United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Rudolph Haas
June 13, 1995
RG-50.030*0333

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Rudolph Haas, conducted by Joan Ringelheim on June 13, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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RUDOLF HAAS
June 13, 1995

Q: Tell me your full name and then tell me when and where you were born.

A: I am Rudolf Haas and I was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1912.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your home and your family life dating back to the earliest memories that you have - even before World War I.

A: On that I can't quite remember, but when I recall my earliest years, that was approximately 1917, 1918, during the First World War. We lived in an apartment building which was the most common arrangement those days, and probably still is. My father had a small business of his own selling paper material and printing to the various businesses. It was a middle class family, quite reasonably comfortable, without the luxuries of this day. You had a cold water flat actually. You only had hot water once a week when the kitchen stove was on because the kitchen stove heated the water as it were. And so once a week you had hot water. That's when you took a shower and a bath in those days. Otherwise, you had these old stoves - you know, these coal fired stoves. And during the 17-18's, during the war, coal supplies became very short and I still remember when we had to have a pushcart and go to the harbor at the river where the coal was brought in. And you had to try to get the supply of coal to take home so you could be warm during the winter years - 1917-1918. And I also remember those days when you had to get up in the middle of the night and go to the basement in the cellar as a bomb shelter because the French primarily bombed Frankfurt in those days, and I remember the tracer bullets at night. I can still see that, believe it or not. And I remember the shaking of the apartment building when the bomb landed nearby, and one actually did get this close - I would say it was a hundred yards from our house. There was a zoological garden across the street and that's where the bomb landed. And I remember the impact of that. And I remember seeing the bomb crater the next day when we looked at the damage that was done. And, so I still have quite vivid memories of the First World War. And I also remember the great day in 1918 when the War ended, and for the first time then we were able to have rolls for breakfast again. And that was something I had never experienced before because that was a special treat. During the war that wasn't available. That's about primarily what I remember of the War years. I did enter the school in 1918. I started grade school in 1918 and, grammar school let's say. And I remember one of the first things we had to do was practice going to the bomb shelter in the school. That was then in the spring of 1918. That's when school started - in April usually. So that still sticks in my memory quite vividly... My first school year was practicing to go to the bomb shelter.

Q: Tell me in general about... Tell me a little more about your family. Introduce me to your family that was at home - your grandparents...

A: Well, I, actually I only knew very little of my grandparents. Our own family was my father, mother and two sisters who were quite a bit older. One sister was ten years older; the other

sister was eight years older. And so I actually had very little contact with them until later years. But we had a grandmother living with us who was quite ill, and I remember she was bedridden. And for a short period of time that I recall, she was taken care of at the house and died probably in the early 20's. That was my father's mother. My mother's mother had died a long time ago as had my father's father. So the only one I really knew was my mother's father who was born in 1850, lived in a small village in the country. He was a cattle dealer like so many people in the small villages in the country, and he was active until 1930 when he passed away at the age of 80, which was quite a remarkable age in those days. That was the place where we use to spend our summers. There was no such thing as a summer camp for children or anything. We had a vacation in the summer. is short only six weeks usually and that was spent in the country with some relatives. So what I especially treasured was a vacation with my grandfather who had a horse and buggy, and I was able to hold the reins for the horse. That was the biggest treat that I could think of. So, several summers I spent with my grandfather in the country and enjoyed country living which was typical, with running water from the fountain in the center of the village, and the horse stable in the backyard - or actually inside of the yard of the house kept the horses - and once and awhile a cow... some chickens. So that was our summer vacation and our summer treat. And I remember the mid-twenties when radio became popular. And I remember - I must have been about ten years old when I started building a radio receiver and you had to string a wire across the backyard, or somewhere where you could possibly hang up an antenna - and had a little crystal with a needle on it - fashioned a radio receiver. That was quite an accomplishment in those days. Otherwise, the pleasures were very simple. You played soccer with the kids - ball of any form - ball games of any form. But, all in all, it was a relatively simple existence.

Q: So then tell me about schooling.

A: School?

Q: Yea.

A: Well I entered a Jewish parochial(ph) school - a day school at the age of... I was still five, not quite six when I entered school. And that was a religious atmosphere. Boys and girls were separate in different buildings -- and we had both our religious education as well as secular education during the nine years of day school. And one of the things that was routine there, that you started languages at an early age. At the age of seven you started French and the age of eight you started English. So every one of the children had two languages to be fairly well versed in. In addition to it, of course, you learned Hebrew and the Bible, and some of the Talmud. So it was a full day. Started at 8:00 o'clock in the morning and usually went to 3 or 4 in the afternoon. So it was a very intensive study course. And it was routine. It wasn't unusual in those days. And then after the ninth grade I had to go to a public school because there was no other high school available, and there we, again, continued our language classes, and naturally mathematics and physics. Then, if you wanted to go to medical school, you had to also have a course in Latin. You had to pass a Latin examination in order to enter

medical school. And as you might know, high school in Europe, at least in Germany, led directly to the University. There was no such thing as college. You had to be prepared to enter the University at the end of the twelfth grade - when you were eighteen. And so from the high school, directly we went to the University. In those days, that was during the good old days of the German Republic. There was a real democratic government to which, I guess, the Germans never got quite use to, but at least you had a great deal of freedom in those days, politically and otherwise. There was a very liberal education and a very comfortable existence because people were really not polarized in those days. That was between 1924 and 1930. The life was quite comfortable. There was very little friction amongst the various groups of the population, and it wasn't until the Nazi Party started the activities when very violent demonstrations occurred, and the Communists on one side and the Nazis on the other side were shooting each other and killing each other during these demonstrations. That was the beginning of the violence really, in the late 30's. And, of course, it continued until 33 when Hitler took over altogether. So those were dangerous times. And you could tell by the early 30's that the future of the Jewish people in Germany was at great risk.

