

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Firstname Lastname**  
**January 19, 1999**  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Fred Deutsch, conducted on January 19, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview 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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**Interview with Fred Deutsch**  
**January 19, 1999**

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: -- sure everything's working here. Mr. Deutsch, could I just have you say a few words, so that we make sure that we're recording here?

Answer: Okay, it's -- it's nice meeting you and finally be able to talk about the second part of my life and hope that it will make sense.

Q: Well, first of all, I wanted to go back and ask you a couple of factual questions. Th-Th-The names of your mother and your father and your sister and your grandparents.

A: Okay, my father's name is Dr. Bruno Deutsch. My mother's name is Eleishka Deutschova, born Hoobervar. My sister's name is Zoozanar Holobecova, maiden name Brunova. She is sister from my mother's first marriage. And my grandparents, was it?

Q: Correct.

A: From my mother's side is Dr. Adolf Hooper, grandmother Paula Hooberva, born Klepfnacherva. From my father's side, my grandfather's name was Samuel Deutsch and my grandmother's was Jenny Deutschova, born Meyerva.

Q: Okay, thank you. One of the things you mentioned in the video interview was that your grandfather had some poison that you were to have used if things got really unbearable.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: When did you find out about the fact that he had this poison and what were the circumstances?

A: I do not exactly remember when the subject was brought up. I simply do not remember. It -- It, in all likelihood was mentioned casually.

Q: But it -- it -- it re -- it came up while you were on the run -- while you were --

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Uh-huh. It wasn't later, when --

A: No, it was -- it was -- it was while we were on the run.

Q: Do you remember your reaction to finding out about that?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: Another thing having to do with the video was your time in the Catholic orphanage.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you had said that you weren't really aware of religion at that age, but there were a lot of different experiences with religion, that you had. You had the Catholic orphanage, you-your own religion. Were you aware of -- of your place in any of this?

A: I do not think that I was bothered by it, because during the war, I was about a half a year or eight months, hidden under assumed name in -- in the parish of a Lutheran minister, so that somehow I was used to Christianity, as far as that goes. But, when I was deposited in that orphanage, it was already after liberation -- very shortly after liberation. And my parents made it clear to me that I will be there only a very short time and I can only assume that the nuns were instructed that I'm there only temporarily, for a couple days or weeks. So they have not tried to impose any of their influence upon me. It was like -- like, if you will, to -- to -- to be deposited in a day care center, if you wish. There was one fellow I befriended there, during those few days. He used to -- he spend there a whole war. He was Jewish, but he was not circumcised, so there

was apparently no way t -- of proving that he was Jewish. But that -- that didn't have any lasting influence upon me.

Q: When the war ended, you were 13. You were in this orphanage?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And since the video interview stopped at that point --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- perhaps we could pick up the chronology and -- and --

A: Okay.

Q: -- talk about that period as the war ended and what was going on in your life.

A: Okay. After some very short time in the orphanage, one of my relatives -- and I don't remember exactly whether it was my sister or my parents, came to pick me up and we came back to Ungarrishbrote or Uerskibrote, the town from which we fled in 1942, to Slovakia. If I remember correctly, in those -- in that period that I was in the orphanage, my parents succeeded having our house returned to us. Because, during the war, our house was occupied by Christians, who were not very pleased, apparently, to vacate the house after the war. Because majority Christians who found themselves into those situations, assumed that the Jews have perished. That they will be able to stay there forever. So, we returned to our own house. I remember, after few days or weeks, I joined the Boy Scouts. I had got -- got a nasty infection on my foot and had to be operated on and had to be transported for the operation to Ungarishradish or Werskaradishka, which had a hospital. And the only doctor in Ungarishbrote who was available, said that because the war has ended such a short while earlier, they didn't had any ether -- anesthesia, to put me to sleep. So I had to go to Ungarishradish for operation. I stayed there a couple of days. My father, in the meantime, traveled throughout the Czechoslovakia. Mainly --

his dental office was confiscated by the Nazis. And the provisional Czech government wanted to return it to him, but of course, the original equipment, God knows where it disappeared. So, the government has said that they will give him a dental equipment left by fleeing Germans. So he can choose any dental office that he wants to, with one condition, that the office will stay in that city in which it is. And the Czech government promised to find for us an apartment in that city. So, from what I understand, my father looked over about five or six dental offices and has selected one in the city of Zenime or Zenoimal, which is about one hour by train away from Vienna, in southern Moravia. And in, I think September of '45, we have moved. Correction, it must have been later. October or November, we have moved to Zenoimal. And while in Uerskibrote, I started getting private tutoring lessons, because I was still at a compulsory school age. And the debate was with the school board, whether I should be admitted to a class according to my chronological age or placed in a class according to my academic knowledge. And until that issue was resolved -- because the local school board didn't had any instructions how to proceed. So, in the meantime, I was having a private tutor, so I think that during the summer of '45, I was spending it with a tutor. And in September, I started school. In the meantime, the ruling was that I had to attend classes according to my chronological age. So, of course, I was -- I was totally unprepared, after four years -- five years being out of school. So I -- I always had very poor grades as a result. And then my father selected the dental office in Zenoimal, so we have moved to Zenoimal. I remember the travel throughout the Czech Republic by train was an ordeal, because th-the cars were not only filthy and dirty, but all the windows were broken. And it was -- the trains were running, God knows how. So Zenoimal -- the city of Zenoimal, I think at that time, it -- it must have had a population of about 20,000, was heavily scarred from Germans fleeing to Austria. There were several burn out tanks left over in the city. A great part of the city

was in ruins. And almost all the windows in Zenoimal were broken, because allies were bombing Vienna. And Vienna Noiseshtatel, which had apparently German ammunition factories, and from the vibration of the bombs, the glass of the windows simply broke. So, then I stayed in Zenoimal, I think til about 1947. Yes, in May of 1947, I finished my compulsory educational requirements, which at that time, were nine grades. I did not qualify for high school, simply because of academic deficiencies. And the fact that I was Jewish and suffered from a lack of education was not taken into account. And in 1947, the problem was asked, okay, what do I do now? The city of 20,000 people did not have many opportunities for young people. There were a couple openings in various trades. In the Czech economy at that time, usually somebody who selected a trade went into apprenticeship status for next three years. So, there were openings if you wanted to become a barber or a painter or a sales clerk. All those trades are -- required three years apprenticeship. But somehow it came to my attention that a textile factory was looking for apprenticeship connected with bort and learning classes. So, the whole picture came -- began to look like a two year long apprenticeship, with half a day of practical work in a textile factory and half a day of classroom work. I succeeded, with my father's help, to enter the program and left home to a small village in which there was a textile factory. I-It used to be owned by Jews. And I started as an apprentice in -- in that factory and I believe that the program was the first year. We were to rotate in the textile factory, from department to department and the second year you should have selected a department, which would become your specialty. So I finished the first year, but even during the first year, I still had physical problems, because I was extremely weak as a result of the war. Furthermore, I never felt quite home, because I was the only Jewish apprentice in our class of about 60. So I was sort of a curiosity. And I finished, I think, first half of the second year, when my parents suggested that -- by that time, it was 1948. The

Communists already took over the government of Czechoslovakia when my parents came to me with the question whether I would be willing to emigrate to Israel. Do you have any --

Q: Yes, that's a good point to go back and -- and ask you questions about that period. Did -- Did you feel, because you were behind in your schooling, did -- did that make you feel -- a-and your experience was different from others in the village, I -- I assume, so wh -- did you feel alienated or -- or set apart from -- from your -- your classmates?

A: I -- I do not think that I felt alienated from my classmates, maybe because all of them were on the nine year track, rather than on the 12 year track. And simply, they were too young to have had first hand experience with the Nazis or Jews, because they grew up under normal conditions, with the exception of -- of -- of the war years. But in Zenoimal, a great percentage of the students in the nine -- in -- in -- in the lower grades, commuted from neighboring villages. And they were sons of farmers, who basically didn't feel the war in the same fashion like people who were living in the cities. Because in the -- in the outlying areas, you know, the Nazis didn't had such a tight control like over the population of -- of -- of larger cities.

Q: Mm-hm. Who were most of -- who were your friends? Did you make close friend during that period?

A: I made some friends, simply because -- I got to tell you something, I was not tremendously interested in catching up with my academic deficiencies, simply because I didn't had a -- a specific goal in mind. While I was going to school in Zenoimal, it never occurred to me, "Gosh, in -- in a year or two I will be finished, what do I do then?" It -- It never occurred to me. I -- during the war, because of my being locked up always in -- in rooms, I had tremendous energy, which first had to be satisfied. And, as a result, I played soccer. I was very good at soccer. Although, because of my physical -- being physically weak, I didn't -- I wasn't able to run for a



long time. But still, I was a very good soccer player in my own group of youngsters. So, most of the time, I tried to catch up on the physical activities, which I missed during the war, rather than on the emotional side. The physical deficiencies came to me more naturally than the academic development.

Q: What were some of the physical ailments? You said you were weak --

A: I had, several times, very bad ear infection. You see, in those days, although penicillin was all ready -- after the war, was already invented, but it was question of availability. So that was -- that was problem number one. Then, when, during your formative years, you are continuously locked up, your body does not get the opportunity to develop physically. And consequently, I -- I was weak, physically and undernourished. So all that, first of all, I had to catch up with. I don't know what I ever caught up. Basically, I will tell you something, I think that I caught up with most of the deficiencies, but I was always out of sync.

Q: Did you talk with your -- your mates and -- and your schoolmates and friends about your experience during the Holocaust -- during the war?

A: No. Nobody was particularly interested in it. At one time one of my teachers suggested that I write a book. But, you know, coming to a 13 year old boy with a task, why don't you write a book about your experiences, didn't -- didn't sit with me quite, quite well. I didn't see any purpose for it, you know. Because it's -- it's completely different than looking at it in hindsight, 50 years, you know.

Q: You would think that s -- that some of your friends would -- would be curious or -- or perhaps you would be wanting to tell them because there was an adventure about -- I mean, there was partly an adventure. I mean it ma-may not have felt that way to you, but if I were a classmate and

I had a friend who'd -- who had done what you did during the war, I might be curious about hearing -- hearing about it.

A: I don't think -- I don't think that the issue was ever -- ever raised. You know, okay, I'm -- I'm -- you are right, had it happened now. But don't forget, you have to project yourself to those days. Czechoslovakia, for example, looking in hindsight, had only small number of newspapers that were all published in the capital city of Prague. I don't remember ever seeing a local newspaper. Television didn't exist. Radio -- those people who could afford a radio, Czechoslovakia had only two or three radio stations which had three or four times a day news, the news were mostly of international nature. So that news penetrated very, very slowly at -- int - - to the population. Usually news that was of local importance appeared on a bulletin board. Every city had, on -- in the major streets, had big bulletin boards, where some officials used to paste announcements. But otherwise, you simply didn't know what is happening, unless you heard it over the radio, or if you knew a foreign language, to listen to Radio Vienna or -- or -- or some adjacent city, listening to the news that way. So that people didn't know exactly, what was happening -- what happened in the past. And I do not think that people were all that curious to find out somebody else's experiences. Maybe -- Maybe -- Maybe people -- don't forget that Christians in -- in those days, after the war, felt guilty. Because the Judaism in -- in -- in -- in -- in Czechoslovakia, the anti-Semitism was more of a religious character. We Jews were not so much despised by the Czechs because we were wealthy or -- or -- or -- or more successful, but whenever the word Jew was thrown into my face, it was always labeled, you Christ killer. So, you know -- and that was after the war against the law.

Q: So, saying that was against the law?

A: Yes, against the Czech law, to point out that -- that expression. There was absolutely nothing forbidding to -- to be very antagonistic toward Gypsies, but the Jews were sheltered, as far as that goes.

Q: Did -- Did you experience any blatant anti-Semitism during those years that you were [indecipherable]

A: After the war.

Q: After the war?

A: To be very honest with you, no. If there was, it was well hidden. It was not -- not -- not obvious to me. Furthermore, I -- I think I was not even looking for it. I have not -- not memory that I have experienced anything of that sort.

Q: Did you have Jewish friends?

