

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Fred Loewy
November 30, 2005
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PREFACE

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FRED LOEWY
November 30, 2005

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Fred.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: It's very nice to meet you finally.

A: My pleasure.

Q: Tell me what -- when were you born?

A: In -- I was born in 1925.

Q: And the month?

A: It's a -- February 18th.

Q: Febru -- February 18th?

A: Yes.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in Frankfurt am Main, because there are two Frankfurts in Germany.

Q: Right. And what was your name?

A: The name originally, of my parents, I believe was L-o-w-y, with an umlaut on the O, which was converted to L-o-e-w-y.

Q: Right. And your birth name was Manfred, not --

A: Manfred.

Q: -- and -- and you then became F-Fred.

A: Freddie, and then Fred.

Q: And then Fred.

A: Freddie in the resistance [indecipherable]

Q: You were Freddie in the resistance?

A: Yes.

Q: Uh-huh. Now you were born in 1925, but your -- your father moved to Alsace in 1926, is that right?

A: That is correct.

Q: But you didn't move then?

A: We moved about one or two years later. My father opened up a business over there, and we moved in afterwards.

Q: And do you know why he moved? I mean, did you hear later, as -- when you got older, why he left Germany?

A: Well, it's an opportunity, you know, because Germany had [indecipherable] so he had opportunity to go there. But he didn't know anyone, but he had a partner over there by the name of Camille Ernst, E-r-n-s-t.

Q: Right.

A: And th-this was a -- I guess, a metals recycling plant.

Q: And what was he doing when he was in Germany? What was his work? The same kind of work?

A: Actually, before he went there, he went to Israel. He was sent -- oh, Palestine at that time, to found a kibbutz, which was called Mahane Israel.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Mahane, M-a-h-a-n-e, Israel. I went on vacation there, years later, and I found the place again. It had been damaged because there was a combat going on there in 1948.

Q: Right.

A: So I have pictures with the walls all shot up, yeah.

Q: So he went there in the 20's, in the early 20's, before you were born?

A: Yes, in -- about '22 or '23.

Q: Right.

A: Somewhere like that.

Q: And what -- so that he didn't have a business in Germany, when he came back, he decided to go to Alsace, you think?

A: I am not sure that time, because -- I do know that -- the funny part I heard is that he was once on the train traveling, and then he bought a home, sight unseen, from someone on the train. That -- so I guess he must have had money at the time, and if he had any occupation, I would not know.

Q: Right.

A: That's the kind of a person he was, I mean, makes decisions on the spur of the moment.

Q: Right. Did you take after him?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: Sometimes I wish I did.

Q: Uh-huh. So when you moved to Alsace, you lived in a small town called sal --

A: Selestat.

Q: Selestat.

A: Yes. And that is where he went into business with Camille Ernst.

Q: Right. Which turned out much later to be very important.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, what is metal recycling, do you know? Do --

A: All -- bot -- all iron, you know, is just like what they do over here nowadays, it's -- material can be reused again.

Q: Right.

A: I guess they were ahead of his time, because they -- this is very popular now.

Q: So then he would sell it?

A: Yes.

Q: Sell the -- sell this --

A: I was too young to remember that --

Q: Right.

A: -- except I went to -- with him once to a place where there's -- was all storage, is big storage area.

Q: Uh-huh. Were you fairly well off? Did you -- I mean, were you comfortable --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- economically?

A: Yes, I'd say yes.

Q: You lived in a home or an apartment?

A: We had an apartment over there, yes.

Q: And you were -- you had a room with your brother, Max?

A: Correct, yes.

Q: And Max was how much older than you?

A: Three years older, he was born in 1922.

Q: In '22?

A: Yes.

Q: And your sister?

A: My sister was born in 1920, five years older than me.

Q: Oh, I see, so she's the eldest?

A: Yes.

Q: And your parents then were married when? In 1919?

A: In 1919, that is correct.

Q: 1919.

A: Yes.

Q: Right. So let's talk a little about li -- what it was like when you were a kid at h -- at home.

A: Well, I guess --

Q: Do you remember?

A: One thing I remember very well, and it is, I used to go to school in Selestat, Collège Koeberle it was called, and some kids used to pick on me to the point where I did not want to go to school, and I was hiding near the house, in the house, actually, under the stairway, until a neighbor found me over there and reported me to my mom. So she took me to school at that time. I-It -- it -- it went on for a few days before she caught me.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: So you would stay there all day and then when it was time for kids to come home, you'd come out?

A: Correct.

Q: And your mother hadn't figured this out?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Because I was hidden under the staircase.

Q: So how did the neighbor find you? Why did the neighbor even look for you? Do you know?

A: I guess they were not looking for me, but they accidentally saw me, I guess, and --

Q: I see.

A: -- they ha -- reported me.

Q: Did you -- did you tell your mother why you were doing that?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did she say?

A: She took me to school and she told the teacher why I was missing classes.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: And the teacher then brought it up to the other students, and that ceased, and there was no more problem.

Q: So there was no more problem, they left you -- it was fine? Why was this kid picking on you?

A: Well, you know, there's always big bullies in -- everywhere.

Q: Everywhere. Were you close with your father?

A: Yes.

Q: As a -- as a young -- as a young kid as well?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes. All of us were very close, yes.

Q: So you were close with your mother as well?

A: Well, she was home at the time, and --

Q: Right, so your -- so --

A: -- my father used to, later on had a business where he used travel quite a bit. And as a matter of fact, at one time he was in the car, with the chauffeur, and he fell -- the chauffeur fell asleep, my father was asleep, and had an accident. So after the accident, we moved from Selestat to Strasbourg, which was another town of about 200,000 population. And then my father changed ac -- a -- ax -- activity, he went into the radio business. He had a big radio store, and then we moved to Colmar. I believed I showed you a picture of the exposition that we had.

Q: Right.

A: When some uncles c-came to visit us also.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, was he hurt in that accident, is that why he changed to go to the radio business?

A: Well, he -- yes he was hurt there, and I guess he had some -- a compensation, and then he opened up the other business.

Q: But the other business was not with this man Camille Ernst. Did ern --

A: No, but ye --

Q: -- he stay -- did he stay in this other business?

A: No, apparently not.

Q: Apparently not. So it was over.

A: So we were l -- we lost contact with him completely.

Q: Right.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember moving to Strasbourg? Or you --

A: Oh yes.

Q: You do?

A: I lived there for a few years.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I went there to the Lycée St-Jean, which is on the border -- on the -- next to river Ill, I-I-I.

Q: Right.

A: I remember it very well. I had to walk quite a ways from home to there.

Q: To school?

A: To school.

Q: Yeah?

A: I enjoyed it though.

Q: You liked that?

A: Yes. We lived near the courtyard. This was a -- it's interesting. I -- it's a big park, and now they have the United Nations building on the courtyard. It's a -- the u -- I'm not sure exactly its function, but it has to do with the United Nation, o-or -- or Europe -- European community. It's a big building over there, yes. I went to visit their museum.

Q: Was it difficult moving so -- so often as such a young person, because you went to -- to Selestat and Strasbourg, and the Colmar --

A: Colmar.

Q: I mean, Colmar, rather.

A: No. I mean, you know, I was young and, you get used to the changes.

Q: You get used to it.

A: Right.

Q: Your friends, were -- were you going to a public school so that you were with Jewish students as well as Gentile students?

A: Yes. Absolutely, yes.

Q: And di -- were your friends mixed, so you didn't have a -- you --

A: No, mixed, all sorts.

Q: Yeah. And did you live in a neighborhood where -- where it was both Jewish and Gentile?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Was -- was yours a religious family, or not?

A: They came from religious families, yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And they did observe the shala -- sha -- Shabbat, and the [indecipherable]

Q: The Sabbath, yes.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And holidays?

A: And holidays, absolutely yes.

Q: Did you go to synagogue?

A: Yes.

Q: You did? On a regular basis?

A: No. Usually I went on holidays.

Q: Were you kosher?

A: Yes.

Q: You were?

A: Absolutely, absolutely. [inaudible]

Q: So you were very conscious of being --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- Jewish, and -- and the traditions?

A: Oh yes. I remember in Colmar, we used to have the [indecipherable] holidays.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they took all the children, and they had them go in the circle around a [indecipherable] and they used to hand us candy bars -- bags, okay.

Q: Right.

A: It was very, very nice.

Q: You liked that.

A: I liked that, yes.

Q: Because that was a fun holiday.

A: I had a sweet tooth.

Q: Yes. And you had a lot of friends as -- growing up?

A: Oh yes. I think so.

Q: And w-w-were they often at your house? Or --

A: Well, occasionally.

Q: Occasionally.

A: There is one thing I objected to at that time.

Q: Mm.

A: My father wanted to have me go to the synagogue on Friday -- on Saturday afternoon with the other children, and I just didn't like that too much.

Q: You wanted to have your Saturdays to yourself?

A: Yes.

Q: So what happened, who won?

A: I guess I won.

Q: You won. So what was it -- what was it like at -- at home? Were your parents very affectionate, did they talk with you a lot?

A: Oh yes. But they had to make a living, they were busy. My mother had the business on her own.

Q: Oh, she did?

A: Y-Yeah, what they call bonneterie, which are underwear, you know, that's -- it was her [indecipherable] business, and my father had his business, so they were traveling. I mean, in Colmar they had the -- the open air markets --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Twice a week, on Thursday and Saturday. And then my mom was over there [indecipherable] store, and it was interesting.

Q: She had her own store?

A: Yes. In the [indecipherable]

Q: Now, was that unusual for a woman to be doing that kind of work, or not so much?

A: Well, no.

Q: It wasn't?

A: I don't think so.

Q: Did you go to that store also and work, sometimes?

A: Well, yes, b -- I-I didn't work there, but we had actually, like a small a-apartment behind it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Or, at least a few rooms.

Q: Right.

A: So I used to go there, too.

Q: But that's not where you lived --

A: Oh no.

Q: -- you lived in another place, but you were able to just be there and so you could play, as a kid?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Did you eat dinners together?

A: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely. Breakfast and dinners.

Q: So all the -- wi-with Max, and Erna's the name of your sister.

A: My sister, that's right.

Q: And Berthe is your mother?

A: Yes.

Q: And Elias is your father.

A: My father, correct.

Q: Right. So did you talk politics when you grew up?

A: No, but I was very much interested in things that went on in the world.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I used to read the papers --

Q: You did?

A: -- all the time, yes. First of all, for breakfast, I had my dictionary in front of me.

Q: Your dictionary, right.

A: For lunch, I had my dictionary in front of me, and [indecipherable] too, and I just read it from cover to cover. I mean, I find it very interesting, I liked words. I followed the a-attack of Italy on Ethiopia.

Q: Really?

A: I got interested in that. I was interested in the revolution in Spain, Franco revolution.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I followed that very closely, too. And the events in Germany. Yeah, I -- I was very much interested in these sort of things, yes.

Q: But you're born in 1925, so when Hitler takes over --

A: In '30 th --

Q: In '33.

A: Three, yes.

Q: You're eight years old.

A: But I was reading papers.

Q: But you're -- but you were -- so, when you said you were sitting with the dictionary, does that mean you were using the dictionary and reading the newspaper, or you were just reading the dictionary?

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

Q: You were just reading the dictionary?

A: Yes, and I found time for newspaper, too. Now, in 1933, I was interested in what was going on, because my relatives lived in Germany --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- that time, Frankfurt. My grandfather lived there, my uncles. It was a family of eight -- 10 children, actually. My mother was one of the 10.

Q: Wow.

A: So, one of her sisters had -- moved to Brazil, and she came to Colmar -- no, to Selestat on the way to Brazil, she stayed a few days with us.

Q: Right.

A: But then we still had eight brothers over there, a-and sisters. One of her brothers was killed by the Nazis on the Kristallnacht. What happened is, when they were looking, the police was looking for the Jews to arrest them, he was in the cellar. And when the two policemen came down there, they found him -- okay, I should go back a little bit. One of the neighbors in the house watched my cousin, his son, bring him food, and followed him and saw that he was going to the cellar and -- where my uncle was hidden. So he reported him to the police. When the police came, he was making believe that he was chopping some wood for the fireplace, and the Germans accused him of having threatened him with the ax.

Q: With the ax, hm.

A: And they said that he died of a heart attack. My -- my cousin, the older one, his oldest son, opened up the casket later on. He found out that he had been beaten in the face, and shot through the heart.

Q: Wow.

A: So there was no question about that he had been murdered, you know. So his mother sent him to England on the Kindertransport to get him out of the way --

Q: The older -- the oldest, right.

A: -- because he was the oldest one. The other one follow -- the middle one followed later on.

The youngest one is the one that the neighbor had spied on.

Q: Right.

A: And he remained with the mother. She went to Belgium, and I met her there after the war. She was hiding in a farm, under a false name also.

Q: Right, right. So between '33, and '39, are you discussing politics in your home, or you're just -- you're reading the newspapers and seeing what's going on in Germany?

A: Well, y-yes, we -- we discussed what was going on in Germany, because my mother was very much concerned about her family there.

Q: Right.

A: And then in '39 -- my father had family in Poland, so he was concerned about it too.

Q: Concerned about family, too, right.

A: And what happened, in the Kristallnacht, my other uncle, one of my mom's brothers, Willie, was arrested, and he went to the camp of -- starts with an R, I forget the name now. It -- this became a woman's -- women's camp.

Q: Ravensbrück.

A: Ravensbrück, that's correct.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes. And he died over there in 1941.

Q: Huh.

A: His wife had passed away before the war, so he had a daughter, and apparently, she was in a home for orphans at the time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I found out later on that the Nazi kids broke into the orphanage and attacked th-the -- the girls over there.

Q: I see.

A: Then they had a -- a -- a death certificate saying that she died of a -- a lung infection. I spoke to relatives later on, she said no, apparently she committed suicide after what happened.

Q: Mm. Mm-hm. So ha -- you're not hearing about this, however, until much later, right?

A: Oh yes.

Q: You -- it's -- there was just a lot of worry about what's -- what's been going --

A: Well, about my uncles, yes, I found out [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: -- in time.

Q: Right.

A: Another uncle, Uncle Meyer was also arrested, went to Buchenwald, but was released when he got visas to come to United States.

Q: So he was in the United States.

A: He was saved.

Q: Right.

A: And another uncle, Nathan, and his sister, Fanny, went to the United States before the war. They had some papers to see some relatives over here.

Q: Right. So your -- is your -- does your father come from a large family, or is -- was he the only child?

A: There were eight --

Q: There were eight children?

A: -- children. One girl and seven brothers. One of the brothers came to visit us, went back to Holland, then he went back to Germany and he disappeared in Poland in the end. He died there.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: He was murdered, actual, in Bialystok, I understand.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Another brother went to the United States. And then my father, so that took care of three of the brothers, and the other ones all perished.

Q: Right.

A: And so did my aun -- my grandmother. She lived in a --

Q: On your father's side.

A: On the father's side.

Q: Right.

A: She was in a small village called Zegocina, Z-e-g-o-c-i-n-a. And what happened is a small village, was only a few Jewish people there. I understand three Jewish people living there, and the Nazis had -- wa -- after the occupation of Poland, requested that they come to Bochnia, a larger city, to a cer -- bils -- or a certain portion there wa -- became the ghetto. So the neighbors, the Polish neighbors were forced to put my grandmother in one of their carts, and bring her over there, too. She was no -- in no way capable of traveling by foot.

Q: Right.

A: And she disappeared also.

Q: Right. Is -- let me go back to you as a kid. Besides being interested in the dictionary, what else were you interested in? It's a very interesting interest, it's very unusual to have a child --

A: I was interested in the words, and how to spell.

Q: In the words, and how to spell.

A: I was th -- that -- I was very good at that, the spelling.

Q: And -- and what was the dictionary, French?

A: LaRousse.

Q: LaRousse

A: LaRousse [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable]. It's a big dictionary, by the way.

Q: Yes, it's a very big dictionary.

A: In French.

Q: Did you get through the whole thing?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Really?

A: And then back again sometimes. I mean, I didn't do it all in one -- one month or so, it -- it --

Q: No.

A: -- took time.

Q: No. But did you start with A and then go through?

A: All the way.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. I picked up a few Latin words the same time.

Q: I bet you did.

A: Oh, th-the etymology of the words, you know?

Q: Right. Was your brother and sister interested in the words in the same way, or were you very different?

A: I don't know, but they were bookworms, also.

Q: They were bookworms?

A: Yes.

Q: So all of you were bookworms?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: And your parents too?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. They -- not so much. Although they read a -- a local newspaper in Alsatian, in German dialect, you know.

Q: Right.

A: But -- but they didn't s -- they didn't read any French books or anything like that. I guess my [indecipherable] had some German books, yes.

Q: Right. Hm. What sort of a personality did your mother have and your father have? Did you -- because they both --

A: Real busy.

Q: -- especially your father turns into a very imaginative kind of person, taking a lot of responsibility in a very difficult time.

A: Absolutely

Q: Did you see that early on? Do -- could you -- could you tell?

A: No, his one concern was for his family.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: How to make a living. It was difficult at the time too, because in Paris you could not be employed, as a foreigner, you know, not to take jobs away from local people, so they had to be self-employed. So this is very difficult.

Q: Right, yes.

A: Especially since he did not speak French either. Alt -- al -- Al-Asatian and German.

Q: So he spoke Asatian and German, he never learned French?

A: Not at that time, no. When he went to southern France, then he picked it up fine, yes.

Q: Uh-huh. But still he wasn't fluent, so you were fluent.

A: Yes.

Q: And you could speak Asatian and German and French?

A: And French, yes.

Q: And some English.

A: And -- and some English. Not too much English at that time.

Q: Right.

A: My mom was very concerned about us, and she always was very motherly [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, yes. Were -- before the war, were you able to see relatives in Germany? You never went to Poland, am I correct?

A: No.

Q: But you did go back to Germany --

A: To Germany, yes, we went --

Q: -- you visited.

A: -- to weddings over there, the family weddings, you know, and I went back at least, I remember, twice, for sure.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Probably three times, but twice for sure --

Q: Right.

A: -- to the -- no, went to three different weddings over there.

Q: Three different weddings?

A: Yes.

Q: Before the war?

A: Yes.

Q: Really? So did you -- did you feel close with these people, or -- or not too much?

A: There were two uncles and one aunt.

Q: That's all.

A: So we were very close to them.

Q: Oh you -- you -- so you were --

A: The family was very close.

Q: I see.

A: What happened at that time, my grandmother had passed away in 1929, I believe. So my grandfather had eight children [indecipherable] for a long time, and my mother, being the oldest daughter, took over for my grandmother, so she was in charge of the family, the children. So she

had her hands full, but then she got married in 1919, and then my grandfather had his hands full, too.

Q: Uh-huh. So then he took over at that point.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. So your mother was a mother long before she was a biological mother.

A: Correct.

Q: Yes.

A: Correct.

Q: Well, the war comes in 1939, and you're in --

A: Colmar.

Q: -- Colmar, right?

A: Yes.

Q: And I understand your f -- your father was -- first of all, you had learned how to be a civil defense person, right?

A: No, no.

Q: Both -- no.

A: What -- what happened is that my father volunteered. He was, what 40 -- see, '39 -- 49 years -
- was it 49? He was about 49 years old.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: While he wouldn't volunteer for the service, his age was [indecipherable] children, but he volunteered for civil defense.

Q: Right.

A: And they immediately put him in charge of a post in a school where they expected possibly the Germans are using war gas. So he was in a disinfection station. And he organized it in an excellent way. He got -- and made sure that the -- all the equipment that they needed, and that they appreciated it very much, what he did for this place in -- this was an interesting one, in case of a failure of power, he had bicycles put in there, remove -- well, they put them on -- on the stand basically, and they had generators on the bike.

Q: Right, so they could use the bicycles.

A: For lights.

Q: Right.

A: That was a very --

Q: Very smart.

A: -- ingenious at that --

Q: Yes.

A: [indecipherable] time, since they had no money to buy all the equipment they needed. And then we had training over there, the Dr. Sitlow was in charge civil defense, and he came on and give us training and first aid and decontamination. Now why -- this is actually how I got involved, because my father says, "Come on down to the classes, this is very interesting for you, too." This how I involved, I was about 13 - 14 years old.

Q: Cause you were 14, right.

A: Yes, and he got his diploma, I think I have it with me.

Q: And you got a diploma.

