United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Shimon Schwarzschild
April 23, 2017
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PREFACE

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SHIMON SCHWARZSCHILD
April 23, 2017

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Shimon Schwarzschild**, on April 23rd, 2017, in **Manhattan**, **New York City**, **New York**. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with us today, and to share your story. Before I ask all of the questions related to your bio, could you tell me, how do you pronounce your name properly? I'm not sure if I got it.

Answer: That's wha – thank you for saying that, I was going to interrupt you. The different parts of my family pronounce it differently. I pronounce it in a more German way, which is **Schwarzshield**(ph).

Q: **Schwarzshield**(ph), okay.

A: Cause it comes – it means black shield, or black coat of arms. However, other parts of my family have gone to **Schwarzschild**. So I am **Schwarzshield**(ph), **Shimon Schwarzshield**(ph).

Q: **Schwarzshield**(ph), okay. And tell me, was **Shimon** your name at birth?

A: It wa – it was my name at birth, and then i-i – my parents, who were Orthodox Jewish in a small town, had two lifestyles they lived by. They h – they – they had their Jewish names. My father, for example, was **Abraham**, and they had their token to assimilation, their Germanic names, and his Germanic name, if you'll pardon the expression, was **Adolf**.

Q: Oh no, really?

A: And in my case, I was born **Shimon**, but – but my Germanic name that I lived for my whole lifetime in **Germany** was **Siegbert**.

Q: **Siegbert**.

A: And then when I came to this country, I changed it to **Bert**. And one day in – of course in **California**, where else, up in a redwoods trees, I had this flash that said, you've always liked the sound of **Shimon**, and **Bert Schwarzschild** is so guttural, and I went to all the bay – I-I went to, almost instinctively to the banks, to the social security, everywhere, and I took back **Shimon**.

Q: And about –

A: And that's about 20 years ago, or longer.

Q: Oh, so when you were in your 70s already.

A: Pardon? I was –

Q: So –

A: – yeah, in my 60s, maybe.

Q: In your 60s.

A: Or somewhere like that.

Q: So – so you had lived a great portion of your life as **Bert**.

A: As **Bert**, that's right.

Q: Wow.

A: I – so, when I Google myself, the-there's a life at **Bert**, and a li – and mor – the – and a more recent life at **Shimon**.

Q: And just a question of curiosity, I hadn't heard that before, though I'm sure many, many people did so, that you have a name that is reflective of Orthodox Judaism, and then another name that is more assimilation –

A: Germanic **Siegbert**, like **sieg heil**. I hate to say it, you know.

Q: Can you tell me, wa – was there a formal way? Did you have to se – did your parents have to have formal documents that had one name, or could they have both? Beca – I ask this, because later –

A: Well, when we first came here, I was **Siegbert**.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and –

Q: That's to the uni – **United States**?

A: – I was in the navy, and they used the name of **Siegbert**. And I – and believe it or not, when we came to this country as refugees, we had enemy a-alien – we ha – we were classi – enemy aliens, and we had an enemy alien **I**.**D**. card with my **Siegbert** on it, and we were not allowed to leave 25 miles of **Jersey City**, or have a shortwave radio, which is kind of an interesting thing about –

Q: And how long did that last, this enemy alien –

A: It lasted pretty much until I went into the navy, at maybe a – 18, and became – and then my parents became derivatives – got derivative citizenship paper. I'm not sure exactly when the enemy alien category stopped. It was there for the war, I believe, for the duration of the war. So I was in the navy for the duration of the war, but – but we were classified as enemy aliens.

Q: Do you think you were an enemy alien while you were in the navy?

A: No, I think – I – I don't know what my status was then wa –

Q: Okay.

A: – it opened a lot of doors, because once I was in the navy, then my parents were – that gave me citizenship in some strange way, and then my parents were able to – they exped – were able to expedite getting citizenship papers. They –

Q: And in **Germany**, do you know whether in **Germany** there was a way of recording both your Jewish name, and your Germanic type name, officially, or was that they had to choose one or the other?

A: I think that we were in **Germany**. I was only known as **Siegbert**, and my father was only known as **Adolf**. But what happened is, there were also Jewish records, but what happened, what I understand from – from the archivist who – who rediscovered, and gave me my family tree **[break]**

Q: – and were allowed to have land. You know, they – they weren't allowed to – I mean, in general, under the Russian empire, it was a different system of land distribution, and who owned it. Jews managed estates, but very few had – were farmers themselves. But it was another form of exclusion.

A: I think that – that exclusion also went on in – in my region –

Q: Yeah.

A: – because even though my parents were cattle dealers, and their parents – my father's father was a cattle dealer, they didn't have big amounts of land. They had – they owned a house, in – in the village of **Dettingen**. And then my grandfather mo – bought a house in **Wertheim**, and that's where my father and his brother moved to, to continue their – their cattle business, even – even though this meant – in those days, ha – being a cattle dealer meant going on a bicycle every morning –

Q: Really?

A: – to all the villages, to find out who – what farmers were – were interested in selling a cow, or what farmers were interested in buying a cow. So my father – there were no cars – he would go out on a bicycle to – and I would sit on the bicycle if I went out with him, to these different villages. And he would have, in each village, he would have a no – a non-Jewish schmoozer.

Q: Really?

A: A man who was like his – his eyes and ears. And the first thing he would do in the village, he would meet with the schmoozer in a beer garden, and then the schmoozer would tell him the latest – what farmer had his cow, wanted to sell it, or wanted to buy one. And then he would get – the schmoozer would get a commission –

Q: I was going to ask, yeah.

A: – if my father bought or sold a cow that he had told him about.

Q: Now, did your father also have competition?

A: Yes, yes, there were other Jews who were also cattle dealers. There weren't that many in our region, but every Wednesday, there would be a marketplace, right near our house, by the river, where all of the people, the – the cow – the cattle dealers would bring their cows, and farmers. And then you meet th-the – the – the people from the bigger cities, who were – worked for meat packing firms would come, and there would be big negotiations, and I would hear them ar-argue over price, and then there would be this – I would hear this gigantic clap. There were no invoices, and no purchase orders, and once that clap took place, the lives of the people were behind this – this transaction.

Q: Oh, how interesting.

A: And that's how the cows were bought and sold in – in the –

Q: How interesting.

A: – when I was a kid. And then – and my father would so-sometimes argue, they would get to so many marks –

Q: Okay.

A: – and before they would clap, he would also say, and 10 marks **trinkgeld** for the children, which meant, a additional 10 marks for my savings account.

Q: And did he get it?

A: And they would argue over that, and they would be included, and then I would feel good, be – I never saw the money, because it went into a bank account. But it would include five or 10 marks of **trinkgeld** for the children.

Q: How cool is that?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You know, it must have been like a – I can imagine, as a little kid, to be accompanying your father as he does his business is a very important role. And then to witness this is also interesting, cause for kids, everything is interesting.

A: I know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And actually, you know, my biography that I'm writing, I – I – I'm titling it, "**Drinking Krambambuli**." And you probably have never heard of **krambambuli**,

but what would happen is, when we got to a village, and you got into a tavern, I would be thirsty, and – and – and there was a – ye – he would sometimes buy me a soda, called **Sharbaso**(ph), which was the name of the company.

Q: **Sharbaso**(ph)?

A: **Sharbaso**(ph). And we – when I was in **Wertheim** the last time, the e – the deputy mayor actually showed me an old advertising, with the name **Sharbaso**(ph) on it, it doesn't exist any more. Which was a name of an early pop – pop drink.

Q: What did it taste like?

A: Well, it was sweet. I don't – I'm not sure any more whether it had bubbles in it. I think it had bubbles.

Q: So it's carbonated.

A: But – but – but then he would say, every now and then, either it wasn't there, or he didn't want to spend the money on it, and he would say to me, drink **wasser wie das liebe vieh und denke es ist Krambambuli**. Which translated means, drink water like the dear cows, and think it is **Krambambuli**, and I never knew what **Krambambuli** was until recently when I **Googled** it, and I found fe – **[break] –** and he was depressed, and he never – he – he never really learned the language. It's a real reversal. My mother was the ballbuster, was up from six a.m. to midnight, working and cleaning the house, and sh – when we came here, she became

emancipated. She found a job within days, whereas my father was lucky if he could keep some job in working in a butcher store, a baker, move around sacks of something, or a night watchman, he had a night watchman job, until some burglars came in and – while he was asleep on one of the department store beds, and – an-and – and he was fired from the job, I remember that. My father was – had a hard time in this country, and my mother was a ballbuster here, she – she worked from 10 in the morning til six at night, and took care of all of us, and cooked the suppers in advance, or e – so my father, who would usually be – often home and unemployed, would heat up the stove – the – the meals for us when we – when we came home from school.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. So – so –

Q: That's very sad for him, yeah.

A: – so he – he was a very nostalgic, and very, as I said, romanticist. I wouldn't say that he was a happy go lucky person; he wasn't. He was in World War I. He was – he was injured, and he – an-and he kind of had some physical suffering and pain, from broken ribs that he – he had not – not – not in a – in battle, but he had to take care of some horses, as a soldier, and one of the horses –

Q: Kicked him?

A: – kicked him in the ribs. And – and so – so a lot of people saw him as sad and sardonic. But on Friday night, when we – because we were Orthodox, we would – he would – we would lie on the couch, and he would – we would sing songs, and – and – or he would tell the stories.

Q: That was my next question, is, was he a storyteller?

A: He was a storyteller also.

Q: Yeah.

A: A-And – and he would often read the stories, you know. But – but he also told stories, yeah.

Q: Wa – and was this a difference from how he had been in **Germany**? From how you remember him from **Germany**?

A: You mean when he came here?

Q: Yeah. In **Germany**, was he a different type of personality?

A: Yes, yes. He – he still enjoyed being home, he was not a – you know, he was not like some of the other Germans in the town, who were always walking to the **marktplatz** and drinking beer in the – in the taverns. But – but in this country, he became very sedate, and in the sense that he – he would not want to leave the house. And – and if we wanted to go to a movie house, my mother, who was so full of

energy, would literally push him off the couch, push him towards the door, put a hat on his head, to – to – to get him to go out with us.

Q: That's so sad.

A: And – and he would feel secure at home. He wou – he would have a stamp – he had a stamp collection, and he would work on the stamp collection, or – he wasn't much of a reader. I think it was more a kind of a form of depression, you know. He would say – one of his favorite phrases that I remember is, **das wasser hat keine balken**, you know.

Q: The water has no –

A: Locks to hold onto for s – for life support. When we talked about going out – he would not vote. Well, of course, **Jersey City** had a very crooked mayor. But he would not vote, and the only – and what would happen, he'd be – he would allow himself to be intimidated. The ward **[indecipherable]** come to our house, and would insist that he go, and he literally would push him out to the precinct voting place. And that's the only ti – because he felt all politicians were crooks. But he would allow himself to be somewhat bamboozled, you know. Yeah.

Q: Sad.

A: But he was a very gentle father, and I appreciated that – that side of his. He actually, finally did find a profession again, because his brother and he – his brother

was a housepainter, and they went into partnership again. They were partners in the cow business, and they went into partnership painting apartments in **New York City**. I didn't know the exact nature of –

Q: Of course not, but –

A: – o-of – you know.

Q: – but you wanted to be part of, you know –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – like – like you wanted to be part of your brother's stable.

A: Because I had been such an intrinsic part. Before the **Hitler** era, and propaganda, I would spend a lot of time in their homes, I would do things with them. We – our town would be flooded every year, and I have this vivid memory, the water from the river would come into the streets, and we would put on – we would put on our stilt – we would take stilts and we would play in the water, or we'd bicycle through the water, you know. We did all kinds of kid stuff, or we would go up to the **haider**(ph) where – and we'd scale the walls of the castle. The castle was broken down. We did things that now are so **verboten** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – it isn't even funny. They reconstructed the castle, it's called **Klein Heidelberg**, small **Heidelberg**, you know. And it's now beautiful, and there are concerts and

musical events, and restaur – restaurants and everything in that castle. But when we were there, was a ruin. And there was fences – a hole in, that we would go to. It wasn't even covered. And the – and we were told that – there were all these folklores, that the – the robber baron for our castle would kidnap rich merchants, put them in the bottom of this dungeon until they got ransom, and if they didn't get ransom, they remained –

Q: There.

A: – remained there. And we used to go and throw rocks down to – and – and – to see this **[phone ringing]** – that's okay – to see how long it would take for the rock to hit bottom, you know, in this dungeon. **[break] –** the glass making factories there, and – and so they had been expropriated, and they had been refugees, and they had experienced some of the problems that it – Jews had. So they were amongst the – a major initiative to fund and bring back the Jews to **Wertheim**.

Q: How interesting.

A: Yeah.

Q: How interesting.

A: And I met many of them, and one of them, who was one of the big glass manufacturers, and was the founder o-of – which is now a very famous glass museum in **Wertheim**, they – they offered my family this wonderful mansion

overlooking the castle, and provided us with a **VW** convertible, because they happened to be on vacation, and they just turned it over for us to utilize. And – and – and – and you know, and the other Jews who came back. When I came back – w- we didn't all come at once, so there was just maybe like a – a half a dozen, or a dozen families who were wined and dined, and – and – and – and we were hosted by all these different people in **Wertheim**, but many of them from the – the community of – of the –

Q: From **Dresden**, yeah.

A: – the east r – the east German emigres – emigres to **Wertheim**.

Q: Well, you know, that – that's also a story in itself, is that relationship between west Germans and east Germans. And –

A: Or was it a –

Q: **Wessie** and **Ossie**.

A: That's right.

Q: Particularly when there was still the wall there, and the different world experiences that they had, the different views of one another that they had. And depending on when these people came from **Dresden**, whether this was right after the war, or before that wall became impermeable. But yes, there was a different sensibility, you know, in that country, which is one of the tragedies of it. Let's turn

now though, to another – a factual thing, just so that I can anchor this. Were – did your parents also come back during that time, or was this just you?

A: Very – it's very interesting. My brother and I each received invitation. The mayor had actually visited my mother and my brother, and – and – and my mother fell in love with him, actually. But when – when – but my family took the initiative, I took the initiative. My brother did not, and he refused to go back. For him, it was more an emotional thing. But he had – he had actually gone to **Wertheim** as a **G**.**I**., he was part of the occupation force – forces that occupied **Frankfurt**, and – and he actually went t – past **Wertheim**, but he emotionally felt he could not return. He also – wa-was a lack of forgiveness involved, also. And my uncle, the uncle I was telling you about, he consider – called me a traitor for going back. I felt like I had unfinished business in **Wertheim**. I had as much unfinished business in **Wertheim** as the people who were dealing with the guilt complexes had, in inviting us back. And I felt that I wanted to get past that.

