

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010
RG-50.030*0581

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Joseph Eaton, conducted by Judith Cohen and Steven Luckert on May 27, 2010 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

JOSEPH EATON

May 27, 2010

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial** interview with Dr. **Joseph Eaton**, conducted by **Judith Cohen** and **Steven Luckert** on May 27th, at the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**. Dr. **Eaton**, can you start by giving your first name as it appeared originally, as you were named in **Germany**, your name in **Germany** and why don't you give us the names of your immediate family as well?

Answer: All right. I was born as **Joseph Wexler** in **Nuremberg, Germany** in – not in a hospital, because it wasn't safe to go to hospital, if you could afford to have delivery at home. So I was born in **Luxfeld**(ph) three, across the park. My father was **Jacob Wexler**, and my mother **Flora Goldschmidt Wexler**. And I have three brothers, **Siegfried** was his first name, and later he changed it to **Shlomo. Martin** to **Moeshe**(ph) and **Herbert** to **Yitzhak**(ph). And I was born on September 28th, 1919. After the war, when there was a great shortage of food, and my father had to work very hard to get milk from peasants near **Nuremberg**, because you couldn't get enough for a baby.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your early life, pre-Nazi takeover? Life in the 20s, both your father's profession, family's religious affiliation, Jewish **communo**(ph) affiliation, schooling.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

A: My parents always had to rent a place. They did not own an apartment and they always looked for a place to rent near a park, so that it would be easy for the children to go there and play. They were sufficiently well off for my mother to have one or two household helps, because in those days you didn't have dishwashers, and you couldn't go to the gr-grocery store and get prepared food, so it was a lot more work to feed four children and a husband. My father was the first in his family to break away from the pattern of being a petty merchant selling a – running a store to provide clothing and dry goods. He was able to purchase a factory, manufacturing shaving brushes, something we don't use any more today. And he was married in 1912, shortly after the sinking of the **Titanic**. And so I still remember in our home, there was a memento to the pi – **Titanic**, because that was an event that apparently affected a lot of people. And shortly after he purchased the factory, World War II – World War I broke out, and he and his brothers – he had four brothers – three brothers – were drafted. And my father served in the German army for four years, and was very upset and resentful over the amount of anti-Semitism he experienced.

Q: Can you describe what sort of anti-Semitism he noticed?

A: Well – well, what I do remember, his telling me about the complaint that too many Jews were trying to get out of serving in the army. So, the German government decided to have a census of how many Jews were serving in the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

German army. When the findings were that the Jews were overrepresented in the army, the results were not published, not until the late 20s. But – so he was drafted as a private and ended his service as a private, as did most Jews. I mean, if you were a physician or a dentist, you might become an officer, but by and large Jews were not considered qualified to be in combat, and so he spent his period of time in the transportation system, which meant looking after horses, because that was the main vehicle transportation. So, I remember these things, I'm sure, not when I was – before going to primary school. But I had always someone, a – a caretaker, looking after the smaller children, or taking us to an aunt and uncle's house, who had a child my age. So this is how I lived in **Nuremberg**, but I do not recall having any non-Jewish German friends.

Q: What sort of school did you attend?

A: What?

Q: What sort of elementary school did you attend?

A: Well, I went to a parochial school, of which – of the Jewish community. We lived there, nearby, walking distance, and I do remember being attacked sometimes by other kids, ger – who didn't like Jewish kids, and you had to fight. And so I went to this school, which was not a very good school; we had, I would say, very poor teachers. And I was kind of a rebellious, problematic child. I would talk back to the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

teachers sometimes. And at one point, a teacher called me a donkey. And so I said, well if I am a donkey, you are a monkey. And the teacher was so upset. And finally my parents bribed me to apologize, even though I – they agreed I – it was justified for me to talk back. But as soon as – after four years, I went to high school, gymnasium as in – they call it in German. And in the middle of that year, that was in 1933, the government decided that no Jewish child should be allowed to go to a gymnasium, and so I was notified that I could not continue, in 1934.

Q: Let me step back a little bit. Before '33, how aware of you what – were you of the political unrest that was going on in **Nuremberg**? Did you witness any political rallies?

A: Well, strange is, I do remember being very interested in what was going on, and reading the newspapers. Now, of course, I had two older brothers, who were educationally very active, so I would say at age eight and nine, I was very much aware of elections, and the propaganda in elections and the Nazi party, and the Nationalists, who were close to the Nazis. So certainly I have very vivid memories of 1932 and 1933. But I do not recall ever feeling frightened.

Q: When the results of the plebiscite were announced in '32, and they announced that **Hitler** had won, what was the immediate reaction in your family? Did people take it seriously?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

A: Well, my father at that point lost his job, because the company for which he worked – he had to give up his business because of the depression. It was based in – a lot on export of shaving brushes to other European countries, and he had traveled a great deal to different countries, and as a result I became a stamp collector. But he lost his business because in the depression there just wasn't enough, so he worked for a company selling their shaving brushes. And he lost the job. And I remember in 19 – you know, in January and February 1933, when **Hitler** came into power, that this was pretty bad, but we didn't think it was a catastrophe. It wouldn't last, after all, the Nazi party was not a majority, but close to it. And I remember my father, for example, printing advertisements to announce that he was making men's suits to – for measure. He hired tailors to do the work, and he would find customers and take their measurements and sell tailor made clothing, which in those days was a very common thing, I mean, you didn't have the mass production. And so he had advertisements printed, and when I was out of school or had a day off, I would take these ads and put them into mailboxes. My first job. So he, even though there was a Nazi boycott, he continued to try and sell, although gradually the business stopped, because it was dangerous and counterproductive for Germans to do business with any Jew. So, in 1934 - '35, he effectively ceased having an income.

Q: Now, did you witness any of the **Nuremberg** rallies in the first year?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

A: No, no I – I was aware of them. I was aware of the **Stürmer** newspaper, that came out every week, but the Jewish youth groups to which I belonged, a religious Zionist group called **Esba**(ph) continued to function. We went on hiking trips and – and at that time, while I do remember the boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1st, 1933, being surprised how many businesses were Jewish. So this – a friend walking around the city, I said, good God, these are Jew – all Jewish, because they were being boycotted, but I wasn't have a – didn't have a sense of fear. And once on a hike, a group of Nazi **SS** troops told us we had to break up camp and go back home. But again, no sense of fear that anything would happen to me. So, I was spared the frightening experiences of Jews after 1937 - '38, when there was a great deal of physical abuse. There were some Jews arrested in '33, and a few were killed in concentration camps, but I didn't – my family didn't know any of them, so that I would say – when I left **Germany** I never had experienced the sense of physical fear, because that came later.

Q: Let me go back, when you mentioned that you were expelled from school, can you sort of describe that day, how you found out that you were no longer allowed to attend the gymnasium, how you filled up your days afterwards?

A: Well, that is interesting. In high school, there was a complete shift, because since I – I was a fairly good student, very good student in fact, but had very bad

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

relationships with the teachers, who found that I asked too many questions and you know, there were all kinds of religious instruction and I wasn't quite sure, and asked questions. So, we had problems. So when I went to high school, everything changed. I was a good student, the student – the teachers liked me. When the teachers ran out of booklets for examinations, he would send me to a store nearby to pick them up. And I remember one time he says, oh you can't go to this store, because it's owned by a Jew, you have to go to that store. I didn't like that, but – I was well regarded in the school, and one day found out that – that all – not only I, but other Jewish children had to leave, and – well, that's politics. The Jewish community – by that time I lived in **Berlin**, my family had moved to **Berlin**, and there they had a very good Jewish school, whose teachers, many of them were college professors who had lost their jobs, who later on sometimes became quite famous individually, as scholars in **Israel** or in the **United States**. So, I went for one year to a Jewish high school in the suburb of **Berlin** called **Grünwald**, from which, by the way, the Jews of **Berlin** were deported from that place. And so I would say I did not, as I said, I – I knew what was going on, because I listened to the news, and read the newspapers and talked to friends about what was happening.

Q2: Can I just interject a question? **Nuremberg** had the odious distinction of having **Julius Streicher** as the **gauleiter**, the Nazi leader of – of **Franconia**, and also the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

publisher of “**Der Stürmer**,” and I was just wondering, you know, about how visible was “**Der Stürmer**” –

A: Very visible.

Q: – and – and what kind of response did it generate among –

A: I mean, since I didn’t have any German friends – I mean, we had a German maid, two German maids, we never talked about that. I didn’t talk to German – non-Jewish German kids. You read the fr – crazy, outrageous stories every week. I mean, I didn’t buy the paper, but I looked at the newsstand, at the front page. And well, this is Nazi, this is – you s – you s – you grew up, you lived with this as part of the realities of life. Later on when I studied the history of my family, prior ge – generations also had to sort of take the fact that there was anti-Semitism for granted, the way minorities today live in so many countries where there is governmentally supported discrimination. But, we talked about it at home, and I think my parents decided, because of the history of all this, that there was no future for us in **Germany**, as early as 1933. Whereas so many German Jews thought this would pass the way it had always passed, and they delayed making a decision to leave.

Q: Okay, let’s talk about the decision to emigrate. Now, who is the first members of your family to leave **Germany**, and what prompted them to go where they did, and

–

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

A: Well, since my father had to go – went bankrupt – bankrupt when the factory could no longer sell enough, we didn't have the financial means to get an immigration visa from [indecipherable] countries, because in the early 30s there was a depression all over the world. Nobody wanted immigrants. It was very difficult to get visas, so it became clear that it would be very unlikely to be able to emigrate. We actually had distant relatives in the **United States** who emigrated in the 19th century, but my father didn't know about them, because they were, you know, three or four generations back. So my two older brothers decided not to have an academic career, but to become **Halutzim** or physical laborers and go to **Palestine**. And they succeeded.

Q: And what year was that?

A: '35 and '36. And there was an opportunity for children to come to the **United States** under a special program to finish school, and then return home, hopefully. And my parent decided, with much discussion in – within the larger family, to send my younger brother, who was 12, and me, who was 14 to the **United States** under this program where, in foster homes, we would finish our education. And they were able to emigrate to **Holland**.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about this program. Can you – a-actually want to go in two different directions, cause I want to talk about your parents' emigration to **Holland**.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

But first, can you describe the program that you were under; who subsidized it, was this through the Jewish community, was it general, what political ramifications were there?

A: Well, we all know historically that President **Roosevelt** took very little action to help the Jews of **Germany**. He had a congress that was not willing to change immigration laws. And within the Department of State, and in **Canada** as well, the bureaucracy felt, whatever immigrants we get, we don't need Jews. And so they made it especially difficult for Jews to get papers, unless they had very good connections in the **U.S.** and **Canada**. But, under pressure, **Roosevelt** agreed to commit, I don't know how many, whether it was 2,000 or 20,000 children from **Germany** to come to the **United States** under a guarantee of the Jewish community that they would not become a burden to the welfare system. It was called the German Jewish Children's Aid Society. And I think my younger brother was on the first group, and I came a week later on the second group –

Q: What year and month was that?

A: – traveling on the **S.S. Harding**. And while it was upsetting, I – I felt, and my parents reinforced this, this was a temporary thing, and that we would be reunited after they got out of the country. And so I landed the day before Thanksgiving of 1934, in **New York**, and was temporarily picked up to the home of one of the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

officers of the German Jewish Children's Society, a attorney, **John L. Bernstein**.

And then later on to – went to another foster home.

Q: I want to come back later and ask you about what it was like living in the **United States** without parents, but why don't we jump over to your parents. After you and your siblings all left, where did they go?

A: Well, actually, my parents' marriage was – did not come – it sort of deteriorated as he lost his business. My mother was an intellectual. He was interested in things, but really did not share her intellectual interests. And so the marriage was not a good marriage, but I didn't know about that. My older brothers did, and they did divorce and emigrated to **Holland** separately. And my father found another girlfriend and they emigrated together, also to **Amsterdam**. So it was a congenial divorce. There wasn't much to argue about in 1936, although emotionally this was a very difficult thing for my mother. But she got a good deal of support from her family and her sisters. So – however, there was a tremendous amount of correspondence between members of the family. I have letters, about this many, with my parents, my mother, my father, my brothers and we kept the letters. So, over the years, my brothers gave me the letters, because I was the only one in the family who showed interest, and of course, the only one who could read German. So I have a tremendous collection of letters, and I have to decide what to do with

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

them, because I don't think I have the time right now to go through them. But they present a great deal of day to day information of how a normal refugee family dealt with the realities of emigration, adjustment, what – interrelationships. Today this would never happen. People might communicate by email, but in those days, letter writing was the only means of communication. And it meant having – spending money on postage, which for my parents was not easy. So, most of the letters, th-the – every inch of the paper was filled with words. In other words, you didn't have any margins, to save money.

