

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Freddy Schumer
August 14, 2012
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Freddy Schumer, conducted by Noemi Szekely-Popescu on August 14, 2012 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place by telephone and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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FREDDY SCHUMER

August 14, 2012

N: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Fred Schumer taped over the phone on August 14, 2012. The interviewer is Noemi Szekely-Popescu. She is in Washington, DC. Fred is in Rio, Brazil. Hi Fred.

S: Hi.

N: Hi. Do you prefer Fred or Freddy?

S: Um. Uh. Freddy is my correct name.

N: It is your correct name. Do you mind if I call you Freddy? Or should I call you Mr. Schumer?

S: Yes, and I have an even other name. My birth certificate says Siegfried.

N: Siegfried? Okay, well, then tell me, can you tell me what your first and last names were at birth?

S: At birth it was uh, the last name was Schumer. S-C-H-U-M-E-R.

N: Mhm. And the first name was Siegfried?

S: It was Siegfried because my parents wanted to put in Freddy. But that already was the time when Hitler was poking out and everything. And, so they thought, no they want a German name, they don't want an American name. So my parents, they put in Siegfried.

N: Okay. And Siegfried is spelled S-I-E-G...

S: S-I-E-G-F-R-I-E-D.

N: Okay.

S: Siegfried.

N: Okay, and, and you just mentioned something interesting. You were born, can you tell me what year?

S: I was born in Leipzig, Germany, 1929. Uh. On January the 11th. My mother told me that the day I was born on, it was the coldest day of the century in Leipzig. It was Celsius 45 degrees below zero.

N: Oh, my goodness. That's very cold. And, and it's really interesting because you just said your parents wanted to give you an American sounding name and this is, well, obviously before you're born, maybe 1928, right? When she's pregnant, your mother? but they were already concerned about you having a foreign name. That you should have a German name.

S: Yes, it is that time.

N: Now, now, can you, do you an idea why they were concerned in 1928?

S: In 1929, I said, my birth year is 1929.

N: Absolutely, but I'm thinking

S: Ah, 1920...

N: probably, they talked about your name a month before, right? So...

S: Yeah, but that (program?) happened at the mayor's office when they registered my birth.

N: Ahhhh.... So, so, so was it the mayor who said something?

S: No, it was one of the employees of the mayor's office.

N: Ahhh!

S: Who had orders to accept only German sounding names.

N: I see. Okay. Well, that's, that's really interesting. Okay, well, then, let's go back in time before your birth. Let's talk about your parents first. Can you tell me their names. Let's start with your father.

S: My father's name was Baruch. At the time when he came to the States he changed it to Bruno Schumer.

N: Mhm. So he was born Baruch? And do you spell that B-A-R-U-C-H?

S: You're right.

N: Okay. Can you tell me when he was born? What year?

S: Yes. Um. June 19, 1906.

N: Okay. And where was he born?

S: In Leipzig.

N: Okay. And his family, had they, had they been living in Leipzig for generations or was he?

S: It's seems that my uh, my uh my grandfather on my father's side, it seems he came from somewhere small town in the Austrian Hungarian Empire, which was before the Second World War.

N: Mhm.

S: Excuse me, before the First World War.

N: Sure.

S: And, uh, and it seems he came to Leipzig when he was a young man between 20 and 30.

N: Okay, and...

S: But I don't know where he was born.

N: You don't know which part of the Empire he came from?

S: No. Austrian-Hungarian Empire at that time was very big.

N: Yes.

S: It was Austria, it was part of Czechoslovakia,

N: Yes.

S: It was the southern part of Germany.

N: Yes.

S: It was very big. And Hungary was also in the middle.

N: Yes. And, and, do you know, this is your grandfather we're talking about.

S: Right.

N: What was his first name?

S: Aron [ph].

N: Aron [ph]. Okay. And do you know which languages Aron[ph] spoke?

S: Well, he spoke German, if he spoke any, any. Mostly German, I don't remember him talking Yiddish.

N: Mhm. And...

S: And if he knew any other languages I wouldn't know.

N: You wouldn't know. Okay. Okay. So, your paternal grandfather came to Leipzig from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Uh. In the late 1800s. And what about your father's mother? Baruch's mother? Where was she from?

S: Her. I don't know. She died very young. She had diabetes.

N: Mhm.

S: As a matter of fact, my father, in my father's family there were four men and three girls. And after four men, five, uh, three had uh, diabetes. Because diabetes comes from the mother, goes only through the male side.

N: Oh.

S: It never goes through the female side.

N: I see. Um. And do you know when she died?

S: Uhhhhmmm...

N: Approximately.

S: I don't know if she died before I was born or afterward. I couldn't tell you.

N: Okay. And so your father had, did you say, three siblings?

S: My. No, my grandfather had seven children. Four boys and three girls.

N: Ah. Okay. Four boys. Three girls. What did your grandfather do for a living?

S: He had a factory of uh, of uh. Uh. When the American forces came in 1945 to Europe, they all were wearing belts. At that time in Europe nobody used to wear belts. How do you call it? Hosentrager? I know the name in German.

N: Oh, yes, um, the suspenders.

S: Suspenders, yes. He had a very big factory in Germany. I think it was one of the biggest ones. Making suspenders. Because everybody at that time was using suspenders. Nobody used to wear in Europe at that time, belts.

N: And, and, so you're saying your grandfather owned this factory.

S: Yes, he owned the factory.

N: Do you know what the factory's name was?

S: No, I don't. I know the one of my father in Holland, but the one of my uh, grandfather in Germany I don't remember.

N: Okay. So, your grandfather had a factory of suspenders.

S: Yes.

N: And then your father had a factory. Is that what you're saying?

S: My father left. Hitler came to power in March 1933. My father was always the first one. He was the first one to leave Germany. He left in April 1933. And my brother. My younger brother was born in Amsterdam in May 33.

N: Mhm.

S: My mother was 8 months pregnant when they, when they fled from Leipzig.

N: Oh, goodness. So, and, and so your father had a suspender factory. Do I understand correctly?

S: Yes. That, that that was called Grutel Fabrik Neterland [ph]. It means...

N: Uh huh. Grutel Fabrik Neterland [ph].

S: Correct.

N: Was it called Neterland when it was still in Leipzig or already in the Netherlands?

S: Oh, no, no, no. He started from, he started from the bottom when he came from Holland. My mother worked.

N: Okay, but did...

S: My mother, my mother (laughter) cut the belts and then re-stitched them.

N: Oh. It was a family affair.

S: Right. (laughter)

N: So, before the Netherlands, what was your father doing as a profession in Leipzig?

S: Uh, he was working, he and, of the four boys, he and his younger brother were working at the factory in Germany. He travelled a lot at that time.

N: Mhm.

S: Uh, I know that in 1925 he told me that we went for, to make sales in South Africa.

N: Wow.

S: Yeah. And after four weeks on the boat, my father at that time was very religious, so for four weeks, he ate bread, cans of sardines, and boiled, hard boiled eggs.

N: (chuckle) That's very nutritious actually. And, so was he a, was he a salesman for a factory?

S: No, he was a partner.

N: Ahhh...

S: He and his younger brother were partners in the factory. Junior partners.

N: Okay. As a partner, he went to South Africa for what? For investments? Investors?

S: No. To sell.

N: Okay, but he was a partner.

S: He sold all over Europe. He went to Italy, he went to Eastern Europe. That's what he told me. I... obviously.

N: And.

S: Go ahead.

N: Sorry. And do you know what the name of this business was? In Germany?

S: The name of the factory of my grandfather, I don't know.

N: Okay. But he was working for your grandfather then in Germany. Correct?

S: Correct.

N: Okay. Okay. Just for me to be clear. And so the brother that he was a partner with, what was his name?

S: Josef.

N: Josef. Okay. Ummm. And, so you're saying he was very religious when he took the boat. Am I assuming correctly that this was a very religious family?

S: Very religious.

N: Okay. Uh.

S: I think I even gave my grandfather was gabbe in the synagogue in Leipzig.

N: Do you?

S: Do you know what a gabbe is?

N: No, please tell me.

S: Gabbe is the uh, sort of director, at the synagogue. Each synagogue usually has four to six gabbes. Gabbes is the people who uh, they, how can I tell it? They they are chiefs of the synagogue. They show a good example. They organize everything. Etc. Etc.

N: Now, um, what tradition was this? What Jewish tradition?

S: Orthodox.

N: Orthodox. Okay.

S: Yes. They were not haredim. You know what haredim is?

N: Yes, I do. So, they're not haredim?

S: Yes, they were Orthodox Jews, but they were not haredim. I mean my, my aunts, they wore normal dresses and everything like that.

N: Mhm. Mhm. And, so clearly, they would have kept kosher at home?

S: Yes, of course.

N: Did they keep Shabbat?

S: Yes, of course.

N: Okay. So they would keep all of the, all of the traditions?

S: Yes.

N: Uh. And now, what was the synagogue called where he was, can you spell the word for me that you were using? Gabbe?

S: Gabbe. G-A-B-B-E.

N: Okay. So which synagogue was it?

S: I don't remember. I never. I might have gone there, but at the age of one, two, three. I wouldn't remember.

N: Sure.

S: I was four years old when I left Leipzig.

N: Yes, sure. I was thinking maybe someone would have told you later, you know. Later in life. But,

S: No, no no. Because after we came to Holland in 1933, 1940 the Germans invaded Holland. I still was very young.

N: Yes.

S: And at that time nobody talked about past history because they didn't want to talk about it.

N: Sure. Sure. Okay. So then, let's still stay with your parents at this point, so, um, your father was working for your grandfather. And it seems like they were, um, uh, is it fair to say they would be a middle class family? I mean they owned a factory?

S: Yes.

N: So, I mean, how well off were they?

S: Financially, I wouldn't know. The factory of my grandfather had something like 500 employees.

N: 500 employees?

S: Yes.

N: Okay.

S: That was big.

N: That was big.

S: Yeah, the one of my father, in Holland, only had about 20 or 30. In Holland also, it was a much smaller market.

N: Mhm. Mhm. Do you know how big the house was where your father grew up? Do you have any knowledge of that apartment or building?

S: Well, look, they have seven children. They even had a governess for the children. Each, they told what the children did wrong, and at the end of the week she made the accounts with my grandfather and then they would get a cut in their pocket money.

S and N: (laugh)

S: My father was very, my father was very, how would I say, very unbehaved very often.

N: Oh, I see.

S: He once went to a ball at night, uh, it's uh, they had to wear stockings, and he had to dress in dark so nobody would see him leave the house. So when he arrived at the ball, one of the girls told him, "Bruno, you're wearing red socks." She says, "Why?" He says, "Didn't you know it's the latest mode in London?"

N and S: (laugh)

S: My father was very very very smart aleck, they say in New York.

N: I see. So, there was a governess? Um, were there any other people who helped around the house in such a big place?

S: Yes. But I wouldn't know how many.

N: Mhm.

S: I even don't remember their house. I mean, there probably were there. But I cannot remember anything from Leipzig. Not where I lived. Not where my grandparents lived. I don't remember anything from the city.

N: Do you know the name, what the first name maybe was of this governess of your father?

S: No, I wouldn't.

N: Okay.

S: None of the employees.

N: Okay.

S: Even the employees of my grandparents who lived in Holland. Their names, I have one was named Sarah. But that's about all I can remember.

N: Mhm. Mhm. Would you know by any chance whether she was Jewish or Gentile?

S: Oh, definitely.

N: Definitely?

S: All the, all the employees of, of the uh, of my father's parents and my mother's parents, they all were Jewish.

N: They were Jewish.

S: And, there in Holland, my uh, my grandparents also were extremely, were also Orthodox in the same way, as in Germany.

N: Mhm. Now you mentioned. I think you mentioned that your father did not speak Yiddish. Or was it your grandfather.

S: No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I speak Yiddish, but he doesn't.

N: He didn't?

S: He understood a little bit, but uh, uh, his Yiddish was rather poor.

N: Now, does that mean he would not have been interacting with the community that spoke Yiddish?

S: In Germany, the community that spoke Yiddish was extremely small. You know, all in all.

N: Okay.

S: Because if you could speak Yiddish, you usually came from the Eastern part of Europe. Poland. Russia. Etc.

N: Okay. Well, then, how about your mother's family? Can you tell me about your grandparents on your mother's side?

S: Yes, of course. My grandfather name on my mother's side, was Moshe [ph], Moses, but everybody called him Moshe [ph].

N: Okay, so your grandfather was called Moshe.

S: Schoenberg [ph]. Like the composer.

N: Schoenberg. Sure.

S: Schoenberg, but without the, the two double points because the musician is called Schoenberg [ph], and they were actually Schoenberg [ph].

N: Okay.

S: And my grandmother's name was Rosa.

N: Rosa. Okay. And where were they from?

S: They were in Auschwitz, at the time it was called Oswiecim in Polish. And, uh, in 1931, one year before the First World War, they left and went to Holland.

N: They went to Holland. I see. Now, why did they decide to go to Holland?

S: Excuse me?

N: Why did they decide to go to Holland?

S: Because they probably saw the First World War coming on.

N: The Second World War?

S: No, I'm talking about the first one.

N: Oh, I'm sorry did you say that they left.

S: 1913, I said.

N: 1913, I'm sorry, I thought 1931. 1913 they left for Holland. Okay, okay. So, they left for Holland? Do you know why they chose Holland of Western European countries?

S: You mean, why they choose Holland? I don't know. That's what you ask?

N: Yeah.

S: Yes. I don't know why they choose Holland.

N: Okay. And your mother, what was her first name?

S: Sala.

N: How do you spell that?

S: S-A-L-A.

N: Mhm.

S: Her Hebrew name is Sala.

N: Uh huh. Okay. And what year was she born?

S: In 1909 on February the first.

N: Okay, so she was already born before they all moved to Holland?

S: Yeah. She was eight months with my brother younger brother.

N: Uh, but your, okay, so I'm a little bit confused. Your grandparents had moved to Holland in 1913. Is that right?

S: My maternal grandparents.

N: Yes. And they moved there with your mother.

S: Yes.

N: Okay. Alright, alright. So your mother...

S: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm very sorry.

N: No, no, no. That's fine.

S: I'm confusing this. My grandparents left Auschwitz 1931 before the Second World War. Before the First World War.

N: Right, in 1913.

S: And my parents left in 1933, left one month after Hitler came to power to go to Holland.

N: Okay. Yes, that's clear. Now, I'm just trying to figure out where your mother was between 1913 and 1933.

S: In Auschwitz.

N: But didn't your grandparents take your mother...?

S: Oh, excuse me, excuse me, you're right. You're right. You're right. My parents got married on 1928.

N: Ah hah! And where did they get married?

S: In Leipzig. And my mother then went to live in Leipzig.

N: Now, your mother, between 1913, when she leaves Galicia, and 1928, when she marries your father in Leipzig- she is in Holland between that time?

S: She's in Holland, because uh, her father, my maternal grandfather used to do business with my father's grandfather.

N: I see, that's where they know each other from.]

S: No, he saw her yes.

N: So, what did your maternal grandfather do? What did Moshe do?

S: He had a, Moshe he had a very big wholesale store, wholesale building. A big four floor building. Of everything you can think of in textiles. Underwear, shirts, trousers, socks, uh, handkerchiefs. Who knows what else?

N: So, you're paternal grandfather was selling the, the suspenders to Moshe? The seller?

S: To Moshe.

N: I see. Okay. And um, so, how did your maternal family, they were, were they religious? Sorry, I should rephrase...

S: No, they were exactly the same as on, exactly the same as on my father's side. They're both the same degree of religiousness.

N: Okay. And also, Orthodox.

S: Pardon?

N: Also Orthodox?

S: Also Orthodox, yes.

N: Okay. Did they speak Yiddish amongst themselves?

S: Yes. Yes. They came from Poland.

N: Mhm. Did they?

S: Most Jews who come from Poland and from Russia and from... You know what? I wanna ask you a funny question.

N: Sure.

S: You know what country the most beautiful way of speaking Yiddish is?

N: No.

S: Lithuania. All the big Chasidim come from Lithuania.

N: Mhm. Mhm.

S: I'm sorry I mix in something with the...

N: No, no, no, no, this is very. This is very interesting. And I'm asking these questions because I, I think that having this information is descriptive of a family. You know, you can better understand the situation of a family.

S: Yes. Yes. Yes.

N: So, they spoke Yiddish amongst themselves. So, would you say that your mother's first language was Yiddish or something else?

S: Well, Polish.

N: It was Polish?

S: Yeah, but after she married, she forgot it, she didn't want to speak it anymore.

N: But does that mean they were speaking Polish at home, with, in Holland?

S: First at home and when she came to Holland she started speaking Dutch.

N: Okay, so basically, after the age of four, she was speaking...

S: At four years old she came to Holland.

N: Dutch. Uh huh. So, in her home, were they speaking Polish, Dutch, or Yiddish, or everything?

S: Mmmmm... I would say Dutch. Maybe my, maybe my Oma Rosa and Opa Moshe in between themselves certainly were only speaking Yiddish. But I think with the children they were only speaking Dutch.

N: So, does that?

S: None of my uncles on my father's side or my mother's side, none of them knew Yiddish.

N: I see. Okay. So then, your grandparents, Moshe and Rosa, they would not have known Dutch before they went to Holland? Right?

S: No. No.

N: Okay. So they learned Dutch and they spoke Dutch with their own children. Is that right?

S: Yes. Because they had to speak Dutch for business also. So, like they say in Israel, "Aim doreaha" [ph]. You know what that means?

N: No, please tell me.

S: "Aim doreaha" [ph] means you have no choice.

N: Ah hah.

S: Doreaha [ph] is choice. Aim [ph] is no.

N: And um, did your maternal grandmother work or not?

S: Oh, yes. (chuckle)

N: What did she do?

S: She was a very good business woman. My grand, my, my, Moshe Schoenberg, he used to do buying because he knew the quality very well, but who, who, who, who handled the whole business? And who made the sales was Oma Rosa.

N: Ah hah.

S: She was a very good businessman.

N: Ah hah. And on your father's side? Your...

S: My grandmother, my father's grandmother married a man, my father's mother, my father's grandmother died very early.

N: Okay. But she would not have been working? Would she?

S: I wouldn't know. I never met her. I cannot remember having met her and I don't know when she died.

N: Mhm.

S: She must have died young.

N: Okay. Now, let's just talk about your parent's education. Your father went to what kind of school?

S: He went to high school, then he went to kind of a business school for two years.

N: Do you know which one?

S: No. No.

N: Mhm. This was in Leipzig?

S: In Leipzig.

N: Okay. Do you know whether he went to a religious school or a public school?

S: Public.

N: Mhm. What are?

S: Public school. Not a lot. I don't think in Leipzig they had many religious shuls like they have.

N: Yeshivas.

S: Like they have in the states.

N: Mhm. Mhm. And what about your mother? Did she have any schooling?

S: She went all through public school, my mother.

N: Public school in Holland?

S: Yeah. I don't think they had Yiddish schools in Holland.

N: Mhm. Now where in Holland did they move to?

S: Amsterdam.

N: And she stayed in Amsterdam until what year when she was growing up?

S: Til she married in 1928.

N: Okay, and was it an arranged marriage? Or did she know your father?

S: No, she knew my father because my father used to be once or twice a year in Amsterdam to sell, to sell, hosentragers, the

N: The, the, suspenders.

S: Suspenders, yes.

N: Okay, so they had met.

S: They had met.

N: And so she moves in 1928 to marry your father. And then, are you, you're the first child?

S: I am the first one. My brother is uh, four and a half years younger than I am.

N: Mhm. So your brother was born when?

S: In Amsterdam in May 19... uh, excuse me, 1933.

N: 1933. Okay. Um. Let's see. So, do you have any memories of Leipzig?

S: No. None whatsoever. Not for my house, not for my grandparents house, not for the synagogue. I don't know if my father took me there on the High Holidays. I only remember Holland.

N: Did.

