

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Joseph Levine
September 11, 1990
RG-50.030*0128**

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Joseph Levine, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on September 11, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

JOSEPH LEVINE

September 11, 1990

Q: Please give us your name, your place of birth, and the date of your birth.

A: My name is Joseph Levine, and I was born on July 20, 1907, in the small town of Malodezna in Russia.

Q: And will you now give us a little background of your childhood, growing up.

A: Well, I...in 1914, when I was 7 years old, my father and five children were already in America, and they sent passports to my mother and the other four children, including me, to come to America. Because of the war we could not go into France or Germany, so we were stuck. By early 1915, as the Germans approached our town, we had to flee for our lives. So I recall how the whole town, we left on an open coal car in the rain not knowing where we were going. We came to the city of Minsk and there the whole...other people in the train were marched to the central square...square where there were three synagogues. We spent a few nights in the synagogues which were filled with refugees and what few belongings they had, and my mother find a relative and we moved into a crowded, small apartment where we stayed for at least 6 months or longer because I recall I went to Cheder, the Hebrew school in Minsk. When things got so bad that we stood in line for a piece of black bread with Zeppelins overhead, my courageous mother took her four children and we started a journey in freight cars. I don't...I'm sure she didn't know where we're gonna end up, and the...the trains took us across Russia, Siberia, and into Ha Binh, China. We lived in Harbin¹ at least for 4, 5 months. We finally made contact with the family in America, and once contacts were made through an uncle of mine...he who was one of the founders of the UJA, very prominent in Jewish life in New York. A man named Abe Edelberg. Uncle Abe arranged for us to try to leave Harbine, and we then traveled from Harbine to Korea, and then we came to Japan and lived in Kobe for a little while and then we sailed from Yokohama and we arrived in San Francisco on February 12, 1917. From there, we traveled by train to...overnight stay in New York City and then to New Haven, Connecticut, where we joined my grandparents and my family. So that my first years, my early life in America was spent in New Haven where I graduated from elementary school and high school. In 1930...uh...in 1926, I entered Franklin and Marshall College, graduated in 1930, was admitted to the Graduate School for Jewish Social Work, which is no longer in existence. And at the end of my first year, I was offered a job with the Jewish Board of Guardians, which was then the largest Jewish Psychiatric Clinic in New York. I spent 6 years with the clinic. In 41, I took a civil service exam for parole officer, started as a parole officer by '41. I had to beat everybody in the state, and was appointed to the position of executive case supervisor, and I had that job 'til '43. In 1943, one of my brothers was involved in very important war work. So, I left the division and went to work with him, and at the end of the war in '45, the American Jewish Joint Distribution

¹ located approx. 800 km north of Pyongyang in the Heilongjiang Province in Manchuria, China.

Committee issued an appeal for social workers to work overseas. So I got a job with the Joint, as it was known, and after a month's indoctrination or so, I was sent to Europe and I was member of the first group of Jewish social workers that came to Germany to work with the survivors of the Holocaust.

Q: When you arrived in Germany, where did you go?

A: Well, originally I understand my orders were to work in Munich. I might say that when I got to Europe, we spent a week or so in Paris and nobody really knew what was going on in Germany. I was in Munich where I was supposed to work, but reports came in that there were hundreds of Jews in trouble and needing food, clothing, and so forth in a little town in Schwandorf in Bavaria. So I went up to Schwandorf. I found these Jews and they needed...they weren't registered with UNRRA². So it was a question of getting them jobs, getting them food, and getting them registered and later on helping them to meet their needs. So I began to work in Schwandorf. And slowly, I discovered Jews were living in the small towns in the area so I began traveling to these towns and there again I found an interesting thing that in a number of these towns, the handful of Jews living there were the survivors of the infamous, what I call infamous, death marches. The Germans at the end of the war marched thousands of Jews through the forests. And at the end when they decided to leave, they killed half of the survivors and those that survived dug mass graves and got into the nearest town. So as I got into these towns I found the Jews living in the old barns, over manure piles, and cellars and my job was to get them housing and food and shelter, clothing and...I had Eisenhower's...General Eisenhower's orders in my pocket for the Germans to provide decent housing for them so I was able to do that.

Q: Okay. And what happened...what happened then when you started working with these people? What were some of your experiences?

A: Well, I had many experiences. It should be noted that almost 95 or 99 percent of these Jews were Polish Jews and apparently they came to communities used to organized life, so one of the first thing they did wherever they settled, they formed their own organizations, so I worked through an organization so I had somebody to talk to, committees who wanted food, clothing, money; who needed help. They had trouble with UNRRA. UNRRA, with the United States Army. Uh...I left my wife and two children home. I'll never forget one of the first experiences was being from the little town of Burglengenfeld where I met a little, small child named Ruthie. Ruth Fleischer, who had been in hiding...hidden with a Polish family. Her father was killed. Her mother lived in this little town. She went back to Poland and found Ruth. And when I met Ruth, I'll never forget the little one said to me, "Mr. Levine," in Yiddish, "I am 10 years old and I don't know how to read and write. Please help me go to school." First thing the child asked me. But at the beginning, as I said, we had Jews coming and going. There were Jews drifting in from Poland. There was always the question of

