think -- no?

Q: Whole time.

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A: I didn't know that.

Q: So the question is -- that you don't know the answer to, is how come they didn't send you?

A: Well, because -- I don't know -- I was in **Auschwitz**, I wa -- once you were -- were in **Auschwitz** in a labor battalion there, they usually kept you, a -- I mean, if the guy was nice enough.

Q: Right.

A: There were also some **Auschwitz** things they were not so nice. I remember once working in a -- they had a -- where all the bricks were stored, so now that there used to be a lot of building, we build roads and everything over there. And there was a **Adolf Hitler** Street there, which I helped build.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And I worked on this [**indecipherable**] we had to take the b -- bricks and -- it was actually -- brought it from one corner the other, it was just to annoy people really, there was no actual rhyme nor reason to doing it in the first place. So then I'm carrying, all of a sudden the Americans fly over there and start shooting wi -- machine gun fire. And I took the bricks, I figure the hell with this, and I fell da -- threw myself down, and I saw the -- the -- the bullets, you know, and I saw the sand -- the -- the dust come up, you know? But he didn't come back, usually sometimes the Americans used

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to go down the road, and then they come back again. I was lucky, this guy never came back, this pilot. So I was saved there.

Q: This was when you were in **Auschwitz**, not in **Buna**?

A: When ausch -- in **Auschwitz**. In **Auschwitz** there was a -- we worked, and the -- and we used to go -- there was a factory and they had big machines there, and when they had an air raid, we used to go in -- into the -- where the cables were, and they would -- there were big **b-batong** plates, they would -- I mean, berp -- what do you call **batong** in English? Cement plates.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they were put over and then after the air raid was over, they -- we would come out again. Unfortunately, **Auschwitz** was never bombed, except the **SS** barracks in **Auschwitz** were. I was there too when that happened. I was working there, and we had to go in the basement, and all of a sudden, there was such a n -- pressure, air pressure from that bomb falling, I fell over two rows of people. But nothing happened to me, and nothing happened to the people there. And then the women started to scream, there was a women's camp in **Auschwitz II** that was in [indecipherable] **stuber**. That was where they -- they fixed the **SS** uniforms and ironed them, whatever they had to do there. And the guards ran out, and got the **SS** man, one **SS** man said, "They not have to shoot them, they're just scared, they -- they going to go back." Well, they had no place

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to go anyway. So, this wa -- was about as far as I came to the -- to shootings, I mean, from war related shooting, so to speak.

Q: Explain something to me, when you and -- I think you were talking about **Klein**, you would see the fire from the crematoria when they were burning bodies.

A: Yeah.

Q: Where were you? Where were you standing?

A: We were standing -- I worked in this -- this was a three story building, it was called the **DAW**, which stands for **Deutsche Aurustungswerke. Aurustungswerke**, it was where -- where they fixed the -- the beds and things like that. And we used to go up on the third floor, and the third floor window wa -- faced **Birkenau**, and you could see the fires, at night you see fires for miles.

Q: Right.

A: And you -- you could see it, I mean they -- you could see the ovens, and -- I mean, not the ovens proper, but the chimneys, you know?

Q: So you -- right, right. So you were in th-this building is in **Auschwitz I**, on the third floor?

A: Yeah, ab -- yeah.

Q: I s -- I see. Okay.

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A: It's actually not in **Auschwitz I**, but it's part of **Auschwitz I**, but in order to get this, the **SS** had to bring you there, the part the -- two miles, or a mile and a half more from the main camp.

Q: I see.

A: When you worked at night -- you sed -- see, during the daytime the **SS** would walk with you to the -- to the p-places where the battalions worked, and then they would make a ba -- guard chain around it, they had towers, too. They were wooden towers --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- with doors, you know, and they would stand there with the machine guns. At night, after everybody -- after the -- the -- the battalions went back into the camp, the - - the -- the -- the ch -- the chain -- the guard chain was taken back, and they -- I don't know whether they were offered [**indecipherable**] anyway, the -- the main camp.

Q: Right.

A: Of course, they didn't need as many because the outside camp needed a lot of guards because there was a large area to be covered. But once you came back, you were inside the camp. But when we went out at night, we had guards with us. It didn't -- they -- they didn't have them on the -- on the towers --

Q: Right.

A: -- but they had them surrounding the -- the buildings --

Q: I see. Okay.

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A: -- there was only one battalion working there.

Q: When it gets close to 1945 -- you were there from '43, February, March. You probably got there in March maybe, right, very early March. So you're there for almost two years, am I right?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you get stronger the longer you were there, because you get used to this in some way?

A: Yeah, I get -- I'm -- not because I got used to. You get stronger because some conditions slightly, slightly improved in the camp. They needed already people. The -- the Russians were closing in on, there were no more slave labors to be gotten from the eastern ber -- ber -- countries. So what they did is since they needed worker, we got a little bit more ri -- we didn't get more bread or anything, but we got a little bit more soup. What happened was when a -- when people came in the [indecipherable] they had breads, and all kinds of -- some of them was hide diamonds, and then all this. The bread was taken to the kitchen, and they made a bread soup out of it. But the unfortunate thing was some wa -- some of the bread was moldy, I used to get a terrible heartburn from that bread soup. But it helped, you know?

Q: Right.

A: It was bread, it was soup. It was a horrible thing, it looked like -- you wouldn't give -- you wouldn't give it to a dog, or to a poi -- maybe to a pig you would give it, but not

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to a dog. And it helped you somehow bolster your body a little bit, to a slight extent.

And I actually felt a little better -- I mean, I wouldn't say I felt as good as when I got in for the first time, but I felt better than at the beginning of it, you know?

Q: Right.

A: And we had a little bit more rest, too. I think we worked on Saturdays, only till about four o'clock, and we used to work till seven. And Sundays you were also -- what we did, we used to get soup, we would eat, and then we would go to -- I would go to sleep.

Q: For the day.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Unless say -- some extra-curricular activity was going on, they had a -- that the SS was counting, or something. But most of the time that didn't happen. So I had much more rest, too. So I actually felt a little better. I couldn't have made that Death March without having had a little improve -- improvement within my body.

Q: Were you also -- did you have im-improved clothes, did you get better shoes? Or were you still wearing the wooden shoes?

A: No, I wasn't wearing the wooden shoes any more. The wooden shoes was also a thing that al -- that also depended upon luck. Sometimes they would have some shoes from people that they wouldn't use. Some -- I wa -- I had once one brown shoe, and

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one black shoe also. I mean, wa -- there were no fashion parades in **Auschwitz**.

Needless to say, who cares? But they were shoes nevertheless, and they was much better than these wooden things, because they got -- they gave -- they broke your feet up, and they gave -- they -- they started bleeding, and oh, horrible. They never fit right, I mean, you couldn't make them fit the -- and then the other thing was we had no shoelaces. Once shoelace broke, or you couldn't knot them together any more, you had to rely on your own ingenuity, if you were lucky, to find a piece of string, or something you could hold it with, if not you had to go like this. You had to go like somebody goes to the bathroom at night, actually. And I had -- yeah, I had shoes already then. I think I had a little bit better uniform, too. I used to -- since I was in a better battalion, I used to sleep at night on my pants to keep the -- keep the crease.

Q: The crease?