A: Zenoimal had very, very small Jewish population. I -- I -- I think that there were about half a dozen Jewish families in -- in all of Zenoimal. No, I don't remember any -- I don't remember nobody my own age bracket. There were a couple Jewish families, but these people very much older. They were more my parents age. And then I was -- I had no particular reason to seek out Jews. I felt very comfortably with Christian friends.

Q: That's a pretty difficult age, adol --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: That's a pretty difficult age, adolescence, for anybody. Given that what you had gone through from ages, what, nine to 13? Was your adolescence -- do you remember it as being a happy time? A -- A difficult time? Or -- Or -- Or fairly normal?

A: I -- I -- I don't -- I cannot recall my feelings, but I didn't see anything extremely difficult in it. It was more of a physical discomfort. And simply I -- I think that we all were resigned to our fate. I did not know of the alternatives. Somehow it was made clear to me that complaining will not help, that we simply have to wait out end of the war. And I recognized that fact and tried to make -- not fight it.

Q: What was your relationship with your parents during the period from the end of the war to the time you went to Israel?

A: That was -- that was a little bit strange. My father and my mother had frequent fights, but I never knew exactly the nature of the fights, because they were all done in my absence. You know, children, if they're left out -- whenever something very serious took place, the children were sent out of the room, or parents waited for the children, while they were in school or outside, to -- to settle their differences. So there was a tension between my parents, but the tension was also caused, to a great deal, by my sister, who was no longer living with us. She was eight years older than I and she was trying to find her own way, recognizing that the city of Znojmo does not have many opportunities to offer her. Furthermore, she was already marriage age, so she was living in -- in Prague and later on in Brno, in Brinn, working as a secretary -- stenographer for some firms. So there were also tensions caused because of her. But overall, the time after the war was not -- before I left for Israel, was not entirely smooth. And only later, when I came to Israel, I realized why. But by then, I was already thousands of miles away, not being in the position to influence the situation one way or the other.

Q: And what was it that you realized at that point?

A: Okay. Now, I have to go a little bit back to talk about the last days prior to departure to Israel. I do not know whether, in retrospect -- I have to mention that after leaving for Israel, I have

never seen my parents again. Consequently, I cannot ask them for details of those days. But, my father arranged for me to go to -- to emigrate to Israel with a group of youngsters my age. I have met with part of that group. Neither one of -- of the group was from Zenoimal, they all were dispersed throughout Czechoslovakia, but these individuals were already together a year or two in preparation for pioneering life in Israel. So, I was attached to that group. And that group belonged to a very left oriented political party. It was almost Communism. That -- the group had aimed to emigrate to Israel and supplement membership of a kibbutz -- very left oriented kibbutz. And I felt extremely uncomfortable after arriving in Israel, in that kibbutz type surrounding. Because, I was exposed to the Communist propaganda in 1948 and I was able to realize that the Russians were extremely anti-Semitic. So, I began to realize that I fled Communism of Czechoslovakia, just to come into a different form of Communism in Israel. But it -- it -- it was not initiated in my mind by -- so much by politics, but by various actions of that group, to which I supposedly had to conform to their way of life. For example, all the personal clothes -- clothing were taken away. They were all arranged in a group type -- communal type bank. You got clothing, two sets a week, depending on your size. You didn't know whose clothing you are wearing. Meals were given in a mess hall. Every morning you have to look at your schedule where you were attached to work that day. So I became extremely bitter, fleeing from Communism in Czechoslovakia, facing myself with Israeli Communism, although it was that kibbutz. Furthermore, no money. We were -- the kibbutz was quite a few miles from any village. Everything you needed, you had to go to the group leader and ask for it. Everything was allocated to you. Toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving cream, shaving blades, shoelaces, everything was rationed. You were permitted to write one letter a month. It was -- that group gave you the postage stamp. So it was extremely regimented type of life, which -- which didn't sit with me.

But I'm not quite certain, my father signed some documents, which legally obligated me to that group. But I think -- yes, I exited Czechoslovakia on 10th of April, '49. It was a -- one of the last transports of Jews that was permitted to exit Czechoslovakia. There were about thousand of us. By train we rode from Prague to Italy. At that time was in existence, international refugee organization, was I think United Nations sponsored. And we ended up in a transition camp in Trane, in Italy, which is not far away from that port, Barre, in Italy. And there we waited for ship to take us to Israel. We spent some two weeks in that camp because April '49 was Passover and the Israeli ship didn't wanted to sail during Passover holiday. So when we came to Israel -- yes, I mentioned, we left 10th of April Prague, we arrived in Israel, 26th of April, '49 in Haifa. From there we went to transition camp, which again went against my grain because it had a fence -- concertina fence, with guards. We were sprayed heavily, DDT and each time you wanted to exit the camp, you had to clear it with the guards at the gate. And after several days in the camp, trucks came pick us -- pick -- pick us up and we were driven to the kibbutz, where all these events took place. So, in the kibbutz, I think we worked about three days a week and two days a week we learned Hebrew and geography of Israel. That was still in '49 -- in April '49, when we arrived. It was not quite a year since establishment of state of Israel, which I think came into existence in my -- May of '48. But then, the war with Arab nations took place, so I came to Israel just shortly after the cease fire with the Arab nations was signed. So there was still great deal of uncertainty whether it will not flair up once again. Do you have any questions up to that point?

Q: No, you were leading up to the story about your parents.

A: Mm.

Q: And that you'd found out that something about them --

A: Okay. May I -- I will -- I will come to it little bit later?

Q: Sure.

A: But I would like to skip it for the time being. In -- I came to the kibbutz, I think, in about -- taking the refugee camp into -- I think in May of '49, we finally came to the kibbutz. And in November of '49, I quit. I simply had -- I had enough of it. I had some very distant relatives living in Haifa, so with their permission, I got room and board in their household. And from November of '49, to July of '50, I lived with them and worked on various odd jobs. In a factory for mirrors, in a factory for -- that was making plastic buttons for furniture. Until, in July of '50, I was drafted into the service. I ended up with agricultural unit which had na -- an acronym, Nuchile, nor koletseem luchem, and went to basic training in Jerusalem for three months. And after the basic training, we ended up -- again we were divided into groups and my group was put for a training of about six months in a different form of a kibbutz, called Moshaf. There we were to learn that particular trade -- that agricultural line and after the six months of training, we were to -- as a group of military personnel, we were to settle on the border with Jordan and build a village, an agricultural establishment. For that reason, we were discharged from uniform military, but had to stay for the duration of ma -- our military obligation in that village, under paramilitary rules. Leaving that village prior to expiration of the military obligation would have meant that you would have been drafted and put back into uniform. So, with various finagling, I was able to leave that village temporarily, because the village was unable to support all of us. So some -- some of us had to go and seek outside employment. And I found a job with a Israeli corporation that was laying a pipeline from Tel Aviv to the Negev desert. And part of my pay, I was sending to my village, not so much to support them economically, but to show good faith that I still am in touch with them.

Q: And this -- the village in Israel?

A: In Israel. And that labor camp that was laying that pipeline, was on the edge of the desert Negev, about two hours by car from Tel Aviv. And that village that I was obligated to, was on the border of Jordan and Israel, where this was deeper, in the southern part of Israel. And in the labor camp -- it was a regular labor camp with the barracks made of wood. Every morning you exit to work on the pipeline and in the evening you return. There was a mess hall. You were paid regularly -- a regular salary according to classification of your particular work. And there I stayed for about a year, I think. In the meantime -- now I began to realize what was happening back in Czechoslovakia. A radio announced the trials took place -- I don't know whether you are familiar with that, in -- in the 50's, quite few ministers of the Czech Republic were sentence to be hanged. You know, these were out of made -- made up trials, accusing them of being spies for the US And Stalin was simply out of his mind by -- by -- the Communist regime was very, very tight in Czechoslovakia. Then one day, I received letter that my mother committed suicide, and now I have to go back again. Some place and some times, during the war, when we were hiding in the mountains, in the bunker, two fellows, young fellows, came to the bunker and I don't know until this day how did they found us, suggesting that we should return, that they actually will help us across the border, back to Protectorat. Because Protectorat, by that time, was cleared of Jews. And if we will be in hiding in Protectorat, the Germans will have no reason to look for us, because all the Jews were already sent to concentration camps. So I don't know the fine points, where we were to hide on the other side, but they were guiding us from the bunker, across the border, back to Protectorat, when we were to rest in a tourist resort, which was exactly on the border. And as we approached the tourist resort, subtly we heard barking of dogs. And that usually was a bad sign. So these two guys told us to wait, that they will go and take a look



why the dogs are barking and they simply never came back. So, we returned to the bunker. And now events took place as I said before, normal. We waited out the war without knowing what happened to these two guys. After the war, we were called as witnesses to court. These two boys were supposedly caught in that resort by the Germans and forced to collaborate. I don't know exactly what that meant -- these were young fellows, in -- in their early 20's -- what was actually meant by collaborations, but in the early years, after the war, there were criminal cases by the hundreds, throughout the whole Czechoslovakia, against various collaborators with the Nazis. That took place long before the Communists took over Czech Republic. And we were called with -- to be -- be witnesses on behalf of these two fellows. And I do not remember exactly what sentence did these two boys got or whether they were liberated. Unfortunately that did not end there. In 1948, while I was in the textile school, I started having feeling that not everything is okay at home, but I was unable to put my finger on it. Namely, every month, I came for a weekend home and my mother was always in tears and my father was furri -- furious. And I didn't know whether these were -- whether they had differences as man and wife or what -- what -- what was nature of their conflict. So, sometimes -- and I don't know exactly what time period, was I able to begin to put things together. I suspect that the first time I got some form of picture in 1965, when I visited Czechoslovakia back for the first time. The following thing has developed. These two boys joined a -- became member of a club, American - Czechoslovak friendship. And when Communists took over Czechoslovakia, they began to arrest all the members of this club. And the two fellows approached my mother, because we lived so near Austrian border, whether she can help them to escape to Austria. And it was a whole group of Czech patriots in Zenoimal, who were involved in helping to escape -- various people. There was custom officials involved in it. Postal officials involved in it. They smuggled people on trucks

that went across the border to de-de-deliver packages. So people were hiding behind the packages. But nevertheless, the Secret Police got wind of it and arrested the whole group of people, including my mother, and put them on trial. And I still have at home, documents of the trial, the whole protocol. I do not remember when -- how long the trial took place -- for how long, but my mother was freed, simply because she claimed that she wanted to -- to repay the boys their goodness that they helped us to -- tried to help us during the war. She was freed. But the Secret Czech Police tried to convert my mother into a snitch to spy on others. My mother was imprisoned for about half a year. And in 1952 or '53, out of desperation, she jumped out of the window of the police station. And that -- what I got in a letter notice while I was in that labor camp in Israel, building the pipeline, I got a letter from my sister. So, as time went by, bits and piece of -- of the pieces began to -- to make sense what was happening. And even though my parents send me to Israel, they promised that they will join me in the next transport. And looking at it back now, I think there are two versions -- two possibilities. The Czech government began to realize that it is letting too many medical doctors out of Czechoslovakia and they are weakening their own economy. So they stopped issuing emigration permits to medical doctors. That is one possibility. The other possibility is that my mother was already heavily investigated by the secret police and they did not wanted to let my parents exit. Which of the two forms is correct, I do not know.

Q: You've had to piece this story together yourself, really?

A: Yes, yes, yes. My sister didn't wanted to help me much, because apparently it was too horrible for her to repeat it. But my sister was living nearby and she must have witnessed every step of it.

Q: Did you have any contact with your father or did you speak with your father or -- or correspond after you --

A: Just correspondence. But don't forget that my father died in about 1962. My mother died in '53. Their letters were heavily censored. Every letter that left for western country was very heavily censored, so that you were absolutely in no position to -- to get clear answer.

Q: Wh-What is the effect of the news of your mother's suicide on you, in Israel?

A: It was devastating, it was horrible. For short while I started blaming my father, not knowing the details. I thought that she committed suicide because of some -- some family disputes. So I had ab --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: Wh-What is the effect of the news of your mother's suicide on you, in Israel?

A: It was devastating, it was horrible. For short while I started blaming my father, not knowing the details. I thought that she committed suicide because of some -- some family disputes. So I had absolutely no evidence as to the true nature of what was happening. So, for long time, I was angry at my father. But slowly, slowly, the picture began to clear itself up.

