

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Max Heller
September 24, 1998
RG-50.030*0395

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Max Heller, conducted on September 24, 1998 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

MAX HELLER
September 24, 1998

Beginning Tape One

Question: I'd like you to just begin by introducing yourself, and -- and telling us where and when you were born.

Answer: My name is Max Heller. I was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1919. I come from a relatively small family, just a sister, and of course my parents. I grew up in a very Orthodox home. My parents observed the Shabbas, they would not work on the Sabbath; in fact, they would not even light -- put the light on. In fact, what -- that sort of gives me wonderful memories. My father was more Orthodox than -- than my mother. My father had the philosophy that God takes care of everything, and my mother said God takes care of those who take care of themselves. So I'm sort of an in-between. If I lean to anything I lean to, you must take care of yourself rather than -- and my father would run across the street against the light because he knew God would take care of him. But it's interesting, that kind of faith helped us when things got very bad. Our home was a very happy home. We were not wealthy by any means, I would say we were middle income people, both my mother and my father worked. They had their own business, which was a -- a textile business, but they sold to individuals on a credit basis, and they had several salesmen that went out and sold the merchandise and that sort of thing. I -- as I told you, I was brought up Orthodox. In fact, I had a Hebrew teacher from the time I was eight years old to prepare me for -- for my Bar Mitzvah, he came to my house three times a week. I remember that teacher, because he taught me a lot, not just the Hebrew part, but also, after the lesson he would sit with me and talk to me about what Judaism is all about, the ethics, the morals, and the stories, and I was fascinated with that. And I would say that today I'm a strong

Jew, more on the side of the morals and the ethics, and how you're supposed to behave, than the rituals. I -- I have nothing against rituals, I -- I observe but not -- not as much as I -- I try to live like this man taught me, so I'm -- I'm trying to give you a picture of what life was like in our house. My sister was two years old than I am. She -- she probably did not experience things the way I did because as a youngster I was involved in a lot of fights because I was Jewish. I experienced a lot more anti-Semitism than my sister did. So it -- in that respect, perhaps we grew up a little bit different.

Q: Why would you have experienced more than your sister?

A: Well, my sister, if there was any -- any anti-Semitic action on the street, she certainly would run home rather than get out and fight. So -- so it was a -- really different, she was not exposed as much as -- as I was. And I -- I -- you know, I-I sort of lived through it. I belonged to -- when I got older I belonged to a sport club called Ha-Koah, the word stands for strength, and I was in the wrestling section. So all of these guys -- I was like a mascot. In those days they were really national champs. They didn't shy away from defending yourself. And it's interesting when I think about it now, is what made my Judaism stronger then, and still is today is you cannot shy away. You must face, you must face anti-Semitism, if it exists. You -- you cannot just walk away from it. And even today when I see something that I feel -- and I've been in company of people that say things like, oh, I Jewed him down, as an example. I speak up. And perhaps this goes back to my childhood when I was -- I spoke up, and I defended myself.

Q: But what at that point gave you the strength to defend yourself -- yourself, instead of to --

A: Well, I -- th-that's a very good question. You know, people say I'm proud to be a Jew, right? That's -- but you have to know why you are proud, and I think because of my upbringing, both my mother and father, and then this teacher that I'm talking about, I felt good being Jewish. I

never -- I never had to shy away, it was something that I was very proud of, but I knew why. And so this, I think, made the difference, it's the upbringing that makes the difference. I was very happy. Even today I have people that -- I live in a small town in the south, and we have a college in our town called Bob Jones University, and they always send people out trying to convert you. They knock on my door. And both Trude, my wife and I, when we answer the door, we say, you have the wrong address. We are very happy with what we are. Maybe you're happy with what you are. And so this -- you know, it carries forward, there's no question about it. And we -- I think our children feel the same way.

Q: Let's go back. You were talking about the fact that your family was very observant.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Do you have fond memories of some of those observances?

A: Probably the happiest time of my life, this may sound ridiculous, when we were the poorest. And this was during the depression, I -- in Europe the depression started perhaps a little earlier than it did in the United States. But my parents had practically lost their business. And they refused to go into bankruptcy. And so we had to give up our apartment, and we moved into one room. My sister, myself, my mother and father, and occasionally my mother's sister. And on the Sabbath, in this one room, when during the day we would not light -- there was no light, the most beautiful time was when later in the afternoon -- we went to synagogue in the morning, but later in the afternoon we would crawl in bed with Mother and Father, and my father would tell these stories about he served four years in the war -- in -- on the side of Germany, incidentally. But my mother would sing the most beautiful Jewish songs, and most of them are very sad, but they were beautiful. And we -- my -- we used to sit -- we were lying in bed crying, not because we were unhappy, because we were happy. And I've learned a lot from that. I -- I've learned to become

really sentimental about my -- my Yiddish [indecipherable] and to appreciate li -- really life, because the songs deal with life. So I would say i-if you say what gave it to me, and what -- what my life was like, this I think determined the way I am. Those times. I remember at the end of the day on the Sabbath, they turned the lights on, and they would sit down at a table and they would divide the money they had earned -- they went to work for other people, and they divided the money that they had to pay the creditors. And when things got better, my mother and father were able to get back into business. My father was very proud of the name, he wouldn't think of bankruptcy. And again, that I think taught me a great deal. So these were -- these were happy times, although they were tough times.

Q: Tell me about the Jewish life in Vienna in general.

A: Well, Jewish people were about 10 percent of the population. And it was a very rich life. The Jews were involved in -- in the music, they were involved in -- in politics, they were involved certainly in the arts and sciences, and in teaching. And Jews, generally speaking, I would say, were quite influential. They were also -- not all of them were successful, but they were mostly successful people, and -- and very law abiding. We didn't -- we had nobody to be ashamed of. So Jewish life was a rich life, I would say, although I must tell you, sa -- when -- I go back now to -- to this sa -- during the day on Saturday, the thing that really touched me is my mother would tell us stories about her life as a teenager in a little town in Poland. She grew up in a town called Lubachow. Her parents, I would say, were poor people. Very, very observant. I still remember my grandfather, very much so because he was a very imposing man with a white beard, and -- but he always would tell me these stories, and my mother would tell us what happened to her as a child. She was sent away from home when she was not even 10 years old because the fear that they had of pogroms, when soldiers would come and rape girls. They -- she and her sisters would

hide under the house. And so one day they were sent to -- to Kraków to a -- to a member of the family, and my mother, at age 10 or so, had to work for that family, although she lived with them. She was like a -- she took care of the baby, she helped clean the house. So when you hear from your own mother what -- what she went through -- but my mother was never bitter. The -- the thing that my mother always said, but look, here we are. And thank God we are alive. I -- I survived that. So these are -- these are all part of my -- my make-up, and it was very meaningful to me to hear what my parents went through. My father went -- was in the service for four years as I told you, he was wounded in the war. And yet, when Hitler came, it made absolutely no -- no difference. Neither my mother nor my father went to public school because the public school would not have them. And both my parents were self educated, and went in business self educated. So as a result of that, education was the most important thing in our family. So it -- it all comes back. You know, people say, well, the Jewish people are so intent on education. This is a good reason. That's why. And my mother would even write in her -- she -- she sometimes would keep a journal, which we found only recently, and it was very touching what she said. She says, one day I had -- I prayed that my children would have a good education. It's the most important thing in the world. So -- so perhaps this gives you a -- a picture of what -- what it was like, life for me in our house, and generally life in Vienna. But we had good times in Vienna, too, we used to -- we used to go to balls, and -- during Mardi Gras season. In fact, every summer we would have a house in the country, and that's where I met my -- my wife, when I was -- I was 17 and she was 14. And the day I met her I told her I was going to marry her, and her father overheard it, and I was not his favorite person after that. She was -- she was the only child.

Q: You spoke of education. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that, and whether you went to integrated schools --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- or whether you went only to Jewish institutions?

A: Yeah. No, I went -- when my -- my grammar school was boys only, and that's not unusual, it was a public school. I went to grammar school for four years, it was totally integrated. We had -- in fact I had many non-Jewish friends when I went to school. And then after -- at age 10 is when I finished grammar school, and stood an exam to enter into a private high school called gymnasium. And that too was integrated. We had religion -- we took religion in school in contrast to America, and this is -- that's one reason why I feel so strong about not mixing religion with the state, because we -- when we went to school, we had religion, but we had to leave our room, and we went to Jewish class, so to speak, when others went to the Christian class. That was not very good, but -- but the school was integrated. I experienced anti-Semitism then, where you know, you'd find scribbled notes, you Jew, or Jew go back to Palestine, and things like that. Some of the professors we had, I felt were anti-Semitic. Maybe it's because I didn't study that much, but some of them, on the other hand, I felt were very sympathetic. So my schooling -- I finished school not because I was genius, but the system was that you can finish high school after four years, and I went to work as an apprentice. And I made the equivalent of maybe 20 dollars a month. And while I, however, while I was working I went to a business school for three years. And while I was not a very good student in the gymnasium, business school was really what I wanted, and I -- I -- I did quite well. So I worked and went to school at the same time.

Q: And what was the work?

