

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Eric Simon
June 21, 2014
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PREFACE

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ERIC SIMON

June 21, 2014

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Dr. **Eric Simon**, on June 21st, 2014, in **Hackensack, New Jersey**. Thank you, Dr. **Simon**, for agreeing to come and speak with us today, to share some of your experiences.

Answer: Thank – you’re wel – very welcome.

Q: I’m going to start from the very beginning, and I’d like you tell me what your name was at birth, the date of your birth and where you were born.

A: My name at birth was **Jacob** – well, I’ll say it in German, **Jakob Erich**(ph) **Simon**. That’s what it says on my birth certificate. I was named after an uncle who died, unfortunately, at 26 years of age, I never met him. And I was born on his birthday, and I was named after him.

Q: Wow.

A: My parents preferred the name **Erich**(ph), so I was – became **Eric**, **Eric** – **Erich**(ph) **Jakob Simon**, and when I came to this country I anglicized it to star – drop the **H**, and I’m **Eric Jacob Simon**.

Q: **Eric Jacob Simon** today.

A: Or **Eric J. Simon**.

Q: Yeah.

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A: I was born in **Wiesbaden**, in **Germany**, in **Hessen**, in a place called – a hospital called the **Paulinenstift**(ph) in **Wiesbaden**, in – on June 2nd, 1924.

Q: June 2nd, 1924.

A: And we lived in **Wiesbaden**, address **Rudisshammerstrass** 15, until we emigrated in – late in 1938.

Q: Okay. So it's amazing that you remember even your street address.

A: Well, I've been back, so that – that helps.

Q: Were you an only child?

A: No, I have a brother who is 19 months younger, whose name is **Walter Ernst**, or **E. Simon**, who lives in **Philadelphia**, and we are very close.

Q: Okay, so it was the two of you, two boys.

A: Just the two of us.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your family, the – the family you were born into.

A: Right.

Q: What did your father do as a profession, did your mother work **[inaudible]** and what kind of families did they come from?

A: My –

Q: These are big questions.

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A: Yeah. I don't know as much about my grandparents as I should know, but I will tell you what I know. My father was born in a tiny little town called **Gensingen** [indecipherable].

Q: Okay, **Gensingen** [indecipherable].

A: He, I think went only to **Volksschule** and then became an apprentice in a grain and feed, **Getreide und Futtermittel** business.

Q: Okay.

A: Which he then went into a-as – with a partner and as his own business.

Q: As his own business.

A: As his own business, and did very nicely. His par – his fa – his father was also doing grain and feed sales, and he also occasionally sold a cow. He – he wa – in this tow – little town, did a little bit of everything. My grandmother, **Fanny Simon** was a lovely woman. She was still very beautiful when she was 80.

Q: Really?

A: They were lovely grandparents and I enjoyed vacations at their house.

Q: Were they – were they well-to-do, your grandparents? Were they originally meltu –

A: Were they well-to-do?

Q: – well-to-do, or middle class, or –

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A: I would say middle class, they were not very well-to-do, but they were not – I mean, they had a little house, you know, sort of a – very closely in almost like row houses in that little – little – very ancient town. And they were – they were fine, but they were not – I would not say they – they were well-to-do.

Q: What about your –

A: My grandparents on my mother's side I think were a little bit better off. My grandfather on that side had a – and a – and a [indecipherable] he made brandy.

Q: Wow.

A: And I enjoyed visiting them, and they – they – they did, I think, pretty well. They had – they had the [indecipherable] where they lived, and it was a really fascinating place. I was very disappointed after the war to find that had been bombed, and it co – there was nothing left of their house or their factory, whatever you'd want to call it, and everything had completely changed.

Q: Tell me, where – where were they? Were they in the same village?

A: They went **Bingen am Rhein**, not far.

Q: **Bingen** – okay, **Bingen am Rhein**.

A: **Bingen am Rhein**, and my mother grew up there.

Q: What was her maiden name?

A: Her name is – maiden name is **Meyer, m-e-y-e-r**.

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Q: And her first name, your mother's first –

A: **Paula.**

Q: **Paula.**

A: **Paula and Joseph.**

Q: **Paula –**

A: My parents.

Q: Okay. **Joseph Si – Simon.**

A: **Joseph Simon.**

Q: **Simon.** And **Paula –**

A: **Paula Meyer Simon.**

Q: Okay. And so she came from **Meyers**, who had the **weinerei**(ph), th-the wine –

A: Right, right

Q: – the brandy –

A: Exactly, exactly.

Q: – factory there.

A: Right.

Q: Did they have – were they – did they have brothers and sisters, your parents?

A: My parents? My mother had a sister, one sister, and my dad had that brother who died so young in an automobile accident, age – at 26.

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Q: The one you were named after?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: And strangely enough, I was born exactly on his birthday, so –

Q: That's quite a coincidence.

A: So, when my – I don't know exactly how my dad and mother met, but they were very much in love, and they married in 1923, I believe, and honeymooned in **Heligoland**, and I think I was conceived there, because I – they were married in August, and I was born the next June second.

Q: Yeah. So **Heligoland**, where is that? Tell me [indecipherable]

A: It's an island, I think in the – in the **North Sea**.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm not a hundred percent sure of that.

Q: Okay.

A: Never been there, but I heard a lot about it, it was a very favorite place for honeymoons at that time.

Q: Oh, the **Niagara Falls** of **Germany**, then.

A: Exactly.

Q: So, do you have any earliest memories –

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A: Yes.

Q: – as a small child?

A: I – I think so, because I –

Q: Okay.

A: – it's hard sometimes to tell what – what – what do you remember, what were you told.

Q: Yes.

A: But I remember vaguely my mo – when – that my brother came home, and very short – wh-when he was very small baby, he had some kind of infection on his face, which became a sept – septicemia, a blood poisoning. And he had to have an operation. I don't know exactly what they did, I guess just maybe drained the – the – the sore that he had that was infected. And lu-luckily he survived, because that was almost always fatal. Had a big scar on – that never totally disappeared. It was –

Q: Oh really?

A: And he still has a little bit of that. But the – he was fine, and –

Q: Why does that stick in your memory?

A: – I remember that – pardon?

Q: Why do you think that sticks in your memory?

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A: Well, again, I – I don't – I think it – it was dra-dramatic, and – and it may have been – it maybe have been really more been told to me than – than I really remember. But I think I remember – think that I – when I was three – se – three or four years old. We had, I think – this, don't forget was – I was born in '24, so we had a – our – our childhood were really quite happy. My parents were well off. We had – we lived in a beautiful, huge apartment in this –

Q: Oh, describe it to me.

A: It had two or three bedrooms, it had at least one bathroom, I – may have been two, I don't remember. And I – or at least a separate toilet. A – and **hamzimmer**(ph), a – a what would call it?

Q: **Hanzimmer**(ph)?

A: **Hanzimmer**(ph), a salon, a –

Q: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, sort of a living room or a –

A: Living room.

Q: – meeting room.

A: – which was very large, and a dining room. Something called a **[indecipherable]**, which was really a place where my parents got dressed in their – off their bedroom. And master bedroom, and I think two – two other bedrooms, and

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my brother and I usually shared a bedroom. I think the other bedroom was made into a study or something.

Q: And wha –

A: But it was very large and it was very beautiful and we had a balcony, and was a quiet street.

Q: It sounds like a 19th century kind of building.

A: Yes, it – it – I mean – and – and my grandfather owned that apartment building, so my dad and my uncle owned – owned the whole thing eventually. And it was quiet – a nice place for the children to play, ride their tricycles and bicycles and –

Q: Where would you do that? In the courtyard? Was there a courtyard?

A: Or even on the street, because there wasn't a whole lot of traffic. So this was my early childhood and the next major thing I remember, and we can go back if something comes up from a question, was when I was about six, seven years old, I developed on my left eye, I believe it was, a – what looked like a – a serious infection or some inflammation, where I had a drooping li-lid, and it looked very angry. And my parents took me to an eye doctor in **Wiesbaden**, of all – of all names, Dr. **Goering**.

Q: Oh, good God.

A: He was a cousin or something of the field marshal.

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Q: Really?

A: And he came out with a cockamamie diagnosis of **TB** of the eye.

Q: Tuberculosis of the eye.

A: And my parents got – yeah, I don't even know if that exists.

Q: Yeah.

A: But my parents got scared enough so they sent me for the entire – when I was about seven years old, for the entire winter to a **kinderheim**, which I guess translates best to a chi-children's camp –

Q: Yeah.

A: – in **Samaden**(ph), **Switzerland**, a village right outside of **Saint Moritz**.

Q: Well, that's not bad.

A: No, it isn't bad except I was so homesick I couldn't enjoy it.

Q: Of course, of course.

A: That time I think I was even without my brother, and I was there from before Christmas til after Easter, and I just cried myself to sleep many nights. Didn't really appreciate, as I did la-later on, as I will tell you in a minute. So I was there for a very long time, the idea was that the mountain air is good for **TB**. And the following year they send me back again, I think also for most of the winter, to another – but this one – this – this one time was a much more pleasant, Jewish

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kinderheim in **Celerina**, which is the town between **Samadan(ph)**, or **Samadan(ph)**, and **Saint Moritz**. And that time I had my brother with me, an-and I was a little older and I had a very good time, and I learned how to ski. I mean, I learned the rudimentary –

Q: Yeah.

A: – aspects of it, snowplows and – and m-my dad came to visit, and show you how brothers can differ, I said – I ju – I was starting to run into his arms because I was so happy to see him, and my brother said, no, first we're gonna finish the sled ride down the mountain [**indecipherable**]. But we had a wonderful time –

Q: Kids are like that.

A: – seeing him, we still enjoyed seeing him.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and that was actually a very interesting –

Q: So this was –

A: – experience.

Q: Were you very close to your brother from the very beginning?

A: Oh yes, we – you know, we had our fights, as most children, especially that close, two boys do. But we were always very close, we – we ch – shared a bedroom and we – we couldn't go to sleep without saying [**speaks German**]

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Q: Oh, that's sweet, that really is.

A: Right. So, and then I really became very interested in winter sports, and I – my dad, and then following when – as I became a little older, like 10 - 11, my dad took me with him. My par – my parents took separate vacations. I haven't told you much about the business –

Q: No.

A: – but –

Q: I'd like to know about ma –

A: – my mother enjoyed working in the business. So she was basically office manager, bookkeeper, accountant, whatever, and in-in the – in the – in – in the [indecipherable] which was in our building, so she didn't have to go anywhere. But they didn't take vacation together, somebody had to be there for the business, so they – my mother went with his sister, my dad went pretty much by himself, but met some people he knew that came every year in **Saint Moritz**.

Q: Oh, so is that – was that –

A: So at that time it wasn't quite as –

Q: Yeah.

A: – as fa – posh as it is now, but it was still a beautiful resort, and he took me with him for – from – I guess from the time – from what, 11 to 13. Thirteen was in 1937,

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and it was the last time we were able to go to **Switzerland**. Now, my dad waited a long time, and I'll explain that, to emigrate, and I'll explain that –

Q: Okay.

A: – very carefully. But he clearly knew it was coming, because one of the reasons for going on all these vacations was that – to smuggle money out of **Germany**.

Q: Oh really?

A: Absolutely, he started that very early. He would go to **Switzerland** – first of all, you had – the Germans gave you a certain amount of foreign money, they allowed you a certain amount of money to change to – so let's say in the case of Swiss francs, or Dutch guilder, you had a couple of thousand dollars, whatever it was, he would live in a little cheaper hotel, save some money, put it in a bank in **Switzerland** or **Holland, Belgium**, wherever we went. He also took along a [indecipherable] or contacts, and sold it there. In addition, I found out later they bought a row house in **Philadelphia**. So –

Q: Did they? Even before coming here?

A: They really in – in the fi – the idea that we may go there, and we – or go to the **United States**. And so they – they were really quite foresighted in that sense.

Q: Yeah, it's true, it's true, because many people –

A: Right.

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Q: – didn't know where to go, or how.

A: Yeah, but he didn't even apply for a – for a visa, but I'll explain that in a minute.

So my mother was made – mainly in the business, so she hired a both some – some help in the kitchen, and you know, like a – a maid – a maid.

Q: You anticipated one of my questions, yes.

A: But she also, from time to time hired a nursemaid for – for the two boys.

Q: Okay. That's one thing I wanted to ask, is whether she had any help in the house.

A: Oh, absolutely –

Q: Okay.

A: – since she ur – worked quite a bit. She almost always had a maid, as long as we were allowed to have them. And from time to time quite often had also, at least on weekends, a nursemaid for us.

Q: So were these people – were they – did they change a lot, or did you have people come help her and – and th-that became part of the family? What kind of relation did you have with this –

A: I-In the beginning, yeah. Early on, as they were there quite a long time and – and became sort of a part of the family, I mean, really – even had Christmas trees for the maids, which we enjoyed too, at Christmastime. Later on, of course, these things changed a lot. When the **Nuremberg** laws came out, we had to have a maid over

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say 55 years old, and wa – while the lady was very nice, we never became that close. But I had, I-I remember, at least one young woman that took care of us on weekends when we were already a little older, when I was maybe 10 or 11, and my brother was a year and a half younger, whom I had a terrible crush on. She was very, very pretty. And so the reason my par – well, first of all, let me say something about the times.

Q: Yes.

A: We – it was – as soon as the Nazis came to power, things did change pretty quickly.

Q: How? How did – did it – how did it affect your life? I mean, the – your family's life, not just yours.

A: Actually, you know, clearly not as much as it did later on, but very quickly we couldn't go to our swimming pool, our favorite swimming pool. We couldn't go – my – my dad belonged to a **luft bad** –

Q: So, a **luft bad**.

A: – which was basically the German equivalent of an all male nudist colony. They went there to walk around in the nude and take sun baths in the nude.

Q: Right.

A: And they couldn't over – over there. There were – were signs [**speaks German**]

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Q: Jews are not allowed, yeah, not allowed in – not –

A: All over, yeah, also some of the mu – movie theaters and theaters.

Q: And that was pretty soon after the –

A: Even some park benches, I don't remember for sure whether – if that was the case in **Wiesbaden**. But, I mean, those things became evident.