S: In Holland, I remember we used to go and we used to, on Ramadan [ph] on Yom Kippur, my father went to the big synagogue in the center of Amsterdam. It was one and a half hour walking one way and one and a half hour walking back.

N: Oh my goodness. That's quite the workout.

S: Yes. Did your grandparents also, your maternal grandparents were already in Holland, they had not moved. Did your paternal grandparents, well your mother, your grandmother I suppose had passed away by then from diabetes, did your grandfather move with you to Holland? Your paternal grandfather.

S: No. No. He left Germany, I think only in 39. He went to Belgium together with the younger brother of my father. He went only at the last minute, I must say.

N: Now, you've already talked a bit about this, but I want to get back to your family leaving in 33. Can you tell me more about how they felt about why they were leaving? Anything concrete that they said, you know? There was a... Maybe there was an event that they decided, okay, this is it, we're leaving. Or, how did they come to that decision?

S: My father was a guy who always saw, looked very much in the future. My father in 1938, 39 uh, when there was still no war in Holland. He wanted to go to the States. He had three sisters in the states. Um. And my mother didn't want to go because her parents were living in Amsterdam. In 1940, my father was very good friends with the English Consul, and uh, the Germans invaded Holland in 1940.

N: Mhm.

S: In May.

N: Yes.

S: And so the consul contact my father and says, "Bruno, I've been your guest many times now. You are my guest. I have a ship leaving Amsterdam about in an hour from now, only English citizens. You will be the only people on board who are not English citizens." That boat, when it left coast in Holland, it struck two magnetic mines.

N: Oh my goodness.

S: Terrible. Everything, everything busts and breaks, glass, windows, wash basins. Everything. So, we went back to the port in Holland.

N: Are you saying your family was on that ship?

S: Yes, we were. The four of us. We went in the lifeboats. Luckily enough it wasn't very far away from the coast. It was about an hour rowing. And we arrived in the port of Emerd [ph], that's the port of Amsterdam, and uh, stayed about two hours, and my father is very impatient, and he says, "Let's go back to Amsterdam." If we would have stayed another two hours, the English sent another ship and took everybody to England. My life story would have been totally different.

N: So, he didn't wait for the second boat, you're saying?

S: No, my father was not. No, my father was not the kind of guy to wait for things. Because 1942, when the Germans started deporting Jews in Holland, he was the first one to leave Holland. My story's long.

N: I know you're story's long. I want to bring you back because I think we're jumping ahead so much. But before I take you back, do you know what the name was of the British consul that said, "You are now my guests."?

S: No. No.

N: You don't know the name. Do you know the name of the boat that struck the mines?

S: Renselaer.

N: Can you spell that?

S: R-E-N-S-E-L-A-E-R.

N: Mhm. Would you know what the second boat was, that he didn't wait for?

S: No.

N: Okay.

S: Because we took off, so we wouldn't know.

N: So, let's get back from 1940 because we have to talk about the time between 33 and 40. So, getting back to my question, you said that your father always looked ahead. So, but was there something that pushed him to leave, or had he been thinking about it during the year? I realize you were only four years old.

S: He was afraid of Hitler and he wanted to get away as far as possible from him. Which wasn't, which, which in Holland was not the case because Holland is a neighbor of Germany.

N: Yes, do you know why they chose Holland?

S: Because my mother, because my mother's parents lived there.

N: Do you know whether they, they took their valuables, the worth of their property, their business, were they able to liquidate the factory?

S: No, I know my father took some of the money of the factory and of my grandfather took away to Holland. And the German's discovered it and later he had to send it back to Germany.

N: So, he took some of the value of the factory and then he had to send it back?

S: Send it back.

N: Wh...?

S: Look, they worked hard for a couple of years to start a, to build up their business. It was life at the time.

N: Do you know, do you know when he had to send back the money?

S: No. I think it was two or three years later.

N: So, maybe 35, 36?

S: Yeah, something like that.

N: And, you said that your father had a brother and he was a junior partner. Where, did he stay in Germany or did he leave?

S: No, no, my grandfather and his younger son Josef went to Belgium in 1933. About a year before the Germans invaded Belgium.

N: 39.

S: And they went in 39. And in 1940, the Germans invaded Belgium, Holland and France.

N: Mhm. Mhm. So, between 33 and 39, is your father communicating with his father and his brother? Are they exchanging letters?

S: Probably, probably. But I wouldn't know the details.

N: Was your father keeping up with what was happening in Germany? Did he ever talk about it?

S: Yes, yes. Yes, of course. I mean, it was in all the papers all over Europe. You had it in Belgium. You had it in France. Everybody knew the problems with Germany.

N: Sure, but what I'm interested in is how this played out in your family. So, was it a topic of conversation?

S: No. No. Not with us children.

N: I see.

S: There might have been conversation between my parents themselves and maybe with their friends, but not with us.

N: And when you were growing up before the war in Holland, um, did you. Okay. Here's the question. What identity did you have? How did you feel about yourself? Were you a German Jewish boy in Holland? Were you a Dutch boy?

S: I felt, no, I felt like a Jewish boy with no nationality. At that time we didn't have passports because we were stateless.

N: Mhm.

S: We were stateless for a long time. But that's another story? You know what stateless is?

N: Absolutely. Um, so, did your parents have any kind of identity papers during the 30s?

S: Oh, yes, they were residents in Holland. And they had a factory and they paid taxes. The factory made profit and they paid taxes. And they paid taxes on their private income from the factory...

N: Mhm.

S: and they were, they were, with the exception of the nationality, they were like Dutch citizens.

N: What language did your parents speak at home with you?

S: Only Dutch. After they left Germany, they never again spoke Germany. They only started speaking Germany again when we immigrated in 1947 to uh, to New York. Because uh, my three aunts there, they spoke half the time English with us, half the time, German.

N: And why is it that they stopped speaking German in Holland?

S: Because my father terrible hate of Hitler and Germany. I never, after the Second World War ends, finish about 1944, I went, I been going all over Europe because, uh, I live in Brazil since 51, all over Europe, especially for business, because we were in the chemical import business. I went to Russia, I went to Denmark, went to Poland, to Hungary, uh, but I never went back to Germany.

N: So, your parents imparted this feeling about Germany onto you?

S: Yes. They didn't want to speak German. Only when they arrived in the States did they start to speak a little bit German. Then later on, they went to live in Switzerland. Because my father was diabetic also. Because I told you it comes through the mother's side. My younger brother was also diabetic. Uh, Yich, when we came to Brazil in 1951, my parents arrived in 54, three years later. We worked together in business, my father, also. And, the diabetes of my father was getting worse because he made a very big mistake of not taking insulin injections. He only wanted to take pills. In 1969, the house doctor, my father told him, "Listen, Bruno, you in the wrong business because of your business we always have all these problems, and problems are bad for diabetic people. You go to live in Switzerland." And in 69, they went to live in Switzerland. And there again, of course, they start speaking German again.

N: Mhm

S: That's where I learned my five languages, in that way. Because in Holland, I learned Dutch, then we were hidden in Belgium, during the war, and at the Belgian lyceum, you know what lyceum is, middle school, high school, I mean, we had to take four, five languages. So, Dutch and French were the main languages of Belgium at the time. So, at school, I learned English and especially, German grammar. One of the worst grammars in the world is German.

N: It's true.

S: French is difficult. The German is much worse. Irregular verbs in French are nothing. But the Germans, there (tape jumps) has three conjugations.

N: It's true.

S: Sorry, that I pulled over the, over the...

N: No, no, no, this is very important. These are all important things. So, at home in Holland, they were speaking Dutch.

S: Only Dutch.

N: No Yiddish?

S: No Yiddish. And all the friends of my parents in between themselves, they only spoke Dutch. Some of my best school friends, his parents, were from Dutch. Which they came from Russia, I think two generations ago, but they were all, they already were born in Holland.

N: Mhm.

S: And my, my. The elder sister of my mother also came to Holland, uh, and she also spoke Dutch.

N: And you only had one sibling? Or more?

S: You mean, younger brother? Sibling in which way?

N: Brother.

S: I have sibling would be my child.

N: No, no, sibling is brother or sister.

S: Oh, I'm sorry. Sorry. I thought sibling was a child.

N: No, no.

S: Okay. I only had one brother.

N: Okay. And, so when your parents lived in Holland, you said you lived in Amsterdam, do you remember the street where you lived?

S: Number 164 Beethoven Straat, Amsterdam Zuid.

N: So it was Beethoven Street,

S: 164 Beethoven Straat, S-T-R-A-A-T, and the neighborhood was called Zuid-south- Z-U-I-D.

N: Okay. Was that a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, or?

S: No, no. Mixed.

N: Mixed.

S: There were Jewish there of course, but don't forget the Jewish population of Holland at that time already was big, but it was not more than 10%. Holland population at that time was 8,000,000 people and there were 800,000 Jews, which after the Second World War only about 30 or 40 were left over.

N: Mhm. Did you live in an apartment or in a building?

S: Yeah. Apartment.

N: Do you remember how many rooms you had?

S: Uh, we had three bedrooms, one for my parents, one for my brother, one for me.

N: Did, did you have a nanny?

S: No, we had a Dutch, no, we had a German maid.

N: A German maid.

S: Yeah, but she lived in Holland a very long time.

N: I'm sorry, she...

S: She came to Holland as a child.

N: I see.

S: But she was actually German.

N: Did she live with you or did she just come in?

S: She lived with us. No she didn't live with us because there was no room for her.

N: Do you remember her name?

S: Margaret. Margot. M-A-R-G-O-T.

N: Um, and, so did she take care of the children or only the house?

S: No, she did everything. She made the house, she went shopping while my mother worked at the factory and she took care of my brother and I. Although, I remember very early on going to school myself because it was about three, four blocks.

N: And you're saying your mother worked at the factory with your father?

S: Yes, for a long time.

N: And what did your mother do in the factory?

S: I told you, she cut, she cut the pieces of, of, of, of rubber or whatever. The elastic. And my father sewed them.

N: Uh huh. Uh huh.

S: And later on they got more employees. But, the first two or three years, they worked long, they worked long, from 8 in the morning until 6 or 7 at night.

N: Wow. And what kind of traditions did they keep?

S: Orthodox.

N: So, it was Orthodox at home.

S: Kosher, we made abdalla Saturday night. You know what abdalla is?

N: Yes.

S: We had Kiddush on Friday evening, challah and everything.

N: Um. Did you go to a religious school?

S: No, a public school. Two very public schools. One was called Dalton's. Dalton's School, which was a system, you know, I don't if you ever heard of Montessori?

N: Yes, I did.

S: It was not a school of distance. And I went to Dalton's School and I write in blocks. I don't write in flowing letters.

N: So, why, what is the advantage of writing in blocks? Or why did they?

S: I had, this is what I was taught in school. I don't know Mr. Dalton at all. He invented that. The problem is, that if you write in blocks like this, as you do in the Dalton School, my school friend, he could imitate my signature as well as I could imitate his.

N: So, why did your parents choose to put you in something that sounds like maybe some, not very conservative type of school for the time? Certainly alternative. Or new. Or different.

S: Because it was in that neighborhood. There were two schools. Dalton's School and Montessori school. You had to choose between one of the two. Why they chose Dalton's School, I don't remember.

N: But why did they?

S: I don't remember of having any public schools.

N: I see. So there was no accessible public school.

S: No, not in our neighborhood. Maybe in other parts of town, yes, I wouldn't know.

N: And can you tell me a little more about this Dalton School, what other specialties did it have, aside from block letter writing?

S: Uh. No, no, it's not a block letter. Their teaching system modern, they taught a little bit of everything. It was the same, at the Montessori, it would be the same. I think that the teaching system wouldn't be very much different from any other teaching system at that time in Holland.

N: Um, so you said, you would go to school by yourself. You were able to walk by yourself?

S: Yes.

N: Okay. Did your, uh, brother, who was already born there, was he going to school there a few years later? Was there a kindergarten?

S: Mmmm... One minute, one minute. We left. He might have gone, but I cannot remember. I don't think, no, there was no kindergarten.

N: Now, aside from Margot, I hope I'm pronouncing her name correctly, did you have any other people helping around the house? Was there a cook? Or?

S: No, no, Because Margot used to cook, used to clean, used to go shopping, I used to go to the market with her to go shopping, and she was the only one.

N: Now you, of course, said a couple of times that your mother was working. Do you know whether she had to work? Or she chose to work?

S: She probably choose to work, but uh, again, in Bernarach [ph] she had no other choice. I mean, she had to help. It was the beginning of their life.

N:Mhm. Mhm. Mhm.

S: Of their business life, let's say.

N: Did she at one point stop working, when they were better off?

S: Yes, yes, yes. I think she worked about, I wouldn't know, four to five years, three to four years. You don't work all, at the time when the factory became big and more people came to work, she stopped working.

N: So, how many people were working at that factory? At the Beutel [ph] factory?

S: I think between 20 and 30.

N: And this was around what year, they had that many people?

S: Uh. I think after four or five years, and then til 1942 when we left.

N: Okay. So, it would have been that many people already in 38, 39?

S: Yes.

N: Okay. And um, can you tell me a little about your parent's friends? Did they socialize? Did people come over for dinner? Or card games or tea?

S: Oh, yes. No, it was more they went out together at night. Went to have coffee, or to a vegico [ph], to a concert or a theater play. And it took, I. House visits maybe two, three times a year. But, not, not, not on a weekly basis, I'd say.

N: And when they went to a concert, what kind of music was it?

S: I don't know.

N: You don't know. Um, do you know whether their friends came from a certain circle? How, you know, where were they socializing? What type of friends did they have?

S: Well, um, mostly Jewish friends. My father had about one or two Dutch business friends that they see, but ah, I think that the socializing was only between themselves and between Jews. I would say that their, their Jewish friend circle must have been between 8 and 10 different people.

N: And so, not really many gentile friends?

S: No, none whatsoever.

N: Oh, none whatsoever. Okay. Um, I don't know if I asked this before, but Margot was not Jewish, right?

S: Excuse me. Who was not Jewish?

N: Margot?

S: No, Margot was not, no.

N: Mhm. Mhm. And, um, so, when you went to the Dalton School, I suppose there were Jewish boys and non-Jewish boys?

S: Yes, of course.

N: And...

S: You know who was my old mate in Dalton School?

N: Who?

S: I'm so sure you know her name.

N: I don't know, you didn't tell me yet. Who? (chuckle)

S: Anne Frank.

N: Really?

S: Yes.

N: Yes, I certainly know her name.

S: She sat about three rows behind me.

N: Really? Well, what do you remember about her?

S: She had dark hair. She had dark eyes. What can I remember at that age of a girl?

N: I don't know. Was she quiet? Was she misbehaving?

S: I wouldn't remember. There were about 20-25 people in my room.

N: Ah hah. Ah hah. So, I know this is a strange question, but, how do you know it was her?

S: Ah, because I remember her face. When I saw pictures later.

N: Uh huh. Uh huh. Do you remember when you saw her picture first? As like, in a publication.

S: I would say in 45, 46. Not in 44 because we were only liberated in September 1944. The small detail, that's not important but it's interesting. My parents in Brussels at that time, they were living separate because it was safer. Uh...

N: I'm sorry, they were living with?

S: They were living in separate apartments.

N: Separate apartments. Okay. In Brussels.

S: Yes. Safer. So, at the house my father was living, there was a, to go out, you had to go down about 3 or 4 steps. So when the English marched in in September, he was so happy, he forgot the four steps. He fell, broke two ribs.

N: Oh my goodness.

S: Small details. (chuckling)

N: (chuckling) So, do you have any other memories of Anne Frank?

S: No. No. No.

N: Do you have any memories of your friends from that school that time?

S: Yes. Because Herman , Herman Spector [ph], he was sitting next to me. There were rows of two pupils. And uh, I had two other friends. Peter Sussman [ph] and the other one was Charles Silverstein

[ph]. The Silverstein people, when they came to New York, they became very big because his father Silverstein he made a very big brokerage business which later on broke, but okay. Never mind. (laughter)

N: And, and these boys, I suppose, did you say his name was Peter? Peter Silverstein [ph]?

S: Yeah, we met about two or three times a week to play together. With soldiers or with horses or with other games.

N: What kind of games did you play? As a little boy growing up?

S: Uh.... Soldiers, horses, um, I don't remember. Trains and cars.

N: Did you play any sports?

S: No. The only sports I did was, uh, we used to live , our house was on the corner, and next to the street of the corner of our house was a canal which in winter froze completely. So, all winter long, I used to skate. But in Belgium, in Holland, no other sports. I make sports in Belgium when we came there.

N: Now, so you were talking about these boys. Were they predominantly Jewish, your friends, or were they a mix?

S: No, I would say only, I had no, no, I had no non-Jewish friends.

N: And why was that?

S: Because, I, we, because I knew their parents and they knew my parents. And it was about 10 people one was friends with the other and the children were friends with as a result.

N: And you all went to the same school?

S: Yes.

N: Now do you remember any incidents of anti-Semitism in Holland in the 30s?

S: No. Not before the war. Not until the Germans marched in.

N: Okay. Did your family talk about or do you have any memory of hearing about Kristallnacht?

S: About? Ah, no.

N: The Night of Broken Glass?

S: No, I know, I know. No. No. My father knew about it, but I was much too small. I think Kristallnacht was in 1936.

N: Uh, yeah, 38.

S: Yeah, 38. Sorry. Yeah, no, no. It might have been in the papers, I didn't read the papers at that time.

N: Sure. Okay. Well, then, can you, do you have a memory of how you heard about the war starting?

S: Oh, yes. (chuckle) They started bombing the neighborhood.

N: Okay. So can you tell me about that day? Where were you and what did you hear?

S: No, I will never forget the day, and you know why?

N: Mhm.

S: Because the night before, I got a new bike. A shining new bike.

N: What's uh?

S: And I was planning on the next morning to go out and ride my bike. And the Germans just choose that day to invade Holland.

N: Oh my goodness. What, do you remember what brand it was?

S: No.

N: What color?

S: Black.

N: And why did you get a bike? Was it your, some kind of event?

S: I don't know. I don't remember.

N: Was it your first bike?

S: Second bike. The old one had become, the older one had become old.

N: Oh, I see. Okay, so the Germans invaded on the first day when you were going to ride your bike?

S: Yes, it was May. I don't remember.

N: 10th.

S: It was the 10th I think.

N: Yeah. Yeah. And do you remember, so you were talking about bombs? You were talking about bombing?

S: Excuse me?

N : You were talking about bombs before? Or bombing?

S: Yes, they were bombing. And there were planes flying all over. And the Dutch flew, they had the anti-air craft fires, anti-aircraft fire is murder because the shrapnel when it goes up in the air, it falls back in

small pieces of uh, uh, of uh, how do you call it? _____ is what you call it in Portuguese. It's not, it's kind of a metal.

N: Uh huh, like debris?

S: How do you call it?

N: I'm guessing it's some kind of debris from the shrapnel, like little pieces.

S: Debris is actually French word.

N: Yes, it's true. It is. So, so, when this was happening, where were you?

S: We were in our house, and then I remember a friend of ours called very early in the morning. He said to my father, " _____ " It means the puppets are dancing. It means, it was a way of expressing

N: Mhm.

S: he didn't know if the lines were monitored or not.

N: Ah, I see.

S: Then, I remember, right away that at noon time we already went to the ship. My father took the car.

N: The same day, at noon, you were already going to the ship?

S: Yes.

N: Oh, so it was on May 10th, when the Consul called?

S: Yes.

N: Wow. Now, you had said that your father already wanted to leave for the United States around 1938, is that right? And your mother wanted to stay because her parents were there?

S: Correct.

N: Do you remember any arguments or disagreements in front of the children about this?

S: No, no, it was between my parents and their parents. They would never would speak about things like that. At that time, they didn't tell anything children. It's not like nowadays.

N: So, so this. The bombing happens in the morning.

S: No, no, all day long. We had about 3, 4 days. I think that Holland surrendered on the fifth or sixth day.