A: I got one too, I -- I didn't bring it with me, I couldn't find it at the time, but I, the same as he.

Q: So where is Max, how come he doesn't say to Max to go, but he says to you to go?

A: Max was employed.

Q: He was employed?

A: Yes, he was a shoe salesman in a store.

Q: I see. Now, this civil defense work was done because they were afraid of the Nazi attack, am I right?

A: Yes, we are close to the border.

Q: Yes.

A: So, no, the -- the Maginot Line was there, but you can't come in with planes, you can't come close [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: You know. So as a matter of fact, at one time on a Sunday, we had about seven or eight alarms going off, planes coming over, to the point where you refused to go back in the cellar.

They had the civil defense sa -- protection of the house, but we are sick and tired of going up and down, up and down, up and down.

Q: So what'd you do?

A: Just stayed in the apartment.

Q: Yes?

A: You know, I guess I had [indecipherable]

Q: Did the planes come back?

A: Well, they came back about seven times, or -- or more.

Q: Really?

A: Seven to 10 times in one day.

Q: So how long were you working at this yo -- or your father was head of the post before you --

A: Well, from August, or September of 1939, til we left Colmar. What happened is the Germans invaded Belgium on the 10th of May, 1940.

Q: Right.

A: So things got aya -- off of that point. And the Germans captured Belgium, the French resistance broke down.

Q: Right.

A: They came across the Vosges mountains, which was the -- here is [indecipherable]. We are in Colmar in the Alsace in the plains, and the Vosges mountains, the Germans came around because the Maginot Line was facing one way. All the guns were facing --

Q: The other way.

A: -- east.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they couldn't be turned round. That was a really stupid move on the part of the French army.

Q: Right.

A: But they thought that the -- it was only meant as a temporary measure to give chance to France to mobilize its troops.

Q: Right.

A: This was the purpose was of the Maginot Line.

Q: Right. We're going to have to stop the tape at this point, and we'll start again right there.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Fred, you were describing the German attack of France.

A: Okay, so the Germans attacked through Luxembourg and Belgium --

Q: Right.

A: And Holland, of course. And they came around the mountain, the Vosges mountains. On the 15th of June, 1940, they open up with the artillery on the other side of the Rhine. We were about 19 kilometers from the Rhine, so it did not affect us directly, but we knew things were going wrong. So my father was on duty at the zo -- station, yeah, on the 14th, and already he is -- people that work for him in the first aid station, start to question, when the Germans come in, should we salute them heil Hitler, or should we salute them the French way? My father says, "Oh-oh, this doesn't sound good." So immediately he went to his superior and asked for a transfer out to go to interior of France. He received an ordre démission. It's an order that the authorities have to help him out to go to where he has to go, and this was Bordeaux, on the other end of France. We were told to be at the railroad station at --

Q: Can I stop you for a minute?

A: Certainly.

Q: Whe -- when your father realizes that everybody around him is trying to figure out how to accommodate the Germans.

A: Right.

Q: So does he think of himself as vulnerable because he's Jewish, you think?

A: Absolutely. It's cl --

Q: He does? It's very clear to him.

A: Oh yes, because of the -- what happened to his two brother-in-laws.

Q: What happened to --

A: The brother-in-laws.

Q: Uh-huh, right. And he knew that.

A: Sure, he knew that.

Q: Right. So when he goes to his superior, does he say look, I -- you know, this is dangerous for me and family and I have got to get out.

A: There was no question --

Q: There was no question.

A: He wa -- he will be given the authority to leave, and to get the help of -- assistance of [indecipherable] authorities --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- to go to Bordeaux.

Q: Okay, so you're going to go to Bordeaux the next day.

A: No, we tried.

Q: You tried.

A: On the 15th, we go -- we are told to go -- be at railroad station at 10 o'clock in the morning. We go there, the train had left about si -- seven o'clock in the morning. That was the last train out of Colmar.

Q: So do you think you -- he was given bad information on purpose --

A: No.

Q: -- or people just didn't know?

A: No, I guess they were realizing the situation was worse than they thought, and they had to leave earlier.

Q: Uh-huh, I see.

A: So we had actually left the house with a few things on our back, and a bicycle. We figured, oh, we are going to be gone for a short time, and be back soon, so we didn't take too much, except what we could take with us. Silverware, and food, and that's about it, you know. So my father decides we are going to walk.

Q: To Bordeaux?

A: On the road, on the road. So we go south, and there is a Protestant minister, he comes along with a horse drawn carriage, and he seems to realize what goes on, and he invites my sister and my mother on the cart, because he had room for two people. And he rides on a few miles, and -- kilometers, and drops them off when he takes it off-road. We, in the meantime catch up with my mom and sister, and quickly walking, I'm not sure how lo -- how far we walking, we must have walked between eight and 10 miles. Along comes this army truck that is going back -- was retreating, and they pick us up. With the bicycle, too. That was wonderful. There was nobody else on the road except us.

Q: Really?

A: When the minister left us, he says, "God be wi -- wi -- will be with you." He realized what was going on. And so we --

Q: Does it -- does it surprise you now that nobody else was on the road, that you were the only ones on the road?

A: Right.

Q: Doesn't that seem surprising?

A: Well, you know, the local people didn't have to worry about the Germans.

Q: Germans.

A: Other ones may not have the means, or no -- no car, or so --

Q: Right.

A: Remember that the French army had the authority to requisition cars for their needs.

Q: I see.

A: Because there are only so many army trucks or whatnot, and they had all -- also requisitioned our car.

Q: Uh-huh, so you didn't ha -- I see, you --

A: The military. So we didn't have transportation.

Q: -- didn't have a car.

A: That's right.

Q: What did your dad tell you and the kids? What di -- were you frightened when you were on this trip?

A: Well, we were very concerned, of course. We were not pleased to -- to leave, you know, on foot or so. But we thought it was an emergency, and my parents know what's best for us.

Q: Right.

A: So the truck drove us for some distance, and had dropped us off. Along comes this so -- young recruit, actually it was a civilian in a car, and he has orders to report to a certain area. So he takes us on. We are driving down to Dole . . . Dijon, that area, and things got very hot. There was a big tank -- gas tank, burning. I'm not sure if the army had done it to destroy it, or if the Germans had machine-gunned it, but it was burning at night. That gave us a chance to drive at night with, you know -- but at that point we run into traffic.

Q: Mm?

A: And got really hectic. If somebody run out of gas, or had a pa -- had a problem with his car, the cars behind him stopped, pushed him off the road, with the people inside.

Q: Really?

A: Nothing get in the way. They had to go on. It was terrible. There is no es -- it's me, me, me and I don't care about anybody else.

Q: It's really scary.

A: It was very scary, especially when they don't let the people get out of the car.

Q: Right, right. So you saw that?

A: Yes. And we got to [indecipherable], we got to Rouen, we got into a train, and oh, the démission gave us permission to go on any train, in any -- get any assistance from the military or civilians. So the train stops a few miles down, and they tell us to get out. No, the -- at -- the train stops in the station, and there's a Italian plane flying over. And we say, oh gosh, they were machine gunners.

Q: Right.

A: They -- it was in front of our compartment, it was a flatbed with a machine gun, right, a French machine gun, and about three or four French soldiers. That was a bad situation because civilians and military -- if you see troops there, you have a right to shoot at them.

Q: Right.

A: If you believe in the Geneva Convention that civilians are protected.

Q: Right.

A: Then came the order, all civilians off the train. We are expecting an attack by Italian planes. So we get out of the station. I think it was just a trick. The French authorities want to have the train to themselves to put more troops on there. We go outside of the station and there my father

meets a couple from Frankfurt -- he never knew -- I mean, he knew who they were, and they didn't speak French. And they were -- then we -- we gave them, we talked to them. They owned a movie -- a -- a movie i-in Frankfurt, and my parents knew about that. So they said, what are you doing here? They said, well, they're here from Belgium, they had escaped from Belgium, and they were completely lost. So my father decides, we are going back on the train now. And he says, "You come with us, and don't say a word." There is a soldier there with a fixed bayonet to prevent people from going on. My father says, "You follow me." And we go by, he presents the order, and we walk right through. The soldier did not even have time to read it. He let us go by. I mean, my father bluffed him.

Q: Right.

A: Get back on the train -- excuse me -- and then the train takes off.

Q: When you saw this, were you surprised at how your father was acting, or was this --

A: I guess h-he -- he surprised me, but I know I -- I just follow orders. He says, you know -

Q: No, I understand that, but it did surprise you that your father did that?

A: Oh, it surprised me very, yes. Especially because the people there --

Q: Right.

A: -- come with us, and -- and have their luggage, too, you know? So --

Q: So, clearly, the situation brought something out in your father.

A: It's a decision -- they have -- time to make a decision.

Q: And he just made the decisions and just did things, right?

A: Then we go on the train, and now in the com-compartment there are some ci-civilians coming on, and there is a guy from the -- a civilian, he has a French army pack with him.

Q: A French army?

A: Pack.

Q: Pack. Oh, an a -- a --

A: A -- a -- a -- for a -- outfit.

Q: Right.

A: Right. He was in c -- i-in civilian clothes. And the -- the gendarmes are coming now, and checking for deserters. My father says to the guy, "You better throw that pack out or they're going to arrest you." Because he was a desert-serter. So he threw the pack out. He saved his neck, probably, too, because he got [indecipherable]

Q: I'm sure he saved his neck.

A: Then, to continue --

Q: But your father was obviously so observant of what was going on --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- so that he could make these kinds of decisions.

A: Oh yes.

Q: It was quite amazing.

A: Then there were some young students on the train, and they had mon -- a -- harmonicas and they would sing th -- tha -- playing music. It was very encouraging, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my mother gave them some bread, too, they were st -- starving.

Q: So you gave them food?

A: Yeah, bread.

Q: Yeah.

A: We had -- that's all we had is bread at the time. We -- we shared it with them. And then we stopped in the station, and th--there was a wine -- there was another tr--train on the other side of the rail, and we looked out there, there's a -- a soldier laying on the floor. The train had been machine gunned, and this was a tank truck of wine, full of holes, and the soldiers were just laying down letting the wine go into his mouth. He was so amusing, you know.

Q: He was the only -- only soldier doing this? [indecipherable]

A: He was [indecipherable] doing it for free, you know?

Q: Right.

A: I mean -- and then we go back on the train. We didn't get -- we didn't get off the train because we didn't want to t--take a chance on train leaving and leave us behind.

Q: Right, right. So you stayed on the train?

A: Yes. Different station, we run out of water, so farmers come over and sell us water, at a franc, one franc per glass.

Q: That's a lot of money.

A: It was, and taking advantage of a situation.

Q: Right.

A: And another [indecipherable] we had what they call a buffet, in French, in the railroad stations. And they had food at exorbitant prices, too.

Q: Mm.

A: We bought whatever we could there, and then after about nine days, we wound up in Bordeaux.

Q: Nine days.

A: Took us nine days traveling. And si -- the -- or the train stops and [indecipherable] and try and get food.

Q: So there's clearly not much chance to wash yourself anywhere, right?

A: Oh no, oh no.

Q: There's nothing like that.

A: Not -- no, nothing like that.

Q: And are there bathroom facilities on the train?

A: Ah --

Q: Do you remember?

A: I don't recall. I know -- maybe -- probably you had to go outside in the station's -- regular train stations there.

Q: When it stopped.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And as you go on the train stop, we go to the gare, which was a railroad station, and this one guy comes over, and it was a competitor of my fa-father, he was in the radio business in Colmar.

Q: He was in the radio business?

A: Yes, he was a competitor of my father.

Q: He was a competitor, uh-huh.

A: So he asked my father, "What are you doing here?" He says, "Well, we just came from Colmar." He said, "I'll find a -- a place for you." For one night he put us up in a -- in an apartment. Then, they were sending these troops on the railroad station that had been abandoned by their officers. They didn't speak French, they had no money, they had no food. And they were

looking at us, you know, jealously because we were eating. So my mom said, sh -- let's share bread with tha -- them. There were about four or five of them, you know, so we share the bread with them, and they were so happy, because they had no-nothing.

Q: But that was your mother who said that, yes?

A: It's very emotional. Anyway --

Q: It's very what?

A: Emotional.

Q: Oh, emotional, yes.

A: Very -- now. So --

Q: Why -- why was it so emotional, do you think?

A: It is for me now.

Q: Now.

A: That I think about it, you know, because m-mother was thinking of them, of the soldiers, that they need help, too.

Q: Right.

A: And then, in the night -- or the night before, Italian planes had bombed Bordeaux, and it was time to get out. So we go to the -- is -- Bordeaux is a port city, so we go to the port, and to the [indecipherable] authorities, and he showed them the p -- the pass, we have to go to Bordeaux, and we want to go to England. The -- the -- the officer says, "Okay, come back to -- tomorrow, and there's a ship going to England," and he's prepared the papers for us, too. Next morning, same thing happened, the ship had left. Last ship. So, then the ar -- neighbors -- the papers come out that the armistice has been signed, the German ath-authorities -- army will occupy northern France and the whole western coast --

Q: Right.

A: -- including Bordeaux, all the way to -- to Spain. It's time for us to get -- move on again.

Q: And you're only there what, for a day or two, few days.

A: Yeah. One day.

Q: Right.

A: One day.

Q: One day.

A: This is -- this was about the 23rd -- I don't know the exact date, but this came in the paper there. And then my father says, "Let's go on to Toulouse." Toulouse -- we had a map, so we knew which was occupied zone, which was not occupied. So we go in the train, and in Toulouse we got off, and there are thousands of people in Toulouse. People came from Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, from all over.

Q: Right.

A: The north of France, from Germany, Austria.

Q: And why was Toulouse such a attractive --

A: This was a large city.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: A large city in a non-occupied zone.

Q: Right.

A: And you could like go close to the border to see -- to the occupied zone, we were not interested in that. And this was the --

Q: Right. You wanted to get as far away as you could.

A: Yes, and this was not too far from the Spanish border either. So we go there, and they have big plaques -- how can I say? Blackboards where people -- I look for this one, I look for that one. This a-army unit, and this a -- a -- so --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- you know, they were trying to find each other over there. And then there was a big cab -- a sik -- a big place for the refugees to get food. So we went over there, and there [indecipherable] line over there, too, you know? You know, was terrible, I mean, it took long hours to get there. And then we do find an apartment, and find a small place at -- an old man there, rue Petraque, P-e-t-r-a-q-u-e. Petraque was a Greek, or -- or -- or an poet or something like that. [indecipherable]

Q: Yes, right.

A: So, we go there, and the man is very nice to us, and he says, "Look, we have no beds over here, but I know a place where we can get you mattresses." So this was a factory that had shut down, and they had mattresses for their employees. We go over there with a handcart and we buy three or four mattresses, o-or five mattresses, and he brings us -- bring home to us again. So tha - - this a place to sleep on.

Q: So what was this place like?

A: It was a small house, he had him and his son in the house.

Q: Right.

A: And he had, I guess, two rooms available, so we slept there on the floor. And next day, or a few days later, I helped him, he was putting a -- a floor board, replacing the old board, and I helped him out.

Q: And you helped him out.

A: He -- he -- he went to buy the lumber and all that, and I helped him put s-strips in there --

Q: Right.

A: -- and nail them on. And then we had to -- we were there a few days. We went to Polish consulate to get a passport. We did not have a passport.

Q: You had no -- you -- you -- your father had no passport at all?

A: No, he had a Spanish *carte étrangère*, foreigner --

Q: Right.

A: In France. It's a green card.

Q: Right.

A: It's like a passport also, different pages. So we get to the consulate, big lines over there. Finally we get to the consul, I was with him, and he would like to have passport. The girl says, "Where were you born?" In so and so, western Poland. He speaks Polish with the consul. He says, "But you have no passport." That's why I am here for. I want to go get the documentation. He says, "But you left Poland in 1919, that was when -- or '18 -- when you became aus -- it was Austrian before that, so you're not actually Polish," he says, "I can't give you a passport, except [indecipherable] exception, your son is -- the oldest one is 19 years old?" No, 17 or eight -- "18 years old, and if he joins the Polish army, I will give him a passport." He said, "Thank you very much." [indecipherable] We left.

Q: So they were going to take Max in order to give you --

A: To him only. They would give him a passport.

Q: But not for any --

A: Big -- big favor.

Q: But not for anybody else.

A: Not to us, no. So we walked out.

Q: So you're in France without any sort of identification except that you're foreigners?

A: That's right, there's foreign -- like, it's a green card of about eight, 10 pages, I believe, and it's like that.

Q: Right.

A: But only my parents had that, and my brother. My sister also, I believe, because they were employed, so they had the same thing.

Q: And you had nothing?

A: No, because I didn't -- I wasn't working. I -- I -- I was not a certain age, I didn't need an --

Q: Right.

A: -- identity card. So what happened then? We are back in the house -- one morning, about five o'clock in the morning, knock on the door.

Q: This is the same house, with this -- where you bought these mattresses, yes? Or are you at a different place?

A: Where we lived, where we stayed at. Where we stay overnight.

Q: Where you were staying, right?

A: Mm-hm. And I -- as -- was going to say [indecipherable]

Q: Was there a knock on the door?

A: Knock on the door, and then they had these inspectors -- inspector, and come with us, they asked us. They put us in what they call a black Mar -- Maria, this is a police wagon, and I said, "Why you are arrestings us?" Don't ask questions.

Q: These are not Germans, these are French.

A: No, the French police.

Q: Yes.

A: And they pick up -- and they go from house to house, where they have foreigners, and they pick them up. And they were all Jewish except two -- some Russians. The cart is full now, and then I found out later what the -- the course was. The French government in Lotrower issued an order that all those who came to France after 1936 should be sent to concentration camp.

Q: Right.

A: But the authorities had also the latitude to arrest anybody that came before 1936.

Q: Right.

A: And prefect did not like Jews particularly, so he said it doesn't make a difference what the -- time they came in here.

Q: Take them.

A: As long as -- yes, take them. The reason originally of that was that France, Vichy government was against Communists, came from Spain, from the 1936 revolution. So, they had those in mind first, and then anybody that came from Belgium, Holland and Germany, and [indecipherable] after '36.

Q: And what year was that ruling put into place, did you --

A: In 1940, in November. 1940.

Q: 1940 in November, uh-huh.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Then we were put in small camp, I forgot the name of it, Recebedou, or an --

Q: This was before Agde?

A: Yes, this was in the area of Toulouse.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So, my father knew somebody in the prefecture, in the governor's office, who had just -- you signed in -- as foreigner you had to register.

Q: Right.

A: So he said, maybe this guy can help us out. So he asked the camp commander, captain -- the camp was actually surrounded by boy scouts, that's what I had -- in charge of the camp.

[indecipherable] captain --

Q: This is not Agde, this is --

A: No, no, this is to --

Q: -- this is Toulouse, near Toulouse.

A: -- near Toulouse, near -- near Toulouse, yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I -- I remember it was --

Q: Boy scouts surrounded the --

A: Boy scouts. They -- th-they not -- they didn't arrest the people, they let them go in and out if they had some justification. It wasn't a camp to hold them.

Q: Oh, right, so it was a holding camp of some kind --

A: Right.

Q: -- a transit camp.

A: So my father asked the captain to be authorized to go to Toulouse to meet this man from prefecture. Okay, fine. So him and my fa -- and my sister hitchhiked to Toulouse, there was the prefecture -- to see this man, and thi -- they ask him, why didn't you tell us that the workers who are [indecipherable] you know, you could have given us a warning. The guy sh-shook his sh-

shoulders. You know. Sorry about that, you know. I cannot do anything for you. They go back to the camp because we are still there [indecipherable] us, my mom, my brother and me.

Q: Right.

A: And then they say okay, everybody let's march railroad station. They put us -- put us in a cattle car. French have a fancy name for it, eight horses or 40 men, huit hommes -- quarante hommes ou huit chevaux, eight men -- or eight horses.

Q: Eight horses, right.

A: And put us in there. No windows. So it had maybe a small opening for air. And the cabin had a few other people in it. And the train goes on the way, for hours and hours and hours. At night we arrive, I believe is Montpellier. And in Montpellier they open up the door, and they let Red Cross nurses give us some water.

