United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Werner Kleeman
March 19, 2008
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Werner Kleeman, conducted on March 19, 2008 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in March 19, 2008 and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

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

WERNER KLEEMAN
March 19, 2008

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning Mr. Kleeman.

Answer: Good morning, Nina.

Q: How are you doing?

A: I'm doing fine.

Q: Good. Maybe for beginning purposes you could tell us your name and where we are today.

A: My name is Werner Kleeman. You're at my ha -- my residence in Flushing, New York, 4546 196 Place. I've been living here for over 55 years. I bought this about 1950, when I was poor. The house was built before the war, originally it sold for about 6,000 dollars.

Q: Hm.

A: I had to pay 16,000 and today it's worth about 800,000.

Q: Fantastic.

A: We are surrounded by Orientals and they love it here and they pay the price to live here. I have Koreans on one side, Chinese on the other, Greeks on another side, very international.

Q: Yeah. Let's go back to your childhood if you will, we'll start at the beginning. And I'd like for you to tell me about your mother and father.

A: Well, the t -- the tears are coming.

Q: Oh.

A: My mother and father were very Orthodox religious people, and they kept the home the same way. The religion was important. We were in th -- we had to observe the Sabbath and all the laws. At the age of 11 I was sent away to the next city to go into a high school. That was about

1932, and I stayed there for three years til the Nazi regime forced Jewish people to leave the system. And we had to leave and we did not get any f-further education.

Q: What kind of business was your father in?

A: My father had a corn business and a textile business. The corn business was seasonal from about July, August til March. The farmers -- where we lived was the richest soil in Germany and it produced ber -- beautiful crops. Wheat and rye that was desirable and it -- it was quality and my father bought it from the farmers and sold it to dealers and they came by a -- a -- boats docked in a little villa -- a little town, Ochsenfurt, and they loaded it in bulk onto the boats and the boats went down the river, into the Rhine river and they usually ended up in Dortmund where -- where -- which had the largest brewery in Germany.

Q: Uh-huh. And -- and the name of your town was?

A: The name of the village was Gaukönigshofen, about twel -- according to the history about 1250 years old. It came very early, it -- it -- it finally, I think eight -- 17 or 1600 the names were changed and it ended up in Gaukönigshofen. The hofen means a courtyard and the gau means a district. And the König means that it was dominated by the rulers from either the Catholic church, the bishops, or the -- the other rulers in Munich. At that time Bavaria was independent from Germany.

Q: And in this little village, how many people lived there?

A: About 600 at the time when we were there. Now it's about 2500 --

Q: Huh.

A: -- it doubled its size, it grew and so on.

Q: And tell about your home, where you lived in -- in this little --

A: I lived -- we lived in a home that was like an old fortress. It -- originally they ta -- they -- we had a boy in -- in the village, the grandson of the Nazi mayor, he went to a university in Bamberg and he wrote a book about the village, a 700 page book and he researched everything. And he found out the will -- th-the ha -- the ha -- house was surrounded by water and they used it to -- to buy ha -- hides from the animals and they treated it to make leather out of the hides. And those treatments developed a certain odor, and there was running water going through the streams around the house and the -- it had like a walk to go in that was supposed to be a bridge that they caw -- pull up if they didn't want anybody. When we lived there, there was no running water in the house. The walls were very thick, at least eight or 10 inches, and all stone, heavy stone. And finally, in about 1928, the water was -- was put through the village and came into the house. Cold water, of course.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In front of the house was one of the pumps to pump water from a deep pool.

Q: Was that something that you did as a boy?

A: I did some pumping at the pu -- yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: This -- this way -- the village had a pump o-on it -- another part of the village, but we didn't have to go and use it, we had our own pump.

Q: Uh-huh. And there were how many children in your family?

A: Well, five children. Four boys and one girl.

Q: And -- and where did you fall in that?

A: Pardon?

Q: Where were you in that?

A: I was number three.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The middle.

Q: Uh-huh. Do you want to say the names of your brothers and sisters?

A: Siegfried was the oldest, born in 1913. Theo was the next, he was born 1917. Then I came 1919, then came another boy, 1921, his name was Alfred. And then came the sister, 1923, her name was Ruth.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Siegfried, Alfred and Ruth are still alive. Theo died about five, six years ago in Israel.

Q: And your father had been -- served in World War I, correct?

A: Yes. Four years he served in World War I. He was wounded, he was practically buried alive in the -- in the shell hole, but he made it through and he came home 1918 or 1919. I got some of his papers here.

Q: Mm.

A: Very proud in those days to serve Germany.

Q: Mm-hm. And what was your m -- wh-where was your mother from?

A: My mother came from a small village, Wiesenfeld. It was about 25 miles away from where my father was living. And she came, she ha -- she was a youngest of three sisters and one brother, and they were all good families.

Q: Mm. And -- and they got married in -- before or after he was in the service?

A: Before.

Q: Before, right.

A: He got married in 1912.

Q: Right.

A: The war started in 1913 or ’14.

Q: Mm-hm. And they lived in Gaukönigshofen?

A: They lived at Gaukönigshofen in a big house.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: They -- they lived with an uncle, and uncle ha -- o-owned that house and he had no children, so he took in my father, who was -- at age six or seven lost his parents, so this uncle took two children in to raise them.

Q: Hm.

A: So one of -- my father and the si -- another sister, she was married later and she had four -- four children.

Q: And we’re going to be referring throughout this interview to your memoir which you wrote, it’s called, “From Dachau to D-Day”. So we’re going to be pulling some stories from that.

A: Okay.

Q: But I would li -- [interruption] Okay, here we’re back. Tell me what it was like, the small town life, when you were a young boy.

A: It was a -- i-it -- it -- a simple life, it’s a religious life. You -- you obeyed all the rules and regulations, and there was not much social life. You had relatives in the village and friends, but otherwise it was no big problem.

Q: And were -- how many Jewish families were in your village?

A: W-Was about 50 Jewish families, I would say, probably 10 percent of the population was a -- they had their own synagogue and we had a Hebrew teacher who lived in a special house that was built for the religious school. He had the apartment upstairs, and it was pretty much a normal

life. It was one of the larger congregations in that district that had Jews. There were three, four other congregations that were much smaller with the Jewish population.

Q: Mm-hm. So the Jews were in quite a minority at that -- in that part of Germany?

A: Yeah --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- we were a minority, but we were respected. My father was part of the con -- of the -- of the community, of the town council. He was a member and he had to go to the meetings and debate what was good and bad for the village.

Q: When you were a young boy in the t -- like in the 20's and early 30's, did you feel different? Did you feel singled out in any way at that time because you were Jewish? Or did you feel assimilated?

A: No, I didn't feel anything til about 1932 when the Nazis came slowly into power.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Up -- up to that time there was no -- the village was all Catholic and everybody knew everybody and there was no bad -- no bad feelings about anything.

Q: And how did that change, gradually?

A: That changed the minute that Hitler was elected as a ma -- as a pr -- chancellor. Then -- then some people in the village decided they wanted to join him and they started creating problems.

Q: Mm-hm. What were some of the early problems that you experienced?

A: Well, the -- the government start passing laws and within a few years ya -- Jews couldn't own a business any more, they couldn't do anything, they weren't even allowed -- or anything to normal life.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were just tr-treated like criminals.

Q: And you were in the public school?

A: I was in the public school til I went to the high school in Würzburg.

Q: And -- and were you -- I'm trying to think, do the math in my head and think what year were you in elementary school. Were you --

A: About 1933, I was kicked out with all the other Jewish boy. A friend of mine who went to school with me, his father sent him to Switzerland to finish his education. He studied and became a -- a physical education teacher. But h-his family owned some galleries in Holland, and so from Switzerland he went to Holland and when the war started he was not allowed to emigrate any more and he was deported with his parents to one of the c -- camps in the east and exterminated.

Q: Mm. What was like for you in school? Were the other -- were your schoolmates making comments to you, were the teachers making comments to you? Did it build up?

A: Not really, but you could feel the tension.

Q: How? Did you remember any stories about things that happened to you?

A: Not really, no.

Q: Okay.

A: Not personal stories.

Q: But -- but then you and all your siblings were kicked out of school at the same time?

A: Right, we had to -- we had to -- to -- to go without an education, you can say.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Those -- those year -- the best years of your education were lost.

Q: An-And how did you react to that? Were you afraid? Were you confused?

A: Well, you couldn't do anything about it except emigrate, leave Germany. And that was not easy, because all -- most countries had no quota for you to come in and get a -- get a visa to settle. So you had to have -- you have to try to make a-any arrangements you could. I was trying to get to Israel, and I was not successful. My brother went to Israel in 1936. He was the first one to leave from Germany. And otherwise it was really proble -- problematic, you couldn't ge -- go anyplace. Finally, about 1937, I wrote to a relative, a cousin who was living in Omaha, Nebraska and he was kind enough to help me.

Q: But that took some time, yeah.

A: He put a deposit in the bank in my name and sent the receipt to the American consulate, who was at that time in Stuttgart and the consulate registered me and confirmed the receipt and I had to wait for my number to be called, which was about a year or two away. So the -- when came the bru -- the Kristallnacht and the Nazis put me into Dachau after a few weeks and so. And while I was there my mother had a relative in London who vouched for me to stay there while I was waiting for my visa to go to America. That was after I got out of Dachau. It took me two weeks to pack up and go to London. And I got there, I think, January 1939.

Q: Right. Let me ask you, in those years between 1932 and 1936, when your brother left, your parents and other relatives, were they all very keen on having family members leave? Because so many Jews did not leave, or didn't --

A: Oh no, we were determined to leave. We-We wanted to leave and we tried everything under the sun to get out. My oldest brother finally got a visa the day Kristallnacht appeared.

Q: Tell me that story about taking him.

A: He got a -- a -- a visa and he got an invitation to go to the American consulate in Stuttgart and we drove there together on -- we still had our own car. I even had a driver's license. And we

went to th -- on the nember -- November ninth he was summoned to the American consulate. So we went to Stuttgart, we checked into a hotel and he went there in the morning. And during the day was the destruction of the Kristallnacht. I stayed in a hotel and he was in a -- in the consulate getting his -- he had his passport to get his visa entered. And he stayed there -- they kept him all day and he came out five o'clock at night and we saw the destruction all around us, all the Jewish shops were destroyed. Where the Jews were living the windows were slashed, the bedding was thrown out through the windows. It was a mass hysteria. So at five o'clock he came out and we decided -- he decided, he had his passport, he didn't have his ticket for the boat. He had bought it, but he didn't bring it to Stuttgart. And he went to the railroad station and bought a ticket to go to Basel in Switzerland. We had a relative living in Basel. So he cleared out and I checked out from the hotel and started to drive home.

Q: What time of day was it?

A: Five o'clock in the afternoon --

Q: And with this --

A: -- it was dark already, November. So I started to drive home and I got to -- to the -- a city called Wachmergenheim and I stopped, I saw -- I saw a public telephone and I called my father and he said, don't come home, they're coming here. In other words, he knew they were coming to start destroying whatever they wanted to destroy.

Q: The Germans?

A: The Germans, the Nazis, yeah. So I drove another 20 kilomed and I checked into a farmer I knew well for the night. I didn't want to go home and be part of that. So he le -- he let me stay wi -- in his home. I put the car inside the court, but in the morning, five o'clock, he said he's got servants, he will feel better if I would leave because they might report him.

Q: He wasn't Jewish? Was he Jewish?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. No, no, he was not Jewish. He was a good Christian. So I left and I went to another village with another farmer whom I knew had no servants. And he let me stay til seven o'clock. Then I had no more choice but go home. And I drove home and I found myself facing the world's worst. The house -- the door was broken down, every window was broken, the house was completely demolished. And before I knew it, one of the officers came and says, you're the re -- you are arrested and he took me to the gendarme to sit in his office til they had re -- ru -- re -- a way to transport me to the prison.

Q: And there was nobody there? Your parents and your siblings, they were gone?

A: My father was gone, my mother was in the house. That was all.

Q: What did she say to you?

A: She co -- she -- she was all broken down. Finally a neighbor came in and help with the -- ope -- to lift up some [indecipherable] and fix the house door a little, so she could close it. It was -- it was the most miserable thing you could have ever experienced.

Q: Was she able to tell you what had happened?

A: She wasn't in no mood to even talk about it, because you saw with your own eyes, it was nothing but destruction. Every closet had been turned over, everything broken, I -- un-unbelievable. They were acting like criminals. And we knew them.

Q: You knew the people who'd come there?

A: Well, they came from the next town on a truck with wooden sticks to hit the people, and yeah, we knew some of them. One -- one of them stood in front of my father and said, no-nothing can

happen to Mr. Kleeman. Because he was a -- he owned a -- a -- a [indecipherable] in a village that my father used to go in once in awhile.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That's what he said, but it was alright for him to beat up the other Jews.

Q: So you -- you were arrested and taken into the offices --

A: I was taken into the same prison and put into the room with my father.

Q: And you were 15 years old?

A: No, I was 18.

Q: 18 years old.

A: Yeah.

Q: And --

A: No, 19.

Q: -- where was that prison?

A: That was in Ochsenfurt, was f-five kilometer away, the next small town, which was the -- the regional office, like a county here.

Q: And who else was in that prison?

A: All the Jews that they had arrested in the whole county, they had put them into that prison.

Q: So when you got there, you knew most of the people in there?

A: Yeah, you knew most of them, but you weren't able to talk to them. Each one was locked in this room. They were allowed 15 minutes in the afternoon to walk around the courtyard, but you couldn't talk to any one of them. They were s -- they were supervising.

Q: And what did you know about what was going to happen to you?

A: You knew nothing, because you had no -- you couldn't get a newspaper, you had no radio. You knew nothing from day to day what would happen to you. Nobody knew anything. They finally took some of the older people, like my father, World War I veteran, and let them go home, discharged them. But not the younger ones.

Q: What happened to the younger ones?

A: Well, after two weeks or so, they took us to another prison in a large city and there we were processed, pictures taken and fingerprinted and prepare to be shipped to the concentration camp. We didn't know what was going on, but that was the rumor.

Q: At that time in Germany though, you knew that there were concentration camps?

A: Yes, it was known. There was Dachau, there was Buchenwald. They were prepared for this. They were built up and were waiting for the big shipments of Jews. They brought them in from Austria, they brought them in from -- from all of Bavaria. Was filled up. They didn't care how crowded it was, it was just -- they were the bosses. Was electric wire fence all around the place so you had no chance to escape, and so on.

Q: How -- how did you get to Dachau?

A: On the bus. They put you on -- there was -- they had four or five buses running, everyone filled with people and lots of policemen. Took about five to six hours to te -- to -- the ride to Dachau. You didn't even know where you were going, you just suspected it.

Q: And what -- what happened when they -- when you got there?

A: In Dachau they started to cut your hair and process you, take your clothes away and give you the minimum, like a pair of pajamas and a pair of fo -- shoes that didn't fit. You were stripped of everything you owned, and -- and thrown in with other prisoners. You didn't know what was going on. You were a -- practically, you didn't exist. You -- you -- if you got a bowl of soup for

day -- for the day, you were lucky. And they made all the prisoners do the work for them. They only made themselves as the -- as the guard, as the policemen. And they had vicious dogs and everything in the camp already. If you didn't behave they put the dog on you to tear you to pieces. People died every day. In -- in the morning they loaded up the dead bodies and took them out someplace, we don't know where. But people were dying from heart attacks, from problems, everything. I-It was a shameful existence, you couldn't do anything about it.

Q: Did you work? Were you forced to do work there?

A: You -- no, there was no work. You had to stand around the parade ground and wait for them to tell you something. You -- you stood for six hours, eight hours, 10 hours a day in the cold weather. They didn't care.

Q: Did you get sick?