Q: I -- I read, I believe, the transcripts of your video interview, that -- that you believed the -- the rape of your mother during hiding had something to do with -- might have had something to do with it. Is that -- is that not correct?

A: I -- I don't think that that -- because that -- her -- her suicide took place nine years later.

Q: Mm-hm. There -- there was a trial -- the men who raped your mother were put on trial, is that correct?

A: Not the man himself, but the commandant of that unit.

Q: And were you present for that?

A: No, no, no, no. Apparently, there was enough -- the evidence -- and I came across his name not long ago, here, in the museum. That -- that trial had such heavy evidence against him for so many other things, that this was not needed. Although it would have been pleasure, maybe, to be present at the trial.

Q: Where was the trial, and what year?

A: The trial was in Bratislava. He was Slovak. The trial, I think, was in 1946. Again, it was one of hundreds and hundreds of trials.

Q: And what became of this man?

A: I think that he got the rope. So, you know, being very cynical, everybody can die only once. So -- but I -- I know I was shaken up by my mother's suicide. But, then the trials were taking place, you know, for the government in -- in Czechoslovakia and friend of mine who -- with whom I was sharing room in that labor camp, Puthier Margolias, his uncle was -- also got the rope. So we shared our misfortune with each other.

Q: You're not aware of what happened to the man under this commander who -- who was executed? The -- The man who actually committed the rape?

A: No, no, no, no. No, I don't know. I don't know.

Q: There were farmers who helped you out --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- during your hi -- period in hiding, and a Lutheran minister?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did you ever go back and find out what happened to them, or talk to them?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q: Is that later in the story, when you returned, or is this during?

A: No, no, it just about a year ago, I wrote about -- and it came in a very interesting fashion, back. I wrote about my experiences in a magazine called Phoenix, which was dealing with these issues and apparently somebody has read my story and he and his wife went for a visit to Czechoslovakia and spent part of their time to retracing my experiences. And they also published their experiences in the same magazine. When I came, in '65, to Czechoslovakia back, for the first time, I was told by my sister -- I asked about that minister, and my sister was not quite sure what has happened to him, except knowing that he has spent some time in jail. But, my first visit in Czechoslovakia was only two weeks long and I simply did not have enough time, nor I didn't

know just what can I do under the Communist regime and what can I not? Because I came from US, which was their biggest enemy and every time you went to a city, you had to report with the local police station, who registered. And when you exited, you had again to let them know that you are leaving. So, I didn't know exactly what -- what was going on. But this fellow wrote up that the minister was imprisoned by the Communists and freed eventually, after several years, but in such a poor health, that not long thereafter, he died. And I have that article with -- even with his photo, of that minister. You see, there were couple Christians, during our experiences, who actually practiced Christianity. Who didn't just go Sundays to church, who actually practiced Christianity. But there were very few and far in between. And the minister was one of them.

Q: Do you know what became of some of the farmers that helped you out?

A: One of them was executed with his whole family, for hiding us. That was after we were caught, because we didn't report, like we promised, so he was executed with his family. Another farmer, his son was a schoolteacher, who actually supplied me with a false school certificate, giving me an assumed name and assume identity. He was caught by helping partisans, and executed. So, his father's lost two sons. Some of them simply died natural death.

Q: Were you close to those families -- those farm families?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: You spent a lot of time with them?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

Q: Sort of like aunts and uncles, or --

A: Well, they were very close to us, because most of them -- not all of them, but most of them did it in gratitude towards my grandfather, because he was their medical doctor. He was responsible for their well beings.

Q: What -- What happened to your grandparents after the war?

A: We are talking about my maternal grandparents. Well, my -- my paternal grandparents -- my grandmother and my aunt went into concentration camps and perished there. And my maternal grandparents that were with us all the time, returned after the war to their house in Slovakia and simply died of old age.

Q: What was your relationship with them? Did you stay in touch?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. That was a very close relationship, very close relationship. Because it was our grandfather who actually -- due to his profession and due to his contacts, saved our lives.

Q: So you visited with them and spent some time with them?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did you communicate with -- with them and -- when you had gone to Israel?

A: In -- Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. But again, the letters were in a -- in a sort of a cryptic form, not very clear. You had always to read between lines and fictitious names and symbols.

Q: When did you find out about your -- your father's parents, that they had died in the concentration camps?

A: Well, my grandparents -- my grandfather from my father's side, died in 1923. That was long before Hitler. I do not know the circumstances of his death. My grandmother and aunt, they simply have not returned to co -- from concentration camp. I do not know exactly in what form the Czech provisional government notified the relatives of those people who failed to return. I

don't know in what form they did it. But, you assumed that after the war has ended, if you were not contacted within some sensible period of time, that the person simply has died. So I think that it became very -- then, it also became clear to us that my grandmother, when -- when she went to concentration camp was already some 75.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you know which camp she was sent to?

A: Yes, and if -- if you wish, we can look it up in the Theresien book -- in that memorial book. She and her daughter, my aunt, first went to Theresienstadt and then they continued from Theresienstadt. But, the fact that somebody was shipped from Theresienstadt in a transport to a different camp, that does not mean that that person has actually died in that camp. That person may have died while he was transported to the camp. And that, nobody will ever be able to establish the fact that certain people have died already, on the train. Those that went to gas chambers, okay, they're registered in the camp, going to gas chambers. But those that died on the road to the concentration camps, that would never be, probably, established, where exactly, they died.

Q: I wanted to go back to y-your father's decision to have you go to Israel [indecipherable]

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What was the -- the motivation? What was his reason?

A: I do not know. My father, in all likelihood, felt very uncomfortably with the approaching Communist regime. And it didn't take him too long to convince me to leave Czechoslovakia. He sweeten it up by the fact that they will -- he and mother will join me and we'll start life in a free country again. Then, I began to feel pressure in that factory where I was apprentice, in that school, began to feel pressure, Communist pressure to conform. I already began to feel it, even before I left for that trade school, in my soccer club. My soccer team was suddenly required to



come to a Communist school. I don't know how -- how -- they used to call it agitation center. It was sort of a cultural center, in which the Communist events took place. So we were -- if you want to play soccer next Sunday, you have to come Tuesday, wearing a white shirt and a red scarf, to that Communist cultural center and start singing various songs glorifying the labor. If you will not come, you will not play soccer game next Sunday. So that all started to go against my grain. I don't think it was with a full understanding what Communism is, but all that ordering process began to remind me so much of the Nazis. Didn't the Nazis do exactly the same thing to me? Telling me what stores can I visit, what streets can I go to and what am I permitted to do and what not permitted to do? So that began to ring in my -- hey, we are going into another -- another -- another communist -- another Nazi era. But instead of swastikas, this one has a -- has a hammer and sickle.

Q: Well, then you faced the conformity in Israel as well?

A: And then I began to face the same thing again, in Israel was starting to take place. So all of that rang bell, back to the Nazis. And the Communism, whether you are being taught by a Jew or by a Christian, doesn't make any difference. It's the same lady in a different dress.

Q: What was the name of that left leaning group that -- that you went with to Israel?

A: It was a political party called Ma Pum. I do not believe that it exists any more, it simply changed its name today. But it was not Vanegorian, nor Golda Meir. It was Ma Pum. It was a very leftist, Zionist, Communist organization. Marx, Lenin, all nine yards involved, only having a Jewish flavor.

Q: I read somewhere that where you said you were lonely in Israel.

A: That -- That -- because I didn't fit that particular group, I was ostracized. I felt very lonely, at least in the kibbutz. Then, in July of '50, when I joined the military, the army, at least in the

basic training, I f -- began to feel very comfortably. Because these were all fellows my age and the Israeli military, at least in the basic training, in my days, gave me the same feeling like a US soldier must have when he joins the Marine Corps, that you have a family.

Q: And did you feel loyalty toward Israel? Or patriotism toward Israel in -- in being in the army?

A: I do not think that it came so much -- that it was so much question of patriotism toward Israel, because I still kept hoping that my parents will come. But as -- when my mother committed suicide, it became quite clear to me that my father will never leave. I started losing -- I don't think that I had Zionist enthusiasm. Israel, for me, didn't mean much, because I simply didn't had the upbringing or the contacts with that affili -- that kind affiliation. I started looking toward US because I had here an uncle, my father's brother.

Q: When did you begin to think about US?

A: To be honest with you, I already started thinking about it on the ship, while we were sailing from Italy to Israel. I already approach the captain of the ship, asking him how do I emigrate to America and I remember that shocking expression on his face. Here he is, responsible for some ship of 1500 immigrants and people are already asking him how to exit Israel. So he told me, "Young man, you will have to give first Israel lots of sweat and blood before you will be able to exit Israel." But that was my first thought. What, if ever, things will not work out? Because I -- I wanted very badly, family. And I didn't had in Israel, nobody truly close. They -- the closest was in US or in Czechoslovakia.

Q: That's -- it's interesting that you would feel lonely, you know, obviously you were missing your parents, but there were so many other survivors in Israel, that one would think that there might be some common bond. But did -- did you feel that, or did -- and did you talk about your experience much while you were in Israel?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no. You see, this is -- although it is a very logical assumption, but it's completely false. Number one -- it's false for two reasons. Number one, in the first years after liberation, if you will, everybody tried to forget the past. That has not changed, even with people's arrival to Israel. You see, everybody has a different time limit for forgetting. Some forget quickly, some forget never. But, people were not very open and willing to talk about their individual experiences during the war. Secondly, everybody who came to Israel, with the exception of those that ended up in a kibbutz, had to start finding their own living -- making their own living. And that began to -- to take majority of their time and occupation, to -- to try to si -- find some economic way of supporting themselves. So that -- that was reason number two. These were the two most important reasons. And reason number three, that although majority of the Jews of those days that came to Israel were survivors of the Holocaust, but they came from different countries. So, consequently they did not had much in common, culturally, except, you know -- I don't know, it -- it -- it is still -- it still puzzles me even today, you know, the only thing that we do have in common, maybe, is the Bible. But once everybody grows up in -- in different country, under different circumstances, the only thing that we have in common are that we are all human beings, you know? The culture affinity isn't there.

Q: You said in your video interview, one of the reasons why I never liked Israel is because I always felt that the wound of the Holocaust will never heal --

A: Oh yes, oh yes.

Q: -- if you will continuously --

A: Oh, yes.

Q: -- remind -- be reminded of it every day.

A: Yes. You know, the Israeli government tried to -- to establish a bond between the newcomers and the oldtimes and the state of Israel and they did so -- one of their very may -- met -- maybe effective weapons was continuously try to remind us that it was Israel who accepted us after the war. Because the Communists wouldn't let you to emigrate anyplace else, except to Israel. And the Israeli government also, in -- in their propaganda, was preaching that in -- in -- in unity is -- is strength and in division is weakness. So, you know, I don't know. I -- I -- I'm not easily -- I was never easily influenced by -- by that kind of propaganda, because I have experienced it many times before. Maybe I'm -- even today, it takes me awhile to sort things out, but eventually I think I -- I see the light.

Q: The -- The comment about -- your comment about the wound of the Holocaust will never heal if you continuously reminded of it, is sort of in contrast to the other -- th-the famous -- I guess maybe it's Elie Wiesel, you know, where we're doomed to repeat if we -- if we don't remember.

D-Do you see those two in -- in contrast, or are you talking about what was going on in Israel, with -- with the Israeli government constantly reminding you as a way of bonding you together?

A: No, you see, the difference probably, without having been able to analyze it from that angle, I think the basic difference between my bitterness or -- or scars of the Holocaust and Elie W- Wiesel or Wiesel's is a difference i-in our ages. You know, I -- I -- I don't know exactly how old Elie is, whether he is my age or he's older, I don't know. But then, the Holocaust itself does -- didn't affect everybody equally. It -- It depends on your emotional make-up. So that for me, at least, I -- I fear and I am playing back, you know, sometimes in my mind, I am going -- I am doing like the Monday morning quarterback talk. Undoubtedly, had my mother not being involved in that affair, had Czechoslovakia not been raped by the Nazis, then Czechoslovakia -- had not been for the Nazis, Czechoslovakia would not have been Communist in '48, I would

have had probably a normal childhood, like thousands and thousands of people in -- in the US have, who grow up normal lives, you know? Even here, no -- not -- not everybody is liked by everybody, for whatever reason. But if you -- you -- you have freedom to -- to move, you have freedom to -- to select, to do whatever you want. But the Holocaust put on me a label. I still feel the yellow star here.