Q: What was – how late were you able to keep up the correspondence?

A: Til 1941. Til **Germany** and the **United States** declared war, since the **U.S.** was – we c – so we couldn't – I have letters from '40 and '41 from **Holland**. And we didn't have the money to telephone. I didn't have the money, and they didn't have the money, because in those days, to make a long distance call was very expensive.

Q: Let me – oh –

Q2: What did your parents do when they got to the **Netherlands**?

A: Well, my mother took care of elderly people who needed some support. So she was basically a health aide of elderly people, and they were all deported, of course, after the Nazis came, although my mother was able to escape to a village, and hid there for a while until a local Nazi gave her away, and they arrested her. So the –

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

my father learned dry cleaning, he took a course in **Amsterdam** on how to dry clean. And even though they had no permit, no working permit, but to be a household aide, you really didn't need a permit. That's – it's the kind of job that nobody wanted, so my mother could work. And my father was doing busin – I guess, also extra-legally, but the Dutch apparently didn't enforce the restrictions with such efficiency, and – I mean, they didn't have any – much money and they may even have gi – been given some support by the Jewish community in **Amsterdam**, but I don't know those details. They didn't write about it, and I didn't ask about it. Okay.

Q: I want to ask you now, what it was like for a young boy, 14 years old I remember, to live with a foster family that he had never met before, and what was your adjustment learning English, learning a new educational system, learning a new family.

A: Well, I didn't feel really comfortable in any of the homes, but felt I had to – I was grateful, and I had to be accommodative. The first fast – foster home family were – was a wealthy family living on **Central Park West** in **New York City** in a big apartment. They had three daughters. And so they felt having a boy in the family would be a good idea. But they were very Orthodox, and I found myself at that time becoming more and more estranged to Orthodoxy, and they noticed that,

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

so I was moved to another family, the son of the Rabbi **de Sola Pool**, the head of **Shearith Israel** of the Sephardic synagogue in **New York City**, who was a sort of son of a famous father who wasn't doing quite so well, so it was difficult for him. He was a salesperson for different companies, but never quite made it in the corporate world, and they had one son, a little younger than I, and – almost the same age, and that created problems, because he was doing okay in school, but I was academically outstanding. And so I think that created problems for **Richard Mindas**(ph). I didn't have any problems with him, but we didn't become close. And – but I went first to a **New York** school, the **Jefferson** High School in **Brooklyn**. And there, fortunately, they had a good speech department. So the speech therapist took an interest in me, and helped me to learn to speak English properly. So I got a lot of special instruction, and my capacity to speak English and to spell and so on, developed rather quickly, so that when later on, before I graduated, I actually got better grades in English than most of my fellow students, because I had to learn the language and therefore was more careful with spelling. So actually, I graduated from **White Plains** High School at the age of 16, because I got credit by taking examinations in world history and European history. I had to learn American history, I had to learn English, but math and geography, I passed the Regents Exams, so that I graduated early and went to college at the age of 16.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

Q: And who paid for your college? Was the German children's aid still supporting you at this point?

A: I first went to a free – to the **New York City's** high s – City College, because that was free. But after one year got a scholarship to go to **Cornell**. And I also got a scholarship for maintenance from – through the German Jewish Children's Aid from someone of the **Woberg**(ph) family. Because one of their daughters who was active in the Zionist movement met me and I was so knowledgeable about what was going on in the **Middle East**, she decided to get the family to send me to **Cornell**. And I also met the president of **Hadassah**, because her son went to a summer camp to which I was invited. So that I had connections, through my knowledge of what was going on in the Jewish world. I did a lot of reading. I had a nephew by marriage of my father, who was a professor at the theological seminary. So I had contacts with the academic world at the age of 15 and 16 and 17 that resulted in my having contacts among the Jewish leadership elite, including Rabbi **Pool**, whose wife also became president of **Hadassah**. And at one point I was invited by Justice **Brandeis** to meet with him in his home here in **Washington**, because he was interested in cooperative farming and kibbutzim. And by that time I had a job to do research in that field.

Q: What were you studying at **Cornell**?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

A: At **Cornell**, I first thought of becoming a – a physician who was taking care of animals, I –

Q: A veterinarian?

A: A what?

Q: A veterinarian?

A: A veterinarian. I really had very poor advice, in terms of making choices. I had no one to talk to. But when I got to **Cornell** and took a course in animal husbandry, I came to the dec – quickly to the decision that I was not the right person to help cows and horses deliver their offspring. And also, I took a course in rural sociology. And there I wrote a term paper on the kibbutz movement, simply from what you read in the newspapers and knew from my brothers in **Israel**. And the professor liked the paper so much – he happened to be the editor of rural sociology, so it got published. So at – as a junior at **Cornell**, I was a pub – I had a publication in a – in – in a well-known journal, and that made a big difference in my subsequent career. And that's how Justice **Brandeis** heard about me and whose interest in **Palestine** and its economic development was a private, but very great interest. And so I think, through Mrs. **Epstein**, somehow he heard about me and he invited me to come to see him on a Sunday morning.

Q: What was your impression of him?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

A: Well, he obviously knew an awful lot, and I really didn't have enough of understanding of the significance of being invited by a member of the Supreme Court, to fully be amazed at this – you know, this was, for me, a normal thing that happens.

Q: [indecipherable] I'm trying to do the math. You came to the **United States** at 14, you graduated at 16, so we're talking now – it's about '39 – '40?

A: That's right, I gradu – graduated in 1940.

Q: And I want to ask you, how aware were you of what was going on back in **Europe**? What sort of news were you getting about the start of World War II, how much news was filtering?

A: I was very much aware, I mean, reading Eng-English, being able to read in German, my parents wouldn't – would write once or twice a week. I would write back, not often, make copies of my letters, so I – my letter writings not only have their letters, but my responses. And much of that is also true of my brothers. So, even correspondence with my grandmother, who remained in **Frankfurt** because she didn't think the Nazis would bother an older lady, and so she was not willing to leave the country when everybody else left. She had a nice home, and so on. So I was very much aware. I would say I was more aware of what was going in **Europe**

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

than most people, and probably as much aware of what was going on as my teachers.

Q: And was there any mobilization on the part of the American Jewish community at this point, in '39, after the invasion of **Poland**, for relief efforts, that you saw?

A: Well, I was aware of the tremendous sense of frustration of the American Jewish community. But on the other hand, I was aware of the complexities of the leadership. I mean, like Rabbi **Wise**, who had good relationship with **Roosevelt**, and so he had to be very careful in open criticism of the Department of State. I was aware of the American Jewish committee and their ambivalence about being too supportive of the Zionists, because after all, we Jews are religion rather than a nationality, and I was very much identified with the idea that Jews are both a religion and a nationality. And so I would say I had a quite advanced knowledge, not only what was going on in the **U.S.** or in **Germany**, or in much of the rest of **Europe**, what was going on in the **Soviet Union**. When I was at **Cornell**, there was a pretty active communist youth group, and I was among the Jewish kids who were very much opposed to the **Soviet Union**, because of – even though they seemed to be wi – quite progressive, they were a dictatorship. And so I was active in the **Hillel** Society and that group was very much opposed to the **Soviet Union**, whereas there

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

were a lot of – not a lot, but there was a sufficiently active group of students at **Cornell** that felt that the **Soviet Union** had the solution to mankind's future.

Q: What sort of activities was your group, the Zionist group at **Hillel** doing?

A: Well, first of all, we were very critical of the **Soviet Union**; of its dictatorship, the concentration camps, the labor camps, **Stalin**. We did not think they are progressive. There were lots of arguments. And so, I had friends among the anti-communists, but you know, I did become a Republican as a result, but I was politically active, and one of my friends was a Iraqi Jew. The only Jew ever sent by the Iraqi government, on a scholarship of the government. They every year sent over some students to get an American degree, and **Mayer(ph) Sofaya(ph)** was the only one who was Jewish who they ever selected. And so we became very friendly, and through him I learned a lot of what was going through the Arab world, and I did – was invited to his wedding in **Egypt** in 1945, and actually went to the wedding. I didn't get there on time, but I actually met him in **Cairo**, in – at the end of 1945, and that another interesting story, how knowing him enabled me to come to **Palestine** in 1945.

Q: We'll get to that. Now, I just want to check, your official status at this point is you're still a German citizen, or were you officially stateless?

A: No, I was a German citizen.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
May 27, 2010

Q: And so how did the **United States'** entry into World War II, let's go to **Pearl Harbor**, what were the ramifications for you?

A: Well, you have to keep in mind that when I went to graduate school, I was accepted at the school of social work ka – at **Chicago University**. And in the first semester, where I had a job selling clothes in a men's clothing store, I suddenly was offered a job in **New York City** to set up a research institute on cooperative farming. So I left **Chicago**, and found myself at the age of 21, or – **[file break]**

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: This is the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** with **Joseph Eaton**, conducted by **Judith Cohen** on August 31st – August first in **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**. It's a continuation of the interview begun at the Holocaust Museum in June. Okay, when we left off with the previous interview, you had finished telling us about your experiences at **Cornell** and were just beginning your graduate school and about to enter the army. So let's start with after you left **Cornell** and began graduate school in **Chicago**.

A: After I graduated from **Cornell**, I had been advised by a professor who **Leonard Katrow**(ph), who was very friendly towards me and invited me to his home many times, he advised me not to go into academia, because he said Jews didn't have much of a chance. And that it would be better off to study the applications of sociology, so I applied to a school of social work at the University of **Chicago**, which at that time was well regarded, and had a sociological orientation, rather than a psychiatric orientation. And while I was there, I received a phone call from **New York**, from **Edward A. Newman**, a wealthy Jewish banker, asking me if I were interested in conducting a study of cooperative farming in the **United States**, what our experiences were in that field, because the – **Henry Wallace**, either secretary of agriculture or vice-president at – I think he had just stopped being vice-president, **Truman** had been appointed – was very interested in possibly expanding

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

cooperative farming in the **United States** as a way of helping landless farm workers to become owners, and they were particularly interested in moshavim, because one of the sons of **Henry Wallace** had been in **Israel** for a summer, and reported about kibbutzim and moshavim. So **Edward Newman**, who knew **Henry Wallace**, decided to fund a study. And the reason he called me is a term paper of mine on kibbutzim in the junior year had gotten published in a journal. And so, I looked like being an expert in an area where nobody else was really better informed. Not that I really was an expert, because I didn't speak Hebrew and had never lived in **Israel**. So I decided to accept the job and after one quarter at the end of December, went to **New York** to start the job. The study was – had to have a organizational sponsorship, and so we set up the rules [indecipherable] institute, and with the help of **Henry Wallace**, I was able to recruit a board of directors, who were very, very prominent. Some of them were suggested by Justice **Brandeis**, who heard about the study and invited me to his home on a Sunday morning to tell him what was happening in the cooperative farming field, especially **Palestine**. He obviously continued to have a significant influence and interest, and indeed, had been responsible for the book by **Walter C. Loudermilk**, the commissioner of social si – the commissioner of conservation in the department of agriculture, who had made a study of why is it that in the **Middle East**, there is such incredible poverty, when at

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

one time in their history, it was the most advanced and prosperous area? And he went by car from **Morocco**, all the way to **Iraq** and **Turkey** and then wrote a book in which he pointed out that the neglect and the poverty was due to the way the social structure was operating under **Islam**, and the only bright light was the Jewish settlements in **Palestine**. And he praised them and pointed out the modern agricultural methods and this – the green line already existed in 1940 when – in '41. And when **Henry Wallace** got the report, he apparently called **Brandeis** and told him, you should really look at this. And **Brandeis** got someone, a woman, to edit the report, publish it as a book called, "**The Land of Promise**," and the book was distributed to every member of Congress. And so, the fact that I was making the study was obviously of interest to **Brandeis**. So suddenly, as a refugee, I felt myself interacting with people in the so – conservation service, the agricultural extension service, and wherever I went to study cooperative farming experiences in the **United States**, I had superb cooperation.

