

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Herbert Friedman**  
**October 17, 2010**  
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## PREFACE

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## HERBERT FRIEDMAN

October 17, 2010

Question: This is an oral history interview, conducted by the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**. The interview is conducted on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the **Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia Kindertransport** Association conference. The interviewer is **Noemi Szekely-Popescu**, and the interviewee is **Herbert Friedman**. Welcome. Could you first give me your name at birth?

Answer: My name is **Herbert Friedman**, born on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1924, in **Vienna, Austria**. Can you stop the tape for a second?

Q: Absolutely. **[break]** So Mr. **Friedman**, you just told us what year you were born, and I'd be curious to know what your parents did. What – what did your father do?

A: My father was a shoe designer, working on ladies' shoes, and he worked for, initially, as far as I remember, for a Czech shoe factory called **Bachia**(ph). This was in the 20s. But then, with the depression, the factory f-folded up and he went into the leather business, selling supplies to shoe repair shops. And it was a – I imagine, a-as a child I really didn't appreciate the – the difficulty that – that it was for him to earn a living, but we managed.

Q: Now, what did your mother do? Did she stay at home?

A: No, she was a housekeeper, and there were three children. And my grandmother, and of course my parents, we all lived in one apartment. And the apartment was

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about a – consisted of about two and a half rooms. A-And in the bedroom – all six of us slept in that one bedroom. It was a big bedroom, but I would sleep with my brother, and then that was the custom. And if we had visitors, by the way, which happened from time to time, people who came from **Radom**, where they had originally come from, then the two boys, my brother and I would sleep on the floor. Spread out a blanket on the floor, and the guests would stay in the bed. But that was the custom, and the – we really expected that this would happen, and di-di-didn't affect us in any way, or didn't bother us sleeping on the floor, because we slept just as well on the floor as in bed, as – as – as kids.

Q: What part of **Vienna** was this?

A: Well, we lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> district, known as the **Brigittenau**, about two blocks from the **Danube**. And we lived on the fourth floor, no elevators, no running water in the apartment. You went out in the hallway, where there was a cold water faucet that you got the water from, and then would bring it in the home, and – and then there was a – a bathroom, it was sort of a – just a – a toilet, which was shared between two apartments. A-And that – and that was the style, an-and that's all I saw, and any people I came in contact with, they all seemed to have a similar setup except sometimes the apartment was even smaller than ours. So, there was no – living in the fourth floor, there was no elevator, you walked. And my grandmother

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would many times say, oh those steps, they're killing me. You see, but at the time I says, you know, I don't know why she's complaining, there's nothing to it. You know, I could take two steps at a time as a kid, running up and down. But the last time when I was in **Vienna**, two years ago, I walked those steps. The house is still there. And – and – and I understood what my grandmother was talking about.

Q: So you said that you had siblings. Can you tell me their names, when they were born?

A: Yeah, well, my brother was two years older. His – his name was **Benny**, and he was born February of – of '22. I have a sister born March 8<sup>th</sup>, '26.

Q: And your sister's name?

A: **Lilly**.

Q: Did you have an observant family? What denomination did you belong to?

A: Yeah, ultra-Orthodox. Ultra-Orthodox, yeah. Come – come Friday, you know, the light would go off. And we all, we'd have a light by the Shabbas candle, and we would have no heat, because it's Shabbas, you know, you have to suffer. A-And, you know, I remember – of course, you can't get it on tape, but to show you, my grandmother would sit there, in va – in **Vienna** it really gets cold, and sh-she would **[indecipherable]** she'd back and forth, you know, with her – with her feet and arm, trying stay warm. But, no heat, until Shabbas was over, you see.

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Q: So – so what did they – what did your family do for a Shabbat meal, given that there's no heat? Did they leave the stove on, or –

A: Oh, we had the – a cold – I mean we had – we have a warm meal before going to synagogue on Friday, and on Saturday we had something cold, that didn't require any – any heating un-until Shabbas was over.

Q: Which synagogue did you go to?

A: It was called – well, my father would go to the **Kasha**(ph) temple. And I didn't like to go there, so at first I – he would drag me with him. And I didn't like it because I didn't understand what was going on, and it was stand up and sit down and stand up and sit down and you know, and – and it went on forever. So I would go to the **Klikee**(ph) temple. The **Klikee**(ph) temple was located on the **Klikee**(ph) **gasse**. Many times in **Austria** they – they would name the temple after the s – the street that it was located on. And I liked the – the **Klikee**(ph) because after services, they would give candy to the kids. So it was – so naturally that was a big attraction for me, the candy.

Q: Now, when you say ultra-Orthodox, do you – do you mean Hasidic, or – or Orthodox?

A: No. N-No, just ver-very much adherent, but not **[indecipherable]**, no.

Q: And you say that your family had originally come from **Radom**?

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A: Yes. First my father came. He came from **Radom** to – because he was going to be drafted into the Polish army. He didn't want to serve in the Polish army, so he ran away. And he heard about **Vienna**, so he came to **Vienna**. And my mother later followed. And as a matter of fact, she told me once that if – and you want me to say in German? **[speaks German here]**. When I arrived in **Vienna**, I thought I was in heaven. That's how different it – living conditions were in **Poland, Radom**, compared to the modern city of **Vienna, Austria**.

Q: And your – your father was trying to escape being drafted, was that during the run up to the first world war, or when was that?

A: No, this was after.

Q: After?

A: Yeah, this was af –

Q: So what year did they come to **Vienna**? Do you know?

A: I'm – I'm not quite – I think my father came there around maybe '20, and my mother came a year later, '21 or '22, something like that. Many questions that I'm being asked now, I-I wish I had asked. That's why when I talk to – to my children, and when I talk to schools, I always urge people – young – young children, to ask their parents while you still have an opportunity, or grandparents, what life was like for them. Because I know you will – are going to regret. We all do,

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no matter how old, or – or – at the time, but eventually you – you’re going to regret that you did not ask certain questions while you had the opportunity.

Q: So they came – both of them came from **Poland**.

A: Yeah, **Radom**.

Q: Did they speak Polish amongst each other, or Yiddish –

A: Yeah, as a matter of fact, they spoke Yiddish normally, but Polish when they didn’t want us to know what they were talking about. So they’d switch to Polish.

Q: So you didn’t grow up to – to know Polish, to learn Polish?

A: No, no, no. We spoke yi – they would speak Yiddish, we would speak German.

So – so I understood what they were saying, but we didn’t really speak Yiddish, w- we spoke German. The children.

Q: Di-Did your father have to speak German in his business life, or did – could he get by on Yiddish?

A: Well, he spoke both. So whatever the circumstances were, he could respond. But the – most of the time, the people that he dealt with likewise were immigrants from adjoining countries, because **Austria** was a more modern place and it offered greater opportunities than smaller countries, I mean – not smaller countries, you know, but – but th – not as advanced countries. So he would speak – when he dealt



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with Gentiles, he spoke German, and with Jewish people, yeah, it was always – Yiddish was the international language.

Q: Can you tell me about school?

A: Yes. I always attended elementary school, and then –

Q: Jewish school, or a state school?

A: No, a state. Yeah, public school. Which was very good. I attended public school, f-four years of elementary, and then we switched over to something called **hauptschule**, which was a sort of a – I guess in **America** you'd call it middle school. And in my case, I – I couldn't even finish the middle school, because once **Hitler** came in, none of us were able to attend any school, we were kicked out of school, and – and I sw-switched over to a Jewish school for a while, called **Talmud Torah** in the second district in **Vienna**. The second district was heavily populated by Jewish people, and they used to call it Matzoh **Insel**. Matzoh Island.

Q: So bef – before the annexation, when you're still able to go to – to a state school, did you take any supplementary, or so-some sort of Jewish classes at the end of the day, or – or on Sundays, or –

A: No, n-not really. Only training for Bar Mitzvah, where a year ahead of time, I would sit down with someone, not a rabbi, but one of the Hassids, who would teach me the Torah portion that I was supposed to read at my Bar Mitzvah, which

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occurred in '37, actually four months before **Hitler** came in. And it happened to be a very momentous occasion in my life. You might find it funny, my grandmother was at first a little upset that I would have my Bar Mitzvah staged at the **Klikee(ph)** temple. Why? Because the **Klikee(ph)** temple had an organ. And having an organ in a temple, that – that was not kosher enough, so she wanted me to have it somewhere else. But I liked the **Klikee(ph)** temple, and I was going there. So I had to tell her that although they have this organ, they never use it. And the only time they use it was on Sundays when on occasion they have a wedding. But the mere fact that the organ was there, that was enough reason for her not to particularly enjoy being there.

Q: Since you went to a non-Jewish school until the annexation, did you have any non-Jewish friends? What was the distribution of Jews to non-Jews in your class?

A: In – from grade one, I experienced anti-Semitism. Six years old, I go into grade one, another kid – they find out very soon whether you're Christian or not, even at six. And he called me a Christ killer, and you know, I didn't know what that was. I said – you know, what he was talking about. And – and it was not – when I came home, I asked my mother. And she said, oh, pay no attention, or this is something that they're – where they're taught at home not to like certain people, but you're gonna hear this, just – h-he doesn't know what he's saying, so just forget about it.

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But you mean – you very soon learn. Later on actually, we would frequently have fights, wh-which – which occurred mainly when the priests came to school, and started showing movies. And it dealt – you saw people with beards, and – and th-the payos and so forth, so you knew that – and they showed the crucifixion.

Q: Do you remember what grade this was? How old were you when these movies started to be shown?

A: I think I – I probably was around eight or nine, a-an-and – and when class lets out, then we started fights. And many a day I'd come home with a bloody nose because at that time, when somebody hit you, you – you struck back. And I was never hesitant, so it's oh – you know, even as I went on to middle school, you know, I – somebody said something to me, called me a dirty Jew, you know, I'd let him have it. And you learn that if it's one person, you take him on, but if there's a group, I figured I'd better run. But I was never scared, al-although my mother in particular always told me not to get involved, or – or – you know, walk away, run away, but I never did.

Q: How did your father feel about this? Did he have an opinion about confrontation, or –

A: I was always scared to tell my father, because – because he was the enforcer, you see, so I dealt mostly with my mother. I – I had a mean – when I was – and – and

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also, many times, I – I admit, I didn't listen. I – I was – my mother would say, a reckless person. In the summer of '34, I asked my mother if I could go swimming. And I loved swimming, even as a child, you know. And she said no, you stay home. So I said to – okay, well, can I go downstairs, you know, be on the street? All right, be on the street, but I want you home before too long. So I said fine. So, I ran downstairs with my bathing suit to go swimming, that she had told me not to do. And I – in my eagerness to cross the street, didn't look, and I was hit by a truck. And I had several fractures and lacerations and concussion and spent three months in the hospital. That was an important lesson. But being somewhat reckless, rising to whatever challenge that came along, has always been a part of me. I-I was, to some extent, not to make myself some sort of a hero, I was always aggressive. And sometimes it got me into trouble, but it never changed my mind. This was in '34. I have another event in '37, when – which had a great impact on my life. There were three boys, and we were walking along the **Danube** [indecipherable] only a three or four minute walk from where we lived, so – and this was in the winter of '37, late October, when, as we're walking along, we notice something bobbing up and down in the water – in the water, and we didn't know at first what it was. And then we recognized that this was a person, you know, what is she doing in the water? So – so it dawned on us that this person is about to drown. So two of us ran

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down the embankment and jumped into the water. I was 13 – not quite 13, and my friend was not quite 15. And the third person ran to get the police. So, if you know anything about the **Danube**, and I know, since you are from **Hungary**, you know the **Danube**, it's a very swift river. You're not going to swim against the current, you just can't, it just knocks you down. So – so if you go in here, you're gonna come out way, way down on the other side. So after a while we – we struggled, but we were able to get her to th-the embankment and – and ou-out of the water. And by that time, the third person had run to get the police, and when we got to – when we got her out to the side o-of the river, the police was there, and the ambulance was there. And they picked her up and th – it was a woman, and they took her away. And then the police took the two of us to the police station. And there they gave us some hot chocolate and d-dry out. And a man came and started questioning us and then he took a picture. And we paid no attention as to who he was, or what was up, what – we were there several hours, and then they said to us, oh, now you can go home. So I went home, and I ha – I hate to describe to you what took place when I got home. First of all, it was Friday evening, and I'm supposed to go with my father to the synagogue. And I wasn't home. And, where were you? [indecipherable] So, I was so scared to tell what happened to – to my mother, so I said, do you know what? We were playing by the water, and I fell in. Then came, how many times

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have I told you to stay away from the water? When are you finally going to listen, and so forth. And – and wa-was plenty of scolding and reprimand, you know, n-no food, you know, we're not going to give you anything. And of course I – I was so disheveled, you know, and tha – look – looked terrible. A-And it wasn't until the next day, when people stopped my mother on the street and started congratulating her, and she didn't know what for. And then she found out that there had been a picture in the newspaper, which described what had taken place. And then she came back and started questioning, what – what really happened, you see, so sh-she was of two – two – two different feelings. In the one, she says, do you realize how dangerous it was for you, what you did? A-And, this was very reckless. And the other way she – she was proud that I had participated in – in saving a person. But th-the recklessness was a major factor, that you would go to such an extreme, which was very, very unusual. And by the way, I have a picture here, as it appeared in a newspaper, blew up and I'll – I'll show it to you later; and also comments that were about me specifically. It just so happened that this particular event became a bone of contention between the Austrian more or less public press, which for the most part was anti-Semitic, and the Jewish press, an-and the Jewish publications, who took the German newspapers to task. It – it just so happened that the two boys who jumped into the water were Jewish. The boy who ran to get the police was Gentile.