A: And I had a nicer cap already, was a little bit [**indecipherable**] over the thing, not like the real bigshots, but it was --

Q: It was [**indecipherable**]

A: -- a fair beginning. And of course **Itzhak Klein** was lucky later, he got into the fire brigade, and he was doing better, but he had -- the food that he could spare, or -- or got through channels, he would give to his niece who was in the -- in the women's camp in **Auschwitz**. I carried it over at times, to her, and threw it over the fence. It wasn't easy

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when I was hungry myself, you know, but he was my best friend, and I -- I would have never taken any of that bread.

Q: So you -- you -- so you didn't go into **Birkenau**, you threw it over the fence?

A: I threw it -- no. It was not in **Birkenau**, that was in **Auschwitz**. **Auschwitz** had new buildings on the side there --

Q: [indecipherable] they had a women's -- right.

A: -- we marched past them every day going to work and coming back. And in that fenced in area --

Q: You could throw [indecipherable]

A: -- on one side were the **SS** barracks -- of course they were not fenced in, but it -- women's camp was fenced in, and the girls would be outside there at times, you know, and I threw it over, and she thanked me. I don't know if she ever got out, but --

Q: Do -- do you rem -- did you hear about **Wetzler** and **Vrba** escaping when you in **Auschwitz**, or only afterward?

A: I don't remember. I heard afterward.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I didn't hear th --

Q: You hear [indecipherable] right away.

A: -- the Germans certainly didn't tell us, they told us when they -- -- when they brought the people back that the --

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Q: Yeah.

A: -- but if somebody had success in -- think that the -- the Germans certainly wouldn't tell us about it. Wh-What could they have said, that -- that -- you know there are two people that went out and never came back.

Q: No, I thought perhaps there were rumors among prisoners [indecipherable]

A: No, no.

Q: Although [indecipherable] escaped from **Birkenau**

A: I remember the time when they -- when they tried to blast the thick -- the -- one of the ovens there, and they had -- one of the girls worked in the factory, giving out the dynamite, you know, they put the --

Q: Yes, the --

A: -- the dynamite in caps.

Q: -- the **Union** factory.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, she was a very pretty woman.

Q: **Roza Robota?**

A: Yeah, yeah. I saw -- I saw when she -- she -- when they brought her out, and she -- her hands chained behind her back. They used to beat her horrible. Was horrible.

Q: Yes, but you didn't see the four women who were hung?

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A: No.

Q: After the uprising.

A: No, no.

Q: Did you hear the uprising in [indecipherable]

A: We heard about it, yeah.

Q: You heard about it, but you didn't hear the noise?

A: Well, we knew about it too, because we knew that the SS was out with dogs, and -- and looking for -- and then the sirens go over, and when somebody's -- is escaping.

Q: Did you hear shooting?

A: Yeah --

Q: Now did

A: -- [indecipherable]

Q: No, the -- I -- I'm talking about the -- the -- the uprising in October '44
[indecipherable] blew up --

A: No, that I didn't hear.

Q: You didn't hear anything?

A: No, because it was too va --

Q: Too far away?

A: -- far, or maybe it -- I might have been able to hear it, but I wouldn't have recognized it as such, because it was a few miles away from us.

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Q: Yeah, right.

A: And I might have not heard it, or I don't know why I didn't hear it.

Q: Did you think you changed in **Auschwitz** as a person?

A: No, I don't think -- I did change, but the only thing my outlook on certain things have changed. I wouldn't think that I changed, I mean, I bi -- didn't become cruel or bitter, or anything like that. I still enjoy company of people, you know, and -- but I became anti-religious. Anti-religion. Because I figure -- I said to myself, if there's a God, and He wasn't there, we ne -- who needs Him? This was the worst thing that can happen to a person. To lose his life, children, women. People who never did anything wrong. So I don't need Him. If I have to go, I go, so -- and then the story which is you go to heaven, for heaven's sake. It must be a crowded place, that they going to heaven now since the -- since the **Adam** and **Eve**, and before, even.

Q: But you weren't very religious before, when you grew up, and y-you grew up in a house that was traditional until your father died.

A: Yeah.

Q: But did you believe in God then, even though you wer --

A: Yeah, I guess so, I was totally believe in God --

Q: So you were?

A: -- I don't what I believed Him, I never seen Him.

Q: Uh-huh.

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A: But I believed what they told me.

Q: Right.

A: I mean my father re -- was a very intelligent man, and I -- we believed what he told us, you know?

Q: Right. So do you think you became an atheist?

A: Yeah, in a way, I think so.

Q: Do you -- do you think you became cynical about human beings because of what you saw?

A: In which w -- w -- ga -- ga -- define that a little more.

Q: Well ... If the behavior of people surprised you, that people could be so cruel and so indifferent to other human beings, did you then begin to believe that it was -- that it was less likely that people could be good under certain circumstances?

A: No.

Q: In other words, it was very easy to make people behave in terrible ways.

A: No, I don't think it's easy to make -- I believe that there are people that are born to be ruthless, and when you really think about it, the Germans were -- had the upper hand in **Europe**, because nobody could beat the Germans, the French, the English, everybody was afraid of the Germans. So if you have so much power, it's easy to be a hero, you know? The Germans went into **Poland**, they marched behind the tanks, you know, th-the -- the Poles came on horses, you know? But when -- when -- when they

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came to **Stalingrad**, they were running faster than a rabbit. So all of a sudden the supermen were not so super duper any more as they pretended to be. Because I believe normally that every person, in case of danger, is going to go and -- is going to lose his heroic ideas and do what the rest does, you know? So the Germans were actually -- I mean, really in my opinion they were not superior to anybody because they were superior as far as the material go -- went, the -- the -- the war material, but once the allies got to the point where they overtook them, there were no more heroes.

Q: Right.

A: And I still insist today that actually the real winner of war were the Russians. The Russians had more casualties, and fought more than anybody else. The Russians had to fight because **Stalin** would send them in, they couldn't come out. If somebody was not brave, they would put them up against the wall. And they did a wonderful job, they really did. And -- and that's why that time when **Stalin** met **Churchill**, he says to him, "You know," he said, "you cannot win this war." He says, "You always tell you're going to attack when you don't do anything." He says, "If you want to win a war, you have to go into combat with the enemy, otherwise you can't win the war." And he was right. And **Churchill** was sitting there with his cigar, and was listening, you know. But eventually -- the British are like that. The British like everything should be settled in a diplomatic way. You can't settle with the -- with people like Nazis in a diplomatic way, with German **Hitlerites**.

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Q: Did you know there was going to be a march out of -- they were going to evacuate you from **Auschwitz**?

A: Yeah, absolutely, you knew. Because we knew that they -- the Russians were coming, you could hear the artillery and everything. And when the Germans put us -- th -- told us we have to leave the camp, we knew that we had to -- we were going on a march. I mean, the -- the Germans didn't use **[indecipherable]** and say this to -- to s -- to chauffeur us, we had to walk on the -- it was terrible too, it was snowing and snowing and snowing. I don't know how long I walked, if you would ask me how many days I was on the road, I really wouldn't know. And I **[indecipherable]** was sleeping and walking at the same time.

Q: The same time?