Q: In this period, when you met **Brandeis**, and you're going around looking at the farms, did anybody ever question the fact that you were a refugee, and ask you about –

A: No, no. Neither they, or any of the officials, very high officials, I mean, you know, third level subcabinet officers, and the – the **U.S.** government, under **Henry**

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Wallace had begun cooperative farms by purchasing large plantations that were going bankrupt, especially in the south, and then hiring farm managers and recruiting impoverished farm laborers, put them on the land. Each – the land was owned cooperatively by the farm. They didn't know much about how to run a farm, so they built a large farm and equipment for large machinery, and the farm manager began to teach the workers and gradually they took more and more responsibility for running the farm. And so I s-studied the 27 experimental areas, traveling all over the **United States**.

Q: And how long did you stay with this job?

A: Well, until I was drafted. In the middle of the study, I was drafted. I had part of a manuscript with me. I also visited some of the religious collective farms, like the Amish and **Amana** colonies in **Iowa**, which were communistic [indecipherable]. But before I finished, I was drafted, but I somehow managed to finish my report and **Harper** Brothers decided to publish the report as a book, calling it, "**Exploring Tomorrow's Agriculture**." So after, when I was in basic training at **Fort Dix, New Jersey** –

Q: And what year and month was that?

A: That was 1943. I – I went in the army '42, but in basic training. I think it was '43 the book was published. And I was a private being trained to be a first aid enlisted

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

man to deal with injured people in the battlefield. When a package arrived, and I immediately knew when it was brought in by the first sergeant that this was not food from some friend or relative. But he made me open it up, and it was a book. And he looked at this and says, he expected some food and candy that could be distributed – he said, did you write this? I said yes. He said, well, if you can write so well, let's see how well you are in cleaning pots. So everybody laughed and for one week I had sweep – special duty in the kitchen, cleaning these very large pots, some of them so large that you had to go into the pot to clean it.

Q: Let me ask two questions; one is, do you attribute his response just to the fact that he was disappointed that there was no food, or do you think any of this was anti-Semitic, or anti-intellectual?

A: I don't think so. I don't think there was – I experienced no discrimination or reference to my refugee status. First of all, I spoke English extremely well. I did better on many tests, including sharpshooting. I was not outstanding, but you know, did adequately. So the – within the army, I did not experience any anti-foreignism, or anti-Semitism.

Q: And, let me ask a different question. What name were you going by at this point, and can you talk about change of name?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: My brothers and I had changed our name in 1940. After the war had begun, and my brothers, one of them was in the British Army and the other in the **Haganah** in **Israel**, and people in **Israel** anyhow wanted – didn't want German names. But one of the special problems we faced is that our parents were living in **Amsterdam**, and if we were taken prisoner, this might – we were worried that this could cause problems for them as parents of traitors, because we were obviously fighting against the Fatherland. So we decided to change our name and adopted a name that was suggested by Rabbi **de Sola Pool**, and – whom – whom I knew, because his wife was president of **Hadassah**. And I was one of the people she became interested in because there weren't many young Americans who showed much interest and real knowledge about Zionism and **Israel**, which I did because I had been very active in **Germany**, even though I was only 14. So, he was very helpful, and he ultimately married **Helen** and me, even though we were not Sephardim. So, at any rate, this is how, professionally, I finished a book which **Columbia** University accepted as my dissertation. Because at **Columbia** you had to publish your dissertation, and here I had a book published by **Harper** brothers. So my dissertation was approved before I had taken more than one course in sociology at **Columbia**. So when I came back from the army, I had to take all the courses and pass examination about substance, but I didn't have to write a dissertation.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: Okay, so now let's go back to **Fort Dix**, and you're working there, training to be someta – medic, and you're going by the name of **Eaton** at this point. And then what happens?

A: Well, in **Fort Dix**, when we finished our basic training, I was a sort of middle range effective first aid man, because not being very tall, I had problems carrying these – the what do you call – you carry human beings on – that are injured on a –

Q: Stretchers?

A: On a what?

Q: Stretchers, or –

A: On stretcher, yeah, one stretcher.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, you had to carry the stretcher and – and on battlefields you had to be – keep your head down and so on. So you had to carry, you didn't do it by yourself, two people had to carry a stretcher. But most people preferred others to work with them than me, because I wasn't as strong as many other soldiers. So, instead of being sent to a field, to a division, I ended up at a military hospital in **Camp Rucker, Alabama**, as a clerk. And it looked like my future would be to be a clerk in a military hospital, and I was very well regarded, because I was among the relatively few people who could handle medical records, with all their special

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

words, and being able to identify diagnoses and to spell them properly. So I was – my commanding officer thought very well of me. It might even result in a promotion to private first class, but before that happened, he got a notice from **Washington** that I was being transferred.

Q: Let me just interject one question, and then we'll talk about the transfer. What was your official citizenship status at this point?

A: I was an enemy alien, and I was drafted as an enemy alien. And as an enemy alien, I was obviously under **FBI** surveillance. I know this because in 1942 I received a postcard from **Sweden**, from an aunt, saying that they needed money so that they might be able to get a visa to **Ecuador** for my mother. And they didn't have money, could I raise 12,000 dollars? And within two days or so after I got the postcard, the **FBI** came to my door and asked me if I had sent any money, pointing out to me that this was trading with the enemy. Well, I didn't have any money, I didn't know anybody I could get 12,000 dollars from. But I know, obviously my mail was being monitored. And, you know, the – they did say to me, it's just as well you didn't send them any money, because this is just a scam, as far as we know. But my mail was being censored, without ever being notified.

Q: So, now as an enemy alien, you're in the army –

A: Yes.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: – and –

A: So we're as – but the fact that I was drafted, this didn't seem to bother anybody. So it might have meant that I might have been promoted more quickly, that could be a factor, because I was ap – still a private after s-several months in a really important position in the hospital. In other words, I was in charge of the night shift, and when people came in, they depended on me to keep the records straight, and that had been, apparently, a real problem, simply because it wasn't always easy to get the right people to do the job. Well educated people usually were assigned to other jobs.

Q: And then why did you leave this job?

A: So, what happened, and I only learned that later, is that when you're drafted – in World War II, the army had adopted the **IBM** technology to keep personnel records, so that every soldier, when he was drafted, had – was interviewed in great detail about their background, and all of that was put on **IBM** cards. And in 1942, or was it f – or early '43, I'm not sure exactly, the **U.S.** government had decided that when we liberate **France**, the **U.S.** would need to govern **France**. **Roosevelt** did not trust **de Gaulle**, whom he regarded as an extreme nationalist who would undermine the recovery of **Europe**, as happened in wor – after World War I, when the French were – insisted on the **Versailles** treaty. So, he decided he wasn't going to let the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

free French govern **France**, but there would be a **U.S.** military government of **France**, then there would be free election, and let the French decide whether they want **de Gaulle** or somebody else. So in preparation for the liberation of **France**, they were going to train a cadre of people to govern **France**. And even though I didn't know French, but becu – my card fell out and they decided I was one of these people, so suddenly I was transferred from Camp **Rucker, Alabama** to **Queens College, New York**, to learn how to be one of the military government staff. French economics, French history, French law. The f – the – the taxation system and so on, so for six months I learned a great deal about **France**, and learned enough French so I could go to **Columbia** and pass my French language exam, because at **Columbia** you had to have two foreign languages if you wanted a **PhD**. They accepted my German and I passed the French exam, I learned enough. And we were about ready to be shipped over to **England** to work with the English, who had reluctantly accepted the policy of **Roosevelt**, when **Roosevelt** and **Churchill** met in **Casablanca**. And there **Churchill** convinced **Roosevelt** that the free French, **de Gaulle** should govern the occupied **France**, that with all the problems that **de Gaulle** might create, it was better than the English and Americans tr – doing the job. So overnight, about 10,000 bright American soldiers became surplus, and had to be reassigned, and our – overnight, our program was finished. I mean, you know,

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

when you come to think of it, right in the middle of it, there was no longer any need to train people to govern French towns and villages. And most of the trainees were reassigned to different divisions. Many military units had a shortage of people with high **IQs**. And this was an opportunity for the army to infuse more people with high **IQs**. But a few were given a choice, because the army was trying to fill some special jobs. And one of them was a unit that would be dropped to sabotage German facilities, dropped over **Germany**. And so I was interviewed and told that that was an opportunity for me, but they warned me that the chances of surviving were less than 50 percent, and what would be involved. And not that I was particularly heroic and wanting such a – a job, but I didn't feel as a Jew I could say no, so I – I said yes, when I really wa – wished I didn't have to say yes. So, as a result, I was sent to Camp **Ritchie**, the **U.S.** intelligence training area near **Washington, D.C.**

Q: Can you tell me about the type of training you got at Camp **Ritchie**, and who the other soldiers were who you met there?

A: Well, shortly after I arrived at Camp **Ritchie** it became clear the govern – the army had decided that the program of dropping people didn't work, the Germans were too well organized. So actually I found myself attached to another unit, the psychological warfare division of the **U.S. Army**.

Q: Now –

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: – and that psychological warfare division had very interesting responsibilities of providing intelligence at the division, as well as at the supreme headquarter level.

Q: I want to talk in detail about what you did in **PSYOPS**, but can you first tell me about who the other people were in your – in the division and in your unit? What types of people were recruited for this work?

A: In the psychological warfare division, the key person was a Austrian named Captain **Hans Harber(ph)**, and he had become important because he – he married the daughter of – the father of **Ted Kennedy** and the other **Kennedys**, who had been ambassador to **Great Britain**. The way **Hans Harber(ph)**, who was himself a refugee from **Austria** – he became extremely well-known because of his personal history. **Harbie(ph)** was the son of a Hungarian Jew named **Baeckeshee(ph)**, who edited the scandal sheet of **Budapest**, and who had shot himself in the foot in World War I, so he wouldn't have to serve. And **Hans** had been very ashamed of his father when the war broke out in – World War II, in '39, he signed up in the Foreign Legion and was taken prisoner by the Germans and escaped, and wrote a book about the whole situation; his service, his family, and it became a best seller. So this is how, because of the book, he was invited to lecture all over the country and **Europe**, and this is how he met his future wife. And then he signed up in the American army, and he dising – distinguished himself in **North Africa**. He was a

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

journalist who had studied the history of **Hitler** and his family. So he was appointed to head the psychological warfare units, and was regarded by top level executives as a intelligent, sophisticated analyst of what was going on in **Europe**.

Q: Now, before you could b – enter psy – the **PSYOPS** division, did you have to undergo any security clearances, any other special exams?

A: If I did, they h-had all the information about me, so I – I would – I do not recall. My hunch is they did make the security clearance.

Q: And what sort of special training did they give you at Camp **Ritchie**?

A: Well, the training we got was a a-analysis of how the German army was structured; tactically, strategically, chains of command. We studied the German propaganda techniques. We studied the British American policies that **Harber**(ph) had worked out with the British, which contrasted to the **Hollywood** approach, that at the beginning had been kind of adopted, a kind of advertising that we have now, in which you oftentime make claims that are not – that are misleading. The British had decided before **Dunkirk**, that the only way they could win in **Europe** is to adopt a policy of always telling the truth. So at **Dunkirk** they reported their defeat, the problems of evacuating everybody, the losses, and they broadcast these facts to the Germans over **BBC**, and the French and so on. And you know what, they were facing a tremendous loss, had the Germans had succeeded, and continued this

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

policy and psychological warfare had adopted the policy of not using propaganda, they – you know, the way Americans advertise.

Q: And how did they define your mission? Did you have a mission statement?

A: The mission statement was to get the Germans as – first of all, to believe in what they were being told by the U.S. and by the British, and second, to get the Germans to question their regime, on the basis of what was difficult for the Germans. In other words, we'd – we – to simply say the Germans were unfair and unjust and so on, wasn't going to work, because they felt that **Germany**, in order to survive, had to do some terrible things, that's war. We had to focus on inconsistencies in German policies from the point of view of the German public and the differentiation between what was good for the general public, and what was good to the me – for the maintenance of the regime.