A: I -- the sc -- the business that I worked for, they had five and 10 cent stores which they started, and in fact they were among the first. And they also would sell merchandise on

consignment and put people in business. And my work when I first started was sweeping floors and cleaning bathrooms and that sort of thing, but within -- when I was 17, I was in charge of a department and I had learned about import/export, because a lot of the merchandise which we sold was imported. And I had taken all kinds of courses which enabled me to become a buyer for -- for that company. And a good many of the people that worked -- the company was owned by a Jewish man, and the people that worked there were both Jews and non-Jews. And I must tell you this, we haven't come to Hitler yet, but Hitler came in on a -- on a Friday, on, I believe it was March the 11th. On Monday I went to work, we didn't know what to do, so you go, like you always go, I went to work. And the same people that I had worked with for several years already -- this was 1937 -- is when -- '38, excuse me, when Hitler came. The same people that I had worked with for several years suddenly appeared in Nazi uniforms with the swastika band. The same people that I had lunch with every day, that I -- that I went out with, the very same people. And that was a shock. And this -- this just tells you really, what went on, and how -- how life was. In a way we kidded ourselves. We -- we kidded. Although we had all of these fights and troubles, but never thought that it would get to a point as it did. What also happened is a man who worked for the owner of our company, that our owner had put in business, came in one day and took over the business. Came in with a group of Nazis in black and brown uniforms and just took the business. And ironically made out a receipt, and fired everybody, except three of us. And we were put into one office, in one room, and we -- and the reason they didn't fire us is the people they put in charge had to learn something. So I'm -- I'm trying to really give you a picture of -- it's -- it's -- it's -- when I think about it, I'm really amazed myself of how we were so foolish prior to Hitler not to recognize, or not to sense that there was more to this than just having a fight in the street.

Q: Let's just backtrack, cause of course I -- I want you to tell me much more about when Hitler came in. You mentioned that there were fights in the s -- in the street, or scribbled notes. Can you talk a little bit more about other hints, or -- or outright incidents of anti-Semitism prior to Hitler?

A: Well, of course the Nazi party had started many, many years ago. And in fact, they killed a chancellor, his name was Dollfuss, several years before Hitler came into Austria. But it was after 1933, where Hitler came into Germany, where he took over the German government. And those people, his followers, killed Dollfuss, and they were put in jail. So there was always that unrest, and there was always -- Austria had maybe 10 - 15 political parties, and there were marches in the streets. It's -- it's quite different than it is here. And it always resulted in -- in fights and even killings. There was -- the anti-Semitism that you could feel in Austria was that sometimes you could not live where you wanted to live. You were rejected on a job because you were Jewish. So it -- it wa -- it wa -- those kind of things. But we lived with it, and this was -- you almost get used to a way of life, that's just the way it was. And so you -- you live with it. When people came -- we had somebody in the place where I worked who had come from Germany, from Leipzig and he told us stories about that Jewish businesses were taken over, and Jews were beaten and all that. I must tell you the truth, we didn't believe it. We thought oh, there must be something wrong with that man. Why would they do anything like that? So there was a difference between political national socialism and the anti-Semitic part of anti -- o-of that fascism. It was either political, but it was also anti-Semitic. So it was in that atmosphere that we grew up. Maybe I felt it more than others because I was in a Jewish club, and maybe because of the section where I lived. Maybe I was more aware of it because of the education that I had. And my mother, the stories that she would tell me, I -- I was sort of on the -- I -- I had like an antenna. You -- you get sensitive where you -- where you feel these things.

Q: Were you beaten up?

A: I was beaten up and I beat up. I did it both ways. Oh definitely. I -- I came home sometimes with a bloody nose. But I also came home where I felt very triumphant, where I gave somebody a bloody nose.

Q: But none of this taunting -- was that disturbing to you, or that surprising to you? Didn't you come home and -- and talk to your family and say why is this happening?

A: No, not really, because I knew the history of the Jews. Not only my mother's experience in Poland, but I knew about the Spanish Inquisition. I knew what happened in Europe, in many countries where Jews lived, and then came another king or another prince or another chancellor, and Jews had to leave. I knew all that. I had -- I had heard stories from my grandfather in Poland, who told me what -- what he had experienced. So this -- you know, this was the history of the Jews. I accepted that. That was the way life was, and -- and the more -- the more they -- the more they were after us, the stronger we became, I felt, at least. It's like when you -- when you hunt an animal, the fox becomes very fast and clever, because it hunted in -- in a way, that's the way it was, certainly with me.

Q: Now you went to public schools or private schools, but they were mixed.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were your friends mixed, or were your friends Jewish?

A: Most of my friends were Jewish, but some of them, of course, were not. And one of the bad experiences I had after Hitler came was with a friend, a non-Jewish friend that I had known for many, many years, who in fact belonged to the same club, the sport club that I belonged to. And he is the one that threw me on the street, and made me scrub the street. And when I wanted to pull my pants up not to make -- make them wet, he -- he pulled them down, and he called me a

[indecipherable] a pig Jew. That was perhaps the greatest shock. Can you imagine that you -- you sort of grew up with somebody and suddenly this is what happens to you. You really feel, when something like that happens, you feel it perhaps more because of the disappointment, because it's something I did not expect. Fighting on the street I -- I expected. You know, that -- it really didn't bother me. But this was a betrayal, I was betrayed. So when you ask me about friends, I'm not saying that every one was like that. Most of my non-Jewish friends would not have anything to do with me after that. That -- and this, in a way, I -- I expected that. I -- I -- I just -- they were protecting themselves, and at that point I was much more interested with what was going to happen to us, could we get out, than if somebody spoke to me or not.

Q: But it must have been tremendously hurtful.

A: Oh, it was very hurtful, it was very hurtful. One time I was surrounded by a group of people -- when I went to this school I was telling you about, th-the business school while I was working, and one time I was surrounded by maybe 10 or 15 people my age that I had gone to school with, who threatened to beat me up. And if it hadn't been for a police officer -- and that was unusual by the way, that a police officer would interfere, because normally they looked aside, I would have been beaten to a pulp, I'm sure. It was hurtful. Th-There's no question about it. But you know, it just didn't get me down. This is where my father's faith comes in. I knew that some -- we -- we had to get out, there was no question about that, and we did not go to pieces. It's interesting, with all the troubles, Jewish people would still tell jokes. When -- when all these -- these bad things happened, they would still tell jokes. They would still talk about normal life. You don't just give up everything. That's the way life was, you -- you went on, you tried to do -- live as normal as you could, which really wasn't normal. Because I remember my mother and father had -- or everything they had, their bank account was confiscated after Hitler, and we lived

from what my mother had saved -- and I often tell Trude I hope you have some money somewhere I don't know about. And after awhile when that ran out, we began to sell, like my mother liked silver and things like that. And this is what we lived from. My mother made -- I -- every day we ate like potatoes. Meat was hardly ever, but never complained. We never -- we never complained about it. So I -- I don't know how others reacted. We were glad that we -- we were still alive, we were hopeful that we would get out, and of course we -- we -- we did get out. I -- I -- I don't want to talk about the beatings that people took, and what we saw on the street. It is indescribable in a way. It's -- it's unbelievable that this happened to people that confessed to be God fearing -- I mean that people who -- who said they believe in God, went to church, went to concert, loved music, loved literature, that these are the very same people that turned into -- to beasts, and then came home and loved and hugged their children. So it was a tough time.

Q: This probably does take us up to, you know, what happened in March of -- of 1938.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Because you -- you've mentioned that you knew a little bit of what was going on in Germany, but you didn't either believe it or --

A: We -- we did not -- we knew a little bit, we did not know everything, of course. And also you have to remember during those years there were not -- the concentration camps had not started yet. Businesses were confiscated, laws were passed in Germany that for instance a Jewish doctor could -- did not cre -- treat a non-Jewish patient and the other way around. That Jews could not employ non-Jews, etcetera. Those -- those were the laws that were passed, but there were no -- no concentration camps yet. There was always a rumbling going on, and Hitler proposed that Austria be annexed to Germany. And a boat was to be taken, I believe it was on the 13th of March, 1938. The chancellor, the Austrian chancellor at that time, his name was Schuschnigg

went to Berchtesgaden two or three days before the vote was taken -- or to be taken and told Hitler that we're fighting it, we're not -- we're not going to just accept this, and so forth. Well, on Friday before election, I was outside of the business, I had been at a meeting, and it was in the afternoon. And of course there was a lot of literature about how to vote, vote yes or vote no and that sort of thing, but you didn't see any swastikas. And in the afternoon, within one hour, word got out that Hitler's troops had marched into Austria, and I have never seen a people more organized than the Austrians were. Police officers put on swastika bands, public buildings flew the -- the -- the swastika flag. The trucks were already out in the street looting. And this all happened within -- within an hour. It was highly organized, and I must tell you, Austria was really not taken over, because Austria was happy to become part of Germany. The people were jubilant, they were absolutely jubilant. They were not victims, the Austrians were not victims. They were part of it. And I -- I remember this was on a Friday and I went home immediately, came home, and I said, what are we going to do? And my mother said, "It's Shabbas, it's Friday night. We're gonna have a -- we gonna have Sabbath." And believe it or not, we sat down at the table -- Friday was a -- was a wonderful day in our home, everything was cleaner, it smelled more -- better. It was really like a festival. My mother said this is Shabbas, we're going to sit down, we're going to have our meal. She lit the candles, she prayed over the candles, we had our meal, my father said the prayers. And then, after that is when we really began to talk. But this -- that -- the -- the ritual of the Friday night service remained, in fact it probably was the most meaningful Friday night we ever spent. There was great strength there, and great faith. Well, now I must tell you what happened. I'll go back a little. In 1937, on -- this is when we went to the country in the summer and rented a house. I met my wife, I told you about that. I immediately fell in love with her. But the week when I met her, for some unexplainable reason --

my father would commute and he would come in on a Friday and stay til Monday. On Thursday, I cannot tell you why, I'll never know why, I decided to go to Vienna and come back on Friday with my father. And everybody said, why you going, you just met Trude, and I said, I just feel like going. And when I got off the railroad station in Vienna, I met a boy friend of mine. And he said, what are you doing this evening? And I said, I really have no plans, I don't even know why I came. He said, why don't go we -- why don't we go dancing. And so I met him that evening and we went to an outdoor restaurant where there were -- where there was dancing. And I -- in -- in Europe it is quite appropriate that you can get up from your table, walk over to -- to a lady and ask her to dance, and if she says no, you -- you know, you're a little embarrassed, but you go back to your table. So I had noticed a table with a -- it was obvious that they were Americans. There were five girls and a chaperone. And I said to my friend, I says, you know this -- this -- there's one girl there, I really like her looks and I'm going to ask her to dance with me. If she says no, I'm going to walk out, cause I'm not going to come back to the table and be embarrassed. So I paid my bill and I walked over, and in German -- I couldn't speak English, I asked the chaperone, may I dance with one of the girls, and they looked me over, and they agreed, and I asked this girl to dance with me. And we danced until the place closed, about one o'clock. And then I asked the chaperone, may I come the next day on Friday and take this young lady for a walk and show her Vienna, and they -- after a conference they agreed. And so the next day I -- I bought a little dictionary, and I picked her up at the hotel and we made -- we walked for about two hours, made conversation through this dictionary. I took her back to the hotel, and she by the way was -- she had just graduated high school, so she was just about my age. I said, give me your name and address, and I will learn how to speak English and then I will write to you. So she gave me her name and address, and her name was Mary Mills, she lived on Mills Avenue,