N: Mhm. Yes. It's about...

S: In Holland, it was very short. In Belgium, it took longer. In French, even much longer.

N: So, when the bombing was happening were you in your apartment?

S: Yes.

N: You did not go...

S: It started in the morning around five, six o'clock.

N: You did not go to a place that was safe? Maybe to a cellar?

S: At that time, there were no cellars.

N: There were no cellars.

S: No, no. There was no war.

N: So, so, on this, the same day, on May 10th, the British consul calls and invites your family onto the Renselaer?

S: Right.

N: Now, do you remember packing?

S: No, we didn't pack. I remember my father threw some money in a bag, and, uh, uh, uh, we had to leave ship. He had a choice. (tape unclear) Or... keep the money, the bag of the money, or keep my younger brother because he wanted to go elsewhere. So he threw the bag in the in the water (chuckle).

N: Where did your younger brother want to go?

S: No, he was going to take us to England.

N: I'm sorry, he was going to?

S: The ship was going to take us to England. It was an English ship.

N: No, no, no, but you said there was a choice to either take the bag or your younger brother?

S: No, when we were leaving the ship, you have to go into the saving boats.

N: Ah, onto the saving boats. Okay.

S: Yes, yes, you have to climb into the saving boats.

N: I see. And there wasn't enough space.

S: My father, all, he would take my younger brother and he would take him into the saving boat or he would take his bag. One way or the other, you had to choose.

N: So what happened to the bag?

S: It disappeared in the water.

N: So, okay, so before you abandoned ship, when you get on the ship, how many people were on that ship?

S: It was so full.

N: And you had mentioned the consul said that your family would be the only ones who were not British?

S: Correct.

N: Now, how come your father have such a good relationship with such a high ranking British diplomat?

S: Because, I don't know. They, they, they. My father knew a lot of people. He was very, he was very extrovert.

N: Mhm. Mhm. And, do you remember when the ship hit the mines? You said there were some kind of mines?

S: Of course I remember.

N: But can you describe it to me.

S: There was a terrible noise and you hear everything breaking around you.

N: Uh huh.

S: I told you. The...

N: The glass?

S: The glass, the windows, the shav-, the thing where you wash your water. Sometimes, the word is missing. The bathtub was completely in pieces.

N: Uh huh.

S: And then we ran out. They had people of the English, the English sailors, they said what to do.

N: Now, what was your um, state at that point? You're about 10 years old, right? So, how are you living this? What are you feeling?

S: Not remembering. I just remember the noise and everything breaking down. And we were running upstairs to get into the boats. And, and, then the people were rowing in the boat, and then we came in very big underground cellar there in Holland.

N: I'm sorry you came in a very big...?

S: A very big cellar where many people were.

N: A cellar.

S: An underground bunker, let's say.

N: So, you're rowing back, where do you disembark?

S: In the port of Haven van Amsterdam which is the port of Amsterdam. It's the canal between Amsterdam and Maarten, and Maarten is on the North Sea, it's a port.

N: And then where did your family go immediately afterwards?

S: You mean when we came back to Holland? We went back to our apartment.

N: And you said there was a, a second boat that was departing later.

S: Yes.

N: How many hours later?

S: I think, uh, they told us later on, it came about 2 or 3 hours later. After we left.

N: Your father decided not to wait.

S: No, he, he, he was afraid of waiting. He went back to Amsterdam.

N: I see, so they were telling you to wait in the port and he decided not to wait in the port.

S: Right.

N: And the cellar was where?

S: Was near the port also.

N: Near the port.

S: I wouldn't remember the exact location.

N: But they were telling people from the boats to go into the cellar.

S: Yes.

N: Okay.

S: Well, you had to go somewhere.

N: Sure.

S: You row the boat, you come into the port, you have to get out of the boat. You can't stay.

N: Sure. It's just for me to understand where you know, like, what comes first in the sequence. Okay. So, your father decides not to wait, he takes everyone back to the apartment where he used to live.

S: Yes. Yes.

N: And then what happens?

S: Then, what happens? Life goes on. He went back to the factory and uh, six months later, he got a, a German supervisor from the German ministry of commerce.

N: Do you remember what the supervisor was called?

S: No.

N: Okay.

S: But, my father got along with him rather well.

N: I see.

S: He wasn't a bad guy. As a matter of fact, in 19, in 1942 when we escaped, uh, to Belgium. We were sent back, it's a long story, we were sent back by the Gestapo and and the um, my parents arrived at the Hague, which was the capitol of Holland and my father knew the guy was living there. He stayed, they stayed about two nights in the apartment with the guy. If he got caught, he would have got shot. So, there was sometimes good Germans.

N: But you don't remember his name?

S: No.

N: And, and obviously, this person knew that your father was Jewish. Your father was not hiding the fact?

S: Yes, yes, obviously because after six months, we had to wear those, those uh...

N: Stars.

S: Magen David stars.

N: Right. Okay, then, describe to me what happens after the Germans come in.

S: The first six months it was almost nothing happened. Then things started happening.

N: Were you able to go to school normally?

S: Yes.

N: Okay, there was no distinction made between children?

S: No, but but for instance, uh, it's called Sou... Do you know what licorice is?

N: I'm sorry, how do you spell that?

S: Licorice.

N: Oh, licorice. Yes, yes, yes.

S: Yeah, well in Holland they made it the salt way. Completely salt, in black. Well, in Holland, this was a delicacy and every second day I used to go to the drug store to buy myself a little package of these licorice. In Dutch, it's called drupples, zoethout drupples [ph].

N: Uh huh.

S: Sold drugs. Uh, uh, uh, after six months Jewish were only allowed to go into stores between 6 and 8, between 6 and 8 pm.

N: Mhm.

S: After 12 months, I remember Jews were not allowed to go on the streets between 8pm and 6am. One restriction came after the other. I cannot remember them because there were many of them.

N: So, when these first restrictions came in, what did you think about them as a boy who is not very old yet?

S: Well, they were a pain in the neck, but that's about all.

N: That's about all. But...

S: As a child, what can you remember? I mean, you don't realize what's going on.

N: Mhm. Did anything change in school after a while?

S: No.

N: Nothing.

S: At school, no. Because I remember when I finish my primary school, which was in 1941, uh, I had to go, there was a high school for Jewish. I had to go to a Jewish high school.

N: Okay.

S: There were only Jews and it was a high school.

N: What was the high school called?

S: Joodse HoBS. Hogere [ph] (Jewish Higher Citizen's School). Joodse, uh, Jewish. Hogere, uh, in Dutch is Hogere burger [ph] school, which means higher

N: Education?

S: No, hogere is someone who lives in the country. A higher citizen's school. A Jewish Higher Citizen's School.

N: Okay. And where was it located?

S: Near the Hotel Amstel, which was the most expensive hotel in Amsterdam and it was just the corner of the River Amstel, which is the biggest river which is crossing Amsterdam.

N: Okay. Um. So, you have to go to this Jewish school? Did you, did that seem odd to you, or did you have any thoughts about going to an only Jewish school?

S: No, one went to do what was one told to do.

N: Okay. What was one told. And what about Margot? How long did she stay with your parents?

S: Until we fled in 1942.

N: So, she was still working there after occupation.

S: Oh, wait a minute! Wait, wait, wait, wait. You got me there. I don't remember. This I don't remember. No, I think she left earlier, after the Germans marched in they forced her to leave, I think.

N: And there was no other person helping in the house after?

S: At that time, I don't think so, no.

N: So, tell me, when did you have to start wearing the star?

S: Uh, six months or one year after the Germans arrived. I don't remember the exact date. It was not immediately. It was probably in 1943 or after.

N: 43?

S: Yes, because the Germans. No, actually, 41.

S: 41. Okay.

S: I am mixing my dates.

N: And where on your clothes did you have to?

S: On the left side of your shirt or jacket.

N: And was it only the shirt or the jacket that you wore outside? So, like, like an overcoat.

S: No, no, if you have a, had a shirt which had no Magen David, you could wear it inside the house. But, with that shirt you couldn't go in the street.

N: Okay. Um, did, who sewed on this piece?

S: Don't remember.

N: How did you?

S: Probably my mother. But, I'm not sure.

N: And how did you feel about wearing something like that?

S: Everybody did.

N: Mhm. Did you ever get any kind of um, did you ever get into any altercation because of it? Did anyone say anything on the street? Do anything on the street?

S: No. Dutch were very, very, Dutch were very in favor of Jews. They were even strikes in, I think in 1940, 1941 in favor of Jews.

N: Mhm.

S: Dutch were very, very, very were very Jewish friendly. Like in Belgium, the Walloon [ph], the French side, the southern part of Belgium, they were also very friendly with Jews. In the northern part, which is the Flemish part, they always were way anti-Semitic.

N: And do you know why?

S: No.

N: Okay.

S: I wouldn't know why.

N: So, so you're saying nobody, nobody hurt you, nobody taunted you.

S: No, no, no.

N: Okay, and how long were you in the situation where you had to wear the Star?

S: Til, til we fled in 19

N: And when did you flee?

S: In 42, when the deportations started. In June.

N: Okay, so summer of 42. And, um, during, from the point where the Germans came in in summer 40 to the point where you flee in summer 42, was your father able to continue working as he had been working before?

S: Yes.

N: So, he only had a new supervisor, but he, he could do the same things.

S: The rest was as before.

N: Okay. And, so you were saying, this supervisor, later on tried to help your family.

S: He took in my parents one or two nights to sleep because they had no place to go.

N: And so why was this, were they already on root to Belgium? Or?

S: No, we fled in 1942, uh, uh to Brussels because there was somebody there who was to take us back out to Switzerland. And then we were betrayed by a Jew in Belgium who knew many people.

N: Okay, so what, first, my first question is, what made your father decide to flee exactly in 42?

S: Well, because Belgium was occupied also.

N: No, but what did, flee from Holland.

S: Because he knew that the deportations were going to start in July, so we left in June.

N: And how did he know that?

S: I don't know.

N: Mhm. Did he, did he talk about this, did he say, "This is why we are leaving?" Or did he just?

S: No, no, no, no, no. No. No. We were children at that time you know. And they were people. And my parents sort of said as less as possible because you never know if the Germans would arrest or something, arresting you, the better it was.

We were in 42, we were arrested by the *Devisenschutzkommando* (Foreign Currency Control Administration). Which was a branch of the German government to protect foreign exchange. And, I, I was examined by two Germans when they arrested us for about three, four hours and I always denied everything. Then later on, my father came in and told me, "You can answer now." I didn't know everything. Then my father made an agreement with them that he would give them the money he had in Switzerland if they would let us go to Switzerland. Instead of that, they sent us back on the train to Holland with two German air force officers. And when we arrived in Amsterdam, excuse me, the Hague, the capitol, my father asked them could leave the train and we children had to go to the toilet. And so they said we could leave the train. The train was stopped in the station. They probably knew we were going to run away. So, we ran away and we went to that uh, that house. My parents stayed there. And, I don't know how they arranged it, my brother and I, we were in Haarlem, which is a small town near Amsterdam. We stayed there six months. We were in a small maternity of about 12 or 14 bedrooms. And we stayed six months, we stayed in Holland. And we never went in the street. We always stayed inside the house.

N: So, this is fascinating, but I'm afraid that I'm losing some details. Let's go back to, to your father decides in the summer of 42 in June of 42, before the deportations to leave. So, who, is he helped by anyone?

S: Yes, but I wouldn't know who.

N: Mhm. So, you say yes because you know that someone was there? Do you remember someone?

S: I remember we were in a car together with a friend of my parents. Salo Lieberman [ph]. Uh, and it was the driver. The rest I don't remember. I remember what happened, driving outside of Brussels, the Germans stopped us and arrested us.

N: So, you had got, you had not even gotten to the other country?

S: No, no, we're half an hour outside of Brussels. In the suburbs of Brussels.

N: And they arrested you. Now, how did you get from Holland to Belgium?

S: Uh, by one of these smugglers which take you across the border.

N: So, it was on foot.

S: Yes.

N: And how did you get to the border in Holland?

S: By train.

N: And what happened when you first tried to leave? What happened to the apartment? And to the factory? Did he sell it to someone? Did he give it to someone?

S: No, no, no, no. We left, I think my father made the decision in a fort night or maybe even less. He just left the factory as it was. He left the apartment the way it was. He gave the key I think to friends of his, non-Jewish friends who lived one floor higher.

N: Do you remember their name?

S: Willis. W-I-L-L-I-S.

N: Okay. So they were driven to the border. And did you say that there was another family with you? Or that was later outside of?

S: No. Only one man.

N: Only one man drove you to the border.

S: Yes. He drove my parents. He was younger.

N: Okay. And then you were supposed to, by foot, cross the border.

S: Right.

N: Do you remember what time of day this was? (beeping noise)

S: I do not remember crossing the border.

N: Sorry?

S: I say, I do not remember crossing the border.

N: Oh, you don't remember this. Okay. So, once you were in Belgium, did anything happen before they got to Brussels?

S: No.

N: Um, and then you said, did you stay any time in Brussels before you were trying to escape to Switzerland? Or not?

S: Maybe one day, but I'm not sure.

N: Do you know whether they were um, leaving through some kind of network or organization?

S: Probably. No, no, no. There were people who were organized to smuggle people across the border, to smuggle them into Switzerland. I wouldn't call it a network. It was probably a group of people, maybe one or two people. It was not an organized network like we know nowadays.

N: Okay. So, and so they're going. They're leaving Brussels, hoping to get toward Switzerland, but they get already stopped by the police in the suburbs of Brussels you said. So, do you remember how the police stopped them? Or any memories of that?

S: Well, was, there was a barricade on the street. So, you had to stop the car.

N: And then what happened? They told them to?

S: We had to go back and my parents went, were sent to prison.

N: Which prison?

S: Prison. Ah, prison for burglars and murders.

N: But do you know the name of the prison?

S: Yes, Saint Gilles. S-A-I-N-T and Gilles is G-I-L-L-E-S.

N: Okay, Gilles is the second word.

S: Gilles. G-I-L-L-E-S. And the first word, the first word is Saint. Saint is a saint. S-A-I-N-T.

N: Okay. Like a, like a Catholic saint. St. Gills. Okay. I see. And it was a prison for common criminals?

S: Right.

N: And where, where...

S: My brother and I, we were sent to a, a place where they kept Belgian prisoners of war.

N: So, what was that called?

S: I don't remember.

N: And, well you were pretty young, so this is, you're thirteen, right? And your brother was nine?

S: Right.

N: And you're sent to this place where there are prisoners of war. Are there other, are there children there?

S: No, only us two. Because at that, I was 13. We left in June 1942 and in January I had my Bar Mitzvah. And at the time of my Bar Mitzvah there were about fifty people in my apartment for the party. And the people came at 7:00 and they left at 8:00 in the morning because nobody could go in the streets.

N: Oh, wow.

S: It was quite a night.

N: So everyone was up all night. That might have been a great party.

S: It was quite a night.

N: Um, so when you get to this prison, and you say you don't remember the name. What do they do you?

S: No, we weren't in a prison. We were in a prisoner camp.

N: Oh, I'm sorry a camp for prisoners of war. What does it look like? What is its structure?

S: It was a very big barracks, many beds. Things like that. I really don't remember if we ate there or what we ate there. I wouldn't remember. I think we stayed about 3, 4 days.

N: Three, four days. Were there, were there adults around you, in the barracks?

S: No, no. Only sol, sol, only prisoners of war, Belgian soldiers.

N: But, so they were adults?

S: Yes.

N: Okay. And you were the only children there?

S: Yes.

N: Did anyone talk to you?

S: No. If they did it, I wouldn't remember. I don't know.

N: Well, do you remember being worried, confused, frightened?

S: Yes, of course.

N: So, did you know? Did you have some sort of understanding of where you were? Did you comprehend it?

S: Yes, I knew I was in Belgium. I knew I was in Brussels. I knew I was in a prisoner camp because they told us that.

N: And, you knew that you were with your younger brother? Were you concerned about taking care of him?

S: No, I always took care of my younger brother. My whole life. (chuckle) Well, we were in Belgium for two years. And I always took care of him. I know. Do you want details of our life in Belgium?

N: Everything. But just chronologically.

S: Okay.

N: So, you're still in this prisoner of war camp. Do you remember anything going on, any events?

S: No, no, no. I remember that about five, six days later my parents came, picked us up with two German air force officers, they, we ran away on the train in Holland. My parents.

N: Let's talk about running away because that sounds very exciting. So, you're being escorted by these two German officers back to Holland.

S: Yes, my father asked them if he could leave the train. The train had stopped in the Hague, which is the capitol of Holland,

N: Yes, yes.

S: to see if we could go to the toilet. They said yes we could.

N: Is that because if there were not toilets on the train?

S: Good question. He asked him, my father asked him if we could go *out* to go to the toilet.

N: Ah, okay. And so you say, they say yes.

S: Yes.

N: So, can you describe what your family did then? They get off the train and?

S: My parents went to that one house of the German, they stayed one or two nights.

N: No, no, no, no, no. But, in the train station. Where do they go?

S: I don't remember. Noemi, I don't remember.

N: You don't remember if you had to run, or...

S: No, no, no we left walking normally.

N: Walking normally.

S: If you run, that's a problem.

N: That would have been suspicious.

S: Yeah, then you're in trouble.

N: Were your parents kind of coaching you, like don't turn around or don't speak?

S: No, I don't remember where, we split up right away. I don't know how the hell they did it. They sent us to that house. To that maternity house.

N: By maternity house you mean where, where babies are born?

S: Yes, yes, babies are born. On the first floor there was about 12 or 14 rooms for expecting mothers and there was a, a, a, how do you call the top of the house, a, a, a- the other way, the opposite of a basement. What's on top of a house?

N: Ah, attic.

S: Attic, right. I was looking for the word.

N: Uh huh.

S: There was an attic where all the nurses slept and my brother and I slept.

N: And do you know how they arranged for you to be there?

S: Well, they put in two beds, and they put in a closet.

N: No, your parents, how they arranged with the nurses.

S: No. I don't know. I even don't know how they arranged. They slept, they stayed six months at an elderly lady in Amster... in the Hague and I don't know how they arranged that either.

N: But first you were saying they stayed with your father's former supervisor for like a night or two, right? (beeping noise)

S: Two nights only.

N: Okay, two nights. And you were already.

S: How they did all these things, I don't know.

N: You were already in the maternity house in the same nights that they were sleeping with the, at his former supervisor's house?

S: I don't even know how we came to that maternity house because my parents didn't take us there. Who took us there, I don't remember.

N: Do you remember the name of the maternity house?

S: No.

N: Okay. So, how long were you in the maternity house?

S: Six months.

N: Six months! And you were in the attic?

S: We sat all day long. And at that time, I still was kosher and I didn't eat any meat for six months.

N: What did you eat instead?

S: Uh, cheese, bread, fish.

N: Was there enough food?

S: But no, no, no meat parts, no chicken, no meat, no nothing.

N: Was there enough food during those six months?

S: Yes. There were.

N: And your little?

S: But after, after, after, in December 42, we again crossed the border.

N: Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait. Too fast. Too fast. So, you were sleeping in the attic with the nurses. Is that right?

S: Yes.

N: How many people in the attic?

S: 6 to 8, 4 to 6 nurses and two other servants.

N: And were you the? Yeah.

S: The attic was divided in small rooms. And my brother and I, I think we had a room to ourselves.

N: Were there any other children in the attic?

S: No.

N: Were there any other children in the maternity house? Or just babies and?

S: No, no, just babies.

N: Pregnant women? Um, were you the only Jewish people there?

S: Yes.

N: Did you know that?

S: If I,

N: Were you aware?

S: I knew the people were there were Dutch people, there were no Jews there.

N: But you were aware that you were basically hidden.

S: Yes. Uh, yes, yes, because they didn't let us go out in the street.

N: And did the nurses or anyone who ever worked there ever talk to you about that?

S: No.

N: Do you remember anybody's name?

