

You will try not to move too much.

I will try not to move too much.

All right.

All right.

We are rolling.

Just as long as you scream, it's all right.

OK. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. George Landau, former ambassador of the United States to several countries, conducted on March 10th, 2014 at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum facilities here in Washington, DC. Thank you very, very much, Ambassador, for agreeing to meet and speak with us today.

You're very welcome.

OK. I'm going to start this interview from the very beginning because we are very interested to learn about your early experiences, and the forces and people who shaped you. So can you tell me, when were you born, where were you born, and what name were you born with? Sometimes it changes over the years.

I was born on March 4, 1920 in Vienna, Austria.

Were you the only child?

The only child.

Can you tell me your parents' names?

Yes. My father's name was Dr. Jacob Landau. He was a lawyer, Rechtsanwalt.

Ein Rechtsanwalt.

And my mother was Jeanette Landau, nee Klausner.

Uh-huh. Were they also native Viennese?

No, they were not. They came from the Bukowina. They came from Czernowitz.

Oh.

And they left, my father did his-- it was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. And my father did his university studies there, and then came to Vienna to start practicing law. And my mother and her family also came to Vienna during the war.

World War I?

World War I, yes. It was not connected with the war, but it was the time frame. And when I was born, my father was established as a lawyer and had his own office.

Your mother came also from Bukowina? Where did your mother's family come from, if they weren't from Vienna?

Bukowina.

Also from Bukowina.

Yes.

Also. I see. And did they come from large families?

My mother had three siblings. My father had five siblings.

Did all of them stay in Bukowina except for your parents?

On my father's side, yes. On my mother's side, they were all in Vienna.

I see. That's sort of as the groundwork to ask, did you have other extended family members around you as you were growing up?

No.

No. Were you close, then, to your mother's side of the family? Did you see them often when they were here in Vienna?

Yes, I saw them quite often.

Did you ever travel back with your parents to where they were born to meet other family members?

Yes. Not with my parents, but I was invited when I was 14 and then 16 to stay for the summer vacation. I stayed with one of my uncles, who was a doctor. And I stayed with him, and then another uncle who had a store in Dona Watra, which was a resort town. And so I spent the summer months, and I got to know them all very well.

Tell me-- and forgive my ignorance-- which country ruled that area when you went there? It wasn't Austria.

No, it was Austrian-Hungarian Empire when my parents left. It became, after 1918 peace treaty, it became Romania. And it was Romania until the end of World War II, when the Russians occupied it. And in fact, I'll tell you, I came back to Romania in 1946 while I was in the army. I just noticed that headquarters had planes to the missions via the US military mission in Bucharest, in Budapest, and in Sofia. So I had some time to kill, and so I asked whether I could go to Bucharest. And so I did. It was in January '46. And I saw quite a few of my family members there. That was, of course, the reason I went there.

So they survived.

Oh yeah, everybody survived. In Romania, it was not particularly complicated. They had labor camps, I think, but I'm not aware that-- maybe somebody went, but as far as I know, they were all, when I was there in '46, all doing well and in good health. And then, of course, all of them left eventually and went to Israel.

I see. I see. So when you went back in your early years-- we'll go back to that-- you mentioned that an uncle was a doctor--

Yes.

--and another one owned a store?

Right.

So were they sort of like an educated middle class in the-- it was Czernowitz, the town that they lived in?

I'm sorry?

The town. What was the name of the town they lived in?

Well, my uncle, the doctor, was a county doctor for the whole region from the border, the Romanian-- it was, of course, Romania-- from the Polish-Romanian border up to Czernowitz, which was called Cernuti at the time. And so he was a regional doctor, and he lived in [PLACE NAME], which was the border town between Poland and Romania. But his responsibility went all the way to Cernauti.

And my other uncle lived in Dona Watra, Vatra Dornei in Romanian, which is a resort town, a very lovely town. And I spent two weeks with each one, I think, in '34, and then again in '36.

Was the standard of living in these places the same as in Vienna?

Well, they lived very well. I mean, he was the medical county doctor, and so standard of living, it's hard to say. I mean, I was very surprised, when I went to my uncle, he took me along-- I mean, I had nothing to do, so he took me along on his trips when he saw his patients. And he used a buggy. You know, cart and the horse. And I enjoyed that very much. That's not something you would see in Vienna.

That's true. What language did you speak with him?

German.

German? With your uncles in Romania and at home, then, I take it, as well? That was your first language?

It was.

OK. Did you learn any Romanian?

No. I mean, I was there a month, twice.

Were there any other languages that you spoke with your parents?

With my parents? No. I had a governess who taught me, supposedly, French and English.

Why do you say supposedly?

Well, she was an Austrian, and had been to France and had been to England, but it was fairly rudimentary.

OK, I'll go back now-- oh, one other question. Since your father and your uncle already were professional people, what about their father, your grandfather, and before? Were they also educated people? Was this a family that educated their children?

Well, of the six children, including my father, when he was a lawyer, the second one was a doctor, the third one was a banker. And then they had no children for 20 years, and then they had three more, two girls and a son who had the store. But they all went to school, they all went to a gymnasium and a university. But the girls didn't do anything in particular, other than get married.

And your grandfather himself, how did he support his family? My grandfather, whom I just saw one time, he had a-- I don't know how you call that-- he had a plant where wood was being processed.

Ah. Wood processing plant.

Yeah, I would say that. You know, the--

Timber.

And-- yes. And he had a rather large plant. But by the time I met him, he was already retired. He had given it up or sold it, and lived with my grandmother in Cernuti, in Czernowitz.

Did the whole family consider itself German? Is that a funny question?

Well, the Austrian-- they were still-- Austrian and Hungarian monarchy, they spoke German amongst each other. After the first war, my uncle, for instance, the doctor, had to learn Romanian because he was part of the Romanian government, in a way. And so the kids, everybody spoke German at home.

I see. I see. Let's go back now to Vienna and a little bit about your mother's family.

Yeah.

They also came from the same place, yes?

Yes.

Yes. When you were there visiting your father's side, were any of her relatives still there?

No, because--

At all? Oh.

--my mother had two brothers and one sister, and they were all in Vienna and doing very well.

And did they have children?

Oh, yes.

Did you-- were you close?

That's hard to say because they were all much older. And for instance, I had one cousin who was 18 and graduated from the gymnasium when I entered the gymnasium. So I saw them occasionally, but they didn't bother with me. I was too little.

I see. I see. There were age differences.

There were age differences, yes. But I had a cousin who was three years older than I was, and I saw a great deal afterwards in New York during the war. But we saw each other, yes. We were friendly, but not all that close.

Did your mother have a profession in Vienna, or was she-- I mean, I hate to say only a housewife, because a housewife has a lot of work.

Well, she was Frau doctor. Since she was Herr doctor, she was Frau doctor.

Frau doctor.

And she played a lot of bridge, like every day. But she took care of the house and helped my father sometimes, if he needed any help. But she was a very competent lady.

Did you have household help?

Yes.

A lot? A housekeeper?

No, we had a maid, you know, cook and maid in one thing, more or less.

And you had a nanny.

I had a-- no, not a nanny. I had a governess later, when I was about nine, 10, to just teach me languages. And she was not really a nanny.

I see.

She was a Fra¹/₄lein, a governess.

And describe to me-- well, do you have any earliest memories as a child?

Yes, of course.

Well, could you share some of them?

Sure. My earliest memories are mainly from a summer vacation. We went to the Salzkammergut in Austria every year, and it was very nice. And it was very nice until I was about nine years old. Then, the crash came. And that affected my father's practice, lawyer-- he lost-- some of his clients went bankrupt and all that. And from then on, until 1930, let's say, they were very well off. After that, it started to decline, and was not good by the time I left in '38. He had a hard time making ends meet.

Did he specialize in any particular area of law?

Commercial law.

Commercial law.

Can you describe also for me the place you lived, your home? Was it in the middle of the city? Was it in the outskirts? Was it a villa or an apartment?

No, it was an apartment. And this was one of the things that always bothered me because my uncle, my mother's oldest brother, was quite well to do, and he owned, among other things, he owned some houses. And he owned a very nice house, so he suggested that we live there. By that time, my grandfather, my mother's father, lived with us because his wife, my grandmother died when I was two or three years. I don't remember at all.

So he lived with us. So my uncle, it was his father. So he took special interest, and he had a very nice apartment in Vienna. And so we took it. It bothered me because it was in the 2nd district, and the 2nd district also partly very nice, but partly quite a large Jewish population. And people didn't live there, you know, well-to-do people didn't live-- that many didn't live there. They lived in the 1st or 3rd district, where all my other relatives lived.

So are you saying it wasn't as prestigious as the other places?

It was not as prestigious. It was a really lovely apartment, but it was not as prestigious.

And far away from where your friends were.

No, not really. It was all in town, I mean.

And was it a large apartment?

It was quite large, yes. I mean, everyone had a room, five or six rooms, and the maid's room.

And no horse and buggies in the streets.

Oh, no, I mean, I grew up-- I mean, there was still [NON-ENGLISH] and things around, but people didn't use them. They used the street car, and then eventually the subway, and of course cars. But we did not have a car.

You did not.

No.

Did your father practice nearby?

No, he practiced in the 9th district, had his office. I mean, the legal profession in Austria is quite different from the legal profession in the United States, where you have large firms which you join. There, most of them are solo practitioners. And he was a solo practitioner. And he had his office in the 9th district, which was a very nice neighborhood, until, I would say, 1934.

By that time, the practice had dwindled. So he then moved his office to the house. And what we did is, within the building, we changed apartments, and had a larger apartment so that he would have an office and then a reception room.

So can I surmise that mostly you lived in a Jewish neighborhood when you were in this 9th district?

In the second district.

Excuse me, yes.

Yes, pretty much.

Did you feel assimilated? I mean, it's a question that's leading. I'm trying to get a sense of how did you see yourselves, you as a young person and your parents, as to identity?

To identity, they were Austrians. They were quite secular. I went to the synagogue twice a year, on New Year's and on Rosh Hashanah-- no, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Yeah.

So I went every morning, but I then went, of course, to school, to gymnasium in the 1st district, which was a very prestigious gymnasium, probably the best in town at the time there, Akademisches Gymnasium.

Akademisches-- mm-hmm.

And that was it. But, I mean, we had the Jewish religion, and I took-- you know, in school we had religion, but that was it.

So the various religious classes were held in public schools?

Well, yes. Religion was in the curriculum.

So it could be the Catholics went to Catholic lessons--

Right, right, right.

--and if they were Protestants, they would go to Protestant lessons.

No, the Protestants went to the park because there weren't any.

There weren't any.

We had one.

Yeah?

Yeah, so was Jewish, but had been baptized and eventually became a Protestant. And he had a wonderful time.

Everybody else was in class.

Exactly.

So if I could-- I'm putting it in my words, but I would say you'd be Austrian of the Jewish confession.

The what? I'm sorry.

Austrian of the Jewish religion.

Austrian, I mean--

Yeah. OK.

--we were quite aware that we were Jewish, but it was not practiced.

Yeah. Was the whole family pretty secular?

The whole family. Not my grandfather, my mother's father. He went to synagogue every Friday, and he was religious. He prayed in the morning. But my parents did not. And all my uncles and my cousins were totally secular.

Did your grandfather speak Yiddish?

I'm sorry?

Your grandfather, did he also speak Yiddish?

Not to me. I don't know whether he did. I don't think so.

OK.

He may have, but I can't tell you. He didn't practice, if he did.

Of your parents-- how old were you, by the way, when your grandfather came to live with you?

Before I was-- well, no, he must have come to live with us in 1923 or 1924. I mean--

Oh, so you're little.

--when I grew up, he was already living with us.

OK, so he grew up-- that is, you grew up with him as part of the household.

Very much so, and I was very close to him.

That was my next question.

Yes.

What kind of a person was he? And what was his name, first of all?

Jacob Klausner. And I still think of him with great affection. And in fact, in 2008, when my sons and I went to Vienna, we went to the cemetery and found his grave, you know, and my grandmother's. They're buried together. And it was quite neglected by then, so I had it fixed up and repaired. And my son, in about 10 years, will then do it again to keep it going.

Did he pass away before World War II happened, your grandfather?

Yes. He passed away after I left Austria.

I see.

So I think I left Austria in July, and he passed away in December of '38, or early '39.

I see.

He was 79 by the time he died.

Of your grandfather, your mother, and your father, who were you closest to?

My mother, I would think, because my father was in the office and my mother kind of stayed around. I mean, I saw her-- took me to school or picked me up and so on.

What kind of person was she?

She was very smart and very well read, and a great bridge player.

Did she teach you how to play bridge?

She didn't teach me, but I played bridge at the time. I mean, I learned it and I played a great deal in the army, and never since.

And she was smart, and she-- what other kinds of characteristics did she have?

Well, she was an intellectual. I mean, she liked music, and so did my father. And she was very interested that I did well in school. And she was a very typical Viennese, upper middle class person, and had friends and got along very well with everyone.

Was she a happy person?

Yes. She was an optimistic person, always.

And your grandfather-- that is, her father-- did you see that as a trait that she got from him? Did he have the same kind of personality, the same outlook?

Hard to say. I can't really say because he was just-- at that time, somebody was 60 or 70, he was an old man. And he took me to the park, and he was very nice and bought me chocolates, but we had no-- I mean, at that time, I was a child, so I had no great intellectual interest. But I have no idea.

But he was well-- they were all well read. I mean, we had obvious two newspapers and discuss the situation. And one of my first memories, actually, is when I was seven years old, I read about Lindbergh crossing the ocean and Dempsey beating Tommy or other way around, I don't remember, but I still remember that very well.

From the newspapers. What were the major newspapers that you had at the house? What were they called?

Well, the Neue Freie Presse--

Neue Freie Presse.

--was the Viennese which everybody read. I mean, as you know, the intellectual in Vienna, the intellectuals were mainly secular Jews. So it was an easy atmosphere to move around.

Did you have a lot of parties or dinner guests and a social life? Your parents.

Not very much, no, because they had maybe until '30, '31. Afterwards, when the depression struck, they had much less. But I had quite an active social life.

Who were your friends?

Well, friends from school. And then the main-- I mean, the main interest at that time was in-- I'm talking about when I was 13, 14, was to go to the skating rink, the Eislauf-Verein, which where all the kids meet the girls. And so we had a lot of parties between our colleagues and then girls from parallel schools. And I got around quite a lot, and had a lot of friends.

Was it mixed as far as backgrounds were concerned, Catholics as well as Jews, or was it--

Very few Catholics. Very few. There were one or two. There were quite a few baptized, but basically it was this large secular Viennese group.

And it was comfortable.

It was very comfortable, yeah. We had the Eislauf-Verin and the dancing school. I mean, it was obviously all the same people, but it was very nice.

