

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Fred Firnbacher
September 16, 2010
RG-50.030*0587

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Fred Firnbacher, conducted by Ina Navazelskis on September 16, 2010 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Silver Spring, MD 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.

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FRED FIRNBACHER

September 16, 2010

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Fred Firnbacher**, on September 16th, 2010, in **Silver Spring, Maryland**, in Mr. **Firnbacher's** home, and thank you very much for agreeing to see us, to be re-interviewed by –

Answer: You're welcome.

Q: – the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum. And I will start with trying to lay the groundwork, trying to find out the world – a little bit about the world you were born into. Can you tell me where you were born, when, your name, your parents' names, and we'll go from there.

A: Okay, I was born in **Regensburg, Germany**, which is up the **Danube** from **Straubing**, where my family lived, probably because they had better medical care there than in **Straubing**, so it happened there. My name f – w – at that time was **Manfred Firnbacher**, but when I came to **United States** and I got my citizenship paper, I did not like the Germanic name of **Manfred**, so I had it legally changed to **Frederick**, and I took the middle name of **Stephen**, which is in honor of my grandfather.

Q: I see. What year were you born? What's the date of your birth?

A: May 19, 1930.

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Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: No.

Q: You were an only child.

A: Yes.

Q: Was yours a large family?

A: On my father's side, my father had four brothers and four sisters, and some of them weren't living any more when I was born, and I was the youngest of about oh, seven, eight grandchildren. That's on my father's side. On my mother's side, my mother had a sister and a brother. Brother who had a PhD. in chemistry from the University of **Heidelberg**, but due to the situation in **Germany**, he couldn't get a job there. So he emigrated to **Holland**, and he worked for **Organon**, which is the big pharmaceutical company there. And he was part of the earl – original research for the conjugated estrogens.

Q: I see. Could you spell the name of that research company so that we can –

A: **Organon, o-r-g-a-n-o-n.**

Q: **Organon**, okay.

A: And they're in – located in a place called **Oss, o-s-s**, in **Holland**.

Q: What was – what was your father's profession, or what – how did he make a living?

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A: My father was a cattle and horse dealer. He would buy cattle from farmers, resell it to other farmers. He'd buy cattle to be slaughtered. As far as the horses went, he would go every year at the German-**Belgium** border, where they had a type of horse like the **Clydesdale**, heavy work horses. He would buy them as colts, transport them to **Bavaria** and then resell them to farmers, who raised them.

Q: Tell – can you tell me – th-this is just pure coincidence. This morning we had an interview with somebody whose father was also in the cattle market business. Was this a fai – was this an area of activity that there were more Jews than in other areas, or was this just a pure coincidence that we were –

A: I think was – that I – I don't know for a fact, but I think a lot of Jews, for instance, our family, my father and his father were – worked together. An uncle by the name of **Solomon Firnbacher** also was in the cattle and horse business in **Regensburg**, which is a little way up the da – **Danube**. There were more **Firnbachers** in the cattle and horse business, and they more or less worked together. And I was told that they had the largest cattle business in **Bavaria**.

Q: I see. Okay, okay, so that – it gives us a little bit of sense of the wider context.

A: I don't know how true it is about the size of it, but that's what I heard.

Q: Okay. And your mother, was she involved in her – your dad's business as well, or wa –

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A: Well no, she was just a regular housewife.

Q: Okay.

A: And the funny thing is, her father was in the horse business.

Q: What was her name?

A: Her name – her name is **Ida Luchs**.

Q: How do – **i-d-a** is her first –

A: **I-d-a**, and last name **l-u-c-h-s**.

Q: **L-u-c-h-s**. And your father's first name was?

A: **Maier. M-a-i-e-r**.

Q: **Maier Firnbacher**, okay. Would you say that your family was a well-to-do family?

A: Well, as a child I wouldn't know that much about finance then, but we were pretty well off, I would think.

Q: Did you have nannies, did you have servants at home?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have housekeepers and things like that?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. What are some of your earliest memories from your childhood?

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A: Well, my mother was from a village in **Buttenwiessen** which was also in **Bavaria**, which was a good distance away, and we used to go to **Buttenwiessen** frequently.

Q: **Buttenwiessen?**

A: Yes. It's **b-u-t-t-e-n-w-i-e-s-s-e-n**.

Q: Was it a fun thing for a child to do when you went to **Buttenwiessen**?

A: Well, I never got there after I was four years old because my grandfather died and Grandma came to live with us.

Q: Ah, I see. So it was – it was something that happened only in those first four years of your life?

A: Yes.

Q: And what memories do you have of **Buttenwiessen**?

A: My cousin and I, who – who was – he was a year and a half older, we went with my grandfather to – one time while he was out selling a horse or something, and there was a very steep place there, which is made out of concrete and we use it like a slide and we slid down. I – they did something that they considered impossible, I got home in leather pants.

Q: So you – did you wear **lederhosen**?

A: Yeah.

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Q: That is a very – I mean, that's quite an achievement, cause those are tough pieces of leather there. Any other memories from that time, of your grandfather –

A: Well, I re – I remember the first **Seders** I went to.

Q: Mm-hm, what were they like?

A: They were just a lot of fun.

Q: Well, tell somebody who's not Jewish a little bit about **Seders** in **Germany** at that time, cause I wouldn't know.

A: Well – well, the family came together and there was a lot of singing, lot of good food, and we went through the whole **Haggadah**.

Q: A-And that is a prayer?

A: The **Haggadah** is the prayer book that they use for the **Seder**.

Q: I see. Okay, thank you. And is thi – was this something that was very traditional? Was your family a very religious family?

A: Yeah, we were brought up Orthodox.

Q: I see. Okay. And wa – was that something that almost all Jews in smaller cities and towns would – would observe?

A: Well, I don't know about – cause I was just a little one, so –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – I don't know. In **Straubing** we had one synagogue and it was Orthodox and **Buttenwiessen** was one synagogue and that was Orthodox. In fact, **Buttenwiessen** at the turn of the century, that's back in 1900, was about 70 percent Jewish.

Q: Did you have any contact with Gentile Germans at all? Do you remember, from
ger –

A: Oh yeah, when – when I was in school, in the first grade, I was entered into the – well, it was called the Protestant school. I was entered there and there were just two of us in the class, two Jewish children. The other one was a girl who – who I happen to know cause we grew up together, we were the same age. And I had the lovely experience of being expelled from school in the first grade because I hit a Nazi child and I was too dangerous to be left with them.

Q: Oh dear, and you were how old?

A: Six.

Q: And di-did you know the full reasons why this was happening?

A: Well, yeah, th-the wa – w-we – we knew that, being Jewish that we were just being hit upon and it just so happened this child was about three years older than me and a foot taller, and he started picking on me. So my dad being in the cattle and horse business, I ran into the house, got a horsewhip and hit him once with it. And there is a picture of me with the horsewhip way up on top.

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Q: Oh, we will take a look at that photograph later. And – and that was enough to make that happen.

A: Yes.

Q: And that was –

A: And I was out of school, my par – parents protested and what does a kid know, and after six weeks, after a lot of red tape going through the – with the – with the German government, the – I finally was allowed to go back to school. And at the end of the year, all the Jewish kids were expelled from the school.

Q: So this would have been 1935 - '36?

A: Thirty si – 30 s – either '36 or '37. I started school in '36, so I don't know what was –

Q: Yeah, probably –

A: – after new year, probably '37.

Q: Was that – is that your most vivid memory of coming – you know, sort of like head on into Nazism and you know, when you experience it, or did you have other things that –

A: Well, you could walk down the street – I mean, my parents ar – I w – I was – they let me go on the streets by myself and I'd see German storm troopers, SS men, SA men walking on the streets, and I – I was just a kid, so they didn't know who I

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was, so I just walked everywhere, I – other things that I remember is, when I was expelled – after we were all expelled from school we had an older man who had been a schoolteacher in his younger years, this time he was the top man of the synagogue, he – we didn't have a rabbi, it wasn't a large enough congregation to have a rabbi, but he led all the services, he taught the children Hebrew in Hebrew school, and since he'd been a teacher, the parents all got together and said, you've got to teach these children. And from the second grade on I was in a one room schoolhouse til later. Now, other things I remember when I was in that school. One day the door was kicked open, German storm trooper at the door, class dismissed. Didn't say anything, everybody go home. And I went home along the street. Half an hour after I was home we saw the troops going through the street for the **anschluss** in **Austria**. We were right near the border there. German troops just coming through the city, just truckload after truckload. And I guess they were going in the railroad station too, the trains were heading all for **Austria**. And by the next day we saw them coming back already, cause they had taken all of **Austria** so raptly. Then I remember another time, I was downtown in the – in **Straubing** and I saw a bunch of tanks coming, loads of – one tank after another, must have been hundreds of them, and they were heading for the **Sudetenland**, for the **anschluss** there.

Q: For the Czechoslovakian –

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A: For the Czechoslovakian. So I saw both of those invasions.

Q: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness, because yes, they were on the way, wa – wa
– where you lived –

A: Right, we were right in the corner –

Q: – in **Bavaria**, you were there, yeah.

A: – where **Czechoslovakia**, **Austria** and **Germany** came together, we lived right
in that little corner.

Q: And were people in the town saying yes, we're going to – **Austria** will now be
part of us, is that –

A: Well, not so much they ev – when they were down there they looked rather
scared, like going into battle, not knowing what's going to happen. The next day
when they were coming back, or next few days, they were rather jubilant.

Q: Did – do you – did you notice, or did your parents talk about neighbors or your
father's business being affected in – in all of – you know, in all of what was
happening at that time?