Q: A-And what goes along with that feeling?

A: Feelings of inferiority. Feelings of second class citizenship. Suspicion.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

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Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: -- feeling?

A: Feelings of inferiority. Feelings of second class citizenship. Suspicion... These probably are the first things that come to my mind. Certain amount of bitterness, specially of having lost time. Because, as I told you initially, I continuously feel I'm out of sync. I am about 15 to 20 years behind in experiences. I'm certainly not fully acclimatized. Language problems, cultural barriers, if you will. I don't feel comfortably in large groups of people. So, you know, these are some of -- some of the residues. But again, as I told you, I don't know exactly to what degree they are a product of the Holocaust.

Q: An-And how much were the -- are the products of just who you are or who you would have been.

A: Correct.

Q: Mm.

A: Correct. I don't know.

Q: Do you spend much time thinking about that, or -- or not?

A: You know, I -- it's interesting how it -- how it -- how it -- how it started. I think that I began to think about it when I started working for the US government, with Affirmative Action. That what triggered the whole blasted thing in my mind.

Q: Can you tell me about that?

A: Well, again, I began to feel categorizing people, bracketing people by nationality, by religion, by color. I again began to feel like I was going back to those blasted Nazis. Didn't -- did -- didn't they do exactly the same thing?

Q: Eve-Even though the motivation was supposedly for --

A: Completely different, but it reminds me so much of it.

Q: What was the job and what -- what year was it?

A: Well, I joined the federal government in 1972 and I began to feel the Affirmative Action for the first time in 1974 or 1975. It may have been called differently in those days, but so many slots have to be allotted to women, so many to minorities, people with Hispanic names. You know, it again started labeling people who have priority over you, to whom you have to sacrifice your progress, because they are disadvantaged. But then I began to ask myself, "Gosh, why are they disadvantaged?" I came here with 10 dollars in my pocket, waiting five years for emigration visa to the US. I started in New York as a shipping clerk. And I started going to night school, first in preparation for GED high school equivalency test, then after passing that, I was going to college at night, paying for it through my own pocket. So I was begging to ask, "Why are those people given all the privileges, where I was not given it?" I never asked for it, didn't want it. It's a free country, you can do whatever you want to. So, I again begin to feel I am cheated by something. I had to work and pay for it and they get it free of charge. On the contrary, they are encouraged to come forward and raise a hand. And I -- I -- I know it's very unfair to make that comparison, but that's exactly how I felt.

Q: Have -- Have those feelings been resolved, or do you still ask that question?

A: They were later on reinforced, when I -- it's a long story, an ugly one, when I was forced to resign from the government. I -- I rej-rejoined it at a lower grade, with a different command. I worked for the Department of Defense. I joined a military district of Washington, where I even got a supervisory -- low supervisory position, but I was supervising black workers. And there it was horrible.

Q: How so?

A: Anti-Semitism. But not the same anti-Semitism. It was just -- just different kind of anti-Semitism. You know, there is economics anti-Semitism and there is religious anti-Semitism.

Q: And what kind was this?

A: This was probably the economic anti-Semitism, connected with envy. That you Jews are born smart. You Jews own all the banks. You Jews have formed some con-conspiratory groups to wipe us out. And in addition to anti-Semitism, it was also intensified by being white. The fact that I have tried to -- to explain to -- to -- to these people that there are many black Jews, too, who eventually feel exactly like the blacks feel here. The black Jews of Israel are also extremely unhappy with their lot.

Q: Did this anti-Semitism that you experienced -- you said this was in the -- in the military?

A: In civil service.

Q: Civil service?

A: Yes.

Q: A-And what was -- what were the -- what were the years, and --

A: That very strong ones, with the -- with the black population, that was from 1988 through 1997.

Q: And did that make it difficult for you to do your job?

A: Oh, yes. Extremely difficult, extremely difficult. Eventually, I -- I resigned my supervisory position. But that didn't -- didn't make it any easier.

Q: Did you say you were forced to resign?

A: Well, I was forced to resign as a civil service, but that may have been -- may have been an anti-Semitic -- may have had a reason, anti-Semitic, but I am not hundred percent sure. Can we take a short break?



Q: Absolutely.

A: Okay.

Q: I was curious about your time in Israel -- just finishing up your time in Israel.

A: Mm?

Q: Cause you had said that you were reminded of the Holocaust every day, or -- or often. How --  
How were you reminded? How was that --

A: Well, it was pointed out th-that Israel was, after all, the only country that was willing to admit us as immigrants. That unless we Jews will stick together, the Holocaust can reoccur once again. And that we Jews are hated every place we go and we have to stick together in a -- in one country and not be dispersed throughout the whole world.

Q: And what was the effect of that message upon you?

A: Frankly speaking, I said baloney. I always felt very comfortably living side by side with people of all religion and all national origins. And I didn't see any reason for living in a pure or elistic type society.

Q: And your -- your plans, even from -- you had said earlier, your -- your boat trip to Israel, where you were looking beyond.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Can you talk about the events that led you to -- to leave Israel and come to America?

A: I do not think that it happened -- the decision probably started already in Czechoslovakia, because I do not believe that my parents truly planned to go to Israel. Later on, it -- it -- it turned that that was the only way out, but the original plan was to join my uncle in New York and my father already, in Czechoslovakia, started learning English and prepare himself for US dental examination for foreign doctors, which he knew that he will eventually have to take. So that the

seeds were already planted in my mind in Czechoslovakia and I started putting them into action in about 1952, I believe. Not knowingly. I was still in the Israeli military. I walked to the emba -- American embassy in Tel Aviv and they asked me several questions and when they discovered that I'm still under military obligation, they told me that they cannot even register me until I am discharged from the army. And about 1953, I came back. I was already di-discharged. They said they cannot register me once again, because US has closed emigration quota for Czechoslovakia, because Czechoslovakia supplies arms to North Korea. And, as you know, at least in those days, emigration quota to US was determined by the country of your birth, not of your si -- current -- present situ -- citizenship. And Czechoslovak quota was very small, furthermore, it was closed. Furthermore, I had no right to any preferential quota. So that I would be asked, if I still was interested, to come back once the closure is lifted. So I came back in '54, when finally I was able to register under a non-preferential quota and it took five years before finally I was called to submit my documents. By that time I have discovered that I don't have a birth certificate, so I have to go to the Czech embassy to apply for birth certificate. Then, I didn't know I had to submit an affidavit of support, which I had to obtain from somebody in the US. So I had to write to my relatives in Czechoslovakia and my grandfather was able to broker -- can you visualize Communist censored letters from Czechoslovakia to US, trying to broker for me a affidavit of support to come to the US? It was very, very delicate operation and through some very distant relatives whom I -- until that point, never met, sent me an affidavit of support and lend me money for passage, because my savings went all for preparation of the papers, because everything had to be translated from Czech to English and from Hebrew into English and the Israelis had to pay some taxes, because -- which I -- I'm not so certain that you know of that fact, that when you emigrate to Israel, the Israeli government, at it's own expense, puts you through a

language course and puts you through that refugee camp. But, for all that the Israeli government pays, from the donation of the American government, the dollars and the Jews that donate money to Israel. So, a certain fixed amount of money is granted for absorption of a single person or a family and so forth and so forth. And that is a open debt which you have. As long as you are staying in Israel, the debt is never called, but once you want to leave Israel, they send you a bill for all that. So I had to pay it back.

Q: How much was that?

A: Today it would be equivalent to about 500 dollars.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But if you are earning about 30 dollars a month, 500 dollars is lots of money.

Q: And you were, at this time in your early 20's?

A: In -- in my -- about middle 20's.

Q: Early to middle 20's?

A: Yes.

Q: What -- What were you doing -- what -- for employment, and --

A: Okay, I was a taxi driver at night -- night time employ taxi driver. I worked for time for a inter-urban taxi company that had the old DeSoto taxis, seven seaters. We competed with the bus service from city to city. Then I worked in the cities as night taxi driver. And shortly before emigration, I finally found a job in a refinery, as a laboratory technician. I was taking a course with the Haifa Institute of Technology, an extension division course for laboratory technicians, so I found a job there.

Q: Did you -- Did you have any other schooling in -- during this time in Israel?

A: In Israel, only those -- the half a year that I was in the kibbutz and apparently got maybe two days a week some lessons in Hebrew, geography and little bit history and language, but no -- no -- nothing else.

Q: Were you involved romantically with anyone? Did you have relationships?

A: I think that I came close to it several times, but none never -- never anything developed to -- to a serious stage. There was -- there was, again, the differences in cultural background, you know? The fact that two people are Jewish doesn't -- doesn't make them automatically see eye to eye. There are that -- the s -- very same differences, like between here, a man and woman, you know, they are no different. Then Israel, in those days, had economic -- tremendous economic difficulties. Apartments were in very short supply. In those days it was almost impossible to rent an apartment in Israel. You had either to buy it, like you buy a co-op here, or a condominium, or you have to put key money. I don't know whether you are ever -- you know, familiar with that concept of key money. Let's say you are renting an apartment. You have to put -- just as an example -- 10,000 dollars as a deposit to the landlord and you pay him a month, 10 dollar rent. The next year, your deposit goes down to -- from 10,000 to 9,000 and your rent goes up to 20 dollars. The third year your key deposit goes down to 800 dollars and you have to pay him 30 dollars a month in rent. When it reaches zero, can you see the see saw? When it reaches zero, you have to start from the beginning. And simply, very few people have the money to put for the key deposit, so that many couples cannot get married.

Q: Was that a -- a difficult time of your life, i-in Israel, those five years waiting for --

A: Yes.

Q: -- the papers to come through?

A: Yes, that was -- that was not so difficult from economic point of view, because taxi drivers, you know, were able to make ends meet. But the problem was that when there came something as more serious decision to be made, a long term commitment, I did not know which way to go, because I have -- had -- had no assurance that I will ever receive visa to US. And even if -- if I did, I never knew when it will come. It was continuously disrupted by my being recalled to reserve duty, to the military. By that time, I had already the rank of corporal in the Israeli army and the higher your rank is, the longer period you serve in the reserve obligations. And they slice your obligation into segments, it's not one unit. It's a week here, two weeks here. And the Israeli economy in those days, even when you worked, they did not reimburse you with salary to -- to the time you had to serve in the military. And you got military pay according to your rank and that was peanuts, because the Israeli military claimed that they are feeding you, they are dressing you, so they give you only couple dollars monthly spending money -- pocket money for cigarettes and razor blades. And in the meantime, if you rented someplace a room, you still had to pay rent for the room after you exit the reserve obligation.

Q: So, it was 1959 when --

A: Yes, yes --

Q: -- you finally got your papers --

A: -- yes, yes --

Q: -- taken care of?

A: -- yes, yes.

Q: Can you tell me about your -- your trip to the United States and what that was like?

A: Okay, the trip -- the trip itself, I don't know why I felt very ambivalent because I knew what I am leaving behind, but I didn't know what I went facing. Israel, in those days -- Lute Airport

didn't accommodate jets. I flew out with a Super Constellation, four engine prop airplane from Tel Aviv -- from Lute, which is not far away from Tel Aviv. Our first stop was Paris. I flew with Air France. In Paris, I stayed about two or three hours and boarded another Super Constellation to New York. And Paris already accommodated jets, so there were about four passengers on the whole Air France jet prop plane to New York. By the way, the jet planes fair was more expensive than the prop. So I slept almost all -- from Paris to New York, it took about 12 hours. Stretched myself across all those three or four seats and slept most of the way. Arriving in New York, it was not Kennedy Airport, but it was Idlewild Airport in those days. I arrived, I think about 4:30 in the morning. The immigration officer was already sleeping behind his desk. I think I was the only immigrant. The airport was deserted. He looked at my papers and say, "You just made it in time." I came three days before my entry visa was to expire. And there were waiting some very distant relatives, for me, at Idlewild Airport, who took me to their apartment in Manhattan. I slept there, I think, for about 10 hours. First time that I was able to eat a decent European type meal and have apples. You know Israel is very, very short on apples, because of the climate. And I went to visit my uncle and aunt, from whom I had a letter waiting for me at the airport, to come to visit them. Do we have any gaps to close?