So was there any contact with Christian Austrians in any way?

Yes, we had, because my father had some clients, and they invited us sometimes and we saw them. And of course, we always had a Christian maid, so she took me to church sometimes, and she had to take me out for walk, so.

Do you remember any of the places that you went with her?

With?

With her, with the maid.

Mainly to Prater, the big park.

Yeah. And you've emphasized that, in '29, when the crash came, life changed.

Yes.

Fairly--

Gradually.

Yeah, gradually. In your milieu, in your growing up-- and you said you had newspapers in the house and so on-- what was the political world like? Was it discussed? Was it part of conversation at dinner time what was going on outside of one's personal circle?

Oh, yes.

What were the topics of discussion?

Well, the type of discussion were Austrian politicians. And then I remember, of course, in 1934 when the prime minister of Austria was Dollfuss. He was assassinated by the Nazis. So you could see the Nazi threat coming closer and closer.

And so in Austria, this class of people, so to speak, had little choice, because there were basically two parties in Austria, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats. And so the secular Jews were all Social Democrats, but they were not to the left. They were very centrist. They were always looking for a centrist party because they didn't like the Social Democrats because they were too far involved in--

Socialism.

--in socialism. And they didn't like the Christian Democrats, particularly, because they were the Christian Democrats. So they were looking for middle party, and they had candidates sometimes, but of course, a third-party candidate always fails. And I still remember, actually, when I was about 15 or 16, most of my friends became monarchists because we thought, you know, Kaiser Otto would be good, you know, and bring him back, because there was no political life either way for us. We didn't like either of the parties. So we talked about the monarchy, but it was a foible, of course.

At home, did your parents interest themselves in the politics of the country?

No, not really, other than they voted. And I still remember on the 1st of March-- sorry, the 1st of May, the 1st of May in Europe has a different connotation. It's kind of Labor Day and the labor demonstration. And so everybody wore a red carnation and walked around to the ring. And I went to my father. And I lost him, or he lost me. And so I went to a policeman and said I'm lost. And he found my father, eventually.

But your father came out to march on Labor Day then, as to acknowledge Labor Day.

Yes, because it was a holiday, and so everybody wanted to see what's going on.

Ah.

He was not a partisan of any kind. He was not political at all, all his life.

Did the election-- when did you think Hitler first came into your, I'd say, horizon?

Well, I remember it very well. It was an afternoon, and we had to go back to school that afternoon. It was in '32. And we saw that Hitler had been elected, and everybody expected the worst. And I talked to my schoolmates and there was a big to do. And we watched Hitler very closely. And then we listened to his speeches on the radio.

And after soccer, which was my main preoccupation-- I loved-- watched all the soccer game-- not watched, but listened to all the soccer games-- we watched political news, and we were very much aware because, you know, as Hitler in Germany, then slowly the Nazis in Austria started up, and they put bombs in various places. And they were very much in the newspapers. Then, of course, the Dollfuss assassination.

Can you tell us a little bit about that, about the circumstances? Who he was, and why this thing happened?

I'm sorry? Can

You tell us a little bit about who he was and why he was targeted?

Well, Dollfuss was the prime minister, and he tried to differentiate himself from Hitler. He was of the right, but he was not a Nazi, of course, and the Nazis wanted to get rid of him and bring their own people in. And so they came to his office in the government seat where he was, and they assassinated him.

And then Schuschnigg came afterwards, and Starhemberg was his vice president, and they had a very fascist-type regime because, mistakenly, the Austrian government always thought that the Italians were their friends and the Italians would help them against the Germans. So Gian Ciano, foreign minister, used to come to Vienna quite often, and we had alliance with Italy. But of course, once Mussolini and Hitler bombed it, we were thrown away.

And so the discussions that happened were amongst your contemporaries and yourself, rather than between the adults that you knew and yourself. Is that correct?

Yes, because we all very much interested, most of my friends, as we went on during the Depression, were less affected than we were. So they were quite well to do, and they used to go abroad to England and to Italy and so on. And they all saw what was coming, but nobody was really prepared, with the exception we had one or two classmates, one was a very good friend of mine, who really identified with their religion to the extent-- not that they were particularly pious, but they were looking towards Palestine, and one, of course, was much involved, and he went to Palestine when Hitler came.

So but I mean, for all the rest, Palestine was of no particular interest and it was a difficult time. Because we saw it coming, but we were quite helpless. But they always thought that the European nations, Great Britain and France and, in particular, Italy, would make sure that nothing happens to Austria.

And there was-- yeah, it didn't turn out that way.

It certainly didn't.

Yeah. Did teachers in school--

I'm sorry?

Did your teachers in school ever talk about these political things that were in the air?

No, they did not. They were very careful. But I must say, the day Hitler took over, marched into Austria, quite a few of them showed up with Nazi uniforms or Nazi pins and so on. But I must say it was not-- we had no problems, really.

I mean, we had, of course, quite a few Catholic classmates of mine, but they were not overly political, at least that we knew. One of them actually then, after Hitler took over, also came with the brown shirt and all that. But we had no racial tension of any sort.

Mhm. Did you, in living in this milieu that was large and secular and Viennese and Jewish, did you ever have direct exposure to anti-Semitism as a child?

You read about it in the paper, but I must say no, I did not, until after the Anschluss.

OK. And were there-- when you say everybody could tell what was coming but nobody was prepared, that sounds like a contradiction in terms.

Well, because they didn't because they always thought that there would be some-- that Hitler would not occupy something, Austria or anything like that. I mean, Austria was the first big one. I mean, the [INAUDIBLE] was not a big deal, really, because it was German before, but Austria was a sovereign nation. But it became quite clear that the pressure on Schuschnigg was very large, and then eventually, of course, he succumbed.

And you were how old when the Anschluss happened?

I was 18. I was in my last year in gymnasium and I was about to graduate. I mean, it happened in March, and I graduated in June. And you know, we had the very difficult tests the Matura, in order to graduate. And I was very fortunate because, as it happened, as I mentioned to you, I was in the Akademisches Gymnasium.

That's right.

And when I came to the seventh grade, which was the eighth grade-- you know, the last one, because you had the four years equivalent to 12th grade, when I came to the seventh grade, we had trigonometry. And that's not really my case. And I had a very hard time. And of course, I came home and said the teacher, of course, is very anti-Semitic. But the point is whether it was anti-Semitic or not made no difference because I was bad. Everybody would have flunked me. And I was in danger of flunking trigonometry, [NON-ENGLISH] as it's called in German.

So I changed schools and went to another school in the 8th district. It was a very fine school in the Albertgasse. And there, they didn't have Geometrie but they had English, because Latin we always had from a certain class on, but they had English, which we did not have in the Akademisches Gymnasium, which was fine because it helped me pick up what my governess have taught me, and came in handy afterwards.

So the people in the Akademisches Gymnasium were told one day to get out. And they went to some school in the 2nd district, where they graduated. But the school I was, in the [GERMAN], we had two parallel classes. So they just switched, put all the Aryans in one class, put all the non-Aryans, which was a wider range than the Jews, all the non-Aryans in another class, and we could graduate. It was fine. And I graduated, and I got my--

So you made it under the wire. As far as graduation, you made it under the wire.

Exactly. We were the last ones to graduate. That was in June 1938, and I left in July.

Ah. Very fast.

Yes, I mean, the idea was most of my well-to-do friends got out even faster than I.

Well, then, let's go back, then, some months. Do you remember where you were when the Anschluss actually happened?

Yes. We were all at home listening to the radio, and it was very dramatic, melodramatic. Schuschnigg, two days before-- I mean, this is all history-- Schuschnigg, the day before, was called to Germany and came to Hitler. And Hitler threatened him, and so he went back. And then the German mobilized and made us start marching. And he came on the radio and said, well, this is the end, and Austria is dead. And they played the national anthem, and that was it.

It was a difficult time. And then everybody saw it. We talked on the phone to my colleagues and my friends, and we all got together. And everybody had plans to go abroad, and where do you go. And they rushed to the various embassies to stand in line. But I wanted to go to the United States, but I had no friends, no relatives here so it was not possible because you needed an affidavit to come here, and I didn't have an affidavit.

Well, I want to go back a little bit. When you're listening over the radio when you're all at home, do you remember how your mother reacted, your father, your grandfather? What they said, what they did?

Well, it was going to be very difficult, and we discussed what to do. I mean, I think their main concern was about me because they kind of figured what happens, happens to them, but they wanted to get me out.

So there was no talk of them leaving?

Not then. You know, it all had a happy ending, and they all left and it was fine, but no, at that time, the main concern was about me. And--

Before we get into that, you see, I want to get a sense of--

A little louder.

I say, before we get into what was involved with getting you out of the country, I'd like to get more of a sense of how life changed for you, specifically, and your family, when the Anschluss happened. What happened when you went out in the streets? Did they look different? When was the first time you saw brown shirts, I guess?

Yes, I mean, it was worrisome because I went to school, we continued-- I mean, life was, in a way, it went on normally. And my father, it was very funny, actually, my father did benefit from the Anschluss indirectly because he had friends, some of the judges and the clerks at the courts, I mean, where he worked. And one of them was-- a retired judge, and he was the one who had to stamp the passports of everyone leaving the country saying that there's no negative information that would keep him from leaving. In other words, he paid all his taxes and whatever.

Right. No police record.

Yeah, and he knew him very well. My father knew him very well. And that man said to him, look, if you have some people who are leaving, and you know the long lines, and it takes days, but if you bring me their passports, I'll do it right away. For a price, of course.

Yeah.

So that was a gold mine.

Of course.

Because my father-- everybody wanted to do this. So my father actually helped him, helped the people get out. And the man got paid, and he gave him, he gave my father some part of it or whatever. I don't know what the details were.

A commission.

A commission, yeah. And it was very-- it was a good setup, and helped a lot of people. And I remember when I left, for instance, I just walked in and didn't have to wait or anything, got it done.

What was the name of this judge?

I have no idea.

You don't remember?

No.

OK.

I don't remember that. But I mean, the talk was, right away, you know, everybody-- we had a double life, so to speak, because we had to prepare for the Matura and work hard in school, and I must say, none of the teachers in any way showed any animosity, which was very funny. They were very nice. And not so in the Akademisches Gymnasium, which was fortunately which I had left. But where I was, they hadn't changed. They were neither no more friendly, no more unfriendly.

They were the same.

They were the same, and we graduated, and that was it. But everybody was looking to go to England, United States, or wherever.

The teacher that you mentioned before who taught you trigonometry at Akademisches Gymnasium. He was anti-Semitic. Is that what you're saying?

Well, I don't know. He probably was, yes, but I mean, I remember, for instance, the person that had physical education became the director, and the director, who was Jewish, was gone. And I must say, much to my regret, when I came back to Austria in 1945 in the army, he was back. The old director was back, the Jewish director.

And I didn't go and see him. I went by the school and I said, you know, I really should go up there, but it would have looked presumptuous. Here I go in in the officer's uniform, and I didn't want to make any waves. So I didn't go, but I'm sorry I didn't.

Because you would have been able to catch up with them.

Exactly. And my history professor also had come back, and he was also Jewish. And--

Well, this is--

--a missed opportunity.

Yeah, well, I guess because you mentioned earlier that this was the best school in the city, this Akademisches Gymnasium. Then it was special, in a certain way, and the dynamics that were going around in the school, if you had Jewish teachers who were dismissed and a Jewish director who was dismissed, and then they were replaced, was there more focus? Was it much-- because it had the prestige, was it more dangerous in an inadvertent kind of way, or more unlikely for the Jewish students to be able to graduate?

Well, they didn't. They were kicked out, and they were moved-- I mean, it was almost-- they were kicked out methodically.

I see.

They were just transferred to a school in the 2nd district.

That's what you meant when you were talking about that.

Yes, and they graduated.

And they were kicked out because of the prestige of this place and they shouldn't be?

No, most schools got rid of the non-Aryans and sent them to other schools to graduate, in the 2nd district or wherever.

OK. I don't understand the logic of it.

Well, it was peculiar. In some schools, like in mine, we could-- it was fine. It was done. And in most schools, they were kicked out. And I think it had to do whoever became in charge, whoever became director. And I think in the school I was, the director in charge, he was a Christian Democrat, but somehow he was acceptable, I guess.

And you mentioned that it was distinguished between Aryans and non-Aryans.

Yes.

And that there were more than just Jews who belonged to that other group. Who, for example, would have been part of the non-Aryan group?

Well, Catholics who were Jewish.

I see, who had been baptized.

You know, a Protestant-- I mean, everybody who was a non-Aryan.

Got it. Got it. It was racial, rather than religious.

Oh, yes, absolutely, because in Austria particularly, there were an awful lot of non-Aryans.

Did the streets change? Did life in the streets change?

Well, yes. And there, I must say my only experience with all this was that, one day, I came back from school, and I was walking, and then all of a sudden, there were a bunch of young men in uniform, brown shirts or whatever, and there was a commotion. And I walked by, I didn't look, you know, I tried to stay away from it, but one guy saw me and said, look, here's another one.

And they got me, and they said, look, on the street, the Schuschnigg government, the previous government, had on the street put markers with their emblem, the Austrian emblem and all that. And what they did, they found Jews and people, and they had to rub it clean. So I got caught, and I rubbed it clean. And it was an experience that left a lot in me. I mean, it really disturbed me, and I must say, I thought about it for a long time.

What-- can you share some of those things that you were thinking about?

Well, I was thinking about, first of all, about the unfairness of this all. But then I was thinking about also why does one get punished for religious reasons if one doesn't really believe in religious reason. And therefore, I had no problem later on when I converted, and which was not on account of this, but I mean, it didn't bother me one way or another.

You've converted from Judaism?

Oh, yes. Yeah, I did. It was much later. It was in Colombia, when I went to South America.

We'll come to that later.

Yeah.

OK.

So in some ways, it was the indiscriminate kind of it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what your own personal views are or how you feel about your religion, you're still branded it. Is that what it was?

Well, I mean, it was, I mean, how did they know? I mean, I was not particularly Jewish-looking, but they'd figure out that it was a Jew, and bingo. And of course, you didn't say anything. You just start cleaning it up.

How long did it take you?

Huh?

How long did it take you?

20 minutes or half an hour. And I was not the only one. I mean, there was a group of people. And I thought it was, you know--

And they stood around while you were doing it?

Oh, yes, stood around and laughed.

Were they the same age as you? Older?

They were older, same age or older. I mean, they were all young, but they were all in uniform.

Young men.

Yes.

No girls.

No. To the best of my memory.

Yeah. Well, I mean, the humiliation.

Yes, it was very humiliating. And I said, you know, actually, while I was doing it, I said never again. Not going to get involved in this stuff anymore. And of course, it was still the problem that, at that time, I didn't know exactly how I would get out, and what to do.