Q: So, that soon after '33? I mean, soon –

A: Very soon, I would say –

Q: So you were nine years old –

A: – '34 - '35.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And they made it more and more difficult for my dad to operate his business. He had a l – a – an **[indecipherable]** and wholesale grain business. He – he bought and sold, and he he had a – a – what do you call it, a –

Q: A tire, a towel, a si – excuse me, a silo?

A: Not exact silo, a – a warehouse with a thing where you – where you can put – put – put the grain through into sacks and all – and all sorts of – even, I think, some milling. And this warehouse was taken away from him, and what we found out later is, it became a – an arms depot –

Q: Really?

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A: – for the Nazis. And my dad went and took a picture of that warehouse, not knowing it was an arms depot, I don't think he knew, and was immediately hauled in by the Gestapo, and questioned and told he was not allowed to take pictures at this. But they let him go that time.

Q: So this is after it's taken away from him?

A: Yes, that was probably about '36 - '37. Between '36 - '37, I don't remember exactly what year. And then, of course, it became more and more difficult for him to do any business. Luckily, he had savings, so he was able to live from about '36 to – until the end of '38, when we emigrated to **United States** –

Q: That's actually – yeah.

A: – and had enough left over for us to live a few months before he started to work there. But things got more and more difficult. If – if a Jewish had wanted to go to a gymnasium, there was a quota. And my parents wanted to send me to the **orangienstrasse**(ph) gymnasium, I forget, they had a form **real** gymnasium, something like that, and they couldn't get in. But I got into the **Gutenberg** gymnasium, which was a **humanistisch** gymnasium and a **real** gymnasium. About the only difference between the humanistic part and the – and the **real** part was that in humanistic part you took Greek as a second, after Latin – after Latin and French, then Greek, and the other one you took Latin, French and then English. And I went

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to the **real** part of it, and well, only about, I would say six Jewish boys – this was an all boys' school, and I believe there may have been a girl – separate girl gymnasium as well, six or seven Jewish kids among about 300 students.

Q: Wow. That's not much.

A: And I had one very good friend, whom I already had as a friend in the **Volksschule**, whose name I would give you. His name was **Vanna(ph) Kahn(ph)**; became **Warren Kahn(ph)** in the **United States**, and he now retired in **Sarasota, Florida**, and we still see each other occasionally, as I age.

Q: Another Jewish person? He was Jewish as well?

A: Jewish – Jewish as well.

Q: Did you have any non-Jewish friends as you were growing up?

A: I did, and I'm – the one I remember most vividly is a – a boy with the typically German name of **Karl Heinz Mueller(ph)**.

Q: Oh gosh, yes.

A: I can't be get mi – more German than that.

Q: Yeah.

A: And he used to come to my house, I used to come to his house, played together, enjoyed each other, until one day he came to my house and said, **Eric**, my dad is an opera singer, he works for the **Startz(ph) Oper**, which is a government –

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Q: Opera company.

A: – o-operated, and he was told that if I see this Jew boy one more time, he doesn't have a job. I said, you can't come back. I absolutely don't want to be responsible for that. And I've never seen him since, and I have no idea whether he alive or dead. I totally lost track.

Q: What – how old are you when – when – when that happened?

A: Must have been 12 or 13, because we left when I was 14 –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and it happened a little before we left, so it – probably 13.

Q: How did – how did you feel about it when he said that, were you shocked?

A: I was very upset.

Q: Yeah.

A: Very upset. I mean, I wasn't shocked because I had a feeling this was gonna come. But I was very sad. He wa – we were very close. But also, around that time, I wi – we'd w – be walking down the street and – and people would yell dirty Jew.

[speaks German] and things like that. People who didn't know me at all, I – I mean, I don't know that I looked particularly Jewish, but they seemed to know I was Jewish, an-and I didn't – I didn't let it bother me, but I mean, it was –

Q: How could it not bother –

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A: – sometimes very upsetting, you don't know how soon they're gonna start hitting and –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and attacking. And if they di – the eye – it's interesting, the people who knew me in high school, in the gymnasium, were very nice to me all year long, except on one day. One day a year they were – th-they had to put on the uniform to come to school. It was called **Hitlerjugend Werbewoche**.

Q: It means –

A: It means –

Q: – the **Hitler** youth, sort of like –

A: **Hitlerjugend** is the **Hitler** youth –

Q: – recruitment year – recruitment week.

A: – **werbewoche** means recruiting week, exactly.

Q: Yeah, recruiting week.

A: There's nothing to recruit, because every German boy who was not Jewish, had to belong.

Q: Yeah.

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A: But they came to – they – they propagandized the **Hitler** youth by coming to school in the uniform, and they were suddenly, totally changed. And they were not very nice, and sometimes quite –

Q: Some kids –

A: – agress – aggressive. And one year we even ma – **Warren** and I ha-had to actually fight them off. We stood back to back so we couldn't be attacked from the back and – and punched, until a very nice gentleman with a cane came along and shooed – shooed these guys away. We were very lucky –

Q: And this was in school?

A: Hm?

Q: This was in the school halls?

A: No, no, this was out on the street, yeah. This is near the school.

Q: And were these your classmates?

A: No – well, a couple of them may have been, yes. I don't remember exactly.

Q: Older than you, younger than you?

A: There all in uniform – in **Hitler** you – youth un-un-uniform.

Q: Were they older than you?

A: No, about the same age.

Q: Okay, okay.

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A: So, you know, things were beginning to go south, and you could tell that with things were not pleasant for people, so –

Q: I – I want to go back a little bit. I want to go back to your family life. The relations that you had with the hired help –

A: With?

Q: With the hired help, the people who came to help your mother in the – in the home, either take care of you or in the kitchen on the weekends. Did those relations change? You said that the **Nuremberg** laws came, and so you couldn't hire somebody who was younger than 55. But did the attitude of the people who were hired, did that change?

A: I don't know. I mean, it – not that I was aware of. They were all – I mean, they – first of all, even if they did, it didn't show it, because they want – they wanted their jobs.

Q: Right, that's true.

A: So I – I really can't answer that question.

Q: What about conversations before **Hitler** came to power? You would have been still a child that is 10 years old or younger. But were there conversations in the home about what there were – what kind of atmosphere was in **Germany**, what kind of economic troubles **Germany** was going –

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A: I think there was some conversation about that they were very worried that **Hitler** might come to power. And I – my dad had read “**Mein Kampf**.” And I’d like to take that occasion to say that my parents didn’t have a lot of formal education, but they were amazingly intellectual. I mean, they had a huge library, they read all the classics, **Schiller**, **Goethe** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – **Lessing**. And they – they were very b – very mu – very much interested in education and in reading.

Q: Okay.

A: My dad had read “**Mein Kampf**,” and so he knew what **Hitler** was saying about the Jews, and was worried that he meant it. And so, they were concerned, I mean, no question about it. And – but that was about the extent of it.

Q: Did they wo – di – did they ever have conversations with you and your brother about life outside, about being careful, about possibly being attacked, or pi – ki – how kids – how you should react if kids call you names or things?

A: Not that much. I mean, it didn’t happen that often, and I – it may have been discussed, but I don’t have any – any real good recollections that I can give you.

Q: Okay. Would your family –

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A: But I think they were a little concerned about my being in a – in a school with so few Jewish children. And of course, I noticed the discrimination not from the children, but from the higher ups, immediate – very, very – very quickly. I was a pretty good soccer player, and was what you would call now a striker. And together with the center, whose name was **Krempel**(ph), I happen to remember his name, we scored a lot of goals. And one day my – the coach came to me and said, you can no longer play on the line, I'm gonna put you in the goal, because you're not going to be playing in the interschool game, because you're Jewish. And then I played goal for a while, and then I was out altogether. And the other time I was very uncomfortable is, they taught religion in school. So couple times I went along with – for – with the Catholic class, because I'd – I was embarrassed to drop out. And then th-the – our synagogue, the **[indecipherable]** in German it's called **liberale Gemeinde**, a liberal exa – which is what – here – here would be called Conservative. We were members of that, and the religion teacher, also the cantor, is Herr **Kappel**(ph) would come to the high school, to the gymnasium and with the two or three of us, would have a master key, and look for an empty classroom, and give us religious classes. So that was a little uncomfortable being different from the rest of the – the kids.

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Q: Were the classes at the – I mean, was it very visible and – and obvious when you would go for those religion classes, or were they held at the same time as –

A: They were held at the same time and it was probably not that obvious, but I felt – I was self-conscious about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And probably other kids were too.

Q: Yeah.

A: But – and then I – I also did some track in – in gym and – and so forth, and running, and I was pretty good at that. I really worked hard at athletics, cause I felt I would be better – better off if I'm strong and – and athletic than if I were a weakling and bookish and –

Q: And wouldn't be able to defend yourself.

A: And – right, exactly.

Q: Yeah.

A: We belonged to a – since we couldn't belong to the – to the re-regular ones, there was a Jewish athletic group called **Schild Wiesbaden**.

Q: **Schild Wiesbaden**.

A: Also, the area [**speaks German here**]. This was a very conservative Jewish group that were proud of the fact that they, or relatives had been front line soldiers

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in the first World War. And they ran this shi – this sports organization, where we did a lot of athletics ranging from Ping Pong to soccer to handball. I don't know the – you know the German handball. It's like soccer except you – you dribble the ball and throw it at the goal.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we – that was a great activity that most of us enjoyed very much. The Germans also had called – had something called an **alliystoms(ph) medalia(ph)**, where you – you have to – it's like a decathlon or something. You have to do – swim certain distance in certain time, you have ride your bike, you have to do all kinds of –

Q: Measureable. Things that are –

A: Measure – measureable things that have certain minimum you have to do, and if you do them all, then you get a medal. And when the Jews couldn't get that, so we had our own. Exactly with exactly the same metrics.

Q: But it sou – it sounds, you know, for – when you mentioned who was running this **schild verein(ph)**, th-the youth orga – the Jewish sports organization –

A: Yes.

Q: That it's – it sounds very bittersweet, actually, in that if they were very proud of having been soldiers in World War I –

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A: Yes.

Q: – that that patriotism didn't matter.

A: Didn't matter wi – di – in fact, those people were probably the ones that are most likely to die because they thought they – they don't mean us. We're the – we're the patriotic Germans.

Q: Yeah.

A: Happened to be of Jewish faith, but they were totally wrong. And of course, people who were only part Jewish were also very insecure, cause they had no belonging. My parents were never very religious, but when **Hitler** came, they became – I should say, I don't know whether to say more religious, but more belonging. In other words, they went to the synagogue more and wanted to be part of the congregation. They felt a need for this, because of the persecution.

Q: A sense of community.

A: Yes. A sense of community, exactly, because of the persecution there. They had that basis, and I think that was very helpful, and it was people who were – didn't have that who committed suicide, and who – who were very depressed, and – and had real problems.

Q: Did you know any families –

A: Not that [indecipherable]

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Q: – that were mixed?

A: Pardon?

Q: Did you know of any families that were mixed? That is –

A: Yes, we knew some families who were mixed, and – but I don't – I can't remember any names, but my parents had friends who were one – one party was not Jewish. And – and of course, people who were part Jewish, who had one Jewish parents, w-we knew some. My par – most – as I remember, my – most of my parents' friends were Jewish. I think they may have had some – well, they certainly had some – some Gentile friends on vacation in – in ca – **Saint Moritz**, all his friends were non-Jewish, and – most of them, most of them.

Q: Mm-hm. Were they like business partners, or they w-would have been people he knew from school, or –

A: No, just – or – in – in **Switzerland**?

Q: Yes.

A: They were people that you just met at the hotel.

Q: Oh, I see. I see. I see.

A: Yeah, there was a Dutch lady that I may come back to, because she helped him get out of **Germany** –

Q: That will be interesting to –

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A: – that he met every winter. There were a family, **Zimmerman**, who were not Jewish, but that's a name that can be either. There was a – there was a family from **Italy**, I believe they were Jewish, but they – they – I don't remember the name. But they – they made a lot of friends there, or my dad did and my – as I said, my mother went with her sisters. I don't – and I was never with her, so I don't know what kind of friends they made there. But my father had many friends there, you know [indecipherable]. And when I went with him, I went through my religious stage. I was 12 years old and wanted to be a rabbi.

Q: Did you?

A: And so I made a move to the Jewish kosher hotel, called the Hotel **Edelweiss** in **Saint Moritz-Bad**. And we had a very good time there, and that's where I really learned how to ski. We took some more lessons. My dad and I skied together and I took some lessons. Learned to Christie into the hill, and it became a real passion with me, although I never skied again from the time we left **Germany**, twel – until – from ni-nine – from 1938 to 1955.

Q: Really?

A: So the best years of my life in hi – you know, college – high school and college, graduate school, I did not ski, no-not really. So we took it up again when my oldest son was five years old.

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Q: Oh my.

A: And we began again, and of course I had the liking of it and the – and no fear of it, so it –

Q: So it helped.

A: – it, very quickly –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and then since then we've been skiing some every winter until about three years ago when I more or less gave it up.

Q: Well, that's pretty impressive. That's pretty impressive.

A: It was a real – a real **[indecipherable]**

Q: It was a real passion, huh?

A: Yeah, a real passion. I'll come to my other passion later.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: My wife of almost 67 years I'm talking about. Well, we'll come back to that.

Q: Okay.

A: So we es – we had a pretty good **youth** with – between the vacation – we had summer vacations too, we went to **Kennorka(ph)** and **Bru-Bruges, Wuja(ph)** in –

Q: Mm-hm, **Belgium**?

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A: – **Belgium**. We went to **Santfort** in – in **Holland**. Most of our vacations were outside of **Germany** and I think the – the fact that they wanted to leave money there was certainly a part of the reason. I did go to some **kinderheims** in **Germany**, but these were just –

Q: Yeah.

A: – like a few weeks in – in the summer, and only for recreation, not for health reasons. One was in **Oberowler**(ph), I don't even know where that is any more, and the other was in the **Schwarzwald** in **Bad Dürkheim**.

Q: Uh-huh. The ones that you went to for health reasons, the **kinderheim**, you mentioned the first time you were seven years old. Would that have been your first year in school, in regular school?

A: Yeah, well, second year.

Q: Second year.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you missed a lot of schooling that year?

A: I guess so. I never –

Q: And the – and the following year as well.

A: I never thought of it.