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It never occurred to us that this would ever be a problem, but it was a big bone of contention, a big discussion. The – I mean, in particular th-the Jewish press, because the Jewi – the Jews were always characterized as being cowards. Jews – Jews didn't want to be in the military, and Jews were afraid and – and unreliable, and – and they're not really Austrian and so forth, and – but here was an example where two Jewish boys jumped in the water. We didn't hesitate, we didn't ask who it was, we didn't ask what religion she was. We just acted because we – we felt we – we should do something, you see? And I have various correspondence which refers to that particular event, in – in several organizations who got involved. This was in October or – late October of 1937. One month later I had my Bar Mitzvah, and at the Bar Mitzvah there was a lot of congratulation, because this was only a month later, and the **Kultusgemeinde** – the **Kultusgemeinde**, it's called a cultural association, but really it's not a cultural association, i-it was a sort of a semi-government authority for the Jewish people. And every Jew in **Austria** had to deal with the **Kultusgemeinde** at least three times in their lives. The **Kultusgemeinde** issued the birth certificate, the marriage certificate and the death certificate. So – so every Jew had to register with the **Kultusgemeinde**, which later on also turned out to be a detriment for the Jewish people, because when the Nazis came in and wanted a list, all they had to do is go to the **Kultusgemeinde** and have a list of any

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– of a Jew living anywhere in the city. So at that time the **Kultusgemeinde** representative came to the temple, and th-they gave me a di-diploma of recognition for what I had done, and – and also a watch. And this was the first watch that I had ever owned, so – so to me that – that was a big deal.

Q: You mentioned that there was a point of contention between the Jewish press and the mainstream press, and then you gave some great background about how Jews had been perceived, and – and obviously you being part of this heroic act was kind of going counter to the prevailing notion of – of how a Jew would act. But I’m curious exactly how the Jewish press was making use of this. What were they saying, and what was – what was the conversation between the two presses?

A: Mostly it – it dealt – they were attacking the press for their attitude toward Jews, the reason for their hostility to Jews, and their idiocy as pertaining anti-Semitism. And their failure to recognize what we had done. The majority of press had nothing, no comment whatsoever. There was only one particular newspaper, it’s called “**Das Kleine Blatt**,” which carried a small picture of the two of us, and – and our age, and our name, and one paragra – one sentence, actually; and that was it. An-And no other publication – public – publication, who certainly at that time in the country, if it had been anybody else, it would have been played up big, you see? So, it’s interesting, no attention was – was paid to it. Forty – 40 years later, my son, who



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was working in Congress, and I had just given an interview in **Norfolk, Virginia**, where I was living at the time, and they wrote up the experience that I had, and my – my background and so forth. And when he read it, h-he showed it to the congressman. And congressman was **Whitehurst** from **Norfolk**. He says well – well, we've got to do something, this is not right. So he wrote a letter to the ambassador, giving him a – a copy of the article in the newspaper, and that I had never received any recognition. So the ambassador at that time was **Thomas Klestil**. **Thomas Klestil** went on from the embassy, the ambassador being there in **Washington**, to become the foreign minister of **Austria**. And then, from the foreign ministry, became the president of **Austria**. So the ambassador said that he had never heard of this, but he was going to investigate.

Q: How old was the ambassador?

A: I don't know how old he was. I – I suppose he was in his 40s, you know. But he would investigate, and it was maybe a couple of months later he came back and said yes, we have a record of this. And they arranged a reception for me, and I met the ambassador, and he asked me if I would be willing to come back at the government's invitation to **Austria**, they want to honor me. And eventually I was given a gold medal for heroism, 40 years after the event.

Q: So this would have happened in the 70s and the 80s? When did this happen?

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A: I-It probably – I – I don't have the – th-the date now. It – probably in the 70s.

Q: That's a fascinating story. He –

A: It was a – let's see now, I'm trying to think. Yeah, '78 maybe, something like that. But this is not the end of the story. When **Hitler** came in, as soon as **Hitler** and the Nazis took over in **Austria**, my mother was the driving force. She felt that we could not possibly stay on in **Austria**, we had to get out. But there were many people at first, when **Hitler** came in that says, well, you know what's going on, the – you know, with the plundering of shops and the beating up of Jewish people, and people s-stationing themselves, Nazi personnel in uniform stationing them – in front of Jewish shops, from – not to let anybody in. I mean, not to let any Gentiles in to – to patronize the Jewish shops. They recognized right away that we cannot live – go on living in **Austria**, we had to get out. So she wrote the letter to, you know, who – who do you write? A cousin of a cousin of a cousin that yo – she once heard of, and so forth. But she wrote a letter and she described our plight, that my –

Q: Where was this cousin? In the **United States**?

A: Yeah, lived in **Baltimore**, a-and whether or not he would be willing to send an affidavit, and then she asked for an affidavit for my father and my brother, and she – and at that time she felt, you know, let me get the men out. You know, th –

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nobody's going to touch the women, and you know, and children and such, you know, what –

Q: Is this still 1938?

A: This was '38, yes. Probably as early as April '38. **Hitler** came in in March, 13<sup>th</sup>, I believe.

Q: I'm sorry to cut you off all the time, but I'm very interested in this progression. So your mother realizes pretty much immediately that there's danger. So I'm curious about the years '33 through '38. How are your parents, or adults around you, reacting to what was happening in **Germany**? Did they talk about it at all? Were you aware of it?

A: Yes, they talked about it. And – and we knew about it, but we felt that the Austrians are very patriotic, and oh, we are social democrats, and oh – no, **Austria's** not going to become involved, you know – you know, this is **Germany**. And communications at that time were not what they are today. So whatever was written in the paper and so forth, i-it was like a different world, going from one country to the other. You – you – actually, you couldn't go, un-unless you – you had to have visas. You ri – you – you can go to – to **Hungary** in an hour and a half, I'm in – in – today I'm in **Hungary**. Not in those days. You had to have a – a visa or – to leave, and a visa to enter, a-and it was – you had to have a passport, and it

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was a complicated affair, you know, and – and transportation was not what it is today. I mean, for me, as a – as – as a child, it w – it was a big deal to – to get on a bus, and to – and to – and to get on a streetcar. Oh, oh, that was an exciting event. As a matter of fact, somebody asked me once, how old were you when you first rode in a passenger automobile? And the first time I rode in a passenger automobile, I-I was a-around 16 years old, in – in **London**. In **London**, trying to take a taxi to – to the train station. That was in 1940, you know, and – and I'd never ridden in a – in taxi before, but this was the first time.

Q: W-Well, had you taken like a **fiaker**, you – you were taking horse-drawn buggies, or there was absolutely no –

A: N-N-N-No, you – you took a – first of all, the first means of transportation was to walk, you see, that was custom, the – no matter how far it was, you walked. A- And aside from walking, you took the streetcar. And if you – buses were not available, except if you wanted to leave the city, that's where they had buses. And –

Q: Did you ever bicycle?

A: I didn't have a bicycle, no. Because if I had a bicycle, I'd have to drag it up four f – four floors of steps. And I-I think that my parents would have been more concerned with safety, e-even then, because the – th-they knew that I probably would use the bike to go to areas where they wouldn't want me to go. Where there's

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maybe some traffic and so forth. So most of the time I-I just walked. I walked to school.

Q: How long did it take to walk to school?

A: Well, the public school was around the corner, the elementary school. And the other one was a little further, m-maybe a 15 minute walk. Now, when I went in **Talmud Torah** School, sometimes I'd see a horse-driven wagon, and we would jump on that, and when the – when the driver was – wasn't looking, you know. So I'd jump on it and – and take a ride with him, and then jump off. Which too was not that safe. But that's what we did.

Q: So amongst your siblings, were you – were you the – th-the little devil? The one who always got into trouble, or was your brother similar?

A: No, no, he was very conservative. I – I was the trouble maker. I – I don't know why, but the – I've done that throughout my life, you know, army service, I did things that – on reflection now, when I think back I says, oh my God, that was dumb. And working – I'm a pharmacist and we – we – we had our own business in **Norfolk, Virginia**, and in the 80s, I experienced two hold-ups, and had a gun to my head twice, you know, and you know, people would say, well, were you scared, and so forth. I say, yes, of course I – I was scared, but – but it – but one thing I can tell you, I did not panic. Of course, you know, I'm skipping the story back and forth,

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maybe. So – so the first time that I had a gun to my head, it was by two black men, and they wanted **Talwin**, which mimics opium, but it wasn't even a narcotic, and I was astonished when they asked for it, you see. But then he asked for my wallet, so I gave him my wallet. Then he said to me, kneel down. And I said to him, if you're going to shoot me, you're going to have to look at me, I'm not kneeling. And he says – and he says, all right. And he turned around and walked – and ran out. By the way, he got shot and killed two days later, trying to rob another pharmacy. The second time maybe was – maybe three – three weeks later, and this time it was by two whites. And they were more knowledgeable, they were prepared. They came with an empty pillowcase, and they knew – they probably had shopped us, and they knew where I kept the narcotics. So – so they wanted the morphine, and the **Dilaudid** and the **Demerol**, and the codeine and opium and so forth that we had; so they got all of that. And then, you know, he's holding a pistol, while the other one is loading up on – on whatever we had in narcotics. And then he said to me, ge – let me have your wallet. So I said to him, let me – I says, give me – give you my wallet? I says, do you realize what problems that is? I says, I gotta run here and there to get new identification and new driver's license. I got to stop all the credit cards, I says, it's a whole lot of trouble. And so he says, all right, keep the wallet. And people couldn't believe, you – you actually did that? I says, yes. So, I – I –

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throughout life, I don't panic. I-I size up the situation a-as to what I need to do and – and act accordingly. And – and I feel that when you panic, then many times the person who is the aggressor, will also panic, and then you don't know what to expect. People would ask me, they would – found it strange that the first time that you were held up, you had two blacks, right? Yeah. And the second time it was two whites? Yeah. Don't you find it strange? I says, no, I says, my – my pharmacy was an equal opportunity pharmacy. So – so they – they would laugh, it was fun. But after that, I hired the police to come in and – an-and they were – every – every afternoon and evening I would have police in – in the pharmacy, and my sons urged me, you know, it's time to get out. You know, you – you can't keep this up. Because it was true, because you – you become apprehensive that every time the door opens, you don't know who is coming in. And the problem with drugs today in **America** is so – so pervasive, that you just don't know what to anticipate. A-And you live and work in a form of tension. So although I was only 59 at the time, I – I decided to call it quits. I sold the pharmacy and retired at 59. And I took a three month vacation, you know, traveled to **Europe**; your country, **Hungary**, I was there for about a month. Enjoyed it. A-And when I came back I was restless and didn't know what to do, so I went to work for the navy, the navy hospital in the – as a pharmacist. And I worked until the 90s a-and then I quit a-and stopped working.

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Q: Well, now we've gotten a bit ahead of ourselves.

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: Let's go back to **Vienna**, and – and I – I was very curious about one thing. You said that during the – this heroic rescue, you had one friend with you who was non-Jewish. Did you have many non-Jewish friends, and –

A: No.

Q: No. Was he the only one?