² The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

housing for these people. At one point, not too long after I came, we had to open a tent city...tent city near the city of Cham, C-H-A-M. I want to digress for a moment to say that I was...God was good to me because on the first day of my work in Schwandorf, in this little town where Jews hadn't lived for...maybe never lived, German town where the church was built in the 1400s. I met a young man named Moshe, M-O-S-H-E, Rechnitz, R-E-C-H-N-I-T-Z. Moshe was about 21 or 22 years old. He spoke a number of languages. He came from the city of Katowice in Poland and I employed him right there. Moshe was my driver and my assistant almost like my son. Wonderful young man, so I was...he...he was really my right arm. And while I'm talking about Moshe, I might say that he himself spent...was in 5, 6 slave camps, slave labor camps. His mother was killed in one of the labor camps, munitions plant. He was in Buchenwald and he was on one of these death marches. And one morning he and I were driving through these beautiful Bavarian hills when we came to beautiful spot. He stopped the Jeep and he asked me to follow him, went down a little...a little brook and there I saw shoes, odd shoes laying on the ground and he told that he was...when he was on a death march, when they came to this little...this area outside of the town of Stamsreid, the Germans killed half of the handful of survivors. And he was one of the living on these people the survivors dug a grave, there was a mass grave and Moshe was freed in Stamsreid. Now, I traveled from town to town because these where Jews were organized and these people needed money for food for programs that they ran, and the Joint really financed most of their stuff. I worked mostly with UNRRA, which provided food and clothing, and the United States Army, so I ended up being the spokesman for the Jews. I had a simulated rank of lieutenant colonel which meant nothing except that it gave me entree to top headquarters. I dealt with the generals in the area, general 4th Armored Division, so that I had no trouble there. Now, many...of course, I have many memories of a lot of things happening. I want to describe some of them. One morning I was in my office when two men came in. One of them turned to me and said, "Levine, you and the Joint are doing a good job providing food, clothing and shelter, but we need something for the Geist." I think this happened later in the year. At any rate, this incident happened. I said, "What do you mean by Geist?" He said, "Something for the spirit of the Jews." I looked at the man and I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "We need a Yiddish newspaper." I might digress for a moment to say that I was fortunate to have been in Munich, shortly after...after my arrival and was at that printing plant when the first copy of the...called Unser Weg, the Yiddish paper, came off the press, and I brought a copy to give to the Museum. So there's a man who wants a paper published in Regensburg. So I asked who he was, and he says, "My name is Silverberg, and I was the editor of the Moment in Warsaw, which meant nothing to me, but I later learned that the Moment was the New York Times of Warsaw. And he said, "What you need is a newspaper." I thought the guy was crazy. I had visions of, you know, what's involved in printing a paper. So I said, "How are you going to print a paper?" So he then told me that before the war, he dealt with a firm in Frankfurt that supplied types for European countries. He was confident that even though the building was bombed...it was bombed, he knew where in the basement he'd find Yiddish type. Then he said, "If...if you pay for this thing, and pay the expenses...this man introduced me, and now I will go around...we're gonna find hand typesetters." I said, "Fine. What are you going to print it on?" "Oh," he says, "I've already found a local German printer and made arrangements where if we pay him, he'll print

it." I said, "That's fine. What about a paper and ink?" He said, "That's where you gotta come in. We already located a German who has a lot of paper and ink hidden. You'll have to get the requisition to...through the United States Army. I believed I involved Rabbi Gene Lipman in this deal. At any rate, the paper finally came out called Der Najer Moment. And a interesting thing happened. Shortly before I left for America, I got...received a telephone call from an excited Jew, claiming that there were hundreds of Jews at the railroad station. This was in Regensburg. And that the commotion, couple of them were shot and there was trouble at the railroad station. So I grabbed the man, Abe Cohn, he came to replace me and we jump in a Jeep and I had one of the UNRRA men drive the Jeep and I don't think any Jeep ever cut across the city faster. Lucky we weren't killed. When I got to the railroad station and found six hundred Jews. Apparently, these people were being transported I later learned from Austria to a camp near the Czech border. The locomotive broke down in Regensburg. So when I arrived Jews are sleeping on the ground, some in the box cars, couple tried to make fires to light something. On the far end, there were railroad and German police surrounding young kids, and I understand one young kid was shot in the legs and now...a day later brought him back from the hospital. I learned that these six hundred people --this was in Linz, Austria --were given a couple hours notice to get on the train. There were no chaplains on the train. It was a shameful thing. They were given a couple slices of meat and bread and no water. And I learned that at night some of the young G.I.'s shot their guns in the air so the Jews in each freight car thought they were killing Jews so he told me this story. At any rate, as soon as I learned all this I had all my food I had in my little warehouse sent over. Emptied my warehouse. Got a hold of the UNRRA, which sent me huge cans of soup and bread and they finally fixed the locomotive, and as the train pulled out I wished at that moment that every [American] Jew could have been with me as these Jews, American Jews who made all this possible, as they waved, thanking me. Then I went back to my home in order to get Munich, spent a hour on the telephone just to be connected. I reported this to my headquarters. A day later checked...I made arrangements and in the future no transports went out without a chaplain. Now, I didn't get into my pajamas until about 12 o'clock at night when I received a telephone call from Silverberg, the editor of the Moment, asking that I come to his home immediately. I was exhausted. Said something very important happened. I rushed to his apartment, and he introduced me to two men who escaped from the transport who knew Silverberg. One was Schlomoberl Berlinsky, who was supposed to have been one of the leading novelists in Poland, and a man named Mendel Mann, who was one of the rising Yiddish poets in Poland. He introduced me and he wanted me to meet them because these men had no identification. They had nothing. To make sure the next morning I could take care of them so they wouldn't be picked up. While we were talking, Silverberg told me that he would like to print something by these two men to let the world know that they are alive, but he said this presents a problem because I've got the paper set for publication. And it would cost money to reset the paper. And I said, "Go ahead and do it.." Well, to make the story short, the paper came out and shortly thereafter, I was driving to Silverberg's home where outside I saw two young men, one of whom I recognized and he recognized me. Was a member of Kibbutz Nahum, it was a kibbutz about 20 kids, Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir³, and I

³ **Hebrew:** "the Young Guard"; a collectivist and utopian Zionist youth movement. Mostly active

was like their substitute father. And the kids rushed over to me, and the strange kid held the Moment like a hot coal in his hand. And the kid that knew me asked me, "Where did...where does the editor live?" Silverberg. So I said, "What's the excitement about?" He said, "Let him tell you." This kid told me that before the war, he and his mother and sister and, I think, and father, lived in Warsaw [or] in Lodz; either of the two. At any rate, while his father was away seeing his publishers, he and his mother and sister were put in the camp. He lost his mother and sister, never saw his father, and he said that after the war he and another buddy decided to go to Poland to look for their relatives. They came to the city of Bamberg in Germany after the war, and from there they went to Poland. He told me how he went to Poland looking for his father. He knew his mother died and sister. He came back from Poland to Bamberg and went to bed that night, got up in the morning and found our paper, the Moment, which was distributed. He took the Moment, and there's an article about his father. He said, "Where is my father?" So that night we reunited father and son, if did nothing else with the paper. Well, at any rate, that's the newspapers. A number of other interesting things happened. For instance, in '46 most of...for all these Jews, for almost all of them, it was the first free...I mean it was the first time they could observe Pesach as free man. You know, the war is 39, 46 and so forth. So for days, the Joint sent me in a shipment of matzoh and wine and I spent my travel money to make arrangements with communities to come in and pick up their requisitions. And for a week or two Moshe and I spent time doling out matzoh and wines and Haggadot and they gave them money to buy fish. And several things happened. When I...after I got through meeting with the last delegation, I went up to my room to call Munich and I reported that everything was distributed. They then asked whether I gave...distributed wine or matzoh to the camp Deggendorf...1200 Jews. So I told them they hadn't sent it...they didn't send me anything. I felt so wonderful and suddenly the bottom fell out. No wine for 1200 people. So I called Deggendorf and they were smart. They made their own wine, and they baked their own matzoh. Well the reason I tell this story is that at that time the chief medical officer for the area which had 300,000 DPs...there were only a very small number of Jews, like I don't know many thousands...4 thousand, 5 thousand, where the Jewish doctor, woman doctor from Chicago a Dr. Anna Monatov (ph). I remembered her. I also had working with me a nurse sent by the Jewish Agency, Becky Lyons, who is still alive. She is now...she has a doctorate, which she is now a world authority in hospital administration. Lectures all over the world. And then there was the Jewish town major from the Bronx, a kid named Badian. And I invited these three to be my guest, you know, for seder to join the people I was with. After the service in the makeshift synagogue, oh, yes, and the president of the Gemeinde, of the community was the man named Jacob Gottlieb, who unfortunately was my age but his hair was white because I was told he watched his wife and two children thrown in the gas chamber. At any rate, so we went to the first seder...to seder with the kids in the kibbutz and it was heartbreaking for me because there were 20 kids, no mother, no father, no nothing. We had a comparatively short service. No meat of course, just simple seder, but what we lacked in food the kids made up in spirit

