

This is tape 3, side A of an interview with Ernest Fontheim on June 4, 1997. The interviewer is Randy Goldman.

OK.

Yeah. So, um-- I mean, we were not exactly excited by this prospect, particularly since we figured if they need us here to load their truck, somewhere they must have a railroad siding where the truck then has to be unloaded into railroad cars. And we didn't want to be taken there.

Now again, I had [CHUCKLES] a really unbelievable stroke of luck. It turns out that one of the nurses in that hospital was a nurse who-- at one time, my grandmother had-- I forgot for what reason, my grandmother was paralyzed towards the last years of her life. And anyway, she knew me and she knew our family.

And so I told her-- we had a chance to chat, and then she told us to-- when we co-- to bring down know whatever we were taking down-- told to take down. And when we come up to see her in a certain room number. So that's where we went.

And then she conducted us to some rear staircase in the rear of the building that the Russians apparently hadn't been aware of, and which led out some rear door to a side street away from that main highway. And then she told us to walk down that street several blocks, and then turn right, and to-- where we come back again to the main highway, but sort of out of sight of those guards there. So that's what we did.

OK, then we continued. And then when we came to Berlin, I went with my-- with Margaret's father to the city office where I had been a few days before, and we were given the list. And then we started to look at one or two apartments, and actually liked one.

There was a mother with-- I guess she must have been probably late 30s, maybe around 40, with two relatively small children. Maybe sort of-- around-- maybe a young teenager. I think a boy around 13, and a girl a few years younger.

And we identified ourselves as-- that we are Jews, and that the Nazis are taking everything we-- away. Oh yeah, by the way-- I'm sorry, I have to back up. The official in the City Hall also told us that the-- people whose apartments are vacated are not permitted to take anything with them unless we give special permission.

And then Margaret's father sort of conducted the conversation. And he told her that we are, of course, not like the Nazis, and any personal-- I mean, we don't want our clothing, or that of other family members, and/or personal items. But all furnishings or kitchen utensils and those things have to stay in the apartment. And we do it sort of on an honor code, and we'll be back the next morning to claim the apartment.

So that's what we did. We came back the next morning, got the set of keys, and then took possession of the apartment. And then I think through Major Shike or somehow we got a Russian military truck to take us along who was going to Berlin anyway, also with all our luggage. I mean, you couldn't have-- yeah. I mean, I skipped several things.

When I said-- discussed when we suddenly had to leave that village there overnight and we hid all of our suitcases in the shed of this elderly couple, Dwuzul. I don't whether I mentioned their name, but their name is Dwuzul. Anyway, I picked those up by meeting them at a certain railroad station. So we had all our things with us by that time.

And of course, there was no way how we could have gotten to Berlin with all that stuff if we-- so anyway, that's how we got to Berlin. And then one sort of interesting after-development, I had discussed quite a bit earlier the former client of my father who was also a furrier, and where I went to work once a week on his estate, sort of as a gardener in the fields. And I mentioned that he had three Polish forced laborers there. A Polish couple, and then a single woman Maria, who always, every time I came, invited me to her home and fed me and gave me food alone. And well, I sort of suspected that she might have a crush on me.

Well, when I visited the furrier, Walter Lange, after the war, he told me an amazing story. He said when the Russians

came-- and he lived, of course, in an area of big mansions. And they were going everywhere just emptying places out. Maria went and sort of got ahold of the first Russian officer, and had a long conversation in Russian with him, as a result of which the officer ordered all of his troops away from his house.

And on and he was-- nothing happened to his place. And then he asked Maria, what did you tell them? And, I told them that you are one of the few decent Germans, that you helped enemies of the regime and Jews.

And then he said, what Jews did I help? Well, I went-- I think I mentioned, I went also under an assumed name. And the name I used there, by the way, was Tsarini. There was some reason for that, but it doesn't make a difference here.

And she said, wasn't Tsarini Jewish? And he laughed and said, of course he was. But how did you know? Then she said, I know because I'm Jewish. My name is not "Maria" at all.

I got Polish papers. It was better to be deported to Germany for forced labor than to some concentration camp. And I immediately recognize a Jew.

And when he told me the story, I felt really dumb. That is-- that never occurred to me. And I often wondered what became of Maria, or whatever her real name is. But it's an interesting sidelight.

I want to ask you a question. At what point did you start hearing about all of the atrocities?

OK. In-- we heard from British Broadcasting, BBC, that we occasionally-- yeah, they-- we had a chance to listen to BBC at the house of this elderly couple, the Dwuzuls, who are the-- related-- who were insulted that we hadn't informed them earlier. We were-- because they-- we had--

Even before that, when we still pretended to be good German Aryans, we had often been at their house listening to foreign broadcasts, mainly BBC, actually, with them. And in fact, I have to say that that was a big morale-booster just to listen to the BBC. They did a lot for us just by having these broadcasts.

And their signal was always distorted out with the Morse code signal for the letter "V" for "Victory", and [HAND DRUMMING]. And by coincidence, these are also the first taps of Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony". And just listening to this signal was already a big morale-booster.