Q: And did you begin any of the actual work while you were still in the **United States** –

A: Yes.

Q: – or was this all pre –

A: We – we wrote leaflets to be dropped.

Q: While you were in Camp **Ritchie**?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: While we da – we had to find our way blind, men left all by ourselves somewhere in – in the area. We had to write reports to headquarters. It turned out later on, the unit I was attached to was directly attached to **Eisenhower's** supreme headquarters, so we were reporting directly. **Ha-Ha-Harber**(ph) obviously was given that job, and so the 10 people he had selected automatically got jobs that had actually impact on public policy.

Q: And when did your unit ship out to **Europe**?

A: We shipped out in '43, and were sent to **London**, there to work with the British and get trained for British American cooperation. We had – that time we had not yet attacked **Europe** at **Omaha Beach**, but we were being readied for that event. We knew that sooner or later we would invade **Europe**, but of course we didn't know when it would happen. But that was our training. And especially writing reports, working with British – actually, we were being investigated carefully by British intelligence. They didn't trust – and I learned later that the Americans, our particular unit was sent to a villa in the outskirts of **London**, which was very comfortable, but of course the blitz was going on. Any time you got hit by a bomb, that was it, a whole block would be wiped out by one bomb. And – but the villas were run by women – British women soldiers, who did – who fed us, who looked after our clothes, who woke us up in the morning, who made sure that we had, you

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

know, were properly fed and had all the comforts. What we didn't realize, that they also were carefully making notes on all of us, and had conversations. Their job was to make sure that we would be able to function in a proper fashion. And then, about five weeks after the invasion of **France**, we landed at **Omaha Beach** at a time when it was no longer dangerous, because actually, American troops had liberated **Paris**. So we landed and there was a bus waiting, and we drove directly to **Paris**.

Q: Now, won't you tell me about what your day to day work was? And I know that you were writing leaflets, but what was the source of information, how did you get the information that you we – based on your reports, and how did you decide what went into the reports that you were writing?

A: Well, the leaflets had to appeal to Germans. So what we did is we looked at the tactical situation, and then presented it to the Germans as this is what is happening in the battlefields. And giving them facts about what was going on, which by 1940 – late 1943 - 1944 was no longer entirely favorable to the Germans. I mean, we were still incurring losses, but we were beginning – you know, in **Africa** we actually were able to defeat **Rommel** and prevent the capture of **Egypt**. So, depending on what happened that day, we would write a leaflet, and then we would think of some other things that might make Germans question the policies of their government.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: And how independent were you in terms of what you put in? Who had to approve these leaflets?

A: The 10 men working in teams of one or two or thr – not more than that, would prepare a leaflet, or a news broadcast, and they would be reviewed by Captain **Harber**(ph). And he had the authority to say yes or no. There was a colonel, but the colonel was somebody who had come from the broadcasting industry, who worked well with **Harber**(ph), but really **Harber**(ph) was the authority, as somebody who understood what was going on in **Europe**.

Q: And how did you disseminate these leaflets once you wrote them?

A: Well, we did nothing, they were just – they were just exercises. The – I think at times – no, I don't think, I know at times our products were shown to high officials, probably **Patton** and **Bradley** and **Eisenhower**, to give them an idea what psychological w-warfare we'd be doing. But it was all practice.

Q: So none of these ever made it to **Germany**, or –

A: I don't know. They – they may very well have been dropped. Certainly I knew that once we were at Radio **Luxembourg**, everything we did was being dropped. I don't know whether, before we actually occupied **Luxembourg**, and Radio **Luxembourg**, and operated from there, whether the British had decided that simply it was enough to have the **BBC**, simply because to drop leaflets meant to use air

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

power, and every plane we could spare was being used to bomb. So I sort of doubt that they would drop leaflets, when we had no capacity to occupy, to get Germans to surrender, and so on. So I'm not sure that – there may have been some tactical use used in the radio brod – broadcast, but – but we didn't get that kind of feedback. But I doubt very much that we dropped any leaflets before we were in a capacity to take prisoners.

Q: So when did your unit shift from **Paris** to **Luxembourg**, and what was the reason for the shift?

A: Let's see, **D-Day** was?

Q: June seventh. June fourth.

A: June fourth, so in July, when we went to **Paris**, and then about a week later, we were shipped to **Luxembourg**, which the Germans had evacuated in a hurry. And they left Radio **Luxembourg** operating. And so we took ov – the allies took over Radio **Luxembourg** and turned it into a broadcasting station to **Germany**, and to **Europe**, to **France**, and to many other languages. So, basically we were stationed in the radio station, which had large administrative headquarters, and also military bar-barracks of the **Luxembourg** Army, and the population of **Luxembourg** was very friendly. After all, they – they were not – had been occupied. So, it was a pretty secure place from which to operate.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: And were your radio stations just conveying tactical information from the battlefield, or were you doing anything else?

A: We had news programs every hour on the hour in German. And Radio **Luxembourg** also had a program that claimed to be a – a group of SS dissidents who had decided that the fuehrer needed protection from the corrupt subordinates, like **Goering** and **Goebbels** and **Himmler**, who were really taking advantage of him, and sabotaging his policies, and that there was a need to clean out these traitors, to enable the fuehrer to retake command, to protect the Fatherland. And that was the approach of the dissident SS group that a program claimed to be, even though it was broadcast over Radio **Luxembourg** only five minutes a day.

Q: And who was taking the role of the SS [indecipherable]

A: I don't know, because they never told us that this program existed. It was so secret that even we didn't [phone ringing] Okay? The – this program, which we called the black propaganda, because it was based on a falsehood. And that unit, I learned later, broadcast gossip that we picked up from prisoners of war, because we were instructed, when interviewing prisoners of war to find out about their home life, what was going on in the cities where they lived, you know, the soldiers who were being taken prisoners were wondering wer – will they be tortured. And when we interviewed prisoner of war, we first sat them down and says, would you like

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

some coffee? And we gave them real coffee, and spoke about the fact, you know, Americans still can buy good coffee.

Q: Did any of them question why your German was so good, or suspect that –

A: The Germans?

Q: Yeah, the prisoners of war, or did any of them suspect why your German was so good?

A: No, th – I – not a single prisoner ever asked me where – how come I spoke such good German, was I Jewish? They were too scared. They may have suspected that I was Jewish, and some prisoners, of course, without being asked, told me about how opposed they were to the persecution of Jews.

Q: Now, you say there was another unit that was doing the black propaganda. What – was your propaganda all white and red?

A: In other words, part of the information we were asked to provide was for a service that we didn't know about, because it was so secret, that it wasn't shared with us. I think **Harber**(ph) knew about the black program, but he never shared it with us.

Q: Now, did you ever get any reports back about who was actually listening to your radio broadcast, and what effect it had?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: We asked people, and – because severe jail sentences; being sent to the front lines, if you weren't in the front lines; being sent to concentration camp was a possible punishment for listening. It was strictly forbidden to listen to any enemy broadcast. And so it was important for us to find out if they had heard, and we found out that a large proportion – I don't remember statistics – were – had listened at some times, because they wanted to know what was going on. And the other thing we did do, is to encourage listenership. We not only provided accurate information to the Germans, of exactly what was happening, we provided them with information of what was happening to bombed cities and villages, to the extent that we could get information. And about three months before Christmas, 1944, **Harbie**(ph) convened a meeting of his 10 soldiers and said, you know, we have a problem what to do on Christmas. Should we broadcast on bri – Christmas we do every day? Because after all, our broadcasts are very disturbing to the Germans. The news every day is not good. And what should we do on – on Christmas day? How to somehow appeal to them? And I proposed that we don't broadcast any news on that day, since it would be bad, but instead interview prisoners of war to send greetings to their loved ones, and broadcast them. So the decision was we should announce from months in advance, on Christmas day, we will have 1,000 German prisoners of war personally speak to their families. W-We learned later that this

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

news spread and was a way of making people think about agwa – if they had a prisoner of war, maybe my son is among the 1,000.

Q: What sort of greetings did they say?

A: We would ask them to – they had about a little less than a minute. They could say who they are, that they're a prisoner of war and so and so, and they're in this and this camp, that they are feeling well, that they're healthy, sending greeting to mother and father [indecipherable] and brothers and sisters, and whatever they wanted to say and do through that period. Many of them talked about that they're getting good food and that they're not being tortured and th –

Q: And where were these **POW** camps? Were they all in **Luxembourg**, or [indecipherable]

A: No, we would go to the front lines and then simply – our unit had trucks, these news – not – I-like any radio – any radio station, or television station, they have a truck fully equipped to interview and to broadcast, so that we would actually interview people, and get them in at broadcast, or sometimes have them repeat it so that it would fit our pattern, and gradually accumulated enough personnel using these mobile broadcasting ca – trucks.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: Been talking about the radio, I want to talk about the print aspect. You mentioned in **Paris** that you thought that nothing was dropped because of the bombing, but later on it was.

A: And it wa – na –

Q: So tell us about the leaflets and how those were sent over **Germany**.

A: Not only leaflets, we also had a newspaper, called “**The Front Post**,” and they would also be dropped. They were a little larger, had more information and were overstated. And they were dropped. I don’t think they may – probably every two or three days –

Q: This is all by airplane?

A: By airplane, or by artillery shells.

Q: And where were they targeted, for cities, or –

A: They were targeted on front line units of the German army. Occasionally I think we also dropped leaflets, “**The Front Post**,” not the surrender bre – leaflets. They were only dropped over the German lines. But we also would drop newspapers over German villages and cities.

Q: And were you able to gauge the effectiveness of these leaflets? Do you know whether people read them or saved them?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: Well, we would interview people and we certainly would get feedbacks that they were being read, but I had no access to the comprehensive reports, so I – I don't really know whether we reached 25 percent or 40 percent or 50 percent at different times. But certainly the Germans were not effective to completely stop the use of the material that was being dropped.

Q: And tell me about the content. I – you mentioned before that it was –

A: Well, I –

Q: – largely tactical. Did you talk about any atrocities in these leaflets?

A: The British opposed the idea of focusing on the persecution of the Jews. They took the position that – a-and a correct position – **Hitler** was again and again reminding Germans that there wouldn't be a war, except for the Jews. And of course, **Roosevelt** was – was – had his name changed from **Rosenfeld**(ph) to **Roosevelt** and that if it weren't for the Jews, nobody would oppose **Hitler**. And the British took the position that focusing on the atrocities would only reinforce the idea that this is what the war was all about. So you had to get special permission to make any reference to the persecution of the Jews on our news broadcasts.

Q: So were there any times when you looked for that special permission, any events that were covered?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: Well, I think there was evi – there was – I think **Auschwitz** was mentioned, but not every day, not even every week.

Q: So let me ask about **Auschwitz**.

A: I mean, when we started to liberate camps, then that was announced.

Q: So what –

A: But that was very late. But in '44, you couldn't touch the Jewish issue.

Q: So we mentioned the liberation of **Auschwitz**, so were you getting information from the Soviets? Were they sharing inf – intelligence with you?

A: Oh yes. No, no, the exchange of information with the Soviets on that issue, I think was pretty good. Certainly our leaflets constantly showed the Russian front, which looked much – their advances were much quicker than our advances, so we had to focus on, soon you will be occupied by the Russians. But we didn't say, put it this way, we simply said the Russians are advancing, and we are advancing, but we didn't. We showed on the map that they were advancing much more quickly.

Q: Now I understand there was also information about surrender in these leaflets.

Can you tell –

A: About what?

Q: Surrender.

A: Yes.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: Can you talk about that?