in Poland and Galicia before Second World War and formed many kibbutzim in Palestine after the War.

as they did all...every time I was with them, their singing and their dancing, and they singing like they're going to go to Palestine. Wonderful singing. When I...we left the kids about 10 o'clock at night, my guests and I walked toward the Jewish center. Now, Regensburg is a city which has streets like those in...in Jerusalem. The city is a thousand years old or more. So as we approached...it was a moonlight night, and as we approached the...the Jewish Center building which, incidently, was in the shadow of a huge cathedral built 4 or 5 hundred years ago, we heard noises coming from the building. And came to the Center and we found that they had a community seder on the second floor. They cleaned out all the furniture, put up these wooden tables and as we walked in, they had just finished their meal and I saw a sea of men and women and this little child and they weren't happy. But as soon as they saw us, they began to sing and then sang another song. Suddenly, they were not alone. Within a few minutes four guys ran downstairs and they brought up a piano. This was a seder. The guy began...one of the men sat at the piano, began to play. The other was singing. Then two or three couples got on the top of the tables and began to dance. While this was going on, I saw one man throw...they had huge windows, German windows. He threw them out as if to let the world know that the Jews are still alive and they sang as loud as they could as if to let the Germans and the world know that they were alive. At any rate, this seder went on til about another hour or so, then I went home and wrote a letter to my wife describing that. That was the first seder. I think it's important to describe the first Hanukkah. The first Hanukkah, this is in 45. This was in Schwandorf. The Jews had no Jewish center there so I got a...I requisitioned an old beer hall which...when the Germans stopped using a building, you can imagine what condition it was in. But the Jews cleaned it up, repainted the walls, and had the section put up...the section for a synagogue, and the rest was for a social hall. And I got military permission --there was a curfew-- for the Jews to stay out late that night, and we had our first Hanukkah light lit in the synagogue, in the makeshift synagogue in Schwandorf. It happened that at that time...first I got to say that before this synagogue...before Schwandorf, our service, I might tell you that I came back to Schwandorf with a bunch of mail and letters and so forth, and while I was...came into the room of the President Schwarzfuchs, I noticed a gentleman sitting there. He was a bearded man sitting like this. He suddenly turned to me and say, "Was für ein Joint ist da?" The Joint is our organization. So I turned to Schwarzfuchs, I said, "Who is this man?" He says, "He is a Rabbi. He came from Warsaw." Survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto. So I said, "Was meint ihr? What do you mean?" He says, "Wo ist die Mikvah für die Weiber?" You know the mikvah. I'm in this stinking little town. "Und wo sind die Hanukkah-Lichter für Hanukkah?". I didn't realize Hanukkah was in another week. So I went down...so within a few days I went to a warehouse, military warehouse, in a place called Walhalla, on the Danube, not from Regensburg. And when the supply man wouldn't give me any candles...I figured I'd get candles and cut them half and distribute them. So he wouldn't give me that so I got the...called Munich. Took me an hour to get through. And the man in charge gave me...gave this guy permission to give me some cases of candles. So my driver and I then went back and we were cutting candles in half when I got phone call from Munich and advising me that the Rabbi, Chaplain Gene Lipman, had been to Palestine, brought back Palestinian candles, and holders, the Menorahs, and was on the way and within a short time Gene came with his assistant, Si Pava, and the four of us were sorting bundles of candles and we distributed them to the area. Now let me go back to

the synagogue in Schwandorf So the first Hanukkah light I thought I'd spend it with the Jews in Schwandorf. It was my own...almost just like my home. And this Rabbi was still there, so he gave a address. He spoke about a half an hour, and then there was joy and we had kegs of beer and we celebrated. I spent...went a few other towns for different Hannukahs. But the last Hanukkah candle lighting and I attended the Synagogue in Straubing. Straubing was not too far from Regensburg. And the head of the community was man named by Steven Schwartz, who was an engineer. Wonderful gentleman. And I took with me from Regensburg, I think I brought the Rabbi, Joseph Glazer, who...later we gave him the title of Oberrabbi, Chief Rabbi. He's alive and lives in Cedarhurst, Long Island. And we came to...to Straubing. I walked in to a magnificent, newly painted synagogue. I learned that during...the synagogue was built in 1907. During the war the Germans turned it into a warehouse. After a war, the young man appeared and told Steven Schwartz that he was a native of Straubing. His grandfather, I think, built the synagogue. That in the cellar of the synagogue they would find the original plans for it, and sure enough in a case they found the original, you know, architectural and drawing plans. And there's a Jewish town major and they forced the Germans to redo the synagogue as it was. So Steven Schwartz used that...used this occasion of the last candle almost like a rededication of the synagogue I'll never forget Steven had a huge Menorah built in the back of the synagogue and he had huge candles in it. Must have been stolen from some church. On the Bimah, he had covered with velvet, he had this beautiful, little, hand carved Menorah I bought...you know, the Gene Lipman from Palestine, and Palestinian candles were lit. Can you picture the scene? In the audience were the Jews from Schwandorf, from Straubing, a few Jewish GIs, and Schwartz arranged a program which included music by the first musical group in the area, from Camp Deggendorf. And as I listened to them, there were tears down my eyes to think that thousands and thousands and thousands of Jews with that kind of talent were burned in the gas chamber. I was the last speaker, and I'll never forget looking into these sad faces. And when I got through, it was like a wind came in and slowly they drifted out. And when I came home I sat down and wrote my wife a letter and I, of course, realized what do they have to be happy about? Hanukkah, the joyous moment. So that was the Hanukkah. I went one later on, but I missed my first great experience and I better tel] it now, and that is my visit to Dachau. On October 6, 1945, the day before I left Schwandorf, I heard there is a camp at Dachau. I didn't know too much about it. The Joint at that time had a pool of two or three drivers so one of the men was assigned to drive me and it was obvious he was very reluctant to do it. We came to Dachau. It was a beautiful morning. We parked the car at the far end of the lot. We didn't know what we're going to find. It was a large installation, barracks you know. As it turned out that the first building I walked into was the gas chamber. And the driver, this man was in back of me...I believe there was a German guide. I can't say for sure. At any rate, we walked into what I learned was the gas chamber. The walls were covered with blood. Now, it's beautiful, painted white if you go there. It's a museum. From the gas chamber, I walked into the next room that had three ovens. I recall turning back and looking at this man's face. It was green. And mine...mine must have been the same way. I walked into a third room, and the room was lined with shelves with small earthen jars. And I looked down and in front of me were two barrels of human ashes. My blood must have been frozen. I turned to my right and I wanted to grab the first thing I could and there was a barrel with these earthen jar