Q: Tell me more about that... I mean, from a personal perspective. Tell me changes that you saw.

A: Well, primarily, the agitation of the Nazi Party which at the very beginning derived most of their appeal by promising the general population to take over all the Jewish businesses and take away their wealth, which they supposedly had, and sold their ideas primarily with anti-Semitism, which was quite easy to do because the economic situation in Germany was very bad, and jobs were hard to come by. So enough people who were looking for some free giveaways for their benefit, so that the idea of the Nazis tried to make popular fell on very fertile ground. And you could tell that the mood of the population changed steadily and gradually.

Q: And you saw a distinct change and increase in anti-Semitism?

A: Oh, yea, very definitely... very definitely.

Q: And what kinds of specific incidents stand out in your memory?

A: Well, personally I don't have any stories to tell of any threats, but the usual attitude of youngsters already, let's say, was different. However, while I was at the public school between 27 and 1930, I personally had no real problems of any sort. Everybody was still, in those days, very friendly and perfectly congenial; except you knew several of the classmates were members of a nationalistic group. You knew they were members, some of them became members of the Nazi Party. There were still a fair number of right wing groups that wanted the Kaiser back. And so between those two right wing political Camps there was considerable friction as well. And the worst part was that the political parties increased every year and ended up, I think it was approximately 26 political parties that went to election day. So there was really no majority anywhere. They had to make friends with strange bedfellows

Sometimes to get their votes together. But one of the difficulty of the German political system at that time was that the split in 26 different parties made matters a great deal worse and made governing almost impossible. In addition to that, of course, the attitudes of the people had changed. I still remember very early, as you may know, that Germany had a social security system even in those days that started after the First World War, where people got unemployment benefits. And I quite clearly recall a conversation that I listened to on the streetcar where a couple of fellows talked about the pay they were getting for the job. And they said, "Ralph(ph), I almost get just as much from social security, but get unemployment compensation, that doesn't pay for me to work even." So that added to... started even then. I've never forgotten the strange idea that people do prefer to take a handout rather than earn it by working. It was quite an eye opener and I've never forgotten it. It's amazing how these ideas took hold very quickly. On the other hand, the ideals of democracy didn't sink in very quickly. They have never quite gotten to that point. They still preferred to be told what to do and be managed rather than to participate.

Q: After... At some point in the 1930's, you were tutoring. Tell me about that.

A: Well, I... Since we were not particularly wealthy by any means, I had to - well, I wanted to and I more or less had to help pay for my University tuition. And in order to earn some money for that I was tutoring students, and help them do their homework, sort of thing. And I was able to pay most of my tuition with the money that I earned that way. Tuition was very minimal anyway because University was owned by the state and so actually the fees you had to pay were very small by comparison - no comparison what one has to pay today, even at a college. So I was able to finance my medical school education pretty well - fairly closely anyway.

Q: But during this time period, when was this, and you were tutoring people who weren't Jewish?

A: Yeah. They were not Jewish. That's right, yeah. Well, there was still a large group of the population who was not influenced by the Nazi ideas and continued to be perfectly friendly, and have - not having any prejudice. So I was able to tutor non-Jewish students til - close to the time I finished medical school, which was 1935. And, of course, the first couple of years of the Nazi regime, things were not nearly as difficult as they became later on. The people that I worked for... well they became a little bit anxious towards the end and, you know, they wasn't going to announce my activities. And they weren't going to tell everybody who was teaching their - was tutoring their children. But it was getting more and more difficult, and people had to be more and more careful not to give away their liberal ideas. That wasn't very appreciated by the neighbors very frequently. And during the years of my medical school training, right after 1933, many of the students - well I wouldn't say many, but a fair number of the students appeared in their storm trooper uniforms during classes. And some of the professors - some of the doctors who were teaching appeared in their uniform with a white coat over it. I remember one or two of these students in uniform even brought their gun and holster along and had their (rollover-ph) strapped to the side all through the lectures, which