Greenville, South Carolina, U.S.A. And I took that address and I put it in my wallet. Then on Friday evening I came back to the summer resort and I told Trude, "Guess what, I danced with an American." And Trude says, "I could care less." She wasn't too impressed. Well, I saved that address, and now go back -- I go forward, Friday night after si -- after we had our meal, I said to my parents, "You know, you remember I met this girl in -- in fisil -- in Vienna, after I had come back from the summer resort? I have her address, I'm going to write to her and see if she will help me." And my parents said, "She'll never remember you." I says, "Well, we'll see." In fact, I told that to -- to Trude, my -- now my wife, and she said, "Good luck and good weather." I wrote to her and I still have a copy of that letter. I remember I wrote the letter in German and then I took each word and translated it to English so the -- the grammar is not good. But she -- the letter I wrote to Mary Mills, she understood what I was saying. And I -- I said to her in the letter, perhaps you will remember me. I must get out of here. If you will help me, I promise you I'll never be a burden to you. And that was in March of 1938. And several weeks went by and I did not hear from her, and one day -- I think I was with Trude at their store, if I'm not mistaken -- I get a call from my father, you have a registered letter from America. I cannot tell you what that felt like. When I came home, and I opened up the letter, it said, I have not forgotten you. I have gone to see a man here in Greenville, who promised that he would help you. His name is Shepherd Saltzman, he owns a shirt factory, and he said that he would send you the necessary papers. There's no way that I can tell you [indecipherable] we were very lucky. And this is really how I came to America. This man helped me. He later told me, he said, "When Mary came to see me, I said to her, how can I not help, when I a Jew -- when you a Christian want to help, and I as a Jew, how can I not help?" So he sent me an affidavit that would guarantee that I would not be a burden to the government. In the affidavit he said, if there's anybody else in your family that you

want to come with you, let me know. Well, we didn't the chutzpah, the gall to -- to ask for more, but then when things got worse, and my sister had a very close call, frightening experience, we sent a telegram to this man and said, would you include my sister Paula? And he wired back to the consulate to include her. And so my sister and I came here -- came to America in the end of July 1938, and left my parents behind.

Q: I want to backtrack. I know that this is difficult to talk about, but I think what's important for those of us who were not there to understand is -- is really the mood and the circumstances of Vienna after the Germans essentially annexed Austria.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: And what -- what was going on. What you saw, what you experienced.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: How your life was changed. I think that's really important.

Q: Well, let me start off how my life was changed, on -- on the out -- on the outside. How did -- how did we know that there was a difference. The following week after Hitler marched in, the benches in the parks were already marked no Jews. No Jews allowed. That following week, Jews were dismissed from their job. That following week, some synagogues were burning, stores were broken into. We saw trucks that took, especially groceries, out of stores. In our own case, our bank account was confiscated. The customers my parents had stopped paying. What I saw was neighbor turning against neighbor. If -- if some people wanted to have a certain apartment, they would go to the -- to the government and say so and so has said something about the German, and the result was that they had to move out of their apartment. And I'll give you an example, happened in -- in my wife's case, Trude and her family were ordered out of their apartment and given six hours to get out, and they had to find another place. And that other place where they

lived was like a ghetto, really. But that's how it happened. How was life otherwise? People disappeared, people were scared to death. When I heard anybody walking in back of me, there was a fear. A fear I cannot explain. I remember one night, about 11 or 12 o'clock, there was a knock on our door, and our first thought was oh my God, the Gestapo is here. I open up the door, and it was a -- a man who said, I'm a conductor, train conductor. I have an envelope for you from your family in Poland. My father had family in Poland, and my mother had family in Poland. And they've said to tell you to come to Poland. And I said to this conductor, tell them they better get out of Poland. See, the people in Poland were in the same position that we were about Germany. People in Poland thought this -- they're going to be okay. We already felt that there was no place in Europe for us. So life was -- people were already, as I told you -- we had a friend in our family who was picked up by the Gestapo, he was put into a basement, and he was with -- with a group of other Jews, and he was told, say your last prayers, we're gonna -- you're gonna be executed. And they did it in alphabetical order, they would call. His name was Lang, L-a-n-g. They called people in alphabetical order. In the -- in the -- in that basement, people were already saying their Shema, hear oh Israel, the last prayer that you say before death. And when he came outside, they were shooting in the air and laughing, and then kicked him out. But in the meantime, some people died of fear. I mean, it was that kind of thing. And I remember we used to stand in line at embassies, hoping to get -- there were always rumors. Oh, you can go to Australia, you can go to England. You can get a visa here or there. So we would stand all night, waiting to get into the embassy. And the young Hitler youth would come in trucks, and they would throw horse manure at us, and the police would stand there and laugh. So what -- what was life like, it was -- it -- it's very hard to -- for people to understand how we even survived mentally. And yet we -- we would -- we would try to listen to the radio, although it was

forbidden -- foreign -- foreign broadcast. And yet we -- during all that time we still hoped -- we said, oh well, maybe America is not going to allow this to happen, and maybe Russia will -- will do something. Maybe France will do something. There was still that hope that somebody was going to come to our rescue. And you know what I learned? The world does not hear tears. You can cry, and cry, nobody hears you. The world does not hear you cry. And that's exactly what happened. We were crying, but nobody was listening. So that's -- that's what life was like.

Q: You continued to go to work?

A: Until I -- but just for a few weeks. I still have a copy of the letter, saying you're discharged, yeah. I worked, I think, until May.

Q: And then they discharged you?

A: Oh sure. They discharged me within a week of -- after he took over, and gave me a letter -- I have a letter of recommendation, which is ridiculous, but -- what a good worker I was. But they discharged me, as of -- I've forgotten the date exactly.

Q: So when you describe police or soldiers or Hitler youth, are we talking about Germans or Austrians?

A: Austrians more than Germans. It's very interesting that -- that you ask me that question, because I had some narrow escapes where I was saved by a German. I remember one time, Trude's father had loved cars, and he had a brand new car. And one day I came to her house and she said, "They came and got my father's car. They just -- they gave us a receipt, they took the keys." I says, "They can't do that, how can they do this?" And like a fool I went to the Gestapo headquarters, and there hundreds of people were standing in line because they had been called to come to the Gestapo, and I, like a schmoe stand there, and suddenly a -- a -- a staff car, a German officer gets out of the car and he takes a look at me and says, "Why are you here?" And I tell him

the story, he says, "Take my advice. Go home." So this is -- this is one time when -- when a German really -- a German officer helped me. I had another experience -- you know, you gotta have some luck in life. People call it miracle, luck, whatever it is. In order to cu -- to get the visa from the Americans, we had to have a paper from the Austrian government saying that we had no -- committed no crime, and that sort of thing. My sister applied for it and I did, and hers came back and mine didn't. And in the meantime I received a letter from the American embassy saying your papers are ready, but when you come be sure you have this and this and that. Included in that was the letter from the government that I was not a criminal. And it was just two or three days before I was supposed to get my visa. And if you don't have the papers, they pass you up. So I stood in line again for hours and hours with my mother, to this -- to the police station. I finally come upstairs and this German, he says what do you want, and I tell him what happened. And I plead with him, he says, I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do for you. It'll take days and days and days to -- to search your record. And while I'm talking to him, a young girl walks up, and calls him aside, and they -- two of them look at me, and they whisper, and he comes back to me and he says, if I have your word that you will not tell this to anybody, come back this afternoon. This -- this young lady has agreed to spend the rest of the day just on your case. I come downstairs and my mother said, what happened, and I squeezed her arm, which I tried to show her it's good, because I was afraid to say anything in front of anybody. You know, you save your own skin. I come back in the afternoon, he hands me the papers and he said, I must tell you, he says, "I'm a nationale socialist. I'm a national socialist. I'm a political one. I never, never thought this would happen. I wish that I could go with you." He says, "And you will do well in America, and I wish you luck." So I -- you -- you sort of -- you -- you -- you lived by your experiences, and what I have learned is, with all these terrible experiences that we have,

there is somebody good. And I live on the good experiences, rather than the bad ones. If I didn't, I don't think I could have survived mentally. I could not. And so I grew up and I matured, and tried not to hate, because that -- hate eats you up, it doesn't -- it doesn't hurt the one you hate, it hurts -- it hurts you. For every bad that I had -- not for every, but look, I had a Christian girl save my life. I had these people that helped me. And the others, those that -- the real -- I -- I can't even find a word for them, that behaved like they did, I -- I -- I -- I try to forget -- somebody once asked me, have you forgiven? And I said, that kind of crime requires a greater -- a greater force than what I am, to forgive. That is not up to me. They gonna have to answer to a greater being than -- than to me. And -- and this is -- this is the way I feel, and this is true. I cannot -- I cannot -- nobody can imagine how these people acted. And I must tell you, they were overjoyed, the Austrians. They were overjoyed. I mean, here is Hitler promising -- don't forget, 10 percent of Vienna's population was Jewish, and -- and it was a -- basically a thriving community. And Hitler says to these people, you see, all that they have, you will have. You can have it. Just take it. So they were -- they were -- they were pro -- pro-Hitler.

