

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Ernest Loewenstein**  
**October 30, 2001**  
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## **PREFACE**

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## **ERNEST LOEWENSTEIN**

### **October 30, 2001**

#### Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Ernie.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: Welcome to Washington.

A: Thank you.

Q: What we like to start with, just telling me what your name was when you were born, as opposed to what it is now.

A: Ernst Norbert Lowenstein. That's it.

Q: And your name now is?

A: Now we changed it to Ernest Lowenstein.

Q: Right, and you say it differently. And when were you born?

A: May 28<sup>th</sup>, '26, in Koblenz, Germany.

Q: What year?

A: 1926. Quite awhile ago.

Q: Quite awhile ago.

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me something about your -- your family as you were growing up. Tell me about your mother -- talk about your mother first and then we'll talk about your father.

A: Well, my -- my mother was born in Koblenz.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The daughter of a -- of a horse dealer, horse trader. The only daughter, the only child.

Q: Uh-huh. What was her name?

A: Hedwich, Hedwich. She went to a school there, she went to the -- to another college, to a [indecipherable] shula, they called it. She was really an -- an educated woman.

Q: What does it mean to be a horse trader?

A: He dealt in horses.

Q: That's all?

A: That was his --

Q: It was --

A: -- that was his -- his --

Q: And these are working horses, or any kind?

A: These were mostly work horses, yes. That region of Germany there were a lot of vineyards, lot of -- a lot of grapes are grown there, and he would sell horses to the -- to the farmers in the surround area of Koblenz and the Rhine and -- but mostly on the Mosel river. He had a well established business there. He was one of -- of several horse dealers in -- in -- in -- in Koblenz, he was not the only one.

Q: And did your father come from Koblenz also?

A: No, my father came from a small town near Frankfurt.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: His parents also were -- they were cattle dealers, they were not horse dealers. He had two sisters and two brothers. That were -- that --

Q: And how did -- do you know how he met your mother?

A: Do -- I [indecipherable] mostly the marriages, the way I understand were arranged marriages. They met through a-acquaintances, they were introduced.

Q: What's your earliest memory of your mother, what was she like? Do you remember?

A: Well, she was -- she was a terrific mother. She -- she wanted my brother and me to -- not to become cattle or horse dealers, she wanted -- wanted us to go to -- go to the university and -- and -- and become professionals. She -- she worked very hard for us to -- after Hitler came to power, to --

Q: Right.

A: -- get out of Germany.

Q: Was sh -- was she a good humored woman? Did she have a sense of humor? Was she warm? How would you describe her?

A: She was quite strict in a way.

Q: Strict?

A: She was -- oh yes, she was strict. She wouldn't tell us -- let us get away with too many things.

Q: And your brother -- you were born in '26 and your brother was born in '31?

A: He was born in '31, right, right.

Q: And -- and what role does your father play in -- in raising you? Is he more distant than your mother?

A: Well, he was a -- he wasn't home as much. Of course, my mother was home all the time.

Even though she had worked before she got married as a -- as a -- how do you say that? Bilingual secretary for a --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- big concern in -- in Koblenz, a Jewish concern, yeah. And -- but my father was -- he was gone quite a bit, buying horses. He would travel to -- to Belgium and northern Germany, so that

he -- he wasn't always home. But when you compare it to -- to fwa -- to the foot -- to the -- to today --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- he was home quite a bit, yes.

Q: Did -- did you live on a farm with horses?

A: No, no, we lived in the city. Lived in the city and we -- it was a -- a three or four story house and in back of the house there was a courtyard and a good sized barn. We had no land, so to speak. We bought all the feed for the horses, we bought the hay and -- and -- and -- and I remember they used to buy carrots to feed horses. Of all things, carrots. And grain, that we kept in the barn. And there was probably room for -- probably a dozen horses.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: So it's a big barn.

A: Good sized barn, yeah. Yeah, yeah. It was right -- right in -- in the city of Koblenz. And the farmers used to come to our house and pick out the horses that they wanted to buy.

Q: So did -- did you --

A: Now --

Q: Yeah, go ahead.

A: -- my -- when -- when my f-father married my mother, he went into business with -- with my grandfather.

Q: I see.

A: So they were both there. We lived in the same house with my grandparents.

Q: And whose hou -- was that your grandparents' house?

A: It was my grandparents' house, yes. It was quite a large house, there were other people, there were, I think three ap -- three apartments in the house that were rented out.

Q: So who lived on the first floor? Grandparents, or your --

A: No, no, no, in fact, we lived on the same floor.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: On the first floor.

Q: So you lived together with your grandparents?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So did that mean your grandparents took care of you a lot, or not?

A: Oh yes, my -- of course my grandmother was there all the time, yes.

Q: Right.

A: And then -- and my mother and grandmother, yes, my grandfather was there. He was an old man already, what I considered an old man.

Q: What do you -- how do you -- how old do you think he was?

A: Well, as far back as I can remember, he was in his 70's.

Q: Uh-huh. Did you and your brother go out to the barn and take care of the horses as well, or were you not allowed there?

A: Not really. We had the -- we had a hired man, Konesh, a hired man that --

Q: Was that his name?

A: Can't think of his name any more. He was -- he also -- he was not just an ordinary hired man, he also helped in the business, he -- he would deliver the horses, on foot, he didn't get truck like -- like you do today. But my grandfather was still active in the business, but my dad was really the -- the dealer.

Q: Right.

A: The dealer. And of course we went to school, went to kindergarten. And --

Q: Did you like school?

A: Did I like school? I thought it was not necessary.

Q: From the beginning you thought it wasn't necessary?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you -- was your bro -- was your brother the same way once he started?

A: No, he was more --

Q: He -- he liked it more.

A: He -- he -- more studious than I was.

Q: Did that disappoint your mother that you didn't like school?

A: I'm sure, I'm sure. I'm sure it did.

Q: Was -- was yours a religious home, Ernie?

A: No. Well, we kept all holidays. We kept the Sabbath, of course, we kept a kosher home.

Q: Oh, you did?

A: We did keep a kosher home, but I wouldn't call it religious. We went to -- Friday nights we went to shul, Saturdays we went to shul. And still we were not [indecipherable] have a memory, there were many more religious people in -- in Koblenz than -- than we were.

Q: But what you say sounds fairly religious --

A: Yeah, yeah --

Q: -- you did a lot, right?

A: -- to what -- what you -- yeah, that's compared to today, oh yeah, yes, we only ate kosher meat and kept the flesh thing and [indecipherable] things separate. Went to Hebrew school.



Q: Oh, you did?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you like that school?

A: Not as mu -- it was a lot more la -- lax.

Q: Right.

A: Of course that -- that was interrupted fairly early.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Let me -- let me ask you just a couple of other questions about the house. Who cooked in the house, did your mother or your grandma?

A: Grandmother, yes, my grandmother.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, she --

Q: Was she a good cook?

A: She was a -- oh yeah, she was a good cooker. And like my -- like I said, my mother kept the books for the business.

Q: So she worked for the business as opposed to working --

A: But -- but -- but -- yeah, but she also -- she also helped in the house, I'm sure.

Q: Who were your friends, besides -- well, I don't know if your brother was a friend, he was so much younger at a certain point.

A: He was a lot younger than I was, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: I had my -- the kids that I hung out with, were mostly the kids on the -- on the street, that lived on the same street I did. And I knew everybody on -- on the street and everybody knew me. Couldn't get out of school early enough so we could go and play, boys, girls. Played a lot of soccer.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I ha -- my best friend was a -- a Jewish boy, Manfred Ramla His parents came from Kolomaya, from Poland. He was my best friend, and he had a brother that was the same age as my -- my brother, they were friends. Of course, I knew all the Jewish boys and girls, but we didn't get close until, oh, probably '37, until we couldn't go to school any more, and aft -- and then we -- on -- on weekends most of them came to my house.

Q: The kids came to your house, yeah.

A: The kids did, the kids my age, yes.

Q: Before '37 or '38, were you friends with non-Jewish kids as well?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, yeah [indecipherable]

Q: And it was an easy relationship?

A: Oh yeah. I mean, it was, you got just a few little o -- pals, and got along well. Of course there were always, with some -- some always had remarks about my Jewishness, but the kids are -- not the kids on my street, the kids away from my street, they would call me dirty Jew bastard, you know, and things like that. But for some reason, I didn't take much of that. I always -- if somebody would call me that, I'd let them know I didn't like it.

Q: And how would you --

A: In wo -- not only vocally.

Q: You beat them up?

A: I tried, yes.

Q: Did you succeed?

A: Most of the time.

Q: Most of the --

A: Yes, yeah. There was one kid that I played a lot with. [indecipherable] Fogel, now the name comes to me, [indecipherable] Fogel, yes. We always played soccer together, and he was really a -- a stronger kid than me. But -- and he hardly ever said anything, but when he did, there was always -- I would never -- I ha -- I never took it, I nev -- I always -- we dropped everything and we -- we hit each other, you know.

Q: And did he stop then [indecipherable]

A: But he [indecipherable] he stop, he stop.

Q: Do you think it was serious for him, or it was just a game?

A: No, no, it was a -- it was a game for him, it was a way to get -- if he didn't get his way, it was a way to get back at me. But there w -- there -- there was definitely anti-Semitism, but before '37 -- I think it was thi -- '37 - '36, it didn't affect me very much. After that, it --

Q: After that, it --

A: After that it did.

Q: After you were taken out of school.

A: After we had --

Q: Did you -- did you notice uniformed soldiers, or people in funny uniforms that you hadn't seen before, after '33?

A: Yes, even e -- even the -- the people that lived upstairs, they had -- they had -- had a son, must have been in the early 20's, he was with the arbeitsdienst. That was even before the SR at that

time. He would come in uniform always. And -- but he -- [indecipherable] they lived in our house, we were never close with them, and especially not him. But they didn't bother us.

Q: Didn't bother you.

A: Didn't bother us, until, like I say, '30 -- '37 - '38.

Q: So in '37, you're 11 years old, right? And that's the end of school, is that right?

A: Ki-Kicked us out of school [indecipherable]

Q: So it's -- in some way were you happy, because you didn't like school so much?

A: No.

Q: You weren't happy.

A: No, no, no.

Q: How did you find out? Did you go to school and the teacher said you can't come? How did you know to -- not to go?

A: Don't really remember, just that I know we couldn't go to school any more.

Q: Right. So when -- go ahead.

A: I remember my -- I heard them talk about it, that -- ma -- my father talked to -- I was supposed to go to the -- in ginsk -- gymnasium, and he talked to -- he knew one of the teachers, and [indecipherable] says, just send him to me, you know, I will teach him. But that -- I never did.

Q: So you -- uh-huh.

A: I never did go be -- I -- things really got serious by that time, and --

Q: Did -- did your mother do anything with you at home in terms of schooling?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no. We -- we tried desperately to get out of Germany. They closed our business down.

But I think that wasn't until -- we was closed down [indecipherable]

Q: '38, November '38.

A: -- '38, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: That wasn't until '38.

Q: '38. So --

A: But they might have shut us down before that already, I -- I am not sure any more.

Q: But you still stayed in --

A: But we couldn't do business any more.

Q: But you still stay in the house?

A: I stayed in the house, played with the kids on the street.

Q: Right. Do you recall that your father all of a sudden is staying home and he's not working?

A: Oh yes, it was -- I -- I remember that some business was done anyway at first, until they really clamp -- because farmers would -- they would come and wa -- wanted to do some -- some of them --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- would come and wanted to do business with us. Then there were some that probably owed us some money that -- that didn't come any more.

Q: Was -- was this business mainly with non-Jews, or is this a very mixed business?

A: All with non-Jews.

Q: All with non-Jews.

A: All with non-Jews, yes, as far as I remember, yeah --

Q: Right.

A: -- yes. There was a -- a market in -- in -- in Koblenz that my father and grandfather used to go to and I remember in the 1 -- the later years my -- his -- his brothers and cousins that were cattle dealers would still come to the market and they would -- they would sometimes bring the cows to our barn until the market opened up.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But -- but that -- the reason for that was because they couldn't -- it was difficult for them to bring the cattle to the -- to the market.

Q: Right.

A: And then some of the farmers would come to us. I remember one in particular, he -- the -- Mr. Ebart, he was the mayor of Atsaport. And they had vineyards and he al -- he came on his bicycle, saw us always, and he would do business with us.

Q: So, during this period before Kristallnacht, we -- I mean, you don't know when it was that your father th -- when the business stops. Is there a lot of talking between you and your mother and father about getting out of Ger -- do you know that they're trying to get out?

A: Oh -- oh, oh yes, I -- I remember them, my -- my -- especially my mother writing to South America. There was talk about going to Chile, going to Ecuador. We tried to come to the United States, we had relatives here that had immigrated to the United States early -- early on, and both on my mother's side and my father's side. But they made it so difficult for us, so hard. The United St -- especially the United States did. There was a quota, you couldn't -- and -- and you -- you -- you had to have guarantees that after we -- if -- if you would -- if you would get to the United States we wouldn't be a burden to the government.

Q: Right.

A: So that we had -- I remember we had -- my mother had cousins in -- in Saint Louis, and my father had cousins in Oklahoma, and they both guaranteed for us, and still we --

Q: Still you couldn't.

A: -- we couldn't come. We d -- really didn't want to go to South America. And as it finally turned out, we didn't. But --

Q: Was your mother fluent in English as well as German?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, yes, yes. She -- she took seven years of French and, I don't know, four or five years of -- of English. And she worked as a -- as a bilingual secretary for this -- for this paper factory. They made e-envelopes as far as I know, envelopes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they exported all over the world.

Q: Was your family different from other families in thinking so quickly about getting out of Germany? What -- what --

A: Well --

Q: What do you think it was?

A: That we thought that early to get out?

Q: Cause not everyb -- yes, because not everybody thought that they needed to get out.

A: I -- there were -- maybe it had something to do because we had family in this country already and we couldn't do any business any more. I -- we were not well to do. We were, would say middle -- middle class people. We had to do something to make a living.

Q: Right.

A: I know that some of my Jewish friends, their parents didn't think Hitler would last long, didn't -- they never got out. In fact, my other fr -- maybe 20 kids my age, my brother and I, we

were the only ones -- well, Samuel [indecipherable] got out. Samuel Lintner got out, and Arthur [indecipherable] got out. I think those were --

Q: That's all.

A: -- out of 20 some odd kids, just the four of us got out, the rest of them all perished.

Q: And do you recall talking with other kids about your trying to get out, that the --

A: Oh yes, oh yeah.

Q: -- and saying to them, you should --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- you should all get out too?

A: Well, we were kids.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was an adventure for us all.

Q: You weren't afraid.

A: Weren't really afraid, we were very uneasy, but we didn't realize, until my father came back from the concentration camp, from Dachau.

Q: Yeah, let's talk a little bit about -- do you remember when your father was arrested?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And this is before Kristallnacht? Do you remember?

A: It was right around that time --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- that he -- they came and arrested him, yes.

Q: And did you see that? Did you see people coming?

A: Yes.



Q: Who came?

A: They came and arrested him. I remember my mother sending me down to where he was supposed to be, and I remember going there. I wanted to find out why, how, where he was.

Thought -- it's so long ago, I don't -- the particulars I don't remember, you know.

Q: Do you remember going by yourself?

A: By myself, yes.

Q: Was this to a jail, do you think?

A: To a place, yes, to -- wa -- I-I didn't know, it was a big building.

Q: Right. And did you go inside?

A: I went inside and I talked to somebody, yes. But the -- they send me -- they send me back home, and --

Q: So you didn't see your fa -- you didn't see your father.

A: I didn't get to see my father. Now, I don't remember that -- that he came home again and then they re-arrested him. I know at about that time he was sent to Dachau.

Q: And do you remember when you found out that he was -- was there some communication, or was it a rumor that he was sent? Do you have an idea?

A: My mother knew.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: How we found out, I don't remember.

Q: Right. So that -- it must have been awful in the house when he was --

A: Was -- that was very bad, yes, it was terrible for us. Course we didn't know what went on there, and we didn't know until after he came home. We -- we knew somebody that my mother -- that was supposed to be with the gest -- Gestapo, with -- with -- with -- or something like that.

