

Gerald Silver

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Abstract

Gerald Silver was born April 26, 1923 in Brooklyn, New York. This interview focuses on his being a Jewish/American in the US military in Europe near the end of World War II. His parents came from the Ukraine and spoke Yiddish in the home with the grandparents. Gerald had a sister, Miriam who was five years younger than him. His father's older siblings immigrated to South America where they became successful businessmen and later went to Israel. Gerald did not have relatives in Europe during the Holocaust. His father had a series of businesses ending in a Sweet Shoppe where they placed a picture in the window of their Cousin Phil Silver, the actor. Gerald was brought up in the Jewish neighborhoods of Brownsville and Crown Heights and learned of the European Jews' experiences by reading the Yiddish newspaper, "The Day." Gerald graduated Jefferson High School in June '40 and worked at his father's store and spent weekends ushering at the Jewish Theatre until he was drafted into the Army in '43. He was stationed at Ft. Dearborn, Illinois in the anti-aircraft unit. Then sent to Camp Upton in West Hampton, Long Island for training. Next he was shipped to Glasgow, Scotland in April '44 and went by jeep to Wales where he learned how to get from a boat to a beach. Gerald was not informed that the training was for D-Day. They left England on a LST (Landing Ship Tank), a boat that carried tanks to cross the Channel to Omaha Beach. At 6:30 AM they went down ropes into waist-high deep while being shot at. Gerald helped others who were hit and tried to get them on the beach before he realized that he was wounded. It was announced that he would get a Bronze Star and stripes for promotion to Buck Sergeant for helping others but an officer said, "Not the Jew boy" so instead he received a letter of commendation. Gerald felt that instead of the Allied planes going to bomb Germany, they should have bombed the Germans in the bunkers overlooking the beach. Luckily, a destroyer on the beach went back and forth the English Channel and destroyed these Germans. The Medics took care of Gerald's wound which affected him in later years. Gerald received the Purple Heart for being wounded. He remained on the beach directing units to their designated area in Europe. Gerald attended the opening ceremony of the cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach. He saw a little action in Belgium, did not participate in the Battle of the Bulge and went for Passover dinner at a Dutch Convent where he was surprised to see Jews walk out of a trapdoor under a carpet where they had been hidden. After liberation, he visited Dachau where he saw no Jewish prisoners but saw SS prisoners and mountains of children's shoes which was frightening. Gerald ended up serving in the occupied Army at Kaufbeuren, Bavaria before being shipped home to New York in December '45 from England. Gerald was

happy that both Hitler and the Nazis were gone. He received 80% disability but now he feels 100% disabled due to his stress if he views a war film and that both feet are affected. He married Roz in '51 and was successful as a salesman for a paper company until he retired at age 66. Then he volunteered at the New York Community Board and it turned into a paid part-time position.

Summary

- 00:00 Gerald Silver was born April 26, 1923 in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn, New York. He was known as "Gary" or "Gershon Yitzchak" (Gary Jacob in Yiddish). He will focus on his being a Jewish/American in the US military in Europe near the end of World War II. He learned Yiddish from hearing his parents speak to his grandparents in Yiddish and still enjoys speaking Yiddish. His father emigrated here from the Ukraine in 1913. His grandfather sent his father away to prevent his being drafted into the Russian Army but in 1917 he was drafted into the US Army. His father served in WWI and Gerald served in WWII. Gerald's mother came from Kiev, Ukraine when she was a year old so was raised as an American. She was a high school graduate and spoke fluent English and Yiddish. Gerald's sister, Miriam, was five years younger than him and passed away in 1982, a week before Jim and Barbara's wedding. She had two children, Richard and Jeffrey. Both Gerald's sets of grandparents came from the Ukraine (where Shalom Aleichem lived). His mother's father was a kosher butcher.
- 05:00 His grandparents did not discuss their growing up in the Ukraine so his mother did not know their childhood. His father had four sisters and two brothers, all had a good childhood and became successful financially. His father was the oldest sibling. His oldest sister met a man whose friend said that if you go to South America, you can become a financial success. Her fiancé went to Columbia, South America for a year and had a business which was successful so wrote to Gerald's aunt, his future wife, and said she should join him. She arrived and they got married and she, in turn, told her siblings to come. They arrived and became businessmen. They were the second or third Jewish family to settle there in the 1920s. Uncle George had sugar and coffee plantations. He sold his sugar plantation to Coca Cola for \$4 million. He also had homes in Paris and England. His wife, Pauline came to New York and lived in Forest Hills. They had one son, George. All the relatives were Zionist. When Israel was being formed, they sent boatloads of arms and ammunition to the Haganah. After the State of Israel was formed, they bought real estate and orange groves and had homes in Tel Aviv. George lives in a penthouse in Tel Aviv and does business in New York.
- 10:00 George visited Gerald and told him about his cousins in Israel. They have no relatives left in Columbia. His father's father migrated to Israel and is buried there. Gerald lived