Q: Give you water?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. Then they close the doors again, and we continue to Agde. Everybody out, it's middle of the night. We had to march to the village of Agde, you know, with luggage and whatnot. Was quite a march, and then went into the camp, and they say well, go to -- guys over here. Women on one side, one -- some guys, one camp, men on the other camp. And they put us in camp, they had -- a clo -- a cap -- a -- a head of the barrack, and he assigned us places on the straw, and there is a double layer straws on the bottom, and on top there. I don't remember if it had 40 or 50 people in a barrack.

Q: Fred, let's go back a little bit. When they came that morning to pick you up --

A: Yes.

Q: You were home?

A: Yes. We were sleeping, at --

Q: So the whole family was home.

A: -- five o'clock in the morning.

Q: Oh, it's five o'clock in the morning?

A: Yes.

Q: So this must have been very scary to you --

A: It was, it was.

Q: -- you were 14 -- y-you were 15 now -- 16? 15 years old.

A: Fi -- 40 -- 40 -- yeah, right, right.

Q: Do you -- did your father and mother explain to you that these kinds of things might happen --

A: No.

Q: -- or there was no idea?

A: We never expected.

Q: You didn't expect it at all?

A: No. I mean, after all, you live in France, so you don't expect have a-anybody, whether they were foreigners, or -- or -- or -- or French, or --

Q: You expected to receive --

A: -- or came before or after [indecipherable]. There was no -- we did not know of the law, of the '36 law.

Q: You didn't -- you didn't know that law?

A: No, found out afterwards.

Q: I see.

A: No.

Q: So it wasn't publicized --

A: No.

Q: -- as far as you knew.

A: It was only through the authorities, so they could go ahead --

Q: And do what they --

A: -- and people [indecipherable] themselves and -- and disappear.

Q: So did you have any time to -- to take something with you?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Just get dressed --

Q: And go.

A: -- go. Yeah.

Q: But you described when you were -- when you went to Agde that people were carrying luggage, but you were not?

A: Well, we had -- well, I should say there was a -- a few things, possibly, I'm sorry.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We lib -- we did not have time to pack, nothing. Just --

Q: Just a few things.

A: -- what you -- what you can carry, you know [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: I -- I guess [indecipherable] because yes, we had some things we could carry, like clothing or whatever.

Q: Right

A: But [indecipherable] you know.

Q: But you probably didn't have much stuff to begin with, because --

A: That is right.

Q: -- you had left Colmar so fast.

A: That is correct.

Q: So you really --

A: We are just -- we are leaving this behind there.

Q: Right, right. Let's -- let's stop the tape, instead of moving on.

A: Yes.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: So you're in the camp of Agde.

A: Yes.

Q: Which is considered a concentration camp.

A: Yes.

Q: And your mother and sister are in one place.

A: Excuse me, it is fa -- term, atelier, is a -- that was a concentration [indecipherable]

Q: Ata --

A: Atelier, it's atel -- yeah, atelier.

Q: An int -- an intern -- internment camp, yes.

A: Yes, exactly.

Q: But that's not what it was, no. So what was this like for you when you walked in there? You were -- you were set up in barracks?

A: Yes, and we were tired, we slept. About six o'clock in the morning, everybody has to get out, wash. They had a big -- a big pipe for water in the -- from faucets --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- [indecipherable] put a trough there, and we wash up, and then they serve us black coffee, no sugar, nothing, and I guess they gave us a -- a bread for four people. We cut it up in pieces, and took turns. Every time they serve bread, the f -- they were changed as a priority, one guy had the -- the choice first, and the next one next time. So he could get the largest piece.

Q: I see.

A: It was -- you know, we were hungry, and it was very important to get as much food as you could.

Q: Right. And who cut the bread?

A: One of the four.

Q: One of the four.

A: Yes.

Q: And who was your fourth, because you were three?

A: Well, we were not -- my -- my wife -- my mother and my sister were in a different camp.

Q: Right, but your brother and your father, and --

A: But we -- yes, but we -- we took from the whole barrack, they just took four people, any four.

Q: I see, any four.

A: And -- and here's the bread, divide it.

Q: Were you staying near your father and brother, or you we --

A: Yes.

Q: You were.

A: Yes, I stay with them.

Q: And were you -- a number of people on one bunk, or was it one person?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember?

A: We were like two people on one bunk.

Q: Two?

A: And usually -- and -- and then there were about over 40 people in the whole barrack, I think.

Q: 40?

A: 40.

Q: So it's not -- it wasn't huge.

A: No, [indecipherable] barracks, but not huge, no.

Q: Was it cold?

A: What happened later on is -- I'll tell you about this one. [indecipherable] was very cold, and he took an old bench -- they had the stove there --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- it was op -- operating. And he took a bench, broke it up somehow, and he started a fire.

Well, somehow or other somebody reported him, the guy who was in charge of the barrack, I believe, and then they put him in jail, in the brig for a few days.

Q: Because he broke up this bench?

A: Yeah. They [indecipherable]

Q: Was it warm -- was it warmer?

A: Not very well.

Q: It didn't --

A: No. Orders are orders, you cannot -- you are going to freeze, you're going to freeze, you know?

Q: Right. And your clo -- they didn't give you different clothes?

A: Oh no.

Q: It was the clothes you came in with.

A: That's right.

Q: Did you have coat? Do you remember?

A: At that time, no.

Q: No.

A: Because we had left in the summertime, in June, think -- no, I take that back. No, that was it. We did not have any coats then.

Q: You didn't have a coat.

A: We got some coats later on, in Montpelier. But -- so we were there for about four or five days I believe, and [indecipherable] in the morning, get your breakfast -- breakfast. My brother and I were designated to go in the kitchen to work peeling potatoes. So the guys already give us a little food they throw on the side, you know. But that just lasted one time, one day.

Q: You -- you were only in the kitchen for one day?

A: Yes.

Q: I see.

A: It wa -- a few hours one day.

Q: Really?

A: But the -- the guys [indecipherable]

Q: Did you take some stuff?

A: Well, the guy gave us a few things, but --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- th-then [indecipherable] so then what happened is the camp commander let people go out sometimes if they had to go to see a dentist or a doctor or so.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He gave them a permit for a few hours. While they were out in the city, in the village, that is to say, they sometimes were able to buy stuff for themselves or for other people, too.

Q: Right.

A: And they brought in food. That helped. If those -- if you had money, you could buy some stuff, you know. Well, when we realized that you could go out of certain -- on certain conditions, we decided -- my father decided, let's see if we can go out completely, permanently. So he -- there was a -- a young lady in the cap -- captain's office, a st-stenographer. And my sister was with her [indecipherable] in the same camp with the -- barrack with the woman, and she says, you know, they need another s -- not stenographer, dactylo, a --a typist.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And w-why don't you apply for a job? So my s -- my sister said okay. So she applies for the job, and she was there a few days, my father says, you know, ask if I can go to a od -- to a -- the prefecture in Montpellier, to see the governor. Just like that.

Q: Now let me ask you something. How did your father make contact with your sister, if you were in different barracks?

A: Wel -- we had -- we had visiting times.

Q: There were visiting times?

A: Yes. Ev -- every --

Q: Every day, or no?

A: No, every so often.

Q: I see.

A: Within a few days, or maybe a few times in a week.

Q: So your father is immediately thinking, how can I --

A: Yeah, I'm not going to be here, I'm not going to stay here.

Q: I'm not going to stay here.

A: That's right.

Q: I've got to figure out a way to get out.

A: Right. And -- at that time we did not know the 36 -- 1936 law.

Q: Yeah.

A: So my father -- my -- my sister is performing very satisfactorily for her --

Q: Right.

A: -- captain, and my father says, "Ask for permit to go to Montpellier," for her and him, because sh -- he didn't speak French. Captain says fine, but he had hostages there, my mom, and my brother and me --

Q: Right.

A: -- so he was not afraid he was -- escape.

Q: Right.

A: Fine, so they go to Montpellier, find out where the prefecture is, where the prefect's office is, and in the hallway, they're already down there and this man comes towards them, and they look at each other. The man says, "What are you doing here?" That was Camille Ernst.

Q: The man with whom your -- your father was the -- yeah.

A: Partner before. Father says, "We're at camp in Agde." So he says, "What? You are free." And he releases us either way, and he says to my father, are there more people that you know -- and he explained to my father what the story was with the 1936 law, but you were here before. So he says, "Do you know more people in the same situation that came before 1936 in the camp?" Off the top of his head my father had met people already in the camp, in the barrack, and he remembered -- thought of 36 people including us five.

Q: Right.

A: And Ernst puts all the names down on the same list, he says they are all free. Then he says, "I want you to stay in the camp of Agde, and in the village of Agde." My father says "Why?" He says, "I want you to help free all the people that can be freed from the camp." He was -- a hand to the heart. So my father says, "Well, how can they po -- ho-how can they be freed? What does it need to be [indecipherable]." He says, "If they have the means, they came -- first of all, they have to be in France since before 1936. They have to have the resources to exist in France without falling in the charge of the French government." That was important.

Q: And that was for a period of about a year, right?

A: About a year, if I remember correctly.

Q: Yes.

A: And my father says, "That's nice. How about people who have no money?" He says, "We will find a way." And -- okay, so my father and my sister come back, my father sees -- become -- right away I see him, he says, "Keep your mouth shut, but we are free." He didn't want to cause a panic in the -- in the barrack, you know, people getting all excited. And then he explains --

Q: And did -- did Mr. Ernst give your father --

A: A pass.

Q: A pass. So if you would --

A: What happened -- he gave them the list, the whole list actually, and -- had to be turned in to the captain of the camp.

Q: And how does Ernst have this power to do that? Do you understand that?

A: He was in charge of the police. He was under the prefect, the second in charge. He was -- his title was secretaire generale, and he looked at the -- looked from Dr. Zucco -- Zu --

Q: Zuccotti?

A: Yes, Zuccotti.

Q: Yes.

A: And [indecipherable] secretaire generale. Him, and then the other gentleman who was working for him. Actually, everybody w-working for him. You know he reported to --

Q: Right.

A: -- governor -- excuse me -- Mr. Verdi -- Berdetti.

Q: This was very emotional for you when your father came back and told you the story, yes?

A: Yes, he says, "Don't say anything." He didn't want to cause a panic. H-He da -- spoke to the individuals from the barrack who were going to be freed. There wasn't [indecipherable] they had their wives too, you know.

Q: Right.

A: Just fo --

Q: Right.

A: But he called them up one at a time, and told them, keep your mouth shut, but you are free tomorrow, you'll get out. So the list was in the hands of the captain, an he issued individuals -- individual releases. That's why our release has a number of blanks, about four or five lines, but it was actually a whole list of people. So he issued that for [indecipherable]

Q: And the captain, Tass -- Tassart is his name?

A: Tassart.

Q: Tassart?

A: Yes.

Q: N-N-No question?

A: No question. Orders are orders.

Q: Well, this is -- this is the orders and this is what he's going to do.

A: That's right.

Q: So were peop -- were other people upset that you folks were leaving, or did they --

A: They didn't know.

Q: No.

A: We did not tell, and the next morning we were -- we ready to go. That's where they found out that the -- a few people ba -- not just us, but a few other ones --

Q: Right.

A: -- were released. And then they asked, how come they're released? Well, we came before 1936.

Q: Right.

A: That camp was a whole bunch of Spanish internees, because they came after '36. They had been interned because they -- lots of them were Communists --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And that the French didn't care for them [indecipherable]. Even though Germany became an ally of the German -- of the Russians -- the Communists --

Q: Right.

A: -- the French did not -- didn't say [indecipherable].

Q: The French didn't like the Communists?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: For Germans it was just an expedient to occupy part of fro -- Poland, you know. And so we took the train and we -- somehow I guess we wound up in the Jewish organization, and we asked

them to help us find a place. And we ran out of funds at that time, because we could not go back to -- Alsace was occupied. The banks, everything had been seized.

Q: Right.

A: So we were running out of money. They helped us out there.

Q: And where -- where did you go from Agde?

A: In Montpellier.

Q: You went back to Mo --

A: Montpellier

Q: Montpellier.

A: Yes. To that Jewish organization. And they were helping all the refugees --

Q: Right.

A: -- that was the funds from the Jewish organizations, from the United States. Then, we met somebody over there, and we ask him if he knew where they had places for rent. And he says, "Yes, come with us. I live in Celleneuve," which is small village outside of Montpellier, we rode up a trolley car. Went over there, we found this home. It was not the fanciest place, it has a stable underneath there, but hey, we lived there, that's it. So we stayed there for the first time, in ce -- in Celleneuve, let's see. These people are from Belgium, and they lived in the same village. Unfortunately, they are on the -- okay, then, later on came ins-instructions to arrest the people, I think it was in the s-summer of 1942. They had what they call razzias, r-a-z-z -- double z - i-a-s, or rafles, r-a - one f - l-e-s. And they just came, gendarmes a-arrested -- no, they arrested at certain cell blocks, homes. And they searched anybody in the street. If they see you walk into a hallway, they would hassle you, because they knew that you were trying to hide. So they check identity [indecipherable]. Then the -- if they had the ideas that you came to France after '36, they

took you in right away, arrested you. At that time, my father had connections with the boy scouts, the leader. He [indecipherable] in one of the books by Ann Latour, which was [indecipherable] here, was sold in the museum, and [indecipherable] name. Anyway, we found places for some of the people, hiding places.

Q: Let me stop you for a moment. Aren't you forgetting the f -- your father and sister going back and forth into Agde?

A: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yeah. I --

Q: This i -- this is a very big, important story, yes?

A: Absolutely, absolutely. So, when he stayed in Agde, then he went to the camp commander, Tassart, who helped him out, sort out who was there before 1936 --

Q: Right.

A: -- this was [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: And my father approached him, he says, "You can be free if you meet certain requirements." 1936, and means of -- of existing on the outside. "But," he says, "you must also help people who have no funds. You must lend it to them, and they give back to you when they get out." Because this was another of -- transaction outside the [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: So the -- okay, and my father was able to get about 1500 people out this way.

Q: It's extraordinary story, you know. In how long a period of time was this go on? Months?

A: It was -- oh yes, oh yes. It was from November to February or March, just before we went to Montpellier. This was --

Q: So it's in --

A: -- in Agde.

Q: -- November of 1940.

A: '40 to '41.

Q: To '41.

A: About.

Q: To February '41.

A: I believe so. Now what happened at that time -- so these people were free. The other thing happened. Ernst told my father, you know, I suspect anybody -- somebody over here is writing down the serial numbers of the bills.

Q: Oh.

A: So we became money launderers, we trade the bills so there was always constant new supply.

Q: So who was doing the money laundering?

A: My brother, my sister and me.

Q: Your brother and your si -- the three of you.

A: The three of us. Went to grocery stores, we went to banks. We -- or so -- we brought food into the camp, too. So people gave us the money to buy food for them, and so we had a-an exchange also.

Q: Now, all of you had passes to go in and out.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Right?

A: I have one here from my mom and my father. And the passport is for every day, seven days a week. From eight o'clock in the morning til seven o'clock at night, that's 11 hours. That wa --

Q: It's really rather extraordinary, but this happened in a number of places in France, I gather, that people were able to get passes to go in and out [indecipherable]

A: I don't know about the other camps. I don't know, I --

Q: But at least there.

A: I have no idea.

Q: Yeah.

A: But this camp, because of Ernst, was very important.

Q: Right.

A: And I have the original pass with me.

Q: Did your father see Ernst on a fairly regular basis, or not?

A: Well, every time people were freed, they had to get to Montpellier. And so they were accompa -- accompanied by either my father, or my si -- [indecipherable] my father, my sister or my sister [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. Because they had to go through [indecipherable] over there. They didn't had -- excuse me -- they couldn't send somebody to the camp.

Q: Right.

A: And then show the money [indecipherable], no, had to be [indecipherable]

Q: Right. But now, let me ask you something. When people didn't have money --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and the people who did have money would lend them the money --

A: So they gave it to my sister --

Q: -- then they leave, and then they gave it back.

A: -- to take back.

Q: Take it back so it can be used again.

A: To [indecipherable] the list, and then --

Q: Right.

A: -- return the money to people.

Q: But now these people leave, and they really don't have money. So now, how do they survive?

A: Well, they went to Jewish Committee to help them out.

Q: In Montpellier.

A: Montpellier.

Q: I see.

A: That's where they were hiding, in Montpellier, at that point. So --

Q: And then they were helped.

A: They were helped, yes. Some had the visa to go to other countries, they had visa to go to Portugal. We have a very important place to go through it, to go to the United States.

Q: Yes.

A: Because if you had a visa from the United States, you had to go through port -- Spain or Portugal, and many people waited in Portugal for their American visas to come through.

Q: Right.

A: So the Joint Distribution or other organizations helped them out monetarily to go to --

Q: Right.

A: -- these places.

Q: Right. Were you folks frightened during this period or did you all feel very safe once you had the pass?

A: Well, as long as we knew Ernst, we felt very safe.

Q: Then you -- then you felt safe.

A: I forgot to say also, in those days they have also soup kitchen for all the refugees. Food, the -- either the Red Cross or other organizations had food, they sit -- they u -- went to those places. So the people who came out of the camp, and us too for awhile, ate in those places because we had no resources, you know?

Q: I see.

A: So --

Q: So your situation was not so terrible?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: Your situation was not so terrible, because there was this -- some food.

A: It -- it was not -- it was not that much food, either.

Q: It was not that much.

A: Or choice, but they --

Q: Right.

A: -- better than nothing.

Q: But there was something.

A: That's right.

Q: Yes.

A: So --

Q: Were people working in this camp?

A: No, no.

Q: They weren't.

A: It were very idle, no.

Q: They were just sitting, and waiting.

A: I -- and then also, Montpellier, you had the Red Cross distributed clothing, and also the -- what was it called? Not the [indecipherable], the foundation army distributed clothing over there, too. A reg --

Q: Clothing?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh.

A: For -- from the United States that they donated. So that's where we got our first clothes, my brother and me. It was like a pillorin they call it, it -- it was a [indecipherable] without sleeves, except it had openings [indecipherable]

Q: Like a poncho.

A: Exactly, that's what it is.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: This was good for rain, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: For you got your hands free. You didn't --

Q: Did you get some warm clothes? Because it's winter now.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: You know, they had the -- plenty of supplies. They had a lot of supplies.

Q: Right.

A: But they could not bring them into the camp.

Q: They couldn't bring it into the camp?

A: No. By the way, it was where the camp [indecipherable] in there, there was someone, and we suspect it was an American journalist that was there, and it was behind the barrier that [indecipherable] and the gendarmes were with him, so a few of us made a sign, "Nous avons faim." We are hungry. We moved that towards him. The gendarmes [indecipherable] too close, and I hope he saw the sign.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They didn't force us to go back.

Q: Right.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Huh. All right, so 1500 people get -- how many people were in this camp to begin with, do you have any idea?

A: Thousands.

Q: Thousands?

A: Yes. I don't [indecipherable] thousands -- I'd say probably between three and 4000, probably. That means just the women --

Q: And were they all -- were they mainly Jews?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: They were Spaniards, and also military, foreign troops like Czechs. And I -- I don't remember [indecipherable] of Polish troops, but they were supposed to go to Africa when Germany won the war.

Q: Right.

A: But then they got stuck, there with no ships to take them to Africa, so they put them in the camp.

Q: Now, how did people prove that they came to France before 1936? Did they -- or did --

A: You -- you --

Q: You have a -- you have an entrance pa --

A: A passport from a -- if you came from foreign countries, or even from France that you had a -
- your foreigner card. And a foreigner carte étrangère, has a pa -- passport when you came in --
ha-has a card showing when you came in.

Q: So the people who came in after 1936 were stuck in the camp?

A: And then, the worst that happened [indéchiffrable]. Then they decided to enter the camp and transfer everybody to the camp of Rivesaltes.

Q: Right.

A: Which is near the Pyrenees, and there are terrible conditions. It was near the sea, and they had the, I guess water running close by a-and the rain and whatnot.

Q: Right.

A: And so the camp commander, Tassart, said, "Well, I'd like to send a delegation of the people to Rivesaltes to see how the conditions are, so they can convince the people in the camp that things are not that bad over there the way [indéchiffrable]." It was one of those, what do you call it? There was a Russian general who made fake visitors [indéchiffrable]

Q: Oh, Potemkin.

A: Potemkin.

Q: Yes.

A: Potemkin village.

Q: Right.

A: So they had places over there, and they saw [indecipherable] is, this has flowers over here, and this and that, and so forth. Sidewalks and that. It was terrible when they got there, though.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The food was not good, and that -- the Rivesaltes, th-they had just a few barracks they showed them.