wasn't particularly comforting. But, we got by. I go along. I was able to attend the classes. I was able to do the practical work in the hospital - on the wards. I even was allowed to deliver babies, which was part of our curriculum. So all-in-all, I personally was not restricted particularly. Of course, one was always very careful not to step on anybody's toes. But, all-in-all, I was able to get by reasonably well and was able to finish medical school, which was, as I said, in 35, two years after Hitler had taken over. On the other hand, you had to face every day the signs on the walls with all the Nazi propaganda which was anti-Semitic, by promising the people all the supposed wealth that the Jews had. They got more and more followers and one could feel that the situation was getting more and more difficult. But nobody ever would have dreamt that it would lead to extremes like it actually did. And politically one always thought, well the economic situation being what it was, that Hitler was never going to Survive another winter because he wouldn't be able to feed his people, and give them anything of what he had promised them. But he had more staying power than anybody ever thought. So it became quite clear then, by the time I finished medical school, that I had to leave. And interestingly enough, in those days the Nazis were perfectly satisfied to have you get out Of the country. When I finished my state board, which in the Germany system comes before the medical degree, you graduate without a degree actually. You get a certificate that you have passed the state board that you're entitled to practice medicine, but you do not have a doctoral degree - a doctor title either. And you can practice medicine - I presume it's still this way - without a doctoral over there. When I finished medical school and I got my certificate that I was entitled to practice medicine, I was told then right there that you won't be allowed to practice medicine in this country - and we won't - you can take your examine for the doctor, which required a thesis and another exam, but we won't give you your diploma until after you've left the country. So that was an open invitation to get out, which was, in looking back, was favorable to help us make up our mind because very few people could make up their mind since there was no place to go unless you happen to have relatives in foreign countries, particularly in either North or South America, which was relatively safe. totally helpless then because the economic situation was the same and we were to the point where nobody was allowed as a foreigner to earn any money. So there was a good reason to leave and to find some way, if you could. So when I got this invitation to go to get myself a M.D. degree elsewhere, I accepted that and went to Switzerland, which had reciprocity in those days, probably still now, with German medical schools and universities. So on the basis of my German certificate, I could enroll in the Swiss University, write a thesis, take and exam and then get a doctor degree from the Swiss University. And, fortunately, I was able to do that and... On the other hand, I had no idea where I was going to go after that. I had no place to practice medicine because every country, particularly in Europe, was completely closed off. If you, as a foreigner, earned any money in any of the European countries, you were immediately expelled. And when it came to practicing medicine, it was was totally impossible. In Switzerland, for example, you had to go back to get your high school diploma before you could... and then go to medical school again. And the other thing was that they wouldn't let you have a citizenship. The Swiss had a good system. The required period of time that you were... to live in the country was five years. So they let you stay there for 4½ years and then said, "Now you gotta go." So you never were able to accomplish a stay of five years so you could apply for citizenship, even if you had

gone back to school. So that was pretty much the same in all the European countries. Since the economic situation was bad, they had unemployment which was very high. They tried to keep any foreigner out of the labor market. So unless you had relatives elsewhere, in North or South America, you had no place to go. So when I went to Switzerland, I really had no plan. I had no idea where I could possibly go afterwards. Still, I suppose, I wasn't really at that point to be desperate yet, and I wasn't really sure what would happen. But while I was in Switzerland then, for my last semester to get my M.D. degree from Berne, Switzerland, I met an old friend of mine again who was a medical student in Frankfurt for a period of time. He was from Yugoslavia. And while I was there, at one point he asked me for a loan of a small amount of money which I had no idea what he was going to do with. And it ended up that he took a train with that money to Davos in Switzerland where he shot a Nazi official. The Nazis had sent their organizer to organize a Nazi Party in Switzerland. And somehow or other he heard about him - he knew about him - and apparently this fellow as fairly successful in recruiting some Swiss, a small number - not a really large number I'm sure. But he was recruiting people to foil the Nazi Party in Switzerland. And the Germans, of course, would have loved to take over Switzerland at the same time. So he went up to Davos and shot this Nazi gaulietier(ph) - killed him. At the time he had the idea of committing suicide. He was depressed. He was ill and all that. But after he had shot this man, he gave himself up and the next morning I was staying at the rooming house where during those semester months and got a call from the police to ask me to come over there to the police headquarters in Berne. Of course it was not unusual in those days, whenever you were in a foreign country you were always subject to police checks, and you always had to register with the police wherever you were. So I did go that morning and, to make the story short, they asked me about this friend of mine and wanted to know what I knew about him and all that. And I finally said to them, "What's happened to him?" They said, "Did you see the newspaper today?" I says, "No, I didn't see a newspaper today." So they said, "Well, we'd just like to know what you knew about him." I said, "Well, what happened? Did he commit suicide. I know he's been depressed." Well finally, they said, "Well, he shot Gustov(ph)." I said, "What's Gustov?" I had not idea who it was. I had never heard of him before. So anyway they realized that I was not an accomplice and I didn't have anything to do with it, but they had found my address in this students house - in his room - and they checked out every angle, of course. And so it ended up that they kept my connection with this man totally quiet and never - the Nazis never found out about the fact that I had any contact with this man. They were looking for everybody, of course, that they could possibly accuse of accomplice... of being an accomplice. And nothing ever happened to my parents during that time, but of course I never dared to go back on account of that. However, the day of the trial in the Swiss Court, my testimony was read and the next day the Nazis came to my parents' house and searched the house, and looked for any kind of evidence that I had been in a political scheme of sorts, or party, or anything. And that was quite uncomfortable for my parents, of course. So the idea not to go back was justified and I would have been in trouble very quickly. And in addition to that I probably would have stayed too long - to the point where I would have been deported myself. So in a way, this friend of mine whose name happened to be Frankfurter, by killing this Gustov(ph), saved my life actually. I would have probably never gotten through alive otherwise. So he was then sentenced to eighteen years in prison by the