And of course, we heard all kinds of stories that the Nazis kept from the population. And of course, as I had also said before, that was punishable by execution if they found out someone was listening to foreign radio broadcasts. So in a way, the Dwuzuls had a point, you know? They were totally in our hands, you know? We listened to these broadcasts there was them at their radio.

No, my question is--

Yeah.

--after you were with the Russians, did people start streaming back?

Oh, no.

Did you start hearing stories?

No, not-- I mean, all I was going to say, that come from the Brit-- from BBC, we heard for the first time, I think maybe I said that before already, that hundreds of thousands of Jews are being killed. Then, um-- no. It took quite a while. Actually, people slowly dribbled in.

There was a central registration place for Jews right after the war. In fact, that was at the Jewish hospital, which was the last sort of collection center for Jews for deportation. Then that was turned over, and then was the first place where Jews

could-- free Jews could collect again. But since there was no public transport and that was at the opposite end of Berlin, Templehoff was in the southern part of Berlin, and that hospital in the northern part, it was a long walk of many miles. I went there once a week, hoping to see a well-known name, but didn't discover anyone.

The first person who returned, whom I knew, from Auschwitz, was a high school friend of mine who, in fact, later also came to this country, and was an-- before his retirement, a professor of mathematics at Ohio State University in Columbus, and-- where he is living now. But he was in Auschwitz, and he came back and he told me basically a lot of the things-- also a lot of the things that Elie Wiesel discussed in his book *Night*. And I mean, the fact that millions of Jews had been systematically killed-- I mean, because then also other Jews came back. Not just German Jews.

Also East European Jews who were chased out then from their own countries, mainly from Poland. As you may know, there were pogroms in Poland against returning Jews. And so I don't know how soon we found out, but within maybe weeks or months we found out. Although-- I mean, the total extent of it probably might have taken longer. I don't know.

But the stories--

Yeah, right.

How bad it was?

Yeah, right. That came out. I would like to make a few postscript comments concerning the period of time before the start of World War II. Because I remember, you had also asked me a question, how that time affected me.

At that time, I was just a teenager. And of course, the Nazis were then in power since 1933. And what I would like to say is that there was an increasing atmosphere of hostility against the Jews in all-- in the media, and in newspapers, and the radio, and so on.

And we were, I mean, that I know I discussed also, pictured as the worst criminals, and as a-- sort of trying to undermine the German nation. Yeah. For example, one incident in the apartment building where we lived, the beautiful one, we had that large apartment, there were only two parties on each floor. And on the same floor, there was another couple, and the husband was also a lawyer. But they were Aryans and Germans.

And they had a daughter, just one single child. The daughter, my sister's age. And the grandmother, one of the grandmothers, also lived with them.

And my sister and that girl were very close friends. They played together, and of course, they went to school together. Then when they came to school, and so on.

And one day, the girl told my sister that her grandmother had forbade her from now on to have a Jewish friend. So she's sorry, but she can't come over anymore, and can't have her over. Things like that.

Then each apartment building was assigned a Nazi party representative for that building. And the man who was representative in our building, for example, made it a point whenever we crossed paths with him, the house entrance, or the elevator, or wherever, to ostensibly sort of look in a very hostile way and ignoring us, not greeting us. And a few other tenants, not all of them, but a few other tenants followed suit.

Then as the '30s wore on and the Nazis really started openly to prepare for war, they also started an extensive air raid protection system, with building air raid shelters in basements and so on. And one of the early orders was that Jews are not permitted to join the other tenants in an air raid shelter. So we had to go-- each tenant also had a little lockable area, sort of separated by wooden planks, to store things for storage. And we had to sit in there like pariahs while the rest of the tenants walked by there into their air raid shelter, which was-- with benches, and so on.

And there was-- I mean, there were constant speeches, of course, which were insulting and hostile to us. And even people who were not ill-meaning felt that it was dangerous even to be seen-- to associate with Jews. And then there

were-- they had frequent Nazi holidays, or other holidays they-- every opportunity, they-- there were the Olympic Games, and so on.

And of each time, they made a big fuss about marches. That was sort of one of their favorite activities. SS units, SA units, Hitler Youth units would march, looking really snappy and snifty, with flags flying and with bands playing, and singing their songs. And it was sort of, in retrospect, almost like a-- almost continuous holiday atmosphere.

And by that time, of course, as the '30s went on, everybody was employed. Germany had a tremendous unemployment rate before, as part of the worldwide Great Depression. And of course, they were all employed, basically, rearming Germany.

But we didn't know it at the time. But that was a-- that's how they solved the unemployment problem, and also their own military, what they conceived as inferiority. And--

You mentioned the Olympics.

Yeah.

Did you go to any of that?

Yeah. Well actually, I went to two events. I went-- one was the final for the gold medal of Soccer. I went with my mother. My mother was very interested in sports. My father couldn't have cared less.

So she went with me. And the final game was between Italy and Austria, and it was a very exciting game. They were, at that time, the powerhouses in soccer. And actually, Germany also had a pretty good team, but was already out of the running by the time.