They had a cigar store where my dad, he smoked cigars, so he bought the cigars, always. His son supposedly had connections, and I remember my mother bringing him a lot of money, how much I don't know, to help us get my father released from Dachau. I remember a lot of the Jewish men at that time, maybe all of them, were arrested. And after a -- after, I think it was six weeks, he did come home, but that was after Kristallnacht, I remember. Now, Kristallnacht, we were one of the few, maybe -- I have no record of this, but they didn't come to our house, but -- or to our Jewish friends homes, they were all -- I remember going to a close friend of my parents, to their house, and I remember what it looked like in there. It was, yeah, just -- they destroyed everything, even the -- they went through closets and cut the -- cut the clothes down, they -- they -- they pulled -- i-in the kitchen they pulled the cabinets down and -- and -- and it was a wreck, I remember that. I come back to this because I don't want to -- I want -- want you know about that, I don't want to forget it. But when my father came back, we didn't know when or -- I -- all I remember is I looked down and he looked like a walking skeleton, like a walking dead man. He was quite a robust man and he had -- he ha -- was in terrible shape when he -- when he came back. Of course he was not -- he wasn't supposed to tell an -- anybody, you know, what -- what happened, but the stories we heard from him, I -- I don't remember if he told us that right away, or if he told us that later, the things that went on in Dachau, that they were -- but that time it was wintertime, they were -- the only clothes they had one was their underwear and a -- a pajama-like -- like outfit. They were up in the morning at -- very early in the morning and stood at attention for two hours. Some were not able to do that and they collapsed. Some had -- remember him telling us they -- they took fire hoses and stuck it in their mouth and drowned them. I remember my cousin Siggy was in Dachau and he was in the same barracks. Seems like it was num -- number -- barrack number nine, and the -- the political prisoners that were there were the -- they were the -- what's

the right word for that, they were the -- they were in command of the barracks. His name was Bellow, nickname, probably a nickname they gave him. Starved him, beat him. But anyway, he -  
- he -- he got in -- he -- he got out and came home.

Q: Can I -- can I go back for a second --

A: Sure.

Q: -- to Kristallnacht.

A: Sure, there are a lot of things that I forget.

Q: Didn't something happen with your grandfather's -- didn't somebody come into your house, some thugs, that they were going to do something and your grandfather somehow stopped them because he had helped --

A: Well --

Q: Do you recall that?

A: -- you know that -- I don't.

Q: Mm.

A: Very [indecipherable] possible.

Q: Cause it just seems odd that they wouldn't -- they would not come into your house.

A: They did -- they had [indecipherable] and I remember they had a -- they put a -- a -- a yellow plaque on our -- we had a big -- big two iron [indecipherable] big gate in front that went to the back -- into our backyard, and two SR men stood there to make sure that -- that nobody would come to see us. They -- they probably stayed there for several days, but they never came to the house, they never touched our furniture. As far as I know we -- we were the only ones. We might not have been, you know, but because all of my -- the home -- my friend's homes were -- were destroyed.

Q: Do you remember that night at all? Do you remember being afraid, do you remember staying in your house in your -- i-in some special place in the house?

A: I don't.

Q: You don't. Do you remember hearing noises?

A: The next day I -- I -- no, no, I -- I --

Q: You don't remember screaming --

A: -- I don't remember, no.

Q: -- or beatings or anything?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, because we were the only Jews on that street --

Q: I see.

A: -- see? And the rest they were all -- there were no ghettos.

Q: Right.

A: They lived all over town, had shoe stores, furniture stores. Some of my friend -- my -- my friend's fathers were in, you know, ha -- couple of will lawyers. There were -- Goodshak, he dealt in hides. All different trades.

Q: Do you remember -- yes?

A: Now I -- what I do remember is that my -- that my best friend, they were deported back to Poland, and I think that was in -- I'm not sure -- in '36 to '37, early, it was early already.

Q: This was your best friend?

A: Th -- my best friend, Manfred. Yeah, they -- he -- they had to go back to Kolomaya. This was a -- we were really close, and it -- those were bad, bad times, yes.

Q: Do you remember the day he left?

A: I -- yeah -- yes. But then I reme -- I also remember that he -- Mr. Rabla was able to come back once, he had -- was for something, I don't remember, all the -- and he -- he stopped in, he told us where -- where he was, but we were -- never got to -- you know, we never heard from them again.

Q: You didn't?

A: Never heard from them again, no. Of course by that time we were pretty well isolated from the -- the rest of the -- of the -- of the population, all social events were only within the Jewish community. But first, you know, they -- I -- I remember this because they talk about it today, the Kulturbund, we had that -- the -- we had concerts, and I remember going to a concert in Koblenz in the synagogue and the Gestapo people were -- I remember them being there. They -- I remember enjoying a concert. Of course, you know, when you're a kid, you look at things altogether different, you know, than -- it was never -- I-I never took it all that serious.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Except for what happened to my --

Q: Your father.

A: My father.

Q: Right. So it -- but it must have been very strange living on your street with n -- with no Jewish -- other Jewish people. Did people talk with you, did they --

A: Oh yes, oh the kids all -- we were --

Q: It was okay?

A: Oh yeah, we all -- we -- we played until -- until the day we left.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: How interesting.

A: I -- I remember when -- when we left in my -- in the ki -- children's transport to Belgium, the -- my dad hired a -- he was -- we still had -- we -- he was able to hire a taxi to take us to the railroad station with our heavy suitcases, you know. Kids would run along the taxi and they waved goodbye to us. Of course, that was in '39.

Q: Right.

A: That was '39.

Q: Let -- let me ask you about your father coming back. Did he -- did he look as if he had been starved for those six weeks?

A: Oh yes, he -- he was -- he -- he had lost a lot of weight, his eyes sunk back in his head. He -- he wasn't the same any more. Was the -- I -- I -- I -- I -- I know it was the -- they were mistreated, beaten, starved.

Q: Did -- when you saw him through the window, when he walked up, cause you didn't know he was coming, right?

A: No, we -- I wa --

Q: Did you --

A: -- I remember looking down into the -- because we lived on the first floor, I remember him standing there.

Q: Did you run down to him? Do you remember?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I'm sure I did.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember talking with him at some point soon after he came back into --

A: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yeah.

Q: Did he seem very different to you, not just physically, but psychologically? Do you -- do you have any -- you don't remember.

A: I don't remember.

Q: Yeah.

A: I remember we -- I remember they wanted to get us out of Germany any way possible.

Q: That is -- right.

A: Any way possible. And -- and -- and -- and -- and they did and we left in the -- guess it was in the spring of '39.

Q: Mm, mm, in April.

A: He -- it was before that.

Q: It was before that that you got out?

A: Yeah, yes, before April, I think, I think -- think like it was in March, seems to me.

Q: Huh.

A: February, March, I don't remember.

Q: So it was cold?

A: Probably.

Q: Probably cold. Did -- you weren't against leaving your parents and your grandparents at that moment?

A: Well --

Q: Did it feel -- it must have felt odd, though, you and your younger brother, you were --

A: Of course, you know, of course it was.

Q: You were almost --

A: But still --

Q: Yeah?

A: -- still when you're -- how old was I, 12?

Q: Yes, you were going to turn 13 soon, yeah.

A: 12 -- 12, yeah, I remember I was Bar Mitzvahed in Belgium. Didn't know what to expect, but it -- it was -- of course it was hard, you know. My -- my brother went to a --- a -- he -- we knew this, he went to a -- a f -- a -- one family that came from Koblenz that lived there, and I went to a family that my dad used to do business with in -- in --

Q: Right.

A: -- in -- in Germany.

Q: But let me -- let me ask you something. When your parents finally -- I don't know, did they sit you down and they said, we've made arrangements, you're leaving tomorrow, you're leaving next week.

A: Yes.

Q: How did they -- how did they do it? Do you recall?

A: I don't remember. I -- it's a long time ago.

Q: I understand that.

A: Yes, it's a long time ago.

Q: Do you remem --

A: I remember that it was --

Q: Tough.

A: -- gonna be for good, you know --



Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- because we weren't sure of -- of anything at that time.

Q: So you weren't sure you're --

A: If we were gonna --

Q: -- you would see them again.

A: -- see each other again [indecipherable]. Our plans were, of course, that they would -- that sometime in the future we would reunite, but we weren't sure of anything. They weren't sure of being able to get out.

Q: Right.

A: As far as we knew it was goodbye for -- maybe for good.

Q: Did anybody cry?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't know. Probably did. I know I -- I was supposed to look after my brother, and that was --

Q: That was a big responsibility, right?

A: Yeah. [indecipherable]. Sorry.

Q: It's okay. What's going through your mind?

A: Oh well. But we got to Belgium, we -- the family I lived with were very good to me, and the family Guy was with, they were good to him.

Q: Ernie, let me ask you something. When you said you were t -- you were told to take care of your brother, what -- what just happened to you? What do you -- what were you recalling that made you feel what you just -- do you know?

A: I'll come to that. The -- now, the people I stayed with, were -- came from -- of course, came from Germany, too. His name was Erik Schlafi. I don't know if I -- if I told this to anybody before, yeah. He was the -- the son-in-law of the people my father used to do business with. He had an import export business in -- in -- in Antwerp. He was there since 1933 already. He came from Essen, and he was the German heavywa -- heavyweight champion o -- o-of -- boxing champion of Germany, among other things. He had -- he had to leave in '33, just as soon as Hitler came to power because he -- at that time he was a member of the Communist party, but he was a Communist that like -- like I'm a Chinaman, you know? But that -- that was the thing to do at that time, he went to the university and -- and the k -- and the -- and his parents were very well-to-do, and he -- and there was a lot of poverty in Germany at that -- at that time, and -- and he wanted social programs to help the poor. And so that -- that -- the university students that -- the way they tell me, it was the thing to do at that time, to belong to the Communist party. And there was some -- Goering was giving a speech in -- as -- the -- the way I remember it, in Munich. And they got into a tussle an-and -- and -- and -- and Erik let him -- hit him good and hard, and they had a -- they had a -- a law -- he had a lawsuit, Goering brought a lawsuit against him. So just as soon as they came to power, they left Germany right away, he had to leave. And they were very good to me until the Germans came to [indecipherable] th-they came to Antwerp May eighth as far as I remember.

Q: Right, right.

A: The eighth of May. And a week before that, he -- a week or two before that, he packed up his family and left.

Q: Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that, but you're there for almost a year with him --

A: Right.

Q: -- and soon after you arrive, you have a Bar Mitzvah.

A: Right.

Q: Was that planned? I mean, had you been preparing for a Bar Mitzvah?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: So how did it happen wa --

A: Well, it was th -- it was time, I think I was 13 years old --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and -- and he -- he belonged to the Hallenser shul there, and I set my [indecipherable] and I was Bar Mitzvahed in that --

Q: It was fast?

A: -- I jus -- it was very fast and simple.

Q: Was there a party?

A: He made a party for me afterwards, yes, yes.

Q: That must have made you happy, that was very nice.

A: That was very nice, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, they were very -- they spent the summers at the -- in Ostend, and he took me around, several times. Went to the beach.

Q: Did they have other children?

A: Yeah, oh yes, yes. There was A-André and Gabi.

Q: Uh-huh. So did you -- did -- did you have your own room, were they that wealthy, or did you --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did -- you had your own room?

A: I had my -- had my own room. They also had a maid that they brought along from Germany, and oh I helped, you know, I, sometime I-I helped, but -- went to school, not for very long, but I did go to school in Belgium. He would -- there was anything going on, he would -- he would always take me along, I was -- we were good friends.

Q: Were you the eldest, or was André and Gabi were younger?

A: No, they were -- they were young, oh yes, they were --

Q: They were young?

A: They were much, much younger, yes.

Q: E-Even younger than Guy?

A: Oh yes, yes, they were.

Q: Uh-huh, so they were really kids.

A: They were -- yeah, I -- they were two, three years old, yeah.

Q: And did you know him from before?

A: No.

Q: You didn't. So y --

A: No, I had no idea, although I -- I knew the -- I knew his in-laws that also lived in Antwerp.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I would see them off and on. The people that my dad, they ha -- they had a ca -- a -- a -- a small bank in Germany, and my -- my father, he would -- when he would sell, he would -- I don't -- he did some kind of business with him, I don't know.

Q: Uh-huh, [indecipherable]. And were you in close proximity to where Guy was staying?

A: He was at the other end of town, but we would see each other. We always -- we saw each other every week, at least once a week we would see each other.

Q: And you knew that he was okay, the family was treating him well?

A: And I know he -- oh, oh yes, yes, yes.

Q: And he felt all right with them?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And he went to a Catholic school?

A: I don't know.

Q: You didn't go to a -- you went to --

A: No, I went to a regular school.

Q: Regular school.

A: Regular school, yes. If he went to Catholic school, I don't know. I don't know what kind of school he went to.

Q: And did you hear from your parents?

A: Wa-Wasn't very important to me --

Q: Wasn --

A: -- as long as he was healthy and okay. My parents, we were in touch with my -- we -- I -- we wrote to each other all the time.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: In fact, shortly after we came to Belgium, my grandfather died in Germany.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And -- I forget [indecipherable] forget so many things, that I remembered maybe a year ago, two years ago. Es-Especially lately, you know.

Q: Mm.

A: My parents finally got a -- some kind of a transit visa through England, to come to the United States. They stopped in -- they stopped in -- excuse me -- in -- they stopped in Belgium and Antwerp --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- on their way to England.

Q: So you saw them?

A: So we saw them for a day, part of a day.

Q: So they didn't -- they didn't stay overnight?

A: Huh, I don't remember that either.

Q: You don't.

A: I don't think so.

Q: But that must have been wonderful, to see them.

A: Oh yes, that was great, oh yes, sure.

Q: So now you knew that they would be safe.

A: Right, yes, yes.

Q: Now this is at -- no, this is bef -- before Belgium is occupied, so you must --

A: You see, they came in the -- in the summer of '40.

Q: Is it the summer of '40, or '39?

A: The Germans.

Q: The Germans came in May of '40 --

A: '40 - '40.

Q: -- and your parents saw you in August, I think, of 1939?

A: Don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: Don't remember. Sounds -- sounds right. Sounds right. And then they went to England, and we were supposed to meet up with them, come to the United States. And --

Q: Do you -- do you think that your parents helped to pay for your stay in Belgium --

A: No.

Q: -- with these people? No.

A: No. No.

Q: Not even with the folks that Guy was staying with?

A: I don't think so.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I don't know.

Q: Right.

A: But I don't think so, because I know they were not allowed to take any -- anything out of Germany any more, except for some furniture, some -- which we never got anyway, which for some reason we never got.

Q: Could they take some money out?

A: Uh, I don't know.

Q: You don't know. Did they -- did they give --

A: I don't think so.

Q: -- any money when they came?

A: No.

Q: Nothing?

A: No, no.

Q: Do you remember if you ate lunch together? Did you eat? Do you remember anything? Do you have any visualization of where you met them? None at all.

A: Not really. Not really.

Q: But you and Guy met them?

A: For sure -- yeah, oh yes, we meet them, yes.

Q: Yes. Do you think the other families were with you? You were alone? You don't know?

Okay.

A: Don't remember any more.

Q: Right.

A: Don't remember it. Li-Like I said, you know, there's so many things that -- that I forget and then sometimes I'm reminded of it, you know, and then the -- then it comes back to me.

Q: Right. Memory is like a maze, you know, it starts -- it pops up and it -- then hides.

A: Sometimes my brother remembers things that -- that I don't.

Q: Right.

A: That's how it is.

Q: Let's take a break --

A: Okay.

Q: -- because the tape is going to stop soon.

A: Okay.

End of Tape One



Beginning Tape Two

Q: Ernie, when we last -- when we were on the last tape, we were talking about the fact that after Belgium was occupied -- attacked and occupied, the Levys left.

A: They left before that, though, before they --

Q: What did they say to you? I mean, there you are, they're supposed to be taking care of you, so they leave with their two kids, to go to France?

A: War time, and it's war here. I knew -- I knew he had to leave, he had to go.

Q: He wa -- but he wasn't going to take you?

A: No.

Q: Why, do you think?

