

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Henry Schmelzer
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PREFACE

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HENRY SCHMELZER

January 12, 1990

- A: ...that's a small place, small town...uh...near what was at that time before the first world war...uh...the Austrian/Russian boarder because that part of Poland was...uh...in the Austria...Austria...I think they called it Austria/Hungarian empire. Austria/Hungarian I don't know how...how you would say that in English really. Uh...And the grandparents also came from very close to that place. They lived there til the outbreak of the first world war, 1914, when my father was indoctrinated into the Austrian Army and Mother...uh...who at that time was pregnant with my older sister, Leah and we called her Toni...uh...fled from that area...took her mother along "by the name of Freda and...uh...fled to Vienna. My oldest sister was born on the way in Hungary. Uh...Ever since then until they had to escape from Vienna after the Nazis came in in 1938,...uh... we lived...we lived in Vienna. As a matter of fact, as far as I know we lived in the same house until the last 2 or 3 months of 1938.
- Q: Okay. Tell me...uh...please a little bit about your father's occupation. What did he do?
- A: After my father was demobilized from the army...uh...he... uh... built up a...uh... wine business and over a period of 20 years he built it into a very substantial wine wholesale business. Uh...finally, we had...uh...large cellars in the...I think it was in the 18th District in "I...I remember the place very well. It is a magnificent large court yard with chestnut trees...uh...three offices...uh...and extensive underground cellars. At least I was very impressive by the fact that they were...uh....uh...barrels of wine higher than I was, which wasn't very difficult. I wasn't very tall at the time, but they were about the height of a man. And...uh...there were rows and rows of them. And there was an escalator going down...uh...along which I guess they were transferring the barrels into bottles and so on and so forth. And he supplied mainly restaurants and hotels. Some of the wine we also imported from other countries, like Yugoslavia and I expect Hungary and so on. Uh...
- Q: You as a child! Tell me a little bit about your childhood. Did you go to school? Did you have friends?
- A: Yes. Well, uh...first of all, what I...I have to say something in general about the nature of my memories. Uh...the Nazi period stretches across...uh...the landscape of my memories of my mind almost like a Chinese war. You can...there are chinks here and there. You can look through them. You can catch a glimpse of some of the things that happened beyond the war...before it, but...uh...this...this huge war has cast a long shadow, both backwards and forwards, and really dominates the landscape. But I do remember some of the things. Uh...We were substantially a middle class family. As I say, we always lived in the same house in which really means a street of front gardens. Each apartment house had little front gardens. I remember vividly these were beautiful gardens with...uh...flower beds...uh...carnations, forget me naught, roses...uh...and huge lilies. This was lilies I believe. Uh...The house itself...uh...uh...was really properly built. You know, in...in Vienna, you had houses that were built for centuries...uh...marble and...and brass

and...and oak to us and so on and so forth, absolutely beautifully fitted out. Uh...At first we lived on the third floor and then we moved down stairs to a mezzanine, which is a kind of half floor. It's almost on the level of the second floor as they would call it here because the ground floor is called the first floor in...in...in America. Uh...We always had as far...as long as I remember it any way, live in maids. These were generally girls who came from the country and...uh...Mother...uh... was a very...uh... friendly and compassionate person. She was always... always busy in the house, mainly on cooking which was at that time a task that...that took up a good part of the day. Uh...The house was sparkling. Uh...I was a bookworm. I remember lying on my belly on the floor and seeing my reflection in the linoleum. Uh...I was lost in books. Uh...But I also had friends out in the streets and...uh...used to play...uh...kicking the ball around and playing with those little marbles which at that time were clay, glossy clay balls. As a matter of fact, some were glass, but I liked the clay better because they were so beautifully colored. Uh...I do remember vividly. Now before...before I come to the elementary school, I want to say that there were two...uh...facts that I vividly recall. First of all, I had a rather strict father. And that was very much in accordance with the fashion of the times. These were patriotic figures. And I loved him very much. I remember the intense joy that I had when I heard the... his key grating in the lock. I knew it was my father's key. And I knew more or less what time he would come home. Mother was a very affectionate woman. I am afraid that she...uh...she spoiled me. She was over-protective. She was always hovering over me when I was eating. The side effect, of course, was that I became the worst eater in Europe. I mean it just came to a point that I couldn't even look at a cup of coffee or milk or whatever and not feel sick. I was a very, very bad eater. Yal. So that...that...that was...that was a strong memory. Uh...Somehow...uh...I was very much of a dreamer. Books were my world of escape. And I managed to enter this world and close the door behind me and live in it for a long time. Elementary school was just around the corner. Uh...Well around the corner. It was in a part of the street called, oddly enough, means beautiful street. It wasn't nothing very beautiful about that street, but the elementary school was called at the time. And I remember the first...I was a person...uh...not very independent, probably as a result of the kind of education of the upbringing. As I said, I was over-protected, and...uh...it was difficult for me to separate myself from home and go to school in the first place. But...uh...I remember vividly on one of the first days, the principal of the school, I remember the name of Pakoni lifted me on to his knee and I can see his friendly face. He was a person of Czech extraction, I believe. Uh...so he spoke a perfect German. I suspect that he might even have been born in Vienna. But, of course, you know, the Austrian empire at the time incorporated...uh... No, it had incorporated. At that time when I was born and Czechoslovakia was already an independent country. But before that it was part of the empire. Uh...So he took me on his knee and he asked me whom I loved more, my mother or him. I was intensely embarrassed. I'm telling this story to show that...uh...uh...Vienna was a place of mixed emotions for me. Anti-Semitism was endemic in Vienna but there were loving persons, of course. There were individuals who and I did experience affection and love from some of them. As a matter of fact, when he asked me this question, the door opened and Mother came in. (Laughter) So that just adds to my embarrassment. (Laughter) I don't know how I wiggled out of that one. Subsequently, we had a...a teacher by the name of Kanote. Uh...and...uh...she also singled me out as...uh...I guess I am...I am really sorry to say as one of her preferred students

because I don't like this whole business of really singling out anybody. I am today for instance Professor at Rutgers University and...uh...I am very much guided by...uh...maybe this experience and others that...uh...that I just like all my students. I like all the kids there. Uh...But in any case, she had...she had the Jewish pets and the Gentile pets. I was the Jewish. The Gentile was a fellow by the name of who is the son of policeman. I remember all these things so...so...so vividly. Uh...The reason I mention this again was to show you a little bit of the atmosphere there. Uh...And I remember one occasion when...uh...she would sometimes go out because I think that...uh...she had a bit of a flirt going with a...with another teacher by the name of Flashman in the class. And she asked me to monitor the class. And as soon as she left, the class broke out into some kind of rowdy behavior and I immediately was able somehow to control that and what I learned about myself instinctively, you know, and I only recall this on reflection now...was that in...in times of tension and so, I seemed to have...to...to psychologically understand ways of controlling myself, of being in...in complete possession of myself and consequently of the situation and it was something that stood me in good stead when the Nazis came in. Uh...

Q: Let's talk about that.

A: Right...Well..

Q: When the Nazis came in.

A: Yes. At that time...uh...that was, of course, I believe...uh... the date was the 11th of March, 1938. And...uh...We had at that time a live-in maid by the name of Fritzi Shumberger. The reason I mention her was she did play a little bit of a role afterwards and also she had a little emblem on her lapel. It was . It was...uh...in the shape of a boot, and subsequently we learned that it was the emblem of the leading Nazis. I say illegal because before the Nazis marched in, the Nazi party was not legal in Austria. However, personally, she was not...uh...hostile to us and I don't think that she behaved badly when all is said and done. Uh...I do remember the speech of Shoosnick who was at that time Chancellor, " Chancellor.

Q: Where were you?

A: I was...I was in that apartment...in our apartment in 186 204. That was the first apartment on the left side...uh...as you came into the house and stepped up quite a number of steps. Uh...And I listed to...uh...his speech and do...do recall...uh...some of the words he said. I believe he said To the death with red, white red, which is the color of the Austrian flag. Red, white, red. Uh...At least my memory tells me that he said the things that he said. And...uh...Fritzi Shumberger, that maid, and my brother next to me (clearing throat) Excuse me. Guess I'll have to drink something.

Q: That's fine.

