United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Joe Friedman
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PREFACE

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JOE FRIEDMAN
October 3, 1996

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Friedman.

A: Good afternoon.

Q: I'd like to start by having you tell us just basic information about when and where you were born and take us rather quickly, if you would, to where you found yourself in the spring of 1945.

A: Well, that covers quite a bit of territory. I was born in St. Joseph, Missouri, on March the tenth in 1920 and I was the fourth of five children and eventually my father and mother took in a cousin who was orphaned. So there were three boys and three girls in the family. I went to school locally in St. Joseph, Missouri, and of course grew up during the Depression. That covered quite a long era. We all worked. It was the usual paper route, selling magazines, eventually working in the drugstore and working my way through school as much as I could. Fortunately, we had a junior college in St. Joseph and I was able to go there for my first two years and get an Associate Arts degree. But after that, I ran out of money, so I was in search of jobs that would pay more. With that in mind, I went out to Colorado, where I had an older brother and his family, and I worked in an amusement park in Colorado – Lakeside Amusement Park. It was a very good job for the summer because a lot of college kids worked there as they did in ranches, dude ranches, in Colorado. So it was very pleasant work but by the end of the summer I still didn't have enough money to go back to school. So I went back home – I was homesick and my folks wanted me to come back. I went back around Thanksgiving of 1939. And made enough money to enter my first year of college—of podiatry school. I'm almost afraid to go down that alley because it was my first profession. I went there because Dad wanted me to be a doctor. I didn't want to be a doctor but this was the next best thing. In fact, it was difficult at that time, even to get into medical school. There were Jewish quotas. But I did go to Chicago and I talked to the registrar and when I came home during the summer of '39, to make a decision as to what I wanted to do, I decided to go to podiatry school. Well, that was in the fall of '41, and we know what happened on December the seventh. During the Christmas holidays, although they asked us to remain in school as much as we could, everybody was gung ho. We wanted to get into the army and fight the Japanese because of this atrocity that they had inflicted upon us at Pearl Harbor. Well, I tried to get into the Navy but, at that time, they were very strict and I couldn't get in on account of my eyes, plus the fact that they did encourage us to stay in school – at least to finish that year, which I did. I went back to school, but during the week of finals, I got the orders to come report to my selective draft board and fill a quota and I did. I came home and went into the army. I went into basic training to _____, Texas, with the 95th Infantry Division. I had had ROTC in high school at that time. ROTC was very good because we were able to wear uniforms and it would save on our clothing. Although they tell you never to volunteer for anything in the Army, when they asked if anyone had had any close order drill, my hand went up and I was immediately put in charge of a platoon. At the

end of the first month, fortunately, I made PFC. The second month, I made buck sergeant, I'm sorry, corporal, then buck sergeant, that's three stripes, then staff sergeant. Then I was ready to go to OCS. I wanted to get out of there as soon as I could. I had a first sergeant, was regular army, very anti-semitic, and when I put in my papers for OCS, he didn't send them into headquarters, so I didn't get to go.

Q: Did you ever talk to him about that?

A: Yes, yes, and the reason he didn't put the papers in, although he'd called me, in all the promotions that I got, I found out that he kept saying, "I don't want a kike (ph) on my staff". The other officers would override him and I was promoted from time to time, through the ranks. The reason he didn't send me to OCS was he was going out to the 97th Infantry Division and he wanted me to go along with him, which was quite a strange thing, until you think of the fact that I did all his work. And also, one of the officers in my company said that I was going through too fast and that OCS is very difficult. They were flunking out at least half of them and it would do me good to have a little more training, a little more of a sense of army, and what's expected of me, and the extra six months or so that I'd have to spend would be to my advantage. And it was true. I did go to OCS and it was very difficult. I think around 520 of us matriculated and there were maybe 200, 280 or 85 that finally graduated and got their bars. Then we were sent to different camps. I finally ended up at a headquarters company at Camp Blanding, Florida, doing various jobs. And then went overseas.

Q: When did you go overseas?

A: Went overseas during the winter of '42-'43. We were stationed in Preston, Lancashire, and we crossed the channel on a Polish ship called the Sobiesky (ph) and when we got midway through the channel, there was a lot of submarine and anti-aircraft activity by the Germans, so we had to back to Southampton. I later read, after the war, that the ship that left Southampton the same time we did was torpedoed.

Q: When was that?

A: It was. . . the dates are going to be a little difficult for me.

Q: The general time of year?

A: Oh, it was during Christmas, it was during Christmas. It was the same night that Glenn Miller disappeared over the channel. Which later came into a lot of things that I did after the war, or a lot of things that I thought about as being – if something took off, took of paramount importance to me, I would think of the time that I crossed the channel, and how lucky that I was. When they said that, "you get on this ship, or you get on this ship, how many are in your complement", I said, "Six officers and 96 men". "Okay, you get on this one, you get on that one." We were lucky enough to get on the Sobiesky (ph) that turned back. The other one was torpedoed, with a loss of about 90% of the personnel. I didn't know

this until after the war ended, when they were printing these statistics. At any rate, we landed. We had to go over the side of the ship with a rope ladder and landed in landing craft and went into LeHarve(ph). Now this was after the invasion, and although we weren't being shot at, it was still very difficult and very cold wading through the water until we get onto dry land. Once, and I'm going very fast because there's quite a bit to cover, once we got into France, we started moving very rapidly. In fact, I know there were a lot of articles written about Patton streaking across France and into Germany and across the Rhine, across the Raymoggan (ph) bridge head, which we crossed, and into Tree Air (ph). Then we went to, we were in the battle of Baston, we were in Belgium, Luxembourg, and then into Germany.

Q: You came into about the tail end of the winter, fighting.

A: From the beginning of winter, of '44, '45.

Q: And the Battle of the Bulge was going on.

A: In winter of '45.

Q: Right.

A: '44, '45.

Q: And then you were at Baston in February?

A: Around that time. I once read where someone was telling an account of, it might not have been his war stories, it was something and what stuck in my mind was, he said "My memory has a lot of holes in it." So I'm going to paraphrase what he said, or copy what he said, and tell you that my memory, after 50 years of not going back to all this, until I was given an opportunity to give this oral history, my memory is going to have a lot of holes in it. So there will be a time period that will have quite a spread. Now with the Third Army, _____, I hope -- it would have been nice if it all happened that quickly to bring me to this point, but I know that this is the major thrust of the interview.

Q: We're in April.

A: We're in April. Our troops uncovered the concentration camp at Ordruff (ph). Now Ordruff (ph) was one of the satellite camps at Bookenblow (ph) near Gotha (ph) and you can't get the full measure or the full thrust of what happens to you when you walk into a place like this and see bodies, emaciated bodies, stacked one on top of the other.

Q: Back up a little bit for me. When you got the orders to go in and you were, how did you approach, what did the area look like, what time of day was it, can you remember those things?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have that whole memory?

A: Yes. Vividly, vividly, it was daylight. Those who were left, there were still bodies burning in the ovens, and we could still smell it. In fact, after the war was over when my mother would fix a chicken and try to burn off the little feathers that were left, I had to get out of the house. I couldn't smell that odor, that odor that gets into your nostrils, and never leaves. I've never bought a pair of striped pajamas in my life, because that's what they were wearing – these striped pajamas, and I know what happened. I kept salivating. You know there's, before you vomit, something happens to the salivary glands and it's kind of a, well if you've ever done it, if you've ever had it, you know that it just, before you give it all up, there's, you know that you're going to throw up. And that's rather indelicate, but this is what happens. Some of the dead were in very grotesque positions, leaning against a tree with their legs covered, and dead. Just all sorts of, maybe some in fetal positions, lying in the camp. Those who were still alive, in the barracks, if you could call it a barracks, they were sort of lean-tos with straw, were so weak that if the one next to him was dead, he didn't have the strength to push him off so that he could at least have maybe the small luxury of being able to turn around on this pallet that had been his bed for many years. We did whatever we could – we did in the way of food, whatever we could give them, whatever help we could give them, but we were still moving on. I was still with the combat troop. Actually, I had a litter bearer platoon, and my men were the ones who saw the first casualties, the first line of casualties, and would carry them back to the evac hospitals that were in the rear of the combat line. We did whatever we could to make them comfortable. I heard that, after we left, there was such pandemonium, and I think that this continued until the end of the war, there was never, nothing ever ran smoothly, it seems. As much as we tried, there was always some trouble brewing somewhere and something to be taken care of, that needed immediate attention. But I understand that the Burgermeister (ph) of Ordruff (ph) was murdered by the inmates who were left and his body was dismembered and he was strung up on a tree in the center of town, the civic center. I think this is true.

Q: You didn't see it?

A: I didn't see it.

Q: But you have reason to believe . . .

A: Yes.

Q: Could you see, when you first came in, some of the people who were still alive were able to walk around and talk with you?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: And did you talk with people?

A: Briefly, briefly. 'Cause we'd both cry. There wasn't too much, we'd start a conversation and they would love us and kiss us and we would hug them and whatever we had we would give them. Then there was the language barrier. Some spoke Russian, some spoke Polish, some Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Estonians, Latvian. They came from the Balkan countries as well, Romania, Hungary. There was a whole cacophony of voices and languages but we knew one thing. They all had one thing in common – that they were free. And I think, I think, wanted to get revenge. I probably would have behaved in the same way, to avenge six years, some of them, of torture, of having their families taken away from them. And murdered in such a manner, in such a diabolical manner, that we've all learned about since then. I didn't know all this at that time. I was aware . . .

Q: What did you know then? Did you why these people were in this camp? Did you know who they were?

A: Yes.

Q: Right away?

A: Well, I knew, I knew, I knew that they were slave laborers. I knew that the majority of them were Jews.

Q: Do you know how you knew that?

A: Well, in my fractured Yiddish, and they told me, and I was able to understand a little bit of German. But I just sensed that most of them were, because by then, what had been written in the Stars and Stripes, which was the army newspaper in Germany, or in Europe, we started hearing about these atrocities. But I didn't have any visual evidence of it until I went into the concentration camp. I didn't know how they got there, well, I knew how they got there, they were forced there, but I didn't know until later on when I read how they were put in vans, and put on trains and in boxcars and the methodical way that they were loaded into boxcars with the elderly going in first, pushed in. And then the younger ones and then the younger children and then perhaps, from six on down, they were just picked up by their legs and thrown into the boxcar to land on top of whoever was there and then the boxcar was sealed. If they had to defecate, or urinate, they had to do it in place, in the boxcars. The boxcars came into play, when the vans that they used to gas – you know they would use vans and they would hook a pipe onto the exhaust and put the pipe into the van and by the time they got to Treblinka, or Auschwitz. . . I didn't know all this until much later. When I saw them, well, they were prisoners who hadn't been fed who worked for the German war machine and given, not even, minimal rations. Not even just something to keep them going so they could keep the war machine going, and when they couldn't any longer do that, it was off to the ovens. That was all I knew then.

Q: And you saw mostly men?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see women?

A: No. I don't recall seeing any women then.

Q: And did you spend some time – how big was the camp and what did you see there and what did you piece together from seeing what was at the camp? Did you see what work they were doing? Did you know that?