A: Yes. He happened to live on the floor below us. And it was interesting that when **Hitler** came in, although we were very close friends, he stopped me on the stairways one day, and he told me that **Herbert**, you understand that we can't be friends any longer. So I said yes, I understand. An-And that was the end, I thought. A couple days later, we meet up again on the steps, and th – he stopped me, and he said, would I do him a favor? I says, what – what is it you – you want? He says, well, I need a pair of white socks, and I know you have some. Would you loan me your white socks? So I said, well, why do you need my white socks? He says, well, he says, you know, he says, I belong to the **Hitlerjugend**, and white socks are part of the uniform. And I was told to stand downstairs in front of **Herr Gros'**(ph) shop, to make sure that no Christian people go in. So I need the socks. So I – his name was **Bertie**. So I said, **Bertie**, I – I – I have no idea where the socks are, or if I still



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have them. I don't – I don't think that I have it. And maybe he understood that – what I was saying, but I – I gave him no socks. But as close a friend we were, overnight, **Hitlerjugend**, y-you know – you know. And this was the biggest surprise that I had, that the – the very same people who lived with you in – in the house, an-a-and knew the family and – and **guten tag** and **guten naft**(ph) and this and that an-and they're friendly, and suddenly yo – tell you they have been in the underground f-for years, under – as Nazis. And this is unbelievable. I remember –

Q: Th-They told you that?

A: Yeah, when **Hitler** came in. They said, yeah, we been in underground. I remember a neighbor came in that we were very friendly with – as a matter of fact, the family – they were a tailor, and my folks wanted to have a – a big table when they had the reception after the Bar Mitzvah, th – in our apartment. They didn't have a big enough table so we – so they loaned us the – that – their work table where they made suits or coats or whatever the – a tailor does. So – so – so the woman came over, **Frau Bodichka**(ph), and she's friends with my mother a-and she's saying to my mother, you have nothing to fear. Yo-You are good Jews. Nobody's going to touch you. But, she says, maybe the people who live across the street, she says, maybe they got it coming to them. And as young as I was at the time, you know, just 13 years old, I said – I says, how do I know that the people

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across the street aren't saying the same thing about us? You see, but wa – one thing that I-I later became aware of, that i-if I was 13, it was just a number. I really overnight became an adult. A-And you recognize right away that things are not going to be the way they were. And for instance, when my mother had written to **America**, to distant cousins for an affidavit, they responded and were willing to send the affidavit. But I was going to be there, wi – stay in **Vienna**. And I felt I was ju – in as much – in as much danger as anybody else. And there was a Jewish boy across the str-street, **Teddy Katz**, he told me one day, let's run away. Don't say anything to anybody, we'll run away. I says, where do you want to run? He says, well, we'll go to **Czechoslovakia**. I says, who do we know in **Czechoslovakia**? I says, ha – I says, we have no money. I says – I says re – we gonna cross the border illegally? Yes. I says, when we get there, then what? So, I said no, I – I – it just doesn't make any sense. But I wanted to get out, so I had registered with what was known then as the **Palestina**(ph) office, the **Pales-Palestine** office, for **aliyah**. But – but I didn't hear. So I deci –

Q: I – I'm sorry to cut you off again, but this is another point that I'm particularly interested in. What was your family's relationship to Zionism as you were growing up?

A: None.

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Q: So, registering with the **Palestina**(ph) office, this was something completely new? It hadn't been in your mind before?

A: Oh, no, I had no intention of going to **Palestine**, or – for the most part, you know, life was okay. You know, it's – it's our country, you know, I'm Austrian. I was very patriotic, you know, because it's drilled into you in school, you know, and you know, **Austria**, our homeland and the Austrian history, Austrian-Hungarian empire, the Kaiser and so forth, so – so – the imperial **Austria**, oh we – we stopped the – the Turks when they attacked and – and if you go down – downtown in the first district, you can see where the – the last shell is still imbedded in – in the concrete and so forth. S-So Austrians are quite patriotic. But th – I felt that I was in danger, and I wanted to get out of the country, especially after **Kristallnacht**. On **Kristallnacht**, after the assassination of the diplomat in **Paris**, and with **Hershel Grynszpan**, who shot the embassy personnel in – in **Paris**. It wasn't ambassador, but the – an assistant to the ambassador, whatever his position was, I don't recall. But I knew that something was going to happen, that there would be revenge. I mean, I-I just – you – you could almost smell it in the air, that something was going to happen.

Q: This is November '38?

A: Yes.

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Q: But the annexation happened –

A: In March.

Q: – at the beginning of that year.

A: In March.

Q: Ca-Can you tell me whether – how things were going in th – in that six month period, leading up to **Kristallnacht**? How many things were changing?

A: Well, I can tell you I – I was a – a member of the **Hakura**(ph) swim team.

**Hakura**(ph) means strength. And I was member of the swim team. On March the 10<sup>th</sup>, I believe it was a Thursday, I had just gone there for a practice session. When I walked out, I saw a large mass of people, and were yelling and screaming, and as – as a kid I'm – I'm always attracted to something that – that's different as a – I want to know what's going on. So – so I approached them, that was only across the street from **Dianabad**(ph). I don't know if you're acquainted with **Vienna** or not. So, if you cross the street you come to **Schwedenzplatz**(ph), so – so there they had a big demonstration. Gra – a great mass of people, with this social democratic flag and whatnot. And on – and the police standing in front of me. And on the other side, a small group of Nazis, and yelling at each other, and so forth. This was Thursday. And on Sunday we're gonna have a **plevicide** whether or not **Austria** wants to join with **Hitler**. This wa – this was by order of the chancellor of **Austria**, **Schuschnigg**,

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**Kurt Schuschnigg.** So when I saw that, I says oh, Austrians will never vote for **Hitler**. As I – so as – I really wasn't concerned until the next evening, when over the radio, suddenly I heard that the **plevicide** had been cancelled, and the government had abdicated, and new people were coming to – into government, and they were all Nazi officials. I says – then I recognized re – this does not sound good. Something is gonna happen. And it – and true enough, why – on Sunday, German troops marched in, and announce a gov – overthrew the government, and we – we were part of **Germany**. We had been annexed, or **anschluss**. And this – and suddenly we're oven – over-overnight we're pri – night, I was confident that **Austria** would never become part of **Germany**, suddenly e-everyone – everyone that you met wu – seemingly seemed to be connected to – with the Nazi party all along, in the underground [**indecipherable**]. And everybody ha-had this – the armband on with the Nazi insignia, and flags all over the city, and I couldn't understand how suddenly people that I – I felt if you give them the chance to vote would have voted against the Nazis, now everybody seemed to be for it. The – the cardinal of **Austria**, **Innitzer**, welcomed **Hitler** as, you know, the native son returning to his country and so forth, and – and it seemed so unbelievable, how overnight something as dramatic a-as a – as giving away everything and becoming a devoted Nazi, a-and the Jewish people going to be the target, you see, because we

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heard it con-consistently, with the editor of the newspapers, or ev – ev – everything became pro-Nazis, a-and you saw no opposition whatsoever. Everybody was for the Nazis. And the people were f-for the Nazis. Either that, or afraid, because seemingly 100 percent were not necessarily in favor of what was taking place, but it seemed to be the vast majority were. And the plundering took place, and the beating took place and the dem – the humiliation took place, you know, all the graffiti that had been anti-Nazi – they take elderly Jewish people, and sometimes religious people, whoever they were, peop-people of recognition, professional people, you know, and would humiliate them, give him a toothbrush and tell him to scrub the streets and so forth, and spit at them and make fun. And the people would stand around and laugh.

Q: And this is still the run-up to **Kristallnacht**?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, before. Could – could we stop one second?

Q: Yes, absolutely.

A: I-I want to go to the bathroom.

Q: Absolutely. Stop the track. **[break]** Okay.

A: Where wer – where are we now?

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Q: We are at the preceding events that are leading up to **Kristallnacht**.

A: On **Kristallnacht**, no – November nine, we saw what was going on on the street, that the shops are being plundered, a-and the Jewish people are – on the street were being beaten up, so you're afraid to – as to what may happen. And the greatest fear was to hear the knock on the door. When you – when you heard that knock on the door, we froze. And I could see the expression on my – my father and my mother's face, and I – and I knew they – they were scared. And it passes onto the children when you – wh-when they see that the – the parents are – are frightened. And the – there's a knock on the door and the order, open up. So, we opened up the door, and to – two uniformed **SA** people walked in, one a little older tha-than the other one. The other one looked – looked to be sa – someone maybe 18 or 19 years old, something like that. And they demanded to see my brother, specifically asking for ba – for him by his name, but he was not home. So they didn't believe it, so they went through the apartment, searching for him, and he wasn't there. So, since he wasn't there, one of them, the elderly one said, we'll take him, pointing to me. And it was then that my mother started pleading and crying, saying he is only a little boy, he hasn't done anything, and please leave him alone, you know – you know, just begging him. And – and it was then that the younger **SA** man said, it wasn't him. Tha-That's it, it wasn't him. And they said oh – okay, we'll come back in a

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little while. So, when I heard it wasn't him, a-as I – I surmised that maybe my brother had gotten into a fight, and now was the time to get even, you see. And the mere fact that it wasn't him, saved me. And because my mother, as soon as they left, told me to run downstairs and intercept my brother from coming home, and telling him to stay with a friend, not to come home. And – and then she sent me to tell my uncle not to go home, and to stay with his mother-in-law. That was interesting too, and h-he – he told me later on, that they came to his mother-in-law's home, you know, everybody knew already where most likely somebody would – would go if you want to pick him up. And when he heard the knock on the door, he crawled under the table, and the table had a long tablecloth. So they were searching the house, the – the apartment that they lived in, and they didn't see him. And they were pounding the table, saying well, you be sure to – to let us know as soon as he comes here. Well, he was under the table. He survived. His wife and his son did not survive. But i-it was, th-the following day, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, when I wa – was on my way to go to the **Palestina**(ph) office to check on the – on my **aliyah**, which is immigration to then known **Palestine** or **Israel**. When I came downstairs, I saw a – a big truck and a lot of people around the truck jeering and laughing and enjoying themselves. And the police is there also, just standing there. And I was wondering what the heck is going on here, what's it all about, you know? And – and



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the house right next door to us, there was a shop, a shop carrying bedding equipment, blankets and pillows and pillowcases and towels and stuff like that. And I noticed that they were carrying stuff out from the shop, and putting it on the truck. Well, you recognize right away, it doesn't take long, as to what's going on. They're just confiscating whatever goods he has and putting it on the truck. And then I saw the owner standing there beside the – the shop. Hi-His name was shp – **H-Herr Schpringer(ph)**. A Mr. **Schpringer(ph)**. A-And he's white-faced, scared. And when they had just about emptied the shop, Mr. – **Herr Schpringer(ph)**, being a business man, walks up to the head honcho Nazi there, and asks for a receipt. And th-the storm trooper turned around and yelled to the crowd, **Herr Schpringer(ph)** wants a receipt. And everybody starts laughing and cheering and screaming. And then he grabs **Schpringer(ph)** by the neck, the collar of his neck, and turned him around and gave him a kick in the rear, and **Schpringer(ph)** fell down on the pavement. And he said, here Jew, this is your receipt. I – I witnessed that. A-And I-I felt that even going to the **aliyah** office may not be such a good idea. I says – so I decided to go to the home of the chief rabbi.

Q: Now, let me cut you off once again, cause this is very interesting, the dynamics of this. You're witnessing this, does that mean you're a part of the crowd? Where are you standing?

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A: Just standing be – not part. I'm standing ba – little distance away, y-you know, maybe – but I'm a – nobody's paying any attention to me, you see, I'm just a kid.

Q: So you didn't feel like you were in danger of being recognized as a Jew?

A: Y-Y-You know – you know, a-again, I-I did things a-as a kid, that when I reflect now, I says, this was really stupid. I mean th – I had no awareness. I – spontaneous response to different things. For instance, if I told you I saw **Eichmann**, and asked him to put a country on my passport, it's only years later that I even became aware who he was. I had no idea **Eichmann**, I never heard of him. But I went to – to the **Rothschild** palace, which was the Nazi headquarters, and I walked in there – well, when you walk in there, everything is **heil Hitler**, you know, an-and I'm not going to come in and say **heil Hitler**, so wha-what am I going to say? **Grüss gott**. Which was the way we normally greeted each other, **grüss gott**, and – greet God. And – and everybody looks up, you know, what's this Jewish kid doing here? You see, so I asked – when **Eichmann** asked me what it is I want, and I told him, I need to get a country entered – because I ca – I can't remember exactly what – you had to choose on the passport what country you n – had to have on the passport. And if it wasn't listed, then you couldn't go to that country. And **England** wasn't listed. I never thought of going to **England**. And so of course, this is somewhat later.