A: Well, we took the position, say to the Germans, you've lost the war. If you surrender, you will be – this leaflet will – and this was on every leaflet, is a written guarantee of the condi – **[coughing]** of the following conditions of surrender: first, you will not be tortured. You will be sent in a prison camp. You will get three meals a day, identical to the food of the American or British soldiers, which includes; real coffee three times a day; real cigarettes with every meal; meat and fish. Healthy food, the way allied soldiers are being fed. You will be allowed through the Red Cross to communicate with your families, so that if you surrender, you will have contact with your families, which now, very often you don't have, because the German communication system was not very good in '44 and '45. That was the surrender. And these guarantee, they called it guarantee **[indecipherable]**. Quite a few soldiers, when they surrendered, pulled them out of their shoes, or somewhere in their clothing, to be sure that they would be treated properly. And certainly when we interviewed prisoners of war, we did not use the kind of threats or you know, s – intimidation f-for I think many good reasons. First of all, tactical information you don't get from soldiers. You can sometimes get it from officers, but by the time you get it, all a – it often is no longer valuable. Because what do we want to know is where do you have your artillery, what kind of weapons do you have, does your unit

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

have? What plans were made to proceed to defeat us, and so on. That kind of tactical information, for 24 - 20 - 48 hours might be useful, but with advances of the battlefield, it does – it doesn't become very meaningful. So at any rate, while – when you interviewed officers, you would try to learn from them what kind of equipment they had. You didn't just f – you didn't focus on that, you also spent a lot of time on their schooling, how they became officers, what their career was, and were they being treated fairly. What about their families, how they were doing, their children and so on. And f – on that basis, people often told us things, how life was terrible, what they were fearful of being arrested simply because they wanted to survive, and that they had been dis – badly treated, and that in particular officer in their command had been very mean and they had suffered this and that and so on. So that kind of information [indecipherable] obviously, did reach the black station, but we didn't know it.

Q: Did they talk much about their views toward the Nazi party? Did any of them have Nazi membership that they denied, or was this simply not covered?

A: Some did, very few. Most of the people tried to avoid politically sensitive things, but they weren't sophisticated always to know what was sensitive. So we did get useful information, but we were very circumspect of asking them. We – we did ask them, were you a member of the Nazi party, and most of them were. And then they

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

would say, well, understand, everybody had to be a member of the Nazi party. And then we would learn a little bit about their career. Some of them were willing to talk, because they thought it might improve the way would – the way would be treated, because they were being treated so well. And if they were resistant, we withdraw and then send them back, and let them tell their fellow soldiers in the prison camp, I didn't give them any information, but they didn't do anything to me. And thereby enhance our reputation among the prisoners of war, because we would not only interview them – we couldn't interview everybody who was being captured, there were too many people being captured.

Q: Now, I understand that you actually took in one surrender of a general –

A: **Von Poten, Ernst von Poten.**

Q: Tell us about that incident.

A: Well, we were always looking for interesting prisoners, so when the city of **Treya**(ph) was about to fall, I was sent, as I often was, to go there and find out how mili – to write a report on the – how a military government functioned after the first de – day or two. And see if there were any interesting prisoners. So when I got to **Treya**(ph), the captain who – in charge of military government, been maybe there 24 hours and 48 hours, and had found a German who was willing to be a coordinator between the military government and the German administrative

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

system. And he had apparently not been a Nazi, so the captain had developed trust. And when I ask about interesting prisoners, he said, well ba – you better talk to – I have the name now, but I don't remember just now what the name is. So I came to his office and he said, oh yes, there's a general who would like to surrender, but he's afraid of being taken prisoner by some enlisted group, because they might mistreat him. He would like to be – he's hiding, hoping to get arrested by officers, and I know where he is and he told me that's what he would like to do, and if you are interested, I will tell you where he is. That was kind of a silly, you know – but I got the instructions and so on, and talked more. He didn't know much about the general himself. My driver, who was married, felt this was a trick to get us into the woods above **Treya**(ph) where there might still be German soldiers that had been roaming around and would attack us, and this is not a reliable story. But I had become convinced that it was real, at least there's a good chance, and so I said, let's go and get him and he had – my driver had no choice, I – I happened to b-be one grade above him. So, we went with our regular broadcasting truck, and followed directions and drove up into the woods and after about maybe half an hour, I saw a man walking with a – a dog and **von Poten** had been described to me of having a dog. And so we stopped. **[phone ringing]**

Q: **[indecipherable]** take a call right here.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: This time I'm taking **[break]**

Q: Okay, this begins the next track with the interview with **Joseph Eaton**.

A: Well, a man who looked like the general that was described, and the fact that he was walking with a dog, we stopped the truck. And I opened the window and said, General **von Poten**? He looked up and said, **jawohl**? Sort of, yes. And I said, I understand you want to surrender? He said yes. I said, well, I was sent by supreme headquarters to take your surrender. Thank you, he said, I'm glad how – that you got the message. And here is, about 200 meters from here is a cottage in which we have been living since I was fired from my post a month ago, or two months ago. So please, let's sit down comfortably in my house. So he walked and we drove and he went into the house and brought out his wife and introduced her. And so my driver was suspicious, he didn't go in, and I went into the house and we sat down. But the small room was crowded with furniture covered with bed sheets. And we sat down on a couch and started to talk. He pulled out documents signed by the chief – the commander of the German army, General **Keitel**, informing him that the fuehrer had decided that the army needed more young people; they weren't sufficiently aggressive to push ahead, and for that reason, in spite of his good service, he was being retired. He appealed the forced retirement, but the appeal was denied. All of this was in correspondence signed by no one less than the counterpart

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

of **Eisenhower**, the chief commander of the German army. So, I took those documents and he said he decided, even though he was no longer a soldier, he said, I'm a civilian now, but he decided that as a former general, he might be considered someone to be made a prisoner of war, he hoped this would not be the case, but this is why he let the message be transmitted that he was ready to be in touch with the enemy. He indicated in conversations about the war, I learned – he and I talked about his career. So, he said, I became a soldier before World War I, and served in the Austrian army, and he told me the different battles. And then stayed in the Austrian army and then when **Germany** occupied **Austria**, he became part of the German army. And he was involved in the war against **Russia** and was in-injured near **Stalingrad**, and for a year and a half was in the hospital. And after he had recuperated, the army assigned him to be the governor of the French city of **Metz**. And he showed me documents there, his appointment. And he indicated that he had problems with the head of the Nazi party in **Metz**. **Metz** is a French city, occupied mostly by German speaking people, so it's part of **Alsace-Lorraine** that had been transferred after World War I, to **France**. And he said, I had problems with the local Nazi leader. When I got the job, they offered me several villas, but they were all taken from Jews. And my wife and I didn't want to live in a house that was full of tears, so we didn't take them, we went into an apartment. He may have realized that

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

I was Jewish, but he didn't ask me. And then I was in – had trouble with the Nazi party leader, because I took the position that for security purposes, we had to choose – treat the local population well. So I went to French music events, French theater, not only the German theater, and the Nazi leader felt that was not a proper thing to do, for the commanding general to go to a French theater production. And he complained to **Himmler** and asked that he be dismissed, and apparently succeeded; **Himmler** supported his retirement. All of this was in documents. So, I see – I then ask him, well, what you – what would you recommend that **Germany** do today? He said, we've lost the war, we have to accept unconditional surrender, because every day major German villages and cities are devastated, and we are not gaining anything. It's – we've lost. So I said, would you be willing to tell this to the German population if you had a chance? He says, of course. And then I told him that he was a lucky man, that he had the opportunity to do this right now, because there was a broadcasting station in my truck. So he got caught, and I gave him a pen and paper, and I found he had great difficulty writing a script, so I offered to write it, help him draft it. Well, what are you going to say? He said okay, and I drafted a speech, thinking in terms of what is he likely to say? So, you know, he wasn't advocating to surrender, because **Germany** had done terrible things. He – he had no regrets about moving into **Russia** and whatever he helped in **Russia**, and you know, every

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

command was one that he tried to execute. He simply was willing to surrender because it was better for **Germany**. So he modified my remarks, his German was much better than mine. And then I said let's – I sat him into the truck doing exactly what you are doing, and we listened to the broadcast. And then I had him do it two more times, because it didn't sound as good as I thought it would – should be. And afterwards I told him that he should put on his uniform, and asked him if he had any weapons, and the only thing he had was a sword and a pistol, and I took both of those. And he dressed in his army uniform and I said, well, I have to take you to headquarters to – for them to decide whether you are to become a prisoner of war, or a civilian and could be treated as a civilian. And so he gave me more papers to document his status. And put him into a truck late at night, the front seat, I sat in the back because again, I didn't trust him to sit in back of me, and drove to **Luxembourg**. We got there about four o'clock in the morning and I called my commanding officer in his quarters and told him that I got a general. And **Harber**(ph), who had a good sense of humor says, **Eaton**, why don't you drive more carefully? And after telling him a little bit more about the general, I said, well, why don't we have breakfast with him, because I think everybody else here would like to meet him. The Americans had not captured a general up to now on the western front like the Russians side. And there was a – well, you know – as you know,

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

in **Stalingrad** a Russian general who actually then organized troops to fight with the Russians against **Hitler**. So, at about five o'clock, we – the cook had prepared good breakfast, bacon and eggs and trimmings, and the colonel and majors and captains were all assembled. There was one thing that I forgot to tell you, I had been told that the general was terribly worried about being taken prisoner by enlisted men, he thought he would be mistreated. So I decided I would make myself an officer. That was a risky thing to do, to impersonate an officer in the army. But you know, we had a great deal of freedom in my cir – in other words, there was nobody telling me what to do when I went to the front lines. It was my decision to decide where, which camp to go to, whom to interview, which American officers to ask for cooperation. So, before going up in the hills, early in the morning, about eight or 8:30, I asked Germans where there was a drugstore, and I went to the drugstore, which wasn't open yet, rang the bell. The druggist answered when he saw, I guess, the military truck outside and looked worried, of course. And I said, I need a Band-Aid. Well, that was an easy request. So he immediately got a box of Band-Aids. And ask him for a scissors and I cut two pieces of the rubberized part of the Band-Aid, which is white on the other side, and put it on the helmet and promoted myself to captain. And so, when I took the general into, you know, custody, I introduced myself as Captain **Eaton**, who had been sent by supreme headquarters to accept his

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

surrender. So, you know, he felt sort of pleased that somehow supreme headquarters – and that may have had a fact – an impact on his re-readiness to cooperate. So I had told **Harbie**(ph) on the phone what I had done. And when I arrived everybody treated me as Captain **Eaton**, and – and my driver was sort of amazed that I – nobody criticized me, and then afterwards a decision was made to clear with supreme headquarters what to do with the general, that we would use him to work for us at Radio **Luxembourg**, and in the – the day or two that this might take, we put up the general in the hotel, and my job, I was in the same room with him, was to take him for walks, see to it that he got his rations, and talk to him. And then introduce him, bring him to different officers who wanted to talk to him, for whatever information they were interested in. And after da – a day or two, nothing happened. So I was able to talk to Captain **Harber**(ph), he said well, we are having problems with this man, and I don't know what's going to happen, but it doesn't look good, because some of the senior officials in **Eisenhower's** headquarters are concerned over the fact that you took this general in Third Army territory and brought him to **Luxembourg**, when according to army rules, which you didn't know and I didn't know, you f – all prisoners of war have to be cleared through the prison camps. And you didn't clear him through the prison camp, you took him directly to headquarters. And some people are talking about court-martialing not

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

only you, but me and the colonel. So, it took two weeks before a decision was made not to court-martial us.

Q: What happened to the broadcast?

A: Nothing, it wasn't used. Apparently, there was enough fear among the upper level staff that **Patton** would get furious if someone that was captured in his area was not – did not – he did not have the opportunity to handle the whole situation. And for that reason, rather than get into another controversy between **Patton** and **Bradley** and **Eisenhower** – and there had been many controversies between them, I mean, they – **Patton** was very egocentric – the decision was made to return the captain to where we had taken him prisoner and then to notify the French, the free French, who had been asked to move into **Treya**(ph) as the Third Army was advancing, to come up and arrest him. So my job, they says – an-an – and – and – and they said, we decided you should do the job. So here was my – I-I was given another driver, and it was my job to find the place where I had taken him prisoner.