A: Well, he was – with the **Nuremburg** laws, I guess it was, Jews weren't allowed
to have businesses any more, so he just had to stop. That was it, he had to just get
rid of all the cattle and horses he had.

Q: So how did you live?

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A: Well, I guess they had means with which to live.

Q: So was probably savings.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Just what would have been saved up, and nothing. Di-Did you – okay. Did – did you notice – I mean, you were a young child at the time, but children feel things –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – very often. Did you notice something happening in your parents' demeanor towards one another, towards you –

A: No, they –

Q: – to the outside?

A: No, they – they just more or less indoctrinated me to be careful when I go in the street and not to mingle too much with – with the other kids.

Q: Were there other incidents from other kids, aside from that one – one boy –

A: Well, that's the only one that I really know about.

Q: Mm-hm, that you remember.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Yeah. Did you ever have any other German – did you have German friends?

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A: My parents had some German friends, but as times went on they – they didn't have that much to do with them. More or less stayed with the Jewish people who were in town.

Q: What else can you tell us about what happened afterwards? After you were in the school, how long did that school exist? Was that at some point also closed down or not?

A: Well, Crystal Night, that was the end of it. Crystal Night they broke into the synagogue, and where – there was one room in there, schoolroom, which they used before for Hebrew school, was that got to be our classroom, and of course with the – everybody having been arrested and being sent to **Dachau**, there was no more school, and that was it, they –

Q: Is that what happened afterwards is that not only was the building broken into, but those who were involved were sent to **Dachau**?

A: Yeah, all th – all the men and the ne – well, on Crystal Night they broke into the synagogue, they tried to break into our house, but the door was so strong they couldn't break in, and one of the neighbors across the street hollered out of his window, let those people alone, they haven't done anything to you, or something of that nature, and they went away. And in the morning, they – the police came to

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arrest my father, to put him under protective custody, and three days later he was in **Dachau**.

Q: Oh my. Did you see them arrest him? Did you see –

A: I was upstairs and I just heard – heard them downstairs.

Q: That must have been terrifying for a child.

A: It was terrifying. And my mother had nerve enough to go every day up to the police station as long as he was there. They allowed her to visit – well, n-not to actually visit him, to bring him things like warm clothing and stuff like that, and they passed that on to him.

Q: And how long was he in **Dachau**?

A: Three weeks. And that – he would have gotten out after four weeks anyhow, because all veterans from World War I were released from **Dachau** at that time. But my mother had heard that somebody went to the Gestapo and asked for their husband to be released, next day he came in. So Mother said, well, what can I lose? So she took the train to **Regensburg**, asked for his release and couple of days later, here he was at home.

Q: Did he look changed?

A: Well, he looked gaunt and they took the clothing and everything away from them, put them in these uniforms like you s-see from the prisoners in **Auschwitz**

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and everywhere. And it was cold of winter and they had on something about the warmth of a pajama.

Q: Yeah, of course, I mean, because **Kristallnacht** was in November.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And – and – and it was cold.

A: And it was very cold in **Europe**.

Q: Yeah. Did he talk about what had gone on in **Dachau**?

A: Well he di – said some of the things like when they – they taunted them when they got off the buses there. They had hoses and stuff and they swung at them and they made them run here and there and everything.

Q: Your language at home I take it, was only German. Is that so?

A: Well, that's all we could speak, because that – that was our native tongue.

Q: Okay. No Yiddish, or –

A: No.

Q: No. Wh-What – did things change in your house after your father came home, as far as how they were thinking of what to do, where to go?

A: Well, we already had our visas and everything to come to the **United States**, so –

Q: So they'd already planned.

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A: – we – we – everything had been planned. He got home in early December of '38, and we had our appointment with the American consulate in January, first week in January. And we went to **Stuttgart** to the consulate and of course somebody, on purpose I guess, instead of putting the date 1939 on one of the papers, '38, so that slowed everything down, my father had to go back and forth. So they used to come by every other day just about to pick up your passport and take it away from you. So there would be no chance of them getting our passport, we didn't come home from **Stuttgart**. We went from there to **Augsburg**, stayed with relatives over the weekend, and first thing on Monday morning, my dad took the train to **Straubing**, went to get the date changed on that paper, went from there to **Stuttgart**, got – saw the American consulate, got everything straight, picked us up late at night in **Augsburg**, we took th – in the night, the train back to **Straubing**. And the next train that left for **Holland**, we were on it to get out of the country.

Q: So you didn't waste any time –

A: No.

Q: – after he came back from **Kristallnacht**.

A: My – my uncle, who had become ill and he was an invalid, and he couldn't get around any more, so my mother's sister lived with him, she was divorced. And she and her son lived in **Holland** and took care of my uncle so we had a place where to

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stay til they shipped – because ba – my dad already had tickets before even Crystal Night, for us to leave **Germany** on January 28th of 1939.

Q: And did you know – being a child, did you know of all these plans?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay, so they – they were talking about that at home, there was already we're not staying here, even before **Kristallnacht**. You know, the –

A: Well, to get out of **Germany**, you just couldn't say we're gonna leave.

Q: Of course not.

A: You had to have paperwork, and the – the **United States** had a quota, how many people from each country that they would accept. So it was like getting a number in the delicatessen counter, you had to have a number, in the order of your number, you were called to **Stuttgart**. And we knew that it was January sixth that we were to appear there.

Q: And that wasn't yet certain that you would be able to go when you appeared there, or was it? It was a more f – more or less a formality.

A: It was va – well, we had to pass phy – physical exam, they weren't going to take just anybody to come to **United States**.

Q: And were y – was your family able – yo-you – you left everything, then.

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A: We were allowed to take, I think it was 250 marks, German money. Or was it – then two fi – I think it was 250 marks per person, that's all the money we were allowed to take with us.

Q: Were you able to take any other items? Did you take any toys?

A: Oh yeah, in – once we knew that we were leaving, in fact, before we even went to the consulate, we had a big van – it's like – like they were years ahead, it was like the – today the containers that they – ships things, we were able to take all of our furniture and stuff with us. But, they had to be inspected by the German government. They put a value on every item, and you had to pay a tax of that amount to them.

Q: For your own stuff.

A: For your – for your own stuff.

Q: And so did you pretty much leave an empty house?

A: Well, my grandmother was still there. She – she wasn't with us, so she was there in the apartment. And as the different apartments vacated, my grandmother was able to go to **Holland** and then stay with her daughter, she was able to do that. In fact, she was in **Holland** when the Germans invaded.

Q: What happened to her?

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A: Well, she died in **Sobibor**. I think it's **Sobi** – I'm not sure whether **Sobibor** or **Mauthausen**, one of those two.

Q: And the large family of your – I think you've talked about your father having come from a very large family.

A: Well, his brother, who was younger than he was a physician. He didn't say a word to anybody, all of a sudden we got word he was in **Switzerland**. From **Switzerland** he went on to then **Palestine**, there was no **Israel** yet. And he practiced medicine in – in **Israel**. And he – he p – he lived through the war. In fact, after his wife passed away, he went back to **Germany**, and he was an official in the German government in the medical section, with an office in **Munich**.

Q: Oh my, how unusual. There was – I know of many people who – many – I knew a few people who did go back, who –

A: Well, but this was quite a bit after the war. He didn't got back immediately, he went back a long time after, in the 50s.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And his sisters, three of them who were still living, and they succumbed in the Holocaust.

Q: I see, so they were still there.

A: Mm-hm.

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Q: They were still in **Straubing**.

A: **Straubi** – well, one was in **Regensburg** and one was in **Landshut** and one was in **Straubing**.

Q: Did you, bit by bit, learn of the fates of each single one?

A: Well, th-they looked after the war, and it took time til we got them. Now, in the articles that I gave to –

Q: **Suzy** [indecipherable]

A: – **Suzy**, there's a lot of paperwork in there from letters that were written, and where – where the people ended up. And we got notices through the Red Cross from the family in **Holland** where they were, and what happened to them.

Q: So your uncle who was in **Holland** stayed there, he didn't –

A: No, he – he passed away before the war, he was sickly and after we left, he went downhill real fast, and in fact we were in the **United States** only about two months when my mother got word that he passed away.

Q: I see. And your si – her sister who was taking care of him –

A: She ended up in **Auschwitz**, she and her son.

Q: Okay. So when you were leaving your grandmother and when you were leaving your extended family, there had been nobody else in the family aside from this one

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uncle who had had plans or – or talk of also trying to get out, or they just didn't have the way of doing it, or –

A: Well, the lot of them didn't, they had to have, first of all an affidavit, someone to sponsor them to come to **United States**. And a lot of people even if they didn't have that yet, they got themselves a number, and a lot of them did have the affidavits, but the war broke out –

Q: So they were caught.

A: – before – they were caught in there before they had a chance – before the number came up.

Q: So you left **Germany** when you were hold old then, nine years –

A: Eight.

Q: Eight, eight. And what are the memories that you have when you cr – crossed into **Holland**? Did you feel in – like you were – was it like from one world to another world?

A: Well, it was very unusual. As we were go – the train was going toward the border, German **SS** men came through, they were inspecting people and hoping that they wouldn't call you out. And we saw them passing by our compartment and they seemed to bypass us. All of sudden we heard the con – the conductors going through speaking Dutch. They'd been at the border, the Germans were gone, the

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Dutch were in, and we opened the window and we spit out the Swiss – the end of **Germany**.

Q: Fitting. And tell me now about the Torah story that you were talking about.

What was that, how does it – what was the beginning of it, how did it develop –

A: Okay. On Crystal Night they broke into the synagogue.