A: (Drinking water) Uh...My brother Leo. He was the next oldest. I was the youngest in a family of four which was also was a kind of situation that...uh...had me on my guard most of the time. And...and what separated me from the next one was a period of 6 years, very substantial. But the other three...uh...were only separated in terms of 2 years and there was... So really there were two families. It was they and I. I always regarded myself as an outsider and I expect it was because of that large separation of time. Anyway, Leo was there and Fritzi and she said something, "Oh wonderful and so on and so forth." Uh...Because obviously, I think she was going out with somebody who was a Nazi and they...they were very joyful about Hitler coming in. As a matter of fact, many Austrians were....uh...

Q: Excuse me. I'm confused. Who was joyful.

A: Fritzi Shumberger, our... our maid was very joyful about it and many Austrians were. In any case...uh...and my brother remarked...he made some kind of...uh...negative remark about it, saying that...uh..., you know, there may not be that much reason to be happy. I...In any case...I do...I do remember that. I also remember the next day looking out. First of all, there were...there were bombers going...coming overhead. Hugh, hugh...uh...machines, droning and very low, almost...uh...scraping the...the...the tops...the tops of the houses. Black, black planes. They looked black to me or maybe that's just a psychological memory. Uh...And every house was draped with a spastic of flags. Every house! And these were hugh flags. I am talking about apartment houses, five floors. And these were flags that...that went from the roof right almost down to the...to the sidewalk and I should imagine that...uh...there was a very active, highly organized Nazi underground movement. And they distributed all these these flags over night. Also, there were many Nazis in all the houses. There was a substantial proportion of Austrians and Nazis. Austria has always...uh... managed to portray itself only as the victim and I have to say most emphatically...and I don't want to be unjust to the many people in Austria who were good people and kind people...but there was a large population of haters in Austria. And I don't think there was a single country in the world that embraced Hitler so fervently as the Austrian nation. And those of us who were there know it, experienced it. Uh...I do remember that...uh...somehow or other I managed to either to allow my mother to go out or slip...I probably slipped out. And I went pretty far afield because I found myself...uh...and this was probably not on the first week. It was probably some weeks after the entry. But it was a time when...when Hitler...uh...was...uh...uh...going around in a procession. I remember him...I remember him standing in a motor car, standing upright. It was an open...uh... car. And the sidewalks were thronged with people. I mean there was just one mass of people all waving and shouting and...and...and jubilant. Uh...There was an ecstasy of joy. And I was standing there very quietly observing this. Uh...At that time...uh...people who knew you before suddenly didn't know you. (Clearing throat) In our apartment house, we had...uh...there were quite a number of Jewish families in our apartment house. Uh...There were not many Gentile families, but I think... There were probably...it was probably half half. There might have been three or four...of two I know definitely that they were Nazis. Uh...One was called Garla, and he will appear later on because he tried to blackmail my father and caused his arrest. Uh...and the other one was Sargi, and this Sargi, you know, there was this special story there because they are...there

was daughter and two sons. The two sons had been friends of my brothers. But the friendship, I think had already more or less fizzled out...uh...uh...maybe a year or two before the Nazis came, but...uh...actually entered, but obviously, it was probably on the side of their becoming Nazis. One was called Franz and the other Willi. Willi Sargi became an SS man, and Franz Sargi became an SR man. Uh...And it's...they...they never personally undertook any action against us, these people. And as a matter of fact, the daughter...I don't know her name...who was working...uh...as probably some secretary in the police headquarters, local police headquarters, was helpful to my mother.

Q: How?

A: I don't recall the exact circumstances. I think it probably was...it might have been connected with the arrest of my father. I am going to talk about it a little later on. But I know that my mother went...uh...to her and I seem to remember that when she came back that she said some nice things about...about her. But I don't remember the exact circumstances. I wasn't even told exactly what happened at that time. Uh...If I can stop a moment here because I have a sense that there was something happening...

Q: Can you hold...hold the tape a minute? Is that what you what you would like to do. H

A: Yal.

Q: Can you stop the tape a minute. Tell me when it's on Bonnie. Okay.

A: One of the things that...that I remember vividly...uh...was, of course, the fact that...uh...shortly after...uh...the annexation...uh...we had to stay there. And there was a...some obvious peculiar about celebrating festival of freedom of liberation. And I do remember my father sitting there at the table and saying...uh...that he really didn't have the heart to do it. But we decided that we do it anyway. And I...I am sure it was the hardest and most difficult that we ever had. Just because it is a festival of liberation, and...uh...I don't need to tell you how we felt at that time. Uh...One of the...I had mentioned...I had mentioned...uh...Incidentally I mentioned Willi Sargi, and I just want to add to this that...and it's strange how sometimes little things...uh...become memories that...that stand out way and beyond the significance. Because my...my sister, Leah, and we actually always called her Toni for some reason so I am going to refer to her as Toni. Uh...She had managed to blot out most of the things that happened at the time, but one thing she...she remembers vividly and she's told me about it two or three times. I mean whenever she mentions that, I can feel it...the strong emotions tied up with it, and it's a little thing. She remembers herself walking into the house one day and Willi Sargi, that...that fellow who had been friends of...uh...my family, of my brothers and possibly her too, was walking ahead and he opened the door and he closed it right in her face. It's such a little thing, but it will live with her as long as she lives. And so I say memories are strange things because so many more horrendous things happened afterwards. Uh...At that time, I was going to...the " • gymnasium. That was a Jewish High School. A very, very good high school. One of the two best in Vienna. Uh...And they had a very select...uh...cadre of...uh... teachers. One of them was a pretty woman poetist and...uh...,

of course, at that time, you know, the curriculum and the standards of education are very high. That school closed its door in... after I graduated...uh... in 1938. It closed its door for good for over 50 years. I think they only recently reopened again, last year or so I think I've heard. And I remember that...uh...when we...uh... left...uh.. on the last day of school...uh...and there was a group of boys waiting outside to beat us up, but...uh...that was...that was the gymnasium. Uh...I had two brothers...uh...the oldest by the name of Gabe. He left for the United States...uh... early in 1938. He missed most of the...uh... Nazi period. I think he left...uh...uh...in the early summer, late spring or early summer.

Q: How did he get out?

A: We have...a part of my mother's family is American...had settled in America...uh...a generation or two ago. And they sent us affidavits and...uh...Gabe was the first one able to make use of it. So he went straight...uh...you know, as a important little passenger on the ship, he could close the door and luckily he missed...uh... most of the terrible things...uh...that happened afterwards.

Q: Why did the rest of you not go with him?

A: Well, ...uh...it took time. Affidavits, you know, affidavits, the processing and everything...uh...wasn't such a simple and easy matter. It took...uh...it took father almost a year...uh...to get out...uh...for instance. Uh...Leo...Leo was the second one who left, but...but his...uh...exodus was fraught with difficulties. In the first place, in summer he tried to escape over the border into France and he went with a friend by the name of . And...uh...he was caught by the French police and returned. And...uh...since...since my brother was...he was a very handsome fellow and quite a personality I would say...uh... He had no difficulty with the German border police and there were some SR SS men there. Uh...He had no problem whatsoever and they just let him go. Yal. And he returned to Vienna. And I...I still remember him coming up the street. I happened to be outside, and he was tanned and he...he...he looked so wonderful, like somebody who came from the mountain already or something like that. Uh...Shortly after that, he...uh...he went again. He escaped by Italy and by illegal ship...uh...to Palestine. So he got into Palestine, it was probably late summer of 1938, and when war broke out...uh... early in 1940 in Germany he volunteered. And he fought through all the campaigns...uh...so...uh...in North Africa and...uh... practically the whole length of Italy.

Q: With which army?