Q: When the Germans came in, were there German troops in the streets?

A: Oh yes, yeah. They -- at first, in fact, my God, there was a parade. The German soldiers, they parading. He -- they probably picked the -- the best looking ones, and the people were jubilant. Unfortunately, some of the churches welcomed Hitler, issued proclamation welcoming Hitler. Sure, there were -- there were German troops, but they didn't have to stay there, because the Austrians were very happy to do that. The Austrian police was like -- was Hitler supporters, there's no question about it.

Q: Now in the early days, as I understand it, there was a lot of chaos, a lot of sort of uncontrolled violence. And from what I've read, that after some time, and I don't know how much time, that sort of the efficiency of the German machine demanded that -- that that chaos be controlled.

Q: Well, they actually, y-y-you remember the story about Kristallnacht, and I think that was in November of 1938, what the government actually said, on this and this day, you can go out and do what you want. You go ahead, break -- break the -- the store windows, go ahead and beat up people. Go, do what you want, you've got 24 hours to do it. So it was the government that controlled the chaos, you're right. But individuals, that doesn't -- didn't mean that individuals did not perform violence. But the government controlled -- which was even worse than if it were just a riot on the part of people, cause by that time they already began to build concentration camps, and they had passed all these different laws. The Nuremberg Laws became the Austrian laws. So that -- it was a -- it was a very well organized effort.

Q: I guess my question here is, how long did it take after March 13th for things to settle down a little bit, and for the government, German or Austrian, to really take charge in a -- in a systematic way.

A: Well, I left Vienna in July, the end of July 1938. By that time it was not systematic, it was still -- some of it was systematic yes, if you wanted to take over a business, if a -- if -- if a Austrian wanted to take your business, and they would have a friend who is a Nazi, they were so well organized that they gave you a receipt. Now, I'm not being facetious. So when I left there was still that -- that sort of thing going on. In fact, I would say, after that is when it became more regulated. But that didn't mean that you didn't fear of your life. The difference was that it wa -- the -- the uniform people that came, it was the Gestapo people who came for you, rather than an individual ho-hoodlum, if that's -- if that's what you mean.

Q: Yeah, well, I -- I -- I mean, I can't imagine that this massive violence and looting and beating that s -- that began immediately, went on continuously for months.

A: No, no, n-no, you're right, no. It -- it was still there, but not -- not in the same force. At first people were evidently told, do what you want. And that was an outlet for them, I mean, they were so happy that Hitler came because now they could loot. Now, if they wanted our apartment, they got it. Now, if they wanted our business, they got it. Right? So that was at first, and then, of course it became more regulated because the government stepped in and built the concentration camps, an-and that sort of thing.

Q: But this cra -- this real craziness, did it last two weeks, two months?

A: N-No, it lasted several weeks. It lasted several weeks. But the -- the fear did not leave us. Perhaps the fear was even greater because the -- because the government without a doubt, took over the violence, or controlled the violence.

Q: And when you speak of the government, I don't mean to be [indcipherable]

A: The Austrian government, the Austrian government. But they had put in -- Germany put in a - a -- a -- like a governor let's say, you could call it, a German. Or they found an Austrian who had been a Nazi, and made him the mayor, let's say. They also released all the political prisoners who had been put in prison because they killed, like this Chancellor Dollfuss, who was killed. His killers were let -- were let out. So it -- that was all well thought out, and this -- this is how that happened.

Q: Okay, why don't we stop right here and change tapes.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Now you were discharged from your business, and it took you a few months to get out. How did you spend your time in those few months?

A: Well, most of the time we would go and stand in line, trying to get information about how to get out, i-is there a -- a -- a possibility of getting a visa to certain places. That's how most of the time was spent almost -- almost every day. The rest of the time, I -- I visited friends. There was really nothing to do. I did not walk the streets if I could help it. You stay as low as possible. You try not to be noticed. In fact, my father and mother, who were Polish citizens -- I was born in Vienna, but they were born in Poland -- because of that, I was considered a pole -- a citi -- a Polish citizen. And so I -- people started like a business of emblems that you wear, and so I wore a Polish emblem, to indicate that I will -- was a Polish citizen, thinking that that would protect me. And anybody who had anything that they could wear, they would put on. Of course, if you were a Nazi, you put in your lapel the button, the swastika button. And so I carried this, thinking maybe this -- this would protect me. Th -- well, evidently it did, although, you know, I was pushed off the street, did not walk on the sidewalk with somebody else and that -- that sort of thing.

Q: Well how did people know you were a Jew?

A: Well, I was not blonde and blue di -- blue eyes. I lived in a certain district, and people -- by the way, we had to carry an I.D. card that indicated that we were Jewish, an-and that's one reason why I'm opposed. I hope to God it never happens here. But so they knew if I had been picked up, they knew, of course, that I was Jewish. I lived in that district. And if I did not wear a swastika, I was suspect. So I think it was very simple. It's either you wore a lapel button or an armband, or you didn't. So it wasn't -- it was not very difficult.

Q: Was the identity card the new thing?

A: No, no, no.

Q: You'd always had those?

A: Yes, yeah, always had that. In fact, when I went to the bank, when my parents send me to the bank to take money out, and the system is different, you -- you -- you go to the teller, you put in your check, you get a number. And I guess they check and see if you have the money in the bank. And then they call your number. When my number was called, they said to me, your -- your account is closed. They knew I was Jewish. That -- that -- that -- that's how it happened.

Q: Were you ever put on any work details, or --

A: No.

Q: -- rounded up, or anything like that?

A: Oh, I was rounded up to wash the streets, I told you that.

Q: Well, you actually didn't describe that very much in this interview.

A: Well, I was walking -- I was walking on the street, in fact, I was walking with a girl, other than Trude, and forgive me Trude, and minding my own business when across the street, there was this action, called an action. The streets had been full of paint in anticipation of the vote, so there would be all kinds of lettering in the street, or on the walls. And what they did, is they picked up Jews, and they made them clean it. And I was walking in the opposite side of the street when this -- this fellow who I thought was my friend, grabbed me and pulled me over, and made me -- made me clean the street. That's exactly how it happened. And that wa -- that was a -- a tremendous shock. A-Aside from that, you know, like I told you what happened at the school where I was surrounded by people, I was not beaten up, no.

Q: Were you shoved off of sidewalks?

A: Oh yeah, that, sure. Yeah. Shoved, or I would just be plain cursed at. People just -- some people just took pleasure in simply cursing you. The -- the -- the house where we lived had maybe 25, maybe 30 apartments, and it was already even with our house -- our apartment building rather, there were Jews and non-Jews living there. And some of the non-Jews already started to take over apartments that the Jews lived in, that they liked better. So there was neighbor turning against neighbor. We had a superintendent of the building who was not Jewish, who would warn us, actually. He -- he was a pretty good person. Would warn us if they saw, you know, Nazis coming, to lay low. It was -- it was -- ye -- you learned not to really -- I hate to say that, not to trust anybody, because you live in constant fear. It reminds me sometimes of how cattle herded into cars, and they're taken to slaughter. And somehow, this is what happens to you as a human being. You begin to develop fear like you feel like you're being herded. Yo -- you -- you -- you change. You change because you don't -- you even walk different, you -- you -- you don't -- you're just a totally different person. And unless you live through it, you -- you wouldn't -- you wouldn't understand it. We didn't realize it. We did not realize it. The -- the -- when I saw a uniform, it scared me. It sc -- when I came to America, when I got off the ship, and I saw police officers talking to people as friends, I could not get over it. I -- I met a -- the man who brought me over was at the ship to pick me up, and he was with a -- a -- a gentleman and he introduced me. He said, this is Rabbi Mezuer. And I looked at the man, and I called Shep Saltzman aside and I said, "He's not a rabbi, he's a spy." He said, "Why in the world would you say that?" I said, "Well, he's clean-shaven, he does not wear a skullcap and he speaks perfect German." Anybody, when you hear that German in back of you, you have fear. I mean, that -- this is what happens to you in just a few months. Fortunately, the wounds heal, if you -- it -- it's just like anything else, if you cut yourself and -- and there's an infection, it keeps on going and

going. If you let it heal there's a scar, the scar never leaves you. The scar is there, but it doesn't fester. And so all this that you go through, if you're fortunate enough you can survive it and still live a normal life.

Q: During this few months that you stayed over there, did you continue to observe the Sabbath, did you have a Passover?

A: Yes, of course. We observed, sure. It -- it was perhaps even more meaningful, more meaningful than ever, yeah. The -- the question that perhaps underlying your -- your question is did you lose faith, and no we did not. This is -- my father would always say, don't worry, God'll help. I told you before, that's the way he was. Oh, don't worry, God -- God is going to help. No, we did not -- we -- we did not go to synagogue because I -- one of the synagogues was a very small place where we went to, and that one was -- was demolished, totally demolished. So whatever services were at home, and sometimes a -- a friend would come over, or a relative would come over, and you sit together, and you observe the Friday night, and I must say that the food was not as good as it was before, but that -- that really -- that -- that didn't matter. You -- you cannot -- you cannot lose hope. If you -- if you lose hope --

Q: Sorry. [interruption] The meals weren't just good because you couldn't afford the food, or because food was rationed and there just wasn't much?