And what happened, see-- at that time, of course, Austria was still an independent country. Otherwise, they wouldn't have had a team. But the Germans, of course, felt kinship with the Austrians. So the stadium sort of rooted for the Austrians.

The Italians had bought blocks, large blocks of seats, where they were sitting in their black fascist uniforms, and were waving Italian flags. And they must have had some sort of a cheerleader. They would, at some particular moments, maybe when Italy was on a drive, they would jump up, like on a command, and shout in Italian, Italia, Italia, Italia! And waving their flags.

And then the rest of the stadium would thunder back, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. That's the German word for "Austria". [SPEAKING GERMAN] So it was that constant back-and-forth between these blocks of Italians who shouted "Italia", and most of the rest of the stadium shouting [SPEAKING GERMAN]. And, um--

Was that alarming at all? Or was it exciting?

No, that wasn't exciting. It wasn't exciting. I mean, of course, there were political undertones. But Italy was, by that time, already an ally of Germany. So there was no-- it wasn't as if, say, Britain had been. And--

Well, there was a certain energy at the '36 Olympics.

Yeah. Oh yeah. I mean--

Maybe you can talk--

Yeah. I mean, that was-- I mean, incredible. First of all, they toned down somewhat their anti-Semitism. That was probably pressure from the West. Although there wasn't much of that pressure, as far as I can see.

But the whole city was sort of-- was, first of all, renovated. The elevated lines got totally new trains. It's that line that went by that synagogue also that was burned down a few years later.

And in fact, those cars are still in use now, that is now 60 years later. Unbelievable. I mean, now they look worn and so on.

And several stations, likely-- in Central Berlin and Western Berlin, the central station is the Zoo station, because it's near the zoo. And that was totally rebuilt. And lots of other things were done to the city. I mean, the Nazis used that-- went out of their way.

And then interesting, when I came to this country and went to college here in the year 1949, so that was only 13 years after the Olympics, I was at a small college in Missouri who had a scholarship, Southwest Missouri State College in Springfield, Missouri. And my German-- not "my German". She was a German professor there, a woman, and I was actually-- at her request, I was active in the German Club.

They were-- there was a club before students who wanted to major in German and practice German. And she had asked me to go there too so they could sort of converse with me in German. And then I often talked with her also.

She said she was in Germany in '36 through the Olympics. At that time, she was a young-- I don't know, whatever. Assistant professor or something. And she said she was impressed.

The courtesy. The w-- how well everything was planned. The efficiency. And also, the party.

The party organs were also enlisted. They were all very nice. You know, they-- it's probably hard for people to understand. I mean, you can-- you could-- even SS officers, and sometimes the most brutal types, could be very charming, and courteous, and polite. And they were all double-faced.

And so the Olympic Games, from that point of view, were a huge success. I mean-- and of course, also Germany did really well. I mean, the Nazis had a tremendous system of physical training, and sports facilities, and so on. And I think in medals, they won that game for-- at least they claim to have. I forgot the details.

But anyway, coming back to that soccer game, they-- the way soccer was played at that time, at least, it was a draw at the official end of the game. And I think it was 1 to 1. And then the rule was that the game is extended until sudden death. In other words, one party shoots a goal, and that ends the game. And that party, of course, wins.

And it was Italy that shot that additional goal, so it was 2 to 1 for Italy. And they got the gold medal, and the Austrians got the silver then. But my father was-- my mother was very interested in sports. Not just a spectator of sports, but she did a lot also to entice me to-- I was originally totally averse to any sports, and didn't like it, and often was afraid of things.

And she had a tremendous energy and thought of-- practically forced me out to learn how to swim, to ski, and to skate. I mean, ice skate. And bicycle.

And I do most of these things. For swimming, I don't care too much anymore. I find it too boring just to swim back-and-forth in a lap. But I'm able to swim. But I still love skiing.

Why don't you continue?

Oh. Incidentally, the Olympics was the first occasion when I saw Hitler in-person. We lived-- the street we lived on, in that apartment, was a major east-west sort of boulevard that cut through-- it started at the center of Berlin, actually, near the Vice Chancellery, and then went for several miles to the western outskirts where we lived. And the Olympic stadium was also near where we lived. So Hitler passed by there on Opening Day to open the games.

And of course, his trip out to the Olympic stadium itself was planned as big theater. They had the streets lined with

enthusiastic crowds, and SS sort of in formation, holding them back. And then Hitler would ride in an open Mercedes-Benz in uniform, standing stiffly upright, and periodically raising his right arm to the Hitler salute, greeting the masses. And as I stood on the balcony just looking straight down at Hitler, the thought occurred to me how easy it would be just to assassinate him from here.

The next time I saw him was exactly about a year later, when Mussolini played a state visit to Berlin in 1937. And in fact, during that state visit, the Berlin-Rome axis was sort of cemented. And Mussolini-- the arrangement was also for them to ride into town, so in the opposite direction now from the-- from a suburban railroad station which was, in fact, just half a mile away from where our house was. And then they rode into town, again, greeting the masses that were lined up behind all of SS.