covers, which I brought. And by that point I wanted to get out into the sunlight. And I didn't want to see anything of the camp. And we walked to the far end of the lot and we got to the car. And the man turned to me and said, "Levine, look what you got in your hands?" The jar covers were just almost like glued. So we finally calmed down, both of us and I might say that as we were leaving, we saw Germans playing Fußball, soccer. They were guards who were prisoners of the United States army. They were being fed 4,000 calories a day as prisoners, while the Jews were getting 1700 calories a day from UNRRA and the military, most of it potatoes. At any rate, as we left, we got in the car. We both calmed down. And after 5 minutes or so the man turned...said to me, "Levine, did you notice that I was reluctant to drive you?" I said, "Yes." "So, I'll tell you why." He says, "I was on the last transport...last transport that was brought to Dachau. The Americans were approaching. They couldn't even talk to us in the camp. They took us on a march about 30 kilometers. I was on the march from Dachau to Munich. Almost half of the people dropped dead or were shot on the way. And before the Germans ran away...this was the pattern...they'd shot half of the survivors." And he said, "I was among the living and I ended up in Munich. That's why you found me in Munich." Then he said, "Who would have thought that I who was brought to Dachau to be exterminated would walk through and come out alive." So that's; just one of the incidents. I want to say something about my dear friend, Chaim Diamond. Chaim Diamond was a young man who, with his younger brother, were survivors of Auschwitz. Chaim was the president of the little community of Eggenfelden. He later became active and was a member of the Central Committee. And I left him in '46. We renewed friendship in '56 in New York, where he is a successful businessman and we've been friends ever since. And while talking about Chaim, I can also talk about Eggenfelden because this is an example of what kind of work I did. For instance, one day I received a telephone call from the UNRRA Director, who was a gentleman from Virgin Islands named Johnson. He called me up. I'd never heard of Eggenfelden but he called me up and told me the story that there were Jews living in Eggenfelden under horrible living conditions and that there was a hotel...I thought he said it was owned by a Jew. At any rate, which is about to be turned over to the Germans by the town major, and he suggested that I try to come down and maybe try to get the hotel for the Jews. So I drove to Eggenfelden and I had my notes home, and I took inventory of how Jews lived. Six people in the basement, five people in one little room with one twin bed. It was horrible conditions. So I talked to the Jews, came back, saw the colonel in charge of this department for the army, gave him the report at 9 o'clock in the morning. By 4 o'clock in the afternoon he sent over a message to me, "You can have the hotel." So they arranged for the Jews to move into the hotel. That wasn't all. After the Jews settled, the delegation came to me, "We need a Jewish center." So we found an abandoned building not...almost a block away from the hotel, and I got that from the military. And the Jews again cleaned it up, painted it, so forth. I took some people with me for the...on the official opening, and what a joy it was to walk into this newly-painted hall. The fixtures were made by a man who was in the business in Poland before the war, and they made the fixtures from planes...parts of parts of airplanes, and there were Jewish musicians singing and dancing until about 4 o'clock in the morning. That was in the town of Eggenfelden where Chaim Diamond was one of the leaders. Deggendorf has to be mentioned. Deggendorf was a camp of 400 Jews in the area, mostly German Jews who were rescued from Theresienstadt and Chaplain Lipman had a lot

to do with them coming there. And I must say that I met Gene Lipman in Munich and he said, "We'll get together." Two days after I was in the little town of Schwandorf, Gene Lipman appeared with his assistant, Si, Simon Pava, P-A-V-A, wonderful Chaplain's assistant. And he said, "Joe, what did you bring with you from America? Can you take it with you? We're going to a birthday party." And, of course, I was there only one day, so I had stuff that I brought from the United States. Canned stuff to give away. Put it in the Jeep and we road to the little town of Terschenreuth (ph) where there were four sisters whom Gene helped to live. He realled saved their lives. We had a wonderful party. That night I slept with Gene in a small bed. At 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning I was awakened by Gene. He said, "Joe, we're going to Deggendorf," which meant nothing to me. And it was my first four hour ride in a Jeep. Almost killed my insides. We got to Deggendorf and when people saw Gene and his assistant, it was almost that noise like a messiah came. Hundreds of people suddenly began approaching. See, Gene was one of the saviors. The camp was well-organized. A woman named Kitty Rothschild ran it til the end. At any rate, what happened...I'm telling you the story of Deggendorf because when Gene appeared he carried bags of mail. The Jews had no mail service, so Gene...and these people had a lot of American relatives. So Gene arranged with these Jews to address letters to Americans. He sent them out in his own envelopes, with a note: Send your reply to me and I'll deliver it. So he set up a mail service which I inherited. And that was part of my job. I did that too. I might say that while doing that Jews came over to me to ask me to find their relatives in America. So the mail would come and I had an uncle named Jake Bernstein. He moved to Cleveland. So some guy would give me a name Izzy Cohen, he moved to New York. Go find Izzy Cohen I didn't have any copying machine, damn it, but I cabled to America and got telephone books and with my boy and I...with Moshe and I would sit sometime most of the night copying all the Goldbergs like J. Goldberg from Brooklyn, and I sent him a letter with a note that so and so comes from this town. He's looking for his uncle. Maybe you're his relative. Once in a while I got a reply. That was part of the mail service. My work, as I said, required providing food, clothing and shelter. We faced a situation where Jews after the Kielce Pogrom⁴, we had hundreds of Jews coming into the United States Zone. We lacked housing for them.