A: Well, first of all, we didn't have money. Because as I told you, we -- in fact, my mother started to, at the beginning would go to the pawn shop and it was -- it was called [indecipherable], it was run by the government, and would pawn things. But then after a few weeks we realized that this is not going to get better. There was no sense to pawn it when you know you can't get it back, so we began to sell. And there you got a little more money, and this is what we lived off. So this -- and we did get some money from relatives, both in Poland and in

Czechoslovakia. The relatives that sent us money through this train conductor, half of the money went to him. That was his -- his take, because he put his life in danger. So we had some of that money, we -- we -- we had paid for the ticket on the ship. We took -- when I left Vienna we took eight -- the equivalent of eight dollars in my pocket. But the ship was paid for. And then I had prepaid I think something like 10 or 20 dollars that I could s -- that was part of the travel expense, that I could spend on the boat. So when I came to the United States, I had left a dollar and 60 cents, out of that eight dollars.

Q: How -- you mentioned that peop -- you -- you lined up along with other people every day to try to get out. Was there an immigration policy in place at that point?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Wa -- how easy was it for people to get out?

A: Well, you could only get out if you could get in. In other words, you could not get out unless you had a place where to go. And most of the countries did not want you. For instance if you escaped to Belgium, which is what happened to my wife, the Belgium government would give you a 30 day permit. And then you have to come and register again, and if you're lucky you get another 30 day permit. So it was not easy to get out unless you had a place where to go. The world simply did not want us. What's the use of kidding? When I compare, as an example, what happened in -- in recent history, under President Carter, where maybe 100,000 or more Cubans were let in, there was no such thing where the American government say well, come. Or -- or not just the American government, any of the other governments. That did not happen then. So, we had no place to go, nobody wanted us. But there were always rumors that -- yeah, you could get,

I think into Australia if you had the equivalent of maybe 10,000 dollars or so, but who had it? I mean, we -- it was taken away from you. So we -- we didn't -- when my mother and father ultimately left Vienna, all they had left in the apartment was their bed and a table and two chairs. Everything else was either taken or sold. That's -- if you can visualize that. When I went through it, my -- my sister and I, Paula left Vienna, I did not know that I would ever see my mother and father again. In fact, that was the saddest day in my life. They took us to the train station, of course, and we pulled down the windows of -- on the -- in the car, and we held hands. And then the train started to move, and my mother and father walked with us first, and then ran as long as they could, holding hands. And then we no longer could hold hands. And we pulled out, and they became smaller and smaller. I never thought I would see them again, never. These are the -- these are the kind of things that stay with you all your life. Fortunately they -- they were able to come over, there was another miracle. A -- a woman at the American embassy was helpful for that. When I went to get my papers at the American embassy, you stand in line -- you're scared to death anyhow, you don't know what's going to happen. You go through a physical exam, and you have all your papers. And there was a -- a woman sitting at the desk and I liked her looks, and I said to my mother, "I like her looks, I want her to examine my papers." We come to her, and she looks at my papers and she says, "Is this your mother?" And I said yes. "Are your parents going with you?" I don't know what made me say it, I says, "No, but they will as soon as their affairs are straightened out." They had no papers. So she gets up -- I remember this vividly, and she takes my file and she puts it in a file. That's all I knew. When we received a wire from our mother and father saying we're -- we're coming in -- I think it was in -- I've forgotten the date in November. And when they finally came, I didn't have enough money to go to New York to meet them in New York, but I had enough money to call them. And I said, "Tell me, wha --

how did you get out?" And my mothers says, "Do you remember this woman at the American embassy? She called us and she says, are you ready to leave? You have a special quota."

Because my sister and I were minors, they put us in a special quota and followed up, and this is how my mother and father came here. That -- that's another miracle.

Q: Did you ever -- I'm trying to sort of imagine the mindset. It was very clear to you that you needed to leave. Did that ever get confused by sort of a feeling of desertion of your past and of your community?

A: Oh, never. Never. Not for a moment, never. There was no loyalty to Austria. What loyalty --

Q: But to the Jewish community there?

A: No, no. Never thought about that. No, not at all. The only thing I would feel guilty, I said -- felt bad about, was leaving my mother and father. But it was quite clear, and my parents spoke about it, they said, "Look, you're young, and we've already lived a lot of our lives. We'll manage somehow, with God's help." No, there was never a feeling of deserting anybody, or leaving anybody. The first time I went back to Vienna, after having lived in this country for a number of years, I remember I -- I could not -- I couldn't wait to show my American passport. Oh, American. You don't realize what that means to be an American. And ti -- the man at the border when you -- when you checked your -- your passport says, "Oh, you've -- you've come home." I said, "Oh no, my home is America." I never -- the only thing I -- I -- if I ever missed anything about Austria was I get nostalgic when I hear the music, and some of the food. But no, not at all. Unfortunately we've been back to Austria several times, but the last time I was there I experienced anti-Americanism, and anti-Semitism, and I will never go back, never.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your journey over here with your sister and --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- we can sort of move forward there unless -- unless --

A: No, no, no, no, okay. Now I'm -- I arrive in America.

Q: How was the trip over, were you --

A: It was wonderful, wonderful. You know, I was 18 - 19 years old, I -- we went second class, there were three classes on the ship. I was on a French boat, I met people. And interestingly, I have to tell you this, I was kosher. I observed the Shabbas, and never smoked on the Sabbath, I never ate ham, for instance. When I got on the ship, I asked the -- the headwaiter, I says, "Do you have a kosher kitchen?" "Oh," he says, "yes." I say, "I want to see it." So he took me into the kitchen, I said, "Where is your kosher kitchen?" "Oh," he says, "this is kosher meat, and this is not." And I says, "And that's it?" He says, "Yes." I says, "I'll eat what everybody else does." I mean, it -- it was a farce. And then the other thing that happened to me, my sister caught me smoking, and she said, "My God Max, it's -- it's Shabbas." And I had not realized that it was the Sabbath, you know, you lose track of time. So that's when I -- that's really what happened to me, I -- I no longer observed the dietary laws, and I -- I s -- smoked on the Sabbath, and of course worked on the Sabbath. So my trip over was -- was really very pleasant. I met some people that I stayed in touch with for a -- a number of years, and when I came to New York, I was a -- my mother had two sisters who lived in America, who never responded to our letters -- while I was there, let me add, but ultimately did write. Well, anyhow, so I had cousin, picked me up, together with this man Shep Saltzman who brought me here. And he said to me, he says, "I have a few days in New York. If you li -- want to stay with your cousin, come and then come to Greenville in -- in a few days." So I stayed with -- with my cousin. The first experience I had, and this is interesting. They looked at me and says, "Oh you don't look half dead." And I said no. But -- but you -- you look okay. They expected me to be a skeleton. And the only thing we could take with

us was clothing. Then they told me, “Oh, you don’t wear these clothes here, this is -- this is not -- you have to wear American clothes.” But make a long story short, I stayed with them for about two or three days, and then they -- they bought me the ticket, a train ticket, to come to Greenville, South Carolina. My sister stayed in -- in Newark, that’s where my aunt lived, to see -- she says, “Why don’t you go and see what it’s like?” My relatives in Newark said, why don’t you go and work for cousin Joe? We had a cousin who -- who had done quite well, he was an immensely wealthy man, who was a very good person, he gave every -- every immigrant a job. And I said no, I’m going to South Carolina. So they bought me a pack of cigarettes and gave me a sandwich and I had a ticket and I went to Greenville, South Carolina.

Q: Let me just -- before you go on, let me ask you something. When you arrived in New York, or in America, was there anything that really struck you?

A: Oh God, yes. There was freedom. Freedom. Unbelievable feeling. I never had that feeling, ever. I mean, here you come off, after this experience scared to death, especially of uniforms, scared of hear a -- a German word, scared to move, or scared to have somebody walk in back of you, and here it’s just this mass of people, and people are laughing, and -- and it’s -- it’s unbelievable. You have to experience it. This -- this is -- was freedom. It’s a -- it’s a -- it’s a wonderful thing. So this was -- it’s just like new life. If I had been given a -- a transfusion, it wa -- it was wonderful. I have never -- and I -- I was happy from the moment I got off. I was -- I was happy to get on the ship. I never had any doubt. That -- that’s interesting. I never had any fear of the unknown, so to speak. I was so happy, I would have done anything. And when I got off the train in Greenville, for instance, the man who brought me over here, he was at the station. The girl I had met in Vienna, she was at the station, and he -- this Mr. Saltzman says, “Come, I’ll take you to the factory.” But on the way -- this was around noon, he says, “Let me buy you lunch,”

and I said, "No. I -- I -- I'm going to pay for my own lunch." You have to remember, I could get lunch for a nickel or a dime. And he said, "No, let me pay." I said no. I said, "When I can afford to take you for lunch, then you can take me for lunch." I was so concerned not to take charity. I -- I wanted to be on my own. I'm getting a little emotional. So I got in -- I -- I -- I paid for my soup, and then about noontime I went to the factory and I started working right then, immediately. And they put me in the shipping department because his office was on the same floor as the shipping department, and besides that, in order to sweep floors you don't have to be fluent in English. I had learned a little English by the way, from the time I knew that I was coming until I got here, I learned enough to say hello, good-bye, I love you, or I see you later, you know, I -- I wouldn't get lost. But anyhow, so I started working in the shipping department, sweeping floors, carrying boxes and that sort of thing. A very interesting thing happened to me the next day. I get a call from the office, paging Max Heller, come to the office. Scared to death. I come to the office and she says to me, a judge is here to see you, Judge Plyler. I said, oh my God, they're going to send me back. That's the first thing I thought of. There was something wrong. And here is this tall, handsome man, and he introduces himself and he said, "I am Judge Plyler, I have come to welcome you." Excuse me. He says, "I'm -- I'll be president of a university this fall, and I want you to think of my home as your home. I will see that you learn to speak English, we have students here that'll help you." And that was my welcome. It means so much. A simple act of kindness can undo bitter things. Just reaching out. So, that was my beginning in Greenville. My sister came several weeks later. I lived with the -- with the family for a week. And I -- by the way, my first paycheck was nine dollars and 90 cents. It was really 10 dollars, but 10 cents was for Social Security. And I worked seven days a week, maybe 70 - 80 hours a week and I was very happy to. I would have done anything. So, after one week, I lived