S: No, none whatsoever.

N: Do you remember what you did during the day for those six months. How did you keep yourself, you know, amused?

S: I don't remember. They had a garden in the back. I was allowed to go into the garden. But what my brother and I did actually in six months. I, we slept a lot. That's a bad habit I still have. I sleep each afternoon. Uh, we slept a lot. That's what I remember. What we did, I do not remember at all.

N: Were you in contact at all with your parents for those six months?

S: No, no, not at all.

N: So, what, how did that affect you?

S: Somebody picked us up in December 1942, uh, said that your parents called us to pick you up and you're all going to Belgium. Across the border. So we, at night, crossed the border, walked across the border, and we came to Brussels.

N: But this is without your parents. So this is just a person taking you?

S: No, it was the four of us, all together.

N: Okay. So someone picked you up and brought you to your parents. And then, the four of you crossed the border. But for those six months when you were not communicating with your parents and I supposed you don't know when you will see them again. What kind of impression did that leave you with?

S: At that age, you don't have an impression.

N: You don't? Even though you're?

S: You go from day to day and and, that's it.

N: Yeah, but you know, you're 13, you're 14 right?

S: No, but yeah, we lived in a topsy-turvy world. If you lived in a normal world, you would be worried. You were worried about so many things. Actually, if I was worried, I might be, but I wouldn't remember.

N: And your brother, how did he cope with all of this? Did he show any signs of stress?

S: No, but he was much younger, he was 4.5 years younger, so, it was about 7.5 or 8 years or something.

N: So, he wasn't missing his mother or anything?

S: I don't think so, he never mentioned it.

N: Did he keep kosher like you did at the maternity home?

S: No.

N: So he was eating meat?

S: I was always a hardheaded boy. (laughter)

N: And at the time, at this time in the maternity home, when you went out of your way to keep kosher, what was the rationale for that? What were you feeling about the kosher?

S: I was taught to eat kosher and I could eat kosher. I had that kind of a training, upbringing. I mean that's about all.

N: Okay. So, you're saying a stranger came and said, I need to take you to your parents?

S: It might have been the owners of the maternity ward who told us that that stranger had come to fetch us.

N: Okay.

S: But I cannot remember the details.

N: Okay. So you're reunited with your parents and do you leave for Brussels immediately?

S: Yes.

N: Did they tell you anything? Talk to you about anything?

S: No. No. Because at that time, the father of my father lived in Brussels and his younger brother lived in Brussels also. But I remember we stayed, my brother and I, I think we stayed only one or two days in Brussels, and then they sent us to an orphanage.

N: Do you remember the name?

S: Yes. Um. Wait one minute. Orphelinat.

N: Mhm.

S: Called orphanage in French

N: Orphelinat. Yeah.

S: But I don't remember the name. It was in a city called Namur.

N: Can you spell that?

S: N-A-M-U-R.

N: Okay.

S: And they took care of us. There was a, a Catholic priest, he was an Abbe. Abbe? Abbe? What was his name? I can't remember his name. That's all. It's a long time now. And there were also three sisters at a shoe store. And she also took care of us.

N: Well, I just want to make sure I'm, I'm understanding everything. So, you get to Brussels and you're immediately put in the orphanage. In the orphelinat.

S: Right.

N: Okay. And how long do you stay in the orphelinat?

S: One year.

N: One year. And this this Abbe, whose name you don't remember, was he after?

S: Abbe Andre was his name.

N: Ah hah! Okay. Was he after the orphanat, or during?

S: No, he, he, he had a church of his own in the town of Namur.

N: He had a what?

S: He had a church

N: A church.

S: of his own in the town of Namur.

N: Mhm.

S: And from time to time he came to look at us to see if everything was okay. It was those three sisters who were friends of his also, once in a month, or once in two months, they came to have a look of us. Sometimes, they brought something to eat. There we that first year, in Namur, we were hungry.

N: So, describe, describe hungry. I mean describe what you went through?

S: You know what hunger is?

N: No, no, no. I want to understand what it meant to you there.

S: Well, you're hungry, there's a pain in your stomach. You want to eat and there's nothing to eat. Very little food. My parents used to send us cans of sardines and some other cans of something. But it didn't help much. Not only us, but that orphanat had about 2 or 300 orphans. Everybody was hungry.

N: So, your parents would come to visit you?

S: No.

N: No. Where were your parents while you were in the orphanat?

S: First, they were in the same block. My father was on one side of the block, my mother was on the other side of the block.

N: Because it was safer?

S: Safer. And they would see each other very seldom.

N: And who were they living with?

S: My father lived with a lady who had an apartment for rent, he rented it from her. And my mother lived in a house, in a room in which she rented there.

N: And were they living with false papers, or?

S: Yes, false papers.

N: How did they get the false papers?

S: This Abbe Andre, he was a specialist in forging papers. I remember when we were, when I was in Brussels. In the last six, in the first half, in the middle, of 44, uh, Mallone was starting being bombarded and they sent us back to Brussels. I remember this Abbe Andre, used to give me false identity cards, which I had to put inside my shoes, below my stockings, and I had to bring it from one town, one part of town to the other part of town.

N: Well, this.

S: He worked in the underground, he, together with eveque, eveque, it's a big shot in the Catholic Church.

N: Yes.

S: They were, uh, they were organizing an underground resistance. False papers. Help for the people, etc.

N: Well, I want to hear all about this, but, but just in the right sequence. So, let me make sure I know the dates. When you were, before you went to...

S: From middle of 42 to middle of 43 we were in orphanat.

N: Middle of 42 to middle of 43.

S: Right.

M: But what about the maternity home? Wasn't that six months?

S: That was the second half of 42.

N: So, in 42 you were in maternity home.

S: Right.

N: So, it was only in 43 that you were in the orphanat.

S: Right.

N: So, how long do you stay in the orphanat?

S: No, no, no. Yes, 43. Yes.

N: 43. So how long did you stay in the orphanat?

S: One year until the middle of forty, uh, uh, uh. We went to the orphanat in the middle of... uh, middle of, no, 42 we left, then they send us back. So, the second half of 42 we're in Holland. Then we came in

the beginning of 43, uh, we, maybe I'm mixing up dates. I know we were probably here 43 about ¾ year of 43 in the orphanat. Then they took us out from there, and they sent us to the biggest school in Belgium . It was called, uh Ecole de Malonne [ph]. Ecole des Frers [ph]. Ecole, you know how it writes.

N: I'm sorry, it's Ecole and then what?

S: Des Frères- the brothers

N: Des Frères- the brothers, yeah.

S: - and then- Creche.

N: Creche.

S: Sient Malonne. S-I-E-N-T. Malonne is M-A-L-O-N-N-E.

N: Okay, but you stayed nine months at the orphanat? About? Right?

S: Yes. Probably nine months. At Mallone also. But at Mallone, it was a, uh, they were not priests. They were uh, uh, frères. They were pedagogues. They were not priests.

N: They were monks?

S: No.

N: Not monks.

S: No. They were frères. They, they, in the Catholic religion you have abbes and you have freer. Frere, they are not, they do not do religious services, they only do education.

N: Education, okay.

S: Uh, and, that was, you know how many students were in that school?

N: I want to hear all about it, but first I want to get all the information about the orphanat. So, the orphanat was, do you remember what it was called?

S: Yes. L'orphelinat de St. Gilles.

N: Okay. And, this was in Namur?

S: Yes.

N: And how was Abbe Andre related to the orphanat? What was his relationship to it?

S: I don't know. I don't know the Catholic systems there. Like, they have Catholic brothers and you have Catholic sisters.

N: Was he working there?

S: The orphanat was run by Catholic sisters.

N: Was he working there? But, was he working there, or would he come by and visit for some reason?

S: Maybe. Maybe he would give Sunday services at orphanat. This I don't remember.

N: Do you remember whether you were, at the orphanat, were you, were there other Jewish children?

S: No.

N: Did the children know that you were Jewish?

S: No.

N: Did the sisters or the frères, the adults, know that you were Jewish?

S: No, I think only the abbe and the three sisters which were friends of the abbe.

N: So, the three sisters were your aunts?

S: Contacts.

N: Your contact.

S: Or my supervisors or whatever you want to call them.

N: Oh, okay, okay, okay. And how did. Do you remember how your parents chose or why it was this orphanat that you went to?

S: No.

N: No. Um.

S: It might have been Abbe Andre or the eveque which was his boss arranged it for my father.

N: What was the eveque's name?

S: Abbe, no, no, I don't remember. He was a, he was a nobleman. He had a title. Uh, I don't remember.

N: How did your father know these people of the church?

S: I don't know either.

N: Mhm. And when you were in the orphanage for nine months, I suppose you were made to go to services.

S: Oh, yes, of course. On Sunday. My knees are still hurting. (chuckle) You know you have to kneel all the time.

N: Yes.

S: Ummm. We, on Sundays, three times at church. In the morning, at noon and at night. During the week, I think once a day.

N: How did you feel about that?

S: I had to go. I had no way. There was nothing to feel about.

N: Nothing to feel, you just had to go. But it was, I suppose it was unfamiliar and you didn't know the liturgy. I mean, how... how?

S: Well, we mumbled.

N: Mhm

S: There we did not go to confession. When we went to Malonne, we went to confession.

N: How come you didn't go to confession at the orphanage?

S: Maybe Abbe Andre had arranged it in that way. But at Malonne, only two people in the whole college who knew we were Jews. It was the general director and the guy to whom you went to make confession because we didn't make confession. We spoke about, about school things and things like that. Let me go back to Malonne because Malonne is much more interesting than the orphanage.

N: But we will talk about both. Yes, okay, go ahead.

S: Malonne was a school of 6,000 pupils. It had a lower school, it had high school, it had a university, it had a military school.

N: Why were you taken there?

S: I don't know. Abbe Andre arranged it.

N: Did, did your parents? Were you? Did your parents communicate with you that you're being changed?

S: No, no.

N: So, you went over a year without talking to your parents at that point?

S: A year and a half or two years.

N: Wow. Okay.

S: Yeah. And, and, and in Mallone, there was no hunger.

N: There was no what?

S: These people were so big, they had, they had cellars full of coffee. And nobody had coffee in Belgium, but they had.

N: There was no hunger. There was no hunger in Malonne.

S: Plenty of food.

N: So, tell me about the food in Mallone. What did they have?

S: Oh, everything. At that time, I already ate meat because my father told me to eat meat.

N: When did he tell you to eat meat?

S: When we, in 42, when we went across the border to Belgium.

N: So, after the six months of being in the maternity house when you didn't eat meat, he told you to eat meat?

S: Yeah, he told me to eat meat.

N: How did he? What did he say?

S: He just told me, eat meat because you have to uh, grow up. I don't remember the exact terms he used.

N: And he said, it doesn't matter that it's not kosher, or how did?

S: No, no at that time it was not the occasion to be very specific.

N: Okay. He just said eat meat. And you knew that that meant, "I don't have to keep kosher"?

S: If, excuse me, I didn't understand you.

N: So, when he said, very directly, "you need to eat meat", you knew, you understood that that means you don't have to keep only, eat only kosher?

S: Of course because he said to eat meat. There was no kosher meat.

N: Okay.

S: It was meat, meat meant _____, like they say in Yiddish.

N: So, you were eating meat in Malonne, you said?

S: Malien.

N: Malonne, sorry.

S: There were big dining rooms. There was one dining room for about uh, each dining room was about 300 pupils and you would sit at a big bench and one guy, one of the boys had to say a prayer before starting to eat. In Malonne, I went more to the church, I remember.

N: How did you go more to the church because you said you were doing three times a day in?

S: I think during the week, we had to go in the morning and at night, I think. And the high holidays, their holidays it was even worse. But, never mind.

N: And, you had to go to confession, in Malonne?

S: Yes. Yeah, because otherwise it would show that we didn't go to confession.

N: So, can you tell me?

S: These, these, these, brothers, these frères.

N: Yeah.

S: They were pedagogues. They were tremendously good pedagogues. I, I never had such good teachers in my life. Afterwards, we went to normal school in Brussels after the war, but these people were top top teachers. And you know that, uh, you know what *catechisme* is?

N: Yes.

S: You know what marks were? My notes were?

N: What were your grades?

S: 10.

N: 10. Out of 10? (chuckle)

S: Top (chuckle). (Yiddish)_____. You understand that?

N: Wonderful, you were doing very well. So, do you remember any names of these frères?

S: No. They were very good teachers. I don't remember them. They were very pleasant people.

N: Can you, can you tell me?

S: Just, so you, for you to, to, to, to uh, for you to understand the, the, the, the, size of the school. You know what a soccer field is right?

N: Yes.

S: You know how many soccer fields that school had?

N: I don't know.

S: They had 30 soccer fields.

N: 30?

S: 30

N: I, uh, that's amazing.

S: Right. 6,000. 6,000 people. That's 200 people per soccer field.

N: Wow.

S: Yeah.

N: That's very impressive.

S: I didn't mean to interrupt your, but I remember something that I want to get out of my

N: No, no, please every time you remember something, tell me because what's important are your memories. Not my questions. It's about your story. So, so, you said you had to go to confession in Malonne? Can you tell me about what, so, the interaction with the priest in the confessor booth. What happened there?

S: Well, we talked about the work at school or the lessons or if the weather was cold or who one football games, things like that, soccer games.

N: Did the confession, did the priest who was giving confession, did that priest no you were Jewish?

S: Yes, he was the only guy who knew. And the general head of the school.

N: And it was always the same guy who was giving confession?

S: Always the same guy, of course.

N: Uh huh. Uh huh. Did he ever talk about the fact that your Jewish?

S: No.

N: No, um...

S: Excuse me for interrupting you again.

N: No, please, please...

S: But that's very important. Uh, many of the Catholic priests tried to convert Jewish children, so, the uh, the English won't march into Brussels in September 1944 and the first Hanukkah evening my father organized at the, at a very big school, and then together, you know what they did? They went to all, all the orphanages which were in the neighborhood which were before succhos [ph] and they went into the room where the children were sleeping. You know what they did?

N: What did they do?

S: Or what they said?

N: No.

S: *"Sh'ma Yisreal Adonia Eloheinu Adonai Ehad."* Those children would react who knew they were Jewish.

N: I'm sorry. It was your father who did this?

S: My father together with the English and American chaplains. He was very friendly with the Sandhaus, Moshe Sandhaus [ph], he was a chief, uh chief chaplain of all the Jewish chaplains on the European front. He was a general. He was a very nice guy.

N: Who was this person? The name?

S: Moshe, Morris, Moshe Sandhaus [ph].

N: Moishe Sandhaus [ph]. And how did your father know him?

S: Because on Friday night, after the English marched into our house, each Friday evening we had about uh, 15 or 20 Jewish English and American boys for gefilte fish and things like that.

N: Okay. So, he knew people in the troops. I, I want to hear all about this, but again, we're getting ahead of ourselves. So, let's just go back to.

S: Go ahead, you're the boss.

N: (chuckle) No, no, no.

S: No, I have to follow your way because you have the practice. And, I sometimes, sometimes go out of the seams like this.

N: Okay, so there were nine months in 43 that you were at the orphanage and Abbe Andre would come to visit? Did, can you?

S: Very seldom.

N: Can you describe what he looked like.

S: Yes, he was skinny. He had a very pleasant face. Medium sized. That's about all.

N: Eyes? Hair color?

S: But he's known in Belgium.

N: He's what?

S: He's known. He was very well known. Yes.

N: Do you remember the color of his eyes or his hair?

S: No. No. I think his hair was black, but the color of his eyes- t might be black or brown. I wouldn't know.

N: Now, was he ever interacting with you directly? Was he talking to you?

S: Well, he would just ask how things were doing, if everything was okay. He didn't speak much to us. Maybe he didn't want to do it on purpose.

N: But, he was asking you or a whole group of children if you were okay?

S: No. Just my brother and I.

N: Just your brother and you.

S: Yeah, because we were the only two Jewish boys in the Malonne...

N: Not in Mallone. In the orphanage? The orphanat?

S: Both. Both.

N: Because he would come to Malonne too, afterwards?

S: Too, also, yes.

N: Now because I suppose this is a person who is quiet active in the resistance and probably well known, do you know why he had such an interest in you? What, what was the link?

S: Uh. Well, his religious upbringing to do good. To do, to do, to do, welfare. To do good things.

N: Okay.

S: His mission was to help the world and to help people.

N: Do you know if he knew your parents in any way?

S: Yes, of course, he knew my father because they were together eveque and I cannot remember the name of the eveque.

N: I'm sorry. They, they did what with the eveque? How did they know each other?

S: My father might have met him somewhere. I don't know. My father met a lot people. My father was very. May I tell you a minute the story of my father?

N: Please.

S: Uh, in, uh, he almost never went on the streets. My father. They were hidden in the house of a widow in Belgium. And in 19.

N: Do you know where the house was?

S: Yes. Number 29 Franklin Roosevelt Street.

N: That's where your father was staying?

S: Yes. At that time they were together.

N: Oh, they were together. It wasn't when they were in separate apartments?

S: No, in the beginning they were together. Later on, they separated.

N: Okay. And this is at the beginning, or?

S: At the beginning because my father once went out to buy bread.

N: Okay.

S: and there was a Jewish guy called Jacques. Everybody knows Jacques from Antwerp.

N: Jacques?

S: Jacques. And he was a waiter at one of the biggest kosher restaurants in Antwerp.

N: What was his last name?

S: I don't know. Nobody knows. Uh, nobody knows even what happened to him after the war. Uh, so you know all the Jewish customers, so he, he, he went around with Germans picking up Jews. Because one know, one Jew knows the face of another Jew. In general.

N: He went around pointing out Jews?

S: Yes.

N: To the Germans?

S: Yes. So, he was in a car of Jews. When he was, when my father was walking, he told my father to stop.

N: Where was your father working?

S: Walking, on one of the streets in the neighborhood.

N: Oh, walking. Not working, he was walking. He wasn't working. But he wasn't working at the time? Making money?

S: No. They had reserve money. They had diamonds. I remember, my mother had, the buttons of my mother's dress were diamonds, not buttons.

N: Do you remember any other valuables that they were able to take with them from home, from Holland?

S: Mmmm... No. No.

N: So they were living off of whatever they had smuggled into the country when they were escaping?

S: The only thing I know that my father before the war uh started in Holland, he had money in Switzerland and in the States.

N: Oh, he was already sending money?

S: Yes.

N: Smart man.

S: It was how much. I don't know. I was only a child. Now, let's go back a minute to my father.

N: Yeah, yeah.

S: So, the guy Jacques says to my father, "Drop your pants."

N: Mhm.

S: So, my father dropped his pants, and it is short, so Jacques says to the Germans, you see he's gemalet [ph]. You know what gemalet [ph] means?

N: Uhh... circumcised?

S: Yes, right. And the German says, "Ah. Come on." So, they took him to the Gestapo headquarters. They took him to the cellar. There were hundreds of Jews in the cellar. So one guy says, "Bruno, what are you doing here?" So, Bruno says, "Don't speak to me. You don't know me." So, they called my father in for interrogation and uh, so, there was a young SS officer asked my father, "Uh. You're circumcised?" My father said, "No, I'm not. I had a kidney operation and it was part of the kidney operation." So this, German, this young German SS officer, he called in an old German army doctor. He started yelling at him, saying, "Tell me! Tell me!" So, my father saw that this old German army doctor was grinding his teeth.

N: He showed him what?

S: My father saw that old German army doctor grind his teeth.

N: Uh huh.

S: He was angry with the way this young SS was yelling at him. So, he said to the SS, "Yes, this man was operated on his kidneys and that was part of the operation." That saved my father.

N: So, he believed him?

S: He believed him, yeah. He had to believe him. It was his doctor. If the doctor says to the man, he's not circumcised, he's not circumcised.

N: I'm sorry, so the person who was vouching for your father, who is he? He's an older officer?

S: He was a German army doctor.

N: And how come he believed your father?

S: He didn't believe my father. He was angry at the SS officer.