Q: Yeah. No, no, no, it's just –

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A: Yeah.

Q: – I wonder, you know, whether it –

A: Probably was some Christmas vacation, but I don't – but I probably did, yes, yeah, I – I – unless I went earlier, before I went to school, but I – th – my recollection is that I was at least six or seven years old. Yes, I think you're right.

Q: Okay.

A: But I didn't have a problem. At least I can't remember any problem.

Q: Yeah. Or if there was one it long go – it's long gone.

A: Oh yes, right, right.

Q: So –

A: So my – my **Volksschule** was called the **Hebbleschule**(ph).

Q: **Hebbleschule**(ph).

A: I don't know who Mr. **Hebble**(ph) was, but the **Hebbleschule**(ph) I was there for four years, and then I went onto the gymnasium.

Q: Did you always feel different?

A: Did I al-always?

Q: Feel different.

A: Feel different?

Q: Or, did you not feel different at all, and it was other people who were –

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A: I didn't feel different at all.

Q: Okay.

A: No, I really didn't. I – di-didn't even occur to me until people started to –

Q: Yeah.

A: – call me names or attack me or – or – or things happened that we're not allowed to do. But I never felt different.

Q: Did anybody come to your defense when you were attacked, either verbally –

A: As I said, there was this gentleman with a cane –

Q: A gentleman with a cane.

A: – who – who shooed them away. I don't remember whether any kids came – tried to come to my defe-defense. I don't remember that too clearly.

Q: How did the teachers behave?

A: The teachers in general were very good to us, surprisingly. I mean, I had some very courageous teachers. In – in the **Hebbleschule**(ph) I had a mi – a – had

Cantrow, c-a-n-t-r-o-w, who was an extremely fine human being. When I went back to **Wiesbaden** as an adult American, he had passed away. But his wife knew me. I cannot understand that. She knew immediately who I was. So apparently he took a special interest in us Jewish kids because of what was happening, or beginning to happen. And then I pa – went to this gymnasium in ray – the

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Gutenberg gymnasium. And there too, I had a history professor, or teacher [indecipherable] **Herr Wesling**(ph) who lived in our apartment house and was obviously very anti-Nazi, and every time he had a cold and was out for a day, I thought he was in a concentration camp, because he spoke up with incredible courage.

Q: What are – what he – what are the things that he would say?

A: He would say nasty things about the Nazis and about the axis, and made fun of the fact that the Japanese are not Aryans. He would – you know, you had to say **heil Hitler** at the beginning of every class. He would [indecipherable]. Whereas some of the others would stand straight and make sure that nobody's moving and then –

Q: Yeah.

A: – stick out their arm.

Q: Did you have to do that too?

A: I never knew what to do. I f – I mean, I was damned if I did and damned if I – if I didn't, so I usually di-did, because I didn't know which was –

Q: Well, you know, at that point you're not –

A: Right.

Q: – you're in the powerless position.

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A: It was a – it was very – this was very difficult for – luckily nobody said anything, but I was worried that somebody would say, how come you, Jewboy, do this, you know [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: – desecrating the **Deutsche kreuz**. Didn't happen, so –

Q: Yeah.

A: – fortunately. But it could've.

Q: Were there any teachers who were not particularly sympathetic?

A: I'm sure there were, but I didn't have any myself.

Q: Okay.

A: But of course we're – what did happen at that time, and it's all – totally su – totally su-surprising now to anybody I tell it to, is that pe – that kids got hit, sometimes for really stupid reasons. I was actually a pretty hi – well – well behaved child, but I got hit with a bamboo stick on my rear end because of bad handwriting. If – if my essay or whatever, composition was written in bad handwriting, it w – I would get a – an – a grade – sometimes a good grade, but it was in red. And if it was in red, they had to come up and bend over and get two or three s – strokes with a bamboo stick. I mean, ridiculous.

Q: The connection bet –

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A: It didn't improve my handwriting one bit.

Q: Di – was that meted out to everybody, that if you had –

A: Well, everybody had – I mean –

Q: Who had bad handwriting.

A: – any – was other reasons for – for hitting kids. And – and there was one teacher who hit ki-kids wi-with this – with the stick across the hand. That was very painful.

Q: Yeah.

A: I didn't have him, but my – my friend **Vanna(ph) Kahn(ph), Warren** –

Q: He did.

A: – he got some of that.

Q: Yeah.

A: But, the craziest times, from that point of view.

Q: I want to go back a little bit, circle back and ask something I didn't before. And that is, I'd like you to tell me a little bit about your parents' personalities. Your father's personality, his – whether he was open or gregarious, or more reti – reticent, or whatever.

A: Okay, my – my father was extremely gre-gregarious and outgoing.

Q: Yeah?

A: He had a wonderful personality, and that's why he was a very good salesman,

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and was able to start a totally different business in this country and do well. He was in the lighting business when he came over here, which he knew nothing about. But he had such a great personality that everybody liked him and bought from him. And he – he was very outgoing and very – loved people. My mother was more – also had a very nice personality, but she was much more reserved – while he was around especially, she kind of took the background, as was customary in German society. And once he passed away, she just kind of came out of her shell and became much more outgoing and more enterprising, and –

Q: That's already here, in the **United States**?

A: That was already here in the **United States**.

Q: Okay. Who was the –

A: But they – they ha – they were very lovely people, and I think **Irene** will second that.

Q: Yeah. **Irene** is your wife.

A: My wife.

Q: Yes. What were their – what were the things that were important to them? In other words, what kind of values did they hold that – that you could observe and then also choose to either make your own, or not?

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A: It's – it's a hard question to answer. I think they had very good values, as I mentioned before, they don't – didn't have a lot of formal education, but they really acted as though they were highly educated people. They read a lot, th – education was a number one issue. And especially for my dad, vacations were very important. He felt that was a very important part of life, and also he had so-some health problems. Lot of lower back pain, high blood pressure and so he felt he needed a vacation also for health reasons, but he loved vacations; whether it was skiing or whether it was in the summer, hiking, he loved go – an-and I kind of inhe – inherited that.

Q: Well, that's a good thing, because you know, here in our society, people say we don't have enough balance in our lives.

A: Absolutely, absolutely. We've always, my family, **Irene** and I and our kids have always had wonderful vacations together. Of course now it's – becomes much more difficult to go as a family, but we still try to – to travel when we can.

Q: Were they – you mentioned that they were worried when all of these things were happening, when **Hitler** came to power, when his business were – was affected. And you mentioned also that other people fell into a depression, and some others would commit suicide because of [indecipherable]

A: Well this is really more hearsay than – than –

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Q: That's right.

A: – than personal experience.

Q: Right. How did your parents handle these types of stresses in their pers – were they basically optimistic people?

A: Yes, I would – I would say that. They were – they were optimistic people and that's why I wanted to come back to it, why did we leave so late?

Q: Yeah.

A: My parents were very, very attached to their parents and very family oriented. That's another ver – very important value. And my grandfather said point blank, we were born here, we're gonna die here, we're not going anywhere.

Q: This is your mother's father, or your father's father?

A: Both of them.

Q: Both of them.

A: Both of them. And they were not gonna leave them. Now, as I mentioned, my dad was fa-farsighted enough to **[indecipherable]** money, to – I'm sorry, to – to move out money to other countries to have something when he left. But he also, in 1936, made a **orientierungsreise**, an orientation trip to the **United States**.

Q: Oh, did he?

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A: And visited our cousin, who had been writing letters since about '33, why don't you take my affidavit an-and come over here? And he visited her and looked around, and wanted to see what could do in – in a new country, with a new language, with a new culture.

Q: Where did she live?

A: She lived in **Cleveland, Ohio**, where we ended up.

Q: Okay.

A: And a lovely lady – we were – our lives were really saved by the fact that my grandmother's brother had enough sense to leave **Germany** in the late 19 hund – 1800s, move to the **United States**, and this was his daughter, who – a very generous, lovely lady who gave affidavits to something like 15 relatives. And you know, if any of them had been bad apples, she could have been in serious trouble. She was well-off, she had no children and [**indecipherable**] husband, and she had good – good positions. And she was well-off, but she was not really wealthy, and so this is an hero – courageous thing to do. But my dad came over here and then came back and we still didn't leave. That was like two years before we actually left. And finally in – round that time – and I was like 12 years old, and my moth – and you – you – you – you get – you mature fast under these circumstance, and my mother

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and I sat my dad down and said look, Papa, why don't you apply for a visa, you have – you have also an affidavit. You can always let it –

Q: Expire.

A: Expire.

Q: Sure.

A: And he finally did. And my – both my grandfather's then passed away during – during the – actually during those years, '36 - '37, in their 70s. And my grandmothers immediately said, we're going. If we – if we're going anywhere – if we – if you're going anywhere, we're coming. And at that point, ma – we got – we got notified in 1938 that we were getting a visa, if we passed the physical examination at the American consulate in **Stuttgart**. And on November seventh, two days before **Kristallnacht**, we got our American visa. And that was – we took – my br – and at – the people who were on that visa, as far as I know –

Q: Right.

A: – were my brother and I, my parents and my paternal grandmother, **Fanny S-Simon**.

Q: Okay.

A: My aunt, my mother's sister and her husband, **Elsa** and **Gustav Natan**(ph) – **Elsa** and **Gustav** – **Gus Na-Nathan**, and their daughters, **Charlotta** and **Mariana**,

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they took along my maternal grandmother, **Amindia(ph) Meyer**, and they came separately, on a separate visa, and I don't remember exactly what year, I – they may have even been a little later than us. I don't remember exactly the – the circumstance of their emigration and where – whether they stop wher – somewhere else first, and – but you can find that out from my cousin –

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: – in **Cleveland**, who still survives, **Marian**. So, one other thing that I didn't mention, and maybe I should, my – I told you my paternal grandparents lived in nav – in the little town of **Gensingen** –

Q: That's right.

A: – and things were getting very rough in small towns. People throwing rocks through the windows –

Q: All this we should talk about.

A: – and – and putting – and si – and painting signs on th – on – on the walls, but nobody knew who it was. But my parents finally found a si – a – an apartment on a very same street, **Rudis(ph) Hammerstrasse fünf**. We were 14, and it – they were five, and they moved my paternal grandparents to **Wiesbaden**.

Q: So that had been happening to their house as well?

A: Yes, it did, it did. And the – that's finally what scared my dad enough to –

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Q: To move them.

A: – to insist that they move.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then they lived across the street from us, practically, and that, of course, very, very pleasant for us children to visit. Although we enjoyed ka – going to **Gensingen** wa – to that lovely house with the stable and a cow in the back and a yard where we used to do searches for our **Easter** eggs at **Easter** time.

Q: So, when – when people were talking of leaving, was it a sense of a temporary move, or was this a se – that is, we'll move until that **Hitler**, you know, that – that fool **Hitler** gets, well, voted out of office, and then we'll come back. Or was it a sense of, we're really leaving, and we're not coming back?

A: When – when we were still in **Germany** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – when we still in **Wiesbaden**, I think there was a sense – although I think it was a rationalization that it might be temporary, but became more and more evident that it wasn't so temp – temporary and that it was extremely dangerous, although nobody thought about a – a systematic killing. I'm – if anybody says that, I don't believe it. I mean, it just simply not something that people imagined, and in ik – so-

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called civilized country. But once we're ready to go, and by that time, I – we had some experiences which I haven't come around to yet.

Q: Okay.

A: I think we knew it was permanent, absolutely.

Q: But that's a very important –

A: It certainly was permanent to me.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, I didn't expect that we would come back, except to visit maybe.

Q: Yeah.

A: But we – so let me tell you a little bit about our –

Q: Right, tell me about that.

A: – the time when we – so we, as I mentioned, I was still in the gymnasium on November 10th, the day after **Kristallnacht**.

Q: Okay.

A: My – I wa – we were lucky, nobody came and – in-into our apartment. That's the advantage of a bigger city, there's so many of us, and in – in apartment houses where the – you're not quite sure where people live and – I mean, people did get, some of – but it was a little bit safer than in a smaller town. But my grandmother

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and my grandfather – well, by that time my grandfather was dead. My grandmother in **Bingen** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – she had all her – her glasses and gristal – crystal-wear and dishes destroyed.

Th-They had a real attack on her house. And – so we didn't have that, but the following morning, when I was in school, one of my classmates said, **Eric**, did you know the synagogue's on fire? I said, what? I did – I didn't believe it. It's – first of all, it's a berg – huge stone structure, I didn't even think it would burn.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I thought he was –

Q: Pulling your leg.

A: – crazy, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: So, then I discovered, when – when school was over, my mother was at the door picking me up. My dad's ca – had the – the car there, and my mother said, come with me. I – of course, I was upset that a big boy of 14 years old we – picked up from school, and I had no idea what was going on, and –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – and so I went to the car. And it turns out my dad didn't want to go home because he had heard of friends being picked up by the Gestapo and put in concentration camps that day. They picked up many, many able-bodied Jewish men. They did – they left the women and children still alone at that time.

Q: Yeah.

A: But the men were picked up and put in concentration camps.

Q: What I want to – excuse me, I know you have a train of thought, but it – I – I want to ask you before, did you know of people disappearing before **Kristallnacht**, of somebody being arrested –

A: Oh yes, absolutely. I mean, people were arrested for all kinds of things. We had, for instance, a friend who – who was arrested and put in concentration camp for **rassenschande**, which is, he was dating – he was supposed to be dating a Christian woman, or maybe he was married to a Christian woman, I don't recall. You know, this was a – a doctor friend, if I remember correctly, who was put in a concentration camp because he was seen with a Christian woman. Now, they finally let him go, but he was pretty emaciated, and ill when he got out. Now absolutely, there were people arrested for all kinds of reasons, or – or drummed up reasons. And some were let go, and some were not so fortunate. So the question of ca – disappearing to c – to concentration camps, that was already going around for quite a while.

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Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Fortunately in our town, we didn't see too many people just kind of beaten up or – or shot in the street. That went on in some cities.

Q: So you didn't s –

A: Although on **Kristallnacht** I understand that happened, although I didn't see it.

Q: So tell me, where were you and your family on **Kristallnacht**? How did – how –

A: Well, that's it, I mean I – my mother picked me up in school – I mean, not during the night, I – during the next day, the 10th of November.

Q: Yes, well, that night – that night is what I'm asking.