with this family who was a superintendent of the factory. Came the end of the week, I said, "I want to pay you." "No," he says, "I don't want you to pay me." I says, "I'm not going to stay free, I -- I have money. I have nine -- I have nine dollars and 90 cents." I said, "I want to pay you or else I leave." He says, "No, you cannot pay me." So I had found out there was another Jewish family who took in borders and they charged seven dollars a week to be a border. So I moved in with them, I paid my seven dollars, and I saved about a dollar, a dollar and a half a week out of the difference. And then, ultimately, I moved with the family that brought me here. And they were wonderful to me, absolutely wonderful. And he gave my daughter -- my sister a job, and my sister came over and we both stayed with them. And -- and I insisted that I pay them. And I said, I will not -- and I did. And so she worked in the office, I worked in the shipping department, and I'll never forget -- I remember a -- a few months after I came here -- I used to listen to the radio a great deal, this is how I learned -- I went to movies, which were 10 cents, I think, but listened to the radio and I I -- I learned by the sound, and -- English and -- and it -- it didn't take me that long. So one day I learned that there was a bill in the Congress -- I heard that on the radio, to have a minimum wage. And it was to be 25 cents an hour, for 48 hours, I think, and time and a half over that. And I says, oh my God, 48 times 25 is 14 dollars, I make 10, and overtime? I was all for it. And I'll never forget that, the republican -- I didn't know the difference between democrats or republicans. The democrats, however, I learned, proposed the minimum wage, and the republicans were -- opposed it. That's when I became a democrat by the way. I fig -- I figured I'll make 14 dollars an hour. And -- and of course the bill -- bill went through, and interestingly enough, after 48 hours, I checked out the time clock, I didn't get time and a half, but they gave me money to have supper with. And my work, I made progress in my work. A few months after I was in the shipping department, the foreman in the shipping department left. And

so I went to Mr. Saltzman, I said, "I'd like to have his job." He says, "How can you have his job, you can't speak English." I said, "I'll show them what to do." He said, "Okay." I mean really, this is how it happened. And I became foreman in the shop. Then ultimately my parents came over and he gave my father a job. And my mother and father moved to Greenville. Ironically, I became my father's boss. It was tragic. I mean, he was a man, he was 50 -- he was 50 years old when he came here, and here I was, 19 at that time. And I told him what to do, and he schlepped the boxes just like I did. Never complained, never. It wa -- never a -- not for a moment did we complain. So we moved into an apartment and ultimately I was able to buy a car, and a -- I made progress in my work. The internal sales manager left. I was lucky, they were all leaving, and I -- again I went to -- to the owner of the business, I said, "Give me a chance for this." He says, "But how you gonna correspond with customers, you have -- I said, don't worry, I'll learn." So I would stay every night, and I go through the files and I memorized letters. And I found out after awhile, well, if you have 10 letters, different situations, pretty much that's it. So I gave numbers to the letters and I had a secretary that would type them, and I'd say number two, number three. And this is -- and I was very fortunate with -- given an opportunity. I also learned that if you want something, you have to ask for it. That man was wonderful to me. The day I met him, I said, "I'll never leave you unless I can go in business for myself. That's the only time when -- when I will leave you." Well, Trude in the meantime -- you remember Trude, came to America. She had a much harder time than I did getting out. She escaped to Belgium and had terrible experiences. And in 1942, we were -- we were married. She came to America in 1940, and we married in 1942. And her mother and father came to -- came to Greenville with her, and her uncle did. This same man, this Mr. Saltzman who had given a job to my father, to my sister, now he gave a job to her father and her uncle. He was a -- this man was -- was an angel. He rests in

peace, I can tell you that. Then, after -- I made my -- and Trude, my wife, she worked in the factory. She -- she worked in the office.

Q: Can I just ask what -- when did your parents finally get out?

A: In November of 1938, yeah. So the whole family, we were all working at the shirt factory.

And -- and I had made progress there, I -- I was there -- after six years, seven years, I became a -- a vice president of the company. He was very good to me, he -- he said, "I'll let you buy one percent of the business, and the way you pay for it is from the profit." And so I owned one percent of the company. Ultimately I did go in business for myself in 1946. I went in business, I left him. He was, I would say rightfully so, he was upset, because he had been wonderful to me. But I always wanted to be in business for myself, and we had saved up about 10,000 dollars, because every time I was promoted, I would get a very nice increase, and my wife worked, and I worked, and we -- we were careful. W-We never had a credit -- a charge card until we had enough money to know that we can pay. So anyhow, I went in business with a partner in 1946, and went into the shirt business in a different city because I didn't want to be competitive. And after two years we split. And he remained with the business, and I had more money than I thought ever existed, because we had done well in those two years. But as partners we did not get along, and we had a buy or sell agreement. So after I sold my share of the business, a few days later I went in business for myself, and my only partner was my wife. I started a company called Maxon shirt company, and that was in 1948. And the company did well, and we, in the meantime we had three children, three wonderful children, two daughters and a son. We had bought our own home. It was modest, and -- but we paid for it. And so I went into business, as I said myself, and that was in 1948. 14 years later I sold that business, and that was a philosophical decision. First of all we learned that you don't worship money. And Trude and I felt the same way about

it. I had met a friend of mine who had very bad business problems. And he -- I noticed that he was really beside himself, and I -- I said this -- this -- I just won't let this happen. And so I said, I don't want to be the richest man in the cemetery. And we had a chance to either go public, or sell the business. And I told Trude, I said Trude, "I -- I want to sell. How do you feel about it?" And she says, "If that's what you want. What are you going to do?" I said, "Don't worry." So in 1962, after in business 14 years, I sold the business. And I stayed with the business for five years, I had a contract. I was active in the community as soon as I could. My first experience in community work was with a group of Christian women who were interested to do something about first and youthful offenders. It was my first involvement, and I became deeply interested in that when we were able to get laws changed where youthful offenders were separated from hardened criminals. And I continued to be quite active in the community, including, of course, the synagogue, president of the synagogue and every Jewish organization. And then one day I received a call saying there's a rumor that you are interested to run for mayor. I thought -- that had never, never occurred to me. But I had been involved do something about housing for the poor. I became very interested in that, and I started a housing foundation. And wherever I turned, I found that the government is involved. And I said no, I -- I'm not going to run for mayor, but maybe I'll run for city council, and I did. And so I was elected for -- on a two year term. And then after two years the -- the term of the mayor was up. And I -- I ran for mayor and I was elected, about 70 percent of the vote. Interestingly enough, I ran as a democrat, I had no opposition from the republicans, but I had oppositions from the democrats, and they -- the fellow who ran against me came to me one day, and he says, "You know, God came to me and said that I should run against you." This is the truth. And I says, "Well God never said anything to me about you." Well, make a long story short, I -- I was elected, and I was mayor for a -- two four year terms, eight years. I also ran

for the Congress. At the end of -- we -- we -- I proposed the term limitations. I felt like eight years is plenty, and so I could not run again and this -- the congressional seat was open, and so I ran for that. And I won the primary, but I lost the election. Some of that experience was anti-Semitic. I had -- I had some anti-Semitic experiences. I'm not saying that's why I lost, but the fact is -- what happened was 30 days before the election a third candidate entered and he, on Thursday before the election he called a news conference saying that Max Heller is not fit to serve because he does not believe in Christ. And when you go to Washington, in time of need, who are you going to call on? And I -- I thought this was ridiculous, everybody knew that I was Jewish, and -- and I -- I really -- I said -- my response was that people are not going to believe any of -- I mean, make this an issue. My wife told me, she says, "You're making a mistake, you ought to really fight this hard." I said, "Look, it's Thursday, the election is Tuesday." Well, make a long story short, I -- I lost the election by maybe two percent, and then consequently I was asked by the governor of the state if I would serve as chairman of the state development board -- economic development, which is equivalent to secretary of commerce. And I did that -- we did that, I should say, for four years. And that was a very good experience. And then consequently of course, came home, came back home. We lived in -- in the capital. Our children grew up, we -- we had wonderful, wonderful family. We now have 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild, and two great-grandchildren on the way, and we have -- we had a wedding not long ago, one of our granddaughters. We have another one coming up in four weeks. We've been very fortunate. We have good children, we have good grandchildren, and I must say that they -- if there's one thing that they have done that I am proud of, there is no intolerance, no bigotry in those children or grandchildren. None. None whatsoever. And they've had some experiences where -- one of my grand -- one of my children came home from school crying and says, so and so said that I