N: Oh.

S: He knew, he knew my father was circumcised.

N: But he was angry at the SS officers.

S: I mean, the uh, those air force officers took us to the Hague, they didn't like their job that they had to escort Jews on the train because they figured they had nothing to do. There were Germans who were not in favor of that. Not many unfortunately, but there were. They let my father go. You know my father, from the Gestapo headquarter to the house he was living, he took 8, 7, 8 different trams. You know what a tram is?

N: Yes. Mhm.

S: A trolley. He took 8 different trolleys.

N: In order not to be followed?

S: Right

N: Hmmm... This is a great story and I'm very, very glad you told me. And if you have any other stories like this, please, at any time, feel free to tell me.

S: Well, this my ____ I told you already.

N: Well, okay, so I feel like there are so many stories. The one that you just told about your father getting out of the Gestapo headquarters or, or offices. When was this?

S: This was in, uh, in Spring 43.

N: So, you were where in spring 43? You were in the orphanage. Right?

S: In the orphanage. We didn't know. Father, my father told us after we were liberated here in the town. He even did not tell when. We were hidden about three months in Brussels because Malonne was closed because of bombardments.

N: So, this was after Malonne? You were hidden in a third place?

S: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

N: So, when your father was detained by the Gestapo was it when he was living together with your mother or separately?

S: Yes, at that time, he still was living. I think after that, they got scared and they separated.

N: Okay. And after that, did your father continue walking on the streets?

S: No. You know my father? You know what my father's speciality was?

N: No.

S: After that happened to him?

N: What's that?

S: Baking your own bread. He used to bake his own bread. Not to have to go out in the streets.

N: How did he learn to bake his own bread?

S: (chuckle) I don't know. Maybe my mother, my mother taught him. I don't know.

N: And, um, well, I mean this is a pretty private question, but I suppose that you yourself would have been recognized as a Jewish boy if you were made to undress? And you were in...

S: Of course, I am. Look we were religious. Both my brother and I were circumcised.

N: So, how come you were around so many children? Were you? Did you have to hide?

S: No, because we were never naked.

N: Sorry?

S: Only when we went into showers.

N: You were never naked?

S: Only when you went into showers and then nobody saw us.

N: How come nobody saw you in showers?

S: Because it was done in such a way that there was a little ante-room before you left your clothes there. You went in the shower and there was nobody else but you.

N: Well, I'm just, I'm curious, because I would think in a place with hundreds of children, who all need to bathe.

S: Yeah, no, no, no. But that's Belgium. It was cold. There was only. When we came to Brazil, there were very good friends of ours picked me up at the airport 1951. So, I told her, "Dona Susannah," that was

April, "how's the weather here?" She said, "Well, it's three months warm and nine months hot." Well, in Belgium, it was nine months cold and only three months medium. Not even hot.

N: Not even warm.

S: Yeah. You never undressed there.

N: So, you were never in a situation where there were other boys in the shower?

S: No. Each one had his own shower.

N: Each one had his own shower?

S: Yeah, there were hundreds of showers in the basement.

N: Were you ever concerned about being seen?

S: You know, it might be part of the Catholic mentality. That they did not want to, they did not want to, they did not want to see one naked boy and another naked boy.

N: I see. And were you ever concerned? Did you ever take precautions not to show yourself?

S: Yes, of course.

N: So, what kind of precautions did you take?

S: I never took my underpants down.

N: So, you would maybe wait until other people were already in the shower? Or how exactly did you?

S: I guess I don't remember. I guess I don't remember.

N: Did you ever?

S: We were all kids. I mean, uh, kids are not curious on these things in general.

N: I don't know about that.

S: Nowadays, maybe yes. But not at that time. We are going back now, 70, 80 years.

N: Did you ever need to talk about this with your younger brother because you were helping him?

S: No, I think it was automatic. I might have, I might have talked to him, but I don't know.

N: Um. You said a story way before about.

S: Excuse me interrupting you because now you're talking about how much I remember.

N: No tell me, tell me. What?

S: When we lived in Belgium, when we lived in Holland as children, we were at the Pensionale Orphanage [ph]. We only

N: In Belgium?

S: Yes. We only took one shower in 2 weeks. In Holland each week.

N: Ahhh... Ah hah.

S: Yah. You're very secretive. In Holland also. This business of taking shower each day, this is an American custom, which after the Second World War, the American soldiers brought to Europe. In Europe, people used to take showers once every two weeks, at the most every week.

N: I see. So it was not a common occurrence. And so you were not undressing.

S: No. There was no need to. It was a cold climate.

N: Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Well, that's important to know. So, thank you for sharing that.

S: (chuckle)

N: So, you told me a story before, it was earlier, but I feel like the story might have been later in your travels or what you went through. You said that, at one point you were all detained, and you were interrogated and your father told you later, It's okay, they know everything.

S: Yes.

N: When is this in the story? I'm confused. Where is this and when?

S: And the headquarters of the *Devisenschuttkommando*. In the uh, the uh, the people who used to take care of foreign currency, exchange control.

N: Exchange control. Uh huh. So, when did they take you there? When they stopped you from escaping the first time?

S: No, right away, the car, the soldiers stopped us. And then, they, one of the soldiers in the car, they went straight, we went straight into the building of the *Devisenschuttkommando*.

N: And this was the first time you were trying to get to Switzerland and you're turned back to Holland or is this later?

S: That's the first time.

N: So, this is 194...

S: There was no, there was no second time.

N: Right. This is 1940, right?

S: 1940 was to England, not to Switzerland. Ah, I'm, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Now I'm confused. We only tried

N: It's, it's after you tried to get to England...

S: Wait a minute. Now I'm confused. We only tried tried to go to Sw. In 1940, we tried to go to England. In 1942, we tried to go to Switzerland. And in 1940, that's about all.

N: Okay, but this is before you're in the orphanage?

S: This was before I was in the orphanage.

N: Okay. So can you tell me precisely what happened when you were stopped by the Germans? You were brought to the headquarters and then what happened? Were you separated?

S: They took my parents to one room for questioning and my brother and I, the another. My brother they didn't ask any questions because he was very small at that time.

N: Yeah.

S: Me, they asked the question, where I was, where I lived, what's my name. So I told, I always answer, I don't know. Fifth amendment.

N: I'm sorry, you said, I don't know and?

S: I don't know. That's all.

N: So, you were kind of playing dumb?

S: Yeah. I didn't want to answer to them. So, I told them I don't know.

N: And okay, what else did they ask or what happened afterwards?

S: Now, well, then after two or three hours my father came and told me he already had told them who we are, and I could tell them. So, I told them.

N: Did they hurt you?

S: No. No, it bearable.

N: Mhm. And then where were you taken? I'm just trying to remember the arc of the story. So,

S: And then, from there we were taken, I think to the train to send us to Holland.

N: Okay. The escort back. And then you escape by saying you need to go to the bathroom.

S: Right. Right.

N: And in the interrogation room, how many adults were there?

S: Two or three women, I think one or two men. Most of the questioning was made by a woman.

N: Uh, what were you at a table?

S: No, I was sitting on a chair, if there were tables I don't remember.

N: Uh, do you remember feeling frightened?

S: No, to the contrary.

N: Sorry?

S: To the contrary, I was not frightened.

N: Why were you not frightened?

S: Because I was hardheaded. I didn't want to give them answers. I was angry in a way.

N: You were angry. You were feeling anger?

S: I was feeling anger that we were stopped and that we sat there with all these Germans. Only anger, I was not afraid.

N: Okay. So, um. So, Abbe Andre came and visited you just a few times and he came and visited you both in the orphanage and at the Malonne Ecole de' Freres Creche [ph] and you were saying that basically, you remember in the orphanage there wasn't enough to eat. When you did have to eat something there, what kind of food did you eat?

S: Hmm... Mashed potatoes, potatoes is cheap. Uh, very little meat. Uh, vegetables they had because they had their own vegetable garden. Ah, very much little quantities. There were many children, wasn't that much food.

N: How many children were at the orphanage?

S: I remember we were hungry enough, I don't know why, and I don't know the quantities we ate. I only remember that we were hungry.

N: That you were hungry. Okay. Were you also?

S: Once we were in Malonne I remember, we were never hungry.

N: Never hungry. Now at the orphanage, was there enough heating? Was there enough clothing?

S: We had clothing. I don't know what. I don't know where we got the clothing from, how, how, how we got clothing. This I don't remember.

N: What about heating? Was there heating in there?

S: Yes.

N: There was?

S: Yes. We did not suffer from the cold.

N: Do you remember how many children were in the orphanage?

S: About 3-400 hundred.

N: 3-400 hundred. And do you remember, was there schooling?

S: Oh, yes.

N: There was at the orphanage?

S: Oh, yes, we had schooling. Not as good as Malonne, but then... Schooling only by Sisters.

N: And were there any other activities that you would do at the orphanage aside from being in school?
Any organized activities?

S: No.

N: Or hobbies?

S: No.

N: Or friends?

S: And at Malonne either because I didn't play soccer. I don't remember of any activities, uh, in Malonne when we were free. I don't remember what we did, but we didn't do any sports or anything like that.

N: No sports. But you would have been allowed to go outside from the orphanage or not?

S: No. No. No. No. There was a controller at the door. You couldn't go out. Even to go, to go come in, uh, to go in people had to say who they were and what they wanted to go in for. There was control.

N: Was there any raids? And inspections?

S: No, uh, wait a minute. What were the words you said before?

N: Like a raid.

S: Ah. Raid. Yes. Yes. Uh, no. Why?

N: I don't know. Like anyone came to inspect, look for people.

S: No, no, no, no, no. No, not in the orphanage and not in Malonne. But it happened in Brussels. My brother and I we were hidden in another apartment about four, five blocks away from my parents.

N: This was after Malonne?

S: This was, yes, this was.

N: Why did you leave Malonne, do you know?

S: Uh, uh, in spring 44.

N: And why do you leave?

S: Because they were bombarding. They close the whole thing.

N: They closed it. So all the children left.

S: Yes.

N: Okay.

S: And then when we were in Brussels, uh, uh, in the woman, in the bedroom at the back of an apartment of people there.

N: Did you, did your parents arrange this?

S: And we were lucky. One of the nights these people had inspection by a German, by German army people, and they checked the whole house except our room.

N: Why?

S: Ah.

N: Why did they miss your room?

S: I don't know.

N: Was it a hidden room?

S: I wouldn't know.

N: But, was it a hidden room?

S: I even didn't hear them.

N: Oh, you didn't hear them.

S: I only found out the next day when they told us.

N: Was it a hidden room? Was it like some kind of secret passage?

S: No, no. It was room at the back of a, at the end of a corridor. It wasn't hidden, but it was a, it was a little bit farther away than the rest.

N: Mhm. Mhm. So, you, who arranged for you to be in that house?

S: I don't know. Probably Andre or the eveque. I don't know.

N: Do you remember where the house was?

S: Ahh... If I go there, I might know, but I don't remember the name.

N: Do you remember any names of any people?

S: I only remember the name of the first place where my parents used to live uh.

N: Roosevelt.

S: This Franklin Roosevelt. The later, wait a moment, my father lived on. Ach. I don't remember, I don't remember. I don't remember the name of my father, of my mother, and uh, of my brother. What I remember, what might interest you are the names. The name of my father was Ferdinand de'Montagne [ph].

N: This was, this was who?

S: My father's name...

N: Oh, your father's fake name.

S: Yes, fake name.

N: Why did he choose that?

S: They gave it to him probably. Probably Ferdinand de'Montagne [ph] died, and they did not put it on the register so they could give out an identity card with that name.

N: So, can you tell me about how they changed the identity card? Do you know anything about how they?

S: No, no. It was all these underground groups and they had the organization and they had these people at the mayor's office and they were controlling, people were dying. Things like that.

N: But do you, do you know anything about how they were forging? What materials they were using to change things? Or?

S: I don't know. This I don't know.

N: Do you know how your father got the fake identity papers?

S: Probably from Abbe Andre. I remember his name Ferdinand de'Montagne [ph]. De means that, if de is written with small d it means that the person is a noble.

N: Yes.

S: If the de- if it's in German also Van, if it's written with small v is a noble, if it's written with big V, then it's just a plebeo [ph].

N: Ah hah. I did not know that. Do you, do you remember what your mother's false name was?

S: Yes. Of course. Betrinolle van Achter.

N: Oh, also noble.

S: (chuckle) Van with a big V, not little v.

N: Can you spell that for me?

S: Yeah. Uh, uh. B-E-T-R-I-N-O-L-L-E.

N: And then?

S: Van is V-A-N. And then A-C-H-T-E-R.

N: Mhm.

S: Achter is Dutch. Know what it means?

N: No.

S: Behind. (chuckle)

N: Oh.

S: It was Betronille from behind.

N: So, am I understanding correctly that there is no such real name or do people actually have that name?

S: I don't know if they made up the names or if they're people who died. I don't know. I don't know how they did that.

N: Now, did you have a fake paper?

S: Oh, yeah. My name was Francois. F. You know how Francois is spelled in French?

N: Well, yes, it's Francis or Franz.

S: F-R-A-N-C-O-I-S Demblon. D-E-M-B-L-O-N.

N: And you were given this? You did not choose it or?

S: No. We were given it.

N: And can you describe what this identity paper looked like?

S: It's, it's an identity card like you used to have at that time. It's the same all over the world. It's not as modern as nowadays.

N: Now, who gave it to you?

S: There was a photograph glued in, a couple of stamps,...

N: But it was your photograph?

S: Yes, of course.

N: And who gave it to you?

S: I don't remember.

N: When did you get it?

S: Uh, before we went to the orphanage.

N: Oh, so you were already Francois in the orphanage.

S: Oh yes. Oh, yes. I have I have kept as a souvenir all my school records and all my school reports.

N: Mhm.

S: And school results.

N: Mhm.

S: From the orphanage.

N: Mhm

S: I think, especially from Malonne, with my false name.

N: With your false name. And what was your brother's false name?

S: Jacques. J-A-C-Q-U-E-S.

N: And the last name?

S: Also Demblon. It was my brother, wasn't he?

N: So, so you were lucky enough to have?

S: The same name.

N: Okay. Because I suppose if it's uh, a person who died, I mean, they must have...

S: The probably, they somehow, I don't know how they did it. They did it.

N: And was it hard to explain and get you're your brother who was younger than you to remember that he has to act as if he has a false name?

S: Oh. My parents told him and I told him. And after all, he was already an age that he could understand the danger if he would do anything, uh, which he is uh, which could imperil him.

N: Did he ever make a mistake?

S: No. No.

N: And he never called you Freddy or? Those years?

S: No.

N: It was always Francois?

S: Francois.

N: Did you...?

S: His name actually is Jack.

N: Yes, Jacques.

S: Not Jacques, Jack. The American way.

N: Oh, the American way. Jack.

S: Yeah. It is not the French way.

N: Mhm. So, are you saying that he kept that name after the war?

S: (chuckle). No. Ah, you mean Jack. No he was born Jack Schumer.

N: He was born Jack. And so he was, oh, so his false name was really like his real name.

S: His first name was Frenchified.

N: I see, now, now did either of you speak French at that time.

S: No.

N: How did of you get away with having a French name and not speaking French? That wasn't suspicious to anyone?

S: Oh, no, no. In Belgium, it didn't mean anything. People could, people lived in the Flemish part and spoke Dutch or Flemish, sometimes they had French names. It didn't mean. In Belgium, there was no connection made between your name, if it was a French sounding name or a Flemish sounding name.

N: I see. And, um. Okay, well let's go back a little bit to Malonne. What were your activities in Malonne, besides your studies which really impressed you, and the level of education?

S: I think we had gymnastic lessons.

N: What kind of gymnastics?

S: General gymnastics. You know, bars and stuff like that. Maybe handball also. I don't remember.

N: Were you good at that?

S: I don't remember.

N: Mhm.

S: I don't remember. I don't remember. I even don't remember much, probably had gymnastics, but I have no, I have no recollection of it. The rest of the time, we had to study a lot. Because they, they were very hard on the studies. They would give you lessons in the morning and then you had to study all afternoon. There wasn't much time left over.

N: Did you have any friendships with anyone?

S: No.

N: Was it all boys?

S: Yes.

N: And in the orphanage did you have any friendships with anyone?

S: No, not either.

N: And that was all boys too?

S: Only boys.

N: And what were?

S: Because the Catholics don't mix sexes.

N: Right, right, right. And what were your, was there any reason why you weren't having friendships?

S: No, I didn't look for friendship because it was a way of protect yourself.

N: Okay. So this was a way of, a very, you were aware of it and you were not making friends for this reason.

S: Oh, yes, of course I was aware. I was, you had to act accordingly and friendships, uh. To be by yourself. And no friends. It's safer.

N: So, when did you start transporting fake identity cards for Abbe Andre?

S: In spring 44. When we left Malonne. I was in Brussels.

N: So when you leave Malonne, you're still together with your little brother, right?

S: Yes.

N: And you're going to this apartment where there was that one raid and they didn't find you?

S: Yes.

N: Okay, so, do you remember, was it, was it Abbe Andre who asked you to do this?

S: No, my father.

N: And how did he describe it? Or how did he ask you to do this?

S: No, he told me to put it in my socks. To put it in my shoes. And he gave me the address where to bring it. And more than once, I was stopped by German soldiers.

N: Mhm.

S: Pushed you against the wall, you have about three soldiers behind you with arms, but they never looked inside my shoes.

N: And they never made you undress?

S: No. They touched the body, but uh, the arms, and the stomach and the legs, but they never looked in the shoes.

N: Mhm. So your father asked you to do this, did he say where you were taking these things?

S: Well, he gave me the address where to deliver them of course.

N: And he didn't give you any context? Did he give you a name that you were supposed to give these things to?

S: I don't remember. He told me to go there, deliver to, this I don't remember. Probably at the address where you ring the bell, the guy who opens the door is probably the guy who wants to have the documents.

N: So, when you would deliver one of these things. He opens the door. What do you say? I suppose you have to go inside to take your shoes off, right?

S: Uh, good question, but no memory.

N: No. Um.

S: No, probably guy, when he saw a young boy there, he probably. Maybe somebody told him a young boy going to come, so he probably already knew beforehand.

N: So, when your, do you know why your father was asking you to make these deliveries?

S: Yes, to help people who need false identities.

N: And how come as a person who himself is obviously in danger and is hidden, how is he actually active in this? How does he become active in this?

S: Because he had contact apparently with Abbe Andre. But I don't know the reason or the details.

N: Mhm. So, so basically he just came to you and said I need you to make this delivery.

S: Yeah, he says go and bring this there and there and he told me where to put it.

N: And how big was it? Did it fit in your shoe?

S: Yes. Yeah, it just wasn't comfortable, but the distance was not very far. But it was no problem.

N: And how many times did you have to make these deliveries?

S: Oh, I don't remember. Half a dozen times, maybe less.

N: Mhm. Mhm. And how many times were you stopped?

S: About once or twice.

N: And they didn't find anything. And they let you go.

S: Yeah.

N: What was it like...?

S: I wasn't the only one who was stopped. There was a, there was a line. About three, four people standing on line so they took one and the next guy and the next guy, etc.

N: What were you thinking when you got stopped? How? What, what was crossing your mind?

S: Mmmm... You get worried that uh, you get worried, but you try to calm yourself.

N: How?

S: By keeping, by keeping calm.

N: Okay.

S: There, ah, there is no other way.

N: So, so what's curious to me is that this is after your father got caught and went to the Gestapo, right?

S: Which I didn't know at that time.

N: Which you didn't even know. But.

S: I only knew that after we were liberated by the English.

N: And you had said that after that he gets worried and he lives separately from your mother as a precaution. He doesn't go outside as a precaution. So, after all of these things, how come he asks his own son to go out and make a dangerous delivery?

S: Story of Abraham and Isaac, I would say.

N: Yes? Why?

S: Look, it had to be done. Somebody had to do it.

N: And why was it you and not him?