A: They had a small car. He had his wife and two children. I understood. I had no hard feelings. I remember he made arrangements f -- I don't even remember if Guy was there or not, that I would stay with somebody. And he left a certain amount of money. Seems like it was 600 francs. And they were supposed to take -- that was sup -- that was supposed to take care of us for a month or so.

Q: So, you remember something a little bit differently than Guy, he recalls that you came to him with the Weinbergs --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and then the Weinbergs left, and then you were alone. Di y-you don't remember it that way?

A: I know I stayed with this family for a ce -- for a certain amount of time, and there were -- seems like two other children, kids my age. I don't remember if Guy was there or not.

Q: Okay.

A: But that came to an end, after the money ran out they told me that -- go.

Q: Just go.

A: Go. And then Guy and I, we -- I remember wa -- Weinbergs were gone. Where they went, what happened, I don't remember, and by that time of course, the Germans were -- had occupied Antwerp, and we had no place to go. We found a place down towards where the Jewish section was. There was a house. If somebody told us about it, I don't know. We stayed up in the attic, it was a -- the house was c-completely abandoned, there was no pi -- as far as the -- there was nobody else living there. We stayed up in the attic, I know that.

Q: Why did you stay in the attic? Did you think it was safest?

A: I don't know any more why. I know that's where we stayed.

Q: Did you have anything with you? Did you take a little suitcase?

A: Oh yeah, we -- we -- we had our clothes --

Q: You did?

A: -- yeah, we -- we had our clothes, oh yeah, yeah. I'm sure. I don't remember packing my stuff, but I'm very sure we -- we had it. And I'm sure I was looking out for my brother.

Q: Were you frightened? You're 14 years old.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you feel like a grown-up kid?

A: I felt like I had to survive somehow.

Q: Mm.

A: Didn't ma -- didn't make much difference how. And I didn't feel sorry for myself.

Q: You didn't?

A: No. I didn't see how anybody could. There was no point in it. I know there was some Jewish organizations left there because I know we went there often, and -- to eat. Like they had li-like a soup kitchen, like. I know every once in awhile we would -- there was a man, a Jewish man. I o - - it seems like his name was Rabinowitz or something like that [indecipherable] that would bring us a loaf of bread off and on. He wouldn't bring it, we would meet him someplace and he would give us a loaf of bread. Don't remember much about that time, but I know we lived there for some time.

Q: And how -- how is Guy doing? Does he take on your attitude, or is he, because he's five years younger, which makes him --

A: Well about that time I was how old, 13, right?

Q: I -- well --

A: 13 - 14 --

Q: 14.

A: 13 - 14 --

Q: You were 14.

A: Yeah, 14.

Q: Cause it's 1940, it's after May of 1940.

A: Right, right, yeah, right, yeah, '40. Yeah, I was 14, sure.

Q: Right?

A: Sure.

Q: But he is nine.

A: And he is nine. We -- it must have been at that time too, the Germans were bivouacked in a park, and they have all kinds of food and we would go and talk German -- I -- I know we -- we

stayed up nights thinking of stories to tell them. We told them that by -- that we were in Belgium with our parents, and that they were interned by the French. We must have heard that someplace, sure we didn't fish it out of the sky. They believed us anyway, and we were -- we were left alone in Antwerp. Look, there was food. That's what we went for, we wanted something to eat.

Q: Did you have I.D. cards?

A: No.

Q: Nothing?

A: No, no.

Q: So they didn't ask for anything?

A: No, no. They were run of the mill soldiers, you know, they didn't really care. We didn't had -- they -- all they knew is we spoke German with them --

Q: Right.

A: -- and told them we were Germans and -- and they gave us food. And that's how we met Madame Marian in the park --

Q: This is --

A: -- just out of circumstances.

Q: Right, and so this is the same park where the German soldiers are. So you go there --

A: Maybe [indecipherable]

Q: -- daily, maybe?

A: I don't know any more. We wer -- went there, I know that. And --

Q: Wa -- if -- let me just ask you now, before we talk about Marian, when you went to the soup kitchen -- to the --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- where the Jewish organization was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did you ask them to get in touch with your parents in England? Did you know where your parents were in England?

A: Yes.

Q: You knew where they were?

A: Yes. I know it today yet.

Q: Where were they?

A: Eight Mornington Terrace. Ask me [indecipherable] this morning and I won't know it, you know, or yesterday, or the day before. Yes, we knew, and at that time were we -- did we correspond with them? I don't see how, because we didn't have a permanent address.

Q: Right, but I'm wondering if you --

A: There must have been some ti -- time that we did not --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- correspond with them.

Q: Which must have frightened them terribly.

A: Oh, I'm sure that this -- sure it did.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I don't know how -- don't remember how long we were like that. Then one day we met this -- this Belgian lady, and she saw where we got -- that we were able to get along with the German soldiers there, and then -- and she took us in.

Q: And you trusted her?

A: Well, trust, no trust, didn't have much to lose. Was going to be better on -- than where we were. We went home with her and we stayed there for some time. She -- of course, she took advantage of us because we were able to get -- people were hungry.

Q: Right.

A: People would go on bicycles into the country to get food, scrounge food. We found a place there, it was a German barracks not too far from the -- where we lived, and we got food there. We got the -- I remember we got the potato peels, we got all the potato peels. They were -- they make great pancakes, the -- just the peels.

Q: Really?

A: Oh, great pancakes, yes. You know there's a -- beside the peel, there is -- there's -- there's some potato left on it, or -- yeah, we lived well. And I got a job in the military bakery, as a German.

Q: As a German.

A: As a --

Q: Nobody asked you whether you were -- did they ask you are you Jewish? They didn't. They didn't assume.

A: They know a Jew wouldn't dare do that.

Q: Right.

A: Therefore, well.

Q: Tell me a little bit about Marian before you get this job. What is she like, that you remember.

A: She -- I don't think they were married. Maybe they were -- I -- I don't really know, to Pierre. He worked for the -- he worked for the trolley cars. Wasn't a conductor, he took care of the -- of the rail and so on. And they lived in a -- in a -- in -- which is very common in -- in -- in Antwerp,

in a below ground apartment they had. And -- forgot the name of the street now. And they fixed up a room upstairs for us --

Q: Really?

A: -- somehow, yeah, yeah. What? There -- there was a bed, and I remember a window that I looked out of, I remember looking out, and I would see the airplanes coming back from raids over Germany that -- looked at the wings, there were ho-holes in them this big, they look right through the wings and you wonder how they could fly. They were always -- I -- I had a -- a thing there that I would remember some days th-that I [indecipherable] forget this day. I've had days before that that I -- I'm -- I'm thinking, you know, that -- that there will be a time that I will think back on this, that we would, you know, survive it, you know. I remember looking out that window wa -- one night and maybe one day, watching those planes coming back. But anyway, we -- we stayed there.

Q: Was she kind?

A: Yeah. She was good to us, yeah. Course she had a lot of advantages, too. When I worked at the military bakery I would bring home flour every day in my thermos, fill it up with flour.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And the guys that I worked with, they thought I was German. Some of them -- there were a couple of sailors there, hated me. And I know we got into a tussle at one time and these sailors, they wa -- they -- they were tough, you know, I remember one of them throwing me [indecipherable] seems like it was 15 feet behind them.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And still I got along with them, you know, I just couldn't let on --

Q: Why were they fighting with you, you were a kid?

A: I was a German, though, th-they thought I was German.

Q: Oh, oh, I see, that was a Belgian soldier, uh-huh.

A: Not Belgian soldiers.

Q: Not Belgian sol --

A: They were people working there for the --

Q: I see.

A: -- for -- for the German soldiers, for the military bakery, right.

Q: [indecipherable] right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So did this put you in a funny sort of --

A: Sure.

Q: -- I don't know, feeling, here you are Jewish and against what these people are doing --

A: Of course, yeah --

Q: -- and yet you're working for them.

A: Yeah, yeah, but I couldn't let on, except for one time. And I worked there for quite awhile.

And that [indecipherable], the guy that ran the -- the German officer that ran the place came from Hamburg, I forgot his name. But that time I was 15 and supposed to get a passport and he helped me write a letter and -- we were so -- we had a lot more luck than brains, that they didn't find out. Yeah, at the Christmas 1940, I -- I'm sure I told this story to somebody.

Q: Tell it.

A: Now, by that time the -- th-that we stayed with the Madame Marian, we were in touch with my parents. And my parents by that time were in the United States already. They figured they could help us, at least as well from the United States as -- better then from England. If it would



have been anybody else but my mother, we would never have made it. She -- of course this I found out later, you know, she ran and ran and wrote and wrote and -- and -- and -- and she was in touch with Senator Wagner, she came to Washington several times to get -- to get us visas for the United States. Where was I? Where Marian --

Q: [indecipherable] Christmas party.

A: Yeah, we went -- yeah. At the -- the Germans invited us to a Christmas party, the soldiers did, in 1900 and -- was that 1940 -- '41 -- no, '40 --

Q: '40.

A: -- '40 -- '40

Q: I think '40.

A: Yeah, for -- had to be 1940.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Couldn't refuse, you know, so we went. Big long table, one side was Christmas tree. People came in, mostly soldiers, some civilians. The guy sitting right across from me -- now, we -- I told you I'm -- we were in touch with my parents, we tried to get papers to come to the United States. Had to get a German passport. We went to the German au-authorities that -- at -- in -- in -- in -- in Antwerp to get this German passport, legitimate, as Jews. The guy that was -- handled our -- some of our [indecipherable] sat right across from me. I thought my heart was going to stop right then and there. Never -- did -- didn't he recognize us? Did he know? There were no -- they weren't all bad. Ninety-five percent were bad, you know, 95 percent I can swear to it, they were bad, you know. But there were five percent were good. Because things happened in -- in -- in -- in Berlin that I didn't tell you about, that --

Q: Well, we'll get there.

A: Yes.

Q: So he does not say anything?

A: Never said anything.

Q: And he knows that you're Jewish?

A: Right. There we sat, and the commandant of the -- of the garrison there, made a speech, I'll remember the words that you know, we -- we don't celebrate the birth of a dirty Jew bastard, he probably said. We celebrate the Christmas tree. And I always say to myself, that son-of-a-gun, he would have known what's sitting right next to him there. That I remember well. I remember that this guy never said anything, too.

Q: Were other things said that were very uncomfortable, or wa-was this mainly a -- that you remember?

A: That's the only thing that I remember about that.

Q: That you remember. And is Guy with you?

A: Guy was, yeah.

Q: Was he working with you in the -- in the bakery?

A: No, no, no, no --

Q: He wasn't.

A: -- he was too young.

Q: He was too young. But they knew him. Did he come -- cause he wasn't going to school any more.

A: No, no, he came with me to get food.

Q: Right.

A: Course we've always had our bicycles nearby, thinking you know that if they catch us, we're going to run. And we had the routes all mapped out, that we would take. We knew the port of Antwerp very well, that we -- we thought we could lose them and we would get away. There was a article one day in the German newspaper in Antwerp [speaks German here]. And they never caught the -- believed our story. In other words now, there was some people that knew the real stuff, and the military and the newspaper never did catch on. So we were just lucky.

Q: Do you think Marian and Pierre were in danger because they were keeping you, if they found out you were Jewish?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: No, no, not [indecipherable]. So like I said, you know, we -- things get mixed up in my head, there's a lot of things that I -- that happened while we stayed with them. Among others, they -- I was supposed to be deported, and that must have been after, wasn't it? Anyway, one -- one day while I was working in the military barrack and we were cleaning socks. There was a machine there that cleaned the socks, with Alphonse [indecipherable] him and me, we were cleaning socks. And the Gestapo, you know, you -- you could spot them a mile away, you know. A car came in, a convertible car came in -- in -- into the -- this military bakery was in a -- in a fortress that was built by Napoleon. Very old fashioned, very old -- th-this car pulls in and there's a -- a - they caught on with me. And if they catch me, I want somebody -- I want Guy to find out, I want Guy to know. So I took Alphonse [indecipherable] that was working with me there in confidence, I told him, listen here. I'm afraid. I'm really -- and I told him -- told him the truth, told him, hey listen, I'm Jewish. He -- he wouldn't believe it, you know, and then -- but I told

him, I said, if they catch -- please let -- let my brother know. It was a false alarm. But after that -- after that day, I didn't dare go back. I didn't know if he was -- if I could trust him or not.

Q: But he didn't know where you lived?

A: Must have. He was going to let my brother know.

Q: That's true.

A: But anyway, he -- I never went back to work there after that, I never went back. And I -- apparently they didn't --

Q: They didn't do anything.

A: They -- they didn't do anything.

Q: Was Marian upset that you stopped working, because [indecipherable]

A: Oh yeah, yeah, because that was a big deal for her, that -- you know, we'd bring flour every day. She was upset about it, and I know it was before -- must have been before that already. They called off -- I don't know who did they call -- the authorities told me to report to the railroad station, pack my stuff and -- the railroad station. And I -- I said to -- you know, that was one of the toughest days, I said -- you know, I had to leave my brother. I didn't think I was -- for some reason I didn't think I was going to come back from that. Well, I got to the railroad station and -- and Madame Marian went with me, and that -- the Belgian that had -- organized that, probably under the authority of the Germans, I guess, I don't -- I was -- and she talked to one of the policeman there, one of the cops there, and he went back home.

Q: Do you know what was said?

A: I have no idea.

Q: You don't --

A: I have no idea.

Q: How come Guy -- I'm a little confused about something.

A: Ask me.

Q: If you're not in -- if you're not -- if you're not known as Jewish --

A: Yes.

Q: -- so how is there a notice that you were supposed to go down to the railway station --

A: Well the --

Q: -- do you know?

A: Well, sure.

Q: Because you had apply --

A: The authorities knew that the --

Q: Because you had applied.

A: Yeah, the -- well, the authorities are -- the Belgian authorities also knew I -- knew I was there.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: They knew I was there.

Q: Right.

A: When I went to -- to Levys already, they knew that.

Q: Right.

A: The only ones that we had buffaloed were the soldiers, the military a-authority there.

Q: Right. Okay, that makes sense.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Did you --

A: Because I got -- I got the Belgian papers th-that they -- they've got them, the -- they got most of my stuff.

Q: Was there a J on your --

A: Oh yeah.

Q: -- [indecipherable] passport. There was.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: On the -- J on the German passport --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and on the Belgian passport.

Q: Right.

A: They put it on too. Well anyway, I -- I -- but then, shortly after that, I -- I know that -- that summer we were both barefoot, we [indecipherable] but that wasn't all that uncommon in -- in Antwerp --

Q: No?

A: -- you know, that felt good.

Q: So what happens in terms of staying with Marian, Madame Marian and Pierre? That's --

A: That -- that petered out after that. St -- don't remember any more just how it came about. Anyway, my brother stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Best.

Q: How did that happen?

A: Sure we met them through Mr. Rosenbaum. He was the cantor of the -- of the Hallenser shul there.

Q: Where you were --

A: Bar Mitzvah.

Q: Bar Mitzvahed.

A: Yeah.

Q: So he knew you?

A: Somehow we went be -- we went to him, got to him, and -- but that time there were no services any more, there were no -- and he put me up in the shul. There was a room there that I stayed in -- that I stayed in.

Q: With Guy?

A: No.

Q: And where's Guy?

A: Guy stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Best.

Q: Ah, ah, I see, right, okay --

A: Yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Now, Mr. Best was Jewish, Mrs. Best was not, and I guess nobody knew that he was Jewish. And they had a little girl Guy's age.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And he just fit right in and they were extremely good to him. Nice people.

Q: Did you want to stay there, or that was not possible?

A: Well, it wasn't possible. I didn't really care where I stayed, as long as I had a place to stay.

Q: Right.

A: And he got me a job in a -- in a place -- as a plumber, and I got to -- to -- the work papers yet. I don't know if you got them or not. I think I -- I still got 'em, anyway. I didn't know anything about plumbing. All I remember is the first job I got that they gave me there was

I had to split a piece of steel in half with a hammer and a chisel and I remember that thumb was this thick. I hit my thumb more often than I hit the -- hit the chisel.