And there was an interesting contrast. Hitler, the unsmiling, stiff despot. And Mussolini, the typical jovial Italian. He also raised his hand, but he raised it in a much more informal way.

His mouth was widely open, and laughing and smiling. And his body would sort of, in body language, wave back-and-forth from one side to the other, acknowledging crowds on both sides. There was a tremendous difference in the appearance of these two dictators. I'm not trying to make Mussolini appear any-- like a nice uncle, but there was a tremendous difference between these two men. Both were equally brutal.

In summary, I must say that I-- the years in the '30s leading up to World War 2 and the Holocaust, I felt basically like an outsider, like being pushed away from the main body, and from all the festivities that the Germans enjoyed, from which I was excluded. But on the other hand, I had found my inner Jewish belonging, mainly as a result of the school that I went to, and-- which gave me inner strength, and to some extent, compensated for that. One final remark I would like to make concerning the question of the deportations.

The deportations, of course, were ordered by the Gestapo, and go back directly to an order by Heidrich, who was ordered by Hitler-- was given by Hitler the order to carry this out. But the-- at the local level, the deportations were organized by the Jewish community organizations. And of course, that has been a big problem ever since it happened.

For me personally, I felt, first of all, totally abandoned, I would say, by the-- knowing that the Jewish organizations were organizing the transports. In fact, it got to the point where I actually considered the leadership of the [SPEAKING GERMAN], that was the sort of umbrella organization of Jews in Germany, I considered them as part of the enemy. And they had to be considered that way.

On the other hand, of course, we know now much more there were very difficult moral decisions, and there were very difficult also options available. I certainly would never want to be in a position to make those choices. But it-- but the fact remains that for me, at the time, I felt really as being abandoned by my own leadership, and-- and it probably needs to be considered more deeply now where we have some distance what the options were that these people had, and what they could have done other than what they actually did.

I'm wondering how long you remained in Berlin, what your plans were, and how easy or difficult it was to realize those plans.

Yeah. Briefly, my first priority was to get on with my education. And I immediately enrolled in the Technical University in Berlin, and then later took courses also in the main University, or Humboldt University, as it was then renamed, taking lectures in mathematics, physics, and so on. There were many famous professors who had still survived the war.

And of course, there were then also a number of Jews who had returned. Or some of them actually had survived in Berlin as mixed-- children of mixed marriages, where one parent was Gentile and the other one was Jewish. And of course, there was a large number of German army veterans. And that, in fact, was a very sore point. Many of them were still very nationalistic, in spite of that huge defeat.

So I enrolled in those courses. And actually, Margaret's mother immediately opened a sort of office on her own for

social help for Jews returning from concentration camps. And she worked closely together with the American official who was in charge of that borough, Templehoff, a-- I think a Captain or Major Davidhoff or Davidhoff. It turns out, supposedly, that that man was a communist, and was then later rotated out and sent home.

And when the first possibility arose for emigrating to the United States, that was in '46, and we registered, it turned out that Margaret's mother somehow was on the blacklist because she had closely collaborated, and that Major Davidoff, also, for example, was helpful in providing apartments for returning Jews, and et cetera, et cetera. And so we were, for about a year, subjected to a lot of chicanery by the American consulate. I remember the consul himself was a Mr. Haney, and-- who was a very unpleasant character.

And I was once, I'm sure on his orders, although I can't prove it, interrogated by an officer of the CIC. The CIC is the army's Criminal Investigation Commission, or something. And that interrogation took place in the following way, that the interrogating officer sat behind the desk, and next to him was a growling German Shepherd who was here just to intimidate me. And they wanted to know about-- wanted me to incriminate Margaret's parents, basically, as communists.

And when I couldn't say anything incriminating, he let me go finally. But it was a very unpleasant interview. Or "interrogation" is a better word.

I did receive, finally, my visa. But the host family did not. And at that point, since we had lived through thick and thin through the war, I decided to let my visa lapse, even though I was told by the-- and I told the consul I will go when the other three go. The consul said that there's no guarantee that I will ever get my visa renewed if I let it lapse once.

And I had an uncle here in the United States who also implored me to come and let-- wait here for them. Anyway-- and by the way, that's an interesting thing. My first connection to friends-- there was no postal connection, of course, between Germany and any country outside. So we went to-- there was a huge barracks of American soldiers near where we lived.

And I remember, I went to the guard soldier outside and asked whether he could tell me whether there was a Jewish soldier somewhere. It's such an outlandish idea. So he directed me, pointed to some particular room. And it was a Sergeant Roth, R-O-T-H.

So I went to that Roth and told him who I was, and that I survived, and I had an address of a school friend in Connecticut, and my uncle. And actually, I didn't-- he was in New York, but I didn't have his exact address. But I had some connecting address in London who could then forward it.

And so he also conversed with me, the Roth, and he asked me what-- no, he didn't ask me, he warned me not to try to emigrate to the United States because there were already too many Jews there, and there was rising anti-Semitism. And now that the Nazis were gone and the war was over, it would be much better for me also if I stayed in Germany. And I found that so unbelievably preposterous. He was an American Jew telling me not to come here.