A: That night we were in our apartment, nobody bothered us. We were lucky, we were not one of the ones that were –

Q: And you didn't hear people in the streets?

A: – attacked in the pogrom.

Q: You didn't hear people in the streets?

A: No, we didn't know anything that was going on until I was picked up from school by my – by my parents.

Q: By your mother.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

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A: And then we drove around **Wiesbaden** because my dad was afraid to go home, he thought he would be picked up.

Q: Right.

A: Finally, my mother and I said this – you can't keep doing this, because th-they probably know your license plate, the Gestapo. So we hit upon the idea, and –

Q: Where was your brother – excuse me.

A: My brother? That's a good question. I think – he went to a Jewish school –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and he may have been in school that day. I don't remember. Him – he – you can ask him.

Q: Okay.

A: But I – I really don't remember wa – he wa – he wasn't in the car, that I do remember.

Q: Okay.

A: We had [**indecipherable**] a very good friend of ours, Mr. **Fritz Steckelmacher**(ph) was a British citizen. He had worked in a bri – he was a banker for **Deutsche Bank**, but he had worked for several years, much earlier I think, just after World War I or something, in **England**, and long enough to be – to get British

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citizenship. And we felt that the Germans were still legalistic enough to maybe leave a British citizen –

Q: Alone.

A: – alone. At least not to search him in – without a warrant.

Q: Was he Jewish?

A: He is Jewish.

Q: He was Jewish, okay.

A: And his father was a famous rabbi and writer – author in **Mannheim**.

Anyway, the – my dad hid out at a – of course first, oh, he doesn't want to make any kind of **umstände mache**.

Q: Yeah, that's right. Inconvenience anybody.

A: But he hid out at his house, and he had dogs, and the dog could give him away too, that – another problem. But he hid out in his house for about four or five days.

At that point, he did not fail – feel very comfortable there. I mean, he was worried that somebody would come. And we got this lovely lady, Miss **Schraeder**(ph) from **Amsterdam**. Blonde, Aryan looking. The wife of the com – police commissioner of **Amsterdam**, who was his friend from **Saint Moritz**, who came to **Wiesbaden**, stayed with us a couple of days, and then took him to the train station, chattering loudly in Dutch. And she got on the train, kissed him goodbye and then he jumped

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on, and she jumped off, because they were arresting Jews at the train station that time.

Q: Oh.

A: And he managed to get across the border to – to **Amsterdam** and to – to **Holland**. And a day after he got there, the Gestapo came to the house, two as – two or three people, searched the house from top to bottom.

Q: You were at home?

A: And my – we were home. My mother actually locked my brother and me into the bedroom because there were – she was worried were close enough to puberty to –

Q: Yeah.

A: – count as men. And my mother at that time had incredible courage. I mean, she really talked – one guy came at 11 o'clock at night, and she's, what kind of business is it, come to woman who's alone at 11 o'clock at night.

Q: [indecipherable] yeah.

A: And – and had the guy apologizing. But basically they – they searched the house, and finally she said, why don't you call the telephone [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: – telephone office, and you'll fi – you'll see that he ki – he called me, and he is in **Amsterdam**. And finally they did that. And they stole the car. They stole the

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typewriters out of the office, too-took whatever wasn't attached. Told my mother, you have a month to pack up what you want to take, and get you and your children out of here. And since we had the americ – they – since we had the American visa, they're willing to just let us go. And at that time, the-these things are so gradual, so –

Q: Incremental, in some ways.

A: Right, a-at that – at that time they left women and children alone.

Q: That's right.

A: That didn't last long. So basically we – that was on the 12th or the 13th of November, and we left about the 10th of December for – for **Holland**, reunited with our dad. And took the boat **S-Statendam**, in the **Holland America** line –

Q: Before –

A: – to **America**.

Q: Okay, before we get to that, when you left **Germany**, did you leave all your belongings?

A: We left everything except a lift van full of some furniture.

Q: Okay.

A: And some clothes. But all money had to be left. They give you like a hundred dollars or something, I don't know, you can take with you.

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Q: So whatever – whatever liquid assets you had in **Germany**, you lost.

A: We lost.

Q: And –

A: That's why my parents took first class tickets on the boat. They couldn't – they couldn't use the money anyway.

Q: Yeah. Had they bought those tickets before?

A: They bought the tickets earlier.

Q: Before they –

A: I mean, my mother bought them when – when she knew that they were – that we were going to live.

Q: I see.

A: Leave. And they a – almost lost it because on kri – on **Kristallnacht**, they plundered this –

Q: Travel agency?

A: – travel agency, and luckily he had – had them in a safe, and he still had our tickets, but my mother was plenty worried that they were gone.

Q: I can imagine. All right, the point is I can't imagine, but – but wou – di – one question I wanted to make sure; did you live in a mixed neighborhood? That is –

A: Oh yes.

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Q: Okay, so it wasn't just known as a **Jüdisches [indecipherable]**

A: No, not at all –

Q: – or something like that?

A: – not at all.

Q: Okay.

A: It was a very mixed neighborhood.

Q: Okay, so that –

A: I mean, most of the people in our building that ow – my dad owned, were not Jewish. There were very few Jews. In fact, I don't remember any.

Q: Okay.

A: No – yes, the ti – **Hannah Natan**(ph), a friend of ours called **Nathan**, not – not related to our **Nathan**, and she was married to **Herr Forte**(ph) and they lived in our building. I think they're the only Jewish family that I remember living in our house.

Q: And so that means that the con – the real estate, had that already been confiscated, the building itself, or is it – you lost that when you left?

A: Lost that when we left. My father lost – lost another – I think another – wa – something called [**speaks German**], which is some kind of mill and – and warehouse, and he lost the apartment building, and later on got some restitution. But that's another story that's –

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Q: Yeah.

A: He didn't get a whole lot because it turned out that – they claimed that there was a – what are these insects that eat wood?

Q: Termites.

A: Yeah, termites, which were not true, and there were all kinds of things said about that house, so he got the very minimal amount for it, but he got something for it.

Q: You're talking about the apartment house?

A: Yes.

Q: So, it had been made of wood?

A: Pardon?

Q: Was it built from wood?

A: Not really, not really. The whole thing was nonsense.

Q: Yeah. So le-le-let's go – we're – we're jumping a bit, but let's go to that – that section. We're talking now after the war. When did – when – what was the process of trying to get some sort of restitu – you know, recompense?

A: That dragged out oda – over years.

Q: When did it start? When did – when did he find in –

A: Probably in the 50s.

Q: Okay.

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A: And I really don't recall. I don't have a really good sense of the years. But my parents, as I said, got some restitution for the apartment house they shared with my aunt and uncle. And I think for some other things. I wanted to get – get restitution for interruption of education. Now, I didn't have a lot of interruption, but I did have interruption.

Q: Yeah.

A: And most of my friends, including my brother, got the restitution. It was like a thousand marks or 2,000 marks. And I got a letter from **Wiesbaden** saying I should be grateful that I was Jewish, otherwise I would end up in the German army, and who knows where I would be. And besides, I have a **PhD** degree. What am I complaining about?

Q: Oh my God.

A: So I went to court, and lost. And once you lose in the local court, you have to go to a court of appeals, where you have to pay a percentage, or a – actually have to pay a – not a percentage, you have to pay a fee to the lawyer, and even the lawyer said, don't gamble 20 percent of what you might get, for the fact that you might get, because you might not get it. And so we gave it up. And then when – when – when the people who got the restitution for the interruption of education got a second round – of course, I didn't get the second round, because I didn't get the first round.

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Q: Right.

A: But that wasn't too serious because it really wasn't a huge amount of money.

Q: No, it's the point of the thing, however.

A: But the point is that – that whole premise that I should be –

Q: Grateful.

A: – write a thank you note to **Hitler** or something because I wasn't drafted into the German army, were sort of ridiculous, but the re –

Q: I can't imagine you –

A: – the courts held that.

Q: Yeah. I can't imagine that somebody would have had the audacity in the postwar years to write that.

A: Well, you know – what apparently happened is that the **Wiesbaden** court, or – or – or –

Q: Authority?

A: – government –

Q: Yeah.

A: – was very generous for a while, and suddenly realized they were being too generous and they kind of had a backlash and g-got – got the other way. But the fact that the judges would write a stupid thing like that, i-is really hard to understand.

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Q: And this took place th – in which decade? When, you know, that process happened, where you got rejected for your restitution claim?

A: That whi – whi – while I was in – already – I already had, I think finished my education here, and had a **PhD** in chemistry. So I had a good education, but I s – I said anything, which was true, that I had thought about going to medical school, and that I couldn't do, and well, I mean, it wasn't – I didn't do because of a change in country, and they didn't pay any attention to that.

Q: So –

A: Especially since, I think, a **PhD** in – in **Germany** the **PhD** is considered somewa – somewhat higher than a – than an **MD**.

Q: I know, I know, it's that, **Herr** doctor, doctor.

A: Right.

Q: System.

A: And **Frau** doctor.

Q: **Frau** doctor, yeah, exactly. So this must have been in the 60s or 70s.

A: Ah, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Ah, yes, yeah, 60s, I think.

Q: It must have been a –

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A: It may have started a little earlier, but I – I can't be sure.

Q: Yeah. The – the Dutch lady who came to kind of escort your father out of danger, when you said goodbye to him, was that something that you remember, or was it, oh, we'll see you soon in **Amsterdam**?

A: Well, I didn't go to the – to the station with him.

Q: No.

A: I mean, we said goodbye at home –

Q: Yes.

A: – but I – we felt pretty confident that we would be reunited pretty soon.

Q: Okay.

A: Since we had this one month – well, at that time we didn't know that, but I don't remember be-being too upset.

Q: Okay, okay. And – and wh-what's more, you had both affidavits and visas, which a lot of other people did not have.

A: Oh my goodness. In fact, at that time, and – D-Dutch did not leave – let Jewish people without visas to go somewhere else into the country. He would not have been able to get in.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So tell me a little bit about the trip when you left your home. Do you remember what it was like to close the door for the last time?

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A: Not really.

Q: No?

A: I – I remember being excited about traveling and probably not so upset about leaving –

Q: Right.

A: – my home, because of all the – what wa – that was going on, and looking forward to seeing my dad, and looking forward to having a boat trip, and there was so much going on.

Q: Did you by train or by car to **Amsterdam**?

A: I think we went by train. Yeah, oh yeah, definitely went by train. My mother didn't have her license, didn't drive.

Q: Okay.

A: In fact, my dad didn't have a license until probably in the mid se – se – or late 30s, because he had a chauffeur for a good deal of his adult life, until he couldn't either afford, or have it any more, and then he finally learned how to drive.

Q: What kind of car was it?

A: He – he drove a number of cars, he drove an **Audi**, he drove **Mercedes Benz** and he drove, I think, an **Adler**, which was a car that hadn't exist in a long time. I had a **Adler** bicycle, with three gears.

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Q: Oh wow.

A: At that time, that was huge.

Q: Oh yeah. So the car that was confiscated, which one – which one of those –

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: I think it was a **Mercedes Benz**, but I'm not sure.

Q: Okay. The time when you were driving around, when your mother picked you up from school, and your father didn't want to go –

A: No, no, my father wa – picked – picked – I mean, my father drove, my da – my – my mother –

Q: Okay –

A: – my mother never drove, actually, she – she got a license in this country, but she used it for cashing checks. She never –

Q: Okay. So I mean – I misspoke. What I meant is, you were picked up from school by your mom, but your father was driving around in the car.

A: Yeah, he was sitting in the car.

Q: Right.

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A: Right. He was –

Q: What did you see in the streets? This is what I'm saying. If you were driving around **Wiesbaden**, did you see damage in the streets?

A: No, I actually did not.

Q: Okay.

A: It was mostly in the homes.

Q: Okay.

A: There was not much going on in the street. I didn't even see the synagogue. I mean, we – we didn't go there.

Q: Okay. In –

A: So I didn't know about the fire until I – until much later – I mean, I knew it was – that it had burned, but I didn't see it.

Q: Yeah. In the month that you were there, after your father had gone, did you have contact with other people from the community, and discussions with them, or were you able to gauge –

A: Certainly with our relatives, I think we had discussion. I don't remember what friends we had discussions with. I mean, many of our friends had left, too.

Q: Okay.

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A: Like this wa – **Vanna(ph) Kahn(ph), Warren Kahn(ph)**? His family had already emigrated, I think they left about '36 - '37.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And another very close friend, **Heiner(ph) Stend(ph)**, or **Henry Stern**, he left also, much earlier than his fa – well, he wa – he went with the **Kindertransport** to the **United States**. And a funny thing is that when we arrived in **Cleveland, Ohio**, it turned out we were closer – **Henry** and I lived closer together than we did in **Wiesbaden**.

Q: Oh, isn't that funny.

A: I mean, could have gone anywhere in the **United States**, he went to a very wealthy man called **Sam Wise(ph)**, head of – head of a big paint company, **Albro(ph)** Paint, and lived with them for a while until his parents were able to get – get out of **Germany**. And we were only a few blocks apart.

Q: When you got to **Amsterdam**, how long did you stay there?

A: Only a few days, I don't remember exactly, but –

Q: Okay.

A: – a few days and then we – on the –

Q: You sailed from when?

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A: – 13th or 14th December, we took the shi – th-the boat from **Rotterdam**. And we, being December, we got into lots of storms, and I remember distinctly we were – there was an **SOS** apparently from the **Queen Mary**. And so we were supposed to go to their aid. By the time we got close to the **Queen Mary**, everything had been taken care of and they were okay. But it was so stormy that most people in the boat were so seasick that they didn't eat. My dad and I – for some reason I'm not subject to motion sickness, and we were often the only people in the dining room.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: My mother, my grandmother and my brother were all sick. But – and I infuriated my father, and this is a totally minor nonsense-sensical comment, but I ate spaghetti every night at dinner when I could have had filet mignon and lobster, or whatever.

Q: First class tickets, great food –

A: Right, right.

Q: – and you want spaghetti.

A: Exactly.

Q: So that's what – that's what sticks in your memory from the trip over –

A: Yeah.

Q: – the storms and the spaghetti.

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A: Yeah, and occasionally, when the things died down, playing a little Ping Pong.

And I remember seeing my first two American mu – movies, and I remember to this day what they were.