A: He was...uh...with the British army, the RASC. I think he was first in the Palestine corps. There was...there was, in fact,...he was involved in a very significant rescue mission of Jews...uh...in northern Italy who were held captive by the Gestapo and...uh...the group of...uh...Jewish soldiers...uh... I don't know that they were in command of the whole group or only of that particular transport of that particular truck...uh...crossed-through the German border at the time and there was only a local armistice, a local armistice between the commanders and the Germans were still armed. And they went right up to that particular headquarter, and the Gestapo had fled at that time. And they took all over a 100

Jews back to...to Rome. I have to say, however, that my brother told me about this only once and that is when I saw him for the first time in 1953. Uh...That is...uh... practically 15 years after...uh...the Nazi invasion or Nazi annexation out of Austria. And we had a long talk in Israel. He told me once about it and never talked about it again and...uh...now that I have a chance, I am going to try to get historical documentation because my brother was...uh... a rather quiet and extremely restrained sort of person and he...he's never mentioned it again. And I think it was a significant...was a very significant...uh... episode. As a matter of fact he told me that when they came back to Rome, he formed...uh... the American Army and said that he instructions from British Headquarters that here was a group of people who had to be taken care of and...uh...they...they were obviously people in very poor condition of health. Yal. So he surrendered them...he surrendered them to...to the Americans and he said to them when...when they first arrived and the Jews saw them, something fell underneath and said they were angels.school. My parents registered me in a...in a training course for carpenters. There were a number of different (clearing throat) vocational courses being given under the auspices of...uh...the Coltis Commander, which was the Jewish...uh...uh...organization, the Organization of Jewry in Vienna. And I guess the idea was (a) since I would have to leave and they tried to send me out as early possible because obviously every day was...uh...I was threatened there...uh...to get me out of harm's way, to get me away from the apartment which was a trap and also to give some qualifications, some sort of another. And...uh... I remember...and I am going a little ahead and I will afterwards go backward, but I am going a little ahead of time because I remember on the day of the Kristallnacht which I believed was the 9th to the 11th of November, 1938. I was in that carpentry workshop and there was a call on the telephone and the manager of the shop...uh... went to the phone and listened very seriously and then he turned to us and said, "There is some action on the way and you will be safer at home." I am going to talk about this in detail a little later on because there was lots of things that happened in between. And I want to talk about them now. Uh...First of all,...uh...a... a number of times...uh...the Nazis came to our place, to our apartment. They came to our apartment. They weren't exactly break-ins, but they weren't exactly visits either because these people came and...uh... they didn't bother to ring the bell or knock on the door. They...they generally beat on the door with their boots so we knew exactly what kind of gentlemen were waiting out there.

Q: Do you need some water?

A: Yes. Please.

Q: I must really sound very hoarse here.

A: That's fine. Take your time. Take some water.

Q: Uh...I remember a number of these occasions. I think I happened to have been present at practically every one of them cause I was mostly at home except when I was in that carpentry workshop later on. Uh...On one occasion they came and...uh...they asked for my father. And my father was a very sick man at that time. At the sight of what happened...uh...Of course, as I said, the business was Aryonized. He lost the business

and, consequently, in his mind he lost the...uh...the very reason for existence. He lost the structure of his life. Uh...He...uh...became so sick that every day he had attacks that he simply...uh... fell unconscious. He became unconscious. I remember he did the blood drained from his face. His face became ashen. He sank back and for about 10, 15 minutes he was as if dead. And then he always recovered. And that happened day after day, day after day, day after day. Yal. You can imagine what kind of impact it had on me. At least it's difficult to imagine, really difficult to imagine. Uh...I later on, I subsequently learned (clearing throat) from a sister that these were epileptic attacks. He had developed epilepsy. I didn't even know that at the time. Uh...his...hair, which had always been blond, turned gray in a week. So, and he had always had heart trouble and so on. So when the Nazis came on one occasions, this was , I heard my mother say, "Why don't you take me. He's a...he's a very sick man. He has a very sick heart. Why don't you take me instead?" And the Nazi looked at her. There were two of them. And one said, you know, "Lock your door. We are going to say that nobody is home. And don't open for anybody." And they left. On another occasion, and I am mentioning the little...the little visit at first. On another occasion...uh...they came and they asked for...if there were any males around, any men. I was the only one. And...uh...I always looked about 5 years younger. That was as a result of eating so badly I guess. And it was really what saved me from the concentration camp. (Clearing throat) Because he looked at me and he thought I was about 10, and I was really 14. (Laughter) He didn't even bother to say anything. He just turned around. It's like...uh...throwing a little fish back, you know, and left. That was the second visit. The third one, and I don't know whether I have the order correctly because memories are strange. You remember things vividly, but you don't always remember the order in which they happened. Uh...About at least 3 or 4, this SR man came to our apartment in and I remember at that time, this...this must have been before mid-summer because I was still in school. I remember I was in school because I had visited a friend by the name of Amile Krueger. He was a genius in mathematics and I was excellent in Latin, the Classics and Literature, so we used to help each other. And I was visiting his place and came home and as I knocked on the door, either the moment I knocked on the door or just a little before I heard noises in the apartment and knew they were not noises from my family. I still remember I was rooted by fear, and I had an immediate impulse for flight. But whether it was solidarity or fear or whatever it was or the swiftness with which things happen, I didn't turn...turn away, and the door opened and instead of my mother, there was this giant man. And I was pulled in somehow...uh...and there was my father, mother and myself. My sister was married at the time and she had a separate apartment, not too far from us. And there was Fritz Shamburger, our maid, and they made us stand against the wall. I was in the which is...uh...the...uh...the foyer, the lobby, you know. It's a sort of L shape, very long L shaped room. They made us stand against the wall by the corner window and one of them shouted, Where's the gold? Where've you hidden the gold?" These were very primitive people. Yal. They must have thought we were Fort Knox or something. I mean, gold. I know my mother had a wedding ring, but...uh...hidden gold, buried it. Uh...My father said, "We have no gold." So they stood us against the wall. They took out their pistols and they put the pistol on our chest. It was father, mother and myself. And father said to them...and Fritz Shamburger, the maid, was standing in the doorway of the kitchen and watching... What could she do really? And father said, "Why don't you shoot us?" And I am quoting almost verbatim. He said, "I'd rather you shoot us

straight away than have this insult and...uh...indignity, you know, without end." And actually that...that...that...uh...brings up another memory in my mind. They didn't shoot us. Uh...They...at that time apparently didn't have the authority to do that. Or possibly they were still after the gold and you can't get gold from dead Jews, whatever the case may be. And they took my father away. They took him to our business. At that time it was still in our possession in the district, and my brother, Leo, was still there at the time. And I remember Leo had some money somewhere on an inside pocket, but he said he had no money. You see we needed that money desperately because...uh...there was no business anymore and we knew that without money, we won't be able to get out. So...uh...they didn't find the money on him. We were always walking on a tight rope. Yal. Whether the arrested father at the time or not, I do not know. I know Father was arrested at least twice. But...uh...my mother and I were locked into the kitchen after they left. And they left this SR man to guard us. This marshall of people, you know, these heroic figures, the Aryonrosher...superman in their imagination. I had learned to be contemptuous of anti-Semites and I will come back to this...uh...afterwards, but in any case, I was a very, restless, impatient sort of person and I had inherited a little bit of the temper from my father. And all the time that temper was rising within me and remember I was a book worm. It was never clear when I left the world of reality and walked over into a world of imagination. Yal. In the world of imagination, I was just a I mean I...So eventually, I got so fed up, I got so angry in the kitchen I said to my mother, "I have to do homework and they prevent me from doing the homework and I am going to...to...uh...take them to task over this." And I don't know if my mother tried to restrain me, but, you know, what could she do. I went out and I confronted this Nazi and said, "You know that I am supposed to do my homework. I am supposed to bring it in tomorrow and if I can't do it because of you, you will come with me tomorrow and you will come to the teacher. Yal. And you tell her whose responsible for this. Yal." He didn't know how to cope with this. And...and this is where my memory ends. I really do not know what happened, you know. He didn't beat me up. That is for sure because I would have remembered that. Yal. But whether I was allowed to do the homework or whether they pushed me inside again or what, I...I do not recall. That...that was one visit. Uh...Our flat...our apartment was...was broken in on another occasion. We don't know who did it. I should imagine it was done really by so-called "in court" officials because...uh...the apartment was sealed by the Nazis. And...uh...

Q: What do you mean it was sealed.

A: It was sealed. Sealed by Gestapos. We were not allowed to enter again. It was just sealed. It was put under seal, lock and seal.

Q: Where did you go to live.