Q: Well, I don't know whether we talked about this on tape, or whether I asked you on tape, or whether, when we were discussing this earlier, why you had chosen -- why you had decided to come to America?

A: Oh, because of -- because I realized that my family from Czechoslovakia will not join me and the second best -- I wanted family -- was my uncle, my father's brother, who used to be extremely wealthy, in Czechoslovakia. And now I have to digress little bit from this original -- from the story. You see, my family, like many Jewish, central European families, my family was

very large, but dispersed. The dispersion was not caused by Hitler, but it was caused by the break up of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Consequently, people who were born in Vienna or in Budapest, finally -- suddenly found themselves being citizens of a independent, but different country. The monarchy disappeared. And as a result, there was a barrier between us, because they were living in foreign countries. Not only that, but at the time of the break up of the monarchy, I think in 1920 -- around 1920's, US established immigration quotas and there was no longer Austro-Hungarian quota, which never existed anyhow, but everybody who went to come to the US, came according to the quota of the country of which he was a citizen now, in which he was born. So some people had to wait long time, some people didn't had to wait long at all. Some family's entry to the US was actually broken up because the husband was born in a different country than the wife. And my uncle, after the first World War ended, was one of f-four brothers. Leo, who was the oldest one, emigrated to United States in 1913, one step ahead of the police. He was gamble -- he was gambling in cards and horses and apparently signed some IOU's, which he was unable to redeem. So, the Austrian police was after him, and in those days, if you were a crook in Europe, you came to United States, like Al Capone. So, he came to the US. He settled here, but severed contacts with his family, so we didn't know whether he is alive or not. And he lived in New Jersey, in a small town called Morristown, about one hour from New York City. His brother Herbert became extremely wealthy textile mer --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

A: -- became extremely wealthy textile merchant in Brinn -- in Burno, second largest city in Czechoslovakia, dealing with silk. In those days, silk was still in it's pure form imported from China, was very expensive. And he was a multi-millionaire, who every year spend vacation in

Switzerland. And, at the start, when Nazis marched into Czechoslovakia in '38, he found himself in Switzerland, vacationing with his whole family. So, he never went back to Czechoslovakia. He had enough money with him, still, to make him very comfortable, but no longer multi-millionaire. From Switzerland, he went to France and from France to Portugal. Someplace along the road, he obtained entrance visa to US, which later on proved to be false, not valid. In Portugal, he finally -- no, he obtained visa to Canada, which was not fal -- which was false. So, in Portugal, he was able to obtain visa to US and from Portugal he emigrated to New York, where he settled and became partner in a textile store.

Q: This is Herbert --

A: Herbert --

Q: Deutsch? Was this --

A: Deutsch, Herbert Deutsch. He, his wife and his daughter. But his wife, excuse me that expression, was a bitch. She didn't wanted me to US. And every letter that I wrote to him, pertaining to an affidavit of support, she didn't showed him. She threw it into garbage.

Q: Why didn't she want you to come?

A: Because she was afraid that it will cost them money to support me. She was very greedy. She was a very hateful woman. You know, why some people are hateful, she all -- supposedly came from a family that was full of hate, so she was very hateful. Their marriage was very unhappy. In 1955, I think that Herbert has discovered his brother Leon, living 50 miles from him.

[indecipherable]

Q: In Morrisstown?

A: In Morrisstown. But Herbert never forgave to Leon those years of silence and the heartbreak he caused to Jenny -- to his mother, by not letting himself known that he is alive. So that was



Herbert, living in New York, he didn't send me affidavit of support. My grandfather brokered that affidavit of support through a distant branch of the family, who were born in Austria, who went first to Cuba and from Cuba came to the US.

Q: What were your first impressions of -- of New York?

A: I was overwhelmed, simply by it's size, by it's complexity. I was like Alice in Wonderland. I was perplexed, to be very basically honest with you, with American packaging. I bought a shoe polish, I remember and I was lost about how to open the lid of it. That was the first time that I bought milk in a paper container. I was unable to follow instructions how to open various things and how to approach. Push here, pull here, you know? With left finger here, right finger there. I was totally lost.

Q: Did you speak English?

A: Little bit.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I familiarized myself with American culture by watching television, but I got many wrong impressions, because in those days there were shows like "Father Knows Best", where there was solution to every problem. And I said to myself, "That's impossible that America is so different that they have solution for every problem." You know? I began to feel tremendously shortchanged that I have so much catching up to do, because I'm not even -- I -- I don't come even close to thinking in those terms.

Q: When did you discover that that -- the TV world was -- was much different than reality?

A: I do not think that it came overnight. I don't think so. I don't know exactly. It certainly came a long time after I have been in the US. And certainly it did not come while I was in New York. It must have come about 10 or 15 years later, when I started to discover the differences -- not

only the differences between TV and reality, but differences between the fact that -- and please don't take it personally, that US parents have tendency to give too great of a positive public relationship spiel to their children -- to their offsprings.

Q: For example?

A: Okay, after -- after being about a year in New York, not seeing eye to eye with my uncle, I was -- I realized that I can never live up to his expectations. Furthermore, he didn't wanted to realize that I, at the age of 27, cannot be molded the same way a 10 year old can be. So I -- while in New York, I visited my uncle in Morrisstown and I found a wonderful old man, who certainly was sorry for what -- for his behavior in the younger days. But my New York uncle didn't wanted to forgive him. He said that he forgives him, but whenever discussion came to it, it was still there. I decided to leave New York and move to Morrisstown. My Morrisstown uncle found me a job in a department store in Morrisstown, I became a shoe salesman. And my Morrisstown uncle attached himself to a wealthy Jewish family in Morrisstown. He worked for them. They owned a hotel, a very small, rundown hotel, but nevertheless, he was living there. And he found, in that family, a second home. He attached to hi -- to himself to that family. And they treated him very nicely and he felt very warmly toward them. And they were extremely wealthy. And they looked upon me in a very favorable fashion, that finally my uncle, who from 1913, until 1960 was alone, finally found family member who likes him -- who loves him. So they liked me because of it. But, they always gave themselves as example of American success. They always pointed out to me their children. Let's say, their married daughters. They claimed that if you take a good boy, from a good family and match him -- match her up with a good girl from a good family, that it has to be success. And they continuously -- they also pointed out to me, couple

times, that I cannot expect the greatest success in US, because I have no background. It took me quite awhile to figure out what they mean by background. That --

Q: What di -- What did they mean?

A: Background, you don't have address, identifiable address. Your family tree is not in the US and is -- it is unknown. That they meant by background. When I kept talking about atmosphere in the US as opposed to atmosphere in Israel, they said, "Oh yes, we know. I-In Israel the atmosphere is -- is semi-tropical." They didn't know that I mean by it, cultural atmosphere. They were -- they were very commercially oriented. They had no formal education whatsoever. But they were Polish Jews, who -- who were -- usually the Polish Jews were always looked upon in Europe -- when you want to see a small merchant, that is Polish. Like Tuvya in -- in -- in "Fiddler on the Roof", you know? A small, little merchant selling buttons, or -- or -- you know? So they too, gave me couple times, feelings of inferiority, but based upon commercial basis. Then, the relatives here, in the States, distant relatives, who were in Austria, one was a carpenter, one was a tailor. They came to the US, the tailor became a very successful tailor in New York. The carpenter opened a plastic factories in Teaneck, New Jersey, very wealthy. So, you know, the whole structure, family structure, disintegrated and started to taking a different shape and form, once it broke up, in different countries.

Q: Did you have -- keep in correspondence with your father at this point, or --

A: I kept correspondence with my father until his death in na -- 1962 or '63, yes.

Q: And what was the relationship like? What we -- what --

A: It was again, the letters were censored. He was extremely proud when I passed the GED equivalency high school examination.

Q: What -- What year was that?

A: That was 1961. Because he, like all fathers, predicted that you will -- he told me, "You will grow up to nothing. You will never amount to anything." But I don't think that -- that he -- he -- that was more a phrase or expression. Had he taken in account the handicaps that I had, he certainly would not -- not -- not -- not think of -- of -- of all that seriously. Then, when I told him that I was able to gain admission to a university, he was extremely proud. But, when I first came to Czechoslovakia in '65, he was already dead. And I was able to come to Czechoslovakia in '65 because my uncle in Morrisstown died and left me inheritance of about 4,000 dollars. I remember 1,500 dollars went toward his funeral. I have spent about 2,000 dollars towards my tuition in college, because I went to a private school. No state school in New Jersey wanted to admit me because I had a very, very low score on -- how was it called in that time -- Princeton College Boards. And state school said, "No, we have strict regulations, try private school. They don't have such strict regulations." So I was admitted, but I had to pay, in those days, oh about -- beginning tuition was about 27.50 per credit hour. And by the time I finished, it was about 55 dollars per credit hour. And multiply it by 130 credits and I paid for everything from my own pocket, except those 2,000 dollars that my uncle left me. So, I left myself thousand dollars for a trip to Czech Republic.

Q: And what was the purpose of the -- of the trip?

A: To be reunited with my sister and with my aunt. My mother had a sister in Czechoslovakia, which lived in the house of my grandfather and grandmother.

Q: And how long did you visit? How long were you there?

A: I stayed one week with my aunt and uncle in Slovakia and one week with my sister in Zenoimal.

Q: Wh-What do you think -- wh-what left the most impression on you, your visit? Did you go back to your village?

A: Which one? To Orskiboat?

Q: Th-The village that you lived in before the war.

A: No, no, no, no, no. There was absolutely no time. You see, I was working for Allied Chemical Corporation in Morrisstown and I got only two weeks vacation. And furthermore, I planned the vacation between semesters. It took me 10 years to finish the college. Because of money and language, I had to take it very slowly. And I went year round, both summer sessions. I took six credits during regular semester. That meant four nights a week and I took two courses during the summer. One in the first summer semester and one course the second summer semester. And there were only two weeks open window between the summer sessions. And between the second summer session and beginning of the fall session was the cheapest air fare. So I took advantage of it and went to Czechoslovakia.

Q: Did you visit your father's gravesite?

A: No. Because, in Czechoslovakia in those days, nobody was -- was -- nobody was buried. The state did not permit it, only cremations took place. And visiting somebody's grave whose ashes are there didn't mean anything to me.

Q: How did you resolve your feelings that -- the fact that the last time you'd seen your mother was -- was when you left for Israel and the last time you saw your father was -- was when you left for Israel and that they'd both died and you'd never seen them?

A: I never resolved it. I still didn't -- don't know how to deal with it. I am asking myself -- well, I -- had I stayed in Czechoslovakia instead of emigrating to Israel, I probably would not have changed anything on my father's death, because he died of stroke, you know, at the age of 73.

That probably would not have changed. But where I feel little bit guilty, had I stayed in Czechoslovakia, maybe my presence would give my mother a reason to stay alive. And maybe she would not have committed the suicide. But see, sa -- there are too many maybes, you know? And that what irritates me continuously, that there are -- I have so many perhaps and maybes in my background. And here and there I succeed finding an answer. That this truly would have happened or did happened, regardless of my staying there or exiting. You know, sometimes I have the feeling that I'm carrying on my shoulders the responsibility for the whole human race. And then I -- I begin to realize that if that subways train comes five minutes later, I have no -- no -- no leverage o-over that, you know? But nevertheless, it -- it causes me quite a bit of frustration.

Q: Why -- Why do you have this sense of responsibility?

A: I don't know. I simply don't know. Maybe the luck of contribution -- that nobody has asked me. That I found myself like a leaf being tossed by the wind and not being able to -- to direct the way the wind will blow or -- or the leave will be -- will be scattered. I would like to have more input into what is happening to me. And until I came to the States, I really didn't have any input. Things were happening outside my control, completely. I didn't have a handle on my own fate until I came to the States. And it took me time -- a long time in the States -- not that I didn't had the freedom to choose my fate, but I didn't know exactly what to choose.

Q: How did you finally feel as though you got a handle on your -- on your fate?