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Q: So I'm going to stop the track right now, we're going to switch tracks, one second.

**End of File Two**

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**Beginning File Three**

Q: All right, we're on track three. So, let – let me just stop you, and – in terms of the chronology. So you –

A: Yeah, because – because I'm – I'm not t-telling you step by step.

Q: Well, this is very exciting, but – but I – I just – I want to get my bearings in the story. So you witness **Herr Schpringer** being brutalized, and you decide that maybe you should go to the **Palestina**(ph) organization, but then –

A: Oh, orig – originally had planned to go, th-then I said to myself, no, no, this may be too dangerous. So – so I went to – actually, it wasn't that night either, on recollection. I – I went – I did go to the **aliyah** office. I'm sorry, I had to correct myself. I went to the **aliyah** office, a-and when I came there, it was packed with people; men and women. And I wasn't there very long when the **SS** showed up, and they sent men to one side, and the women and children to the other side. And I had had my Bar Mitzvah, so it came up to me to decide which side should I go on? And I felt that maybe I better play it safe. So I decided to go with the women, although you know, people who had had their Bar Mitzvah, they regard themselves already as men. But, you know, I – I says, I – I better play it safe. And it wasn't very long thereafter, when we had separated and we were in different rooms, that all the men were taken away by truck. And later on I learned that they had been taken to

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**Dachau.** Had I stayed with the men, I would have wound up in **Dachau**, but I was with the women. So they kept us there for an hour, an hour and a half, til they decided what to do with us, what – they let us go. And here again comes the recklessness. They let us go, and I'm going out on the s – from the building. So I thought that more and more men will be coming to the building, and they're gonna get arrested, and maybe I ought to warn them. But in back of me, there's an **SS** man, right in the building. If you've been to **Vienna**, I am – the building is still there, and it's not far – the Hotel **Metropol** was Gestapo headquarters. It's only one block away. And maybe two blocks away is the **Kultusgemeinde** on the **Juden** – on the **Judengasse**. So this was in the – on the – on the **Aurelia** street, you see, which on – only short walk where the **aliyah** office was. Years later I took my wife there and I showed her where it was. A-And so I stood at the edge of the – the pavement – pedes – pedestrian pavement, not the street, and as men were approaching me to go into the building, I would turn my head away and say, don't go in, Gestapo. And invariably, they would say, what did you say? And I would repeat, you know, but not looking directly at him, as if I – but the Gestapo in back of me was a trooper, noticed that people were coming up to me and turned around and walking away. So a-after three or four had done this, he comes out and yells for me to come back. And he wants to know, what did you say to the men? **Was hast**

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**du gesagt?** I says, I didn't say anything, I – I – I – I – I said I – oh, you said something. I said, the only thing I said was I was here for some time and I just got out. That I waited a long time, but I just got out. That's not what you said, tell me what you said. So I stuck by my story. So yeah, they – he wanted – he really beat me, and then he kicked me down the steps. There were about three steps as – as you entered the building. So I fell over the three steps, and I got up, and I ran away.

Q: Now, when you were turning people away, were you turning any passerby away, or did you know who –

A: No, people were coming from the other side, apparently they – they may have come from the **Kultusgemeinde**, approaching **aliyah** office, you see. I don't know if the **Kultusgemeinde** was open at that time or not, because this was right –

**Kristallnacht.**

Q: This is November 10<sup>th</sup>.

A: Yes. This is still part of the – the pogrom.

Q: So whoever is passing by at that point is – is Jewish, because that's the section of the –

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, so you knew that these people are in danger?

A: Oh – oh yeah, yeah.

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Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. And I knew if they got into the building they'd get arrested. And the – many years later, I felt that what I did at that time probably was more dangerous than jumping into the **Danube**. And didn't even think of it, I just acted spontaneous. It came to my mind that I can – I wish I had a name, or had recognized who – who any of these people were, but I had no idea. But you know, once I – I fell down the steps, and you know, I had the black eye and I went home and my mother, she was really in – in a panic. She says, we told you to stay home, we told you not to go here, and told you this and that, you know, that – berated, you know, because parental concern, they know that when you're home, you know, at least we know who you are or where you are, and – a-and we don't worry. But once a child – a-and I don't know if you have children yet, but when y – when you do, y-you become aware that if you don't know where the child is, you begin to worry.

Q: Had you succeeded in intercepting your brother?

A: Yes.

Q: What happened to your brother?

A: Yeah, I intercepted him, told him not to come home, and he went with a friend. But he – the f – it was on the following day that I decided, first of all, it was useless

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to go to the **Kultusgemeinde**, because the **Kultusgemeinde**, th-the line was for blocks, people standing in line, trying to get into the building to see the officials.

Q: What were they hoping for?

A: An idea, information, maybe financial help because nobody was working, y-y- you see, so yo-you want to eat, you see, you need money. So maybe – maybe they'll get a tip, which country, anywhere in the world, affords an opportunity that you can go to and so forth. I-I decided that s-since I was known, with the notoriety of saving this girl, that maybe this could be of help to me. So I went to see **Israel Taglicht**, a rabbi asr – **Israel Taglicht**, who was the chief rabbi of **Vienna**. I – I still remember, it was the first time I had been in – at his residence [indecipherable] really f – beautiful home, the flush red carpet. Cause this something that I hadn't seen before, you see, so I rem – I remembered the red carpet. And he asked me what he could do for me, a-and I asked him, you know, that I had applied for **aliyah**, I hadn't heard, is there anything th – he could help me with. So, h-he refers me to see the executive secretary of the **Kultusgemeinde**, who was **Josef Löwenherz**, Dr. **Josef Löwenherz**, and he f – phoned him apparently, and he got through to him and I had a pass. So, the following day, I went to see **Löwenherz**, and I didn't have to stand in line. I see all these people standing in line and he does – right away e – allowed to enter, with this pass. And I came to his office, and he knew about me, he knew



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about having saved this girl, and he said, you know, what can I do for you? And I told him again I had applied for **aliyah**, I hadn't heard, can he do anything for me? And it was then that he lifted the phone, and he started talking to somebody. And it was all about a **Kindertransport**. And, I don't know what he's talking about. So when he put the phone down, I says, what – what is the **Kindertransport**? So he explained to me that he is in negotiation with **Eichmann**. He didn't say **Eichmann**, he said the Nazis. He did not know whether he's gonna be successful or not, but the idea is to have a transport of 1,000 children; 800 would go to **England**, the first 800. The last 200 would be dropped off in **Holland**. And he said to me, I don't know whether we will be successful in negotiation with Nazi authorities, he says, but if you like, he says, I'll put your name on the list. So I said yes, what I got to lose, I says, yeah, put my name on the list, and I didn't think anything o-of – more about it. I went home, and again where have you been, and this or that, you – why aren't you – how many times to we have to tell you to stay home and so the litany of – of complaints that my mother had. But it was a – a week later that I was notified that I'd been – I had been chosen to participate in the transport.

Q: How did your parents react?

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A: Th-They was fine. I was old enough that I want to get out. My mother was satisfied that all the men, so c – old men will be go out of the way, a-and it will just be my mother and my sister.

Q: At this – at this point, has your father and uncle been successful in leaving the country?

A: Yeah – no, they – they're still there, they – but they have received the affidavit. And now the problem was w-we had to find the money for pa-passage. And they got assistance for – some money that came from the cousin, and – and some money they had saved up. Other than that, I don't know if they got anything from the **Kultusgemeinde** or not. I just don't know. But I – I knew when I left that my father was going to – I left in December, and – and my father was leaving in January. See, th-they had the visa and then – and the affidavit. It was a week after I had talked to Dr. **Löwenherz** that I was notified to participate in the **Kindertransport**, which was to leave on the – late at night, it was around 10 o'clock at night from a station – not the **Westbahnhof**. Many people will tell you I left from the **Westbahnhof**, they didn't leave from the **Westbahnhof**, the – they left from one station afterward, called **Hütteldorf**. And the requirements as to – we were given a notification as to what we would – allowed – were allowed to take out of the country. And it's interesting, you were not allowed to take anything out of the country, including

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clothing that was new. Anything that you took out of the country had to be in your possession one year ahead of time, '37. And –

Q: How would you prove this?

A: Y-You know, at that time, I didn't think of it, but we obeyed it, yeah. It's a – nobody, as far as I know – I mean, I have no way of knowing, but my – my parents did not buy anything, a pair of socks, o-or a shirt, or underwear, no-none of that. It was true that then – everything that I took with me, I had had be-before. And – and under penalty of punishment, whatever the punishment would have been, my father had to swear a signed affidavit, that whatever I was taking out had been in my possession as of 1937. An-And by the way, I have that document, with his signature, you see.

Q: What's happening to your brother at this point?

A: Well, he left with my father in – in January of '39.

Q: So then, the – the three male members of your family leave together in the – January of '39, your father, your uncle and your brother?

A: No, no, my uncle had nothing to do with this.

Q: Okay.

A: It's just my fa – my uncle, before they left, my uncles – I – I took him to the train station, he was smuggling himself across the border into **Yugoslavia** to go to

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**Palestine** because it – i-illegal immigration was more productive and successful than trying to wait for admission by any authorit – any country. You're not supposed to be in **Yugoslavia**, you're not supposed to be in **Italy** wi-without p-permit, and – which you couldn't get, so you – you just crossed the border.

Q: Di-Did he take a train? How was he going to cross the border?

A: Yo-You get to the border, the Austrian border, and you get off the train. And then at night, th – wi – there was a smuggling operation going on at that time.

People got paid to take you, and – and th – and I-I guess there was bribery to look another way in the – you know, th-that must have gone on for a long time.

Q: And this is the winter of '38, when he's escaping to **Yugoslavia**? It's after **Kristallnacht**?

A: Yeah, yeah, no December –

Q: December.

A: December '38, yes. What day? I don't know, maybe a third week of December, or the second week of December. No, it had to be – it had to be probably the first week of December, because I left on – on my birthday, the 11<sup>th</sup>, so it had to be before that, cause I took him to the train. A-Again, there was **[indecipherable]** nobody else. Even when any kind of form needed to be filled out, they called on me. My – my parents, to a large extent felt that I would know what to do, you see.

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So – so the – my brother would do something foolish, you see, so – so he – and he's smaller – see, my brother was taller. So he's taller [indecipherable] more of a child, you know, tha-that – he –

Q: Nobody suspects a child.

A: Ye-Yeah, he can get by, you see. Maybe they – their judgment was correct in – in that respect.

Q: So what happens to your uncle? Does he get through to **Yugoslavia**?

A: He wa – he got through **Yugoslavia**, and **Romania**, into **Turkey** and from **Turkey** to **Israel**. His wife was left behind, and his son was left behind. And they were deported. You didn't ask me about my friend, who was –

Q: Let's talk about your friend.

A: – who was involved with me in saving the girl. We had, you know, when – when you think back, you know, as – as children, the type of conversation that we had compared to the conversation that kids have in this country, yeah, you know, it was a – it was unbelievable. You're talking about life and death, and they're talking about football, or baseball, you know. So I – his name was **Ernst**, I used to call him **Ernsty**(ph). I said, why don't you try to get out also? He couldn't get on the **Kindertransport**. He was two years older, so the cut-off age was, at that time was 16, and he – he was almost 17. He says – in any event, he says, I – I can't leave my

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parents. The sister had left for **Israel**, she had made **aliyah** early o-of '38. So he – he s – he said, in any event, he says, you know, my – my father is – is a decorated from World War I, and he says, I can understand where they'll bother you because you – you – your parents are –

Q: One – one moment.

A: So – so he – he felt that his father having been a veteran of the World War I, and decorated and you know, au – Austrian citizen to begin with, whereas my parents were naturalized. And nothing is gonna happen to us. So – so I – he wasn't too – he says, in your case, your – your parents are Polish originally, and he says yeah, I can see where – so he stayed and what would happen eventually is that like everybody else, they were kicked out of the apartment. I was in **England** ba – by that time and lost contact. My problem also was, I had no money. Somebody was give me – have to give me a stamp. Then sometimes I got a postcard from someone. And that's the only means I had to write. And I heard nothing any more fr-from **Ernsty**(ph). Later on I heard that the parents were deported to **Theresienstadt**, and they died there. And he was living with some girl in the second district, and they were deported [**indecipherable**] down here. And when they arrived in – in **Poland**, the following day they were all shot, including him. And tha-that was what – I didn't hear that until the end of the war. I had no idea that – often wondered what happened to him,

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but we never knew. Of course, I didn't know what happened to my uncle, I didn't know what happened to my cousins or my aunt, or – or my grandparents or, you know, in – in **Poland** my father's parents' family, most of them are still in **Radom**, and there were 10 brothers and sisters. And they – and they had married and they had children. Nobody survived. So that – that was one aspect. I don't know where I am i-i-in – in this story, yo-yo-you better take me back to –

Q: Absolutely.