So was it the nail in the coffin that said, yes, I'm--

No, it was not the nail in the coffin. It was already absolutely that I was going. There was no question. It was just a further confirmation.

Got it.

I mean, everybody was, right from March 11th, was only thinking in how to get out and where to go. That was it.

Did you tell your parents about the incident?

Yes. Yes, they noticed because I didn't come home for lunch. I came at three o'clock, and I was pretty dirty. So.

They must have been worried.

They were worried, yes. But my mom was always worried at the time. I remember when my father went out in the morning, you know, to-- whatever he had to do, and he didn't come home by 1:30, one worried immediately. And you stood at the window looking for him. And then he finally showed up. But I must say, nothing happened to my parents, at least that I am aware of while I was there. They still stayed another year after I left before they left.

Were there people who disappeared out in those first months that you knew personally?

Oh, yes. I mean, quite a few people were immediately arrested and sent to Dachau, mainly. And most of them, I must say, were released eventually. It was just indiscriminate. And they were mainly rich people and I think they made arrangements to give money away or something, and then they left.

I see.

So yeah, parents of my friends, some of them, yes, absolutely.

Was this an attempt of being able to take over assets?

Yes, I mean, it was very interesting, actually, because anti-Semitism in Austria was stronger than in Germany. The Austrians had always been anti-Semitic. Lueger was the mayor at the turn of the century, and he was known to be anti-Semitic in the city. But still, had some friends, so he made the famous statement, I determine who is a Jew. And there was a strong anti-Semitic feeling because the Jews, particularly in Vienna, which, don't forget, became all of a sudden a big place in a small country, and the Jews were, you know, well-to-do and--

Prominent.

Very prominent, yes, and particularly in the artistic field and all that. And they all left. And most of them went to Hollywood.

When you say that Austria was more anti-Semitic than Germany, is this a-- since you experienced this anti-Semitism at this age, and not earlier, how do you come to that conclusion? How do you come to that point of view?

Well, because in history, I mean, it's basically-- it's a Catholic country, and Germany is not. And the Church, of course, in the 17th, 18th, and 19th century keep pushing anti-Semitic ideas. They don't do anymore, they haven't done probably for a while, but the people just were set against. And I mean, Hitler's experiences, I mean, he became anti-Semitic when he was in Vienna because he wanted to sell his paintings and the Jews didn't buy it, and that made him mad.

So it's definitely-- it was a difficult thing. And the Austrians showed their anti-Semitism because they were much more unpleasant than the Germans, in the beginning, particularly. And the people really took over apartments and houses and, you know, unauthorized. Not really-- just on their own, it showed.

Yeah. Taking advantage.

Yes. Oh, very much so.

By the time you left, did you feel a heartbreak about Austria and about your place in it, or did you feel an anger, or something else?

Just relieved. I remember the relief when I crossed the border into Holland on the train. It was just wonderful to be out of it. The mindset was, from March 11th on, get out. And you didn't think much.

So tell me what eventually happened. Let's go now to the beginning of I've got to get out, now how do I do it. What happened?

Well, I looked around for a while and I saw there was no way. I mean, I had some acquaintance in the United States, I had pen pal connections, and I wrote. And they said, well, but we can't give you an affidavit because we don't have enough money or whatever. So really, that was out.

But I had an uncle, and one of my father's brother, the banker, he had a friend-- or knew of a friend, I don't know what the detail was, but he got to someone in Colombia, in South America. And this fellow then was asked through my uncle to send a request for me. And it came through. I went to the Colombian consulate in Vienna, and I got my visa and my passport-- I had a passport-- and I left and went to Amsterdam, and then took a ship to--

What was your parting with your parents like?

Well, it was pretty sad because there was a question whether we would see each other. And it was my-- I told them, I says, don't worry, I'm absolutely sure we'll see each other. And so I left. And of course, I was able to get my parents out, so it was fine.

So it was through your efforts that they were able to leave?

Well, absolutely. I mean, from the day I arrived in Colombia and I got up to-- well, it was not easy, I can tell you. We went on a ship. Of course, we went third class. And there were a couple of other Viennese. That was nice. I mean, we all went into this uncertain future, and none of us spoke Spanish. And we got to Barranquilla, which was a port, and we slept on the first night-- there was a hotel or something-- we slept under a mosquito net. And that impressed me no end. I never thought in my life I would sleep on a mosquito net.

Are there mosquitoes in Austria?

No.

See, I didn't think so.

So anyway, I mean, at that time, traveling was difficult. There were just fledgling air routes in Colombia. It was just beginning. And so one took from the port, from Barranquilla, took the steamer up the river, the Magdalena River, to the railroad. It's a seven-day trip. And you go up the river, and you see crocodiles. You know, you think there's some logs, and then all of a sudden, the logs move, and it's a crocodile. I mean, it was very exotic. And they ate fried bananas and things like that. There were a couple of other people in my position on the ship, so it was entertaining.

It's like a different world.

It was totally different. And we took the train then from the town after Magdalena-- I forgot the name-- and went to Bogota. And I told about a pensione. And there was a pensione, and there were quite a few Austrians there. And I still remember the first day--

Would you like some water?

No, thanks. The first day, they asked me what I wanted for breakfast. So I looked in the dictionary. I wanted an egg, but they brought me a towel. So it didn't work. But, you know, when you're hard up-- in three months. I spoke Spanish quite well. Spoke it fluently, in fact.

Well, the menu was very important to learn.

Yes. So the gentleman who had vouched for me, he was an importer. He had all kinds of representations from British firms, mainly, and some Americans. But he didn't have anything to do for me, really, and he realized that. And I realized it. So I went out and looked for a job. And I went around, and--

Did he give you a place to live, or you stayed in a pensione?

I'm sorry?

Did he give you a place to live, or did you stay in this pensione?

No, I stayed in the pensione. And then three or four of us took a house, which worked out very well because there was a German Jewish professor-- let's say a German professor of Jewish background-- Meyer-Lindenhof and he was married to an Austrian baroness. A very nice couple. And they went away for a year, and they were looking to rent their house.

And so three of us-- or actually four of us, I was the fourth, yeah, we took over their house.

And as a side note, I saw Meyer-Lindenhof again when he was the German ambassador to Spain and I was Director for Spanish and Portuguese Affairs in the department. And we had lunch together and dinner together quite often to just remember the old times.

So we took the house. And I was looking for a job. And I found a job. And I found a job by just going into one store, which was the largest photo store, the Aqua. It was a German store. And I said, do you have a job for me and? And they said, yes. Do you speak English? And I said, yes, which, you know--

Kind of.

Kind of, yeah. But for them, it was good enough, because there a lot of tourists, and I sold them cameras, and it worked out very well. It was very funny. They were all Germans. My immediate supervisor was the head of the Nationalist Socialist Party in Colombia.

No kidding.

Yes, Mr. Birkin. And the owner was German. Mr. Hering, who was very nice, and obviously not a Nazi. And the second part owner was an Austrian. And I did-- you know, I worked very hard and sold cameras and took pictures for developing, and all that. And after I was there-- well, during that time-- I mean, that's the first thing that I did with-- together with another-- with two other Viennese fellows, we had-- got contact-- somebody contact us with the archbishop. And the-- we talked there to the various prelates. And there, I told them, you know, our immediate need is, we need the church's help to get our parents out.

And they did. And they were very helpful. And I must say, they did not pressure us in any way. They kind of intimated that we-- they thought that we should be Catholics, but they didn't say, you must do this in order. There was just an intimation. But we thought it certainly is worthwhile. It will spur their efforts if we convert, and-- under the motto that-- Henry the II, "Paris is worth a mass." We all converted.

And we got our parents-- well, I got my parents out. They got the papers, and my parents, and came. And the second one got the papers, but they were going to wait, because they had one of their sons in a concentration camp and he was supposed to get out, and they waited for him. Of course, they never got out, and they died. He was one of my very good friends. Still in touch with his widow now. But my parents came, then, and-- so--

Well--

That was my life achievement, to bring them out.

It was a huge achievement. That's a huge achievement. They came, then, to Colombia?

They came to Colombia.

OK.

And--

Did they tell you of what had been going on--

Well--

--in that year?

Yes, because my grandfather had passed away. I mean, peacefully. And they were-- had to move out from their

apartment, and they went to another apartment. And then they left.

Were they allowed to bring anything with them?

Yes, they had a-- they brought-- they didn't have much. I think they-- as far as jewelry and so is concerned, they probably had to sell it in order to keep going and get the money to come over there. But they brought books out, and they brought back a large clock, which is still on my wall.

No kidding.

And that's actually the first thing I ever remember, when I was three years old, I heard the sound of the clock. And I have it again, you know? It's with me here.

So it's from your child-- that's amazing--

Yes.

--that you have this piece from your childhood.

Yeah, it's 1879. It's a large clock, you know? The wall clock.

It's a wall-- not a standing grandfather clock?

No, it's a wall clock, but--

OK.

--it's a large wall one. It's very nice.

Does it work still?

Of course.

[LAUGHS]

I have it fixed every year you know?

Of course.

And, in fact, I got it when my mother passed away in '74. She had a lot of stuff, and I just brought it over to-- I was in Paraguay at the time. And so it's in my house ever since.

Well, it's a nice constant from the early days till now.

Yes, the only thing I have from Austria, really, is the clock.

Did your parents-- did you tell them under what circumstances you were able to get them out, by converting?

Yes.

Did it matter to them.

I don't think it did. They didn't convert. They didn't have to. And they lived happily ever after. And I don't think they went to a synagogue ever since. But then my parents stayed, they-- well, it was more complicated than that. As I told

you, I was involved with her in the Aqua photo store. And after my parents came, then one of the partners, Mr. Hammerschmidt, the Austrian, quit and opened his own store, two stores, in Bucaramanga and in CÃ³cuta, two provincial towns, two districts. And he asked me to come with him and run it. So that was fine, because I took my parents with me, who had just arrived, and their-- and things were much less expensive. And I rented the house with my salary, which was fine, and there were my parents in Bucaramanga.

And again, they did learn Spanish very well and became very integrated there in the Bucaramanga life. And my father did extremely well. I mean, this was a war, and everything was at premium. And there were quite a few importers in Bogota, and he became their subcontract. I mean, he covered Bucaramanga and CÃ³cuta for them. And during the war, everything could be sold as long as you brought it in. And so he did very well. And he made a good living and was very happy. They were extremely happy. The only Austrians who were there were the Hammerschmidts, and they were very close friends. And they got to know a lot of Colombians, real Colombian, Jewish Colombians, whatever. And they had a perfectly happy cycle.

Well, it sounds to me like they were extremely flexible people, too.

Yes. I mean, it went very well, and I must say, when I came in 1950-- I came, then after the war, when I got out, I was still in uniform on terminal leave, I went to see them.

They were still in Colombia?

Oh, they were in Bucaramanga. They were doing very well. And then in 1950, I came with my wife to meet my parents. And we had a very nice time. And they were so popular, I remember-- Bucaramanga was then a smaller town than now, and they had a newspaper article because they had come and-- the son of Dr. Cobo and, you know-- they had to really totally integrated. I must say they had a happy life. But my father died in '74. No, my father died in '59. My mother closed the house and went to live in Bogota, because there, she had her bridge parties and lived happily and had lots of friends until she died in '74.

What a lovely kind of--

Yeah, I mean--

--destiny to--

They came to the United States to visit us two times. And my father prostate cancer. And at that time, it was still hard to-- now, it could have been operated without any problem. But they came and saw a doctor in New York. And it was very nice. And they liked my wife and so they got along swimmingly with her.

So I want to go back to the conversion. Was it in any way a real conversion?

Well, when you say a "real conversion," I mean--

I mean, was it one where you-- when you converted, you actually believed the tenets of the faith?

I didn't believe then. I don't believe now.

Got it.

I mean, it makes no difference, other than I do go to church every Sunday, because my sons are brought up, and I go and communicate with God, who is, as far as I'm concerned, non-denominational.

Well, I would say there's a contradiction there. When you say I didn't believe then, I don't believe now, but I go and I communicate with God--

Yeah.

--there's something contradictory in that--

No, no.

--statement.

I always believed in a superior human-- superior being, but I don't believe in religion. The religious trappings, I mean, turned me off.

Got it.

First one and then the other.

Yeah.

I think it's a lot of nonsense.

OK, OK. OK. I just wanted to be able to clarify that, because you say there was no there was no pressure. There was a suggestion.

Yes.

And there was--

It fine, and I thought it would help the process.

Which was--

It maybe did or maybe didn't. But they got out, and that's all--

That was the important thing.

I mean, if you ask me today what was my greatest achievement in life, it was bringing my parents out.

I can understand that. I can understand that. It is an achievement, and so many people wanted to and tried and couldn't.

Well, that-- the funny thing is, I was not all that close to my parents ever. You know, I was close and I was a good son and they were good parents, but I was not really close. But it was my duty to do so. And I got them out. And that was fine. And it worked very well, and so for that, I'm grateful to whoever that superior being is.

Yeah. Let's go back, then, to where you were in Colombia. And did you travel between these two towns where you were now working as a manager?

No, no, because I was in charge of the place in Bucaramanga and I stayed in Bucaramanga. But it was a difficult time, because I did not feel-- you know, I was in Colombia, and I thought, that's great, but let's get out. I obviously wanted to go to the United States. And I-- we had a radio, shortwave radio, at home, and all listened to American stations. And I wanted to really get there, but I had, again, the responsibility. My parents had come and they had to get set up. And so after they were set up, I quit my job and went back to Bogota, still thinking how-- first of all, I wanted to get out of Bucaramanga. I mean, it was cloying and really not for me.

And I went to Bogota and, of course, didn't have a job. But I stayed. There was one very nice Austrian family, also a lawyer from Vienna, and I-- they rented me a room. And then I started looking for a job. And, of course, I'd save the

little money, but I had to find one right away. And I found one immediately. They had opened, on the main street in Bogota, they had opened the first ice cream parlor, which was something totally new.

And so they were looking for somebody who spoke English and could run the place. Well, that was me. I mean, my English was still not great, but it was manageable. So I became the manager of that ice cream parlor. And I had about 20 waitresses. And, you know, it was a big place. And the lady who owned it was very nice, and she wanted me to give her English lessons, which I did. I'm not sure how much she profited by it.

But anyway-- but, again, this was not what I wanted to do. And so I looked around. And I got to know a man by the name of-- who came there with his son who was, well, 25. And his name was Pierce-- George L. Pierce. He was a manager of Otis Elevator in Bogota, an American. And I told him that I was looking for a job.

And he said, well, I just have a job for you. My son, Larry, had just become the representative of a company that installs-- what-- how to describe that, describe-- he installs little flasks in the urinals in all the hotels and restaurants so to avoid the smell. And he needs somebody to check on those things.