A: Not -- I didn't get sick there, no, but you had to s -- keep your health. You had to try the best to hope to get out sometime. My day came December 22nd, I believe it was that they told me in the evening that you go home tomorrow.

Q: And how did they tell you that?

A: I don't remember how that went, but in the morning you got your own clothes back and get ready to leave and they took you to the railroad and the railroad took you to Munich, which was a -- the nearest city, about 10 to 12 miles away. And in Munich the Jewish community had a room in the railroad station where they took you in. You had no money to buy a ticket or anything, so they took care of you. Next morning I was home.

Q: When you were -- when you were let out, did they tell you that you had to leave the country, or did they just say go out --

A: Well they -- they told me I'm le -- being left because I can get out of the country. I'm being let out because of that. They also tell you don't speak about what happened in Dachau, don't tell anybody. So that's -- that's all. You were glad to get out and keep your mouth shut for awhile. You couldn't say anything til after you left Germany.

Q: And your paperwork had come through then from -- from your relative in Omaha?

A: Yeah, that paper was coming through, and the -- the consul from Stuttgart sent it to London when I was there and then I had to wait in London about 11 months before my number came up. You were registered and then in December I was able to -- I get -- went to London in January and in December I was able to go to new y -- to -- to -- to -- on a boat to New York.

Q: Right. So --

A: I had to buy a new ticket, I had bought a ticket in Germany to go to America before I-I -- before Kristallnacht.

Q: Right.

A: But it was worthless because Germany was at war.

Q: We're going to break and change tapes now.

A: Okay.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Okay, we're back. When you came back to your home, what did you find when you got home?

A: I found my mother and father there, the house was fixed up a little, the windows had been replaced and everything -- anything you did was ready to go and leave as fast as you can. I bought a few things and I was anxious to get out.

Q: And did -- did your parents think at that time that they were going to help you get out as fast as possible so that -- that you could help them, was that the plan?

A: Well, they were hoping. I didn't know what -- how I -- how -- how I could help til I was able to get to London and meet some people and look for help.

Q: But had -- did you all plan that together? Was that --

A: Mentally -- well, no, I didn't discuss it, but I -- mentally I hoped that I could do something once I get to London.

Q: And at this time you -- you had a -- your older brother that was --

A: He left and he was able to leave. He took a train from Basel to Le Havre and catched the boat he had a ticket for, yeah.

Q: And where did he go?

A: To United States.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah, he ne-never went back to -- to the home in Germany.

Q: Were you in touch with him, did he write?

A: No, I wa -- there was no way of going in touch with him. He was just lucky, he was able to -- to leave.

Q: Mm. [interruption]. So you were the second one to leave then, in your family?

A: No, I was the third one. The one to Israel first --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and then the brother and then me.

Q: Oh, that's right, the -- one went in '36.

A: Right.

Q: Right. And were you getting -- were you hearing from him? Was he writing?

A: Who, the one in is -- yeah, he wrote, but I -- I -- when I came to London I wrote him a letter and I got a reply.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Those days there was no air mail, you know, it was boat. Three weeks for a letter. You don't -- you don't remember those days.

Q: No, I don't. So how -- tell about your crossing -- your leaving Germany and getting to London, tell how you did that.

A: I -- I bought a railroad ticket and the ticket went from Germany to London. That included a ferry ride from Holland into England and then another train ride into London. That was a -- the way of travel, because that -- there was no airplanes, you could say. There were a few small planes to deliver mail or something, but people couldn't travel yet by airplane.

Q: And why did you go to London?

A: Because the other cousin -- the cousin who helped me lived in London. And that was the normal procedure to go to.

Q: And what did your cousin do there?

A: He had a business. He picked me up at the railroad station and put me into a boarding home. He paid for -- for two weeks stay and that was my beginning of life in London.

Q: Mm-hm. And you got work there?

A: I wasn't allowed to work because I was a -- like a guest, I was transient. You weren't y -- officially you weren't allowed to work because the British had [indecipherable] on us. Was -- was still sort of depression and they didn't want us refugees to take jobs away from them.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So you couldn't, even if you found a job where to work, it wouldn't help you because the British were very loyal and they didn't want you to be in trouble.

Q: And what did you do while you were there?

A: I volunteered wer -- to work in the social cl -- like federation in the cl -- British make-up of the so -- of the federation. And they let you volunteer and work for -- for nothing. They needed help because there was so much mail coming in to them and so much help needed, that it was easy to get that job.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That was my luck.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because once I was in that boarding house, there was a card game every Wednesday night and one of the players heard my name and he says, I want to talk to you. And I waited for the game to be over and then we talked and he told me his name and where he came from, and his father and my father were friends.

Q: And what was his name?

A: Ha -- Norbert Leaman, like the Leaman brothers. And they also came from a small village, the same village where my father was born. And he was the Godsend for me. He offered to help me and this -- this was like a miracle. The relatives did not offer any help, but he did. Within t -- week or two he signed an affidavit for my parents and arranged for my brother and sister to get to London and they even came in to learn a profession to work. He was outstanding.

Q: From what I know about how much trouble people had getting out of Germany, you were so lucky.

A: I was very lucky. I was one of the few who was able to save a family. I was very lucky. I-It's hard to describe it.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because there was -- they f -- they came about three months after I got there and they had to wait in London for the visa to come to America, but that was very, very lucky. Unheard of, practically. And luckily my brother in Israel had a little money so he was able to send some money to live on.

Q: And what was it like when your parents came? Do you remember meeting them?

A: Yeah, I met -- I went to the railroad station, and picked them up and I had rented a little apartment where to live in the north section of London near the boarding house where I was first put. And w-we managed. My brother and sister got a little job. He were -- he learned as a carpenter and my sister did some homework, housecleaning and we managed.

Q: So your brother and sister came with your parents?

A: No, they came a week or two later.

Q: Oh.

A: Their papers weren't ready when my parents came.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But they came within a week or two.

Q: And your sister was the youngest one, how old was she at that time?

A: She was that -- she was born ’23 and that was 1939, so 16.

Q: Mm.

A: Rough -- rough life.

Q: Yeah. So you’re all there together in north London?

A: Yeah, we lived in a small apartment.

Q: And what were your days like, what did you do?

A: Oh, I went to work as a volunteer in the -- in the office, I went every day. I didn’t want to give up my job and I helped quite a few other people to get out from Germany. I f -- I --

Q: Can you describe the -- did that agency have a name, that you worked with?

A: Yeah, Bloomsbury House. It was known as the only agency that controlled th-the -- the German Jews to come to England. It was called Bloomsbury House. But they -- they couldn’t employ me, they couldn’t pay me, let’s put it this way, they couldn’t -- they weren’t allowed to -- to hire anybody who came temporarily, which I could understand. And they -- they had one big banker from London who came every afternoon and signed so many papers that were processed during the day and those papers were sent to the home office and within 10 days or so, the people whose name was on the papers would get the permit to come to England. That was Sir Otto Schiff, a -- a famous banker in London.

Q: And wa -- why did his signature mean so much?

A: He was appointed by the British to handle the immigration of the refugees. And he had to sign applications every day. And he had a very good secretary, Ruth Fellner. She came from Vienna

and she prepared all the papers for him, and he came every afternoon, four or five o'clock to sign the papers. Without his signature the papers wouldn't have done anything.

Q: And how many people do you think were getting out, every day or every week because of that work?

A: Ma-Maybe between 60 and a hundred.

Q: A week?

A: A -- a day.

Q: A day?

A: Yeah, yeah. Maybe. Well, they -- they -- they spread all over London or Manchester or whatever. Wherever they had people they knew. It was a -- a -- a process, a daily process and th-there was lawyers involved and I go -- I got -- I handled a few cases, I had to hire a lawyer to put the applications in. And one of the lawyers liked me. He also was a refugee, but he must have been in London five years already. He was well-mannered, well-dressed and he says to me, I -- I need you. And he offered to help me. He says, I'll give you some money every week, but you have to help me with my cases. So I watched his cases as they come in and I reported to him once a week and told him ho-how -- how they're standing, when he can expect the recess. And he was very good to me. He gave me a few dollars every week and bought me a lunch. That was not legal, but he felt he needed me and I did help him. I helped quite a few other people to come to London.

Q: And something that I didn't ask you about, you spoke English because you had learned it in school, is that right?

A: Yeah, I had three years English in school, I was able to -- to con -- to converse and listen and have conversation, yes.

Q: Mm, that was fortunate.

A: That was very fortunate. That's why I was able to do things.

Q: And your parents, what did your parents do all day?

A: Na -- they couldn't do anything. The -- cook three meals, two meals and walk around the neighborhood and do a little shopping. That's all. They couldn't -- they didn't know English, they -- they didn't have money to do anything. You -- you -- you were marking time, if you know what that means.

Q: Yeah.

A: You -- from day to day you were hoping that some -- soon you will be able to leave and get away.

Q: Now, when you came out and when they came out, what did you bring with you?

A: Few clothes, fe -- necessary clothes. Wasn't important. You were ready to go without anything worthwhile.

Q: And did you -- were you able to bring money?

A: No, no. T-Two dollars, three dollars. You weren't able to bring any money, anything of value. Th-They searched you at the railroad station before you boarded your train. You couldn't take anything. You weren't allowed to leave any money -- the opposite. I was forced to pay 2,000 marks -- money to the Germans for -- for letting me go. There -- you couldn't take anything. My father had money, couldn't bring any dollar. You had to give it away to his family and so on before leaving Germany. Was -- was impossible to bring any money. They didn't care. They -- they were just ready to steal everything so they didn't want you to take anything.

Q: Were there a lot of -- were there a lot of Jewish refugees in that part of London where you lived?

A: Yes, there were -- there were quite a few Jewish refugees, yes. Who is that?

A2: Your daughter.

A: Oh.

Q: Want me to stop for a second?

A2: Hello.

Q: Hi. [tape break]. Okay, we're going to roll again. I asked you about other Jews that had come to London, was there a big community of people there?

A: Well, they were spread all over London. They -- there was one section northwest, Hampstead they call it, there were quite a few up there, and they were living all over, wherever they could find cheap accommodations. Couldn't live in the west end.

Q: Yeah.

A: And everybody that came was hoping to have a -- relatives in America already to send them a few dollars to exist, cause nobody was allowed to work.

Q: And when you got there, did you immediately make plans to go to America?

A: Ye -- there's nothing you could do. You -- you -- you had to sit and wait and do -- sometime in November, or -- yeah, in November, I got there in January -- November I got a letter from the American consulate in London that I should come and get my visa. So they -- they s -- that was the -- the consulate, not the embassy. But the consulate office was in the -- in the same building where the embassy was. So I went there on a Saturday morning and I got my visa. And when I had my visa I had to make arrangements for a boat to take me to New York. And you -- you go to the -- to the sh-ship -- C-Cunard line and they tell you this boat is leaving in a week or so and you can have it, but you have to buy a ticket. And the ticket in those days was, I believe, 30 pounds and I didn't have the money. And I didn't want to take the last dollar from my parents, so

I went around people I knew already, English people and I ended up collect -- collecting 30 pounds to buy my ticket. And wh-what I had was the -- the lowest room in the boat, on the -- way on the bottom, but it didn't matter. It was wartime already, war started September first and I left the end of November. And we weren't allowed on deck, the boat was all blacked out and everything, but we managed. We didn't know if a submarine would hit us or not, because the submarines were out in the ocean already.

Q: When you got your visa, what had you had -- what did you have to go through to get a visa?

A: Nothing. Nothing, just present my passport. They had the -- the papers that the man deposited 5,000 dollars in my name. He didn't ask any more questions.

Q: That was the relative from Omaha?

A: Yeah, he -- I never was able to go and visit him and he never asked me to come. But I'm sure after he found I da -- was in America, he took his money back, probably. I didn't get it.

Q: So he had it on deposit in your name, that's -- that was the procedure?

A: What?

Q: He would put that money on deposit?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That -- that was -- instead of an affidavit he -- he put the 5,000 in my name and -- and the consul recognized that. Maybe I should have taken it away from the bank, I don't know, maybe I was too honest.

Q: Do you remember when you came on the boat into New York harbor?

A: Yeah, I remember.

Q: Were you allowed to come up on deck at that point?

A: Yeah, yeah. You were allowed to get up and get your little suitcase, whatever you had and get ready to -- to -- you had to go through customs and you had to go -- I forgot, you -- well, you already had a card that you could go to work from the consul in London, he gave you the blue card.

Q: What time of day did you come into New York?

A: 12 o'clock in the morning -- 10 o'clock. Twel -- the boat went up, you passed the Statue of Liberty and we docked about 11 - 12 o'clock.

Q: What were you thinking at that point?

A: Well, it was freedom. St -- liberty. It was a beautiful feeling. You a -- you achieved something, accomplishment.

Q: Yeah. And when you got off the boat, what did you do?

A: Well, I -- I -- I put my head together, I took my luggage and I inquired the subway and I walked to 42nd Street where I finally was able to catch a subway to take to Long Island, because I had a cousin living in Jackson Heights. And I went there all by myself with my luggage and I got off at the right station and I went up and I knocked at the door, here I am.

Q: Did they know you were coming?

A: I think they had an idea, but they didn't know when or anything.

Q: What di -- what happened then?

A: Well, they took me in.

Q: Luckily.

A: And -- and I stayed it -- a few days later I went to work in long -- in New York.

Q: How did you get a job?

A: I we -- I went -- I walked up and down Broadway looking for a job. I -- I had to start working to make some money. So I got settled down fast and I stayed there. I slept on the living room sofa. They didn't throw me out.

Q: And what was it like those first few weeks there? What was it like for you? Were you happy, were you --

A: I was very happy. I was free. I -- I was able to breathe fresh air. I don't think it's very -- it's not easy to describe what happens those days, but I managed. That was 1939. America was in uproar then, the politics. Some wanted war, some wanted not to fight the Germans. You know, in Washington was no peace. Roosevelt already was president for the second term and they were fighting him and there was a lot of uproar in America. But you didn't worry about that, you couldn't change anything. You just watched it. But there were a lot of forces who wanted to side with Germany. That was another chapter.

Q: Did you get involved in those discussions with people?

A: No. I tried not to, because I was a guest -- well here I was not a guest any more, but I was very careful. I couldn't -- I couldn't get up in discussions what's right and wrong. Was -- it was something and you -- you -- you had to lay low. But it was an experience.

Q: And what -- what work did you get there on Broadway?

A: I worked in a department store in the stockroom. And we were t-tw -- twelve dollars a week for 48 hours, but it was -- it was money. You could live on it.

Q: Hm.

A: I had to give my cousin eight dollars a week to fi -- to -- to eat and sleep there and I had four dollars to spend. Was all right. I didn't starve.

Q: And -- and you s -- made plans then to bring your parents, is that right?

A: Well, the parents were -- were sitting in London waiting also to -- and they got a -- a month or six weeks later they got their visa to come to America. And they came on the same boat I came over.

Q: And how did they -- did somebody put money in the bank for them?

A: No, they had to -- a -- a relative in Philadelphia who signed the affidavit for them. A -- a -- widow, very nice lady. I paid her a lis -- a visit a few years later. She was very generous. She paid -- she -- she -- she signed the papers, she didn't give them any money or anything, but she signed the papers to bring them here.

Q: So when di -- when did they come?

A: They came about six weeks after I came.

Q: That fast?

A: That fast, yeah.

Q: You were lucky, they were lucky too.

A: Yeah, I -- and I was lucky to get out from England because the British were starting to take the refugees and sending them either to Canada or to Australia. They didn’t allow them to st -- to settle in England. In other words, they were all temporary. And they started to -- to send them out to their colonies, which they cou -- no one could refuse because they were just told to go -- to get on a boat and go. They didn’t have to buy a ticket or anything, the British government forced them to go, either to Canada or to Australia.