A: I...I...I'll tell you that. Probably...Actually...we actually went to our sister. If my sister hadn't been there, well, I guess we still had a...I still had a aunt. They had a very small apartment. But we...we lived with our sister for the...for the last 2 or 3 months...uh... Uh...What happened there was that I had...whatever money we had left...I don't know whether at that time we had already lost the business or not, but in any case, there was

little business and people wouldn't pay us anyway even if we supplied. Uh...So we had no money coming in and so we had a substantial business but you know as a businessman, we weren't that rich. We had some money left to pay for expenses to move out or what, but whatever money we had left was our lifeline for escape. And I had become extremely adept at hiding things and at finding things. And the reason why I had become adept was that, as I told you, I was a book worm and I would read through libraries. I mean literally shelf after shelf cause I remember my mother would take me to a worker's library in this, I believe they called them, you know. The Social Democrats built wonderful apartment buildings in Vienna. They...they become quite well renowned. And they had libraries there and health clinics and...uh...kindergarten and gardens inside. It was really a splendid world. Yal. And they had these libraries, and my mother would take me there and for me this was a paradise. And actually as I remember, they were really little rooms, but the glorious thing was there was these bookcases and they were stacked with books from the floor to the ceiling and I knew that each book was a world. And it just entranced me. Yal. And I would read indiscriminately, but they were mostly good books. They were...at home also we had, our saloon was stacked. We had all the classics. At that time we had paperbacks also the crown books they were called. That was before the Penguins. And I knew all the classics and I knew the Russians and the French, the dossiers and all these people. But my mother used to hide books from me that were classics even because they were too serious. For instance,...uh...and what an innocent world it was at the time, for instance...uh...and , Crime and Punishment. I am mentioning this because it later on plays actually a role. However, there was no place they could hide a book that I didn't find. And...uh...the most peculiar place that my mother found was the stove pipe, you know, in the saloon and I found that too because I always...I put myself in her place. Now where...where would I hide something. A book...a book isn't such a small object you see. So I became extremely skilled in nosing out things, where they might be hidden, and hiding things. And I was the person consequently selected...you see how negative qualities become virtues in a world that's gone crazy...to hide whatever money we had left. And what I did, and that was just before our apartment was ransacked and sealed, was...uh...we had these brass beds which had hollow legs and you could unscrew the...uh...the wheels. So I stuffed some money up there in the legs and then we had curtain rods that were also brass. Hugh things! And I stuffed some money there. Actually, you could only get them out with very, very long thin stick. Yal. The Nazis, however, who were never book worms, never learned...uh...to learn to look..to look for things (laughter), you know, in those little hollow hiding places. And they never found the money. Now, then the apartment, after the apartment was sealed, and we were ordered...and we had no money... Yal. We were literally penniless. So one day, Mother took me to the Gestapo headquarters...Central City...It was in the hotel. I forgotten the name of the hotel. And I want to explain to you exactly what happened because I vividly remember every moment of it. And, of course, she had me by the arm, you know, and we walked in and there was this...this splendid lobby. And there were people standing around. I don't whether they wore uniforms or not, but there were people in there. It was a lovely place, and there was a spiral staircase to the right and at the foot of the staircase was a soldier. I believe he was a soldier and not a SR man. He might have been a SR man, but I seemed to remember he was a soldier. (Clearing throat) Sorry. And he had a rifle there with a bayonet, a naked bayonet planted in...uh...the...uh...what you call

that?...the...uh... on top of the rifle planted there. And as we came in, he jumped mother and he saw a woman with...with a child there and he immediately decided we're Jewish and he shot at something like . They used this expression. It's like is like sow. It's a female pig, you know. And they combined it with...with the term Jew. And for them that was the way to call us. And he...he...he advanced the rifle into a ready position and that's another heroic measure...here's a woman with a child. Yal. And he made some kind of threatening movement, and my mother brushed by him as if he didn't exist. Yal. Totally ignored him. And he was an attack dog who...who had not been instructed how to deal with a situation like that. And this is what happened sometimes in those situations. If you were really plucky or if you were desperate to the point that you didn't care...uh...sometimes you overwhelmed them. Sometimes. But you had to have some presence in that control. As I said something that I learned in school early. However, it didn't stand...it didn't help me in this situation because when we came in I was so embarrassed. It was, of course, a mixture of embarrassment and fear, but I honestly think it was about 90 percent or 80 percent embarrassment. I was a very shy youngster, and here everybody was looking at us. And I was pulling at my mother's arms...let's get out of here, you know. I was so ashamed. Yal. Just to be in the center of attraction, even if it hadn't been for...even it had been for purposes. But my mother let me go. I ran out of the hotel, but I was sufficiently able to see her, to watch her go up the staircase. Well, my mother came out of this hotel with the key to our apartment. You have seen her photograph. She was a very impressive person and somehow when no matter who, like the Nazi, the SR man...the underling who came, and who must have had a spark of humanity in his mind and who left without doing any harm to us and even cautioned us to lock up and not open to anybody. And here...this Gestapo officials of high rank, because they were the officials in the headquarters and they gave her the keys. But they gave her the key for 24 hours...24 hours or 48 hours. I think 24 hours. It was enough for us to go in, take the money out that we had there and so make it possible for us to survive. That was the second substantial visit. It was really not a visit. It was...uh...say...it was really a break-in to our apartment. Subsequently, of course, she returned the key. Uh...Now...Now I want to...to...to go back or to go forward rather to speak about the Kristallnacht.

Q: Okay. Could we hold it? If you're moving to there, we're about ready to change tapes, so let's do that at this point.

A: Right. Okay. Good.

Q: You can take some water.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay. We're back. You were going to take it up with Kristallnacht.

A: Alright. Uh...Yal. Just before I go to Kristallnacht, there's something really significant I have to mention. As I said, Father...Father was a broken man because...uh...he had lost his business. Essentially, he had lost, in his eyes, his role. His role was that of protector. And now he couldn't protect us. Mother, on the other hand, had gained a role because she

had to do everything she had done before and more. And she was always...uh...a housewife, a house person. So Mother became stronger but Father just broke. And Father wanted to die. He...he wanted...he wanted...as a matter of fact, he really wanted that all of us should commit suicide. And...and not only, and as I told you before, that he lost consciousness...uh...every day and it was really a death that he wished. He wanted us all to die. He wanted that all of us should commit suicide. It was the only way out that...that he saw possible. And every time that a Jewish family that we knew had chosen this path...had committed suicide... In one case I remember he was talking about the family that went out to the cemetery and they committed suicide at the grave site, probably of their parents. He came home and he said, "What a wonderful thing these people did. We should do the same thing." Uh...

Q: How did your mother respond to that?

A: My mother very quietly...uh...I...I...I don't even remember her saying anything. She just didn't accept his advice. Yes. But all the time what had happened inside of me was in situations like this...uh...something grows up between you and your world, the world outside. It's...it's that wall that I talked about before, which had started to build up and you can really only survive at a very, very significant price. And the price is...uh...that you detach yourself from your emotions and when you lose your emotions...when you lose your connection with your feeling, you essentially become...uh...an automated...you essentially become a sort of person drained of vitality because you don't want to experience what is happening around you, so you can't experience anything. Uh...And once that happens...it isn't something...it's not like shoes you can put on and take off...and actually it sometimes lasts in some ways a life time. Not in that horrendous form, but I will explain to you later how I emerged from all this into England. But it certainly...uh...helps you escape and...uh... Unfortunately, we didn't know. The world didn't know how to cope with this psychological situation at the time so they thought you got out of it. Let's forget it. And that is essentially what happen, except you may forget it, but it doesn't forget you and...uh...it just goes on living within you. Alright. Uh...The Kristallnacht and its generally known that...uh...what triggered it was...uh...the assassination by a young Jewish boy...I think his name was...uh...Green...

Q: Greenspan.

A: Greenspan. Yal. Who had...uh....shot...uh... some German official at the Paris...the Germany Embassy in Paris by the name of " •. Because...uh...they had...uh...I believe killed his parents.

Q: Don't worry about that. What happened...Where were you at Kristallnacht?