on Bristol Street in Brownsville when his grandparents came to say, "Farewell" on their way to Palestine. The aunt bought a house, #6 Sheraby (?) in Tel Aviv. The aunt's mother died before the grandparents, around 1930 before WWII. George was a pre-teen the only time he saw Gerald. They came from Russia to the US and then to Palestine. In the early 1900s they had farmed in the Ukraine. They got out before the arrival of the Nazis. No family member lived in the area of the Nazi forces.

15:00 Gerald's father had one store after another. First he was a cutter in clothing manufacturing and next he had a dairy stand on Avenue U in Brooklyn. They lived at Bedford Avenue and Avenue U. His father gave it up and sold smoked fish. He ended up on St. John's Place in Crown Heights near Buffalo Avenue, "Silver's Sweet Shoppe." He carried nuts, candy, chocolate and halvah. He was successful in this last store and bought nine family houses near Eastern Parkway. Gerald would enter the store and eat dates and nuts. There was a picture of his cousin, Phil Silvers, in the window. Gerald's father lived with his aunt when she gave birth to Phil ("Philly") as they were his only relatives. His father held "Philly" in his arms so Phil Silvers referred to his father as "Uncle Sam." In show business, Phil was called, "Silvers" rather than "Silver." Silver is "Sirvonegine" in Russian.

20:00 George Mechanik (?) was the first one in Columbia to send boatloads of arms to Palestine. One relative in South America was "Fishman." They all kept their Latin names from South America. Rosie or "Rosita" married Hershel Fishman. There was Enrique Silver, his father's brother and Gabriel Silver, his Cousin Phil's father who was a first cousin. Phil sent his father his picture and he put it in his store's window. Gerald visited his cousin backstage when he was in "High Button Shoes." Gerald's wife, Roz, went with him backstage. His wife was excited. Phil was nice. When Gerald went into service, he wrote that if he was transferred to California, he should stay with him but Gerald was not sent in that direction. Phil had two brothers, Saul and the other was an accountant or a lawyer. When Phil was in show business, he was the softest touch for anyone who needed money. One of the brothers gave up his practice to become Phil's manager as everyone on Broadway owed Phil money. When his brother took over, Phil did well. He was successful in burlesque and ultimately in Hollywood. Gerald's father was learned in Judaism.

25:00 He attended synagogue on Saturday. He was knowledgeable. Gerald went to Hebrew School, was Bar Mitzvah and was active in the 183rd Street Hillcrest Temple. His mother's parents were orthodox. Two brothers were successful in business. His mother had several cousins. They were a close-knit family. Gerald had friends in the neighborhood. He lived there quite a few years. He lived on Sterling Place between Howard and Ralph Streets until his teens and played punch ball and stickball in the street. He attended PS 144 and then Junior High 210 on Rochester Avenue. They were good years. He had no non-Jewish friends as the neighborhood was Jewish. He read about

Hitler coming into power as so many Jewish people were being persecuted so realized it was a bad situation. He followed the event by reading his father's Jewish newspaper, "The Tag" (The Day). He learned how to read it (Hebrew alphabet with no vowels) and followed the happenings in Europe so he was very knowledgeable at any early age. "The Tag" is leftist and his father was the founder of the Jewish Ushers' Union, the Yiddish stage. His father was an usher at the Parkway Theatre at 2nd Avenue in Manhattan.