A: First of all, it took me quite a -- quite a bit of time to decide what is it I want to study. I didn't wanted to study accounting to begin with. I wanted to become a chemical engineer. But my background in -- in math was not sufficiently strong to gain admission to engineering school. Then, engineering school was five years long, instead of four years. That would have created

another problem. Then, I felt that to study something other than accounting would require a much better knowledge of the English language than I possessed. Then the school, even though it was a private university, regulated to some degree, the sequence of the courses I was taking -- I had to take. Because everybody who was admitted under GED had first to take English, History, Math and Language, before taking anything else. The 15 -- the first 18 or 24 credits, you were simply on probation. So I -- I felt like walking continuously on a thin ice. And then American girls had tremendous influence on my way of thinking. Because I heard, in Israel -- you know, Israel is a haven for Jewish American women. And I don't mean it as a joke. You would be surprised how many American Jewish women come to Israel to find a husband. And some of them are extremely wealthy and some of them are really willing to compromise and go down very low on the economical ladder to find a Jewish husband. Many marriages end up in a disaster. Very few American Jewish girls stay in Israel. They usually bring their husbands to the States. And many of the Jewish boys simply don't measure up to the expectations. But, in Israel, in my days, there was generated the saying that American girls have tremendous body, but instead of a heart, they had a computer. And that was confirmed to me when I was dating American Jewish girls. I -- for first 10 years, I dated only -- tried to date only Jewish American girls and it was always the same result. "You are a nice boy, but you are nothing economically." The girls told me, "We are seeking somebody who has it made already." Again, I was out of sync. "Yes, you have perseverance. We see that you are going nights to school, you are trying to better yourself." But I got my BS, I was 37. By that time, most fellows already are partners in some business or self-employed or whatever.

Q: When did you meet your wife?

A: Huh, that is a very interesting story. I worked at Allied Chemicals in Morrisstown and I was renting a room with a family. He was also from Czechoslovakia and she was from Italy. They were Christians, but they were honest, good family. And one day, in 1968, his uncle from Czechoslovakia came to visit. Because in '68, if you remember th-the Prague's sprink liberated the exit and he succeeded coming to the US for a visit, leaving his wife and children as hostages that he will come back. And we started talking and he said, "Look, you will have absolutely no problems --" he asked me why I'm still single, so I describe him the situation and he said, "Look, that doesn't surprise me. You simply don't fit, culturally with American girls. You would be much better off finding a Czech girl." So I said, "Well, how that would be possible after so many years not being there? A whole generation or two were born." So he said, "Leave it to me, I will look around." And he lined up about five or six girls and I came for a visit. I went out with all of them and I selected one. And in 1970, I went once or twice again to Czechoslovakia and I established correspondence with one of the girls and it clicked without any problems. And in 1970, I was about to graduate in August and in June of 1970, I went to Czechoslovakia and got married there.

Q: So, these Czech women, were they in Czechoslovakia?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q: How -- How were you dating them?

A: I stayed in Czechoslovakia for a month and I went out with each one of them and I finally decided on one of them.

Q: And this was set up by you --

A: By that friend.

Q: And had you corresponded with them, at any point?



A: With two I kept correspondence until I severed the correspondence and I began to concentrate on that one.

Q: And why was it that you selected yo-your -- your future wife? What was it about her?

A: Chemistry. The Czechs gave me bloody hard time to get married. You cannot visualize how many documents I needed.

Q: How soon after you -- you met, were you married?

A: About two years later.

Q: So she came back to America?

A: No. We were -- we were married in Czechoslovakia, it took her three months to process the papers. But the three months were delayed by US, not by the Czechs. We started processing our papers for the marriage about year earlier. That has to be satisfied the Czech government first.

Q: So, your courtship took place -- did you travel to Czechoslo --

A: Travel and correspondence. And she's not Jewish.

Q: What is her name?

A: Meerka.

Q: Okay. Did you talk with her about your Holocaust experiences?

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: -- your Holocaust experiences?

A: I think I did, but she is much younger than I. She is 16 years younger than I, so she did not have first hand experience. Furthermore, she was born already under the Communist regime. But she had couple girlfriends who were Jewish, who were -- I -- I don't know whether the girls or their parents were product of the Holocaust, so she knew what I am talking about.

Q: Had you talked about your Holocaust experience with -- with very many people in -- in America?

A: No. Not -- not -- not -- not many, not many. In all honesty, I think that in Morrisstown, where I spent 10 years, I didn't speak about it once. I belonged, because of my Morrisstown uncle, in a Jewish congregation, a very modern congregation, sort of a religious how they call it, Reform Judaism. But not one of the Jews there ever, ever asked me about Holocaust experiences. I do not know just what -- what it is about -- the American Jews, they are a completely different breed. You know, the -- sometimes you are wondering what sort of a Jews are they to begin with. For example, when -- when -- when there were wars of -- I used to teach the Hebrew language in that synagogue to kids. So there was a war, I don't know, in '67, between Israel and Arabs, and one of the boys came to school after the war has ended and said, "Mr. Deutsch, isn't it fantastic we beat the Arabs?" They are riding on the coattails of the Israel when Israel does something great. But they don't want to recognize Israel when things are not going so well, you know? So I -- I don't think that the American Jews know exactly where and how do they fit, whether they are American or they should be Israelis. Then they don't know exactly how the Judaism fits into the Israeli structure. They are very confuse and very ambivalent about it.

Q: And how do you see yourself fitting in?

A: For me, Judaism is a religion and nothing more. Israel is a society composed of Jews, but that's it. And the Jews of Israel go to various synagogues, to Orthodox, to Reform. And as far as beyond that, they have absolutely nothing in common. What is united -- uniting -- uniting them is the danger from the Arabs on one hand and the bad memories of anti-Semitism and Holocaust from Europe. And not having -- not being for the Holocaust, I'm not certain that Israel as state would exist. It still would be probably today, Palestine.

Q: Was your marriage ceremony performed by a rabbi?

A: No, no, Czechoslovakia -- we got married in 1970, Czechoslovakia did not have religious ceremonies. It was conducted by a judge -- peace judge, how you want to call him?

Q: Justice of the Peace?

A: Justice of the Peace, and my marriage -- I have a rec-recording of it, of the whole ceremony.

Q: Oh, a tape recording?

A: Tape recording.

Q: Mm.

A: It's a 78 --

Q: Record?

A: Vinyl record.

Q: So when did you come back to America with your wife?

A: Okay, I came back -- we got married in June of '70, I came back -- I worked already in Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. It was couple months before graduation. They gave me already a professional status as an accountant. I came back probably end of June and October 10th, my wife came to the States. We rented an apartment in Morrisstown and I think in January of 1971 --

she was a medical technician, she found a job also at Mount Sinai in New York and started working as a medical technician there.

Q: And -- And your job was an accountant at Mount Sinai?

A: Yes.

Q: A-And what did you -- what did you get your degree in?

A: Accounting.

Q: Accounting. And what was that university?

A: Farley Dickinson.

Q: Farley Dickinson.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so, what was that time like? Your -- Your wife is -- her first experience in America and -  
-

A: Well, the first experience was horrible. I -- I -- I -- I was desperate. She started crying. She cried for about a week. I do not know whether she started -- yeah, she was hired at Mount Sinai, but Mount Sinai had a strange employment structure. It is very heavily unionized and there are various categories. There are union for nurses, union for blue collar workers. Everybody's unionized and everybody belongs to a different union, and every union has a different pay scale. And my wife belonged to union of medical technicians, and the union of medical technicians has a -- has the lowest pay scale than the union of blue collar workers. And she, coming from a Communist country, was extremely insulted that she, with all her medical training, is getting paid less than the janitor is paid. And that was insulting to her. But, looking at it in retrospect, I think -- and I will of course never, never ask her about it, that she gave me that as an excuse, but I think that she was very, very homesick and tried to cover up for it by giving me that excuse. In

1971, about year after she came to the States, she went already for a visit to Czechoslovakia, to visit her mother. And she tells me -- she was there about a month, that she had -- have -- had to think about it very deeply whether she wants to come back to US or not. But, apparently, I don't know whether she made the decision on her own or whether her mother talked her into it, she came back.

Q: That must have been frightening.

A: Yes, yes it was. But -- well, I -- I -- I don't know what to tell you about it today. I don't know how my thoughts -- in what direction they went in those days, whether she will come back or not.

Q: Do you have children?

A: Yes, we have a son. Was born in 1975.

Q: Oh, that's right. I spoke with him on the phone.

A: Oh yeah, you talked to him. Well, all those years, we both worked, we saved money. So he finished -- he got his BS from Virginia Tech, in economics and his MBA from Texas A and M, which he finished about five months ago. And three months ago he s-started to work for a consulting firm in Springfield, Virginia. And he's traveling as a consultant for that firm.

Q: And what is it -- what is his name?

A: Leon.

Q: Leon. After your uncle?

A: After my uncle in Morrisstown.

Q: Do y -- Have you talked about your Holocaust experience with him much?

A: Oh yes, yes, yes. He's very interested in it. He visited the museum here once or twice. He's half Jewish and I think that he leans much more toward Judaism than toward Christianity. I

explained to him several times the liabilities of -- and the assets of both and told him, "Look, you are in a position to choose." And for some reason, I -- I cannot put my finger on it, but he feels closer affinity to Judaism than to Christianity. My wife stays out of it, she couldn't care less for neither one, although she feels also sympathy toward Christia -- toward Judaism. But she's not trying to influence our son one way or the other.

Q: Do you remember the first time you told him about what you went through as a child during the Holocaust?

A: I do not know. I do not know one -- when I told him. He asked me, for example, why did we named him Leon. So when I started telling him that he was named after Uncle Leon, he started asking about Uncle Leon. And I think that's how it led towards -- towards the Holocaust issue. Then, when I -- after I moved from mo -- New York to Morrisstown, I kept meeting with my New York uncle about once a month. He was extremely angry at me that I deserted him and decided to break bread with his brother, whom he never forgave. And my uncle in New York continuously kept criticizing everything I did. He used always negative criticism. H-He always told me, "Don't do that," but he never told me what to do instead. And I raised couple times the issue, "What would you say if I married a Christian girl?" So he was very much against it. So when I did marry my wife, I simply didn't tell him that I'm going to marry. I came back and on nec -- our next meeting, I told him, "Uncle, I just came back from Czechoslovakia and I married a Christian girl." And that was the end for him. We had a fight and we never saw each other again. That was in 1970. And in 1973, he died, natural death. He got a heart attack. But there comes a related and also interesting story. He had a daughter, a ravishing beauty. She was about 18 or 19, right out of high school, when she married her sweetheart, graduate of Columbia, engineer, who worked for Sperry Gyroscope in New York, on Long Island. An extremely well

paying job, very bright, good looking fellow. They lived on Long Island and I saw her twice in 1959. And I was unable to see her again and I had the feeling that, at that time, that because I didn't lived up to my aunt's and uncle's expectations, that they ins-instigated her against me. And about year or two later, in early 60's, he quit his job with Sperry Gyroscope and moved to Palo Alto, California, got a very high position with one of the electronics firms in Palo Alto. And my uncle never wanted to give me their address. So, I lost complete contact with them and when my uncle died, in '73, I was trying to find out their address. But my aunt, the one who hated me, was still alive and she didn't wanted to speak to me. And I didn't know how to find them. I looked telephone books, looked every place, I was unable to find them. And about two years ago, don't ask me how and why, I exhausted all the avenues of finding her and suddenly something occurred to me. I wrote to New York City, asking for my uncle's death certificate and they answered me that I have insufficient information, that maybe he died outside of New York City and in which case they will not have his death records. And about at that time, I bought an internet and I went through the Social Security -- some organization publishes death registry by states and Social Securities on the internet and I found my uncle. And I wrote to New York City again, this time giving his Social Security number and they gave me, for 15 dollars, his death certificate. And on New York City's death certificate, on the bottom, is a line for informant of the death. There was my aunt -- aunt's name and her address, which was the same like my uncle used to be. Then, I discovered that my aunt died in 1983, so I sent for her death certificate. And the informant's name on her death certificate was her daughter. She was not living in Palo Alto, she was living in Los Altos, which is about 10 miles from Palo Alto. I wrote her a letter and three days later, she called me by telephone. And I ask her, "Why haven't you looked for me? My name is in the telephone book." She had unlisted number. 39 years it took me to find her.

She said she had a very miserable childhood. Her mother hated her. Her -- the day she came to her mother, telling her that, "I'm getting married," her mother said, "You are dead for me. You are leaving me, your own mother. I don't want to know you any more." And she told me things about her parent's marriage which make my few hair rise. That also that marriage was only in name. All those high standards that they asked me to live up to, they didn't even come close in one percent to those standards. And she is divorced. What is she, my cousin? My niece? My cousin. My uncle's daughter.