A: No. No. By then, by the time we got there, the guards had disappeared. They tried to kill as many as they could before they left. A lot of what went on there, we were told as we went on, as we left, and talked to each other about what had been happening there, and were given all sorts of lectures, again, on what had been happening in these camps. I didn't see firsthand where they worked – they weren't working anymore. They sort of spread out over the countryside because, as we progressed, as the army progressed, we would see them.

Q: Walking?

A: Walking – in the striped pajamas, foraging for food, perhaps killing justifiably, we thought.

Q: How long did you stay at Ordruff ph)?

A: Perhaps the larger part of two days. Maybe a day and then left on the second day. But during that time, during that time, something must have started germinating in my mind. I couldn't help but think, of course, there but for the grace of God, go I. I and my antecedents were all from Russia, and I could very well have been one of the inmates of the concentration camp, had I lived in that surrounding, in Russia. The entire village, I later learned, the entire village that my parents and grandparents lived in and aunts and uncles whom I'd never met and cousins – they were entirely wiped out. I later learned that they were all herded into a barn and the barn was set on fire and as they tried to escape, they were machine-gunned. This is in 1939 when the Germans went into Poland. I didn't know that that happened. I just know that we stopped getting letters from my grandparents in 1939. We stopped getting mushrooms. They used to send mother – my grandmother used to send her dried mushrooms and she made delicious mushroom and barley soup. That all stopped of course.

Q: So even before you went in the service, you were aware of the situation for Jewish people in the eastern part . . .

A: Oh, yes.

Q: You knew.

A: I knew. I wanted to go into Germany in 1938. I wanted to take a bicycle tour through Germany and I had talked to a friend who had been there and he said, "Don't go. It's not the place for Jews." So we knew as early, actually, as 1933, the things that were happening, the laws. I didn't pay that much attention to it. I was 13 years old then and the prom was much more important at the time, I guess.

Q: But your parents were concerned and keeping in touch with relatives?

A: Yes.

Q: Were relatives coming over during the thirties?

A: At the end of the thirties. An uncle of mine who survived, or who was able to come over, came over. But we didn't talk about it a lot. And I found that to be true among many first generation Americans, as I was. We were too busy trying to Americanize our parents. Which was a mistake. What we should have been doing was talking to them and getting this beautiful, beautiful background that they had in Europe. I know later on when I'd take Mother for a ride in my car and we went out into the country because I came from a small town, in Missouri, and when the wheat was being harvested and the corn, she'd take it in. She'd smell the wheat and she'd say, "Oh, this is just like home." It was always home. And oddly enough, in the many years that I'd been away from St. Joe and I'd been away to school and in the theater, I've been away altogether, I guess, close to 50 years, whenever I told my wife, whenever I talked about home, she always knew that it meant St. Joseph. It wasn't where we were living at the time. That was a house. And we've lived all over the world. And I guess the army took me all over the world, too. But home, home was always St. Joe, the way Russia was always home to Mother and Dad. And I'm sorry I didn't find out more about that. We got busy with making a living, going to school, and finding the American dream. I'm digressing.

Q: Well, that's okay. Dr. Friedman, when you spent that day and a half, more or less, in Ordruff . . . when you left, what was it that the army was able to do for those people in that short amount of time? Very much?

A: Not a lot. Just enough to keep them alive. It became quite a hot potato after a while, on what to do with these people. I do know, and it might have been, it might be a rumor, but I was told that our Air Force, who did almost pinpoint bombing, eventually, was told not to bomb any of the German military camps. Or any of the IG Farban (ph) buildings. Now the IG Farban was this tremendous cartel that had quite a bit of American money involved in it. The army barracks, we knew that we were going to have to use them for the displaced persons, until they could be repatriated. Now it wasn't that difficult to send the western Europeans

back, who'd been slave laborers, send them back to France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy – although Italy was Allied Germany for a while – they were also working in the war effort and had to be sent home. But we couldn't do anything with this tremendous, tremendous horde of eastern Europeans until we made contact with the Russians and that took 'til the end of the war, and then some. And then problems.

Q: Is there anything else about that day and a half in Ordruff that you remember, that you want to relay? Anything about the town itself, the local people in the town? Did you have any opportunity to interact with the local people?

A: I didn't speak with any of them, but they all stood around as though . . .

Q: They came – was the camp right in town?

A: Yes. On the edge of town, on the edge of town. They acted as though, as they were surprised. But I honestly believe that no matter where the camps were, the people knew. They knew! They smelled it! They smelled the ovens. They smelled the smoke that came out of the ovens. They didn't think they were baking bread there.

Q: And the camp itself was close enough to the town . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . that was no doubt in your mind that people must have smelled and seen.

A: Now, they might not have seen. They might not have been all that aware of how, how really despicable the conditions were – how horrible they were. But I'm sure that they knew what was going on, and didn't care. Jews! Who cared? Hasn't that always been the history?

Q: Did you, at the time, did you feel resentment towards those local people right away? Did that occur to you?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I can't say that I did. I really didn't know enough then, and didn't feel enough. But what I did feel, and I guess that's what later led me, I'm taking all this in, probably, led me to volunteer to stay over after the war ended. Or to get into the work of repatriating the displaced persons. I thought if I could, that whatever I could do, that I would try. In fact, it became a problem to the United States Army before the war ended, because when the camps that were overrun, eventually all of them, knew that they would get better treatment from the United States Army, and, as we progressed, I would see hundreds, literally hundreds, thousands even, Russians walking, displaced persons walking along the street, along the

highway that we were driving on to get from one town to another. They had to be put in camps, otherwise we couldn't feed them, we couldn't clothe them, we couldn't control them.

Q: What happened to you after you left Ordruff in April? Where did you go? Where were you on your way to? What was your destination then?

A: I am, actually my platoon was broken up shortly after that. And, 'cause the war was winding down.

Q: You didn't, you weren't, that function wasn't necessary anymore.

A: No. No. I still had control of them but they were assigned to various combat troops. At times we were with, I forget the names of the various corps, the 12th Corps, the 22nd, the 15th, and from time to time, I would see them and sort of oversee them and see that they got their rations and see that they got their pay and see that they got their mail. But other than that, other than that, I, the work really for me sort of died down a bit, until, until my commanding officer asked me if I thought I would like to get involved in working with the displaced persons. And it wasn't all altruistic, at the time. I thought if I would get involved with that, when the war ended I wouldn't be sent to the Pacific. I'm being honest in saying that that was a factor, also. But the overriding factor, I believe, was something inside me that just wanted to help. You know, I'm beginning to think, and as I hear myself and as we go on with this oral history, I'm going, you're going to hear I a lot, I guess.

Q: (laughter) It's about you.

A: It's – you really can't be modest about these things, can you?

Q: No. It's your story.

A: Pronouns tend to get all knocked all over the place. But I know of no other way I can tell you this. But I really, honestly and truly, wanted to do what I could to help.

Q: Where were you – do you remember hearing that the war was over?

A: I didn't know the war was over until three days after it was over. And it's in my notes here. We were near a camp and there were two German planes that landed near us. A German officer and a blonde came out of one of the planes with a case of champagne. And he's the one who told us, the group that I was with, that the war had ended. I think it was a, I think the war ended, what May the 5th? This was about May the 8th. I wrote home and I told them that I found out that the war had ended. Now other things happened along the way. I received a promotion from second – I was a second lieutenant. And I received a promotion from second lieutenant to first lieutenant. Now I can along on this vein for awhile, if you wish . . .

Q: It's up to you.

A: And then we can go back to the camps.

Q: Okay.

A: But it is germane to what has happened. I received a promotion, first lieutenant, and while I was in Koburg (ph), one of the camps, we were constantly being inspected. There was a group of officers that came in from Third Army. No one wanted the responsibility of running one of these camps, because by this time, there were all sorts of letters written to the paper, and all sorts of surveys being made on how the camps were run and how the Jews were being treated. Governor Lame (ph) and I recall reading in the Stars and Stripes that the Jews were being treated worse by the American army and by Unrah, (ph) and so on in the camps, than they were in the concentration camps. Well, this wasn't true, entirely, but there was some truth in it. They didn't know whether to put the Jews in with all the other DPs, or, because the Jews were stateless, they were homeless then. They couldn't go back home because their homes had already been taken over by the Poles, the Russians, or whatever and they were happy. They were happy. I'm getting ahead of myself.

Q: No. We're in the summer of 1945 when there is still a very chaotic situation in the camp – everybody's thrown together and they haven't been and the ones who could go home haven't yet really gone . . .

A: No. But they were being . . .

Q: A sorting out period of who's going to run these camps, how are they going to be run.

A: Right.

Q: You know, how are we gonna treat them.

A: Yes.

Q: Political agendas in the U.S. There was, President Truman commissioned a report . . .

A: Right.

Q: .. . sent to his representative . . .

A: It was the Harrison . . .

Q: Harrison Report in the summer of '45.

A: Yes.

Q: That's what you're describing, is that summer.

A: Right. Now when you go into the Holocaust Museum, here, the first photo that you see is Ordruff, my camp, the one that I went into. It's a huge blowup on the wall – that's the first thing that you see. And you see Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton looking at these corpses about 11 days after we were there. I think, I think the date on that photograph is about the 16th, something like that, and we went in around April the 4th or 5th. Patton, there's an article written by his aide-de-camp, and it's in one of the books that's in the library here, wrote that Patton became so ill when he saw this that he had to around one of the barracks and vomit. Patton. April, May, June, July, August, September – there's quite an article about Patton and the DPs in the same magazine where Patton went into a camp, which camp was it? It was an all-Jewish camp. And he went in and he said, "The filthy Jews were worse than animals. They defecate on the floors and they urinate in corners and it the Feast of Yom Kippur, the Feast of Yom Kippur, and they made a room into a synagogue and there's a man, a priest they call a rabbi. He had some paper rolled around a pole that's called the Talmud but we know it's the Torah. And the rabbi looked like King Henry the Eighth, with a filthy hat and fur on it. The prayers were in such gibberish that no one understood what they were – what anyone was saying. The stench of all these filthy bodies was such that when I left, I couldn't enjoy my dinner." Tough.

Q: Did you ever have occasion to meet Patton?

A: I saw him. I saw him in his jeep on the Raymoggan (ph) bridge head. I didn't meet him. Little second lieutenants don't meet, well, I shouldn't say that. I'm sure that the private he slapped in the hospital and told him that he was malingering and should get back to the front – he had a nice meeting with Patton.

Q: Did you have . . .

A: See, I didn't know all this until . . .

Q: Did you have these feelings about Patton at the time?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Patton was my god. Look what he did for us. They called it the Red Ball Express. We went through France, through Germany. We went through because we overwhelmed them with personnel and material. Not because of Patton's genius, I don't think. Am I being a traitor? I don't know. You might want to cut this out.

Q: Where did, where are we, in the summer of '45?

A: Yes.

Q: And you have been promoted.

A: To first lieutenant.

Q: To first lieutenant.

A: But I still had my men, but also, I'm sort of working my way into working in the DP camps, with the knowledge of my commanding officer. He had received orders to send whoever he could to a school that would train us for these camps. Now the school was run by army officers who had already been in a camp and knew some of the problems. I think, I think the school lasted all of ten days, if that long. And I was ready.

Q: Time to _____.