Q: Hm.

A: And quite a few left when their visa didn’t come up as fast as mine came up, they went. They had to go. I knew -- then later on, some of those people came back to New York.

Q: Mm.

A: We had la -- quite a few people like that.

Q: Yeah.

A: But at least they were free. That -- that's another story.

Q: When your parents came, did they come to New York? Did your parents come into New York?

A: Yeah, my parents came to New York and I picked them up and took them to the same apartment where I was. Yeah, yes.

Q: And they all -- and then all of -- and your sister, too, and brother?

A: Yeah, they all -- they came and they went. They went to Baltimore because my older brother settled in Baltimore and I had aunt who had settled in Baltimore, the family settled in Baltimore, but I stayed in New York. I figured I'd try to make a go in New York.

Q: You liked it?

A: No -- no -- never regret it.

Q: You like New York? You liked it?

A: Huh?

Q: You liked it right away? Did you like New York afa --

A: Yeah, I liked New York. It was a -- a metropolitan city. I didn't have money to see anything, but I liked it. It was -- after London comes New York.

Q: Yeah [indecipherable] right. So your parents were in Baltimore and you were here.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you were working and did you get an apartment of your own?

A: No. I stayed there til I was drafted. No, I didn't look for an apartment my own, I didn't have enough money to even consider one and I didn't need it. I was taken care of, and so I was da --

wa-was about two years and the war had started November -- December 7th, 1941, and we the -- we were drafted in 1942. I was drafted in -- it's in the book. No, I think it was mo -- May -- May or June 1942. And --

Q: And -- and what did you think when you got that notice? Were you happy, or did you --

A: Well, I couldn't fight it. I had to go, I was at the right age and I was healthy. And we had to contribute to win the war. That was all there was to it. You couldn't fight it, you had to do your part. That's how it started, and to -- we -- we were taken -- you -- you don't know the routine they had in New York. You had to go to your draft board, then they took you over to Governor's Island, which is way down Manhattan, and there they swore you in. Then they took you to Penn Station, you got on a train and they took you to Camp Upton, way ou -- way out near Riverhead. And there you changed into uniforms and you got a few tests and you send your clothes home. And that was the end of being your own boss. You got your three meals a day and you got medical examinations. You -- you got -- you were part of the army.

Q: And by that time did you feel like -- did you feel like an American, or --

A: Yes, well you were wearing the American uniform. You were a part of the system.

Q: But did it feel odd to you? I mean, didn't it feel iro --

A: No, you felt you were better off being there than being in Germany in a concentration camp. So you felt good about it. And you -- yo-you grew up in the army. You -- you had to learn the slang wen -- language. You had to do a lot of things you weren't used to, but you managed.

Q: Okay, we're going to switch tapes.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Okay. So you've -- you're inducted into the U.S. Army?

A: Yes.

Q: When was it? June of '42?

A: June of '42.

Q: And basic training, what was that like for you?

A: We trained out to la -- to Camp Upton. We stayed there four or five days to get uniform, to get all -- and certain tests and medical examination, that was -- you were in. You couldn't -- you couldn't run away any more. You had to send your civilian clothes home. Y-You were tol -- they told you, not allowed to wear civilian clothes any more. You -- you're in for duration plus six months. So you don't know duration was a month or a year or five years.

Q: Right. Wow. When you went in, you said it was better -- you know, you prefer to be in the U.S. Army than to be back in Germany.

A: Right, right.

Q: Did you know about concentration camps in Germany at that time? Did -- how much did you know about what was going on?

A: We knew that Dachau had existed and the other camps, because you heard a lot about them. But you really didn't know what was going on til they finally put you in there and you experienced it.

Q: After -- after you arrived.

A: But -- but -- but it -- that was a definite future for them, to use them and to punish people who were -- politically didn't agree with them. In other words, people who were more t --

Communists or certain other tribes, they didn't want them, so they put them in there and controlled them so they couldn't undermine the Nazi government.

Q: Right.

A: That was one of the reasons they built the concentration camp.

Q: Right.

A: Of course, then they used them to put the Jews in af -- especially after the war started and nobody could leave Germany any more, that was a -- a different story.

Q: Now your -- your whole family got out.

A: Yes.

Q: But did you have other relatives who were not able to get out?

A: Oh yes, I had uncles and aunts and cousins, they weren't able to get out. They were -- they became part of the system that were destroyed, yes. You still got a few letters from them p-pleading with you to help them, but you couldn't do anything, because first of all we had no money and they had no connections to make to -- to -- to leave Germany. It was -- it was desperate pleas for -- for them to come and look for help. I was a rare case that I was able to save my family.

Q: It must have been hard to get those letters.

A: It was hard to get the letters, yes. But th-th -- I had some, my father left some for me, it was heartbreaking, if you know what I mean. Even some I -- I had a couple of uncles where the son already was in America and he couldn't do anything for them. He had no money and he had no -- no way of anybody signing an affidavit for them. It was -- and the war came very suddenly, when the borders were closed, if you know what I'm saying. And like I say to schoolchi -- a friend of mine, whose family was well-to-do with paintings and everything, he -- they couldn't

get out. They -- they were settling in Holland and nobody realized overnight Holland can be overrun and connected to Germany and there was no mu -- nobody allowed to leave Holland any more. And some people went into France and they were caught in France. You -- you don't know what was -- what -- wha-what was right and wrong. It was impossible to plan anything. It's -- it's really hard to describe. And then there were a lot of American relatives who didn't want to help and didn't bend over to help. It's -- you -- you don't know what to do. You don't know how lucky I was, besides saving myself.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's hard to describe it. My -- my children always ask me questions about that, because they admired me, the way I was able to handle it. You read it -- you read it in the book, too. I was so lucky. And that's why I felt I have to give back something, and I did my best in the army to do the right thing.

Q: Let's talk about your military service, cause you -- you went in in June of 1942, and where did you go for basic training?

A: Camp Wheeler, Georgia. The -- th -- from Fort Upton they put you on a troop train, you don't know where you're going, but the train took you to Camp Wheeler near Macon, Georgia. And it was a big camp that was built up for that purpose and there is 90 days tough training. An-And -- but no matter what -- how tough it was, you couldn't compare anything to remind you of the concentration camp. You had three good meals a day. It was hot during the summer, but you had to learn to live with the climate, but you managed and you knew it was i -- you were in for awhile. And from Camp Wheeler I was lucky, I met another friend who was good to me, Freddy Strauss.

Q: And who was Freddy?

A: Huh?

Q: Who was Freddy Strauss?

A: He -- he was an -- his mother was a distant relative of my mother, who came from New York and he was working in Cincinnati and he got drafted and he was in Camp Wheeler a few months before me and he was graduate from New York University, he al -- he al-already was a sergeant and he worked in a regimental headquarters. So I met him some -- some weekend, Saturday someplace and he took care of me. He started to take me to Atlanta for a weekend, he -- he took over. We had good meals in Atlanta, we -- we were like a -- like brothers. It was unbelievable that I as a trainee was allowed -- he went to the sergeant to get permission to take me and I already was a little bit elevated, if you know what I mean.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we stayed friends all our lives. He passed away very young, in middle of 1955 or ’60. I still in touch with his three boys.

Q: Mm.

A: Once I make a friendship, it lasts. They -- they just hang on to me.

Q: And when did you --

Q2: Could you fix his sweater [indecipherable] on the left side.

Q: On the left side? Okay. I’m going to f -- I’m going to fix your sweater, it’s kind of folded here.

A: Okay, okay.

Q: There you go.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay? That look good?

Q2: Yes, perfect, thank you.

A: Is it all right now?

Q2: Yeah, it's perfect, thank you.

Q: That's good, okay.

A: Okay.

Q: So you're in -- you're in Georgia?

A: Yeah.

Q: And when did you ship out for --

A: 90 days. They took you on a truck to Macon, there's a federal courthouse there and they took you in and the judge swears you in with all the other non-citizens. There was Italians, there was Greeks, they weren't all Jews. And you get sworn in. After 90 days you become an American citizen. You didn't have to wait five years. They figured -- this is the routine they took. They didn't isolate us like they isolated the Japanese citizens and put them in camps. They gave us the privilege of becoming a citizen so they didn't have to worry where we would have to go in the war.

Q: Did you know about the Japanese being interned in California at that time?

A: I may have read something in the paper, I don't remember.

Q: Did you ever have any fears or concerns that you would be --

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: Once I was a citizen, I was equal.

Q: But before that, did you have any?

A: Before that? Well, it was only 90 days.

Q: No, but you had been in the country for a couple of years.

A: Yeah, no, then you had your papers to stay. You were allowed to work. You --

Q: But you -- you -- you were never --

A: I was never in danger, no. I had papers --

Q: Or fearful?

A: -- to wait five years to become a citizen.

Q: Right.

A: But I was never in danger of being arrested or deported or anything like that. While the Japanese, you know, they weren't asked questions, it was just a government ruling to put them away.

Q: Right.

A: The government was nervous, that's all I can say.

Q: Right.

A: Some of them became good soldiers, yo-you -- you understand what I mean.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: They didn't ask for that isolation, but no, we had no problem. After 90 days you were sworn in, and that was full fledged citizen.

Q: And then you went to England?

A: No, they sent me to Augusta to another outfit.

Q: Oh.

A: A regular fort infantry division that th-th-they -- they were filling the army divisions with the new recruits, so so many went here, so many went -- we were sent all over. I want -- went in a group to go to Augusta, Georgia, and I was put in the fourth infantry division. And there were

problems, but you had to overcome it. I was a refugee, I was a Jew, I was a -- a Yankee. I was everything but as -- American.

Q: To them.

A: Yeah. Hillbillies. Hillbillies, some of them, a lot of them had never seen a Jew, they thought that Jews had to grow horns. And it was a tough life for awhile. Eve-Even the officers, some of whom were regular army officers, some of them were reserve officers and then a little later came the young ones, the -- what we call the 90 day wonders. They were the college kids who were sent to some kind of a school in Fort Benning and after 90 days they got sworn in as a second lieutenant. They were mixed, from all over the country. But the old-time officers were not too friendly to us refugees. They were their own -- their own people and they -- they spent every year two weeks in the army reserve for two weeks training and they let you know that they are regular army people. Th-They felt differently.

Q: And how many of you were there? How many refugees were there?

A: I have no idea.

Q: But, around the group that you were with, a lot? Th --

A: I have no idea how many --

Q: -- a few?

A: -- I -- I don't know how many Jews. I think we had in the fourth division, six percent Jews in the division, but how many of the Jews were refugees, I don't know. It -- it -- we weren't grouped as a group to associate with one another. There was too many different units that we were distributed.

Q: And you didn't seek each other out?

A: We didn't -- we me -- we met. There was a rabbi in the division and he held the service Friday night and we met maybe 20 - 25 boys there. But a -- but the-the-they were not refugees, they were Americans. So you met Jews, but you didn't know exactly how many. But we always had the figure of about six percent. In other words, the division wa -- had about 14,000 people and there was supposed to be about six or 700 Jews amongst -- distributed between the officers and the men. It i -- it -- it was never an isolated group. We were always mixed in. And like I say, after awhile you were respected. But it was not easy.

Q: What were some of the difficult things?

A: Well, you were a minority, you were a refugee, which they all could understand and they just didn't love you. When -- when it was time for a detail, they picked on you. You do this tonight, you do that. You had no choice. But sooner or later you grew up and you demanded more respect, and --

Q: Did you get into fights with people?

A: No, no, no. Never. No fights with anybody, because I wasn't made to be a fighting man. But it was tough. And we had a rabbi, who was a -- a good man from the seminary and he had a tough job also. He was part in the chapel to have services Friday night and he had to go to the different regiments to maintain services, and he had to take the interest of the Jewish boys. It was part of his job.

Q: So when -- when were you sent to England? When did you go to England?

A: To England? I told you I went to England January 1939.

Q: No, the second time --

A: Oh, oh --

Q: -- the second time.

A: -- wi -- wi -- oh. That's something else.

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh.

Q: The second time you went.

A: The army -- the army sent the fourth division from Georgia to Fort Dix, New Jersey, 16,000 men. In Fort Dix we were supposed to go to Africa to fight the war in Africa.

Q: That's what they told you?

A: Yeah. That's why they sent us to Fort Dix, Fort Dix was near lu -- near Brooklyn where they loaded up the troops and sent them. While in Fort Dix they realized they had no facilities shipping to -- to handle us. So we couldn't go. Marking time in Fort Dix, they -- then they sent orders and sent us to Florida. In Florida they sent us out in the wilderness. There is a wilderness in Florida, it's west of sa -- Tallahassee. It's on the Gulf of Mexico. They had little huts there, little barracks, they had floors, rattlesnakes crawling all over. And there we got our first taste of amphibious training. In other words, we were marked to partake in Europe at something special. So they gave us training, small old boats to go out on the gulf, and it -- it was there, Thanksgiving day 1943 and a storm came up and some of the boats turned over and a couple of fellows drowned. They didn't care, they said, you got to be trained.

Q: So you were practicing landing crafts.

A: Yeah, broken down landing crafts, not the -- not the new ones. The navy was there, the coast guard was there, there was an island off the coast, it was called Dark Islands. The air force used it to put their bombs into certain buildings there. It was -- it was a rough training.

Q: Was that near Panama City, or pen --

A: Not too far away.

Q: -- Pensacola?

A: Pensacola. Tallahassee. Apalachicola was the next town, if you know the neighborhood.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was 50 miles away from Tallahassee.

Q: 50 miles from Tallahassee.

A: Yeah. Anyhow, we stayed there from about September to November -- November, I believe. Three months or something for training. And they told you you can't go home, you can't get a furlough unless you know how to swim 50 yards. They had a pool there, you forced yourself to swim it so you get a furlough to go home.

Q: Did you know how to swim before that?

A: No, I didn't, but they gave me a pass anyhow. Then they loaded us up again on a train and sent us to South Carolina, Fort Jackson. They -- I was home on furlough when the orders came, don't come back to Florida, go to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. So I went there and we stayed there a month for more, what they call strip down and preparation. Then they shipped us up to New Jersey, Fort ca -- Camp Kilmer, near New Brunswick. There we had to stay two weeks to get our shots and our overseas equipment and all that stuff. And then we left early January.

Q: Early January.

A: Early January for -- for the s -- trip to lond -- to England, yes.

Q: Crossing the Atlantic in January.

A: Yeah, yeah. And the submarines were out there waiting for us. You had no choice.

Q: Did you get fired on?

A: No, n-no --

Q: No.

A: -- no submarines deta -- was a convoy of about 50 boats and destroyers going around all the time, no, no submarine came, no. No nothing. We were lucky, that's all, because pa -- prior to that they lost boats with troops [indecipherable] on the ocean. But we were -- we were lucky, nobody actually worried, because they needed us in Europe.

Q: Were you excited to go? Did you --

A: I couldn't have. I want -- I'm glad I went to Europe and not to Pacific. That -- that feeling I had, because at -- at -- at least I knew I w -- I had a language and I -- I felt I belonged there.

Q: Did you have a feeling that you wanted to fight Germans, or --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You did?

A: Yeah, I had the feeling. And -- and my break came when they invited me for an interview to go up f -- division as an interpreter. And that's when I got a job and I became a mensch.

Q: When you got to England that happened?

A: Huh?

Q: When you got to England that happened?

A: Yeah, but when I -- n-no, it happened in March, so it was about a month or two after coming to England that it happened, yeah. I have the dates down.

Q: And why do you say that's when you became a mensch?

A: Well, you were with different people, you were doing different things. I -- I became a -- a Jeep driver, I became somebody that was important.

Q: You had privileges?

A: Huh?

Q: You had some privileges?