Q: So I have another –

A: And it was – for me, I felt it was like a transaction –

Q: And –

A: – for me to go back, and – and revisit the place I had left.

Q: And did you find that unfinished business, and were you able to finish it?

A: Yes. One of the things that I pondered over, and – and I hope – well, if you get a chance to read my memoirs, I wrote a poem called "**Return to Wertheim**."

Q: Do you know it by heart?

A: I think it's important, you know, maybe I should – I – I would love to read it, it's short.

Q: I would very much like for you to read it.

A: I'd love to read it and – and then talk about it, because it – it sums up –

Q: Let's do that.

A: – the range of feelings. Can I do that now?

Q: Absolutely.

A: Okay.

Q: Absolutely. Let's stop for a second.

A: Okay. **[break]**

Q: Okay. Let's hear your –

A: Wait, don't start yet.

Q: Don't start yet, okay.

A: I also have one on the **– [break]** "– of about 200 who had once lived there. The other hundred were killed in the Holocaust, and – and we hundred, living now dispersed, in a modern day diaspora, from **Alabama** to **Zurich**. Was it karma, **ESP**,

or just luck, that within days after my moment of rec-reconciliation, I should receive an invitation to return to **Wertheim**, as a guest of its mayor and its residents, who until now, I had rejected and renounced. I returned to **Wertheim** with apprehension and hope, to rediscover the memories I had left behind. To rediscover the aborted part of my childhood life. To rediscover myself. Now I reconnected with my classmates, who I had seen last, when they shunned me, as they were **dutily** – dutifully indoctrinated to do in their eugenics classes, from which I and other Jewish students were excluded, where they were shown drawings of evil looking, long-bearded Jewish men, sucking through straw – straws, a baby's blood, with glee. Now I reconnected with my child within, with the pain I'd felt then, as one or another turned away in mid-play, remembering that I was a Jew, an un-Aryan, too. Now they celebrated my return, at a special class reunion, the 10 year olds transformed into buxom women and beer bellied men. They listened in disbelief, astonishment, and sadness, to – to my last experience in **Wertheim**, at their hands. Quite different from what they remembered, or their consciences allowed them to remember. The gray haired women sobbed, tears streaming down, understanding their part in the tragedy, realizing that they too had been robbed of their childhood innocence, feeling – feeling so long repressed, and hidden from you – from view, by them, me, us. I've returned to **Wertheim** a half dozen times, have

been welcomed by friends old and new, have received and given outpourings of hospitality. But occasionally uneasiness and paranoia seizes me, especially when I see old strangers, my age, still envisaged them in a Nazi Brownshirt, or a black **SS** uniform. I resist blurting out, did you leave your uniform at home? Still imagine them once marching and singing **[speaks German]**. When the Jewish blood spurts from the knife, then we will all be free. Deep physical wounds leave permanent scars. Mental wounds are no different. Their scars are hidden, but there, capable of flaring again. My return to **Wertheim** enabled me to revisit these wounds and scars, to look at them closely, to pay attention to them. But also, to see them in perspective. I can better deal with them now that I'm more at peace, accepting that for better or worse, a part of me is German. The German of a **Hitler**, **Goebbels**, **Bormann**, but also the German of a **Beethoven**, **Goethe**, **Einstown**(ph) – **Einstein**, and **Heine**."

Q: Thank you.

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank you. What a journey you describe in your poem, what a journey.

A: Well, it – I was amazed at myself when I wrote this, actually.

Q: Did it take you long?

A: No, it didn't, you know, really it didn't. Well, I did a little bit of maybe making some corrections, but by and large, the whole thing came out because I remember that when I read it, I read it in class, you know, we were like in a class, and the teacher asked us to read it, and she said that's a very powerful poem, you should try to get – read it to others, you know? And I did actually do that for a while, in **California**. Shortly after I read it, I did go to a couple of poetry classes, where I read it. The "**Synagogue of Laudenbach**(ph)" is shorter.

Q: Okay.

A: And it's different, but it's also a tr – a true experience, based on a real experience that I had in the village of my mother, when I went back.

Q: Okay.

A: Do you want me to read it?

Q: Yes, please.

A: It's called the syna – "Synagogue of **Laudenbach**(ph)." "I walked in a dream, past the empty lot, where once stood the simple, one story synagogue, victim of the flames of **Kristallnacht**. I walked past my memories, memories of singing, praying, chanting, of running, shouting, laughing, respectfully dressed in my young boy's finest, coming and going in the house of God. Now, 40 years later, not even a wall, rubble, or – or ashes remain, to validate my childhood. The lives of those who

congregated each Sabbath, or the lives of those who destroyed it, except the bittersweet and awesome memories, and the sterile, white, clean spot, where emptiness cannot ease the terrible deed. The synagogue of **Laudenbach**(ph) is gone, but memories linger on, with Jewish survivors and Nazi's collaborators alike, those few that are still alive, contemplating their own imminent departure, their own past, present and future, and the final judgment being made in the hereafter of their lives. Sequel: I walk past that empty, holy spot, to the modest cottage across the street, where my grandparents once lived, and cross the street to pr – to pray, their house still standing, as a witness to the past, the sweet and terrible past. Except for the old man in the doorway, who is quizzically eyeing **Karl** and me. My German friend and neighbor of my childhood, who had driven me to **Laudenbach**(ph) to help me revisit my childhood memories. Here's **Jacob's**(ph) grandson from **America**, **Karl** explained to the old man. He wants to visit his grandfather's house, with your permission. Could he look inside? The old man's face went ashen. He trembled, tottered, almost collapsed, then shouted, I paid **Jacob**(ph) for the house in full. I bought it in good faith, a long time ago. He shut the white, picket gate, to keep out the visiting demon from **America**, who had come to – to – to devour him. Afterwards, my friend **Karl** explained, no doubt that man had been a loyal Nazi, rewarded with a purchase of the house, bought cheaply, through blackmail and

intimidation, after the terror of **Kristallnacht**, after the synagogue was torched. I left **Laudenbach**(ph), resolved never to return, but carrying with me forever, those bittersweet memories of a synagogue that once existed, and the simple, sharing, country Jews, who were once part of my life. Goodbye. **Auf niemersehen**(ph)."

Q: Wow. **Auf niemersehen**(ph), can you tell us what that means?

A: Well, I'm not sure whether it's appropriate, but **wiedersehen**, **auf wiedersehen** means goodbye, and I just – I just sort of brutalized it, the word, and made it made-up, **niemersehen**(ph).

Q: Well –

A: **Wiedersehen**, you know, goodbye means to see you again, that's the German expression of goodbye.

Q: Yeah.

A: See you again.

Q: And in – **auf niemersehen**(ph) means what?

A: Means, I will ne – I – that's the last time I'm gonna be there.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I don't want to go back.

Q: Thank you for sharing that.

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank you for sharing it. Both of them. And they both were –

A: Now that old man is dead, I guess I could may-maybe – you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and – and I learned that **Laudenbach**(ph) has become a larger town, you know, and there are probably people there who don't remember any of this, except for the few that are still alive, like I am. I'm still alive.

Q: When you went back, and you met with these former classmates, you mentioned earlier that it was like therapy.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it therapy, or was it something that just had some of the effects?

A: Well, it was therapy in the sense that I – I – I related my experience there, and I – and I saw all of these feelings and emotions that welled up, especially with the women who started sobbing around me.

Q: Had they been people –

A: So, I sort of – **[break]** – in the middle of the war, Nazi – a Nazi truck came to **Wertheim** and to all the towns in that region, and they picked up all of the je – the birth records of the Jews and took them away. And they took them – my friend the archivist said they probably took it to a warehouse in **Frankfurt** for that region, which got saturation bombed, and they never found the records again. So he put

together my family tree, because in the 1800s, there was a king of that region, **Baden** and **Württemberg**. And – and he ordered that the Catholic rec – birth records be in the Catholic church, the Protestant birth records in the Protestant church, and the Jewish records in the Catholic church, because the Catholic church was a minority church, you know, Lutheran –

Q: Okay, right.

A: – was the majority. So my friend the archivist, went back to the churches to put – bring to – to – to get me my family tree.

Q: How interesting.

A: Yeah.

Q: You know, this sort of quirk that you wouldn't realize, or you wouldn't think that you could find 18 – 19th century –

A: Records.

Q: – Jewish birth records in the Catholic church.

A: And in the case of **Wertheim**, earlier, because the graveyard in **Wertheim** goes back – the Jewish graveyard goes back to 1405 **A**.**D**.

Q: Oh my.

A: And the – the – and the – the – the – the – the – the – the makers and – of **Wertheim** are now competing with **Prague** to – to – they're competing and they –

and they claim now that the Jewish graveyard in **Wertheim** is older than the – than the so-called oldest Jewish graveyard in **Prague**, is fu –

Q: Well they'll have good la – good –

A: – it's funny, actually.

Q: Yeah.

A: There's no Jews living in **Wertheim**, of course.

Q: Yeah, but you know, they'll have a – they'll have an uphill battle competing with the **Prague** cemetery.

A: I know, I know.

Q: So let's go back now, to the beginning. What was the date of your birth?

A: I was born in 19 December, in 1925.

Q: And you were born in **Wertheim**?

A: In **Wertheim**, mm-hm.

Q: And your parents? You said your father's name was **Abraham**?

A: **A-Abraham –**

Q: **Abraham** and then **Adolf**.

A: – and – and **Adolf**, mm-hm.

Q: And your mother's?

A: She was **Rosalie**, and I don't even remember at this point, her Jewish name. But she was **Rosalia**, or **Rosalie –**

Q: And what –

A: – as long as I remember.

Q: And what was her maiden name?

A: **Birk**, **b-i-r-k**.

Q: And were both of them originally from **Wertheim**?

A: No, they came from a – from – she came from a village called **Laudenbach**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: And – and – and my br – my father had a brother, and somehow they connected with – with my mother and her cousin, **Nayta**(ph) was her name. And so the two brothers married the two cousins.

Q: Oh my. Oh my.

A: So it's kind of an interesting hookup.

Q: Yeah. And –

A: So – so she – she was a – she was one of s – seven children in –

Q: Wow.

A: – in a very agricultural Jewish community. My grandfather was a farmer, a small farmer. And many of the Jews, I think because they were not allowed to go into any

of the trades, you know, in the – in the – you know, in the – in the early days when they had Jewish names, they were not allowed to have even German names. And they – they – so they could – they were not allowed to be in the – in the trades, and so apparently nobody wanted to be a cow Jew, or a cattle dealer. So you have met Jews all over **Germany** who – who were cattle dealers.

Q: I – I've heard of that.

A: Yeah.

Q: I've heard of many families who – who made their living, the fathers made their living through horse trading, cattle trading –

A: The horse and cows –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that's right. And – and – and – and s – and – and my gr – forebears were smith – they actually – they did horses, they did –

Q: The – they shod the shoes, and things?

A: They shod shoes and actually my gr – my grandfather – my great-grandfather was a smith in the nearby village, which – and I visited it on the last trip there, and saw the smith place, which used to be his place. And – and – and that was an earlier **Schwarzschild**.

Q: Well, you know, this is interesting, because it is – now, we're talking in generalities, or I am, at any rate – this is diametrically different from eastern **Europe**, where Jews were mostly in the trades, and very few were farmers. And –

[break]

A: – tastic story. And of course, it illustrates my father, who never went through grade school even –

Q: Really?

A: – had this real romantic flare. And he would sing songs that had to do with **Robin Hood**, and the Italian version here. He would sing a song that was – these things were all mysterious in my head until I started **Googling** them, and I realized he was a total romanticist. He would sing – he would – he would sing a song to us, about a man by the name of **Rinaldini**.

Q: **Rinaldini**.

A: We always wondered, **Rinaldini [sings in German] Rinaldini** wake up. Tomorrow is going to be better, etcetera. And – and it was haunting. And – and again, more – in more recent years, I **Googled** all these things and found out this was the **Robin Hood** of **Italy**, **Rinaldini**. And my father –

Q: Can you sing – yeah.

A: – he also loved **Zane Grey**. He would read us the German translations. So I expected cowboys in the street, and Indians in the streets of **Manhattan** when I got here, and I was terribly disappointed. Because he would read me the **Zane Grey – Grey** stories of –

Q: Well, there was also **Karl May** that –

A: – cowboy and Indians.

Q: – yeah, yeah. In **Germany** a lot of people have told me about **Karl May**, who wrote in, I think, also about cowboys and Indians.

A: I think I remember that name.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: And – and –

A: Yeah, yes.

Q: And I never heard of **Karl May** until I started interviewing people, you know.

A: That's interesting, yeah, yeah.

Q: So can you, in German, can you sing one of the songs that is in your head, from your father? Whether it's aufterhi – that one about **aufterhieder**(ph) or –

A: Oh, well, you know, a lot of the songs that I knew had some military symbolism, because so much in **Germany** as children wi – were – were military songs. But I remember one which – which was semi-military.

Q: Okay.

A: How –

Q: In German. In German.

A: In – in – in German, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Let me – I have to think for a moment. These songs were always ready – always had them ready, except for the last year, year or two –

Q: Yeah.

A: – I'm beginning to have to think … **[sings in German]**

Q: Was that one from your father?

A: Which translated –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that was from my father, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Which you un – you understand the German of it?

Q: Yeah, but – but for those who will not, please – please translate.

A: The ger – th-the girls opened the windows and doors when the soldiers go through the town, because they love the noise of the – of their marching songs.

Q: Songs.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I also – I also did know – know a little bit of the "**Gendanken Sind Frei**." That was about the only freedom song that I remember. I remember a lot of other soldier songs. **[sings in German]** etcetera, I don't remember the words.

Q: That's okay.

A: But it's like hold that, hold that, hold high –

Q: The flag.

A: – the flag. Show the enemy that we are, you know.

Q: We're he – we're something to count on.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, an-and – and – and – and ho – ho – hoi – **[signs German]**. It's a very sad song –

Q: Sad song, yeah.

A: – as – about dying on – in the battlefield.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then – and then also, they were **[speaks German**, **sings German] –** the trees are blossoming.

Q: Are blossoming.

A: I – I remember that, and we used to go around the maypole. So that was kind of a nice memory that I had.

Q: It – it – you give the impression that your father was a very happy person, if he was singing. Was he?