Q: Where was the Kielce Pogrom from?

A: What?

Q: Where was the Kielce Pogrom from?

A: In Poland. The Jews returned to Poland, and there was antisemitism and they killed a number of Jews, so Jews fled from Poland. And this was already in '46 and I got to tell you a story how I was in...at the Czech border, came home tired, when I found a message. Report to

⁴ The Kielce Pogrom took place on 4 July 1946. Forty-two Jews were killed, and the incident initiated a mass migration of surviving Eastern European Jews to the West.

General Perkins, 4th Armored Division, immediately upon your arrival. So as tired as I was, I jumped in my Jeep and went to headquarters. And when I came in...I'm not trying to impress you, but it's interesting that there were Colonels and Majors waiting to see the General, Chief of Staff a man named Erzag (ph). I remember him. As soon as he saw me, he went into the General's office, out marched a couple of colonels and I was ushered into the General's office. There was another General with him, Robert (ph). I came in. The General greeted me and he did something he never did before. He had a basket of cigarettes. He said, "Joe, sit down. Have a cigarette." I smelled something. I said, "You wanted to see me immediately on my arrival." So he said...he told me then what happened. He said, "While you were gone, the General and I discussed the problem of housing for the Jews." You see the Army was responsible for a lot of this. And they wanted efficiency and they then told me...so he then said, "We decided we found a way to solve the problem." I said, "What do you have in mind?" he said, "Well in the town of Pocking (P-O-C-K-I-N-G) down near Passau, southern part of Bavaria, we have a camp where there are four thousand Hungarians and two thousand Poles now occupying that." He said, "We're going to ship the Hungarians out. We'll take the Poles and send them to some other...there were thousand of Poles...Polish camps." He said, "We'll turn that camp into a Jewish camp." He said, "We'll take all the Jews who live in these little towns and put them in this camp." And I blew my top. When I walked out, I really pinched myself, saying "Did you dare do it?" I talked to these Generals and I said, "Are you guys crazy or nuts?" I said, "Number one, you'll have to take every Jew and carry him bodily. Secondly, I'll have nothing to do with it. Thirdly, I'll let my headquarters know in New York what you want to do. You're talking about people who came out of...came out of the death camps, and you want: to put them in another camp." Well, they saw my reasoning, but they said, "Joe, we're still going to get rid of the Hungarians. We'll still get rid of the Poles. We've got to provide space for the new Jews coming in. Now, mind you, a lot of these people were not...caught in this camp. They came from Poland, so he suggested that Gene Lipman, Rabbi Lipman and I drive down. So we drove to Pocking, and we found these Hungarians. It was maddening for me to see these beautiful, well-dressed women with beautiful expensive fur coats. The Hungarians worked for the Nazis. And there were Poles there, but we found that this was a huge air base, used by Hermann Göring, with hundreds of planes that had been bombed Installation of 10 or 15 thousand people were with hospitals, halls, and so forth. The facilities that were there, many of them bombed out. To make a long story short, they got rid of the Hungarians, who I might say took very movable item that they could. They ripped the walls. They took the pipes. They took the sinks. They took light fixtures. The Army had to rebuild them. They got rid of the Poles, who took all the cut wood with them. And then we began shipping Jews into the camp. Shortly after the camp opened, the General again sent a message to me: wants to see me. He said, "Joe, we'll having trouble with the camp. The Jews are burning beds, which is presenting a problem to the military. Go down and see what's what." So I went down and I...sure enough when the Poles left they took all the wood and the saws and everything else that the Jews were supposed to get, the GIs sold them on the route, and the Jews were freezing so they burned beds. And they complained; well, we took care of that. I might say that two things happened during that visit.

Q: Joe, we have to stop right now temporarily because they're gonna take....they finished the film.

Tape #2

Q: Joe, we are ready now to recommence.

A: Can I continue?

Q: Continue.

A: Now during this trip to Pocking, I recall several things happened. Number one, if I haven't mentioned it, I want to say that I took along with me...I brought to this camp Becky Lyons, the nurse who came from Palestine sent by the Jewish Agency. I called a meeting of all the people of the camp to explain to them that I was working with the military and will see that they will get whatever they need to make life more comfortable. As we were waiting for this group to get together, I found myself sitting next to a man and little son, about 10 or 11 years old, and I got in a conversation with the man and he told me that he was a partisan. You know, through most of the war he lived in the forest with his son. His wife was killed. And I turned to the little boy and I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I was a partisanchik." I was a little partisan. And then he said, "The other two kids who were there with me used to join me and at night we'd sneak into the nearest town to steal food." And then in Yiddish he said, "If we had to shoot, we shot." This was a little kid.

Q: How old about?

A: About 11, 12 years old. And then his father said to him in Yiddish, "Show them where they shot you." And the kid picked up his sleeve, and he showed me where he had been shot through the arm. This is a little kid. At any rate, I still remember standing on the platform with Becky Lyons with me, and when I introduced Becky as coming from Palestine, the symbol, a living person from Palestine where they wanted to go, I saw a sea of smiles as she said "Shalom." Just that one word, shalom, lit up the faces of the whole crowd. Another thing that happened that day, I remember, was I found that: there was a transport of about 20 children, the first transport. Later on there were hundreds of children brought in. I'll tell you where they came from. And I walked into a barrack where these kids were sleeping on straw mattresses. I spoke to the leader called Amadrach, a young girl about 18 years old and I'll never forget when I asked her what I could provide that the kids needed most, and her reply was, "Get me paper. Get me pencils. Maybe books. These children have to learn." This was the first thing she asked me for. Well, to end the story of Pocking, I might say that Pocking grew to a camp with about 6 or 8 thousand Jews. You see, Jews were fleeing from Poland and other parts of Europe into the United States Zone. Since they had not been in camps, you know, this was better than sleeping outdoors. Children appeared because the Jewish Brigade boys brought them. You know, people don't know the story that after the war, members of the Jewish Brigade in Palestine volunteered to go into Europe to find children, and they went into Rumania and Hungary, and Poland and they found Jewish children that were living in monasteries or whatever, and they brought them into the United States Zone. And that explains why there were so many children in Pocking. UNRRA threw a large team into