So I said, great. You know, it's better than an ice cream parlor.

[LAUGHS]

And I-- so I went to all the urinals in town and checked that the things were working all right. And that lasted about a week.

[LAUGHS]

And, you know-- I mean, no, because Mr. Pierce said, look, that was just to keep you going. I have a job for you in Otis Elevator.

Aw.

So I went to Otis Elevator and I typed invoices. And, you know, I could type. And he was very nice, and he said to me, you know-- I had a small salary. And he said, how are your parents? And I said, well, they're hard up. And what do you do for them? I said, well, regardless, I send them for my salary. It was still the beginning, before they got settled, really. So I sent them \$20 a month. And I must say, after I left, he continued to send them \$20 a month for another year or so, which was very nice.

And he knew, of course, that was-- my interest was to come to the United States, so I talked to him and said, how about getting transferred to the United States? And he discussed it with some people. They came down from New York, you know, his superiors, and I got to know them. And they said, sure, we'll do this. And they gave me a letter saying that once you arrive in the United States, you will be employed by Otis Elevator. But that was enough for me to go to the American embassy. And--

Was this is the first time you walked into an American embassy?

Yes.

Do you remember your impressions of it?

Well, I remember I talked to a third secretary who later became Consul General in Indonesia when I was ambassador for Chile, and I went by and showed him the passport, and said, you know this the signature? He said, yes, Mr. Ambassador, that's mine. That was it.

But anyway, with that letter, of course, the quota was wide open, because there were no Austrians or Germans going in '41 anymore. It was closed. And so I got the-- I had the letter. Of course, there was no question of employment. And I

got my immigrant visa in 1941. And I went to New York.

Well, that's a change from the crocodiles in Colombia.

Yes, I went to Buenaventura again, which was a kind of a hellish port, and took the Grace Line in steerage. But it was fine. It was a week and that made no difference, and got to New York on July 1, '41, and somebody from Otis Elevator was there waiting for me. And I was getting out of the gangplank to go to customs. There was a dollar bill laying on the floor, and I picked it up, and I said, well, there must be many more, but it was the only dollar bill I ever found.

[LAUGHS]

And I got my papers and started working for Otis Elevator.

Did they help you find a place to live?

They put me up in a hotel, the Chelsea Hotel on the 23rd Street, for a couple of times--

No kidding.

Yeah, just for a couple of days. And then, of course, I had my uncle there, the oldest brother of my mother. And so I went to see him, and he told me where to rent a room.

So tell me, how come he hadn't been part of the picture in trying to get you to the United States from Austria?

No, no, he was not there yet.

Ah.

I mean, when I left--

OK.

--they went to France. And they were able to get out to the United States eventually in '41 or something. I mean, they came in '40. Maybe they came about a year before I came. And so they helped me find a place. And I made \$25 a week with Otis Elevator.

What was your job?

I had no job. It was the international division, and they didn't have a job for me. I had no technical capabilities. They were preparing technical things for the-- they were very nice, and-- but obviously, the odds and ends. But I didn't know exactly what to do. So came December 11-- and December 7, I'm sorry. Came December 7, and the next day, I was called in, and they said, you know, we have a lot of government contract-- ships, you know, hydraulic things, and you're really an enemy alien, you know? I don't think we can keep you anymore.

And I said, well, look, you're totally mistaken. I'm not an enemy alien. They said, well, but you're a German.

Austrian, yeah.

Austrian, German, whatever.

So I said-- that was-- I think they said it must be December 9 or 10 when they told me. So I remember on December 23, I took the train from New York to Washington, and I got there on the 24th, in the morning, and I didn't take a hotel or anything. I went right to the Department of Justice. And I said-- at that time, it was so easy. You just walked in and talked to the door man.

I said, I want to talk to someone about nationality. And they said, well, go up and see Mr. So-and-so. I went up and knocked on the door, and there was Mr. So-and-so. And I said, look, I'm about to be fired because I'm an enemy alien.

So he listened to me and looked at my passport. I told him my story. And he said, well, what do you want? I said, well, I want that letter from the Department of Justice that I'm not an enemy alien. And he said, well, it was 11 o'clock. Come back at 2 o'clock, because it's Christmas Eve, and we're going to close early, and I'll have the letter for you.

So I went and, excuse me, got the letter, went back to New York, and showed him the letter. And I said, look, I'm not an enemy alien, but I'm leaving anyway, so goodbye. Because, meanwhile, I had met someone whom I knew in-- while I was in Bucaramanga, and he was a freight forwarder at Gondrand Freres, Gondrand Brothers, very often he had come to Bucaramanga, and he had come to the store, and so I talked with him for a long time. And he said to me, if ever you come to New York, come and see me.

Well, I came and saw him, and he offered me a job right away for \$35 a month. So I said we'll do that January 1, and that's fine. So I got the letter from Otis Elevator, told them, and left, and started with Gondrand. And that was actually fun.

What did you do in this--

Well, a freight forwarder, you do bills of lading. You prepare shipments. At that time, it was all ocean freight. And we did a lot of business, mainly to Colombia and Venezuela and all of Latin America. And I handled that. And we made quite-- I made quite a lot of money, because on a Friday night, when the ships were leaving, you had to work until 3:00 in the morning to get all the papers ready, so I got a lot of overtime, and that was fine. And I enjoyed it very much. And it was a Swiss firm, because the owners were Swiss, but there were quite a few refugees there also, and it was a nice group.

And shortly thereafter-- I mean, that was a-- I started January 1, 1942, and by July 1942, I got a notice from the draft board that I was to be inducted, and showed it to Mr. Bender and Mr. Silo, the owners. And they said, "Oh, we can't spare you. I mean, we have the Belgium account from the World's Fair. I mean, we are very busy. And you're absolutely necessary."

So we went to the draft board. We asked for a hearing. And both of them went to the board with me. And they explained to them how I was absolutely irreplaceable and I had to stay. And they were very understanding, and they said, yes, absolutely, we agree with you.

The next morning-- mail was fast. I already got my induction order.

Oh, good God.

So that's it.

Well, you know, I want to go back a little bit to the episode with Otis Elevator.

Yes.

Sounds clearly that they had offended you in a very deep way.

Yes. They did, because they questioned my loyalty. You know, I mean-- it was just totally ignorant. They were very nice about it, but they say, we can't afford this, because we have all these government contracts. I mean, they--

It was Pearl Harbor. It was because of Pearl Harbor?

Of course.

Yeah.

Yes. It was because of Pearl Harbor. And it was right after-- they were worried about their Navy contract-- their biggest client at the time was the Navy. And so I wanted to get the letter, but--

It was a--

I had already talked to the other people. And, because, I had basically nothing to do with Otis Elevator. And it was--

So it was an honor-- it was a question of honor?

Yes, I wanted to-- exactly. I wanted to show them.

Yeah.

And I must say that years later, when I was in Uruguay-- I think I was in Uruguay. One of the Otis Elevator, from the international division, came to Uruguay, and came to the embassy. And of course, I was a commercial attachÃ©, so he saw me. And we recognized each other immediately. And I told him about it. And he said, well, it was just a bureaucratic decision from upstairs. They said, we might-- got to make sure we have no foreigners. We had another German there, in fact, and so they had to take whatever measures.

But still, the other thing is if we're talking technically, had the United States declared war on Germany at that point? I thought it was Japan. Or was it--

No.

--everything-- there was an act-- you know, axis--

No, we declared war on Japan, and the following day, Germany and Italy declared war on us.

Declared war on us. Yeah. OK. And that's what did it.

Yeah, it was perfectly defensible. I mean, I understand where they came from. I mean, they were very nice to me, because they realized I had nothing to offer them, really. But George Pierce got me over there, so they figured they're going to keep me. \$25 is not a matter of life and death. But I wanted out, and so I enjoyed going back to Gondrand and had a happy life there.

Do you have any-- do you have first impressions besides having found that dollar near the gangplank of what New York struck you as?

Well, I'd been thinking and dreaming about the United States and read the American papers, so I was pretty much looking forward. I mean, it's very impressive. You know, the first night in the hotel and everything works and is clean. And after Colombia, it's-- I had breakfast downstairs, and had tomato juice and soft-boiled egg. I mean, I was living it up. And then I went-- I had my uncle and my aunt, of course, and my cousin, and--

Did they live in Manhattan?

Yes.

Did they live up in that section--

I'm sorry?

Did they live in Inwood, or did they live somewhere else?

No.

No? Where did they live?

They lived on 81st and West End Avenue. And they were very nice and, of course, that took care of me, to some extent. I mean, they, too, of course, had a hard time when they came here. I mean, he was an engineer, and they had been very wealthy. But by the time they came to the United States, they started working as diamond cutters in the diamond section there--

The jewelry district?

--on 46th Street or whatever.

Yeah, yeah.

But they lived to a ripe old age.

Did you feel at-- I mean, you had come from a cosmopolitan city.

I'm sorry?

You were born and raised in a cosmopolitan city.

Yes.

You had gone to a totally different world in Colombia.

Yeah.

And then you'd come back--

I went back-- of course.

You were, you know--

The only thing I had to learn in New York, when you're on 45th Street, which way to go to 46th that you don't go to 44. So once I figured that out, I was home.

[LAUGHS]

And we came back-- we lived in New York, eight years-- much later, after I left the Foreign Service, and we loved it.

So you got your induction papers. And what did you do? What happened after that?

Well, I was inducted.

OK.

I was inducted into Fort Dix, New Jersey. And it was on November-- I was inducted, I think, on November 16. I reported for duty about the 20th. And three or four days later it was Thanksgiving, and I went-- you know, just introduction, and we got shots and uniforms and all that. And I found on my bunk quite a white towel. And I said, what that white towel about?

Sergeant said, because they're going to wake you up at 3:30 in the morning.

And I said, why? Tomorrow is Thanksgiving.

He said, that's why, because you're on KP. You're on kitchen duty. And so they woke me up at 3:30, and I spent the whole day peeling potatoes and washing dishes, and got through by 4:00. And I was pretty bushed. And so I walked out, and there was an army movie station there, and there was a movie. I went to see that. I remember while I was sitting in the movie, I thought, that's not for me. You know, I better go to Officer Candidate School. And I made up my mind then and there. And I did.

So your induction letter came-- I'm trying to do things chronologically, late December '41 is when--

No, my induction letter came in '42.

Yes, I know.

Yeah.

But when in '42?

I would say in July, something like that. July or August.

So you worked for this other place--

Oh, yes.

--at \$35--

I did.

--for a good half year?

I did very well, yeah. Loved it.

And then you had about four or five months at Fort Dix?

No, I-- in Fort Dix, I had two weeks.

Oh, excuse me.

You know, I was inducted-- Fort Dix is an induction center.

OK.

And they don't train you there. They just give you all the-- get you ready. And then we went on a train, and not knowing where to go, and we wandered around, and we went-- I remember once, we went to Arkansas, and then eventually we wound up in Texas, and that's where we stopped, and I was with the 82nd Infantry Division.

I see.

No, 104th Infantry Division.

Infantry Division.

104th Infantry Division for basic training. Bucharest in '46. I wanted to go--

You ready? Yeah? OK, this is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Ambassador George Landau on March 10, 2014. Now, before we broke for lunch, we were talking about your induction in the army. And can you refresh my memory? After the two weeks in Fort Dix, you then went on a train, you said, that took you to Arkansas, to Texas, to other places. Is that that where training actually happened?

Yes. I mean, we went to Camp Maxey in Texas, the 102nd Infantry Division, which I was assigned for basic training. And what happened, that during basic training, I got an ear infection, and I otitis media, so they took me out of the training cycle, and by the time I was finished, the division had already finished their training, so I was assigned-- I was taken out and assigned to headquarters Camp Maxey in Texas, and put into the finance office, where I handled payment vouchers and travel allowances, and particularly, I was in charge of travel allowances and figuring out-- they figured since I had been a freight forwarder I knew about travel, so therefore, I got that job. And while I was there, of course, I was applying to OCS.

Which is?

Officer Candidate School.

OK.

To all of them, from A to Z. And the one that came through first was Transportation Corps, so I took that and went to Camp Plauche in New Orleans. And by the time I got to Camp Plauche, they had moved the Officer Candidate School to an island-- I forgot the name now-- on the lake near New Orleans. And that was the headquarters of the Transportation Corps OCS. And I took the course. And, of course, I was not a good soldier. And I got into all kinds of problems.

Tell me, why weren't you a good soldier?

Well, I'm not very handy and not very athletic. And particularly, the question of handy, you have to be able to put up a tent in 8 seconds, or whatever, eight minutes, I can't remember. It took me double the time. And I committed one of the cardinal sins-- I knocked over a rifle stack.

[LAUGHS]

And that was it. So, you see, what they did during the war, Officer Candidate School, 90 days, they have a large amount with the idea that about half of them would wash out during the course, for academic or other reasons. And I was doing well in academic, but obviously, I failed, and I had the three demerits-- the last demerit was the rifle stack. So I had to go before the board. And they were to dismiss me from school.

And they said-- there was three offices. And they said, do you have anything to say for yourself?

And I said, yes. I think, actually, while I sit here, that I'm more valuable than any of the three of you.

And they kind of raised the eyebrows--

Opened eyes.

--and said, what do you mean, Corporal?

I said, well, what I mean, I mean, do you speak any foreign languages? Do you have any experience in Europe? I do, and I speak Spanish, and I speak German, and I know my way around, and I can be of invaluable service to the country as an interrogator or do a lot of things. And I think I'm really more qualified than anyone around here.

And they said-- dismissed me, and they decided they were going to let me graduate, but considering that I was such a lousy soldier, they said, we're going to graduate you with the next class. So I was the only one there who was not a 90-day one. I was a 120-day one. Then I graduated and was assigned, then, to a port company. And there were-- those port companies were supposed to be trained for the second invasion, because the first invasion was on June 7, and then we were going to do another invasion, more south, with troops from-- coming from Italy.

Did you know that at the time?

No. And those soldiers were supposed to be trained to lay pontoon bridges and things like that. And I went to meet my new company, of which I was going to be the platoon leader, and temporarily the only officer assigned to it. And I came, and they were all from the Deep South. And I greeted them, and I found out they didn't understand me, and I didn't understand them at all. It was quite a dreadful experience. And that was just introduction. And then I went on my 40-- 14 day leave. When you graduate from OCS, you get a leave, 14 days. So I was going to return to New York, where my uncle and aunt lived, and my cousin, but on the way-- it was the Jeffersonian, I think, was the train from New Orleans to New York. And on the way, I decided, I'm going to stop off in Washington. And I did. And I went to the Pentagon, which was quite new, at the time, not really finished completely, but it was operative.