A: – a particular event, or –

Q: Well, what I'd like to know at this point is, what's happening to your sister? Is she just staying home and –

Q: She – she was two years younger, so she was around 11, and she stayed home. And in the meantime, while I'm in **England**, I am – e-even today i-it bothers me, I-I am put in a very, very stressful position. My uncle writes to me – and this is my mother's brother – the other uncle was my father's brother. But he writes to me that he's smuggled himself across the border into **Italy**. And he says, help me, I'm eating grass. **[phone ringing]** And do you – are you getting the phone I'm hearing?  
**[break]**

Q: Okay, we're back on. He writes to you and you're in **England** and he says that he's eating grass.

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A: Yeah, a-and help me. Well, I-I'm 14 years old, I have no money. Absolutely not – not one penny, nothing. And I don't speak the language. I don't know what's going on. I'm at this place in **Dovercourt** in **Lowestoft**(ph), freezing cold. I mean, this cabin, no running water. Every bit of clothing that I had, I'm – I'm – I'm putting it on at night, trying to stay warm, and – because we're right on the ocean, and this wintertime. I couldn't stay warm. So aft – they gave us sort of a canister, was supposed to be filled with hot water, and – and when I woke up in the morning the second night, it was – it was frozen ice. And I said, you know, to – to my friend who is staying with me, I says, you know, I can't take this any more, I says, I'm not gonna stay here. So – so I just took the blanket, and I went into the dining hall, and there they had a fireplace, and I put the blanket on the floor. And for the rest of the time that I was at this camp, I slept on the floor in front of the dining place, ju-just ha-had to stay warm. But this is a different story now. As far as my uncle is concerned, he writes to me from time to time that he – he also has no money, and he's hungry. And then in one letter he's saying that – now that you're safe and out of the country, it's your responsibility to help me, to help me get out of the country. Well – well, I get this letter, a-and then o-on a – on a personal note from my mother, she's getting, as time goes on, more worried and more concerned. My father is in **United States**, a good looking man, and maybe it went on in her head



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that maybe he's met somebody, which later on I hear, was not that unusual. So she – the pressure went on, with me caught in the middle. She's writing to me that he's not doing anything to help her get out of the country. In the meantime, he's in this country, he doesn't speak English. He doesn't know who is what, or where to go or what do you do. He doesn't have any money either. He's dependent upon the assistance from – from the distant cousins who have no relation whatsoever. I don't know what their finances were at the time. So, you know, one letter I get, that I should write to my father, that if he doesn't do something to help my mother to get out of the country, that I should write to him – oh, she said, send a cable – how am I gonna send a cable – that that I would have nothing to do with him, if he wasn't more active in helping. I realized the situation she's in, I – I don't know what's going on. So I wrote him what she told me. And then I get a letter from my father, that this is no way to talk to me. A-And you know, I – I'm in the middle of this thing, in the – in the back and forth, and you know, that – it was for me a very, very uncomfortable and stressful and it's – if you can put yourself in the situation where – where you are put in the situation of choosing between your father or your mother, I mean how – how do you do this? A-A-And – and – and who is right and who is wrong, and what's going on? I don't know. But you ask me to do this, all right, I'll – I'll do it. You see, so – but I mean, that has always bothered me

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that – that I wrote that letter. And I – he s – my father berated me, that this no way to talk to me, and it was disrespectful. But i-it was – you know, the war broke out and my mother is still over there, and finally she did get an affidavit, cause

**America** and **Germany**, there was still correspondence going on because **America** was not at war in '39. So she – she got the affidavit and she's able to leave through **Italy**.

Q: With your sister?

A: With my sister, yeah.

Q: What about your grandmother?

A: My – my grandmother, I've almost forgot about her. She – she left before any of us did. I-I really – I really loved her. She [indecipherable] she was put in touch, I don't know how, she took a train t-toward the **Belgium** border, and there she was ma – we had two aunts – two – my mother had two sisters who lived in **Paris**, so – so they have arranged where one of the husbands of – of one of the sisters were to go to **Belgium** and arrange with a smuggler, and they smuggled her across the border.

Q: How much earlier is this?

A: This probably was e-either very – at the end of November, or maybe early – early – first week of December.

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Q: '38?

A: Yeah, '38, yeah. So she crosses the border, and she gets arrested. And the French put her in prison, illegal entry. An elderly woman, and she only speaks Yiddish, and she's very **frum**. So in prison she doesn't want to eat, because it's **treyfa**. So she dies. In-Interesting that, since talking about what – **Paris**, that she was arrested by the French police, the two sisters were deported to **Auschwitz**, picked up by the French. Collaborators. I-I-I'm skipping a lot.

Q: No, no **[inaudible]**

A: My mother e-eventually, she gets the affidavit, she meets up with the brother who had written to me, you know, for help, and whatever money she has, not much, it's some spending money, she – she gives it to him.

Q: This is in **Italy**?

A: In **Italy**, yeah.

Q: And in the meantime, the Italian police had picked him up because he's got no place where to stay. And he went to the Jewish welfare service of some kind, and the building, an-and the Italians had closed it, because too many people were coming there for – asking for help and – and so forth. They didn't want any Jewish immigrants to come to the country. So – so when they picked them up, they asked them what – what is your source of income? He has no income. We give you 24

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hours to get out of the country, or else we'll return you to **Germany**. So he crosses the border illegally, into **France**.

Q: Do you know how he did it, given that he couldn't bribe anyone?

A: I don't think so, no, he didn't have anything. Cause the minute he crossed the border, he got picked up and sent to **Gurs**. And then he, from **Gurs** he went to **Drancy**, and from **Drancy** he went to **Auschwitz**. He had a son, **Julius**. The son, had smu – had smuggled himself across the border. It's a little chilly here. Are you uncomfortable?

Q: No. Let me press pause [indecipherable] [break] So, pressing record. If I remember correctly, you had mentioned that you had some interaction with **Eichmann**. Was that – was that a personal eyewitness on your part, or was that through –

A: No, I – I didn't know anything about **Eichmann**. I needed to have an entry made o-on – on an immediate basis, because I'm going to go to **England** an-and I needed a passport, and **England** was not listed on the passport, so – so how do I do this? So – so I decided that the best way – a-and by the way, it has to be certified on the passport, each country that you want to go – emigrate to. So I decided to go to Nazi headquarters. They were located at **Rothschild** palace. And I just went in and – and right away I meet the person in charge, the – you know, they're – they're referring

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me from one place to the other. And he wants to know what it is that – that I'm there for, and so I told him. And he – he [**indecipherable**] agreed and he gave it to me, wrote in there and put the stamp on it and – an-and that was it. And it was only years later that I learned that the person who was in charge was **Eichmann**. So if he was in charge, so – so – so it must have been him. You know, he didn't introduce himself to me. But, you know, my assumption. I don't know who else had the authority, except f-for hi – for **Eichmann**, once you are in – in the headquarters of the Nazi government.

Q: How did people treat you there when they were referring you from one place to the next? Was it just all business?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: There was – there was no **un-pleasantry**?

A: No, no. I said **grüss gott**, th-they gave me a – they stared at me. I – I – I think they were surprised, they didn't know what to do. I mean, a little boy comes in, and there's – with **grüss gott**, a-a-and you know, who – who – who do you want to see?

An-And I probably said th-the person in charge. A-And so the – from one office to the other, to wind up with **Eichmann**, I – I – I – I – I did hear, when he was tried in **Israel** that he made some claim that on occasion he tried to save Jews. I mean, that was par – so-some small part of his defense. But he did o – also admit that one

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mistake that he made was that he slapped **Löwenherz**. And tha-that he – he apologized for having slapped his face, because he had much respect for **Löwenherz**, and – and **Löwenherz** survived. And by the way, ma-many people felt that **Löwenherz** was a collaborator. I spoke to his son, his son survived, and I was able to get ahold of him, lived in **New York**, name – changed his name to **Lavary**(ph). I have a letter that he sent me, talking about his father and how glad he was to hear from me, because I had written to him and told him about the father, and – the father being responsible for my sur-surviving. And he says, the father would have been happy to hear from me. And he put me in touch with his daughter, who lives in **California**, and she's a professor at one of the universities there, and he – he felt that the daughter should hear my story. So we got the daughter to call me, and we were in a conference phone call, and I told her story, and then she – because the father was criticized for having supplied the lists to the Nazi authorities, who were then picked up and deported. How else do you find out who lives where? But they had the information. My knowledge of **Löwenherz**, he had no choice. So – so they're gonna get that list no matter what. He's not the only one who knows where the lists are. So if they kill him [**indecipherable**] so – so he is in a difficult situation. Might – you might also find of interest that the rabbi at my Bar Mitzvah was Rabbi **Benjamin Murmelstein**. There you have a different story. He was part

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of the **Judenrat** in **Vienna**, and then he became part of the **Judenrat** at **Theresienstadt**. It is reported that he acted shamefully, that he molested women, and if they didn't cooperate, he'd put them on the list to be deported. There are books written about his deed. He too survived, and wound up in **Italy**. They wanted – many of the people who knew him from – who also had survived **Theresienstadt** wanted to hang him up. He a – with the church's help, he wound up in **Rome**, and the Vatican supposedly helped him, and he started working for the Vatican, and he died in **Italy**. And the wife wanted to have him buried in the Jewish cemetery, and they refused. And with the Vatican intercession, to cooperate or to yield or whatever, so – so they agreed, but only at the edge of the cemetery. I understand that there is some sort of a custom that if you are an apostate, or you've done something disrespectful to the Jewish people, they let you be buried in the Jewish cemetery, but away from everybody, only at the edge. So that is where he's buried, in **Italy**. That's the story of the rabbi, **Benjamin mermu – Benjamin Murmelstein**. And I have – I can't remember the name of the book, but there's a – a book written about the – the **Judenrat**, he was the head of the camp at **Theresienstadt**, and he s – replaced **Edelman**, who was the former head. And **Edelman**, before being deported, advised the committee there, don't trust

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**Murmelstein.** And if you like, I'll give you name of the – of the – of the book, and – and you can Google **M-Murmelstein.**

Q: I'm sure [**indecipherable**]

A: It doesn't make reference to what he did, only the position that he held. So – so he – he became quite prominent as **Benjamin Murmelstein.** I don't know if – you didn't write down the name. **Benjamin Murmelstein.** I still have the Bar Mitzvah book that I received. That's another story. It was about two or three days before we left. We had to take our suitcases and to have it inspected by the Gestapo. And you were not allowed to take any money, you're not allowed to take any cameras, no jewelry, nothing of any value. You – a-anything in your possession had to be in your possession as of '37, as I mentioned earlier. No – no typewriters, nothing – no musical instruments, an-and the only thing that was not listed was books. And since it wasn't listed, I felt, you know, I always liked books, and the nicest present you could give me for my Bar Mitzvah would be a book. So, I – I had received quite a few books, so I put them in a suitcase. And when we went to the **Kultusgemeinde,** where we had taken our suitcase to, the Gestapo agent said, what's with these books? And my mother said, well, he likes to read. He doesn't need them. So he started – took some of the books and tossed them all out. You know, just threw them away, but he left some books there. And one of the books he'd left was the



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Bar Mitzvah boy – prayer book, which I still have, with the date and everything.

Another document. German Bar Mitzvah prayer book. So where are we in the story?

Q: Well, tell me about the day that you left. So, it was from **Hütteldorf**. Who did you go to the train station with?