Q: I want to shift the focus now. We've been talking about your role as an American soldier and I want to talk about your attitudes as a Jewish soldier, and the war at this point is winding down. I understand that you took advantage of the fact that you had use of a car to actually explore and see what happened to your own family.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: Yeah, well, shortly before being sent overseas, apparently army policy was to naturalize enemy aliens, especially people like myself, who had a very high security position. So I was given a three day leave to travel to **Chicago** to go before a judge who – I don't think he ever tested me as normally citizenship people are – application for citizenship, with being in the army, it – the whole thing was about five minutes. And then – so I had become a citizen. Then – and I was a citizen in **England** and – when serving over in **Germany**. Then – obviously we all knew what was – that the Germans were murdering Jews in large numbers. Exactly what was happening, we didn't know. You heard rumors of **Auschwitz**, you heard – you knew that in concentration camps many people were tortured, and some people were killed. But you didn't know any of the full details at all. And in my unit of 10 people, I think there were two who were not Jewish, all the others were. And we didn't talk about being Jewish. There were German refugees like myself and Captain **Harber**(ph), we knew had been born into a Jewish family, but we didn't know what his sympathies were, that he had been converted. And none of my fellow soldiers and I ever talked about the Jewish problem. They didn't seem to ever talk about it. And so, it – it's something you kept to yourself, but I was very much aware, not only of what was – we knew was happening to Jews, that they had been murdered in large numbers in **Russia**, that – that we had heard. But I also

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

knew that – what was going on in **Palestine**, so whenever there was news available, I was particularly interested in. And so, as a result, I took a special interest in Jews. And one of my assignments was to enter **Germany** as soon as we occupied a few villages around **Aachen**. And wherever I went, I would ask, are any – what happened to the Jews. And the – **Monschau** didn't have Jews, but in **Aachen**, which we occupied around October – middle of October, and I arrived there maybe two or three days after occupation, I learned from the public relations officer that one Jew had survived. And the army had seen to it that he would get a reasonable quarter, and he gave me the address. So, I – you know, I – wasn't difficult to find out where to go, because you asked people, and he was put into a building that had been – the upper part had been destroyed, but the first floor, the four walls were standing, there were no windows, the door could not be closed, but it was better than most, you know, I-living in a cellar. And he had put a big sign on the door, **Jude**. And so when I came in and introduced myself, he was very happy to see me. He had a chair and insisted I sit on the chair, and he stood, in his warm clothing, he had no gloves. So I gave him my gloves and a scarf, and we talked about what happened. And he explained to me that just before deportation, the Germans deported all the Jews from **Aachen**, but because they had Christian friends, he and his wife were able to move into the suburb and be hidden.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Unfortunately, his wife got caught in the city, and his – was deported. He – but he survived. And he described himself as being a member of the **B’nai Brith** and didn’t know any Hebrew, but he had been to synagogues and knew something about prayers. And he thought that probably he would be safe now in **Aachen**. But – and that’s why he put the sign up, and he felt that he was – he didn’t know of any other Jew who survived. Well, apparently the people in military government looked after him subsequently. He was seep – he got a job in military government as somebody who could be trusted, and ultimately turned out to be a member of the city council and became head of a new Jewish community, because there were a few survivors who drifted back to **Aachen** and so the province decided to facilitate the development of a Jewish community, and he actually became its head, I think, for the rest of his life.

Q: Did he have any details on where people were deported to, and what happened to them after they were deported?

A: He knew they were deported, he didn’t know where. He knew about **Theresienstadt**, but he didn’t – the details were not known to him, it’s ju – they had disappeared, and he was really worried that they might not come back.

Q: Now, you mentioned **Theresienstadt**; you yourself visited; you talk about that visit.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: What?

Q: The visit to **Theresienstadt** that you made.

A: Yeah. Now, when **Buchenwald** was liberated, by that time much of my work was to – well, nearly all of my work was to visit different cities or villages or camps that we had liberated, to write reports for supreme headquarters. So I decided I would go to **Buchenwald**. All I had to do was tell Captain **Harber**(ph) I'd like to go to **Buchenwald**, he said fine. I got orders [indecipherable] you know, within a few hours, and a driver, and off we went. So that's how I got to **Buchenwald**, to write reports.

Q: What were your main impressions?

A: Well, it was impossible to describe. I mean, you drove into a camp, and you were greeted with piles of corpses, maybe up as high as this – the ceiling here.

Q: About how many days after liberation was this?

A: That was five, six days. When I arrived, I inquired how – how the former prisoners were being dealt with, and I quickly discovered that Jews had succeeded to be in a special barracks, even though originally, the Americans had decided that prison – the people liberated, Poles would go into a barrack and Yugoslavs and Germans, pris – inmates, and then they discovered that the Jews didn't want to be with the Poles and didn't want to be with the Yugoslavs, and they simply refused.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

So, the local commander said okay, I'll give you your own barracks. And – and that happened within – on the first day. So I went to the Jewish barrack and introduced myself, and we sat down, I said, what are the problems? Are you getting enough food? And they said, well, we're getting our share. And – but they were complaining about the administrative problems they had of getting recognized as a nationality. So we discussed the political aspects, pointed out to them that the British government had a strong, vested interest in preventing the establishment of Jews as a separate nationality, because of what was th – their commitment in **Palestine**, that they had made a decision that they made a mistake in 1917, there were many more Arabs than Jews, and they didn't – they didn't want to lose support of the Muslims, and so they had made an agreement, and until that can be overturned, the British were pushing very hard to oppose recognition of Jews. But on the other hand, Jews shouldn't be worried, and simply, they had the power to refuse. They should insist on whatever they want, because there was strong political support of their position in the American Jewish community, and to some extent in the British community. So they had done the right thing and they should be very assertive and so on. So we talked about that, basically was mos – much of the time. In addition to getting information for my reports, that was the focus of my visit. After all, I only spent maybe four or five hours in the camp.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: Now, I know that one of your reports was on the children of **Buchenwald**. Did you actually go into the children's barrack?

A: Yes.

Q: And can you talk about your reaction when you saw it?

A: Well, ah – the – first of all, many children were with adults, either because they were related, and I couldn't quite understand how they survived, or because they were being looked after by adults who wanted to protect them, and so on. So, the children and [indecipherable] adolescents lived for – with the – with the adults. I don't recall that there was a children's barrack. There were not many children.

Q: And did any of the Jewish prisoners ask you to take messages back? Did they put [indecipherable]

A: Well, a few, even in **Buchenwald** would give me letters, but not many. I wasn't there long enough. It wasn't like in **Theresienstadt**. And so the – I think I got two or three letters in **Buchenwald**. I was there for a very short period of time, because you know, I had to bring back reports to headquarters. For all I know, those reports were shared with upper level command. I couldn't tell you exactly who read them, but you know, like any reports coming in from the ground, sometimes they will reach – I'm sure some of them were read by **Eisenhower**. And I did talk in these reports not only about conditions in the – and how the prisoner of war were

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

organized and how they had been able to kill some of the guards, but I also talked about the fact that there were special problems with Jews who didn't want to be with Poles, and certainly didn't want to be with Germans. And those reports went to upper levels, whatever their impact – impact might have been, but certainly the American high level command became aware of the fact that this was a very touchy problem.

Q: And then what other camps did you visit?

A: I – I visited **Buchenwald**, and I was at **Theresienstadt**. And **Theresienstadt** was very unexpected, because when **Theresienstadt** was liberated in late April, and the news came across, it was in the Russian zone.

Q: Before we get there, let me just ask one question en route. At this point, what information did you have about your parents? When did you – where they had gone?

A: I kn-knew nothing.

Q: So did you know that German Jews were sent to **Theresienstadt**, or was just –

A: There was a possib – I knew that many German Jews were sent to **Theresienstadt**. So the possibility that they might have gone to **Theresienstadt** was there, and we knew Jews had survived there. So, as soon as that happened, I went to my commanding officer and told him I'd like to go to **Theresienstadt** to get

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

the names of the liberated people. Did he think this was a good idea, even though it was in the Russian zone? And he thought it was. And so, within hours I had orders, I think they were signed by General **Bradley**, to go into the Russian zone, to the libera – to **Theresienstadt**, to carry out the instructions of the theater commander, that was **Eisenhower**, that f – were my orders. Had a ja – had a driver, and went to the commissary and stocked up with gasoline and food to the hilt, and off we went. I had been, as a child, in **Marienbad**, or **Mariánské Lázně**, which in Czech. So we drove through that community, where I remembered the f – you know, a few places, and got to **Prague**. We didn't encounter any Russian troops, because **Theresienstadt** was pretty close to as far as the Russians got. The Americans – **Patton** had actually gotten to **Prague**, and then later had to withdraw from **Prague** because of an agreement that **Eisenhower** had made with **Stalin** that **Czechoslovakia** would be turned over to them, so – but at that time, the first time we encountered Russians was in **Theresienstadt**. And we were not allowed to enter the camp, because – the explanation was there was a typhus epidemic, and we would have to wait until it was under control. So for about two days, we found a place to sleep, we waited til the camp was open, and then over to **Theresienstadt** and ask for the commanding officer. Well, being the only American I'm taken immediately to the right place, and was invited into the barrack where he was

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

sitting, a room like this. And he's surrounded by a few people talking Russian. And I showed him my orders and he called over a translator to look at my orders and tell him what they were, and saw the signature of my officer. So, pat me down, and then said **[phone ringing]** – so, it's easier to talk on the phone without the hearing aid, because apparently they interfere with each other. So, b-before he answered me about the information, he said, through this interpreter, why are the Americans killing Russian soldiers? I said, that's impossible, they are our allies, they liberated, th-they – he said, well, I read it in "**Pravda**." I said, I certainly will check into it, and we **[indecipherable]** headquarters **[indecipherable]**. I didn't ask him for a copy of the report in "**Pravda**." It didn't – after that exchange, he dropped the matter. And he said, I s – I – I'm sending somebody to talk to the head of the Jewish community, so they will get ready, to get the names ready for you. And he poured a glass of liquor and offered me a big glass like that. And I realized that I could never keep up with him, so I cur – it occurred to me how to get out of it, I said, I – I have a very sad problem. He says, what's the problem? I have a ruptured thorax, and alcohol will irritate it, I can't drink anything. Well, he felt very bad about me, but he wanted to drink. And the whole table had been filled with bottles. I mean, the alc – the conc – the alcoholism among the upper level command was apparent. And underneath the table were radios that had been confiscated, so he offered me a

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

radio, which I explained to him I had one, so I didn't want to deprive others of the radio, so I didn't take a radio. But then I was taken by a Russian soldier to meet **Leo Baeck**, who was in charge of the Jewish community. And we sat down on his bed.

Q: Did you know who **Leo Baeck** was ahead of time?

A: Yes. I knew who he was. I didn't know he was the head of the Jewish community. I didn't know had – he had survived. I knew about him as a Reform rabbi in **Berlin**, but I knew nothing else about him.

Q: Tell me about your meeting with Rabbi **Baeck**.

A: Well, the fact that he survived was almost incredible. He said, well, the Germans apparently decided I should live. Because so many other people were killed, some – some rabbis were sent to **Auschwitz**. They obviously thought I was – would be of use to them. And he was describing a little bit of how the camp was organized, that Jews were doing all the work, they been paid for the work, and with this money they would get their very limited rations. And they could use that money and I – I got some, you know, samples of the money. And he had a register of all persons who had ever been there, including information when they were deported or – or murdered. And I got a copy, which I took with me, and delivered to headquarters. And I presume this may have been used to evacuate the liberated people, which happened very quickly.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: Did you have a chance to go through the names? Did any sound familiar to you?

A: Oh yes, I mean, I saw – the only one I saw was my grandmother. She had been there, and I learned from somebody who knew her, when I mentioned this, that she starved to death, she died of malnutrition. She was 72 years of age. As did many other people. If they didn't have good jobs, where they could steal food, they had real pro – survival problems, because the rations were rations that did not sustain – allow you to sustain normal health.

Q: Tell me, what was **Leo Baeck's** reaction when you came in – and I assume you identified yourself as having been a German Jewish refugee coming back with the Americans?

A: Well, I mean, he – **Leo Baeck** at that time said he wasn't sure what would happen, but he – he didn't want to go back to **Berlin**, because he knew the community, he was among the last to be deported, so he – the synagogues had been burned or destroyed; the Jewish community center, there was – there was no community, so he had – he didn't want to go back to **Germany**. And he said, that's true of most of the German Jews here. But some did want to go back because they had property and so on, but he had nothing left in **Germany**.

Q: Did he ask for your help with anything?

A: No.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: Did anybody else that you meet there ask for –

A: The only thing people ask for is to deliver letters. They recognized apparently that – I explained to people how I got there, I said I was – that the Russians were willing to let us take the names, but it was – the Russians were in charge, so they realized I couldn't do anything, since it was the Russians. And apparently the Russians had treat – treated them – allowed them to organize the camp – well, the camp was already organized under the Germans, but now they treated them with great respect, and they looked after the sick. And Russian physicians would be available to provide treatment, to provide medicines. In other words, they wa – they were being given services by the Russians within the limits of what the Russians had, which was damn little.