Q: Right. Now this is after you got out the 1500 people --

A: Correct.

Q: -- that they closed Agde and sent them to Rivesaltes, yes?

A: Correct. I know of one of the people that went to -- like, it was part of the [indecipherable] it was called Rubenstein. He was from Frankfurt and my parents knew him, and he had a son of our age, too. And he was wa -- allowed somehow to come to Montpellier [indecipherable] camp and he went to our house even, but he had to go back to the camp.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But he was one of the guys that was blindsided, I -- you know, just told him hey, it's so beautiful over here, and they showed him the -- how many things that were favorable to show to -- to the French -- to the internees.

Q: Right. Now, bef -- before we get to talking about you father, and y -- because of these razzias and their -- razzias and their picking up people.

A: Oh yes.

Q: You g -- you are going to school, you're in a suburb of Montpellier in Celleneuve?

A: Celleneuve, yes.

Q: Celleneuve.

A: I went to the ORT school --

Q: ORT school, and very --

A: -- in Montpellier.

Q: Yes. And there you learned things that became important for you later, yes?

A: Yes. First of all, I started as a mechanic's training. Forging -- iron forging -- forge is a French word, it's a -- what do you call it -- you know, where you process hot irons.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And where the [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: And then the -- and then I took the class in chemistry, my brother also. And that was very interesting, it took a few months [indecipherable]. Exam was very strict.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: Because you might think it was from the Sorbonne [indecipherable] Paris [indecipherable]

Q: It was good.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: I aced it.

Q: You did?

A: Yes, I got Tres bien. I have [indecipherable] here, too.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, we had to know how to -- what are you using to make soaps, what are you using to make lipsticks, what are you using to make toothpastes, and all kinds of -- of what do you call that, practical chemistry.

Q: I was going to say it's very practical chemistry

A: Yes, yes.

Q: It's not theoretical.

A: Yes, it -- the instructor was from Poland, and he was -- he trained us. He was a -- also a refugee [indecipherable]. He -- I saw him in pa -- in -- in New York when I came back, when I came over here. I looked him up in the phone book, and tried to get a job, and he took me to his chemistry factory in Bayonne, and they were -- offered me a job. They did not tell me what it was, but when [indecipherable] and I says I wouldn't accept this job, they wouldn't pay anything, because the expenses would be higher traveling --

Q: Right.

A: -- than they would want to pay you.

Q: Now why did you take this course in particular?

A: I didn't want to be idle --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- you know, and then the -- I also had the training in mechanical applications, they had the other course being taught the same time a -- the same time, later on, so it was good to continue.

Q: Right.

A: I like it a lot, you know.

Q: And when you're in Celleneuve, you -- you were Jew -- I mean, people knew that you were Jewish, you weren't hiding the fact.

A: Where?

Q: When you were in Celleneuve.

A: Celleneuve?

Q: When you were going to school.

A: We did not to broadcast anything at all, no.

Q: You didn't broadcast.

A: We are refugees, yeah, just refugees from Alsace.

Q: Right.

A: There was only one more family in Celleneuve, that's the one that told u -- told us about the apartment.

Q: Right.

A: And there were two -- three, four, five people. And --

Q: So you didn't have false papers, but you were still not you -- but people didn't know who you were?

A: No, no.

Q: They didn't --

A: They were -- just were Alsations.

Q: Right.

A: They didn't know we were foreigners, no.

Q: Right. Okay, we have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Fred, let's -- let me just ask you again about Agde, because you and your brother brought in food --

A: Food.

Q: -- daily to people. W-Were you actually working out -- you had access 11 hours a day.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you really going back and forth all those hours?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: Once a day.

Q: Once a day you went.

A: We had -- you know, it was difficult. First of all we had to do the shopping, you had to carry as much as you could and besides, there was the matter of -- these people have money to buy anything, yo -- I mean, we were limited ourselves, so we could not actually -- that was not the case though. The primary thing was, it was quite a distance to walk in the village, too, you know.

Q: It was a big distance, yeah.

A: And do the shopping, and carry it back, you know, it was a --

Q: But the people inside the camp would give you money?

A: Yes.

Q: And would they ask you to get certain things, or --

A: Absolutely.

Q: They d -- they did.

A: Absolutely, yes.

Q: And how did you decide who you would w-work --

A: They asked us, you know?

Q: They just asked you.

A: Because this happened before. People went to -- had the authority to go to see a dentist or a doctor, or so, and people asked them, would you please buy me this or that [indecipherable]

Q: I see.

A: So th-that already started before.

Q: Right.

A: So for us it was just a matter of stepping in there and help them out too. We had been through these horrible few days, and we were lucky, it was just a few days.

Q: Right.

A: We felt very badly for those people. I mean, when you're hungry, it's a terrible feeling.

Q: Right. So you felt responsible to do something.

A: Absolutely.

Q: So how much -- how long a walk was it from the camp to the village?

A: A few kilometers.

Q: A few kilometers.

A: Yes.

Q: And --

A: And then when you go to the village you have to go to the -- the grocery stores, and you had to get from th-this end, that [indecipherable] different places, you know, so it took time.

Q: Right. And you didn't have gloves, so it was very cold.

A: Our hands were frozen. But we did not worry about that because we felt we had to do this.

Q: Right. So it must have been exhausting both psychologically and physically for you folks.

A: No, psychologically we felt we had to do it.

Q: So this was --

A: This was a must.

Q: -- this was good. And this went on for a number of months?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Til about -- well, til about February or so, when they decide to close the camp.

Q: So it's December, January, February, so it is a few months.

A: Right, yes, it was a few months, yeah.

Q: So it's a lot.

A: Oh we, you know, I have to -- yeah, we were staying in the [indecipherable] when they decided to move the people to Rivesaltes.

Q: Right.

A: Yes. And then they had to send a delegation to --

Q: To -- to look at the fake part of the camp, yes.

A: Right.

Q: But after they leave, do they -- do they close the camp in June of --

A: I believe so.

Q: In June of 1941 or '42?

A: Oh, before.

Q: Before?

A: Oh yes, I think it -- see, let's see, June -- I think February was what -- I-I can't recall.

Q: February '41.

A: I believe in early -- yes, '41, yes, uh-huh. It wasn't too many months after we left. I think this was February, or something like [indecipherable]

Q: So when you're at school, the ORT school --

A: Yes.

Q: -- was that in '41 or '42, do you -- do you have a -- do you remember at all?

A: Not exactly, but I have the certificate so I can --

Q: Well, we can check.

A: Yes.

Q: But maybe it's '42 that you're in this school.

A: Well, because I went to different classes, I went to the mechanics.

Q: Right.

A: I went to the other one. So the other one was about four or five months prior to the applied chemistry class.

Q: Right.

A: What a class that was, it was -- it was great.

Q: It was great?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: I learned an awful lot.

Q: But you hadn't been to school for a few years now, right?

A: Oh no.

Q: So this was just --

A: That wa -- that was th -- that was the end of it there.

Q: Did you carry around your dictionary with you? Is that one of the things you took?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No, no. No.

Q: No, huh? So it's good that you had all this dictionary training beforehand, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: So in July and August of 1942, they start these raids, the Germans --

A: Ah, yes.

Q: -- because they're occupying Vichy, no?

A: No, this [indecipherable]

Q: This is before?

A: -- before that. Because I remember that they had some raids, or rafles [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: -- and before that -- and we located places to hide.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: People to hide with, food. My father had this one friend of his who had a restaurant, Tellenbaum, and he provided food. The boy scouts went to different donors or so, they collected the food. They distributed it to the homes, not on a daily basis, because that would have attracted attention. So that every two days or three days, they will bring a supply for a few days, so as not to arouse the people there to see wha -- what goes on there, you know? They found abandoned houses like that -- things like that. The best place to hide was hospitals.

Q: Why?

A: The food was available. You did not have to bring anything in. Doctors and nurses cooperated.

Q: They did?

A: They put people in beds, and we -- we were [indecipherable]. That was very -- these were -- these were doctors and Red Cross people and -- and nurses, these are not Jewish. Everybody cooperated. Not just -- not just --

Q: But your father arranged all of this?

A: Well, he got people -- connections, you know.

Q: Right.

A: But --

Q: But he started it.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So he just keeps going with these ideas?

A: Because we knew that people were going to be getting arrested, we had to hide them, you know?

Q: But weren't you vulnerable also? Or people just didn't know who you were?

A: We weren't vulnerable because we knew Ernst. He was in charge of police.

Q: I see.

A: At that point. Now, the people that lived in the same village as we did, Celleneuve, the daughter was arrested. And we tried to get her freed out, couldn't --

Q: But you couldn't do it.

A: -- couldn't [indecipherable] no. Then the pers -- the family hid us later on, too. This was before --

Q: So s --

A: I'm sorry.

Q: No, no, go ahead.

A: This was before the Germans occupied southern France.

Q: Okay. But in Celleneuve there seems to be a lot of help, the people are -- are willing to be very helpful to the people who are vulnerable.

A: Well, I'm talking about people who are French citizens basically, because they were not subject to any persecution.

Q: I see.

A: Because they were French citizens.

Q: Right.

A: Th-They fall under '36 law -- 1936 law.

Q: And because it's unoccupied at that point, they're not vulnerable.

A: Correct, correct.

Q: Uh-huh. And so this goes on now for a few months?

A: Yes, and then the razzias ended the end of -- by August or suppose -- early September, I believe, they stopped. Then the allies landed in North Africa on August -- on November eighth, 1942. On November 11th [indecipherable] Armistice day for World War I, the Germans invaded France, and then it was time to leave. So we go to prefecture, my father and my sister, and they as -- ask for false identification. He sends them to a place where a Catholic religious -- religious man -- I'm not sure what they call that, it's -- it's an order of the Catholic religion. And then they had a period of time where the man -- the [indecipherable] had no contact with the outside. He sends my sister and me over there to ask for the false identification. We have about four pictures,

I didn't have any of my mom at the time. We go there, and the abbey in Chanione d'Aussac, d'Aussac, d'A-u-s-s-a-c. He sees us, he opens the door, he says, for that purpose I am not going to go according [indecipherable] religion. This is important, he has to help us. Then he sends us to a mail drop, a Catholic library, to pick up the documents over there. The document -- the Catholic library was --

Q: So he didn't know you were Jewish?

A: Oh yes.

Q: He did?

A: Oh yes, we -- we told him.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Because Ernst sent us to him.

Q: Right, okay.

A: I guess he must have called -- talk -- telephoned [indecipherable] first, because otherwise he would never [indecipherable]

Q: Otherwise he wouldn't take you, yeah.

A: Right. And then they sent us to librarie Catholic, which is a mail drop for the social security office service of the resistance. I didn't know that at the time. And di -- the people working already against the Vichy government and against the Germans.

Q: Right.

A: So we go back and pick up the visa -- the cards over there, on the 11th I believe, was the same day or the next day -- next day, probably. And then we take a train, and go to Nende, which is in the Lozere mountains. [indecipherable] my father had met a gentleman from St-Germain-de-Calbert. And we had to go through Nende to go there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So, he says, well let's go to St-Germain-de-Calbert. We took a train to Nende, and we stayed in the refugee camp overnight, they have them all over the place, and at five o'clock in the morning, we walk out of camp, and go to the mills -- to the city, and there is a German soldier with fixed bayonet, standing guard in front of a hotel, where the German officers was s-staying. We got scared, I mean, you know.

Q: And there were all of you, it's the five you walking.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Is he going to ask for our papers or what, you know?

Q: Right.

A: Well, he was just watching the hotel, it was al -- his job, so we walk by, we go to the railroad station, and from the railroad station we go to the Col de Jalcreste, J-a-l-c-r-e-s-t-e. Acor -- it was actually a -- a valley, like a valley.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And there was a chauffeur, a fellow who did transportation for people, like a taxi, but actually is a [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Right. And he takes us to St-Germain-de-Calbert. We meet the friend of my father, and he finds a place for us to stay, we rent th-the place.

Q: And the German, you're bypassing the German altogether.

A: Yes, they are not in [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: And they are just on main highway, in Nende, and [indecipherable]. And well, you know, next day, gendarmes come to the door.

Q: The next day?

A: Are be -- juif? Are you Jewish? Said no. He said, Catholic? Are you Catholic? I said yes. [indecipherable], you know, but [indecipherable] as long as they had orders to record the entrance of any non-resident and see if they are Jewish. It was the 1936 laws there, misapplied. I mean, they -- they went on further than -- than [indecipherable] for anybody. So I didn't walk away --

Q: Did your papers say that you were Jewish?

A: No, no.

Q: I mean not Jewish, Catholic?

A: No.

Q: It didn't say anything?

A: No. The papers we had, and I think I sent you copies with those cards. No, there's just a -- the birthdate, birthplace, and --

Q: And your name then was --

A: Hebergé.

Q: Hebergé.

A: Hebergé. Iberger, depending on the -- who asks, you know.

Q: Right, right.

A: My parents say Iberger, we say Hebergé. But --

Q: Okay, so now you're Catholic.

A: Yes. And we, you know [indecipherable] in the village. We stay -- first of all we stayed in the hotel, Hotel Martin, that's in Poland, because that hotel had an annex, we stayed in the annex. The hotel itself was already occupied. And he was hiding, we didn't know at the time, 24 Jewish people, plus about six or seven other ones who were foreigners, Armenians and other nationalities. They were not hiding from the Germans at the time, but were just hiding from the French [indecipherable] I guess.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: But -- so anyway, then we [indecipherable] the sequence. I -- I guess we get to meet people over there. There was a shoemaker who had the sewing machine -- no, no, the -- the -- we were looking for food, to buy food. Well, we had some money and [indecipherable] and some silverware and a -- a tablecloth. And they told me that I could probably get food on those items if I go to a farm on the other side of the hill, on the mountain. Château de Cremat, C-r-e-m-a-t. I go over there and the lady is very nice, and I says, "I came to get some food from you. I do not have much money, but I can give you some merchandise in trade." And she said, "Let's see." And I showed her our silverware. Yes, she's interested. I show her the tablecloth, she's interested. You know, before, they were poor, the farms, had not much money to buy those things, and now they have food when people need it, they can get more money, so now they have money to buy things --

Q: Right.

A: -- or for trade. It was great. So I brought home some paté de fois gras. They had pigs, they slaughtered since war, a-and geese, so it was great. And my parents were really surprised that I [indecipherable]

Q: I would imagine.

A: -- so well. I don't know how -- how I became the -- the shopper for my fa -- family.

Q: Right, right. And besides paté, what did you bring?

A: Let's see, paté, potatoes and vegetables, and --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- like th-that.

Q: So the paté was a -- a big luxury.

A: Was the main thing, yes. But -- it certainly was.

Q: So when you're staying in the annex of the hotel, did you have --

A: Yes, it was just two buildings down the road, with a different entrance and th -- and there's a passage under -- underneath it, to get into it like a -- a bridge.

Q: So, do you have a washroom, a shower --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: A shower? You have toilet?

A: Yes. They had about 20 some rooms, and the main hotel was all occupied, and so we had the overfill.

Q: So you --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: And where were these other Jews that you didn't know about, in the annex also --

A: In -- in -- in --

Q: -- in the main hotel?

A: -- in -- in the main hotel, yes. They are the ones that occupied most of the rooms

[indecipherable]

Q: I see.

A: So we -- we met all the people, because the one that we knew had already met most of them, but we never admitted who we were. It was obvious we knew each other --

Q: Right.

A: -- we knew who we were --

Q: Right.

A: -- and we had common sense not to mention anything or discuss anything. So I -- I --

Q: So it's clearly very dangerous at this point, because the Germans can go anywhere, they ha -- they're occupying --

A: We thought too busy occupy --

Q: Other places?

A: -- other places, yes, the -- the coast -- coastline because the allies had landed in southern France --

Q: Right.

A: -- the coastline. So Montpellier, Nieme, those places were more vulnerable, you know, for -- for people.

Q: Right.

A: Because they ordered certain areas evacuated, no civilians could live there, too. So it was -- but we were quite a ways from the coast. This was our luck.

Q: So do you sort of settle down and you now have to get work in order to be able to eat, yes?

A: Yes. I-I am not sure exactly when it started, but I found a job with my father to cut down trees, which were used for the coal mines as support, you know, they have a --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- so the miners can work in -- under there.

Q: So these are big logs that you're working with, yes.

A: Pi -- big pine trees. And we had to cut down 12, our quota. 12 pine trees a two -- for two of us.

Q: 12 a day for each of you?

A: No, two of them, for both of us. Remove the branches, remove the bark.

Q: Wow.

A: We had a big, long stick with a -- a knife, to remove the bark. And, you know, it was a -- a -- trying to saw the tree down with -- we use an ax to make a cut in the tree, a vee shaped ax.

Q: Right.

A: And then take the hacksaw -- the -- the -- a big, two man saw, cut the other side and make sure the tree falls o-on the right s -- o-on the side not [indecipherable]

Q: So you ha -- you have to do it on the right side, otherwise you're in big trouble, right?

A: Right. And that was quite heavy work.

Q: Now, where was your brother? You were --

A: He was working in the farm where I had the -- made the exchange for the food.

Q: I see. So you and your father got the heavy work.

A: We were lucky, because there we got paid. On the other side he -- he just got so-some food, you know.

Q: He got some food, but he didn't get paid?

A: He got the food for the work for himself and very little to -- to take home.

Q: And where is your sister and your mother at this point?

A: My sister went to work in a -- in the Catholic lady who had the garden. Now, this could have been a problem. What happened, she was very religious and she asked my sister for a baptism

paper. My sister says, well, we are in Alsace, we don't have anything here [indecipherable].

There is no way for us to get it now.

Q: Right.

A: That was [indecipherable] likely.

Q: And that was okay?

A: Boy, but she was really strict on -- on -- on that, because she would have a -- a Catholic person working there.

Q: Oh.

A: The -- my mom was home most of the time. And we used to go someplace out, my father and I, to harvest mushrooms after rain.

Q: Really?

A: We didn't know much about the mushrooms, but we [indecipherable] people, and the tourists take only one type, it's an orange type. And if you go take this only, you won't go wrong. [indecipherable] get poisoned. So we did that.

Q: And did you do that in order to sell these mushrooms?

A: No, no, no.

Q: To -- just to eat them?

A: I had -- I had food, you know, on the table.

Q: And your mother wa -- your mother was doing the cooking, I gather.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: And you know what? She was terrific. She always knew we did not have enough food, she says, here is little more, here, this. I said, "But it's your food, don't." She said, "No, I'm not hungry." You know how mothers are. You will say no?

Q: So she -- she didn't eat as much as she could have, yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you see her lose weight?

A: We all lost weight [indecipherable]

Q: You di -- you all lost weight.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: But you know, it was terrible, because we didn't want to take her food.

Q: Right.

A: We were hungry and we knew that she was hungry too, so we tried to refuse as much as possible.

Q: Right.

A: But she always said, no, take this one, spoonful of this one.

Q: Hm. Fred, tell me something. What were you hearing about what was happening outside of France? Were you hearing about killing centers, were you hearing about shooting -- you

A: No -- oh. That was ki -- we didn't know until after the war.

Q: -- you didn't -- you didn't know until after. Nothing

A: No, no.

Q: You just knew that the Germans were after the Jews, but you didn't know why, what they were doing?

A: No, [indecipherable] not, no. We knew only they were arresting them, they were putting them in camps, resettling them in the towns, the whatnot.

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable] be able to do anything.

Q: So no rumors came to you, nothing?

A: No, nothing at all. Not even I guess in the rest of France. We were [indecipherable] we never heard about it.

Q: Right.

A: And the rest of France didn't hear about it, either. Because they said that we are going to repay them for country -- for [indecipherable] land.

Q: Right.

A: You know, for food [indecipherable] different jobs and whatnot.

Q: And that's all. So I suppose in some way it was fortunate that you didn't know anything.

A: Right.

Q: Because your spirits would not -- so de -- as depressed as it might have been.

A: Oh no, right. I mean, we -- we knew we could -- we had to avoid them because of what they did to -- to my uncles, they killed them, yeah. Although we did not know about the second one, he -- we -- we -- he wasn't at camp when we left.

Q: Right.