A: The first camp that I went into, then I was, I was put on temporary duty, then I was relieved of all my duties . . .

Q: Separated from your platoon.

A: . . . with my platoon. And I was relieved of all my duties with the company and put on temporary duty with the G-5 section of the Third Army which is the military government section. And the first camp that I went to was in Bamburg(ph), Germany. I brought a map, incidentally, perhaps later on, we can go through it. And I received the best training that anybody could ever have, in this camp. The way the camps were set up, we used, we had Unrah (ph) personnel. We had German personnel.

Q: Civilian.

A: Civilian. And army. We had, now understand, in order to run all these places, we had to have people who were knowledgeable about the gasworks, about the waterworks, about the electrical companies – and who knew these things? Germans. Nazis. If they weren't members of the Nazi Party, they didn't hold these positions, so we had to use them. Course Patton was later accused of playing footsie with all of them, but to some extent he had to. One thing leads to another, doesn't it? They all had to fill out what they called a Fraggoboggen (ph) – are you familiar with the questionnaire that the Nazis had to fill out? Well, it tells about their history in the Nazi Party and of course all of them said that they didn't, or many of them had a supplement to it, which I have here, and I'm going to leave with the Archives – a supplement to the Fraggoboggen (ph) that this one man filled out. "I was never a member of the Nazi Party." That's what he said. "I was never involved in any of the atrocities." They all were. They all were – if they weren't actively involved in it, they

were guilty because they were there and allowed it to start as far back as 1933 and did nothing. Or when they started coming after the Germans who disagreed. And the Catholics who disagreed, after they got through with the Jews and the gypsies and the homosexuals. That's when people started taking note. Maybe there's a juggernaut that we can't stop – that we're going to need help. Now I'm in a camp, and the camps were run as cities. They had their own administration. We had an entire Polish army complement in camp. I have it right here – the badges that they wore.

Q: In Bamburg (ph).

A: In Bamburg (ph). And later in Koburg, (ph) also. And the camp – we were constantly being inspected because, we were being inspected by all the, by major generals, and colonels, because everybody was coming down on them, from President Truman on down.

Q: Action, they wanted . . .

A: They wanted, they wanted what's going on in these camps. So they'd come in. Now, at one time, by being on temporary – this is just a little story. By being on temporary duty and away from my original company, I wasn't able to draw any rations – any of my rations from my company – like cigarettes. We were able to get liquor, too, incidentally. Heavens knows we needed a little schnapps once in a while. Cigarettes, liquor and candy. And when I tried to get it from my company, they said we didn't draw any rations for you because, PX rations, I guess they called it, because you're not assigned to us. You're away on temporary duty. And when I tried to get it from the army headquarters, they said, you're not on our roster, you're only here on temporary duty. So on one of the times that, on one of the times that my camp was being inspected, when the officers got through, there were about eight of them, and I have the listing here of all of them. The general just happened to mention, "You deserve a lot of credit for the work that you've done here." And I said, "I deserve a rest." And the rest of the officers – I guess their chin dropped between their knees because you just don't talk that way, _____. Very G.I. And he said, "Oh, what would you like to do?" And you know, I was very young then, and very flip. I said, "I think I'd like to go to the Riviera for ten days or so." He said, "Oh, how soon could you be ready?" "How soon could you get a man here to replace me?" He said, "Can you be in Munich at 5:00 or 9:00 in the morning or whatever? We'll fly you to the Riviera." "Certainly I can be there." So before going, we had a camp barber – and the reason I'm telling you this is because one story begets another story – and he was cutting my hair, I had hair then. He was a Frenchman and I told him, I said, "Now I want you to do a good job because I'm going to the Riviera. I'm going to stay at the Hotel Carlton. I go to Nice and to Monte Carlo while I'm there." He said, "My family lives in Cannes. I haven't seen them in eight years – I haven't written to them and there's no way that they could write to me. Would you call on them?" I said, "Of course." He gave me their address of where they lived. They lived up above Cannes – Gros(ph)? Well, and one day I took a cab and went up there and I met his family and I invited his sister, a little 16-year-old sister to come back to the hotel with me to have dinner. Well, the Hotel Carlton, this is where they have the Cannes Film Festival, as you know, and everything is very, very elegant there.

There's a waiter behind each chair. The little girl was sitting there, I don't she's ever, I don't what she's ever had in the way of food, or the way it was served, but I want you to know it was quite elegant. And she brought a little bottle of perfume for me as a gift for letting her family know that her brother was still alive. That little bottle of perfume is the only thing that I have left. When I came back to the states and we staged at Camp Philip Morris – you know they named the staging camps in France after cigarettes – I had a musette (ph) full of souvenirs – perfume, lighters. I had a bottle of, I had a fifth of Three Feathers, which is bourbon liquor that my dad had given me two years before. He said, he wanted, he said, "Yasilah, (ph) I want you to give this to your colonel so he won't send you overseas." And I thought to my, I told my commanding officer, I said, "My dad wants me to give you this so you won't send me overseas." We both had a good laugh. I thought if we landed safely, I'd break open the bottle. Every celebration that we had, I was going to use that bottle that my dad gave me. I never did. I never did because there was always liquor available. And this became kind of an icon, kind of a talisman. I thought as long as I had that, nothing's going to happen to me. Because it somehow, it's somehow sacred. When I had this in my musette (ph) bag, with that little bottle of perfume, along with perfume for all the women in my family, Chanel, and Flue de Racai (ph), and all the Caron and I had lace from Belgium that I had picked up and saved to take home as souvenirs. Everything was stolen out of my stateroom but that little bottle of perfume. And, the bottle of bourbon. And my dad and I had the first two drinks out of that bottle. Well, I came back from the Riviera and kept working and for a while, we went, I was sent to Veeldflecken (ph). Now Veeldflecken (ph) was taken over by an Unrah (ph) team and we were already old hands at this. I only spent two weeks there, about two weeks, and a member of the Unrah (ph) team was Kathleen Hulm (ph) who later wrote "A Nun's Story", that was made into a movie with Audrey Hepburn. And I met her and I have a copy of her book. I had a copy of her book but it's now in the archives, here in the museum. It's out of print and it's a wonderful, wonderful account of how a displaced person camp is run, and how it should be run. All the trials, all the vicissitudes, all the problems, all the glory and all the good feelings that you have when you see a job well done. I came back to Bamburg (ph) and by this time there was quite an attrition among the officers and enlisted men who were going back to the States. They'd earned enough points to be sent back and I was put in, they had spread us out over several camps and I was sent to Koburg (ph) and that's where I had my greatest glory if there is such a thing. And I'll tell you what happened at Koburg (ph).

Q: Good. Let's take a break and then we'll come back to Koburg (ph). Good.

End of Tape 1

Tape #2

Q: We're gonna start with now, in the fall of 1945. You come back from the Riviera and you have been assigned to Koburg (ph).

A: Right. It was quite a coup, actually, I was the only officer in the camp. I was the second lieutenant. I had six enlisted men who were gems. They had been in DP camps, they had worked in DP camps, and we were the only American army personnel in the camp. The camp, however, held between 11,000 and 15,000 eastern Europeans, mostly Poles.

Q: They were there when you got there?

A: They were there when I got there. They'd been collecting them. See, nothing travels faster than a rumor in the army, or in a situation like this. When they told the people, the people who'd been slave laborers that they could get billeting and rations and so on, under the American auspices, under the American army auspices, have a place to sleep, have a place to eat, until they could be repatriated, but, on the other hand, many of them were already, had already been repatriated and had come back. Because they had been fooled by Stalin. Stalin even sent special troops into the area to sort of prepare the people for coming home by telling them that you're going to come home, you're going to be with your families, you're going to be on your farms, you're going to be in your villages, and life is going to be like it was before. It didn't happen. Once the boxcars were sealed, I don't think they were really sealed in the manner that the boxcars were sealed, that's probably not a good word. Once they were closed and they started the long trek to the East, when they got there, stories came back that they weren't even allowed to go into their own villages. That they went on to various goulag in Siberia and spent so much time because Stalin, Stalin sent his own son to one of them, who'd been in Germany as a slave laborer. He said they should have chosen death rather than work for the German war machine. That fought against Russia.

Q: Were you present for any of these – what were they called, repatriation . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . .transports.

A: Yes. Many of them.

Q: Those happened at Koburg (ph). People were organized to be sent back to Russia.

A: We would organize, we would send them to a railhead at Lichtenfelds (ph) which was about 15 kilometers from Koburg (ph), Koburg (ph). That was the railhead. We would put them on trucks and the trucks, incidentally, belonged to the 11th Panzer (ph) Division. They were SS troops, run by Major McLean (ph), and this is a walking stick that he later carved and gave to me. Here it says, Coatsing (ph), that was their headquarters, May the 5th, 11th Panzer (ph)

Division, 1945. Although it's a Scottish name, he was quite German. He had a complement of 175 vehicles, German vehicles. Some of them were halftracks, some were regular trucks, some were similar to our jeeps, and some were what you might call pleasure cars, for officers, perhaps an Opal, or one of the other small German car, Volkswagen. And we would load them onto these trucks. We gave them five days ration for the long trek back to Russia or Poland, to their villages. We saw that they were well clothed, we saw that families went together, quite unlike the transports that went to Treblinka and Auschwitz.

Q: Were these people eager to go?

A: Yes.

Q: Willing to go?

A: In the beginning. And then we had to force them to get on the trucks.

Q: How many of these . . .

A: 1500 a day.

Q: For how long?

A: It seemed to go on forever. But it was around, I guess this lasted, this lasted until about March of '46.

Q: So, six months?

A: Five or six months.

Q: Daily?

A: Almost daily. The constant—we took a census of the camp from time to time. It wasn't a daily census – maybe every week, every two weeks and found that the constant number was always between 13,000 and 15,000 people. But there were around 1500 a day that left for the railhead and around 1500 a day that came in from other camps, from the German countryside, people who'd continued to work, under the German – not as slave laborers. But some of them stayed in Germany who heard about what was going on after they were being repatriated. Some of the them wanted to stay in Germany and work on the German economy. That didn't last too long. They started coming into camps where they could get rations, from the American Army, from Unrah(ph), from Quakers, from – there were many organizations that would send boxes of food in. Dry milk, dried eggs, whatever. And this was, this was the almost, you'd almost count on 1500 going out every day or two and we have of course, we have photos of all that. They send – and they decorated the trucks with boughs. It looked like Arbor Day. They put all sorts of tree branches on the trucks. Then they had huge photos of

Stalin and Lenin and they sang Russian songs and we had Russian officers at the exchange points, at Lichtenfelds (ph) to see that everything was run properly, that they got on these trains. Later on, to our shame, our halftracks drove up and guns were mounted on the halftracks, and they were forced to get on the trains to go back.

Q: When did that change happen? Was it – do you remember an incident where suddenly you knew that things were different or was it gradual?

A: Actually, it was gradual. And then it got to the point where I didn't always go to the railheads. I went there very seldom after it started running. To Lichtenfelds (ph).

Q: But in the beginning, you would go?

A: In the beginnings, I would go. On some of the trains there . . .

Q: But you felt the people were genuinely . . .

A: Happy. Happy, singing.

Q: And later, when you say that the Americans had to force these people. What was the nature of that coercion?