A: He was – he became depressed when we came here.

Q: Okay.

A: Because he had no trade other than being a cattle dealer, and he was too discouraged and depressed to go into another business. We used to go driving in the country with friends, and he would see a cow, and his eyes would light up. And he could tell us almost everything about that cow, how many calves it had, how many lit – liters of milk it could give, what's the weight and size of the cow. And he – we would say, why don't we get a farm, but he – he never could. And he was **[break] –** in a – and maybe in his 50s, and 60s.

Q: Did that get him out of the house then?

A: Yeah, and that got him to go to **New York**, mm-hm.

Q: Let's turn to your mother a little bit. Tell me about what her personality was like when – in **Germany**, you know, when – let's start from **Germany**, and then –

A: Yeah. Well, the picture I have of her in **Germany** was always being busy with the household, with us. I had a brother. My brother and I – my brother was two years older than I.

Q: What is his name?

A: **Walter**.

Q: **Walter**. Is he still –

A: And he is st – he died over 10 years ago now.

Q: Okay.

A: He – what did he – what did you ask?

Q: No, my question was, oh, what was his name, was **Walter**, so – and you –

A: **Walter**. **Walter Isadore Schwarzschild**. So he did have a Jewish name also.

Q: Yeah. And so you remember your mother always being busy in **Germany**.

A: Yeah, with – with – with the fam – with family things, and we – since we were Orthodox, that – that added an extra burden, cleaning the house before Friday, doing the Friday rituals. I remember the – that – that picture. Even though she did have some help, we – even though we were cattle – lowly cattle dealers in the small town, sometimes there would be a farmers – a farming – a farmer woman who

would come and help and be like – do some of the taking care of the two chil – of us two children, while we were very young. I remember that. And – and – and – and she would do all the cooking, and – and you know, and we had **milchting**(ph) and **fleishting**(ph) and all of that. So – so and – and –

Q: What does that mean in English, **milchting**(ph) and **fleishting**(ph)?

A: Keeping separate dishes –

Q: Okay.

A: – for dairy and non-dairy dishes.

Q: Okay.

A: And then we even had – we even had the classical Shabbas goy, who was a woman who lived nearby, the wife of a grocer, who bec – incid – became an **SS** later.

Q: Really?

A: And all of his chi – all of his sons bec – were in the **SS**. But she would come over, and – and – and turn on the food that – that my – my mother had cooked in advance. And we – we couldn't even turn on the electric light, we were not allowed to turn on the electric light, or cut paper, I remember that vividly. As a kid, that was such a – you know, pain.

Q: Sort of cramps any activity.

A: Inconvenience, you know, that we couldn't – couldn't do that.

Q: Yeah. What ha – what could you do?

A: Well, about – the thing I remember the most – mostly on – on a satur – and we played a lot with children, even though we – Orthodox Jews, we didn't live in an Orthodox community, as such, you know, we were spread out over the town, so we did a lot of playing with – with non-Jewish kids, who were cro – who lived to – down the street, or across the street from us. So during the week we did a lot of playing wi-with – with other children, and on – on Saturday we'd be at home, we had an old phonograph. My father – we'd get together on Friday night. We would sometimes walk to a – a – a – to the river, where we would bring a – breadcrumbs to put in the water for the fish, or something like that. Although I think that was more associated with Passover, I remember – I'm trying to remember it. But we didn't do very much, there was no movies, there was no – we would sometimes visit other Jewish families.

Q: Were there many in that time?

A: Yes, there were over a hundred. There were maybe a hundr – out of a town of 5,000, there were like over 150 Jewish people in town.

Q: Was there a synagogue?

A: There was a synagogue, a very active synagogue. It was Orthodox. We had a rabbi, who I couldn't stand – I didn't like, but –

Q: Why not?

A: **[indecipherable] Sichal**(ph) was his name, **Sichal**(ph). He was – he was very – a hard taskmaster, and very disciplinarian, like all – like the teachers in the – in the public schools. And I remember him taking a girl in my class, who was also learning Hebrew with me, over his –

Q: Knees?

A: – knee, and paddling her. And I felt almost that – that – that it was a sexual thing. I've never forgiven him for that, you know, although I don't remember being hit by him, but I remember him hitting her, and – and – a-and – and – but I remember the – the positive things about going to the synagogue was the singing and the chanting, and being – and usually with – always with – with my father and my – and my mother.

Q: Did he have a good voice?

A: Not particularly. Not particularly. He would sing some songs, but we weren't into singing together that much.

Q: Okay.

A: He would teach us songs. That I remember. And he wou – I guess we would sing them together. I – I – I – it's a little bit hazy in my mind –

Q: What about your moth –

A: – cause I left when I – we left when I was 10.

Q: Yeah. What about your mother? Did she have time to spend with the kids like your father did, or less so?

A: Well, she was always – I mean, she spend most of her time in the house, if – far as I can remember. And – and – but she alone couldn't apparently do it all, because we did have the help from some of the – from a woman, someone from the villages, who sometimes came to help. Bu-But – but her main – her main domain was the house and the children, and family. And that's why I felt she became emancipated when she came here.

Q: Who would you say had the greater influence on you?

A: Well, as far as the – my sense of romance, you know, my father. And – and I – I – I don't have that kind of vague picture. I ma – I could run to my mother for comfort, you know, if I – if – if I fell, or if I had – I had a hard time with my brother, because he was two years older, and he had his own circle of friends, and I fa – found myself wanting to be part of his circle, and him rejecting me, and me running to my mother –

Q: Yeah.

A: – crying and running to my mother, a-a-and she was always there for me in that – in that way. I – she was – and in later life, in – here, she was extremely optimistic, she was extremely pro-life, she was extremely war – generous to us as growing up children and young men, you know. I had a hard time sometimes with it, because she also had – she had a lot of mantras, and one of the mantras was be nice, be go – good. And do – you know, be nice to other people, and be good, you know. And – and I had – it took me a lifetime to – to get past some of those mantras. But she was very, very pro-life.

Q: By pro-life you mean –

A: And she was very much for us, you know, she ha – she helped to give my brother and me the motivation, the life motivation, just in general.

Q: That's quite a gift.

A: Yeah, oh yeah.

Q: That's quite a gift.

A: Yeah. And she was just very proud of us, and I had an uncle who – who was a real problem uncle, and when my brother became an **M**.**D**., a doctor, and I changed careers from electronic engineering to saving whales, and I remember my uncle saying to her one day while I was there, what's a nice Jewish boy like him – like

you saving whales? Why can't you be just a ni – a Jewish businessman, you know? And my mother would not only defend me, she would say, what's wrong with saving whales, you know. And this brother, you – everyone had – everyone had problems in standing up to him, because he was so tyrannical.

Q: Her brother?

A: Her brother. Her favorite brother was very tyrannical, and – and – and just practically destroyed his son, as a child. As a child, you know.

Q: Yeah, when – when parents are so negative to children, it – it really is a price they pay for – you know, for that. **[background noise**, **sirens]** I can – let's – let's stop a bit because of the noi – **[break]** Okay, so your father would take you with him when he would –

A: Okay, not every day, but often.

Q: Did he take your brother, too?

A: He did, but I – I don't remember that as much as myself riding on this bicycle, and going with him. So, he must have.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. He must have.

Q: So when would your day start, when you would go out with your father?

A: He – he – he – he – it would start – he would do – in the morn – early morning, he would milk the cows.

Q: At what time?

A: Sometimes it's six and seven.

Q: That's early.

A: Because there would be – there could be as many as 10 –

Q: Okay.

A: – or 15 cows. And – and he would feed them. It wasn't just a sales operation, you know. And – and –

Q: So he had bought them up from the local farmers, from his schmoozer, that his schmoozer had –

A: That's right.

Q: And –

A: And then he would re – resell them –

Q: Okay.

A: – either to – to be – to be – to the meatpacking people to be – to get killed, or to other farmers. There are farmers that will also buying the co – buying cows. So – so it was both, yeah.

Q: And you would accompany him on these types of transactions?

A: On the – on the bi – occasionally. I wouldn't accompany him every day. I would do a lot of – I did a lot of playing. We had – we lived two blocks away from the street that went up into the – into the hills, into the **haider**(ph), and to where we had this fantastic castle. And we would – we would – I would – I – that – I've forgotten. See, and I'm glad you asking. I spent most of my days with other children, no – Jewish or non-Jewish, mostly non-Jewish, because other than – somehow, there was the Jewish community in the synagogue, and there was the Jewish rabbi that we took lessons with, but there was not a strong community that – where children interacted with each other.

Q: So no real social life?

A: So most of my friends were non-Jewish. I – I had only –

Q: Okay, neighborhood kids?

A: – in my class, my –

Q: Yeah.

A: – my school, my elementary school class of about 30, there was only one other Jewish child in my particular class.

Q: Oh wow.

A: **Ilsa**(ph) **Hamel**(ph) was her name.

Q: **Ilsa**(ph) **Hamel**(ph).

A: **Ilsa**(ph) **Hamel**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: And – and – and so, that's why the whole experience was so painful for me, because all these children, when – when – when **Hitler** came in power, and these – a-and the Nazis started prevailing, they would go – we all went to school together, from different parts of the city, but they would go also into eugenics classes, where they were taught to – about the inferiority of Jews, and they – and they stopped – slowly stopped playing with me, because – because they were told that they – well, they – I remember one day – this – this is very vivid. It's in my biography. I remember one day walking to school by myself, because the school wasn't that far away, and – and – and there is – there was a – like a glass covered stand in front of the school, with a newspaper inside, and the newspaper was "**Der Stürmer**." And on the front page, there was a picture of a group of long-bearded, black clothed Jews with prayer locks, sucking blood from a baby in the middle of the – of them. And – and so, that's the kind of propaganda that they were subjected to. And so, slowly, every – they started – stopped playing with me. This is towards the end, before we left, in many – over many months. And every now and then a ca – some kid would play with me, and then suddenly remember that I was Jewish. And I remember that, and I remember sometimes the – I was jealous also. That's the other

– another side of me. I would see the fireplaces on the hillside, where the young kids who were now all becoming **Hitler** youth, with their brown une – little uniforms, and their backpacks, which they would fill with stones, to build up their bodies. They would be – they would – I would see fires, and they would be swearing their allegiance to the führer in – in – up on the hillside. And I wa – to some extent, I was jealous. **[break] –** you know.

Q: Yeah. So you would play together?

A: Yeah, we would play, and do a lot of things together, in the – in the winter, around Christmastime, we would – they would – they had – they wouldn't – they would – and it's again, the war, the war mentality. Now it – when I think back – I'm a peacenik now, of course. Th-They would m-make lead soldiers by the hundreds, it seemed, they would make armies. And they actually had a – an outfitter, like they would melt lead. And I would be up – up there watching them do it, I'd – we did – I didn't have my own lead making set, you know.

Q: Oh, so the children would get lead making sets that could make soldiers out of them?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yes. At home, I – at their homes, I would see them make these lead soldiers, you know.

Q: Well, that sounds like fun.

A: And then we would play with these soldiers, you know, like kids do.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we would also – sometimes I remember – I have this vision, actually, I have a photograph, we would do – mimi – mimic marching. This is all pre-Nazi, and –

Q: Did you – did you have best friends amongst all the children?

A: I had a couple of best friends, and one of them – this is a real irony – one of them was a very good friend, but we became better friends as a result of all the Nazi propaganda, because he had – he had a crippled leg from infantile paralysis. **Herbert Koch** was his name.

Q: **Herbert Koch**.

A: Yeah. And he could not march with the other kids. And the irony was that his uncle was one of the worst Nazis in the town, and he actually ran the explosive factory that the allies bombed. The only time they bombed **Wertheim** was to get this explosive factory.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: And – and hi – and we were good friends, but – but ultimately, before we left, that friendship also went. And you know, when I came back – you know, I – we haven't got to that yet, but when I came back we ha – we literally had group therapy, all the – all of my classmates who were now buxom women in their 50s –

Q: Well, you know, let's – since we're on that –

A: – and – and – and – and –

Q: – let's talk about that a little bit.

A: Yeah.

Q: We – you know, we don't have to go chronologically.

A: Yeah, okay.

Q: You say you went back to **Wertheim**?

A: I went back to **Wertheim**.

Q: And that – and you were at – this wa – it sounds like several times you've gone back.

A: Yeah. The first time I went back, they had a mayor, **Josef Scheuermann**, who was – and I believe him, by the way, and everyone else has corroborated, was very anti-Nazi as a – growing up as a child. His best friend was Jewish. He lived in – in a larger city, he didn't live in **Wertheim**. And ultimately, he went to **Wertheim**, became the – the mayor. A-And – and – I started to make a point, and now I'm trying to think what – what it was.

Q: It was, the first time you went back, and then there was the – the mayor, who –

A: The initiative, right.

Q: Right.

A: He – he went and – he went and searched for all the surviving Jews, all over the world. He went to **Israel**, he went to germ – he went to the **U.S.**, he visited my mother. He visit – he went to every country to invite – to invite them – the – the – the surviving Jews back to **Wertheim**. And the – the interesting thing was, that the initiative to invite the Jews back, got the – and the money to pay for the – to – the in – invitation included a plane ticket, and they arranged for accommodations. And the main financial initiative came from a group of ger – of Germans, of **Wertheim** residents, who were East Germans at the end of the war. They were part of the glassmaking industry. They were the craftspeople who lived in the **Dresden** area. And when the Russians came and invaded, they fled. And they had to find a place to go, and they somehow found their way to **Wertheim**, where they were treated very hostilely, like – you know, like th – I had – I had this kinship with them, you know, they were treated like – not quite like the enemy, but like outsiders. And ultimately, they became the social – the rich community of **Wertheim** –

Q: Because they had their trade.

A: – they established the – they established **[break]**

Q: Okay, thank you. All right, so you –

A: I have to wear my glasses for –

Q: Okay. So you wrote this in a writing class, you're saying?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. So please, the – the **Wertheim** poem.