A: Okay. Uh...I was on Kristallnacht, actually that day I was...I was in the carpentry workshop. And...uh...I mentioned before the telephone call came so when the manager of the workshop took the call and turned to us and said, "Look. There is something going on in town. You'll be better off at home." We knew immediately what...what is going to be. We packed our...our stuff and...uh...we...uh... went...went home. I remember...I had

forgotten where this ...this carpentry workshop was, but I should imagine by the appearance of the...uh...the neighborhood because I was waiting for a train. I took a train, but I know what kind of...uh... streets we went through. Uh...It seemed to have been the inner city which is an unusual place for a workshop because these were splendid buildings. And I remember standing...you see the...the...the trains in Vienna had an open platform...uh...either at...at the rear end so you could easily jump on and off and you could be standing there. And I was standing along side. It was close to me. There was an elegant couple and, you know, in those times when people were elegant, they were elegant. There was a very attractive lady and she was dressed in a beautiful silk dress it seemed to me, and a gentlemen and she was looking at the newspaper and seeing something and she turned to the man and said, "Look at this terrible things they're doing to the Jews in Germany. Surely, this couldn't happen here." I remember those words because...uh...first of all, there are a lot of... Really, the only words I remember from that...from that period actually spoken because within a few seconds or a few minutes or moments or very short time after that, we passed a side street. The train went on a side street and there was this magnificent temple in flames. And there was a Jew in costume with a long beard. Obviously he must have been praying in the synagogue and he was running and there was a crowd running after him and he was like one of those you know, in the classic books that I was reading. Uh...with a poem by Sheller about a Kraut chasing something or other. And you flash by. I mean the train, you know, how long does it take. It was just a. And it was an ironic commentary on what that lady said...uh...to the man. I remember coming home, which was actually the apartment of my sister and...uh...there I knocked on the door and you must...and you must...uh...not remember because you don't know of this, but bear in mind that these were heavy reinforced doors with not only massive...uh...wood, but also not the kind of plywood that is used now, but genuine oak or something like, but also...uh...uh...steel bars inside. There's a whole...there's a whole steel door inside. So these were fortresses. I don't know why they were fortresses because there were very few thefts there. But nonetheless, at least before the Nazis, in which case these were really thefts, but...uh...these...these doors were difficult to break down. When I came home they very cautiously opened the door. My...I found there my...my...my mother, my sister and her baby. Her baby was...uh...only about 2 months old at the time. Rose was born in August 1938. So I can...I can position this in time because I...she was born in August 1938. I left on the 18th of December 38. Of course, it's the Kristallnacht, 11th of November. Well, I knew that before. So...uh...she was 2 months...2 months old. And Father wasn't there. I believe he must have been arrested. And...uh...my brother-in-law had been arrested. My...my sister says that happened on the morning of the Kristallnacht, but at any rate I know that he was...uh...sent to Dachau and he was in Dachau in fact over...over half a year. Uh...How he got out of it alive, but...uh...and he went through terrible time there. In any case, when I came home, something strange happened. I mean I was always the youngster, the kid and so on. And now I...I was the only man. And I don't know whether this is some genetics or the biology of relatives, I just...I...the diffident, the shy, the book worm and so on, assumed control quite naturally and I said, "If somebody comes, we won't open the door. We just don't open." And this...well, my sister was always a person...my sister was not a person who was very assertive. In any case, she would have taken a rather quiet role in the background. But my mother was a very courageous person. But I think as a result of all that had happened...of

what happened to Father...of the fact that both of them were arrested, she became...she was very quiet and she just accepted...uh...my suggestion without any demurring. Well, we didn't have to wait long. Shortly after, it was before lunch time, we heard these...uh... very well known...uh... boots beating on the door and they weren't just beating on the door, generally accompanied by shouts...open up this that and so on. We didn't open. And I think probably...I have gone through some different phases in my life, but this must have been one of them because...uh... we tiptoed into the kitchen and so as not to be seen from outside or so we were on the fifth floor, but the house was built around the court yard and you could have looked in from the opposite wing. So we had to stand pressed against the wall. And my sister had to put her hand on the mouth of the baby. It was a 2 month old baby. And always be afraid that either she might stifle her inadvertently or that the baby would cry. And here these men were battering on the door and you know, with the jack boots you can subject a door to some treatment and it went on, it seemed to me, for an eternity. And what went through my mind was the scene of in Crime and Punishment. was a criminal. Yal. But nonetheless, it was a scene of the most...and they were standing there in, I believe in the kitchen, after having committed the deed, and they hear some...some steps going up and then the door rattling and he is afraid that the lock might...might open up because...uh...this...uh...was just some...some kind of...uh... what do you call it in English? It's...uh...we call it a..It wasn't...it wasn't locked with a key, but it was locked with some...some kind of mechanical device.

Q: Yal. I know what you mean.

A: Uh...And that scene flashed through my mind because I was always living half in the book and half outside. And then we...and we could hear everything that was going on outside and then...uh...one man said to the other...apparently, he was the leader of the group. He said to the other, "or whatever the name was, Go down and fetch a crow bar." And this fellow went down. And, of course, our...way back...uh...was closed. We couldn't open. They would have thrown us out the window. At that moment, the door from a neighboring apartment opened and there was a woman... I had never spoken to her. Mother had never spoken to her. I don't know whether my daughter knew her. She was a Gentile obviously. And she said, "You know, I saw them go out about a hour ago. You're wasting your time"...or words to that effect. You could hear everything in that apartment. You could hear things through the door. And they went away. And in the afternoon, they came back. And, of course, I had said, "Look. They come back in the afternoon. We open immediately. I don't want to go through this again." Yal. So when they came, we opened straight away. But I, you know, my temper was...was sort of moving up, you know, again and I decided that I was going to sit at...uh... the coffee table in the saloon...uh...drinking a cup of coffee or tea or whatever was there as if...uh... I couldn't care a damn about what was going on, just to show my disdain, you understand. I thought that this would make a significant impression. I was really, you know, half serious, half child...uh. And that's what I did. And they came in and my sister had...uh...a side porch, you know with sliding glass doors and she displayed all kinds of...uh...lots of precious things...porcelain, crystal...uh...the things that you got for our wedding...uh...heirlooms, stuff of that sort. And, of course, they were after it. And one of the Nazis, a kind of clumsy fellow, who had never handled doors like this tried to open and he sort of fumbled around and he

couldn't figure out how this...this door opened. Yal. Because the only door probably that he...he got to know was the door on hinges. And I could see him sort of...I could almost read his mind...and holding his foot, his leg up in order to kick the door in, and I jumped up. Yal. And confronted him as much as I could confront him. I mean my head was probably the height of his breast bone. And I said you know...and I again remember the words verbatim...there are two ways of opening this door. I said, "One is you lift your leg and kick it in like that, and I just imitated what he was doing, and the other one is like this and I put out one little finger and I just made the door open. And don't you think that's a better way. And I looked him in the face and he looked back and no words were exchanged...no further word was exchanged between us. And, of course, they packed all the stuff up and took it away and walked out. And that was another visit. It was the most terrible because of what happened in the morning and that could have easily ended up, as I say, with our flying out of the window. Uh...If you don't mind, a few things occur to me. I want to go back to them. First of all (clearing throat), there was first of all two...two personal encounters and...uh...that I think of. Uh...I had...I told you before that I had...I had learned in some way that in certain critical situations I could face up to things and somehow assert control. It was almost a kind of...uh...psychological insight...some...some measure of certainty that I had at the time. Some...some voice that came to me from outside myself. And I remember that one of the times it happened was even before the Nazis came in. Uh...It was winter time and I was dressed...uh...in a very nice winter coat. It was a new coat. with a herringbone and a velvet collar. And here was a much bigger boat but ragged, obviously from very poor circumstances who came up and our steps met at the corner and I knew that he wasn't going to shake my hands. I realized that he was gonna beat me up. And I always had empathy for the underdog. I had a very, very strong empathy. I had really always a strong heart for poor people, for animals, for all things of that sort, and I felt ashamed actually of my...of our circumstances. Even so, God knows,...uh...I was luxuriating my...the presence of the coat with normally books, you know, or games of skills. They never bought me a model set because I might break my leg or something, which I probably would have (chuckle) if they bought me one. But I always had that...that feeling that...uh...I felt uncomfortable of having more than somebody else and so I didn't have to fake anything. I...I really had an understanding for him and a feeling for him. And it may have been this fact that sort of edged away fear because it took the place of fear. It was...it was the feeling that possessed me. And I said to him...uh..."You know, I want...uh...there's something I want to tell you." And I said it in a way that...uh...somehow or other seemed to engage him, seemed to engage his interest. I was listening and I told him about the fact that I wanted to go to Palestine and that many of us, even those of us who come from so-called...uh...homes that were more affluent really wanted to choose this life for ourselves and that I understand where he came from and understand his circumstances that...that many of...of friends of mine, people I know have chosen a life of work on the land, hard work. Yal. And there wasn't really as much difference between us as might appear. And that I wasn't responsible for the fact that...that he was poor and that he was in difficult circumstances and we almost became friendly and they told...he told me about the fact that his father was beating him up and so on and so forth and, you know, his father was a drunkard. But I will never forget the words that he said to me at the end and the words were...and this was a poor, maybe semi-literate, ragged youth, maybe a year before the Nazis came...I would say