Q: So did anybody train you, or they just --

A: That was part of the training, yeah --

Q: That was part of the training --

A: -- that was -- yes. And that was the time we went down to -- there was a Mrs. Arum down on Kebitsplatte, one of the main thoroughfare -- fares where they -- right next to the railroad -- near the railroad station where the -- where the diamond [indecipherable] was -- where the diamond -- the exchange was. We would go there periodically to the rest -- she still had a restaurant there, and -- and -- and -- and -- and -- and -- and Jewish -- th-the Belgian Jews would come there, and she would -- we would eat there off and on. And on Shabbas, I know I went to Mr. Rosenbaum. What the connection between the shul and him was at that time, I don't really know. I know there was a Mrs. Kleinman that helped us get papers. I remember going to the American consulate, the -- an America [indecipherable] for our visa. Guy and I both went there.

Q: You saw Guy very often? Were you living wa -- was the synagogue where you were staying -  
-

A: Not very far apart, yes, yeah, yeah.

Q: Not very far.

A: Yeah, I saw him. Yeah.

Q: Both of you were optimistic, aren't you, in some way, as kids?

A: I don't know what we were. I don't know what we were.

Q: Well, you weren't pessimistic, you didn't get depressed and stop moving.

A: Oh no, no.



Q: You're always -- you're always adjusting.

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. There were other people that -- there were other people that were -- Mrs. Dessaur, Mrs. Dessaur and -- forgot his name, and her -- her boyfriend. We -- I -- I went there every once in awhile. I've got -- I've got his picture in -- in a note, in back of it, someplace. But when the time came that we were supposed to go to -- to Berlin for our span -- we needed a Spanish transit visa, we had to go -- we had to be in a neutral country to get our American visa.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I think it was this Mrs. Kleinman that -- and it was impossible to do, to go -- you know, get to Germany and -- and -- and -- and get this Spanish transit visa. She got us a paper from the commandant of Belgium, Antwerp, who supposedly had a Jewish girlfriend that -- that she knew. Anyway, we got -- I -- I think his -- his name was Ascher, he got it, you know, that the -- this paper that it gi -- give us permission to go to Berlin.

Q: But this was after you get a message from your mother.

A: Oh yes, we were -- we had -- we steadily corresponded with our -- with our mother, my parents.

Q: And -- and messages are going back and forth to the synagogue or to the Best home, where your brother is? Do you know? Do you remember?

A: Don't remem -- I'm -- I'm sure it came to me, but --

Q: And this is all by mail, or as --

A: -- by mail.

Q: By just regular mail?

A: By mail, yes. And we got these [indecipherable] sure we were asked to come to the consulate, the American consulate. We were not at war at the time. And I remember spending hours sitting on a bench there until it was our turn and then we had got a physical there. Unless you were in good shape, you know, forget it, you know, they wouldn't -- they wouldn't take you. And the time came that we were supposed to go to -- to Germany to get the -- the Spanish transit visa.

Q: Were you dressed well to go to this physical? Did you have shoes [indecipherable]

A: Oh ye -- oh yeah --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- we -- we were okay in Belgium.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you passed the physical?

A: Yeah, passed the physical and -- and everything. We had -- we still had to be in a neutral country. Why -- why -- Belgium was occupied by -- by the Germans, it had to be the next -- the nearest -- the nearest neutral country was s -- was Spain, and in order to -- to get that, we had to be th -- had to go to Berlin, that was the closest Spanish consul. So we packed our stuff and we had the necessary papers, and we were on our way to Berlin.

Q: Was that very nerve-racking, because now you're going back to the --

A: Oh, oh yes, yes, didn't like it a bit. We felt very uncomf -- and on the -- and on the train and starting out in Antwerp, there were a lot of Belgians that went to work in Germany. Some German soldiers that -- that went on leave to Germany. And we were sitting in that compartment, you know, with -- and we didn't want anybody to know who we were.

Q: Right.

A: And we got to the -- must have been the border between Belgium and Germany. I don't -- everybody had to get off the train, papers got examined, and I think it was the SS, I'm not a hundred percent sure. Hah, [speaks German here]. Two Jewish boys. Come on, we're going to shoot you guys. And they took us in to a -- to a room, interrogated us, went through our luggage. Guy made some kind of a remark, they slapped him around. Until I came up with that paper from this Commandant Ascher, they let us go.

Q: Hm.

A: And we got -- I don't know, we got back on the train, and next stop was Berlin, you know, that's quite a -- quite a -- quite a bit --

Q: Was Guy very hurt?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no, no.

Q: They didn't hit you?

A: No, never touched me.

Q: That must have been pretty scary for you two, though.

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, sure.

Q: Those guys.

A: Oh yeah, we -- we -- come out, we shoot you guys.

Q: Just like that.

A: Yeah, well, what are you going to do, you know, we couldn't run away, they were right there. They had rifles. But anyway, so we -- we got to Berlin and --

Q: And who met you? Did someone meet you?

A: Nobody met us.

Q: No.

A: No, we knew --

Q: Did you know where to go?

A: We had -- we had an address where to go.

Q: And where was that?

A: I think it was 26 Hamburgerstrasse.

Q: Mm-hm. The Jewish Home for the Aged?

A: It was supposed to be a Jewish home for the aged, yes. We didn't know how to get there, how far it was. We had to ask somebody, and we always knew that the army were not as -- they were not as bad as anybody else. And so I -- I asked a soldier, where is so and so and so. He explained it to us, but it was a long ways away. We had our suitcases that we were dragging.

Q: So you walked?

A: Oh yeah, what do you think?

Q: I don't know.

A: On horseback?

Q: You had no money.

A: We had no money.

Q: And who got you the ticket, do you know?

A: The --

Q: The [indecipherable] the train.

A: There was a committee -- committee in Antwerp.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yes. I remember going to the -- going to the railway station in Antwerp. The name escape me, Mrs. -- Jewish lady, young lady that worked -- that had -- that one time worked for Mr. Levy. And I remember the dress she wore, her dress were the colors of the Belgian flag. A lot of Belgians did that at that time, the ones that dared.

Q: Right.

A: And we told her what -- that we eventually would wind up -- you know, hoping to wind up in the United States, we said that this -- the -- the [indecipherable] and then -- and then in -- in Flemish, you know, she told --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- to -- if yo -- if you get to New York to greet Mr. Levy.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We were walking in Berlin on this -- you know, going the direction that we were told to go and then all of a sudden we saw this man coming down the street with a Mogen-David on his -- said Jude -- Jude. So I went up to him, you know, says, hey, I'm a Jew too, you know, I want to go there and there. He said what, you know, he -- he was afraid to talk to -- how come you're not wearing a -- how dare you walk around without the -- a Jewish star? So I -- I -- I th -- explained to him that we just got off a train and we didn't know anything about it. Well, he told us again, you know, which way to go and somehow got there. There were not many people there, but I -- I don't -- don't know if they expected us, they didn't expect us. I think they did, I ma -- I think expect us. Somehow there was communication. The --

Q: Were there children -- other children there your age?

A: There were -- it seems like a few child -- there were more -- there were several boys older than I was. At that time I was 15, they were 18 - 19 - 20. I remember there was one man there, he

was a -- a furrier. And I know he was working on some fur, and he were there for much longer than I thought he would be there. But he had all kinds of difficulties [indecipherable]. He had to get German papers. I remember one day being in the -- in the -- we had to get some papers from the SS, and I was told to move some furniture, and I spent maybe a couple, two or three days there, maybe more, moving furniture for them. But we -- we got the -- we got whatever we were supposed to get there, we finally got it.

Q: What -- what were your accommodations like at the Jewish home?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't -- you don't remember.

A: I don't remember.

Q: Did you mainly s -- have to stay inside, did you work, was there something --

A: Well, we worked there, worked on that railroad station, stuffing bags with straw, because the deportations had just started then. But we took it all in stride. Didn't get much to eat.

Q: You didn't?

A: No, but that didn't bother us either. It must have been enough to -- to k -- to keep us alive. We would -- crazy thing, I -- I did such foolish things. We went sight-seeing and took our jackets, you know, so they wouldn't see that we were Jewish [indecipherable] our arms. Things that we really sh-shouldn't have done, taken [indecipherable] take a chance like that.

Q: Why did you do it?

A: Why did we --

Q: Why did you do that?

A: Sight see.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Didn't know better. Should have known better. We knew things were serious and still --

Q: Was one -- did you do this many times? A number of times?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Once you lost your papers?

A: I wish you wouldn't have reminded me of that, but I did.

Q: Mm.

A: Lost the papers. I mean, that's what -- everything hinged on that, that was getting out and not getting out. I always kept them with me. Somehow I left them laying someplace. Called the police, they found them. I got them -- got them back.

Q: All of them?

A: All of them.

Q: And what did the police say, cause the --

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I really don't.

Q: Mm.

A: It isn't that I don't want to remember, I don't remember that.

Q: Maybe it was too frightening to even see them.

A: Yes. I never thought we'd get them back. So there were times, you know, that -- that I was desperate, and I'm sure my brother was.

Q: Are you also able to hear from your mother and father --

A: In -- in --

Q: -- in Berlin, or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no.

Q: So they're waiting to hear that you've gotten the papers --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to leave Germany and leave Belgium.

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. And we didn't hear from them all the time they were on -- til we got to the United States.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Until we got our -- finally did get our Spanish transit visa.

Q: Did you have to go many times to try to get the papers, or only once?

A: To the -- even more than once.

Q: More than once.

A: More than once, oh yes. Took s -- took six weeks until we -- you know, w-we -- we spent maybe a week moving fur-furniture for -- for these --

Q: Did any adult go with you when you went to get these papers, or did you always go alone with Guy?

A: As far as I remember going -- going alone. We were told where to go and we went. I don't remember anybody coming along, but if somebody did, I don't remember.

Q: Right. And they didn't question you, here are two kids, what are you doing, is this -- bu-but if your papers were okay, they believed it, I guess, huh? Do you think you were in danger of being kept in Berlin and deported?

A: It's all possible, sure.



Q: Yeah.

A: What would have happened if we didn't get the Spanish transit visa? We would have -- you know, all -- I don't know what our lot wou -- would have been.

Q: Right. Were you hearing about the war at this time? Because in June is the attack on the Soviet Union, so do you see more soldiers, or you're hearing very little?

A: We -- sure we knew about the war, sure we knew, but that didn't -- one day we walked across the street in -- in -- in Berlin, and before we even crossed the street, a lady came walking up to us and she said, boys, be proud of that -- she was not Jewish, you know -- be proud of the -- of your star. You know, be -- be strong, you know.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. There were some, you know, what -- when people ask me today, you know, a-about the Germans, you know, of co -- of course, you know, after the war when I -- I -- when I were -- when I came back as a soldier, there were no Nazis, you couldn't find any, you know, there weren't any, you know.

Q: Right, right.

A: And what I always [indecipherable] they were the best and the worst. Out of the di -- 95 percent I wouldn't give you a nickel for. And five -- and out of the five percent, maybe one percent were tops, better than you could find anyplace else. And -- and we knew some, this Mr. Ebart for instance, that we used to do business with. He wasn't -- I know he wasn't supposed to come to buy us any more in Koblenz, but he came anyway.

Q: Mm.

A: And maybe this -- this young man that sat across from us at the Christmas party, I can't believe that he didn't recognize us. And he just didn't say anything. That's [indecipherable]

Q: Did -- did you get paid for this work that you did? Was there anything that you got?

A: No.

Q: Or was --

A: Oh no.

Q: -- was the exchange that you were staying in this place and they were giving you some food?

Who were you working for when you -- when you were [indecipherable]

A: Oh for -- for the Germans.

Q: For the Germans.

A: For the Germans.

Q: I see.

A: Get paid?

Q: No, I didn't --

A: Sure, sure.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And who else was working with you when you were filling those sacks with hay? Were there other Jews who are working?

A: The other guys that stayed in the --

Q: In that -- in the home.

A: -- in that home, yeah.

Q: And did you realize what these sacks were for? Did you have any idea?

A: Yeah.

Q: You did?

A: Yeah. I think so. Yeah, I'm su -- I'm sure I did.

Q: It was clear that they were going to deport Jews?

A: Yeah, yeah. What it meant --

Q: You didn't know.

A: We had no -- no idea. No idea. In the meantime, my grandmother was still in Koblenz.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, she never did get out. She wa -- she perished there in the camp.

Q: And she must have been fairly old.

A: Oh yeah, she was in her 80's.

Q: Do you think that your parents tried to get your grandma out as well? This is your mother -- your father's mother?

A: My -- no, no, my mother's mother.

Q: Your mother's mother.

A: My mother's mother.

Q: You don't know?

A: Her -- she didn't want to go.

Q: She -- uh-huh.

A: She didn't want to go.

Q: So what happened to your father's parents?

A: My father's father died early, and my m -- my grandmother died -- I think she died in '38 - '39, she died.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: This -- one brother perished, this -- and his youngest daughter did, in the camps. All in all, you know, the biggest share of our family got out, except for the kids from Koblenz, they all -- they all perished.

Q: Right.

A: My -- I had an uncle that got out early, he went to Israel, my Uncle Otto went to Israel, and his two brothers came -- came to this country and I think he got out in '38 already.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: On my mother's side, her -- my grandmother had a brother in -- in [indecipherable]. They sent them to Auschwitz. He was in -- in a camp in France. I have Red Cross -- Red Cross correspondence my mother had, you know, I still have that. Uncle Yakov [indecipherable], yes, they perished both, in the camps. And -- but g-good share of my family, we were -- we were lucky.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me something a -- I'm trying to get a sense of the m -- the mood, if there was one, between you and Guy. It sounds like you're extremely practical. You don't get depressed, you don't get too positive, it's just that you keep going. Is that --

A: That's right.

Q: Is that how you are?

A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, yeah. I -- sometimes I -- I'm still -- I -- I -- very -- I don't know what it is, European. Can't understand the kids in this country. I mean, I've lived here most of my life, you know, it's just --

Q: What do you think the difference is?

A: Spoiled rotten. Spoiled to the p -- you know, they were just brought up wrong. I understand why.

Q: Mm.

A: I shouldn't say this, but people have to be more self-reliant. It's not -- it's not like that with everybody, I know that, but there too many that -- well, they've lived at -- the different times --

Q: Right.

A: -- different times.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: Different times. We knew we -- that is wasn't -- wasn't going to be easy. We expected the worst. We expected the worst and then --

Q: Right.

A: -- then if the worst didn't happen, it was good.

Q: It was good, yeah.

A: That I didn't get deported that time in Belgium, oh, it's a miracle.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. What else can I tell you?

Q: Well, why don't we take a break?

A: Okay.

Q: And change the tape.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Ernie, before I ask you about your trip out of Berlin, I thought of something a few minutes ago. What language we-were you speaking in Belgium?

A: Flemish.

Q: So did you --

A: Flumps, flumps.

Q: Flumps?

A: Flumps.

Q: Did you know Flemish before you came?

A: No, no, nobody -- when we left there we spoke it as -- perfect.

Q: Really?

A: Both of us, yes. It's not that much different from German, but the pronunciation of it, it's got to be -- if you don't want to be detected, it's go to be just so.

Q: Right.

A: And I -- I think both of us had that, yeah. It was so much easier for Guy, I think, than -- but he --

Q: Because he was that much younger?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Hm. Okay, so --

A: But that time when we -- when we came to -- to the United States, when we came to New York, Guy couldn't speak to his parents, all he knew was Flemish, he forgot his German altogether.

Q: Oh, you're kidding.

A: Yes.

Q: And you hadn't forgotten German?

A: No, no. Yeah.

Q: So that must have been really upsetting.

A: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, I wouldn't say he completely forgot it --

Q: Right.

A: -- but it was hard for him.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Hm. All right, now you have your papers and you're going to I -- now leave Berlin, and you're heading for Spain, I gather, right?

A: Right. They put us on this train, this one car, we were only with -- was four refugees, but all older people.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They were all older people, and as far as I know we were the only kids, yes. I know we were the only kids on the train. There were no other kids on the train. I remember they pulled the shades down at the station so nobody could look in. Maybe they did it because so we couldn't look out, I don't know.

Q: And you had tickets?

A: I --

Q: You don't remember.

A: I don't remember that.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Don't remember anything about tickets, but we -- we were on that train for a long time.