- 30:00 Gerald was taken to see Jewish plays. When he was older, he was a substitute usher on the weekends and got \$1 and saw many Yiddish shows. He remembers Jacob Jacobs and his wife. Gerald learned Yiddish from listening to it and reading the Yiddish newspaper. He was taught how to write but forgot it but can still read and speak Yiddish. His father received letters from his siblings who wrote about the political events taking place in their areas. His father was well-versed about events. His father's siblings in South America were successful and started traveling and came to the US so Gerald met some aunts. His relatives were involved with the Haganah. They were aware of events.
- 35:00 Gerald had no relatives in the Holocaust. Gerald's father was in the Jewish Theatre so Gerald had an opportunity to see the Jewish Theatre in their Golden Age. As a teenager, Gerald did not have a career in mind. He did fairly well in school as was an average student. As he got older, he was aware that war was coming which took his mind off thinking about a career. Some of his friends became successful scientists and in the law but he was not in that realm. Gerald was successful as a sales person after the war. He entered service in '43. When the war broke out, he was interested in it and read about it in the newspapers or heard about it on the radio.
- 40:00 From '39 to '43, he knew about the Jews in Europe as he followed it. No one in his family was persecuted. His friends did not pay attention to the events in Europe. Though Gerald knew of the existence of the camps, he did not know what went on there. He graduated Jefferson High School in June '40 and worked at his father's store and spent weekends ushering at the Jewish Theatre. He knew that he was about to be drafted. Everyone knew that the US was about to enter the war as President Roosevelt talked about it. When he heard about Pearl Harbor in December '41, he expected to go fight the Japs. Actually, he did not know if he would be sent to Europe or Asia and did not have the choice of direction, only had the choice of service to enter.
- 45:00 He waited at home until he was drafted as his parents did not want him to leave. His parents spoke Yiddish to each other and English to him. In February or March '43, his draft number was reached and he was sent to Ft. Dearborn, Illinois. He ended up in the 397, AAA weapon anti-aircraft on the shores of Lake Michigan, a regular Army post. It was beautiful and was on the outskirts of Chicago. The Commanding Officer, a colonel was the coach for basketball at DePauw. On weekends, Gerald got a pass and would spend alternate weekends in Chicago and Milwaukee. The Chicago bars were free as it

was a sailor town. There was a base on the Great lakes. There were few soldiers, mostly sailors. He liked Chicago. It was the first time he met non-Jews. He had no problems and assimilated well.

- 50:00 There was no anti-Semitism directed at him at that time but later he experienced it during the war. His outfit shipped out for Camp Upton where there were soldiers with similar backgrounds (Brooklyn, Bronx, Amsterdam, upstate New York) so they got along. They were assigned to anti-aircraft machine gunner with 40 men in the unit. They did not choose it but were all selected. He stayed in Chicago until sent overseas. First he was sent to West Hampton, Long Island where there were only two houses. One was owned by the Vanderbilts and the other by another socially high family. They were sent there for anti-aircraft training. They would fire at an airplane towing targets behind them and would fire at the target. All went well until one of his guns almost hit an airplane so that put a stop to the training. The beach only had the two houses, not like today. Then they were shipped to England. He slept in a hole on the ship and landed in Glasgow, Scotland. He was extremely sick on the ship.
- 55:00 They traveled by jeep to Wales which was a colorful area and were trained to go over the land. They were taken to an area with water and were placed in small boats and taken toward the beach to learn how to land on it. They were preparing for D-Day. They were there for several months. They did not have anti-aircraft guns with them. There was little target practice. About 50 to 75 soldiers including Gerald were detached from the outfit and were to be attached to the 16th Infantry First Division. They were not informed why they were detached. Later, after they hit Omaha Beach on D-Day, their duty was to make the beach secure, build a jetty to go out from the beach into the English Channel and place anti-aircraft guns on the jetty in case the Germans strafe the beach. The guns would provide anti-aircraft fire. They found out that after landing on the jetty, they would be the guys to fire the guns. This did not take place as one-half the guns ended up in the English Channel. Gerald saw the jetty but he was not on it and was shipped back to his old outfit. They left England on a LST (Landing Ship Tank), a boat that carried tanks. The Channel was crowded with them on D-Day.
- 60:00 When they reached a certain point in the Channel, they had to climb down a rope ladder and land on the small LCT, a landing craft. This small boat circled six hours on the Channel awaiting flares that shot into the sky meaning the craft can go to the beach. During the six hours, everyone was seasick on the little boats until they landed on the beach. When Gerald was on the big ship, he did not know it was D-Day as did not know they were going to cross over to Normandy. He knew that something was going to take place as he saw equipment but was not told he was going to Normandy but knew he was going into action. He lost a friend, Jimmy Speradacus (?) on the English Channel as a German U-boat attacked his boat which Gerald learned later. He was a good friend. He

was called, "Greek" because he came from Astoria, a Greek area. He was the only soldier lost on the boat.

65:00 It was 6:30 AM when they climbed down the ropes as the flares had gone up and Gerald was told to go to the beach. Some of the soldiers were hit by shell fire. He got into water that was waist-high deep and realized that he was being shot at. It was noisy due to the firing, shells hitting the water, and guys getting hit by bullets. He bent down. There were mines in the water that blew up if bullets hit them. Gerald helped guys who were hit and tried to get on the beach and when he was almost there, he felt stiff and saw blood. He realized that he was hit in the left thigh as it was numb and his arm had shrapnel so he crawled on the beach until he reached the sea wall. The Germans were on top of the cliff and could not see him. Behind him was the whole beach. Soon more guys got up and had the whole seawall with the group who were on the beach. Then he tried to help others get up by crawling and pulling the wounded guys up. Someone said, "What if the Germans attempt to gas them, do we have gas masks?" He had his and made sure that he asked everyone and crawled from guy to guy and asked if they had gas masks and canteens. If not, he would take them from the dead and give them to the wounded.