A: Yes, privileges, and wi-with a different group of people. You met officers who were ranking and educated and with entirely different life.

Q: So you knew then from the spring, from March on, that you were going to be a translator. If you hadn't been asked to do that, what would you have been doing?

A: I have been -- I would have been fighting in the front line. Would have been one of the first to land on the beach. And th-the -- the beach we invaded was -- was wa -- lucky, th-they -- they practically walked across. And was -- was like -- not like a war time. E-Even Colonel Reider told me he was pulling flags out [indecipherable] and it means wor-worry they're mines, but there were only flags, there were no mines in the ground. If there would have been mines, we would have had lots of casualties. But they didn't -- either they didn't have mines or they didn't want them there. Rommel might have been da -- may have done it on purpose, we don't know. He didn't live long enough to tell us.

Q: Right. When you -- when the invasion was launched, can you tell some stories about preparing yourself the night before -- but you knew you weren't going to go onshore with a gun like in a first wave. Did you --

A: No, y-you -- you were out on the water, on the channel for practically four days, because we loaded up on a Friday night and the boat pulled out to make room for another boat. There were -- there were 5,000 boats to be loaded, and go out into the channel to prepare. And it took time to load these boats, because you had to drive on your equipment, you had to pack it onto the boat so you could drive off. Nothing was normal, everything was practically upside-down. And in -- in the midst of everything, you looked up in the sky, where are the German planes? You worried when they come out and put the bombs on you or anything like that. And it didn't come out. And the weather, once we were out on the channel, the weather turned bad. Was a big storm coming

up, so they -- they decided they couldn't land that day, on the fifth of June. The -- the sea was too rough, they couldn't unload or anything. So they delayed it 24 hours, we were circling more on the water, worried, where are the German planes? And they didn't show up. So we were more than lucky that there was no interference for -- for the whole fle -- crew. The British, the French, the American, everybody was calm. And then, finally they decided if they don't la-land the next day, they have to delay it another two or three weeks, because of the moon and the tide. They were worried that it's high water, to get the boats in closer. So they decided to land as -- on June sixth. The decision came 24 hours before, that Eisenhower made the decision, this is it, we have to land.

Q: Do you remember hearing that --

A: Yes.

Q: -- announcement?

A: Yeah. So wa -- we were on the boat, the -- the captain of the boat had to know. And in a way it -- we felt it was good to get it over with, because if it would have been another day, they would have had to turn around, put more fuel into the boats, because they were going to run low on fuel after circling four days out on the water. So the -- June six opened it up, and there still was no German airplanes, which wa-was like a miracle. And the German pilots had -- they had moved their -- their airplanes away from the front in France, way back to practically the German border, so they were confused also. Rommel had gone home to visit his wife for that week.

Q: It was her birthday.

A: Yeah. So, she cooperated. [laughter] We should have given her a medal. What are you laughing?

Q: Was -- so tell me when you personally went on -- on shore? What do you remember about when you landed? What did you -- what were you doing?

A: I described it in the book. I did nothing, I was -- my -- my Jeep was not allowed to be a part of the invasion fleet, it wasn't deemed necessary enough for me to have it the first week.

Q: You chief?

A: My Jeep, yeah. I left it back in England.

Q: Your Jeep.

A: My Jeep, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: So I went without anything, just my personal equipment.

Q: And you were a translator, but who were you attached to?

A: Division -- division headquarters. I wa -- I could be shifted around wherever they needed me, but I didn't have my own Jeep the first two weeks because th-they couldn't handle all the equipment so they left some transportation behind, and that came in two weeks later when -- when I got my own Jeep. So --

Q: So when you -- on the first day, what did you do? Did you have to translate?

A: I -- I stayed with my truck where we all were, and we moved inland about five, six miles and we started to eat supper and settle down a little. We were eating the box K rations, what they used to call it, and it helped that -- we ate the same food aboard the ship. The navy couldn't feed us, they didn't have the know-how or the time or the equipment.

Q: What time of day did you go ashore?

A: About four -- five o'clock in the afternoon.

Q: And the invasion had started that morning?

A: The morning, you -- nothing, you stood around and looked over and see if the airplanes are coming.

Q: No, but w -- the invasion had s -- already begun that morning, right? And you --

A: Yeah, seven o'clock this morning -- in the morning.

Q: -- and you came at five in the afternoon of the same day?

A: Yeah, yeah. The invasion started seven in the morning, clock-wise.

Q: Was there still gunfire, shooting going on in the --

A: You heard gunfire, yes, yeah. You had sh -- you had shells coming in and small arms fire, but yo-you -- you didn't worry, you just went and hoped for the best, that's all.

Q: So that was your first day in combat?

A: That was the first day in France.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, you passed, you looked, you read the report how Colonel Gaitling observed the first farmer, how they lead a comfortable life. They didn't know the war was going on. You -- you can't believe everything. But it was un-unreal, if you know what I mean.

Q: Were you called upon -- okay, we need to take a break.

A: When I think back, I -- I --

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Okay, you got something on your lip. There you go.

A: Wipe off the Chinese food.

Q: Yes, that's good. Okay.

A: Okay, and thank you.

Q: You're welcome.

A: Anything else not in order?

Q: No, it looks good. It's looking good. When we stopped, you had s -- you were telling me about coming ashore in France --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in June of 1944. You were a translator. How long was it before you got to employ your translator skills?

A: Well, th -- it was either the first or second night, I went out on a patrol by myself and I captured a German soldier; he came out of the woods. So I was able to talk to him, he was not really German, he was Czechoslovak, but he -- he knew German. That's when I started using it.

Q: Yeah. And after that experience, what --

A: After that you don't know when you ran into something. I was not in char -- in charge to interrogate prisoners. They had special teams on each regiment called interrogation of prisoners of war. They had at least three German speaking fellows there, in each team. And they took care of the prisoners. It was not my responsibility.

Q: What kinds of things were you doing? What kinds of translation were you doing?

A: Well, I was doing a ch -- military government and division headquarters if they had problems.

Q: Mm-hm. And what -- and what would happen? Would they call you and say we're going someplace, we need you to come?

A: Yeah, an officer would say, let's go here and there, that's it. And th -- and then I drove and he sat next to me and when we hit Germans, I talked f-for him and translated. That -- that went on all -- all week, all day, every day something special.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Sunday morning sometimes we went to -- we had to give them permission if they wanted a church service. They weren't allowed to gather without our permission.

Q: Who?

A: The Germans. German civilians. So one of the majors always said, let's check the church service. So I -- we drove over to the next village where the church was and went in. And that service usually was nine o'clock -- eight o'clock, nine o'clock we went in and we sat in the back. And I had to listen to what was going on and tell him. So at the end they usually had three Ave Marias for their old people, for their children, for their sick people. And when they were finished with that, I got up and I yelled, and one Ave Maria for our liberators. And they didn't like it, but they s -- they sa -- recited it. And the major always said, very good, I like the way you did it. We had to let them know we are watching.

Q: Did you -- did you go into Paris when Paris was liberated?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: And --

A: My -- the fourth division liberated Paris.

Q: Yeah.

A: We were -- we were hand picked for that beca -- I don't know -- wa -- wa -- one of the reasons I know, there was a -- a-an -- an officer or a colonel, a very elegant fellow, he spent two years in Paris in the American embassy as military attaché before the war. So he knew Paris inside-out. So they told his regiment to be the leading regiment into Paris, because he knew every corner -- and I wa -- I was going to say, every elegant woman. I think that may have been the reason th -- the for -- not th-the reason, but the regiment was picked as the leading regiment.

Q: Because of him?

A: Huh?

Q: Because of him?

A: Because of him, yeah. You know, you -- you -- the average officer didn't know anything about Paris and Paris was a blackout city, no streetlight, no other light, nothing. It was daylight or -- or l -- or dark. I was having my Major Fissette for three days, we were riding up and down Paris. He had to take care of lots of things. And they attached a French professor to us to -- to guide us, to help us. So this professor, he -- he lived in Neuille, which is north of Paris, elegant sap -- elegant wife, but he would have to sleep home at night. He wouldn't a -- be able to sleep with us. So at 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock at night, I had to drive through Paris in a blackout and -- with my major and bring him home. And then come back to find our headquarters, which was in a zoo. We were sleeping in the zoo in Paris, we didn't go to the Ritz hotel.

Q: I bet you had -- every day was completely different, and --

A: Every day was a little bit different.

Q: Yeah.

A: E-Even when -- if the headquarters didn't move, there was always something different to do. And of course the first -- the first big challenge came when we hit Cherbourg, 20 -- 24 - 25 days after landing on D-Day. That was the -- the first city that came -- that was liberated o -- the mayor may have come in --

Q: Okay, okay.

A: -- if I heard something. And that -- that city was important because they needed the deep dock for the big boats to come in.

Q: Right.

A: And the freight and everything. So into Paris -- in-into Cherbourg, I was alone, I had no officer with me. So I drove in and I -- I didn't speak French, a few words, and I decided -- I checked myself into the German military hospital. I figured some of the bi-big Nazi bastards may put bandages on, or cl -- or -- or -- legs or arms or something, and give themselves up as soldiers so they wouldn't get arrested. But I -- I couldn't find any in the hospital under that duration, and the smell in that hospital was impossible. So after an hour or so I checked out. I couldn't -- I couldn't find anybody and I didn't -- couldn't stay any longer, th-the smell -- they had dead people, they buried them in the backyard, and it was miserable. So I checked out and I went to the Hotel Atlantic where the division had set up headquarters and I put a blanket on the floor in the lobby and I slept there for a few hours. General Roosevelt was -- had been appointed commanding officer of the Cherbourg area.

Q: Did you know him?

A: I met him, but I didn't know him, but Major Fissette worked with him for -- for -- lived with him for three, four months.

Q: This was President Roosevelt's son?

A: The first president's son.

Q: Yes, Teddy Roosevelt's son.

A: Yeah, Teddy -- Teddy Roosevelt, yeah. The first president's son. He wa -- he was -- what can I say, he was all hepped up to be there. He already had fought in Africa and he came to the division. They assigned him to help the fourth division and he loved it.

Q: Let me ask you this. Because you were -- knew the German language and because you grew up in Germany, do you think that you had insight into German soldiers or German movements, or German military operations in any way that was helpful?

A: No, I couldn't -- I couldn't help the military because I wasn't supposed to talk to capt -- to -- to prisoners.

Q: But -- but did you have knowledge of how things worked?

A: I had knowledge if I could -- could sit down with them and question them, but I wasn't supposed to do this, I had to stick to my headquarters.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Because they had special guys in each regiment who were supposed to -- to stick to these soldiers and try to get them to talk and find out. That's why one of the fellows in the 22nd infantry hit a German soldier and he -- he claims, if you give me a map, I'll show you exactly where Rommel's headquarters is. So he opened up a map and the guy really pointed it out, it was a certain chateau in a small village. And that information they gave to the air corps and within a few days they bombed the road leading to the headquarters and Rommel was driving on that road and was wounded very badly. He was unconscious for a week. Of course, they didn't know he wanted to be our friend. So it shows you what can happen.

Q: Yeah. I want to go back to Paris. Any other -- did -- any other good stories from anything that happened to you in Paris? How long were you there?

A: No, I was there three days with a Major Fissette. We were together day and night. We closed whore houses, we -- we did all kinds of crazy things.

Q: Like what? Can you remember some of them?

A: I have -- I have to read up the book or something.

Q: Okay.

A: I -- I know what -- three days we ran at -- back and forth at day -- daybreak and at night to -- to north of Paris to bring the professor home and pick him up in the morning.

Q: Were there very many Germans in Paris at that time or had they --

A: There were some -- mayb -- I would say between 10 and 15,000.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were -- most of them were taken prisoners and they wanted to be taken prisoners by the Americans because the free French wanted to kill them. So they'd rather offered themselves to the Americans to feel more secure.

Q: Right. And after Paris, where did you go? That was in the late summer of 1944, right? August?

A: That was in June -- i-in s -- August 24. August 25th Paris was liberated.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: And where did you after that?

A: North into Belgium. We were in Belgium about s -- about September first, probably. I have the history.

Q: And it was in the low countries that you met Ernest Hemingway, is that right?

A: Ernest Hemingway, we -- he already was in Paris, but I didn't meet him. He came in practically before the American soldiers. He had his own little army and he was able -- he spoke French, he was able to go wherever he wanted to go. He had a Jeep for himself and he had another Jeep for si -- five or six or eight French volunteers from the FFI who protected him and did everything we wanted him -- he was like a general.

Q: Hm.

A: He was -- militarily he was a big -- a man of lots of experience, and he went in division headquarters, he was allowed into any office, anything, and the generals asked him sometimes for his opinion. And he also carried a gun. He wasn't supposed to, but he carried a gun. He was nearly thrown out from Europe for that.

Q: And where did you meet him?

A: I met him the first time in Germany when we liberate -- when we evacuated that town where -- where you have those pictures over there, pu [indecipherable]. It was dec -- September 16th or something we met, and when we evacuated the town, he came in with John Rose tos -- together.

Q: An artist, yeah.

A: And that's when he -- when he -- [indecipherable] sat in a bay window and drew pictures all -- nobo -- not talking to anybody, and Hemingway was snooping around for wine, for whiskey.

Q: Did you talk with him?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I wa -- I one time asked him how he made out with the two famous women, Ingrid Bergman and Marla Dietrich. He said, I couldn't touch them. [laughs]. I had guts to ask him.

Q: So you knew who he was, he was famous by that time, you knew who he was.

A: Oh, he was very famous.

Q: Yeah.

A: You could see his -- his build, his uniform. He wor -- he wore a German fur lined jacket, a sh -- a sheepskin jacket. He wore a big belt. [indecipherable]. He captured that in an African wars from a German officer. You could spot him a mile away.

Q: Flamboyant.

A: Beard most of the time. But very, very humble, very low key and very high class mind.

Q: Hm.

A: He -- he was a -- and he was liked and they all wanted him to be attached to them. So he happened to choose the fourth division, he spent three, four months with us --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- without moving. They gave him enough [indecipherable] they gave him enough -- whatever he wanted to drink, they created for him.

Q: So, did he spend that winter with you, then?

A: Huh?

Q: Winter -- winter of ’44 - ’45 he was with you?

A: Yeah, he was with us.

Q: So you saw him regularly?

A: Yeah, he went home i -- I think in January ’45, I think he went home.

Q: Right.

A: He had enough.

Q: It was a tough winter.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Then he went home to -- I -- I don't know whether he went to Cuba or whether he went to the -- to Florida, the beach, where he had a house.

Q: And what -- what -- what was the winter like for you? What wa -- what kinds of things di --

A: It was cold, miserable, snow, rain, everything. And then of course was the counterattack from the Germans, December 16th, and that was no picnic for us. Was very tough. I -- I must tell y -- te-tell you a story. We were in Swiya -- in bl -- in Zweifall, a German town, a small town, two, maybe two, 3,000 [indecipherable] south of Aachen. Th-The battle of the Huertgen forest, I have the story in German if you want it, I can give you. And there, we were in the -- in the town, and it was miserable. Water in the foxhole, fog, snow, everything. And they made me go out in the morning, eight o'clock to the next -- a big farm, to get milk for the children in the town. So every morning I drove out and I got a couple of cans of milk. And one time a woman says to me, she wants to talk to an officer. I said, I'll bring you an officer. So next morning I said to Fissette, I said, there's a woman out there on the -- on the ranch, she wants to talk to an officer. He says, I'll go with you. So I took him there and I showed him the house. I -- I knew she talked English so I didn't bother going in with him, I sent him in, and he talked to her. She asked him if he knew a Major Collin. So he said, yes, I know a Major Collins, he is General Collins now, he's a corps commander, he's right here in the neighborhood. Well, she told him her name, I have it written down, ma -- phone so and so. He was -- he was her boyfriend in World War I. She was looking for him. [laughs] You -- you laugh.