And again, unlike today, no guards. You just walk in. And I asked the first soldier I saw, I mean, where is the G2 section?

And he said, well, ring E.

So I went to ring E, and eventually, I walked to several officers.

Tell me, what does the G2 section mean?

I'm sorry?

What does G2 section mean?

G2 is intelligence. G1 Administration, G2 Intelligence, G3 supply-- no, G4 is supply. G3 is operations. So anyway, I went to the office of the right man and said, look, I graduated last week from Officer Candidate School, and I'm really interested in intelligence rather than Transportation Corps.

And he said, why?

And so I told him because I speak languages, I've come from Europe.

And he said absolutely, you're our man. And he says, where you going?

I said, I'm going to New York.

And he said, by the time you arrive in New York tomorrow, you'll have your orders.

Wow.

And I did indeed. And I was assigned to the Military Intelligence Training Center in Cambridge, Maryland.

I want to stop right there for just a second, unless there was a point you wanted to make right afterwards, because I have a bunch of questions. Oh, I really did stop you in your tracks, didn't I?

I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.

I said, I wanted to ask a number of questions, but I interrupted your train of thought.

Go ahead.

OK. So number-- I have a number of impressions. Number one, that's a lot of chutzpah to tell the first set of officers I know I'm more valuable than you are.

Look, I was convinced I was going to be selected-- I was going to be washed out, anyway, so it didn't make any difference what--

Ah, yeah, that is--

I didn't take any risk.

--you weren't going to-- that's right, you were going to fail the course because you threw down the rifles.

Yeah, that was one-- that was my third demerit. I mean, I had many other faults.

I see, OK. And it's very proactive. I mean, I've interviewed other people who were Camp Ritchie-- went through Camp Ritchie, and their way of getting there was different than yours. They were usually selected. That is, they-- somebody recognized that they had languages and pulled them.

Yes. They do that in basic training or right were then they are drafted.

Right.

But that's why, when I came to Camp Ritchie, we had the best mess hall in the United States, because we had all the flat-footed waiters and cooks from the New York restaurants. They all wound up-- because they all were Italian, so-- French, and so they all wound up there.

[LAUGHS] I see.

But the officers mainly came after they graduated.

So here is-- here's another question, though. You were drafted when you were in New York, and it's clear from your telling that you were very enthusiastic about wanting to be useful and you have your talents used in the right ways. But you were just gone-- you had just been called a year before an enemy alien by the company, and you had to go to the Department of Justice to get a piece of paper that says you weren't. And you weren't a citizen yet. Did it feel odd to you that you were being called to serve and maybe die for a country-- and you're not a citizen of that country yet? It wasn't your country.

Well, one, don't forget, that was after Pearl Harbor. Everybody was very enthusiastic. And the worst case that could happen to a young man was not to be accepted, be a 4F. So I was-- took it for granted that I would be inducted and that I would be in the army. That was self understood, and I would not have had it any other way. Now, as far as citizenship is concerned, while I was in Camp Maxey, in 1943, I was naturalized. In other words, they got a bulletin from headquarters that all noncitizens should come to a certain place where we were asked what the details were, and then we were taken by bus the following day to Paris, Texas, Lamar county. And so I was Texan, really, because I was naturalized in Texas in 1943, which, of course, was absolutely necessary, because you cannot go to Officer Candidate School unless you're an American citizen. So that was taken care of.

The other question I have is more from a social sciences perspective. From what I've heard, that the draft was one of the great equalizers, at least during World War II, maybe in subsequent wars as well, but until the draft ended, for example, of various parts of American society. That is, people you met in the army, you'd never, ever meet anywhere else. You would never-- your paths in life would never normally cross. When you were inducted, did that happen? Did you meet

and get to know people from-- did you have impressions of these Americans who might be from the farm, you know?

Very much so, very much so. And of course, at this point, it was not a social equalizer as much as you met totally different people. I mean, for instance, in basic training, the people next to me, two guys were was Kentucky coal miners. And they were very nice guys. And one of them said, could you lend me \$5 until payday?

And I said, sure. And so payday came, and I didn't get any money. So I said to him, you know, you owe me \$5. He said to me, look, say it one more time, and I'll knock your teeth out. So that's-- I learned how people operate.

But it was. It was a great equalizer, but you have to keep in mind that most of the college people, the people I left-- met later on in the State Department, were all in the military, but they all had reserve commissions, because from college, they got ROTC, so it was really the great masses. And the way to get out of this was precisely people who had ambition and interest-- they applied for Officer Candidate School. And that's what I did. But it's not your-- kind of with the rest of the people.

And did you have-- was there something new or shocking or of interest when you saw this cross-section of, let's say, Americans before you got to office--

Yes. I mean, I was very shocked, because I must have had a sheltered childhood, and certainly in Otis Elevator they were all very nice and polite. But I mean, every third word was a foul word, a four-letter word, and I mean, I couldn't believe it. I never heard that much of that before or afterwards. But all those things conspired for me to get out as fast as possible, to be an officer. The thing didn't-- there was still foul language, but it was a little different.

Foul language with a brain?

Huh?

Foul language with a brain.

Yes.

[LAUGHS] OK. Let's go back to Camp Ritchie. You're finally there. This man in the Pentagon says, you're our man. You get the orders. What was your first impression of Camp Ritchie?

Oh, I loved it. I loved it. Everybody spoke French or German or Italian and we had officer's quarters. Of course, I was a newly minted second lieutenant, so, I-- for once, now, I didn't have to salute anybody, but people saluted me, which was payback for the last two years.

[LAUGHS]

And we had, of course, courses which are extremely interesting, in IPW, Interrogation of Prisoners of War, or [? the ?] order of battle, photo intelligence. I mean, they were really fascinating courses.

Do you remember any of the things that you were taught in those courses?

Oh, yes. Of course.

Tell us a few about them.

In the order of battle, I mean, we learned all the German divisions. We learned to set up the name of the commanders. And we learned that-- in interrogation, what to ask for. It depends on whether you're at the battalion or at the divisional headquarters, or wherever you are. You ask different questions. And we were well trained. It was an excellent course. And when I went overseas and I-- I was really prepared to do the right things, not to go to battle, but to ask the right questions.

Do you remember some of the types of questions that you were trained to ask?

Well, again, it depends. If you are at the lower levels, you ask, who's your commanding officer? Do you have any howitzers embedded? Where are they? What cannons do you have? And what's the composition of your troops between Germans and Austrians? And that was all-- it depended, then, on the--

So the intelligence that you were gathering was actually to find out military strength?

Exactly.

OK.

Yeah, I mean, it was military intelligence. Now, when you get up, and higher up, if you're at the division level or even higher, at Corps level, then you ask different-- about the other Corps and what's the morale, and-- I mean, I used all those questions later on. Not really in the military, certainly not in the army, because by the time I got over there, the war was practically over. And so I was assigned-- and when I got overseas, I went to outside of Paris. And--

When did you get there? Oh, let's stay with Camp Ritchie a little bit. Did you meet any other young German-- Austrian-- Jewish young men from Vienna? Did you meet anybody who was from Germany?

Yes.

Yes?

There were quite a few.

Did you know of them before?

No.

No. So--

I knew by reputation. I knew a fellow who was the nephew of Franz Lehár, the famous composer. He was with me, and-- because I saw Lehár later on in Austria, and brought him his nephew's regards. But we were all very compatible. But, I mean, they were not just refugees. I mean, they had brought-- we had a captain by the name of Rindfleisch. And he didn't speak any German, but he came from Texas, New Braunfels, where Germans came hundreds of years ago, and because he had name of Rindfleisch he went to military intelligence. But he didn't speak German, and he wound up as a photo intelligence operator. But it was a good schooling. You see, we had no basic intelligence strength, and the British actually came over in '42 and started Cambridge and told us how to do-- go about it. They gave us all the instructions.

Oh, that's interesting.

By the time I got there, we had only American instructors, and one of the instructors who came back from Tunisia, was the first lieutenant that made captain while he was there. That was Dick Walters, who became a colleague of mine. They called him Lieutenant General Walters, ambassador to the United Nations, and a great friend of mine. I've known him ever since.

David Rockefeller, who was whom I worked later on very closely, was in Cambridge. He was a French MRI. You know, and he went on to go to North Africa then.

But, I mean, it was an interesting group, a very cosmopolitan group.

Totally different.

Oh, yes.

OK. How long did the training last?

The training lasted, if I'm correct, three months.

And was there a particular kind of assignment that you were slotted for, a job that you were slotted for, or were you a generalist interrogator, for example?

No, you are-- you-- when you come out, you're 9301, one military intelligence officer general, with subspecialty 9316, interrogators of prisoners of war, 9330, order of battle specialist. And then some were shipped-- my class was shipped to Italy, and some were shipped to France. And I was in the group that went to France. But France was-- Paris was liberated by then.

Tell me, what date did you land there? What date did you--

I landed there in early '45, like January or February.

And here, I want to stop and--

The war ended in May.

Yeah. How much-- if you can think back to that time, how much were you hearing and learning about what had happened to European Jews?

Nothing. I mean, we knew more than-- we heard there were terrible problems, but we didn't know any details. I mean, that was before the concentration camps were liberated and all that, so we didn't know any great details.

OK. So when you land in France in early '45, January, February, something like that, you think?

Yeah.

OK. What happened then? What was your first--

I was assigned to Camp [PLACE NAME]. And we were working right on preparation to move forward to Austria, because we knew the war-- by that time I got to [PLACE NAME] it was later than that, because you didn't go directly from the ship. I went to all kind of repple depples where you were kept. And the [INAUDIBLE] had happened, and the siege was broken, so it was-- we had entered Germany, so there was a question of time. So we were preparing. We were preparing to move forward. And I think within a week after the war ended, we were off to-- this was MIS headquarters in Europe, Military Intelligence Service, so we went off to MIS Forward, which was in Bad Schwalbach. Bad Schwalbach was outside of Wiesbaden.

Ah, yeah.

We had a hotel there. And that's where we went.

So that's near Frankfurt-- not so close to Frankfurt, but--

No, not to-- close to Wiesbaden, but Wiesbaden is not far from Frankfurt.

That's right.

And I was-- there a number of second lieutenants, and we were all given assigned tasks in moving. And I had-- was in

charge of transport of 30 Jeeps. And I got them to Bad Schwalbach, where we went and reported for duty. And then we were hanging around and not doing anything, really, for another week or so. Then we all got assignments. And I got an extremely interesting assignment, which must've been now-- by that time, it was beginning of June, I would say. Yeah, early June.

We had two officers coming from Washington. One was a captain and one was a civilian, but had assimilated the rank of major. And they were both technical-- chemical engineers. And they were supposed-- their instructions were to find-- let's say hydraulic hydrogen and nitrogen-- what do you call those? Hydrogen and nitrogen units that could be used for the-- which we needed for the invasion of Japan. And the Germans were-- had done very much in that field. And so we had to find-- we wanted the plans. So they were the experts, and I was their local guide, so to speak.

And so we went to Augsburg first, where there was the-- Mannesmann was the factory who made those things. And we went there, and we did find them. I mean, we talked to a lot of people, and we got there. That was really-- the war was over months, and I mean, everything was-- the roads were clogged with people in push carts and whatever, going from place to place. And it was a terrible mess. And there was nothing to eat. In other words, we got sea rations along, and then we tried to work it-- by nightfall, we found an American unit where we can stay and have dinner and went on.

We went to Augsburg first, and there-- Ullmann Augsburg. There, we found-- in Mannesmann we found plans which we needed, which they thought were very useful. And then there was another plant in Hanover, but Hanover was in the British zone, so we had permission to go to Hanover. But first, we went to Stuttgart. And I don't know why-- I can't-- do not remember now, we had to go to Stuttgart. And that was very-- I was very much looking forward to go to Stuttgart.

Why?

Because they had the big factory there, "Zeiss," that made optic for photo?

Zeiss.

Zeiss, yeah.

Zeiss, mm-hmm.

And they made cameras, and I wanted to get a Rolleiflex or whatever.

Zeiss Ikon, I remember. Yeah.

Yeah. And, well, we got there to Stuttgart, and I remember it was the end of the month. It was the 29th of June, and-- 28th of June, maybe. And we got to the factory. And, of course, there were two Senegalese French troops there. Didn't speak any language. Didn't let me in. And because-- it was funny, because on the 1st of July, we changed, and the French left Stuttgart and Rittenburg and the Americans took over.

And in exchange, we took over Tyrol and Vorarlberg in Austria from the French. It was a change. And we then went to Tyrol and Vorarlberg two days later, because we had a lead in Innsbruck. And so we saw the change of command twice, first in Stuttgart and then in Innsbruck. That was very interesting. And then from there, we went to Hanover. And it was-- really, I saw Germany at its worst. I mean--

Before you left Austria in '38, had you ever visited Germany?

Never.

So this was the first time you were in--

The first time. And I mean, I saw-- I mean, Nuremburg was just so-- I have-- I took a lot of photographs, of course. And it just totally destroyed. It was-- you know, unbelievable. I mean, just streets-- total rubble, nothing else. It was

unbelievable. And I saw it, of course, then much later on. I went to Berlin in January '46. And it was unbelievable, the destruction.

What kind of feeling did you have when you got to--

I'm sorry?

What kind of feeling did you have when you had gone to-- when you landed in Germany, arrived in Germany, and you saw all of this destruction?

Yeah, a certain feeling of comfort.

Yeah.

They had it coming.

Yeah.

I had no crocodile tears.

Yeah, yeah. At some point, when we spoke earlier, you said that the first time you saw a concentration camp was when you arrived after the war in Europe. Can you tell me about that?

I'm sorry?

The first time you saw a concentration camp was when you--

No, I-- you misunderstood me.

Oh.

I mean, you asked me something, and I said that at that time, we didn't know that there were concentration camps. No, I--

OK. Did you ever see one?

Yes, I saw Dachau.

That's what I wanted to find out about.

Yes, I saw Dachau, and I would say in early '46. It was, by then, already cleaned up, kind of, but, I mean, kind of a memorial shrine. It was terrible to see, of course. But there were no more people around or anything.

When did you start to learn about what had happened, not only to the Jews, but particularly to the Jews of Europe?

I would say through the newspapers.

After the war?

Yes, or during-- after the war, as the troops came and liberated. That was in-- you see, our main source of information was Stars and Stripes, and they covered it pretty well, with photos and all that. So we became aware of it, but--

Did you--

--at the same time as the American public.

Did you ever meet anybody who had been an inmate in the camps in your--

I'm sorry?

Did you ever meet anybody who had been imprisoned in the camps through your duties in intelligence?

No, I don't think so. But we're going to come back to that later on, because in '46, I was in charge of a DP camp in Ebensee in Austria where we processed Soviet Jews leave-- fleeing the Soviet Union. But they were not-- they were in camps in some-- in the Soviet Union, but not in the same circumstances.