A: When I woke up, I thought I was in the same spot that I originally was when I fell asleep. It looked all the same. Snow, snow, snow. Dead people on the road, prisoners. People shot, and blood running in the snow. You didn't see anything you -- it looked like that whole area was what's like a monotonous area, like you walk into a desert, there was no end and no beginning. And we were -- we overtook the women when we walked, and of course there was that -- always the truck there to pick up the dead people we had to throw on there. We didn't walk during the daytime, they -- they -- they didn't want the Poles, and the people -- the civilians to see us, I guess. So in the daytime they would put us in some kind of empty haylofts, and empty places where

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they had cows, and things like that, and we had -- we slept there on the dirt. I remember waking up one morning, I have ants in my mouth. It was -- my -- it was like a -- well, you know when you take a strawberry from animals that was laying [indecipherable] defecating, and so -- th -- that's where they -- they put us, you know? But we had to march on, and march on and finally we came to a train. And this train took us to **Gross Rosen**, I think. **Gross Rosen** is in lower **Silesia**, but it was a horrible camp too. **Gross Rosen** was -- had a lot of **kapos** and criminals, supervisors, you know. In some instance you had couples were political prisoners, they were not as bad. You know, Communists, or --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- some people that they di -- had a brain, they knew that -- what was going on there. But these guys, they -- they still -- they also believed that the -- that the Germans would win the war. In fact, the Germans recruited from some of these prisons, they recruited them for war duty at the end, some of the -- I remember they were exercising with wooden sticks, and they had to sing, and -- and carry the wooden stick over their shoulder like a rifle, you know they wouldn't give them a rifle. You know what happened when you give a criminal a rifle, but they must have used them well for military purposes later on.

Q: And did you keep thinking any day now the Russians are going to come, and the Americans a -- and the --

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A: Yeah, absolutely, but no such luck.

Q: Yeah. No such luck.

A: It -- the Russians came, and we went. I was in **Gross Rosen**, and --

Q: How long were you there, do you know?

A: Oh, a couple of days only --

Q: That's all?

A: -- I don't know, maybe a week. Was horrible, [indecipherable] the -- every day two prisoners -- four -- four prisoners had to go to get the -- the breakfast tea. That was some water, and some kind of a plant they put in there, was brown, it was horrible tasting. It was icy there, and it was all up on the hill, and we used to slide around there, we were afraid we -- if you spilled that tea, it was the end of you, you know? And when I s -- was there a week, and the [indecipherable] I have a transfer to go, I said, "I'm volunteering. I'm going." I didn't like it there at all. So I went on again, they marched us. And then finally we went into a train. Again a freight train, again overcrowding, again no food, and we had an awful lot of people dying in that train. It was really so bad we couldn't leave on the ground. I mean, they were laying on the ground [indecipherable] couldn't sit -- couldn't stand -- if you did this -- we had a brilliant idea, we took one of the blankets and we knotted it onto the -- the two metal bars there where the sliding door was, and we made a hammock out of them, we put the corpses in that. And, course not a nice thing to see when there's -- every time you

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see dead heads shaking back and forth. But it was better than having them on the ground, we -- that the living had to sit, or things -- had to -- look -- so finally when we got to [indecipherable] it was either regen -- no, it could have been **Regensburg** or **Augsburg**. I would say it was **Regensburg. Regensburg**, all of a sudden the door opened, and the **SS** said, "If you throw out the dead, you going to get something to eat." Oh, oh, wonderful. So I grabbed them by the head, and this other guy grabbed them by the leg, and we just slid them out, you know, one after the other. We had about 15 of them in there.

Q: 15 in that hammock-like --

A: Y -- not only the hammock, we -- we put them in the corners, we put them any -- any odd way where we can put them where they would take up the least space.

Q: I see.

A: And some people tried to break their bones, and figured that they could make them smaller that way. And well, we got them out, and I still see them, they were rolling down from the railroad tracks there. And then the -- the German Red Cross came and they gave us a little cup of soup there, you know, like it was this big.

Q: That was -- that was the soup?

A: Yeah, it was soup. That was the food we got. And we got a piece of bread, and then they closed that up again. And since we had already the soup, they didn't think that we would need water. So off we went and this was already -- the Germans were t --

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coming back from the front, and th trains were going to other fronts, and -- and th-the railroads were bumper to bumper there. We had to wait till the -- the army per -- trains were going. In the meantime we had the air attack by the Americans, and we're lucky they didn't hit our train, and things like -- it was horrible. It was -- you're sitting inside a railroad car -- or standing inside the railroad car. You cannot move, you can't get out of it, because it's locked. And here were these bombs falling. It's a hell of a situation, you know? I mean, at least if you are in the war, you can throw yourself down, or hide behind a bush, or whatever you can do, I don't know. [indecipherable]. It was a matter of luck. I don't think that anybody got out of **Auschwitz**, as -- except the ones that fled, on account of their own intuition. I believe that they got out because was just damn lucky. Like me, I was damn lucky. As bad as it was, and as much I suffered, I was still lucky. I was lucky to escape all these things, and then of course I was a little wiser then, I knew how to handle myself better. When you first get there, you are like a lightning rod, they hit you left, right and [indecipherable] you don't know what to do right. But later on you learn the tricks of the trade so to speak, and it gets a little better. At least you know what to do, and not to be somewheres where you're not supposed to be.

Q: Right. We have to change the tape.

A: Mm.

End of Tape Seven

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Beginning Tape Eight

Q: **Jack**, did your pants rip on this train trip --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- so that you were in your underwear? How did that happen?

A: I don't remember h -- any -- exactly any more how it happened, but my pants ripped lengthwi -- oh, I know how it happened, I now remember. People were dying, they were trying to pull themselves up, and they ripped my pants.

Q: Huh. So you were in your un -- you lost your pants?

A: **[indecipherable]**. Uh-huh. I --

Q: Essentially?

A: -- I think I didn't lose my pants, what I did is, they -- they were very modern pants now, they were -- you don't have to slip into them, you went like this with them. And I must have somehow found something to hold it together like a nail or something, so I was not really -- I wouldn't arrive in **Dachau** without my pants, you know.

Q: Right, right, it --

A: That doesn't look too good.

Q: Right. So you get finally to **Dachau** --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- yes, on this train, this is --

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A: I finally get to **Dachau**. I was put into quarantine. All the people that -- that were coming from **Gross Rosen**. I didn't like that at all already, because quarantine meant that you were not working. If you're not working you have no right to live.

Q: Right, right.

A: So I was there couple of days, and there was another transfer going. And they took me right away because here they use a different system as in **Auschwitz**. In **Auschwitz** everything went by the number, by the prison number. Over there they went by the alphabet. So my name was **Bassfreund**, I--I was next to **A**, **B**, so they took me for the transport. And others did not make it, they -- I think after **K** they stopped.

Q: But you volunteered? Or did they just take you?

A: No, I didn't volunteer.

Q: Oh, you didn't volunteer.

A: I didn't volunteer. They -- they took us out of there because they were overcrowded as it was, so many different concentration camps which emptied on account of Russian advance -- advances.

Q: Right.

A: They all concentrated on the remaining camps, and **Dachau** was one of the main camps there. So they were glad to get us out.

Q: And --

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A: Little did I know that I was going in one of the worst camps there was. I was put in a chain again, until the -- six, seven hours maybe? I ended up in **Muhldorf**. I was -- didn't end up in **Muhldorf**, I went over the railroad station, who knows where it was. It da -- we unloaded. We had to go -- hold each other's -- by the arms, and we had the **SS** marching us through a forest. And I marched to the forest, and I was cold, there was snow, and was horrible. All of a sudden I see watchtowers, and I see barbed wires, I know where I finally had arrived where I was supposed to go. And it was **Muhldorf**, it was the forest camp, or the **Waldlager**, for they called it. And the **Waldlager** also had no gas chambers. They didn't need them because people there died like flies. They had no barracks there, there were -- at night you had to -- they had th -- dug under the ground and put a little thing like a doghouse over -- on the top of it, you know, to keep the snow from going out. And you had to creep in there, there was a little door you had to go through. And they had wooden planks there, and you just would lie down on those planks, and sleep.