S: I, because he didn't go out in the street.

N: But for the same reason, I mean you could have gotten...

S: No, no, but when we came back from Malonne we went out on the streets in Brussels. Us two children. Because about three or four blocks away from the apartment where we lived to go to my mother or to my father, mostly to my mother's house.

N: So you were already in the practice of going out on the street?

S: Yes, yes.

N: And you were not under suspicion. How often would you visit your mother?

S: Maybe once a week, but I really don't know.

N: And did you visit your father at all?

S: Much less, but I don't remember either. I remember we used to eat at the house where we were hidden.

N: Mhm. Was there enough food there?

S: Yes.

N: Mhm. Did Abbe Andre ever wear civilian clothes? Like you know, not priestly clothes?

S: Not to my knowledge.

N: Did your, do you think at the time, did your parents or your father, did he have certain political inclinations or not?

S: No.

N: Political beliefs?

S: No. I don't think he ever belonged to a political party. Not even when they, not even when they went. I mean, because of the war, I think that my whole family, also my father, my mother, my brother and I, we became apolitical. You know what that means, right?

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

S: My brother and I here, we don't belong to any party. My parents, when they lived in the states, they didn't belong to any party. And in Switzerland, they didn't belong to any party either.

N: Were any of the children who were at the orphanage or in Malonne, were they, were any of them foreign, or were they all Belgian?

S: So, the way I saw them, they were all Belgian.

N: They were all Belgian, as far as you knew.

S: Yes.

N: Mhm. Mhm. So, you were never caught delivering these identity cards?

S: No, thank God, otherwise I wouldn't be speaking with you. (chuckle)

N: (chuckle) Did you know of anyone, people you knew, who were caught doing anything like this?

S: No, no. Many people died, but I don't know any specific case. People died.

N: Was your brother ever transporting these cards?

S: No. He was too young.

N: So, you weren't really interacting with the people. You would just drop off the card and leave, right? There was no.

S: No, no, no, no. Just take them and just go back.

N: So, you didn't know who they were, you had no relationship to them, did you have any idea how your father was getting the information of who to drop these off to?

S: The only contact my father had, as far as I know, all the time, were Abbe Andre and his chief, the eveque. And I cannot remember the name of the eveque.

N: The people that were keeping you, or hiding you in this apartment where there was that one raid, were they being paid to hide you?

S: Yes. Yes. Because they gave us a room and they fed us, of course.

N: So, they were paid.

S: Yes.

N: Mhm. Um.

S: Maybe they, I am not sure these people knew we were Jewish.

N: Ah, that's interesting.

S: I don't know because uh, when they, in spring 40, uh, 44, when the bombardments started in Belgium, many schools were emptied and the children were sent home.

N: Oh, so there were many displaced children.

S: Yes. I don't know if they knew or not, but of course, we had to pay rent for that woman. We had to pay for the food.

N: And at that time, did you have enough food, clothing and warmth?

S: Yes, yes.

N: So, there was no hunger?

S: In Belgium, with the exception of the orphanage, there was no hunger. Holland was the other way around. In Holland, many people died from hunger.

N: Mhm. Mhm.

S: My father, I don't know if this is pertinent to it, but, uh, my father, after we were liberated in September 44, he, one year he didn't work. He went to join the American Joint

N: Yes.

S: Company and he worked for them to help find Jewish children. Only after working there for a year that he started his own business. He wanted to, wanted to, do his part.

N: Of helping the community.

S: Yeah.

N: When your father got interested you with the false identity cards, did he give you any instructions on what to do if you did get caught?

S: No.

N: So, you had no instructions.

S: No, it wouldn't be intelligent.

N: Okay.

S: It is better not to know.

N: Sure. Sure. I understand. It's interesting how a, how a parent can manage this, you know?

S: Well, okay, look, during the war, there are many. People managed many things which under normal circumstances you cannot understand.

N: Were you ever, were you ever scared when transporting the cards?

S: No. No.

N: Did anyone ever come to you and ask for help?

S: Not to me, no.

N: Not to you, no. So you wouldn't know who was contacting your father?

S: No.

N: Um. It's just. It's such a unique story. I'm just trying to understand how it happened.

S: Well, isn't my story, in a way similar to the stories of other people?

N: Ah. Not so much, really, no I mean, this is, it's pretty unusual. So,

S: Okay. I'm happy, I'm happy that the time you're giving me is your worthwhile.

N: Oh, absolutely, much more than worthwhile. And so how much time did you spend in this, in this apartment, after Malonne where at that time you were transporting the cards? How many months is this?

S: I think about three, four months.

N: Three, four months and then the British arrive?

S: The British arrived in the beginning of September.

N: So, that was three, four months before September then, right?

S: It must have been March, April that uh, that the schools were closed.

N: So, when you were going on these errands to deliver the cards, where was your brother?

S: Uh, he s, probably s, I would say he stayed in the apartment where we were sleeping, but I wouldn't know. Maybe he was with my mother. I cannot remember.

N: And the people who were keeping you obviously had no idea what you were up to, right?

S: Right. Obviously.

N: Um, so do you remember when you first heard that the Allies had come in, that the British were there?

S: I don't remember, I think it was the, the second of September because everyone was telling in the streets "L'anglais sont arrives!" "The English have arrived!"

N: Mhm.

S: So, and then you saw the English marching. And you saw, German prisoners of war, which were taken by the English and other people.

N: Mhm.

S: You know that uh, uh, uh, on sukkot [ph] in Brussels, in December.

N: In December? Sukkot [ph] in December?

S: Excuse me, excuse me, Hanukkah.

N: Hanukkah.

S: Yeah. My father, together with Moshe Sandhaus [ph], together with a lot of the English people, uh, they made a tremendous sukkot [ph], uh, Hanukkah party, they had about four or five hundred Jewish boys or girls. Most of them orphans.

N: In your house?

S: No, no, no. That is a very big home. Four or five hundred people.

N: Oh, four or five hundred people. And where was it held?

S: Well, somewhere, center of town we rented a big hall.

N: Uh huh. So, you, you had told me a story before about liberation or immediately after liberation. Your father was going around trying to find the Jewish children in these group homes or orphanages, right?

S: Yes.

N: Was that immediately after liberation? Or later?

S: Um, no I would say about two or three months later. It takes time to get things organized.

N: So, who was he going with? Were, were these?

S: He was going with people from the English army, people from the American army.

N: From the United States army?

S: Moshe Sandhaus [ph] went along sometimes also. You know, I want to tell you something before I forget.

N: Please, please.

S: That's interesting. My mother's name was Betrinolle van Achter. So, one of the school friends of my father from Leipzig, he went to the States in 1936 or 37. He was in the American army and he came to Brussels, his name was Leo Friedman. He met my father, but he didn't meet my mother. So, he went to a hotel where he was stationed in the middle of town and he saw my mother coming in. And he knew my mother as a girl.

N: Mhm.

S: And he came over and he said, "Sala, I'm so happy to see you!" So, she told him, "Sir, I don't know you. My name is Betrinolle von Achter." Yes. Yes. (chuckle). It was about two or three weeks after we were liberated. Just to see, show you how reactions of people are.

N: Wow. So, you're mother was still very cautious.

S: He said, "Sala. You are Sala Schumer. You are the wife of my best friend."

N: Mhm.

S: Then she says, then she remembers him, she says, "Oh, you are Leo Friedman."

N: Uh huh. But she, but she was still pretty cautious at the time?

S: Yes, she was. Yes, if somebody suddenly comes to you,

N: Sure.

S: then, you, you trained not, not to say that that that's.

N: So, how about you, were you still using the name Francois? Or did you change it?

S: No. No. No. I, after we were liberated, I went back to my name Freddy Schumer.

N: Immediately.

S: Immediately

N: So, tell me, tell me a little more, back to the liberation. Did you, before your liberation, did you hear about let's say D-Day in the summer?

S: Yes, of course.

N: And who did you hear it from?

S: Oh, it was in the papers. They couldn't hide it.

N: Were you reading the papers?

S: I, well, you hear people talk about it. I wouldn't read, I didn't read papers at that age, but you heard people talking about it.

N: Do you remember?

S: I had two cousins...

N: Do you have any memory of who was talking about it or how they were describing it?

S: No, people in the streets were talking that, that, look, it said in the papers, the Germans couldn't hide it. I even had two, I had two cousins of mine, the eldest sister of my father, they went to the States in 1928-29. Uh. Came to New York, they were one of the first ones to arrive there. They were in the diamond business and used to travel to Venezuela.

N: Mhm.

S: And two of her sons went in the army. One, one was a paratrooper who stormed behind the lines because he spoke German. And the other one was in the CIC. What do you know what the CIC is?

N: CIC?

S: Yes, Counter Intelligence Corps.

N: Counter Intelligence Corps. Mhm.

S: I, because he was German, he spoke German also, and he had to interrogate all of the Germans to, to, to see what secrets he could get out of them.

N: So, what were their names?

S: Uh, Kregel was their family name. K-R-E-N-G-E-L. One was named Joe, one was Joe and the other one was Charles.

N: Which one was the paratrooper and which one was CIC?

S: Uh, the paratrooper was Charlie, and the CIC was Joe.

N: And Joe was stationed where? Where was he interrogating people?

S: Somewhere in Germany.

N: And, but none of your extended family ended up in Belgium at that point, right?

S: Uh, oh yes. My grandfather and the youngest brother of my father still lives in Brussels.

N: Oh, okay. These Americans...

S: Ah, no, no excuse me, my, only my grandfather was hidden and stayed in Brussels. Uh, Josef went to Portugal in uh, I think in 42, he managed to get to the second half of 42, he managed to get to Portugal.

N: Who was hiding your grandfather?

S: I don't remember.

N: Do you know where he was hiding?

S: In Brussels and then later on he was hiding in Namur. My father, my grandfather was a typical German, one day he walked into the headquarters of the German army,

N: Mhm.

S: and he tell them, "Listen, I want to have this and this and this done." (chuckle) And he was a real *yekke*. You know what a *yekke* is?

N: Yes, I do.

S: He was a real *yekke*, and they did what he wanted them to do, but he only did it once. Thank God.

N: So, what did he ask for?

S: I don't remember.

N: So, he went into the headquarters of the German army and he kind of passed himself off as a German gentile?

S: Yes, right (chuckle).

N: Well, that takes some chutzpah.

S: Yes, war stories sometimes are interesting.

N: They're very interesting. So, you had known about D-Day, that was a few months before your own liberation. Was there any kind of sense that things are going to happen soon?

S: Yeah, it was only two or three months anyway, between D-Day and, and, and, uh I think D-Day was in June if I am not mistaken.

N: Correct.

S: Yes, and they march in September in Brussels.

N: But, but during those months, was life changing for you? Was there a sense that, that any day now it's going to end? Or was it the same?

S: Of course people were hoping that it would end. But the worst part, in Belgium, still was to come. Do you remember the uh, the general who answered "nuts"?

N: I'm sorry, who answered?

S: Nuts to the Germans. You ever hear, remember the name of the city called Bastogne in Belgium?

N: Yes. Yes.

S: It was an American general, I don't know if it was Patton or another one. He was surrounded by the Germans, the Germans say surrender, he told them nuts.

N: Mhm. Aha.

S: Yes, and thank God to that. The Germans were not able to go on to Antwerp. They wanted to take the port of Antwerp. We, at that time, that happened in November or December 44, we already packed to, to leave Belgium, to run away.

N: Mhm. So, you, I'm sorry, did you just say November?

S: The Battle of Bastogne I think was in November.

N: Of which year?

S: 44.

N: 44. Okay.

S: Bastogne is in the Ardennes, in the Ardennes.

N: Okay. So, so you're liberated by the British in September of 44 you said. Okay. So, your, your father immediately after liberation is looking for these Jewish children by going into these group homes and saying She'ma and seeing if anyone reacts.

S: Right.

N: So, these Allied service members with your father, what is their interest in finding Jewish children?

S: Of course, they're Jewish children. They're Jews.

N: The Allied service, the British? Those were the British?

S: No, I'm talking about, the kids were only Jewish. These were Jewish soldiers who went. Not Christian soldiers.

N: And how did these Jewish soldiers know or find your father?

S: The probably saw, saw, the chaplain Moshe Sandhaus [ph].

N: And how did he know your father?

S: Moshe Sandhaus [ph] came very often Friday night to have supper with us.

N: And how did he know your father?

S: I don't know. Probably one of his friends. He had about two or three friends from Leipzig who went to the States and went in the army. And he met many people in Brussels in the army. People he knew. There was a, in England, Woody Siegel, uh, he also, he left Leipzig and went to London in also, I think something like 34, 35, 36. He also came with the British army. He came very often to my house because he and my father were very, very good friends.

N: Okay.

S: You know what his business was? You know what, what, the uh, Leipzig had three things for what it was known. It's university. It's uh, it's fair.

N: I'm sorry, it's fair.

S: No, no. It's... How do you call it, um, uh, uh, a book sale? A book sale. My wife goes to a book sale to sell books.

N: Oh, a book fair. Okay.

S: A fair. A fair.

N: Mhm. Mhm. Mhm.

S: It was known for its fairs, and it was known for its, the biggest fur business in Europe was in Leipzig.

N: Fur business?

S: Yeah. And this guy, Siegel, he was a furrier in London. There were many furriers. My father went to go to London and about 20 friends there who went to Leipzig were in the fur business.

N: Uh huh. Uh huh. So they, they somehow met up or found each other?

S: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

N: I see. I see. So your parents then were basically having these hospitality events for displaced children and Jewish servicemen. And how often did these happen?

S: Oh, almost every Sabbath. I don't remember.

N: Okay, so it would be Shabbat.

S: Yeah, there were always people to eat there.

N: Um. When, when were you reunited with your parents?

S: Um. Actually, the day the English marched in on the second of September. Then we all came together.

N: The same day?

S: Yeah, because we all were living, uh, we all were living apart.

N: Uh huh.

S: The same day or the day before, this I don't remember. I think there were rumors going around already one or two days before that the British are very nearby.

N: And did you move back? I'm sorry, where did you move to? You hadn't been living there before.

S: Oh, um, we went back you won't believe to where. We went back to Rue Franklin Roosevelt. It, to the same room where my parents were hidden. But only, we took a bigger part of the house. I think we took two floors.

N: Two floors?

S: Yes.

N: So, so.

S: The widow, and, and the French, the Belgian widow, she used to live in the basement. And her name was Madame Nicodeme.

N: Oh, Nicodeme.

S: Yes. N-I-C-O-D-E-M-E.

N: And, so to take two floors, I suppose your parents must have still had some, some valuables, right? To be able to rent so much space?

S: They probably had. Thank God they had money left over.

N: Mhm. Was your, did your father start working immediately at that point?

S: No. I uh, he worked for a year for the Joint and then he started working.

N: I'm sorry?

S: He worked one year for the Joint.

N: For the Joint. Mhm.

S: And then he started working.

N: And when he was working for the Joint, he was helping Jewish displaced children?

S: Yes. He was working whatever. They sent him to Holland because my father obviously spoke Dutch. And they wanted to have things, Holland's situation was very bad for the Jews.

N: Yeah.

S: They gave him, they gave him, they gave him staff colonel, a full colonel's staff. They sent him to Holland for a week.

N: They gave him a full colonel's staff. What does that mean?

S: That means again, he was dressed as a colonel and they gave the _____ a colonel.

N: But, how did the Joint have the authority to give him a?

S: They were probably authorized to do it. (chuckle)

N: Okay.

S: They wouldn't do it if they were not authorized.

N: Okay. So how many staff people does that mean? How many people were working for him?

S: At that time, I think it two or three. There were not many. And, so he went to Holland and he stayed about two weeks to reorganize things and, but then he went back to Belgium.

N: So, what kind of tasks was he doing exactly?

S: Finding children, helping people. I don't know.

N: Mhm. Did he ever talk about?

S and N: Talking at the same time.

N: I'm sorry?

S: Uh, whatever had to be done.

N: Whatever had to be done. He, he didn't really talk about what work he did?

S: No. He didn't talk about it. No.

N: So, when did you first remember hearing about what had happened to the Jews?

S: I didn't, I didn't understand your question.

N: Do, do you recall a moment when somebody, when you somehow learned what had happened to the communities in Europe? The Jewish communities in Europe?

S: Oh, right away after the war.

N: Right away.

S: Yes.

N: And what exactly do you remember hearing?

S: Hearing how many people got killed. I mean, in Holland you used to have. My father went to Holland. Amsterdam used to have 800,000 Jews. When he came back to Amsterdam, you had a registry of Jews, there were 80,000 of them.

N: Did he talk about this?

S: Yes. He told us. It's a known fact as a matter of fact. The two things about Holland which people don't know very much about. The number one is that 90% of the Dutch Jews were killed. And number two, that's relevant today, that 11% of the Dutch population is Muslim.

N: Uh. I... though they were not Muslim at the time. I mean...

S: No, no, no. Because they are Indonesia. That was the colony of Holland.

N: Sure. So, you're talking about Holland today?

S: Yeah, I'm talking about Holland today. I'm talking about France today.

N: Yes, absolutely. I am aware of that. But I'm, I'm curious about just how this information was communicated at the time about what had happened to the Jews of Europe?

S: In the papers. Mouth to mouth. Conversations between people.

N: Do you remember having a conversation about it? With an adult?

S: No, I did not. I was too young for that. I went to school, I went to my Belgian school there. I had a very good school there. Uh, uh. They had to call it artene [ph]. Artene [ph] is like a lyceum. Do you speak French?

N: I do.

S: I heard a very, I heard a very nice something or other, a very nice. _____ (French)

N: _____ (French)

S: _____ (French) You're very set if you use that expression.

N: That's a very beautiful expression.

S: _____ (French)

N: And what made you think about this expression?

S: Most of the time, I use when I'm sad.

N: But something reminded you of, of this, what exactly?

S: Many things of Europe. I mean I speak five languages. I try to keep them speaking all day long.

N: Of course.

S: My brother, we speak Dutch and English. Especially Dutch when we don't want people to understand. And we don't realize between us what language we are speaking.

N: Mhm. You're not conscious.

S: I have many friends in Europe who are tri or four lingual. You speak with them, you don't realize the language if you know they speak several languages.

N: Mhm. So, you you were saying basically people knew about what happened to the Jews. But at the same time, you were saying, as someone who was still a young boy, if not a child, they weren't really talking to you. So where were you getting this information?

S: Very much of this information you get later on. You read books, you read papers.

N: Yes, but at the time. I'm trying to understand.

S: At the time, I might not have known. At the time, I didn't know much. I was too young. And part of that knowledge, the what happened to the people as a whole, in the whole circumstance, uh, it uh, you didn't know at the time that things had been so terrible. Yes, many people came back from the concentration camps. And it was terrible, the stories were terrible.

N: Do you remember encountering people who had come back from the camps?

S: There were two or three of them. Their stories were terrible.

N: Can you tell me what the stories were?

S: Well, so, all those things which they went through. The hunger. The death. The beatings, etc., etc.

N: Do you remember if these?

S: None of these people who come back, who came back, psychologically ever got cured.

N: Mhm. Do you remember when you interacted with these people, or where? Was it in Belgium?

S: It was in Belgium, yes. Because we were working with a young guy, also came back. At that time in Belgium we started a nylon business which was a very hot article at that time. There was also a young guy, uh, who came from concentration camp. He very often told us things that happened there.

N: So, so, what were the names of these guys?

S: (pause) I don't know. I only remember the partner. My father had a Danish-Jewish partner. His name was Arnold Erteschik and one of this brother's was a Danish writier.

N: Can you, can you spell his first name and last name?

S: Arnold, Arnold you know. And Erteschik is E-R-T-E-S-C-H-I-K.

N: And he was a concentration camp survivor?

S: No. No. No. I don't know, I don't know how he got out alive or what he went through. I remember he was my father's partner when he restarted doing business in Europe.

N: So your father restarted doing business in Europe about one year after the war because the first year he was working for the joint?