Swiss. Also the Germans, of course, agitated as much as they could and wanted as heavy a sentence as possible. And he was kept in prison until the day after the Germans surrendered. The Swiss let him go the day after Germany surrendered in 45. So that was really, for me, a great life saver. On the other hand, I was stuck in Switzerland then with no place to go. All I had with me was one suit and there was things you couldn't... You couldn't send out much money any more - out of Germany then. Just a minimum was permissible. So I didn't really know where to go next. Nevertheless, I went to one of the hospitals - University Hospital - just to volunteer in order to, you know, be occupied and to at least learn something more after finishing medical school. And there I had the first, well actually this was the second, remarkable incident that helped me. The first one was Frankfurter's murder of Gustov(ph) and the second was that I volunteered at the hospital and, not knowing what to do next and where my next money would come from, one of the residents at the hospital asked me if I would be willing to help her out because her finance had been a resident at this small hospital where the chief had to go to his annual military service. Every Swiss up to a certain age had to spend three weeks in the military and the chief of the hospital was due to leave and all he had was one resident to care for the eighty patients of this small district hospital. And her fiance panicked. He ran away, which embarrassed the family terribly, of course. He was a nice Swiss boy but I guess he didn't have much guts, and he was afraid to be stuck with eighty patients not knowing how he would take care of them. So this young lady asked me if I would be willing to take his place because everybody was terribly embarrassed and the doctor, the chief of the hospital, needed somebody to come in. So I said, "Sure. I'd be glad to if I can get permission." Whatever you did in those days in these countries... If you wanted to work, you had to have a police permit. So I said, "Well, if I can get the permit, I'd be glad to do it, of course. I'd love to." So what happened... She got me on the phone. The chief of the hospital was at the other end. He says, "Well, do you want to take the job?" I said, "Sure." "Alright. Such and such a time there's a train. You get to the station and you come to the town of Choffingen(ph) and I'll meet you at the hospital." I hadn't the slightest idea where it was and I really didn't care either. I ran to my rooming house and packed my things, went to the train station and I got to this town of Choffingen(ph) and I left my suitcase at the train station because I didn't really believe I could get a job there. So I walked out to the hospital. It was outside of town - a little small town, actually - and the chief met me there. He said, "Okay, here's a white coat. Here's a piece of paper and pencil. You can speak some Swiss German?" I says, "Well, I'll get by I guess." He said, "Okay, let's go." So he made rounds with eighty patients and he said, "Goodbye. I'11 see you in three weeks." So there I was with a hospital on my hands and I said, "Well, you've just got to wait a moment and call up the police chief. I can't just take a job without a permit." So he did call the police and says, "Well, I'm leaving for a military service. I've got to have somebody to take care of my patients. You've got to give me a permit." So he did. And I was able to go to work and manage reasonably well. And when he came back after three weeks, said "Well, would you like to stay here?" I said, "Sure I would." "Well," he said, "I'll see what I can do." He had some good connections so fortunately he got the permission for me to stay there. But this had to be renewed every three months - from three months to three months. You had to go through a rigmarole where you had to get permission renewed that you could stay and could work. So he did that for me and there was no problem. I got along beautifully there and

people were as friendly as you can possibly imagine. And I enjoyed my work and I made friends. But still it was no solution for me because I knew that wouldn't last. And sure enough, after a year and a half, the Swiss finally said, "That's it. No more." They gave all kinds of reasons. First it was the unemployment was too high. I couldn't stay. And then he next thing was the "too many foreigners in the country." And they gave me a date when I had to leave no matter what. And they said, "Well, we'll give you three months to figure out where to go and to find some other place, but got to leave." There was no choice in the matter. So that was all fine while it lasted and it was a big help, but.... It was a rare opportunity because very few, if anyone, had been able to work in a foreign country in Europe during those years. But still I then had to look for a more permanent arrangement. So my next idea was to try to go to Palestine, which began to take in some of the European Jews, but there were only two ways of entering Palestine in those days during the British control. You had either be a farmer proving that you had so many months of training in farming, or you had to be a capitalist. That meant that you had to have a thousand British Pounds in your name on the bank account. And if you had that, then you could get a certificate from the British to enter Palestine. On the other hand, this was controlled by the Zionist organization. The Zionist organization had available a certain number of these certificates and they could give those certificates to anyone who they wanted to. So the Zionist organization invited me to come to Basel(ph) to appear before the committee and decide whether they would give me that permission. That was the end of 36. And so when I appeared there they asked me, "Are you a member of the Zionist Organization? Do you have any money?" So I told them, "I just have those few francs that I earned here in the last year, and I'm not a member of the Zionist Organization. Observant Jew." Zionists are not observant generally. They said, "Well, you're not a member of the Zionist Organization, don't have any money -- nothing doing. We will not give you are certificate." So that was hopeless. So then when I had to leave Switzerland I had luckily been given a visa to go to France. Usually they did not give you any visa unless they knew you could go back somewheres else afterwards. So, somehow or other they did give me a visa to go to France. So I went to Paris hoping that I would be able to get some type of arrangement where I could go to one of the South American countries because United States in those days would not admit anyone that did not have an affidavit of a relative - had to be a relative, and had to be a relative who had sufficient amount of money to be able to guarantee that you would not become a public charge for five years - until you became a citizen. So unless you had a relative, and unless you had somebody that sufficient amount of means, you have no chance of getting a visa to come to the United States. And I didn't have any relatives. I knew of nobody at the time and so there was no chance to consider the United States even. And I went to the various consulates or embassies of different countries in South America where you could get a visa depending on how much money you had. If you had a lot of money, you could go to Argentina. If you had a little less, you could go to Brazil. If you had a little less, you could go to Cuba. But wherever you went you had to pay a fair amount of money to buy a visa and I just didn't have enough for any of those countries. The only one I could afford to buy a visa from would have been Venezuela. So I started to learn Spanish because you had to take your exam there in Spanish and all that. And I figured, well eventually that's what I would have to do - go to Venezuela. And I was just living on money I had earned in