Q: Cousin.

A: Cousin. Yeah, she lives a -- a life of a very wealthy divorcee.

Q: Do you still tee -- keep in touch?

A: Yes, occasionally we exchange notes.

Q: And what is her name?

A: Alice. Alice Sege. S-e-g-e.

Q: Wh-Why was it that you wrote -- wanted the death certificate of your uncle? Just curious.

A: I -- I don't know -- because by wanting his death certificate, I didn't know what the end result will be. I have just tried to get together pieces to a jigsaw puzzle, who died and when. And maybe my son is trying and has been building our family tree.

Q: That's a big job.

A: And I think for that reason, I tried to get together as many pieces as I possibly can. And maybe that has led me to the original. Because there were four brothers, I did not know exactly, chronologically, how they fit, who is the oldest, who is the youngest. And, being an accountant, I like things in order. So maybe -- maybe that --



Q: You know, you came to America in a very interesting time, a time when there wasn't much order, in the 60's. A lot of anti-war protests, eventually. Civil rights, assassinations. What --

What impact did that have on you, coming from your background? What were your impressions?

A: My -- My initial -- when I came to -- in '59, my biggest shock was Cuba, Castro. That was the biggest shock. Then, that was a very negative shock. Then the positive event happened, when the Israelis caught Adolf Eichmann. Then, New York City, I don't remember any protests in New York City. New York City was a beehive. I commuted by subway station -- by subway to work as a shipping clerk. And evening I bought textbooks from Barnes and Nobles. Used textbook, high school textbooks and after work, I locked myself in my room and I read many of the books that are required from high school kids to be read. I went to Washington Irving High School, nights I think, for a course in English language. And most of the time I was very tired, physically, because I don't know, in New York City, the humidity was making havoc on my -- on my disposition in New York. In Israel, I -- I had no problem, you know. Tel Aviv is extremely hot and humid, too. But in Israel you wear shorts and you wore sandals and tee shirt. But in New York, you have to wear a suit and tie and the subway, crowded, standing on one foot. So it was a different, different, different atmosphere.

Q: Little more -- little more left on this tape. I wanted to get up to your employment with the US government, when did that begin?

A: Can we -- can I --

Q: Yeah.

A: Can we stop a minute?

Q: Sure.

A: I have to go...

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: You ended up working for the United States government, can you tell me about how you ended up in that position?

A: Okay. My wife and I bought a house. We started -- after about -- my wife started working, I think, in January of '70 and -- no, that would be incorrect. '70 she came only to the States. In '71 -- in January of '71, she started working and in one year we saved enough money for a down payment on a house, which we bought in community called Hopatcong, Lake Hopatcong. It's not far away from Morrisstown and we both commuted daily to New York City. It was 55 miles each way. And for a time, we realized that we cannot afford anything living closer to New York City, because of the expense. But, at that time, I don't think that my wife si -- she simply was not long enough in the US to be able to advise me or make up her mind just which way to go. I think she was more dependent on my decisions. But I began to realize a very interesting thing in Mount Sinai. It probably was not affiliated with Affirmative Action, but Mount Sinai Hospital was very proud at it's employment record, advertising -- at least among the employees, that they employ people from every nation under the sun, except Mexico. But something very interesting was taking place. Not only were you almost -- mor -- it was almost impossible to cross the boundaries of the various unions. But, in order to maintain some sort of a equilibrium, even though it seems to me maybe I was imagining it, whenever they occurred a vacancy in the non -- in the administrative positions, they -- Mount Sinai replaced the vacancy -- filled the vacancy with exactly the same nationality it was created by. So, when an Italian American left an position, exactly Italian American took that same position. So, I was asking, "How do I fit as a Czech Jew?" I was the only one. I have absolutely no chance. So I was looking at some

opportunity for bettering myself. And prior to Mount Sinai, I worked again for about half a year, Allied Chemicals, this time as a professional, but they had implemented an austerity program and they laid me off. And prior to me -- to Allied Chemicals, I worked for public accounting firm. At that time I had a dream that I will become a CPA. And in New Jersey at that time, you either had to work 10 years for the US government, or three years for a CPA firm, in order to qualify for CPA examinations. And I forgot -- I decided that CPA firm is not for me. That CPA's are in demand also in industry. But how do I gain the CPA examination qualifications? Simply by joining US government. So that led me to decision to join the US government. And originally I applied for a slot with the IRS, but from OPN in New York -- Office of Personnel Management, my rating was too high for the IRS starting position. And apparently, the Department of Defense had many more vacancies in that grade. So I was picked up by the US Army. And instead of commuting 55 miles to New York, I was commuting now seven miles to Picatinni Arsenal. My wife was still working at Mount Sinai. She hitched always, a ride with a coworker. And Picatinni Arsenal had a layoff and I, through the layoff process -- they call it darriff -- I found another position at Potuxin Naval Air Station, here in Maryland. So, we moved to Maryland. My wife got a job as a technician, medical technician in LaPlata Memorial Hospital. And from Potuxin Naval Air Station, I got a promotion to David Taylor Model Basin. Do you know where it is?

Q: Mm-mm.

A: It's on border of Maryland -- is Virginia. It's called -- there is a bridge called Legionnaire's Bridge and behind it is hidden a great engineering -- [indecipherable] engineering installation.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

A: Accounting.

Q: For accounting, oh.

A: And from there, I got a job back with army. Potuxin and Carderuck, or David Taylor Model Basin were navy. I got a job back with the army in Alexandria. Army Material Command, which was the headquarters -- again, as an accountant. And then, after about working for Army Material Command for some eight or nine years, I realized, through the Affirmative Action that I am going no place. But the army paid for my Master's degree program and I decided to go for a Ph.D. And the army had no interest in my Ph.D. So I started paying for it from my own pocket and I selected international affairs as my project -- Ph.D program. And I started going to Catholic university. And, in 1988, again I had here a problem with a colonel, who was director. In the meantime, I gained -- I was ob -- able to obtain a changeover from accounting to international programs division, with AMC -- with Army Material Command. And the director was a colonel who was a bigot, first class.

Q: A bigot?

A: Yes, and anti-Semite. And he created the situation -- very unpleasant situation where I was almost forced to resign, either to be fired or forced to resign.

Q: What happened?

A: Well, to make a long story short, as I see it -- that doesn't mean that it necessarily was so -- he was an old bachelor who was trying to sleep with every girl he could have. And many young girls took the bite. In the div -- in the international programs directorate, we had couple openings. Every time a girl came in for a promotion, became engaged to him. Once she obtained the promotion, she disengaged and went back where she came from with a higher grade. And on the third occasion, I mention it to him. Not what he is doing, because I had no right, but I said, "How is it possible -- look, these girls are coming here, not only getting promotion and then

transfer back, but I am here trying to get a transfer to a different director, without promotion, and I cannot do so. Please help me.” And he felt threatened, and he created a situation where he wrote me up for every single, every simple deficiency. I handed him a project five minutes late, he wrote me up. So I itkermated to the fact that I either had to be fired or to resign. So, instead of preventing being fired, three days before the deadline, I resigned.

Q: And where did you go from there?

A: Oh, for about four months, I went -- worked on the economy. I worked as a night auditor for L'enfant Plaza Hotel, here in DC. I worked for a month as a shoe salesman for Bloomingdale's. The shoe salesman experience from Morrisstown came very handy. Then I got a position which could have lasted 180 days for the post office, US Post Office, selling stamps over the ph-phone, to collectors. And worked as an auditor for “House of Ruth”, in DC. And all those weeks I had floated application as an accountant, back for federal employment. And I got a call from the Library of Congress, for a position in my old grade. But, Library of Congress, at that time, the chief told me that they have a huge computer in the basement, which is not utilized at all. And through my experience, they would like me to activate the computer and start it providing data that the computer should be generating, if I want the position. Two days earlier, I got a positive interview with military district of Washington, as an accountant, a grade lower, but asking me to do almost a very similar job that I used to do for Army Material Command, as an accountant. So, I had a choice. Grade higher, but working with a computer, or grade lower, but doing more or less the same accounting job I did before. So I have selected the lower grade. And I work for next eight or nine years for military district of Washington. For -- we stayed for about seven years at Half Street, in DC. Shared that building with FBI and [indecipherable] Investigating Service. And then we moved to Alexandria. But, you know -- from where I retired in last -- in

1997, in May. Interesting thing happened now -- occurred to me that when I got the job with Army Material Command, in the international division, the Pollard case came into existence.

Q: Pollard?

A: Pollard.

Q: Ronald, or --

A: Whatever his name is.

Q: Ronald Pollard, yeah, mm-hm. Spike.

A: And I represented the Israeli desk at the time. So I was investigated whether I had some connection to it. But Pollard was navy, I was army and we had absolutely no connection.

Q: And were they suspicious of you in any way because you had lived in Israel?

A: It may have crossed their mind. But I was never affected by Pollard's mishap. Then our -- one of our colonel's -- but that affair you probably don't remember. Maybe you never knew it, Gillespie was his name. They had some problem with identifying missiles in Florida. He was also my boss. It -- It -- Yo -- It made headlines in Time magazine and in all the papers, but it was a short -- relatively short-lived affair.

Q: How long did they investigate you in the Pollard case?

A: Maybe two or three times, they asked me various questions.

Q: [indecipherable] You had said to me at -- at lunch that you're very pro-American and I-I'd like for you to talk about that and also what -- what that might have been like, to have your patriotism, I guess, or your loyalty questioned in the Pollard case.

A: Number -- No, I was -- I was little bit pissed off, frankly speaking. I was insulted by it.

Because I -- I -- I don't know how you can prove to somebody loyalty -- that you are loyal. I -- I don't know exactly how to prove it. You know, in -- in older days, you proved your loyalty by

joining the military in a uniform or going to fight for your adopted country. I was little bit too old to do all that, but simply, it was -- it was insulting to me that -- that they doubted my sincerity or loyalty. What else can I add to it?

Q: Can you talk a little bit about your -- I mean, you've had citizenship as a Czech, and as an Israeli, and now as an American.

A: Okay, to clarify you that -- that issue. Czech citizenship, at least I didn't know about it in Israel. Apparently all those -- those 10 years that I was in Israel, I probably was a Czech citizen. Although, something goes through my mind and I cannot find evidence. The Czech government, after the last transport of Jews left from Czechoslovakia to Israel, the Czech government advertised in it's newspapers and through it's embassies overseas, that all Czech citizens who will not return to Czechoslovakia by such and such a date, will lose their Czech citizenship. So, I lived under that assumption in Israel, that because I have not returned, I have lost my citizenship. Then, in Israel, upon your arrival, they ask you right in the airport or in the port of you arrival, whether you want to be an Israeli citizen. And if you say yes, from that moment on, you are an Israeli citizen. They don't care whether you are citizen of another country. From here on, you are an Israeli citizen and you have the right to Israeli passport. One hour after you land in Israel, you are already there a citizen. If you say no, then they let you live as a non-Israeli, but you still have to fulfill the obligations, like any other Israeli. They just don't trust you as much. Coming to the States, nobody asked me -- I came under the Israeli passport. Working for Army Material Command, there came an opportunity -- they advertised some vacancies -- under the Civil Service in Israel -- if you will remember, when Israel surrendered to Egypt, that desert. What it -- it's not the Sinai desert, it's -- yeah, it's the Sinai desert. When Israel gave back to Egyptian -- to Egypt, Sinai desert, the Americans came that they will finance in Israel some airport which

Israelis have lost in Sinai, to Egyptian. And the Civil Service was looking for people who would be willing to go to Israel as servants. So I put application in, but I still had Israeli citizenship and I was afraid that there will arise a conflict. On the one hand, my being Amer-American employee and on the other hand being Israeli citizen. So, I went to Israeli embassy and I -- I renounced in writing my Israeli citizenship. And as a result, my son and I lost it. We have a letter. My wife never was an Israeli citizen to -- to begin with. But interesting thing now happened. When Czechoslovakia shed it's Communist flavor, we Czechs here assumed that all of us who left Czechoslovakia from 1948 until today, will gain back Czech citizenship. Matter of fact, gain it back I think was wrong way of phrasing it. I don't know whether I knew that we lost it. But what came now to light? The new democratic government of Czechoslovakia proclaimed that we are not longer Czech citizenship -- citizens. Because Czechoslovakia and United States signed, in 1928, a mutual treaty whereby -- in which you gain one citizenship, but lose the other one. And the Czechs began to enforce it.