Q: Right.

A: It was a bunch of thugs. They came and ransacked the place. They couldn't burn it because it was in a residential area and they couldn't get permission from the fire department to burn the synagogue down. So they ransacked everything and I did see the results of it, and I've never seen such a mess of total destruction, like a bomb had hit the place. And when we – they – they came in, just about destroyed everything. When my father came back from **Dachau**, he had – we had – we were ready to leave **Germany**, we were ready to pack everything. And on the list of items we were permitted to take out was the Torah. So he went to the Gestapo and he showed them papers where he was, could he get his Torah back? The Torah –

Q: This was the synagogue's Torah?

A: That was his Torah, it was af –

Q: Oh, it's his Torah.

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A: – i-it was – it was in – our family's Torah. That was written by my great-grandfather, which is another story. And anyway –

Q: We'll hear that then, maybe.

A: Anyway, he went there to get the Torahs, he was – there was jus – he was told. And when he got there, there was a room that had Torahs and prayer books, all kind of religious material just laying in a big heap. Well, he picked up his Torah and he saw all these others there, being desecrated through – the Torah's supposed to be – always be standing up. So he took all the Torahs and stood them up. And he saw a box there, so he took one Torah, he put it into this box, and he took the silverware that was there, the breastplate, the – the silver hand and the crown and he put all that into the box, and he closed the box up. Well, I am not sure, but the – when they found this Torah after the war, there in the box with all that, it had to be the Torah my father had put in there, cause what probably happened, I surmise that they came – the Gestapo came by to pick up all these items, and there's this box there, they didn't look in it, and it was left. And somebody probably would say, oh my God, there's Torahs here. If they catch me with this, they're going to cut my head off, send me a concentration camp or do something. So they headed for the war, and after the war was over, they discreetly brought it back and just left it there. And I have a hunch that's what happened, but from what they said the Torah – th-the box

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looked like – of what my father had – the story he'd always told, I put the two – t-t-
two together and it had to be that.

Q: And when was it discovered? Was it like returned right after the war, or se –

A: After –

Q: – or several years later or decades late –

A: Shortly after the war.

Q: So cer – shortly after the war –

A: Yeah.

Q: – it just appeared in the –

A: It appeared in the – in –

Q: – where the synagogue was.

A: – no, in the si – in the police station.

Q: Oh, in the police station. It appeared there.

A: That's where it disappeared from. That's where my father, when he went to pick
up his Torah –

Q: That's where he found it, okay.

A: And he put it into the box.

Q: Okay.

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A: And so I – I just put two and two together, but the fact that my dad mentioned it so often –

Q: Talked about it so much.

A: Right.

Q: And yes, I mean, it – it – it makes sense that – that – that's an educated hypothesis, that –

A: But in the film you don't get that, because they didn't ask me about it, I had no idea that's how the film was going to end up, cause they just asked me about our Torah, the story of it, and –

Q: And when you're talking now, you're talking about a film that was made by German television people.

A: That was for German tel – this **Wolfgang Bergman** was the producer, and –

Q: And the point of his film was the story of this –

A: Of the missing Torah – well, the story – what had happened to this Torah, where'd they find it from. **[phone ringing]**

Q: Let's – let's poi – **[break]** You can turn us back on. So, can you tell me a little bit about the point of the film? It was to find out what happened, this mystery of the hidden Torah.

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A: Whe-Where did it come from. They had interviewed a lot of German people about Crystal Night there, and it – they – they had – th-this film was made a- actually after the war, in 1989, so much later.

Q: Okay.

A: And you've got the – the film there, so you can go through it and see it, it's all in German. And anyway, you want to know the story about the Torah.

Q: Right.

A: Well, my great-grandfather, **Moses Firnbacher**, was in the **United States**, and he hit gold in the goldrush in ninet – 1849.

Q: Oh my.

A: And he took his belongings, his riches from the goldrush, brought it back to **Germany**, to **Gossmannsdorf** where the family lived, and like any other young man, he got married there, started a business, and he had children of his own, and the oldest was my grandfather, **Joseph Firnbacher**. And for his Bar Mitzvah he wanted to have a Torah written. Since he'd gotten all this gold, he had wealth. So he had a Torah written, and they brought the Torah scribe, a **sofer** into the house, and he lived with them for a whole year, and every week he wrote that week's portion for the Torah, til it was finished, for my grandfather's Bar Mitzvah. And this, when

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they moved to **Straubing**, my grandfather went there, I guess, for greener pastures or exactly what I don't know. I wasn't around yet then.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they went to **Straubing**, the Torah came with them and then my father was Bar Mitzvahed from it and it belonged to the family and when we left **Germany**, we – we brought it with us.

Q: Wow. So it's –

A: Then I was Bar Mitzvahed out of it and our son was.

Q: Wow. And where is it now?

A: It's at **Ohr Kodish** in – in **Chevy Chase**.

Q: In your synagogue there?

A: Mm-hm

Q: That's not just any old Torah.

A: Right.

Q: That is – that is quite a special one. And did your father have difficulties in – when he had to go through bureaucra – bureaucracy, pay for it, go through the German police and so on, but were – did they know what they were giving up, or they didn't care?

A: Oh, they didn't care. **[phone ringing]**

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Q: Okay, they can call again, okay? So let's go. So yes, I was asking about any complications in getting the Torah out of your fa – of your father dealing with the – the Nazi officials.

A: No, he just – he just went there, he showed the paper, this is it, it's got the approval, bingo.

Q: And they could – and they –

A: They made a phone call, the police station released the Torah to him.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: And then, the thing is this. Here he is, it's a snowy, wintry day, my father is carrying a Torah through the streets of Nazi **Germany** to ki – bring it to our house, whi – it was a brave thing. But I have a hunch that half the – not more than half, 90 percent of the people wouldn't have even known what he was carrying.

Q: Did your parents, since you – you were a child at the time, and it's real – a lot of the questions that I'd have would be the kind that a child wouldn't know the answers to, but did your parents talk about neighbors who'd changed their attitudes, or changed their behavior towards your family? Or were the Gentiles around pretty much the same they had always been?

A: Some of them were the same. Some of them th-they're real Nazis.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And more or less, watch out.

Q: And yo – and your parents would let you – would let you know that this one you have to be careful with –

A: Oh yeah.

Q: – this one you have to be careful with.

A: But they let me go freely, even a-as a seven and eight year old. I would wander around the city cause I – well, na – the section where we lived. I didn't go all over town, but in section where we lived, I walked around freely.

Q: Was it a pretty residential area where you lived?

A: I won't say it was pretty, it was just typical houses there. In fact, our house, we – we weren't that far from the railroad lines. And when the allies bombed over there, our house was hit. And it – they took the same bricks that were get – from the house. It was three stories high, and they had enough bricks to rebuild it two stories. And when **Betsy** saw it when she was with me in **Germany**, it's not a pretty house.

Q: Okay. But then that house that –

A: Th-That – that was in **Buttenwiessen**, that was – that's not the one –

Q: That's your grandfather's house.

A: That's my grandfather's house.

Q: I see.

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A: That was confiscated by the Nazis, my grandmother had to sign it over, and after the war, we did get some restitution for it.

Q: Okay. When did you stop speaking German?

A: I always spoke German in – I mean, when my parents passed away, I didn't have anybody to speak German to any more. But I went to s – American conversation school in, I think it was **Webster** School, here in **D.C.**, **10th** and **Eight** Street, northwest.

Q: So you moved to **Washington** when you came to the **United States**?

A: Oh yeah. And I learned little bit there, and they got my father a job on a chicken farm in **Virginia**, which that was a horror. Anyway, they put me into the public school there in a little place called **Midlothian**.

Q: I've heard of **Midlothian**.

A: It's outside of **Richmond**.

Q: Right.

A: I went to school there. I didn't know what was coming up, but I was s-starting to learn English, and – and then –

Q: What were yo – what were your first impressions when – did you sail into **New York** harbor, or to **Baltimore** –

A: Yeah, we di – no, we sai – we – we landed in **Hoboken, New Jersey**.

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Q: Okay.

A: That's where **Holland** American line had their pier at that time. But we saw the Statue of Liberty. And we always had heard how warm it gets in **America** in the summertime. Of course, this was February, I didn't realize it snowed here in the winter. And we arrived in a snowstorm.

Q: Oh my.

A: And we were picked up by a nephew of my father, a first cousin of mine. And he and another relative, they picked us up, they took us into **New York City**, and they showed me the wa – the **Empire State Building**, the biggest building in the world, I couldn't believe it. I kept looking up.

Q: Well, I remember – I'm from **Boston**, and I had been to **New York** a couple of times before, when I was, you know, growing up. But a friend of mine convinced me to move there when I was a young adult. And for the first three days I felt like, oh, these are such statues, they're so big and I'm so little, you know. And I never thought I could fee – have that feeling, cause I'm a city kid, you know, and you're used to tall buildings. But **New York** has that, you know, effect on people.

A: Well, they – they put us on the train that afternoon for **Washington**, because we had an affidavit from people who lived in **Washington**. We stayed with them at first, then we lived in rooming houses and so on.

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Q: So it was a little tough to begin with.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Had your father been able to get any of his capital out, any – any sa –

A: No.

Q: No. So it was only the 250 marks.

A: Per person, yeah.

Q: Per person. That is tough. That is very tough. So you didn't forget German, in other words.

A: No. Well, we spoke it at home, so –

Q: Even in the **United States**?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Cause some people – some people either refused to, or they were in an environment which didn't encourage it.