A: O-Only my mother. My father was – oh, she felt my father may be arrested, you know, so he – because fo-for a while he just didn't leave the house. So it was – I-I had no idea what to expect, but when w – when we got there, each child had to be dropped off at the foot of the steps. That was in the requirement that we had received, as to what procedure to follow for the transport, and – and we were to arrive at a certain hour, and in my case late in the evening. The child had to be drop off at the steps of the foot o-of the entrance. The parent was not allowed on the platform. Only one parent could come, and we would be given a number, and that was it. A-And now we arriving at the station. And there are hundreds of parents with a child, and well, I'm almost 14, only one day away. This is a – late in – at night, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, and I'm listening to some of the conversation that was going on, you know, with the – the conversation between my mother a-and me, we – we – we knew what to accept. I wanted to be part of it, my mother wanted me out of the country, so it was, write to me, we'll get together, we'll be okay an-and

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so forth, and you know, my – each – each one encouraging the other, y-you see, so – so I'm not – I – I recognize what is taking place, but I'm – I'm not emotionally carried away, because I know we're gonna meet up again, you know. My father, a month later is leaving, so I know we're gonna get together some – at some time. When or what, of course, we had no idea. But I'm listening to what goes on around me, which I found very heartrending. I had no idea that on this transport would be children between two and 16. And the conversation of some of these children, four, five, six years old, they had no idea what was taking place, and what – why they were there and where they were going and why they were going an-and – and are you not coming with me, or – or I don't want to go, I want to stay. You don't love me, or – I get emotional even today when I talk about it because at the time I – I was not as em-emotionally affected as I am now, because now I have children and grandchildren and I don't know if I would have the courage of the parents, the sacrifice that they made, to take a kid at that age and send him away. I-It took a lot of guts, I mean, cause I don't want you to worry, or write to me, or we'll soon get together, and it's all fabricated. They don't know. And as finally happened, close to 90 percent of the children never saw their parents again. So i-it – it was a very, very stressful period. A-And you know, give them a number, I – you know, my number was thr – 325, so I knew I was going to **England** – because until then I didn't even

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know where I was going for sure. So – so I knew I was going to **England**. And they took the younger children, they put them in one wagon, the older children in another wagon. And the girls in one wagon, the boys in another wagon, so – and I remember on the – f-for the – for the most part we had a certain amount of fear as to what was going to happen, even on the train, whenever it stopped and the Nazi personnel came on an-and then they walked through and – because they could kick you off the train, you know. Somebody – there was a rumor that somebody was taken off the train. If there was or wasn't, I have no idea, you know, rumor circulates. So we had some social workers from the **Kultusgemeinde** who came with us and they had – they were going to be allowed to leave the country, but their family was held hostage, they had to return. And we a-arrived to the **[indecipherable]** i-in – late – late at night, after a day and a half of traveling on the train, we arrived in **Holland** and the train stopped on the German side first, and they inspected, and whatever and then they let the train proceed across the border. And once we crossed the border all hell broke loose, and everybody started yelling and screaming and cheering and you know, because now we knew we were free; no longer to be afraid of the Nazis or what they could do. And I remember people coming up to the train and th-they offered us drinks and – and sandwiches and so forth, a very friendly reception i-in **Holland**. And after a little while, I-I was so tired

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from the day and a half on th – on the train that I – I-I could – I could barely stay awake. So – so all I remember is I got on this boat and the crossing of the channel is very stormy, I – and I got motion sick. I'd never been on any ocean, I – first time I – I'm seeing an ocean. And in the morning the – the next morning we – we arrived in **Harwich, England**, and I faintly remember – I don't know how – being taken to **Lowestoft(ph)** in **Dovercourt**. And there I stayed maybe three weeks, something like that, and my – my problem started, I was there three weeks then – then they – they sent me to **Ipswich**, and I was there 10 days, and being – and then I went to another place, it was a convalescent home for sick people, and – and in each time i-i-in the – in **Dovercourt** every weekend, they – they would line us up and – and people would come down a-and pick out certain children. And you know, I asked them what's going on? These are people that – private people want to take a child in their home. But I noticed that whenever they picked anybody out, they wanted a small, small, young children. Nobody wanted to get a teenager, you see, so nobody picked me. So – so I was going to this convalescent home, and then I went another place. Each time I'm – I'm staying a week or two, or three weeks, and then I go another place, and then finally I was sen – we went to a place called – they always cut down the number of boys, always – you know, th – by then, I think we're down to a dozen boys a-and – and we're going to a – **San Remo** hotel in **Margate**, near –

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near **Dover**. And th-that was sort of a family run hotel, small hotel, and I really liked it. I said oh, this is beautiful. I sa – th-the ocean, a-and – and it's – it's gotten warmer and the food is great, and we were there maybe two and a half weeks, and the proprietor tells us that you'll have to leave, you know, some other place. I says, why, I says, you know, we like it here. We said, we want – I want to stay here, I said, this is – this is very nice. He said, I'm very sorry, but I can't support a group of boys and nobody pays us. So that was the first time that I realized that – what was going on. That we're being shifted from one place to the other. Maybe they said, all right, I'll take them for a few days, and so forth, you see, but nobody was paying anybody, you see, so these people were – were offering to house some – some boys until they realized that th – they'll have to make room for us, and there's certain expense involved, and – and you – there's no funds available.

Q: I-I'm – a-at this point I'm curious about the people around you. First off, did you know anyone on the **Kindertransport**?

A: No.

Q: And then once you get to **England**, are you making any kind of friendships and how well are you able to communicate in English?

A: I'm not communicating with – I'm living with German boys, Austrian boys, and we're talking German. Spoke German almost the whole time I lived in **England**. A-

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And f-from **San Remo** Hotel, we were sent to **Croydon**, an estate. Then we – we hearing the possibility of war, and the – that be – you know, now the – **England** is rearm – finally re-arming itself, you know, a-and there's more and more talk about the possibility of war because **Hitler** wants **Danzig** and – a-and **England** has a pact with **Poland** and **France** and so forth, they're gonna come to the assistance of the Polish government. A-And in **Croydon**, it was around September first, war starts. A-And there we stayed at a school that had been evacuated of British children, it was a private school, a girls' school. **Kendra Hall** was the name. And so we stayed there on – on the first night when war star – started. And – and we experienced the first air raid alarm, supposedly German planes were si-si – flying overhead. A-And we went into the air raid shelter. And we were there – nice place, by the way – we were there maybe two weeks when we were told that we had to leave the place because near us was a – the **RAF**, Royal Air Force had a base, and they needed to house their personnel, so they were going to take over the school, and we would have to leave. So, the next thing we were being sent to **London**, to another school. I don't know if you know anything about **London, Eaton**(ph) Avenue, [**indecipherable**] school. And the same thing, it's a private school, it was empty, children had been evacuated. And the building is empty, if you want to stay there, fine. So a group of boys stayed at this school.

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Q: These are still German speaking refugees?

A: Yeah, all was, yeah, yeah. We just speak German. Hardly anybody knew any English. And –

Q: Well, the nine months that you're in **Britain** before the war breaks out, you're not receiving any kind of schooling? You're just being moved around?

A: No school.

Q: And how frequently are you able to communicate with – with anyone back home?

A: Perhaps once a month or every six weeks or something like that. Not – not a – not on a daily basis or even weekly basis, it's just that – because I – I have the stamps. I mean, it sounds silly today, you know, when you talk about it, you know, I have a stamp. But you know, I was there maybe a week, and I'm told by the headmaster that they had a phone call from the refugee committee. And the refugee committee tha – informs him that they have no money for my support. They've run of – out of funds, and that I would have to get a job. So he – he told me that the – you – you got to find a job. I-I don't know how I found it, whether he found it for me, or whether somebody told me about it, I just don't remember. But I went for interview for the person who was going to employ me, and he hired me, and the job was to be a delivery boy, a-and that's what I was, a del –

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**Q: In London?**

A: Yeah. A delivery boy for Lady **Garmin(ph) Taylor(ph)**, and I'll be a delivery boy, and he's going to teach me – first he's going to teach me how to sew, and he'll see how I do, and if I do real well – he was telling me about how much money you make as a – as a tailor of – s-and how much money you make as a cutter. He says – he says, if you really do well, he says, I'll teach you to be a cutter, and he says, a cutter makes something like 40 pounds a week, or something like that. As – as a delivery boy I make one pound. One pound a week, you know, I thought that was great, one pound a week.

Q: Was that enough for you to feed yourself for a week?

A: That's what I lived on, one pound a week.

Q: What were you eating?

A: I ate – I ate one meal a day. And sometimes, y-you know, when people I've worked with – not – not – not every day, but maybe ca – two, three times a week, because we – we have these lunchtime periods, you know, in the afternoon, th-the – 10 o'clock or so they ha – they serve tea. When I say serve tea, we ma – we made tea, a-and in f – in – in the afternoon at two o'clock, the teatime again, we – sometimes they would bring an extra sandwich, not – not – not all the time, but sometimes, and that – that was a big deal for me.



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Q: And these were the other delivery boys, or – who would bring the sandwiches?

A: No, no, no, they were wor-workers.

Q: Tailors, or –

A: Yeah, women.

Q: Women.

A: Women workers or a-adult, women workers.

Q: Were they British or foreigners?

A: No, no, British, yeah British. And you learn English listening to them, you know, many times – they liked me and they laughed about the way I spoke, and the accent I had and so forth, and – but that's what I was doing, whatever. **Maurice Skark**(ph) was the owner. And he would do the cutting, I would pick up the cloth from the wholesaler, and I would take the cloth and bring him the cloth, or – and he had the – what do you call it **Joyce**, a design? No, no, no, how to – how to cut th-th-the fabric out.

Q: A template, or –

A: Th-There's a di – a – a paper design that you lay – put down and cut accordingly. So – so – so he had the design which was drawn out on paper and he had a picture of what the dress ought to look like and so forth, and – and this was high – high expense fashions for the day. And the – and he would start from scratch

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and make the dress and then I – or the coat or many times was a – women's overcoats, or – or a skirt, or whatever. A-And then I would take the finished product and take it back to the wholesaler and the wholesaler would inspect it, and tha-that's – when it passes inspection, that's when he gets paid, you see. Now, on one pound a week, I paid 15 shillings fo-for room and board. Three shillings I had to pay for transportation, cause I lived at this Swiss cottage. And where I worked was off a street called **Poland** Street, which was near **Oxford** Circle, if you've ever been to **London**. It's a – it's a block away from **Oxford** Street, which is the main drag. A- And I worked there until the day that I actually left **London**.

Q: The war had already broken out.

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: The war had already broken out?

A: Oh yes, yes, I lived through the bombing.

Q: And you were working.

A: Yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, I – I – I was an air raid warden. I had volunteered to be in – become an air raid warden.

Q: So your English had improved by then?

A: Yes, yes, I o – well not fluent, but well enough to – to know what's going on and I could read the paper. But as an air raid warden, when the – when the air raid

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warden – warning came on, I would be on the roof. They – they would call the spotters to spot the airplanes. Yo-You know, didn't really know what were – what I was supposed to do, but you know, I – I had a helmet, and I was an air raid warden.

Q: So you would spot an airplane and you'd get everyone down in the basement?

A: Yeah, yeah, to so – go undercover.

Q: I'm going to stop you here, and we're going to sw-switch tracks.

**End of File Three**

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**Beginning File Four**

Q: How did you become a volunteer air raid warden?

A: You know, I don't remember. I volunteered. An-And anybody who wants to do anything, you know, it – it's okay. Had I been 18 years old, I would have been arrested as an enemy alien. And since I don't reme – you know, I don't remember whether you had to be 18 or 16 when they considered you an enemy alien and they would put you in some sort of a camp. At 18 you could volunteer for a pioneer – what they called Pioneer Corps, and in **England**, you know, I wasn't old enough to – to be in anything at the time. I was waiting f – you know, I-I can imagine how my – my parents were in this country at the time, and in the newsreel when they went to the – the movies on occasion, they would see th – oh, what – they have a movie – what they would ca – what they called **Movietone News**. This is way before your – your time. They would show **London** ablaze, and they would show the – the – the searching f – search lights a-and f-fire – buildings were put aflame and – and heavy bombing. An-And – and I lived through that and I – I – we had sandbags all around the building, the school; it was not a very big building, it was small. But sandbagged all around, and we would sleep in – in the cellar, the basement, or – and wa – one particular night, if you ever – I'm sure you've seen it on television maybe, when a bomb falls down, there is that searing noise, and as it comes closer to you

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it's louder and louder. And this particular time I felt, that's got my number – that's got our number on it, a-and it's gonna hit our building. And a-as it came closer a-and I – and suddenly I heard a huge explosion, and the building shook and the glass broke and I had been sleeping, you know, I – I sat up quite alarmed. And the headmaster of the school saw me, and he said to me, Mr. **Friedman**, would you like to have a cup of tea? Br-British stoic behavior. Years later, I had described **Joyce** many times, that particular event, and – and I showed her and told her how close that bomb fell. And I said, you know, it wiped out that entire building. So – so years later, in the 60s, we went back, and I – and I wanted to show her the building, it's a – and st – the place was still vacant, nothing was there. So I says, look, this is where the bomb fell. And th-the school had been converted into apartments, and knocked on the door in one of the apartments and talked to the people if they'll let me come in. And we came in, and I was telling them the different things. And I said, you know, around here, there used to be a – a dumbwaiter. You know what a dumbwaiter is?