Q: That's crazy, wow.

A: See what a war can do?

Q: People are people, huh? Yeah.

A: So -- so Fissette fixed him up, he -- he -- he made sure the general goes and meets and looks up the old girlfriend.

Q: Now, during this time in -- in -- in the -- the winter, you were still translating all the time, did you ever have to fight in a --

A: No, no.

Q: You never did.

A: No, the only time I shi -- I was doing a little shooting in Paris. I was on a bridge and they were shooting down from a high-rise building and I took my gun and shoot back at them. But yo -- I didn't see anybody, but everybody else was shooting, so I was shooting also.

Q: Again you were lucky, huh?

A: Huh?

Q: Again you were lucky.

A: I was lucky, yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Because I -- I -- I -- I tell you something, I was careful. I didn't stick my neck out when I didn't have to, because I didn't see -- I couldn't see my being shipped home in a box to my father. So I did not take any special dangerous missions. One time word came around they looking for a German speaking fellow. The Germans had demanded that an American pe -- ma -- officer come over and look at an area where there's a prisoner of war camp so they wouldn't shoot and kill our own prisoners. So I said to myself, it's not my day. You know it, sometimes you wake up in the morning, you have that feeling. I took my Jeep and went out hiding for a few hours. I figured, this is not for me today. Because sometimes if they hit a Jew, they can kill him

and to send back and [indecipherable] he was in an accident, or something. So I didn't go that day. That afternoon I felt this is not for me. I went into hiding for a few hours and then I come back and then I found out they had an officer in one of the regiments, lieutenant something, and they sent him over. But he came back all right with the information. You know, sometimes you wake up with a feeling, and -- and you have to take care of yourself. Another time, when we broke out from Normandy, I was up in a villa -- in an -- in a -- in a town, was just taken. There was still fighting there, Saint-Pois, it was right in Normandy. And I -- I drove into town like a big shot, and the officer, Captain Walker says to me, get the hell out of here, you have no business being here. I was ready to put up proclamations for the -- for the French people. So he says, get out. So I turned around and I got out. I figured if the mayor -- major throws you out, you're out. I went back. Next day, I had -- th-the town was taken and I came back with my proclamations. And the town was on a little hill and it had -- when you go up it had like an S curve in order to get there. So on my way up to the town, I see a Jeep blown up. I passed this, and I said to myself, I don't know what happened. When I got up into the town and th -- the regiment from the 22nd infantry was right next on the outskirts, one of the fellows, he knew me, he says, got bad news for you. He says, your friend, Feinberg, whatever his name was, was killed last night. I said, he was on patrol on a Jeep? He said yes. I said, I passed the Jeep. So I said nothing to -- the bodies were torn to pieces, four of them. I said no-nothing and I felt -- I [indecipherable] I was on the road the day before and nothing happened, so I figure the Germans came in during the night, put mines in the road. Because that Jeep was hit with a mine. So what can -- I could do nothing, if you know what I mean. I just had bad news. He was a very smart fellow and we were friends, in a way. Anyhow, coming home from the war, about -- must have been six, eight years later, I said to myself, I'm going to Brooklyn to visit the family. The -- the least I can do. Th-Then -- I

started out on a Sunday afternoon to go to Brooklyn. I had the address. Halfway down I said to myself, if I tell them the truth, they'll be hurt, if I lie to them, they don't let me go til I break down and tell them the truth. I turned around and went home. If you know what I mean. That's feelings.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Tell me about when -- what -- when the war ended, in April --

A: When the -- I was in the hospital when the war ended.

Q: Before we -- before we go on, can you sit up a little bit? Because when you lean down I can't see your face.

A: Huh?

Q: Okay, when you lean over like that, I can't see your face.

A: Oh, okay.

Q: Okay? We want to see your face, okay?

A: Okay, you want me to move a little closer?

Q2: No, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: You know what -- you know -- are you with me on that? I don't want him to have -- have to feel so uncomfortable.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is it -- are you comfortable sitting up?

A: I'm comfortable.

Q: Okay.

A: I just can hear you better when I --

Q: Okay, well I'll try and remember to talk louder.

A: Okay.

Q: I'm sorry. I don't -- I just don't want you to -- I want -- I want us to see your face, okay?

A: Wait a second, let me wipe my --

Q: Okay.

A: I try to help you. [tape break] Go ahead.

Q: Okay. April -- where -- where were you in April? When the war ended, where were you?

A: I was in a hospital in Dijon, France, I believe, because I had an o -- in April I had an appendix attack, and I turned myself in-into infirmary and they -- they -- the infirmary couldn't know much, they were not equipped for it, so they send me to another hospital, another hospital and the -- that la -- the 'nother hospital sent me down on a troo -- on a hospital train to Dijon, France, which was a general hospital. And there they decided I don't need the operation, I just need a few days rest. So I was in that hospital and the guy in charge, the doctor in charge was a -- a -- a big drunk. I do -- he came from Detroit, he was a major, but I could see no -- no future. He gave me about 40 pills to take in one day, and he just didn't know. I think he was filled up with liquor all the time. Anyhow, they finally let me go, three weeks later or something. And when you go in the hospital you lose yourself. You can't pr -- you can't take a gun in with you, you can't take a knife in with you because they are very cautious that -- people go crazy, you -- you understand what I mean? So the -- all that they take away from you. Well anyhow, they discharged me and I got a troop train up to cher -- into Germany. Worms, a city near the Rhine. And that was what's called a replacement depot. And I was in there waiting to get assigned. Meanwhile the war had ended, and I forgot to tell you, the fourth division, in October '44, General Marshall came over to France and he made the speech in division headquarters, I wasn't there. He said, some of you boys will have to go to Japan when you finish the war here. So what can you do? You're part of the division, division goes, you have to go. Anyhow, I didn't -- I wasn't too anxious to go back

to the division, so they assigned me to six army group in Heidelberg. From the -- from Worms, I was sent to Heidelberg and I joined -- I was in there, I was driving a Jeep, I was going on a few trips with an officer. And I had, from civilian life I had a friend who was stationed in Heidelberg. He worked for the signal corps. So I looked him up and we were friends, we were together and so on. So sure enough, in June the division was sent home, ready to redo -- regroup and go to Japan. They had no choice, General Marshall selected them. Yeah. Ye-Yeah. They took out the German speaking fellows and left them in Europe.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They figured they're no good in Japan. Anyhow, that's what happened, so I stayed in Europe, and I got myself another assignment. That's when I went to another replacement and took off and went to my hometown.

Q: Now, tell me that story. Sit up -- sa -- can you sit up --

Q2: No, before you -- we would like to change tapes before --

Q: Oh, we're going to change --

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: -- in the role that you had, you had a lot of autonomy.

A: I?

Q: You si -- it seems like you had a lot of autonomy while you were in the service.

A: Yeah.

Q: I mean, you -- you were able to -- you had a -- you did a lot of things on your own.

A: I did.

Q: Yeah.

A: I did. I had a Jeep.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I was -- I was not scared, I was courageous. I would go out on a patrol, I -- if I don't have -- i-if I didn't have to drive an officer, I still went out and looked and see what I can do. I-It's in the book, one time I picked up two officers that were shot through the arm. There's always something coming up you could do.

Q: Yeah. Now let's tell the story now about how you ended up going back to your hometown.

A: I went back to my hometown the first time I was stationed in Heidelberg. I said to the captain, I need a Jeep and I want to go and visit my hometown. He gave me a pass and the Jeep for a day -- for a day and a half.

Q: This was in the summer?

A: That was in the summer, yeah. That was in May a -- probably in June. And I drove there and I-I went in. I -- I -- I visited a good farmer that I knew was no Nazi and I felt safe to go in and w-we had some lunch and he was glad to see me, he couldn't believe it. So I stayed there and I went to the military government in Ochsenfurt and I told that captain who I am, and I said, I'd

like to come and work for you. He says, I need you. And he was so pepped up, he got into his Jeep and followed me in my Jeep to Heidelberg --

Q: Because he wanted --

A: -- which was about two to three hour drive.

Q: Because he wanted you?

A: Yeah, he wanted me. And he -- he followed right behind me and he went into the same captain who gave me the Jeep, he says, I need this man. And the captain says, I can't let you have him. Just like that he -- he denied it ca -- ca -- I think it was Captain Friedman. Anyhow, that was it, so a few days later Captain Friedman says to me, I want you to go out, I need some wine. I want you to go and get me a couple of hundred bottles of wine. I said, give me a Jeep, I'll get your wine. So I drove down to Mannheim and I see a sign, winery and I went in and I tell guy, I need some good wine. He says, I have it. He opened up cobblestones in his courtyard and he pulled out a couple of cases of Moselle wine. I took 200 bottles, and I paid him a nickel a bottle. I didn't steal it. And after that the captain says to me, I'm supposed to tell you the colonel said he never drank wine like that. I said, you tell him he'll never get it again like that. And that miserable captain didn't even say to me, take a bottle for yourself, if you know what I mean. I didn't need it, I always had a bottle of wine when I needed one. Anyhow, then a-all of a sudden the order came transferring me to a replacement near Frankfurt. So I figured this is -- I'm getting away from that captain. So I went to Frankfurt, but now -- but -- but now [indecipherable] Hamburg, where the replacement office was and I checked in. And when I walked out in the building, my friend Colonel Gaitling walks in the street. He had come back from aus -- he had come back from somewhere and was ready for re-assignment. So he says, come up to my office, I want to talk to you. He had a -- a private room, a -- a major or a colonel gets treated well. So I

went up to his office, he's -- tried to hand me a bottle of cognac. He says, I want you to come with me, I've become security officer in Linz, which was Austria. I said, Colonel, as much as I like to go with you, but I won't -- I have a de -- I have a desire to go to my hometown and take care of things. He says, if you feel that way, you go and I get you some other time. So next morning I pack my bundle and I go to the information -- no-not information office, the -- the -- the communication office where they handled the mail and so on. I said to the guy, a -- e -- a -- are you going out into Germany with your distributings, your mail? He says yeah. I says, can I come along? He says yeah, sit in the back of the Jeep. So I had my bundle with me, nothing but a -- in those days you had a ha -- half a duffel bag full. A set of underwear, and shoes, nothing much. So I sat, and within two hours we were at the very place I wanted to go. And I checked in with the captain, I said, I'm here to stay, unofficially. No --

Q: Where --

A: -- no papers.

Q: Where were you?

A: In Germany.

Q: But --

A: No papers, no nothing, I just packed and left. I didn't go in the office and tell them nothing. I figured, if they find -- if they want me, they'll find me. So I went in and I started working. The captain was very happy, I had -- I knew people, I knew information, I knew what was going on. So I worked there and I stayed there and nothing happened until about September first. Then all of a sudden they sent an order for me to go to Austria. I said no more, I had enough. I packed my bundle and I went into the next hospital and I told them I feel sick, I'm out. And they -- they take me to another hos-hospital and then I got a hospital with a nice Jewish doctor from New York

and he says, I'm going to send you home. I said, I appreciate it. I took him out for -- w-we went back to where I was stationed, I poured some wine for him. I had place where the German army had le-leather saddles from the horse ho -- from the cavalry days, and I gave him a -- I opened up the door, I said here, you take yourself a couple -- he had the horse in Central Park at the time, for the wife to ride. So I gave him a couple of saddles, he was out of this world. Brand new leather saddles, if you know what I'm talking about. So anyhow, he sent me home. It took two, three months, but I got home on the hospital ship.

Q: When was it that you went back to your hometown, and wer --

A: That was when I -- after I went to the -- to the military government, that's when I took the time out to go to the hometown and arrest these fellows, and --

Q: Well, tell me those stories.

A: Those [indecipherable]

Q: So you -- you told me before that you went to your town for one night.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then --

A: But that was just to acquaint myself.

Q: Okay. Then what did you do?

A: Then -- then when I packed from the replacement depot and got myself a ride with the chief to go, I went for good.

Q: To your town?

A: To the town, to the mili -- military government. I slept in their quarters and I worked for them.

Q: And what town was that in? What town was that in?

A: Ochsen -- Ochsenfurt.

Q: Which was just close-by to your hometown?

A: Yes, it was four kilometer.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. That's where I settled down.

Q: Okay.

A: For about six, eight weeks, maybe.

Q: Okay, so in that six or eight weeks then, you went back to your village.

A: Yeah, that -- that's the story written up in the Times.

Q: Right.

A: They did a good job.

Q: Right. But you have to tell me that.

A: I -- I -- I started to work there and whatever I -- I -- the captain gave me assignments, do this, do that and do all kinds of things. And these people in the military government, they were, in my eyes not good soldiers. They were not brought up like -- like we were in the infantry, like real spit and span good soldiers, they --

Q: The military government was there to oversee like the occupation.

A: To oversee the rebuilding of the German system.

Q: Right, it was not the same as the m-military.

A: Yeah, yeah, it's -- it's part of the military.

Q: Right.

A: They wore the uniform, but they were civil service workers, schoolteachers, all kinds of professions, but they were not military --

Q: I see.

A: -- to be out fighting and winning a war.

Q: I see.

A: They -- they -- they did their own life. They were a little bit different from us. We all -- us old soldiers, we all felt the same way. They -- they took two hour lunch breaks and they lived like kings and the war was over for them, they had all the time in the world to straighten out, to -- what they -- their how -- their main job was to check civilians, who was a party member, who had to be denazified, who had to be sent away to a camp or something. That was their main job, and then they started recruiting people to start, if they didn't belong to the party, to become a -- a lawyer or a j -- court judge or a civil service job to rebuild Germany. They had to ra -- to make sure the electric was rebuilt, the railroads were rebuilt. Everything was in shambles. Nothing was working. Because when you fight a total war in your own home, then everything gets destroyed. It's -- it's under -- you cannot describe it. Unless you have seen it and lived through it, you -- you cannot imagine what it is to be in a city, no light, no streetlight, th-the sidewalks was fu-full of sha -- garbage from the bombing, from the walls. You can't believe it. And they had to clean up themselves, the Americans were not there to clean up the rubble for them. They had to clean it or else it would still be laying.

Q: So you were working for the military government in Ochsenfurt?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you get assigned to go back to your town?

A: Yeah, I had a Jeep there, I was allowed to go anyplace I wanted to.

Q: So how did you get to the point where you went back to arrest people?

A: Well, wa -- after I worked there for awhile, I figured it was time to -- to look for these fellows. And I inquired, I had a German policeman who helped me get the names together, and then I had the names of about 10 or 12 of them. And I decided it's time for me to pick them up and put them in the jail, and I did.

Q: How did you do this, on what -- did you have some orders that allowed you to do this, cause --

A: I cou -- I -- I couldn't do it as an -- I could do it as an American soldier, but they didn't commit a crime against the Amer-merican soldier, they committed a crime about civilian -- against civilian people. So I was allowed to arrest them and put them into jail. But then it was supposed to be that the Germans take over, but there were no Germans in office yet to do that. So when I left -- when I re -- was ready to go into a hospital to -- not to have to go to Austria, I let them sit in the jail, but the captain finally got their confessions and he had to do something about them, so he -- he kept the confessions and he let them out to go home. And I haven't heard from it since, except when this fellow wrote the book 20 or 30 years later, he got from the court the papers what happened to them in 1948.

Q: How did you find them? Were they all living there in that town?

A: They were all living there. There were some of them that ha -- that were fighting in the war in Russia and hadn't come back, but the ones I found were all living there.

Q: And -- and did you confront them personally?

A: I didn't arrest them, I tra -- I made the German police arrest them and put them into jail. And then first I had to change the warden in jail because he was a Nazi, I couldn't trust him. So I had to kick him out and put a new man in. Otherwise, he would have let them go anyhow.