A: Well, we spoke less and less when we went out, because when the war started, lot of people didn't like the Germans, so we tried to speak English when we went out.

Q: During the war, what do you remember of your parents' demeanor?

A: Well, they're –

Q: I – they must have been concerned ab –

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A: Well, they're very concerned about the relative that are still over there, not hearing anything. At first we got mail from them, but it was all censored. You'd see letters with something blacked out, or cut out. Every piece of mail we got was censored, even before they're at war with the **United States**. Because you have the period from 1939 to '41 when the British and the Frenchman [**indecipherable**]

Q: That's right. When was the first time that you learned of the fates of your – of your family, of your larger extended fa –

A: Well, as – as word got through, it was difficult to find the – my parents would write to everywhere – to everybody everywhere, the –

Q: Was it only after the war?

A: After the war. You couldn't find out anything during the war. We tried to send mail through the Red Cross, but wasn't much luck there.

Q: When did you go back? Cause you mentioned before that you went back.

A: I went back to **Germany** when I'm in – in the military.

Q: And when was that?

A: I was over there from 1954 into '55.

Q: That's pretty early, considering. You know, ma – considering that many people didn't – didn't go back, if at all, in the 70s or the 80s, or to see the places they had been to. Did you go back to **Straubing** when you were in the military?

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A: Yeah. When a – when I was in the army, I didn't want to go to **Korea**, and it just so happens that I knew a few people in personnel at Fort **Benning, Georgia**, and I mentioned to them if they ever have a levy for somebody with my **MOS**, which is a pharmacist's **MOS**, I would be very happy to go to **Germany**, yeah, I just did not want to go to **Korea**. So before I knew it, here I had orders to go to **Germany**.

Q: And where were you based?

A: I was – first we arrived in **Bremerhaven**, and from there we were shipped down to **Zweibrucken**, where all the troops were disseminated all over **Germany**. Now, **Zweibrucken** was very interesting. They had us take our patches off of our uniforms so they couldn't tell where we came from in the **United States** because it – it was still the height of the Cold War. So a – I was hoping I would be sent to **Frankfurt** where the general hospital, I was hoping to be stationed there. I think it was the 97th general hospital, I'm not sure any more the number. And lo and behold the orders came down, 97th general hospital, **Frankfurt**. I was so happy because **Frankfurt** was the center, I knew I could travel all over **Germany** once I got there. We got to there, said we have no need for pharmacists here. If you want to stay here, you – we can put you in the motor pool. Well, being a young pharmacist just out of school, I'm not going to get my fingernails dirty in the motor pool. So I was – we were transferred to triple seven nine, which was a outfit of nothing but medical

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specialists. And from there we were assigned, and I ended up in a place – I was sent to **Würzburg**. And, funny thing, that's very close to where that Torah that my dad brought over was written. Anyway, when we got to **Würzburg** we're told – we were there cause that was just the headquarters, and I was sent to a place called **Wildflecken**.

Q: And is that in **Bavaria** too?

A: It's in the **Rhine** valley. We were – I was stationed seven miles from east **Germany**.

Q: Oh my.

A: It was in the middle of nowhere. Nobody in **Germany** knew where **Wildflecken** was.

Q: I've been there.

A: You've been there?

Q: I've been there. I've been there. I know exactly where you're speaking –

A: They took – after the war, they put up a lot of the displaced persons up there, and the place was covered like a forest, because the Germans had secret installations there, were testing, I believe there, buzz bombs that they were shooting over into **England**. They were testing them there, they had – there was a secret – it was a secret base for the Germans, nobody had heard of **Wildflecken**. Where – where are

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you stationed? **Wildflecken**. Never heard of it, where is it. And anyway, when they got these displaced person there, they chopped all the trees down, they used them for fire – firewood. And where we were stationed, we were in – I was in the dispensary, and w-we – it was like SS headquar – officers' quarters. So we w – as – here I was a **PFC** when I got there, that's private first class.

Q: Okay.

A: Had a private room, not – not like military barracks, it – we – we –

Q: Small place.

A: – ba – we had – had German civilians who worked for us. I – I was training at – I – I more or less re-did the entire pharmacy department there, because it hadn't had a – anybody who was a licensed pharmacist there, this – this German was a druggist, as the German call it, in other words, sells toothpaste and stuff like that.

Q: That's right.

A: And I – I taught him stuff, and as a result that –

Q: That **Wildflecken** has a pharmacy.

A: Yes.

Q: How interesting. Now, when you were there, did you go back to **Straubing**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you go to **Buttenwiessen**?

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A: Well, the first trip I made – well, actually, I got there in September, so it was right before the Jewish holidays.

Q: Right.

A: So I was not very popular, when soon as I got there I es – I wanted to go for the holidays, where do you go? I'm new there. So I was told that **Würzburg** was the closest place, so I got a three day pass for the – **Rosh Hashanah**. And then for when **Yom Kippur** came, I went back there. But they saw that – cause I told them, I'm taking off for this [indecipherable] Christmas I – I'll do all that sort of stuff. So I – so I – th-they realized that it was religious reason, not that I was goofing off.

Q: Right.

A: So my first trip I did was to **Munich** for another reason, because my grandmother had a very good friend who survived the Holocaust, and she was in the home for the aged in **Munich**. And so I go to visit her, what can I take a woman who is in her 80s, what can I bring her?

Q: Of course.

A: I'm thinking, I'm thinking. Guess what I came up with? Cigarettes. She could – with cigarettes she could get anything.

Q: Of course, of course, of course. So you bring an 80 year old packs of cigarettes.

A: Brought her a carton of cigarettes.

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Q: Yeah.

A: Greatest present. She was so appreciative. Well, once my mother found out that this woman was living, we'd send her packages. So when the packages went over they were plundered before she got them. So I got the great idea, I'm going to write on the outside of the package, gift parcel. The word g-i-f-t gift is the German word for poison. And every package went through.

Q: Really? But – but, you know, how mean. You know, a parcel goes to an old woman in a nursing home –

A: Yes.

Q: – and it – and it's pulled apart and si – you know, stolen –

A: Right.

Q: – before she even gets – you know, before it gets to her.

A: And w-we – we sent her stuff like soap, toothpaste, stuff like that, which they couldn't get.

Q: Of course.

A: I mean, you couldn't send – we could send some canned goods, but you couldn't send anything else because if you – it would perish by the time it would get there.

Q: So, your first trip was to **Munich**. During that same three day pass, did you make it down to **Straubing**?

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A: No, I went to **Buttenwiessen** where my –

Q: Mm-hm.

A: – through – I went along with troo – the railroad ways.

Q: Okay.

A: So **Buttenwiessen**, I decided to stop there in the morning. In fact, I got off the train in **Donauwerth**, which was where the train went, the train didn't go to **Buttenwiessen**. So I got out of there and had lunch, and I got a cab driver there, standing at the railroad station. How much you charge me to take me to **Buttenwiessen** and bring me back? Twenty-five marks. Fine. I say, I'm going to have lunch and then I want you to take me to **Buttenwiessen**. I get to **Buttenwiessen**, the first thing I ask, where do we find the **Bürgermeister**? The – the mayor.

Q: Right.

A: So we found him. They're all farmers. In fact, in those days he probably – he probably couldn't even sign his name. They weren't that educated. So I said, I'd like to see my grandfather's house, which way, and I'd like to go to the cemetery. Got to the cemetery, I had a picture of my grandfather's tombstone, so I knew what it looked like. I found the tombstone, everything on it was erased.

Q: Really?

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A: I went in – my mother said, when you go in the door to the cemetery, you turn right and it's the third grave. It wasn't there, I found it somewhere else. They had taken all the tombstones out, they had plundered them, they were going to reuse them. And they took the names **[indecipherable]**. When war ended, they brought them back, the one they still had, just put them anywhere. So that was the story there. So I told them where I wanted the tombstone, I wanted it re-engraved, and of course I wrote my dad and he sent them a very nice letter. I should say not so nice.

Q: Pardon?

A: I should say not so nice.

Q: Nis – yeah.

A: And tha-that took care of that. Then from there I went – stopped in **Augsburg**. I just wanted to see the house that my uncle had, he was in **New York**, and I just – it was on the **Bahnhofstrasse**, so it's right down the street from the railroad station. I just stopped long enough to find the place, to see what it looked like, take a picture of it and depart and then from there I went to **Munich** and I spent the weekend there and then I had to get back to base.

Q: So you – but the impression I get is that you looked at buildings and s – graves.

A: Right.

Q: Did you meet people? Did you see any people who knew you, who knew your –

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A: Well, in **Buttenwiessen**, the word got around so fast that I – that I was in town, the whole town was there when I got back to where the cab was.

Q: Wow.

A: And war – what happened to your mother, your aunt? Wanted to know what – what happened to everybody.

Q: How did you feel wi-with these – with this kind of curiosity? Did it feel strange?

A: Yeah. I mean, here I was surrounded by everybud – by 30 - 40 people.

Q: And yo – and yet, 10 years earlier, or 12 years earlier, you wouldn't have known which one of those you could trust, if any.

A: Well, I didn't know who most of them were, but I got the **Bürgermeister's** name, and etcetera, etcetera, and my mother remembered him as a kid.

Q: Did you ever go back to **Straubing** at that time?

A: Well, next time I had a three d – the next pass I had was only a two day pass, so I just went to **Nuremberg**, cause I wanted to see the Christmas set-up, cause it's very famous there, the old city in **Nuremberg**. So I went there in December, and in January I went to **Straubing**.

Q: And how did – I mean, cause **Straubing** you have real memories of –

A: Yeah.