A: Maybe a little subterfuge. A little tell the story about how nice it was going to be after they got there, that they were going to their own villages, using the same line that the Russians used. And the Russians were there to back us up, to help us with this.

Q: But you knew that wasn't true?

A: It slowly dawned on all of us. It's in all the books now – our disgraceful forced repatriation. But we couldn't do anything else – they couldn't live with us for -- in the camps forever. They couldn't live on the German economy forever. Even the Germans were having – I didn't sympathize with them that much, only as one human being to another – but they were having a difficult time. As a matter of fact, those who saved Jewish children started turning them over to the American army so that we would make different billets and different camps for them. And I think I showed you earlier, in the chronology of what happened during the war, that the Joint Distribution Committee and they were a tremendous during the war, a tremendous help. They saved my life many times. Gathered up orphans from Buchenwald, in the Buchenwald area and sent them to France. I received orders from Third Army headquarters to form an orphanage for Jewish children who'd been turned back by the Germans who had saved them during the war and were turning them back to the army to be fed and clothed by army personnel. And there was a sanitarium, the Strooth (ph) Sanitarium. I don't think I've mentioned that name in years. But now I know, that was the name of it. The Strooth (ph) Sanitarium near Onzbock (ph). And I was to get 40 orphans to billet there

and my main adversary was an American officer who received orders about the same time that I did for the orphans, he received orders to find billets for returning German prisoners of war. And I had to put up a big fight to get this Strooth (ph) Sanitarium for my orphans. And instead of getting 40, over 200 came in. And while I'm on the story, the Joint Distribution Committee had teachers, or they had people who – they were preparing these orphans for Israel, like the Opon (ph) and they taught them Hebrew, they were teaching them folk dancing. And it was a wonderful, wonderful camp and wonderful experience for them. And one day, one -- a little girl from the camp came into my office and gave me that block of wood that's now in the archives at the museum. She had carved what looked like the Fleur de Lee (ph) that the Girl Scouts – apparently they were basing their training perhaps on what they do with the Girl Scouts. And she gave this to me and I saved it all these years, 50 years, until I came here in the end of June to turn over a lot of my artifacts and that's one of the things that I gave to the museum. I later heard from her, from Israel, it was Palestine then, telling me how happy she was. I haven't been able to find that letter. I saved all the letters that I received. My dear, dear sisters saved all the letters that I wrote for four years in the army and I have a journal for almost every day because I wrote quite a bit and I had a little high school girl working in my home the past month or so before school started and she was putting the letters into polyurethane sleeves and so far she's used 1200 sleeves. It doesn't mean I wrote 1200 letters. This is just the year of 1945 and beginning of '46 before I came home. But several of my letters were five and six pages long. But I'm so happy to have this all, all four years preserved. And also letters that I got from different people – I'm doing the same thing with them. But I haven't found her letter. I haven't found her letter.

Q: Let's go to spring of '46 and these repatriation transports are coming to an end you said more or less in March?

A: Yes.

Q: Of that year?

A: Yes.

Q: And they were getting less pleasant.

A: Well, not only were they coming to an end, but the army involvement was becoming less and less and they were being turned over to Unrah (ph). The camps were being run by Unrah (ph). Now before that time, I had to suffer through another inspection that turned out to be quite a coup for me. Major General Robertson, commanding general of the 15th Corps, I believe it was, came into my camp, with Major General Richardson. And he, too, was very complimentary and then he left. He sent back a letter of commendation which I have here. Yes. 15th Corps. Major General Robertson. "I wish to take this opportunity to commend you for the excellent work you've done at Koburg (ph) Displaced Persons Camp. My recent inspection revealed that your earnest efforts and ingenius use of all available facilities have solved many seemingly hopeless problems. A fine organization and administration of the

camp reflects the highest credit upon you and your accomplishments."

Q: Let's talk about those – ingeniuses that he's referring to. Why does it take ingeniuses to run a camp?

A: Well . . .

Q: What was the . . .

A: Well, I'll give you one example. We had to find enough coal and enough wood to heat the cauldrons that made the food. The main food was soups, different soups.

Q: You were feeding 11,000 . . .

A: 11,000 people a day. We had to cut down entire forests, to get wood to burn in the kitchens.

Q: You'd just go out in the nearby countryside . . .

A: We'd go out, well, that's where the German – the German battalion that worked with me – they were very good at ferreting out these places. It so happened that one of them belonged to a baroness. She came into my camp and begged me not to touch her trees. We had to. We had to. It was in our area and we needed, we needed the wood. Before – now, do you know that Germany was divided into four parts after the war? The American Occupied Zone of Germany, the British, French and Russian Occupied Zone. During the early days of the Russian occupation of Germany, which was just north of us, I found out that there was a warehouse that had the leather pants that the SS troop, the motorcycle troops wore. And there were hundreds of thousands of those leather pants. So Germans, well, many Europeans love rubber stamps. If something has a rubber stamp on it, it must be authentic. So I had a bunch of rubber stamps made up, in Koburg (ph), in one of the offices that made them and it said, "Please give bearer, whatever, the above merchandise," and stamped it military government, Unites States Military Government. I've forgotten now what I put on it. But I sent these German trucks up to Soldenburg (ph), which was just beyond the American Occupied Zone of Germany and into the Russian Occupied Zone. And they loaded those trucks up with all the leather pants. Now the reason I did that is because in my zone, my area, there was a shoe factory. They didn't have any uppers, but they had all the Airsots (ph) leathers, Airsots (ph) soles. And we were buying these things, we were buying equipment from the German – or articles of clothing from the Germans for the DPs and for the slave laborers. We were able, with one pair of leather pants, we were able to make six pairs of shoes. Now I wanted to bring one pair home, as a souvenir, but I thought if I bring a pair of shoes home, that means somebody's going to have to without shoes, and I didn't. Oh, oh, do I think of that, when I see the shoes in the museum. That's what I think about – what we did so that they'd have shoes. DPs. And what they did, and what they did when they took the shoes off -- the Jews before going in the undressing rooms -- before going into the crematoria. So worried that our men wouldn't have shoes and they were so worried that they

couldn't take 'em off fast enough. They're in the bin, aren't they – in the museum. That's what I think about. Well, I received a letter of commendation from another major. I won't read it – it's on record, thanking me for this ingenuity. But you do things. I don't know where it comes from. You – I set up a theater. You have pictures of that. They had their own entertainment. We had a hospital – we had a wonderful hospital. I also had Polish army personnel attached to my camp.

Q: How did that happen? How did they happen to be here?

A: They had been slave laborers but they had been taken as prisoners. But they were army officers. They were Polish army officers and the Polish army in exile in London decreed that they work in these camps to help repatriate the Poles. And if I can put my hand on it right away, maybe I won't take the time now, but they wore patches that said Polish Army Displaced Person, Third Army, Number Ten. That was my camp. DPTA10 – that was the name of my camp. Oh, what a badge of honor that was – for them. It gave them the run of the camp. They had wonderful uniforms to wear – it was kind of a mixed uniform – American officer uniform and Polish officer uniforms. But they wore their berets with the Polish emblem on it and this nice emblem wasn't like the yellow Star of David the Jews had to wear, in disgrace.

Q: What was the – what were living conditions like for people at Koburg (ph)? There were big former German army barracks where people were housed?

A: They were housed in the barracks . . .

Q: Can you describe the living situation? Were families together?

A: Yes. Yes. Not only were families together, but sometimes when they got their potato rations, they made vodka. And every once in a while, we had to raid the camp, when we knew that there were stills, and people told us, because, actually, it was – it had become poisonous, a lot of the vodka that they made. I don't know what they mixed it with. They mixed it with alcohol that you put in cars and there were some horrible scenes. But they lived, I assure you, they lived much better than they had ever lived up until that time under the German rule.

Q: They had three meals a day?

A: They had three meals a day. Not only did they have three meals a day but we had a nutritionist attached to the camp. Two nutritionists – we had an American nutritionist and one on the Unrah (ph) team. There was a schedule, there was a roster – so many calories for adults, so many calories for children at a certain age, so many calories for youngsters, those who got skim milk, those got regular milk with cream. Incidentally, Strooth (ph) Sanitarium, for the orphans, was near Striker's Farm. Striker, who was the number one Jew-Baiter (ph) of Germany – I saw him – I went to the Nuremburg war trials one day. We were able to get

eggs and butter and milk from his farm. His farm functioned during the entire war – it never stopped producing. At first it bothered me and then I thought why should it bother me? We're getting all this good stuff from him. Incidentally, we got fresh vegetables and butter and fresh meat from the German economy. We had demands, we had regular requisitions that we gave the military, the German military command, in each city, and they had to supply so much.

Q: And they did?

A: And they did. And they cried plenty. I have letters here, telling us that it's getting more and more difficult to supply us with what, with what we're requesting. Well, we cut it down. We compromised. But we weren't _____. We were a little more humane.

Q: So some of the supplies were coming from the army. . .

A: Army.

Q: And some you would work through the local German military authorities and they would supply . . .

A: The German, actually, the German civilian. It was called, had the name here, called the German Food Commission, I believe. And they had set up this commission to supply fresh food for the camps.

Q: And what kind of – vegetables grown locally?

A: Yes. Whatever they could get – beans, corn, lentils which of course is a form of beans.

Q: And some fresh meat?

A: Fresh meat. I rather think some of the nice meat we got was horse meat. But as long as, as long, and I've eaten it. As long as I didn't know what it was, it didn't bother me. And it was supplemented by different charity organizations that would send food in.

Q: So you were constantly balancing what you had in your warehouse with how many people were around and how many were expected . . .

A: Right.

Q: But you never really knew from month to month how many people you were going to have?

A: No.

Q: Right?

A: But somehow it worked out, somehow it worked out. There were times, there were times when I felt like I was in a pressure cooker and I had to let off some steam. And there was a very, you couldn't call it a mountain, 'course Bavaria is beautiful and there's all sorts of mountains around in the area, but a couple of times I had to get in my jeep and drive up to the highest point and get out and scream. Just scream. To know what?

Q: Just because you felt so much pressure, so tense? Can you describe some of – specific reasons why you would feel tense? Was it negotiating with people that was difficult for you – what was it?

A: Well, it was getting orders that camp was going to be inspected and trying to get everybody to work, to see that things were clean. And inspect the kitchens, to see, we didn't want typhus to break out. We didn't want any of the, any contagious diseases. We didn't, we kept fighting, we kept fighting food sources. That was the main thing. And whenever a shipment came in, right into the camp, people knew about it. Especially, if they came, if they were things that came, not from the army or from the German economy but things that came in from some of the other support groups. I keep saying Quakers because they were really very predominant in this but there were other – I'm trying to think of some of the other civilian groups in the United States that sent food over. But when those, when those shipments came in, they would gather around the truck and almost act like, I don't like to use the word animals, but it, everybody wanted to get in front. "Throw me a box of this. Throw this to me. I want this. Throw it. I'm here. Throw it to me. Ah, here, I need this. My child needs this." "Here's some dry milk. Here's some Hersheys, some Hersheys candy bars. Cigarettes." These are the things that were prized and that's what I had my nightmares over after I got home, many, many months later.

Q: Those scenes of people trying to get things . . .