killed Christ. But it didn't -- that did not change their lives. So they grew up very, very good -- I have a lot of -- very, very much to be grateful for, and I am. I am very grateful. I've devoted, I'd say, the last 30 years of my life -- I should say we, because my wife is the same way, for the community. And I've had no regrets to be out of business. I got enough money when we sold the business to manage it careful. And we've had no [indecipherable]. I'm not the richest man in the cemetery, I never want to be. And we -- we thank every God -- every day that we are here, we are grateful. And we've told that to -- to our children. We tell it to -- we -- both my wife and I, we speak in schools, we speak in churches. And I think it's important that people hear this message. We often think that when we are dead, when this generation dies, it becomes a history in the books, or on videotape. And I think that's one reason I consider it very important to do this interview, because this should not be forgotten. I wish that we had today copies of interviews that were done hundreds of years ago. All we have is mouth to ear, and written. And somehow, written history is not as powerful as when you can see it, or hear it. And I respect what is being done today, so that the -- the world should not forget. There has to be a lesson in all of that. I don't know -- we often wonder how -- how -- really, how did this happen? We lost 90 people in the Holocaust, 90 of our family were killed. One cousin survived in Czechoslovakia. She and four of her siblings and her mother and father were alive until the day when the Americans -- and they were in Theresienstadt, and the day when the Americans came in, the Nazis took trucks and ran over her family and everyone was killed except she. How in the world? How can we forget that? And as I said before, these are the very same people, Germany and Austria, and for that matter Poland, the Poles did their share of anti-Semitism. They had more churches. The Viennese loved music, and they -- they -- they produced some of the finest writers in the world, a -- the Germans did. And these are the very same people who perfected the art of killing. And

nobody can tell me that people didn't know about this. When you think about it, hundreds and thousands of concentration camps, it took architects, it took engineers, it took builders, carpenters, guards, railroad conductors, truck drivers. Millions of people were involved to commit this crime. And nobody can tell me that people didn't know about it. They should feel guilty. The new generation of Germans, I really think, is trying to overcome this. The Austrians have not learned quite as well. And yet, I find it very disturbing that in an election not long ago in -- in Austria, about 20 percent of the vote went to the Nazi movement. And that's bothersome. That's something that we need to be concerned about. I -- I'd like to -- I think this could be the end of my -- of the interview, unless you have something else that you want to ask me. I don't know how we as a people can impart to others that there is so much good in the world, and yet there is so much evil. And what is so important, that the good overcomes the evil. Good people can become bad, and I always say, find the good people, find those and protect them. But also, speak up when you hear bigots. And what we have to remember, hatred is hatred. If there is hatred against minorities because of their color, it's the same as hatred because of religion. And we, as Jews, especially those of us who survived, have a responsibility, we have a duty, if nothing else, to speak up. Speak up and help others to overcome this. If there is nothing else we've done, I think that that -- that has to be a mission. So, we have not lost faith, we have not lost faith in people, and we have not lost in faith in our religion. I feel very good with what I am. And I'm very grateful. And if my children or grandchildren, or great-grandchildren and my wife see this, I just want you know that I love you.

Q: I actually do have a few questions. Do you want to take a break, or do you want me to --

A: No.

Q: I want to go back to I think when you first came to South Carolina. I know that Americans can be insular, and I'm -- and you told me about the -- the really wonderful, moving experiences you had with some individuals. But when you came into this factory, and I suspect especially because you did well, did you ever feel resented because you were a foreigner?

A: No.

Q: Because you were a Jew?

A: No.

Q: I mean you --

A: Not in the factory, no.

Q: In Greenville, it -- I -- I doubt there was a huge Jewish community. I mean in -- or even a -- a huge European community for that matter.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: I'm just wondering what that felt like, if you ever felt different, or --

A: No, not -- not really. You have to remember, I would have scrubbed floors and sw -- and sleep on the ground. I was so happy to be there. I never -- I never felt -- i-in fact, I must say that - I'll never forget this, I was asked to make a talk, just after I'd been here a few months, and it was to a Masonic group. And I tried to tell them about the difference between America and what happened in Europe. And at the end of the talk, they passed a hat. And they presented me something like 30 dollars. Well, that was a lot of money then. And they said, "I want you -- I want you to have this." And I said, "I -- I cannot accept that," I says, "I have a job, and I'm not hungry," I said. "But if you let me give this to a Jewish charity, I accept it." And they said, "We are honored to do that." I once spoke at a church and I -- and I tried to bring out the difference between America and here, and -- and some of -- always was a question and answer period. And

somebody said to me, "Oh this -- America's not as free as you think." And I said, "The very fact that you can get up and say this without fear of being arrested, tells me that this is a free country." So, no I -- I -- most people were -- tried to be very helpful. The newspaper -- you know, we were an oddity in a way, because we were the first refugees, and so the newspaper was very interested. One of the pictures that I cherish that I have was a picture with a policeman who put his arm around me. That meant a great deal to me. Here was a policeman who -- who was my friend. We --

Q: So there never was any cultural adjustment, or you were never ostracized, or --

A: No, no, no. When Trude and I, after we became engaged, we were looking for an apartment and we saw an apartment we liked, and I did not hear from the real estate man for a number of weeks and I called him finally. And I says, "What happened?" And he said, "Well I don't know how to tell you this, but this man will not rent to Jews." And I was -- I was shocked. I was shocked. And so, we went out looking for other apartments and we saw one apartment in a wonderful section of Greenville, and we went in there, introduced ourselves, the lady's name was Keller. And showed me the apartment, and I said -- and she told me how much it was, and I said, "My -- we can't afford that." I think it was like 80 dollars a month. And she says, "Pay me less, because I -- I li -- I want you. I want you to be here. I -- I like you both." And I said, "We are Jewish." She says, "That's wonderful." So, the experience I had before was offset by that. So there was very -- you know, I had very -- of course there was anti-Semitism. Some people had never seen a Jew. They thought we wear horns, and things like that, and th-there are always -- there always will be -- it's a question of degree, but no, I -- and when I ran for public office, yes, there was some anti-Semitism, there was no question about it. A lot of it was whispered, and you know, people say, well, you don't want the Jew to run this city, blah, blah, blah, but 70 percent

of the people voted for me and the other 30 percent did not vote against me because I was Jewish, they voted against me because maybe they didn't like me, what I proposed. I was very open that I was for integration. Totally open. And I -- you know, I was shocked, frankly, when I came to South Carolina to find the way it was segregated. Blacks were not allowed to work in the same room with whites. The toilets were marked white and -- and -- and colored. There was a water fountain that the sign was -- said colored. I thought it was pink water. And -- and I was shocked by that. And when I had -- when we had our own factory, one day I just took down the signs. And you know what happened? Nothing. People came to work the next day, they -- they sat next to each other in the canteen, they used the same bathrooms, they worked next to each other. Nobody complained. I think some people were relieved that this was over with. So my -- my experience there was a great -- much greater shock than any kind of anti-Semitism. A-As I said, when I ran for office, I was very open with what I want to accomplish. And we integrated the city departments, we created commissions that were totally integrated. We had a bricklayer next to a banker and they got along beautiful. Th-This is -- this made me feel very good, I mean, very happy about that.

Q: I was going to ask you in terms of your -- both Jewish community and civic work, what you feel were your most meaningful accomplishments. I think especially given your background.

A: One, I was mayor. I -- I'll tell you what meant the most to me, that's -- but -- but -- I get a -- I get credit for having a rebirth of downtown, and I have -- I can show you newspaper articles, and people have been very nice, honorary doctorates and all that. What meant the most to me, was we had a -- a -- a public bus system. While I was mayor, the people that ran the company came in one day and gave us 30 day notice that they were going to quit unless we -- we subsidize it unlimited. And I said, "Well we -- we can't do that." I called a meeting of churches, and I said,

“I know you have buses. Would you lend us some buses?” And I had more buses than we needed. I went to the technical school, and asked them, “Would you train people to drive buses?” 30 days after they gave me notice, and they walked out, we had a bus system running. Some of the buses had signs, Jesus saves and all that. People laughed about it. That Christmas there was a parade and I -- I was -- my wife and I were in a open car, and what touched me more than anything -- poor people that had to use these buses depended on going to work, and people would yell out, thank you for the buses. That really touched the people. Whatever else happened, of course it was meaningful and I feel good about it, but that was the thing that brought me closest to the people.

Q: It sounds like you were also active in civil rights efforts [indecipherable]

A: Yes, and I -- and I s -- I still am. Right now I co-chair a small committee, a bi-racial committee. We've had some problems in the jail and that sort of thing. Yeah, I -- I've always been. I've been involved in -- I've been -- been involved in education for many years. Fighting for better education. This judge who came to see me was -- became president of a university called Furman University, and I've been involved with them for many years on their advisory board, and we have a scholarship in the name of the girl that brought me here. We have a scholarship in the name of the man who brought me here, and we have a scholarship in Trude and my name. And -- and that -- I think that's -- that was important to us. Education is. And so we continue, we're -- both of us continue to be active, and why not? I live there. This is my life.

Q: It's interesting that --

Q2: One minute.

Q: How many?

Q2: One minute.

Q: Well, one minute, we might as well stop. So [indecipherable]. But --

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: It's okay. Couple more questions. We talked a little bit about some of your political accomplishments and what's meant a lot to you. The -- I'm wondering if you were impacted slightly differently because of your experience by -- by pivotal events of the last 50 years, whether it's the civil rights movement, the -- the wars today, the ethnic cleansing today, the Eichmann trial.

A: Mm. Mm-hm.

Q: If any of -- or even the -- this -- the [indecipherable] sort of birth of the state of Israel, if there are any of these events that were especially powerful to you? It's a broad question, I know.