Q: – you know, more than **Buttenwiessen**. What was that like for you?

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A: Well, I was on the train as the train pulled into town. I recognized the post office, and they had like two railroad stations now, one for the **G.I.s** and one for the Germans. And from there I walked somewhere to find a hotel, and I stayed there. When I signed my last name the – the cle – the desk clerk there recognized the last name. He said, you any relation to so and so? I says yes, that was my grandfather. And while I was in **Straubing**, I also went to visit the synagogue there, the cemetery, our old house, my uncle's house. And my father had a lawyer already in **Germany** who was handling a lot of his papers, I went to visit him. And that was about it for my visit in **Straubing**.

Q: So, no people – it wasn't like the whole village gathered once they found out –

A: No, no, **Straubing's** a little – s – **Buttenwiessen** was a village, **Straubing** was a t –

Q: A town.

A: – a real city with 40,000 people in it.

Q: Yeah, okay, okay.

A: So anyway, in **Straubing** I got reprimanded by the **MPs**; it was snowing and I had – unless you were a paratrooper, you weren't allowed to blouse your boots. And I didn't want to get the bottom of my trousers wet in the snow, so I had bloused my

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boots, in other words so the boots would be showing. So they made me undo the boots and said, don't do that again.

Q: Why would that even matter?

A: Because I'm not a paratrooper, that's military –

Q: And all par – I see.

A: Only a paratrooper in those days was allowed to blouse his boots.

Q: Did you ever meet people afterwards in **Straubing** who knew your family?

A: Well, my mother wa – had a certain brand of sweaters she liked, **Blyla**(ph) was the manufacturer. So s-she said I could go to one of the department stores, which had been Jewish before, **Salinger's**(ph), and I went in there to buy a sweater for her. She knew the size, the German sizes. Went in there and the girl who waited on me says, I went to school with you. See, cause my – we had a nametag on the – on the uniform, so she knew right away –

Q: So during that very, very short time that you were in the public school, she remembered you from that.

A: I didn't remember her.

Q: Yeah, isn't that interesting.

A: Well, the word got around there too, I guess, that I was in town.

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Q: Yeah. Tell me about this article by **Julius Streicher**, that appeared in **Der Stürmer**. How is it that your father or your grandfather – this is from 1927, so this

–

A: That's before I was born, so I –

Q: Before you were born. But how did they get in his crosshairs?

A: I have no idea. I got – this was given to me by the gentleman, this **Wolfgang Bergman** who took the b – he brought it – he thought he'd show that to me.

Q: I see. And it says, **Joseph Firnbacher**, so that would be your grandfather?

A: Right.

Q: **Der Straubinger vieh Juder**. So that would be the –

A: Cattle Jew.

Q: – Jew from **Straubing**. **Die eine nabindiga stube in [German]** yeah.

A: When he gets into high German, I – I'm lost.

Q: It's also – it's also in that sort of gothic script –

A: Yeah.

Q: – so that we don't necessarily – but yes, we can tell it's a tendential article for sure. **Straubing ist eine nett niederbayerischen stadt**. **Straubing** is a nice, lower Bavarian city. **[German]**

A: In other words, he says that the Jews have taken over the town –

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Q: Town.

A: – and they've got – stolen everybody's riches. Well, there are other articles about other people.

Q: Okay. But the same sort of thing.

A: They're all the same type of thing, which I thought might be of interest.

Q: Yes, it is, yes it is, and it's – so even before your birth, there is already this atmosphere –

A: That's before the Nazis were even in, that's before –

Q: That's right. That's before '33.

A: Right.

Q: Wow. And it's from **Der Stürmer**. Thank you for – for sharing that.

A: I think they have – get more use out of it at the Holocaust Museum than I would.

Q: Was this the only time that you were back in **Straubing**?

A: No, we were back – that's in – I went over in 1995.

Q: So, it was 40 years difference –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – between the first time and the second time. What did you notice from the second time that was different from the first?

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A: Well, it was more – like it's in **United States**, I mean, it was more modernistic, it was – I mean, the people were speaking German. We noticed something which I'd never noticed before, **McDonald's**.

Q: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

A: I know. We – right, **Betsy, McDonald's**? We found a **McDonald's** in **Straubing**.

Q: And did you have – did you find, of course, your old home?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, what I did, I wrote to them in **Straubing** that – I wrote to the Jewish synagogue. I didn't know what their title was or anything, I just, Jewish congregation of **Straubing**, to the head of it, and I got an answer back from them, and they – we told them th – what day we would be in **Straubing**. And we got there on that date, they met us there. We met a couple of people who – from the synagogue there. We went to the synagogue, we saw it was rebuilt just like it was before the war.

Q: Wow.

A: It – it – it was beautiful.

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Q: And the first time you went back, was one of your questions how many Jews might have survived and come back to **Straubing**? Did you know about that?

A: Well, the – well, that we knew right after the war cause my father wrote to the **Bürgermeister** or whoe – whoever was in charge right after the war. There was one who'd been heavily wounded in World War I who survived. I think it was just two.

Q: Just two. Just two.

A: And when – when I was there, we went to the cemetery again, we wa – saw our old house. There was also a memorial there for the – the prisoners who the Germans were holding, who they were marching from **Flossenbürg** to **Dachau**. In fact, the best man at our wedding, I didn't know it, he was liberated right near **Straubing**, and he was in that group that was being marched through **Germany**, and he was released in **Cham, c-h-a-m**, is the name of the place. And he told me about ther – anyway, they had built a memorial to these people. They wouldn't allow them to give them food, or wouldn't let them have water. The people in town came by to help them, and the **SS** just told the people, get out, leave these people alone. And a lot of them died there, and there was a memorial which is a water fountain, and had the word water written on it in all different languages, **wasser, mayim**(ph). In fact, I av – took pictures of it, I – I've got videos that I took when we were there.

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Q: That sounds like a fitting memorial. And yes – and **Flossenbürg** wasn't that far from **Wildflecken**, if I remember.

A: That I don't know.

Q: Yeah. It's – it's – it's also in that sort of corner, forgotten corner.

A: Oh, **Wildflecken**, I always said I [**indecipherable**] the battle of the **Mickey Mouse**, that's where I got my medals. The story there was the **Mickey Mouse** was in, and on payday the troops were down there and get drunk. And we were in the m – in the medical corps, we ran the dispensary. And when the troops were drunk and the **MPs** would call us up, we've got another one who's hurt down here. They'd throw bottles at each other, and we'd pick them up and they'd bring them up to the dispensary for us to sew them up. And so I said I earned my medals in the battle of **Mickey Mouse**.

Q: I see. Well, better than in real battles.

A: Right.

Q: So you ended up being there for two years, yes? 1954 – '55 –

A: No, in – in – I was in **Wildflecken** only for about three-quarters of a year. I went over in September of '54 and I left in May of '55.

Q: So about a year and a half total.

A: No, about three-quarters of a year.

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Q: Oh, excuse me, that's right, that's right –

A: '54 to '55.

Q: – that's right. And – and was that your service then, that was your full service –

A: Well, I was in **United States**, I was – I was at Fort **Benning** before that.

Q: Ah, I see, I see.

A: Af – that was after base – basic training at Camp **Pickett**, then it was Fort **Benning**.

Q: Okay. And I've missed a part in here, and that was, after you're in **Midlothian** and you go to school, how you finished school, where did you go to college, what did you study and so on.

A: I – well, like I always joke around and say I went through school, in the front door and out the back. When we came back here, I went to **Bankcroft** School for the fourth grade, and then we moved to a bigger apartment and I went to **John Quincy Adams**. And from there I went to –

Q: Was that in **D.C.**, excuse me?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Then I went to **Powell** Junior High School and from there I went to **Central** High School. And from there I went to **G.W.**, I started out, I was going to be a pre-

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med, but when I saw du – they had quota system getting into school, and the expenses and everything, I got my Associate of Arts degree and then went on to pharmacy school. Went through pharmacy school in three years at **G.W.** and got my Bachelor of Science in pharmacy.

Q: Can you tell me what kind of quota system?

A: They would – they had limited the number of Jews that they were accepting to medical school.

Q: Here, in the **United States**?

A: Here in the **United States**.

Q: After the war.

A: A friend of mine applied to 30 schools, got ref – turned down by all of them. I never applied to medical school. The following year he applied again, and – to the same schools, and the 30th one, **Howard** University accepted him.

Q: Wow. You know, one heard of things like that over in **Europe**, but not over here in the **United States**. So, you finished pharmacy school.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you had finished before your army service, your military service?

A: Well, the funny thing is, the pharmacy school – my father tried to get restitution from – for missing schooling etcetera in **Germany**.

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Q: Right.

A: And when they found out I was a pharmacist, it takes eight years in **Germany**, and only five here. It was three and a – four and a half years actually, the number of credits. And so you got out sooner than you would have in **Germany**, so they rejected me, I never got any restitution.

Q: My goodness. But on that question in general, was there restitution made to your parents?

A: My – yeah, my –

Q: For –

A: – father – my father got quite a bit back. I won't say a lot, but he got some satisfaction.

Q: From – for his business, lost business?

A: Lost business – well, I – I didn't mingle in those things, so wa – I was just a kid. But his business, the properties he owned.

Q: Okay. So some of it was done at that time. Maybe it was a i – maybe it was a little more streamlined for people who came from **Germany**, than from those who would have come from **Poland** or from the **Czech Republic**.

A: Probably was, because that was already in the east zone, that was –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – under Russian control.

Q: Yeah, and – and the – the records are there.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: The records are there to show –

A: Well, they're immaculate at keeping records, rec-recording everything.