Q: Did these adults, were they -- did they pay attention to you, did they talk with you, or were the two of you isolated?

A: Well, we -- I'm -- I'm sure we talked. I don't really remember this, but I'm sure we were -- we all talked. We were all -- whatever it was, as it were -- we were all afraid. We all -- there wasn't that much talking going on. We all knew it was our last chance, because we -- we knew the -- the deportations had started, and we were very much afraid.

Q: Did you think the Germans would go back on these visas, on these permissions? You didn't -- you had no idea.

A: We had no idea what -- what to expect. We were anxious to leave.

Q: Right.

A: And couldn't wait until we would get to Spain. Don't remember how long it took, the -- these trains didn't go very fast at that time. Took quite awhile until we got to -- through France, until we got to the -- to the Spanish border.

Q: Did you have food with you, did you take food with you? Some bread, some cheese, anything?

A: Don't remember. We must have.

Q: You must have --

A: We must have.



Q: -- cause they didn't feed you on the train.

A: They didn't feed us, no, no.

Q: And again, you have no money. You have nothing.

A: No, no, we had no money.

Q: Nothing.

A: No, no. Our papers, that's it. No money, no. We got to -- to the Spanish border and we had to get off the train and get our -- our baggage. I know there were German soldiers there that went through our baggage, through our papers. And we had to leave this -- the train and get on -- it seemed like we -- it seems like there was a -- a special car for us there, just the car, not -- not -- not th -- a complete train, and now that I start talking about it, I remember these anxious feelings to get out of German occupied country, into -- anxious to get to Spain. And it -- after they tif -- they load us onto this car, they -- they backed us in -- in -- on-onto another -- on -- on another railroad track so that we could get hooked onto the Spanish train. It seemed to take forever til they finally hooked us on, and it was just a little ways into -- into Spain. And we were so relieved, you know, I mean, that -- wh-when we got to San Sebastian that [indecipherable]

Q: So all th -- all the people go all th -- everybody was going with this train.

A: Everybody was on this -- this car.

Q: Now, it -- when you switch the trains, is this the time when your brother ripped off his --

A: No, no --

Q: -- yellow star and hid it?

A: He had -- this is bef -- before we got to the border, he had this -- we didn't -- we didn't wear the Jewish star any more.

Q: Uh-huh, you tol --

A: In fact, we were not all -- nobody was supposed to have one.

Q: I see.

A: No. I don't think we had to choo -- we wore a Jewish star when we got on the train in Berlin.

Q: You didn't have one?

A: No. I think we were told to take it off, and -- and Guy, my brother, packed it into his suitcase, and he wasn't supposed to. I guess the Germans didn't want anybody to know about this.

Q: Do you remember giving it to somebody? Yours?

A: I don't remember that --

Q: You don't remember?

A: No.

Q: So you didn't -- did you know that your brother had packed this in his suitcase, or did you only find that out afterwards?

A: I don't remember. I don't -- I don't think I would have allowed him to do it.

Q: Yeah. Right. When did you find out that he had it? In San Sebastian?

A: Sometime afterwards.

Q: Afterward.

A: Yes, sometime afterwards.

Q: Were you angry at him? Or was there no point?

A: Di-Didn't matter at --

Q: Didn't -- right.

A: -- that time, even though after we -- well it -- we stayed in a -- in a hotel, in a very nice hotel in San Sebastian, and I remember we got rolls with real butter.

Q: Really? That was --

A: Yes. And I think we stayed there for a day.

Q: And who put you up? Was this --

A: That's all the --

Q: -- by your mother, or this organization --

A: -- no, no, that's th -- th -- th -- I think it's the Joint.

Q: I see.

A: Joint, we called it the Joint --

Q: Right.

A: -- Distribution Committee. I think they did all that. They did all that, paid for it.

Q: And is that who took this whole group from Berlin?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Mm. So you had a nice room?

A: Ho, ha, ha, ha -- I thought --

Q: In comparison with the way you were living?

A: -- I thought so, I'm -- I'm -- I'm sure it was, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm sure it was, yeah.

Q: And you still are carrying your luggage, this heavy luggage, or not?

A: Yes, we still -- we had our -- our suitcases --

Q: Right.

A: -- yeah, we both had our suitcases, yeah.

Q: Did --

A: And it took -- it took forever to go from San Sebastian to -- to Barcelona.

Q: Barcelona. By train?

A: By -- by train, and the -- the bun -- the bandits came on the train with us, I remember, and -- and they -- the Spanish police were on the -- on the train. They wore these funny, black hats. I remember a -- a young -- a young guy getting out of the train that got into our car, and I didn't know Spanish. Somehow we made each -- h-he made us understand that he w -- that he's hiding from the -- from the police, and the -- as they came through we made like he was one of us so he wouldn't be bothered, yeah, so I remember that, yeah.

Q: So now you became a protector of somebody.

A: Yeah, I -- yes.

Q: Because you [indecipherable]

A: Yes, as long as he was trying to get away from the police, that -- we probably thought that it was a good thing for us to -- to help him.

Q: Now, who paid for your trip, the train trip from San Sebastian to Barcelona, is this the Joint again?

A: I think so.

Q: And are many of you going to Barcelona? Do --

A: Yes, that whole --

Q: -- a -- everybody has to go?

A: -- that whole --

Q: I see.

A: -- trainload --

Q: So you're a troop?

A: -- went through -- yes.

Q: About how many people do you think that was, do you have any idea?

A: How many fit into a railroad car? I don't know.

Q: I don't know.

A: No.

Q: Hundred?

A: I know we -- we slept on the train, you know, everybody slept --

Q: Right.

A: -- on the train.

Q: And you were in one car?

A: One car.

Q: The whole trip?

A: The whole trip. Now, we transferred from this one car in -- in France, through this one car in -  
-

Q: In Spain.

A: -- that went to -- we went to Spain

Q: And so that --

A: And we -- when -- when we got to Barcelona, we -- we was -- we stayed in different hotels.

Q: Mm.

A: We stayed -- maybe a half a dozen stayed in the place where we stayed. A half a dozen stayed  
in -- i-in -- in different hotels in -- in Barcelona. And it was all arranged by the Joint.

Q: By the Joint. And is -- if -- if you know, I don't know whether you know or whether you  
remember, were most people trying to get to the United States?

A: Yes, I think they -- I -- I don't really know, I don't know that.

Q: Yes.

A: I don't know that.

Q: Right.

A: Someone might have -- I'm -- I'm sure someone went to San Domingo , maybe landed.

Q: Yeah, right. So they may have stopped there, but they -- you think they were all going to the same ship that you were going to, or trying to?

A: No.

Q: Or you don't know? No?

A: No, no, I don't think so.

Q: Was anybody taking care of you? Two kids amongst all these adults?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no.

Q: Did you feel the need for that, or you didn't care?

A: Well, I know we -- we -- we got together with two more kids, one or two more kids in Barcelona, because I remember going on sightseeing trips with them. I remember there was a -- up on the hill there was a cross, it's still there, you know. I remember we -- I don't know if I should tell this in -- but why not?

Q: Why not.

A: In -- in -- in -- in Spain, in Barcelona, we had no money. What made me think is we went on this excursion with these kids, you know, we -- we bought bananas to take along. We had money -- because we had money. We knew some of the people that were with us, and -- a-and -- and we wanted to visit them in the -- these other hotels on the [indecipherable] de Cataluna, that's where

this hotel [indecipherable] the Hotel Laurette. And I sat in a chair like this, I want to try that here, too, maybe it happen here. And for some reason, you know, I -- I reached back here and I came up with a handful of change. I said, that's not bad, you know? I went to all the chairs in the hotel, you know, and -- and it seemed like every once in awhile the -- people would -- it would fall out of their pockets, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- in the -- and then -- and I had enough money to buy bananas, because f -- Spain was a very poor country at that time, extremely poor. Food was very scarce, what we mostly ate was cabbage, that was our -- our main -- main -- how do you say that, staple?

Q: Meal -- staple, yeah.

A: Yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: So you took an excursion, you bou -- you bought the bananas and went on this excursion.

A: Right, you know, we st -- we were there for si-six weeks, in -- in -- in Barcelona.

Q: So what in heaven's name did you do for six weeks?

A: Walked all over Barcelona, we walked. Waiting for -- well, we missed one boat. Something happened that -- I don't remember what, that we didn't get onto this boat and then the -- I know there were -- this Joint Distribution com -- Committee did all that to get -- get us onto another boat.

Q: Mm.

A: Which finally left from -- from Lisbon. But I didn't -- we didn't know how long we will be in -- in -- in -- in Barcelona. And, guess there was nothing to do for us, we -- we --

Q: So how did you get an appointment with the American consulate? Did you just keep trying?

A: I know we got appointments, we had an appointment, we went there.

Q: He wasn't very nice to you, was he?

A: No, no, he wasn't, no. And I'll never forget, he -- we were asked to come to see him and into his room. Yeah, I remember he had -- he put his feet up on the desk, you know, and -- and he didn't believe us that we got out of Germany, I don't know why not. And he was -- he -- he refused to -- ou -- give us our visa, but we had a -- we had a f -- was it a letter or a photocopy of a letter from the State Department that my mother got, that to any consulate, if he would get that, that they should issue us a visa, and well he -- eventually he did.

Q: What did he think you were doing?

A: I have no idea. Like he -- he was not very cooperative, he didn't --

Q: Your brother --

A: -- he hated -- he hated to -- to give us a visa.

Q: Your brother thinks he was very anti-Semitic. Do you remember him that way?

A: It's all possible.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's possible. I don't -- don't remember that.

Q: So did you have to go back more than once for him to agree or did you just stay with him until he finally agreed?

A: Well, we -- seems like we went there several times.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We finally did get it, you know, we -- we did get it, and -- and one day they told us, you know, we -- we have to go to Lisbon, and they put us on a train to Lisbon.

Q: So this is the Joint who is telling you?

A: Yes, yes.



Q: Because you missed the last boat from Barcelona --

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: -- you have to go and get the --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- the boat from Lisbon.

A: Right.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Right. Yes.

Q: So now are other people traveling with you again as part of this [indecipherable] group --

A: To Lisbon?

Q: -- or are you alone?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Mm.

A: What I do remember is, that there were several Gestapo agents on the train with us.

Q: Really?

A: Like I told you, that you can spot these guys a mile away. All -- well, something else, being in -- in -- in Spain at that time, we were not that secure anyway. There were a lot of German soldiers there that came -- that s -- on -- on -- on leave, the -- the Germans had -- they went to Spain because Franco was -- was allied with Hitler.

Q: Right.

A: And after we finally settled down in -- in Barcelona, we -- we were ill at ease seeing all -- quite a few German soldiers. We didn't expect it.

Q: And how were the Spanish to you? Were you -- were you able to pick up some Spanish so you could speak a little bit, or no?

A: Oho, very little.

Q: Very little.

A: Quatta, questa, and --

Q: Uh-huh. Right.

A: And -- and -- and -- and -- and a few -- a few words. The Spanish, very little contact, a few people where we stayed in the pensionne. Don't -- don't really remember. We had -- we -- we -- we stayed mostly by ourselves and with -- with this -- with the group that we were with.

Q: Did the Joint warn you about walking around and staying away from Germans if you see them? German soldiers?

A: No, no.

Q: They didn't warn you.

A: No, no. In fact, I don't remember anybody in particular, how we were notified th -- where to go, where not to go, when our appointments were with the -- with --with the authorities there, and --

Q: But somebody must have, right?

A: Oh, I'm sure --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- yes, yeah, somebody did, yeah. Somebody -- but I don't --

Q: So you didn't make the appointment --

A: No.

Q: -- with the counselor.

A: No.

Q: They made it for you.

A: They made it for us, yes.

Q: It's a little surprising to me that no adult went with you. If they were making these appointments, why wouldn't they go? You're -- you're children.

A: Maybe they --

Q: Doesn't that surprise you?

A: Maybe they did, I don't -- I don't remember any more. All I remember is -- is talking to a -- to the people at the -- at the consulate there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Nobody seemed to talk for us, or at least I don't remember anybody talking for us.

Q: Were you nervous going to see the American consulate?

A: Yes, oh yes, we were always. There was always tension.

Q: Did you and Guy talk beforehand as to what you would say, and what you thought might happen?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, we always --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- well, we -- we did most of that in Belgium, but at -- during the German occupation, we -- we practiced at night what -- what -- what they would ask, what they -- the questions they could ask, and what would be an answer that -- that they could believe.

Q: Right.

A: So there was -- of course there was tension, but see, the tensions went away after we were on the boat, and as a --

Q: In li -- in lisb --

A: -- and I'll -- I'll never forget looking back at the harbor and then -- and then Lisibon --

Lisbon, yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you cry?

A: I don't think so.

Q: Did you smile, do you think?

A: I am [indecipherable].

Q: Yes.

A: Must have, yes, must have. But there were all -- all old people on the -- on the boat, mostly.

Q: Old people.

A: Most -- yeah. Ex -- I'll take that back, be -- there must have been a couple of younger guys there, too.

Q: What kind of a --

A: Boat? Was the [indecipherable], a con -- they told it was a converted coal steamer.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: There were no cabins. There were hammocks in the -- in the hold of the boat, but Guy and I, we slept on top -- on -- on deck all the time, yeah.

Q: Did you have blankets?

A: I don't --

Q: Cause it must have been chilly.

A: I don't -- I don't remember.

Q: Well, you're traveling in December, right?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, but did we leave -- no, no, we -- we -- we -- it was -- we -- hm.

Yeah?

Q: I don't know, it looks to me -- well, you arrived December 28<sup>th</sup>.

A: Sure, yeah, right, right, yeah.

Q: So it's possible Novemb --

A: So it was the end -- end of November, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: S -- yeah, it was wintertime.

Q: So it must have been pretty --

A: It was -- no, it wasn't cold at all. [indecipherable] we had -- well, Portugal is -- is warm, and from there we headed south. We -- we were not out of port very long, and I guess then we were always on -- on deck. A sub came up. Came up, and went back down again.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. If it was a German sub, it wa -- wa -- I --

Q: You have no idea.

A: I have -- I have no idea, yeah. But that's when that -- after we were on the boat, we said we -- now we -- we've got it made now.

Q: Did you guys get along the whole time you were together, after you left your parents in Antwerp?

A: Probably not.

Q: Probably --

A: Probably not, no. But we --

Q: Let's -- let's hold if for a second, these are very loud planes. -- be somewhat difficult for you taking f -- taking care of a brother who is five years younger while you're a kid yourself.

A: Well, m-maybe he didn't make it di -- difficult for me, he was --

Q: Mm.

A: -- good kid.

Q: Yeah.

A: Didn't always see eye to eye, but we knew -- he knew what it was all about.

Q: Right.

A: I remember when, on -- when I became Bar Mitzvah in -- in -- i-in Antwerp. He came to my party we had in the afternoon, you know, and I know he kicked me in the shin for something.

Q: He kicked you in the --

A: He kick -- he kicked me in the shin. I -- oh yeah, we had a fight.

Q: Did you kick him back?

A: I don't --

Q: You don't know.

A: Probably. Probably. But we had -- got along good.

Q: Right.

A: We have -- yeah -- no -- no problems.

Q: Did he ever get more lonely and si -- because he was so much younger --

A: Probably.

Q: -- [indecipherable] lonely for your parents, and --

A: Probably.

Q: -- yeah.

A: I'm -- I'm -- I'm -- I'm sure he did.

Q: Yeah. He didn't -- he didn't express that to you, though. Or that you remember.

A: I don't remember that, but I'm -- when I think back, he saw things different than I did, too.

We haven't talked lately about these things, but I remember when -- when we did talk about them.

Q: Can you give examples, any examples of how you saw things differently?

A: It's -- I'm sorry, but I can't. Can't put it into words.

Q: Mm-hm, right.

A: He -- five -- those five years make a big difference.

Q: Right.

A: You know, I mean [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. I changed when I -- that this whole thing had changed me too. I will -- and I know when I -- when we came to the United States, trauma that -- took me a long time to get over it. A long time. Probably 30 - 40 years.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And that I'm still different than everybody else. Yeah, th -- those like -- those kind of experiences, esp-especially if they take several years, your outlook -- outlook changes.