A: Well, let me -- let me start off with the birth of Israel, because I think that was -- that was the turning point for the Jewish community of the world. I really do. Suddenly, every Jew was so proud to be a Jew. Really proud. And the -- there were -- people -- there were many, unfortunate, that were not proud, they -- and I can understand that too. They'd had nothing to hold onto and suddenly here's a state, a state of Israel. So that was -- that was a joy. People would come up to me on the street and congratulate me, as if I had anything to do with it. We're so proud. And we were so proud, there was -- and -- and this is one reason I -- I -- I say we must -- we must support the -- the people of Israel. They're the ones that fought a battle for us that we did not fight. My children and grandchildren have asked me, how come you didn't fight? I said, that's a tough question. One grandchild especially, Danny. And it's a tough, tough answer. And I said, "We had nothing to fight with." Nothing. We were like cows going to slaughter. And here is this state, here this -- this new Jew, who is fighting. So that -- that is a great, great, great happening in the history of the Jews, very dramatic. Without a doubt, that -- that's been one of the events. But of course other events in my life are -- are really very personal. Getting married, having children,

having grandchildren, an-and that sort of thing. I -- I remember at the United Nations there was a -- there was a resolution passed that was very, very anti-Israel. And that particular day -- I was mayor then -- I greeted several thousand Baptists who had come to a convention, and I was a few minutes late getting there because I listened to the news program in the morning. And when I got up to greet them, I says, "I have to pour my heart out to you. I am late because of what happened at the United Nations. How dare they did to this remnant of our people? God's people." And I said, "You of all people, you who are good Christians, you have to help me." I got a standing ovation. And the next day -- and I still have a copy of it, the newspaper wrote -- had -- had an editorial [indecipherable] Heller gives Hell to United Nation, bravo, or something like that. That was -- that was a good feeling, to speak up, but it was also a good feeling to be supported, then. So the -- these are [indecipherable] it's so -- so hard to remember all the different things that happened to you. I just happened to think of this.

Q: I'm just thinking about all of the -- the -- the wars today and the ethnic cleansing in various parts of the world, does that stir up anything in you?

A: Well, they asked me -- it does -- it does, it's -- it's just when -- when it happened in Yugoslavia and -- and Bosnia-Herzegovina and all that, Trude and I belonged to a group called Renaissance, and we -- once a year there's a meeting in Hilton Head of hundreds of people. In fact, President Clinton, this is where I met him the first time. And this was -- that particular time I -- I was asked to have a -- say something, a speech before this group. And what I spoke of -- about, this Holocaust, I called it a Holocaust. And I said, just because they are not Jewish, does not mean that it's not a Holocaust. And we don't do a thing about it. And this is tragic. And this was very, very, very important to me to be able to say that. And there were governors there, and - and Clinton was there. And there were mayors there, and there were politicians there, and

writers there, and it had to be said. This, I think, was a bad thing that the United States waited that long. Because we of all people, we Americans of all people, must understand that we cannot let this happen to others. And I'm not saying that you go to war everywhere, but there are many ways that we can assert our leadership. We are -- we are the leaders of this world, and I get passionate about that. There is killings going on every day, whether it's in Rwanda, or whether it's the Hutus and the Tutsis and what have you. And we have to do everything we can to -- to stop that. That's an obligation that we have. We are doing a lot. I would say that the United States is really the one country in the world that is doing something about it. Others totally ignore it, but we don't, I mean we send help, we've sent our soldiers, we -- and we still have soldiers over there. But on the other hand we still have soldiers in Japan to protect the Japanese. We still have soldiers in Germany. We are part of NATO. And so when people criticize that we have soldiers in Yugoslavia to keep the peace, why is that bad, and it's not bad to keep them in Japan? So you asked me the right question, I guess. I -- I really feel very strong about that.

Q: One more question, it's this -- it's a slightly different.

A: Let me just add one thing --

Q: Yes.

A: -- but to be perfectly honest, I have been upset with some of my friends -- ne -- the -- I'm not that friendly any more, that have -- that are immigrants like I am, like we are, and when this happened in -- in Yugoslavia, who said to me, "This is none of our business. What do we have to do with it?" And I said, "My God, you of all people? You are saying what others said when our people were dying in Europe." That's exactly what they said. And I-I -- I can't understand how people that have been through what we have been -- and -- and they've been through more than

when I think what others suffered, I -- I did not. And yet, they say, oh, it's none of my business, just because they don't feel the pain, and they should feel the pain.

Q: How -- how do you respond to the conditions in Gaza?

A: Well, first of all, Gaza, I -- let -- let the -- the Arabs have Gaza, what's there?. What is there? Nothing. Peace has to become -- has to come to Israel and -- and the Arab nations. What is the answer if it's not peace? You know, what is the alternative? And how long can Israel go on and bleed themselves? And they are bleeding themselves, when -- when such a large portion of their national budget has to go for defense. So peace has to -- has to occur. Both Trude and I were -- were very, very honored to be asked to be present several years ago at the signing here in Washington. And I happened to sit next to an Arab woman, and we both cried. She wanted peace for her people, I wanted peace for my people, and there has to be a way. Land is not that important unless it is part of the national defense. There is no compromise on that. Beyond that, it's only dirt. But the national defense without a doubt, and Israel is -- has to be realistic that Israel is surrounded by -- by many enemies, and it'll take generations, if ever, that this feeling of hatred will change. But there is no answer, other than a -- has to be a peaceful solution. I wish Solomon was back.

Q: Whatever happened to Mary Mills? Did you stay friends with her?

A: Well, at first -- she wrote me by the way, while I was still in Europe. I think you know Shep Saltzman wrote me, "I think you should know that Mary Mills is engaged to be married this fall." Most people thought there was a romance there, and there wasn't. I mean, we didn't even hold hands when we walked. When we first -- when I first came, her husband -- her then became husband, there was some jealousy there, I think, and -- and when Trude and I were married, we didn't -- we s -- once a year we would communicate, and -- but there was a distance at first. But

then, as we had children, and they had children, our children began to meet. And we were -- we became -- we became really good friends. Mary Mills died a few years ago. She was my angel. The beautiful thing about it, she never realized what she had done. To her it was a very natural thing. We're still friendly with one of her daughters who -- who did live in Greenville, but recently moved. So she is done, she's -- her picture is -- is -- I have a picture of my family in our bedroom, but I also have a picture of Mary Mills in that room. I don't want my children ever forget who she was. I want them to know, too. So that's what happened to Mary Mills.

Q: Is there anything else you want to add on?

A: No, really, really not. I -- I think I poured my heart out. I appreciate what you are doing. I think it's very important. I appreciate what the Holocaust Museum is doing for -- not just for -- for Jews, this is a Christian problem as well, the problem that we have. This is a Muslim problem, this is -- whatever happened to us -- us as Jews was -- is also a problem of the world. And the Holocaust Museum can serve to remind people that there can be evil, but also that there can be good. So I -- I want to thank you for the work that you do.

Q: It's my honor. Thank you. Let's see what -- over there --

A: The pictures?

Q: All right Max, go ahead.

A: This is a picture of my grandparents on my mother's side. My grandmother's name was Miriam and my grandfather's name was Samuel Norfin. They lived in Lubachow, Poland.

Q: Do you know what year that is?

A: This -- this was taken maybe -- oh God, I'd say 70 years ago. About 70 years, I would say. Maybe more, maybe more, 80 years ago.

Q: Okay [indecipherable] years ago.

A: Right, I -- I would say that.

Q: Okay, we're rolling. Start any time.

A: This is my mother Leah at a costume ball. She was dressed as a Gypsy, and this was taken about 1900 and -- in the 1920's, so this picture is about 78 years old. This is September 1998. And that was in Vienna at a costume ball.

Q: Right. And stand by [indecipherable] Max, tell us about it.

A: This is a photo of my father when he was in service for the German army in nin -- from between 1914 - 1918. My father is the one sitting on the left, and I assume that this picture was taken 1915, something like that. He, by the way, was wounded in service.

Q: Rolling camera.

A: Here you see my sister Paula on the left side, my mother, of course in the middle, and next me, on the right side. This -- this photo was taken in 1922, I believe. I was about three years old and my sister was five years old. My sister died recently. Her name was Paula.

Q: Okay.

A: This shows me as a happy 10 year old in 1929. It was taken in a park.

Q: Okay, tapes rolling.

A: This shows my wife Trude, the year I met her in 1937 in the summer resort, and I immediately fell in love with her and I still am.

Q: Now is that a photo you took, or --

A: No, no.

Q: Oh.

A: They had it taken on the boat. It was taken by a ship photographer.

Q: All right, go ahead and tell us about [indecipherable]

A: This shows the five young ladies I met in Vienna in 1937. The one on the right side, on the outside is Mary Mills. And she is the one who saved my life. A wonderful person. It was taken on the ship, the Ile de France, which is the same ship that I came over on.

Q: You [indecipherable]

A: Yeah.

Q: You [indecipherable].

A: A-Again on the right side, that's -- it's Mary Mills. She -- she's the one I danced with a whole evening in Vienna on her world tour and she's the one who gave me the -- her address in Greenville, South Carolina, and helped me to come to America.

Q: Okay, any time.

A: This -- this, of course, is our wedding picture, August the second, 1942. It was -- it was a wonderful wedding. It was a small wedding, we only had 38 people at the wedding. And my father-in-law showed me the bill afterwards and it was 38 dollars. The truth.

Q: Wow, can't do that any more. [tape jump]

A: It's beautiful on the screen.

Q: Yeah, these pictures here, it -- it always surprises me that [indecipherable] [technical discussion] There's so many people in here.

A: You better have everybody on that or they'll never forgive me.

Q: Right. I don't think we really can name everybody.

A: No, I'll just tell them who they are.

Q: Cause we can't -- okay, you're just going to go like top, left to right ki-kind of thing?

A: Okay. I -- I'll just tell the occasion.

Q: Okay.

A: This was taken a year ago fro -- [tape break]

Q: Okay, any time.

A: This is a picture of our family taken a year ago for our -- on the occasion of our 55th wedding anniversary. They are our children, our grandchildren, our children's spouses, our grandchildren's spouses, and one great grandchild also seen there, and since then anoth -- two more great-grandchildren are on the way, God willing everything should be well. And there's one other member of the family, our granddaughter -- one of our granddaughters has a serious boyfriend who was not there at the time, and he'll forgive me, I'm sure. It's a beautiful family, we're very lucky.

End of Tape Three

Conclusion of Interview