A: I'd wake up and look at the end of the bed and I'd see these people coming over it, over my knees, and screaming for food.

Q: Did you get satisfaction at the time, that you were able to help them, or did it always feel like you couldn't do enough?

A: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. There were a lot of perks, believe me. I was amply repaid. And not just, it was, it was a very good feeling to know that you're helping these people. Because of, because of the, because of the commendation that I got, from Major General Robertson, I was able to, he promoted me to captain. A major general can do that – they call it a battlefield promotion. That was wonderful. I went in as a private and thought, gee, I'd like to come out as a captain. That seemed like – I didn't want anything more. And it did happen. And then because of Major General Robertson, because of this letter of commendation, it entitled me to the army commendation medal, which I have. And I thought I brought it in here.

Q: Did, in your camp, did you have, I know you had a flow in and out of people from different places but what was the situation in Koburg (ph) in, let's say the first six months or so, for Jewish DPs? Did you have a lot of Jewish people there?

A: Yes, but before I go into that . . .

Q: Okay.

A: In sending the western Europeans home, and I'll come back to that, in sending the western Europeans home, we had a French team attached to the camp and it was called the MMLA, Mission Militaire Liaison (ph) Administratif. We had three French officers, men, and one female officer. The female officer was Russian, of Russian origin, but had lived in France many years. And they helped us repatriate the western Europeans. And they were tremendous help. One was a doctor, two of them, two of them were doctors. One wore a signet ring – it didn't mean anything to me at the time, and I'll tell you what happened much later on, but he was a Bourbon (ph), he was of the Bourbon (ph) royalty. French Bourbon (ph). And the most helpful was the woman because I had all these eastern Europeans, too, as well as the western Europeans. And they wanted to stay, they worked very hard and it was an opportunity for them to learn English, from us, and we learned as much French as we could from them. Now, you asked me, about the camp that I was coming back to . . .

Q: I asked you about Jews.

A: The Jews.

Q: Right.

A: Up until that time, up until that time, there were Jews, but they came in as DPs. This was in the beginning. They came into camp and when I knew who they were, and they had their own way of, of, of being in their own group. And when they realized that this camp was really a repatriation camp, a camp that was sending people back east, when they realized they couldn't go back, then they wanted to get to Jewish camps. And who took them to the Jewish camps? What irony. My German major from the Panzer (ph) Division in his trucks. Loaded them up – and he knew. And I knew that he knew. But they got very good treatment and they went to camps in southern Bavaria. There was Ogsburg (ph), there was a camp in Ogsburg (ph), there was a camp at Strowbing (ph), there was a camp, there was one they called the Funk Casairn (ph). Casairn (ph) means camp. I knew that that was a Jewish camp and he and his men had orders to take the Jews.

Q: So after what period of time – do you remember when that was, in the winter of '45, maybe, that soon?

A: Early '46.

Q: Early ’46.

A: Beginning, beginning in winter of ’45 and early ’46. Now, when, when Unrah (ph) started taking over the camps, I was transferred. I’m trying to think if there was anything more I wanted to tell you about Koburg, except that it was running rather smoothly, although people started trickling back and telling their countrymen that they weren’t allowed to go home, that they were sent to Siberia. So that meant that more came in and that we would have to continue to take care of them. On Bastille Day in camp, one of the French officers almost blew up the camp celebrating Bastille Day. Jacques Jencam (ph) was his name. And when he left, he told me if I ever got to Paris to be sure and look him up, which I later did, but that’s, I’ll go into that. Now, I, when the work was running smoothly in the camps, and, as I said, they had their own hospitals, they had their own entertainment. We were invited to many of the affairs that they had in camp, as guests of honor, and I went. I danced to many a oom-pah-pah band and Polish, and the polka. I liked to dance. Then I was transferred to Onzbock (ph) which was outside of Nuremburg. And I was put in charge of several DP camps and also the exchange point at Hoapf, (ph) Germany, and we have that on the map. Now the reason it was called an exchange point is because, apparently, and I believe it was at the Yalta Conference, we, that is the four major powers, said that we would repatriate the Germans, also, who had been displaced because of war. German for German, who had been displaced prior to September the 1st, 1936. And they all, and they came from Russian zone into the American zone through Hoapf (ph), Germany. And I was in charge of that exchange point. Excuse me. And it was through this exchange point, the Jews came in. They also had gone back to Poland, or wherever. And they thought that they, well they did, they knew their homes were already occupied, their farms had been occupied, and they were being killed. The progroms had started. A little anecdote. When the Allies got onto the government of Poland, after the war, immediately after the war, and started chastising them for starting these anti-Semitic picadilloes again, this one telegram that they got, or communicae that they got, said, “I don’t understand how you can be so unhappy with us. We’ve only burned one synagogue since last August.” This is what was happening. Lodz (ph), Lodz (ph), the city of Lodz (ph), that had 200,000 Jews before the war, two of them came back. The Lodz (ph) Uprising. When they were subdued, they were all taken out, but 40 of them hid in the, in various cellars, underground sewers. This is why they either didn’t go, or went and came back. Poles wanted to kill them. They didn’t want to give up their homes. They didn’t want to give up their farms. I’m not talking about the Poles that came to American during the mass migration in 1906 and 1909. They came for the same reason my folks came – to get away from religious persecution and to have a better life for their children. There was a Polish family that took care of all of us in Saint, little St. Joseph, Missouri. They were like brothers and sisters to my father and mother because they spoke Polish. My folks did too -- Russian Polish. These are people that had been so indoctrinated with the hatred who had helped, I think they showed the Nazis a few things, and so did the Estonians and Lithuanians and the Latvians. They came out smelling like a rose, too, after the war. To make Patton say, when he talked about the dirty, filthy Jews, he said, “They’re nothing like the Estonians.” Well, how could they be? Where was the soap? Where were the water levels in the billets

that they were in? There wasn't any water, there wasn't any running water! How could they use the latrines or the toilets? He didn't think about that. And it was against his Anglo-Saxon sensitivities to put them in German homes. You can't displace Germans! For the Jews? "I can't do that," he said. I'm digressing.

Q: Let's talk about Hoapf (ph).

A: Yes.

Q: How did you organize that? It sounds like a big job.

A: It was a big job. It was a big job and I didn't do it alone. We had security troops there stationed . . .

Q: Can you remind me, give me a little time frame here? Do you remember roughly when you went to that assignment?

A: March.

Q: Were we talking March?

A: March. We're talking about March, '46.

Q: Spring.

A: February, March.

Q: Okay.

A: We had security patrols around there and we had, we had people, offices set up and they all had papers. They all had the, they all had the _____ papers. Everyone had papers . . .

Q: Everyone . . .

A: Germans had papers, the Jews coming across had their papers. I don't think that they were the correct papers, I know that they weren't. I know that they were false papers but they were coming in as German nationals. And they had been doing that for months. I know at least that I'd helped about 900 come through. And this one time, I might as well get onto this story, because it happened. There were 125 caught coming, Jews, coming across the border with, at Hoapf (ph). They had the security patrol pick them up and he called in Onzbock (ph), and wanted to know what to do with them. I said, "Put them all in jail at Hoapf (ph)." Now this is in Mittenwald (ph). Mittenwald (ph) is the county and Hoapf (ph) is the main city. The Joint Distribution Committee was working out of the jail and they were handling all the Jews, many of the Jews that were coming through. Now there's a lot that enters into

this. The extreme efficiency of the Germans. By now the trains were running, by now the electricity was on, all the gas, water and that wasn't too long after the war ended.

Q: Less than a year.

A: Less than a year. And the people that were supposed to be doing all this were still back in the military government schools at the University, the University of Michigan, Harvard or Yale – the Ivy League schools. They were learning German, they were learning Polish, they were learning Russian, they were learning French, so that they'd know how to handle the DPs when they got to Europe. They got there after it was all over. But it worked. And now this was an officer – this was a captain, the security officer and he wanted to know what to do with their papers. I said, "Send them to me by courier," and incidentally, among my pictures that I gave Bob Kesting (ph), just yesterday, I have a picture of the courier. And it got to me, in Onzbock (ph), to my billet, at the Golden Eshtairn (ph) Hotel, about three in the morning, and I burned them. I don't know why. It just seemed to be the thing to do. You have evidence of some transgression – you get rid of it.

Q: And – meaning you knew these were false papers.

A: It really didn't matter – about burning them because I knew that they could make new papers. It amounted to just the same as the paper – but I didn't want to have any of the evidence because of what was going to happen. I knew I would have to account for it. By morning, by morning, they were all out of jail. The guards had been bribed with money, with drinks, with liquor and the Jews were on trains, again going to Jewish DP camps in the American Occupied Zone of Germany. The story doesn't end there with me. I was called into the office—my commanding officer's office – who was a colonel. And I shan't tell you his name. I've never mentioned his name. He was regular army. He had appropriated the finest chalet in Onzbock, for his family. They were coming over. After all, this was a war of occupation. He had appropriated one of Hitler's specially built Mercedes-Benz bullet-proof touring cars for his own. And he called me in because the security officer at Hoapf (ph) told him what had happened. He said, "What do you know about this?" I said "Well, I know that 125 Jews, approximately, 125 Jews tried to come across the border last night and I told the captain to put them all in jail." He said "Well, they're all gone now. Where do you think they are?" And I said "Well, I think they're all very happily ensconced in Jewish DP camps in Bavaria, in southern Germany." He said, "You know, this is conduct unbecoming an American officer and I'm going to have to court-martial you." Well. "We, I'll send for someone from the Judge Advocate Division, Third Army headquarters to come up and take a deposition. Meanwhile, you're under arrest of quarters at the Golden Eshtairn (ph) Hotel." I found this the other night. I knew something would happen – I wouldn't be able to put my hands on these things. Nevertheless, that's where we were billeted. It was a little embarrassing to go from his office, with two MPs, one on each side of me and put me under arrest of quarters in my hotel room. And I could only leave to go to eat, also, under guard. He, I saw him afterwards, before the, it would have been the attorney from the judge advocate, judge advocate's office, whatever, to come up and take a deposition prior to a

court martial – I saw him. My colonel. And I said, "Colonel" – now I want you to know that I was just a kid, according to what I am now, I was just a kid, but you grow up very fast in the army. I said, "I don't know what's going to happen to me if you court martial me. I'm sure I'll be breaking rocks at Fort Leavenworth. But you're going to be right beside me." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I'll just have to tell them how you allowed all your men to go into my DP camps, your officers gave them furloughs and leaves to go into my DP camps and shack up with the women in the camp. You gave them extra rations. You drew army rations that you shouldn't have so that they could have a wonderful time sleeping with my women in the camps!" They were so bold and so blazen about this that they walked around in their uniforms. They didn't even bother to get into civilian clothes.

Q: And that was forbidden, that they should go . . .

A: Of course. Yes. Couldn't fraternize with them at all. There were all sorts of directives. We had a little pamphlet that Bradley put out. It's in the archives – I gave it to them. "So I'll have to tell them that." And he thought for a moment. I said, "You know, you can delegate command in the army, as a colonel, you can tell me, as a captain, what to do, but the responsibility is still your responsibility. And all this happened under your nose." What's 125 Jews? There were close to a thousand. This had been going on for months. And it worked. It didn't mean anything to him. The lives of 125 Jews, or even a thousand, compared to what he was going to have after his family came over. This fine chalet in Onzbock (ph) where they could go skiing at Garmish (ph), Garmish Pardonkershem (ph). Where they could go into Nuremburg, where the Passion Play already started. And over Amergal (ph), they could have that. Oh, I don't know how he ended up. Probably, may be, maybe made general one day, who knows? I was, but . . .