Q: It's like being in a grave? For --

A: Almost. It was -- you were underground already.

Q: Right.

A: And the -- the only way you could keep warm there was by moving every -- all the prisoner had to move close together, because the body heat had to keep you from

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freezing. So that we did. And my friend, the one that always brought the cheerful news was there too.

Q: Really?

A: So that already a big plus, because he said, "This is it, fellas."

Q: This is it.

A: This is -- you can't bring us any further, they almost in **Austria** already. He says, "This is it, the Americans are here any minute now." He says, "You might wake up tomorrow morning and see American uniforms in here."

Q: So he kept this up every day?

A: Every day --

Q: The same thing?

A: -- he had some news.

Q: I see.

A: He would -- he should have become a broadcaster.

Q: Right.

A: He was constantly involved with the advances of the allies, that was his main topic. And also to -- to -- he would tell us on the Russian front, 100,000 Germans killed. On the American front, 25,000 Germans. He ha -- he knew everything by numbers, he knew where they were. They didn't know where they were, but he knew. It was really an unusual thing with him. I have never seen a person more optimistic than this guy.

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He really got out, I met him in **Munich** after the war when I was doing the **Boder** interviews, just before then, I met him.

Q: Really?

A: I saw him, I said, my God [**indecipherable**], oh he got married already. He said he's sorry that he got married, but he got married. I said, "Get a divorce." What can I tell you? So h-he was then optimistic too, hey things are going to get better soon, he says -- this time he couldn't tell you nobody advances, the war was over already.

Q: Right, right.

A: And he says to me, "Don't go over too far the other side. This is where the Americans are coming from, if they see somebody move, they going to shoot you." He was crazy, that guy. I remember --

Q: But he made it

A: He made it out, he made it out, thank God he made it out.

Q: Right. So there's not work in **Muhldorf**?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Oh, there is work?

A: There's plenty of work in **Muhldorf**.

Q: Uh-huh. I see.

A: Where there is a German, there is work.

Q: I see.

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A: Where there are three Alabamians, there's a church. The work was determined, creating something extremely new that will turn the tide of the war. They are going to build an underground airport. The planes are going to be underground, they're going to start and when they get to real boost, that's where the runway ends, and then th -- they're in the open, so the Americans can't shoot them down, shoot them underground, because they're underground. So we had three shifts going on this crazy, ridiculous work project --

Q: Of digging underground to create --

A: No, here's what it was. You came to a spot there, and there were wheelbarrows, wheelbarrows galore, and prisoners galore as well. So there were b -- planks going up like a little hill, and when you came to that hill there was a big shaft and there were p-pillars there. Cement pillars, whatever. And you had to empty -- they filled the thing up with cement before you went up there. You go up and you tip it over, and you fill the cement in there, and then you go back again around and you start all over again.

And there were some people that fell in, they were so weak, they fell into these columns, you know, the next guy, what could do, he -- he put the cement on top of him. I bet -- I bet you that there's still b-bones in these things there, even after ma -- so many years, but people died there from dysentery, from typhus, it was -- the place was infested with lice and fleas, you wouldn't believe. And I got sick, too.

Q: And that's the first time you got sick, pretty much.

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A: Yeah, and the -- they had a hung -- a je -- Jewish person with a Hungarian doctor, he wouldn't pi -- take me in there, I was bleeding from the rectum and all kinds of thing, and he wouldn't take me into the sick bay there. Well, sick bay, there was no -- at least you were out of work then, you know? You could just lay down there and whatever. So I said, this either him or me. I went to the **kapo** and I showed him my underwear. And I said, "The guy doesn't want to take me." He says, "Come with me, I -- he's going to take you very fast now." He came in and he took him and he hit him in the face, he says, "You take this guy, and right away. Guy's sick," he says. "Don't just take your own people in there, all the Hungarians. Other people have to live, too." So he took me in. And this **kapo** loved to -- to do this because he always liked to hit people. So that was another job for him to do, and I went in there, and I was together with French prisoners there. There were two fellows, they came from a small town that was called **Charme**, like charm, **C-h-a-r-m-e**, in **Vosges**. And one guy's name was **Fernand Roehrig**, I remember the name, I could spell it, too. And he had a friend, his name escapes me. He was a -- he repaired radios. **Fernand Roehrig** and this guy had been already freed by the Americans. Then all of a sudden the Germans made a counterattack. He said, I was smoking American cigarettes, we were going out, I -- we were -- went to see the girls, you know, and all of a sudden the Germans attacked. Pushed the Americans back, took away the people, the men, put them on the train and brought them to **Muhldorf** where I was. He used to get packets from the Red Cross, he

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sometimes used to give me something. And **Fernand Roehrig** says to me, he says, “**Jack**, don’t worry. If they’re -- your family is not alive, you come home with me, I have a sister, is a very pretty girl, and she’s single, maybe you want to marry her. If not, you don’t marry her, but at least you don’t have to go home to an empty house.” In those days my French was a little better, yes -- I mean I ha -- yesterday I spoke French. The guy says, “Ma -- you speak beautiful.” I -- “If this is beautiful, I don’t know what ugly is.” And she -- he s -- he was sick, too. The guy that fixed the radios died of typhus. I saw him die, I saw when they brought him out. And **Fernand Roehrig** got out, he went back to **France**. And I had ty -- I had typhus, I was -- I was freed by the Americans, well we were all freed by the Americans. And they made a hospital for us, and that’s how we got out, I mean -- I remember the first day, that was the worst thing, I was practically in a coma, I was -- I didn’t know what -- what -- I was imagining that I had killed the camp commander and had him hidden under my bed. You imagine? And now -- every time when somebody came in, I used to say to him, “I want to show you something. You know, look there, look.”

Q: Right.

A: And a --

Q: It was a good wish.

A: Yeah, it was a good wish. It was -- it was no facts involved in this idea. Then, all of a sudden three ladies from the **[indecipherable]** three or four ladies in olive green

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uniform of the Red Cross came in, and they took **DDT**, they had these pumps, you know? And they came in and they pumped that -- that whole place, looked like in a snowstorm. It was -- it was the right thing to do in those days, in those days they didn't know that **DDT** was --

Q: Was terrible.

A: -- cancer causing, or whatever it is. And --

Q: How long were you in **Muhldorf** before the Americans came in, do you think?

A: Not -- I was in mu -- yeah, I would say I was in **Muhldorf** -- January --

Q: From January --

A: -- for -- for a month.

Q: Really? From January till April?

A: Yeah.

Q: To May?

A: When you look on the internet, the **Muhldorf** death list is endless, endless list, and mostly Hungarian Jews. I didn't re -- I knew that they were [**indecipherable**] the doctor there was hungar -- but I don't remember being in contact with too many Hungarian Jewish people there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I didn't really know -- **Rudi** was with me th-there -- or whatever he -- I forgot his last name already, the -- the optimist, the newsman --

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Q: The optimist.

A: -- he all -- he put -- he brought the news wherever it was needed.

Q: Right.