Q: What were they?

A: **Walt Disney’s “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” and “Love Finds Andy Hardy.”**

Q: Did you understand them? Was your English strong enough to understand it?

A: I think I understood part of it.

Q: Okay.

A: My – I had English in school for one semester or two, and my da – my parents gave me some private lessons.

Q: Okay.

A: But, my English was very weak, to say the least.

Q: Okay. But interesting that that’s what – that you remember that, you know –

A: Oh yes.

Q: – th-those movies.

A: Yeah, oh yeah, and a – it’s funny, but I do.

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Q: Yeah. Well, it's interesting with "**Snow White**," because there have been other people that I've spoken with who recall seeing "**Snow White**" in the theaters in **Europe** before the war.

A: Yeah.

Q: It came out in the late 30s, and – and that makes sense.

A: It's funny, in th – in the – in the theaters in **Wiesbaden**, I saw – I don't think I saw any American picture. I think they were all German pictures that I saw, pretty much.

Q: I have one more question, I forgot to ask. You know, here we are in the **Atlantic** and we're coming to the **States** –

A: Right.

Q: – and I thought I'd asked them all. No. I didn't ask you about the news and the propaganda. How much new – what newspapers did you read, and did you listen to the radio, and how – what was – what was going on, what kind of information would you get?

A: Well, I can answer it this way, we – we were at the **Wiesbadener Tagblatt**, that thing, and the **Frankfurter Allgemeine** [indecipherable]. We listened to the radio, and we tried to get British stations, which wasn't always successful and I'm not sure that we cou – wouldn't have been in trouble if it – we'd a been caught. And the

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thing was very upsetting is the – the – “**Der Stürmer**,” the anti-Semitic newspaper was in boxes all over the – the streets of **Wiesbaden**, people standing in front of it, reading about those horrible creatures, the Jews, and all the misery they brought to **Germany**. And that was really very upsetting. And the history books in – I – I should add – in my school, they – they substituted all of the history books with Nazi edited –

Q: – Right.

A: – version. On the – on the bottom of every page of the history book would say, **Die Juden sind unser Unglück.**

Q: Really?

A: The Jews are our un – un –

Q: Our misfortune.

A: – our misfortune. Every page.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: And – and the stuff in there, I mean – luckily I had this wonderful history professor, this Dr. **Wesling**(ph), who didn’t really use it, and gave me a decent grade in – in the subject, even though I didn’t read this nonsense.

Q: So in other words, he was a history teacher, he’s give a text, and he puts it to the side and he just –

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A: Oh he – he had incredible courage, I don't know what happened to him after we left, but – he was still okay, but – but he – he was one of the few who were really willing to open their mouth and speak up and that was not healthy at the time.

Q: Yeah. So I-I – this is the first I hear that there – that sentence would have been on every single test –

A: Every page.

Q: Yeah. And so what kind of – what kind of broadcasts would be over the radio?

A: Well, we listened to news.

Q: Okay.

A: I also listened to the – at three o'clock in the morning, the prize fight between **Joe Louis** and **Max Schmeling**.

Q: Oh, really?

A: It didn't last very long.

Q: Yeah.

A: But, you know, we tried to get information about what was going on.

Q: Did you hear about the Olympics for example? Do you remember hearing, or anything about the '36 Olympics?

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A: You know, I don't remember hearing much about it. What I really remember is the **Leni rieshen – Riefenstahl** movie about the '36 Olympics. I saw that at least once or twice.

Q: Really?

A: Fantastic black and white movie featuring **Jesse Owens**.

Q: Right.

A: That was – I saw when I was in this country. But I don't remember what I did at the time. I must have – I must have listened to some of it.

Q: Yeah? Yeah, I mean, certainly **Jesse Owens** being –

A: Just yeah, I mean – I – I seem to remember it, but I can't remember how much I –

Q: Right.

A: – I mean, from afterwards and from the movie, and –

Q: Right.

A: – how much I knew from –

Q: Right.

A: – at the time.

Q: Did you hear **Hitler's** over the radio? Okay, but – **[interruption]** All right. So, we were talk – did you hear **Hitler's** speeches over the radio?

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A: I did, I did.

Q: And do you remember anything about them?

A: I – I even – and I – and of course saw the **SR** and the **SS** marching by. I still know the **Horst-Wessel** song in German from beginning to end.

Q: Do you really?

A: And of course, the words to **Deutschland [indecipherable]**. I don't know why I know – I remember this nonsense, but – but you know, you absorb all this when you're there, and yes, we were pretty aware of some of the things that were going on, I mean, you couldn't help it.

Q: Yeah. Any particular speech in mind? I mean, the – there were the rallies that were in **Nuremberg** –

A: No, I – what I remember very, very vividly is when **Neville Chamberlain** came to **Munich**, and appeased **Hitler** f – to peace in our time. And I know, even I was only 12 years old, it was 1936, I was extremely upset. I knew enough to know that that couldn't be good. And to be Jews in – in a country at war that doesn't like you, I knew was worse than just being at war. And I was at that time really, really worried.

Q: So **[indecipherable]** interest –

A: And discussed it, I'm sure, with my parents.

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Q: Yeah.

A: But –

Q: Disgusted as were your parents, is that what you said?

A: Hm? What?

Q: You said you were disgusted? Oh, you discussed it.

A: I – we discussed it. No, no, I discussed it with my parents –

Q: Oh, okay.

A: And the other thing I want to tell you, I was a – I was a very avid reader, but reader mostly of, you know, novels and one very – one of my favorite author was

Karl May –

Q: Oh yeah.

A: – who wrote about the American Indians and Indian –

Q: Right.

A: – and cowboys. And he was never here, but – but he – he wrote some very exciting stories and I read – they were 600 pages long and I read almost all of them.

Q: Well, it's –

A: And sometimes at night, when my parents wanted me to go to sleep, I had a little nightlight and I read in bed. And I read, of course, some of the you – b-books for children, that are for young people, that I just loved. [indecipherable] I don't know

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if that means anything to you. But an advertising contest that the kids were engaged in. And Pe-**Peter Maktasarenin**(ph) what was about a people – children building – racing cars and winning a race, and al-all kinds of fun stories.

Q: Well, I remember that when I moved to **Germany**, people would find out I'm American and they'd talk about **Karl May**, and I had never heard of him, you know. He was –

A: No, I mean, he was really very popular with German kids of that time.

Q: Yeah. So, okay, so we talked a little bit about the overall media situation, and the newspapers that you mentioned, **Frankfurter Allgemeine** and **Wiesbadener Tagblatt**, were they more or less news oriented, or did politics and propaganda end up in their pages as well?

A: I don't have a clear recollection of that.

Q: Okay.

A: But they were news ori – hopefully news oriented on the front page. What – what they did on the editorial page, I don't re – I don't recall.

Q: Okay.

A: But, I think they were still fairly straightforward at that time, but –

Q: Because German journalists were under a great deal of pressure.

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A: Oh, enormous pressure, and I'm sure that as time went on that they wen – became more and more –

Q: Yeah.

A: – propagandist. But I don't recall whether, you know, in '36 or so, what things were like.

Q: Okay. So let's go back to the boat. Aside from the – the storms, the spaghetti, the movies, any other memories from traveling?

A: When the – when the weather was a little better, we would play Ping Pong on deck, and it – it was a fun trip. I mean, I – they enjoyed it. I enjoyed it enormously.

Q: Did your parents seem worried or relieved?

A: They seemed relieved. They seemed relieved. I'm sure they were worried about what they gonna do to make a living here, but they didn't show it.

Q: Wow.

A: And we had a really very good time. When we arrived in **New York**, my dad immediately said, I'm not staying here. I – life is too hard in – in this big city, and –

Q: Right.

A: – as he put it, too many refugees from many – from many countries. And so where do we go? It's a huge country.

Q: Right.

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A: We went where we had a cousin, **Cleveland**. Not to be any kind of – to get to – you know, to give her any kind of problems, but to – at least somebody we can ask a question if – if we're not familiar with the –

Q: Situation.

A: – what goes on.

Q: Yeah.

A: She actually helped us find our first apartment, and we became very close friends.

Q: Di –

A: My parents became very close. My mother and **Sophie**, who – who lost her husband where – when we were there a very short time. And – but sh – but she and my mother became very close friends.

Q: Did your parents speak English at that point?

A: A little bit.

Q: Okay.

A: They actually became – they – they became very good at it. They – I mean, they had a strong accent.

Q: Uh-huh.

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A: But they spoke it very well. Now, my dad also – you know, my parents also, I think, took some lessons, but how they picked it up so well, I don't know, but we ca – of course spoke a lot of German at home, especially since my grandmother never learned it. And in fact, **Irene**, when – when we got – when we got engaged, learned how to speak to my grandmother in – well, both grandmothers for that matter, in German – German Yiddish – Yiddish German.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And got along very well with both my parents and both my – my – my parents and my grandmothers. And –

Q: So what was your li – how did – how did your life change, specifically –

A: Well, I mean, it changed because it was a different culture. I went to my first coed school. When we arrived, very quickly we arrived in when, early January. And then we were in **New York**, we arrived – we arrived in **Hoboken** on the boat, on the thir – 23rd or 24th of December.

Q: So th-the pier was at **Hoboken**?

A: The pier was at **Hobo-Hoboken** –

Q: Okay.

A: – not **Ellis Island**.

Q: Okay.

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A: And stayed in **New York** a few days and then went to **Cleveland** about the fourth or fifth of January.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So I went to school almost immediately. But the 31st of January was graduation day, and I was in school in the – in a – in a junior high school –

Q: Okay.

A: – ninth grade, and my friend **Henry Stern** was there, and they were going to promote him in January, the fir – the mid-year, to the high school. And the principal said he would like me to be there to learn some English before I went to the high school, and I said no, I want to go with my friend. So after a short discussion, he said okay, **Eric**, I'm going to send you to high school, but this – you're going on probation, and if because of your language difficulty you don't make it, you're coming back here. I said yes, sir.

Q: Okay.

A: And I made it.

Q: You made it, huh?

A: I never went back.

Q: Okay.

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A: And I had the chutzpah, and I think you know the – the – the term, when I got my report card at the end of the first semester, I had two **A**s and a **B** and a **C** plus in English. And I went up to my English teacher and I said, couldn't you change that to a **B** minus? What – what's the difference between a **C** plus and a **B** minus so I can get on the honor roll? And she sat me down and give me one lecture. And I didn't get the **B** plus, but it was the only time I wasn't on the honor roll.

Q: So –

A: And I had a very good experience in high school except I was very shy when it came to girls.

Q: Oh.

A: As you can imagine that I'd never – I had no sisters and I didn't have any classmates that were girls. I didn't know any girls.

Q: No cousins or anything, yeah.

A: And –

Q: What were American kids, compare – you know, you had gone from a German school in a – in a – in an totalitarian state –

A: Right.

Q: – and all of a sudden you're in American high school. Was there – wasn't there a culture shock?

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A: Oh absolutely, absolutely. I mean, it was totally different attitude, teachers were nice to you and tried to help you, and – instead of hitting you. And – and no, I would – it definitely was a culture shock. And di – in general it was a very good experience. My high school had a maybe – at that time maybe 20 percent Jewish student population. And there was a little bit of cliquishness there – there. In other words, there were fraternity like groups. I wouldn't call it fraternity in high school, I don't think there were.

Q: No, there aren't.

A: I think the junior **YMCA** [indecipherable] or something, there were really no Jewish kids there, and there were no Jewish groups that sort of –

Q: Were there refugee – aside from your friend **Howard Stern** – **Henry Stern**, were there any refugee kids there, because –

A: Not many. No, I – I think we were actually sort of stood out. There were very few – I mean, in **Cleveland Heights**, who – who go – what refugees went to **Cleveland Heights**?

Q: Yeah.

A: No, we were pretty much celebrities in that [indecipherable]

Q: Celebrities rather than, you know, high school kids can be pretty –

A: Well, I – curiosity –

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Q: Okay.

A: – I don't know if you would call it celebrities, but we were si – we were different, and – but a – people were nice to us, don't get me wrong.

Q: That's what I was after.

A: We were not discriminated again – no, not at all, no. But you know, as I said, we had a couple of Jewish cliques and some Christian cliques and that was a little bit – I – it didn't bother me too much, but you know, it was something that bothered me a little. But in general it was a very good experience, and in high school, had a wonderful chemistry teacher and he was largely responsible for me to – for m – for going on in – in c-college and graduate school, in – in chemistry.

Q: That's what I wanted to ask, is that where your interests first became –

A: That's where my interest developed, and then when I started to apply to colleges, it – World War II had started. Well [**indecipherable**] in fact, let's see, I didn't go to college until 1944, so – I'm sorry, 1942, I graduated from high school. But still, the

–

Q: Right.

A: – the war – it was after **Pearl Harbor**.

Q: Right.

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A: And the war was in – much in progress, in-including American participation. And I discovered, or my parents discovered, I don't know which, that if I went to **Case** Engineering School, **Case** School of Applied Science it was called then, and then later **Case** Institute of Technology, I would be deferred until I got my degree.

Q: Okay.

A: And if got into **Western Reserve** and studied chemistry, I would get drafted.

Q: You wouldn't?

A: I would.

Q: You would get drafted.

A: And I would much rather have gone to **Western Reserve**, gotten a real, good, general education, beca – where they have much more in terms of history –

Q: Right.

A: – and civics and whatnot. But I went to – to **Case** because I thought it would be nice to get my bachelor's degree before going in the army. Not that I didn't want to go, I was very an – patriotic, but I thought it would be good to have a bachelor's degree. So I went to **Case**, even though I didn't like engineering courses one bit. But I li – I took what's called the chemistry option of chemical engineering, the basic – more the more basic [**indecipherable**] option of chemical engineering. And loved all my theoretical courses, I hated all my applied courses, but I did okay, and

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it was a bit of a – a pain, because – because of the draft and the situation with the war, we had to go on what's called the rapid program; all summer –

Q: Oh, the wis –

A: – no vacations.