S: Right. Right.

N: But that was only one year.

S: Yes.

N: And then he started his business. Did he go back to, to, to clothing?

S: No, he first bought from a Dutch friend of his in Holland. He bought a firm which was importers of furs. Fur importer.

N: So, so, he bought a firm already in 1946?

S: I think in 45 already.

N: So how, I'm just really curious, how is it that he still had money to buy a firm?

S: Maybe at the time he already was able to have money come his sisters and from the States.

N: What had happened to the apartment in Amsterdam?

S: Oh, that was rented. That was not ours.

N: So, you never go the value of it?

S: No. No. No. No.

N: In any way?

S: My father later on like many other people in the same situation, he got back money from Holland as _____. He got back money from Germany, etc. Only later on. I, I, I think. By the way, in the beginning, my father started working, he started making money. It was only the first year that he was living off his _____.

N: Mhm. So, when he started working again, what did you say, what was he doing?

S: First, through my summer vacation, I used to go with the salesmen in a car full of *renard*. Do you know what it is?

N: Uh, mink.

S: No. No. *Renard*. It's fox.

N: Oh, fox! *Renard*.

S: Mink was very expensive.

N: Mink was very expensive, okay.

S: So, we were, we used to go visit in Belgium which used to sell furs, furs.

N: Uh huh. And you were going during summer vacation.

S: Right. I started working when I was, it was 44, 15 years old.

N: 15. In the summer. But you weren't?

S: I went to school, but later on, I went to the States, I worked, but I went to night college in Jamaica.

N: In New York.

S: Jamaica, in Queens?

N: Uh huh.

S: I went to night school. We lived in Forest Hills. Near, you know the tennis stadium in Forest Hills?

N: No.

S: No. I think now, it is not a tennis stadium anymore. I think now the big one is in, near La Guardia airport. Uh, I forgot the name. Very big.

N: So, you were, you were selling furs on your summer vacation starting when you were 15?

S: Yeah, for about one or two years. Then my father saw it was not a big, not a big *paranosa* [ph]. You know what *paranosa* [ph] is?

N: No, I'm not sure I can hear the word. What is the word?

S: *Paranosa* [ph] is, for Yiddish, is to make money.

N: Ah. It wasn't a good business, then.

S: No, no, no, no, no. The fur business was not a good business, no. So he went into the nylon stocking business. And later on, we came to New York, he went into nylon stocking and nylon yarn. Because nylon was a very hot object in Europe at that time.

N: Nylon yard?

S: Yarn.

N: Yarn! Okay.

S: Yarn you use to make stockings as well.

N: Uh huh. Uh huh. Uh huh.

S: Nylon stockings.

N: So, how long did you stay in, in Belgium after the war?

S: In 1947,

N: Mhm.

S: It took us, my father, Jack and I, we had. You know the entry admissions were made by country of birth not by passport.

N: Uh huh

S: So, my father from Germany, and I and Jack, Holland, we had no problem getting an immigration quota. My mother was from Poland, there were many people in line.

N: Uh huh.

S: So, we had to wait three years until she got her quota. So, in 1947 we went to New York.

N: So, this means your father already wanted to go to America immediately after the war in 45.

S: Yes, but he couldn't because of my mother.

N: Now, why did, why did he want to leave Belgium?

S: Well, why would he stay after the war?

N: I...

S: Many people left.

N: But some people stayed. So what was his idea, why did he want to leave?

S: He didn't want to stay in Europe.

N: Why?

S: Why? I don't know. He never said.

N: And you never asked?

S: Many people left Europe, Noemi.

N: Sure, sure.

S: Sure, people didn't want to live their memories. People who stayed were maybe younger people or people who came, people who went to Portugal, went to Jamaica, went to Cuba. My, my uh, my sister, the brother of my mother, he went to Argentina. I have cousins all over the world.

N: Mhm.

S: I have cousins in Argentina. In Mexico. In Leipzig, is still one living. One of the German, the German, he never wanted to leave Germany.

N: Well, see, so some.

S: South Africa, my oldest brother of my father went to South Africa in 194...

N: Well, so, this is interesting because you have a cousin who never wanted to leave Germany, so, but your father wanted to leave. Did he, did he express some kind of?

S: He didn't want to be in Germany after the war. We were liberated, my father wanted to send the money to leave Leipzig, which was at that time Russian territory.

N: Yes.

S: And he didn't want to go. Go explain why. I don't know.

N: And why did your father want to come to America and not all these other destinations? Like maybe Argentina or Cuba or?

S: Because America at that time was a free country. Look, Argentina and Brazil only came away, their own. In 1950 when the war with Korea started becoming worse, you know at that time, there was no free conscription army.

N: Mhm.

S: I mean you went, you wanted to go to the army, you went there. But at my time, you were obliged to, even if you were not American. If you lived there, uh, you pay taxes there, you had to go.

N: Mhm. Mhm.

S: So, I went twice, and I got twice I got a 4F. 4F is a medical deferment. I didn't want to go to, to. My cousin, the one who was an army trooper, he was serving in Korea near the Yellow River and he lost two toes of his right foot- frozen. So, I didn't want. I escaped the Second World War...

N: So, how did you get the medical deferment?

S: For one sickness that is impossible to prove. And I'll tell you the secret.

N: Uh huh.

S: It's migraine. Migraine is impossible to prove. It leaves no traces. You can make x-rays, you can make whatever and you'll never find it. Only if you have other symptoms.

N: Hmmm... Who told you to say migraines? How did you have this idea?

S: Haha. My house doctor.

N: Your house doctor. So, I want to hear all about America, I just want to hear it, like in the right sequence. So your father already knew in 45 immediately that he wants to get out of Europe and he also knew that he wants to come to America, did your mother have any different ideas?

S: No. No, because my grandmother went along. Her mother went along. Her mother has also interesting story.

N: Yes.

S: Uh, her husband, he had a lot of depression, he didn't want to run away. Uh, he stayed, he went into a hospital and they deported him. But she was a very courageous woman. She says, No, I'm not. She as a woman I think, at that time, she was 70 or 75. She was transported on the back of a guy who did the crossing of the border and she came to Belgium. At that time. And she went to live in Kew Gardens, because her, Kew Gardens in Queens also because her daughter lived nearby also.

N: So, so, she left alone or she left with you?

S: No, no, no. She left even before us.

N: Oh, she left before.

S: Yeah, because she got a quota. No, her daughter arranged a preferential quota because it was her mother.

N: This was before the war?

S: She left in 45 about. She was one of the first flights of Brussels to New York.

N: Okay. Okay. Um, okay, so.

S: Sorry, I'm interrupting you.

N: No, no, no, please. Anytime, interrupt me because you're the one who has the stories. I don't want to stop you from telling the stories. So, in 47 you come to America? So, which was your port of entry?

S: New York.

N: Do you?

S: We went on a ship of the American general who went back home. I can't remember his name. It was not Patton. It was not a very well known guy. But never mind, that's secondary.

N: So, you...

S: We went on the *SS America*.

N: *SS America*. How long was your trip? Trans-Atlantic?

S: Oh, at that time, it was 8 or 10 days I think.

N: Mhm. Um, and do you remember your first impressions of New York when you got there?

S: Yes, very big and very warm.

N: Very big and very what?

S: Warm, I think.

N: Warm?

S: We arrived in the end of May, beginning of June.

N: Ah, so it was summer.

S: The same impression I had first time I came to Rio de Janeiro.

N: Mhm. So, you already had family in the States, right?

S: Yes. One of my aunts. The eldest sister of my father lived on Riverside Drive. It was the Jewish quarter of New York at that time. She was also, she was very religious. Her husband also. She was a, she was a for many years, she was the head of the New York City Yeshiva.

N: What was her name?

S: Rex [ph] Krengel.

N: I'm sorry?

S: Krengel. She's the mother of the two boys whose name I mentioned to you.

N: Okay

S: K-R-E-N-G-E-L.

N: Okay. And, and who do you first live with when you got to America?

S: We rented somewhere, a hotel, for about a month or two. Then, my, we bought a house in Forest Hills.

N: And your, you bought a house after living in America?

S: Two or three months.

N: Two or three months. So, clearly your father must have brought some valuables with him?

S: Yes, I mean I told you he had sent some money.

N: He had, yes, he had an account before the war.

S: And he had made some money in Belgium also in those two years.

N: And when did he decide to be in the nylon business?

S: Uh, because in the suspender business. There was no business in the States. Nobody wore suspenders. No use to make suspenders.

N: True. True. But did he decide to be in the nylon business as his first business in the United States or was there something before?

S: No. No. No. No. No. Because they were first having demands for nylon stockings because my uncle was still, the older brother was still in Brussels and there was a big demand for nylon stockings.

N: Okay.

S: Nylon yard only became one or two years later. It started all with nylon stockings.

N: So, there was a big demand in Belgium, but was he, was he?

S: All over Europe. Not only Belgium. They sold to Italy. They sold to France.

N: So, he was shipping nylons to Europe?

S: Yes.

N: So, he was not selling them on the domestic market?

S: No. He had none...

N: So he was like an exporter.

S: He was only an exporter.

N: Do you remember what the name of his business was?

S: Yes. It was Mabar International Corporation. Mabar is M-A-B-A-R. You know what it is, Mabar?

N: No. M-A-B-A-R? Mabar?

S: My father had an Irish. M-A-B-A-R. Uh, my father had an Irish partner. Steve was his name. In New York. Because he stayed started in textiles, but it didn't work out. So, Steve once asked my father, he says, "Bruno, where you get this name from? Mabbar from?" And he says, "Mary is your wife's name and Baruch is my name." (chuckle) But then he told him, that was not the truth. He did MA because of Mazel tov and BAR was Baruch.

N: Haha. I see. It's not bad. Where did he meet this partner? This Irishman?

S: Um, he, they worked about one or two years, but it didn't work out.

N: I see. So, when he was exporting nylons, who were his contacts in Europe? How did he sell these?

S: No. It was this guy _____ was his partner, and it was my uncle Josef in Brussels.

N: So, then he was in Brussels and he was then part of the scheme.

S: My father went, we were living in New York, well, I lived in New York for six years.

N: Yeah.

S: Six years now. 45-51. Six years, yes.

N: 47?

S: No. No. No. 47 to 51. Four years. Excuse me.

N: 47-51. Okay.

S: And my father, used to spend more than half the year in Europe, selling.

N: He was selling...?

S: My brother and I we used to by ourselves home. I used to fry my own steaks.

N: You used to fry your own steaks? (chuckle) Was it a kosher home at that point?

S: Yes.

N: It was kosher again.

S: Although, when we went outside, when we travelled, when we went to eat, then we did not eat kosher. But we did not eat pork, or we did not eat lobster, or

N: Shellfish.

S: shellfish, right.

N: So, are you saying that your parents were actually traveling for business?

S: Yes. Yes.

N: Both of them?

S: Yes.

N: So, your mother was working again?

S: No, no, she was keeping company.

N: She was keeping company.

S: She was taking care of him because he already was diabetic at that time.

N: So, his diabetes came out later in his life.

S: His diabetes. No, wait a minute, I think his diabetes came out strongly when he came to Brazil. I think in Europe he still was not, but my mother wasn't going to stay.

N: Did they have any knowledge of English before they came to the United States?

S: Yes. Oh, yes.

N: How come they spoke English?

S: My father learned English already in school. He had business friends in England. He had an account, an English count, excuse me an Italian count in Milano with whom he did a lot of business. And in Milano spoke about four or five languages.

N: What was the name of the Italian count in Milan?

S: It was uh, de Michaeli [ph]. He was a count.

N: Michaeli, de Michaeli [ph] was his name.

S: Yes. Carlos de Michaeli [ph] was his name.

N: And this was a friend from before the war?

S: Yes. He did this before the war.

N: And your mother. Had she known English before coming to the United States?

S: No. Not much I think.

N: Did she have any problems learning the language? Because she was would have been much older?

S: No. She would have, with all these stories that came, she already start speaking English. Not very good English, but uh, uh. Can you stay on the line for one minute, I'm going to call my wife saying I speak to you because she's going to start 2,4,1.

N: Of course. I'm just going to pause the recording so we don't record this part.

S: Okay.

N: Okay. We are recording again. So, you were saying that it didn't cause any problems for your mother to learn English?

S: No.

N: So, how about you? How did you feel about the United States when you got here?

S: Why, I worked here. I liked it. By the time,

N: So, you were already 18, right?

S: I was 18 when I arrived here.

N: What was America like?

S: 18 or 19. Yes. First time, America.

N: What was America like for you?

S: Well, we lived in Forest Hills. There were four, five semi-attached houses.

N: Mhm.

S: We had a front garden and a back. My neighbor was a, one of the neighbors was my school friend. When at night, I had to study, I would just walk into the living room. There were no locks on the door.

N: No locks on the doors?

S: No locks on the doors.

N: That means there was no crime?

S: No crime, no. Almost none.

N: What kind of a community was it at the time? Who were the people living there?

S: Forest Hills was a medium upper class community, I would say.

N: Was it immigrant or American?

S: Well, it was mixed.

N: Mixed.

S: I don't know. I would say American and Jewish. There were no colored people.

N: And the Jewish people? Were they American Jews or Jews who had just come from Europe?

S: Uh, uh 80% American Jews.

N: But some of them were immigrant families like yours?

S: Some of us were?

N: Some of them were immigrant families like yours?

S: Yes. Some of them. Some of them.

N: So.

S: You ever hear of Rabbi Boxer?

N: Boxer?

S: Yes.

N: Who was he?

S: He was a very well known rabbi in Forest Hills. Uh, we went there always on, to the synagogue in Forest Hills. He's very well known. He only went to Israel. Okay.

N: No, this is good. I want to ask you which synagogue you went to. Now I know.

S: Yes.

N: So you came as already as 18. And you were going to night school. And during the day, what did you do?

S: Well, I worked with my father in the office.

N: What kind of tasks did you have?

S: Uh, writing letters. Making phone calls. Keeping in touch with the manufacturers, they shouldn't forget to sell. Sent the stockings. My father's _____ was in New York.

N: Where was the office?

S: The office was on 42nd Street.

N: Which cross street?

S: 42nd St. just off 5th Avenue.

N: That's a good place.

S: Well, I remember 57 W 42nd St. It was in front of the public library on 5th Avenue.

N: Excellent. And where did you go to night school?

S: In Jamaica.

N: In Jamaica.

S: It was a junior high school.

N: Uh huh.

S: No, excuse me. It was a junior college.

N: A junior college. What were you studying?

S: Uh, uh commercial sciences. Anything to do with commerce. Accounting, etc., etc., things like that. Business stuff.

N: Was this because your parents wanted you to do it, or was this your parents' idea?

S: No, I wanted to do it. I only was able to manage a year and a half because I got too tired.

N: Mhm. It was too much.

S: Yeah. Yeah. Look, all day long. 8:00 I get there, I got there til about 10:00, 10:30. I got home at 11:00. It was too much.

N: You, had you had any knowledge of English before you got to America?

S: Yes. From the American English. From Rabbi Sandhaus [ph]. I was speaking English.

N: But.

S: I learned it. It wasn't a good English, but it was a. You know in Yiddish, it was market English. What you would learn on the market.

N: So, was that enough of a knowledge for you to start working and making business calls and writing business letters? I mean, I'm wondering, you know?

S: Well, you learn quickly if you must. I learned Portuguese very quickly also. I came here knowing no Portuguese whatsoever.

N: What about your brother? He was, like 14, 15 at that point?

S: 33 and we came to the States in 47. Uh,

N: 14

S: He was about 14, yes.

N: So, was he going to high school?

S: Yes, he went to Forest Hills High School. And he went one year to NYU.

N: Why only one year?

S: Because then he came to Brazil. We came to Brazil because we didn't want to go to Korea. So, in 1950, uh, in 1951, my brother would become 18 also. We would have the same trouble all over again.

N: So, tell me...

S: My father went

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

S: My father went to South America. He went to Argentina and Brazil. He didn't like Argentina because Peron was a dictator at that time. So, he met some Jews in Rio. He got, befriended them. And he told us to go to Rio.

N: While you were...

S: Go ahead.

N: While you were in the United States, you never got naturalized? Is that correct?

S: No, you only get naturalized after five years.

N: So, you weren't here enough time.

S: Well, we went in for the first papers.

N: Uh huh.

S: When the Korea business started, uh, I didn't want to go to Korea.

N: So, tell me about that. Why didn't you want to go to Korea?

S: Because I escaped, I escaped the Second World War. And I didn't feel like dying in, in, in on the Yellow River.

N: Okay. Did you?

S: It's self-preservation. I mean, uh

N: Sure.

S: My cousins went because they lived in the States and they had no war time experience.

N: Did you hear, were you hearing something from them, from the front in Korea? Were they able to communicate?

S: No, no. Only through their parents.

N: Through their parents. Okay. And, so, you said that this house doctor said that you suffer from migraines.

S: I used to have migraines. I used to have many headaches when I was young.

N: Oh, this was true. You actually had migraines.

S: Uh. Probably had it.

N: Okay.

S: My brother did not have it. And my brother did not go because he left before he was 18. I think he left a week or two before he turned 18. I think he left in May.

N: And he left for the? Yeah.

S: I came April the first and it's not a joke. It was April the first. He came about two months later.

N: So.

S: My parents came three years later.

N: Your, your brother felt the same way about Korea that you did? About the war?

S: He had no opinion at that time. My parents told him to go.

N: Okay. So, your parents were very concerned about you being in a war.

S: Right.

N: And, how come your parents, obviously I have a sense of the answer, but how come your parents didn't only decide to send the two boys somewhere? You know, while the war is on? Why did they decide to move out of the United States, too?

S: Because we had to register at the uh, uh, we had to register at the army.

N: No, I understand.

S: They couldn't send somebody away. You had to register anyway.

N: No, no, but when you left for South America, because at this point you leave for South America, why didn't your parents decide, okay the boys go to South America. But why, why did they follow?

S: Oh, you mean when the war was over, why we didn't come back?

N: Yeah.

S: Because uh, that war took another two, three years, if I'm not mistaken. And anyway, we got accustomed and we started a business. It didn't make sense to go back.

N: And you, this was in Rio?

S: Excuse me?

N: This was already in Brazil, immediately?

S: This was in Rio, yes. I live in Rio 61 years.

N: Why didn't your parents for example, make the decision in 1950, okay or 51, okay, the boys leave for South America, but we stay. How come they left?

S: Yeah, because they came in 54. They wanted to see how things would work out.

N: Aha. So, they came three years later?

S: Right.

N: So, so, okay, so tell me about when you got to Brazil without your parents first.

S: Um, it was, the tough part was to learn the language. And the most difficult part was to make a paranosa [ph]. I told you what that means, a paranosa [ph], to make a living.

N: Yeah.

S: We tried to start an import textiles because we know textiles, but at that time it was forbidden to import textiles into Brazil for because they had a weak currency. So, they only accepted Brazilian made textiles, no imports.

N: I see.

S: So, a couple of months later, one of our friends, one of our friends here asked me, "Freddy, can't you get me some DDT. I need it."

N: Some what? DDT?

S: You know what DDT is?

N: DDT? The pesticide?

S: You know what DDT is?

N: The pesticide.

S: Yes, So, I says, "Okay, I'll ask my father." So, my father got DDT. I started importing DDT. I got into that business. Just to show you how little I knew about the business. After six months, I went, you had to go in for an import license. So, I went in for an import license for a thousand tons of sodium chloride. So, they called me in about the import license. He says, "You went in for an import license of sodium chloride. Do you know what sodium chloride is?" No, I don't know. I didn't know at that time, chemicals. He says, "Sodium chloride is table salt."

N: Right. (chuckle)

S: (chuckle) I learned my business the hard way.

N: So, who was this person who first asked whether you could help with DDT?

S: Eh. It was friends of the, of the Steinbergs [ph]. I don't remember his name.

N: Who are the Steinbergs [ph]?