Switzerland during that year and a half and I was just living on money I had earned in Switzerland during that year and a half which got me by fairly well; not in luxury by any means, but I somehow managed. So that process of trying to find a place took about six months and, except for Venezuela, there was no opening that I could have possibly found. And just at that point my parents who were still living at that time in Frankfurt... another coincidence... happened to receive a family tree from one of... from the United States - from New York. One of the distant relatives had gone through the trouble of making a complete family tree of their relatives who went back to the late 1700's, early 1800's, and, lo and behold, in this family tree my father then found his - a cousin. And so he got in touch with him, and I got in touch with a friend of mine - a schoolmate of mine who lived in New York - and he started to talk to this relative who was instrumental in bringing quite a few people over, and already had felt that he committed himself to take care of so many people that he couldn't well afford another one. But, eventually he relented and did get me an affidavit, which was wonderful. And I very happily took that to the American Consul in Paris, and he said, "That's fine. But we won't be able to process this until you are... until a certain date at which time your German passport will have expired. So we can't give you the visa. We have to go and get another passport." Well, that was not a small matter in those days either because you didn't trust even the German Consulate in Paris. But anyway I got up my courage one day and went there and applied for another passport. Miraculously, I came across a fellow who was perfectly friendly, and he said, "How much time do you want?" I says, "Well, whatever time - three months would be enough. Whatever you can give me." "I'll give you a year's passport. I don't mind" - and renewed my passport, shook my hands, says, "Good luck to you," and I was ready to go to United States. So happily I went back to the United States Consul in Paris with my passport. He says, "Yes, well that's fine, but we don't have any quota number for you anymore. No quota number now." So he said, "We'll let you know when you... when we find another quota number." So in the meantime I had to go to the French Police to get a permit every month to stay another month..., another month... until I was able to leave. And that got - those permissions after, you have to give a puboir(ph) - you know... had a little hand, a little bit under the table to pay for it. And anyway, I did get that police permission finally for the... the whole year it took me to finally get the visa to come to the United States. So I did get a call after a month or six weeks that they had a quota number for me and I did get my visa. So after one year in Paris I finally managed to get my visa to come to the United States and was able to get a ticket on the boat, and July 4th of 1938 I managed to arrive in the United States. So the worst was over at least at this point. However, I had very little luck helping my family - my parents.

Q: Let's wait a minute and... because I want to put another role of tape on and we're just about to the end of this role... so...

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: Before you tell me more about your family, after you got to the United States, and the war got really into full swing, and the United States got involved, tell me what you heard and what you knew from the perspective of what you knew then as well as you can remember.

A: As to what was going on in Germany?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, actually, I came over here in 38 and... in July of 1938... and actually all I knew was that everybody was trying desperately to leave the country. And in 38 deportation actually hadn't really started yet. People were arrested frequently, but then they were released again. So I did not know just how bad the situation was. I did realize, like most everybody else, that one should bring out one's family if it was at all possible, but no details really were known at that time - at least not to me. I don't think too many people realized what was going on. And in 38 it really - in the summer of 38 - things weren't as bad because the worst started only after November, 38, when Kristall Nacht occurred - when the synagogues were burned and stores were looted and destroyed. So this is actually the time when everybody realized they had to get out. And until then I.... Well, first of all I was busy trying to pass my exams so and do... so I would be able to get the license to practice in the States. So I was not as anxious to... about my family. I didn't realize how difficult the situation was. And, actually I had no money either to do much for them. The only financial support I had was a... the money that I received for a camera which I had bought over - one of the - the only valuable thing that I think I remember must have gotten about $250 for it in those days, which was a lot of money. And I had to live on that for quite a while before I would have earned anything else. So I was handicapped. I had no relatives here actually. The only one was the cousin of my father's who brought me over - gave me the affidavit. And so I was really handicapped to doing anything, but I did start talking to people to get affidavits for my parents and for my sis.... I had two sisters who had six children between them. And there I had some distant relatives. My brother-in-law had some distant relatives. So, trying to get something done as much as possible, but it took me until 1939 to get some relatives to try to get affidavits for them and get them to come over here. And actually I had even made arrangements for my parents to go to England. I was able to find somebody who was able to arrange - put some money in their name in a British bank - again the same old arrangement - so they would come to England. Then in September, 39, the war started which cut off every possibility for anything - for any of them to come out. And so that, that was quite a blow. As it happened then, my father took ill suddenly in December of 39 and died of a heart attack. They had to give up the house in Frankfurt. They had to sell it for a minimal amount to an Aryan, and so they moved to some little apartment somewheres. And with all that I'm sure it was too much. My father was only 67 then and he had a heart attack and died. So then I tried to get my mother out at last, and the only way to do that in those days was to get an Italian steamship line to take them from Genoa to Santo Domingo. And I did manage to get a ticket on the