Q: How do you think it changed you? What do you think you would have been? Do you have any idea how?

A: I don't really know.

Q: Did it make you trust people less, or trust the world less?

A: I don't know, I -- I don't know, I di -- I do --

Q: But you feel it?

A: I would -- yeah. You -- yes, even people to people, I -- you know, you don't think about those things, but now that you asked me, you know -- it made a -- it -- it makes a different person out of you. Not everybody, I'm sure it doesn't do the same thing to everybody.

Q: Maybe it's also your age. You were so young and unformed that it would change you more.

A: Yeah, oh yeah, I'm -- I'm sure it had something to do with -- that had something to do with it. Yeah. I wish I could -- can't explain it.

Q: Well, let me ask you something.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: There were a lot of different people who helped you, in spite of the fact that you were separated, you were kids, and vulnerable, there were people all along --

A: That helped.

Q: -- that helped.

A: Yes.

Q: That might make you think that even in a dangerous situation there is a world that can be like home in some ways, even though it was difficult circumstance.

A: Oh yeah, I mean, I --

Q: Right?

A: -- I -- I always feel that I was very lucky.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Very lucky. Some --

Q: But everything was always strange for you?

A: Yeah.



Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah. Different with -- Guy is different than I am, my brother. Altogether different.

Don't even -- don't even look alike. H-He had -- always had blonde hair, and he was a -- was a more likeable guy than I am. He is more -- it always seemed to me that he was more outgoing than I am. Maybe that's --

Q: Did you think that -- if you look back on your childhood, before you leave your parents in Antwerp, do you see that kind of a difference between the two of you? He was more outgoing, you were less outgoing?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no, no, no. I -- I think I ch -- I changed. I changed because I always had in -- in -- in Koblenz, lot of friends, lot of friends. And then after I came here it was very hard for me to make friends.

Q: But you were turned into an adult very fast, weren't you, at the age of 13 and 14 you had to take care --

A: Yeah, had to -- had to, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Had to, yeah. I wasn't the only one, I'm supposed to -- I suppose there were a lot of -- lot of kids my age at that time that --

Q: Right.

A: -- that grew up in a hurry. Some of them it affected different -- differently than it affected me.

Q: Did you think Guy was changed less than you were changed because he was that much younger? You don't know.

A: I don't know, I -- I -- I don't know. I don't know.

Q: You don't.

A: I --

Q: Tell me more about the boat trip.

A: About the boat trip?

Q: Yeah. Where were you -- where did you -- everybody eat? Did you eat together, was there f --  
was there food there, I hadn't --

A: Oh yes --

Q: [indecipherable] food, it was a long trip.

A: -- there was -- oh yes, people ate together. Although I -- I spent most of the time -- most of  
my time with the sailors, with the -- with the Portuguese sailors. Drank, ate with them and they  
had -- they mixed wine and water, that was our drink. We made a few dollars on the way over,  
Guy and I.

Q: How?

A: All the baggage was -- was dumped into the hold of -- different holds which -- within --  
where we had our bunks, where we had our hammocks, and they knew where -- where they --  
where they were. They were -- seemed to be all on a pile in there, and people would ask us for --  
that -- that needed to get to their valises, to find their valise and bring it to them so they can get  
their -- get at -- get out whatever they needed, and they always paid us. So we had -- we had  
several dollars in our --

Q: Really?

A: -- in our pockets. And -- yeah.

Q: But you didn't have to pay for your meals when you were there, that was all --

A: No, that was all --

Q: -- that was all taken care of.

A: -- that was all included, yes, yes.

Q: Did you have sh -- go ahead.

A: The f -- our first stop was Casablanca, and we got there just shortly after the French scuttled the -- the fleet there, they had -- most of their fleet was in Casablanca, yeah.

Q: You saw that?

A: We s -- thought we saw some of it. Then -- over there.

Q: In Casablanca did you get off the boat, or you stayed on the boat?

A: No, no, stayed on the boat there.

Q: You stayed. Did other people come on?

A: I --

Q: Don't know?

A: -- I would -- I wou -- I would think so, I d -- I don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: I really don't know, don't remember. We stopped in the Azores. We -- so -- somebody might have gotten on, somebody might have gotten off, I don't know.

Q: Do you know about how many people were on the ship?

A: I have no idea.

Q: Couple of hundred? More, less? No idea.

A: I -- I -- I -- I couldn't tell.

Q: And was it -- I'm assuming because it was --

A: Seems like it was a couple hundred, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. All one class. Nobody was -- there wasn't like a first class [indecipherable]

A: No, no, no, no. Li-Like -- as far as I remember there were just hammocks strung this -- there were no cabins, no, no.

Q: Were there showers?

A: I don't know. Did I ever take a sh --

Q: Did you take a shower? A bath?

A: I do -- not as far as I know.

Q: Uh-huh. It's been a -- it was a long time.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you take showers or baths at the Jewish home when you were in Berlin?

A: I'm sure we did.

Q: In Barcelona, or San Sebastian and then [indecipherable]

A: Oh, oh sure, I'm sure we did there, yes.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, of course. I'm sure we did in Berlin, too.

Q: Right.

A: Don't remember the --

Q: Right.

A: But --

Q: On the boat?

A: On the boat I don't know if there were -- there -- there must have been --

Q: Must have been something.

A: -- places, you know, where we could -- especially if everybody -- everybody else wou -- I wouldn't have insisted on it, but I'm sure --

Q: Other people might have, right?

A: -- other -- other people, I'm sure, did.

Q: So, was Guy with you when you were eating with the Portuguese sailors?

A: Well, he --

Q: Or was Guy off someplace?

A: -- we didn't always -- we were not always together.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But we always knew where we --

Q: Where you were.

A: -- where to find each other.

Q: Why did you like being with the Portuguese sailors?

A: When I was a child, I -- that was my dream, I always wanted to become a sailor.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: That's interesting.

A: So that -- that --

Q: So this was your chance to get --

A: -- that -- that was my chance.

Q: Right.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you get seasick on the boat?

A: I don't remember that. No, not -- not -- not really, except for the last -- just before we got to New York, this last week -- the last week, Guy got really seasick. I didn't feel -- I don't think I felt too good either. Yes, I remember not feeling good because --

Q: But Guy was really sick.

A: Guy didn't feel good at all, yeah.

Q: Tell me something, during tho -- those years that you were apart after you left your parents, did you ever get sick, did you ever have a cold? Did you ever get a childhood illness, which would be not surprising?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. Lucky. Lucky.

Q: The war scared away all the --

A: Yeah, because I -- as a kid I had scarlet fever, and I had -- I got all the sicknesses that you shouldn't get.

Q: Mm-hm. But Guy didn't get sick either.

A: No.

Q: How interesting.

A: No, not really, no, we --

Q: So from the --

A: -- lucky.

Q: Yeah. From the Azores you go to Bermuda, is that right?

A: Ah, I th -- I th --

Q: And then Santa Domingo?

A: And then San Domingo, or was it San Domingo first? I don't remember --

Q: Well, that would be a little odd because -- well, I don't know.

A: I don't know either.

Q: I don't know.

A: I don't remember [indecipherable]

Q: I wasn't there, you were there.

A: They -- I don't -- I -- I know we were there.

Q: And in --

A: In the -- in the harbor of Bermuda.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yes.

Q: But again, you don't ever get off the ship in these places --

A: No.

Q: -- unless you're actually --

A: No, no, no, no, no, never got off. We didn't get off in Havana, we didn't get off in Vera Cruz.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: No.

Q: And where is it that somebody starts yelling, Loewenstein, Loewenst --

A: That was in San Domingo.

Q: Mm.

A: Was in San Domingo in th -- in the harbor there. My -- it was an acquaintance of my parents, and of course my parents knew we were on the se -- on the [indecipherable] and they must have known it was going to stop in -- in San Domingo [indecipherable]. If I'm not mistaken his name

was Hyman, his last name was Hyman. He called our name and -- and we talked to him from the railing of the boat, and he was down at the -- standing down there. Don't remember what we talked about.

Q: But that must have been shocking, that someone would say your name.

A: Somebody in [indecipherable] in -- in -- quite, quite. Oh sure, yeah, yeah.

Q: Your mother must -- she probably would have made a great spy, or something, I mean, sh -- that she would have all these ways of getting information to you and getting information back to herself, cause she doesn't know that you're on this boat, right, she just as --

A: She -- she did. She must have. They must have known that we were on the boat.

Q: So the Joint must have told her.

A: Oh yes, I'm sure, I'm sure. We didn't correspond, but they -- through the authorities, through the Joint, they knew because they were there waiting for us --

Q: Right.

A: -- when the boat got to New York, yes.

Q: This is an incredibly long trip. If it's Bermuda, Santa Domingo, Havana, Cuba, Vera Cruz, Mexico and then back up.

A: And then back up, yes.

Q: It's unbelievable.

A: Yeah, yeah, it took six weeks we were on this -- on the [indecipherable]

Q: Was it tough to be patient? Cause this -- you're finally going to get out of all of this and be with your parents.

A: Oh we -- we were happy to be --

Q: On the ship.



A: On the ship, yes.

Q: Right.

A: Yes. Was a -- was an adventure for us, you know, too.

Q: Now, you were in, was it San Domingo when Pearl Harbor was attacked? December seventh -  
-

A: Yes, December seventh, yes, I remember that, remember well. We were afraid maybe they wouldn't let us come to New York any more. We didn't -- because the war broke out, we didn't know how -- how the United States would -- would react to it. Because I -- I remember the Saint Louis coming back to Antwerp, I was there.

Q: Really?

A: I s -- I saw the Saint Louis in Antwerp, yes.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Hm. How did that happen? How come you were -- you heard about the ship coming back, or what?

A: How? I don't remember just how, but --

Q: But you actually saw the sh --

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Q: Did you meet people who disembarked?

A: I don't -- don't remember that.

Q: Hm.

A: Sometimes I doubt myself [indecipherable] sure -- sure we saw the Saint Louis there. Where was that? That was in --

Q: It was in 30 -- in '39?

A: Think so. I'm not --

Q: Or '38? Now I'm not sure you were in [indecipherable]

A: Yeah. Now I'm not so sure any more, but that's a --

Q: You think you saw it.

A: Yeah. That's a long time ago, you know, I -- I -- but it seems like I remember that.

Q: So this guy who calls out to you in sant -- San Domingo, he's going to then let your parents know. Is he going to --

A: I'm sure that was the idea, yes.

Q: [indecipherable] yeah.

A: That he saw us on the boat, yes. I'm sure that --

Q: Now, do you remember coming into New York harbor?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

A: Yes. What I know for sure [indecipherable] I remember looking down off the boat after we pulled into the -- in -- in -- in -- into port, and -- an -- up a -- up against the pier, I remember looking down to see my father and mother.

Q: You do?

A: Yes, and they called out to us, yes, we s -- yes.

Q: What a journey.

A: And -- yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh. But what I also remember is that it -- it felt like -- like -- like a dream. Couldn't believe it when we -- after -- after we were -- got settled in and -- in -- in New York.

Q: Tell me what that first moment was --

A: That -- that -- that -- that we were ac-actually -- that we were actually there, that it wasn't -- that it wasn't a dream.

Q: What was it -- what was it like to greet your parents when you came off the ship? Was it --

A: I --

Q: Do you remember what it was like?

A: I don't remember the feelings, I remember they were there, and -- and --

Q: Did they look like what you thought they would look like? Had they changed? Do you remember?

A: Don't remember.

Q: You must have changed a lot for them, because with kids a couple of years is a lot.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I remember where they lived. I thought that -- that seemed like a palace to me --

Q: Right.

A: -- because we were ready to live anyplace, you know. It didn't matter where. I remember they had sublet it, sublet several -- a couple of rooms from other refugees --

Q: Mm.

A: -- in Washington Heights. And -- you know, I -- I thought it was great, we --

Q: You lived in Cabrini Boulevard?

A: What?

Q: Cabrini Green, was that -- no, Cabrini --

A: Cabrini bou -- Cabrini Boulevard, yes. Lived two or three floors up. I think their name was Katz, right? Mr. and Mrs. Katz. But then shortly after that we got our -- we went into our own

apartment. My f-father and mother both worked. My father at that time worked for S. Klein on Union Square.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: My mother did housework, she --

Q: Was your father a salesman at S. Klein? Is that what he was doing?

A: He stock -- stocked the clothes racks, you know, in the s -- in the stockroom. They hired mostly refugees, lot of refugees worked there. Then later on they -- he worked for another outfit, and he -- he had a higher position. But yes, then we started going to school.

Q: Did you learn English quickly?

A: Guy did, a lot faster than I did, you know. I was sent to -- to a Jewish camp, also through a Jewish organization that -- when we first came that first summer, in Green County, I remember that, Green County, New York. And I was made counselor over the little kids, and they taught -- when I came home from camp, my English was pretty good. They taught me, yes.

Q: How did you find your parents? Did you find them changed, did you feel yourself very comfortable with them, as if time had not lapsed? Do you recall how that was?

A: I don't re -- I -- I know I felt strange.

Q: You did.

A: I felt strange, yes. Everything was different for me, nothing seemed, you know, natural. It was like in a -- well, like in a dream, you know, like things weren't real. But --

Q: Let me ask you this. For -- for two years -- I guess it's almost two years, you are, in a way, the man of this little family of you and Guy.

A: Well, yeah.

Q: Now you come back --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- and your parents are there. And in a way -- my suspicion is they take away --

A: Should be mak -- made it easier for me. Should have made it easier for me.

Q: But in some ways it made it harder because it took away a certain responsibility and --

A: I don't -- I don't -- I don't know just what -- the experience had cha -- had changed me.

Q: Right, right.

A: I -- I was very happy to be a -- to -- to get out of Europe --

Q: Of course.

A: -- get out of. And I was happy to be here.

Q: Did your parent --

A: That's a --

Q: -- g -- I'm sorry. Did your parents ask you about what happened during those years when you were apart? Did you sit down and talk?

A: Oh, I-I -- I told them --

Q: What had happened.

A: -- I told them -- told them everything, of course.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah, sure. But we survived it --

Q: Right.

A: -- I mean, that was the -- we -- after that, everything was -- was easy.

Q: When did you find out all that your mother had done? When did you realize -- fully realize how much --

A: After -- after we came to the -- aft-after we came here --

Q: Came here.

A: -- you know, and we -- we saw, and we saw all that -- see all the letters that she wrote --

Q: Right.

A: -- and the -- all the correspondence and -- oh yeah. That's when we found out.

Q: Were you amazed?

A: Oh yeah. Oh yes, yes. That she was able to -- to do all that.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That she was able to come to Washington, and -- and go and see a senator. We had no means, and I'm sure when she got off the train in Washington, and wherever she stayed, that -- that she walked wherever. So -- but we did what had to be done.

Q: Did -- did your father go with her to Washington, or was --

A: No, no --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- no, no, no. I'm sure he went to work, he worked, he had job.

Q: Did you find him better now, that many years after Dachau?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Had he become more like the person you knew?

A: Oh yeah. Sh -- oh, sure, yes, yes, yes. He -- he got -- he c -- he came -- his first job was as a -- as a dishwasher, then he got a job as a painter. I think he made eight dollars a week, and then he went to work Union Square, and -- and then he got -- went to work for another outfit, their name was S. Klein also, but they had several stores in town -- in -- in -- in -- in -- in this country. New York, and I don't -- I remember him going to a s -- someplace in Ohio, opened up a new store, or closed one down, something like that. And that was up to my mother to do all that, her English

was so much better than my -- my dad, even though my -- I remember my dad's, his English was very good.

Q: Hi-His English was good?

A: Oh yes. Yeah, yeah.

Q: Had he learned it also?

A: No, no --

Q: But he learned it when he came.

A: -- no, no. He learned after he -- yeah, came to this country, yeah. You know, while -- while I was -- while we were still in Germany, there was a -- there was somebody that -- that we knew, that taught me, that I -- I was sent to her to learn English, he taught me some -- very little, not very much. But I remember going there, and she would try to -- try to teach me English. And I -- I knew a little bit when I came to this country, yes. Ask me.