about... He says, "You know, Hitler is going to come here and then I am sorry...I am going to be sorry for all of you." And these are words that I have forgotten easily. That was one encounter. The other one was already under the...under the Nazis. I was...uh...I think walking home at the time and...it was and it was the place where our shul was, the little synagogue. Uh...There were sitting in the front pew. My father incidentally was the vice-president of the other group, which is...which was a Zionist philanthropic organization. And my father was very active in public affairs and as a philanthropist, something that once saved him from the Nazis because I remember in a procession...procession that came by, and I was sort of listening at the window, and somebody was shouting, "Let's take old Schmeltzer," and...uh...somebody else said, "Oh, leave him. At least he helps his own kind." So strange things happened...uh...even in those times. There was this shul in the and I was not far away. As a matter of fact, midway up that street, in the where our shul was. Our shul was at the corner of the where we lived in this. Midway up there was a restaurant at that time. And as I was walking...probably...I don't remember exactly whether I was walking home or walking away from...at any rate I suddenly was surrounded by something like a dozen boys. It was like a ring around me. And there were closing in on me. And it was clear that they were going to beat me up. All of them! Together! And again that particular sense came over me that allowed me to detach myself from my personal circumstance and take on another voice. It was almost as if I was reading a book. And imagination has its place at times. And I said to them...I...I raised my hand because I realized you know, I have to do something that attracts attention...I raised my hand at the time and said, "Look. Before you beat me up, I have something interesting to tell you. And, of course, you know, rich boy...I mean...everybody is curious...I mean no matter what. I said, You know, what's happening here. There's a dozen of you Gentiles, Christians who want to beat up one of me, one Jew. Now what are you doing there. You're really declaring that one Jew is as good as 12 of you." And that...that sort of...that sort of made them look up. Yal. And I said, "I am going to tell the Nazi party about it and, you see, they'll be very angry at you." (Laughter) God knows where this came from. Yal. It's really absolutely absurd. It's ridiculous, but it somehow engaged their attention and they started to discuss this matter amongst each other. (Laughter) Because they were as little...uh...learning. They had just...they picked up anti-Semitism probably from early childhood because it was endemic in Austria. And as they were discussing things, a little gap opened. They...you know, at one point they drew apart. It was just enough for me to flee through and I ran. At that time the person who held the world's record in long distance running was a fellow called ...I think I outran him. I ran so fast up, away from our home, up the to which was a parallel street, a very, very magnificent. Well, it's a very lively vital street that led up to the ticket of the I over took a train and remember I told you they had these open platforms and I jumped up and there weren't sufficiently close to me. I mean they couldn't overtake me and they couldn't get on the train and so I got away that particular time. Now I had mentioned something about shuls. I want to go back to this because something else comes up in my mind. A year before I had Bar Mitzvah and I remember standing in front of the mirror in our L-shaped hall, the one that I described to you before. My mother plunked some kind of blue hat on me which almost blotted my face out. I had this little round face you know, and I was frightened out of my wits, and I was led to...uh...the shul almost like a calf to slaughter and I had to give this long you know which was half in Hebrew and half in

German and these...these were long affairs and you had to know them by heart. It took at least half an hour or later. Yal. You studied it for it months. And I remember (clearing throat) I stood there and I looked at the people and the shul was full of people and my heart sank. This was definitely not a moment of control. And my voice said bye bye, just took leave of me and when I opened my voice...my mouth, almost no voice came out. Yal. And my teacher, Hebrew teacher...his name was Daft, D A F T...was a young, modern man actually. He sat behind me and he leaned forward at this point and he said to me, "You know, if Mussolini can do it, you can do it." I mean, again, outrageous statement, but this man understood something in me because I got so enraged at the fact that this is doing something and I can't doing it....Yal...that I completely forgot myself and I delivered a splendid oratory and everybody was weeping and the last one who wasn't weeping was my sister and I considered this as a personal affront. And then I sort of focused my look. I beamed it at her like a lazer beam and I said one or two sentences as I glazed and then she started weeping. I was very happy. And then our...our family doctor, Frye, he was crying too. Everybody was crying (laughter) in that synagogue. Now, I...I mention this because Daft, who was my teacher, under the Nazi unfortunately something very tragic befell of him...befell him. One day his wife came to my mother and she was literally wringing her hands and said she doesn't know what to do because her husband had simply become mad. He picked up a knife. He said that she wanted to poison him. She was afraid of her life. She was afraid to go to the authorities. And...here you had a world of madness inside in response to madness outside...uh... It was literally a world where all the controls, all the dams broke. Uh...And I don't really know what happened. But I do know that I once visited his place. That was in the good times before my Bar Mitzvah and I was so impressed by the stacks of books he had and there was and I read the title of every one....

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2

service people of medical who were guarding the prisoners inside. And they were outside. And inside were hundreds of German prisoners of war. And these were giants. They were sailors. They were apparently caught...uh...you know either on the ships or whatever. You can imagine. Here was a group of 30, 40 young Jewish school children, all from whatever happened in Europe and...uh...I think...I don't want to be adamant about it. I seemed to remember there was swastika flags inside. Yal. But I am not going to sign that underwriting. Uh...Certainly, there was...uh...a planned Nazi atmosphere also. Yal. There were no demonstrations against us. It was just enough to see these fellows around and we in the midst. There were only 30, 40 of us and we were children..very young boys of 16. None was older than 16. There were only a few Polish among them. Then what happened was... we were about 2 or 3 months in that camp. What happened was that some of us were Orthodox. Now I wasn't Orthodox myself, but some of us were Orthodox, and they were strictly kosher, and they would not eat a non-kosher food. And there was no provision for non-kosher food, and we all declared solidarity with those who were Orthodox. So they wouldn't eat non-kosher food. We didn't eat non-kosher food. The result of it we were all starving and we were literally starving because...uh...all you could eat was cheese...uh...when...when it was served. And I remember the mostly seemed to serve meat which we couldn't eat. Yal. And I ate plenty of toast with jam