A: So we didn't know about what happened to him. But there was shoemaker in town, and he had the sewing machine, so it broke down, so my father offered to fix it for him. Then he said, you know, I got some blankets, I would like to make some pants on it. And the guy [indecipherable] sew pants -- pants. And then they traded it for food for the farmer.

Q: So how did your father have all these skills? All of a sudden he's making pants? He'd never done that be --

A: It doesn't have to be fancy, it was for a farmer who was working the fields.

Q: Well still, but I have to tell you that if you gave me a sewing machine and material, I don't think I could sew a pair of pants. Could you?

A: No.

Q: Do you know what I mean?

A: No.

Q: So your father --

A: Yeah, he did.

Q: He did.

A: He did. And he traded it for food. And I told you about the tobacco exchange.

Q: Yeah.

A: That lady was so grateful because soap was also rationed, it was hard to get.

Q: Right.

A: And now she could wash the floors and -- and all that. She was so happy.

Q: Were you able to make soap for people?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Well, I for -- just for her I did.

Q: Just for this --

A: Because you need other stuff, you need [indecipherable] you needed sodium, you needed sodium, potassium, all kinds of minerals, you need also an indicator of the -- if it's a si -- acidic or -- or [indecipherable] whatever, you know, it's -- the paper.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I forgot what it's called now.

Q: And so who -- to -- for whom were you making this soap?

A: Just for that one lady.

Q: And who was that?

A: She owned the tobacco shop.

Q: Ah, she owned the toba -- and she would exchange it for tobacco, and then you would go and exchange the tobacco --

A: For food.

Q: For food.

A: Because tobacco was rationed too.

Q: Right.

A: But she somehow had connections where she had more than just rations. And she had plenty in reserve too, because they were all appo -- supposedly si -- report, it said the instruction on hand. I'm sure she had enough, so had more than she needed.

Q: Did other people find out that you were making soap?

A: She mentioned something about I'm making soap, and she [indecipherable] that was an exchange of tobacco.

Q: So you're --

A: I didn't want the police to find out either.

Q: Right.

A: The gendarmes.

Q: But -- but your class was very helpful then?

A: Absolutely. It saved our necks. I mean, we had food for whatever time that we had food, you know.

Q: Right. So how hungry were you, Fred?

A: Very, very, very much.

Q: You were very hungry.

A: Very much. Absolutely. The rations that you get officially, were very small.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: We had maybe a half a pound of bread a day, I think it was half pound or a quarter of a pound of bread a day. And you had a half of pound of sugar for the whole month.

Q: Per person?

A: Per person. It wasn't -- I don't think it was even a half a pound. Or maybe a quarter of a pound. It was a very little, it -- it was o -- small cubes [indecipherable]. Oil was very rare. You were entitled to it but you wouldn't get it, because it was not available. Milk was only for children and babies, you know. Coffee was ersatz coffee, not very tasty.

Q: Right.

A: Re -- well, now the main thing we did especially, we went to farms and bought vegetables, carrots, rutabaga.

Q: Rutabaga.

A: [indecipherable] I never see one, too soon. [indecipherable] like Jerusalem artichokes.

Q: Artichokes?

A: But th-they call them something else over there. And it was a different sh -- shape, it was a -- this is -- looks almost like over here, but it was not the same thing. But the rutabaga -- the rutabaga, that was terrible.

Q: So when you say they were -- they were rationing, that means that everybody in the area was presumably going to get the same food, am I right?

A: Yes, except those who grew their own, farmers.

Q: Had more.

A: Had more.

Q: Right.

A: Those -- the trade they did with the -- the same thing, trading, you know. I had the --

Q: Right.

A: -- the cousins -- their cousins and [indecipherable] and what that they -- they [indecipherable] for them, you know.

Q: So if you were good at trading, you had more.

A: If you had more to trade with.

Q: If -- and if you had more to trade with, yes.

A: Yes.

Q: But most people -- would you say that most people were really suffering during this period?

A: Not those people there, no. The refugees, yes. The local people had the chicken, they had the eggs.

Q: So they had enough.

A: They have surely enough, they had a small garden --

Q: So it was the refugees.

A: Yeah, and then next thing is -- is that you had big black market going on too. So the people came from the towns, bought things at high prices, raised the prices for us too.

Q: Right.

A: And we couldn't afford it.

Q: Right.

A: Now there's one interesting thing happened, it was one of the underground movements, that was later on a different group was looking for food. They went to see this farmer and he sold them food at exorbitant prices. Then the commanding officer [indecipherable] took out his pistol, and says okay, let's have the money back. He said, we paid you, you charge exorbitant prices. Then he took a box of matches, stuck the match -- the money into the fire. He says, that's for you, you get nothing. But you got paid, right?

Q: It's very clever.

A: There was a lesson.

Q: Yeah.

A: He didn't overcharge any more, and he got [indecipherable] his business too. They learned.

Q: I think we have to change the tape.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: Fred, you were mentioning to me about checks that you were receiving that you still don't know --

A: Who sent them, right.

Q: Who sent them.

A: We were in the small village of St-Germain-de-Calbert, and from time to time, for a period of time they came every month, and then they stopped. The only people I remember in France that could have possibly send me one is a cousin of my parents who had been in service, got married, and lived, I believe, in Lyon. But I was never able to identify this because the sending station was different. The -- the -- the place from where they s-send the checks. And the other [indecipherable] was, if possible, I understood that maybe some Jewish organization may have been aware of our existence, and they did not put their name on it. I understand they had some resources in Switzerland, the -- I forgot what the name of the organization was -- and they could have possibly done that for a period of time, but I do not know.

Q: But you don't know.

A: No. It was welcome, because we were --

Q: I bet it was.

A: -- exhausted [indecipherable]

Q: How did it come to you? It wouldn't come to your place, would it? How did you --

A: Well, they picked them up -- I guess we had to pick them up at the post office --

Q: At the post office.

A: -- which was about half a block away.

Q: I see. Huh.

A: Speaking about post office --

Q: Yes?

A: Did I tell you that they censored some letters that were sent out from St-Germain-de-Calbert?

I found out afterwards. If those letters were sent to a German authority, or a French police authority, they just tore them up.

Q: They tore them up?

A: They [indecipherable] tore up.

Q: And this was because the resistance was working in various places in that small town, but you didn't -- you didn't know this at the time.

A: No, I found out afterwards through the --

Q: Right.

A: -- some of -- books that I read.

Q: There's an incident where police come, or SS come, I don't know who it is, comes to your house and they look through the house?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And -- but they miss what would have been very revealing, am I right?

A: Right. And this was an incident that occurred on April seventh, 1942, in the village -- or north of the village of san -- St-Etienne Vallee Française. And what happened is, this one [indecipherable] was a hard to get along fellow, apparently, who wouldn't take orders from nobody, and he had a car parked in the street. And some of the local people saw that there was a submachine gun on the back seat. So they told him to take it away, and he refused, just for spite. And what happened, shortly thereafter, a car with four -- I -- I was told -- Gestapo or Wehrmacht, [indecipherable] taken by. I'm not sure which it is. Anyway, they saw that

submachine gun on the back seat, and wanted to find out whose it was. Then this [indecipherable] from the resistance came out, and with this man, and they killed three of them on the spot. I hear from other sources they were killed two on the spot, one tried to escape, and was shot under a bridge where he had hidden, and the fourth one was captured and they hanged him on the gate of a chateau in the same division. A few days later a -- two companies of the Ost Leon, these are the Russians [indecipherable] the Polish troops in the German army, the legion of the east, came by from Marda, and came through our village. And [indecipherable] police came Feldgendarmie, with big metal [indecipherable]. And they knocked on the door at about one, two o'clock in the morning with the rifle butts. I opened up the door and they come in, and the leaders says terrorishn. Are there any terrorists here? My father says, "Il n'ya pas terrorists." Then they say, raffien. We understand every single word they're saying because they're speaking German and we understand it. My father ignores it, "Qu'est ce que c'est raffien?" So the guy does this with his rifle. My father says, "No, Il na pas." Then they searched the house. On top of closets, all the doors, the kitchen, every room. And there's a big overseas trunk in one of the rooms, bedroom. They open it up -- one of the -- one of the guys open up. They went different directions, every one had a different assignment. He opens it up, and there's a drawer of like, shirts, under which we had our talleissim and Tefillin. Luckily for us, he never lifted that tray. Had he lifted it, we would have been dead. So he says, "Nicht viel." Not much. He closes the cover and goes on looking for more weapons or other things, i-in the whole house. Another one of them --

Q: May I ask you something? Isn't it odd that he didn't lift up -- everybody knows that there's a -
- a tray.

A: [indecipherable] yeah.

Q: Right? You just lift it up.

A: He didn't lift it up.

Q: Do you think he did that on purpose? You don't know.

A: Maybe he was tired already from, you know --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- because they had probably a long day [indecipherable] those -- reason, because they had to travel quite a bit --

Q: Right.

A: -- to come to the house, too.

Q: Right.

A: So this very strange, I mean, it saved our lives.

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: And a-another one had came into the kitchen, and the radio was there on the table, so he says, "Radio?" I says, "Ce marche pas." It doesn't work. Well, he doesn't listen, he turns it on. Maybe he didn't understand French anyway. So he turns it on and there's a crackling noise because it wasn't functioning. He shuts it down. Then he sees two dictionaries on the table, one French-German, and one French-English. So he points to the English one, he says, "This good, das yeah." So I nod my head. He walks away. Meantime I have a dog barking in the backyard, and I had to quiet him down because he was waking up the neighborhood, too. Then --

Q: Was that your dog?

A: What's that?

Q: Did you have a dog?

A: Yeah, a small one.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, uh-huh. That dog was important because he helped us bring a lady from Martin a few miles away, she was expecting. And we had to take her to the house to bring her to -- to the Protestant minister who took care of her to go to the hospital, a Jewish woman.

Q: And how did the dog help?

A: When the dogs came -- when we pass in the night [indecipherable] there, dogs are barking all over the place, and he never answered back, as if he knew, you know. Otherwise he would have give us -- gived us away.

Q: Right. So when did you get the dog?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: When did you get the dog?

A: Oh, I don't recall the exact time, but he was with us for o-over a year or so.

Q: He was?

A: Oh yes. Now, the other German checked under the stairway, and there was a spot there where they stored normally vegetables, you know, potatoes or whatnot. And he looks in there with his flashlight, doesn't see anything. Behind a sheerai -- a wax cloth, we had hidden our false identity -- ar -- our true identity cards. And he does not see nothing, it matches the color of the rest of the [indecipherable] and he walks out. So two chance --

Q: That's pretty scary.

A: Oh yes. And then they walk out, we were very calm, and then we collapse. [indecipherable]

Q: Once they walked out you collapsed?

A: Oh God, yes. That was hel -- horrible. We were very close to getting killed there. Turned out [indecipherable]

Q: Do you think they would have just killed you on the spot?

A: Probably not, but they would bring us to the Gestapo.

Q: Yeah.

A: The same thing.

Q: And that would have been -- yeah.

A: Because they would have probably tortured you to try to find out what else you know, who else you know, yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you think of, after this incident, putting all of these things that could reveal who you are someplace else? Bury them or something?

A: Well, what happened is, in the building there was a workshop with a dirt floor. And I had buried those papers in there months before. But we were on the side of a hill, and when it rained, the water accumulated, the sand was washed out, and the papers were shown.

Q: I see.

A: That's why I took them from there and hid them.

Q: Oh, I see. So did you leave them in the house after this, still?

A: I don't recall for sure, but we had not much of a choice [indecipherable] you know. But we had tried to escape from there, the back wall had the stones -- a stone wall actually, with spaces in between, and we tried to put in cap -- a couple hooks so we could walk out there. Luckily we didn't try, because there were soldiers out there, too. And if we had, we'd be dead.

Q: So a -- I see, it wouldn't have worked. Did you know that there was a lot -- there were a lot of people in the resistance in this area, or --

A: Nobody talked very much.

Q: Nobody talked that much.

A: The less we knew, the better off we were.

Q: Right.

A: As a matter of fact, my brother almost got shot. You know, the Germans were taking people from a certain age [indecipherable] 20 - 21 and 22 for forced labor to Germany.

Q: Right.

A: And it -- you have young people came up from the vi -- cities to hide up there. I found out after my brother was killed in combat that there was a group of the resistance that was lying in ambush for him one time, they wanted to kill him. Why? He came to work from the one farm where he worked, and they thought that the only reason he was in the open and not being bothered by the police or so is because he must have been collaborating with the Germans. But the reason was that we were passing for Alsatians, and there was an agreement between France and -- and als -- and the Germans, Alsatians who were -- some of them were Ger-Germans, some of them were French, should not be forced to work f -- in Germany. So this one guy from o -- well, this is [indecipherable] later on told me that we stopped them from killing your brother.

Q: So tell me something, how does it happen that you and Max go into the resistance? What -- what circumstances s-so that you could get in there in the first place?

A: Well, the resistance rep -- s-single people that were hiding in different places, farms [indecipherable], after awhile they got organized, and then they got uniforms. They broke into a uniform factory in Saint Jean Lugar, with the complicity of the owner. He says they broke in and they took so many uniforms. Once they got a uniform, they figure it's about time we should join them guys, too. This is not -- think of us as a -- a -- either against them, or not going to do anything for -- for France. So --

Q: But how did you know that that was the resistance?

A: How did I know the resistance?

Q: Yeah, how did you know?

A: Because they stayed in a building just south of the village, maybe a few hundred feet south from there, which was supposed to be a camp for Chantiers de jeunesse. This was Marshall Pittens idea of taking young people and organizing them for future Frenchmen, you know, o-of -- of his kibo and thing. [indecipherable] too. So we said that -- and they came up and they had roadblocks on the main highway, so we decided let's -- let's join them.

Q: Now, did you talk -- talk about this with your parents?

A: No, no.

Q: You just did it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you living with your parents at the time?

A: Yes, oh yes, yes.

Q: And did they know that you were involved, or didn't they know?

A: No, well they -- they found out, because as soon as we applied there, the guys -- we were g -- on guard duty, y-you know, so many hours of the day --

Q: Right.

A: -- hours of the night. And then we got uniforms too, like they were wearing.

Q: So then they found out.

A: It's a khaki unif -- jacket and --

Q: Right.

A: -- brown pants, yeah.

Q: And were they unhappy that you were doing this, or what?

A: Oh, they were very happy.

Q: They were happy?

A: Because of just -- they -- who, my parents, or -- or --

Q: Your -- your parents.

A: Oh, my parents. They had the doubts about that.

Q: They had doubts.

A: But you know, we had made a decision. We could not be in [indecipherable] and people not knowing if they are on one side or the other side, and that could have been very costly for us sometimes.

Q: So w -- did this mean that your parents were not safe? Or were they safer because you were in the resistance? Or didn't it matter?

A: Well, the people in the village treat us like somebody apart to some extent, you know --

Q: So that you were strangers --

A: -- the parents, they were like strangers to -- to some extent.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Until we joined them, the resistance, everything is fine.

Q: So they knew which side you were on, and then --

A: Yes, exactly.

Q: I see.

A: There was one villager there who had the son in the French milice, which was the most cruel terrorists of the French government that took the resistance people and killed them and tortured them and do everything to them. And the neighbors warned by an anonymous letter, hand carried

to them at night -- not to them, to the house, that they better shape up and get their son out of the area. So you know, we do take [indecipherable] the situation, too. It -- not knowing who we were, what we were doing, did not help in that case.

Q: But let me ask you something. How do you actually -- why did they even trust you? You just went up to them and say we want to join you? I mean, what did -- wh-what did you actually do to join?

A: Well, some of these were actually local inhabitants.

Q: Yes.

A: Some were from the other cities.

Q: Right.

A: So the local ones were, like I said, the one guy told these -- the other commander not to shoot my son, so, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- they realized he --

Q: They -- they knew.

A: -- they did not know, but they were not out to do something unfortunate that could not be corrected. So, I mean when we said we -- okay, we'd like to join you and help you, stay on duty, and guard duty, whatnot, they [indecipherable]

Q: That was okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they know you were Jewish? No.

A: No.

Q: Did they ask?

A: That's just -- that -- no, that's the whole point. Because we were not Jewish officially to them, then who are we? We are Alsations. What are you doing in the mountains? How come you don't [indecipherable] as us, you know?

Q: Right.

A: There was a lot of questions that could be asked.

Q: Right.

A: And I guess they accepted what we [indecipherable]

Q: So, when you weren't doing guard duty at night or doing something at night, did you go back home to your parents?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your father at this point is doing what? He's -- he's working?

A: He was not working at that time.

Q: He wasn't?

A: No. And we had the case where I mentioned to you about the shepherd who had 300 sheep.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And rather than the ge -- the Germans take it all, he took them to the -- our resistance group, and we ate sheep for quite a long time. Mutton. But he -- also -- they also decided to give the parents of the resistance there food, for the sheep.

Q: I see.

A: So that helped too, you know, so th --

Q: And who slaughtered the sheep, the resistance and gave them food -- I mean ho -- how did it work?

A: Well, they had the sheep in some farm, and [indecipherable] he had 300 sheep --

Q: Right.

A: But anyway, every so often they took a sheep on, and took it -- you know, killed it, and -- and -- and divide it --

Q: The food out.

A: -- [indecipherable] among parents of the -- the guys in the resistance.

Q: Right. So, did your parents then have more food than they had before?

A: Well they had no -- no -- no meat.

Q: But they ha -- now they had meat?

A: Yeah, right.

Q: And is your sister working?

A: No.

Q: No. So --

A: Ah -- we -- she works working for that one lady that wanted to have the certificate of baptism, yeah.

Q: Right, right.

A: She was still there.

Q: But was she getting some money, or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: She was just getting some food while she was there.

A: I don't even if that -- it's just the idea of, you know, keeping busy, and then people know what's going on.

Q: Really?

A: Really.

Q: So your -- your parents and your sister are not in a great position at this point?

A: No, no.

Q: So did you and Max think that being in the resistance would be helpful, then? I mean, is that one of the reasons why --

A: No, we -- the Germans, more than the people that were in the resistance in a -- in St-Germain-de-Calbert, they had nothing to lose. They could disappear and even if they caught, well, they would ship them to Germany to do hard work, labor, you know. Us they would kill, so we had --

Q: So you felt you had nothing to lose by doing it?

A: Exactly right.

Q: Right.

A: And -- and we also -- to take vengeance for the killing of our relatives. I mean, this very [indecipherable] knew of.

Q: Right. Did you feel in the resistance group that you were French or you were Jewish? Was there --

A: French. French.

Q: French.

A: Because I had to play the game for all of them.

Q: And you -- and you really felt that?

A: Why --

Q: Or was this your -- your mask?

A: No, because I still knew why we were there under false names, that we were going to get killed as [indecipherable] so certainly the fact that I consider myself Jewish was definitely present. [indecipherable]

Q: Right. That was -- that was present, yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: So were you immediately when you got into the resistance, were you trained right away, or did that take awhile?

A: No, because we had no weapons at that time.

Q: And this is -- is this '42 or '43? This '43?

A: '43 -- '44 almost. Because the resistance include everybody who was hiding from the Germans.

Q: Right.

A: Whether they were active or not, it included those who were put in the reserve to get organized eventually, to be f -- in formations, and be supplied with weapons, too.

Q: Right.

A: And what happens is Germans had issued orders to the city halls to create all weapons from the civilians. They want you to turn in the weapons. And so it either may have mentioned what's the -- they need weapons, so where do you get them? City hall. That's where they were hidden.

Q: Uh-huh. So you went and stole them?

A: Broke in, with the complicity of the mayor --

Q: Right.

A: -- and his assistant.

Q: Right.

A: The knew about it. They just complained about it, but the only problem was that the weapons were of all types, ammunition was all mixture. It was difficult to have the right ammunition for the right rifle.

Q: Right.

A: And if you had wrong bullet, you jammed the rifle.

Q: Right.

A: And it's useless.

Q: So what'd you do? You kept trying to find the right one for the right --

A: Yes, we -- we managed to free up the jammed rifles, too, but this was dangerous too because it can explode in your --

Q: Right. So was there someone there to train -- you had never had a gun in your hand before.

A: I had been at the Collège Bartholdi in Colmar --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And on Thursdays we had training for [indecipherable] preparation. We didn't do very much there, but we learned how to shoot a rifle.

Q: Oh, you did?