Pocking, a Jewish member of the Joint named, I think the first name was Ruth, Fisher. F-I-S-H-E-R, from Chicago was the Joint worker in Pocking. At any rate, that's the story of Pocking, and at home I have the figures of population....I'll turn it over to the Museum...in Pocking by the end of the time I left. And one unforgettable thing that happened...I don't know whether I gave it to her for...to show here, but I brought it with me is the story of the Barhovich siddur. Now Moshe Barhovich was the head of the Vad Hadati, extreme organized Jews in Regensburg. I worked with Moshe. To give you an example of the kind of work he did, when a Polish young man whom I helped to become a director opened up a small camp in the middle of the forest where they took over the barracks where Hitler trained some of his toughest men for murder, a small camp was opened. And I went on the day when the first transport arrived, and Tony did a beautiful job of fixing the place liveable, and within 10 minutes a delegation came to me, saying, "The camp is fine, but where is the kosher kitchen?" So Tony, as a Polish Catholic, didn't think of the kitchen. The army didn't think of the kitchen, and I didn't mention it. So I had quite a job to convince the Jews that I'm going back to Regensburg, and I'll see that everything was sent up within a day or two for a kosher kitchen. When I came back to my office, Moshe...I mean this man Bohovich, was waiting for me, and he wanted to know what about the kosher kitchen in the camp. So I told him the problem I had. I found there was no kitchen, but we gotta go out and buy the pots and pans, and we'll do it. He said, "You give me the money and I'll go out and get it." Three hours later. I looked out of my office and I saw a sight I'll never forget. This fellow, Bohovich, and two men with him apparently rented a hugh Mercedes, one of the big ones. I looked out of my window and there is Bohovich sitting in this car, surrounded with pots and pans, came to tell he that he was on the way to the camp. That night they had their kosher kitchen. They made a kosher kitchen. Well, at any rate, I think it was Purim, where I went to the services in the makeshift synagogue. Moshe showed up with his two young boys. He had maybe 13 or 14 year-old boys. We had few siddurim, prayer books, and as the service started, Moshe pulled out a siddur, a book. And I was sitting next to them, and the three of them, all of them doven, prayed, from this one book. After the service I examined the book and I found that it had...I later counted them...148 pages of a hand- printed siddur. So as to the story of the siddur, which I asked him later to write out, which I have here in Yiddish and I ought to translate into English. And the story was that he and his family lived in the town of Zelechow, in Poland. The Germans entered....captured the town, and the Poles worked with the Germans. He recalls how the synagogue was destroyed, Torahs they ripped up, and how....he describes in this letter how his daughter and wife and sister and children were killed, mentioned to me that he thought he was among only a handful of survivors of 15,000 Jews in Zelechow. He had been a partisan, but when he wrote the siddur, he said he was living in hiding in the cellar of a Pole, who also took advantage of him he said. At any rate, being a former..a pious Jew who worshiped three times a day, fearing that he may die and his boys would not have prayer book to doven, he said I didn't even have room to stand up because I got...somehow he got paper and ink well and ink and from memory he wrote this siddur, Bohovich siddur. So I cabled America, and I got the proper paper and I got a hold of a German who made several copies. I have one copy. I gave Rabbi Lipman the small copy which the German first experimented and I had another copy which I gave to the archives in Munich, so that it is now in the Yad VaShem. My copy was taken by Rabbi Lipman to the

Hebrew Union College. They copied it and it is now in their collection of rare books. Now this was all in.... Now, after the war when I got home, I made efforts and I contacted a number of these people: Americans, Palestine, Israel, New York, elsewhere. I kept on a correspondence and I began looking for Moshe Bohovich. And one day I wrote to Yivo, you know, in New York, and asked them if they heard about it, and they told me that in the memorial book on Zelechow, you know, after the war there were hundreds of memorial books published by groups to memorialize their towns...the pictures of the dead. And they told me if I went to the memorial book on Zelechow, there is something by Moshe Bohovich. And then they said...they suggested I write to a guy named Kaplan Cohn in Chicago. So I wrote to Cohn, and within a week I got a letter from a guy. He said, "I'm Moshe Bohovich. I understand you're looking for me. I live at 233 Grand Street, New York. Within a short time, I was in New York and I met Moshe. Now because he had two children, he was among the earliest ones I helped to get the heck out of Germany. Of course, I...when he left I assumed he was going to Palestine. When I met him in New York, he told me that he and his children ended up in San Jose, Costa Rica. He started an export business. By that time, his two sons were grown. He had a son with 4, 5 children who was running the business. He spent 4 months in Costa Rica, 4 months in Miami, and 4 months in New York. Goodness. His other son, Bernado, graduated Harvard, got a degree from University of Barcelona, was one of the leading attorneys in Costa Rica; still practices under the name of Baruch Bohovich Abstein. In Costa Rica, was represented Costa Rica, in the UN.

Q: Okay. Hold on a minute. They're having a problem with someone doing some drilling.

Q: We're going to have to hold it for a couple of minutes.

[Technical pause]

Q: Hold it. Okay. We're almost ready. Alright.. Come back to 1950. All right. Okay, Joe we are now back on. Come back to 1950.

A: Now as I say, in the 50s, I met Moshe Bohovich. We corresponded. Since early 70...in 73, when I first...after I retired, I went to Florida and I met him in Florida where he was living with his wife. For a number of subsequent years I'd see him. I have this wonderful story about his siddur, and as a Federation Director, I brought many outstanding writers and other peoples to lecture in Fort Wayne and when they heard the story, their answer was, "Joe, write it. I'll help you print it in a magazine." The old gentleman refused to give me permission until a few years ago when I last saw him and he finally told me why. He said that when he was a partisan, the Germans put a price of 100,000 Marks on his head for capture. He must have done something to antagonize the Germans. To make a long story short, he said...told me that he didn't want anything written about him, so that anybody who know where he was. At the age of 87, when he knew he didn't have long to live, he went to Ipala, Israel, where he died. And after his death, his son gave me permission. And I wrote the article which was published in the Jewish Spectator. The editor, Trudy Weis, who died