because I was working in the kitchen. I was very partial to toast and jam, must have eaten so much I couldn't stand it anymore. But we were literally starving and in the end became so...uh...drained of strength...uh...that sometimes...sometimes we were lying out there on the grass and we couldn't even...hardly could get up. We were really that much weakened. I remember the Polish lad that was...I told you about this man, this, who become a friend of mine, was giving us daily lectures and he had extensive knowledge in various areas. And I remember in biology in particular, biology and literature and history and politics. These were his main subjects...and in psychology. And this man was so well read that through the three months he could give us daily lectures of 2 or 3 hours every day...Yal...and really have us riveted. And...and through this camp, there passed different groups. Someones, there was a group of Jewish adults and of a group of Italian adults. I remember the Italian were so different from the Germans. They transformed the...the camp into a soccer stadium. Yal. You know, I...I later make friends with Italians. I love these people. I mean they are just so human. Prison or no prison, they were kicking that ball around. Yal. So different from the very...and I am not saying this against the German as such, but they were very solemn and stodgy. Yal. There was no note of joy. Nothing...nothing to remember. One thing was they all...a lot of them carved things. They were wonderful at carving things. They made little sailing boats that you could push through the neck of a bottle you know. And I watched that and they carved pipes with all kinds of...uh...legendary monsters with shaped faces on them. One day, one of the Nazis there...uh...was named Putsy Humstanker. Now I am saying this from just hearing about it. But Putsy Humstanker, I was told was a friend of Hitler's. How he had gotten himself...uh...captured or what, I don't know. And...and I was told that he was...he was a fellow who played piano, entertained with Hitler's piano and so on. Putsy Humstanker came to us one afternoon drunk and he said, "Look. The Germans are plotting to get rid of you. And I am your friend." Yal. Such friends I can do without, but...we weren't. So, we couldn't look to the British where we could say. They weren't...I mean they were outside. Uh...We armed ourselves with clubs, this, that and the other and sit guards at night, but you know in a sense maybe because we were young and maybe because...well, we were the way we were...We would betroy slogans on our hearts and...and then and Hebrew...uh...slogans...and so on. We did not allow the fact that we were really just a tiny group in this German sea. To the tourist to anyway. But nonetheless, there were difficult times and don't forget this was just about the time that France fell in May. I remember...I remember one day that we lying outside. It was also a day of marvelous summer, blue skies, so radiant. And not far away from us, there was a...a military...uh...Yal... a military...uh...airport and I saw some riding from there and it was so close by that they skimmed over us. I was lying there with some others and we were looking up in the sky and there was these planes. There were so close you could see the heads of the pilots. And we could see the scarves flying up and the German bombers were up there...up deep in the sky up above. We could hear them them droning. And those marvelous youngsters were flying straight at them. Yal. It's...You know, war is a terrible thing, but I have to admit it's one of the most beautiful sights that I have seen. And to see those silver planes. I mean if you detach yourself from the horror and to see afterwards the denotations blossoming like great yellow, red flowers and then parachuting and then when the planes burst, there was a deeper color and then, the parachutes coming down like thistles. Yal. That was an unforgettable sight. I...I felt very, very proud of those fighters that went up,

and I am not a military person. But, in any case, as I said to go back or to go forward, France fell and the Germans became very cocky, very arrogant. And some of them threw their finger across the throat when they passed us. Yal. And I don't know what our feelings were at the time, frankly. I think so many things had happened to us in the beginning that suddenly, I didn't...I didn't function too much emotionally. Yal. Uh...And suddenly, one day they decided to evacuate us to send us either to Canada or Australia. I am not sure. And we were...uh...meant to go on a certain ship. I believe the name was Andora Star. Somehow that name stuck in my mind. I always associated it with that particular situation. And all the Germans...uh... in our camp were sent on the Andora Star and there were some Jewish people, including a brother of my brother-in-law, from other camps. He was interned too, of course, who was in the Andora Star. Now we were taken off maybe a day or two before embarkation because...uh...Jewish...the Jewish Federation it. All kinds of people were working frantically behind the scenes with the home office, with the war office, this that and the other thing. Look...what...this...our Jewish with the... They are boys. What you want to send them to Canada or Australia for with Germans. They took us off the last moment. You know what happened to the Andora Star. It was torpedoed. My brother-in-law's brother was killed among the others and later on when I was in again in another place called... I met one of the rare Jewish survivors of that ship incidentally so I...so I...I know the story all around. And what he told me was that when the ship was torpedoed, the Jews were down in the steerage. I mean they were down, and the Germans and the British were up and they were close to...and they...they took possession of all the lifeboats and the Jews were not allowed into the life boats and he was swimming along and he said he must have been in the water a hour or so. You can't measure time in that condition. And he was almost losing his last ounce of strength, just couldn't go on and there was this life boat near him and he managed to swim up to it and stretch out his hand and get hold of it. And I have to say this ironic episode that happened was that a British person...a British, one of the mates of the ship, said, "Sorry, old boy. You know, full up. This is not the last boat." And the Germans said, "Oh, let the poor bastard on." And they pulled him up and so he was saved. Yal. And I think he must have been one of the very, very, very rare Jewish survivors from the Andora Star. And there was another occasion when death was just moving past me as if he didn't know me...or didn't know me or didn't really want to know me...uh...and...and...and many...many other people have stories of this kind. And those of us who escaped...uh... many of us had many escapes before you could finally get away. That takes us up to...uh...beyond...beyond the Andora Star and the return to...to internment to Lensfield. No...We didn't return. They didn't take us out, of course. We remained in Lensfield, but shortly afterwards...uh...we were finally released and I remember the commandant of the camp wept. Uh..There were a number of sterling British figures I have to say. Uh...As I told...as I told you, Britain is one of the countries I have warm affection. It's not that everybody was a saint, but you make an overall appraisal of a nation, of a civilization and in England I loved them and my...my brother in Palestine did not. He saw...he saw the British from another...another angle, but I have to say that I experienced them in their own country and there are some just lovely, marvelous...uh...persons there and the general tone is...is...is just lot more civilized than the one I encountered generally in Austria. I have to say that. Very different. Now...uh...uh...there was another officer there in the internment camp. We called him Auntie. We called him Auntie because he was

such a passionately devoted soul. He was such a lovely man. Out of his own pockets, he would buy us things...socks and undergarments and stuff. He was another one who cried when we left. Yal. He was a marvelous person. Now...Don't...don't think that every British was like this, but you don't need to meet that many persons and they do leave...uh...a strong...uh...impression behind them. Yal. They sort of light the way. It's almost as if fate...uh...has decided well, you know, you've gone through this, that and the other. We'll send you a little light. Yal. So afterwards, when I got out of the internment...uh...there was an episode and here I am not absolutely certain about the...uh... timing of things or the sequence of events, but I know that my sister was evacuated to Spalding and I managed to be there. I managed to be for a few months there, working the land, because I was then at the time on the war essential work order. Uh...just to be close to her and I managed to survive some bombing attacks that practically pulled the house down over us because the Germans mistook Spalding for which was a nearby railroad station, you know. And they bombed...they released all the bombs on Spalding. Uh...Amongst other things...uh...they destroyed the zoo and killed a lot of animals there. Uh...After that I...I was in...uh...I was in London for some time and I can't date that. I know that I worked in a factory. I know that I...uh...I thought up ways of speeding up production by a multiple of 2 or 3 by...because there were more machines there than...than people. And I worked out a mathematical system whereby you could keep 3 or 4 machines in operation, you know, only attended by 1 person. And you could do it faultlessly. It wasn't even difficult. However, I was watched by the supervisor. You know it is very strange, you know. And incidentally, I had a similar encounter because not everybody in Britain was giving their best for the war effort obviously, but many did and many were very heroic. So again, humanity and with all its...but...uh...there was another occasion in Spalding. In Spalding...uh...I worked for a period of time in the sugar refinery near the laboratory and...uh...I had...uh...another encounter of a similar nature where I wanted to be a little more productive than a certain person, a certain woman and...uh... She then...She became so angry with me because she...because I was in the laboratory...I was supposed to be testing the molasses in the various stages of preparation as to be come to refinement. And she spread the story about me that I was a German spy. But unfortunately...fortunately, rather, she was known as a liar. Nobody paid any credence to her. Uh...I was also in Cambridge. So that was a very intense time. I was also in Cambridge at some time...uh...but this was after I had gotten to... I returned to... It was in...That was a place around... You know... the great...uh...I am making and liquor making and so on. And we...we were living there in really terrible conditions. The difference between and was difference between night and day...day and night rather because was an unsanitary camp. It had been condemned by the British. It had no facilities, no toilet facilities even and so on and so forth. And we worked like slaves on the land. I was there for about half a year. Uh...I eventually left and I went to Cambridge. I was followed by some of the...uh...at that time, a friend of mine, my alter ego almost and he went to Cambridge and...uh...I had the childish idea that I only needed to go to Cambridge and all universities would open their door and say, "Herr Schmeltzer, you know, now you are here. Why didn't you come earlier? You see, we have just the place for you." Well, I ended up as a gardener in College. (Laughter) And I have to tell you it's...it's a really amusing little tale because at that time I was preparing...I was on one of my studies. You see, in...in Vienna because my parents' forced me to study. I didn't want