A: The first time I shot rifle, they told me, this is the target there --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and they said aim in such and such a way, just below, and I did. And there was a guy next to me who hated me, I don't know for what reason. He says, "Ha, ha, ha, you couldn't touch the

side of a barn.” And the inspect -- the instructor says, “Wait a second.” He goes over. “He hit right in the center.” And was he embarrassed.

Q: Yeah, I bet he was.

A: That was an accident, I mean, I may not have hit the center again, but that time I did.

Q: Did you feel comfortable around weapons?

A: Yes.

Q: You did?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: And was that mainly because you -- y-you knew who the enemy was, or does --

A: Yes, exactly, because it gave me a chance to use them to fight back. Not necessarily to attack them, because we were outnumbered, but at least to defend ourselves.

Q: Right.

A: And that was very important for us.

Q: Right. Huh. So when was it that Aaron Bank came into your life?

A: About end of July, he was parachuted as a part of a Jedburgh team. That’s J-e-d-b-u-r-g-h.

Q: And what does that mean, Jedburgh?

A: It’s a -- Jedburgh is a name of a castle out in Scotland. And they were trained over there in groups of three, usually in the [indecipherable] an officer or non-com, who spoke the language of the country in which they were parachuted into, because it landed in Belgium, Holland, France, Yugoslavia, different places, so they had to have somebody who spoke the local language. And the third one was a radio operator. And the -- the point was for them, first of all, to recognize -- to reconnoiter, to find out where the German troops were, their strength, what were good objectives to destroy in case of an invasion to block roads and whatnot. We were started on the

use of a plastic explosives, which was a new thing at the time. We were trained in using gammon hand grenades, there was a special type of hand grenades that they brought to us. That's just training, we did not get any of the weapons right away, though, because it --

Q: You got no other weapons?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: You -- you got no weapons?

A: Not right away.

Q: Not right away, uh-huh.

A: There was just the training. And th-then the Jedburgh team drove around to get acquainted with the various maquis, where they were located, to look for positions, what was important to destroy to prevent Germans from il -- attacking, or reinforcing troops.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then, after that they had time in August, to train us. So Bank came back and trained us in the use of the plastic explosives and they gave us rifles, German, Italian and Russian rifles. Why these rifles? Those are the ones that -- the Italian rifles were captured in Africa, North Africa, in Libya, I believe. The German rifles were captured over there too, possibly or in Italy, and the Russian rifles were captured in Russia. Since the Germans used -- and other Russian troops, and the German army, I guess they were forced into the service. They had Ru-Russian drivers there, too. So the problem was that the ammunition was all different in each of the rifles.

Q: The ammunition was different?

A: Yeah. You could not use one with -- in the other rifles, and that was a big problem. The reason for giving us those weapons too, was the fact that in case of bad weather, they cannot

parachute or re-supply us, so they have to have a source of constant re-supply, and the best thing [indecipherable] to the Germans and take their weapons --

Q: Right.

A: -- and ammunition.

Q: So were these parachuted in, the weapons?

A: The weapons were -- some were parachuted in, the heavy weapons like the French, the heavy machine guns --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: The Hotchkiss machines gu -- machine guns. Some American Browning machine guns, and basically the -- the heavy stuff was parachuted in there, yes.

Q: And Aaron Bank also parachuted in to this area?

A: Oh yes, oh yes. Well, he parachuted before the equipment, way before.

Q: Right, right. Now why would he parachute into that area? Was it known that there were a lot of maquis in the area?

A: Well, there were many of those teams parachuted in all over France, and even in Germany.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So it was just a matter of seeing -- they were prepared for the landing in North Africa.

Q: Right.

A: This happened in August. The landing happened on August 16th, if I remember correctly, in 1940 -- si -- '44. So, he had to be in place to find out how the Germans were reacting to the landing, if they were sending troops from different areas, and [indecipherable], especially they had two SS Panzer divisions, plank regiments in the area. One was the ninth German Panzer

division, the other one was the 11th Hohenstauffen Panzer division. And they wanted to make sure that they cannot attack the allied -- allied troops landing in southern France.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So we should be able to block them.

Q: Right.

A: Block them how? Mainly by putting [indecipherable] down and blowing them up. See, it would not block the Germans, but it would slow them down. They have to remove the trees and whatnot.

Q: Right.

A: And it was just a matter of getting in time, while the allies were landing their troops in --

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Okay, we -- we need to change the tape.

A: Okay.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: So, y-you are with Aaron Bank being trained during the spring of 1944, the early summer of 19 --

A: In August. In August, actually.

Q: In August.

A: Yes [indecipherable]

Q: So how long are you in the resistance before you get this training, do you think? Six months, three months?

A: No, no, no, no. He -- when he parachuted --

Q: Right.

A: -- in August, on the 16th he came down. A few days later he trained us, and we went into combat on the 21st.

Q: No, I understand that --

A: Oh.

Q: -- but you joined the resistance before Aaron Bank came into the picture.

A: Yes, yes, i-in June.

Q: In June?

A: Yes, but because we were hidden also, this is all part of the resistance.

Q: Right.

A: Those who were hiding were actually being organized because people in town send them to the mountains to hide in farms and [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: But that was in preparation of regrouping them and arming them afterwards.

Q: I see.

A: So the resistance was actually considered in the [indecipherable] region [indecipherable] as the fifth of -- I guess in the fifth of May, 1943.

Q: So it's a different sort of a concept of resistance, that actually something's happening that in a way you don't know.

A: Right, the fer --

Q: Right, they're -- they're putting you all together to try and get you to --

A: Yes, and yi -- I -- it was never to exceed a certain number of people at any spot.

Q: I see, right.

A: You -- the maximum they want us to be is maybe 30 at one place, in one location. If you had too many people in one area, then the Germans would become interested.

Q: Right.

A: And they would try to have big forces surrounding you.

Q: So how many people were in your group, about 20, or was there more?

A: We were in the -- our group, 20. The first was retrained by bake -- by Banker -- Bank, Colonel Bank.

Q: Yes.

A: And we were then as-assigned a hundred more from a different company that -- from those who were [indecipherable] were joining us, and they never received the tr-training from him, they were thrown in the battle without training, with us. So we were the ones who attacked first, and [indecipherable] to pull back with, and be there to get [indecipherable] for the whole regiment.

Q: Right.

A: I mean for the whole company. And then we divide ourselves to be mixed with the other ones, so we were supporting them and showing them, you know, not to run, a-a-and -- and they had confidence just because we had the training [indecipherable] that way. And we are not as a single unit then together, we were divided in combat. We mixed together.

Q: With -- with these other people.

A: Right.

Q: But you're trained by Colonel Banks for a few days, that's all?

A: That's all. That's all.

Q: And then you were supposed to be organized well enough to go in to battle of some kind?

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: So a few days after you get trained, you're actually in your first battle?

A: Our very first in August, we were in battle. That's when I led the one group there.

Q: Right. You want to explain what happened?

A: Yes, okay. About 16th or 17th of August, oh I -- I [indecipherable] there, we went down from the mountains towards Alès, the city of Alès. We stopped at a place called genearagues, g-e-n-e-a-r-a-g-u-e-s, and we're in the best position to report any activities, Germans and so forth. And this was the Saturday, on Sunday morning the people from th -- from Alès came by, they want to go swimming in the river not too far from there, and they see we are resistance in uniform, and say, you know, a group is coming in behind us, and those people -- there is one young lady, she's 17 years old, her boyfriend is a militia, a traitor that is -- was working for [indecipherable], and those are the people that killed the si -- the resistance people. So I am on guard duty there, and I stop her, ask for her name [indecipherable] and I arrest her right away, and I turned her over to

the gendarmes. They were in Alès [indecipherable] too. They [indecipherable] her -- then questioned her, and then they searched her, and she has a pistol.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, and it was in her chest.

Q: In her -- in her -- in her bra?

A: Mm-hm, a small pistol in her bra. And they kept her overnight because we did not want to have reports back that the resistance over here. They release her the next day. Her boyfriend was captured by a Communist group two -- three days later. He admitted that he belonged to the militia and he was being paid 3000 francs a month, but he claimed to have resigned two, three months ago. And I had to report this to my captain in my report, and I understand that they killed him, but I have no proof of that. I was told that they shot him.

Q: Hm.

A: A-Anyway, then they had -- on the 21st, we were told that the civilians -- civilian population in Alès had risen up against the Germans, and the Germans had killed eight or nine of them in the city streets. Well, they send us [indecipherable] to -- to reinforce. We were about 30 in that position. So now we [indecipherable] our groups. We were going up tr -- on a truck first, on th -- one machine gun, and we were at Alès, the Germans had left, because I guess they may have received orders to retreat and combine with some other units. So my captain -- my lieutenant -- there was a -- there was a re -- assigned different positions to some of the guys. And me he puts on a pors -- on a [indecipherable] road, he says, report to me if there's anything abnormal happening over here, and he goes into reconnaissance. Well, I didn't know where the [indecipherable]. Anyway --

Q: No cell phones, huh?

A: No, no cell phones. So civilians come back. The French flag is all over the city. And they said you -- the Germans are coming back there, and the [indecipherable] Alès about 10 kilometers south of Alès. I said, oh my God, with the French flag all over the place. We can't inform everybody at one time to remove them all at once. We are not strong enough to have a street fight with them, with the Germans that are come in. What's the alternative? So we decided we have to attack them. And I made the decision, there was nobody in charge, and I so -- took the guys, and because I just took that action, they did not question it, and they base -- my father's trait.

Q: I was going to say, you're just like your father, right, but you were no -- you were what, 19?

A: 19, yes, in '40 --

Q: 1944.

A: Yeah, yeah, mm-hm. So then I take th --

Q: And this is your first --

A: Combat.

Q: First combat.

A: Combat.

Q: Right.

A: There were 10 guys over there, and I had to take them with me. They did not question. And then five civilians come over too, to say they want to go with me. I says fine. We had stationed -- we had been stationed in a school that the Germans had abandoned, but they had left a whole bunch of hand grenades and other equipment there. So I gave the five civilians a hand grenade each, a potato masher, it's called. And I took my men in the car -- no, in the truck. There were some Communists that decided to join us too. I said, okay, come along. So they pile in too, we

go to [indecipherable] Alès, to find that on the [indecipherable] there, the one, the pyramid, did you ever hear it?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I didn't see a pyramid on the -- on your pictures today.

Q: No, but that came after the war.

A: No, no, I mean, I didn't see it today, you have -- you don't have it with you?

Q: No.

A: Oh, I [indecipherable] make sure, okay. Anyway, this is where they have the machine gun that was nine by two, the Communists, that their leader had left to go on a reconnaissance. So I asked them, what are you -- and he said, oh, our leader is coming back soon. Fine. So I divide my men in three groups. I took four or five men with me, and the civilians, the five. I sent five the other way, and the other ones remained with the Communists with the machine gun there. The Germans were having lunch, they got lunch break, in a farm just south of the village. We came out from two sides. And we didn't know how many there were. We were told by civilians that seen them before there were about 150 in the trucks, 20 trucks lined up.

Q: They had 20 trucks?

A: They were lined up -- there was a farm and the access road through the main highway. The other side of the farm was land, so they couldn't even go through there, and I came from that side. So [indecipherable] somebody fires at the Germans, and they are aware that something is going on here, and then the one -- one of my civilians to whom I had given a pistol, had three bullets in the pistol, he aims at a German, closes his eyes and fires. I said, my God, you didn't do any -- y-y-you think you're going to aim at anybody that way? I was furious because he give our position away too soon.

Q: Sure.

A: So the Germans were alert now that there are new -- two groups at least, around here. So they decided they were forced to go south anyway, so they pulled out. As they were on the highway, I have come around and I counted trucks, that's how I knew -- I -- I wouldn't say 20, it may be 19 plus one or minus one. It was about that number. So they go on and we shoot into the trucks. Whether we hit anybody or not we didn't know, because they had the covers on the trucks there. But they go on fine. Then, a short while later -- by the way, the ci -- the Communists were in ci -- in -- in civilian clothes, so they could disappear in case things got too hot, so the Germans wouldn't know them from civilians. The problem was though, if the Germans couldn't tell who shot at them, they would take civilian hostages no matter where, and kill them, innocent people. Anyway, it was [indecipherable] truck came back [indecipherable]. We -- the two groups had joined them over here that point. And the truck stops with the white flag, and the -- one of my men gets up and the -- the Germans shoot him in the leg. Th-The -- the time [indecipherable] timing is [indecipherable]. And we were in the vineyards, it was about that high. We could not raise our heads because we'd be dead. So I decide to crawl in the -- in the vines between the vineyard, and go to a farm, which is on the -- one of the pictures I show you. And I go behind, they have a stairway going up into the attic. I go up there, the door is locked, I take my rifle and try to shoot the door and lock off. The farmer runs up from nowhere, he says, "Attendez, j'ai la clé." Wait, I have the key. I says, fine, open up. And I told him to -- I order him, I didn't ask him -- ask him, I told him, remove one tile edge end of the roof so I can see the road, and use the opening for shooting at the Germans.

Q: Wait a minute, excuse me. Is there something -- there a problem? [inaudible]. All right, so you're --

A: So I'm through to the openings that were [indecipherable] the Germans and my -- one guy had been wounded already.

Q: Right

A: And the three maga -- the three Communists are still walking towards the west lake, and I had to stop shooting because of the bunch of th -- they were in the -- in the way.

Q: Because you could have hit them.

A: Could have killed them.

Q: Right.

A: So I go back down and we are taking my buddy, put in a -- well, we -- a ligature, we took a belt and tied that on. He -- he had been hit in the femoral artery, he was bleeding very badly. Wi --

Q: So you tried to stop the bleeding?

A: I-I'm sorry?

Q: You tried to stop the bleeding.

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Absolutely. So one of the guys says -- had his -- taken his belt off and did that, but we had not even a Band-Aid, no bandages whatsoever. So then the four of us, we picked up a ladder from the farmer, it was laid on, and we took my buddy on it, and we had to carry him very low because the vineyard's very low to start with, and we could not afford to raise any dust by dragging him on the soil.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So that was a -- some mess there. Anyway, we got him to the village again. Meantime Bank had been alerted, and he was there with the Commandant -- well, th-the leader of the whole district. And so I -- I made my report of everything was -- was happening, and the meantime I find out that the Germans has gone back, they fled.

Q: And what happened to the Communists who went up to the --

A: Oh they were -- they were taking prisoners.

Q: They were take --

A: The Germans took them with them. We found them later on tied to trees with the eyes punched out and the ears cut off. They didn't die. Didn't kill them.

Q: They didn't kill them?

A: They just let them suffer, and they died anyway, yes.

Q: Oh. So that was your first experience. Did it make you want to not do it again?

A: Well, [indecipherable] says, anybody who is stupid enough to do what you did should be an officer. So he promoted me and gave me a Croix de Guerre Silver Star.

Q: I see. Were you frightened? At the end, I mean, did it -- did you think, oh my God, what's --

A: Well, I don't know why, I felt that I was responsible for the -- for my guys.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I had enough strength there to see to it --

Q: Right.

A: -- that we --

Q: Now is Max with you also?

A: Yes, he was in -- on one group there, yes. The -- the group that was on the other side.

Q: And what did he think of the fact that you took this over? Was he shocked?

A: He was with --

Q: He was with you.

A: You know you -- there's a French saying, "La valeur n'attend pas les nombres des années."

Valor does not wait for the number of years.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: So you can be young and done --

Q: Or you can be old and done, right.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, would there -- were there other skirmishes, were --

A: Yes, the na -- the next day, we were -- the s -- forgot the name -- the monter des silhols, s-i-l-h-o-l-s, la monter is m-o-n-t-e-r, des, d-e-s, silhols, that's a rise in the road. And we -- I should say, what happened that night, I was put on duty over there, we had moved position, we had walked a few kilometers, one after the o -- behind each other, to get new position, and then I was mid -- charged in middle of the night, on guard duty. At about six o'clock in the morning, my captain comes along -- not so higher -- n-nothing than the captain. And he says I will have an arms inspection. Okay. All of a sudden I realized that my bolt had been removed from my rifle. He had been there during the night and saw me asleep and then he'd removed it. He says, if it happens again, anybody who is falling asleep on guard duty is going to be shot. I got the message. So anyway, in the afternoon, I -- he gives me permission to go to Alès, which is a few kilometers down, for the afternoon. I went to a friend of -- one of the maquisards, who lend me his bicycle, from his father. So I go to Alès, and guess what, they tell me the Germans are fighting over there in the [indecipherable]. So I go back on the bicycle, I had only 100 in my [indecipherable] there and what happened, the tru -- German truck had a trailer with gasoline

behind it. It came from the airport of Nimes. And there were about 13 Germans in the truck, in the trailer, and -- it was a truck, this was a big truck. Three in the front, one on the side with this machine gun, and the rest was inside the truck. So they hit the -- our machine gunner who was on duty at the [indecipherable] over there, and he hit the German who was on the side of the car, and hit him right in the chest, and he was badly hit there. And then he killed the three in the front seat. And by that time I had arrived. They had some that jumped off the truck, Germans, some had escaped. And some were afraid because they did not know which way to move. So then I looked, and there was a [indecipherable] I don't know, it's a ditch --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- and there was a pistol in there. I grabbed the pistol, it's a German pistol, I put my rifle on my shoulder. And then I go on the side of the truck, and all of a sudden two Germans jump out. And I was right behind them, so I said, [speaks German here]. Hands up. They do that immediately, and I [indecipherable] and I bring back to rest of the group. This was so stupid on my part, you have no idea. I did not realize that there was no charger in the pa -- gun, that the gun was empty, and this pistol has a small lever that goes up if there is a bullet in the to - - in -- in the chamber, and the lever goes up and -- and the German says geladen, loaded. And it was down. So if the Germans had faced me, I would have been dead. They would have realized there was no bullet there.

Q: Right.

A: And I would have been gone. You know, how -- how often can you be lucky?

Q: But did -- did you know this?

A: No.

Q: You didn't know that.

A: I didn't know about it, I found out afterwards that --

Q: Afterwards.

A: -- yeah, I found out the thing was empty. I didn't know about the lever.

Q: So it was good you never --

A: The lever.

Q: -- you never asked these guys to turn around.

A: I know, I -- I -- I was -- they turned sideways, and then I told them to line up, and let them talk to each other for awhile to see if they were communicating anything that was important, because I wanted to find out how many had escaped. So this point then told them [indecipherable] you know? They realize I spoke German also, and they -- they stopped talking. Then we took them in to a -- no, there was one more guy that had escaped and was captured, and th -- they had dropped the machine -- the guy that was on the side of that, you know, truck had a machine gun, but somehow or other that pulled off the -- what they were -- the mechanism is to fire. So my captain told me, ask him where the piece is, and tell that you're going to kill him if he doesn't tell you, or how it functions, so forth. So I told him in German, and I tried to be as serious as possible and hey, you know, threatening. And he says, I'm sorry, I -- I was a fireman at the base in ni -- Nîmes, I was not in the infantry. [indecipherable] know that's a lie, because everybody gets trained for weapons. But anyway, we couldn't find the -- the missing piece, and then we took him to Alès with the truck that was damaged, the se -- the windshield was shot out. We took the wounded German with us, we brought them to lycée, a school in Alès that served a - - as a hospital, and I think he couldn't make it though, because he had been really badly shot right in the chest.

Q: Right, right.

A: And the German prisoner, I took him then to the city hall, where they had an officer that was interrogating prisoners. So we passed a truck that had been brought there already, and he asked me to go to find his -- I don't recall that there -- it's -- it's a gamere, it's where you eat, you know, it's like a metal dish or some [indecipherable] that you can fold, and so -- and said what is that, because that were --

Q: Is it a mess kit?

A: -- mess kit, yeah.

Q: Is it a mess kit, yeah.

A: And then that word I didn't understand, it was a -- I'm not [indecipherable] and then he explained that to me, and I -- and I said, okay. Look, I'll let you go up in the truck and find it, but I'm going to shoot you if you have anything else. And he went up -- up -- klamotte, that was the name, k-l-a-m-o-t-t-e, klamotte. I had to translate -- I have to spell German, too.

Q: Right, right.

A: Anyway, he come back out and I turn him in to the -- interrogating officer, which was a G2 mit -- milit -- military intelligence, and they took over from there. They put all the prisoners in a -- in jail, actually, cause they had no other place for them, except in the jail.

Q: Right.