Q: Now, well, let's go back. When you mentioned that the registrar, that register that **Leo Baeck** had, mentioned dates that people were deported, did he know himself where the deportations were going? Did he know that these

[indecipherable]

A: Yeah, he knew – he knew they went to **Auschwitz**.

Q: And did he know the ramifications?

A: Yeah, he knew they went to **Auschwitz** and he knew that they would – they would die there. I mean, he said, this was – the Germans tried to misrepresent the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Red Cross, that this was a – a Jewish community, self-governed by the Jews to – while they should not be in **Germany**, they could be in a community of their own, but this was just a showpiece. And so he – he certainly outlined this, and that the – the Nazis would punish Jews severely if they violated any of the rules and some Jews were – were hanged or shot. And when the camp became overcrowded, they would deport some people to make room for others to come. And as far as he was concerned, there was no future for German Jewry. That he did say. And he later on made that statement publicly, in **England**.

Q: So how long did you remain in **Theresienstadt**?

A: In **Theresienstadt**, I think I was there for a day. We did not spend the night there. My job was to get the information, go back. And they were pretty quick in give – giving us the names.

Q: And when you got back, and you presented the names in the register, did – was there any reaction among the people in your unit when they saw all the lists of deported, and that?

A: Again, while there were many Jews in the system, they were all afraid to talk about the Jewish problem.

Q: And they weren't looking on their own in private to see if their families were there?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: No, no, no. I'm sure they were interested. I mean, I am sure my commanding – I've never discussed it with **Harber**(ph), how b – when I – but when I think back of it, how come any time I wanted something, I got it? I was a sergeant, but I could get anything from **Harber**(ph), and because of the fact that he personally was very sympathetic. But again, to protect himself, he didn't want to be viewed as a spokesperson for the Jews, especially since officially he wasn't even Jewish.

Q: And at this point –

A: I mean, later on, 20 years later, he wrote a book about **Palestine**, a very positive book about king – about how **Palestine** was working and so on. But this was the first time that **Hans** had ever even officially discussed his Jewish background. And later on I did meet him socially, and he spoke very openly about the fact that he – his father had converted out of purely op-opportunistic purposes, but he certainly got no Jewish background, other than what he acquired later on as he grew up.

Q: And at this period of time, just as the war was ending, were you able to communicate – correspond at all to your brothers who were in the Jewish brigade?

A: Well, in the army I was able to use military mail to write to my brothers. There was no longer any possibility of writing to my parents after 19 – after December seventh – no, no, that's not ri – eighth, 1941. And I wasn't in the army at that time anyhow, but there was no mail between the **U.S.** and **Germany**. But there certainly

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

was mail between the **U.S.** and **Palestine**. So I corresponded maybe once a week with my brothers in **Palestine**, and we continued to correspond through army mail, which was pretty efficient. So I knew that my oldest brother had been stationed in **Rome** in 1944, in the Jewish brigade, and I knew his address. So I would send him copies of some of my reports about what was going on in **Germany**. And our reports, I think in today's army would, at least for weeks or months be considered confidential or secret, but security concerns didn't exist at that time, so I had no qualms about sending a report and sending my brother a copy. And then he translated the report in Hebrew and it got published in "**Haaretz**," because in addition to being a soldier, "**Haaretz**" had asked him to be a – what – you know, a – a part time correspondent.

Q: So which reports of yours, on what topics, were republished in "**Haaretz**?"

A: I don't – I would have to look at the – at the actual reports. I think the report about **Buchenwald**, and I think the report – I mean, part of the report on **Theresienstadt**, and I think **Frankfurt**, which had some Jewish content.

Q: Now we – go back to the list of names. At this period of time, I know the Jewish chaplains were collecting names and trying to reunite families. Did the list ever make it to the Jewish chaplains?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: Oh, I'm s – I'm sure they – I mean, I don't know what happened to the list, but considering the efficiency of the army, and considering, for example, what happened to one of my mother's cousins that survived in **Auschwitz** – I mean in – in **Buchenwald**. The various allied governments were very quick in evacuating the [indecipherable] to **Belgium**, to **Holland**, to **France**, to **Italy**, you know, where you could – naturally, you couldn't send – Jews didn't want to go to **Poland**, Jews didn't want to go to **Russia**. So – and most Russian Jews were able to claim that they were Polish, and maybe they were. At any rate, I don't remember that Jews were among those forced by the allies to go back to **Russia**. So, I can't tell you what happened to the list. But keep in mind, we had what, two or three – Rabbi nad – **Nadich**, or something like that.

Q: Oh, **Judah Nadich**?

A: **Nadich**, and maybe one – one or two other, that's all the rabbis were available in the whole district. And they were very busy men. They had to conduct services, and they were part of high level of command. So they had problems getting around, as I did. And so my hunch is that when the means became available, they were transmitted to them. But I don't know.

Q: Now, after **V-E Day**, your job changed a bit –

A: Yes.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

Q: – with the occupation. What was your new job?

A: Well, after **V-J Day**, and even before **V-J Day**, once we entered **Germany** in October '44, the newspaper of **Aachen** and the newspaper later on of **Cologne** was shut down. And **Harber**(ph) convinced **Eisenhower** that we should establish a free press in German, which ultimately would be turned over to the Germans, after they saw how a free press functions. And that was approved. So he had approval to establish 10 German newspapers.

Q: And why did they select the number 10?

A: And they selected them in different cities, to cover whole regions. So there were two in **Bavaria**, one in **Munich**, and the other one in **Regensburg**. But when we occupied **Regensburg**, we didn't find a printing plant that operated. So, i-it had to be moved to **Straubing**, but it was published as the **Regensburger**(ph) **Post**. So, in – the **Munich** press ultimately became the **Süddeutsche Zeitung**. It – It was, I think [indecipherable] but later on it became – when it became German, they changed the name. It is today **Germany's** – one of **Germany's** top newspapers, like “**The New York Times**.” And **Hans Harber**(ph) actually stayed in **Germany** after occupation ended and the Germans took over, to remain as editor of the **Süddeutsche Zeitung** for two or three years to get it going. So **Harber**(ph) decided he – he had 10 men, so each of us was given a newspaper. And I think two people

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

had occasionally written articles for newspapers, but none of us had been editors of a newspaper. But that's how ha – **Harbie**(ph) operated, so overnight I suddenly became editor of a newspaper.

Q: Now, were you this – just the editor? Were you also the only staff writer? Was there anybody working for you, or [indecipherable] operation.

A: Well, I had no staff, I was sent to **Straubing** to-together with a administrative staff, there were two officers and three or four enlisted man whose job was to, first of all, find living quarters, and to have a kitchen of food for the four or five men and the – and me, as the editor. Basically, that unit existed to make sure I had transportation and food and able to run the newspaper. So my – I decided that it – that the building of the press was well preserved, the editor had an apartment there, a very big apartment. And I decided that I might as well live right in the newspaper. And my commanding officer thought that, you know, it was a good idea, so I didn't live with the other enlisted men in quarter that they had established; I had my own quarters in the newspaper, so I could be on top of everything.

Q: And how often did the paper come out?

A: Once a week.

Q: And where'd you get the articles?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: So – so the articles, the – the press was based on a very small staffing, because we didn't have much, all we had is this one – the editors. So what was done is that all 10 newspapers would get the national, international news, which was produced by **Harber(ph)** and his staff in **Bad Nauheim**. So, since each of the newspapers was four pages, there were three pages of national and international news, and a local page. As editor my job was to get information for the local page. And I decided what goes to the local page. **Harber(ph)** didn't have time to even look at the local pages.

Q: Do you remember the types of articles –

A: Oh yes.

Q: – subjects of any of your articles?

A: So, it was up i-in – the other three pages would be speeches by the president [indecipherable] speeches by **Eisenhower**, speeches by **Churchill** and major news about what was going on in **Russia** and so on, but was all written in **Eisenhower's** headquarter. And this was the first time I di – I flew, because they sent a helicopter to **Bad Na** – to **Straubing**, pick me up, take me to **Bad Nauheim** to get the material on Wednesday for the Friday's newspaper, fly me back, just for that purpose. And it was a big scary, because these **Piper Cubs** are not well put together. I mean, you – when you sit in the **Piper Cub** there are two seats, the pilot and me. And you can

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

look down on the side of your seat because it was open, so you can look down. And you flew very low. The **Piper Cubs** don't go up high – very high, so we were very close to the ground. And so that happened every week, and I think once I was asked to drive in the **Jeep**, and I drove myself. And so at any rate, that's how they got the – the main contact. Now, the local c-contact, that was entirely up to me. So you had to think of stories that would appeal to the Germans. And so I would have stories about food rationing, I would have stories about local military government. I would have stories about opening of schools. I would have stories about some interesting hospital case. I also – I learned that there was a Jewish girl who had been hidden by Germans, by 20 different Germans. So I – when I heard about it, I looked for her and I found out where she was. Her name, I think, was **Sonja(ph) Navay(ph)**, and she was 16 years of age, and she had been blonde. Her mother and father were taken away. She didn't know where they were. But friends of the family had hidden her and then turned her over to others because they felt it was too dangerous. So 20 different German families, so I made that a feature story. And it was on my page, and then **Harber(ph)** decided that was a good story, so that became – was reprinted in all the other newspapers. So some of the stories I wrote were copied, and I came to the conclusion that the German governor of **Bavaria** was not too sympathetic towards Jews, because he urged that the policy that had been adopted that Jews

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

would get double rations, because they had been so deprived and emaciated, he felt that was unfair. And he lobbied in favor of giving Jews the same amount of food as everybody else. So I decided he has to go.

Q: Did he ne –

A: So, I mean, I – I wrote articles that criticized his policies, and I don't know whether that's why he ultimately was fired, but he was fired.

Q: Did anyone at **Straubing** know that you were Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: Did the Germans know you were Jewish?

A: By that time they knew wa – they – they knew I was Jewish. First of all, the editor that I replaced was a smart German, a Swiss German. And, you know, when people asked me, I told them, so – so I didn't go into many details about my family, anything else [indecipherable]. So th-the second reason why it became clear I was Jewish is because I featured stories about ous – the Jewish – the reorganization of a Jewish community in **Degendorf**, where there has been no Jews, but **DPs** and how they were operating, or marriage of Jews in – of a Jew in some community. And the fact that it turned out that the secretary that had been found for me, somebody who was very good in German, turned out to be a German Jewish woman who hu – who's – had been a Polish nationality deported to **Poland**, and there she was able to

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

hide that she was Jewish and survived as a Pole. And she was hired as a Pole, but when she discovered that I was very interested in Jewish affairs and wrote reports on the subject, she confessed that she had been hiding her Jewish identity because she really didn't think that the – didn't think you could trust the Americans, since she had some early interactions with American officers who tried to pressure her to sleep with them, and she felt they were just like the Germans.

Q: Now, this time when you were in **Regensburg** and said that you also visited **Hitler's** birthplace, and start to [indecipherable]

A: Well, that was – when **Braunau** was occupied by the Americans, I immediately said, I gotta go there and do a story about **Hitler's** birthplace, so I drove there and just went to the military government headquarters and there I met a Mr. **Fagas**(ph), who looked a lot like **Hitler**, but he had been a socialist, had never been in the party. He was appointed acting mayor. So I talked to him for a while and asked where – where's **Hitler's** birthplace? He took me there. It was a lib – public library, had been a public library. So I went into the building and there were a lot of books and also the local newspaper had been published there, so they had a photographic division, a lot of German photographs. So I took a lot of the photographs that I thought would be of interest, many of which I gave to, you know, delivered in **Bad Nauheim**, but I kept some that interested me. And I also took some books of **Hitler**

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

that – like a copy of “**Mein Kampf**” and photographic books of the fuehrer that came from his library. And I had the printing office make me a printed message that it was taken from **Hitler’s** birthplace. And then I met with the – Mi-Miss **Fagas(ph)**, and said, what are you going to do with **Hitler’s** birthplace? He says, I don’t know. It’s certainly something you have to deal with. I said, I have an idea, let’s make it into a museum of the outrages – atrocities of the Nazis. He liked that idea, and so he said, all right, we’ll do it. And, what are you going to exhibit? Well, he said, that – we have to get information of things that could be put there, like maybe the **Nuremburg** laws, and some of the info – illustrations of Nazi’s atrocities. And I offered to get some placards that could be exhibited, and when I went back to **Straubing**, I got ahold of the local Catholic priest and told him that there was a museum, and I was wondering where there were some Biblical phrases that he could think of that would appropriately describe the evil of the Nazis. So –

Q: What – what sort of phrases did he come up with?