A: Okay, it's called "**Return to Wertheim**." "I've made my peace with the past, my peace with the Germans. Not with the **SS** trooper – troops who goose-stepped past our house one dark forbidding night, their black, shiny boots reverberating on cobblestones, singing, no, shouting in o – in cadence, when the Jewish blood spurts from the knife, then we will all be free. The tune has etched itself so deeply in the cells and inner rec-recesses of my brain, that I find myself humming the gruesome words, and the musical cadence that emerged together, until I am startled by the memory of that night, and by – and by my masochistic instinct to remember the event, an epic, that turned me into a scared kid. We fled the bubbling cauldron that was to become the Holocaust, and crossed the **Atlantic**, to the land of cowboys, Indians, and streets paved with gold. To jobless **America**, in Depression, but breathing the air of freedom. As the family eked out a living, each one of us working for the Yankee dollar, in order to survive and thrive, strangers in a strange land. I was hurt by our frantic, frenetic exodus, and angry too. I hated everything German, even though I was German, too. Reminding myself that my family, and the town's Jewish community, too, had our roots in **Wertheim** since 1405 **A**.**D**., as the gravestones testified, before the Nazi bullies toppled and smashed them, as a final

insult to the dead. Wasn't it enough that they had toppled and smashed the lives of the living? I joined the navy to fight the Germans, and was sent to the **Pacific**, in true snafu fashion, to fight the Japanese instead. In the postwar era, I shunned everything German. I refused to socialize and fraternize with Germans. I refused to buy anything German. I refused to make love to Germans. I refused to ride in a German car, especially the **Volkswagen** that **Hitler** had extolled. Until one day, I confronted myself with this enigma. **Hitler** stereotyped all Jews, as universally evil, to be excised, gassed, eradicated, destroyed. Now, I was stereotyping all Germans, shunning and reviling them, finding them all universally guilty, declaring them all universally responsible for the death of seven million Jewish brethrens. I woke up to the realization that postwar Germans who were born after **Hitler**, were as guilty of the Holocaust cruelties, as I was guilty of the native American holocaust that occurred 100 years ago, right here in **California**, a bounty on their scalps. Right here, in the good old **USA**, the land of **Washington** and **Lincoln**, the land of **Wounded Knee**, and **My Lai** massacres, and many more. So I made a conscious decision to stop my own brand of blind hate and intolerance. The same kind that I experienced from the Nazi bullies in their time, who shouted obscenities and insults at me, without ever bothering to know me. A heavy weight lifted from my shoulders, the good vibes that I now felt, must have echoed, reverberated,

ricocheted around the world, and must have found the psychic antennas on the roof of **Wertheim** city hall, must have been received and heard by **Josef Scheuermann**, **Wertheim**'**s** democratic mayor, who was scouring the world, searching for the town's 100 living Jewish survivors, out of –" **[break] –** group therapy, they – and you know, I didn't learn very much about how the – what happened in their lives. Tha-That maybe – maybe if I should go back again, that would be something I sh – really should explore, except not – there's only one classmate left, and he is sort of my friend and host. And you know, there are a lot of unanswered questions, and – and I – I – I s – don't know what a lot of the people were doing. They were all caught up in – in their lives. My br – the one classmate who's left was – was in – conscripted in the army, was sent to **Russia**, was – became a prisoner of war for two years, or three years, he was in a Russian – the worst possible condition Ru-Russian prison camp, and he survived, and ultimately he came back. I don't know whether he joined the Nazi party or not, the chances are, he did. Everybody did. Ye-Ye-Ye – I remember that even as a child, if you – if you wanted to – th-the – the bully boys, the Brownshirts, would boycott stores, Jewish stores. We had a **MH –** a department store in the town, **Max**(ph) **Held**, **h-e-l-d** was the name, **Max**(ph) **Held** was the owner, **Held** was the department store. And they would have the Brownshirts in front of the Jewish businesses, to censor, or – anybody who – any non-Jew who –

who went into the store. And they would economically get back to – at them. And of course, **Hitler** passed all kinds of laws; one in particular had affected my father, that if you owed any debts to a Jew, you didn't have to pay back. So my father, his business depended on the – the crop next summer, you know. If a farmer bought a cow from him, he would pay the debt back maybe a – when the – when the crops came in. So – so a lot of those farmers stopped doing any business with my father, because they decided that the law allowed them not to pay my father back. And – and I remember, I have this one very vivid memory of waking up like one, two in the morning. We had like a bell, an old fashioned bell which you pull, in front of our house. And the bell pulled, and I went to the window, I woke up, and I saw a farmer standing there, with a cow. Because he did not – he wanted to transact a sale, but he did not want to be seen by anyone –

Q: But he was doing it.

A: – selling – doing a transaction with my father. And that was the economic side of it, you know. This fre – person, **Karl Stahl**(ph), he – he comes from fa – he was right across the street, he – he was a carpenter, he had a carpentry shop, and I practically lived there. You asked me what did I do from morning to night, I often would be in his carpentry shop, you know.

Q: I mean, I was asking during Sabbath, when you couldn't do anything.

A: Oh yeah. No –

Q: No, no, this would have been during the day.

A: – yeah, but during the day, I would be over there. And his – his father was a – was a social democrat, so when the – when everybody started doing, you know, **heil Hitler**, you know, that was the greeting, he – he w – he – he refused. He would spit. And he got away with it, **Karl's** father, because **Karl** was a glider enthusiast, and he learned to – glider flying, and ultimately he was drafted into – or joined into the – the – the air force in –

Q: The **Luftwaffe**.

A: The **Luftwaffe**, and flew a fighter plane. And – and – but his parents could remain stoic social democrats and get away with it, because he was a – he was in the **Luftwaffe**. Do you know what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: They could refuse to **heil Hitler**, his parents, and spit.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because they wouldn't jail them.

Q: Because their son is in the luft –

A: The son is in the **Luftwaffe**. On the other hand, we had a count in that town, who – still the count from **Leherenstein**(ph) owns all the vineyards right now in –

in – in this whole area, you know. And you – a-and he would, if they **heil** – said **heil Hitler**, and I remember, as a child him doing that once, he would take his hat off and say, **grüss gott**. And he got – ultimately did get jailed. I don't know whether it was for doing that very act, but maybe for other non-participation, that he ac – that he – where he did not want to join the – the Nazi machine, like everyone that was supposed to.

Q: What part of you is German?

A: What part of?

Q: You, is German.

A: Oh. You mean, what part of the psychological part of me?

Q: Yeah, not just German of **Beethoven**, and **Goethe** and all those things –

A: Yeah.

Q: – but what part of you feels German?

A: It's – it's – it's – okay, that's a good question. There's a logic German part of me, especially now that I'm 91, where I have to do everything very careful, but I think even earlier, maybe being methodical. That's why I became a – an engineer. That could be the – a German part of me. Conformity. I went through a period in my life where I was very conforming. And –

Q: I sense from you –

A: Yeah.

Q: – I'm sorry to interrupt your thought, but –

A: Yeah.

Q: – I sense from you a great deal of heart, for where you came from.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And a – a great deal of –

A: A lot of – the memories ar – the ger – the memories as a child were very wonderful memories until – until that period of my life. I mean, I was – I left when I was 10. **Hitler** came in power in '33. I was then a – almost eight years old. And – and before that time, I was sort of part of the social fabric of – of my playmates, but I also was Orthodox Jewish, so I was sort of a blend.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Pretty much.

Q: You know, in some ways – you mentioned that **Wertheim** was a town of 5,000 people.

A: Yeah.

Q: These experi – I wonder – I don't know, but I wonder whether or not things when you – the things that happened that were uni – universal across **Germany** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – the **Kristallnacht**, and the – the terror –

A: Whi – yes.

Q: – whether or not there's something more personal when it happens in a smaller space, than in a city like **Berlin**, or **Frankfurt**.

A: Oh, oh, so you – first of all, I wasn't there at Crystal Night, that's in '38 –

Q: Right –

A: – we left in '36.

Q: – you had gone.

A: But, the – the Nazism was extremely – already prevalent in the – in the villages, in the countryside, compared to the city. My – my uncle, the paint manufacturer –

Q: The difficult one.

A: – the – the bully – the bully uncle.

Q: Yeah.

A: He lived in – in the city, in – in a nearby city, less than one hour away, **Würzburg**.

Q: **Würzburg**, mm-hm.

A: Yeah. And – and – a-and, you know, the Jews were – they became targeted much later. My – his wife, my aunt, went to medical school in **Würzburg**, and it was much later before she had to drop out of medical school. So a – but, on the

other hand, I had a relationship with none – with my – with German fr-friends, that was very strong, in the pre – in the pre-**Hitler Germany**. We had children living all along our street. That's why I didn't have a th – I can't remember much of a Jewish community, other than going to the s – to the synagogue to pray. I – there was very little playing that I did with Jewish kids, because a – because my – the community of – my child – community wasn't even in the class, it was my street, you know, that was my neighborhood. And – and I – if I – I think back, I can't remember many classmates in a cl – who I would walk to the school and back from. I can't remember that kind of friendship. I remember more the friendship, the – the convenient – the friendship of convenience, you know, right on – at my street.

Q: When you – when you told your experiences to your former classmates when you went back –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – did they all remember you personally?

A: Well, that's a good question. And the way that it works – worked, they would not have recognized me. We all – they all sported their class photo. Th-They – in **Germany**, you take your – if you're – you're in the cla – I was in the class of 1925, which meant I was born in 1925, you know.

Q: Right.

A: And – and – and ev – I'm not sure whether it was every year, but in the fourth grade, when I left, there was a class photo. And when I came back, everyone had a f – as I did, I had one too, I had a photo, and we would point to each other, to re – to – to – to try to remember who we each were. I would not – I would not have remembered any of – I would not have remembered any of them.

Q: Okay.

A: They had a special reunion for me. That's the other thing they're big on, they – in other words, they didn't just – they had it for me, but every year that class had – has a reunion. Now – now they don't, because it's down to one classmate, you know, **Rudolf**(ph) **Streichorn**(ph). But – but when I went back for that, what I call group therapy meeting –

Q: Yeah.

A: – there was – they had a special meeting to – for me, my classmates, which my friend – which **Rudolf**(ph) **Streichorn**(ph) arranged to – invited them all, an-and I would not have ri – I would not have recognized one single one. And even when I look – looked – to be very truthful, when I looked at the picture, I didn't – there was not strong memory, because the children I played with in a more solid way, were most of the children who – who lived along my street, and I don't think any of

them, except for **Streichorn**(ph), lived on my street. He lived right there. He still lives there. He lived right around the corner from me.

Q: And this is the one whose father was a social democrat?

A: No.

Q: That's somebody else.

A: This is the one who was – became a prisoner of war in **Russia**.

Q: I thought that was the one who was –

A: Oh, kar – well, **Karl Stahl**(ph), yes. But **Karl Stahl**(ph), he didn't go – he was – he was older, he was more like my – my brother's age, and – and – and you know, because I – I – you know, we talk about conflict, I had that conflict, in a sense, with my brother. You know, his friends were his friends, you know. And even though we – we – you know, we would go on stilts together, and we would – but – but – but I had my little circle, and my brother had his own circle. And he had a larger circle than I did. When I – if I went a – if I want to look for grounds for jealousy, you know. We be – he and I had a hard time with each other at that age, but we became very, very close.

Q: Later?

A: Later, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: We were very close.

Q: So I – I guess one thing I wanted to establish, if that is actually the case.

A: Yeah.

Q: The children that – the former children that you met –

A: Yeah.

Q: – when they had that annual meeting –

A: Yes, yes.

Q: It wasn't that – things that they had personally done that you remembered.

A: No.

Q: It is that they didn't know what your experiences were, and you were probably the only classmate to come back and tell them.

A: No, and it's probably a lot of unfinished business on my part, which I can never finish, because they're al – they're almost all dead. I never really explored who they each were.

Q: Well, for some people that –

A: When I think about it.

Q: – yeah. Some people would say, I don't care who they were.

A: Yeah.

Q: And that's another question I have to you, is what do you say to those who say, I don't want to go back. I – I'm writing them off, that's it.

A: Well –

Q: What do you say to them?

A: Well, I – it's close to home. For example, my brother, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Who would – who did not want to go back in any shape or form. And – and – and – and I think that – I think what allowed me to go back easier than my brother, is I didn't have the – the more advanced, and adult memories that he had, and the more recent memories that he had. I think that he was turned off when he went back to **Wertheim**.

Q: As a **G**.**I**.?

A: That's right.

Q: It was right – right at the end of the war, yes.

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Yes.

A: A-And – and – and his exper – he did – there were not that many experience. He had one very powerful experience, that might be worth mentioning.

Q: Sure.

A: And – and – and he w – he – he was the translator for his infantry battalion, because he spoke German, of course. And he was a medical aid person, that was his job with the battalion, but he was also a – a translator. And when he went back to **Frankfurt**, when they occupied **Frankfurt**, a – a man came running up, or walking up to him, and introduced himself, and said, I – I – I would like to ask you for help. And the man identified himself, his name was **Becker**, and he – he had a Jewish wife, which he was forced – which he did not divorce. What happened, in the jew – is he was a – a judge with **ver Baden-Württemberg**. And when the Nazis asked him to divorce his wife, he refused to do it. They stripped him of his office, and he became a factory worker, and they took his wife away to a concentration camp. And so he – when he asked my brother for help, he didn't know whether his wife was still alive or no – or dead. And my brother helped him, and in some way, through the **G**.**I**. network, or whatever, he found – he – he found out what the concentration camp was from him, or from the authorities. You know, they – you know, the Germans are great on records, you know.

Q: Are good, yes, yes.

A: And – and – and – and they found his wife alive. And he was involved with the – reuniting him with his wife, and they became actually friends, and they – but he never went back to visit him, even. My brother had a different nature, I guess, also.

It wasn't just that he had a different experience, but I'm sure the experience he had made him more distrustful, and maybe paran – more paranoid about who they – who the Germans were of that day, and what they did, or didn't do against the Jews, and – and for **Hitler**.

Q: When you saw the reaction of your former classmates –

A: Yeah.

Q: – did that change something inside of you?

A: Well, when I saw the – when I saw primarily the women crying, I – I – I felt that they were experiencing something also, in – in – in looking backwards, in looking back at whatever lifes they – they led. And – and that the – that their opportunity to make contact with someone who survived, must have had – well, it only – it isn't only must – had a powerful effect, there were a lot of – there were many – there were manifestations of that effect. For example, I – I can't figure it out yet, but well, when we went back, th-the es – town, the mayor, the – the friendly mayor sent a bus to **Frankfurt** airport to pick us up. And it was late at night, and – and when we came back and arrived, there were, at two in the morning, there were a group of people waiting to – for us, and they had the most sumptuous banquet at two in the morning.

Q: Who wants to eat then, yeah?

A: I know.

Q: Yeah.

A: To welcome us. The mayor was there. The women from the glass people were – were –

Q: Was there?