Q: Did you -- did you like New York?

A: Did I like New York?

Q: Yeah.

A: Y-Yes, yes, yes. Was not a bad place to live at all. I -- I had -- at first when I went to school [indecipherable] I finished high school in New York. Was hard for me.

Q: Mm.

A: It didn't have extra classrooms for -- for refugees that -- that were help -- that were helped because they couldn't speak the language. You either -- you either passed the -- passed the course or you didn't. So at -- at first it was -- it was hard, but it was a good place to live.

Q: And you were living amongst a lot of German Jewish refugees there.

A: They were all -- all -- all refugees, yes.

Q: Right.

A: All refugees.

Q: So that must have made it more -- were there kids? Were there at least some kids?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, I -- I joined the -- the Maccabee, the --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- soccer club, yes, they were German Jewish kids, yeah, most of them. And I did befriend several. Washington Heights, the refugees used to sit on the park, at -- on Fort [indecipherable] Park until midnight. Nobody bothered them.

Q: Right.

A: It's different today.

Q: Yeah.

A: But we were happy, happy to be there, until we got the urge to get out of New York.

Q: Right. Let's stop the tape now so we can change it, and we'll do one more --

End of Tape Three



Beginning Tape Four

Q: Ernie, when you were in high school, did your teachers or any of the students ask you about where you came from, what happened to you, or was it nobody was asking?

A: Nobody.

Q: Nobody?

A: No, no, no.

Q: So even when you became friends with people, that wasn't part of the --

A: My friends, I told them, you know, if they wanted -- they ask me a question, I -- sure I -- I -- I told them, but nobody seemed to be --

Q: Very interested.

A: -- interested in it.

Q: Right.

A: Oh, although, I re -- I remember we first came to this country, at first there were -- we went to see several people. I remember my mother taking us, and they were very interested, yeah, and -- course I -- at that time I remembered everything, and they were going to write a book about it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Then -- then everybody, you know, you met -- they met -- they went to school, and they got a job, went in the service.

Q: I was going to a -- let me se -- let -- let me go --

A: Send -- send me back where I came from.

Q: Right, I know. I understand a little bit about wh-what happened with your father in terms of work. Your mother was first cleaning houses, cleaning apartment --

A: Cleaning houses, yes, yeah.

Q: And then -- then what should -- did she do?

A: That's it.

Q: That's -- that's what she did.

A: That's what she did until we left New York. She --

Q: Was that hard on her?

A: I don't know if it was hard on her, that's what she did.

Q: Uh-huh, that's what she did.

A: Yeah. She did it without any reservations.

Q: Were you comfortable in terms of money, or were you --

A: In New York?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: You didn't --

A: We had no -- you know, never -- didn't mut -- make much money.

Q: Right.

A: We had a -- we lived in walk-up apartments, we d -- and I remember when -- when we moved from Cabrini Boulevard to further uptown, my -- they were very fussy what apartment they would take. Couldn't spend much money. I think our -- I think was 45 dollars a week, I think they went -- 45 dollars a month, the rent was. Lived in a very nice neighborhood on Thayer Street, that was one block before 200 -- before Dikeman Street.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And it wasn't -- you know, nothing fancy, but that's when I -- let me see, was I -- yeah, I was -- was I still going to school? No, that's when -- no, that was -- I was out of [indecipherable] I

was -- that's after I came home from the service that we moved up to what was -- to Thayer Street.

Q: So your -- your parents, until 1946, stayed in Cabrini Boulevard, or you moved more than once?

A: Hm. No, we moved before I went in the service.

Q: Mm.

A: We din -- before I went in the service we moved from Cabrini Boulevard to Thayer Street.

Q: Now Ernie, you were here for two years and then you're drafted, or did you --

A: Yeah.

Q: So --

A: Yeah, so what?

Q: Did you want to go?

A: Oh, sure.

Q: Oh su -- just --

A: Sure. Yeah.

Q: You didn't feel like you had been through enough?

A: Well, but there was a war on, and -- and there wa -- we had -- nobody had any qualms about -

-

Q: About going.

A: -- that -- about going, oh yes. Yeah, sure.

Q: Was there any suspicion about you because you were from Germany, when you got in the army?

A: Yes. Well, the suspicion was long before that, th -- we were looked upon as a -- by -- by Americans as -- as Germans, you know, as Germans, they cou -- they didn't know the difference between a -- a German Jew, and a -- and a German that wasn't Jewish, you know, they -- lot of people just -- just was beyond them, you know? I can't follow tha -- I -- up unti -- til today I don't understand why -- I can understand why the general population wouldn't know, but the government either wa -- wer -- weren't any smarter, or were they -- or didn't want to be smarter? I don't --

Q: So how -- wh-what did the government do, did the government -- were they spying?

A: Well, the -- well, yeah, they -- they we had to get either -- I had to get special permission to -- to -- I wanted to go see my uncle in -- in -- in -- in Connecticut, we had to get special permission to -- to go there, you know. Everybody, they s -- kept track of us pretty good, even though I thought it was unnecessary, we -- we certainly weren't going to hel -- be -- y-you know, do something, you know, against the -- against -- against the United States.

Q: So they couldn't make a distinction between German Jews and Nazis? [indecipherable]

A: Apparently.

Q: Apparently not.

A: Yeah. Th -- I -- I can understand that from the general population that maybe they were just -- just didn't know, but the government, I -- I -- I think there were -- well, there was a lot of anti-Semitism in the State Department, so I -- I -- I was told, you know.

Q: Do you -- do you know whether your parents were shadowed, if people were suspicious and the government was making sure they weren't seeing the wrong people, or --

A: I -- I don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: I -- I d -- I don't know. I couldn't -- can't think of anything specific.

Q: So were all -- when you all wanted to visit your relative in Connecticut --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- everybody in the family, all four of you had to get special permission?

A: Yes.

Q: And where was that -- where did you have to go to get special permission, do you know?

Cause your mother must -- mother and father must have done that.

A: Well, I -- I've still got the -- the thing --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- where we had the -- some federal authority, I don't remember any more. But that -- that's how it was then.

Q: Do you remember your parent's and your brother's response to your being drafted? Were they upset, or did they just think it's --

A: Oh, not at --

Q: -- this was great --

A: -- not at all.

Q: -- you're going to go and --

A: I don't know if they thought it was great, you know, but that was -- that was war and we were fighting the war and that was certainly my place to be there.

Q: Right.

A: I had no qualms about that. Went to -- I wanted to be in the navy.

Q: That's [indecipherable] to be a sailor.

A: They ask me -- they a -- a -- they a -- ask me, this was the induction, the [indecipherable] induction is, what branch of the service would you like to be in, I said, navy. They says -- I remember [indecipherable] army. They said how come you know, I says, ha, we saw you march up through here, you know, you could march so good. Just kidding around. That day everybody went in the army, I guess.

Q: So wa -- was there a dra -- were you drafted, or did you --

A: Yes, yes --

Q: -- you were -- you were drafted

A: -- I was drafted, yes. But, you know, as soon as you 18.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, soon as I turned 18.

Q: Was it -- automatic.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what was basic training like for you? How many weeks?

A: Well, they send me to -- what the -- my induction was in -- in Fort Dix, New Jersey, and from there I went to C-Camp Hood in Texas.

Q: Mm.

A: And basic training was -- so many things that I forget. Basic training at first was tough and then it was easy, but there were a lot of German prisoners there.

Q: In -- in --

A: In -- in Camp Hood.

Q: -- Camp Hood?

A: Camp Hood, yeah, they brought them from -- from North Africa, with the North Africa corps, and they were still think -- they -- they -- they still thought they were going to win the war. I talked to some of them. They were still gung-ho, they were laughing at us for -- they were laying in the sun with shorts on, and they watched us march to go bivouac, and we ha -- they never had it so good when they --

Q: Right.

A: -- as PW's here.

Q: That must have infuriated you.

A: Well, I wasn't happy about it, but I was happy that they -- there were PW's at least, but they were st-still thought they were going to win. And then the basic training was cut short because they needed us over there. Was supposed to be, I don't know, 17 -- 13 weeks of basic training, was cut short several weeks.

Q: Mm.

A: We were supposed to get a seven day delay en route before we got shipped overseas and that was cut short. And I was foolish enough that they told us, take a troop train, don't take a civilian train, take a troop train because they got preference, you going to get there --

Q: Right.

A: -- get -- get to New York faster. Well, I remember we -- we were stopped and we saw all the civilian trains, they just flew by us. And some of the -- some of the guys got off and got on -- on civilian trains. But I believed them, you know?

Q: So were you late for wherever you were suppo --

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, out of the seven days it was four days, something like that, and then -- yeah, they -- we were not too far from the -- from there we had to report in Baltimore, it seems like, Kilmer? Wa -- is that in [indecipherable] someplace.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Then they took us to New York, and I took the Queen Mary overseas, 10,000 men on it.

Q: Really?

A: [indecipherable]. Oh, by the way, I became a citizen down in -- in -- forgot about that, in --

Q: Camp Hood?

A: -- in Camp Hood, yes. In Bell County, Texas. [indecipherable] gotta be a citizen --

Q: Oh, that's right, you have to be a citizen in order to be --

A: That's what I thought.

Q: Yeah.

A: But there were guys that came back from the Aleutian Islands at that time, they came back as soldiers, and they became citizens with me.

Q: Afterwards, really?

A: Yeah. So they had sent some of them overseas before that already, yeah.

Q: So what were you being trained in this --

A: Infantry.

Q: Infantry.

A: Infantry, yeah.

Q: Just the good old infantry.

A: Infantry.

Q: So you were a private?



A: I was a private.

Q: First class, or private?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: No-Nobody comes out of basic training --

Q: Right.

A: -- with any stars.

Q: So what theaters were you in, what were you doing in -- in Europe?

A: Well, then I -- we went to Glasgow and took -- took a nice train to -- went all through Scotland, England. Don't remember where we got onto this boat -- ship -- something. We -- and we landed in someplace in northern France, and that -- came in as a replacement to the 100<sup>th</sup> infantry division. Easy Company, 100<sup>th</sup> infantry, yeah.

Q: That's Easy Company, is that --

A: Easy Company, yeah. My company commander was Captain Garahan. I was his -- I was his interpreter. Didn't use me that often, but several times.

Q: Could you speak French as well?

A: No, no

Q: No.

A: Oh, you know --

Q: So [indecipherable] for German --

A: -- used for German, yeah.

Q: -- and Flemish, if you ever got to it.

A: Yeah, well, there were no Flemish soldiers.

Q: Right, right.

A: Or who -- my mish -- my -- my -- my German came in handy a couple of times.

Q: Mm.

A: Yeah. We -- there were some maps that I translated for him once and -- and were in -- in -- well, I wasn't -- my -- my -- my German didn't come in that -- all that han-handy, because -- cause at that time there were German -- Germans infiltrated our lines, dressed -- took uniforms from prisoners -- English speaking German soldiers infiltrated our lines, and we went out on patrol. When you come back from patrol, you never know where you -- where you end up.

Q: Mm.

A: And you get stopped by our lines, and they ask -- and -- and -- and you sh -- you should forget the password, you know, my English, you know, it -- they -- they could have spotted that German accent pretty fast, and it didn't -- during those days he didn't ask too many questions, he shot first, you know. So I was scared, a couple of times.

Q: Mm.

A: But we -- our outfit took -- took Bich which was the southernmost ma -- line in the ma --

Q: Bich?

A: Bich, yes.

Q: That was the --

A: I am -- I am a son of Bich, yes, there is -- there is that organization, yes, yes.

Q: Right.

A: We took some prisoners there, and -- and they send me back with probably 20 of them.

Q: Yeah?

A: And --

Q: Alone?

A: Yes, alone, and I was very uneasy, I --

Q: Mm.

A: -- yeah. But I made them toe the line. I had to because they could have --

Q: Yes, 20 men [indecipherable]

A: -- took -- took -- took the army pretty easy, you know.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: I remember we -- I was supposed to take them back. Don't remember just how th -- how that was, the next town back, you know, it was several miles. And I'm -- you know, I had them marching with their ha-hands up, and you -- you're not going to keep your hands up too long. I remember m -- riding them up on a -- beca -- I got to town, up against the fence, and I sat down, and they were standing there looking at me, and I -- I -- I knew better, and I finally made them turn around.

Q: Mm.

A: And now I ca -- I can imagine what it felt like to them, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: But that -- they c -- soon -- soon came -- somebody came and took them off my hand.

Q: Right.

A: And I was glad to get back to my outfit, yeah.

Q: Did you know, by the time you went abroad, if not before, what was happening to Jews in Poland?

A: No.

Q: And the extent of the concentration camps, how huge a system it was?

A: Don't remember what we knew by that time.

Q: You don't remember what you heard in Washington Heights from everybody?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: Right.

A: We knew, you know, that -- we knew about the extermination camps.

Q: You did?

A: We -- by that time everybody knew that, I think.

Q: When were you drafted --

A: 40 f --

Q: '44?

A: '44.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: So were you in a shooting war, were you actually in battle?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah, my outfit, so they tell me was the -- was on the front lines longer than -- without relief, suit -- that's what -- you know, when you were a -- when you're a PFC in an infantry outfit, you don't know what goes on.

Q: Right.

A: Oh yeah, we were --

Q: What was that like for you? Was that awful, or --

A: I had a rifle that time.

Q: You could protect yourself.

A: Yeah, I had a rifle, you know, I --

Q: Were you scared you were going to die?

A: Well I -- I knew enough to duck, you know.

Q: You can't always duck a bullet, cause they come pretty fast, you know.

A: Yes, you can.

Q: You can?

A: Well, if you try to, you do --

Q: Right.

A: -- do your best.

Q: Right.

A: You do your best. I re --

Q: Obviously you did.

A: I remember the -- you know, when you're 18, you do a lot of -- you know [indecipherable] they ask you -- they ask you if you want to become a paratrooper, and I thought long and hard. Fellow across the street from me, his name was Phil Marx, Jewish boy, he went in the -- I don't - - either the 82<sup>nd</sup> or the 101<sup>st</sup>, you know, and I -- and I -- I -- I always thought I could do as well as him, and then I said no, not because it would have been too dangerous for me, I -- I -- I didn't want to hang off the -- and have somebody shoot at me without being able to shoot back at them. I says, I'm not going to -- uh-uh. So I was -- yeah, we got shot at, yeah.

Q: Right. Am I correct that you went back to Antwerp? Is this right after the war, or still during the war?

A: Right after the war. The war was over in May --

Q: '45. Yeah.

A: Yes, '45.

Q: And you found Marian and Pierre?

A: No, no.

Q: You didn't?

A: No, but I -- I saw Pierre.

Q: You saw Pierre?

A: I saw Pierre. I go -- was on a trolley car up the [indecipherable] that's where we -- I lived. I wanted to see the house.

Q: Right.

A: Got off the trolley car, and there he was, cleaning the switches.

Q: Did he recognize you?

A: He must have, he --

Q: He --

A: -- I know -- I don't know, I stopped there, talked to him.

Q: He must have been shocked to see you.

A: I don't remember if he was shocked or not. I remember I stopped there, talked to him.

Q: And how come you didn't see Madame Marian? Was she not around?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't know. My leave was in Brussels.

Q: Mm.

A: I wasn't even supposed to be in Antwerp, but -- but that time I went anyway.

Q: But did you get in contact with M-Madame Marian after the war at all?

A: No.

Q: Not at all.

A: No, no --

Q: By writing, by -- nothing.

A: -- no, no, no, no. No. I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember?

A: No. Seems like he said he didn't know where she was.

Q: Oh, that they had split, maybe?

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Q: Huh.

A: Because I -- I don't know if they were married or not.

Q: Was that strange for you to be back in Antwerp after the war?

A: Oh sure, yes.

Q: Did you go back to look at the places that you had stayed?

A: I didn't spend much time, I -- I didn't have much time there.

Q: Right.

A: With pe -- I went back, my -- my wife and I, we went back in -- in '72, I think, and I spent -- we spent a couple of days in Antwerp. We went to see Bests.

Q: Mm-hm. Those were the last people.

A: That Guy stayed with.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes. And not much else.

Q: You never met up with the Levys?

A: No.