A: So that was then th -- oh no, before that, we knew some had escaped in the -- in the fields, so I took him along and some of my guys and the friends there came along. We went to a farm, and the farmer offered us anisette. It's a French drink, it's a very strong, good thing, and I feel sorry for the guy. Are you thirsty? Is he thirsty? Yeah. So I says, okay, give him bottle.

[indecipherable] anisette. He was so happy, he was -- it was August, it was very hot, too. And I took him to town.

Q: Right. Now the end of August, something really terrible happened when you were --

A: Yes. There was one more incident in between --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- but I was not involved that one because I was not selected to that team. But that was a party, a very small thing, there was no -- nobody killed. [indecipherable] like that. Germans [indecipherable] escaped then.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And on the 27th of August, early in the morning, it's a Sunday, our captain gives the order to take his troops to a certain crossroad to prevent the Germans from coming back towards Alès. And he's told it's a very strong column. Civilians had been informed by a German medic who had been well [indecipherable] by them [indecipherable] that they should get away from their homes because a big column come by and they are fierce guys, they are Russians -- they were Tatars, Mongols, about 2000 of them, Russians, and a thousand Germans or so. So somehow she got the message through to the resistance that we should be careful, the troop will be coming by. So my captain was ordered to intercept them. We got there, it's too bad -- I had the pistol, the -- the mats we were in, the hills. And he located us on a certain perim-perimeter. There were three hills there, and then the horde was going right between them.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So he was a good tactician. He was a captain in the artillery, in reserve, and he found us excellent positions there. There were two machine guns that were in a rocky area, and they had the -- a domineery -- domineering positions and we -- our group, the commander, the 20, were set up at front, right as the road turns and the Germans came from that direction. So we were hard in position, it was hot as can be. And thirsty, you know, nothing to drink. Anyway, we hear

horses galloping around there, and then we see motorcycles coming, and there's a patrol, German, reconnoitering the area. And one fellow on the machine gun fired too soon. The Germans were not supposed to be attacked until they were in certain position where we had a -- a larger group under fire. And I guess he may have t -- hit some motorcyclists there, and then the Germans spread all over the place. We fought them for about seven hours. It was terrible. I mean, we were in good positions, we were on the hills, they were in the plain, and --

Q: Fred?

A: -- my [indecipherable] wounded -- I'm sorry?

Q: I'm going to stop you now, because I don't -- I don't want to stop you in the middle of the story, so let's stop the tape now.

A: Okay.

Q: We have to change the tape.

A: I see, okay.

Q: So I --

A: No problem.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: Okay. I'm sorry for the interruption.

A: No, no, no, no, it's okay.

Q: So you were in battle for seven hours --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and you were in the stronger position, and nevertheless you still weren't able to stop them.

A: Well, they couldn't advance, actually. [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, they couldn't -- I see.

A: But then they came around on the right flank, they went around the hill, and we found out about that, so we -- the [indecipherable] and we -- a machine gun that was moved over to stop them, too. We found out certain things afterwards. For instance the commander asked -- he was a major, asked civilians if the resistance had been in the village. And he says, yes, they came by for some water, but we didn't know who they are, we did not cooperate with them.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That's fine. And then he asked how many were they. So this young kid apparently told them, oh, probably a th -- a thousand or so, exaggerating. But the major laughed and told him yeah, probably a hundred, 200, which is actually quite -- we were 120 [indecipherable]. Anyway, they took a hostage in the village, a poor guy that had come back from work and had gone to see his parents. And they thought he was a terrorist also, and they tied him up, I fo -- found out later on, on the back of a horse drawn carriage, and dragged him to his death. He was dead. There was one captain that was apparently a -- a -- a [indecipherable] one, and he's the one that got all of this. There was one lieutenant apparently, in the German outfit that when they tried to shoot some -- one of the civilians that were there, called Commandant, Commandant. Our

Commandant was over there, he asked what was going on, so he said, don't shoot the civilians. So you know, this is -- we found out afterwards. Anyway, we had to have more help. So our captain sent a motorcycle -- m-motorcycle -- motorcyclist to the headquarter of Bank and said we need some support. And Bank immediately called up by radio -- there was a carrier -- aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean, and he asked for a-assistance. And they said they will send two planes. And th-the message came back to us, they will be there in half an hour, and it took about an hour, but anyway the two planes came in, machine gunned the Germans. They came in very low, just [indecipherable] circled, and they machine-gunned them. And that slowed the Germans down, and we had time to pull back, because we had to -- we could not hold the positions any more. At that time the Germans -- when the planes left -- we were stupid, too. When the planes were over, we got very excited and we took out hankies and we waved at them, you know? That was a bad move because Germans saw where we were, our positions. As soon as the planes left we got hit by artillery you wouldn't believe. I mean, it came down raining like anything. And apparently my brother was killed there, but I did not know that at the time. The captain ordered us to pull back, and on the way down the lieutenant said, "Fred, we need you down by the car." There -- there was a -- a [indecipherable] parked [indecipherable] and when we got on there he says, "Max is dead." I said, "What? What happened?" We -- we were close by, but there was a hill and he was on one side, at a [indecipherable], and I didn't see it. The bi -- shells -- the shells were falling all over the place. And he says yes -- and he say -- and I -- when I moved to go back, he -- he -- he stopped me. And he put me in the car and drove me home -- to the next village. Next morning we go back, there was one of our men had been left behind. He apparently could not follow us, and he had 29 Russian prisoners with him. And how do you do that? He says, well, I saw them over there, and they were trying to hide, and there I was, so I point to them

[indecipherable] and they surrendered. So we got close to them -- because they wanted to surrender, they didn't want to fight with the Germans any more. So when we got close, then lined up and my lieutenant -- there's a difference between lieutenant and the captain, they always interchange you know, whoever was in charge at the time. So my lieutenant tries to speak to them, he doesn't speak Russian, and I don't speak Russian either. And then this Russian soldier goes, heil Hitler. And I take my rifle [indecipherable] and kill him. So my lieutenant puts my rifle down, and the Russian's leader tells him, no, this is -- salute this way, not this way. He was lucky, he nearly got killed over there. But I understand, I mean, he did not know, you know, there was -- there were -- leaders, many of them didn't know what the heil Hitler meant to a -- to the French. And then we went -- during the night, more had surrendered, and we had captured a total of about 300 [indecipherable] citation from the German, 300 prisoners. And some surrendered in the morning, some had gone to the next village and surrendered over there. So we captured all of them. Couldn't believe it. N-Not many Germans, all Russians, yeah.

Q: Not many Germans in that group?

A: They were -- no. They were pretty fanatics. They wouldn't surrender, those guys.

Q: When was your brother buried? Soon after?

A: Yes. So the same afternoon, they brought -- put him on a truck and they told me to go on, and they had an honor guard in the truck, too. Went back up to the village, in Saint -- St-Etienne valais Française, which is the city before St-Germain-de-Calbert, they had already no-notified the people that we are coming. The honor guard were there. [indecipherable]. Then I got home and my father co-comes down the street there. He said, "Oh, that's my son, shot." We brang him in, my mom and my sister are there. It was terrible.

Q: So you were the one who told them?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: You were the one who told them that -- that Max was dead, or --

A: No, because the -- they had oper -- the news -- they fied -- the telephone operator at the post office.

Q: Really?

A: And they had notified my parents we were coming in. Then we s-stayed at the house the o-overnight, and then the lady whose son had passed away the week before said that we should bury him next to her son. And they put him in a double coffin, because we told them that we are going to move him from there. [indecipherable]

Q: It must have been awful.

A: Yes. And then the eulogy from the pastor -- the protestant minister [indecipherable] translation?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yes. There's about 800 people showing up his funeral.

Q: 800.

A: Almost the whole village. And o-other villages, too, you know. Well, after that I stayed a few days in the village, then I was sent back to my unit, and at -- was transferred to -- my parents went back to Montpellier, because this was all free at that point.

Q: At that point -- it was a kind of liberation at that point?

A: Yes. Y --

Q: In August of '44?

A: Yes. You know, Bank -- not Bank, the Polish captain that had the Polish troops there?

Q: Mm.

A: Well, he was part of the liberators from Montpellier. So things had settled down. The same thing is with the resistance. They had organized, but they were not in office yet, but they have pre -- they had made preparations to take over as soon as possible. So it didn't take much time to get in -- take over the -- the officer there.

Q: So you have very little mourning period for your brother. I mean, you're home for a couple of days and then you have to go back.

A: I had to go back, yes.

Q: Was that be -- was that better for you, that you could go back and work?

A: I wanted to go back.

Q: You wanted to go back?

A: I want the Germans.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: My parents did not object to me going back.

Q: They didn't want you to go back.

A: They did not object.

Q: They didn't object.

A: They knew why I wanted to go back.

Q: Do you think they were afraid that something would happen to you?

A: If they were they wouldn't let me know.

Q: They didn't say

A: And maybe they were also more or less -- they saw down that they had the anxiety, you know, they will not see things. Then, I went back to -- with the major, to whom I wrote about -- the lieutenant had lied, you know, about my combat. And he took me back to our unit. And then

later on I was -- my parents were in Montpellier, I was transferred there, and I was transferred to the headquarter of the division as the interpreter for de Chambrun, who [indéchiffrable] and they gave me my rank, and my -- my rank at that time [indéchiffrable] it was on the 14th of July. And then I was in G2, Deuxième Bureau.

Q: And is that because your brother was killed so that you could not be in the armed resistance any more, or was this because there was liberation at that --

A: Well, the Germans [indéchiffrable] by that time, there was nothing to --

Q: There was nothing to do.

A: [indéchiffrable]. Then they took the other guys that were in my outfit and they put them in the regular army, those who volunteered.

Q: I see.

A: And then they got the French uniforms on the [indéchiffrable] so the one will have all [indéchiffrable] on --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- as well as afterwards. They were organized at the 81st regiment. It was [indéchiffrable]. There is a rule in the French army, if you are sole surviving son, you don't go back in combat, you know.

Q: Right.

A: Because they want the family tree to continue. As long as you are in combat, and one has been killed in combat --

Q: Right.

A: -- then the other one doesn't go back in.

Q: Right.

A: But that was not reason there yet.

Q: Right.

A: They trust me.

Q: So it was different for you. So now you are in the intelligence.

A: G2.

Q: Yes.

A: And the first thing that happens, they had me first day, German manuals.

Q: German manuals?

A: Yes, they had the weapon man -- manuals about the certain glass jars [indecipherable] it was, there was a manual with it, I found out that these were firebombs. You break them and everything, it goes up in fire, you know. And machine guns were different [indecipherable] became busy and then later on my -- the Commandant de Chambrun, was replaced because he wasn't -- found to be untrustworthy because I think somehow or other he had the affiliation with the Communists. And that goes way back, and he was [indecipherable] let him completely from the res -- from the army. In comes General -- Colonel Zeller, at the time, and he puts together all the officers of his headquarter, shakes their hands, looks at me. And next thing I know, he gives me first rate, a -- a book in German. He spoke German perfectly, but he did not want to let on. And what does he give me? A book on a house of ill repute that the Germans have recorded the names of the girl [indecipherable]. He says, what is this about? He just wanted to pull my leg, you know? What a character. But he --

Q: So did you translate that?

A: No --

Q: No.

A: -- I just said that -- that's what it is, you know.

Q: That's what it is, that's the end of that.

A: Yeah. He knew that. But I knew what he was up to, just to try to give me a hard time because I -- a young guy. And then I was very much involved with interrogating prisoners of war. There was one that -- a few of them volunteered information so they could [indecipherable] before.

And one was -- said that he had a gir -- a ger -- a French girlfriend, and she was expecting. And she got in touch with her office, she would like to have [indecipherable] father. And he said that he was an Alsatian, not a German, so they sent me out to investigate. And sure enough, he says, well, my father was working in Alsace-Lorraine at one time, as a waiter. I says to --

Q: A waiter?

A: Waiter in a hotel -- in a restaurant, yeah. I says, and are you Alsatian? H says, no, my father was working there. Okay. I wrote back a [indecipherable] report, and I se -- send them to the -- they moved o -- the mines in the -- on the beaches. I was so furious that they tried to take advantage, I say, you know, these French [indecipherable] but I told them --

Q: Where'd they put him?

A: I tol -- I told them to send him to the mine field.

Q: To the mine fields.

A: Yeah, because the Germans were set to remove the mines on the beaches there.

Q: I see.

A: In southern France, and because he had done that, I figured he should be punished.

Q: Right.

A: I -- I was a bad guy.

Q: You were -- you were a -- you were a mean guy, yeah?

A: Yeah. And then the other one --

Q: The-They did what you asked?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh yes. The -- you know, the -- he speaks German, th -- my officers, I accepted the job [indecipherable] involved in this case. And then there was a case where I mentioned before, this one was employed by [indecipherable] and he was to -- he has impor-important information for [indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I drove past Nimes to the farm, and then he told me that the -- this was much later, though, when Germany had surrendered in -- in May, I believe, '45. And he told me that the 19 German army who had come from that i -- from our area, had broke up some dirt in a school yard, and buried all the radio equipment in there, which is valuable stuff to have, you know. And had dumped all the electrical wiring over the side of a cliff. So I made a report to G2 and they sent it to general -- General [indecipherable] group -- well he is -- he was the [indecipherable] marshal later on, but he sent his G2 officer there, and they checked into it. I haven't heard from him since then.

Q: Right. Were you also in charge of military mapping?

A: Yes.

Q: What was that -- what does that mean?

A: Okay. Each headquarter has a mapping department.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: It's a -- a -- a division has the maps for combat if they have to go so and so [indecipherable] such a place, they have to have maps of all the areas, copies of them at least. They can always make copies later on, they have a special p-process. So they figured hey, you can do that. Well, what happened first, he says, they had a map of the combats in Russia, and they had this lieutenant who kept it up to date. They had the string with a [indecipherable] attached on the bottom, and they had pins there, and they had the string going with pins and show the progress from one day to the next. So he got a different assignment so they put me in there, because they had the BBC every day, they were listening on the radio, and [indecipherable] information as to the progress m-made by the Russians on -- on their front. [indecipherable] in Europe, but also I guess they didn't trust the Russians either at that time. Anyway, so they put me there, and then [indecipherable] that's not enough work for you, so they give me the mapping department. So I - I found out that fish market in Montpellier was selling fish and wrapping them in that excellent paper which is used for maps. So I sent somebody to investigate and he said they have a whole bunch maps in a certain place in Alès. So I found out about that. I took two German POW's, and one guard to go with me, and the chauffeur. And we went over there and took back about 20,000 maps. That was a gold trove. Those maps are expensive to -- to make. And they -- some were overwritten in German, but they were actually French, French maps that they had captured before. So the general was very pleased, and he had me make some shelves for all of those, it was quite a job.

Q: 20,000?

A: 20,000 maps. You know, it was [indecipherable] to the French army.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Because they're the ones [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Maps, you know.

Q: When -- when your parents go back to Montpellier --

A: Yes.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you then go back with them and live with them and --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and still work in the armed -- and -- and are you based in Montpellier now?

A: Yes.

Q: You are.

A: The headquarter division is in Montpellier.

Q: In Montpellier.

A: Then my father meet some people there, and he said, you know, we have a lot of people coming back from the camps. We got to do something for them. And he got in touch with Jewish organizations, I guess in Paris [indecipherable]. And they were assigned the responsibility for helping those people. And they had about eight or 10 different organizations in that federation. My father was director of the one federation, and five locations in the States, in those days were on there [indecipherable] the cities. So they obtained money to give out to the refugees, a -- a monthly sum. My father says, no, that is not what you should do. We don't have to give charity to those people, they need something more substantial so they can get back on their feet, like human beings. Those were profession -- excuse me -- we should try to get them the equipment that they need to go back in their professions. I remember of two specific instances, I guess. One

was the shoemaker who needed shoe -- the equipment to repair shoes, and they were able to see -- he said okay, we should try to give them a lump sum, equivalent to maybe one or three years of a charity. If they have the money later on, they can repay it and if not -- either they can give more to other people, but if not, there you go. And they agreed to that. So he was able to get enough money for the people to buy equipment that they had needed, and that was an excellent idea, because the people had self respect again. They came from the camps and had lost all the --

Q: Now, was this money given to men, or to both men and women?

A: Whoever applied. The women got the money to live on, but the -- there was actually to go back in business, if they had some business of sorts, yes. But otherwise they -- they didn't have to get that much money, but if they were a family, so that helped, you know.

Q: Right. Now, there's this period --

A: Very few -- I am sorry -- very few women come back from that -- from there to Montpellier.

Q: More men came back. Many more men.

A: Not many -- not many. Not many.

Q: Not many men either.

A: Compared to the women there were more men, but not that many, no, no.

Q: But not that many anyway.

A: There were few hundreds probably, at the time. [indecipherable]

Q: The period that you're in the resistance --

A: Yes.

Q: -- there's a kind of silence about what your father is doing. Did -- do you not know what he's doing during that period of time, because the war is over, and then he starts up immediately to --

to -- to do something, do you know what I mean? There's this period of great activity of your father.

A: Oh yes, I know [indecipherable] because they had the different groups. One helped the people from the camps, and then that o-organization to provide them food, and the other organizations to try to find family members, housing and so forth. And then I was called in once by one of the attorneys, yeah, to go with him. One -- or big department store had been taken over by Jewish organization -- the -- the Vichy organization for confiscating Jewish property.

Q: Right.

A: So he says, look, we have to reclaim this property. The people there had been -- had disappeared, we don't know where they are, but we want to get this back into our control in case the people come back. So some local women had bought the property of -- at a auction.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I said fine. He told them they should be at h -- at the office -- at the -- at the store at one o'clock in the afternoon. I took one soldier with me -- I was an officer at that time, and he went with me. We got there and I -- he says, turn over your keys. They turned over the keys, good-bye, and he assumed responsibility for his clients. I hope so.

Q: Mm.

A: You know [indecipherable] can happen.

Q: Right.

A: But that was a -- an activity at least it was justified, take property back first and worry about restitution --

Q: So how soon after the war do you -- or after your liberation, do you discover what had gone on in eastern Europe, and the murder of the Jews? Do you -- was it months, was it later than that?

A: Probably three months, because when they rescued people in the camps --

Q: Yes.

A: -- they came out.

Q: And then they told you.

A: Yeah. Newspapers, or --

Q: So this must have been a huge shock to you.

A: Absolutely, absolutely. We did not know the extent. We knew some camps, because the first one was like maybe Mauthausen in Austria, where some of the first was liberated by the western powers. Russians liberated Auschwitz.

Q: Right.

A: So, you know, a different time frame.

Q: It's -- right. Did that -- was that extremely depressing to you? I mean, what were --

A: Yeah, very shocking, infinitely so, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: I couldn't dream that people could do that to other people.

Q: Now your parents lose close relatives.

A: Oh yes. My father lost that --

Q: So that [indecipherable]

A: -- he had his mother and had at least five -- four -- four brothers and a sister, plus their families. They were all married and children.

Q: So in some ways, as difficult as your life was during this time, you're in a -- a kind of bubble.

A: Yes.

Q: Of not really knowing what else is happening.

A: That's right. And then we found out, when Jackie, the young boy came back out of Flossenber, and the colonel left him with us, then we found a lot more of what happened over there.

Q: So tell that story a little bit, this is a -- a -- somebody --

A: Okay, there was American troops in -- went in Germany, they liberated the camp of Flossenber, F-l-o-s-s-e-n-b-e-r-g, and they find this little boy, he's about 14 - 15 years old, and this American Major Leland, he was American officer, decides that he has no parents any more, well the boy told him he had no more parents, and he wants to adopt him, eventually. So he goes with him -- takes him with him in the unit for awhile. He gets an americ -- an American uniform, you know [indecipherable] troops, and then when he was transferred out to Avignon. There was a big [indecipherable] Aix [indecipherable] Aix - Aix -- Aix-en-Provence. And the troops are there, the major has a brother over there who's also a doctor and they come to visit Montpellier. And somehow or other they come to a Jewish committee of the organizations and they meet my father, and they mention about the little boy -- the boy comes with him too. After awhile the major is supposed to go to the Pacific, and he has met my father, so he asks him what -- will you take care of the boy? He was more welcome because my parents were still missing my brother and now he would fill in --

Q: Right.