Q: And did you just stay in your town for --

A: I stayed in the town. And then I -- I visited a fr -- another friend of mine in my village. I had visited him ri-right after I got there and a little later after I arrested them, I paid him a visit and he warned me. He said, be careful, they're after you. So I -- I got the message that they were ready to do something to me, so I changed my habits. I stayed in at night, I put a German police in front of the entrance, and I didn't let anybody come in without knowing who they are. I was very, very careful, because I had a good warning. And if they want to do away with you, they had the power and the weapon to do it. So I was very careful, because my life was important to me at that stage.

Q: How long did it take you to get all of these men rounded up, arrested?

A: Oh that -- that was a few hours, that's --

Q: Really?

A: Really. That was nothing, that was within -- I think they were -- they marched them down to the prison. I don't think we supplied a Jeep or anything. Only the one guy I arrested in my village, him I put on a Jeep because it was four or five kilometer to the -- to the jail.

Q: So it took you weeks to find everybody, is that why you were there that long?

A: No, I took my time. I -- I -- I took my time. I figured that they can't run away, and it took me awhile to decide, and I -- I didn't tell the captain when I was doing it, because he might have stopped me, I don't know. There was certain things you had to do on your own, because when you asked too many questions, you get too many answers and too many problems.

Q: So they were all -- they were all arrested on the same day?

A: Yeah. They were all arrested within an -- two hours, all of them.

Q: And where were you at that time?

A: I was in my office.

Q: You knew what was going on at that moment?

A: I knew what was going on, yeah. And I went right away to the -- to the man in charge of the jail, I said no visitors, no nothing. They get 15 minutes to walk in the courtyard in the afternoon and that's it. I said, no packages in, no packages out, I gave him strict instructions, the way we were treated a few years before. I -- I was the boss.

Q: And how were -- did you feel good about that?

A: Huh?

Q: Were you feeling good about that?

A: Yes, I was feeling good about that.

Q: Yeah.

A: The Americans would have never arrested them. I felt very good about that.

Q: Yeah.

A: I -- I feel this is th-the golden opportunity.

Q: And did -- did people in the town respond in any way? Other people in the town?

A: Well, th-the people in the -- the relatives came to my office. I didn't let them in, but they all tried lo, he wasn't so bad, let him home. I said -- I didn't ackn -- I ignored everything. I didn't listen to anybody. I felt, let them know I'm the boss. It's -- it was good feeling.

Q: Yeah.

A: A-And for what I went through, I deserved to be -- to -- to show them where the bo -- who the boss is. They never expected this to happen.

Q: By that time were there any Jews left in your village?

A: No, no Jews came back from my village. There were some Jews i-in the big city, Würzburg, who had come back, whom I knew from before, and I helped them, I went there at night

sometimes to bring them some food or something. I bought hundred pounds of flo -- white flour from a mill to bring to them so they could bake some cakes and so on. That was a different life, that was not -- not part of my mission, that was human -- humanitarian.

Q: And by this time, in the summer of 1945, people knew about the concentration camps --

A: Oh yes, by that time they were --

Q: -- all of that was public information by that time.

A: -- they were already opened and overrun and publicized. Oh yeah, they knew. In April they overran the first concentration camp. I never -- one of the officers said to me, I want to go to Munich and pass the concentration camp. I says, I was in there once, I don't want to see it. Th- They wanted me to -- to drive with them I ref -- I refused, I just didn't need it -- necessary to go back. Another guy, he says -- o-oh, one guy says, I need a ca -- every officer's supposed to have a German car for the weekends when they went socializing. So he says, can you find me a car? I says, give me a little time, I'll find you a car. I snooped around and I found a beautiful red Mercedes in a vil -- in a town, covered with straw, was hidden away. So I told him, we pulled it out. The roof had collapsed for over the years with the weight, so I told him I have a mechanic in my village, he can fix it. And we put a battery in, we drove the car out and fixed it, and then when the car was fixed he says to me, I'm going to make the first trip to Garmisch where Hitler's headquarters was. You want to come with me? I said no thank you. [laughs]. I -- I went to Nuremberg to pick up my friend Raul whose letter is in your book.

Q: When -- when those 11 men we-were priso -- imprisoned in your village, what happened to them after --

A: They ca -- th --

Q: -- ho-how long did you stay there?

A: The captain let them go. He didn't have charges against them, he -- they didn't do anything the Americans. So he let them go but the papers must have gone to court that they were tried in 1948, which is about three years later. By that time I guess the Americans had built up the German court system enough to handle something like this.

Q: Waha -- when he let them go, how did you respond to that?

A: Wa -- who --

Q: When he let them go?

A: I didn't -- he didn't ask me, I was gone. I was on my way home.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: He didn't ask me, he didn't have to ask me, he could do what he wanted. Bi -- I -- y-you [indecipherable] when he sent me to the hospital to get quinine tablets, and I played dumb. I says, I need a -- a -- a -- a -- a piece of paper telling me to get this, so he signed it for me, and you know what happened to the quinine tablets.

Q: Well, I know because I read the book but you should tell the story. You need to tell the story for the tape.

A: Yeah, ta -- th-the -- the nun in charge gave me the tablets and she explained to me how they should be used. The -- the girl should sit -- the -- the girl had to be pregnant to take them. She should sit in a bathtub with a few inches of water, and practice like riding a bicycle before -- and take the tablets before, and that might help to have like an abortion. So I gave it to him with the instructions from the nun. But I had it in writing.

Q: So that's an indication to you of what kind of men these were, these military government officers were.

A: Yeah, they didn't care.

Q: Yeah.

A: They -- they weren't allowed to fraternize with German women. It was still forbidden. Eisenhower had three months where no one was allowed to touch German women, so they carried Holland women with them when they came from Holland to Germany, so they were not in bru -- had no problems.

Q: And the women just stayed with them in their quarters?

A: Huh?

Q: The women just stayed with them in their quarters?

A: I don't know where they put them up, I didn't look at -- I didn't check, it didn't bother me. They must have put them up someplace.

Q: Right.

A: But they carried their own women from a different country, so they couldn't be brought up on charges. There was ways of doing things.

Q: So when you left Germany, you thought those men were all in prison. They were in prison then?

A: When I left Germany, them -- I think they were still in prison, yeah, yeah. And I couldn't care less, I didn't want to stay around and wait til the German court system was strong enough to take care of everything. But th-the -- the papers I made him sign, he must have kept on his desk and eventually give them to the German court system.

Q: You made all of those men sign confessions?

A: Each one I made sign a confession what he did the night of Kristallnacht. Yeah, I made the -- I did that.

Q: And was one of those 11 men wi -- had one of those people come to your parent's house?

A: Did one of them?

Q: Did one of those 11 men --

A: Yes, they were all there.

Q: Were they among the ones that came to your parent's house and destroyed your house?

A: Ye-Yes, they were all -- they were all there in my parent's house.

Q: Do you know which one it -- oh, all 11 of them?

A: Yeah, I think so. I also must show you -- how -- how -- how long is this wire? Oh.

Q: Okay.

A: Ah, I forgot something.

Q: Okay.

A: While I was visiting a good German, and -- who was happy to see me, and he went into a room and he came out with a little suitcase. And he said, I got something for you. He handed me this and this. These were -- these were items that were used in the synagogue. This is for the wine cup, and this is a spice box with a candle on it that was used Saturday night to end the Sabbath.

Q: Uh-huh. Let me have this paper, let me have this paper. You hold that up a little bit, hold that up a little bit. Little higher. Can you hold it up higher? There you go. That's okay, this is okay. Okay. And he gave those to you? And he had saved them? Where did he --

A: He had saved it. I don't know how he got. And with it was an old book, 300 years old, a memorial book from the congregation. That he gave me also, it was three items, and I treasured them. I treasured them because I felt that was worth the honor to bring them home. And I did bring them home, and of course I showed them to my father and i-i-it wa -- it was heartwarming to -- to see -- to get something like this. And I -- I w -- never would want to give it away because

I felt I deserved it. To make the trip and spend two, three years in hell, I mean at least I deserve this, and I -- it should go into a museum, but I feel I let my daughters decide what they want to do with it. I will not give it away. I cleaned it, I polished it. This is silver, this is I don't know, but --

Q: And when you brought those back -- when you came back and you went to see your parents, did you go straight to see your parents?

A: No, I came back on a hospital ship and I was put in a hospital on Staten Island. They were -- all the patients went there, it was called Halloran General Hospital. And after being in there a day they tell you you can go home for 30 days. So they gave me a 30 day pass, that's when I went home and so -- start seeing people.

Q: And when you went back home, were you able to tell stories right away or did you not want to talk?

A: Well, it was emotional. You didn't -- you couldn't talk, everything was -- too much happened in four years. In order to split out everything, and I was very slow, and you -- you were not yourself yet, you had to calm down slowly. And th -- all of a sudden you wanted to see ma -- more people that you knew, and you were proud that you came back. And so it didn't -- it didn't go that easy. It was very emotional, but I made it.

Q: Were you eventually able to tell your father and mother what you had done, and --

A: Yeah, eventually I was able to tell them, slowly. But I already had told -- I already had told them a lot in letters, because after the war ended, I was able to write home in German. And I could write every night or something and s -- tell them what has happened and so on. So they knew a lot more already from my letters.

Q: And before the -- while the war was still going on you couldn't write letters that --

A: You c -- they couldn't read English, so I -- that was no s -- a -- a -- I couldn't write in German because it had to go through a censor. So I couldn't communicate the way you normally communicate. That only opened up when the war ended. Next day was no more censor. That went for the news reporters also.

Q: Yeah. Okay, we need to change tapes.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: -- Congress --

Q2: Right.

Q: -- they've got everything, but they -- goodness knows who can find it.

A: But you understand what I mean? That book is also very valuable.

Q: Yeah. So you came back -- you came back in the fall of 1945?

A: Yeah, but when I came back --

Q: You'd been in the service --

A: -- I came back it was, I think December '45 and I had a 30 day fa -- furlough and then I had to go back to the hospital and they decided I was suffering -- besides the hearing I was suffering from arthritis for sleeping eight, nine months on the wet ground and the doctor had diagnosed it and they flew me to Hot Springs, Arkansas for 30 days to take the hot bath. Hot Springs, Arkansas was the spa for polio people, and the army, navy had a big general hospital there and they went -- I went there for 30 days to take the bath and it cured me of the arthritis. And after that they tent -- they -- they tried to get rid of me to sign out, I said no, I want to help -- I need some help with my hearing. And they sent me to a hospital in oklaho -- in Oklahoma, called Borden General Hospital, which was for -- for n-nose, eyes and ears. And over there they looked at me, they can't help much. I said, yeah, but I'm here. So they also wanted to discharge me. I says, I'm not taking a discharge unless you give me a medical discharge. Nothing doing. So a week later, some young doctor from Saint Louis, fellow looked like 30 years old, one night says to me, tomorrow morning if you come to this room they'll be a board meeting and I can get you your medical discharge. I said, Dr., it's a deal. So I got dressed my uniform, and I appeared and

they passed it that I got a medical discharge. I wanted a medical discharge because I didn't want to go to Korea, I didn't want to go to Vietnam. So with a medical discharge I was safe.

Q: Yeah.

A: I figured I'd put in enough time. So that's how I happened, and that's when a few -- a year or two later they gave me a 10 percent pension for the hearing. Which is -- I didn't fight, I just took it and left them alone. Now y -- now you know the story.

Q: Yeah. And I know it's hard to -- and that was -- that was 1945 - '46, early 1946, and you know, here we are now 60 years later.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you've just written this book about your experience. But I know that you've also been back to your hometown a couple of times.

A: Oh yes.

Q: And during one of those visits you were asked to speak to the gathered people.

A: Yes, they -- they rebuilt the synagogue to -- like a museum and they dedicated it and they invited us to come and partake at the ceremony.

Q: Who was invited?

A: Me, my brothers from Israel, my brothers from Baltimore. They invited all the people they could find who -- who were related to the village one time. So we went there and that was already -- the guy who wrote the book about the history, he already had finished the book. And a couple of -- a week or two before, they celebrated the dedication of his book.

Q: This is the book about the Jews from --

A: Yeah, Jews in the village, so I was -- I was invited to that celebration and this fellow had quite a few students from the university come, and a couple of professors, was a little affair. And so I

stayed for the other celebration and I found out they didn't invite me to say anything. So I-I got upset and I had a conference with this author of his book, what I could do. And he wasn't invited to say anything either, so he says, put your foot down just before and tell Dr. so and so, if he doesn't give you a chance, you're going to boycott the affair. And I did, and he said, we allow you to say something. That's when I stood up and dashed it out to them in German and in English. And they didn't like it.

Q: Can you summarize for me what you said that day?

A: Y-Yes. I said, th-the people you destroyed suffered in the worst way possible. None of you stood up to help them. I -- I -- I -- I really dished it out very strongly. And there were a couple of news reporters, they shook my hands afterwards and congratulated me. The people didn't like it. Wa -- the priest sent me a letter afterwards, how dare I was to accuse his people of something they had nothing to do with. I -- I told him, they were there and they could have helped people. And that was it.

Q: Mm.

A: And as a matter of fact, the -- the Germans were in a building and had machines going to record it. And the Americans, NBC was there to record it and the Americans gave me -- the NBC gave me the tapes to take home when I flew home a week or so later. And they told me, when you go through the airport, try not to go through the machines, it might destroy them. So I passed the tapes outside and when I got to New York I delivered them to NBC. About 10 years later the girl from the German station is -- called me in and she says, I got those tapes. I said, I'll take them. But I couldn't play them, their system was different from the American system. So I brought them home, three or four tapes, cassettes like yours, and about, I guess eight or 10 years ago, when I got busy with working at Leo Beck, I told them I got some tapes. They're -- they're

very strong, I -- I gave it to them. I would have loved to listen to them, but they never invited me down and I never reminded them, but they have them.

Q: Leo Beck Institute.

A: Leo Beck Institute, because they wanted the history of the German speaking Jews who were chased out of Germany. We keep that Leo Beck going. And it is a very historic documents they have. I gave them a lot of stuff. They wanted old letters, old photographs, everything. They take whatever I could give them. That's how they exist. And so now -- now that's your competition. You -- you are -- your museum is only what, 15 years old? I know that, I know. Wh-When it was first opened, my army outfit had a reunion in Virginia, not far from the museum, and before the reunion I wrote the boys from the fourth division who run the reunion, I said, the museum is opened. I'd like for you to get 50 tickets for us to go and see it. And they wrote and they got 50 tickets.

Q: Great.

A: So come Saturday morning, a couple of officers I knew, friends from Colonel Reider, they cornered me. We want you to take us to the museum. I said, all right, I want to go too, so we go together. I think we rode the subway over. And going in, you had to go up to the fourth floor and work your way down. So they see a -- a big window with shoes and they ask me, what does this mean? Yo-You understand what I mean? They were Christians who had no idea what went on in the camps or anyplace. So I spent three hours with them, going through the museum. I was new myself, I mean, I knew the rail trucks up on the shelf -- you understand what I mean? But I devoted my time to them. And they thanked me and we went back to the hotel and ate lunch. So now -- so now you know.

Q: Yeah, well, can I ask you to --

A: It was -- that was I -- an early vis -- an early visitor in the museum, unknown --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- if you know what I mean.

Q: Yeah.

A: But these fellows had no idea. They were not o-openly received, there was no one to explain to them. And I didn't know the museum that well, I only knew from what I read and what I saw.

Q: Oh. When you came back -- when you were back in the States and -- and you were here in New York and you had a business and you were starting to -- you got married and you had a -- raised a family here. Did you study a lot about the Holocaust?