to do it. But once I had left and I wasn't under constraint, I felt that what I most passionately wanted in life was to study. Yal. I always read intensively and extensively, you understand. Now I wanted to study. So I thought going to Cambridge somehow or other was all you needed to do and say here I am and that's it. Well, as I say, I became a gardener and I...I am ashamed to say I used part of my time actually for study purposes. What I did was that I...I organized the study plan to two areas. Uh...the...uh...liberal art things if you like, languages and literature and that kind of stuff and grammar, I had this little notebook that I could hold in the palm of my hand. Mathematics and other things...mathematics I would rake out and smooth out a plot of land, you know, and I would...I would draw geometric figures and so on on the land and work them out. And then I would enter them in a little notebook. But it turned out that the which were an administrative group of they were looking behind the window sills you know in the stately buildings and they were observing this strange person who was drawing figures in the soil, you understand. And they couldn't figure out what it was I was actually doing, but it seemed to occupy me for an enormously length of periods of time and I seemed to be absolutely obsessed with it. So I was eventually called there and the words that...that I...that they said to me were, you know, we have observed you over a period of time and...uh...frankly, most of the time you seemed to be scratching things in the ground or looking at the palm of your hand. We couldn't figure out what it is you are doing, but you didn't do enough work so I am afraid we have to fire you. So I drew myself up to...and I am not very enormous length at the time...I said, "I am really ashamed of you because this is supposed to be an intellectual...uh... institution and...uh...I can tell you that I am probably more intelligent than any of the students you have, but they have lots more money than I have and if you were really an institution of learning and not of money, you would say, "Look. We really want you here as a student, but obviously you don't know anything about things of that sort. Good Day." And I walked out. And afterwards I was really kind of...I was almost trembling because I wasn't...I wasn't cock sure at all. Yal. I think it was...it was part of my general nature. Anger that was kind of spilling out, you know. In retrospect...uh...there was very little...they... they... they...that they could do about it. I guess they were only acting according to their best understanding of the way the world worked. And I was little...a bit outside the scheme of things. So after Cambridge I thought...I almost...almost was 18. I wanted to volunteer to be a fighter pilot. Maybe this period of the planes flying over...also the fact...the fact that I...I just wanted to...to...I wanted revenge.

Q: May I...We have 10 minutes left on this tape, so what I am going to suggest we do is if you can encapsulate what happened to you and tell us what happened because I want to bring you...uh...to where we had discussed earlier. I want to bring you to after the war in Canada.

A: Alright. Yal.

Q: If you could just tell me what happened.

A: Yal. I can...I can Yal. I can do that. Uh... Because it doesn't take too long time. The fact of the matter is that I...volunteered as a fighter pilot and...uh...I went through medical

examination. There were examinations and they seemed to work out well, but I did get a letter eventually...sorry they couldn't take me. They didn't take any at the time. And I wasn't called an...I was an Austrian Jew. Austria was an enemy. So in England I was an Austrian. I was an enemy. In Austria I was a Jew. I fell between the cracks. Uh...At that time I could have volunteered for the corps, but I wasn't going to be in a service corps. I want to be in a fighting unit. I thought...again, here my childish naiveté came through...that if I...that the moment they allowed us to...to...volunteer to join a...a combat unit...uh...I would be allowed to join my brother. It was again a strong urge that I had to join...and I always worshiped...I really worshipped my brother even so he sometimes beat me up. I have to say that. But he was a great person. He was really one of the heroes in my life. And there are not many of them. maybe, in retrospect, was the great hero, but Leo of my family was not among them. And I had the feeling...somebody told me, one of the person recruitment said to me, "Yes, you...you volunteer and we'll send you wherever you want to go." I believed it. Of course (laugh), you see, the moment we were allowed to volunteer for the combat unit...I volunteered and I was...uh...accepted. That...it took some time because I only joined in the early 43 I believe it. It wasn't 43 for sure. I don't have the date on me exactly.

Q: Where were you sent? Where were you sent?

A: Well, first of all we went through 16...16 weeks of training. You know there was 6 weeks and then 10 weeks.

Q: We don't have the time. After training, where were you sent after training.

A: I was...I was sent to a mountain unit, the... I think it was the 52nd Division and I am quoting from my memory and...uh...this was a division that was essentially stationed in the northern mountains of Scotland where the snow and ice conditions are at least where we went into training, not where the general camp was. It approximated the conditions in the Arctic Circle. Uh...And I contracted a very severe condition. We...we slept in snow and sometimes it was even worse when we went below the snow line. And we slept literally in icy water. And...and we went out for training sometimes for 2 weeks at a stretch, 10 days to 2 weeks at a stretch. I might sleep about, at most, an hour a night til you woke up in the icy water. You only slept out of exhaustion. I contracted a fairly serious arthritic condition, you know, with pain the swollen limbs and so on. And eventually...uh...this...uh... went on for about 2 years. Essentially I understood that we are stationed there to...uh...in case there was a German attack from Norway...from Northern Europe, you know, to protect his flank. Eventually this unit was sent off...uh...2 or 3 weeks before Dunkirk...not Dunkirk... That happened before, of course... Before the...uh...invasion of Europe and...uh...again, I was taken off the unit about a couple of days before the unit in training and I want to tell you what happened.

Q: If we have time. That's the problem. You were just taken off?

A: I was...I was...I was taken off...I was actually commanded...uh...not to go and...uh...it's unfortunate if you don't have time because it's only three sentences.

Q: Okay. Go ahead.

A: Yal. It was really through the intervention of an officer who...uh...was a poet or some literary person who had gone on walks with me. We talked about literature and so on and he said to me, "Look. You are a sick person. You have this arthritic conditions. You could go and should go and have yourself examined by doctors because you're not in condition to go." And I said, "Under no circumstances I am going to do this. I volunteered and I will never do it." And this man had an order sent to me by the medical board which commanded me to appear before them. I appeared before them and to my utter amazement, I was downgraded from A to C-2. It was really a strange story. Uh...I was taken off a day or two before the...the unit went in training. I was broken up over that. I was really...I...I had extremely mixed emotions over this whole thing...uh...because I...I thought maybe I could have gone, but there was no way I could have gone. H

Q: You stayed in Britain... We have about 2 minutes. Uh...You stayed in Britain until the end of the war.

A: Oh, sure. I stay...I stayed in Britain until the war. I was demobilized in 1947. And as a matter of fact, I...you know when you're demobilized you're given...uh...certain things...uh...few dozen belongings, what not...underwear. The most magnificent thing was the raincoat. And the first... This was a really marvelous raincoat, and the first thing that I did was to go to Hyde park and again it was beautiful summer. At least this was a summery day. And so I didn't need to put the raincoat on, you know. I had it over my arm. And there in Hyde Park, if you have ever been there, there's a lake there, a boating lake. And I put my rain...rain coat simply on...on the bench and then walked away from it and walked to the lake to look at the boats and then I remembered I had a raincoat. So I returned to the bench and I didn't have a raincoat anymore. Uh...It was the shortest person ever was and there was a fellow near there who said, Oh you...you are the owner of the raincoat. Well, I have got to tell you, there was a prostitute here and she saw the raincoat and just picked it up and walked away with it. So...uh...I have to say, here was...here was...uh...the legacy to the government of the British Army, you know. But, at least, at least, it was good for one person. Let us. I just want to assume that she was a needy person and she really needed that raincoat. (Laughter)

Q: You met your family after the war?

A: I... Yal. After...after the war essentially I...I managed...I went into the Polytechnic... Polytechnic for a year because it was too late to go to a college. In...in Britain the University went to external and internal. And then I passed some examination. I have to say, with a certain touch of modesty I hope, that I did extremely well.

Q: We are about to run out of tape. Just tell me very briefly. You got your degree?

A: Yes. I got in of Economics. I got my degree in political science in economics and...uh...I worked just for a few months...uh...in a bank, but I had decided already to go to Israel and...uh...uh...that is what I did. Now the whole...the whole thing about

Q: We have 30 seconds.

A: Well, about in 1950... You can't do this in 30 seconds. It's impossible.

Q: No. No. Tell me. Just tell me where your parents were and how you met.

A: My parents...my parents were in...uh...uh...in New York. In Coney Islands, as a matter of fact where they had a little store with my brother-in-law. My father...uh...they were talking about...they were talking about obviously...If you're talking about the time of 1950-51, when I was at the University, I had...uh...gone across to see them, and here was the story of how I got into the United States via Canada. So...uh...

Q: Okay.

A: You said there's no time for that.

Q: Okay. No. Let's hold it. Cut it. That's it. Thank you very much. I thank you.

Conclusion of Interview.