steamship from - to - to Santo Domingo, and hoping that from there I could bring her over to the United States. So the day came when she should have gotten onto the boat - taken a train into Italy. And nothing happened, so I finally, through a sister who was still living then in Frankfurt, one of my sister, I found out that she took ill early in 1940 and had to go to the hospital and never left the hospital. She had cholangitis, if that means anything to you. And there were no antibiotics in those days, so she never survived. So I almost succeeded in getting her out, but didn't quite make it. Then, one sister had escaped with her family to France and lived in Paris, and they thought they were quite safe, of course, until the Nazis took over France and invaded Paris. So they were the first ones to be deported to a French concentration camp; my sister with four children. At that time there were... the oldest one was born in 1925, so that was 45, so the oldest one was - must have been seventeen. The oldest one, Paul, was sixteen or seventeen. The youngest one was just a three years old. And they were deported and course, never heard from again. Her husband had tried to escape to the south of France and he, of course, was caught by the Nazis as well when they took over the south of France. And the sister in Frankfurt was the one who stayed there the longest. She had two girls and also about seventeen and thirteen, and I was able to get in touch with her through Switzerland there for a period of time and she was there when my other died, but she also was deported in 41 - a year after my mother died. She was deported with her two girls and never heard from. So I had tried hard to get her to come over here and found some of her husband's relatives. Her husband had died several years before that and they were ready to help with the expense of bringing them over but once the war had started and the Consulates, both the American Consulates were closed in Germany as well, that was the end of the - 41 - that was the end of the... any chance of anyone leaving.

Q: And during the war itself.... So you weren't hearing from them, but you still didn't know then what had happened to them.

A: Well we knew that.... We knew of the deportation, yes. We knew of the deportation. As a matter of fact, my sister in France was able to send me her address of this particular camp that she was sent to, but that was the last I heard of her. And my sister in Frankfurt - well she - I just no longer heard from her. We assumed that she had also been sent away. Still, at this point, one did not know that these people were all killed just as soon as they arrived in these camps. And I never knew where my sister in France had been sent to. Later on I seen some of the volumes of former West German citizens that were deported - that the Nazis not the Nazis, but the German Republic, finally West German Republic prepared. I could find that they apparently were sent to Riga, but that was not anything definite.

Q: Dr. Meyer was the - He was the head...

A: Chief, yea.

Q: Tell me about your friendship with him.

A: Well, he was the one friend that really would have liked to keep me there if he could have -

if he had been able to who. He was a real good Swiss citizen who was - well - connected to the various military people in Switzerland, and he was just as helpful to me as he could be. He, as a matter of... He was... He had to report. He had to make an annual report of the hospital. And the first year I was there I worked on that report and completed it. And then after the Swiss insisted I leave in 37, he had me come back in 38 while I was still in France to make up the next year's - the annual report for the following year - just to help me out and get me a little extra money. And this was a remarkably fine, fine man, and his wife equally generous and good hearted. They would have done anything possible that they could have done to help me. But they too, of course, were limited in their ability to do things. And after the war we renewed our contact and we visited with them in Switzerland several times after I got settled and was able to afford a trip to Europe which we first did in 1962 - the first time I could manage to get away and take my wife over to Switzerland. And so this has been a very close friendship. They both have died since then, but I'm still in contact with the son of this Dr. Meyer who is a lawyer in Zurich. He has been visiting with us and - in Maine at the time - and we visited at their house. He still feels very close, though he is thirty years younger than I am, but we are a very close friendship still and he calls from time to time. He doesn't like to write letters so he calls from Switzerland. So it's quite remarkable. And one of the nice things that - when they visited us in Maine - was that they came on a Friday and on a Friday night I said to him, "Well, you have to bear with us. We have special things we say or sing on a Friday night to celebrate the Sabbath." So he says, "Well I don't know much about it but my wife does." She is a Swiss schoolteacher and she spent two years in Israel on a kibbutz and she knew more Jewish songs than I did. And so they had a great time celebrating the Friday night with us. That was a particularly heartwarming experience. So like everywheres else you find good people, and some that are not quite as good, but it's heartwarming to have this friendship.

Q: Thank you. I think I've asked you everything that I think is important. Can you think of anything that I have left out?