S: I don't. The Steinbergs [ph] are the friends with we were here in Brazil in the beginning.

N: So, you were staying, you were helping, you were being helped?

S: Yeah, we always went there Friday evenings, and they helped us. And they gave us, you know what ices [ph] are?

N: Ices [ph]? No.

S: Advice. I'm learning you Jewish.

N: Yeah, Yiddish.

S: Yiddish words on the way. Uh, no, the business started growing.

N: So, you were importing chemicals?

S: Chemicals.

N: DDT only? Or others?

S: Pharmaceuticals raw materials also. Because of that, nowadays, when I buy American, I know exactly what it is because I used to import it before.

N: MHm. Mhm. And this was before your parents came to Brazil?

S: Yes.

N: Okay. And, so were you, were you working alone?

S: This was before my father came here with my mother, and we went into business together. We went the three of us. But he travelled a lot to visit suppliers and in 69, they went to Zug, in Switzerland. I don't know if you know Zug. You know Zurich?

N: Well, not well. I know where it is.

S: Well, Zug is a little town near Zurich. A beautiful town. They lived there til my father passed away in 82. They lived there a long time. They went to Zurich because my father's health problems. And my mother passed away in Zurich in an altermtime [ph], an old age home for people in 6, in 99.

N: So, your father passed away in 82 and your mother passed away in 99? That's a very long life.

S: Yeah, my mother was 90 years. And she was a very strong woman. A very strong minded woman.

N: Mhm. And so when you were importing DDT into Brazil, did you have any business partner or you were alone?

S: No. My brother and I, we were together from 61.

N: 51?

S: Actually 51 to 2008, til, 2000 and? 2008 when we sold the business.

N: Oh, so you were together the whole time?

S: I told you, I always took care of my younger brother.

N: I see. What was the business called?

S: Uh, Mabar International. (chuckle)

N: Oh, it was still Mabar.

S: You know what my cable address? Excuse me, my email address?

N: No, but I will write it down later.

S: No, write it down. Do you have a piece of paper and a pencil?

N: (tape paused) Yes. I see. You have a sweet spot for anagrams and word games.

S: Was the name of our house, we had a house in the mountains. Uh, it was the name of the house-Lezam.

N: Lezam?

S: In Portuguese, we call it Lezam. In English, it would be lezam. I have a Jewish friend, I told him, look it's very easy, my email. Just read Mazel the other way around.

N: So, so, um, basically, did you stay with the same line of business, or did the business change and expand?

S: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We sold it to people the same line of business because our specialty was pharmaceuticals, especially uh, uh, raw material for shampoo. You know when you wash your hair? It's full of chemicals.

N: Yes, I am aware of that. (chuckle)

S: And um, our second, our third line of product was food industry, and we sold it to a company. In 2008, I wanted. My brother wanted to stop already many years ago. But I said, Jack, no stopping, keep working.

N: Why? Why didn't you want to stop?

S: Because I felt good working. I liked working

N: You liked to work.

S: I liked work. When I, when I, when we came to Brazil first three years til my parents came and got angry with us, we got up at 6 in the morning, had breakfast at 7, were in the office at 7:30, worked until 8 at night, went to have supper at 9 and went to bed at ten. And seven times a week. No Saturdays, no Sundays.

N: When did you start having weekends?

S: For three years we did that. And then my parents came, and they told me that's no way of life. You're going to start living a normal life.

N: Were you keeping kosher?

S: No.

N: Why did you stop?

S: Uh, too complicated. Too much work. And I was not religious enough. Too much time had passed by. In New York, we were kosher, but here when I came, I was not kosher anymore.

N: But it's interesting that you said it was too much time had passed. Sure a lot of time had passed since Holland, but New York you kept kosher and that was just before?

S: Yeah. That's because my parents kept kosher. Here we ate outside of the house with the uh.

N: I see. Were you still keeping any kind of tradition? Because, since you were working seven days, of course you were not keeping Shabbat.

S: No. I, I, I don't keep the Shabbat. I keep the three holidays which are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Pesach.

N: Mhm.

S: When I go to shul.

N: Mhm.

S: But Shabbat, no.

N: Did you ever, did you ever go back to school?

S: Here, not, no. I didn't have time.

N: So, you got a diploma from the junior college or not?

S: No, in Jamaica, I didn't completely finish it.

N: And then you did not go back to school? So, you were a business man and you were making?

S: My children, my children went to the Bar-Ilan School here in Rio, which was a Jewish school. Strictly Jewish. Uh, children who did not come from a Jewish mother were not allowed to come in.

N: Yeah.

S: They had people from Israel to give Jewish lessons. Both of my children speak fluently Jewish, uh, Hebrew. Uh, they did, they did, the, how do you call it for small children three, four, five years?

N: Kindergarten?

S: Kindergarten. Then they went to a lower school, they went to higher school. From there, they went to the university. And my daughter, she went to two universities. She went, uh, how do you call it when you finish university?

N: Graduate?

S: She graduated in economics and she graduated in music. She was a pianist for a long time. She studied with many pianists here, but then she went to uh, she went to, uh, after a while...

N: So, how did you meet your wife?

S: At the Pizzeria Atlantico [ph] at the beach.

N: In Rio?

S: In Rio, right.

N: What year was it?

S: Mmmm... 62, we got married in 63.

N: 62. Okay so it's much later. So you were, you for a decade you were working?

S: I had no time to meet a girl. My brother, my brother married about three or four years before because he was the extrovert guy. He used to go over everywhere and I used to stay home and work. I was an introvert guy.

N: Were you introverted or were you just more interested in work?

S: Oh, both.

N: How come he was extroverted? I mean, this is interesting because usually when uh?

S: Because my father was extrovert, my mother was introvert.

N: Ah, so he was like his parents?

S: Like my father. My father was tremendous extrovert.

N: So how come you were not like your parents?

S: Because I was like my mother. I was like my grandfather, the one who had depression, a little bit of depression. But he was introvert also. And Rosa Schunberg [ph], my grand, the mother of my mother, she was extrovert.

N: Mhm.

S: She was a saleswoman.

N: Mhm.

S: You have these things. These things stay with you.

N: So, so...

S: I probably, through my marriage, I'm probably less an introvert now because my wife.

N: I wanted to say something like this. I don't think you sound very introverted at all at this point.

S: It depends what the matter is. This matter interests me very much. So, in this matter, I, I am

N: You are extroverted.

S: I clean out, all my whole knowledge.

N: So, um, did, did, we talk about why you had chosen Brazil to go to?

S: Yes, because my father didn't want to go to Argentina. So, we went to...

N: But there are other countries. Why Brazil?

S: Very small. They're very small. Brazil is very big. It's an enormous country.

N: Was there any other reason why you chose Brazil? Was there any contact?

S: Well, because my father met the Steinberg's, Jewish people. He didn't like Argentina. He never thought of going to Chile or Venezuela or to Colombia, so he choose a big country.

N: Okay.

S: It's a practical way of looking at things.

N: How hard was it to learn Portuguese?

S: Hooo....

N: I mean, by then you're an adult so it's not as easy.

S: I know. To learn it well, probably a year. But after three months I was speaking Portuguese. Probably was making mistakes, but when I wanted a loaf of bread, they gave me a loaf of bread. When I wanted a pineapple, they gave me a pineapple. So,

N: Mhm. MHm.

S: So, the more, more, complicated things, it takes about a year or two, but you learn it.

N: So, how long after meeting your wife did you get married?

S: One year.

N: One year. Okay, so you got married in 63?

S; In Rio.

N: In Rio. In 63?

S: In 63, right.

N: Did you ever travel back to Europe?

S: Phew. Already, before I married, I had to travel. Because when we were in New York, we did the following, my father went to Europe from April to September when the weather was nice and sun and pleasant,

N: For business?

S: And I went to Europe from November to March, when it was bloody cold. (chuckle)

N: And this was in the late 40s, you were travelling for business in Europe?

S: Yes. When we started, no, no, no, no in 45 we started working in New York, then we switched.

N: In 47.

S: And we switched.

N: In 47.

S: Half the year my father was in Europe and the other half of the year, I was in Europe. We stayed in New York.

N: So, this was between 47 and 51?

S: Right.

N: So, your...

S: Even after, when we came to Brazil, when my parents left in 69, we, they used to go, for the winter, we used to go to the Swiss mountains to ski. One year, my brother went with his wife and children. The other year, I went. Later on, when my father left in 69, when he retired and away, I went to Europe a couple times a year to visit suppliers. After my parents passed away, I went more often. Instead of, besides visiting suppliers. I know Europe very well. I know the States very well, because when we lived in New York, our summer vacations, did you ever hear, of Lake St. Agata in Canada? In the Catskills? Not in the Catskills mountains.

N: No.

S: In the Catskills. In the other mountains there.

N: The Adirondacks? I don't know.

S: No, those are in the States, I'm talking about in Canada.

N: I don't know.

S: Well, okay. It's north of Montreal. It's like the Catskill Mountains. All the Jews used to go there.

N: And you used to go there for vacation?

S: Yes. Every year. We had a gang of four. I and another three. I took my convertible and we had a good time about two, three weeks.

N: What year was this?

S: Ah, let's see. From 51. No, no. Excuse me, uh, yes, I came to States, 47-51.

N: Oh, you were going to vacation in Canada while you were living n the States.

S: Yes. In the States.

N: I see. And you had a convertible?

S: I had a convertible. An Oldsmobile.

N: What, what, what? An Oldsmobile.

S: An Oldsmobile, yes.

N: So, who was the gang of four?

S: The Oldsmobile made a lot of success there at the beach resort.

N: Oh, I bet. So, who was the gang of four?

S: It was Leon, Leon Farber [ph], he was in the diamond business, Jack Schlazen [ph], he was in the diamond business also. And there was another guy, Isidor [ph], he had a dry cleaner in Manhattan.

N: Mhm. Mhm. And.

S: We were friends in those four years. Those four years together, we were good friends.

N: I see. And, and so, obviously you were travelling a lot through the States, to Europe for years. Did you ever think about moving back to Europe or back to the States?

S: No. No. Not to Europe either.

N: Why?

S: Because I like Brazil. Got used to it. It's a beautiful country.

N: Mhm.

S: The people are very friendly.

N: Mhm.

S: Ah, there are security problems here, I agree with you, but ah, they come here from all over the world. Here a little bit worse, you have, you have them in New York also. My, my uncle got mugged already years ago, mugged already twice in the bathroom when he was visiting New York.

N: Mhm.

S: Um. Brazil is a big country. It's nice. It's interesting.

N: So, what's...?

S: In the States we used to travel now. My daughter is, my daughter is. You know Carina by email or by, by phone maybe.

N: Yes. Yes.

S: She left Brazil in 92 because she wanted to, she was afraid of the, afraid because of the security reasons here.

N: Mhm. But you're not afraid?

S: Pardon?

N: You are not afraid?

S: No, I know where to go, and for that, after the war, I am not afraid.

N: So, did you retire in 2008?

S: Yes, of course. 2008 I was, I was uh, 79 years old. Oh no, wait a minute, I was 78.

N: Mhm.

S: It was time to stop. I was getting tired.

N: You were getting tired.

S: I don't like to do things halfway. If you can't do it fully and completely, it's better to stop. And we were lucky because we sold in 2008, it was before the big crisis. I don't know if you remember that detail?

N: You mean the stock market crisis?

S: Yes. 2008. The stock market and the bank crisis and everything. The first half, if we was sold. In the second half of 2008, we would have gotten half of what we got.

N: Oh, wow.

S: Yeah.

N: Good time to sell.

S: Yeah, we sold very nice, we got along very well with the people with whom we sold. We had a very peaceful and very correct gentlemen-like transfer of power.

N: Mhm.

S: And um, they were the biggest in Brazil of sweeteners. Do you know how many sweeteners exist which I didn't know til I knew these people?

N: No.

S: There are more than 12 different types of sweetener.

N: These are, these are chemical sweeteners?

S: Most people only know saccharine or aspartame.

N: Uh huh.

S: There exist 12 different types and they were the biggest in Brazil and they couldn't expand anymore so they had to sell, find another company in a, in a line of business which is more or less similar to theirs.

N: Uh huh.

S: Because we sold to the food industry also. So, they bought us up.

N: I see. And your wife whom you met in 62, was she of immigrant background too?

S: Um. Let's see. No. No. We _____.

N: No. No. Was she an immigrant? Was she an immigrant to Brazil?

S: No. She was born in La Paz, Bolivia because my father-in-law was one of the first ones to leave Warsaw. He already left in 1935, he went to La Paz in Bolivia.

N: Uh huh.

S: Ahhh... try to make. He had, was able to have his younger brother come to Argentina and the rest of the family didn't want to follow him.

N: Mhm.

S: They all, they all perished.

N: Mhm.

S: And, so he went to La Paz. (clicking noise) Hello? Hello?

N: Hello? Yes, yes, I'm here.

S: Okay, well, they were having revolutions there twice a year.

N: Yeah.

S: He got tired, so in 1954 he came to, he wanted to go to Spain, so he stopped over in the port of Rio and he liked Rio and he stayed in Rio. My wife went to public school and to high school here. And, uh...

N: Were both of her parents Polish?

S: Yes, both of her parents were Polish.

N: And she was born what year?

S: She uh, she's much younger than I am.

N: In 29.

S: No, no, no, I was born in 29, she was born in 43. We are 14 years apart.

N: Oh, you said she's much younger! I heard, "We were born in the same year as I am."

S: She's much younger than I am.

N: Okay. She was born in 43. Okay. Mhm.

S: She was born in 43. Then, um, after the children started becoming bigger. (click)

N: Hello?

S: Does that mean we're talking too much?

N: I don't know. Some clicking. Maybe, is there a battery in your phone? Maybe it's, is it out of batteries or?

S: No. No. No. No.

N: I don't know. (chuckle)

S: Otherwise, I will call you back on my other phone.

N: No, no, it's fine. It's fine.

S: Um. Then she, after we, after the children starting to come, become bigger and starting to go by themselves to school. Do you ever hear of a jewelry world-wide firm called H. Stern?

N: H. Stern. Yes. Yes.

S: She worked there for about 8 or 9 years. Selling jewelry on the international sales floor where only people come in who spoke at least four languages.

N: And she spoke four languages?

S: Yes. Well, she speaks uh, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

N: How come she spoke French?

S: She learned it. She learned it. (clicking noise)

N: Hello?

S: Let me. Let me call you.

N: Um, actually, no, it should, it should be okay because I think we've covered most things, so I I'm afraid that if we if we restarted the recording then there will be...

S: We won't finish (chuckle)

N: No, no, I'm not afraid of that. I'm just afraid that the recording will get messed up if we restart the phone.

S: Okay. I had a very interesting conversation. Not only that, I, I, I like very much, the way you, your answers.

N: Oh, (chuckle), my answers?

S: It stimulated my memory.

N: Well, that's great. That was the whole point of the exercise. So, so, when was your daughter born? What year?

S: Carina was born in 64.

N: 64. Did you?

S: 64. 6-4. 6-4.

N: So, what did you raise her to be? Was there a sense of?

S: Well, she was (clicking noise) Oh, this phone. Uh, she uh, let me call you back a minute.

N: Okay. I'll pause. I'll pause. But let me... (tape paused) So, we were talking about your daughter and I was just wondering with such a, with such kind of a background?

S: No, she uh, yeah, when she was, in 1990, in 1992, um, she went to Geneva. She worked at the UN there for about 2, 3 years. And she worked with a Jewish guy there by the name of Rappaport who was very big. He had ships and he had petroleum refineries in Belgium. Um, uh, then she, you have time for this?

N: Yes, yes.

S: Then she went to uh, um, to Zurich because my mother lived in Zurich at that time. And she lived in that Zug which is near Zurich. She worked in a big company which, her job was to, you know what arbitraging is?

N: Yes, yes.

S: She had to do arbitraging of ocean freights. It's a very specialized business.

N: Mhm

S: Then she met a dentist there. A Jewish dentist. They got engaged, then his mother got in between, so the engagement went off. Then she met about a year or two later, a, you ever hear of Josh Bolton?

N: Yes.

S: He was there with Bush. They met in Zurich and then she went to London, they met in London, she lived with him a couple of years in London. Then Bush called, Bush called three people. He called this um, that woman which speaks six languages, uh what's her name?

N: Condoleeza Rice? Or?

S: No. No. No. No. No.

N: Somebody who speaks many languages?

S: Yes. No. No. She was a colored woman.

N: Condoleeza Rice.

S: Yes, that's right. And then Karl Rove, and then he called Josh Bolton because Josh Bolton had worked for his father already. Because Josh Bolton he was at a very, at one of the big banks. I forgot what the name of bank was.

N: Mhm

S: Uh, so, they called Josh Bolton to help out the election of George Bush. So, she was, she was living with him the whole couple of months during election time. Then she told him, "Listen, Josh, that's no way of life for us. You're a very nice guy, I like you very much. There's one problem with you. You're boss Bush calls me every morning 6:00 and says, "Carina, send Bush, send Josh to work." And you come home at 11:00 at night.

N: Mhm.

S: And you work seven days of week and that's not a way you can form a family.

N: Mhm.

S: They're still very good friends to this day.

N: Mhm.

S: So, now, you have the life of my daughter. So, we'll be in Austin, she'll be in Austin the whole month of February. February, we run away from the heat in Rio and we go to Austin.

N: You're going to Austin. I see. Well, what I was, what I was curious about specifically was that with, you know so much history in this family, how did you consciously raise your daughter? Was there? Was there some kind of need to give her some stories or some sense of her, of what you had been through? Or your background? Or did you choose specifically?

S: No, I choose to send her to Bar-Ilan, which is Jewish school. Which is complete Jewish method also.

N: Yeah.

S: And my daughter is kosher.

N: Mhm. Mhm.

S: Carina is kosher- kosher meat and everything kosher.

N: And you have a son?

S: My son lives in Switzerland. My son also, he, when he married in 1995, three months later, the head office in London called him and they told him, "Mariso [ph], come to London and show them what Brazilians can do." So, he stayed 8 years in London, got himself a British passport, my daughter-in-law also. Then they send him eight year to Houston in Texas. And now he's in Switzerland. So, my children are well divided all over the world.

N: But, so you wanted them to have a Jewish identity?

S: Yes, of course, by sending them to a Jewish school, after all. And the Jewish holidays. I mean, we live a Jewish life. Not a reli... Not a Jewish Orthodox life.

N: Mhm.

S: But, let's say, a Jewish liberal life.

N: Do they have a?

S: Liberal? Orthodox or what?

N: I'm sorry?

S: Are you liberal, or Orthodox or what?

N: I'm non-affiliated. (chuckle)

S: Okay. That's also part of Jewry. Okay.

N: Do they have a Brazilian identity?

S: Excuse me for being indiscrete.

N: No, that's okay.

S: You go to the synagogue during the year?

N: I am happy to tell you all about myself when we finish the interview, but right now it's still about your family, so.

S: (chuckle) Okay.

N: So, do they have a Brazilian identity? Did they grow up with some kind of feeling that they are part of Brazil?

S: Yes. Yes. But, no, they have a feeling that they are mixed. They are part Brazil, they are part Jewish, they are part European, they are part American.

N: Mhm. Mhm.

S: It's a mixture, it's a complete mixture. They don't feel like pure Brazilians or pure Europeans or pure Americans or whatever.

N: Mhm. Mhm.

S: They're mixed. It's a mixture. So am I and so is my wife also. Were you born in the States?

N: I will tell you about myself when we finish. So, actually, here's my last question, because we covered so many things, is there anything that we missed? Is there anything I forgot to ask you about?

S: Uh, I, I, I never could imagine that you could ask so many things.

N: Even more. (chuckle)

S: (chuckle) No. No. You covered the whole field, at least twice Noemi.

N: I hope so. I was trying to be very meticulous and documenting how things happened.

S: No, no, no, no. You can sleep light tonight.

N: Okay, then I will stop the recording right now.

S: Yep.

N: Okay.