A: – was – wer – was there. She was also on the town council. There were about a dozen people there to gr – to – to – to greet us, you know. And – and well, there's another chapter in my biography, to give you an example. One of the woman who was there, **Inga**(ph), she's still alive, and when I went back six months ago, she and her daughter, we – we – we connected, and all of that. And – and she was there. And her husband was the special coordinator of the mayor, to welcome the Jews, that was his job. He was also a correspondent, and a – a newspaper reporter. And – and one day, when we got all the – we got all this publicity. And my first wife was Polish Jewish, you know, and we're – and – and very much more paranoid and suspicious. And – and we – I – I felt that – that we were getting all this – this welcome mat was almost too much, you know? So I wanted my children to see what total reality was. I want – so I – I wanted us to go to **Dachau**. And I told **Ingrid – Inga**(ph) that we were going to **Dachau**. This is the woman who is the wife of the –

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, and she started crying. And she said, you know, I'm afraid. I'm afraid you're going to go to **Dachau**, and you're going to come back and hate my children. She was sobbing. A-And there were these kind of things that – that happened. And her husband devoted his time – every time I came – oh, this is – oh this is the other thing. This is the other thing that's hard to grasp, you know? Every time – I think that all the people there, whether they were guilty or not, appreciate so much that someone Jewish was willing to go back and – and – and have some –

Q: Engagement.

A: – engagement and acceptance. And whenever I went back, they were maj – major newspaper stories about my return. And I have no idea who did it, but one day I went and discovered I – that I had a wi – a **Wikipedia**, I was on **Wikipedia**. My suspicion is it was **Friedrich**(ph), **Inga's**(ph) husband, who is a reporter. I – I can't imagine. I don't even know how you get on **Wikipedia**, you know. And the thing that I noticed on there was that it – at the end of the story of **Wertheim**, the 1400s, the 1300s, etcetera, it says, **Wertheim** is the home of – of – of – of **Shimon Bert Schwarzschild**, the famous environmentalist. And I – I just suspected it had to be him, you know? And – and on my 90th birthday, the town archivist did a major story of my – not only of my family, my current family, he went all the way back to

1803, it's – it's a – a major story of about three columns, of the life of the **Schwarzschild** family, you know. And I – I probably am somewhat seduced by what I see as people who – not – it's not a matter of adulation, it's people who have an appreciation for the fact that I survived, that I'm from **Wertheim**, and – and – and guilt. They had to go through – and I the – I'm sure some of them are still going through their guilt trip, too.

Q: Well, you know, one of the reasons that I focus so much on this – and we'll come back to your biography, is that you really articulated some of the central issues, sometimes personal issues, emotional issues, psychological; I don't know what words to put on it, that ar – that are so universal. When an individual, as part of a group, experiences betrayal and trauma, and cruelty, and repression, you lose faith. And part of the issue when a person survives that kind of experience – and I'm not being very specific in it, but somewhere where you lost faith, and felt betrayal, is how do you regain it back?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Can you regain it back? What are the steps to do that?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What is the price not to regain it back?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And so that's one of the things that I wanted to explore, because you had a – you know, through your telling, such a personal tie. And many people who left, don't have that. Maybe if they went through the process, they could think of it, but they don't.

A: I also have a sense of forgiveness.

Q: That's important.

A: And – and without that I could – this wouldn't have worked either. And it's not just with – with it – my fellow Germans. I – I feel that way about that – I feel that way about every person, and about every country, you know, I feel like – for instance, I fought in **Japan**, I – I wer – I saw some of the defeated people on trucks, being hauled away. They were – I – I couldn't feel – even though I almost – I – I could have been killed, I – I was on a – on – on a – on about the most dangerous –

Q: Yeah.

A: – duty you could be in – in the invasion of **Okinawa**, I felt that every – that the people who were the soldiers, the Japanese, they – they came from every form of belief system. Some of them who ma – worshipped the emperor, and some of them who were drafted li – like mer – like we were. And I – and I w – I – I – I wasn't going to judge them, if I – I mean – I mean, I didn't get that many people who

confessed to me, and said well, I want to confess. You know, that – during the war – I – I have to the boys' room.

Q: Sure, let's **[indecipherable]**.

A: And I should tell you, if you – you – if you have to go – **[break]**

Q: Okay. We were talking about forgiveness.

A: Yeah.

Q: What is it that you wanted to say about that?

A: Yeah, well, a couple of items that happened there, that it – I s – I may sound a little bit jumbled, you know.

Q: That's – no, you sound fine.

A: Wa – one – one thing that happened is one day while **Effie**(ph) and I were there –

Q: This is your first wife?

A: – a reporter came from the main city, I thi – it was either **Stuttgart** or **Frankfurt**. A ma – a major city. And he came to indi – just specifically to interview **Effie**(ph) and myself. **Effie**(ph), you know –

Q: **Effie**(ph) is your first wife.

A: – my first – my first wife. And – and he wanted to know about what happened – what happened in – in my childhood, etcetera, etcetera, what happened in this – in

this – what did they call it? Can't remember. This initiative of coming back. And – and then he find – and then he confessed to it, and he said, you know, it's really important that I write about what happened in your past, and all of your perceptions, like **Effie**(ph) mentioned how when she and I went to the – to the train station, she wanted – asked me if that's the same train station where they took away –

Q: Yeah.

A: – the remaining Jews. And I s – I said yes, an-and he wrote all that, when the – when the story came out, he wrote – wrote about all of these reminiscences. The interesting thing was – and it – I will re – I do remember. I never pursued it or checked it further, is that this was a major article, and no one in **Wertheim** of my hosts, of all of my hosts, ever mentioned it.

Q: You mean it never was published?

A: It was published in the major newspaper –

Q: Paper.

A: – in **Stuttgart**, or in somewhere else. Now maybe they didn't see it, I don't think so, but I think they saw it. And because it dwelt so heavily on my experience –

Q: In **Wertheim**.

A: – in **Wertheim**, as a child, you know. And – and so – but what – what – but the point I also wanted to make is that he felt it important to let the new – the

generation, to let the public know what happened. And that happened again and again. While we – we – you know, they took us to all these – they took us on boat trips, up the **Rhine** river, this is the ho – the host – the host committee, you know. Okay. **[sirens]**

Q: I hate that noise.

A: The – the host committee –

Q: Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. **[break]** I'm doing bad things. Okay, fine. Okay, now we can roll.

A: Okay.

Q: It was that noise.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, we're rolling? All right.

A: Anyway, I start saying the host committee –

Q: So that the – the – committee –

A: – the people, the local people took us on trips, on boat trips, th-the da – returning Jews, that kind of thing. And they took us to a beer brewery. Oh, a **Wertheim** beer brewery, you know, as part of the outings they took us to. And there were these two reporters from the local newspaper, who came to cover it. And you could see they were literally yawning. What kind of an assignment is that, listening to these

middle-age Jews talk about **Wertheim**, you know? And – and one of them was sitting – well, they were both sitting near us, or next to us, and we started talking. And when we – when I started describing the – my ex – my experience as a child, and what happened, etcetera, they became so absorbed, that when the – it came time they had a deadline to go back to the paper, and they did not want to go. They said, you know, the trouble is that our parents taught nothing, say nothing about it, and you're telling us everything that we've never heard. That – that was such an interesting thing.

Q: Did that help towards the forgiveness? Is that what you –

A: Pardon?

Q: Did that help towards the forgiveness? Because –

A: Yeah, in a sense.

Q: Okay.

A: It was like, here were these young people – the ol – the old people never talked about it, because they were – had their – they were carrying all their guilt around. And the young people, their sons, their children, never heard – never heard about it. So that – that turned these two reporters on. They were from **Wertheim**, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they – and they said ma – you know, we don't want to leave. But at – at the beginning, they couldn't wait to get away from these, you know –

Q: Well, at the beginning, they're covering a story of an outing.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Rather than something that's their own history.

A: That's possible.

Q: And the history of their neighbors.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You know, that's a different assignment, you know?

A: That's true, yeah.

Q: Yeah. What year was it that this happened, when you had this sort of seminal trip back?

A: Oh, it was – I think it was '73.

Q: I was thinking it must have been then. Sometime in the 70s.

A: Let me see, there is '57, '67 – maybe '74. My son may have been 16, 15 or 16. **Theo** may have been 15 or 16, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and so it was – it was around that time, you know.

Q: Let's go back now to your biography, okay? When you're – when you're eight years old is when **Hitler** comes to power. And you mentioned that in the ensuing years, your father's business suffers a lot.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: How did – do you remember the day, do you remember the incidence of when he actually does come to power, did things change in **Wertheim** suddenly?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, at – at – hard. That – that is hard for me to – when did I first see the parades with a lot of flags, the bonfires, the kids – the old – the older **Hitler** youth egging my classmates on to try to beat me up.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah, that – it happened. It happened every day, but it – but I often would cu – I – I would come back. They would try to beat me up, and they would shout obscenities. The older ones, usually, but they were trying to inculcate my classmates. I remember one of them – you want – you want me to – to-to-to – to say it?

Q: Yeah.

A: **[speaks German]**

Q: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness.

A: I remember that vividly.

Q: We don't have to translate that.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: It's just a bad obscenity.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. And – and a couple of – and a few times, I don't remember how many, I'd cur – I'd get a bloody nose.

Q: So you were beaten up a lot?

A: I was beaten up, not a lot, but I was beaten up a few times. And usually not from my own classmates, but sometimes. And I can't remember though, which one. But usually was the older class. Remember, I was in the third and fourth class.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it was usually older ones who were already kind of inculcated with their Nazism, in – in their – in their kerchief and shirts.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Well, their own colors.

A: I ne – I never thought of that. I love wearing it. This is a new – a new warm – keeping warm device, but that's what they were wearing, you know.

Q: Yeah. Kerchiefs, yeah.

A: And – and brown shirts, and short pants. **[break]** You know, it's funny, what I cannot remember, and it must be repression, I can't remember having any conversation at 10, or nine, with any kid, about –

Q: Any of this.

A: – any of this, that's right.

Q: Did you have a radio –

A: And it's possible that my brother, who didn't go back, didn't go back because he remembered some of the actual incidents, which I didn't, you know. It's possible. And I can't – I can't check with him, unfortunately.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: One other question before I forget and it goes – I'm stepping back a bit, or looping back, is when we were on the question of forgiveness –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and it was in my mind to ask you, and I forgot. Are you a religious person?

A: I – I – I'm not real – I'm not in a – in a – in a traditional way, I'm not a religious Jew any mome – we – we left Orthodox – my parents, when we came here, it was almost virtually – it was already very difficult for them to make a living, and it was virtually very, very difficult. The aunt who gave us the visa was in a temple, a

Jewish temple, but – which you could walk to if you had a half hour or 45 minutes to walk. And – and – and of course, we never rode in **Germany**, on a – in a car or bus, and so at the beginning, they didn't, and we didn't. But then we slowly, the practicality of it was that we started taking the bus, or – or go – or if someone picked us up to go to the temple. My mother kept **milchtig**(ph) and **fleishtig**(ph) initially, and she never – she – and that ultimately went down the – the drain, but – but we – we – she never brought any pork, or any –

Q: Shrimp, yeah.

A: – bacon or – we had Jewish bacon during the whole time we were there. But they gave up every – every other part of it, and – and in a sense, so – so did I and my brother. I – we – in my life, I – we all – I had been – I have gone to shul, or to a temple for high holidays. In **California** I did it almost every year, even here, for some reason, because **Naomi** is not at all practical Jewish – relig – religious, rather. She's Jewish, very much openly Jewish, you know. We – we – we – we – lately – we have – we have Passover. I – I've been – I was invited to the first Passover – the second night, by relatives of mine who are Orthodox Jewish, still. My – my cousin, the – the – the daughter of my father's partner is very Orthodox Jewish still. And – and – and – but her children are still Orthodox, but not. They drive on Saturday now, she doesn't any more. So they have these various grades, yeah.

Q: But you know, the interesting thing is, is you're mentioning things that are the –

A: I haven't talked about my reverence, religious reverence, or what I feel about that.

Q: That is right, that is – you see, you're talking about the things that – I don't want to denigrate them in any way, but there are – the rituals of a religion.

A: Right.

Q: And the spirituality –

A: Yeah.

Q: – is what – is what is the hard part –

A: Yeah.

Q: – when you talk about transcendence –

A: Okay.

Q: – forgiveness, things like that. And I wondered whether or not it was your early – early background, early exposure to the synagogue, to faith, to – what was it? Does that **[indecipherable]**

A: That makes me retain a – a Jewishness that I have, definitely.

Q: Mm-hm, okay.

A: I – I'm very – I feel fairly secure in being Jewish. My aur – my autocratic uncle was going to try to become Catholic, but he never did. You know, I never had that

desire, or feeling that I needed to do that, or wanted to do that, to escape. I – I have – I ha – I – I – I – I ha – I – I am very respectful, and some – and even fond for some of the other belief systems. I – I like buda – buda – Buddhism, an-and – and – but I have – I don't believe in – that I'll go to heaven. I – I think I'll go to – I'll have – I'll be able to sleep, and have a long sleep, which I don't allow myself to have, because there's so much unfinished –

Q: Business.

A: – business to do. And – and I never have thought that way u-until recently, I one day recently I thought to myself, well, maybe it's not so bad to have a long sleep, you know.

Q: You're not tired when you wake up.

A: Yeah. I don't expect to have a – what do – what do – what do they call them, a – a horde of sexy women waiting for me in heaven.

Q: Or like the Egyptian pharaohs, all of your earthly possessions along with you.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But I –

A: But I – but I – but I have a strong feeling – I have a strong reverence for my Jewishness, and I have a reverence for all life, for all Jews. That's why I changed careers, and became a – a full time environmentalist, and nature protection person.

Q: Okay. And is that also – I-I guess, to me, those – as I go back to its – these are – these are spiritual things, when you talk about forgiveness. And when you talk about a certain openness, and an interest in other – and that has that dimension, it comes from somewhere. And that's what I was trying to –

A: It's a good question. You know, I have an introspective about it myself. I'm very happy that I have this feeling for – for others, and – and – and I'm not even sure if I can attribute it to my own – the cruel – the – you know, the cruelties, and being wrenched from – from my life, whether it's I – it's – it's – I think that I've developed a strong feeling to protect other people and species. I feel that did come from my own experience. My own persecution, I think, has caused me to – I can't think of the right semantics for the moment.

Q: Yeah.

A: I write about it all the time, but I – but my brain is beginning to go, you know.

Q: Your brain is doing fine.