Q: Yeah, yeah. When did you get married?

A: 1957.

Q: So, after you came back.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And –

A: Well, I didn't – actually, **Betsy** and I, we didn't even go with each other before I ca – was in the service. But when I was at **G.W.**, I remember having seen her in the student union.

Q: And – and so you got to know each other after you came back from the service?

A: Mm-hm. Yeah, we met the –

A2: I didn't know his army experience.

Q: I see. And do you have children?

A: Yeah, we have one son, **Michael**.

Q: Does he know your story?

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A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay. What would you say – when did your parents die? When did they pass away?

A: My mother passed away at a y – rather young age, she died in 1968.

Q: Yes, it is a rather a young age.

A: And my father died in 1988. My dad lived to be 95.

Q: Wow. What – what – what do you think they passed onto you as a legacy?

A: Well, just to work hard and do the best you can, and make something of yourself.

Q: How did – or how did they respond to everything that had happened, and how did they come to grips with it?

A: Well, my mother was very, very bitter toward the Germans. Extremely bitter. My father was also, but I don't think he had to the same degree as my mother did.

Q: Did she feel betrayed by her own people in some way?

A: She was – well, she felt betrayed by the Germans, yeah.

Q: But she didn't count them as her own people?

A: No.

Q: Man-many people had, you see, that's why I phrased it like that, many people had felt that they had assimilated, they had fought in a war, World War I, you know.

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A: Well, my father got – had the Iron Cross, and he had the Bavarian Service Cross. In fact, I – they're at the Holocaust Museum, I – that was among the items I gave them. And I put the – that together with the postcard he sent us from **Dachau** saying that that was his thanks from the fatherland for his service in World War I.

Q: Well, that's enough to make you bitter. Is there anything else you'd like to add, that we haven't talked about, that you think is important for people to know in the future?

A: Well, the – the important thing is to keep faith and do the best you can, and like some things in **Germany**, I – y-you can't – just can't forgive, it's just something that they did to you. And like when I went to **Germany**, all the other **G.I.s**, they were going out with German girls, I wouldn't go out with any of them, I didn't want to have anything to do with anybody, for tho – for those reasons.

Q: Was your religion – was your religious belief stronger afterwards?

A: Not –

Q: Did it get shaken [**indecipherable**] change?

A: Not – it doesn't – wasn't necessarily stronger, no.

Q: No. But there are some people also, I know, who lost their religious belief after the war.

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A: Yeah, that's some people, but a – no, I'm ver – very – I'm – I'm not – I'm not Orthodox. We go to Conservative services. We – we don't eat pork products, things like that. But – but we – we believe that we're Jewish, but we're not fanatically Jewish.

Q: My – my point of this is that a lot of people who have been through some of the Holocaust experiences lost their faith in God as a result.

A: No, no.

Q: No. That – well, those were two separate things for you.

A: Right. Like, I'm very active here with the Jewish residents of **Leisure World**.

Last – last week on **Rosh Hashanah**, I did the **Haftarah**. I'm getting ti – now I'm – soon as **Yom Kippur** is over, I start getting things together, I'll be doing the Crystal Night program here, **Kristallnacht**. And I run – I've run that, now this'll be my eighth year that I'm running – running it. I think it's ti – I should have taken my sabbatical this year. Then Passover I – they found somebody who knows how to lead a **Seder**, so I led the **Seder** for over 200 people this last year. That's the fourth time I've led it, but this year, the biggest crowd they ever had for their second **Seder**.

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Q: Wow. Well, this is again, a question that I asked before, are **Seders** generally traditionally celebrated within a circle, a small circle, a family circle, or a community one?

A: This is a community one. Most everybody goes with their family on the first night, so on the second night –

Q: Uh-huh.

A: – we have – we have here what they call second **Seder**. I've run the show for the last four years. I've done a lot of things to liven it up. I've gone on the internet and gotten parodies for f-famous songs, which a – which are funny, like **Clementine** –

Q: Oh yeah.

A: – songs like that. Like we started off the **Seder**, there's this tune, if **There's No Business Like Show Business**, and started off, there's no **Seder** like our **Seder**.

When we go back after the meal to finish off the second half of the **Seder**, I started off, instead of **Take Me Back to the Ballgame**, take me back to the **Seder**. And I've put in about a half a dozen or more songs, and they enjoy that. I have them printed up, the song sheets, and they're at all the tables, and they sing along.

Q: We – a person needs a master of ceremonies like that.

A: So I-I've – I've livened it up quite a bit.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And they enjoyed it. Th-The – and it's also a very fast **Seder**. Some people have **Seders** that run til 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock at night, they drag everything out. Mine is, they wouldn't – didn't believe me, I said, I'll have you eating dinner within 30 minutes. And we did.

Q: And you did. What would you want the people of **Straubing** to know about your family?

A: I really don't care. We were there, we sent them a few things and – for their synagogue, they – like a little museum, whatever they wanted to build, I sent them some things and I never heard much from them, so –

Q: Okay.

A: It – it's changed. **Straubing** was originally, it was German Jews. After the war it was Polish Jews, and now it's all Russian Jews.

Q: Yeah, yeah, different people.

A: Right.

Q: Not those who have roots for centuries, or at least generations, yeah. Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

Q: Thank you very much for talking to us today again, after our first interview in March. This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memur – Memorial Museum interview with **Fred Firnbacher** on September 16th, 2010. Thanks a lot.

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Conclusion of Interview

A: – you wanted to go, but you were going to ask me a question, so we'll go that – it's a one room schoolhouse, there were about six or eight of us, each one of us a different grade, and he taught us all, and I think we learned more there than we would have in public school.

Q: Mm-hm. And –

A: Here – here's another thing with the other one from 50 dollar fine – 50 mark fine, right there, you see 300 thir –

Q: Right.

A: That had to do also with that – that other piece of paper right here.

Q: So –

A: Cause these will someday be destroyed, you're more than welcome to have all these.

Q: Okay, so in essence, at this point, your father doesn't have any business any more. You are being – I-I – I'm – I say homeschooled, but in a –

A: Private school.

Q: No-Not a traditional, right, school situation.

A: Right.

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Q: What about friends that you had had at school, or friends that were not Jewish, that you had?

A: I didn't have many. They didn't want to associate with me, I didn't want to associ – well, I wasn't allowed to associate with them.

Q: You had Jewish friends.

A: I had a few, but the trouble was they were all girls. I had no boys to grow up with except a cousin who was about eight or 10 years older. He still is living, he is in – he is in **Philadelphia** now, and he used to kick a football around with me.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Ball – other words, soccer ball.

Q: So your parents, they had siblings?

A: Yes.

Q: How many siblings did each of them have?

A: My mother had two, one brother and one sister. The brother and sister were living in **Holland**. They – the brother was a PhD. in chemistry, he graduated from **Heidelberg**. He couldn't get a job in **Germany** because he was Jewish, so he went to **Holland** and he worked for **Organon**, big pharmaceutical company in **Oss**.

Q: Mm-hm.

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A: That's **o-s-s**, in **Holland**. And he became paralyzed, I don't know what disease cause I was so little then. But anyway, he was in a wheelchair, and my aunt, she's been divorced, and she had a son, they – she went there to take care of him, and so she lived with her brother in **Holland**.

Q: And did they survive?

A: No. When we left **Germany**, til our ship would leave, as soon as we had our papers to get out, we left on the very next train for **Holland**, and we stayed with them, and he could see the time was getting – he'd never see his sister again. So he went downhill, and about a month after we left **Holland**, he died. And the aunt and her son, they went – they met their end in **Auschwitz**. In fact, I've got their –

Q: Their Red Cross letters?

A: Yeah. [pause]

Q: I'm just – sorry, I just paused to write. Your father also had siblings?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Your mother was **Eda**?

A: **Ida**, right.

Q: **Ida, i-d-a**?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay, and your father was ma – mayr –

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A: **Maier, Maier.**

Q: Okay. And he also had siblings?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Brother, sisters?

A: He – well, there were actually nine of them originally, but I knew three of his sisters. There was a fourth one who died when I was real little, so that took care of them. One brother was – he had just gone across the border into **Switzerland** in oh, about 1936 or '37. And the others, they weren't living any more when the – his other brothers I don't remember, I never knew them.

Q: Hang on one sec. I don't know if I was allowed to do that, but okay. So the – you had – your father was one of nine children.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Your grandparents, were they still alive before the war?

A: My – on my father's side, my grandfather died in 1938, the year bef – year before we left, and my grandmother died in **Theresienstadt**.

Q: Your grandfather died in 1938 from what?

A: Probably heart disease, the – th – didn't know the terms exactly in those days, what different things were.

Q: And what about your mother's parents?

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A: My grandfather there, he died in 1934. That was, I think, before insulin was –

Q: Uh-huh, of diabetes?

A: He di – well, not – he was stung by a bee, and something or other, the – he was allergic, and the diabetes and everything tha – he had a reaction, and he didn't make it. And my grandmother died in **Sobibor**.

Q: So she went to **Westerbork** and then to **Sobibor**?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you have cours –

A: Well, she – she went to – she went to **Holland**. Well she's – she was still in **Straubing** when we were there. She couldn't get a visa, she went back and forth, spent half a year with us, half a year with her other daughter in **Holland**, back and forth, and when the war broke out, she was in **Holland**.

Q: And included in the materials, did you bring some correspondence from your grandmother before she was deported to –

A: I don't think I have any correspondence.

Q: Okay. So, tell me, your father, it's around **Kristallnacht**.

A: Mm-hm.