A: -- a -- a void. So said, sure. And he asked when Leland send a letter to [indecipherable] you before, asking him to help out. Then a -- a few weeks later he makes -- he asked my father make arrangements with the American consulate in Marseilles. So when the papers are ready, the tickets are ready for shipping and all that, my sister and my father are in Marseilles, see the consul there, and everything is finished and Jackie is with them over there, so the amba -- the

amb -- the consul asked my sister, "Don't you want to go to America, too?" She says, "Yes, but we can't." Why not? "It will take years for us to get papers." He says, "Send me your papers." It was the beginning of -- it's the end of May. I [indecipherable] the beginning of March '46. We send the papers in and within a month time we have papers to come to the United States. Now, this was tricky, because you had to have the ships cards, too. Now it's just a Peter or Paul, which comes first. They would not give us actually the visa. Yes, you ha -- they're coming to you, but you must show us the visa -- the -- the ship cards, and vice versa. Anyway, I found out that the French government had some places available on a boat repatriating French citizens back to United States who had come back to France to fight. So they were -- had priorities to go back to - - see. And that included also people in the resistance. When I found out that, I said okay, let's get the ship cards. We got those, and then we went back and we got the visa, in about one month's time.

Q: Right.

A: It was extraordinary.

Q: We need to change the tape.

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: Fred, did you want to come to the United States?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: Did you want to go to the United States?

A: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Why?

A: We had no family after awhile, except the one cousin of my father in Paris. The family had been wiped out or had come already, so --

Q: So you had some family here.

A: Yes.

Q: But what did you think of the -- excuse me -- what did you think of the United States?

A: It's a great country to live in.

Q: It -- but you didn't know that before.

A: No.

Q: But did you think that?

A: But I -- you know, I-I came in here -- we had all family here. And with a very short time, I got a job in the radio factory, selling radios. This just was th-the area my father --

Q: Extension of your father's work, right.

A: Then I became the instructor at the ORT trade school also.

Q: Really?

A: At night.

Q: In New York?

A: Yes.

Q: You first came to New York, right?

A: Yes. Did -- didn't you -- didn't I send you a letter of recommendation from the prior instructor who says that I am very, very super, and [indecipherable] like that.

Q: I don't remember that.

A: No?

Q: I don't remember that.

A: No.

Q: Where were you living in New York, in Manhattan, or Brooklyn, or --

A: We lived in Washington Heights.

Q: In Washington Heights, in Manhattan.

A: Yes, yes, yes, right. On 175th and --

Q: Right.

A: -- Adams -- Amsterdam Avenue.

Q: I lived near there.

A: Oh, did you?

Q: Yes, I lived for awhile.

A: Not too far from the bridge there.

Q: Right, that's right, it's quite nice.

A: On Amsterdam Avenue, I think, was there a bakery or -- not quite a bakery, a Swiss cake shop where they sold cakes and pastry and whatnot? Or wouldn't you know?

Q: I lived, you know, much later --

A: I was young [indecipherable]

Q: -- so I don't know if this was the same .

A: Cause there was a custom [indecipherable]

Q: So you arrived in 1946 in New York.

A: Well, we arrived in norfo -- no, norfo -- Virginia, yes.

Q: Norfolk, Virginia?

A: No, no, no, it's a -- it's north -- it's a port -- no. It's a Navy port there.

Q: Is it in Virginia?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: In Virginia?

A: Yeah, I'm quite sure it was, because we had two storms in the Atlantic. We had a small boat, a -- a liberty ship, 10,000 ton, which was [indecipherable] more than the sea. Newport -- no. Oh God, Norfolk? No, it was Norfolk, Virginia, I guess.

Q: Norfolk?

A: Uh-huh. And then we -- somebody called the news organization over there to receive us, and then get us to the train station.

Q: Right.

A: So they sent a lady over there, and --

Q: And then you went to New York?

A: Yeah.

Q: Now, does Jack go with you the whole time?

A: No, Jack was already here for -- he go-got here --

Q: He came before you?

A: Oh yes. He came here probably in March, or February.

Q: But this -- this soldier guy never adopted him.

A: No.

Q: So that must have been disappointing to him.

A: I suppose. What happened is, my father raised the roof when he -- when we came over here, he went to the Jewish organizations in -- in New York, and Jackie was being taken care of by somebody over there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And he asked them, do you give him any money -- pocket money, anything to go to the movies or stuff like that? No, no. He raised the roof, he says, this child has the right to live like a child. You have a nerve not to -- you know, to treat him as one. And he -- he was really mad. He helped him out. They put -- put him up with somebody and he was -- got very friendly with the people to the point that he changed his name to their name.

Q: So they had -- did they adopt him?

A: No, no.

Q: They didn't?

A: No. I guess they had children of their own already.

Q: So he never had a family growing up when he was a teenager.

A: No, well except when he -- except when he got married.

Q: Right.

A: Had his own two -- two children, yes.

Q: Right.

A: Three children.

Q: Hm. Now, I understand that you -- you all moved in August of 1948 to Arizona because your father was diagnosed with a heart condition, is that right?

A: Well, he had a heart condition in -- in St-Germain-de-Calbert already.

Q: I see.

A: And he had seen the doctor over there, and they couldn't do too much over there. We came over here, and he was here in the winter of '46, and we came here in '48 -- yeah, '47 was bad also, doctor says get out of New York, go to wa-warm climate. So what he did, we wrote to chambers of commerce in Arizona, New Mexico, California and Colorado. And we asked what is situation for jobs and housing. Now remember that this was a time when many soldiers were being discharged, and they were looking for housing too.

Q: Right.

A: So it was a competition and for jobs. And they were all discouraging except Arizona. The respondent said, there's always an opportunity. Come and see for yourself. And so his relatives in New York said, you go to Arizona? Aren't you afraid of the Indians?

Q: Out of the what?

A: Of the Indians?

Q: Indians.

A: Yeah, Arizona? So my father says look, I crossed the ocean to see the Statue of Liberty, and [indecipherable] Indians. And he came back [indecipherable] he didn't speak the language. He went to a Jewish organization and they send him to a -- [indecipherable] presidents who told him to check [indecipherable] to a real estate agent who will find a place for us. And they -- he made a lot of connections over here. He was the kind of a person to -- you know --

Q: To do that, yeah.

A: -- he gets along, yes.

Q: Did he speak English?

A: Not much, not much. But to some of the people he could speak [indecipherable] too, you know.

Q: Right, right.

A: So you know, no problem. And then after a few weeks he had rented a store and then we came over here too. And the first thing we did is buy some radio equipment -- equipment to repair radios. [indecipherable] check tubes, radio tubes and -- and al-all that. And since I'd been [indecipherable] I knew all about that. So we opened up the --

Q: So you s -- so you started open -- repairing radios?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: You started repairing radios?

A: Yes, uh-huh, yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: And are you all -- you're all living together now? Your sister and your si --

A: Oh no, well we -- she's in Phoenix. And she has two children who live separate each one because they are unmarried.

Q: No, I mean when you moved --

A: Oh.

Q: -- in 1948 --

A: Oh, oh, oh --

Q: -- did you all live together for awhile?

A: -- yes, yes.

Q: And when did you -- your sister got married --

A: We came here probably in August sometimes, I think. In '40 --

Q: '48.

A: '48. And she got married in February of '49.

Q: Uh-huh, so it was pretty soon?

A: Yes. We went to a synagogue over there on services, and she met this young man, and just --

Q: And that was it.

A: Yeah.

Q: So she -- but she remained in Arizona?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes

A: Yes.

Q: So you all remained close.

A: Yes.

Q: And you met someone -- I gather you were almost a confirmed bachelor by your own description, yes?

A: You got that right.

Q: Yes. But in 1962 you met a woman named Marilyn?

A: No.

Q: No, you met her earlier?

A: No, I met her at least about in the 50's -- late 50's.

Q: Oh.

A: What happened is she came with her parents from New York.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And lived in our neighborhood, and we knew a person across the street from there and he said -- he came over to me, "Fred, this young lady came from New York, she doesn't know anybody, can you take her to the Jewish center to introduce her to young people, her age?"

Q: Right, right.

A: Said sure. You know, I -- I wouldn't pay attention to me, after all, she is 16, I'm 26, you know, it's just like, when you're 90 and a hundred it doesn't make a difference --

Q: Right.

A: -- between 16 and 26? So --

Q: [indecipherable] it makes a big difference, right?

A: Okay, so I took her down there, she met people there, and then she met -- she finally married someone that she knew in New York but had come out here. And when he passed away about a few years later, I --

Q: So they weren't married for very long?

A: No. Maybe five, six years, I suppose.

Q: Mm.

A: Uh-huh. Then she came by the store, I had the radio store downtown, and she had a baby carriage and the wheel broke off right in front of the store. So I happened to see it, so I said okay [indecipherable] I take you home. Put the cart --

Q: Right.

A: -- and the baby -- and then after that I met her once at a dance somewhere, she was with her brother and I was with my sister and my brother.

Q: Right.

A: And then her brother says, let's go for a pizza, you know? And from then on, we start talking and I had a day off on Wednesday afternoon from work. I said, hey, how about taking the kids for a wal -- you know, mountain climbing or an -- she said sure. And we got acquainted, and she [indecipherable], I got married.

Q: And you got -- so you got married in 1962.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And unfortunately she died a few years ago, yes?

A: Yes, eight years ago.

Q: Was it eight years ago?

A: Eight? No, six year -- six years ago.

Q: Six years ago.

A: Six years ago, yeah.

Q: And did you stay in the radio business all that time?

A: Yes, and I opened up the first TV store in Phoenix.

Q: The first TV store, really?

A: They had -- did not have much -- at that time they had the pattern, you know the test pattern they used to have?

Q: Yeah, yeah, sure.

A: And that's all the people saw all the time. And they came in, when are they going to show the picture, when are they going to show the picture, you know?

Q: Right.

A: And when they finally came in a few months later, the TV station was built on top of the biggest hotel in Phoenix at that time.

Q: Right.

A: And so that was that. I went almost out of radio business to get the TV business. Then after a few years, this -- no, I -- what happened is when I got married to Marilyn, I married her in July of '62.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But I said, you know, and I had been taking her and the kids out for weeks, for -- I said, you know what? I have to leave more time free. I'm not going to have somebody call me at 10 -- 11 o'clock at night that they missed their football or boxing or whatever it is, and I want to have my weekends also. And that's the only way I can marry someone, we'll have some free time.

Q: Right.

A: And then I worked for Motorola.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And we got married after that.

Q: And what were you doing for Motorola?

A: I was a reliability engineer.

Q: A what? A liability?

A: Reliability. Quality control, yes.

Q: Oh, reliability engineer.

A: Quality control.

Q: I see.

A: And you know, we had the [indecipherable] two and [indecipherable] three rockets?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I was in charge of the controls, the quality of the semiconductors that went into the computers. If that failed, it could be a real problem, you know?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: So and then those [indecipherable] one, two and three were obsolete and then I got -- I lost the area of responsibilities.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Ho-How do you think the war -- I don't even know if this is a question anybody can answer.

Ho-How do you think the war changed your life or affected your life afterwards, or did -- do you not think about it that much?

A: I think about it every time I see a war going on someplace else. Oh, only I forgot to tell you, I lived in a big apartment of 11 rooms, across the street from the general's headquarter in Montpellier.

Q: This in -- this is in Montpellier?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: And there was two sides to it, one had four rooms -- five rooms, the other one six rooms. The lieutenant and his wife had one side, and I was on the other side with my parents. The lieutenant was transferred out, he was a military justice officer, and I had a whole 11 rooms there. One day a colonel from the headquarter says, "Loewy, I want to talk to you. Your apartment, I want it. I'll give you one month to find another apartment." I said, he had collaborated with the Germans and he wants me to give him the apartment? No way. A month goes by, "Loewy, have you found something?" I said no. He said, "I'll find something for you." So he finds something and he says,

“Loewy, I want you to move out.” I said, “I refuse.” “You what?” He’s -- what happened then? Had me called before the commander of the garrison, colonel. And they -- they say -- the two of -- I-I took an attorney with me. I was cautious there. You’re sure [indecipherable] give up the apartment? I said, it’s not a military matter, it’s a civil matter. Had nothing to do with [indecipherable] o-or anything else. You are refusing? Yes, I refuse. And then the other colonel bawls me out. Then I said to him, “Colonel, do you know your army regulations?” Yes, I do. “And you Colonel, you know your army regulations?” Yes I do. “What right do you have to talk to me that way in front of a non-com?” I said, “No, no, you cannot insult somebody in front of a lower rank military.” He turned all colors. And they send him out, and then that didn’t happen again. At two o’clock in the afternoon I’m called to see the general, and the general says, “You got to get out of there. You have to go out, period.” I tell my parents [indecipherable] apartments, they said, “Let’s get out of here, forget about it. Let him have it.” I move out of there. Before I move out, I have a friend of mine in G1, which is military personnel, the French army. And he says, “Fred, what’s going on?” I said, “What do you mean what’s going on?” He said, “They are talking about sending you to Africa, to repatriate Senegalese troops.” I said, “What?” I said -- he says, “We know when the ships go there, we don’t know when they come back.” Oh-oh, I figured that the -- the colonel was behind it. The next day he says -- he calls me up in secret because clearly I wasn’t supposed to know what’s going on there. He says, “Now they are trying to send you to Vietnam -- Indo-China.” Not Vietnam, Indo-China. I says, time for me to get out of the army. So I had signed up for the army for the duration of the war, and why I did this, I put down in ink, in Europe. So the war is over in Europe. So nothing happens, nu -- so I figure they are going to send me out before I have a chance to get out of the army. So I send a letter to the general, “General, I demand my discharge.” Nothing happens. So I just had to go one

step higher. I write to the war department, care of the general -- the general command. The same afternoon I got dischar -- discharged. They knew I wasn't going to play around then.

Q: Now, when did you get the medals for your work in the resistance?

A: On 14th of October -- oh, on 14th of July, 1945.

Q: And that's before you left?

A: Oh yes, I left the army in '46. I had six months of furlough coming to me. See, once [indecipherable] being in the resistance because you had no furloughs, yeah.

Q: Right, right.

A: And the fe -- fe -- you know, service, so I came out in -- in March, and came over here in -- in June.

Q: Right.

A: Well, it was interesting.

Q: That was interesting, yes.

A: The [indecipherable] I know they [indecipherable] but --

Q: Right. Is there anything you'd like to say that I haven't asked you about? I mean, one can't cover one's whole life, clearly, so --

A: No, no.

Q: -- but -- so there's always something missing.

A: No. Oh, this -- one interest of me -- one of my hobbies is the family, and I don't know if I showed you the family tree, that I got the family together. You might see -- just see a picture of about 250 people there.

Q: Right, you found your f -- you find your family, right.

A: Can I show it to you?

Q: No, no, don't get up, don't get up.

A: Oh, okay

Q: Because we -- we can't see it on the screen, but you know --

A: No, no, no, no, it's a picture. It's a film, it's a --

Q: Uh-huh. We can see it later, yes, sure --

A: Oh, oh, oh, oh, okay, okay, okay, okay, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- sure, sure. But that was one of your hobbies, you found the members of your family all over the world. That's your father's side --

A: No, my mother's --

Q: Oh, your mother's -- your mother's side.

A: -- side, my mother's side, yes. Couldn't find anybody on father's side.

Q: I see what you're saying. And your mother's last name was what?

A: Jerat, J-e-r-a-t. Yeah. I'm going to have the other side of -- [indecipherable] side reunion a few months ago in New York. There were about 52 of us --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- including some from Brazil who came also.

Q: Oh, that's great.

A: You know, they had done nothing about perpetuating the memory of the -- o -- or finding anything about Jaji.

Q: Right, right.

A: And I forced them to do it [indecipherable]

Q: Right. It's fabulous. Well, thank you Fred, so very much --

A: Oh, you're welcome, you're welcome.

Q: -- to Washington --

A: My pleasure.

Q: -- and being interviewed. We thank you for your story.

A: It's my pleasure.

Q: Thank you.

End of Tape Eight

Beginning Tape Nine

Q: Okay Fred, who's this couple?

A: These are my parents at their wedding. My mother on the left side, Berthe, and my father Elias.

Q: And when were they married?

A: In 19 -- 90 -- in June, 1919.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is a picture of my parents and my older sister and brother. This was taken probably in 1923.

Q: And this one?

A: This is a picture of my mother and the three children. My sister on the left hand side, that's --

Q: No, here.

A: Yes. My brother on the right hand side, and me next to my mom. This was in -- in 1925 or '26 probably.

Q: Why don't you give the names of everybody?

A: Oh yes, this is Erna, Fred, Berthe and Max.

Q: And this shot?

A: This picture is of Max on the left hand side, my sister Erna, and myself.

Q: That's Erna?

A: Erna, yes, Ernie.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is a picture of an expo of radios that my father had in Colmar. And we can start from the right, is a -- oh, my father over there, yes, and this is Max?

Q: Is that Max or you?

A: I -- I cannot see. Wait, I'm sorry. There a -- it is me, yeah, yes.

Q: That's you.

A: Yes. So that'd be Max on there --

Q: Max, and this is?

A: -- and my mother and my sister Erna.

Q: And this picture?

A: This picture is taken in Lozere. On the left hand side is myself, Fred, my sister Erna, and my brother Max.

Q: And what year was that?

A: In March of 1944. The area in St-Germain-de-Calbert.

Q: And who's this group?

A: Okay, from the left top is George Passeron.

Q: Here?

A: Yes. Next to him is his brother Jean -- no, next -- Jean Passeron. This is Max Loewy, my brother and I cannot -- this is me, Fred Loewy, and I do not know this fellow name, I'm sorry. This in the French resistance in St-Germain-de-Calbert.

Q: So this is the maquis group you were with?

A: Maquis group is right, yes.

Q: Okay, and this group?

A: This is a group of the resistance of the 32nd company in Nimes [indecipherable]. I am on the left side and my brother Max is on the -- is next to me.

Q: And this group?

A: This is a group of the [indecipherable] of St-Germain-de-Calbert, the commando unit, and I am on the left hand side.

Q: And who is this good looking guy?

A: This is a picture of my brother Max, and I believe it must have been taken in the late 1930's.

Q: And this shot, Fred?

A: This is a picture of me in the center. It was taken on September first, 1944, prior to a victory parade in Alès.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a picture of myself, Fred Loewy, in 1945, after the liberation of Montpellier.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a picture taken on fer -- on July 14th, 1945, of myself being decorated.

Q: And what medal did you get?

A: Croix de Guerre with a Silver Star.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a picture of Fred Loewy on 14th of July, 1945, after having been decorated with Croix de Guerre. I say '45, or '46, I don't know.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is a picture of Fred Loewy with decorations on May, probably i-in 1945, or '46.

Q: And where are you?

A: Oh, this is in Montpellier. I had a mustache [indecipherable]. I had to.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a picture of Fred Loewy, Berthe Loewy, and Erna Loewy, taken in 1946 in New York at the occasion of a may -- no, no, '47, a May Day parade.

Q: It says '46.

A: [indecipherable] No, I wasn't here yet in May, I'm sorry.

Q: Go ahead, Fred.

A: This picture was taken in 1961 in Phoenix. It's Fred Loewy, Berthe Moed -- Loewy, and Erna Moed. This is [indecipherable] ... is on the right hand side.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a shot of myself, Fred Loewy, my father Elias Loewy, taken in New York on Memorial Day parade in 1947.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a shot of Elias Loewy, taken in Phoenix, Arizona in 1948.

Q: And this shot, Fred?

A: This is a picture of Berthe Loewy, taken in Phoenix, Arizona in 1948.

Q: And what's this shot?

A: This is a shot of my marriage to Marilyn Switzer in July 1962. And of course, I am next to her.

Q: And this?

A: This is a picture of Marilyn Loewy and Fred Loewy, taken on return from a cruise. I ha -- do not have the date.

Q: But it's in the 1990's probably.

A: Yes, it's -- yes.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is a shot on the cruise to the -- off of co -- the Florida coast. And on the right hand side is Russell, and his wi -- and his wife -- oh God, Janny, Richard --

Q: Not Richard.

A: Oh, I'm sorry. Richard and Elliot --

Q: And that's --

A: -- and there I am, Marilyn, Mrs. Switzer, or Switzer, and [indecipherable]

Q: And the grandkids.

A: -- that was Janny, and then [indecipherable] is th -- the one in green dress is Richard's wife,

Arlene. And then the children from the left hand side is Bradley, Justin, Chad and Bridget.

Whew.

End of Tape Nine

Conclusion of Interview