A: Yeah, yeah, well, I – I have a very strong feeling about all living beings. And – and – and I – and it may – some of it may have come from having –

Q: Gone through, yeah.

A: – experienced my own personal estrangement and cruelties.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, you –

A: And – and – but it also makes me – it – but I – but with that, I also feel that everyone is struggling. That I'm not alone in that, and – and – and in a way, that's why I was able – I think I was able to go back to **Wertheim**, and I was able to – to understand the guilt feelings that maybe drove some of the people to – there were people there who I really felt that they were working out their guilt, you know? There were others who weren't, who were – just really felt they wanted to have Jewish residents come back a-and be emancipated in their town. But there were others that I felt they were going through strong guilt experiences in – in their own –

Q: Well, there – there's a certain – I'm pro – I'm not pr-projecting, but I'm assuming that let's say, if you're a German and you have a parent that you loved, and that parent was a Nazi –

A: Right.

Q: – and you have to then somehow integrate what you know, with a loyalty that comes from this being your parent.

A: Right.

Q: And how do you integrate that?

A: Yeah.

Q: How do you deal with that?

A: Yeah.

Q: And it's incredibly painful.

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Let's go back now to the biography, which I –

A: Okay.

Q: – am going to – I promise I'm not going to interrupt again.

A: Well, it's all right.

Q: But –

A: No, you're in – you're doing good – you're doing well in your interruptings. Go ahead.

Q: Thank you. Did you have a radio at home? In your home in **Wertheim**, did you have a radio?

A: No, but we had – we had – we had a phonograph.

Q: You had a phonograph. So you never heard **Hitler's** speeches.

A: Okay, no. Well, let me – oh, let me tell you a wa – a – as true and very interesting story about a radio at home.

Q: Okay.

A: We had no radio, but we had a – a phonograph, and I remember **Die Fledermaus**, I don't remember anything else, ta-da, ta-da, ta-rum-pom-pom, which we played. And I wish I had that phonograph today, you know.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: But, I remember there was a Jewish family, the clo – who lived the closest to us, by the name, the **Fleischmanns**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: And I remember they would invite us to their house, and they had a radio this big.

Q: Oh boy.

A: And I could not get past thinking that there was someone who was singing, and doing the playing, and I would literally – they would have to stop me from going to the back of the radio.

Q: To see who's in it.

A: To see who's in it. And they – and – and so we – we went there, but also we went there – I remember one situation where we went there, and they would close all the shades, and curtains, because you were not allowed to have a shortwave set. I don't know whether that was a Jewish edict, or whether that was a Nazi edict, you know, to apply to everyone. But we – they would turn the radio down, and they

would close the shades. Now, maybe they were listening to Radio **Moscow**. I don't think so. I – I – I –

Q: Or the **BBC**.

A: – or the **BBC**. There were no known – well, in – in my – my childhood would not – I was not sophisticated politically at the age of 10, so I couldn't tell a socialist from a communist from a capitalist.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they me – there probably were some left leaning Jews in – in – in **Wertheim**, but not many. Most of them were agrarian Jews.

Q: Yeah.

A: Like my father, you know, and – and most of them came from a milieu where they never went to high school, even. Like –

Q: And your parents – d-do your parents go to high school, gymnasium, or –

A: No, they never – they never finished grammar school, both of them. And – and I don't think many of the – because in – in – in – at that time, high school was not public. Even in **Germany**, you know, with –

Q: You had to pay for it.

A: – with a **krankenkasse** since **Bismarck** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – high schools were – were not public and you had to pay. And I don't think – I don't think – I think most of the Jews who lived in that time, with the exception of one family, and they were called the **treyf** Jews. I remember them still because – because about three months ago – oh, no, was six months ago. I had been to **Wertheim**, and the **Wertheim** did a major story on my return. They also un-unveiled a Jewish section in the **Wertheim** museum, a whole floor about the Jewish community of **Wertheim**. And I would like that biography I'm giving you to go there –

Q: Okay.

A: – because – and – and I would love if I could get a – if that film is available. When I went there, the director of the museum took me on a personal tour with a bunch of my classmate and other people, and – and I was very appreciative that they now had something to tell the story of the Jews of **Wertheim**. But I felt it was a very static exhibit. And I said – I remember saying to the director, you know, if you're gonna have schoolchildren come there to tell the story, it would be useful if you had something that was au-audio-visual –

Q: That's true.

A: – there, so they could have something they could identify with, you know.

Q: Let's cut the camera for a second.

A: And I thought – **[break]**

Q: Okay. So, the radio question is, did you ever hear **Hitler's** voice?

A: Not in **Germany**. I heard it here. I was a shortwave – an **SWL** at 16, in here, and a shortwave rad – listener. And I would sometimes – I remember him doing one of his diatribes on the rad – on the shortwave radio that I ha – we had in **Jersey City** that was – that was after the ban was lifted, so it must have been when I was 18 or – or so.

Q: So that would have been the first time you heard his voice?

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank God no – goodness in safety, you know –

A: Well, I mean, I've –

Q: – or relative safety.

A: – seen his voice in – in the newsreels, you know.

Q: Ah, that's right.

A: In – in the movies, they had – they had him – you know, I – I – I had heard his voice, his –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know –

Q: Did your – did you – you mentioned "**Der Stürmer**" with the – with that big –

A: Mm, with the cartoon on the front page.

Q: Right. Were there other newspapers that you remember from **Wertheim** that –

A: Oh, that dealt with – with – with these kind of things? I tha – there's a **Wertheim [indecipherable]** and I've gotten very familiar with it since I returned. But I really didn't remember, I can't even remember whether my father read the **Wertheim [indecipherable]** regularly or not, or the – or the "**Frankfurter**." The "**Frankfurter**" is a famous paper.

Q: Yeah.

A: At that age, for some reason, I – you know, I was part – okay, I was part of a provincial, a – not only a provincial town, it's an agriculture town, but a provincial Jewish community. They had all kinds – okay, this is a real funny story, I don't know whether it fits into our frame of things, but they had all kinds of disdain, and looking down their noses. I don't think it was just a Jew – the Jewish – the **Wertheim** Jews, the **Wertheimer**, it's a **Wertheimer** thing. They would say **mitter hände –** no, they would say **[speaks German]**. I remember this as a eight year, nine year old.

Q: Okay, okay, what's the largest lake in **Germany**?

A: The **Berliner schnauze**. Nobody knows this any more. And – and I'll tell you a real, true story.

Q: Okay. Can you translate **Berliner schnauze** for us?

A: Th-The – the sno – the nose, or – and the mouth, the yapping mouth and nose of a **Berlin –** of a **Berlin** native, who talks a lot.

Q: Okay.

A: That's basically what it is.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my father would always say to me, when he didn't believe something, he would say, **mit der hand düren Alexanderplatz**. Okay, I didn't know what this meant, until one day, I was in **Berlin** with two Greek women friends of mine, and I never – I happened to see on the subway, we were on the train, and there was a stop at the **Alexanderplatz**. So I said to them, you know, I've always wanted to know what the **Alexanderplatz** was.

Q: Okay, so he would say **mit der hand –**

A: **Über den Alexanderplatz**.

Q: – **Alexanderplatz**. With the hand over **Alexanderplatz**.

A: Means the asshole. It means, they were looking down on **Berlin**, I – which had an **Alexanderplatz**.

Q: Yes, it did.

A: And I had a terrible experience in that **Alexanderplatz** as a result of my father. I can't blame him, I can't blame him. I wanted to see the **Alexanderplatz**, so I and my Greek friends went there. We were – there was a café there, and we went to have beer. I put my shoulder bag down, I had in it my visa, I had in it my **euro** passes, money, and I – in three days, four days, I was leaving with a group of German foresters, for **Sochi** in the **Soviet Union**. **Sochi**, you know, on the **Black Sea**. And I had my –

Q: Everything.

A: – my Russian visa in this –

Q: Was this during – what year was this, when you were at **Alexanderplatz**?

A: That was maybe in the 90s, or 80s?

Q: Okay, so it was already unified. It wasn't –

A: Yeah, oh y-yeah, yeah.

Q: – it wasn't **[indecipherable]** any more.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And we were – we – a-and – and so, we were sitting there drinking and talking, and this woman came running up, a German woman. She said, oh God, my mino – my nose is running. Do you have a tissue, or something, or – we thought she was

crazy, you know, we all were attending to her. It was like seven at night, it was ca – beginning to get dark. And we finished our beer, and then there were some shadowy figures coming by, but we didn't pay attention to it. And when I went down to pay the beer bill, my bag was gone. And it contained everything.

Q: Everything.

A: Including my – my daughter had to go to the **San Francisco** consulate, and plead with them to get – to get another visa. They would not – the **Berlin** – the – the – the Russian embassy laughed at me when I went there, she'd say, you high tech Americans, you're cra – you think we would be able to communicate with the consulate in **San Francisco**? You're gonna have to go do your own thing if you want to get a – a visa – a copy of your visa.

Q: My goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – so anyway, what I'm saying is that they – they – there was a lot of chauvinism. I don't think it was just Jewish, I think it was a small town looking at, you know, at – looking down at – at – at all the big city people.

Q: Can we cut the camera?

A: And I have to go – **[break]** Well, that was a p.s. anyway, so –

Q: Okay, that's okay, but you understood what your father meant by it.

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Let's go back to your home in **Wertheim**, and ho – did your mother change? Did she still have her ma – help coming in, or was that no longer allowed?

A: You mean, as things got closer? I think that the woman that I mentioned to you, the Shabbas goy, Mrs. **Wettangle**(ph). I don't want to mention names, because the **Wettangle**(ph) family still lives across the street there.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, there's a chapter about her, and about what happened when I ca – oh, I have to tell that, that's very –

Q: Okay.

A: – oh, very germane.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay, what happened is, when I fir – when I first came back – when I returned – during the invitational return, I was there one or two days, when our bell rang. And this woman, Mrs. **Wettangle**(ph), old lady, came. And she was the woman who was our Shabbas goy.

Q: Oh wow.

A: And she wa – invited us to go up to the – up the **haider**(ph) to the castle. She ran like a spring chicken at 80, you know. And – and – and – and we talked to her, and she – we – she was kind of apologizing for what happ – you know, about her husband, and about her children. And she a – well, basically, she wanted forgiveness, especially from my mother. And –

Q: Your mother went?

A: No, my mother didn't.

Q: Mother didn't.

A: My mother di – was not – my mother couldn't g – was very supportive of me going.

Q: Okay.

A: But – and – and she loved the mayor, but she felt she didn't have the emotional –

Q: Strength.

A: – strength to go. So she was very enthusiastic, almost, and – about my going, but she couldn't go. She felt she couldn't bring herself to go.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, this woman came, and – and – and you know, and sh – and she – I didn't know the whole story of it. I didn't even know that – I didn't remember her, but she

said she was the – the person who came, and she was a friend of my mother, and she – she wrote a long letter of forgiveness – asking for forgiveness of my mother.

Q: Oh wow.

A: And – and because I had learned from her, and from other people from – that – that her husband became – he was just – a lot of people did these things out of great opportune – opportunism, you know? He – he wa – he was a grocer, he became an **SS**, his three sons became **SS**. But there was a – there was poetic justice, because I also learned the father got killed. One of the brothers came back blind.

Q: Oh my.

A: Another one came back totally injured from the Russian front. So I – so, they got their own just reward, just desserts, without, you know. But – but my mother could not bring herself to – to send her forgiveness, I remember that still, you know. But this woman was, you know, I mean, she was like the first visitor we had. And –

Q: And what was her story?

A: She said, I've always been a friend. She said, I want – you know, I – when I saw what was happening, I went to your mother, I – I warned her about it. I urged her to leave. You know, that kind – she had that kind of –

Q: Okay.

A: – story to tell me. And – and – but she s – you know, she had no – she had no excuse to offer, except that she always loved my mother, and etcetera, and never had any malice towards us. But – but her husband and her children were another story.

Q: Story.

A: But that's – but that's not – that's not atypical, that's not –

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm sure that happened in many families. It's a opportunism, you know.

Q: Okay. So, she stopped working – or, she stopped coming over.

A: She stopped coming in, I don't know when, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: This is – I – I do not know when she stopped coming.

Q: On Sabbath, yeah.

A: Yeah. I don't know.

Q: How did things – I mean, one of the big questions is, your family leaves in 1936.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's relatively early.

A: That's right.

Q: And for people who are uneducated, that is, without big ties everywhere, so many people who were in the highest echelons of society, decided to stay.

A: That's right.

Q: And – until it was too late.

A: That's right.

Q: How – th-the question –

A: Okay.

Q: – to my mind is – is –

A: What happened.

Q: – how did your parents –

A: I ne – I never told you this, oh my God.

Q: Yeah.

A: Here's what happened. My father was extremely secure. He had fought in World War I. He had gotten an Iron Cross, second class, for a – an incident that occurred on the – on the trenches.

Q: Okay.

A: I-I – if you want me to tell you the story, I'll tell it to you later.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: It was interesting story, what happened. And – and you know, and he had his parents and great-parents, they all came from that same town. And one day – but he did have a – somewhat of a temper, my father. And one day, not long before we left, a Nazi, a Brownshirt – they – the Nazis were already coming into our place. They had a thing called **eintopfgericht**.

Q: **Eintopfgericht**?

A: Yeah. I don't know whether you've ever heard of it, even.

Q: No.

A: During the height – during even at that time of the Nazi era, even though it was the early era, they had a thing called winter health.

Q: Okay.

A: But it was a – I had learned since, it was a disguised way of hoarding for the – for – for war.

Q: Okay.

A: **Hitler** was hoarding for war. They had warehouses, geographically located. And they would come, I'm not sure whether it was once a week, or once a month. There would be some Nazis coming, and they would – and you had to cook a so-called **eintopfgericht**, which means a one-pot –

Q: Dish.

A: – dinner.

Q: Yeah.

A: And all of the hypothetical savings of food that you didn't use because you had an **eintopfgericht**, they would pick up to sto – warehouse. And they would be uniformed Nazis who would come. Now they – they didn't come to hound Jews, they – they didn't come just – this was not a Jewish thing, this was everybody.

Q: So you cooked them a meal?

A: You – no, you didn't cook a meal. You cooked yourself your meal on a – in a one pot service, meaning you made the meal in one pot, like a stew, or something.

Q: Okay.

A: And whatever, hypothetical you saved – and I don't know who decided, and who measured –

Q: So you –

A: – whether it was uncooked rice, uncooked wheat. Stuff you can store, you know? Food that you – could be stored –

Q: Okay.