Q: When did you become a US citizen?

A: In 1964.

Q: In '64.

A: And I wrote several times to the Czechs after the Communists lost the seats, "What am I now?" And I send them documents. And they send me back letters, telling me that based upon the treaty, the day I gained US citizenship, I lost Czech citizenship.

Q: What does it mean to you to be an American citizen?

A: Everything. Czech citizenship -- I would not object if the Czechs gave me back the citizenship, but it would be purely for sentimental reasons. I would not have any advantage in it. It just would be a good, warm feeling that my mother country still knows that I exist and that I'm



her son. That I'm not like stepchild. How is it called, that -- that -- that Walt Disney's play with the girl with the golden slipper?

Q: Cinderella.

A: Cinderella.

Q: Mm. I wanted to ask you a little bit about the effect of your Holocaust experience on -- on your life and I know you started the interview before we even --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- tape, by saying that it's hard for you to sort -- sort that out and to know exactly how it affected your life. But, I believe that you said in your video interview that you think as a result of your Holocaust experience, you try to be inconspicuous. You always look over your shoulder and you're easily intimidated, I believe you said. Can you talk a little bit more about that and if that's still [indecipherable] sense --

A: Well, it -- it is, you know, number one, because of my deficiency of the English language, I -- I have problems expressing feelings. My vocabulary is not large enough. I do not know how to phrase it exactly. You know, there are -- there is a parallel in the American literature, in the book by Hawthorne, "The Scarlet Letter." That's apparently how she must have felt and how I feel. Branded. You know, somebody who -- who is -- who is -- I feel like somebody who is totally unimportant, who can be disposed of. Like you change shirt every day. That I have absolutely no value to anybody, except of course, to my wife and my son. But the rest of the society couldn't care less.

Q: And y -- do you have that feeling often?

A: It is not 24 hours with me. But the older I get, I think it comes more frequently. Isn't that the saying that when you become older, you re-return to your childhood?

Q: And do you think that feeling is in -- is an outgrowth of -- of what you went through --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- in the Holocaust?

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Very definitely, very definitely, very definitely. In it -- it's interesting, when I first came to -- to Morrisstown, in 1960, it was a almost purely white community. There were blacks, but -- but they had a section of town and they were very inconspicuous. I truly felt at home in Morrisstown, because people were not very inter -- not interested in my Holocaust experience, but they looked upon me as a novelty, being an immigrant. Because, in those days, emigration to the US was orderly. And I was one of the very few that landed in Morrisstown in those days. So people wanted to know more about my experiences as an immigrant and why and how did I make decision coming to the US and how do I feel about the US. But slowly, slowly, with the influx of the Cubans, and the thousands of illegal immigrants, immigrants are somehow looked upon as intruders. And nobody cares particularly whether you came legally to the US or whether you came as a wetback. Does it, to some extent, answer your question?

Q: I had forgotten my question.

A: Well, how do I feel about the Holocaust having me labeled.

Q: Oh, right. And so, there was a period when you lived in Morrisstown, where it was -- people were curious, but now you feel as though it's -- it's still a brand?

A: Yes, yes, yes. Specially, specially in this area. Specially in Washington, DC.

Q: In Washington. Wh-What about --

End of Tape Four, Side B

Beginning Tape Five, Side A

A: -- yes, yes, yes. Specially, specially in this area. Specially in Washington, DC.

Q: In Washington. Wh-What about the fact that you're -- you now volunteer at the Holocaust museum? Do you -- do you feel you get support or understanding for the way that you feel, or -- or do you talk to other people about the way you feel? Because there are other survivors, there are other people who -- who were on the run during -- during the Holocaust?

A: You know, I -- I'm not quite certain how to answer you, because I come only twice a week here and the employees of the museum, number one, are US government employees. Number two, there are many Americans here -- native Americans, who have never experienced the Holocaust first hand. They read and hear about it. So, for them, it is an academic curiosity, but nothing more. I suspect that majority of us volunteers are survivors, original survivors of the Holocaust. But each one of us, so far, comes from a different countries. And our individual experiences are totally different. You hardly -- I don't believe, in honesty, I can say that you will find two Holocaust survivors whose experiences will be identical. We -- I -- I don't want to associate with other Holocaust experienced coworkers, because their experiences are totally different and the only thing we have in common is the fact that probably we are Jewish and our lives were changed by Hitler.

Q: Are you uncomfortable with -- with being labeled, or -- wi-with -- with the identity of being a Holocaust survivor?

A: Not -- Not -- I'm not -- not very comfortable with it. I'm not very comfortable with it. Because I don't know, well, what does it -- what does it mean? Do -- Because of it, will people feel sorry for me? I don't want you to feel sorry for me. Should I feel sorry for me? I don't know.

Okay, feeling sorry for myself -- had it not been for my grandfather, I wouldn't be here talking to you now. So, isn't that fact that, in 1942, we crossed the border and we didn't ended up in Auschwitz. So everything from that point on, is a bonus. Now, living a life of bonus, is it a bona fide life, or not? I don't know. You see, these are the issues that I am dealing with. And nobody can give me answer to that and I'm not one t -- I don't want an answer, because I don't believe there is an answer. Maybe, had I been able to talk to Plato or -- or Socrates, maybe I would get an answer from them. But from a rabbi or a minister or a priest, I will not get a sat-sat-satisfactory answer.

Q: Are there smells or images or music or any sounds that bring back memories of -- of th -- yours, in the Holocaust?

A: Yes. The sounds of Nazi songs.

Q: When do you hear those?

A: Oh, in occupied -- before the transports.

Q: When do you hear them now, though?

A: Oh, on history channels.

Q: I see.

A: For me, the second World War has not ended. It never will end. It never will end. You cannot visualize -- you cannot imagine how much Nazi propaganda we were exposed to until the tide has changed for the Germans at Stalingrad. There were Nazi songs all over. And the town of Ungarrishbrote, Ufwairskibrote -- and that I have never mentioned -- had loudspeakers on corners of streets and if the town had some information to convey to the population, it came over the loudspeakers. There were no town's crier's. Loudspeakers. And the loudspeakers generated

the Nazi songs.

Q: Do you still have -- do you ever have nightmares?

A: Yes.

Q: What are those like?

A: Well, specially the -- that guards at the border crossings of Slovakia. I still see the guardhouse. Or a trip in the car, in the snow. I'll walk across the border. I'll walk with the two guys to that hotel on top of the mountain. Depending -- sometimes I see a movie which -- which generates a nightmare. On one hand, I'm cursing myself for being a masochist, watching these movies, "Invasion of Europe" and "900 Days at Stalingrad" and "Blitzkrieg" from England. Churchill's speeches. "The Longest Day," "The Bridge Too Far." "Bridge at Remagen." On one hand I cursing myself, on the other hand, I enjoy seeing these movies. I don't know why. It occurred to me many a times while serving in the Israeli army, we had German arms, at least in my days. We had Mauser rifle, we had German machine guns. Sometimes I'm wondering who had the machine gun before me. Or the rifle. We had German bayonets.

Q: In -- In your piecing together your -- your life -- you've talked about the puzzle, you know, going back and constructing things. Did you find out anything more about your mother's suicide? Cause I think you said in the interview that you thought that -- you had some suspicions about it. It might not have been a suicide.

A: I have tried to follow up -- I have her death certificate. The death certificate is signed by a doctor whom I was unable to trace -- to find so far. The death certificate uses either a Latin or a Greek phrase for cause of the death, followed by Roman numerals. I had contacted NIH, the medical library. The phrase says, "Fractura constratum." Nobody knows exactly -- I have asked couple medical doctors -- what it means, but using imagination, fractura is probably fracture.

Constratum is probably cons-construction -- physical construction. And the numbers -- the Roman numbers, I went to library -- medical library and I found a relationship that that means that various parts -- various ribs and bones in the spine, they're broken. Each number means specific bone is fractured. So, either they beat her to death, or she must have jumped from a window and on the sidewalk found her death. Only two possibilities. And when I wrote to the Czech authorities, they answered that they cannot find any supporting documents elaborating in details by the medical doctor, as to the exact cause of the death.

Q: So there's no way of knowing.

A: But my mother spent four months in jail and for that -- they found my -- mother innocent at the end of the trial, but after the liberation of the Czech -- Czech government -- after the Communist liberation, the government awarded my sister and me, the sum of 50 dollars for the false imprisonment of my mother. We each are entitled to 50 dollars. It would have been 60 dollars, but they -- in their letter of explanation, they deduct the laundry, the food -- they had to feed my mother for three months while she was in jail, and other miscellaneous expenses. So they end on that amount, 50 dollars. So they -- that, I have still credit with the Czech government, should I go to Czechoslovakia, I can -- I have a letter, come to Ministry of Justice, to our cashier and you can collect 50 dollars. Which is about 1500 crowns by today rate of exchange. 1500 crowns, that would cover about dinner for two people in a restaurant.

Q: Well, that's the quest -- all the questions I have to you. Is there anything that you want to say that -- that I didn't ask you about?

A: Right now I cannot -- I cannot think of anything. You know, as it happens many a time, question leads to another question and a question triggers some different thought, but right now, I cannot think of anything.

Q: Well, we've covered a lot of ground, so I thank you very much.

A: Needless to say, I -- I would like to add, I have never received a penny of compensation from the Germans or from the Swiss. And the Swiss undoubtedly have come into possession of all the gold and the valuables that we left behind after we fled. The Germans have never recognized my suffering or rather, my suffering never fits into a grid which the German government has composed for those whom they want to compensate. Because many people have received compensation for lost years or lost that or this. I never was able to fit into any of these obligations.

Q: That -- That theme of being out of sync, even with --

A: -- even with majority --

Q: -- a majority of --

A: Right.

Q: -- of survivors.

A: Right. It -- It is -- it was much easier for -- for the Germans to recognize the concentration camp survivors, because with them, they were registered. They had that number, they had a address. And that is self evident, because the Germans were very meticulously record keepers. But I have absolutely nothing that would be on record. You see, that book that I showed you, the Theresienstadt, there are records of those that were shipped to concentration camp and records of those that survived. There is documentation. But, for me and my family, there is nothing. The only documentation I have, that when we came back and I started school -- in Czechoslovakia, each student gets a year end certificate and on each certificate is written how many days of classes you have missed and so forth and so forth. And the first school certificate I received, has written prior years of schooling, Fred Deutsch has spent living in illegality. But it doesn't say

from when to when or where. Furthermore, the Czech government never issued to us, any certificates attesting that we were living in hiding or anyth -- that we lost our possessions, nothing.

Q: So there's really no official record recognizing --

A: No, absolutely not.

Q: -- what it was that you experienced.

A: Nothing. The Czech government also never issued to na -- neither the Germans have ever issued any-anybody death certificate.

Q: Does it -- Would it help to have some sort of record or validation o-of what you went through?

A: I don't know. So far, I have applied for three articles. The first one -- they -- they -- each one have -- have some numerics attached to it -- article two or article four, I -- each time the government -- the -- the German government comes with some beauty every -- every so often. The first one ask, you have to prove medically that you are permanently disabled. How do I on earth do it, you know? Otherwise, I do qualify, but I have never lost an arm. I -- my legs are frostbitten, but that is not medically sufficient. The second time I qualified again, but they asked my -- my and my wife combined income. And anybody's whose combined income is over 21,000 dollars a year doesn't qualify. The third one, which is still floating -- the Swiss government wants you to keep nice and warm, so if you meet certain criteria, they will give you one time sum of 500 dollars. But, from what I have read, 150,000 people applied and 50,000 were recognized. Inasmuch as I didn't get a penny, so I means I was one of the 100,000 dollars. Now, I have some class action, jointly pending with couple thousand other people, with an attorney in New York called Fagen and Associates. He is handling several of these actions for



lost property, to the Swiss banks. And that should be starting to come at the end of this year, provided everything goes [indecipherable] smoothly. Otherwise, absolutely nothing.

Q: Well, thank you very much for your time, Mr. Deutsch.

A: My pleasure, [indecipherable] My pleasure.

End of Tape Five, Side A

Conclusion of Interview