But anyway, I didn't follow his advice. But what he did do is he did forward my mail. And the letter that I wrote to my school friend wound up as an article. He submitted it.

There's a German Jewish weekly called *Outbow*. By now, it's a biweekly. And it was published in there.

And my uncle then also supported me finally. We did get visas. The joint was extremely helpful, really.

The joint opened offices in Berlin, and with their help, the three of us finally got visas. And we arrived on the 22nd of June, 1947. And then my first priority again here was to study.

This is tape 3, side B, of an interview with Earnest Fontheim on June 4, 1997.

Yeah, um-- after my arrival, my first priority, as I said, was to continue my studies. My uncle provided some financial support in the beginning, for a few months. And then-- I lived in New York then.

He had rented for me a furnished room in the Upper West Side, and then I took a job as a messenger boy on West 48th Street, between 5th and 6th Avenues, for an outfit called Action Messenger Service. We were a whole bunch of young guys who were lined up. And the boss would always call one after the other to run certain errands.

For me, that was great. That's how I got to know New York. He sent me to one address to pick up a package to be delivered to a second address, and I got to know New York from downtown Wall Street, to Midtown, and even further Uptown. And I really fell in love with the city at that time. In the evening-- incidentally, I earned \$0.50 an hour.

And in the evening, I took two or three courses, I forgot, in city college. And I took some elementary physics, which I already had in Germany, just in order to get up-to-speed also with English language and with the technical expressions. And I also had a course in calculus, which also mostly was just a review of what I had already learned in Germany.

And I-- my goal, of course, was to become a full-time student. And financially, that wouldn't have been possible for me. So through a friend of mine, I was referred to a committee with an interesting name, American Committee for Immigrant Writers, Scholars, and Artists. And it was sort of an interesting outfit.

Basically, what they did is they did not have any money themselves. They served as a clearinghouse for available grants, fellowships, and so on. So I registered with them. And after, I forgot what it was, a few months-- I should say also I had only A's for my first two semesters in city college. So that obviously helped along.

And they told me that they had a rotary at the National Scholarship for Southwest Missouri State College in Springfield, Missouri. I never heard of the place before, and of course, I didn't know at that time that there were such huge disparities between different academic institutions. But anyway, I went there. And I credit my two years in Springfield, Missouri, and at that college, mainly with my Americanization.

And one thing that bothered me in New York is that the only social contact I had was not just with other German Jews, but mainly only with Berlin Jews. Former Berlin Jews, I should say. And I realized that if I want to become acculturated in my new country, I can't just have a social life only with people from the old country.

But it was very difficult. In city college, you need to-- I tried several times, unsuccessfully. It's a commuter college. People come take classes and usher away. Go back into the subway and go to Brooklyn, or God knows where. And so it's not really a campus atmosphere.

So when I got that scholarship, I took a train off to Springfield, Missouri. And I should say that my friend's host family, they, after some initial difficulties, settled in New York. And Margaret's father got several jobs, improving as time went on, in the garment industry. As designer, pattern maker, and so on in ladies' garments. Of course, we stayed in contact as I went to Springfield.

And there, I was received by the dean, who felt that it would be a good idea if I would be put-- housed in the barracks, which had been built on campus for GIs. That was the time of the GI Bill of Rights, after World War 2. And there was such an influx of students that they needed to do something to house them.

And so these barracks were built. They were relatively primitive, but as far as I was concerned, totally sufficient. And of course, there I learned all the slang that I hadn't learned in all my years of English in the German high school, including all the four-letter words which I hadn't known before, and in general, got sort of acculturated to life in a small Midwestern town.

As coincidence would have it, also, the dean right away set me in touch with the local rabbi. And it turned out that rabbi also was a former German Jew. He was-- he had been rabbi in the Bavarian city of Oxbourg before the war, and now he was rabbi in Springfield, Missouri. And he and his family took me somewhat under their wings.

I was often invited to Shabbat evening dinners at their house, and obviously, each time for the theater. And so I lived with them. Not lived with them. I mean, I socialized with them.

And on the other hand, I also had American contacts, and I even made dates with American girls. And so-- and my school performance turned out to be very well. I did very well in all classes.

So when I graduated in 1950 with a bachelor's degree, I got an offer-- actually, several offers. But the one that I accepted for graduate school was from Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Admission to graduate school, plus a guaranteed teaching assistantship in the Physics Department.

And so in the summer of 1950, I got my bachelor's degree. That was in July. But I remained a bachelor then for less than a month. Well, on the 6th of August, Margaret and I finally got married. And that was in New York.

And then we moved together to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where I started my graduate studies. The graduate studies turned out-- unfortunately, extended for more years than I had originally anticipated, and is customary, for a number of reasons. I had some bad luck with my first thesis subject, and so on. I don't want to go into that, you know?

But I-- of general interest, as maybe that in Dec-- in my first summer there, it was the summer of '51, I had a summer job at Bethlehem Steel Company, which was in the same city as Lehigh University. And the company-- in fact, the steel plant-- I think the company still exists. But the steel plant doesn't exist anymore. But I saw a steel plant from the inside, and I found all of that very interesting, how steel is being made, and so on.