Q: We're about to run out of time. Let's pick up on the next reel.

A: Alright.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Dr. Friedman, you were telling us, in the last tape about your having allowed these 125 Jews to come through Hoapf (ph), which means that you understood the underground organization that had been created in Europe to move Jews from east to west and eventually down to the Mediterranean – their passage to Palestine.

A: Right. Right.

Q: Explain how you became aware of this and how do you witness its function?

A: That's very good. Sometime in the summer of '45, perhaps around June . . .

Q: '45? Right after the end of the war?

A: Yes. Yes. A group of Palestinian officers, now we must remember it wasn't called Israel then, they were Jewish officers who had fought with the Palestinian brigade in North Africa. And they had permission from Third Army headquarters and they had their papers with them and they had a roster of families and names with them. And you have a picture of that in your archives. And I'm so proud of them. I'm standing right in the middle of them. I just wanted to be with them because of what they were doing. They were trying to find, ostensibly, they were trying to find, survivors of the relatives of members of the Palestinian Brigade. Well, this is true, they were, and they did find as many as they could. But, it was to be a cover for the Jewish Underground. And what they were trying to do was to get the sympathies of the American Jewish officers, mostly American Jewish officers, although a very dear friend of mine that I worked with who is non-Jewish helped a lot. And therein lies another story but, and when they realized that I would do all that I could to help out, they, they were satisfied and pleased. And I think, I think if, if the museum would blow up this photo that I had, that there might be some faces on there that are easily recognizable because I'm sure that they later became leaders in the state of Israel or in, again, with repatriation of, of Jewish DPs, Jewish slave laborers. And I think we might find among them some who had really dedicated the rest of their lives to this type of work.

Q: And how, how did the, this sort of, you say ostensibly they were looking for relatives, how did the sort of surreptitious become communicated to you? Did they take you aside and tell you? Or was it all reading between the lines?

A: No, no, I was told.

Q: Directly.

A: I was told, yes. I was told when they found out that – I had actually been sending, I'd been sending Jews. They knew and I told them that I was sending them with the German battalion to various camps and so it wasn't, it really wasn't all that new for me to do. All it meant was

that they knew that they could come into my camp, you know, with an open heart, and freely, and without fear of being spied upon and told to go back.

Q: We should say for the record, that at the time, this migration was an illegal migration because it was not, people were not being allowed to go into Palestine.

A: No.

Q: They had closed it immigration.

A: Yes. The White Paper, the Offer Declaration, the, the many sad stories of barely getting to the shores and not being allowed to land. Incidentally, they were not only coming from Italy, they were coming from Greece, also.

Q: Those ships.

A: Yes.

Q: And once then, so you met these soldiers in the summer of '45?

A: Yes.

Q: And it was clear to you immediately that there was this continent-wide organization?

A: In Bavaria, anyway.

Q: And you, did you have contact with them – those specific soldiers, subsequently?

A: No.

Q: Or other . . .

A: No, no, I didn't. I didn't.

Q: And did they identify themselves as an organization?

A: Yes. They had, they had legitimate papers that were given to them by the military government of the Third Army. They'd come up, the papers were dated and had the letterheads – were from the Third Army Headquarters at Bod Toles (ph) which was south of Munich and it was very legitimate. The legitimate part was that they were looking for survivors. The other part was that they were also looking for people who were sympathetic towards getting the Jews into camps, helping them get into camps. But, God bless the Jews, they sort of organized themselves and knew where they wanted to go, and knew how to get there. They just, they just couldn't have, didn't want any interference. There was still, you

see when the war ended, there was such a, there was such a, a, thrust by the Germans, the young Germans, to poison the minds of the American soldiers. Now these were soldiers who had never fought in any of the wars, they were fresh from the States and they came in and they saw all the dirty DPs and they saw the dirty French and they saw the dirty Poles, and they saw the dirty this and the dirty that, and the nice clean efficient Germans. Well, of course they were. All the soap went to Germany. "Course they might have been washing themselves with one of their ancestors, I don't know. We know how some of the soap was made. In fact, I have a ship, or had one, that had the Nina, one of Columbus's vessels, a copy of it, and the sails were made out of human skin. And I wanted to bring it back and put it in one of the museums in St. Joe. And I did bring it back, but it's disappeared.

Q: So what you're saying is that the G.I.s were strongly prejudiced against Jewish people . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . after the war?

A: Yes. Yes. Not all. Not all but this was just another little murder. This was another little battle that we had to contend with. They didn't have to draw, they didn't have to draw KP anymore. The Germans did that, the Germans peeled the potatoes, the Germans did the cooking for the army. They didn't have to draw extensive guard duty. You know, there was no more, you know there was no more fear of being invaded, of having your, your command post taken over by Germans or any kind of invading army. Was no longer in existence. All they had to do was sleep with the German girls and drink the champagne and schnapps. It was a great life! We didn't want these dirty people to interfere with it. Get rid of 'em. Put 'em in jail.

Q: And that was the overwhelming sentiment, you think, of the average G.I.?

A: I really do. Maybe I'm very cynical about it, maybe I'm overemphasizing it, but I saw it right after the war ended. Perhaps with all the directives that were sent out and that little booklet that every soldier had to have, that Omar Bradley – you have it, they have it at the museum. I gave it to them. Perhaps with that, if they complied with what he asked them to, things might have been better afterwards. But they were seeing the world through Uncle Sam and having a ball. They knew nothing about what went before. If they had read about it, or if they were told about it, it didn't have the force or the power or the – it didn't affect them the way it did the soldiers who were right there and really knew what had happened.

Q: By that you mean – what?

A: They didn't go into the concentration camps.

Q: Most of the G.I.s never did. So they didn't really understand . . .

A: No.

Q: . . . what these people, or who these people were and what they'd been through. Didn't – Eisenhower seems was very adamant about getting the word out . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . about what had happened in these camps. He invited journalists to come immediately . . .

A: It's true.

Q: . . . camera crews came right away. He brought in civilians from and he and other officers insisted that civilian, that German civilians be brought to see what had happened. So he, he seemed to be making – there seemed to be some effort being made to let the world know . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . what was happening.

A: Yes. And Truman followed suit. Truman did the same thing after he went after because Roosevelt died during this time, '45 . . .

Q: Right.

A: . . . and Truman wanted separate camps set up for Jews if the – go into the German homes, had no qualms about it. Didn't bother them to go into the Jewish homes and kick everybody out.

Q: But you are, I think saying, that part of the reason for the surreptitious nature of this effort to get Jews out was resistance by American military personnel, as well as the law prohibiting Jews from migrating to Palestine.

A: Well, you know, everybody was torn during those times. If you wanted to obey directives, if you knew that they couldn't land in Palestine, then you tried to do – I'm talking about regular army – you thought why, why would I put them in camps? Or why, why would I try to get them down to Italy so that they could get on ships for Israel 'cause they're not going to take them anyway? They won't take them – they started taking them in Brazil, incidentally. We didn't. We didn't take them until much later but that's a whole other story. Again, it was very chaotic, even at that time, as to what to do. Most important thing was to see that they were well fed and clothed and had some degree of contentment and family because they, and, in some way, and some way that they could really reckon with their tremendous loss.

Q: And the people that were coming from east to west, among them the 125 that you have already described – who were they, mostly?

A: They were mostly Jews who had gone back to Poland.

Q: And . . .

A: And found, they were either being killed, or they killed, some of them. There's records, there's, there's documentation of some who did this. Couldn't get back into their homes. Look, it had been how many years since they'd been gone? If we go back to '33 and now, well not so much in Poland, we'll go to '39 and here it's '45, '46 – people'd been living in their homes for five years and tilling the soil, their farms, milking their cows and had a degree of prosperity that they had never known before. The Russians, the Poles, who had taken over, mostly Poland, Lithuania, had taken over the Jewish homes. They didn't want them back and they knew that if they stayed they would, in all probability, be killed because the progroms were starting again. Those were the ones who were coming back and they didn't want to stay in the Russian zone. They knew that they would get better treatment in the American zone. And by coming into the American zone, they could get closer, and closer, and closer to either the United States or Israel. Those were the two main places that they wanted to go.

Q: Do you have any sense of how many people, Jewish people, you may have helped come through Hoapf (ph) other – was it those 125 or were there more?

A: Yes, there were more. There were more. I . . .

Q: Were they coming in all the time, every day for a period of time?

A: No. No. No. No. I estimate, at one time, that as closely as I could remember, that there must have been around 900, close to 900 to a thousand who had come through there. I know because that's the figure that I threw at my commanding officer.

Q: And they were in small groups? And always sort of a similar situation with papers . . .

A: Right.

Q: . . . that had been supplied to them by . . .

A: Either themselves, their own little group, their own little group leader, the Joint Distribution Committee, with the ubiquitous rubber stamp. That rubber stamp had to be on everything – didn't mean anything. Well, it did mean something. It meant that the, that the illegal papers were legal.

Q: Lots of times there were guards that were bribed . . .

A: Yes.

Q: Were you ever involved in that kind of thing?

A: No.

Q: It would have been done on the other side of the border?

A: And then when they came across to get on trains . . .

Q: So yours was a position to accept or deny. You weren't actually, you were not sort of part of their. . .

A: Migration.

Q: . . . bureaucracy in a sense.

A: No, no.

Q: But you had the – you could make the decision to let them in or not let them in.

A: Yeah, but I had to be very careful, you see. I had, I had, above all, I was an American army officer. I was in charge of the other Displaced Person Camps in the area, as well as this exchange point so I had to sort of walk

Q: You were highly visible.

A: Yes. Kind of a thin line. I really couldn't do anything. I couldn't go to Hoapf (ph) and oversee this transfer unless . . .

Q: Because that would be obvious, sort of participating . . .

A: Yeah, I could, yes, I could oversee the German transfer. But it was carried along as the same time as the Jews were coming across. So it was best just to let it happen.

Q: And some of them then, I guess, would come into the camps that you were overseeing?

A: That, not from Hoapf (ph), not so much, no. By that time, they were going into Jewish camps.

Q: And none of those were among your ten?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever have a chance to meet up with any of these groups of people at any . . .

A: No.

Q: . . . any of these thousand people?