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Q: I'm jumping ahead, but around **Kristallnacht** – at this point, before **Kristallnacht**, before November of 1938, did your parents start to get their affairs in orders to get out? Had they already signed for a quota?

A: We – we had – we had relatives over here. In fact, in the family over here there was – there was the **Luchs** family – are you – are you a native Washingtonian?

Q: No.

A: No? Cause there used to be a st – a real estate company here, **Shannon** and **Luchs**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And the **Luchs** family was a very large family, and about half of them came to the **United States** way back, and a lot of them came at later dates, and the offsprings etcetera. There was a Rabbi **Luchs** in **Davenport, Iowa**, and he saw to it that everybody in the family had to give some sort of affidavit to try to get the people out. And that's how we got out, and what happened was, in **Germany** the American consulate of course had a quota, so we got a number, just like you go to the delicatessen –

Q: Right.

A: – when you would go in, there's the number that we had to go to the consulate in **Stuttgart**.

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Q: So you had this in July of 1938?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But it hadn't come up before **Kristallnacht**?

A: No.

Q: What happened on **Kristallnacht**?

A: Well, **Kristallnacht**, well, along with this – well, we went to the hotel that we were staying at before we went to the American consulate in **Stuttgart**, this was in our hotel room, in other words since – since you're not an Aryan, you're expected to eat your meals in the room, you can't go into the –

Q: Dining room.

A: So I thought that would be of interest.

Q: It is. So, do you remember this trip to the consulate?

A: Yeah. I remember one thing, my parents were so worried that we wouldn't get out, cause I had a terrible cough, and it's – they thought maybe the doctors might reject me because I had this cough that the – I might have bronchitis or something. So when we were there, everything was in order except for one thing. My father doesn't know whether it was an accident or whether they did it on purpose, they put the year, it was just after the first of the year, it was in January, instead of putting the date 1939, they put 1938. And so they wouldn't give us our papers to come out.

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So, we didn't want to get to stop, because they always would come by and pick up our passports, then we had a hard time getting the passports back.

Q: Right.

A: So my dad left us with – my mother and me with relatives in **Augsburg**. We stayed there the int – this is on Friday, so we stayed there all weekend. When Dad took the first train Monday morning to **Straubing**, never went to our house, went straight to the authorities, wherever he had to go to get this corrected. Then he got the next train to **Stuttgart**, went to the consulate, got the papers, came back and picked this up at – in **Augsburg**, we went back to **Straubing** that night, and we got everything in order, we th – all the packing, the – everything had been packed already anyway, to get our luggage and everything, to leave **Germany**. And the ne – the very first train out that was – head for **Holland**, we were on.

Q: And this was when, exactly?

A: The – about well – here, the passports. This is my mother's.

Q: So this is stamped November of '38.

A: Well, that's when she got the passport.

Q: Right.

A: We got the traveling – January 11th we arrived [**indecipherable**] **Holland**.

Q: Okay. In 1939.

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: So, let's back – back up to November of 1938.

A: Right.

Q: What happened then?

A: It – well, they – they had plundered the synagogue then, everything there that night.

Q: What do – what do you remember?

A: What do I – well, I remember, cause I saw the synagogue afterwards –

Q: Okay.

A: – what they had done to it. They had plundered all that. In the morning – well, in the middle of the night that night, they came and tried to break into our house.

Being small, I never heard a thing. I slept through the whole thing. In the morning when I woke up, I heard the doorbell ringing downstairs. They weren't able to break into the house, the door was too strong. The police were there to arrest my dad, and took him to the jailhouse in **Straubing**, and after a couple of days he was shipped off to **Dachau**.

Q: And tell me about your mother, what happened with your mother?

A: Well, I wa –

Q: How was her demeanor, was she frantic?

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A: Well, of course she was frantic, and she didn't know what to do. She went to the police station, and she found a very sympathetic policeman there, and she was able to give him warm clothe – underclothing and stuff, so that he could stay warm, it was wintertime. And she went up there every day, she brought something for him every day, this is on – on – and on the third day –

Q: Until he was shipped out.

A: – on the third day he says, they're gone, he says. They asked where to, he says he wasn't sure, but he thinks it's **Dachau**.

Q: And at this point he's sending letters, por – postcards, or –

A: No, it was a little bit different. He wou – he knew we're allowed to send postcards after e-every so often. And this is the thing that he sent. Now the – what I reme – would – thought would be an ironic thing is –

Q: Oh, he's a World War I veteran.

A: He's a world – World War I veteran. He had the Iron Cross. This is the Bavarian, some sort of cross there fr – Bavarian. And in here are –

Q: Oh my God.

A: This is the fifth Bavarian, some kind of division, I guess, in the name of His Majesty, the German Kaiser, that my father got the Iron Cross, second class,

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whatever that means, and so on. That's – that's the authentic papers that he got the Iron Cross.

Q: And so he got this in 1917; one of these in 1917.

A: Probably. But you know, the Iron Cross –

Q: Right.

A: – that was 19 seven – that's this one.

Q: And one of them he got in 1934, right?

A: Yeah. And this right here is His Majesty the King, that would be the Kaiser – no, it's 17 – November 1916th –

Q: 16.

A: I – this is a German script, which I can't read any more. That he got the – the military **fatinzkreuzter(ph)**. Some kind of a cross, that's the third class with honors, or whatever. And that's for the other one, and then he can – received another award, which I don't know anything about, and I don't –

Q: In 1934 they wa – across the board, it – under **Hitler**, issued th-the Black Cross, this Black Cross. So he must have gotten this one in 19 si –

A: No, he got this one 1916 –

Q: Because –

A: – and then this one 1917.

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Q: – cause this is –

A: That's something else, I don't know what that's for, but I just found that.

Q: Okay, because this is – this usually comes with this. Usually it was awarded in 1934 with that.

A: That I don't know. Anyway – cause it's right –

Q: So, is it – it's ironic –

A: – it says right there. Yeah. And that's why it's ironic, that's why I said this will make a nice exhibit, for he fought for this country, and this is his thanks that he received.

Q: And do you think he would have been treated differently if he hadn't fought at all?

A: I don't think so. What happened was, they had – my mother heard somebody had gone to the Gestapo and asked – this can go with that also –

Q: Okay.

A: They had – they had asked if their husband could be released. And because she had nerve enough to go to the Gestapo, they released them. So my mother said, well, I'm going to go to the Gestapo, too. She took the train to **Regensburg**, went to the Gestapo, and a couple days later, my dad walks in the door. And he said that when he left **Dachau**, cause he had – always had money with him, he – a lot of the

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others who didn't have money couldn't buy things, he left money, almost all the money he had, he just kept enough so he could get home, he gave it to different people, and he got letters later on thanking him for it. And as it turned out, a week after he came home, they would have released him anyway cause they released all war veterans the following week.

Q: Mm-hm. So at this point, what happens?

A: This has to do with the – th-the – with the medals, also.

Q: Okay. Oh right, **Ehrenkreuz**. So he was released and then you – this is when you got newspapers together –

A: Well, we couldn't g – we couldn't go anywhere til we could go to the consulate in **Stuttgart**.

Q: Right.

A: He came home the first week in December – second – first, second week, whatever, and our appointment wasn't with the consulate until January, January sixth.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So we just had to sit around and wait and they would come pick up his passport, give it back to him. Have to go and pay a fine to get it back and what have you. Also, on the first of January, everybody had to have a **kennkarte**.

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Q: Of '38.

A: Th-This was January 1st, 1939.

Q: Ah.

A: And we were leaving, so my dad thought we could get out, they wouldn't let us get out of **Germany** without that.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I don't know what happened to my mother's, I don't have it here, I don't have my passport. And this is my **kennkarte**, but this is th – right here, if the – if you're a child under 10 you didn't have to have your picture or your f – your fingerprints.

Q: I see. Interesting. And can I see your passports? So these are for your parents?

A: Mm-hm. I don't know what happened to mine. Ma –

Q: Do you remember having a **kinder ausweis**, or –

A: Oh yeah. I had one, it was just –

Q: – because –

A: – it wasn't a book, like it was just one –

Q: It was a card, right.

A: – little – little card, and I don't know what happened to that. And to be able to go, everything you took with you, you had to pay a fine to the German, so this is

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Juden [speaks German] that's where you had to pay them the fine, or – they valued everything, you had to pay them that much.

Q: Right, so they ta – right, they taxed you to leave the country.

A: Right.

Q: They taxed you to be in the country.

A: And that makes this envelope empty. Let me try and see what else I got here. Oh, here – here's from when I went to the – here's what I was looking for.

Q: The **[indecipherable]**.

A: This is my report card, this is the second one.

Q: You – you said that you went s – you stopped in **Holland**, the family stopped in **Holland** –

A: Mm-hm.

Q: – on their way to the **United States**. How long were you in **Holland**?

A: We got there on the 11th, and our ship left on the 28th, so we had two and a half weeks.

Q: Okay.

A: This is my report card from – I don't have any of my American report cards, but I found this. This is –

Q: The **Straubing**, right?

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A: – the prod – prod – Protestant school, **Straubing**, and the way they marked, one was like an **A**, two like a **B**, and so on and so forth. This was **[indecipherable]** how – how **[indecipherable]** was work, I guess. My behavior, I was – of course I was quiet, I didn't say anything, cause I was afraid of everybody. German, how well I did in German, like here you take English. My speaking, I guess I – because I was shy, I didn't want to talk much. Reading.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Well, this is the fall, this is the spring.

Q: Spring.

A: Right. Writing, I got that. Singing, I got the three, I didn't sing very well then, I do much better now. I guess that's ho – that's homework. Mathematics. This is gym, that's about it.