And then two years later, in '53, I had a summer job at White Sands Proving Ground. That was a rocket proving ground, before anyone even knew that the United States was deeply involved in rocketry. At that time, they just shot-- captured German V2 rockets. And some clever physicist had gotten the idea to, while these rockets are being shot with harmless warheads, just to test their flight characteristics. Why not put some instruments in the warhead to measure properties in the upper atmosphere, ionosphere?

And actually, I was hired partly to write a sort of research paper on certain aspects on how to detect cosmic rays. And so that filled my summer. And I didn't realize at that time that, in fact, space physics would at one time become my life's profession.

In 1954, the following summer, I spent-- I had a special fellowship for-- to Brookhaven, a national laboratory, which at that time was the foremost laboratory for-- in the world, not only this country, for high-energy physics. And there was a machine that could accelerate particles to unheard of, at the time, energies, and cause all kinds of interesting effects and collisions. And I worked with some famous physicists that I met, among others there. Enrico Fermi, who-- the famous Italian Physicist and Nobel Prize Winner, and several others.

And then I wrote a thesis back at Lehigh University in a fairly esoteric, purely mathematical subject in theoretical physics, involving fundamental particles and field theory. I graduated in 1960. And by that time already, we had two children.

I should have mentioned that after we married in August 1950 and moved to Bethlehem, Margo worked for a number of years in an office. And in 1955, she was pregnant with our son, Claude, who was born in August '55. And then in October '59, our daughter, Eva, was born. And in '60, she was less than a year old, we moved from Bethlehem to Ann Arbor, Michigan.

And in Ann Arbor, I had worked-- actually, I was for two years in the radiation laboratory. And the radiation laboratory sort of started to fold and go downhill. And then I obtained an offer from the Space Physics Research Laboratory in 1962, where I stayed until my retirement in 1992.

During that time, I had a-- also a very interesting career. I attended many international meetings, including one in 1971 in Moscow, which interested me very much. And I should add, incidentally, that I taught myself the Cyrillic alphabet during my two years-- postwar years in Berlin, from '45 to '47. Because the Russians-- immediately after their arrival, one of the first things, they put under the German street names-- they named in Russian, in Cyrillic letters, so that their soldiers could orient themselves in the city.

And simply by comparison, and also by knowing the Greek alphabet, which I knew from the gymnasium. I could figure out the entire alphabet. So going to Moscow in '71, at least I wasn't lost. I could read street names and so on. In '72, I attended an international conference in Warsaw, which-- and just shortly before that time, I had read several diaries and reports about Warsaw ghetto, including the uprising.

And the visit to Warsaw was an emotionally very shattering experience for me. I spent every free minute that I was not at the meeting walking around the streets of the ghetto, and-- which I all knew from the books that I'd read and observed. And of course, as is well-known, the ghetto was totally destroyed by the Germans after they captured it. And then the Poles completely leveled everything that was left, and then built sort of workers' apartments in a style which I call "socialist modern," which means modern lines but shoddy construction.

And I just walked through the streets. And in my mental, I saw in front of me the Jews who lived there only a few years before. It was just 30 years later that I was there, which is nothing in history.

In '70-- let me see. In '78, I spent a year-- I'm sorry, I spent a summer in Paris. A former student of mine, actually, who got his PhD under my supervision in the late '60s, was a French fellow with whom I had an also personal friendship, and we stayed in touch. And he was probably one of my most successful students.

By now, he is director of a big laboratory in Toulouse. But at that time, he was already head of a group. And he invited me to spend the summer of '78 there. And I went there with Margot and our daughter, Eva, who at that time, '78-- what was she doing then? She must have been a college freshman.

And that was-- well, we lived, really, like French people. We entered a furnished apartment. And Margaret and Eva, during the day, went, of course, to visit museums and the sights on the streets. And on weekends, we did things together. It was one of the best summers we had.

And in '76, by the way, I had a summer position at the Space Physics Laboratory of the University of California in Berkeley. That was where we made a cross-country trip by car, which is the only way to see this country, is really by driving through it. It's fascinating how the landscape changes, the architecture changes, and so on.

And on the 4th of July-- actually, we first visited friends in San Diego and Los Angeles. And on the 4th of July, we drove up from LA to San Francisco. And of course, the 4th of July is Independence Day, obviously. In '76, it was the 200th anniversary of the United States.

But in addition to that, it was also the day where Israeli commandos liberated the prisoners in Entebbe. And we were driving along and listening to the radio just for diversion, when suddenly a news flash came on that Israeli commandos had liberated the passengers over-- I think it was an Air Force plane with Israeli, and also other citizens on it. And so that was a perfect way for us to celebrate Independence Day.