shortly after the article was published. So it was the last thing she did was include the article about the Bohovich siddur in the Spectator. I published the story in the publication of our Indiana Jewish Historical Society. I didn't mention that I'd been directing the work of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society since 1972. So that's the story of the Bohovich siddur. I brought a picture of the Slota, S-L-O-T-A, family. It's worth mentioning because I was in my office in Regensburg when I got a call advising me that there was some Jews from a transport of Germans that were brought to Regensburg. I located where they placed these people. It was in an old, abandoned school house. When the Germans abandoned school house, you know, 100 years old, you know, the walls were thick and damp, it was cold, and I found 10 Jews in one room, where one double bed occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Slota and two children, Mita and Yana. They must have been about 11 years old. I remember I helped the others and I took this family and got them an apartment, clothing for the children and so forth. And on my last day...and this was before I left that all this happened, I went to say goodbye to the family and by that time we had a little kindergarten. I'll never forget I went to the kindergarten and there were these two little girls with starched dresses, ribbons in their hair and they turned to me like a record, both of them, says, "You love me. Yes?" So I bought a picture of this family. Both of these girls are now mothers. One has 5 children and is a grandmother. The other has four children. Leo Slota died in New York. There is a third beautiful daughter that they had in America, and I been in touch with them. I want to mention that family because again similar to other stories. I had a experience in the city of Furth, F-U-R-T-H, which is outside of Nuremberg. This was just shortly after I got to Regensburg. I found that there was a transport of Jews arriving in Furth. Now Furth had a...apparently there was a collection of houses used by German slave laborers and I remember being there as these Jews arrived, doling out a cup of soup and potatoes. The Jews moved into these houses. Later on, we found that they were in a very unsanitary, unhealthy conditions, so the whole bunch was moved to a place in Bamberg, camp in Bamberg where the Jews lived. I mention to you because an interesting thing happened. In the '50s, Becky Lyon whom I mentioned, Israeli Nurse, was in New York. I arranged to meet her in a Greenwich Village Hotel. When I called her, she told me that her sister, who was a well known writer, was going to have dinner with us and she said, "I'm gonna have a friend there." Well, I came there, called her room, and while I was waiting, a gentleman walked up to me and he said, "Mr. Levine, do you remember me?" I looked at the guy, and he looked like a thousand other Polish Jews, and I said, "I really don't." He said, "My name is Ignatz Eichler, E-I-C-H-L-E-R.]He says, "You gave me a cup of soup and a piece of bread in Furth." Well, he finally came to America, and he opened an electrical appliance store. Becky had helped him and in gratitude he shipped over a lot of appliances and we were joined by the two sisters. We went to a wonderful restaurant on 14th Street...no, 12th Street, where there were these singing waiters and the chorus from the Metropolitan Opera was there, and there was wonderful singing and Ignatz insisted to pay the bill. After that dinner, then we went to...I forget the name of a well known nightclub where Molly Lyons Bar David, Becky's sister, met a well known American writer. He was crippled and in a wheel chair. I forget his names. We were there til 3 o'clock in the morning. Ignatz insisted on paying. I was glad that he was able to do it, but... That's the memories of Furth. Uh...As I said, most of my time was spent traveling with the problems of the Jews and so forth. I am just giving you

some of the highlights of things that happened to me. Uh...I talked...I talked about the death marches. I should mention that I have photographs for myself dedicating monuments. After a while, the Jews, under some law, had the Germans erect monuments. So I brought a picture. You will have it. How they placed...that's right. I have pictures of a place in Ergoldsbach, a little town where the Jews put up a series of monuments and this was the dedication service. I was one of the speakers. Another one was a professor from Austria, Jew who had been in the concentration camps. This was a dedication of 78...where 78 people were killed on the last day before the survivors walked into Ergoldsbach. And this happened in a number of towns. Now...

Q: You mentioned something about...wanting to talk about Nuremberg Trial.

A: Yes. I will talk about Nuremberg Trial. I want to say too that the Jews, as I mentioned earlier, came from Poland where they were highly organized. In Regensburg, they already formed a Central Committee to work with all these towns. The Central Committee also worked with the large committee in Munich. See, there was a Committee of Liberated Jews. In Regensburg, they had the Central Committee of Niederbayern and Oberpfalz. That was the name of it. From the district. It's amazing the set of committees, they had assignments made. They had a lot of battles too. There were a lot of fights for power, because if you are committee man you have power to distribute funds and food which the Joint provided. So that there was a lot of times spent through the local committee, some sad things happened as well as good things happened, working with them.. I want to...Let me close with two stories. Number one, I say I got talk about the Joint Distribution Committee. The people should know. The Joint Distribution Committee was a Jewish American relief agency. The major food did not come from us. They came from UNRRA and the Army. We supplemented. We supplemented with money to enable...enable the people to buy stuff that they needed. I think to illustrate the meaning of the Joint people, I want to tell a story how in January of 1946, there was the first Conference of Liberated Jews in Europe, called in Munich. Ironically, it was held in the Rathaus, the city hall in Munich. Everything around it was kaputt. Delegates from United States, French, American zones lived in straw mattress camps came to this conference, and the great of the world came. I remember. On Sunday morning, I was way up on the top of the rafter. I wanted...I didn't want to take a seat from these people. A little man appeared on the platform I wasn't an ardent Zionist; I was interested. I didn't know the man. And speaking in Yiddish at one point, he turned to them, he waved his fist, and his white hair flew around and he said in Yiddish, "You cannot remain, nor will you remain in this hated Germany. You cannot return to blood covered Poland where the millions have died. Or Rumania." And he waved his fist and he said in Yiddish, "There's one little tiny piece of land in this world where," in Yiddish he said, "your brothers and sisters are willing to share their homes, their food." And he waved his arm again, "If we have to fight and die to bring you to Eretz, we'll do it." This hall was electrified. Electrified! And as I drove...we drove back to Regensburg in that cold and in an open Jeep, Moshe drove me back, I tried to analyze what happened there and I decided that the most important thing that happened was that Ben Gurion let them know they're not alone. And I'm using this story to point out that that was the role of the Joint. We Were there. There was somebody represented American Jewry to

help, and that was exciting. Just one or two other things, two stories and I'll quit. My experience in Nuremberg at the Nuremberg trials. Streicher⁵, the worst...one of the worst of the Nazi had a magnificent mansion outside of Nuremberg. It was taken over and made into a Kibbutz. And I should say that before long young Jews began to marry, as if they're going to let the world know we're going to make more Jews. Interesting, there was a number of marriages going on. And there was a wedding in Streicher's home, in the kibbutz and me being the Director of the Joint...they had no father, so I was...you know like the...whatever it was...the guy...the substitute father. So I attended that wedding. The next morning we drove to Nuremberg and two things happened. We came to an area where we saw blocks and blocks with piles of cut marble. We suddenly came to a...what looked like an entrance to a huge field. We drove into this field that we drove around, just two Jews in a little Jeep. I learned later that all that marble was cut for Hitler's monument he was going to erect to last a thousand years. And later that I learned that we were on that field that you've seen on television where Hitler addressed a quarter of a million Germans, in that field. That was one thing that happened that morning. Then we passed, what I discovered, was the Court of Justice where the Nuremberg Trial was going on. So I said "Moshe, stop." I was in uniform. I had a revolver which I carried all through my time, walked in and I talked to a Colonel at the desk and I asked whether I'd be admitted into the trial and he said, "Yes. Of course, you could." So I went out and gave my gun to Moshe. Took a seat in the front. Oh yes, took a seat in the front row. On my left, incidentally, when I went in I bought a chart how they sat, was where the prisoners sat on benches. When I got there, they were still standing around with briefcases, papers, I think it was the board of directors of the Chase National Bank. In walked Hermann Göring and Hess. I saw a little Beispiel⁶: one or two guys turned their back to Hess, to Göring. Others clicked their heels, bowed and shook hands with Göring. Five minutes later, court was called to order, so these men took their seats. Hermann Goring who sat in the front row facing me, took a huge blanket and wrapped it around his big fanny, sat down and dropped his head and throughout the Trial looked like he feel asleep. Sitting next to him was Hess, and he had a lot of papers and he kept on writing. Nobody was paying any attention to the Jews. I remember Schacht⁷ staring at something at the ceiling all though this thing. You know, the top, except Bormann and Hitler and the little guy, whatever his name was..