Q: Weingartens, the -- the -- who was --

A: Weingar -- they perished --

Q: They --

A: -- Weingartens perished, yeah --

Q: -- and the Levys --

A: -- we know that.

Q: And the Levys [indecipherable]

A: Levys came to this country.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Never. I -- no, never -- never met up with them.

Q: And did you go back to Koblenz aft -- right after the war as well, when you were still in the army?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What'd you do?

A: Yes, I did. Lieutenant Truit and I, we -- we -- I shouldn't ha -- better not talk about that.

Q: Why?

A: We had a deal.

Q: Yeah?

A: I was gonna -- I had -- I had a German car that we -- that we requisitioned.

Q: Mm-hm.



A: And I was gonna sell it in -- in -- in Belgium, but then they -- they caught me twice and they send me back. And I parked it -- I still got the address, I parked it in Acha with a five gallon can of gas in it. But that was on my way, I had to leave for an -- for Antwerp, but I went through Koblenz -- went through Koblenz, you know --

Q: Mm.

A: -- through -- Koblenz was in the -- in the French sec -- sector, and I don't -- I don't know, I -- you know, nobody wore in-insignias, or -- you couldn't tell a -- sure, a general you probably could have, but you couldn't tell a captain from -- from anybody else. Well, of course this was after the war already again, so they did wear -- anyway, I had a ma -- a major's cap on. Twen -- I was all of 19 -- 20 --

Q: Right.

A: But got away with it. Didn't shave for a few days, and -- but I did get -- I went to Koblenz.

Q: And you saw your house?

A: Yes. That wasn't -- well, it was -- the only wall that was still standing was in -- in -- in -- in -- was at the hou -- our house. One, the front wall was good, everything else was flattened. That whole town was --

Q: Was -- was completely flattened.

A: Was pretty well flat, yes. I went to see Hillis Hyam Stoney, a friend of my grandfather's. He was a horse butcher, and he had a -- a klipa, a bar. I remember where he lived, you know. I went to see him. There was nothing standing there, and he invited me into his kitchen, there was no roof to his kitchen, you know. He -- he had bought our house before my parents left Germany, he bought the house with the -- that my -- m-my grandmother was supposed to -- she kept her -- her -- the first floor was hers until she would die a natural death, of course. And I heard from Mrs.

Teale, that's the lady that I studied the history of Jews in Koblenz now, what -- that she had to leave there, even though the man, hillas -- hillas -- this Mr. Hillas Hyam fought tooth and nail, she said, you know, that she should stay. They wouldn't let her stay. They brought all the remaining Jews together in one -- one place. But anyway, I -- I saw him, and then I tried to -- I asked, you know, are there any Jews left, and he told me about a -- a Mr. Pollak that had married a non-Jew, that survive -- that they never caught. I went to see him. I ha -- just had a short conversation with him, don't remember what -- all I can ima -- I would imagine I must have asked what happened to everybody?

Q: Right. Di -- had you known this person before, or was he a stranger?

A: I -- I -- no, I didn't know him, I heard the name.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Heard the name, but I -- I -- I didn't know him. I didn't see anybody else in Koblenz. That was shortly after the -- after the war --

Q: Right.

A: -- ended.

Q: So you were discharged in '46?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And then you go back to your parent's house?

A: Went back home, yes.

Q: So you're now 20?

A: Right.

Q: And Guy is 15?

A: Right.

Q: Guy is sort of the age you were when you first became --

A: Right, yeah, right, yeah, yeah --

Q: [Indecipherable]

A: -- yeah, yeah. Yeah, I -- I [Indecipherable] when I went to sc -- when I went to school, first I went to George Washington high school, which was an academic school, and did a -- I wanted to learn a trade, and everybody thought it was a good idea. I went to machine and metal trade high school. I had a job after school, worked for Atlas Recording Machines, very all -- well known [Indecipherable]. Mr. Kutner, a -- a German and a Syrian owned that place. Mr. Kutner, not -- he was not Jewish, not Jewish. He was a teacher at -- in -- in Berlin at the -- some technical institute. Very smart guy, and I went back there after the war, after I came home from -- from -- from the service, I went to work with them again, and I -- I was -- I liked it, and I wa -- I was probably pretty -- I was good at it. And there were several guys there, this -- this old guy, he was in his 40's, he asked me to go into business with him, and --

Q: This old guy in his 40's?

A: This old guy in his for -- in his 40's. I didn't -- by that time my father was not well any more, he had heart problems. Wanted to get out of the city the worst way, you know, and he wanted to do the same thing my uncles in Connecticut did, he wanted to be a farmer, a cattle dealer. And that's -- he eventually, you know, bought a farm in upstate New York. First we looked in Pennsylvania, couldn't afford it. At that time a lot of German Jewish refugees bought farms in -- in Vineland.

Q: Right.

A: Chicken farms.

Q: Right.

A: So by war's end the -- the val -- the land value was already more than w-we could afford. We had -- we had saved 5,000 dollars. That's a lot of money.

Q: That's a lot of money.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then we started to look in Pennsylvania, then we moved to -- further, further and further up. We finally wound up in -- in Norwich. I got a G.I. loan.

Q: Did your mother want to move also?

A: Oh yes.

Q: She did?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: So everybody did.

A: Oh yes, yes, yes. Yes, and I --

Q: But you didn't get into cattle trading, you did something else in farming?

A: Yes, I d -- I -- I -- I -- I dealt in cows.

Q: But, for milk?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: Well, yes, yes, I did -- we did both, we did both.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We -- we -- we bought the farm. I -- I was the farmer, because from -- from New York, knowing that we were gonna buy a farm, I got a job on a farm in Monticello from Max Yasgur, and he taught me well.

Q: How did you get that job?

A: Through the Jewish agricultural society. They got in touch with Yasgur, apparently they knew him, you know, and he -- he hired me. I worked for him for three-quarters of a year and we were interested in several farms and he asked me to stay with him, he wanted me to go in business with him. I -- I worked hard, I wa -- I was young, and -- and I wasn't afraid to work.

Q: Right.

A: And I took to the work good, but we wanted to have our own farm.

Q: Have your own, right.

A: Yeah. And we saw several places that we were interested in, we finally bought the place in -- in Norwich.

Q: Norwich.

A: It wasn't just what we wanted. We'll s -- I always said, well, we'll stay here for three, four years, and then I'll buy a real farm. That's 54 years ago.

Q: Well, what's the difference between Norwich and a real farm?

A: And a real farm?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, Norwich is -- is a little hilly. There's in a -- N-Norwich itself is in a valley.

Q: Right.

A: So we have valley land and we have some hill land. I wanted one that was all in the valley --

Q: I see.

A: -- because when I worked for Max Yasgur, that was -- in Monticello, that's all in the hills and -- and I knew that wasn't the -- that wasn't a way to farm it. But we -- the first year we -- we just milked cows the first year. And then my f -- my father, of course, knew -- I didn't know the

cattle business. I knew -- by that time I knew how to work the land, how to milk a cow, how to raise crops, but after the first year my father started dealing in cows. One of the reasons we bought the farm in -- in -- in -- in Norwich is because it had a small Jewish community.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And there were several Jewish cattle dealers there that my father knew from --

Q: I see.

A: -- from -- from Germany.

Q: Right.

A: And so we started dealing in cows, my brother and I. I -- I ran the farm, my brother helped. He was still in high school, but you know, he -- it -- it's from 4:30 in the morning until -- until you're done.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: Which might be nine o'clock, 10 o'clock, whatever time it is, you know.

Q: It's tough work, isn't it?

A: Yes. And then he, at 6:30 he would go up and take a shower and get ready for school -- for the school bus. And then after he graduated school, he -- he was on the farm. We would go on the road every day, buy cows, sell them f -- make -- an-and milk cows. We started -- there were 20 -- 23 head on the farm, 23 head. I think eight -- 18 milkers and -- and five head of young stock, yeah. Within -- and -- and he didn't cut a -- this guy that had the farm, Donald Davis, he didn't cut enough hay -- didn't cut enough hay for what he had. Within three or four years, we had 40 - 50 head, and then -- and we had more hay than -- than we needed, we sold hay. And -- but too bad my dad didn't last long. He died in fift -- he bought the farm in '48, and he died in '52.

Q: Really.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's too bad.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your mother lived with you --

A: Yes.

Q: -- through the whole period?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And you -- you met your wife in what -- you got married in '56 -- no, '59.

A: '59, yes.

Q: Right. And she's from Norwich?

A: No, no.

Q: No? Where'd you meet her?

A: A city girl.

Q: Davina?

A: Davina is a city girl.

Q: What, New York city girl?

A: Oh yeah, yes, from the Bronx.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Bronx. She had an uncle in -- that worked for the Norwich pharmaceutical company in -- in

Norwich, and she was visiting -- and he was a friend of my brother's, Abe Middlemark, yes,

Abe. And I -- I met her, and came to see a couple of times in New York, and got engaged, and --

Q: After a couple of times? So fast?

A: After -- well, I don't know, after -- no, more. Probably --

Q: Three or four times, maybe?

A: Six.

Q: Six.

A: Better -- better than six months, you know the -- but of course, I couldn't come to New York that often.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, within a year we -- I think a year later we got married, yes. And it's quite a change for a city girl --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and I wasn't -- I was ill -- ill at ease.

Q: About whether she would adjust to this?

A: That she would -- right, oh yes. And was quite a change for her. But I couldn't marry al -- I had to marry the Jewish girl. There was just no two ways about that.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you lived on this farm for over 50 years, you still have the farm?

A: Yeah.

Q: But it's now a driving range? Part of the farm?

A: Well, I -- I sold the cows, yeah, sold the cows. Well, my brother left in -- my brother left the farm in '69 -- '68 -- '69. He a -- he had back problems.

Q: Mm.



A: And he went to live in New Jersey, and I stayed on and I milked cows, dealt in cows, both, and raised a family.

Q: Right. How many children?

A: Three boys and a girl.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And they decided not to follow in my footsteps, even though they -- they helped while they were going to school. They know all about farming, and all about cows. In fact my -- one of them wanted to become a veterinarian, my -- my Joe, but [indecipherable] he's not -- he's not going to stick around school that long, he'll never do it. He would have made a -- you know there are veterinaries and there are veterinarians. This guy can look through an animal.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, he can look through an animal. But it didn't -- he -- he di -- he -- he get sa -- he's doing something else, yeah. My oldest one, he liked farming. They -- they all like -- they all like farming, they just don't want to make a living that way.

Q: Right.

A: Because it's -- it's -- it's too hard, there's no money in it. Hard to raise a family, but my --

Q: Is it hard to raise a family, why? Because you s -- have to [indecipherable]

A: Be-Be-Because you don't have -- you -- you -- you ki -- don't have the means to do what -- what the city kids do.

Q: I see.

A: I mean, you know, with TV today, they -- they know how -- how easy it is f-for some people to make a living.

Q: Right, right.

A: And they all like for -- they like to be gentleman farmers.

Q: Yeah.

A: They like to have farms, and -- and -- and -- and land and -- and animals, and have somebody else do the work.

Q: Else to the work, yes.

A: And they might get that chance yet.

Q: But you're glad you did this?

A: I have no regrets, no, no, no. I could have very well -- I might have done something else --

Q: Right.

A: -- but as it turned out, I raised a great family.

Q: Yeah.

A: And Norwich was a nice place to live. The farm has still got me.

Q: Right.

A: They ask me if I'm still on the farm, and I always tell them, the farm has got me.

Q: With a -- with a 200 year old house, huh?

A: [indecipherable] 200 year old house, yes, and new roads. When I moved there it was a dirt road, then in 1951 or two, they blacktopped it, and then they made it a little bit bigger a couple of times and they just finished it now, I got a superhighway now out there.

Q: Oh, wow.

A: Which I don't like. Didn't need it. But the government's got so much money they got to spend it someplace.

Q: I know when we talked throughout the last few hours, you said you really don't know how this experience in Europe changed you. Do you -- do you ever feel surprised when you think

back on what you did, you and your brother, that you were able to maneuver through all of this, or that's not how you think?

A: Makes me think like -- like not -- I'm not very religious, you know, I -- I'm very Jewish. I would say that's my -- that's my politics. God takes care of his fools, maybe. We were lucky somebody -- something, you know, when you realize what happened to all the rest over there, and -- and that we were so vulnerable.

Q: Right.

A: And -- and -- and still we -- we got out, so I'm -- I got a lot to be thankful for.

Q: Right. Your mother was a kind of guardian an -- this amazing guardian angel, somehow.

A: She --

Q: Extraordinary.

A: -- she -- oh yes, she did -- if anybody else I'd -- I'm -- we would not -- I don't know if we would have survived it, but I know we wouldn't have gotten to the United States when we did.

Q: Right.

A: I know that. So, between -- between her and God --

Q: And a few nice people who [indecipherable]

A: -- and that -- and the -- yeah --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and -- and -- and --

Q: And you.

A: People [indecipherable] people --

Q: Remember, you and your -- you and your brother are part of this, too.

A: Well, we -- we -- we -- we did save our skin. But it's a great country anyway, the United States.

Q: You think so, yeah.

A: Oh yeah, great country. Nobody complains more than I do, but a great country, yes, yeah.

Q: Let me ask you a more contemporary question. Somebody who's been through the experiences you were during the war, when you think about what's happened here in the last six weeks, what happened on September 11<sup>th</sup>, do you feel different than other Americans who never experienced anything?

A: I -- you know, I -- I -- I thought I did. I thought I'd -- that I feel differently.

Q: Mm.

A: But I listened to a couple of congressman the other day, I-I watch C-Span a lot, he feels just like I do. I think we make -- we make so many mistakes that I -- I say to my -- all -- all this didn't ever happen --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- if they would have just done it right. If they only would have listened to me.

Q: Of course. Are you frightened now?

A: No, I'm not frightened.

Q: No, you're not frightened.

A: I'm -- I am -- I don't know what -- what would be the word for that? Apprehensive, is that the word for it? Maybe. Yeah, I mean, it's a crazy world, you know.

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable]. But I'm -- I'm -- I'm not afraid, no. I watch my step, maybe, you know. But I -- I know my kids aren't. I don't -- I don't think Davina is afraid. I don't know anybody that's afraid.

Q: But everybody's apprehensive?

A: Oh sure.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: You should be. And I -- I -- I -- I -- I think we should be on guard a lot more than -- than we have been. Maybe now -- maybe now we sh -- Of course [indecipherable] fault -- fault our government. It's easy for me to fault the government now, but it -- but I can understand too, why -- why we -- because we c -- got away with it all these years, too. Got away with it, and -- an-and -- and people lived -- don't like to e -- use that word free. Everything was lax, you know, easygoing. But we found out we can't do it.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's not what's wrong with the United States, it's not -- it's wrong with what everybody else is.

Q: Everybody else is doing.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to say about your experiences during the Holocaust that you haven't talked about? Have we missed something?

A: Oh, I'm sure we've missed lots. We missed lots.

Q: Right.

A: I know we missed a lot of the -- the horrible things that -- that happened in -- in -- in Europe, that the -- the -- the Germans and the Poles committed. And that it's almost unbelievable, the

things they did -- that they -- that they did. I realize that you can't hold -- hold it against the -- against the -- the -- today's generation, but what -- what they did in -- in -- in -- in between the years of '33 and '45, for a civilized country to do that is unforgivable. Yeah, people -- people shouldn't forget it, the -- the -- the things that human beings are capable of doing to other human beings. That's all we still are is human beings, you know, and -- and -- and I think -- I think we should always watch out for that, we should keep on having that -- that kind of government that I always complain about here. But -- oh yeah. Because that's what makes the difference. Atrocities that today that happen in -- in -- in -- in -- in -- in -- sometimes that you hear about in Africa, terrible, and eastern Europe. But this -- this was government sponsored. It's the government that was behind it too, not just by groups of -- just groups of people. Not that they can't be -- can't be just as cruel, these groups can be, but when a whole country, a government does that, it's not good, yes.

Q: Not good. Well, I want to thank you very much --

A: You're welcome.

Q: -- for being willing to talk with us today.

A: You're welcome.

Q: Thank you for doing that.

End of Tape Four

Conclusion of Interview