Q: I see, so it was a comple –

A: And we me – did the four years, a bachelor degree, in two and a half years.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: And because almost no offerings in – in the – the liberal arts, I took one cour – one – one semester I wanted to take psychology or – they didn't have anything, that was full. So I took one semester of Spanish and one – one year I took History of Western Civilization. That was about the only non-science courses I ever got. And many of the people were in the v – VA program, which is the navy reserves, and I couldn't join that, I believe, because I wasn't an American citizen then. And – and we – we rushed through all this stuff. And then ra – as soon as I got my bachelor's degree, I was drafted. And I'll tell you about the army experience if you're interested in –

Q: Yes.

A: – a little while, but I want to go back –

Q: Okay.

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A: – and tell you about –

Q: Meeting your wife?

A: – meeting my wife.

Q: Oh, please do, please do.

End of Tape One

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Beginning Tape Two

Q: Okay, so we're gonna circle back a little bit, because this happens often.

Sometimes when we have an interview –

A: Sure.

Q: – that thoughts come up that weren't mentioned while we were on topic. And this is something about what happened with your father –

A: On the train.

Q: – as he was on the train from **Wiesbaden** to **Amsterdam**. So this –

A: He had a very scary moment.

Q: Okay, what happened?

A: The passenger sharing his compartment seemed to be breaking into a sweat. And –

Q: Because he was in it?

A: – when – when they got to the border, especially –

Q: Okay.

A: – when the customs officials came on. And everything went okay, but once they got into **Holland**, he asked the man why he was sweating like that, and he said, well, he had wanted to bring some money out, so he pay – he – he pay – he's – he glued it under the toilet seat, and if the Nazis had found that, not only would he

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have been in trouble, but since he probably wouldn't have admitted it was him, every Jewish person in that – on that train might have been in trouble. And my father really ha – really, really lashed into him and says, how can you do this? I mean, now you jeopardize your own life, but everybody else on the train. Luckily they didn't ask a question –

Q: They didn't find it.

A: – didn't find it.

Q: Uh-huh. But it is – I-I'm glad you brought that up because it is a moment of – that tells a lot. It tells a lot, you know, peop –

A: Oh yeah, there were so many, you know, dangerous and horrifying moments, of course. I mean, even though we were extremely lucky that we never end up in camps and we didn't end up in gas chambers. But we experienced some pretty –

Q: Sounds like close calls.

A: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: But – well, coming back to **America**.

Q: Sure, coming back to **America**, and you regre – and you're drafted. So you finish in two and a half years and that means 1944 or '45 now?

A: Nineteen – I graduated in the summer of 1944.

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Q: Okay, so the war's still on.

A: And when I wanted to go back to is that summer of 1944, early summer, my brother came to me and said, there's a weekend at Camp **Wise**(ph), which was a camp, I guess at that time largely Jewish children, who paid according to their ability to pay. Was a – was actually organized or – and the money was given by this **Sam Wise**(ph) who was the –

Q: Oh, the paint guy.

A: – millionaire with whom my friend **Henry Stern**(ph) was living.

Q: Right.

A: And why don't you come – they're having a weekend to train people to be counselors, and then if you want to, you can go up there for two weeks as a counselor, or [**indecipherable**] m-more, if you want. I said no, I'm not interested. Unbeknownst to me, **Irene** went exactly through the same process, her girlfriend wanted to take her that weekend and she di – wasn't interested. Finally both of us gave in – she to her friend **Esther**, and I to my brother **Walter**, and we went to – to that weekend where the staff was training the counselors. And I was in a taxi from the train to the camp, sitting in the back with a young woman I have never met on my lap, cause we were so many people. And all of a sudden, this very beautiful young girl got into the front seat next to my brother. I take one look at her and I – I

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said to myself, I – I want to get to know her better. And that turned out to be **Irene Rannis**(ph). And when I got out – out of the ca-cab, I ta-talked to her and we looked at each other and that was it.

Q: That was it. You were how old?

A: I was 20, a-and she was 19. And she was engaged to somebody else, but we fell for each other immediately, and didn't eat anything that whole week, we kept staring at each other and being together, and – and the rest is history. We're now married almost 67 years.

Q: Congratulations.

A: Thank you very much.

Q: Congratulations to you both.

A: As of August ninth, we will be married 67 years.

Q: When?

A: August ninth.

Q: August ninth. So you're gonna have many things to celebrate.

A: Yes.

Q: Your birthday and your wedding anniversary.

A: We – we already amply ceb – celebrated my 90th birthday.

Q: Oh, that's right.

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A: And my retirement.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So –

A: So, we ha-had a very good weekend –

Q: Okay.

A: – and then we dated, then I went in the army.

Q: What was your –

A: And we wrote each other every day, and when I came home, I went to graduate school the University of **Chicago** in organic chemistry.

Q: When you were drafted in the army, how long were – was your military service, and what did it comprise?

A: I was only – I was very lucky. I went into the army in 19 – in September '44, and was sent immediately to infantry basic training in **Alabama**. I forget, Fort **McClellan**, I think. And I had a really rough basic training. They put me in heavy weapons, which means artillery, and it was a very rough basic training, I mean, but we did other – we shot rifles, we did bayonet training and the whole bit. And we were spec – I found out later we were supposed to be sent – in fact, our – the – our whole troop was sent to the Battle of the Bulge. But they pulled me out because I had a college degree. I mean, I really had a lucky life. Because I had the degree in science – engineering, they pulled me out and sent me to **Ohio** State University,

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which was very convenient because my girlfriend lived in **Cleveland**, and I was in **Columbus**, which wasn't too bad. So we actually dated on weekends, I either went to **Cleveland** or she came to **Columbus** – you came to **Columbus** once. And then I found out later I was supposed – I [indecipherable] enter, because they wanted to send me to either **Oak Ridge** or **Los Alamos** to work on the atomic bomb.

Q: Really?

A: I didn't know that then. I knew they were going to send me to one of these places, but I didn't know for what. But when they found out, even though I had been naturalized in the army as an American citizen during my basic training, they wouldn't send me because I was still considered an enemy alien, even though I was a citizen and a Jew. And I said, well – I – I s – I asked them later, why didn't you try to find out more about me? He says, no, we didn't have money or time to investigate, so we just won't – wouldn't take you. So they sent me basically, to another basic training, which was in combat engineers, and that was almost worse than infantry because you had to f-fire rifles while you were building houses.

Q: Oh good God.

A: Or bridges.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And I got a little fed up with that. I mean, I was very patriotic, but I – that was a bit much, and so I went to what was called classification and looked to see whether I could do something more useful. And they actually sent me to **Rhode Island**, where I was asked to teach English to German **PWs**.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. These were so called specially picked reliab – quote, reliable **PWs**, although some of them were as high as colonels, so I'm not sure how reliable they were, how anti-Nazi they were, but I taught a **Berlitz** type English, which was very interesting because one – two of my friends, one was from **Brooklyn** and one was from the south, they didn't take – they didn't speak a – a general – general enough English – Midwestern enough English, they took me. So my – my – my accent was already pretty good, but it was fun to do, and I did that –

Q: What ki – well, you said **POWs**?

A: Yes, they were ger –

Q: So **POW** – so, did you speak with them, did you talk to them?

A: I – I didn't – I wasn't allowed to tell them that I spoke German, because the-they wanted them to have the entire class conducted in English and nobody lapse into German. So they didn't know I was German. I overheard a few things.

Q: Well, that's one of the thi – yeah.

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A: They didn't know I could understand. So I was there about a year or so, I think, and then they shipped me to another **POW** camp in **Virginia**, where I taught – they had several very distinguished lecturers on American democracy and the two party system, and you know, the whole American –

Q: The whole nine yards.

A: – politics and history and civics.

Q: Right.

A: And I was one of the discussion leaders, as a – after that lecture, we would ha – break up into smaller groups, and ha – and we would lead – and those I did in English, because they really didn't understand enough German to conduct that in German. So they – I was allowed speak English with them, because they were – presumably knew some ger – I wasn't teaching English at that point, I was leading discussions on American democracy and things like that.

Q: Do you remember any of those discussions and how they would –

A: No, not much.

Q: No. Okay.

A: I remember the professors who gave lectures. They had one called **Homer Smith** – not **Homer Smith**, I'm sorry. I don't remember his first name. I think from **Northwestern**, who was a very distinguished philosopher. And also a – a Professor

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Jones, who's also, I think, University of **Chicago**, somewhere. Also a very distinguished philosopher, and they gave many of the lectures. By the way the – my boss, my o – ca – officer in the first camp where I taught English was **Henry Lee Smith**, I think that was the name, who had a program on the radio where he would guess where people were born and where they were brought up. He was a – like a linguist who didn't speak too many languages, but he – incredible at knowing accents and learning accent and knowing how to distinguish accents. So he would say, oh you were born in **New York**, but you grew up in **Pennsylvania** and you –

Q: Oh my gosh, yeah.

A: And I never heard too many of them, but he was on the radio for – for a very long time, and very nice guy, he was my – my –

Q: Well, what are some of the things that you overheard in that first **POW** camp?

A: Tell you the truth, I don't remember very much. I – the only – the only little thing I remember was when I was in – in – I – I don't think I heard any real anti-Semitic remarks or anything like that, but when I was in **Virginia**, I accidentally yers – used to work **meshugah**. Do you know the word, that Yiddish word **meshugah**?

Q: Yeah.

A: And I said to them, anybody know what that means? And somebody raised their hand and said, that's **Berlin** dialect for **verrückt**. **Berlin** dialect.

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Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, there were some Yiddish words that had gone totally into the German language. **Schmirastand**(ph). The **Hitler** youth said **schmirastand**(ph) for – for standing guard.

Q: **Schmirastand**.

A: Yes. And the Nazis like the **Konidra**(ph) tune so much that they played it on the radio and called it a Chinese melody or something like that.

Q: The crazy things.

A: But – I don't remember too many details, but what – one of the prisoners was a – an artist and he painted my portrait. Somebody in my family has it. I think one of my kids.

Q: Well, what was the – what – what was the – did they know by that point – in the second camp, did they know that you were German?

A: The ones in **Virginia** knew because they knew I – they – I mean, they asked me how come you speak German so well, I couldn't –

Q: Yeah.

A: – really deny it. And actually, one of these people came to me one day and told me about the ho – Holocaust, and I didn't believe him. I said ha – where da – people

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don't do things like that, to – killing – killing millions of people systematically. I mean, I di – I literally did not believe it.

Q: This is so ironic. An – a German **POW** – prisoner, comes to you and tells you about the Holocaust taking place.

A: Right.

Q: And y – and that –

A: Not only that, almost every one of these **PWs** managed to find a Jewish ancestor in his family. They were all – at that time they wanted to be – they wanted to be anti-**Hitler**. And some of them, I'm sure were all their lives. I mean, there were –

Q: Yeah.

A: – in fact, in th – in the first group, where they really wanted to get them ready for – for u – for u – for use in military – in – in go – in governing – governing **Germany**, there were some very liberal people. The trouble was they didn't always get very far because if they were social democrats, the ger – Americans unfortunately se – though they were communists.

Q: Communists.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

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A: But, it was a very – it's somewhat very interesting experience, it's there, absolutely. The – no, I mean, was totally shocked and I really – I didn't – which brings me back to **Germany** for a – for a minute, if you don't mind.

Q: Okay. Oh, this is exactly what I – yeah.

A: What I – I'm say da – but not when I was there, but actually when I was visiting. We were invited back to germ – to **Wiesbaden**. You know, they invited – most of the cities invited their former surviving Jewish citizens back to visit. And we were invited, my wife and I and my brother and his wife were invited back to **Wiesbaden**.

Q: Can you count – tell me a year?

A: I believe in the – in the middle of late thir – 90s.

Q: Okay.

A: And I went to – as I mentioned, I think, earlier, I went to speak to the **Gutenberg** gymnasium where I had gone to school. And the kids were very interested, and I spoke in German, which I was fortunate to be able to do. And the professor was a friend of mine, whom I had met – previously had come to our house with his wife, stayed with us a few days. I believe that was before – or after, I'm not sure. But anyway, the – he mentioned to me that he had a so – given them a list of books to read. And the kids were about for – 15 or 16, picked a book on Holocaust,

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called [**speaks German**]. It was by a German boy, non-Jewish boy called **Friedisch**(ph) – I believe it was **Friedisch**(ph). I think he was the – the Gentile boy, who lived in the same apartment building with a family that had a Jewish boy his age, and they became very, very close friends. I read that book in one night, it was an incredible book. And it gave the – the Jewish situation in **Germany** from the point of view of this Christian boy with – who had this close Jewish friend. And the one scene I remember so vividly, is the Christian dad talking with the Jewish dad and saying, why don't you get out of here? Y-You see that they're not very nice to you and that it could get worse –

Q: Worse.

A: – and more dangerous, and leave. Take your family with you. And the Jewish dad said look, if this were the Middle Ages, and I would have to fear for my life, I would leave tomorrow. But this is **Germany** in the 20th century, a civilized country. I don't have to fear for my life, and eventually **Hitler** will be gone and things will be normal again. This was such a common –

Q: Refrain.

A: – frame of mind for – for Jewish people. Whether they believed it or not, they certainly rationalized that – that they would – nobody would harm them physically, because it was a civilized country. And to some extent my parents, I'm sure used

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that argument as well. But it was really strike – and we discussed that book when I spoke to the class, and of course they asked me questions about my experiences.

Q: Was there anything that they said in those discussions that also stay with you?

A: One thing stayed with me is that I really couldn't answer very well, and when a – a boy said, we're paying restitution to our former Jewish citizens, who were clearly badly hurt. But why should we, the third generation, who had nothing to do with this, why should we – should we pay this? And I didn't have a good answer. I don't remember what I said. You can argue this both ways, you could say look, your gra – your grandparents did this, and so our – some of your grandparents, and so you're still paying for what they did, just as – as in this country some people are advocating restitution for the slaves. And we're certainly not responsible for slavery. And some argue that they're really not guilty. They – they weren't born. Something that's very difficult to –

Q: For you to come down on one side or the other?

A: Right. Exactly, exactly.

Q: Well, tell me a little bit about – I mean, where – again, we're – we're skipping certain topics, but this sounds like an appropriate moment to ask, so what are your feelings about **Germany**? Many people who left never went back, never have any contacts, never engaged –

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A: And I know many.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I understand perfectly. And especially when if you were in a concentration camp, or you were close to being gassed, or you have relatives that were murdered, I could totally understand. But having not had these horrible experiences, I would – didn't feel quite that strongly, but it took me a very long time to want to go back.