And then in the evening, after we arrived in Berkeley, we were told that already, ahead of time, that there's always a big firework over San Francisco Bay, and the best way to view it is from the eastern side of the Bay, from Berkeley. In other words-- the Space Physics Lab is on a mountain where also the Radiation Lab is located. And it was a tremendous experience to see the fireworks over San Francisco Bay on the 4th of July, 1976. But--

Let me ask you a few questions, OK? What-- when you look back-- I mean, you've now had a lot of time, and you-- you're rel-- you're fairly reflective. What sort of long-term impact did these early experiences have on you, on the way you've lived your life, on your general outlook, or the way you've raised your kids? Can you talk about that?

Yes. I mean, it had a tremendous impact. And in fact, the impact increased as the years went by. I mean, the fact that my parents, my sister, and my first girlfriend, plus innumerable other people I knew or I didn't know just vanished and were brutally murdered because of some unbelievable ideology which somebody cooked up is so-- it's even, for me today, not understandable how that could have happened. And I have been sort of totally more and more absorbed by it as the years went by.

I read-- I have innumerable books, some of them I haven't even read yet, on the Holocaust. I mean, starting with the standard works by Hillburg and-- what's her name? Yahyah Hill, the Israeli historian, and also Lucy Dawidowicz, and so on. But in addition to that, all kinds of special works by authors on special subjects like the Warsaw ghetto. I have a whole number of diaries, including Rhea Blumes' notes, and so also on German Jews. And of course, fascinated particularly by the fate of German Jews, because that's what I am. And I was totally raised in Germany.

And how that could have happened, of all countries, in that country is something that I have wrestled with all the-- for years and years, and have not really come to a conclusion. What that really was that gave rise to this unbelievable crime, and-- you know, that was-- also, it was committed by people who are mostly highly-educated. And although there were some uneducated at the lower levels. But at the higher levels, they were often-- Goebbels was a PhD, and many other people in-- who are not that well-known, but were in high positions, were highly-educated.

And to plan a mass murder on that scale and carry it out is totally mind-boggling. And then another thing is that the fate of my immediate family is-- I'm trying to picture my father, even on the deportation train. I mean, how-- I mean, going into such the detail as-- each railroad car where people were transported, and they were basically freight or cattle cars, had just somewhere-- a big bucket where people could relieve themselves. I couldn't-- I can't even believe how anyone would even be able to relieve themselves in public with everybody standing around, and a bucket in the middle.

The idea, to humiliate Jews to such an unbelievable extent. And how my father even-- and then on the day that he left, the temperatures were-- I mean, Berlin in winter, it was anyway cold. I think now it is not as cold anymore. But at that time, it was much cooler. But that was an unusually cold day, even for that time.

I checked the meteorological records again to-- and have that at home, actually, to reconfirm that it was just my memory. But these were extremely cold days. And of course, the cars were unheated.

And all my family was treated after they arrived at Auschwitz. That they went to Auschwitz, that is a matter of record, and my friend, Ruth, I think was deported to Riga. And from what little I know, it may have happened that they were immediately transported by truck into some forest and shot. And so I have been-- as the years went by, I have more and more occupied myself with that.

For example, I was instrumental in Ann Arbor to start an annual observance of Yom HaShoah, which has been now going on for over 10 years. And I was also involved-- Ann Arbor has a statue now commemorating the Holocaust, where I was involved in-- both in raising the money and in getting the idea through to-- the artist who made the statue is Leonard Baskin, who, by the way, also made one of the statues of the new FDR Memorial.

So I'm-- I must say that I'm-- you asked me how I raised my-- what affect of raising my children. And in two ways. First of all, I have always talked to them about that period.

And in 1981, in fact, that was when our son graduated from law school in Michigan. And our daughter was actually still a year away from graduation. But we proposed for them a joint graduation gift, that's a trip to Europe, as students like to do it, sort of to bum around.

They could select where they wanted to go, sort of in youth hostels, and so on, with one proviso. In '81, I was at an international meeting, I think, in June or so, in Edinburgh, Scotland. And I suggested that we meet in Berlin on a certain week so that Margo and I could show them where we grew up, respectively, and also where we went to school, and other places of relevance to our lives. And so that's what we did.

We actually-- after from Edinburgh, we flew to Berlin. The kids had already left earlier. They had decided first to make a brief swing through parts of Scandinavia. They were in Copenhagen, then southern Sweden. OK?

And then they went into Berlin. We met there and spent a week there. And we showed-- went also to the cemetery where some of our forebears, gros grandparents, and so on are buried, and some famous German Jews. In Germany, the gravestones are also more descriptive.

I mean, you can really see who somebody was. I mean, it explained somebody may have been professor of this or that at this university, or may have been an architect, or whatever. Anyway.

And then the rest of the time, well, they continued then on their own. So coming back to your question, I mean, I saw to it. But also, we wanted to make them also very conscious of their Jewish heritage. And Margo and I often feared that in that respect, maybe we didn't do too great a job there.

We sort of totally relied-- we are members of a conservative synagogue. And of course, money constraints being what they are, they can't really hire first-rate teachers. So they usually use college students who come from more or less religious homes to teach the standard things in elementary Hebrew, and biblical history, and so on. But they still-- our daughter now even taking now here a course in Basics of Judaism, I think, at the DCJCC.