But still interesting to find out about. We haven't-- I haven't heard of Soviet DPs--

Oh, yes.

--before.

We had an awful lot of-- that is not chronologically correct, because that was '46.

OK.

Much later.

So we'll get to that.

Yeah.

We'll get to that.

So you were in Innsbruck and then in Hanover to get those plans for these--

Yes, and in Hanover, we got extremely good plans, exactly what they wanted for. And they all went to Paris. I went to Paris with them. And then I went-- they went back to the United States and I went back to Bad Schwalbach.

For a next assignment?

For my next assignment, yes. And while I was waiting in Schwalbach, then-- I was out for a week and kind of relaxing. It was a pretty rough trip. I once went out with my driver in a Jeep, and we had to gas up. And while I was gassing up, there was a fellow, a major standing there, and he said, hey, George, I haven't seen you for a long time. And it was a fella I'd known in Austria, Martin Hertz.

And Martin Hertz-- well, the major had come up from Italy. And he said, you know, I'm on my way to Vienna. I'm assigned to Vienna. And I have a pretty-- a major is a good position. And I said, oh, boy, that's nice. I wished I could be in Vienna. I'm waiting here for my next assignment. And Martin said, well, give me your name, rank, and serial number. I can get it done. And I said, well, what a big shot. I mean, never hear from him again.

[LAUGHS]

And went back, and then had various local assignments there in Bad Schwalbach. And about three, four weeks later-- by that time, it was August, I would say. Yes, I came back after-- it was August. I was called in to the command. And he said I have orders from the war department, and showed me the orders, because Austria was a so-called MTO, the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, because the troops came from Italy. General Clark came from Italy. And I was in Bad Schwalbach, which was ET, or the European Theater of Operation under General Eisenhower. And so to transfer

from one theater to another can only be done by Washington.

So I had orders from the war department to transfer me to the 65th 21st-- 65 21st Military Intelligence Brigade in Vienna, and-- all of Austria, headquarters in Vienna. And the colonel there asked me, when do you want to leave? And I said, well, tomorrow. He said, well, we'll give you a Jeep and a driver, and off you go, which I did. And that was, of course, quite interesting. We drove from Schwalbach to Munich and then to Austria. And I mean, I had left in '38, and this was '45, so it was only seven years.

What an amazing--

And--

--thing.

--here, I was a Second Lieutenant, and came-- and it was emotionally interesting. I mean, touching, when I saw the first postbox with the Austrian-- you know, the yellow with the Austrian flags. And then we drove in towards Vienna. And then we came to Vienna and that was all-- we drove in. It was all-- seemed to kind of-- small, much smaller than I remembered it.

And I asked the driver to go around the Ringstrasse, which covered all the-- so we drove around the Ringstrasse. And then I had orders to report to headquarters, but of course, it was late in the day, so I found the-- we had two hotels in Vienna-- The Bristol for field-grade officers and generals, and The Votivkirche company-grade officers.

What was it, Tivkirche?

On [GERMAN] strasse, behind the Regina Hotel, behind the Votivkirche, yeah. It was a nice hotel. And I got there and had my orders, so I stayed there. The next day, I went to headquarters, which was in Alser, where there used to be big operation in Vienna before. I forgot what it was. But anyway, I reported to headquarters. And the major in command said, well, Lieutenant, you have three choices. You can go to Gmunden, the interrogation center, you can go to Lintz in the documents center, or you can go to Salzburg in the censorship office.

And I said, well, Salzburg is of course the most interesting. I want to go Salzburg. And he said, sure, but the censorship office is not going to last but a few more months. So I said, well, in that case, I'd rather go to Gmunden. So I went to Gmunden. I got my orders. Of course, my Jeep and driver had left by then. And I got orders. And-- take the train, and the Mozart leaves at 9:00 every night.

Well, I'd like to ask something before you leave Vienna. Did it feel-- I mean, it's very odd to put it this way, like you were coming home, or were you alienated from the place? It was like something that had happened in a distant past?

Exactly, totally. I mean, it was another occupied city. And I mean, the Russians were running around, and it had no bearing. But still, of course, I went by my school, and I--

Did you pass the street where your apartment was on, your home?

Not then, because it was a Russian zone, and I couldn't get in there.

So Vienna was split into various zones?

Oh, yes. Yeah, the Russian zone and the American zone, the British zone, and then they carved out-- because the French wanted a zone really small.

So like Berlin? It was like Berlin in that way?

Huh?

It was like Berlin?

Yes, of course, very much, for-- and then we had Jeeps with all four allied soldiers in the [NON-ENGLISH] the first district. And-- which was internationalized.

Before I forget, it's a detail, but I wanted to make sure we got it down. What was the name of the street your old family apartment had been on?

Schmelkase.

Schmelkase.

Schmelkase, 12.

Schmelkase, 12.

Yeah.

12. Number 12.

Yeah, I was there 2008 with my sons and showed them, Schemlkase, 12. Restored. The apartment house looked very nice and neat.

Mm-hmm. But at that time, it was in the Russian zone, so--

It was in the Russian zone.

Russian zone. Yeah, I could not go there.

OK. So you get your orders and you go to Gmunden and--

I go to Gmunden and I was assigned as the officer in charge for economic interrogation. We had all kind of interrogations. So any economist, any owner of a factory, and this and that, I interrogated. But then, of course, the lines were sometimes crossed, and I helped out to interrogate some political prisoners here and there and some military, which we had.

What are the sort of-- do you have any memories of some of the more-- moments that stood out as to the type of-- either information you learned or the things that people said or-- did they try in some ways not to say things, but you were able to tell what the real situation?

Well, I tell you-- we had-- I mean, this is now 2014 and long declassified, but the main-- in those interrogations, the main assistance we have is that we had all-- we had two to a cell, and the cells were all wired. So in the morning, we listened to the playback of what they said to each other. And it's very interesting when they come back from interrogation and they talk to each other. And they said, well-- we had a lieutenant-- oh, what was his name? Joe Rosenberg, Lieutenant Rosenberg. Lieutenant Rosenberg passed as the German interrogator in German, but he was-- he did not speak German. He spoke Yiddish. And so he was very tough, and he interrogated the people.

So we listened, and so Joe called me over and said, look at this tape. And he said to the fellow-- after he was interrogated, he came back and he said-- well, do you speak German?

Mm-hmm.

Yeah. I said, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. And he said-- you know what I told him, and then he repeated that. And then the

other guy laughed, and--

Shall we translate what you just said?

Yes.

I told that-- I really told a tall story to that pig Jew.

Yeah.

That piggish Jew, yeah. And then they laugh about it in the cell.

Right, exactly. So we pretty much know whether people spoke the truth or what they were hiding, and then we interrogated again, of course, and then we bored in. But it was not very much, really, at that time, we acquired. It was interesting. There was I remember Bruno Brein. Bruno Brein was a German-- an Austrian author, and I used to-- before, in '38, I read his books. They were historical books, very good. And he was a Nazi. And so-- but he didn't hide it. But it was very interesting. But we--

And when you-- did you interrogate him?

No. I just read the-- I listened to the tape. I did not interrogate him. But what I was particularly involved was-- there was an Austrian automotive company, Steyr-- Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG. And they made tanks during the war. And we had a couple of their directors as prisoners. And I interrogated them. And then I went to their headquarters in Steyr, and-- to see how they could be Nazified and who should be fired and who should not be fired. And I made those recommendations. And, I mean, I could either fire them or not fire them, but I made the recommendation that the top management-- that one guy could remain, and the other shouldn't. And they carried it out, I suppose. I never heard about it.

I want to ask something from the more technical side. You said later you would listen to the tapes. Does that mean that what was wired in the cells or the interrogations themselves were recorded on magnetic tapes?

Yeah, that's correct.

I see. I see.

Yeah, we could listen to them.

That was the technology at the time.

At the time, yeah, those big roles. I mean, we had a Signal Corps officer with us who was in charge of all this, and he did a good job. But then, I was there for a while. And then-- let's say, I just said, I got in August, roughly, so that covers August, September, October, maybe. In November, I got new orders to-- we did-- within our headquarters, they needed to send two officers to Hyde. Hyde was a little town outside of Linz.

It was the last time-- the last town in the Austria-- in the American zone before the Russian zone took over. And there, we had a prisoner of war camp. And there were about 4,000 people there, all foreigners, non-Germans, and other lieutenant, Lieutenant [PERSONAL NAME] and I, were instructed to go there and liquidate the camp by December 31. And what had been done, of course, before we were sent, all the countries were informed to come and take back their--

Nationals.

--their nationals, and I mean, the Dutch, the Belgians, the Yugoslavs--

So these were all--

--the Spanish.

--everybody who had fought on Germany's side?

Yes.

Mm-hmm.

Yes. There were even the German army, or separate units.

Right.

Like the Spanish had the Blue Division. I mean, there was a lot of Spanish prisoners, which, of course, was easy for me, because I spoke Spanish. But-- so what we dealt with was not necessarily with the prisoners. We dealt with the delegations from the countries that came and took them. Now, I must say that I do not remember what happened to the Spanish prisoners, because I don't think we had relations with Spain. But somehow, they were all taken away, so somebody must have come from Spain. I do not remember the details. I mean, in retrospect, I never thought about it. It seems strange, but they were the easiest to go, because they wanted to go back to Spain, and there was no questions asked, and very orderly. But I guess somebody came.

We had a lot of trouble with the Dutch and the Belgians, because they didn't want to go back, because they would have been prosecuted as war criminals. So the Dutch made it-- the Dutch tried to say they were Belgians. The Belgians said they were Dutch, in order to get to the different countries. So I don't remember the details. All I know, we had orders to close the camp by December 31.

And it became obvious, as we came to the second part of December, before Christmas, that we could get rid of everybody but the Yugoslavs, because the Yugoslavs were split three ways, into-- well, we had royalists, and the other one, Mihailovic, and I forgot who the third one was. But we found out in Vienna-- rather, the headquarters found out-- that this was not an isolated case, that we had Yugoslavs all over Austria. So we made Yugoslavs camps, special camps, and so they were shipped to those special camps. I don't know whether they were separated in those camps, royalists and Mihailovic, and so on.

Was this Serbs, when you say Yugoslavs, or does this mean Croatians as well?

Oh, yes, very much so.

So it meant those who were with part of the UstaÅ¡e and--

Oh, yes--

--who would have fought for, uh-huh, the Croatian forces.

Exactly, yeah.

OK.

But anyway, we got rid of those. They were not picked up, because we had no dealings with Tito, either, and they were just shipped to another camp anyway. We closed--

Did you get any Vlasov army people?

Any what?

Vlasov army people?

I don't remember. I don't remember.

Because that was very close to the Czech border.

Yes.

And I believe the Vlasov army fought in Prague.

Yes, I'm sure, but I do not-- I must say--

You don't know?

There might have been, but I just don't remember.

Because the Soviets would have acted in a different way.

Yes.

Yeah.

Yes, but the Soviets could have come and gotten them, for that matter.

Yeah.

Because they were allies. But I just don't remember. I don't remember any Soviets there.

So your job at this place was to coordinate--

Close the camp.

Close the camp by coordinating the delegations to come and get their nationals.

Yes, which was already coordinated before we came. They were already-- they came shortly after we arrived. So that was-- now, it was complicated, and it was cold and winter. And of course, we went to Linz. And we-- there was one big hotel. I forgot the name now, in Linz. And we lived there and ate there. But it was--

It sounds miserable, actually.

It was pretty miserable, yeah. There was no heat in the hotel. Anyway, we liquidated that, and then I came back.

To Gmunden?

Huh?

To Gmunden?

To Gmunden, yes.

Yeah.

I mean, we were obviously--

Sure.

We were just detailed for that. And I came back, and we stayed-- I stayed until-- I mean, I stayed for a long time, but I mean, until July, I continued interrogation. And that was quite interesting. And in July, we got orders to interrogate the DP camps, because at that time, we had a fairly strong inflow of Soviet Jews trying-- I mean, either, they left. They were authorized to leave, I guess. They came to Austria--

You mean, they were allowed to leave the Soviet Union?

Well, I don't know, but I can't--

They ended up there.

They just-- they came in steady streams.

Yeah.

We had really-- Ebensee was just one of the camps. There were several camps. And they wanted to go to Israel-- well, Palestine, of course. They wanted to go to Palestine or the United States or England. And we just were instructed to screen them and see whether any scientists or any people of possible interest. And so we had really hundreds, every day.

And you had direct contact with them?

Oh, yes, I interrogated them, and-- you know.

What language did you speak?

German, because they spoke Yiddish or German.

Yiddish would be--

Yeah. But I mean, I could understand them, and they could understand me, and I mean, we just had to check their background and see whether there were of any interest. And of course, I would say 98 of 100 were not. But we had engineers or people similar to Operation Paperclip in Germany, scientists brought back to the United States. And we found a few. And the rest we-- it was not up to us. Eventually, those DP camps were all liquidated, and they found their way, mainly through Italy, to Palestine. And a few came to United-- had relatives in the United States, and they eventually came to the United States. But that was a very labor-intensive operation.

Was there anything that you remember from that experience that opened your eyes that something you didn't know before?

Well, I was interested-- actually, I was surprised how many skilled engineers there were. Now, the question, of course, came-- some of them had figured out what we were doing, and so they figured if they're skilled engineers, then maybe they had a better chance to come to the United States, and we did not have enough technical-- we just had to use our own judgment. But it was very interesting.

"Engineer" is a very broad term.

Yes.

And--

Very broad. Lots of people, little time, and fewer people. I mean, there was a lieutenant-- another lieutenant and I who were-- by that time, I'd been promoted to-- already, to first lieutenant, and so I was in charge of that. But it was very

interesting, I must say. So we went ahead. I mean, at the time, I went to Paris a few times, because we had those planes in Salzburg. And in Salzburg, they had a large prisoner of war camp, Glasenbach. And they sent us prisoners which they thought of interest for us to interrogate. So we went down to Glasenbach quite often.

But Salzburg had an airport, a military airport. And so on weekends, when we had time, we went to Paris, or-- the plane was going anywhere. We went down there and said, where are you going? He said, I'm going to Rome. I'm going to Paris. And so off we went.

Gratis?

Of course. It's military, because all-- the war was on. I mean--

It was going to be flying anyway?

Yeah, they were going to fly anyway. And so that's why I came up to Vienna in January '46. And I said, I would like to go to Bucharest. I mean, I'd like to go to Romania, because I had relatives. And so they says, well, we have a plane to Bucharest. It goes-- it's kind of a milk train. It goes to Budapest. It goes to Sophia. It goes to Bucharest, wherever we have military mission.