A: He came up by – in my – the material I gave you, the actual text from the Bible was selected, and I had them print it up on a large placard, and then took the material and they framed it, they – I think they framed it for me in **Straubing**. The – the Germans who had been running the Nazi printing plant became my employees, because there was no one else. In other words, we didn’t replace them.

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

And they were very cooperative. I never – no one ever asked me about being Jewish, but I'm sure they all knew, and because you know, obviously, I spoke such good German, and my secretary, who was bi – by that time was known she was Jewish. And there also was a incident, my fa – my secretary, after she was freed, she had to fill out a questionnaire and she was afraid to reveal that she was not Polish. She didn't trust the Germans, the – our officers. So she filled it out according to her false papers, not realizing that she was providing false information. And when she openly admitted that she was of German background and of Jewish background and not Polish, the – one of the – the sia – the security people decided she had violated the law, she had falsified her identity, and charged her for having done so. I talked to them, and they says, we have no choice, she did it, and we have to prosecute. So I wrote up a defense and there was a trial, so this was public. The other thing that surely made clear to people that I was Jewish was the fact that I found out that there was a synagogue in **Straubing**. And so they showed me where it was. It was dirty and had been used as a storeroom, but it hadn't been burned in **Kristallnacht** because it was a building in a whole row of buildings, undistinguished, and if you had tried to burn it, you would have burned others – places down. So I decided it needed to be restored, and went to the German – th-the – well, I think the mayor actually came to my office when I asked for it. I told him

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

this – we had to clean up the synagogue, and I ask him also that this be done by people who had damaged it, if their names could be identified. And he was not a Nazi, he had been put in the office. So he was able apparently, to find out who did it, and so the members of the family, who had been in the **SS** or **SA** and had damaged the interior of the building, had to come with brooms and paintbrushes and clean up the place.

Q: Did you cover this in your newspaper?

A: And that I put in the newspaper as a story, and again it was published all over **Germany**. And the – the interesting part was that one of the rabbis I just met now, in – I th – I think it was the rabbi in **Nuremburg**, actually had been – there is a Jewish community now in **Straubing**, and it is operating. It's not very large, but the synagogue is being used. So these kinds of things, I could do, simply because I had the authority to select what things to write about.

Q: Now I understand that you were also doing some things in a different capacity –

A: Yeah.

Q: – that you were working together with the **Bricha**.

A: Now, because my brother was in the Jewish Brigade, and knew my address, and knew my telephone number, and he could tell people in the Jewish Brigade, who were being released temporarily by the brigade, to organize the rescue of Jews in

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

eastern **Europe**. The brigade just had enough autonomy to arrange their – the mission – the execution of the missions that they had, mostly transportation. They had trucks to move from **Italy** to **Holland** and **Belgium**, and they did a lot of transporting. So what they did is they organized their crews so that about two-thirds did the work and one-third were released to – given ex-extended leave to go into eastern **Europe** to either visit the s – village or city where they came from, and to help Jews to organize, in order to get to the American zone, because th-there was no future for Jews in eastern **Europe**. And in order to increase the number of Jews who wanted to go to **Palestine**, you had to first bring them to **Germany**. And so there were agents of the Jewish Brigade, whose job it was to go into **Czechoslovakia** and **Poland**, and **Straubing** is close to the Czech border. So they had my name and telephone number so they could call me from **Munich** and say they needed my advice, could I see them? And I wo – of course always would say yes. And this way I became well-known, apparently, on this group of underground workers, and they would come to **Straubing** and they needed a place to sleep at night, which I could provide, and food. And then I would get them to the Czech border.

Q: Did anybody notice that you had these guests coming, mysterious guests, or were you able to keep it a secret?

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

A: Nobody paid much attention to what I was doing. That – the Germans didn't pay – you know, I had no one check on what I was doing and it was perfectly legitimate for the editor of the newspaper to interview anybody. So, it was reasonable for me to interview visiting dignitaries. The fact that they ca – happened to come from **Palestine** – my commanding officer wasn't interest – I mean, the – he was not my commanding officer, because he had no authority over the newspaper. He – he was responsible for making sure my **Jeep** was operating properly and that I had the necessary fuel and food. He wasn't at **[indecipherable]** the newspaper was not his job, so he didn't intervene at all. I'm not sure he even looked at – at the paper I put out. He had a German girlfriend, and had a wonderful time, you know, had nothing to do, so I don't think he ever once ever asked me about my work, because my command was not – he was not – I was not under his command. My commanding officer was, by that time, Major **Hans Harber**(ph) in **Bad Nauheim**, or in **Frankfurt**, where supreme headquarters were located. That was my command.

Q: And how long did you remain in **Straubing**?

A: Well, my job ended when the newspaper was turned over back to a German editorial board, about November '45. By that time, nearly all the newspapers, maybe with a week or two difference, were turned over to the Germans, and the program of U.S. operated German newspapers came to an end. And I had

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

accumulated enough points to be sent home. But because of the fact that there was a army program that permitted soldiers in **Europe** to visit relatives if they were available, I decided to take advantage of that, and I went, I think to **Bad Nauheim**, and asked to meet with my brother in **Palestine**. And that was approved, but a few hours later, while waiting around, I was told sorry, Sergeant **Eaton, Palestine** is closed. The British have closed Camp **Litwinski**, near **Tel Aviv**, a recreational facility for American sailors and soldiers, and ask all Americans to leave. There's no way for you to go to **Palestine** because there were several generals who wanted to go to **Palestine** for Christmas, but who were refused. So I f – thought quickly, and said, but could I meet my brother in **Cairo**? If you can get transportation. So I gave them the address of a school friend at **Cornell University**, a Jew from **Iraq**, who had moved from **Baghdad** to **Cairo**, and I knew his address because he had sent me an invitation to his wedding in **Cairo**. So I got permission to go

[indecipherable] I wanted to see my brother, and so they approved it. And when the orders were printed, they were printed like all other orders, to carry out the instructions of the commander, without specifying anything except I was put on detached duty for two weeks in **Cairo** to carry out instructions of the theater commander. That was **Eisenhower**. So, my commanding officer, who knew why I was leaving, what I went doing, said that's wonderful. I don't care how long you

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

stay, because when you g-go back, you going home. We don't need you any more. So again, I'm not sure every commanding officer would have taken that position. So, I had to find my way to go to **Cairo**. Well, there was no – I didn't get orders, transportation orders, because there was no way to get to **Cairo** from **Straubing, Germany**. So I packed up a duffel bag and hitchhiked to **Rome**, because I knew in **Rome** we had an air force base, and I had found out that we had planes flying from **Rome** to the **Middle East**. So when I got to **Rome**, I found out that there were no planes going to **Palestine**, there were no planes going to **Cairo**, but there were a lot of planes going to **India**, and they had to stop off in **Baghdad** to refuel. So, showing my orders, I got orders to fly to **Baghdad** and then I would find a way of going to **Cairo** from **Baghdad**. Nobody told me how I would do it. I got to **Baghdad**, and in **Baghdad** a British officer looking at my orders said, you are very lucky Sergeant **Eaton**, we have a plane going to **Cairo** in an hour. But I didn't want to go to **Cairo**, I want to go to **Palestine**. So I said, well I can't go to **Cairo** now, I have to go to **Baghdad** first. He said, it doesn't say in your orders. I said, I have to go to **Baghdad** first. And, I can't let you go to **Baghdad**, it's does – not in your orders. So I said, would you put in writing that you're refusing to let me go to **Baghdad**? He didn't want to do that, so instead, he accepted my request and he issued a voucher for me to go to the best hotel in **Baghdad**, where the British

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

officers were staying, to get a room at British expense. And I said I would find a way of getting to **Cairo** by bus. And I did. I got ahold of a bus, there were bus service every few days from **Baghdad** to **Damascus**. And from **Damascus** I got a ba – a bus to **Ruspina**. And then I spent three and a half weeks in **Palestine**, in American uniform, knowing that under British rules, I'm not supposed to be there. No one ever stopped me.

Q: Just stop you one second.

A: And the French really were willing to be part of a new **Europe**, but it was the Jews who prevented this. So that as a – an – and this was also in '45 already. In '46 the British felt they could not change the policy in **Palestine**, and therefore actually you had a rebellion of Jews against the British. And the whole uncertainty of what would happen to all these displaced persons, the ba – of course, after my newspaper was over, and I no longer had a position, I – I was offered a job in military government in **Germany** by the **U.S.** Army, with a pro – with a promotion to captain. But I didn't want to live among Germans, and I wanted to finish my academic career, so – and I didn't really like the American policy in general, which was to work very closely with the lower level German officials, which I didn't particularly like, although today I realize that if we had done what we did in **Iraq**, of dismissing the infrastructure of **Saddam Hussein**, we really didn't have the

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

means to govern the country. And so we really didn't have much of a choice, except to use a great many officials in the same positions that they had occupied under the Nazis, as long as they had not been excessively active, and known to have been – have – have en-engaged in atrocities. So major anti-Semites, judges who convicted too many people to death for stealing food, or for racial fo – fo – disapproved sexual relations or things like that, they lost their job. But most judges, most Nazi judges stayed as Nazi judges. And so by the time I could have become maybe the governor of this or that city in **Germany**, I would have had to deal with these kinds of officials, so no, I wanted to finish my **PhD**. So that – the – but certainly the – one other thing is, once I started to go back i – go into teaching, my focus was on my professional career. So I had research ideas, and I got adequate funding for research. So I focused on research, I didn't return to my army days or take a look at my extensive files of what happened in World War II. I didn't think of myself of somebody who was a historian of **Germany**, World War II. I had lots of interesting records of things I did, and they were put in boxes, and these boxes got transported from this home to that home, and I was always too busy to really look at them, of what was in there, because I had many other interesting professional challenges, until after my retirement, I started looking at the material. And I'm now engaged in writing a history of how my family interacted with the German culture over many

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

centuries. Because one has to face the fact that historically, **Germany** was never just a country of Germans. There was always an existing minority that had a very important function, namely the Jews.

Q: And when you look at all the documents that you accumulated when you were in the army, you're looking at them fresh after so many years, is there anything that surprises you, that you view differently in retrospect than you did at the time?

A: Yes. The – I mean, for hundreds of years, on both sides of my family, they remained Orthodox, even though a large proportion of the German Jews became Reform Jews. On my father's side they were quite conservative. On my mother's side, they took advantage of modern secular education, but they remained Orthodox. I had relatives as far back as 1835 who went to **Palestine**, because they wanted to live there. I – on my mother's side, I had people going to **Palestine**, 1882. The – so that my family was clearly Orthodox. Two of my brothers remained Orthodox. My oldest brother and I, especially under the influence of the Holocaust, I became convinced there is no superior po-power looking after exactly what's happening to any of us. And that if there is some rational power that explains the incredible complexity, and the – the uniformity of many things in nature; the fact that we have **DNA** that we shor – share with earthworms and with butterflies. There's s-some incredible rationality that somehow has developed an evolution for

Interview with Joseph Eaton
August 1, 2010

which I have no explanation. But I don't think there is a god who decides that I've been a good person, or I have had significant faults, on the basis of which my afterlife would be. So, I – I am not an Orthodox Jew today. And – but I am identified with the Jewish community for ethnic reasons. So from that point of view, I had an opportunity to do things during those unusual periods of time, which the only other time I was able to express my interest in being Jewish is when I took a job for five years to establish a school of social work in **Haifa University**, and they needed an outside person who was not involved in Israeli politics. And so they brought me in because university wanted to establish a school that would compete with **Hebrew University** and have a different ideology, so I took that job.

Q: Okay. Well, thank you very much. This concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Dr. **Joseph Eaton**.

Conclusion of Interview