A: Well, the.... My experience in the States was also very wonderful. When I started out I - being totally alone of course - I only had two old schoolmates of mine I had contact with and who helped me out; one of whom was a dentist who took me in and I slept in his back room in his office for the first few months in New York in the - during the hottest months of the year of course - on the bottom of one of those 50 story buildings. But that was a big help even at that. And I use to get by on about $.55 a day of food with horn(ph) for breakfast and lunch, and rolls and bananas for supper. It was very inexpensive in those days. And till I got my first job - when I was in Paris I had also spent some of the time in hospitals so I would at least learn something and maybe get some connection. And one of the hospitals in Paris was Hospitale(ph-French) St. Antoinne, and I happened to work in the X-ray Department there. And the Chief of the Radiology at that time had some contact in New York. So after I had worked there for several months - working mean following them around and I wasn't much help I don't think, but I learned something - this Chief of the Radiology Department had a friend in New York. So when I left for the United States he gave me a letter along to this particular friend of his and through him I got my first job as a resident in radiology in New

Rochelle, New York. Unfortunately, the.... It was a strange situation where the Chief of the Radiology Department at the New Rochelle Hospital had as his associate his wife and it was not a very healthy situation. There was a lot of friction there. And I managed to stay there for six months, but after that, that just was a difficult - so difficult - the first and only time I gave up and left there. But as it happens, there's another one of those many coincidences that I have to be thankful for. I found out through a friend I had met in Switzerland that a hospital in Boston was looking for a resident - a similar situation where a young man had run away because he couldn't stand the responsibility of the work, or the situation, and also about an eighty bed hospital for chronic diseases. And so I heard that this hospital needed somebody. Because that was ... Because in those days, in 1939, - 38, 39 there was a surplus of doctors everywhere. Nobody needed doctors. People didn't go to annual checkups. People didn't see a doctor unless they absolutely had to and they were very sick. And doctors couldn't do too much in those days. There were no antibiotics and medications were few and far between. And so it was very difficult to get any hospital appointment, particularly, as I said, there was a surplus and nobody wanted a foreign graduate - a refugee. They didn't need them in most instances and they would try anything to get somebody else - an American graduate, rather than to take in a refugee. So it was very difficult to get any job. So anyway, I did find out about this opening in Boston and a friend took me up by car. They happened to make a trip anyway from New York to Boston. And so the hospital - well, they played a little hard to get at first, but they finally gave me the job which was the first one when I earned $100 a month, which was a lot of money in those days. And I stayed there for two years. And during that time I was again looking for an opportunity to practice - to start a private practice because I couldn't stay in a hospital forever. It was always very protective, but it wasn't - you couldn't earn a real living that way - or support a family. So anyway I stayed there for two years and then looked for a place to practice and Boston was hopeless like any other city - any big city. Everybody wanted to be in the big city then already. And unless you had enough money to support yourself for two years, you just couldn't even start. Doctors were a poor credit risk. No bank would give you a loan. So unless you had somebody with money or relatives or family, or good connections, you just couldn't think of starting, particularly around a big city. So I did talk to some of the people in Boston that Tufts Medical School - was in those days New England Medical Center. And they said, "Well if we hear of something we'll let you know, but in the Boston area there is no place that needs a doctor. There's just no chance." And the hospitals wouldn't, as a foreign graduate, they wouldn't - weren't too anxious to give you hospital appointments either, even as a visiting or attending physician of course. So it was a very difficult time. And as I said, the need of doctors was minimal. People didn't go for their routine checkups. They didn't need doctors that much and there was no army or navy medical corps that needed help. The Veterans Administration Hospital didn't exist in those days, so the number of doctors that were needed was quite limited - was totally different before the war, and there was a total change after the war, when suddenly there was a shortage. So finally they called me one day and said, "Well there's a place in Maine that needs a doctor. I had no idea where it was or what it was. So anyway I said, "Sure. I'll go and see what the situation is." And since I only wanted to go into practice anyway I was able to buy a 1936 Dodge for $300. That was a big car. It was one of those oil burners. We had to stop every hundred miles to fill up the oil... and drove up to Maine. And there was a town on