A: He was with me, too. And he said a -- he said right away [**indecipherable**], he said, "I told you the Americans are there." I said, "You told me Americans were there six months ago." Of course eventually they have to come, I mean, because we knew that they would -- the Germans would lose the war. But he saw the Americans already six months before anybody else saw them.

Q: Right.

A: And --

Q: So you've --

A: -- they left me lay there --

Q: Right.

A: -- and I started to cry and to scream because I saw all the other kids -- I saw outside, they had these American Red Cross trucks, you know? The si -- is -- the sick er -- car -- er -- per -- Red Cross cars for the sick people, the transport. And I was still there. Came night -- came night, I was still in there. I was crying. I thought they wouldn't take me. The next morning they took me then, finally. I mean, they probably didn't have time, or whatever, they were too busy. But when you're there so long, even an hour is too long, you know?

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Q: Right.

A: I got out and I -- they brought me to a place that was called **Ecksberg, E-c-k-s-b-e-r-g**, and they made a hospital out of it, I had good care. At first I didn't get much to eat, because they knew that if they would feed me that I would die, you know, because I didn't -- hadn't eaten for over two years, you know? And eventually -- oh, they took care -- I had a pus in my -- on my finger. In fact I still -- I still can see here the scar where he cut it. And finally we got already cigarettes, "Lucky Strikes" --

Q: Oh yes?

A: -- he brought us, and then he brought us **Hershey's** tropical chocolate, that was an issue in those days for the army because the chocolate didn't melt as fast, or didn't melt, whatever.

Q: Tropical chocolate?

A: Yeah, was called **Hershey's** tropical chocolate for the army, and it didn't melt. We were in good shape already. And then I -- there was a very pretty woman, she was married to an **SS** man, and one American took a fancy, then she became the supervisor, and I had already fights with -- and I wasn't normal at that time, I had typhus. There was a tiny little plant outside, and I insisted it was a salad, and I said I haven't eaten salad in three years, and I wanted a salad. Well, little thing like this.

Q: So did you as --

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A: And she says, "You can't have this," she says, "that's not salad, that's no -- there's nothing there." I said, "I want it. If you don't give it to me, I'm going to go to the -- to the Americans and tell them to give it to me." And I didn't get it anyway, needless to say. And a lot of peoples were still dying in that hospital. You woke up in the morning, there was another one dead, and he had to be carried out and all this. And we --

Q: So is -- is one of the symptoms of this kind of **spotted** typhus

A: -- From the typhus, I guess, yeah.

Q: -- is delirium, with --

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I don't know how I got out of, but I did -- I did -- I did get out of it, and then when I was already a little bit improving, but still in the state like a s-skeleton, the "**Stars and Stripes**" used to come, used to take pictures, and I -- I was always horrified when they came because they -- I had to sit down, and I was na -- only bones, and when I sat down it felt as if somebody put a needle up my back, you know? But you had to go through with, you know, so I did. And --

Q: Why did they take pictures?

A: I guess for the newspaper, I guess they maybe they freed us, th-th --th -- these army guys probably freed it, or a part of -- I don't know. They took -- a lot of pictures were taken of these camps. That's why you have so many of them, you know, because

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pictures were t -- were taken. In the meantime, the **SS** wasn't there any more. When -- when we -- when the t -- when the Americans came close, I was -- I remember it was a day I was lying outside yet in the camp, and resting, the sun was shining, was beautiful day. All of a sudden, the Americans came and -- and bombs fell in the forest. I saw [indecipherable]. But only once or twice. Then, all of a sudden the **SS** disappeared, and called the local police in to guard us. So when the Americans came, a lot of the **SS** had disappeared already. The police, they didn't know -- they said they didn't know, and they were called in, they had to go, you know? So I don't know how many they caught there, there were -- I was in that -- expected -- that recuperation area there, I would say for at least two months, until I got a little better, you know, and then they discharged me, and I went on the -- there were no trains going those day, there were freight trains. If you hopped on a freight train you took a chance, it could go anywheres. And that's what it was. I remember being on a train, a day and a half I fell asleep, I was in **Augsberg** twice. The train was going to **Augsberg**, came back and went back to **Augsberg**, and I was still on. So -- but eventually I got to **Furth**. It was a scary thing because all these railroad crossings over the rivers, they were bombed, you know?

Q: Right.

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A: And there were no -- when -- when the train went over these, you looked right into the river [**indecipherable**] there were only the tracks in there, and the support for the tracks, but there were no --

Q: No side?

A: -- u-usually they have on the side there, some kind of a --

Q: Right. And **Furth** is -- is near **Nuremberg**? **Nuremberg**?

A: I went to **Nuremberg**.

Q: Yeah.

A: I come to **Nuremberg**, again I had a problem there, that you couldn't get a room. So they let me sleep in one of the bunkers that they built what -- where the people used to go in for the air raids, and was no electricity. I couldn't find the electric switch. I was in there, it was dark, I fell asleep. In the morning when I got up I couldn't find the door. I was in that thing longer than I ever wanted to be. Finally I got out, and I finally I contacted the Jewish congregation there. The head of the Jewish congregation was married to a non-Jewish woman, so he was not in the camp, and he took over business there for us, you know? And he got me a room, and I got a job with him, I was helping him out, I used to go on a bicycle, and bring envelopes to people, you know, to the Americans, and all kinds of things. And finally -- oh, they had it good already because all the -- the -- the packages came from the **United States** with food and things, they came to that place, you know? So I had -- I now had marmalade to eat, and I hadn't

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seen marmalade, I didn't even know what it looked like any more. I didn't even think of it, I didn't even know it existed. And I had it, then I got a job as an assistant to a moving projectionist. I worked in the movie theater. And I worked there for at least a year with the -- till I -- till I came over here. And I believe -- that's when I -- afterwards I got finally the papers from the **United States** that I could come over.

Q: And ha -- you were getting papers from the government, or you had a relative in the **United States**?

A: Had a relative.

Q: You had a relative.

A: I had a -- my mother's uncle.

Q: So --

A: Other words, I guess it was my grandmother's brother.

Q: Your grandmother's brother.

A: It's ma -- it's my mother's uncle, right?

Q: Right, right.

A: He came after the first World War to **Atlanta, Georgia**, and he opened up a flower shop. And he was very successful, he had whole plantations there and all kinds of things. And became very wealthy. So he sent me the papers. I mean, actually he didn't need money for visa -- you only had to guarantee that --

Q: Right.

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A: -- that he would help me get -- well, I didn't need anybody, was soon as I came here, I got the job, you know.

Q: Right. But now, at a certain point, bef -- I think it's a -- a few weeks before you go to **Bremen** to get the boat, you are going to interviewed by somebody named **David Boder**?

A: Yeah.

Q: How did it -- how did it happen?

A: I was at the place in **Munich**, was called the **Funkenkaserne**, it was once an army p-post there, the electronic equipment, or whatever that was called in those days. And it was empty and they used that as a staging area for the people where they had rooms. It was a halfway decent place, I mean there was -- it was not dirty or anything.

Q: Right.

A: And of course it was -- we had not -- not much to do there because you si -- sit around talk, and thing. You get tired of it. So one day I see a lady there, and she says to me, you know, I was just interviewed by Dr. **Boder**, is a -- I don't know who Dr. **Boder** was. Der -- she says, "Why don't you go in, he's looking for somebody to interview." So I went and knocked on the door, and I told -- I introduced myself. And he said, "Oh yeah, yeah, I can use you, sit down and you talk about it." And he had that tape recorder, that's how the interview started. He didn't do it all at once, he pi --

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pi -- in sessions, you know? One session, three sessions was it? I don't remember exactly, but it was not --

Q: Do you remember what --

A: -- all done in -- in -- in one -- at one time.