Q: Hm. And this is for the –

A: Th-That is – it's a **[speaks German]**

Q: Right, the Jewish community.

A: Right. That was the one there, and he has the remarks here that I am a genius at – not exactly genius, but I'm ex-exceedingly bright in mathematics. That goes with it.

Q: So, do you remember what it was – coming over on the ship?

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A: Well, their – they were very, very happy, of course, we were out of **Germany**.

Well, in fact, when we crossed the border into **Holland**, wa – I opened up the window and I spit out. I remember that.

Q: So you understood that –

A: Oh yeah. We were – I was harassed at school, and all along I knew – I – I was taught what – what I could do and what I couldn't do and how to behave myself.

Q: Well, what was it like when you said goodbye to your relatives in **Holland**, for you?

A: It was difficult.

Q: Right. I mean, did you – did your parents think this might be the last time –

A: Right. Well, in fact, when we left **Straubing**, my grandmother was in **Straubing**, but she was back and forth. And my – we wouldn't let her go to the railroad station to see us off because my mother knew that – and my father knew that she would start howling and crying and everything, and they didn't want to have any kind of a scene, so we said goodbye in the house before we left there.

Q: And you arrived in the **United States**, what was it like for you at first? You didn't speak English.

A: Well, I remember we got up in the morning on – on the ship the last day and I saw the Statue of Liberty, and it was snowing. There was snow on the deck of the

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ship. And everybody always said how hot it is in the **United States** – you know, you couldn't believe it snowed over here. It was in February and we went off the ship. We landed in **Hoboken**, went off the ship, through customs and one of my father's nephews, my first cousin was there to meet us. And another cousin on my mother's side was there. And they took us – I guess it was the tubes, whatever they called the trains coming from **New Jersey** into **New York**, and showed me, I remember, the tallest building in the world, the **Empire States** building. They took us to lunch, and I don't remember where or what, and they put us on the train for **Washington**, somebody else was supposed to meet us here to pick us up. They didn't show up for some reason or other, and we took a cab, because the people who sponsored us, who we were going to stay with, they were in their 70s already then. So they didn't come out at night, and so this – I – he – missed connections or whatever, and so we went by cab.

Q: Mm-hm. And you – how did you find it at first? How did you find the people –

A: Well, was strange – strange coming, you didn't know the – you didn't know the language.

Q: How was school?

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A: Well, I went to American conversation school. And I learned English and I picked it up playing with kids in the street and what have you. I just picked it up real fast.

Q: And so you felt the transition was –

A: To me it was easy.

Q: How about for your parents though?

A: Well, it was hard for them to learn English.

Q: And what did your father do?

A: What'd he do? He-He – he didn't have much of jobs at all. At first he was – had a part time job at [indecipherable] still the end of the depression. Before World War II, he worked as a [indecipherable] but they had him in as a packer, then he was a – they used to pack their own stuff in the – like candy and stuff, they had cellophane bags, and put it all out. And he used to work in there putting stuff together like that. Then he was – he never was a cashier or anything like that, just odds and ends. Then later on he started selling door to door like a peddler. And then he went the ki – in wi – in the s – dress business, and selling them to – to the colored, they – he gave them credit, which they couldn't get at the department stores, cause they couldn't get credit. I don't think they had credit cards in those days.

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Q: Don't think so.

A: And so – so he – he gave them credit and built up a pretty good business.

Q: And your mom? Did she help in the business?

A: No, she – well, World War II came, and we – we bought a house, and we rented rooms. So my mother took care of all that in the house, and renting the rooms.

Between the two of them they made – made things go. I mean, there was never – we always had food to eat, always had clothes to wear. We never felt that we were poor, even though we were poor.

Q: Did you find a like community? Did your parents seek out other German Jews?

A: Yeah, well, they – they use – they had a lot of friends here. They used to have – the Russian Hebrew congregation used to have something one night a week where all the German Jews, somebody had organized them to come together, they tell each other wha – how they got a job here, how they got a job there. How they got somebody out of **Europe** and th – and they got together and they got information from each other.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It was a great grapevine.

Q: So what about other relatives? What are you hearing from other relatives?

Nothing at this point?

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A: Well, til 1941, we'd get letters, but they were always censored, stuff crossed out and –

Q: Right.

A: – cut out. And used code things like if somebody was arrested, they went on a trip. Didn't say that they were arrested, and so and so forth.

Q: And at the end of the war, how did your parents seek out information?

A: Well, they wrote everywhere they could. This is – here's one letter my dad wrote for hi – one of his sisters and her husband, family of three children. They lived in **Landshut**, and this is the letter he wrote no – th – when he got back with this – they used the same – I guess they didn't have paper after the war in **Germany**. They used the same letter and they wrote back.

Q: Oh. They were sent to – they were deported in '42. They're unknown – their whereabouts are unknown. They we-were with a transport to **Regensburg** – which brought them to **Regensburg**.

A: Well, that was the main city in the area.

Q: Right. So it's still – this is unknown.

A: Right.

Q: Essentially.

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A: Here is an – the Dutch Red Cross, **Nederlandse Rode Kruis**. This is for **Herta Leven Luchs**, that was my mother's sister, and the other one is for my grandmother. And this is my cousin. And here, it tells right here is transported from **Westerbork** to **Sobibor**.

Q: Did you know what **Sobibor** was at this point?

A: No.

Q: I mean, when they said that, do they – did –

A: I don't know what – no, this is after the war, 1946.

Q: Right. Oh, for the head of the liquidation office for concentration camps. What a title. **Amalie(ph) Luchs**.

A: That was my grandmother.

Q: Right.

A: This, it's a deported to s – this is also **Sobibor**, but then it says – oh, that's for my grandmother, here it says they were deported to **Kozul(ph)**, whatever that is.

That must have been a midpoint, because I got something else that says that they were in **Auschwitz**. This – my cousin and I, whenever we were together, we were like brothers, cause he was an only child and I was an only child. Here is – they went to something in **Eindhoven**, which is in **Holland**, which just said that they

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were sent to **Germany**. See, we tried all different places to find out what happened to them.

Q: She was sent to **Germany**. She was never sent to **Germany** though.

A: No.

Q: She was sent to **Westerbork**, and then from **Westerbork** she was sent to **Sobibor**. **Westerbork** was in **Holland**.

A: On – on this right here, there it says **Auschwitz**, Os-Oswi –

Q: **Oświęcim**.

A: Yeah, whatever. That's for the sister **Herta** and for the – fo –

Q: **Herta Luchs**.

A: **Leven Luchs**.

Q: And – and **Emile Julius** was her son.

A: No, **Emilie Julius** was her husband.

Q: Husband, okay, and he –

A: They – they were divorced. I had no idea what happened to him. It was very rare for somebody to be divorced over there.

Q: Right. What about the son?

A: Well, that – he – that's the son.

Q: **Karl**.

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A: **Karl Hans**. His last name was **Leven, l-e-v-e-n**. And here's that they died, or were murdered I should say, on the third of September 1942. So they were on the road 26th of August **Westerbork**, and then on 31st of August, they were sent to s – to –

Q: So they really didn't spend too much time in **Westerbork**.

A: No. That's a picture of them.

Q: How did your – do you remember when your mother first found out?

A: Oh, she was –

Q: Devastated.

A: – she was a nervous wreck. Here is also a neth – **Ne-Netherlands** Red Cross.

Q: It's interesting though, because in here it says, for filing a claim for compensation in **Germany** –

A: Well, my father filed claims for everything he could.

Q: But it's, oh – in reply to your above inquiry please find enclosed certificates relative to the imprisonment, deportation and subsequent death of the above persons, together with declaration certifying that they were supposed to wear the **Star of David**.

A: Mm-hm.

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Q: Oh yeah, it's right – that's right. The **Juden** star. That's really interesting. So your mother – your father must have asked about that as well.

A: It's a funny thing, my father never knew how to type. When I was in college, I had to type a term paper, so I bought a typewriter. And that typewriter, he used that f – hunt and peck, for years, typing even 15 - 20 years after the war, suing here and suing there, writing to this place, writing to that place, to –

Q: Do you have the files for his –

A: No, I don't have that any more.

Q: Okay.

A: Cause that – there was just too much when we moved here –

Q: Right.

A: – I had to get rid of a lot of stuff.

Q: That's okay. I just wondered because some people –

A: Well here's – this is –

Q: – collect – keep – keep copies of that just –

A: – the secretary s – state of the **United States of America**, I guess that's where they ha – claims that this is claims that he made to **Germany**.

Q: Did he ever get reparations?

A: Oh, he got here quite a bit.

Q: Good.

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A: I don't know how much, but he's always says, here I got a small check here, I got a small check there.

Q: Right.

A: This –

Q: So he really – he did as much as he could.

A: When we – **Betsy** and I went to **Germany**, we went back to the synagogue where I had grown up, and we found – this is pictures from much older than that, because I was m – had been sent to my dad. But this is the memorial in the synagogue there for all the people from **Straubing** who –

Q: Who didn't survive.

A: – who didn't survive the Holocaust, and there are 15 of our family in that list.

Q: It's amazing.

A: And this right here is –

Q: The article.

A: – the article I wrote right after we came back from **Germany**.

Q: Can I keep this copy?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: Okay. So, did you want to donate these materials?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, great.

A: I don't know what you can do with them, but –

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Q: Well – well, first of all, let me turn this off. I'm gonna just say that this is the end of my interview with you – well, actually, our conversation I should say, with Mr. **Firnbacher** in **Maryland**.

Conclusion of post-Interview