A: No, no --

Q: I know that in the 60's and 70's --

A: -- I didn't have time --

Q: -- people didn't talk much about it.

A: -- I -- I needed all my energy to b -- run and build my business. That was important to me, I wanted to be successful and I devoted [indecipherable] in my life to the business, until I was a little -- I was more affluent when I was about 65, and then I started traveling. My business was slow from December 15th to January fifth. The hospitals had parties and they had no room for me and I was able to go to Switzerland for a week, or go to Israel to visit my brother. And that's when I developed socially, if you know what I mean. But during the early years in life, you did not recall the Holocaust so much. You did not recall what you did, you didn't -- you didn't even feel like talking about it sometimes.

Q: But you -- you attended synagogue, your raised your children to be religious?

A: Yeah.

Q: And among your friends was there much talk --

A: Well, you --

Q: -- or were you one of those people who didn't want to talk but other people did?

A: I -- I didn't try to talk because like -- like I told you, Colonel Reider said, I -- I -- I is not the word. Yo-You understand?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I was very reluctant to speak about it. I slowly explained something to my children. I -- I did go to army reunions once a year, and when I walked in the hotel -- I usually went Friday mornings or Sunday afternoon. And when I walked in the boys looked at me, here comes Dr. Kissinger. And I said, but I'm not playing with the same girls he's playing with. It must have been the accent that they got reminded.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, in those days he was famous.

Q: Yeah.

A: So the boys always reminded me, here comes Dr. Kissinger.

Q: During those years, did it ever surprise you how little people knew about Jews in Germany?

A: How many people?

Q: How little people knew about it.

A: I think they all knew a little. I think they all knew. They didn't want to admit to it that they -- they played holy, holy, holy, as innocent. That goes for the -- for the Pope in Rome and all the Cardinals and all the Bishops. If they didn't know they were not human beings. They must have known what went on but they were scared and they didn't do anything about it. Th-th-the Pope

su-supported the criminals and sent them to South America to save their lives. I want to know -- I want to send my b -- the Pope is coming next week to Washington, did you know that?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: He's get -- being wined and dined at the White House. I want to find a way to send him my book. I -- I even called last night my friend who runs Der Speigel. I want to know if he as a news reporter is invited somewhere where he can hand him my book. He is a friend of mine, he was here for a day to -- to tape me.

Q: And when -- when was it that you started to get interested in writing a book, and why did you want to write a book?

A: Well, the -- why? Well, I -- fr-from what my daughters tell me, I was loaded with information. I -- I was a -- a walking library, they used to say, which was true. I observed and I observed, and I didn't write it down, but I kept it. And they -- they started hinting me why I don't write things down and one led to the other and sooner or later I gave in. But they helped me to hire the right woman. Because before I hired her, I became very friendly with a German consul who was stationed in New York, consul number two. And he was already two years in Israel and we became very friendly. So -- and the wife was a -- a -- a newspaper woman. And I -- a -- she invited me to her house for dinner one time, and she lived on -- on the West Side on 66th Street. And we sat down and I said to her, how about you writing my book? She thinks about it, she says, well -- I must have approached her before because that night I -- I si -- offered her 10,000 dollars if she would write it for me. Speaks German, speaks English. Educated woman. She says no, I'm going back to Germany. She wa -- they were transferred back to Berlin and she says even though she was -- quality was there, if you know what I mean, and she was very warm and she was like you, born after the war, had no -- no -- nothing to do with anybody, you know, but she

refused me. I couldn't do anything about it, but that's when I tried, because I felt she was qualified. Even if she was back in Berlin she could do it. But then my daughter found this one by accident. And she came and she sat there and after two hours she says, I'll take the job. And I said, send me a contract.

Q: So then you started writing and collecting --

A: I already started writing --

Q: Right.

A: -- s-stories, three pages, four pages and I started giving -- feeding her with typed stories.

Q: Hm, and when you -- when you finished writing, or when you had it all collected, did you understand anything about yourself or about your experience that you hadn't understood before? Did you gain some perspective that you didn't have before?

A: Did -- did I do what?

Q: When you finished writing it --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- did you -- were you able to look at your experience in a different way? Did you gain some new knowledge by writing it down?

A: Well, I -- no, I wracked my head to get the old stories together as -- as good as possible, and she trimmed them, and she made questions to add. She knew how to handle it, and I was very satisfied. I -- now I feel there's three, four more stories should have been in, but there was a time limit, when she said enough is enough, we're going to finish it the way it is. And that's when I gave you that big book.

Q: Yeah.

A: She used that, I think. She must have sent it to the publisher or something.

Q: Right.

A: But I felt it was a good book, but when the letters came in and people come and -- and the most unusual, there's some Germans here in New York [indecipherable] and other people who got hold of the book and they came and they admired it. And when I sent a draft to the consul because I -- I wanted opinions, if you understand what I mean, so the consul came back to America for four years to -- to Houston, Texas, and once -- first time he was here he came to New York, we had lunch together and I sent him a draft. And he said it's beautiful. He says, the nicest part is the way you carried yourself when you went back into your home village. So everybody picks something different that shakes him. So I felt good to get an opinion like that, if you -- you understand. Because the German opinion to me is worth also, and they should be heard now, because this is a different generation two generations away from the Nazis. And -- and they -- they -- they claim it could never happen again, they say. We don't know. There's still anti-Semitism in Germany today and there's a new group coming up. I got, month ago, a German magazine called Deutsche [indecipherable]. How did I get it? I have a friend in New Jersey, he's like me, he's practically the same age. And some of his friends in Germany sent him the magazine and he went through the magazine and in it he found an article about me, in the magazine, in German. So I read it, and I -- I started -- I told my bankers friend from Germany and one of them said, oh I know the magazine, that's on the right side. They are not mine -- they are not broadminded like we are. So I already know what he meant. He said, they are not leftists, they are rightists. So -- but it -- the article is from the wall str -- not the Wall Street there, from the New York Times. They -- they practically copied it. And I called the guy who wrote the article, he says only the Times can sue him for copyright. I didn't write to the Times. But it

shows you what goes on and to me, for the Germans, it's important that they read what goes on. Th-They wouldn't buy this book if a German wrote it, i-if you know what I mean.

Q: No, explain that. Why is that?

A: Because they feel that he was on D-Day, he's an American, he knows what he is talking about. I feel that's why they want to buy it. The ber -- Bavarian government's supposed to buy it and put it in some of their libraries. A woman I spoke to but so far she hasn't cal-called me and t -- how many copies she wants. But for th -- for them it's important to -- to have the relations warm up again. They invited me, they dedi -- dedicated the Jewish museum in Nuremberg, 1987 they invited me and sent me books and everything. And so they -- they recognize that they need us to help them, if you understand what I mean. The -- the -- the -- the people -- the Bavarian government, about six, eight months ago, wrote me -- I wrote to them, they wrote me a letter back and they sent me a booklet about Dachau. All th-the pictures, everything about Dachau. I -- I got excited and I said to myself, I'm not keeping this in my house, I don't want my daughters to see it. I took it to the local congressman and told him he can put it in any library he wants, I don't want to see it. Now, he refuses to give me a receipt for it that I can take a tax deduction. I also gave him a copy of my book.

Q: Why don't you -- why didn't you want your daughters to see that book? They know what you --

A: I -- I felt -- it excited me so much, they shouldn't see it, what I went through.

Q: But they know?

A: No, I didn't tell them that I got that book.

Q: But do they know what you went through?

A: Well, they know I was in concentration camp.

Q: But that's all?

A: That's all, yeah. But that book described to -- the meat hooks, everything. Shows you everything in the place, and I just couldn't take it. That's how I felt. I -- if you want the book I give you the address in Germany where you can a -- write for a copy.

Q: Well, I'm curious about your experience.

A: Huh?

Q: It's interesting to me about your experience with that book.

A: Yeah. But I couldn't stomach it.

Q: Because it brought back memories? Were those things you knew about?

A: Too -- too many memories. Wh-When you see the barracks and everything, I couldn't take it. I didn't want to keep it in my house, not even a week. So I'm telling you the truth.

Q: You wrote a long book, but is there a lot that you left out?

A: Is there long --

Q: Is there a lot that you left out of your book?

A: There is enough for another book, but I'm not ready for one. I feel that there's some -- some good stories that only wake up after the book was out, if you know what I mean. But it -- it's -- it's not that important that I write it down. I wrote up enough the important parts. Like now I have to do work with the lady whose letter I showed you. I could put in more in her book if I wanted to. Th-That will be an important book, if you know what -- I feel that she might give me half of the book if I let her.

Q: Maybe.

A: I might need your help.

Q: Okay. Okay. [indecipherable]

A: She would love -- I think she would love to sit in here.

Q2: [indecipherable] minutes left on this tape.

A: Do you hear what I said?

Q: No.

A: I would like -- I think she would love to sit here and watch us.

Q: And listen, yeah, maybe. Maybe. We're going to stop now and do the photographs.

Q2: And, anytime.

Q: Okay, this is our first photograph. Can you tell me who is in this picture?

A: My oldest brother Siegfried, my --

Q: Don't -- can you not use your hand?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. Just -- okay.

A: My -- the second brother, Theo, I'm on the right side. Left one is my younger brother and that's a sir -- the sister.

Q: And you look to be what, about 10 years old here?

A: No, about eight, seven.

Q: So this would have been around what year?

A: Oh, ninet -- born 1919, about 1927, I would say.

Q: And where do you think this photograph was taken?

A: In front of the house.

Q: Yep.

A: That's yi -- that's where phot -- the photographer came.

Q: You all have -- look pretty nice there, pretty nice, pretty happy.

A: It look -- it looks antique, yeah.

Q: Pretty happy kids.

A: You s -- you see, they look like -- what can I say, like uniforms a little bit.

Q: Okay.

Q2: It's a -- let me -- yeah, we have to put a little tape on. And, anytime.

Q: Okay. Who is this fellow?

A: That's my father. That must have been when he came home from the war.

Q: Can --

A: Maybe during the war, World War I.

Q: Can you tell me his full name?

A: It's also in front of the house, because we had two or three steps going up to get into the house.

Q: Can you tell me his name?

A: Louie Kleeman.

Q: Louie?

A: Louie, yeah. He was born 1882.

Q: Okay. Okay, next one.

A: This is Werner Kleeman, immediately after release from Dachau. You see the haircut, which was this [indecipherable] the -- the identification that you were a prisoner in a concentration camp.

Q: Because people wouldn't have worn their hair like that?

A: I didn't hav -- never wore hair like that.

Q: Right.

A: Not -- not even in the American army. They also wanted it short, but not that short.

Q: And do you remember where this was taken?

A: Right -- probably in Ochsenfurt where the passport was made out, because we did not have a photographer in the village, so I -- it ha -- I'm sure it had to be taken there.

Q: Okay.

Q2: You know, we need to change tapes.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: Okay.

A: This is the p -- the p -- the passport that I got after being released from the concentration camp in order to leave Germany. The -- the man who signed it, who had the power, was very miserable, and he looked for all kinds of excuses not to give it to you, even though the consul had written that they want me to appear with a passport. When I came back and was stationed in the town, I sent people up to tr -- and I needed a bed to sleep in, and had them remove his own bed to bring to my new quarters in Ochsenfurt. I didn't care if he slept on the floor or not, but I fixed him up then.

Q: And describe what i -- the red --

A: The K is that you're a Jew. The red K, they put that in every passport so you couldn't say you're -- it's not yours. That was only done -- about 1938 they started to issue a red K into every Jewish passport.

Q: And your name?

A: My name is Kleeman, and they add -- added Israel to every Jew, that was an -- a state l -- a state law, so you couldn't sneak out an-and not be identified as a Jew.

Q: Hm. Okay.

Q2: All right, any time.

Q: Okay.

A: This is the house, it used to be called a castle. I believe it was built 1717. It had a weapon at the front entrance and it was originally surrounded by water. There were a couple of little streams going around the building, and they -- the village bought it from my father for a very low price. They wanted to put the schoolhouse -- a school in there. And then the war started, they

didn't do anything with it except they rented out the rooms. And then, after awhile, they used it to put in 50 French pe -- Frenchmen who were forced to work on the farms. And they were locked in at eight o'clock at night and the gendarme came in the morning to open it up to go to work. They were very badly treated by the farmers and I don't know what they did when they were free, but from what I understand they killed a couple of pigs and started to live up a little bit.

Q: Hm. And this is the house that the Nazis came to on Kristallnacht?

A: Yea, this is the house they came, they destroyed every window, every closet, every bed was slice -- slit open. That was completely in shambles.

Q: And do you know when this picture was taken, this photograph?

A: No, this was right after the war. It looks very dilapidated and it must have been taken after the war ended, I don't know. Maybe I took it, because I had a camera with me sometimes. It's very possible that I took this picture myself.

Q: Okay. Did this house have a name?

A: No, no --

Q: No.

A: -- the house didn't have a name. It was part of a -- some kind of a family and they had 16 small homes around it, where poor people were living. First there were the Jews in -- it's writ -- it's written up in this fellow's book, and --

Q: So this would have been -- it really was a castle, then?

A: It was a castle, yeah, and the walls were thick tha -- you couldn't do anything. All brick -- heavy stone, no brick, no veneer. Everything was heavy. And the windows were big and it was a very strong house. And there were 16 smaller homes around it and some of them fell apart, but

the Germans rebuild them the way they were hundred years ago, and the people are living in them now.

Q: Did you have your own room in this house?

A: Yes, I had my own room in the house. The upstairs was no heat. It was cold in the winter with one big stove downstairs in the living room and one bedroom, and the kitchen had the stove to cook on. It was not the most comfortable house.

Q: But it was a big house.

A: It was a big house, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: The rooms were big, was solidly built. Very big house. And then after the war, maybe eight or 10 years later, the Germans re-bought it, and they paid more money to my father and they tore it down and put a schoolhouse up on that place. That's how it worked.

Q: Okay, okay. Okay. Tell us about this photograph.

A: Aft-After the -- we finished the basic training, that was nine -- three months, 90 days, w-we -- we were a group of non-citizens, we were aliens and they took us -- loaded us on a truck and took us to Macon, Georgia where there was a federal court building and we were taken into a room and there appeared a judge who swore us in as American citizens. You didn't have to pass any tests or anything, the uniform was your weapon that you will pass. That was the happy moment in the life of being in the American Army.

Q: Which one is you?

A: The wa -- the -- on the right, the per -- per -- the one behind the first person.

Q: And do you remember any of the other fellows?

A: No, no, I didn't know their names, I didn't know whether they were Greeks or Italians or Jews, I didn't know. You didn't have that much social with them, time to ask questions. You can be assured, when the government took you there, they were non-citizens.

Q: Yeah, okay. Okay?

Q2: Okay. And any time.

A: Ready?

Q: Okay, yup.