the Canadian border of 900 people. And so I drove up there and, sure enough, they needed a doctor badly. There [were] two people that hadn't seen a doctor in several weeks. The doctor that they had had left for the army because that was... end of 1940... and he was very happy to find an excuse to leave there. It was a town of 900 - mostly lumberjacks. And all said, "Sure you can come. We would love to have you. We need a doctor badly. You can rent a house for $20 a month. All you have to do is cut your own wood to heat it." And they said, "Well there's an orphanage here with 300 children. You can take out all the tonsils you want." I said, "Well that's too bad. That's not my line."... Internal medicine, but not in - not in the business of taking out tonsils. Well, they says, "You can do physicals for the Immigration Service. You get $5 for each physical, for every Canadian that comes across the border and wants to work in Maine has to have a physical." So... well.... It wasn't too tempting and I said, "Well, it's too bad I have a New York license, I have a Massachusetts license, but I don't have a Maine license. So I would like to accept your offer but I don't think I can take it." He said, "Well you go down to Lewiston, Maine. They'll fix it up for you. They'll get you a temporary license so you can come up here." Well, I went to Lewiston and, fortunately, they couldn't get me a license. They had to take a state board first. But while they were talking to me they said, "How would you like to stay here for a few months as an intern," after I have been a resident for two years, "and you have a better chance to pass your state boards if you work right in the state. You can hopefully do better that way." And there was no pay. Interns did not get paid in those days - absolutely nothing. They got room and board and uniform. That was it. So I said, well, it was a very very nice hospital. I was very much impressed by it and it was a town of 60,000. I figured, well if I get acquainted, maybe that would be a good place to settle. So I accepted and for six months I worked as an intern again, and took my state board in the meantime - in the middle of a horrible blizzard - but managed to squeeze by. And so when I finished the six months then as an intern, that was 41, and they offered me to stay as a resident, which again was paid $100 a month which was from nothing quite a bit of money. So I accepted and that was July of 41. And in December, war started - Pearl Harbor - in December of 41 and quite a few of the doctors left, went in the service, and so the hospital was very short handed. And so I stayed at the hospital of course, and in those days the draft also started and not being a citizen at this point, I would have been drafted as a private. So the hospital declared me essential. That got you out of the draft. And I stayed at the hospital until 44 when I got my citizenship. And then I applied for a commission in the service and then I entered the service here in Washington in August of 1944 - another one of those hot months that I remember vividly. And I stayed most of my time I spent in Alaska. Handed me a hundred bed hospital to turn into a tuberculosis sanitarium. So that's where a spent the war years - 40, 46. And then before I left Maine they offered me an appointment as an attending at the hospital. So naturally I went back and 48 years later I finally retired. But I certainly had a wonderful time there working with the people in Maine and taking care of the Maine people - delightful. So I... Then I have to tell you how I met my wife. That of course is another coincidence. When I was in Switzerland old friends of mine had been able to get out of Germany and settled in Basel, Switzerland. And they're the ones who had arranged for me to have the thousand British Pounds in the bank account, which unfortunately didn't work. But I always use to visit them on my day off. In those days you worked and had the one weekend off. And when Gerda was liberated from Theresienstadt where she had spent

two years, she lived in Lucerne, which was not very far from Basel(ph). And somehow or other she met these friends of mine who had been trying for years to get me married off somewheres. And when they met Gerda they said, "There's a wife for him." Sure enough, after the war in 46 when I got out of the service I went to New York - had some friends there - and visited for the holidays. And these people from Basel(ph) had also come to the United States. They left Switzerland finally. So there we were - these schoolmates of mine from Frankfurt via Switzerland and Gerda came over the same time to visit them. So that's how we met. That was still the benefit of our Swiss stay. So that was the good part of the story. So I met her in September of 46 and we got married in December of 46, and lived in Maine until I retired in 1992. So that was a happy ending of the story. But as I said, I was fortunate for myself but I was never able to do anything for my family and that was the only sad part.

Q: Thank you. I would like to tape some things from your envelope.

A: Start? This is my old friend David Frankfurter who studied medicine in Frankfurt for three years and then went to Berne, Switzerland where I met him again when I came there in 1936 after I finished medical school. And he seemed to be doing quite well although he had been quite sickly at times with osteomyelitis which was not treatable in those days. And he seemed to be quite himself until one day when he disappeared and turned out to have killed a Nazi organizer in Switzerland - the Nazi organizer who was trying to establish a Nazi Party in Switzerland.

Q: Okay. Let me just switch this. Maybe we'll have to @reframe a little bit.

A: This was a fellow by the name of Gustov(ph) who went to Davos originally, apparently to treat his tuberculosis and stayed there, and then got himself a job as an organizer for the Nazi Party, and was actually not that well known, but somehow or other Frankfurter had heard about him and determined - was determined to do something to help the Swiss Jewish population by eliminating him. And indeed he did a great service to the Swiss by taking care of this man.

Q: Can you just get a closeup of the name plate below the photograph?

Q: You want to kind of move on it, or just...

Q: No. It's mostly that it's a good thing. You know these are a historical record which helps them check spelling and everything. And then let's just do... When was that murder?

A: That was in February, 1936.

Q: February 4. Okay.

A: This is the price list for a visa to Cuba. This was one of the less expensive visas you could possibly obtain. Argentina was in the thousands of dollars. Brazil was a little less. But Cuba was the only one that was in the hundreds of dollars - only.

Q: So you could get to Cuba... You could buy the visa for $400 to get to Cuba.

A: Yeah. This document was the final decision of the Swiss authorities that I had to leave after a certain date when I was no longer needed at the hospital in Soffingen(ph), and they decided that they would give me enough time to find another country to go to where I might possibly establish residence... but not being specific in any suggestion otherwise. This is the actual certificate which supposedly would have entitled me to practice medicine after graduating from medical school and passing the state board examination. But the fact was that soon after 1935 there was already a very definite decree that no Jewish doctor could be allowed to treat any Aryan at any time. This was the certificate I received after finishing medical school and having passed the state board examination, but it was quite obvious at that time, already, that the law would be that no Jewish physician would be allowed to treat any Aryan at any time, and it was an open invitation to leave the country as soon as possible.

Q: Let's do a close.... Let's just zoom into the date there so we get a... or just to that line so there would be a cutting point and then we could use other.... And let's hold on the date. That's good. Great. Thanks.

A: Didn't need it any more.

Q: Tell us about the envelope.

A: This is the official envelope in which my Notice of Departure was sent to me and the very interesting part is that all official Swiss documents included in this envelope are printed in three different languages - German, French and Italian - which makes it remarkable to have these three groups live together in peace and harmony.

End of Tape #2
Conclusion of Interview