Q: Right. Was this one small room that he was in?

A: Yeah, it was like a -- yeah, like a little room.

Q: Uh-huh. And do you remember --

A: And there was a table, I remember, and a tape recorder -- there wasn't a tape recorder, a wire recorder.

Q: Wire recorder. Was this a big machine? Do you remember what it was?

A: Oh, about the size of a typewriter [**indecipherable**]

Q: A big typewriter?

A: Yeah, a big typewriter. I remember -- I think it was red, if I remember correctly, the outside. I think it was a **Webcore**, I'm not sure, but I think it was.

Q: Right, right, uh-huh. Well, what -- what I wanted to do was play you a little bit of -- of your interview.

A: Well how -- well how do you play?

Q: Well, I have a tape recorder here. So let's see if you can hear yourself.

[Interviewer plays audiotape excerpt of interview]

Do you recognize your voice?

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A: Of course.

Q: You've never heard that before.

A: I heard it once on the -- on some of -- some parts of it on the internet, but it was not as clear as this.

Q: As this?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was that like for you, to be interviewed by him? Is this the first time anyone had asked you what had happened?

A: Yeah. Well, no, some Germans were interest to hear what really happened there, and so on, they listened to me, say they never -- they never really said we did a wrong thing, or they never apologized. It was just -- they were interested in hearing it, like, you know? And he was -- he wa -- I don't think -- he was a good interviewer, but he was like a -- like a general talking to a sergeant, you know? Or a general talking to a private or a corporal, you know? He was -- he was not a per -- a person with a -- he had no personality at all. He was like what they call in German a **pedagoga**, a pedagogue. He was strictly like a teacher, where were you born, how long did you live there, what came next, what did you do there, what did you do? It was like an interrogation more than an interview.

Q: And not an interview. So were you uncomfortable with him, do you remember?

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A: No, I wouldn't say I was uncomfortable with him, but I never really could unders -- I mean, I -- I would -- I had never kind of a close contact feeling with him, what you have -- like I have with you, you know, because -- not because he was a man, that might be one of the reasons, but he -- he was like a -- I don't know, very p -- without feelings, like, you know? Without emotions. He was a man like that, probably that's how he was. Because not too much is known about his private life. Even the guy that writes the book tells me that.

Q: Did he explain to you why he was doing this, or did he just sit down and started interviewing you?

A: No, no, no, no --

Q: He didn't -- no explanation.

A: -- he didn't explain anything. But there was no **Shoah** foundation then I don't think, and --

Q: No, nobody was doing interviews. No, he was the only one.

A: I think he was probably one of the first --

Q: Absolutely.

A: -- if not the first --

Q: Right.

A: -- person to interv -- I was lucky, I guess, that he interviewed me.

Q: Yes, is it interesting to hear your voice --

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A: Yeah.

Q: -- this young voice. I wanted to play you something that he said at the end, which I don't know whether you remember.

A: No, I really don't know what he said in the end.

Q: You might not remember but -- and we can -- we'll translate it, I mean you'll know what he's saying. I think this is three, yes. Because here he sounds a little bit different.

A: I sound different?

Q: No, **Boder**. Could you stop the tape for a second, please?

End of Tape Eight

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Beginning Tape Nine

Q: **Jack**, I'm going to play you part of the close of the interview, where **Boder** is asking you whether people got their businesses back in **Munich**, I think it is. And you answer, and he's talking about the Jewish community coming back, and the synagogue opening, as you tell him. And then he starts to say to you something about that you're becoming American, and you say not quite. And then he gives you some advice. So I thought we would just listen to that, because it's sort of interesting at the end that he tr -- is trying to be very supportive of you. So let's listen here.

A: His address is not on there, is it now? I mean, the one on the tape?

Q: No, he says you should drop him a line ho -- as to how you've managed.

A: No.

Q: But he doesn't say --

[plays audiotape of interview]

Q: Now let me fer -- for our non-German speaking audience, let me just translate a little bit. When he says -- you -- you talk about in **Furth** they opened the synagogues -
-

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and the American chaplains were especially instrumental in opening them up --

A: Yes.

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Q: -- etcetera. And when he says, “You’re now almost an American,” and you say not quite --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- not altogether. He says, “Well, you’ll soon be across and let me give you some good advice. Don’t let anybody tell you that education is expensive in **America**. There are expensive schools, and average priced schools, and there are free schools, and there are courses by correspondence. Young people study, older people study, and you will find a way. It might be good for you upon arrival in **America**, after having taken a rest, after having looked around a bit, that you go to a place where they give vocational advice.”

A: Yeah.

Q: And you say yes. And then he goes on. I mean, he’s clearly being the pedagogue --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but in some way caring about you.

A: Y -- Human, being more human.

Q: And then he says, “psychological and occupational advice. They may find something for you to do that you may learn without difficulty. There are such places, and the **ORT** is also active in **America**, and your relatives will probably assist you, and if you work hard, and get accustomed to the life there, things will be all right. And I thank you indeed, **Jurgen**. I suppose you will arrive in **America** before I shall return,

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and I will give you my address. Drop me a line sometime telling me how you have managed to arrange things.” And then you say, “I wish to thank you, first of all, for giving me the opportunity to talk about my experiences in the lager, so that people should get a picture of what -- of that which has really happened. What I have told you are only isolated incidents, and I can tell it with a clean conscience, but nothing is exaggerated. On the contrary, one cannot describe these things the way it really happened.”

A: Uh-huh.

Q: That seemed as if at that moment he changed with you a little bit.

A: Mm.

Q: D-Do you -- do you re-remember that part of the interview at all?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I remember -- I remember him asking -- t-telling me that he would give me his address. He seemed to be a little warmer --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- at this point --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- to me, e-even at the a -- b-before you told me about it. But -- but do we -- I have a feeling that maybe he figured if he does the interview with me, and he talks to -- in

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ge -- general terms, it would probably somehow -- that word from the main point that he wanted to bring out. In other words, there would be talk about private things, or things like that. And he wanted the facts, so to speak, you know, what really happened there.

Q: Right.

A: And he probably figured if he tells me like in a -- in a manner like a -- a -- a general to a private, that it would impress me more, and then I would --

Q: You would tell him --

A: -- give the answers faster and better, you know?

Q: Yeah. Right. Cause he certainly pushes you --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in the interview, what happened here, and what happened there.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So this --

A: Sometimes it seems to me that he wanted to make sure. I mean he -- he sometimes touched on one subject a few times, probably to make sure, maybe I would change my mind and say something else, or so -- which also could be the -- be the case in his -- that he thought it -- thought that.

Q: Y-You said the interview, i-it didn't occur at one time, there were three different --

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Q: [indecipherable] there were three different [indecipherable]

A: Two or three times, I think.

Q: Uh-huh, yes. And did you --

A: And -- but it was always the same woman, it was one [indecipherable] a couple of days it was done in three, four days.

Q: Uh-huh. Did he talk with you afterwards, or did you simply leave?

A: I never seen him again.

Q: No, no, no, I mean when you did part one, and then you were going to leave, did he talk to you --

A: No.

Q: -- nothing?

A: No.