A: – they would pick up.

Q: Oh.

A: Just to – and they called it winter health, probably as a disguise.

Q: To store foods.

A: Wa – he – wi-winter help. You know, like we pick up cans for people.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so – anyway, one day a Brownshirt came to the door, and insulted my father. I don't know what the – what the words were, at the door, and my father punched him in the face.

Q: Uh-oh.

A: And he was jailed for two weeks. And of – you know, at that point, all – all the Jewish people there, they – they saw **Hitler** as some bizarre phenomena, especially in **Wertheim**, because those people had been there for multi, multi, multi-generations. It would blow over. It was a thing that would blow over. And they – and – and some of them laughed when my father – and my father decided he did not want to s – that was when he first decided he's not going to stay in this environment. And we had – we had only one distant relative. It was the widow. She was a southern Jewish belle, who was married to a distant cousin of my father, who had already died in **Jersey City**. And we wrote – that's the only American address we had. And so, my father or my mother wrote a letter to her, Aunt **Bertha**, and – and asked if she would get us a visa, because this is yel – total misunderstanding of

most people. They think, why did those 900,000 Jews, why didn't they just go, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Even if you wanted to go, you can't go unless you have a – a legal document, to allow you out. I mean, after **Kristallnacht**, some people would flee. And if they had non-Jewish friends who would hide them, they would find their way across the border. But no – normally, you couldn't go. So sh – sh – he sent this letter asking for a visa, and she had to get it translated, she – she –

Q: She didn't speak German.

A: – didn't speak German at all, or read German. And she got us the visa. And –

Q: What was her full name?

A: **Bertha Freudenberger**.

Q: **Freudenberger**.

A: Yeah.

Q: **F-r-e-u-d-e-n-b-e-r-g-e-r**?

A: **B-e-r-g-e-r**, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and yeah. And – and I think i-it may have been co – you know, cause in those days, you had to have real financial responsibility on a visa. Y-You – you had

to have your – a bank account that, you know, in case someone couldn't make a living. And I think she had a co-sponsor, who was **Ernestine Oppenheimer**, who was a cousin of hers.

Q: Okay.

A: And they both lived next to each other. And so she – well, she was the first woman that I – the first person that I saw when we arrived on the boat.

Q: Well, I want to talk about leaving –

A: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Q: – leaving that time.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: So, your father gets jailed. When he gets out of jail, he says –

A: Yeah, he sent – yeah.

Q: – he sends this letter.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And she says yes.

A: Yes.

Q: She – she does this.

A: Yes.

Q: How was it le – was he able to leave with any assets at all? Did you take anything?

A: That's a story. You were not al – Jews were not allowed to leave with any money. We were able to have a lift – we had a small – was a crate, where we had some of our belongings. We didn't bring furniture, but linen, and you know, belongings of that sort.

Q: Household things, yeah.

A: Yeah. But the law was very strict about money, or valuables. And what happened is, my Uncle **David**, and unc – the uncle who lived in **Würzburg**, accompanied us to the ship in **Bremen**, at **Bremerhaven**. And my mother decided – well, we took along – we had some gold coins, maybe five or six. And she had put them in a cold cream jar, to – and we got on the train from **Bremen** to **Bremerhaven**, and there were these Nazi guards going back and forth on the train. And my uncle had come along just to escort us to the ship. He – he didn't leave until two – two, three years later. We got him the visa to – to come out. This is the uncle, the famous uncle I was telling you about. So he came along, and my mother got s – really scared. And in the last instant, she took out the gold coins from the cold c-cream jar, and gave it to my uncle to take back with him, because we were worried they would make a – you know –

Q: A fuss, yeah.

A: – a spot inspection, or something.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that would prevent us from leaving. So we came virtually, literally, and every other way, penniless.

Q: Oh wow.

A: Yeah. Now, the aunt we – our aunt was rich. But she very much believe into – in everybody –

Q: Works.

A: – doing – work ethics, doing it yourself. So we never – we never asked for – I don't know whether we even would have taken a penny from her. Well, what she did do is – there was a bachelor relative, who lived in **Jersey City** also, and she didn't invite us into her beautiful home, for whatever reason, you know. But he was a bachelor, and he had an apartment. So, for the first two or three months, we were live – able to live in a – in – in – in – in a small room that he had in the apartment. And she also believed strongly in starting school right away. So, two days after we arrived, and my brother and I spoke absolutely no English, she took us to the public school nearby. We enrolled, and we started school.

Q: Wow.

A: Two days later, and – but they – you know, in those days they didn't have English as a second language.

Q: No, of course not.

A: But what they did do, which was so smart; my brother was two years older, and he was in the sixth grade in **Germany**, I was in the fourth grade. They put him into the fourth grade with me, and they gave us seats next to each other, so that we could whisper – whisper to each other. And we learned the language that way, within six months.

Q: Oh wow. Oh wow.

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me about – tell me about leaving your home in **Wertheim**.

A: Oh, that was –

Q: Was there anyone who –

A: – the only thing I – what I reme – my unc – my – my father's brother did not leave right away, he didn't have a visa. So he – and we lived in the same house. We had a four story house, which is now a – it's now a – what would you call it? Historic. It's – it turned out to be pre-Roman. I never knew it. I slept next to a wall that went back to pre-Roman times, you know.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: The bedroom, my bed – my bed, you know. And there are other historic things about that house, that I learned very recently, when I went back, which I had never known of. And they found out historically about our house, after we had left.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because no one el – no one even knew about it. They found out that – you know, I – I don't want to –

Q: Okay.

A: – delve in that –

Q: Okay.

A: – at the moment. So you – the question you had is –

Q: Is what was it like leaving your home?

A: Yeah, okay. So, my uncle came and took us by car to his home in **Würzburg**, and from there we ultimately – he went with us, by train. But as we were leaving, a – I still – that I sti – I – I remember very little, but as – but as we were leaving, I could see, and we could see people standing behind curtains. There were some where we could almost see a wave. But you could see movements along **Weitsgasse**(ph), which is the name of my street.

Q: **Weitsgasse**(ph).

A: As we slowly drove out. So, everybody was aware of the fact, of course, I mean, we were – we were going. And – and –

Q: And the house remained to your –

A: The house – my – my uncle, and his family, his wife and two children, remained there for another almost two years, until we managed to get them a visa to go. And then they sold the house, and they also got restitution, because they sold – you know, when you sell something under that kind of pressure, and they know it's the Jews leaving, you know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you don't get very much for it, and – and actually, the article the town archive wrote on my 90th birthday, he actually mentioned all the details of how much that house was sold initially, and then later to someone else, and how much restitution the German government ultimately paid for it.

Q: Okay.

A: He actually put that all in the article about my life.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, that was one of my questions, is you do – did you a – did you ever get any restitution?

A: I personally didn't. My parents did, though.

Q: Okay.

A: My parents got – I do – I have no idea any more, at this point.

Q: Doesn't matter.

A: It was in the thousands. But I don't know how much it was. But they did co – they did – you had to get a lawyer, you had to go in with a – an application, and – and – and you – and you got – and they did get restitution, yeah.

Q: So you – your uncle escorts your – your mother's brother uncle –

A: Yes.

Q: – escorts you to **Bremerhaven**.

A: Yes.

Q: And do you remember anything of the boat?

A: Yes, I was very – I – I id – yeah, I – I was crazy to have joined the navy, to see the world, or whatever, for the war, because I was carsick, seasick, train-sick and every other nauseous you can imagine. And – and, as soon – th-this was a huge ship, this was the **Europa**, which became the **Liberté**. Because the French confiscated it at the end of the war.

Q: Right.

A: It's like 50,000 tons, or 60,000 tons. And I remember the eg – exact moment after we had left **Bremerhaven**, my mother was opening a bottle of **5811**, is it? Cologne water.

Q: Oh, I think I know that, **4711**, **4711**.

A: **4711**.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and I started feeling nauseous, and then I was seasick for the whole trip. My brother wasn't. A-And – and – and he – and the final irony is this, when we arrived, and I finally got my – out of the ship, and got on ground, I told you, Aunt **Bertha**, she came with a convertible. She had a **Pierce Arrow**, and it was the first African-American I saw; she had a livery – a uniformed chauffeur, **Conrad**.

Q: Whoa.

A: And **Conrad** came to pick up our countrified belongings, and bring them to the **Pierce Arrow**, where my aunt was sitting in her beautiful, black suit. They drove away from the ship, and when they got to **Times Square**, I became totally nauseous, and **Conrad** s – had to stop the car, so I could get out and vomit at **Times Square**. That was my first experience of **Times Square**, vomiting there. An-And that was – that was my first day, and that's the experience I remember. Also, the disappointment that I saw no Indians here.

Q: No Indians, and no –

A: And cowboys.

Q: Yeah.

A: That was a real disappointment, yeah.

Q: What a nerve.

A: Yeah.

Q: What a nerve. So, what happened when the war came, and you end up serving in the war?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Tell me about your brother and yourself, and how it is that he ended up being in **Germany**, and you ended up being in the **Pacific**.

A: It's interesting, I – yeah. Well, they start – I don't know whether they had any computers yet, but I decided – I had this crazy li – really crazy notion about wanting to be in the navy, and not wanting to be drafted, because people were being drafted o-o-on their 18th birthday. So literally on my 18th birthday, I was still at high school.

Q: Okay.

A: I was in my last semester at **William Dickinson** High School. On my 18th birthday, I enlisted in the navy, and my brother had already been drafted –

Q: So he was drafted, but you enlisted, yeah.

A: – in the army. And he was drafted into an infantry unit that went to **England**, and ultimately was not in the first wave, but it – it was part of the occupation –

Q: **Normandy**.

A: – of **Normandy**.

Q: Wow.

A: So he was in the occupation of **Normandy**, and for some reason, maybe because I was German, maybe because of fate, they sent me – I – I was put on a ship, I was assigned to a ship that was in the – in the **Pacific**.

Q: Did you –

A: Oh, I didn't – I – I didn't go right away. What happened is, when I was in boot training, they give you this gen – gee – general – **GCT**, general classification test that your whole life in the military is dependent on that. And I got a very high grade. So they send me to what was then the hottest kind of training, which was radar and electronic technician training. So for one – almost one full year, I was – I was going to navy training schools in **Chicago**, and **Gulfport**, **Mississippi**. And then I was flown to **Hawaii**, and I was we – was sent to an advanced radar school, and while I was at the school, I got – they gave me – notified me I had 24 hours to pack my bags and get ready. I didn't know where I was going. And it turned out I

was go – I – they put me on a plane that flew from **Honolulu** to **Okinawa**, during the height of the **Okinawa** fighting.

Q: Oh my God.

A: And I was assigned to a special unit that was made up of two pilots, and – and about five specialists, radium and radar man technician, and – and two officers. We were known as a fighter director team, and we were assigned to a destroyer that was called a picket ship, which – which goes in a little circle on the outs – they – all around the island of **Okinawa**. That was the time of the kamikazes, who were – and – and they were early warning ships for kamikaze suicide planes. So I was in this team, and my job was, I would be in the – the raid – the room which had the radar, was called the **CI**, combat information center. And I would have a dual earphone on, and I would watch the blips on the radar, and if – and if – and when we saw a – an approaching kamikaze, I would man – I would maneuver that our pilots would scramble from the airport – from the air – airfield in **Okinawa**, and my job was to maneuver our plane until it would make contact, radar and eye contact with the kamikaze. And then they would say, tally-ho, and my job was over. And – but you know, it didn't always work as beautifully as it sounds, because there were many kamikazes who crashed into picket ships, because they knew that the picket ships – these were destroyers, all the way al – all in different spots around the island. They

knew that these picket ships were early warning ships. And up to that point, I saw the whole – my whole navy duty being on destroyers and all that, as being some romantic, interesting, new experience. Until one day. What had happened – I hope I'm not boring you by all this, but –

Q: No, no, no, no.

A: – there was a terrible tragedy during the war, that probably most Americans don't even know about. And that was that a flotilla of American ships, in the **Straits of Mindanao**, which is off the coast of the **Philippines**, had lost – okay – ha –

Q: Had lost.

A: – got caught in a – in a typhoon. They had been – they had already lost most of their fuel, and the typhoon lasted so long, that they lost their forward motion. And – and many – many of the destroyers and warships capsized. And there were over 5,000 American sailors and so – sailors who lost their lives. That's what I heard the figure was. I haven't – I need to **Google** that, I haven't **Googled** that. But as a result of that, the navy passed a special, ironclad ordinance that any navy ship that gets below 40 percent of its fuel, it must go get refueled, because of that disaster. And so, my picket ship were – ha – went below 40 percent. We immediately headed for the island to get refueled. We were just over the horizon when the pick – the – another ship had been sent out to take our place, got a direct hit from a kamikaze.

On the back of the ship where – which was my battle station. And it blew up the ship, and over a hundred – about a hundred sailors and officers lost their lives.

Q: Wow.

A: And that made me – that was the first time I started s – I realized, hey, this is not a f – a fun game. This is real.

Q: This has consequences.

A: This is real, you know. That would have been me, you know.

Q: Had it not been the 40 percent –

A: That 40 percent rule –

Q: – rule.

A: – saved my life.

Q: Wow.

A: That's right, yeah.

Q: When did you first – well, let me – I was gonna ask a question, but I'm going to preface it with another. Did all of your relatives from **Wertheim** get out?

A: Aunt **Bertha** was a – what's the word I always use? An angel. And she made it possible. We – you know, we – we were working hard to survive, so we slowly – my parents were frugal, and they slowly made some savings, but it would not have been enough to get anyone a visa to get out. So we started joining her, but it was her

initiative that got out my – my mother's brother and sister-in-law and – and child. My father's brother, and family, and – and – and one other family. She got them, and initiated the visas to get – to get them out. So – so, we – our – the initial house we lived in was almost like an underground railroad.

Q: Wow.

A: It was a house with a – like a fla – it was like a flat in a house, a big, spacious – had a second and third floor. So when th – when my relatives came, they all stayed first in our house, until they had enough, some job, or money, or whatever to have – to rent their own place. And that was – happened in **Jersey City**. And that was due to the initiative –

Q: Of **Bertha**.

A: – of Aunt **Bertha**.

Q: Aunt **Bertha**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now, you're in **Laudenbach**(ph), where you went back –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and you said your grandfather's house –

A: Yes.

Q: – had been sold.

A: Yeah.

Q: What happened to your grandfather?