Q: Did it really?

A: It did. When we finally were invited back, I think that was the first time we went to **Germany**. No, we were there once before. I was on a sabbatical in **Paris**, and I took my family to **Wiesbaden** to see where I grew up.

Q: But that would have been **[indecipherable]**

A: We were very uncomfortable, because we didn't know anybody, and the kids even were uncomfortable, and so we stayed about a day or two days and drove to **Basel** and went to **Switzerland**. Well, when I was invited back, it was already the third generation. The second generation was terrible. In other words, the people who were the children of the people who did some of these things, were t – didn't want to talk about it. They were embarrassed, they were ashamed, and they wouldn't bring it up in school. The Holocaust simply wasn't discussed. And we, of course, resented that.

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Q: Yeah.

A: But the third generation was totally different. They wanted to know the answers, they wanted to ask questions, they wanted to know what happened. How – how were their families involved and not involved. So that was something that made me feel that it's time to forgive these chil – these children who – who had really basically nothing to do with it. They might be in – I might have parents who anti-Semitic – who brainwashed them, that I can't – but I can't exclude that in any country.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I felt that this generation deserved at least a little bit more of an – of a rapprochement than the previous generations. And that's why I was willing to go there, and went back for scientific purposes. In other words, for visiting fellow scientists in **Germany**, for going to ger – meetings in **Germany**. In fact, my first visit to **Berlin** was for a scientific meeting, maybe 10 years ago or something, first time [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, it sounds like when this happened, as this developed, it was pretty late. That is, it's decades after you've left.

A: Oh yes, it was –

Q: It's not –

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A: – it was in the 90s that that happened.

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm quite sure. So it was like si – 60 years in the –

Q: Yeah.

A: Fifty or 60 years after I left. Yes, because by that time the people who – who
purp – perpetrated all this were ei-either dead or extremely old.

Q: Yeah.

A: The second generation was also getting older and the third generation really was
making an attempt to know and to make up for what happened.

Q: When you talk about the second generation, is that what you experienced when
you went back to **Germany**? That first time was a family visit.

A: Actually, not directly, too much.

Q: Okay.

A: I mean, I – we went to – I was at a laundry mat, I think and told the people that I
– they asked why – why I spoke German so well, and she told them I was born
there. And she basically said, why did he come back? I – if I were – if I were a Jew
I wouldn't – I wouldn't come back, I mean, after what happened. Something like
that. And so we actually got people who were decent and didn't have a direct
experience, I heard a lot of things where people went to school and – and – friends

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of ours, who said their parent were basically Nazis. This – this family where the –
where the husband was the teacher where I – where I spoke –

Q: Right, right.

A: Her parents were real Nazis and left and fled to **South America**, and at home
she couldn't open her mouth, because her parents were so pro-**Hitler** and anti-
Jewish and everything else. And she became exactly the opposite, and her husband
and she were extremely – in fact, that brings me to a very important –

Q: Right.

A: – thing about why – another reason why I became a little more pro-German, or
pro-German [**indecipherable**]

Q: Engaged.

A: Or engaged, and less anti-German, whatever.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that is, in **Wiesbaden** is a group called the f – the [**speaks German here**]

Q: And in the English translation that would be?

A: English translation a – **ferdechai**(ph) is a –

Q: An association of some kind?

A: – an association to further –

Q: Right.

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A: – the hit – a – the history of the Jewish community of **Wiesbaden**. They built a Jewish museum [**speaks German**] and they collect documents from, and invite – they were in – they were also involved in our invitation to **Wiesbaden** and I gave them actually my mother's passport, and a few of the documents that I had left from – from **Germany**, and they set up a museum. And they had – constantly doing work to recognize people who hi-hid Jews, people who did heroic things, and Jews who – who perished. And they have **stolpersteine**, have you ever have **stolpersteine**?

Q: No.

A: It means stumbling stones.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: But it really means that they take stones out of the sidewalk and put – put a name – put a name –

Q: Of a person.

A: – on it.

Q: Okay.

A: In **Wiesbaden** and in many cities for people who perished, and have a pla – a – a – a monument where the da – where the synagogue used to stand, and things like that, all done by this group, none of whom – maybe one was Jewish, but most of

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them were not. And they're still very active. And then I mentioned, I think earlier, in **Limburg** they have a group co – a Christian – a Christian Jewish –

Q: Right.

A: – society, that works together. And I was very impressed with these people. And I can tell you, only one instance that really impressed me enormously. They persuaded the mayor of **Wiesbaden**, and the governance of **Wiesbaden** to change the name of this street, which had some nondescript name, **Kurnigstrasse**(ph) or –

Q: Something like that, yeah.

A: – to the **Gebruder**(ph) or the **Geshvista**(ph) I don't remember the name, **Stoltz**(ph), something like that, a Jewish brother and sister. And underneath it says, **ermordet** – murdered on July so and so, 1942. And the street has that on it in – in permanence.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I thought that was an extremely courageous and very decent thing to do, is to actually have a street named after two Jew-Jewish children who were murdered in the Holocaust. And they did –

Q: Maybe they lived on that street?

A: – many other wonderful things. Hm?

Q: Maybe they lived on that street?

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A: No, I don't think they did, but they lived in **Wiesbaden**.

Q: They didn't – ah, I see.

A: Yeah, I think they picked the street cause it didn't have a particularly important name, but I don't know that for sure. But that was – and the ceremony that we were at when this was done, I mean, the mayor was there, th-the members of the c – city council, whatever and all kinds of – of somebody – I think somebody from the government of hess – **Hessen** was there, and it was really a big deal. So I – I thought that was – and that was done in the 90s there.

Q: Well, you know, wa – in order for someone to see these things, a first step has to be taken –

A: Exactly.

Q: – to become engaged again.

A: Exactly.

Q: And it's taking that first step, which is usually the hard part.

A: Exactly, absolutely. I mean, I still have some feelings, obviously, that that could happen in a co – in a country as quote civilized as **Germany**, that produced the **Beethoven**, that produced the **Einstein**, that produced people like that, and that that could happen is still incredible to me. And when there's a sports contest, I often root against **Germany**. It's just something, and I – while I buy German – some

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German product – I – I can't get myself to buy a German car, even though they're very good. And so there's still some of these prejudices left, and I'm – it's not surprising. But I can see when people have direct loved ones that perished, and – are going to be much more anti than somebody like me, who was fortunate enough not to have any close friends or relatives that perished in the Holocaust.

Q: Well, I think in – in these things, it's – it's very individual.

A: Of course.

Q: It's ver – you know, the –

A: Of course, absolutely.

Q: And it's very hard, and – and I don't think it's possible, nor should it be, that there's a prescription of how –

A: No.

Q: – at – at what point should one say this?

A: You can't. You can't.

Q: You can't. People –

A: It's a totally individual thing.

Q: Right.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Let's – let's talk about a little bit your further life in the **United States**.

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A: My professional life?

Q: Tell me about your career, your professional life, so that –

A: Okay.

Q: – who will see this – the people who will see this interview will know about some of your work and accomplishments.

A: All right. Well, first of all, I mentioned that I went to college –

Q: Right.

A: – and I just wanted to give credit to my parents because they paid for their college, and made it possible for me to give – to get a profession. And I told you I got a – a degree essentially in chemical engineering. When I came back from the army – and by the way, I just mention briefly, because I had a bachelor degree, because I – I worked briefly on a research project at **Ohio** State while I was waiting to be assigned –

Q: Right.

A: I was able – there was a technical bulletin in the army bulletin that allowed me get – get out of the army early. So I got out February or March, 1946.

Q: Okay.

A: And in – I had to be accepted either in a defense job or – well, war was over, but in a –

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Q: Right.

A: – essential job or in a graduate school, and I was accepted at graduate school at **Case** actually, but I went to the University of **Chicago**.

Q: Okay.

A: That was my choice. But I had to be accepted somewhere, so I went to ca – I – I – I got the –

Q: Right.

A: – acceptance. And the-they discharged me. And I went to the University chica – **Chicago** and took a master's and **PhD** degree in organic chemistry. Now this is very interesting. I didn't take any biology courses, but I audited biochemistry. And I came to the realization that while I enjoyed organic chemistry to a degree, I didn't enjoy reading the literature. I mean, I would look at the Journal Organic Chemistry and it would say, a new synthesis in the anthraquinone series. And I said, who cares? But when I learned something about biochemistry, and at that time was the time when it – what was called [**indecipherable**] very, very much in the research area. In other words, how the body metabolizes food to create energy, to create growth. And that was so exciting, and I made up my mind right then and then, as I was a graduate student, that I wanted to get into biochemistry. And when I finished my **PhD** thesis, which was a strictly organic chemistry thesis, with a prof – very

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famous professor called Professor **Morris Kharasch**, who almost got the **Nobel Prize** because he – he developed a new – brand new field in organic chemistry, the field of – of free radicals in solution. When I received my – finally received my degree, and I was in graduate school almost five years, that was because he was very demanding, and the – there wasn't this – a closed project, it wasn't finish – finished, he would – he would say now finish this, okay, I'll give you another project. But I mean, eventually got out and di-did fine. I actually applied for a fellowship. At that time the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, Polio Foundation, gave a fellowship specifically for people who were in the hard sciences like physics and chemistry and wanted to get into biology. And so I took a – I – I – I ge – I got this, and it was – I was one of the winners, and I took a postdoctoral fellowship for two years at **Columbia**, and at that time **Irene** and I – and I haven't said anything about my family life, but I will –

Q: Yes.

A: – at least briefly – decided we're going to go to **New York**, but we'll be there for two years and then we'll move to a nice, small college town, where I can walk or bicycle to work.

Q: Right.

A: Famous last words, as we're still here.

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Q: Right.

A: At any rate, I had a very good post-doctorate [indecipherable] with a young scientist called **David Shemen**(ph) and became very excited about being a biochemist. Then I got my first real job at **Cornell** Medical School. I kept moving downtown.

Q: Yeah.

A: Where I worked on a – on a project on muscular dystrophy. It actually was a project on vitamin **E** metabolism because the only model of muscular dystrophy that was known at the time were rabbits that got flabby muscles by not eating enough vitamin **E**, having a vitamin **E** deficiency. And we made some interesting discoveries in that area. But I didn't stay in there. What happened was I – my boss, Dr. **Millrat**(ph) was the medical director of the muscular dystrophy foundation of **America**, and they built him – **Cornell** built him an institute for muscle disease. And of course, as usual, not ready when it was supposed to be ready, so I took a sort of sabbatical at **NYU** in a friend's lab, **Werner Maas**(ph), also a German refugee. And spent a year there. And during the year, Professor **Louis Thomas** – you may have heard his name, I don't know. He was not only an outstanding scientist and physician, he was author of a number of books. Li – “**The Lives of the Cell**,” An evening with – with – with **Moller**(ph), I think, a medicine [indecipherable] signs

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were – by the way, I have a paragraph that he wrote about me to his – that sort of autobiographical book. Anyway, **Louis Thomas** approached me about coming to **NYU** and gave me a very nice position as assistant professor at **NYU** in department of medicine. He wanted me strictly – I mean, I'm – I'm a **PhD**, I'm not an **MD**, so the only thing I could do was research, and I got a teaching appointment in – at that time spa – microbiology, cause that's where my – that's where I was with **Werner Maas**(ph). So I had an appointment for – do research in medicine, and – and – and a teaching appointment in microbiology. And after I was there a fairly short period, maybe a year, I – my – my boss, Dr. **Thomas** came to me and said, the city of **New York** is setting up a – something called the Research Council of **New York**. And one of the purposes, the main purpose of this organization is to give what they call career awards to young, promising scientists to keep them in the city. I'd like for you to apply, and if you do that, I'd like you to think about maybe – even though I don't want you to give up what you're doing if you're so interested in it. But I'd like you to think about something you could do that might interest a city, that might make it easier for you to get the fellowship, the research career award. To make a long story short, I chose drug addiction as something would interest a city.

Q: It certainly would.

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A: Basic science of how the brain interacts with opia – opiate – opiate drugs. And that's how I got into my eventual real field, and I got into neuroscience by the back door. I knew nothing about brain anatomy, nothing about brain physiology. I edit – I audited some courses at **Columbia** when I was post-doc, and I order – audited some more at **NYU**, and I read. It wasn't easy, but it was fun. And I got the fellowship, obviously. I had it for 15 years, I didn't lose it, I – we lost the research council, it went belly up. The city decided it didn't have the money –

Q: To fund it.

A: – to continue it. And for 15 years almost – and my entire salary came from the city of **New York**.

Q: But you were si – you – but you were at **NYU**, so **NYU** –

A: I was at **NYU**, in fact about 20 or 30 professors at **NYU** had – had these, and equal number at **Columbia** and quite a number at **Cornell**, and **Albert Einstein**, everywhere. So they gave out – I don't know how many, but they gave out a – maybe a hundred a year or something. And we had annual meetings where we reported our results. And then they went belly up, and I had to put at least part of my salary on my grant. But I – I stayed at **NYU** the rest of my career. I had a couple of possibilities of becoming chairman, but I didn't go. And I – what I accomplished was I published about 270 papers, basically in the area of opiate – opiate research,

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how does the brain react to opiate, what do – what do they do when they get there.

And the major be – discovery we made was discover the so-called opiate rezept – receptors in the brain.

Q: Tell me a little bit about that.

A: These are protein molecules –

Q: Okay.

A: – to which these drugs must bind in order to perform what they perform, namely –

Q: The high?

A: The highs, the lows an-and you know, the dysphoria in some cases. The pain relief. All the things they do, they do many things. The respiratory depression, which kills you within – when you get – when you have an overdose. All these can only be done – can only happen if the drug binds to the opiate receptors, to these protein molecules.

Q: And is it ams – in my very layman's terms, because as I –

A: Sure.

Q: – said before our interview, I'm not very versed in –

A: Right, may – you're not a scientist.

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Q: Does this mean that the discovery was how the drugs actually affect the brain in its – in – in its most –

A: Yes. Yes, and how it affects, on a basic biochemical level.

Q: Right, okay.

A: It binds to this molecule called the receptor.

Q: Right.