So I went to Bucharest. And I didn't have to go any farther, because my uncles and aunts were all in Bucharest, because they all had left Czernowitz, Cernuti during the war. And they were all there.

But this is also a very lucky, and in some ways, it sounds like exceptional destiny, that they survived, because many Romanian Jews did not. They were in labor camps. They were transported. They were in military-- they got deported out of the country, and then were gassed.

Yeah. I think my uncle may have been in a labor camp, but he came-- he was back. I mean, I just don't remember.

So they were all in Bucharest?

They were all there. They were all in Bucharest. And one of my father's brothers, the banker, had gone to Israel before the war, to Palestine, before the war. And they all-- I think they were there in Bucharest another year, and then they all went to Palestine. And I saw them when I was-- at the Canadian Defense College, we took a trip to Israel, and I saw them all still.

So when did-- they went in the '40s. That's when they left?

Yes, they left--

Before it became difficult to leave, in other words.

Yes.

That's what I'm asking.

There was no problem at all. They left in '48, I would say. Something around that time.

OK.

They were old and one of my aunts died recently. I mean, she was 100 years old, or something. And so that was very interesting.

And it was for the reason you wanted to see about your family? That's what--

Of course.

Yes, yeah.

I mean, it was-- I felt that I should-- it was my duty to go there and to see them. And they were all relatively well-off. I mean, I don't have no idea--

You reported back to your father about it?

They what?

You reported back to your--

Of course.

Yeah.

Of course. Yeah, my parents were in Colombia then. And I knew, of course, that before I went to-- I told my parents I'm planning to do that, and they told me that they were in Bucharest, and they had some address of one of them. And that's how I found the rest. Otherwise, we'd never found them, you know? And I remember I went to the embassy at the time and I talked to Ambassador Schoenfeld, who was the ambassador there. And he said-- you know, we talked about the Foreign Service. He said, he liked it very much. And I said, well, that's interesting. I might think about that. And so--

He was the US ambassador to Romania?

Yes, in '46. And it was a very interesting time, because when I was there in '46, the King was still there, King Mihai, but he was no longer in Bucharest. He was in Sinai, in the castle. But the Russians were already there. But you see, there was a period of a few months where the Russians were there and the King was there, and then the King finally left. The Russians-- I don't think the Russians had taken over yet, the civilian government. The Russians ran the country, but the civilian government hadn't been formed yet.

Well, there were these transitional times--

Yes.

--throughout the region.

Yeah, and then Ana Pauker came, and she ran-- she was a Jewish communist. And she ran it then. But anyway, that was just a very interesting trip I took. And I mean, I was interested to see what happens. Of course, I wanted to see what-- my family. And so that was nice, because I'd known them from '36, from my visits to-- and so I stayed with them, you know? And so it was very nice.

So of your family, it sounds like almost everybody was unscathed, at least [CROSS TALK]--

On my father's side, everybody.

OK

On my mother's side, just her oldest sister and her husband left-- were gassed. They all--

What happened to them?

I'm sorry?

I mean were they-- did you find-- were you able to trace what happened to them?

Not really. They disappeared. By the time I got to Vienna, they had disappeared. I mean, I talked to my aunt-- like my mother, only my aunt, much more so, was a great bridge player, and she played with a lot of friends. And I talked to one of her friends, a lady who was an-- a Christian lady, stayed there all the time. And I knew her because I tutored her son to make some little money while I was in Vienna. And she told me that they were deported. So I knew-- of course, my parents knew that something had happened to them. And then later on, of course, I found the exact details, because in 1980, I went to my sons, with Bob and Christopher, and then, when we went to the [GERMAN] to find out. And so they checked the records, and they knew exactly when they were deported and how they were moved first to some district and then deported. And--

Do you know what camp they were deported to?

No. Somewhere in Poland. And disappeared, and gone.

So the--

They were the only ones. All the rest--

[GERMAN] means "cultural association"?

The [GERMAN] was the Jewish community in Vienna. And that was the official Jewish community. There, I found, for instance-- while I was gone, of course, my grandfather had died shortly after I left, but it was through them I found out where he was buried, and the exact grave location, and I went there. That's why I went.

I see. So in other words, that piece of information about your aunt-- it was three or four decades before you were able to get something that was concrete?

Just the details. I mean--

Just the details.

I mean, from where they were deported, what building and what house where they lived, which was not-- they had a lovely apartment in the third district. But obviously, they were deported from some miserable place somewhere. Which was-- she was a very cosmopolitan woman and very nice.

But didn't make it out.

Yeah. Those were the only ones that I lost.

Yeah. It's an unusual fate that so many would survive. It's an unusual one.

Well, in Vienna, I tell you-- it was funny, but the majority of my friends-- they all went to South-- not South America. To Australia, to Australia, to the United States, to Great Britain. They all had connections. They all were well-to-do, and very few-- I mean, I know one or two who went to Italy, and they eventually-- I don't know what happened to them. But they died of natural causes or whatever. But they're gone.

When did your service end in the military intelligence?

Well, in 1974, to be exact. But--

Is that--

I went to Reserve.

What does that mean?

My active duty.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah, I went back in March '47. By that time, I had fallen in love with an Austrian girl, and so I left in March. And she came under the War Brides Act of 1946, so the army brought her over by American, and I posted the bond, whereby \$50, if she would not get married within 90 days, she would be returned. Well, we married, and she stayed for 62 years.

And her name?

I'm sorry?

What was her name?

Her name was Maria.

Maria.

But she was, in Foreign Service circles, known as Mary.

Yeah. And was she from Vienna as well?

No, she was from Upper Austria. She was from a little town. I mean, her father was-- had a farm. But she had been-- she worked in our headquarters, because where her parents lived was that part of Austria which-- on this side of the Danube, which was in the Russian zone, so all the girls left, in order not to get in trouble. And she spoke some English, so she got a job at the headquarters, the military-- the USDIC, United States Details Interrogation Center. She was a switchboard operator, and then she was an administrative clerk. So I got to know her. And so her family, of course, I didn't meet until 1960, when I went back. By that time, the Russians had gone, and so--

Wow, I didn't realize that. I didn't realize that it wouldn't have been possible to meet them because of the Russian presence.

I'm sorry?

I didn't realize that because of the Soviet presence, it wouldn't have been possible to meet them?

No, we could not go in the Russian zone without a pass. I mean, even when we went from London to Vienna, which I did almost weekly, we had a gray card, which I still have-- no, I don't have it. It's in the Hoover Institute. I have all that stuff. We had a gray card that we could to the Russian zone, because they stopped you, and to show them the card, and then we could leave. But you couldn't just go.

And did you get news of what was going on in the Russian zone? Was it very different than where the Western allies were?

Well, for instance, I heard from my wife, because her parents were in the Russian zone, and they stole-- they chopped down the cherry tree and stole the-- did all kinds of things. But they were-- when they left Russia, wherever they were located in barracks, they took the toilets out and brought them back, and things like that.

And my only actually-- one of the few occasions I had to interact with the Russians was once when I went to Vienna on an official trip from London to drive to the Russian zone. And as we were driving, there was American Jeep on the road. Obviously, it veered off the road. And we looked around, and we found a body, and it was dead. It was an American

officer, which-- there was something funny about it, because officers are not supposed to drive. But they didn't have a driver, so I don't know what happened, who he we was.

So anyway, we stopped, and the driver, and I took his wallet with his ID, and then the Russians came. The Russian soldiers came out of nowhere. I mean, they were around. And he obviously had an accident. He veered off the road. So the Russian soldiers came to me, and went like this, looking at my watch.

They wanted the watch.

They wanted to buy a watch. They were perfectly nice. And my driver, who knew-- who'd been to Vienna before, he took a couple of Mickey Mouse watches out, and they immediately gave him some money-- I don't know what or how. I didn't look. But then I told-- you know, we couldn't communicate, but we understood that the guy had an accident, so we went on to Vienna and reported it. That's all I could do.

That was your direct-- your only direct--

With Russian soldiers, yeah.

--interaction.

And I must say, I never realized-- I mean, the Russian soldiers were used-- described as brutes and terrible. But in 1984, I was in Austria with my wife and son, and we went back-- the airport-- you know, the Vienna airport is in Schwechat, which is outside of Vienna, about 20 kilometers. And we got there the night before in order to make the plane the next morning, so we wandered around there, the town-- little town, from the airport hotel. And then we found out hundreds of graves of Russian soldiers who had died in the last days of the war. And that's-- they had tremendous sacrifices.

[NON-ENGLISH]

Huh?

[NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH].

Yeah, exactly.

Yeah.

They really-- unbelievable, rolls and rolls with the names.

Yeah.

That was very sad.

I've seen such graves in the Konigsberg region, with Kaliningrad, you know?

Oh, yeah, in Konigsberg. Of course.

It was just a slaughterhouse.

I know.

It was-- and I mean, hundreds of Thousands

Is that Russia now or Poland?

Yes, Russia. It's still Russia. Very militarized, very militarized. But it had always been militarized. So there were fierce battles there, and it was just one wave of soldiers thrown after another.

Yeah.

What were some of your final assignments in Austria before you left?

Well, I'll tell you, after I left Ebensee, I went back to interrogation, but by the time, the Nazification had ended. We had some odd things here and there, but I just cleaned up more of the Ebensee stuff. And I was ready to go when I went in March. I didn't have much.

This was March '47?

March '47, yes.

OK. And did you know what you wanted to do next?

Well, you may have seen this, maybe, from the stuff I sent you. While I was in Vienna-- while I was in Gmunden, rather, my friend of old, Martin Hertz, who got me there, he was in Vienna, of course. And we were in touch by field telephone and all that. So Martin said, you know, I applied for the Foreign Service. And I remember what Schoenfeld had told me in Bucharest and all that. And I said, gee, I'm interested. He said, look, I'll send you the forms. So send me the forms, and talked over the phone to the embassy. And they said, yes, you have a certain date, and fill out the forms, and we'll send you the information.

And they sent me the information, and then I went up to Vienna and took the Foreign Service exam, which was really interesting, because the American embassy was in a building which I know very well before. It was the Austrian diplomatic school. And I could never have gotten in there, but I know I had friends who were there, in the Consular Academy. There was a school, really like the Foreign Service Institute.

So I took the exam and went back. And Martin had taken it also. And Martin Hertz called me then, a month later, and said, I got my assignment. I'm going to Paris as third secretary. How about you?

And I said, I haven't heard.

And he said, well, you took it later than I did. It's probably here in another month or so.

But I heard nothing. I heard nothing for about three or four months. So finally, I went to Vienna and I found the officer who gave me the exam, and he said, what happened? And he looked to check my name. They said, oh, we have your exam right here.

And I said, how come? What happened?

He said, well, we didn't forward it, because we realized that you didn't meet the requirements. You had to be an American citizen for 15 years, and you were naturalized only in '43.

But what about Martin Hertz? What about your friend?

Well, he was born in New York.

Ah.

He was very smart. His mother, heavily pregnant, went to New York, and he was born there. And she went back to Austria. I mean, it was--

Well, good thing he told her about that.

--purely coincidentally.

[LAUGHS]

She accompanied her husband on a business trip or whatever. But he was a native American. So the guy was very nice to me, and he said, look, I'm sorry, and forwarded it to Washington now with a note that-- to notify you in 15 years. And I said, well, thank you very much.

[LAUGHS]

And as it happens, then, because I was continually interested-- so years and years later, when I was in private business in Colombia, before I resigned my second contract in Colombia in '56, I went to the Department. And, you know, got the runaround, and eventually-- nobody ever heard of it. I mean, that thought I was nuts. But I talked to them and they were very nice.

And they said, well, you were in military intelligence. Do you want to be a security officer?

And I said that's not what I'm looking for.

And then one fellow who was there-- no, it was different. I talked to the assistant secretary for administration, and he sent me to the security officer, because he thought military intelligence. So I talked to the guy in charge, and I said, no, I'm not interested in being a security officer.

And he then said, you know, I just heard the other day that the Department of Commerce is looking for military-- for commercial attaches abroad with business experience in Latin America for a temporary assignment, five years, nonrevokable, nonrenewable assignments, these commercial attaches. And you might be interested in that.

So I went to the Department of Commerce, immediately took a car-- cab from state and went there. And I told them who I was and what I was doing. I was in Cali, Colombia.

And they said, yes, we are very interested, and come back tomorrow morning, and we'll convene a board, and we'll see.

And so I went back the next morning, and I was appointed. I mean, it took them three months. I mean, they passed me and took through the--

And that was what year?

--security clearance and all that.

What year was that?

That was '50-- that was '56.

So it was 10 years, not 15 years later.

Yeah. But this regulation doesn't exist-- that went by the board probably a year afterwards. I mean, I didn't follow it, but I mean, no longer existed. It was never a question. So I was appointed then in early '57. I got a message from the State Department, through the consulate in Cali, and-- saying I was appointed as just commercial attachÃ© to Montevideo, five--year nonrevokable appointment. And then I was finished with the Foreign Service. I mean, just a temporary assignment. So I took it.

And of course, after three years-- any government employees after three years can request permanent assignments or--

to take another Foreign Service exam, but-- which was much different to just an essay and some-- answered some questions, go before a board. And by that time, I had been in the reserve-- a reserve officer for three years and had been promoted. So it was a sign. And that's it. In 1960, I became a regular Foreign Service officer, class three, and--

And your career--

I'm sorry?

And your career in the Foreign Service then went until what year?

Well, it went until '85 when I was ambassador in Venezuela. And at that time in '84, we had-- the president of Venezuela went to state visit to Washington. Of course, I went with him. And we saw President Reagan. And the Venezuelan president said to President Reagan-- he said, you know, I think your term ends in 1987, and so does mine. He said, would you mind if you could keep George Landau as ambassador until then? It would be very comforting to me.

And Reagan said, of course. No problem.

So of course, secretary of state was there, George Shultz, and the assistant secretary for Latin America, so there was no question. So I was going to stay in Venezuela until '87 and then retire, which was past my retirement age, because I was 65-- and in 19-- I was 65.

'85.

1985. So in 1984, David Rockefeller came, and he had seen me in various embassies. I'd hosted him in Chile, and I know him fairly well. But I mean, professionally. And so David came to see me in Caracas, oh, in February or March '85. And he said, you know, I'm looking for a new president for the Consul Americas and the Americas Society. And if you're interested, we'd like to have you.

And so we worked out stipulations. I asked my wife, and she was ready, because now, you see, I had still, under the Reagan promise, I still had two years to go. So the Department head was going to propose me after I finished my tour in Venezuela that year to go to Argentina. So I went to-- David Rockefeller made me the offer. I talked to Secretary Shultz, whom I knew very well, and he-- I told him what the deal was.