A: No. Only the one, no. None of those. But of course those who came through my camp at Koburg (ph), I knew when they were coming through and I knew when they were going out with the, in the trucks and they got special care – food, clothing. Years later, well let's go back to where, if you like, where I was almost court-martialed. Is that alright? Anyway, I was put under arrest of quarters in Onzbock (ph). In the Golden Eshtairn (ph) Hotel. And as I said before, I told the colonel that you can't, that the responsibility was all his and it was under his command. Now and he had all his family coming over, they were all ready to come over for the duration, however long that was going to be. And the next day, there were orders that came from Third Army Headquarters sending me home. That's among the orders that you have. Now they would send divisions home, they would send battalions home, and my orders came through, one person, Captain Joe Friedman, report to Camp Philip Morris. And I was escorted by the two military government, by the two MPs, to the train. We went by car to Frankfurt – we got on the train there for Paris. Now Jacques Jangcam (ph), who had the Bourbon (ph) signet ring, or crest, told me that if I ever got to Paris, to call him. Well, we had to change trains, either from the Guardinore (ph), or whatever. I don't remember because, because it's been 50 years ago. But I took a chance and I called him. Had his phone number in my little book when I knew I was going through Paris and I called him and he asked me – and he was home! And he asked me where I was and I told him I was at the train station. And I told him what the circumstances were – that were two MPs guarding me – but at the time they were looking at magazines and French postcards in the train station. And he said, "I know that train station." He said, "I'll be over there. You stay in the phone booth and pretend that you're talking to me. I'll be over there in about ten minutes and when you see me in the doorway, you come out of the telephone booth and come right to where I am and we'll get in my car and I'll take you home – to my, to my home." And that's what happened. I don't think anything happened to the MPs, because they were all so happy to get rid of me. I'm sure that when he went back, when they went back to Onzbock (ph), and told the colonel what had happened, he probably felt that it would be fine if I was arrested for being AWOL, or whatever. But, what actually happened was that Jacques took me to his home. And his home happened to be a floor through apartments, apartment in the Trockadeero (ph) Section of Paris. And you could see the Eiffel Tower from their home, their apartment. And it was the type of apartment that the elevator opened up into their, well as long as it's French I'd better say foyer, but it opened up into their foyer. And I, his grandmother lived with them, and I received her, I was given her suite of rooms while I was there, which consisted of a sitting room, a bedroom and a bathroom. And I was served breakfast in bed. In fact, I had to wait until the maid got out, left the room so I could get out of bed and put the tray on the dresser so I could have breakfast comfortably. I found out what the signet ring was: their dining room – they had tapestries all over the, all over the apartment and they were these tapestries that depicted all the wars that the Bourbons (ph) had fought in from whenever to wherever. And he was the descendant of the kings and it

didn't mean anything to him except that he had this signet ring that he wore. And it was also in needlepoint on the back of all the chairs in the dining room. And Jacques had a sister who showed me around Paris. We went to the Louvre – we did all the typical tourist things and I was there for about four days. I was very anxious – I was a little afraid that something might happen and I did leave after, I think it was four or five days. But I'd been to the Leedo (ph) and the Moulon (ph) Rouge and the Casino de Paris and to the Napoleon's tomb and the famous cemetery – well, whatever. I'll think of it. And I got to Camp Philip Morris. I could have stayed in Paris for a month! When I reported there, they said, "Well, you'll go out on the next available ship, boat." Washtub is what it was. It was a victory ship. I crossed in the Amsterdam, the SS something Amsterdam which was a huge luxury vessel. Took us four and a half days to cross – took me ten days to get back, and it was during that time and I was in a stateroom with other officers, and that's when all my things were stolen. With the exception of that one bottle of perfume and the fifth of Three Feathers. That was a very popular brand of bourbon during the war that I later had with my dad. Then, I came home and I had a very difficult time. I was being separated from the service at Jefferson Barracks and I sort of broached on this subject when we were talking before, but the first person I saw was a friend of mine that I grew up with in St. Joe and he was playing cards in the officers' recreation room. And I ran up to him and I said, "Paul!" You know, I was so happy to be home! I said, "I'm going to be in St. Joe! They're shipping me out tomorrow! Is there anything you want me to tell your folks – I'll call them!" And he said, "Eh, I see them every weekend." He had spent the entire war in Jefferson Barracks. I guess he did something. Something that was necessary to the war effort. But it hit me, really, how _____. Four years I've been in this man's army. Finally got home. I'd been home before on furloughs and on leaves during the time that I was in the States. My army career was sort of evenly divided. I, I spent two years in the States and two years in Europe. Then I was ordered to report to the parade grounds at Jefferson Barracks before being separated from the service. And I was wearing my captain, my captain's bars and I thought oh-oh, my AWOL caught up with me. Here it comes, the saber, you know, cutting all these things off. But instead, that's when I was given the army, the commendation medal, that beautiful commendation medal, because in my records it had this letter from Major General Robertson which entitled me to the -- and the orders in my file.

Q: But no mention of the AWOL . . .

A: Nothing.

Q: . . . and the threat of the court-martial.

A: Nothing, nothing, nothing. Nothing.

Q: So what, what was it like then, to be a civilian, suddenly. You mentioned it was hard.

A: Very difficult. Very difficult. I, in the army you always wait for someone to tell you what to do. It doesn't matter whether you're a private and the corporal tells you to pick up cigarette

butts or clean the latrine, or your platoon leader, your captain tells you to shape up these men – go on bivouac, maneuvers. There's always someone above you to tell you what to do and I was waiting for someone to tell me what to do. I had this brother and sister living out in Colorado and I went to visit them. And I spent almost the entire summer there – went to the mountains, breathing some nice fresh air and just relaxing. And slowly, the time was coming to go, when I would have to go back to school – if I wanted to finish school. And I was really very reluctant to go and I think that this same thing followed me, this same feeling followed me until I gave up practice until I gave up my practice and left St. Joseph to seek my career – another career in the theater. I had the typical midlife crisis. I did go back to school because I thought let me finish one thing that I started. Let me at least do that. But I was very unhappy when I went back. Many men, many of the students in my class were much younger. They had just come out of high school or you know, they'd gotten a B.A. in college and had gone on to podiatry school. And quite a few were married and I was kind of an old man at 26. And an angry old man because the world had passed me by. And I'd lost four years. I really hadn't. It was the most formative four years that I could have had to prepare me for what came later and that was just – that was life. I went back to school and I came back to St. Joseph to practice. My first year back at school, though, was the hardest and I knew that I would need help. And the Veterans Administration had a counseling service at the University of Chicago and I was able to go there, on Saturdays, every week for about six weeks. And I had a very intense and intensive meeting with a very, very good psychologist, analyst, therapist, counselor that finally culminated in taking various tests. And I did. I took, but I tried, I tried as objective as I could with these tests and they grade you, you know, on the curve. Like, say in law, maybe four people will be better than you are if you follow that field but 95 won't be as good as you. And, as I said, I tried to be as objective as I could in taking the tests but the results were that I would probably be best in personnel management, law and then medicine. Medicine, of course, I'd had two years of pre-med prior to going into podiatry school. So, I'm sure that that showed up in the exams. And I came back and I practiced and I had a very lucrative practice for 14 years and then I had the typical midlife crisis. And I see, gee, and I kept thinking about life back in the DP camps and how tenuous it is and how it just could hang by a thin thread. And you're here today and tomorrow the whole thing could be wiped out. So live each day and, that's not knew with me, of course. But live it the way you want to live it. And live it the way it'll give you the most pleasure, not the most remuneration. But just that'll make you a good man and I picked the most difficult profession in the world. And I left St. Joe and joined a melodrama troupe in Colorado, on the western slope. They called it the Kerosene (ph) Circuit. And I played Aspen, Glenwood Springs, Leadville, Durango, Steamboat Springs – did it an entire summer. And I was 42 years old then.

Q: As an actor?

A: As an actor in a melodrama. And I was fat and bald at that time, too. But at the end of the season I went to New York and David Merrick, who was a very well-known producer at the time, wasn't waiting for me. There was no red carpet, and I knew that if I wanted to do theater, I'd have to study and, at least the glossary of the theater. Even the terms: stage right,

stage left, although in civic theater, I did quite a bit of it. Except we say now, "You go on that side of the stage," when you're saying it and "you go on the other side of the stage." But, nevertheless, I did well. I started doing the soaps and I started doing, I did a couple of Broadway shows. I did several off-Broadway shows. I toured in industrials, I did commercials and I met my dear, dear lovely wife. She was a gift.

Q: Now, I'd like to ask you, if I could, if, you've mentioned that your father was an Orthodox Jew, and that he was observant, and that your parents both came to this country from a small town . . .

A: Yes.

Q: But that you as a young man were interested in being an American, in being Americanized. When you came back from your tour in Europe, and having had the experiences that you did, and seeing what had happened to the Jewish people in Europe and what could have happened to your, to you, had you been there – how did that affect your relationship with your parents and your family? Did it? And your sense of yourself as a Jew? Did those things change gradually or at all? After your experience with, in the DP camps?

A: Well, a lot of things entered into it. Yes they did. To begin with, I'll just give you a short history of my father. My father came over in the great wave of immigration, 1906. He was married, already, and had a child – my oldest brother, who will be 87 in November, next month. And he started peddling. It's the typical American story of the Jews who came over and put a pack on their back which he did, and sold needles and notions and dry goods – whatever he could carry – until he made enough money to buy a horse so that he could carry more things over into Kansas from St. Joseph, Missouri. It's on the border between the, right on the border between Kansas and Missouri. Made enough money then to buy a wagon so he could carry more goods. Then made enough money to bring Mother over and my brother and his sister. I'm giving you all this background because of what has happened. When he had his family over, when he had Mother, he didn't want to go peddling anymore. He wanted to establish, to take root somewhere – in St. Joe. So he opened up a feed store. After all, there were no, there were very few cars. I once read what, what really has happened in my lifetime in the way of automobiles and radio and television and airplanes and all the computers. This has all happened, gee, in this century – not even the entire century, beginning, I remember listening to the radio on the little battery. What'd they call – my brother made it. We would listen, we had earphones and I'd listen on one and he'd listen on the other. But then, we had the last, after the feed store and when there weren't too many more horses, Dad opened up a grocery store. In 1919, and to this day, my brother-in-law has that store. He and my oldest sister took over the store when I came home from, when my brother-in-law came home from the army. Incidentally, my brother-in-law and I were both in the same unit, until we were separated and I went into all this other work and he stayed with the 95th Infantry Division. And every once in a while, if he has two beers, he'll let you know how he took Metts (ph) – and, and he did. Wonderful, wonderful man but I just lost my sister a few months before my wife died. These _____ letters that she saved . . .

Q: Your sister . . .