A: He died in **Theresienstadt**. That's what we do know, and we don't know many a – circumstances actually – I first verified it at the Jewish museum in **Berlin**. They have a register of every person, every Jewish person. And I looked through it and found it.

Q: What was his name?

A: **Jacob Birk**.

Q: **Jacob Birk**.

A: He was a farmer. They had chickens and co – grew things, and –

Q: Was there anybody else who didn't make it?

A: Of – of my family, yes. My mother's other – my mother's sister-in-law went – went to **Chur** where all – all of the people from **Wertheim**, at a particular day, they rounded them up late – this was – this was late, maybe – I don't know exactly, 40 – '41 maybe, or '40, or – on one particular date, they rounded them up, took them to the train station, and they were – all went to **Chur**, which was a **Vichy**, **France** camp, and from there they went to **Auschwitz**.

Q: Oh my.

A: And my aunt went to **Auschwitz**. But that's another story. Her son escaped from that camp, and lived on, my – my cousin. The 50 – they allowed – the **Vichy** French police allowed 50 –

Q: Excuse me, excuse me –

A: – 50 – **[break] –** I survive.

Q: I'm sorry that we interrupted this part of your story. You're talking about your mother's sister-in-law, who was taken with the other Jews of **Wertheim** –

A: Yes.

Q: – to **Shur**(ph), is this what you were –

A: **Chur**.

Q: **Chur**.

A: **C-h-u-r**.

Q: And where is that located?

A: It's in – it's in **Vichy**, **France**, it's aw – I think it's in northern **France**.

Q: Oh, **Gurs**, a-are you talking **Gurs**?

A: Yes, **Gurs**, yes.

Q: **G-u-r-s**.

A: Oh, okay. Then it must be **g-u-r-s**, yeah.

Q: Yeah. And then from –

A: It must have another spelling, for some reason.

Q: Maybe.

A: Yeah.

Q: Maybe. Okay. Or maybe there are two of them.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I know of **Gurs**.

A: Yeah.

Q: All right. So –

A: Now sh-she – she did not live in **Wertheim**, but she came – her husband was my mother's brother from **Laudenbach**(ph). He came from **Laudenbach**(ph). And he was a paint salesman, who worked for my tyrannical uncle.

Q: Okay. And her son escaped from that camp.

A: Yes. He and about maybe, I don't know, 25 children, were allowed to escape. The **Vichy** guards allowed them to escape. And they made contact with the underground, and they were then distributed to different monasteries, and different places. So my cousin was shifted from one place to another during the war. Whenever the Nazi presence became too worrisome, they would move him to another place. And ultimately, he was in a camp in the **Pyrenees** at the end of the war, and we got him out. But he – he – I – I don't know whether because or in spite

of that, he became very paranoid, and he – he saw Nazis everywhere. You know, he was young, but he was very – and he never – he never got past his paranoia.

Q: There are so many victims after –

A: So – yeah.

Q: – who survived.

A: Who survived, right.

Q: Who survived and never really were free from it.

A: Well, it – it pends – I think it depended a lot on the persona, and the si – mental and emotional strength of the people, because there were other – there was one other ki-kid who escaped with him, who I got to – I didn't get to know him, but I got to meet him several times. And he went on to life, and created a – you know, a pretty positive life for himself. But **Kurt** – **Kurt** had trouble, and never – and it may happened to have – you know, it may have to – may have been a family –

Q: You never know.

A: – inheritance also.

Q: Yeah.

A: But that, together with this kind of constant moving, with always staying one step ahead of the Nazis –

Q: That fear.

A: – it was not exactly a therapeutic way of living.

Q: No, no. No, not life enhancing.

A: Yeah.

Q: When did you first learn of the thing called the Holocaust?

A: You know, I don't think – I don't think I learned about the Holocaust until the end of the war, you know. And I often – it's not that I berate myself, but I wa – I wonder now about the relative insensitivity of our whole fa – my whole family. We were struggling for survival, this was the Depression. And it wasn't just that my father didn't have any profession, other than cows. It was like pe – it was very hard to find any work and to – an-and to survive. An-And we, other than these individual stories that we had, like getting our f – getting our relatives out of there –

Q: That's quite something.

A: That's – yeah. Now, the relatives we got out, they all were pre-**Kristallnacht**. And there was one terrible tragedy of my Uncle **Dave**, th-the – the uncle, his – his – his wife's sister was in a – lived in a town called **Spangenberger**(ph) –

Q: **Spangenberger**(ph).

A: – I forgot – **Ursula** was her name, **Ursula**. And she developed an acute appendix when she was maybe 17, 18. And they would not allow any ambulances for Jews

until the morning, and she died, as a result of the blood poisoning from the appendix.

Q: The burst appendix.

A: So, we had those kind of – I remember that personal tragedy, you know. We didn't hear very – we didn't – we were not – and trying to get our own relatives out, and trying to survive and helping them to survive.

Q: That's quite a full plate.

A: That was really our major plan in life, you know.

Q: That's a full plate.

A: Yeah, yeah. And – and I – I – I found out about the intransigence of our – of the **Roosevelt** administration and some of the anti-Semitic actions, or inactions, really, much, much later. Much, much later. At the time, I do know that we worshipped **FDR**, and I still have good feelings about him, in spite of his failings, you know, and – and some of the negative things that he did. We – we often go to the **FDR** museum here in upstate **New York**. But – but we just didn't – we heard about this – we knew about the personal tragedies, and we were trying very hard to get our relatives out. We knew tr – these things were going on. Of course, we had our own experience, and that was earlier.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it was really – it really was self-centered. My parents were self-centered. The on – the only thing is they adored **FDR**, and we had a picture of **FDR** on the wall, you know. But they were not into any kind of altruistic endeavors.

Q: You know, I do – from your description it's almost apologetic, but everybody who has gone through some sort of hardship like this, is inevitably self-centered. People say that you can start thinking of others when you feel secure, and you have food on the table, and a roof over your head.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: That's when you can start thinking of a larger picture.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So, it sound perfectly normal, perfect –

A: I have to go again, I'm sorry.

Q: Okay, that's okay.

A: This kind of – **[break]**

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, th-the question was, yeah, when did you find out about the full scope of the Holocaust, and for you the question was, what motivates people to look beyond, or not look beyond their own circumstances, if I paraphrased correctly.

A: Mm-hm. Well, I can't remember the exact moment. Remember, I was – I was in the war, I was discharged from the **Pacific** in the early part of '46.

Q: Okay.

A: And that was already – **VJ** Day happened –

Q: August.

A: Yeah. And – and although we were not – in the navy we were not deprived of reading papers, newspapers and things. I – I – I was not – I was not into any political or social awareness – I ha – I hate to say that about myself – at that time. Oh yeah, tha – that came later, because actually, at some – I was called back during the Korean war, and – and I actually had an incident where I wa – where I – I pa – I passed on some political magazines to a – a fellow sailor, and he – he took the articles so – too literally, and one day when he – when they were at a battle station, he said something abou – liberal, politically liberal, and another – the petty officer in – in charge called him a communist, and he punched him. And – and we – you – it's like punching a superior officer. And the captain of the ship then came to me, and he said, I cannot tell you wa – what to read, I cannot tell you not to subscribe to "**The Progressive**" magazine, but I'm asking you not to pass it on to other people. I don't know whether you know "**The Progressive**," do you? It's – I love that magazine, I still do, even decades and decades later, you know.

Q: So, did –

A: That was – that was in 1950, though.

Q: Did **Walter** come back with stories of what he saw?

A: He didn't – he didn't – he told me some stor – he – he didn't g – there were not – the o – th – other than the detail of the – of – of the – Mr. **Becker**.

Q: **Becker**, mm-hm.

A: And I think – I th – I think that, you know, he – he didn't come back with many details to me – with me. A-And, you know, and when I think about it, there are a lot of insens – things I was insensitive to. I should have taken the initiative and – and asked him, but who knows where I was in my life then, when he – when I came back, and he came back. He didn't – he must have had stories, but he – he – he never got to – to write anything down. I'm the one who – who is doing it now, and whatever little I'm a – I'm able to write down in my – in my memoirs about his family, as well, you know. He – he didn't – he didn't – there was a phrase – his wife is still alive, **Vicky**, and – and we are very – you know, we're close. She lives in **Cherry Hill**, and – and I visit her from time to time. But – but he never shared a lot, it – with her either, if – if he had stories about his German – his German connections. She had her own story to tell, because she was an Egyptian Jew who fled **Egypt**, you know.

Q: Oh wow.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh wow. Are there – we're coming close to the end of our interview. I wanted to cover these main points, and you've done beautifully. Thank you so much.

A: Thank you. See, I think it was – it feels a little disjointed, but –

Q: It's not.

A: – life is that way, you know.

Q: Yeah. Is there something I haven't asked you, that you think is important, you know, in connection with everything that we spoke, and the events as well as the – the topics, and the interpretation of it, that you'd want people to know about, that you'd want to underst –

A: And you're talking about my – my experience in **Germany**?

Q: Your experience in **Germany**, your family's experience, and then later, how you processed it.

A: Okay. Well, my li – you know, I mean, the sense of forgiveness and conciliation took me a long way, and I really feel – I don't feel uncomfortable about it. A-And – and – and because of my involvement with – with the world's problems, I ha – I've gained – I've gained actually, a strong respect for the present day **Germany**. And especially their attitude and their actions in terms of taking in refugees.

Q: Like from **Syria**, what is going on today?

A: Yeah, and – and I saw – experienced that in my own town. They actually cleared a building in the police academy that they used for recruits or whatever, as a – an area where they took that – that mini-region took about 4,000 refugees. And they're – and – and they're distributed, not just in **Wertheim**, but to other towns in the area. And it's – it's become a con-controversial issue, to some extent.

Q: Sure.

A: But – but – but – but I – I have a strong – I have a strong respect for them for doing that, and – and in a sense, it's a strong respect for – for – for the postwar **Germany** to reconc – to – to – to visualize the horrors that took place, and to ta – to try to reverse any of such a thing from happening now, you know. I – I know that there's a lot of political struggling going on there, as well as every place in **Europe**, and I'm – I – I – I – I re – I think I'm moving away from your question –

Q: No, but that's –

A: – and generalizing it a little bit.

Q: But that's okay, that's okay.

A: But – but I – since I changed careers, and I – I di – never – I never went on to that, I changed careers because I didn't want to accept any more money from the military, our military. And I found one day I had my own – I had a business with

five other engineers, and – and I started re – noticing that almost every purchase order we got, including – this is for just scientific instrumentation that we sold, it all had either – the Department of Defense was paying for them all. And I finally decided I had been – I had gotten a salary twice already from the military. I didn't want anything to do with it any more. And I just – and I o – I had been an environmentalist, so I just totally changed careers, and – and – and I – a-and – well, I'm getting back now, it's just sort of a long way.

Q: That's okay.

A: And I really respect and admire **Germany** for their taking a very strong green policy there now, 35 percent green, and we talk a lot here, and we're less than five percent green right now, a-and with **Trump**, who knows whether that will go up or down.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and so I've developed a – a – a real respect of – for – for – and I – and they're fighting the same political battles we are here now. The new – the new **Germany**, and the new Germans, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: They have their despotic, and they have their right and their mid – their left, and – and we don't know what will happen.

Q: I thank you.

A: Yeah.

Q: Thank you very, very much.

A: Well, I don't know whether that was the perfect note to end, but –

Q: No, it is.

A: Yeah.

Q: I mean, in many ways it is, because so much of what your story is, is that leaving **Germany**, coming back to **Germany**, the role that it played in your life, and how to – how to – I'd – understand it, the – the pro – you know, what – what it is that you had to – the various paths you had to take to get to where you are. It's not an easy one. And I very much appreciate your perspective –

A: Thank you.

Q: – on it.

A: Well, I – it – it – it feels disjointed, but I didn't pre – you don't prepare for this kind of thing, you know.

Q: No, no, no.

A: Yeah.

Q: And every person is an expert in their own life

A: Yeah.

Q: So you can't really read up.

A: Yeah.

Q: You know? You've known it, and you – that's what we want, is we want to hear your – your words, your views, rather than citing, you know, a footnote from someplace.

A: Well –

Q: So, I will say then, in conclusion – unless you have something else to say, I have a concluding kind of statement.

A: Well, the only thing is, I think my German experience helped me to be compassionate about all species and all wrongs that are committed. And I can't fix them, I'm only a single person, and I'm in – pretty much getting to the end of my life. But in a way, in a way, my experience at the hands of the Nazis helped me in maybe becoming a better human being.

Q: How ironic. But it's i – how ironic from that kind of a source, not that you became a hu – better human being, but –

A: Yeah, yeah. And certainly, I'm not dealing with cows. And I often think, you know, in a perverse way, I guess I can thank **Hitler** for me choosing another career, at least.

Q: Yeah, I mean, what was – what would have been your life had there been no – no – no political movement like that, you could have been –

A: Who knows?

Q: – come the first –

A: Who knows?

Q: – the nth generation of a new cow **[indecipherable]**

A: Maybe. And – and you know, that's a pretty profitable business.

Q: That's right.

A: Even though I've become a vegetarian, that's the other thing. And I think that's why I'm still here, so.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm – I'm a – I'm sort of a – I'm not an Orthodox, religious vegetarian. I sometimes become a flexitarian.

Q: I like that term.

A: My mother, who – my daughter, who is visiting me in about three days, is a vegan, so I almost cringe when I see her –

Q: Okay. Well, you've taught me new –

A: – prac – practice her – her – compared to mine.

Q: Well, you've taught me two new words, flexitarian and **memoroid**.

A: Yeah, and **memoroid**. Okay, well they aren't – I can't take originality – maybe I can for the flexitarian, yeah. The **memoroid**, my wife pointed out. She heard someone else tell me, so.

Q: Okay. Well –

A: Yeah.

Q: – once more, thank you. And I will say that, with that, this concludes –

A: Well, I appreciate it very much, having the limelight, my God, and – and you are very – and both of you are very adroit.

Q: Thank you.

A: Now, what happens to –

Q: Hang on a second.

A: – these very powerful words that you've recorded?

Q: Well, what happens is that, as – they go on the internet, unless you wouldn't want it there.

A: Oh, they go on the internet, okay.

Q: But it goes on the internet through the museum's website, and you will get a DVD copy as well.

A: Oh, that's great.

Q: So that people will be able to see your interview from their own home computer.

A: Okay.

Q: And so I'll say, this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Shimon Schwarzschild**, on April 23rd, 2017. Thank you. Okay.

A: Well thank you, yeah.

Q: You're welcome.

Conclusion of Interview