Q: The one that goes –

A: Yeah, yeah, it goes down ba – he says, oh, he says, I was wondering what was back there. So he – he liked the fact that I could explain that to him. So, li-living through the **London** blitz, my parents, knowing that I was there, I-I can imagine

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that they were very worried. And they were anxious to – to get me out. My father sent me an affidavit, the affidavit was rejected by the American embassy. **Kennedy, Joseph Kennedy** was the ambassador at that time. It was rejected because my father's income was insufficient.

Q: Wh-Wh-What was he doing? What was his job at this time?

A: He wa – he was working in some sort of a shoe factory, and he was making – I have the – a re – a receipt home – either he was making 12 dollars a week, or 15 dollars a week, th-that was it.

Q: Was your mother working too?

A: No, my mother never worked.

Q: But they had been reunited by this time, they were both in the **United States**?

A: Yeah, they were both –

Q: Were they in **Baltimore**?

A: Yes, in **Baltimore**.

Q: With your sister.

A: Yes.

Q: And your brother.

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A: A-And my brother. And my brother was living someplace else, and he had a job m-making 10 dollars or 15 dollars a week as a tailor, that he had learned in **Austria**. So, I was supposed to be on – on a ship. I – I left in late November of 1940.

Q: But your affidavit is first rejected.

A: Yes.

Q: So then how – how do you –

A: Well – well, they – my mother went to the Jewish welfare system, **HIAS**, and the person there was a **Julia Strauss**, she was in charge of the off – o-of the Jewish Welfare System – Ser-Service, or whatever they called themselves at the time. And she had a friend who, through marriage was a-an owner or a major shareholder of **Amico Oil**. It was called a st – first it was **Standard Oil** of – of **Ohio**, and dus – she apparently talked to him and so forth, whether he would be willing to help and so – send an affidavit and described to him the circumstances – and he agreed. And he offered 150 dollars for part o-of my passage f-for the ship, because m-my folks didn't the money, and I didn't have the money. And – and in – and with the stipulation that the other half be paid – and this is also strange, often, you know, I – I thought at the time you – it was a very wise, outstanding thing for him to agree, first to give the affidavit, which guarantees that I would not be dependent upon any kind of social welfare once I arrived in this country; e-even though, you know, had

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my parents, my family is here, it makes no difference, according to the American laws at the time. So – so he agrees to give 150 dollars, with the stipulation that an equal amount be spent by somebody in **England**. He wasn't going to pay the whole thing.

Q: So, who did you find in **England**?

A: I don't know. I don't know, a-all this – I mean, I – I had no control over booking, or over – for – for much of what went on.

Q: Do you know what organization was handling your case? Was it a – a Jewish welfare organization?

A: I-It no – evidently some welfare agency – incidentally, while I was living in **England** – I left out that story – my mother writes me a letter that I should try to be placed – I mean, she sees I'm changing my addresses, ever – every two, three weeks I got a different address that she – she's seeing. Why don't you stay in one place? Every time you write you have a different address. So she writes me a letter saying that I should write to the refugee committee, asking them to be placed with a family. And when you are placed with a family, you could ask them to send papers over to me, perhaps they need a domestic. And I'll come over and I'll be a domestic. And then **Lilly** can be a babysitter. But that – that was not unusual, by the way, at the time. Maybe you've heard it from other – so – so – so –



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Q: But she's writing this still from **Vienna**?

A: Yeah, yeah. So – so – so now I get that letter, so, like an obedient son, I write to the committee, the **Bloomsbury House** or whatever it was ca – and abou – about a week later I get an answer. And – and here's the strange part of the answer; how did you get to this country, who is taking care of you, and are you Jewish? And I still have that letter, you see. And I – I got that letter, I was so astonished. I says, who is doing what for me? I'm going from one place to the other. Wh-Who is doing this? And they don't know I exist, you see, so nevertheless I'm – I'm answering the letter, you know, answered each question. And then I got another letter saying back, thank you for writing to us and giving us the information. We will do our very best to place you with a family, but we ask that you be patient, because it may take us some time. That's the last I heard, I was never placed with a family. I – I had – at the same time, I – I don't want to create the impression that I'm angry with anybody or disappointed with anybody. It was war time. The people who were working in these offices had families of their own, and they are concern, there is bombing going on. It's a – ya – you know, you don't know from one day to the next whether your home will be destroyed, you see, so i-it – it's more or less everybody's looking out f-for them – for – first of all to – for their own family, rather than look out for what happens to some kid here or there, you see. Although sa – many children were

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evacuated, you know, a – I was not, a-and m-many others were not. I-It's – that's the way it was, it – it's war.

Q: You mentioned you were being – at – at first, you were being moved around every two weeks or so. Do you have any sense of how the decisions were made? Were your – did they – did these people know each other, was it private charity? You have –

A: I had no idea, I had no idea. Just kept on being shifted. A-And it was on – only boys, and sometimes the boy would come and sometimes not. Sometimes he was going different direction. I-I don't know why. But once I was in **London**, I was in contact with some of the boys that I'd been with at – particularly in **Croydon**, I had a very good friend, **Martin Lerbl**(ph), I have much of his correspondence with me, he wanted me to go t – to **Australia** and become farmers. And – and – and I wrote my mother that we're thinking of going – of volunteering to go to **Australia** and become farmers an-and she was all for it. You know, she already had me running a big farm and – and becoming prosperous that way, and so on, so – and then I wrote my father, told him that we're thinking about going to **Australia**, although I hadn't – I didn't have the foggiest idea how I get to **Australia**. I mean, just child talk, but he would have none of it. So it – my mother yes, my father no.

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Q: Did your father say that you need to come to the **United States**, what was his response?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He wants the family together i-in the **United States**. Now, a-arriving in the **United States**, for two weeks everything is fine. But I meet people here, a-and gradually I-I'm becoming quite concerned, an-and finally I didn't – I didn't like this country.

Q: Wha-What were you seeing?

A: Stupid questions. People who – y-you speak with an accent, where you from? I don't know – which I got quite often. Where you from? **Vienna**. And then I would say oo – a-and then I – I begin to question, I says, do they know where that is? And I was astonished when I asked them, do you know where that is, and they didn't know. I says, my God, these people are re-really stupid. A-And I didn't like the weather.

Q: You were in **Baltimore**?

A: Yeah, I didn't like the weather, I didn't like the winter, I didn't like the summer. I had disagreements with my parents. Frankly, I wanted to go back to **England**. Tha – I didn't say that to them, but I felt that way, because I f –

Q: What was it about the English that made you feel that way?

A: That – that was my home already.

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Q: You had been there how long at that point, you had been there about –

A: About two years.

Q: Two years.

A: Yeah, see it – the boys, you know, w-we were that close, you know, that was my family. A-And here, you know, my mother wants me to go back to school. I says, well, why should I go back to – I-I – I had no school for three years now, none. So – so I thought, no, I don't want to go back to school, I want to get a job. And they said no, no, you got to go to school. And I was in a position where – where either way I couldn't find – I didn't know how to go about finding a job, and at the same time I didn't want to go to school. So, in desperation, I went to see Dr. **Tahlheimer**(ph), the one who had send me the affidavit to – so – so I went to see him in his office, and I told him what my problem was.

Q: Was he an American Jew, or was he a refugee?

A: No, he's a – he's an American, very, very, extremely wealthy. And I told him what my problem was an-and his answer was, you better listen to your mother. So I went to school, an-and – and that was a very – the first year, it was horrible. Ver – because I – I-I was the dummy in the class, and whenever the teacher called on me, you know, I – I – I-I didn't know what was going on. And – and I remember a class in plane geometry, you know, trapezoids and angle this and angle that, I don't know

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what she's talking about. A-And she's asking me, because th – i-it went in rotation, the questions, so how's she gonna leave me out? So when she calls on me, there's a cal – class starts laughing.

Q: Were you older than the other children?

A: Maybe about three-quarters of a year, something like that. Because when I graduated, I was 18. Many of them are 17.

Q: So you had missed out on three years of school, and you were not put back, you were put at the level where you should be, and expected to catch up.

A: Although another boy – I did – I left out the story, it's of interest to us. The first ride I ever took was in a taxicab in **London**. I didn't have enough money to go to the train station, so I took a subway to go **Oxford – Oxford** Street on the **Oxford** Circle. And because of heavy bombing, you couldn't just find a cab, but a cab came along, and I stopped it. And the cab driver said, where you going? I said, I'm going to **Liverpool** station, if you'll take me. He says, hop in. So I got in the cab, and inside the cab is another boy. And after a while we start talking to each other. He is my age. He is going to **Liverpool** train station. Here you're gonna take th – a ship – you know, the train, it goes to **Liverpool**, there he's gonna take a ship, the same ship. Going to the **States**? Yes. What city? **Baltimore**. It was – his name was **Bert Grumwalt**(ph). He had been with a private family, and he's telling me that when he

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left, the family gave him 10 pounds, going away present. I said, 10 pounds, you're kidding. 10 pounds? Unbelievable. I didn't have – even have one. I had noth – you know, wa – but anyhow we – we gu – he was placed in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I'm going into the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, that was the difference. His eng – his English was fluent, mine was not.

Q: Even though you had stayed for two years in **England**?

A: Yeah, yeah. My speech was not. So there was a girl in school that I lamented to many times, **Dorothy**, because many time I just wanted to quit. In 10<sup>th</sup> grade they teach [**indecipherable**] English. And sh – she was right, but I was upset. She said, I know e-eventually you'll know it, but right now you don't. I mean, how different it is today, where they pass you no matter what. She says, you don't know it. If you don't know it, I can't pass you. That's it. But, by the time I graduated, I graduated with honors.

Q: Now, you're saying that **Bert Grumwalt**(ph), you went to the same school?

A: No, no, different school. He went to City College. It's not – it's called City College, but it's not a college, it's a high school. He was in 12<sup>th</sup> grade; I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. That bothered me. Incidentally, he went to the European theater during the war; we lost track of each other. He fought at the Battle of the Bulge, and was taken prisoner by the Germans, was wounded, almost died. He recovered. He'd

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spent several months at **Walter Reed** Hospital in **Washington**, where he recovered.

He joined the si – h-he got a Master's degree, I don't know what in. Do you remember – did he ever mention it? I-I can't remember, but – but he – he joined the **CIA**, and they sent him back to – to **Germany**. He came back to the **States** and he went to work for **Grundell**(ph), a brokerage – **Wall Street** firm. He became the manager of the **Baltimore** office, became very, very rich. And I – I mean wealthy. Lived in a penthouse in **Baltimore**. But we were good friends, and go out together. He died, well, this February will be three years. But you know, we had many memor – shared memories, although he was with a family and I didn't know him in **England**, and – but he knew my cir – the circumstance that I lived on, and also my – my – my war experience. He was sent to **Europe**, I – I – when I joined up they asked me what branch of service do you want to be in? I – I said, you know, army. Y-Yeah, but what particular service in the army? So I – I don't know, what's my choice? So they rattled off artillery, or the paratroopers, th-the tank corps, the infantry, you know, different – you know, quartermaster corps and so forth. And then he said medical corps. So I said medical [indecipherable] I think I'll take the medical corps.

Q: What drew you to that?

A: I don't know. I thought that would – I would learn more. I feel –

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Q: How old were you?