A: As we call it, the receptor – and by the way, just to be fair, there was three laboratories that made the discovery si-simultaneously.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. One was **Pert** and **Snyder** at **Hopkins, Johns Hopkins**. One was a very nice gentleman at **U-Uppsala, Sweden**, called **Lars Terenius**, and my lab.

Q: Okay.

A: And a little bit better than a year later, maybe two years later – yeah, that was in '73, a group in **Scotland**, but also a German Jewish refugee, **Hans Kosterlitz** and his **[indecipherable] John Hughes** discovered the endorphins, the substance in the brain for which th-the receptors were there. They were not there for people who shoot up heroin, or take morphine for pain; they were there for the su-substance which we call er – endorphins.

Q: Right.

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A: And it may interest you to know that I coined the term endorphins. I didn't fa – discover the substances, but I named them. I'm the godfather. And wish I had a –

Q: I'm impressed.

A: – a dollar for every time it's used.

Q: That would be not bad.

A: No, it wouldn't, no.

Q: That would be not bad at all.

A: At any rate, and that – well we – we did a great deal of work on what's called signal transduction, which means what happens between the time these drugs, or the endorphins, bind to the receptors in the time the drug is abused or euphoria happens, a high happens, or pain is relieved.

Q: Okay.

A: And while we still don't know the whole story, we know a great deal of what some of the biochemical steps are between the binding of these drugs, or the endorphins and subsequent events.

Q: You mentioned earlier that your – you would have wanted to be a doctor. Is that something that you knew that you wanted to do when you were younger?

A: No, not – you know, actually, while I did think about that, and I wrote – and I was – I actually got excited early about medical research when I read things like

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“**The Microbe Hunter**,” by **de Kruif**. I actually, partly because my dad kept saying to me – and I don’t want to blame him, but oh, you don’t ne – you don’t like to see the sight of blood, you’ll never be a doctor, I never applied to medical school. I just made up my mind I wanted to do re – scientific research. Had I – had I to do it over, I think I would have, because I think you get a – a little wider horizon by – by taking the medical courses. And I only audit – e-edited – audited –

Q: Audited.

A: – some of them. But even then you don’t get, you know, you don’t do – do the homework pr-properly. And – and some of them I never took. I never took a course in histology. I never took a course in anatomy. I had to learn it – all my [indecipherable] course I didn’t learn as well as if I had formal courses. So it would have been good to have at le – at least a more biological approach. But for some reason I never applied, and this is how I got there, via degree in organic chemistry [indecipherable] in biochemistry and then tr-transferred to different areas.

Q: But it’s such a – it has such implications for human well-being, to be able to understand that that’s what [indecipherable]

A: Absolutely. And you know, this is not that unusual. For instance, you’ve heard of **Watson** and **Crick** –

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Q: Mm-hm. **DNA**, right?

A: – who discovered the double helix.

Q: Right.

A: But **Watson** was a – was a student in biology or biochemistry or something, but **Crick** was as physicist. He didn't know any biology.

Q: Yeah.

A: And there are many cases like that, biochemists, physicists, psychologists, got into the field of neuroscience and did remarkable things.

Q: Well, thank you for sharing that with us. And you wanted also to talk a little bit about your family.

A: Exactly.

Q: So –

A: So I told you how I met **Irene**.

Q: Yes. When did you get married?

A: And –

Q: Which year did you get married?

A: – I – I can honestly state that sev – 67 years later we're still – well, 70 years after I met her, we're still in love.

Q: Congratulations to both.

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A: Thank you.

Q: Yeah.

A: So while we were still – when I was still in graduate school, we had our first son, **Martin**, who is now a professor of math education at **NYU**.

Q: Okay.

A: And three years later, in **New York**, right, we had our daughter **Faye**, who is – was for many years a very fine early childhood schoolteacher, whom – when I say fine, I mean the parents loved her, the children loved her, and – and her fellow teachers loved her, so sh – it must have been something –

Q: Yeah.

A: – she did right. She doesn't do that any more, and what she did do is she set up a foundation in **Irene** and my honor, called the **Irene and Eric Simon** reser – be – Brain Research Foundation. And we raise money to give scholarships – research fellowships to spend a summer in a famous scientist's laboratory, to st – very bright students, to see if we can interest them in a reser – in a research – brain research career.

Q: How cool.

A: And it's – so far I've given out, I think 65 of those in the past 10 years. Each one gets about 2500 dollars to – to expenses, living expenses [**indecipherable**]

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Q: And this is – this is for high school kids, or for graduate –

A: No, this is for college, college.

Q: – college, college kids, okay.

A: Now it's for – we've had as young as sophomores in college, but usually juniors, seniors in college, or possibly beginning graduate of medical students.

Q: Right, right. Okay.

A: And many of them have ended up in – in neuroscience, and – or be – ac – starting to study neurosciences.

Q: That must be so exciting.

A: Now, how many of them would have done it anyway, I can't tell you –

Q: Yeah.

A: – but I think we – at least we confirmed their –

Q: Right.

A: – suspicion that they would like it, and I think we're doing something good. So that's what she's doing now, but she does other things. She does – some – sometimes she does some parent conference – conferences, she does some tutoring. Her husband **Len** is also a consultant, and very successful. He had more work than he can use. He works with people in companies that have financial difficulties, try to straighten them out, and things like that. Set up websites. Anyhow, so that's my

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daughter. My youngest son is **Larry**. He is a graduate in psychology, but then a master's degree at the suggestion of his mother, and a very good one, in neuros – in – in computer science, and he is – has a very responsible position in the **IT** department of **NYU** Medical School. And his job is like – like a doctor's job, he gets – he gets called in the middle of the night.

Q: Oh my.

A: We're having a problem with a computer, our **EKGs** are not showing up –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and so he – and – but he enjoys it very much. And – so that's our children: **Marty**, **Faye** and **Larry**. And my daughter never had any children. She married late. **Marty** had one daughter, who is now 27 years old, beautiful, naturally.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she just announced her engagement to her boyfriend with whom she's been living for some time. And my youngest son **Larry** had three children: **Leron**(ph), who is now 31, **Darlene** and **Andy**, who are twins, and who are 29, I think. And **Andy** –

A2: They'll both be 29 in December.

Q: They'll be 29 in December, you said?

A: December, right.

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Q: Yeah, they'll be 29 in December

A: Right. And the twins, let's see, **Darlene** had no children. She was married –

Q: Right.

A: – she is now divorced, and with a boyfriend. She lived in **Minneapolis** for many years. All of them lived in **Israel** for a while, all of them have dual citizenship. I mean – my – my youngest son's family. Because he married an Israeli lady called **Leah** – **Leah**.

Q: Okay.

A: **Marty** was married a couple time, but he is currently single. **Larry** has the three – these three children, **Le-Leron(ph)**, **Andy** and **Darlene**. **Andy** and **Darlene** and then – **Darlene** has no children yet, but **Andy** has two.

Q: So you're a great-grandpa?

A: We are four times great-grandpas. **Leron(ph)**, who lives in **Israel** has two great-grandchildren we have not yet met – met in person, but only in pictures. And **Andy** lives up in **Monsey, New York**, in **Spring Valley, New York**, and he has two adorable children who we see about every – once a month or so.

Q: What a family.

A: So – a-and there – they are the joy of our lives and one of the few good things about aging.

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Q: Oh, that sounds wonderful. That sounds wonderful.

A: Yes, we – we are ver – as I’ve said at my 90th birthday party, we are – we – we’ve led a very charmed and lucky life in many ways. First escaping from **Germany**, then meeting my lovely wife, whom I ha – wouldn’t have met if my parents had –

Q: Right.

A: – [indecipherable] in **Cleveland**, my parents doing well enough set up a new existence, a new decent income in the **United States**, being able to send my brother and me to college. My brother became a – a – a meta – metallurgy [indecipherable] and start his own smelting business and did very nicely, melt – smelting old automobile – well, you’ll hear from him –

Q: Okay.

A: – personally, but he – smelting old – melting old grills from cars and various things that have a lot of zinc in them, and then producing virgin zinc for – as – as good as anything you get from actual zinc ore. And he did very nicely, and he’s been long retired, and we try to get together as often as possible, though. He’s in **Philadelphia**, it’s not that far, but somehow [indecipherable]

Q: Oh, when you have a busy life –

A: Yeah, exactly.

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Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add to our – what we spoke about today to our interview with you?

A: Let's have a short pause and then let me think.

Q: Okay.

A: Do you have any ideas?

Q: Questions that I wanted to follow up on and sort of like to tie up loose ends from the beginning. You've mentioned that when you were a young boy, and during one of the trips to **Switzerland** with your father, you stayed at a kosher hotel because you wanted to be a rabbi. And tell me, what was it about being a rabbi that attracted you? That – that – what appealed?

Q: That's a difficult question to answer, except I – I was impressed with our rabbi, Rabbi **Paul La-La-Lazarus**(ph) in **Wiesbaden** who – who spoke at my – who – who Bar Mitzvahed me essentially, taught me my lessons – some of my Bar Mitzvah lessons and gave the – the sermon, and he was a very good speaker, and I admired him a great deal. That may have had a lot to – and I went through a – a religious period in my life, which for better or for worse, disappeared pretty quickly after I found out about the Holocaust.

Q: Well, here was a question, yes, do you consider yourself religious today?

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A: No. I mean, I consider myself as a very positive, cultural Jew, a-and ethnic Jew. I'm very proud of anything that the Jewish community does that I like, whether it's sports or science or medicine or anything. And I – I – I like to belong to a Jewish congregation because it gives me a feeling of belonging. As for a belief in God, I'm afraid that's gone. I wish I did. It would make life much easier, would make dying much easier.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I can't believe in it personally. I mean, I – I can believe in a – in a – some kind of super power. I cannot believe in a personal God that would answer que – prayers or punish you or reward you. Simply, the evidence is not there. So –

Q: Thank you.

A: – maybe I shouldn't have said this, but –

Q: No, no, I asked, I asked.

A: – this is how I feel. So then that – that idea. And then of course, I got excited about science, so that kind of went by the wayside.

Q: Tell me a little bit about how your accomplishments have been received.

A: Well, yes, I – they've been, of course, received very well. I mean, we – publishing 250 - 300 papers doesn't go unnoticed.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And many of them were ve – were very good, and very useful. And they led to some rewards. I not – I'm only going to give you two or three that are –

Q: Okay.

A: – remarkable. One is that – and one of my favorites was that I got an honorary doctorate from the University of **Paris** and the **Sorbonne**.

Q: Congratulations.

A: Not only was that a very nice honor, but it was also a very nice occasion. And ma – my wife, my son – oldest son, and my mother, and my brother and my sister-in-law were all at – in **Paris** for the occasion, and we had a wonderful time. And as soon as we're finished with the wonderful time in **Paris**, and an extremely moving ceremony with a chamber music group playing music, and with a – walking in with the –

Q: Yeah.

A: – the academic garments and with my – my godfather, **mon parrain** making a speech as to why I deserve it, there were six others, all in different fields: philosopher, mathematician, biologist and s – and so forth. And I have lovely pictures of them. As soon as we got f-finished with all this and sent all the relatives home, except my brother and – I think my brother and sister-in-law, of course my

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son – my – well, we sent my mother home. We went to s **Zermatt, Switzerland**,
our fave – our favorite ski place.

Q: And you skied.

A: – and we skied.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Well, we did that from the early seven – 70s to about 2010. Almost – almost
every winter.

Q: How wonderful.

A: And the – then I got a very nice prize from the **New York** Academy of Science,
and I don't recall the – it was the name of two brothers and it was distinguished in
the way that it was given by **New York** Academy of Sciences, and the fact that, I
think foreign people before me had won the **Nobel** prize. So it was given to some
pretty good people.

Q: Wow.

A: And I got an award from the nation's drug abuse as one of their outstanding
researchers, called the – oh, I'm blocking out the name.

Q: It's okay.

A: People who – who make discoveries, I – and I got a number of other awards and
name lectures, in other words, lectures in high memory of people who had died, in

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honor of people who were being honored. So i-it's – it's been a very, very, very gratifying to ha – be recognized by one's peers. My – my medical school has also been very generous. In 2005 they did an all-day symposium in my honor. Oh, by the way, in 1997, I believe, a journal called **Neurochemical Research** did a – a whole volume in my honor, with my picture with an article by a colleague, Dr. **Huda(ph)** **Akeel(ph)**, a Syrian born, lovely lady with the University of **Michigan**, who wrote an article about why I deserved the honor. And in the – the s-symposium at my university was – all day symposium with very outstanding people lecturing and saying nice things about me. And then about two or thr – three or four years ago, the medical school set up a annual lecture, called the **Eric Simon** lecture. And so far, thank goodness, it's not in memorial, it's in my honor. But hopefully it'll be continued.

Q: Any final thoughts? You – that – this is quite an impressive roster. Thank you for – for sharing it.

A: Final thoughts?

Q: Final thoughts.

A: No, I just think that compared to so many of my friends and so many of my fellow Jews, I've been extremely lucky and some of what I've told you may be almost – not seem very – very, very important compared to what all these people

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went through. I guess these are my own [indecipherable] for not having been murdered or having been hurt in a serious way, as have the others coming out. But I think these experiences are still important to remember how life was in **Germany**, and here, for that matter, during the – during that – that period.

Q: Well, I – I couldn't agree more. People had different experiences, but this entire – this entire historical epoch didn't leave anybody untouched.

A: No, I – that's for sure.

Q: And – and – and part of what our job is, is to try and collect some of those fragments.

A: Right, and to create the atmosphere, and –

Q: And – yeah. And to – to se –

A: – make – make people understand –

Q: Right.

A: – what the periods –

Q: And to have a historical record.

A: – was like, yeah.

Q: Yes. Through individual experiences. Just like –

A: I mean, even my – my army service – well, I would have gone over and fought if they had sent me.

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Q: Yeah.

A: Somehow I go – I was saved. And I'm still here at 90, and it's not everybody can make that statement either, and I'm still in pretty good health, and –

Q: That's also very impressive. Very impressive.

A: So that's very much my final comment, and I thank you for a very nice interview.

Q: Thank you, and thank you Dr. **Simon** for participating in – this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Dr. **Eric Simon** on June 21st, 2014.

A: Thank you **Ina**.

Q: Right, okay.

End of Tape Two

Conclusion of Interview

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