Q: Göbbels.

A: Göbbels. All the others were there. That morning a Jew was on the stand and the case was being handled --they were taking turns-- the French were prosecuting. This was on November 26th or 27th...I have a transcript of the evidence of 1945...a Jew was on the stand

⁵ Julius Streicher, publisher of the antisemitic Nazi Party newspaper Der Stürmer.

⁶ **German:** example.

⁷ Hjalmar Schacht, the Reich Minister of Economics.

and he testified about the killings in Vilna. He described how the Germans filled up a park with Jews and how the Germans practiced dive bombing, killing the Jews. He described how they filled up a synagogue, set it on fire, and they had machine gunners surrounding the synagogue and as the Jews fled, they killed them. By that time, I'm sitting there. My blood must have been frozen to the spot, and as this Jew was describing all these murders and he threw out a figure of 68,000 Jews were killed...I later met a man who said 120,000 were killed...Göring was sleeping; Hess was writing, and they really --I hate to use the vulgar expression-- seemed bored. I must admit I'm not a murdering man, but I had my revolver I wouldn't be alive here now. I would have taken shots at these guys. That was my experience in Nuremberg. Now, let me conclude...there's a lot to talk about...

Q: You still have a little time.

A: Yal. I don't know whether I told the story how I came to the city of Weiden, W-E-I-D-E-N, and at the community center. I mean I was in the community center. There were a lot of people I know, and suddenly two young women dashed at...at Moshe, grabbed him and kissed him and hugged him. We ended up having lunch with these two young women. And I got this story. Moshe mentioned that he worked in a munitions plant, slave labor camp, and I got the following story. They worked in...these two girls were in the same camp with him. They were separated, but in this camp apparently, the commander was a drunk and one must have started a fire and his quarters were destroyed...part of it was destroyed. The next morning during the Appell...and Appell means the counting, they had the whole camp lined up. The commander walked down the line and picked out a hundred young men. He had machine gunners lined up, and they killed most of them in the presence of everybody else. When Moshe's good luck, the head or foreman of one of the shops, suddenly appeared and began screaming, "Don't kill him. I need him." Moshe and a group of kids, young men, just kids working in the shops. Moshe was number 98 or number 99 of 100. And these girls witnessed this. You can imagine what kind of reunion they had. They told me how they survived. One of them...yes, they told me how they were both...they're blond and didn't look...they looked Polish and they were in the slave camp with Polish girls and these women...I think they told me was they had to get something in Yiddish out of their system, so they sang operatic music with Yiddish words, so the Germans didn't know it, but at any rate, that was the meeting; one little thing in Weiden. I talked about a Nuremberg Trial. At any rate before I left, I was told that they were going to have what is called a banquet to say farewell to Joe Levine. I forget where it was, but when I came to this place where delegates from every community came to say farewell to Joe Levine. It was like my living wake. I sat through hours listening to the Rabbi, to every President of every community had to get in the act. You can't ignore them, president of the committee. The chairman of the cultural committees started to get in the act. At any rate, we had lunch. We continued and the total length of the affairs, Chaim Diamond whom I mentioned...he was the president of the Central Committee at that time, bent down and picked up a piece of paper, cardboard. I brought it. You have it. And he turned to me and said, "Levine, you...now you know about...appreciate...how we feel about you. We want to give you something as a token of...to remember us. And he gave me this diploma. They went to German and in a broken English

expressed their appreciation and made me what I think the only non-Holocaust survivor a honorary member of the Central Committee of Niedrbayern and Oberpfalz, typical German with four signatures and stamps. One name was Chaim Diamond; the other was Silverberg, the editor of the Moment; the other name was Steven Schwartz from Straubing. These were officials from the Central Committee, and a man named Schachler. Years later...I don't know if I described how I met Chaim. Did I?

Q: No.

A: Well, in '56 I learned that Chaim Diamond was in New York. I was at a meeting on 38th street and Rabbi Lipman gave me a note: "had lunch yesterday with Chaim." I said "Where?" He said, "545 Fifth Avenue." Two minutes later, there's Levine running up Fifth Avenue. I had a wonderful reunion with Chaim. At that time he was married and his brother was with him, he had a successful watch business. Chaim and I have been friends ever since. Now what was I talking about before? I forget.

Q: You were talking about the certificate.

A: Oh, yes. So Chaim opened his vault during our meeting and he showed me copies of all the letters I wrote and he was arrested by an American town major because he objected to the anti-semitic signs. I had to go to General McNarney's office to get him out of jail. At any rate, we were talking about papers and he came...we talked about the diploma. So he said, "Joe, I want you to know that before the meeting I met with the Committee and we discussed what can we give Levine as a token of appreciation?" So one man suggested, "Let's give him a diamond ring." Now some of the Jews...I didn't say it, but were on the black market and doing very well. A lot of these Jews were in the black market business in Poland before the war, so it's nothing new. Another one said, "Let's give him a Leica with all the lenses." Another said, "Let's give him money." Finally, somebody said, "Let's give him something that no money can buy that he can hand down to his children." And how right he was. So that diploma which you have here...I gave you a copy of it, is what they gave me, which I treasure as a memory.

Q: Okay, we have about 5 more minutes if you think of anything else.

A: Well, while I'm here I want to talk about the fact that I'm delighted that the United States Memorial the United States Holocaust Memorial is being built. The world shouldn't forget. I'm deeply appreciative of the fact that I was asked to make what little contribution I can make on this program. I hope to turn over...I turned over some materials...some more materials for the Museum. Uh...The world has to remember. The world shall not forget. And I certainly feel that the Museum will render an important...make an important contribution to the world in the coming years.

Q: Thank you, Joseph Levine. It has been very, very interesting listening to you.

A: Thank you.