A: 18. I says, what am I gonna learn in the artillery, how to fire shell? How – how's that gonna be of help to me? So I said, I'll take the medical corps. So when I – you'll read the story there about how I got shipped to the **Pacific**, because I had no idea how to wind up in the – in the – going to the **Pacific**. I protested when – when I was given shipping orders that I was going to be sent to the **Pacific**, I – I protested. I – I – is [indecipherable] one time they had a special program where they would send you to college. In-Incidental, when I finished high school – I keep on going back and forth – the principal called me in, and re – we had become friends, a-and he said to me, how would you like to have a scholarship? And I didn't know what that was. I – I said, what's a scholarship? So – so he's – he's explaining to me. He said, **Loyo-Loyola** College is offering you a scholarship. And he's telling me that this is a Catholic school and – and – and what it's like and so forth. I says, a Catholic school is offering me a scholarship? I says – I couldn't believe this. I says, do you – you mean it's a Catholic an-and – I'm Jewish. He says, oh la – no, do-don't worry about that, they offered. He says, the only thing is, is that you have to have an interview with the dean of admissions, but I don't anticipate any problem. So – so I went to see the dean of admission and everything is fine with him, except he wants me to promise that I will attend the school, if given a schol – made enough



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of a scholarship that I will actually accept it. And the problem was that I already had received orders to go into the army. I says, I can't promise. I don't know when I will be called. So – so I never accepted the scholarship. But th-the surprise was the orders that I received after basic training, was to go to the **Pacific**, which I didn't want, but I had no choice.

Q: You didn't want because you wanted to go back to **Europe**?

A: **Europe**, yeah, of course. I speak German. Why do you send me out to the **Pacific**? And in college they have a special training where they – i-in the army they have a special training where they – the army will pay to send you to college. So I said oh that – how wonderful. So I applied. So in order to be accepted, you – again, you have to be interviewed. The only program available was German. So the first question he is asking me, he says, I see in your resume here that you speak German, is that right? I said yes. He says, then why should we send you to college to study German? By the way, it was called **ASTP**, Army Special Training Program. I said, I want to go to college and this is the only thing you offer. So, he rejects, whi-which made sense. But then to turn around and send me to the **Pacific** made no sense. But this is the army.

Q: In the meantime, in – while this is all happening, how much are you aware of what was happening back in **Europe** and –

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A: Nothing.

Q: – especially Nazi occupied **Europe**.

A: Nothing.

Q: Nothing?

A: Nothing. We have family over there, we have no idea what's going on. We are very worried, very worried, but we – we don't know. We – we hope that somehow or other they're okay, but we don't know.

Q: Are you able to contact the uncle who made it to **Palestine**?

A: Th – no. The one whom – to **Palestine**? No. Don't hear anything about him either.

Q: Okay.

A: What I-I – as a matter of fact, I don't even know if he got to **Palestine**. I mean, at that time, all I knew is he crossed the border into **Yugoslavia**, I never heard any more.

Q: Right.

A: Just before the war ended was the first time I got a letter, where he wrote me how happy he was to find me, and described him – his situation in **Israel**. And you know, I was his favorite and this and that and – but nos – I had had the medical training in the **States** and I had been made to believe that I would wind up in some

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sort of a hospital facility in the **Pacific**. So I looked forward to that, working in the hospital, fine. And we were on the water over a month, maybe five weeks on the water. Can you imagine? And if you read the description there, it was a freighter that had been converted into a troop ship. And we were, as I say there, packed in like sardines, thousands of troops, and one on top of the other, we stacked on – on sort of a canvas bunk a-an – and – and there's non – you can't turn around, because it's so close, and you got to climb up a for – four or five high, as to whe – where you're gonna stay, a-an – a-and if you – you take a shower, but it's salt water, and there's no way that you can lather yourself in soap water, it just doesn't work. So – so it's – it's always sticky, and you ya – and you feel crummy. And th – an-and – an-an-and it's the same clothes, yo – you know, and there's no change of clothes. A-And you feel real miserable. You get – i-in the – in this article I saw it was a – a preparation for jungle warfare. But we were about five weeks on the water. Today you can fly over there in one day. But when I – we landed in **[indecipherable]** and I was there maybe a little over a week and then was back on the ship again, and where we going? Everything was always secret, nobody knew. I mean, who am I gonna tell? You see, but I was on – on the – even on the first sh – o-on the first troop ship **[break]**

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Q: They were telling you that you can't tell any – you were saying you can't tell anyone where you are, but you didn't –

A: No, they weren't telling us not to say anything, because there was nothing to say. In other words, we – we were told nothing. Where am I going? Nobody knows. So I made reference to that in – in the article that I hope you'll find of interest, and wound up in [**indecipherable**] and then I'm put onto another troopship, and again, I ha – I don't have the faintest idea. But they have a roster and one day I'm being told that there was watch duty. Watch duty you are on the deck with a rifle, and for about two hours – two hours off and – and four hours off. I mean, two hours on and four hours off. A-And I see my list as being chosen for on – for – for on duty. I says, wait a minute, I says, I'm a medic. We don't carry weapons. I says, why – why – so – so I says, wait a minute, there's a mistake here. I don't do anything with weapons. So the officer says to me, well, I don't anything about what you tell me, I have nothing here about medic here. He says, you in the infantry. I says, no. Well – well, that's your assignment. That's the first time that I heard anything about the infantry.

Q: Had you received any combat training?

A: No, we-well, yes, i-i-in basic training you receive – but – but not with weapons, if you're a medic. One time the – they took us out and we fired a machine gun and I

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fired the – a carbine and an **M-1** rifle, yeah, I fired one time. But th – but how to clean it, how to handle it [**indecipherable**] no – no extensive training. Yeah, that one time it was a wa – how to disarm somebody who comes to – at you with a – with a bayonet on the rifle. How to disarm that person. That's a-another story. But I was assigned as a medic to the infantry, and from day one I hated it. It is – first of all, the living conditions were so terrible. The food was horrible. Ev-Everything was powdered, we – we got nothing fresh. You living in the jungle, a-and you know, i-insects crawling all over you. And you know, I'm a city boy, I'm – you can't take a bath, y-yo-yo-you know, it's a – it takes weeks to get a letter. A-And we were not directly – at least I was not directly involved in – in combat, but we – we got the wounded, and – an-and my job was principally thr-three directions; overcome shock, hemorrhage and fractures. A-And you learn, it's amazing. Really, you know, I was astonished how much you can learn just by watching what somebody else does, and then sometimes having somebody who knows, come over and – and work with you, and so you learn those things. How to apply traction, and how to apply support, and sa – and put on a cast and all that. You know, you learn that, because later on, toward the end of the war, I was assigned to, you know, shipped to **Hawaii**, a-and – and there I became an instructor and the draft was still going on, and new recruits were coming in and I was lecturing in – in two subjects – three

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subjects; sanitation, first aid and venereal diseases. And I always started off my lecture in venereal diseases, telling them that many times – at that time, when you got a venereal disease, you could be court-martialed and put into prison. You may not know this, and it's totally different today, but then, you know – so – so – so gonorrhea was a major problem to – to many, and disabling, and because it's so infectious. So – so I would – I would start off my – my lecture with contrary to what you may have been told, that you cannot catch gonorrhea off a toilet seat, I want to assure you that that is incorrect. It is possible to get gonorrhea off a toilet seat, but it's a hell of a place to take your girlfriend. You see, because many times, when you asked a soldier, how did you get this? You see, oh, I don't know, maybe off a toilet seat, you know. It's really nonsense, you see it was – so but this was – got a big laugh, and – and – and I would have the attention of the audience. A-And when the war had ended, but I was still in **Hawaii**, and troops were being repatriated back to the country, I asked the commanding officer if he will authorize me to go to the university there, so he said okay. So I went to the – for a little while to the University of **Hawaii**. An-And then when I came back, I-I – you know, I thought I'd become a doctor, until one day I met a guy who had graduated from high school with me, and you know, hi **Herb**, you know, **Phil**, how are you doing? We start talking to each other, where – what are you doing now? I says, well, I'm going to

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college park, I've been accepted to be pre-med. So he says, why do you want to go to pre-med? He says, you know, when you finish it, what do you got? Nothing. Then you still gotta go to med school, right? I says yeah, of course. He says, well, why don't you go to pharmacy school? I says, why should I go to pharmacy? I want to become – he says, no, he says, you use that as your pre-med. And this way you at least have a degree as a pharmacist and you – and you can work during the summer and then pay for medical school – because I had no money. So I thought it was a good idea. The – the problem was that it was mid-August and school starts in September. So – so, how do I get in? Because at that time so many thousands of soldiers came out, an-and they all wanted to go into – applied to **Hopkins. Hopkins** turned me down and said, reapply next year. Well, you're not going to sit around for a whole year. Now I'm in my 20s, 21 or 22 years old. So I – you know, I've – I thought about it, I says, you know, it's not a bad idea, but would I get in? So – so I-I went there, and I asked to meet th-the dean of admission, was a elderly woman. And she gave me the same answer, she says, we – we can admit you next year, but our classes are closed. I don't think it's gonna be possible. She says, well, if somebody last minute doesn't want to come in, you know, maybe. I'll give you an application, she says, but I wouldn't bet on it. I-I-I don't think that it's gonna be possible. So I said to her – her name was **Kohl(ph)**. I-I-I said, Dean **Kohl(ph)**, if you admit me,

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I'll come back and kiss you. The whole of – the whole office there overheard this conversation, they all burst out laughing. But I got in.

Q: And did you come back?

A: I – I came back, but I didn't kiss her. So – so I – I guess that's the story.

Q: I have just one last question. How did you end up learning about what happened back in **Europe**?

A: We thr – through the Red Cross, got the notification that my uncle, you know, my mother's brother had been sent to **Auschwitz**. And – and then gradually we heard that his son, my cousin, he was 18 years old, he was killed in **Auschwitz**. And the most difficult thing for my mother was to learn that the husbands of her sisters and the children had survived, but the sisters had not. A-And mentally, she was finished after this. I-It was – life at home was o – was, from then on was very, very difficult. Later on when the – I – I went back into the army, by the way, during the Korean War, an-and became a commissioned officer. But – and we lived in **Virginia** for 40 years, but every time I went home, all I had to do was open the door an-and – and it was – she'd talk about the brother and the sister, and the brother and the sister and why and this and that. An-And a certain regret. It's just difficult. She should have left me in **England** and should have worked on getting out the brother. I was safe. And maybe she could have helped the brother at that time. And I – I



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knew she was right. So – so you carry that burden, you know, am I responsible, you know, and – you know, I just – could I have done something, you know, who – who – about my uncle, who should I have talked to? I mean, I didn't know anybody, I – you know, where, what? I mean, I don't even know where – where is he? What's the address, you know? And – and even if I have the address, I mean, who – who – who is gonna do what? I don't know what's happening to me from day to – one to the next day, so – so how am I – well, but – but you have that complex of guilt, you know, that he is my friend, I didn't do anything for him. A-A-And then you hear about the other kids, a million and a half, you know, and I survived and they didn't. And why did I survive? A-And you know, for many years, while I was busy working in the off – in the – in the pharmacy, and my wife can tell you, I was okay. It was when I stopped working that all this came back to me, a-and it to – to this day, you know, I'm very much troubled. And – and for a while, I had to get some help. Well, that, I guess is enough.

Q: Thank you.

A: A-As an interviewer, or interviewee, is it?

Q: You're the interviewee, yes.

A: I'm the interviewee. I don't want you to get carried away with my story, or – or – or for me to unload my troubles onto you.

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Q: No, I'm – I'm honored that you chose to speak to us today.

A: I – I thought I had a mental problem for many years. A guilt complex. And then I saw a film, "**Into the Arms of Strangers**." If you have seen the film –

Q: I've seen it.

A: The documents that you see in that film, are mine. If you look at the line of credits, you will see my name. By the way, you can even get a much clearer picture, since you are at the Holocaust Museum, go into the library, ask for the book, then look up my name. An – because – an-and by the way, the – **Deborah Oppenheimer**, the producer, gave me a copy of the book, an-and thanked me for the contribution I made to it. I don't mean financially. I would love to – and they gave us a copy, but it's a – o-of the film, but it's a **VCR**, a-and – and – and if they have it now on the **CD** –

Q: Yes. I watched it on **DVD**.

A: I would love to get ahold of it.

Q: Sure. I can – I can look into that for you.

A: And the Austrian attaché asked me how she – how she could get ahold of the film. But in the film, if you go back to it, you'll see other people talking about survivor guilt.

Q: Yes.

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A: You see. So when I saw that film, in a way, I felt better. Because for a while I thought it was me going crazy, you see, but then I saw that, you know, it was quite normal, because others had felt the same way. So – so yo-you spend a couple of hours together, a-and I hope I didn't overwhelm y-you with my story.

Q: Not at all, I thought it was fascinating.

A: And if you have any additional questions, y-you have my phone number.

Q: Absolutely.

A: And if you want to visit us, fine.

Q: Thank you.

A: A-And maybe – maybe we'll talk about other things, more pleasant –

Q: Thank you.

A: – that you'll find of interest.

Q: Thank you very much.

**End of File Four**

**Conclusion of Interview**