What I'm asking is maybe a little bit more subtle. It's, do you think that you acted differently than you might have? Do you think that you have certain values, or you instilled certain certain values--

Oh, OK.

--as a result of your experiences?

Yes. OK, let-- thank you for raising that question. I was never only concerned exclusively with the Jewish faith, although this is obviously the one that's closest to me. But I was always appalled, for example also, with the treatment of Blacks in this country, or Afro-Americans. And I have been always quite active in Ann Arbor.

I mean, today-- seems long ago, but there was at one time strict housing segregation. And there was a large group in which I was involved for passage of city ordinances to make such segregation illegal, particularly by real estate agents, and loan practices by banks, and so on. And I took the children sometimes along to demonstrations, just to-- and they are both-- and both of our children-- Eva, our daughter, is involved now in the Hunger Coalition here, which incidentally, my wife is also very much involved in Ann Arbor.

And our son is involved with the Anti-Defamation League and such organizations. So we always instilled in them that it is important for everybody to work for equality. Not just for yourself, for your own group, but for all groups.

Were there certain-- or are there certain fears that have stuck with you as a result of your experiences?

Very, very seldom. I have some dreams, or some thoughts. I mean, just recently when I woke up earlier in the morning than I should have, probably, I thought of that incident with that civilian police guy who stopped me on the subway.

And where I asked myself the question, what if my assessment was wrong, and my lingering around there would have caused him-- he could have-- any time while I was at the newspaper kiosk pretending to look at newspapers, he could have tapped on my shoulder and said, why don't you come along? I want to ask you some more questions. And then that would have been the end of me. And I elaborated on that, and my fantasy have--

I mean, there are people who wouldn't have gotten that-- wouldn't ride a subway today. Do you know what I mean?

Yeah.

I'm trying to--

Oh, yeah. No.

If there are certain images, certain sounds that really trigger memories for you--

Yeah--

--in a very powerful way.

Well actually, it's not a memory, it's a-- sirens. For two reasons. First of all, they signaled air raids. But they also--

My father was basically abducted. That's what the correct word for that would have been. And normally, you would call the police and they would come with their sirens blaring. And whenever I hear sirens, particularly on a police car, sometimes I have actually tears are welling.

Thinking of it, they should have come and rescued my parents. They were being abducted in broad daylight. And, um-- and, um-- I visited, um-- I visited, um-- by now Auschwitz four times. And, um-- that is also something I still have not come to-- to grips with.

But in general, I, um-- [CLEARS THROAT] in my day-to-day life, fortunately, I have not had any-- I mean, to my knowledge, at least, any real strong emotional effects. I mean, like you said, not wanting to ride subways or things.

Is there anything else you want to add? Because I think we've covered a lot.

Yeah. I mean, actually, one thing that I wanted to say and forgot, in one of the earlier tapes-- I think I made some mistakes in two dates. One is a high school friend of mine, at one point, I said left Berlin to emigrate to England on January 18, 1938. Now in context, that, of course, could not have been. And as I explained at the time, his parents were Austrians.

And in January '38, Austria still was an independent country. [COUGHS] Excuse me. Austria was occupied in March '38, and-- so then they lost their protection.

And he left actually Berlin on January 18, '39. In other words, about 3/4 of a year after Austria lost its independence. The second date correction, the arrest of my girlfriend, Ruth, I said at one time it's November 9, '41. Also in November-- I'm sorry, September 9, '41 I said.

The first deportation left Berlin only at the end of September '41, and she was deported on September 9, '42. Not '41. I mean, that's just-- that doesn't change anything but to correct the misstatement.

Any overall thought or statement you'd like to make?

Well--

Doesn't have to be specific, but just any--

I would think, really, two or three things. And one of them is that there is a lot of basic value in Judaism, and that it's sort of incumbent on us to really familiarize ourselves with it. I mean, there-- for many Jews in this country, there has been sort of-- the Holocaust has been treated almost like a substitute religion, particularly in recent years. And I think that is almost sick.

I think the Holocaust must be remembered, of course. But not as a-- in the sense of a religion. But in the sense that we, first of all, should remember always, just like really remember other events in our history, going back to Masada, to the destruction of the two temples and so on. And also to learn from it. Learn what to do and also what not to do.

The other thing is that aside from Judaism, I also don't believe that one should be focused 100% on one's Judaism, like-- I know there are such Jews. But that since we are living in a broader world, that it is also the duty of everyone to involve him or herself in the daily politics to fight for what is right, and to fight for-- against injustice. Also, against other groups. I think that is one thing that it is important.

I mean, there is a famous, by now it's a cliché quote, I think it is from the German pastor Niemöller that, at first, they

came after the communists-- I mean, the Nazis. I didn't particularly care, because I wasn't a communist.

Then they went after the Jews, and it didn't bother me either. I'm not a Jew. Then they went after homosexuals and it didn't bother me. I'm not a homosexual.

Then they went after Catholics. That didn't bother me. And when they came after me, there was nobody left.

Thank you.

You're welcome.