Q: So this was very sterile in a way. I mean, you did the interview and you left, and you did -- and you came back and --

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: So he never had a -- sort of informal conversation with you?

A: No, no, not really, no. No, I don't remember that at all.

Q: You don't remember that. And you never saw --

A: I would have remembered if he would have had a more personal conversation with me --

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Q: Yes, yes.

A: -- I'm sure. But I don't think he did.

Q: Did you meet anyone else who was interviewed by him, except for that woman?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I met the woman, but she didn't elaborate on it, didn't tell me anything about how he handled it, and how she handled it. She was also a German Jewish woman, I believe.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah, she was. Seems to me she came from the **Nuremberg** area --

Q: Right.

A: -- or somewhere's around, **Munich** maybe, I don't know.

Q: Now, w-when he published his book in the 50's, did you know about it then?

A: No.

Q: You didn't?

A: No.

Q: Had you -- when you came to this country in '46, or 40 -- '46?

A: '47.

Q: -- '47. Did you talk to people about what had happened to you?

A: Not to friends or relatives, you know, tried not to.

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Q: But not [indecipherable]

A: I didn't make speeches out of it, no.

Q: Right. And people weren't interested, journalists weren't inter -- I mean, no one --

A: No. I don't believe it.

Q: So when did you find out about the book?

A: I found out about the book about a year, year ago, year and a half ago.

Q: That's all?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: If I would have known about the book I would have purchased. You can't get in any more --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- it's out of print, I guess.

Q: So you never -- y-you never knew how find out what happened to this interview, or did you not even think about it?

A: Well, I found out about the interview because my daughter heard it on the internet.

Q: But that's very recent. That's in the last few years.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right.

A: No, I have never heard from Mr. **Boder**. I have never written to him.

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Q: Cause he gave you the wrong address?

A: He did, maybe. I don't know how that ever happened.

Q: Well, cause --

A: I mean, I have a very good memory. If he would have said -- said the ba --

University of **Chicago**, I would have known it.

Q: Right. He said you were --

A: I know exactly that he said University of Technology, **Cambridge, Massachusetts**.

Maybe he didn't want me to write him, I don't know.

Q: I suppose that's possible. Is it interesting for you to hear your voice?

A: Yeah, of course it is. Of course it is. This doesn't bother me because I speak a fluent German. When I hear a tape on which I speak English, that bothers me, because you cannot hear the accent -- when I'm speaking to you I cannot hear that I'm speaking with an accent.

Q: Right, right.

A: But when you replay the tape --

Q: Then you can hear?

A: -- then I can hear what a horrible accent I have.

Q: Yeah. But you like your German, when you speak?

A: The German I like because it is German, and I can -- I mean it is -- there's no accent there.

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Q: Right, right. When you came to the **United States**, you came to **Atlanta** from **Bremen**?

A: No

Q: No.

A: I've never been to **Atlanta**.

Q: So where did you come?

A: I came to my cousin, **John Kayston**. His name was **Katzenstein**, and he came to this country in 1935. He married, he had a daughter, and he pa -- pa -- only passed away about a month or six weeks ago.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. He was older than I am. He worked for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, if you ever heard of that.

Q: Yes, absolutely.

A: Yeah. And he got me a job there, too, I was in the mail room, and the -- but he was an executive there, in the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Q: And that was based where, in --

A: Mor -- 141 **43rd Street** -- I th -- for -- **41st -- 41st Street**.

Q: In **New York**?

A: In the **Channon** building, in **New York**.

Q: Uh-huh. **Shannon**?

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A: **Channon**

Q: **Channon?**

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I remember that was also that **QXR** had their transmitters in that thing --

Q: Oh yeah.

A: -- you always saw guys sitting on the top floor fiddling with the controls.

Q: You could listen to classical music?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: I loved **New York** for that. They had so many classical stations there.

Q: Did you go to the opera in **New York**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Weren't there, out in **Lewison** Stadium, were there **[indecipherable]**

A: Oh, I used to go to -- religiously to those concerts --

Q: Yes?

A: -- I thought the most wonderful thing. I heard **Van Clyburn** there, I heard **Misha Ellman**.

Q: Right.

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A: I heard **Leon Flasher** when he was a young man. I heard **Van Clyburn**, and **Van Clyburn** gave a concert, he gave an hour of encores. And he --

Q: An hour?

A: Yeah. And he played the -- the s -- **Rachmaninoff's** Second Concerto, and he also played a **Brahms** Concerto I believe it was, the second **Brahms**.

Q: Wow.

A: It was beautiful, I -- I was laughing, and it was wonderful.

Q: **Lewison** -- yes, **Lewison** Stadium was great.

A: It was a wonderful place to go, it was only 30 cents, or a quarter.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I used to sit on the **rock** there, and it was beautiful. I heard it -- I heard -- heard -- I heard **Pulchiello Ricci** there, the violinist.

Q: Right.

A: It was really good, the concert hall, lovely, lovely concert.

Q: So **New York** was a great place to be?

A: It was. I don't know whether it still is. I can't -- I can't find my way around any more, too well.

Q: No?

A: It looks so different.

Q: Well, it's -- it's got a lot more --

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A: Midtown --

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, and --

Q: Yeah.

A: It's all different, not the way it used to be. In fact, where the Metropolitan Opera is standing today, there was an armory. And I was a member of the National Guard, that's where we had to drill and train there.

Q: You were a member of the National Guard?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: I didn't bring a picture, I don't know if the -- I have a picture in uniform with a **M-1** rifle on [indecipherable]

Q: Really, really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you like the **United States** when you came?

A: Oh yeah. I loved to go downtown -- I thought it was great, I had never seen -- I used to -- I used to -- my friend, w-we [indecipherable] one night downtown, and I said to him, "I p -- I'm going to buy a record." He says, "But you haven't got a phonograph." I said, "Let's buy the phonograph." So he says, "Got money?" I said no. He says, "I lay it out." So he laid it out and I paid him back. And then I used to go

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downtown, there used to be a -- these arcades, and they used to sell used records, I guess they were, and they used to be 15 cents, 20 cents apiece, I used to buy [indecipherable] heap of records. I bought all kinds of records, **Luffstein, Heifetz.**

Q: Right.

A: And I loved it. And I had a complete [indecipherable] the **Carmen**, with **Gigli**, and I think [indecipherable] was a lady by the name of **Lena Bruneraba**, and it was -
- it was pretty, very pretty.

Q: Now let me ask you something, your sister was in **England** the whole time?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You didn't go back, and **Boder** asks you about this, your sister's in **England**, and you're going to the **United States**. So you didn't see your sister before you came to the **United States**.

A: No, I didn't.

Q: How -- how come, what -- what happened?

A: It was difficult, I don't know, I had no chance to get it, cause I had no money. I had nothing, I mean, I w -- I worked, and I --

Q: Right.

A: -- eked out a living from week to week. So I had no money to go up -- even when I came to the **United States**, I came with 10 dollars -- actually nine dollars, because I bought a -- a carton of **Camels** on the ship, and there was no tax on it, was a dollar.

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Q: So who paid your way, your uncle?

A: My uncle paid my way, yeah.

Q: I see, right.

A: It was a -- it was surprising, I came on a troop ship, it was called the **Ernie Pyle**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I came in December. It was a very bad crossing, it was stormy. The **Queen Elizabeth** was two days late, and the thing was going like so and so and so. I was seasick. Now, here I was after not having eaten good things in so many years, and there were oranges, and apples, and I couldn't eat anything.