A: This is Colonel Gaitling, we became very good friends. This was in a rough time of the winter, I can see the boots he was wearing. They were hard to get by, but it probably was in Huertgen forest, it looks like all -- all trees around it. He was a gentleman and very human and very kind and very considerate. I never forget that we -- we broke out of Normandy and we hit the first French town and there was a little restaurant on the side, and he sent me in to buy a lunch. He was outside on the bench and ate a K-ration. And when I got inside I found my friend Salinger and John Keenan sitting at the counter eating already, so I joined them. We were at home, we were cle -- happy together. This colonel was a very outstanding soldier. He -- he graduated from the Virginia Military Institute, which is as good as West Point. Then he graduated Columbia Law School and he was working for a big law firm, a [indecipherable] law firm on broad -- on Wall Street in New York. He never told us where he was working. The boss at the Wall Street firm became Secretary of the Army under President Franklin Roosevelt. With one letter he could have been sitting in Washington for the duration, but he was too much of a soldier to let anybody know who he was. He st -- he was British descent, and he was very, very warm with you. You couldn't help it but respect him. The first or second night in France, he went on a -- he went to visit Sainte Mère Église, the first [indecipherable] where the paratroopers

had dropped in, and while he was gone, I started t-to dig a foxhole for him, I was finished digging mine. And when he came back midnight, he scolded me because he doesn't allow me to big -- dig a foxhole for him, he's digging his own foxholes. So I apologized and I said, next time I know. He was very, very considerate. He want to make sure you eat and you clean and everything that needed for you to be care of. He never cared about anything special in his uniform. He wore the same clothes we were wearing, and every time we got into a new command post what [indecipherable] being called, he walked around and looked if there was a little stream. When he found one, he found a -- a private corner, he took his uniform off and gave himself a -- a bath in the ice cold water. I couldn't have done that, but he did every time we hit a new som -- CP. He was very articulate and he was very easy and warm to be with. Fortunately, I was able to contact him after the war. When I bought my house, I approached him and he ba -- he made the contract and title for me. He hardly took any money. And then, of course, we were -- became friends. We stayed together til he passed away in 1980-something. I went to his house three, four times a year for dinner. We had wonderful times together. And I went down to the Wall Street firm and we had lunch together. It was an unusual friendship and we always find something to discuss and -- and -- and -- and enlighten us about things what have happened. One of the big things that happened was in my -- when I was in a K company, 22nd infantry, there was a big fuss, to-do, north against south. The southern boys, the hillbillies accused a couple of northern fellows for not leading a normal life, sexually. And they accused them, and the -- the company commander was brainwashed by those fellows, and he more or less listened to them. So he -- he took the accused fellow and put him into a stockade, and started bringing charges. Another sergeant whom I knew very well, of -- a very good friend of mine who was supply sergeant, he was a friend of the accused and he went to another regiment to find a lawyer to sup -

- to s -- defend this fellow. So he went to the 12th regiment and found Colonel Gaitling. He was then a captain, I believe, but he was a lawyer and had th-the best of degrees. So Colonel Gaitling took the case and they brought in a very g -- big court martial. They came down from corps to handle it, they had armed guards around the building and everything. And when he did his research, he found a woman in Augusta who would swear and had the experience that she slept with that fellow.

Q: Right.

A: I don't want to mention his name, there may be relatives listening to it. And whenever I asked the colonel to write this down for me because my language was not ready for a s -- a -- a s -- a case like this, he always told me, Kleeman, it is too spicy. I -- I reminded him every time I came to his house to please write it down for me, and he said it's too spicy. He refused, he -- he kept a diary of his life in the division and he did not write this accident into his diary. I -- I couldn't get angry at him, but he was just too much. He produced a woman at the court martial that testified she slept with this fellow and the case was dismissed.

Q: Hm.

A: The captain was sent out to Fort Benning as a punishment and the first sergeant was removed from the company, and there was a big shake-up in the regiment, because he knew how to handle it. He was a de-definite fine lawyer and he knew that this -- the fellow was not guilty.

Q: Hm.

A: You can't believe what went on in the army. I told you many times I said, the -- the Caine Mutiny was a case like this and they brought a film out of it, why can't you write it up? He says, too spicy. He never told his wife about it, he never told his son and daughter about it. I'm the only man who questioned him about this all the time. But I was not a -- I was not successful. I --

I feel to this day it should have been publicized. Th-The -- the fellow eventually got a discharge and got home and everybody was fine. We got a new captain in the army, a young fellow, and he's -- he's -- when he came in he says, I'm a tough son-of-a-bitch, you boys better behave. [laughs]

Q: Okay.

A: You're laughing.

Q: Well, you're making me laugh.

A: Well, it's better to make you laugh than to cry.

Q: Right. Okay, good.

A: There's a [indecipherable] Theodore Roosevelt, he is the son of the first President Roosevelt. He was 57 years old and didn't have to be in a war, but he insisted on being there. He was first serving in Africa and then he came back to England and they assigned him to help guide the Fourth Division. He was a down to earth soldier who was in World War I already, and he was a regular fellow. He never wore unif -- leggings or anything like that. He did not want to show off that he is anything different. He always walked with a cane and was a very unusual man. He insisted on landing on the beach in -- in Normandy, or -- in the first hour to guide the boys. He felt his presence there would stimulate them to go and march in -- into the country fast. So he was there from the morning on and when them -- there's a gu -- fellow lawyer I know who wrote a book about him, and in a letter home he wrote to his wife, I must have hiked 20 miles the first day up and down the beach to get the boys to move inland.

Q: Hm.

A: For his work there he got the Congressional Medal of Honor, but he didn't live to see it because he died in Normandy of a heart attack about five or six weeks after the landing. His son

was the captain in the First Division and also landed on D-Day. And it was when the Utah beach was hooked up with Omaha beach, the son came over to visit the father in the evening -- afternoon about six o'clock. And they spent two hours together and this must have excited the father so much that within an hour he had a heart attack and passed away. A very s-sad story, but it so happened wi -- and about 10 - 12 years ago I got an invitation for a Kristallnacht celebration in Brooklyn and the invitation said, the German consul will be there, and re -- ru -- Teddy Roosevelt the fourth will be there. So I packed up my history books with him in it and my two daughters and we traveled to Brooklyn and I met the fo -- the -- both the consul and this -- the -- the grandson. I opened my books for him and he couldn't believe it. When he passed away, they never sent any material home what he possessed. And I le -- gave -- I told him I would take care of him. I finally got a history book, a D-Day book and a -- and I -- th-the Gaitling children gave me his map from D-Day, which I should show you a copy of it, which was a masterpiece, and I donated that map to the Roosevelt Museum in Oyster Bay, which is the home of the first president. The grandson couldn't believe all this happening and we have been good friends ever since.

Q: Oh.

A: He's a very fine gentleman. He's a partner at Leaman Brothers and if I have time and need a free lunch, I can go.

Q: That's good.

A: You know? They're not fantasies.

Q: Every one of your stories had a beginning, a middle and an end.

A: Yeah.

Q: And that's wonderful.

A: But they're not fantasies --

Q: No, I know they're --

A: -- they're -- they're experiences.

Q: -- yeah. But they're stories, you know, they're a good -- okay.

A: Yeah, I know what you mean.

Q: Yeah. Okay. Any time.

A: See, he never even wore a steel helmet, he used to wear a knit cap. But that first day or two he had to wear a helmet.

Q: Yeah.

A: He didn't know what was coming.

Q: Hm.

A: And always had a cane.

Q: Yeah. Next picture. This one.

A: Ready?

Q: Yes, we're ready.

A: This is a picture when I got married, in 1948 at the Park Avenue synagogue. This is my wife Laura and her parents. Sh-She -- she was a young girl, she also came from Germany for about three -- the parents had a flour mill about three miles away from my hometown and we were friends through -- while she was growing up. So I married her in 1948 and she produced two nice girls for me, which I -- wonderful children and very kind and good to me.

Q: And what was her last name?

A: Her maiden name was Hyman. Yeah, she was very nice lady, but unfortunately she got sick after awhile and couldn't cope with life the way she should have. But thank God we have two

beautiful children who are the best in the world, and -- and we have four grandchildren that are also very, very warm and -- and ho -- chil -- good children, good grandchildren. You can't find any better.

Q: What year did she pass away?

A: She had nervous breakdowns.

Q: What year did she pass away?

A: About se -- I -- '78, I think. I have it written down. I believe it was 1978. Yeah, the girls were already 20 and 22 years old, right.

Q: Okay, okay. Okay.

A: Okay, this is a picture of my parents. They pro-probably were i-in the 70's when this picture was taken because I can tell from th-the looks of my father. But they were -- they -- they considered themselves very lucky that their -- I was able to save them and bring them out from Germany at a time when it was practically impossible. But we wer -- God was with us and I -- somewhere along the line I met the right people to help me and everything worked out fine. Unfortunately, it was only the family that I could le -- save. It -- I couldn't save any of the uncles and sisters because I -- I didn't have the money. Even if I had the know-how, I had no money to help them. This was a time when you had just to look for yourself in order to survive. It was -- was unconditional life to exist, and -- and hope from day to day that better things will happen.

Q: Where was this picture taken?

A: I would say they died in si -- 1980 - '78, probably about 1970.

Q: Where at?

A: Where? I think it was taken in their home.

Q: In Baltimore?

A: Yeah, in Baltimore, it looks like it.

Q: You want to say your mother's name?

A: My mother's name was Lina, L-i-n-a, and her maiden name was Bamburger. She was a very warm woman, very caring woman and she always con-concerned about the children and grandchildren.

Q: Mm-hm. So your children knew her?

A: My children knew her. They knew th -- my gra -- my father and grandfather, yeah. Oh yeah, they knew them.

Q: Good. Okay.

A: My children are lucky, they -- [tape break]

Q: Okay.

A: I have to think for a minute. The community college, the name -- this is the picture taken at the book signing at the community college here in Bayside, o-on the October 23rd, they invited us and they arranged a book signing party because State Senator Frank Padavan, whom I'm very friendly with and I gave him a copy of the book, he was instrumental that this organization was making the party. Mr. Padavan wrote them a letter, Dr. Fluff was the administrator and he came over here for an interview and he stayed two hours and he said, I'll make the party for you.

Q: Nice.

A: And the party was a great success. This is my daughter Deborah, her -- her husband Lee and my grandson, Steven. And we were happy at the party and it was a success, we had about 90 people there buying the book. And [indecipherable] they gave me an award and they were very, very happy that it happened.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Okay, this is the st -- the -- the family of my daughter Susan, the oldest daughter, her husband l -- st -- her husband's name --

Q: It's okay.

A: Richard, her husband Richard and the son David and this is the son's girlfriend. They -- he -- they -- David graduated from the University of Michigan and he's working for the Swiss Bank in New York. And this is how -- the other family, very good people, very fine children and grandchildren.

Q: And your daughter's name?

A: And the daughter's name is Susan Elgart. And that's me, the old man, the grandfather.

Q: Okay.

Q2: Okay, you know what? Any time.

Q: Okay.

A: Ready?

Q: Yeah.

A: This is a picture of the cover of my book. The lady that helped me designed it. It's all scenes in Germany of this, of th-the borough or the -- the county where we were living, and she d-decided and put in the -- the title, "From Dachau to D-Day", and it warned pe -- it warmed up people to find out what was going on and that's -- when they read this, they bought the book. They wanted to know what I wr -- what I had to say about it. And the cover is very impressive and very, very natural. It shows me, my passport, some church buildings, some -- some uniforms that the women were wearing. It's a very impressive cover that -- that wakes up people, especially the ones in Germany. They recognize it and they're very proud of it.

Q: Can you say the date of publication?

A: The publication?

Q: Date.

A: The name?

Q: When -- what day -- when was it published?

A: Oh, it must have been published a year ago in mar -- I -- I -- A-August -- about August a year ago because a book signing was October 23rd.

Q: So was August 2007?

A: 2007, yeah --

Q: Okay.

A: -- yeah. Yeah.

Q: Okay. All right. Okay, one more -- we're going to do wa -- [tape break]

A: 2006, yeah.

Q2: An-Any time.

Q: Okay, this is a -- this is a photocopy of a letter from Manfred Rommel.

A: Manfred Rommel was the mayor in Stuttgart. When I used to go to Switzerland, Stuttgart and where I s -- wa-was in Switzerland was an hour and a half by train, so one time I sent him a couple of documents about his father and the Fourth Division and before I knew it, his assistant sent me an invitation when there was a meeting that Mr. Rommel would be able to s -- to meet me and say hello to me. So --

Q: Say who his father was.

A: His father was the general commanding the western front. At first he was commanding the Africa corps, where he got beaten by the Americans and the British and then he took over the -- the -- the east -- the western defense, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland. That was all under

his command, and he tried to do whatever e-equipment and men he had available. At the -- he always bragged that he is going to throw any invader back into the sea within 24 hours and we were afraid he might have power. But they didn't give him enough troops to really defend that coast, and Hitler had three or four Panther Divisions about a hundred miles away from the front, and he didn't release them the first or second day, and no general had the power to order them to come to the beach. So what really happened, the German command failed to realize that the allies are -- are going to be there to stay, and that the -- the tanks from the German army were sitting in the mi-middle of France someplace and they couldn't move. When they did start moving, the American Air Force came and put the hell out of them as they were traveling on a highway. It was so bad that they gave up and only traveled at night. And they -- when they finally reached the front, the Americans had enough anti-tank guns and everything to fight them. It was Rommel that I wrote to, that is the reason why his father had no chance. As a matter of fact, when I -- when I got the book from the Gaitling family about the history of the 12th infantry regiment, I sent it to Rommel with the remark, if he reads this he's going to know why his father could never win against the Americans. That must have impressed him so that he wanted to meet me. And it's -- we became friends and every so often he sent an nice --

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: Okay, now you said that you sent him a copy of Gaitling's --

A: Yeah, I sent him -- I sent him documents sometimes.

Q: Uh-huh. And you sent him a -- a draft of your book?

A: I sent him a draft of -- of s-something, yeah.

Q: And in this note he's writing back to you, thanking you.

A: Yeah, yeah, I -- I read the note.

Q: Okay.

A: Ready?

Q: Yep.

A: "Dear. Mr. Kleeman, Many thanks for your letter and the two manuscripts, which I have read with compassion and -- and pride. They are really indeed to be published. I was so impressed by your -- your letter from 204 that I quoted it in my last book. I send you a copy of the [indecipherable]. Write me again. Wishing you very much, your family, Sincerely yours, Manfred Rommel. My handwriting is very, very bad and sl-slow because of my Parkinson's Disease." He was very impress and he always admired that I was lucky to be part of the force that helped wipe out the German army and the German Nazi regime. He said, "Th-The landing in Normandy was a strategic success, and in the world history, a -- a turning point. You should be proud of contributing tha -- tha -- to this. With many green -- greetings, Manfred Rommel."

Q: That's quite extraordinary.

A: Huh?

Q: I think that's quite extraordinary that you got that letter from him.

A: Yeah. Th-Then I wrote him again in -- in -- in -- in 2-0 -- 2004. My daughters and I and the newspaper man from Germany, we traveled to Normandy to s -- to partake on a 60th anniversary. And there we -- we had the newspaper man from Germany, who did the driving and we went into -- into Normandy and we spent a -- a day at the beach, we ate lunch at the Café Roosevelt, and it was very exciting and very -- very much history involved. My daughters decided to take their shoes off and hang their feet into the water of the channel. They decided and tell me the water wasn't so cold. So I sent the story to Rommel and he sent an answer back, but it was cold on June the sixth, 1944. By that time he was still able to write the book and he mentioned this in his book, an-and we are very proud of it that he sent a [indecipherable] of his remarks that he described that I, as a Jew who left Germany in 1939 and were part of the force that started to defeat Germany. He was -- he was a wor -- a man of the world. He was really a historic mayor and very kind and of course he suffered. He was 16 years old when he had to take his father to the hospital where he was poisoned and lost his life. So this was his --

Q: So he was just a l --

A: -- an experience.

Q: -- just a little bit younger than you.

A: Pardon?

Q: He was just a little bit younger than you.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: A few years younger than you.

A: I said this was a great experience and the man had a lot of confidence and trust and he rebuilt the city of Stuttgart, it's a beautiful city today and I wish he wouldn't be so sick, otherwise I would have paid him another visit.

Q: Yeah. Well, thank you, thank you, those are wonderful memories.

A: Wonderful experience.

Q: Yeah. Well thank you so much for all of your time today.

A: You -- you have these pictures somewhere?

Q: Yes.

A: In a book.

Q: Yes, yeah.

A: Yeah, it's in a book.

End of Tape Eight

Conclusion of Interview