And he said, look, they're going to put your name forward to Argentina, but it's not a guarantee, because the White House may send a political appointee. He said if I were you, I'd take the Rockefeller job. So I did. And I stayed eight years there. It was a three-year contract, but I stayed eight years. And I loved it. It was really the Foreign Service continued, because all we did was meet heads of states and foreign ministers who spoke with the council. They all were interested to come. It gave them a platform in the United States. So that was a wonderful job.

That sounds fascinating.

Yeah, it worked out very well.

Well, we spent a lot of time talking about, I'd say, the first 25 years of your life, the first 27 years of your life from, 1920 to '47, and now we're condensing a very distinguished career and service to the United States at the latter end of the interview, which deserves much, much more attention and much, much more space than we've got the time. But what I wanted to ask in bridging those two things, I read in the materials that you gave me that you were very involved in promoting democracy and human rights and, I would say, the dignity of the individual.

I'm sorry?

I would say the dignity of an individual in a society in your various posts. How were-- when we began when I began the interview, I said one of the things we're interested to know is what are the forces that shape a person. So how would you

say that your experiences, your early experiences in Austria and growing up in Vienna in the 1930s, and the things that you learned and were exposed to-- how did they shape the kind of public servant that you were as representing the United States abroad and shaped the values that you espoused?

Well, of course, that's an interesting question. I would say this much. Vienna was an extremely cosmopolitan city and-- intellectually, and in every respect, because a lot of things were going on then, musically, artistically, and literature-wise, so that made it very easy for me to be a Foreign Service officer, because I could connect with other cultures. And then, of course, having lived in Colombia when I first came-- and I've never forgotten that I owe them a deep debt of gratitude, because I know what would have happened to me if Colombia wouldn't have taken me. So-- and I spoke Spanish well, so I very much enjoyed being in Latin America. And they saw that. They reciprocated that. I mean, they always said, after all, the Hapsburgs were both Spanish and Austrians, and I was their descendent.

[LAUGHS]

But by the same token, what happened to me-- I always remembered that and made sure that people don't get in trouble for their beliefs or whatever. You know, there should be no minorities. It was often understood that we took care of it. But I must say, in all honesty, when I got my first embassy, it was-- President Nixon was there, and all my instructions were to shut off the heroin traffic from Paraguay, which was prevalent at the time, and get the people extradited who were involved. It was under President Carter, when I went to Chile under Carter, and Carter was very much into human rights. And I got very exact instructions. And, of course, Pinochet was a difficult person to deal with. So, I mean, I was there to protect human rights to the extent I could. That was my mission. So it often understood-- and whenever I get a mission, I carry it out to the best of my abilities.

And that's why, of course, in the middle, while I was in Chile, in-- I got there in '77, '77 to '82. In 1980, Secretary Vance called me and said, the president would like you to go to Guatemala, where we really have human rights problems. And I was less than enthusiastic, I can assure you. And I said, yes, of course, I'll go there. And they asked for my [NON-ENGLISH] to go there. And the Guatemalan checked with the Chileans, and the Chileans said he's a human rights guy. He's going to get caught-- give you troubles, so they give me the [NON-ENGLISH] And then, of course, they thought better and they gave me the [NON-ENGLISH] a week before the election. And at that time, Christo was deputy secretary-- sent me a message and said it's too late now. Let's wait until the election, and then we'll put your name forward again. But, of course, things changed.

And I thought, well, that was the end of that. And the Reagan administration took over, and Secretary Haag, whom I'd known very well when he was Kissinger's assistant to the colonel. So Al Haig called me-- no, he didn't call me. I mean, his office called and said the secretary wanted to see me right away. It was right after he was confirmed. So I went to Washington, and he said-- and I thought, of course, the Reagan administration couldn't care less about human rights, and they're going to fire me.

But they didn't. Al said, you know, we have a real problem in Salvador with human rights and all that, and we got to-- we're really trying to clean that up, and we would like you to go to Salvador. And I said-- Salvador was miserable at the time.

Absolutely.

People were killed left and right, ambassadors slept under the bed, and all kinds of things. And I said, yes, well, if you ask me to, of course I'll go. But he said, you must know that President Carter wanted to send me to Guatemala, which he didn't know, and that was all over the papers in Latin America. And so it will be understood there that I am a retread from the Carter administration, and you just followed their policy.

He said, no, we don't want to do that. Do you know somebody who could go there?

And I said, yes, I do, and gave him a name.

And he said, well, we'll send you somewhere else, and that by March 1 they'll call you and tell you. And by March 1st,

he called me and said, you're going to go to Panama.

I said, fine. My wife said that we can't go to Panama because my hair will not work there in Panama. Well, anyway, we were going to go to Panama until the senator from-- Howard Baker, the Tennessee-- the senator from Tennessee told the president that he had stuck his neck out about voting for the Panama Canal Treaty, which didn't sit well with his constituents, so he wanted the ambassador in Panama to stay for another year to carry out the details. I mean, he didn't know me and I didn't know him. And so I didn't go to Panama. So I went to Venezuela instead, which was better off, and the hair worked for my wife, and no problem.

[LAUGHS]

So that's how--

Well, that's--

--career are formed.

I guess. [LAUGHS] My goodness. But bumped from one to the other to another, but eventually--

Yeah.

Yeah. And Guatemala and El Salvador were vicious places in those times.

Yeah, no, I was delighted--

Very hard.

--not to go there. But you don't say no.

No, you don't say no.

I mean, it's--

So it was being-- it was growing up in Vienna that helped being a Foreign Service officer, because of what the city was at that time, what the place was, the spirit was?

Yes, I mean, your mind is formed in a way worldly way. And it was easy. It was natural for me. And I must say, I mean-- you know, thinking back, I mean, I must say I'm lucky that what happened happened to me, personally, because had I stayed in Vienna, I would have become another lawyer, and the economic situation would have picked up. I probably would have done well. But I mean, nothing to write home about. And this worked out very well. But, I mean, the price the world paid was very high for this.

Yes.

But, I mean, I got my parents out, and that's all I could do.

Did your children get to know your parents?

I'm sorry?

Did your children get to know your parents?

Yes, yes. Bobby, my older son, came-- we went in Cali-- yeah, did we cover-- I don't think we-- yes, we did cover that, didn't we?

You left your parents in Colombia.

No, no, I left my parents-- my parents were in Colombia. I went to the United States.

That's right.

No, but when I went back to New York, I worked again-- we didn't cover that period.

No, we didn't.

Yeah.

We didn't go there.

OK. Well, what I did then is I wanted to go back to school to get a degree, but of course, I was married by then, so I responsibilities, so I couldn't go back to school. So what I did was I took my old job back. They wanted me desperately back at Gondrand. So I became assistant vice president in charge of Latin America. Still, not a big deal. I think I got \$100 a week, which '46, was manageable--

Not bad.

--but not great. And I went to school at night, which was kind of stressful. And I did this for a while. And my wife worked also. She worked at Blue Cross. And we had no children. We had not planned to have any children for a while. Of course, I stayed in the Reserve and I did my active duty every year. I was-- my old friends, and it was nice. I was promoted to captain then and major, so it went on.

And in 1955, one of the-- end of '54, I guess, one of our customers who was the Chrysler-- he had the Chrysler franchise for part of Colombia, Cali. Cali, Colombia. And he borrowed a lot. He was in trouble, because sloppy operation, and Chrysler was going to take it away from him. So he went to Detroit. And they said, well, you need a new manager. So he got the idea, came to see me, and said, would you like to come and work for me?

And, of course, I was interested, because my parents were there. They were in Bucaramanga, but not-- still, it's the same country. So we worked out the details. I mean, it was much better pay. And so I took a two-year contract.

You had finished with night school by then?

No, I had not quite finished it. And what I did-- no, I didn't do anything. I had not quite finished it. And so I went back to Cali-- went to Cali with him and stayed two years. And then when it came up to renew the contract, that's when I mentioned to you, that when I went to the Department of State--

Right.

--and then when I set it up, and so I did not renew it. And went back. That was my Cali episode. But I saw my parents. We used to go there. And I took Bobby along, who was three years old. And Christopher was not born, of course. But later on-- my father passed away in '59, when I was in Uruguay, and-- but my mother lived until '74. And my mother came to see us frequently and came to Spain while we were stationed there and came to Paraguay in my first embassy.

Was that the first time you were appointed ambassador?

It was in Paraguay, yeah, after I finished with Spain. Yes. And so she came to see me in Paraguay. And then she died in '74. And so Chris, my younger son, knew her very well, remembers her very well.

So even though the distances were there, there was a way that life turned out that your family, small as it was, could be

part of one another's lives?

Oh, absolutely.

Yeah.

Absolutely. And again, when my wife came in '47, for instance, the War Bride-- and so the first thing, she got off the plane, she had to-- she needed dresses and she needed-- she had nothing for-- so my cousin, Madelaine, the daughter of my wife's-- my mother's oldest brother was in New York, went shopping with her and bought her the bridal gown and everything. And we were in touch with Madelaine and her husband, who was an Austrian baron, and who left in '38 because he was a monarchist and very much against the Hitler regime. And we were in touch with them until we went abroad, and then we lost contact somehow and never saw her again. She died in Canada in 2005.

After--

All my relatives have died now on my mother's side, my cousins.

Oh, you said you were the youngest.

I was the youngest.

You were the youngest, yeah.

And the others died in London or in Australia. But they all got out, and they all had profitable, interesting life, and they died.

After 19-- in 1947, when you came back, when was the next time you went to Austria? Was it to bring your children there to show it to them?

No, well, of course, I was in Austria, and-- no. The next time was in 1960. I was in Austria three times-- four times. The first time was in 1960, when-- by that time, we had one son. Bobby was seven years old. Now, I must say this, when we were in Cali-- my wife came to the United States in '47. In '56, she went back to Austria for the first time, and they took Bobby along, so he met his grandparents and everything. And in 1960, we all went to Austria, and I met my--

In-laws.

--my in-laws and her family, which was numerous. And we didn't stay very long. And then we came back in '62, and again stayed with them for a while and then left. And that was it. And then I didn't go back-- Mary went back-- of course, when we were in Spain, three years in Spain, she went back every summer for three months and took Bobby along. And then the next time was 1984, when I was on leave. I was in Venezuela, and we went to Europe. And there they took Chris along for the first time. He was in college.

And we showed him Vienna. We went to Austria. We looked-- it was a strange town. I mean, as I told you before beautiful buildings, but some provincial people who spoke with funny accents and I didn't-- good food and good buildings and lovely countryside.

But not the world that you grew up in?

No, it was a strange-- I mean, it could have been Cologne or whatever. It was not. I mean, I knew the streets, where to go, but it was not-- it was meaningless. That was in '84. I mean, no feeling, I'm coming home, or anything. Nothing. Darmstadt.

Yeah, Darmstadt. Yeah.

So anyway, that was '84. And then in 2008, I had a board meeting in Vienna, one-day board meeting, so I figured I would make a week out of it, and I took both my sons along. Well, they'd grown up by then. And I showed them where I was born. We went to the Kultusgemeinde and we got the grave of my grandparents fixed up. And they really looked around and saw it. That was very nice. But again, I couldn't show them the place where I went to dancing school and all that. But it was no emotional experience. It was totally strange place. It had beautiful buildings, but you don't connect with the people, and they're different people. They're not the people I knew. They all became provincial somehow, short pants and--

Lederhosen?

Lederhosen, yeah.

Lederhosen, yeah.

Great. I stayed at the Imperial Hotel, I guess, again, and it was such an interesting country, but I mean-- an interesting city, but I prefer Paris. But Vienna is nice.

Yeah, and when we talk about it now, in these types of interviews, the point is, is there an emotional connection for a person, given what they had in their life and what happened to them? And clearly, then, for you, there wasn't.

There was none.

There was no-- there was none.

None.

Yeah.

It's-- look, it's a different population. It's not the people I know.

Yeah, yeah.

I mean, it's self understood, because, I mean, I was gone for so long. But still, it's not--

Yeah. And it's understandable.

I mean, I must say, I was very touched, in both schools-- I went Akademisches Gymnasium first. I sent them an email, and they invited me to breakfast with my sons, and they have a tablet outside. It was nice, but-- so what?

OK. Tell me? This continues the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Ambassador George Landau on March 10. Ambassador, I think that we've come close to the end of our discussion today. Is there something else that you-- oh, is there something else that you would like to add to what we've talked about, something maybe that has been missed in the telling of your story and your, I'd say, brushes with a fate that could have been a lot worse than it was, but nevertheless, a life that was very much influenced by the rise of the Nazis and the annexation of Austria? Any final thoughts?

Well, totally, and I mean, I-- all thanks to the Nazis for throwing me out.

[LAUGHS]

Because I came to the country I always wanted to come to. And I will never forget when I was seven years old, my parents took me to the Urania. Urania was kind of a cultural institute where they had a movie on the United States. And it was called the [GERMAN], "The Country of Unlimited Possibilities." and I was very much impressed by it, and I must say now, in my 94th year, I can tell you, the title was absolutely right.

Oh, that's a wonderful tribute to this country. And thank you for it. And thank you very much for speaking with us today and sharing your thoughts-- sharing your life experience. And this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Ambassador George Landau on March 10, 2014.

Thank you very much.

Thank you. OK. OK.

And you-- you just watch the monitor. I'm going to zoom in a little bit, and then I want you to start.

OK. You tell me when.

OK, go ahead.

This is the original Austrian passport of George Landau. And he has just donated that to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as part of our interview process. Here, we see the stamps and the date that it was issued and his passport number. Ah, excuse me, I don't know if I see the date that it was issued, but we do have his passport number on there.

We flip the page. And here is a picture of him as a young teenager and with the date of his birth on this side, that he was born on the 4th of March, 1920. And the various stamps that he had in it. Hang on a minute. Ah. To Romania as well. Stamps from 1937. A stamp that already reflects the Nazi takeover in July 1938. And this is his visa-- oops-- to Colombia from that year, and his permission to leave. Excuse me, on this side. OK. There are probably more stamps on here as well.

Let's cut for that. There may be another document.

Roll here.

OK.

OK. This is something called Heimatschein in German, and it's for Ambassador George Landau, and it shows that he was born in 4th of March, 1920, and it's been registered by the city of Vien-- of Vienna, and the date is 1938, so to me, it looks like-- I don't-- I'm not sure. We'd have to find out what is a Heimatschein. Heimat means hometown and schein means certificate, but its purpose is probably to signify that there is no reason for him not to be able to leave Austria. It was written in June-- 27 June of 1938, and he left in early July, I believe. So it was getting documentation at around that period of time.

All right.

This is the birth certificate-- a photocopy of the birth certificate of Mr. Landau, George Walter Landau, signifying, yes, his birth date of the 4th of March 1920, and with a stamp at the bottom, having been born in Vienna and so on.