Q: Because you were so sick?

A: Yeah. I could really, truly say that I made the crossing by rail, because I was always throwing up.

Q: So when did -- when -- that's really funny -- when did you first contact your sister so she knew that you were alive?

A: I don't know -- I contact my -- contacted my sister when I was in **Ecksberg**. There was an American soldier, he's -- an American Jewish officer, he said to me, "I'm going to **England**." I said, "Would you do me a great favor? I have a sister in **England**." I gave him like that -- and he came over to see my sister and told her that I was alive.

Q: Really?

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A: Yeah. And he -- and she wrote to me, and we wrote to each other.

Q: And when -- and when did you both find out about your mother? Was that right after the war?

A: Yeah. I mean, she didn't come back, so we knew.

Q: She didn't -- yeah.

A: My sister was not too -- I mean, she mi -- my -- my sister said as follows, she said to me, "You know, I feel of course sorry that she had to end up like she did, but I wasn't too keen on her."

Q: Yeah.

A: I knew she wasn't too keen on her.

Q: Right.

A: She never was. And I don't think that my mother -- my mother of -- my mother was not a doting mother to begin with, but she preferred me to her.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I think the reason for that was maybe because she was grown up already, and now if she would meet a man, they would know how old she is, may -- maybe that was one of the reasons, psychologically. And she always liked to dress my sister like she was very young.

Q: Like she was a kid?

A: Mm.

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Q: I see. Nevertheless, she got your sister out.

A: Yeah, she did. This is the -- on her plus side.

Q: Yeah.

A: I got to say, yeah.

Q: Right. Did your sister have a hard time during the war?

A: Yeah, she did.

Q: Not like you, of course, but --

A: No.

Q: -- it was not so easy.

A: But she had a hard -- she always had a hard time.

Q: Yeah. So when did you first reunite, the two of you? When did you first see each other?

A: We saw each other -- that's a good question, I was married already, fit -- si -- 19 -- in the mid to late 50's, I would say it was. She came over here on the -- maybe it was the **Bremen** --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But she made believe that she doesn't know German. She only spoke English.

Q: On the boat?

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A: She still today doesn't like to speak German. She speaks it, of course, I mean the -- she was even older than I am, so [indecipherable] knows how to speak German. But she -- she doesn't like to speak it.

Q: So that was more than -- oh, it's almost 20 years.

A: In fact it happened, yeah, that she told me that when she was on the boat, she went to the library, she looked at the book, and the guy said, "Oh, that's a German book." She said, "Oh, I must have made a mistake then." And she put it back.

Q: So in fact you hadn't seen each other for 15 or 20 years?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's a long time.

A: Yeah, was a long time, it was wonderful to see her, you know?

Q: I bet.

A: And I tell you something else, what -- she -- she came -- she took the -- no, she came on the **S.S. United States** -- no, she came on the **Bremenhaven**, went back with the **S.S. United States**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And she is not -- she was not too keen on my mother, and she was not too keen on speaking German. She [indecipherable] when we call we always speak English, she'd never speak German.

Q: And she wanted to --

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A: Unless there's one word like **landjager**, or -- or --

Q: Right.

A: -- a German salami, let's say **blutwurst**, or something, you know, to that effect. But there was -- there's never a German conversation there going.

Q: And when did she decide to move to the **United States**? Much later?

A: Well, she came to the **United States** in 1977, maybe '76 - '77.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. She went to **California**. She had been married, and she was divorced, and she has a daughter, and the daughter is -- should be on **Ripley's Believe it or Not!** She married the psychiatrist, and she lives in **Huntington Beach**, she calls her mother four or five times a day. When my sister says, "Oh I saw a nice blouse," [indecipherable] I'm not telling her any more, that's all. As soon as she -- she goes and buys it for her. She doesn't know what to do for the mother. She is closer and mother -- and the funniest thing happened. We were in -- when I visited her, we were invited to my niece's house, the doctor [indecipherable] her, and came to doing the dishes, and [indecipherable] she wanted do the dishes, and they were fighting over who was doing the dishes. My niece said, "No, you're my guest Mother, you're not doing the," - - "Oh, but I love to do dishes," she says, "I love," -- my s -- I don't know why my sister likes to do dishes. She's an intelligent girl, I mean she knows a lot, and she read a lot, and she -- but she loves to do dishes, she says.

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Q: May be relaxing.

A: Hm?

Q: Maybe it's relaxing.

A: I think she does it also because she went to many schools, the cooking schools, and maybe she -- she acquired a taste for washing -- doing dishes.

Q: And -- and when did you get married, first time?

A: I got married in 1950.

Q: Soon --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- after you came.

A: Too soon.

Q: Mm. And you --

A: I met her through a friend of mine, who is unfortunately not alive now, he came over here, and he -- he was a short gentleman, just like **Phyllis**, but nice fellow, wonderful personality, good sense of humor. We used to meet a lot of the times, and he said to me, I'm going to intro -- and it was a funny thing, I -- I was in the concentration camp with a guy there -- I mean, I was not in the same camp, but he was during the same time, and he got married to a girl here in the **United States**. He was a couple of years older than I am, and she had a -- she was working with my first wife. So my -- my first wife was introduced to me -- I think my wife took a like -- my first

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wife took a liking to me. When -- when it came to b -- being sent down, my friend says, "Go downstairs and go to the Jewish deli and get some delicatessen." She says, "I'm going to go with you."

Q: And that was it?

A: [indecipherable]. So we met, then we got married, and we were married for 26 years.

Q: That's a long time.

A: Yeah. Well, I was used to suffering, from the concentration camps. And then I married a very pretty non-Jewish girl.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I was married to her for seven years. She was divorced, and she had four kids.

Q: And you -- did you have --

A: You see that I'm an optimist also.

Q: Did you have --

A: Not maybe as much as the guy that predicted the end of the war, but in a certain way I was.

Q: Did you --

A: And --

Q: Did you have kids with your first wife? You have two children --

A: Yeah, my to -- two daughters were --

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Q: Two daughters.

A: -- from my first wife. I didn't have no kids with the second one because she had four already from the first marriage.

Q: Right, right.

A: That would have made it six, eight kids, that is too much.

Q: Did you divorce after 26 years?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And after seven years I divorced, and then I met **Phyllis**, and **Phyllis** is my last attempt and I'm glad -- I'm happy with **Phyllis**. **Phyl** is a good girl.

Q: Good.

A: She's a good girl.

Q: I'm glad to hear it.

A: She's a good girl.

Q: You've had quite a life.

A: Yeah, I could say that.

Q: Is there anything that you would like to say that we haven't covered?

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A: No, but I would like to say that I thank you very much. You -- the interview was very good. I like the way you ask the questions, and the way you treated me, and your tone of voice, I like everything about you.

Q: Aren't you nice?

A: Unfortunately you're married [**indecipherable**]

Q: Actually, I'm not. Thank you. I really am very grateful that you came.

A: I -- no, I really liked it -- I -- I took a liking -- well, when I -- when I was in the car, I did not know you that well, but as soon as I came here I took a great liking to you.

Q: I'm glad.

A: You are in -- on the first page of my book of well liked people.

Q: Oh, you're very sweet. And I thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed here.

A: And I thank you for having me and interviewing me.

Q: Okay.

[At the conclusion of the interview, several photos are shown while Mr. Bass describes each.]

End of Tape Nine

Conclusion of Interview