A: Now. When I came home, there were a number of things that happened. Oh, but I grew up in a very Orthodox family but I was younger. Now my brother, after his Bar-Mitzvah, he did the tfillin (ph), I guess until he got, until after he got married and I didn't. I didn't. I went to Hebrew school and I studied. I can read Hebrew today. I don't know everything – I can't interpret it, but I can read it. And I was bar-mitzvahed, but that was it. I was too busy, afterwards. I, I followed two sisters who were National Honor Society, and Quill and Scroll and all the honors in school and when they heard my name, they said, "Oh, you're Lil's brother and you're Bess's brother." There's the two sisters between my oldest brother and myself. "Oh!" And they expected me to do everything that they did. And I, during the Depression I worked – worked at the drugstore. And I was just busy – busy keeping myself going. It was rather selfish, I presume, but it was difficult being Jewish in a small town. Not as difficult as it is now. We only have about 200 souls in St. Joseph. Before the war, there were around 4500. We didn't become assimilated. We had our own synagogue, of course. We had our own fraternity, sorority – we had our own groups that we socialized with. Little by little, course we couldn't go to the St. Joseph Country Club, which is a joke that I had on them much later on when I received Alumnus of the Year from my college and the dinner was held at the St. Joseph Country Club. There were many times when I refused to go there – they couldn't allow Jews as members, they certainly didn't want us there when we were receiving any kind of honors. It's all changed now, however. But I wasn't as, I really wasn't as observant as my dad. I went to the synagogue on holidays with him and when my mother passed away I said Koddish (ph) when I could, as many times as I could. Also, I came home, there were times that I received, there was a time when I received a letter from home saying that mother was recuperating before I received a letter saying what was wrong. Mother'd had, had gone to Mayo Clinic for a mastectomy in 19, 1945. And she'd lived to 1954 when it had metastasized. So all this took place. You asked me if I was as observant a Jew. I, I thought God had forsaken my people. I really did. I was very angry with Him. How could you let this happen? So I was going to get even. I just wouldn't do anything that He wanted me to do. What were the prayers? So, they were hollow. Why would He listen to mine when He didn't listen to their cries. I heard them. I don't think I really know to this day and that was reinforced because He took my wife away. He, she, the spirit, I don't know. But I do know this. Though it didn't happen to me, those who did believe, and today, those who believe with all their heart and those who believe the way my dad did, had a much easier time of it. For some reason.

Q: You spent the last 50 years angry? About what? _____

A: I never spoke about it – I couldn't. I've probably talked more now in these few hours than I have my whole lifetime, since then. Oh, there was a time in Los Angeles, when I was living there, that one of the high school teachers was rewriting history. And he said that this really didn't happen. He was teaching his classes that all these emaciated bodies were coming from Central Casting. And, course we hear these stories over and over again. And my optometrist,

at the time, was a survivor – an emigre, and he was telling me about this. And I told him my involvement in the DP camps and he asked me if I would work. They were going to set up a round robin with survivors and liberators, such as myself, in a church, actually. And it was, I think it was on Wilshire Boulevard, on Pico Boulevard. There was a church that had classrooms and we were going to have a round robin about, well I have all the papers – we were going to take turns and tell our story over and over and over again. And the classrooms that were bussed in would be in this class and then they would do – they would go, each one of them, in time, would hear the story of about six of us. And incidentally, the Fonz was one of them – Henry Winkler. I think that that was the main attraction for a lot of these kids that came in because, you know, Happy Days was running on the crest of television waves. And I got involved, then, and that's, that was the change of name. I think you, I was using Joe Frederick at the time because when I went into the theater, you couldn't have a very ethnic-sounding name if you wanted to work. In fact, the first man that interviewed me for a job said that he looked at his calendar and when he saw Joe Friedman, he said, he thought to himself, he said, "Eh, another accountant? Another insurance salesman? I have plenty of insurance and I have my own accountant. I don't need anybody like that." And he told me this when I went in. He was the director of Love of Life and Secret Storm – these were soaps that were going on at that time, in New York. And I wanted to work. He says, "You'll never work under the name of Joe Friedman." Well, I wanted to keep the same initials. And also, a strange thing happened before I left St. Joe. One of my patients called me Frederick, by accident. She called me Dr. Frederick and I thought, gee, what a nice sounding name and it's the same initial. But I didn't have to worry about that because there was a dancer in the Equity, one of the actors' union, who was Joe Friedman, and it didn't matter to him – he was a dancer. And so I couldn't use my name, anyway. 'Cause you can't use the same name in the union. Excuse me. So it became Joe Frederick. And that's how it was when I did this round robin. And as a result of that, we were honored at the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles when they were, as liberators – there were several and there all pictures here, and I was given a certificate by Vice-President Mondale. And I'm very proud of that. The only other time, in Los Angeles that I spoke of it and, again, I keep referring to the pictures that I have and I left it with the museum – the Ludz (ph) survivors have a very strong club in Los Angeles. A very affluent club and they do wonderful work with the survivors. And they called the Federation in Los Angeles and asked for entertainers for a fundraiser that they were going to have and I was sent to go to this Beverly Hills mansion and entertain. I have a little act that I do – I was in Fiddler on the Roof for three years – I did close to 3,000 performances. I was in Las Vegas for four months with it. So I sing, and I, and I do Al Jolson. I used to go down on my knee, but then when I couldn't get up one time, I stopped that. At any rate, this Shobby Shoptie (ph) who's a terrorist from, he's one of the leading exponents of, an Israeli on terrorism. He was the main speaker and I was the entertainment. And I felt because of the occasion, and because they were all Ludz (ph) people from the, from the ghetto, that I would tell them a little bit about my experience. And I started talking and a lady came up and she threw her arms around me and she said, "You saved my life. I know who you are. I was in your camp." That's what happened. We both had a good cry. She was in my camp. She was on a truck from Koburg (ph) going down to, it was the Funk Casairn (ph) – she told me.

Q: Shall we take a break? We'll pick it up.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

A: Here we have a picture of members of the Palestinian Brigade, who came into my camp, around the end of June. They had a list of members of the Palestinian Brigade who fought in North Africa and ostensibly they wanted to see if there were still relatives of members of the Brigade that were alive and living in the Displaced Person Camps and they had legitimate orders from Third Army Headquarters at Bogtoles (ph) to come into the camps and when they came into mine, I was very happy to see them. And, underneath it all, they were looking for the possibility of the sympathies of the American Jewish officers who might help out informing the links between various camps for Jewish DPs, who were coming out of the Russian Occupied Zone of Germany into the American Occupied Zone for a number of reasons that we've already talked about. So that they could go down to Italy and get on ships for Israel. This is an aerial view of Koburg (ph). Now Koburg (ph) was a tremendous German army camp. As you can see, all the barracks were built out of brick to last forever. Unlike our camps, we built out camps out of wood and plaster, and tore them down right after the war. But Germany had theirs to go on forever. Fortunately, we had these because we knew that we were going to house the displaced persons in these camps after the war ended. So they did serve a great purpose for us. This is a wonderful Unrah (ph) team that were immeasurable help in Koburg (ph) for me and they're sort of a polygog of nationalities. The head of the Unrah (ph) team on the extreme left, the man, the balding man, was royalty. He was related to the royals of Belgium. And the one kneeling in front of him was White Russian. And she was married to an official of Macy's in New York and felt that during the time that they escaped from Russia, people helped her family and this was the only way that she could pay back in kind and she joined this Unrah (ph) team – spoke excellent Russian. In fact, she spoke about five different languages. The other members – there were two doctors, two nutritionists, a nutritionist for the entire camp, a nutritionist for the hospital, a nurse and chauffeurs. And they worked day and night, right along with us, and God bless them. This is a typical truck that, carrying the displaced persons from Koburg (ph) to Lichtenfelds (ph) which is a railhead, and, as you know, it was a happy time for them until they later learned what their fate held in store after they got to Russia or to Poland. But nevertheless, they decorated the trucks with leaves and trees and branches and also with pictures of their leaders. I don't know where those pictures came from – they just appeared out of nowhere and were on the trucks. And we saw to it that they plenty of food and clothing and sent families back together, quite unlike other trucks that carried out people to crematoria. This is a photo of Russians and American soldiers, at, at a checkpoint. They were there to see that things were carried out according to our own United States directives and the Russian directives. At first, they were very, rather shy, the Russians, and not as talkative as our American officers, but later on there was quite a symbiotic relationship that developed between the two. We wanted things from them and they wanted things from us. And between the two forces we got quite a bit done. Well, that happens to be a picture of me, in my Mercedes. That was a 1936 Mercedes convertible, I think they called it a cabrolay (ph). And I got it quite legitimately – we paid for it – the Germans couldn't use a lot of their vehicles because they couldn't get gasoline for it. In order for me to be able to draw gasoline and to have it serviced at the motor pool, I had to have it painted OD, and had to put the

army emblem on it, a white star on it, and I put some fictitious ordinance number on the hood of the car. So there you have it, I'm, if the authorities find out at this late date, I'll probably have to go to jail. This obviously is a wedding that was held in Bamburg (ph). I was in Koburg (ph) at the time, and they invited me to come up to Bamburg (ph), because they were people that I had worked with when I was in the camp at Bamburg (ph). The groom is Sergeant Richard Lane and the bride, her name is Hettie. I don't know her last name but she was Estonian and she had been a dental assistant and very bright. Her matron of honor was also from the, from one of the Baltic countries. And then, I'm, you can see part of my head behind her. We were all in the wedding party and it was nice. It was nice to know that life could go on and that some of the institutions that we revered throughout life could take place under these most extreme circumstances. As a footnote to this, many, many years later, I visited Hettie and Bob in San Francisco. They had both gone back to college and were very, very happy. A happily married couple. This was an entertainment hall that we had in camp. They had their own musicians. They did requisition musical instruments and I have a whole roster here of what they requisitioned: guitars and violins, accordions – they all played accordions and the Bolla Lika (ph). I really thought that before it was all over with, I'd be an expert at doing the, the Kuzotzka (ph) or the polka. One of the other, or both. But, I enjoyed going to these concerts and they enjoyed having us there because they realized that we were interested in the cultural aspect of their life as well as the necessities, the other necessities of life such as eating, clothing and a roof over their heads. This was a bonus for them. Here I am again. Periodically, of course, I inspected the camp and would see to it that they had enough in the warehouses. We were always, always after enough wood so that we could heat the cauldrons that made the soup which was the mainstay of all the DPs in the camps. We would cut down entire forests in order to get enough wood and here's an example of how we would stockpile it and store it and just, it was as valuable as gold to us. As we spoke of this before, the camp was run the same way an entire city would be run. And this is the hospital of the camp. Many of the doctors, I should say that the majority of the doctors, were Polish although they, we would, they would answer to American medical, members in the medical corps of the American army. And they received wonderful treatment. Whatever they requisitioned for the hospitals we were able to get. We would either get it from our own medical supply or we would get it from the German medical supplies but whatever had to be done was done. Well this is a Polish doctor. He was a very fine man. I had occasion to talk him on a few, a few times that I went over to the hospital and of course many of the times when he came into my office to request medical supplies. But he was dedicated and very happy to be able to be a surgeon, to be a doctor again, which he couldn't do under the German thumb.

Q: Do you recall his name?

A: No I don't. No, I don't. I probably have it somewhere, on a requisition. I'd have to go through the papers. I'm certain that there's a name on the requisitions. I have, I have a whole list of all the Polish personnel and also I have the emblem that they wore on their jackets that I'm gong to give to the museum. This is an interesting story. This gentleman had been a collaborationist. Not in the sense that he collaborated with the Germans, although he might

have, but we do know that whatever organization took over the various DP camps, if he had been a member of the camp, he was able to ingratiate himself into the hierarchy of the camp to the extent where he was able to get supplies and whatever the camps needed. But he would also service himself by doing this. He probably worked the black market in cigarettes, in candy, in clothing, in liquor and the DPs knew about him. When I became commander of the camp in Koburg (ph), he started this same thing with me. And I was quite ignorant of what had gone before, and very innocent and he brought a beautiful dagger that he gave to me that he had sort of confiscated, I guess, himself and had belonged at one time to the Forestmeister of the Black Forest, near TreeAir (ph), Germany. I still have that dagger but this gentleman is no longer with us because the night of the day that he gave me this souvenir, he was murdered by other members of the camp.

Conclusion of Interview