70:00 Then Gerald noticed that Ralston, a nice guy in his outfit who was not on his landing craft, was wounded and he made sure that Ralston had a gas mask and a canteen. Ralston was the only officer on the beach. He was evacuated to England and, Gerald thinks, he lived. Some of the other guys died but he did not know them. (Gerald shows a framed letter from July 9, 1944 from the Commander to Pfc Gerald Silver, 397th AAAW Battalion, that on 6 June 1944, he was commended on exemplary and magnificent behavior under fire saving wounded comrades under rising tides, addressed to Adjutant General Timberlake, Brigadier Commander – read by the interviewer). There was a meeting of the officers and men to decide who would be given medals. It was decided that Gerald would get a Bronze Star and stripes for promotion to Buck Sergeant. One officer said, "Not the Jew boy" so instead he received the letter of commendation. It was his only anti-Semitic experience. Gerald values the document. He helped as many guys as he could.

75:00 The jetty was not built as they realized the beach was secure and the Germans were not near enough to strife so they moved to Normandy. They knocked out the German aircraft who had few planes left. Those on the beach spoke for months about how General Eisenhower and his staff messed up. The sky over the English Channel was black with the airplanes going over to France and never strafed the German positions overlooking the beach. They felt that it was not necessary for 3,000 to die and 9,000 to get wounded. It was a big screw-up. This was never published but the soldiers saw it. If the German positions were strafed or bombed that morning, the Americans could have walked onto the beach instead of so much blood. The Germans looked down on them and shot them

instead of being bombed. All the planes went over the land to bomb Germany. From the seawall, a unit blasted a hole through the barbed wire and went through. What saved them was a destroyer on the beach which went back and forth across the beach on the English Channel.

80:00 This English destroyer and one French destroyer fired up into the cliffs and knocked out the German gun positions which saved them. All the servicemen on the beach had to move inland and knock the Germans out. They did not know there were rangers at the end of the beach scaling the seawall to get on top as saw little of them. Some of the men were detailed from his outfit and they had to bring the rest of his outfit from England. Those who survived in his unit acted as beach master officers responsible for landing. They told the men which outfit was being brought over from England to land on the French beaches. When a certain outfit landed, the beach master told them which road to take. He had this duty for a week or two. Each morning he got a list of units coming and where to send them. They went across Normandy. The work was interesting. When his outfit landed, he rejoined them and spent the rest of the war going inland. When Gerald realized that he was wounded, he saw two medics, one was a physician. They pulled his pants down and said he had shrapnel. One took a plyer type medical instrument and plucked out some of them from his arm and leg. Then they poured Sulphur on the wounds and bandaged him and said that he would be OK. They took down his name, unit and outfit and later he got the Purple Heart for being wounded.

85:00 It was twenty-five years later that the wound affected his nervous system as it caused him to have a drop-foot and now both feet are that way. He used one leg so much that it acted like two legs so needs a walker now. At first he used a cane and went to the VA and got 80% disability rating. Now he feels 100% disabled and feels he should get it but does not feel like going through the trouble. He has a brace that helps. He slept on the beach and saw the physician the next day when the firing ceased. They were under fire for hours the first day. Rangers climbed up after the destroyers did their work. He saw, "Saving Private Ryan" and "The Longest Day" and went to the VA to see the physician, neurologist and psychiatrist. When he got there, he screamed, "How do they have the nerve to make these movies and bring back all those memories?" He was at the 23rd Street and First Avenue VA Hospital. His outburst was part of the 80% rating.

90:00 Now he watches war movies 10 minutes and shuts it off as he may cry for one hour. If he watches "Saving Private Ryan" for five minutes, he cannot sleep and cries. The movies bring back too many memories of faces he forgot. He likes the acting but he cannot watch it. Ultimately, they brought in a grave registration unit which was all-Black. They collected the bodies and buried them in the cemetery overlooking the beach. Gerald was at the services the day the cemetery was opened. He convinced Roz, his wife, to return to the beach. He wanted to see how many guys he knew in the cemetery. They had

reservations to fly and his wife got sick so they canceled but he often feels like returning to Omaha Beach. He never returned.

95:00 Many men had already crossed Normandy when the cemetery was opened. It was on a cliff overlooking the beach. It is hard to speak of it as people he knows are buried there. Some he knew and others he helped but they did not survive. When they had the ceremony, some were already buried. Only a handful of his unit were lost. There were many wounded but they survived. It was spread out so most of his outfit were not with him as they were all along the length of the beach. The 29th Infantry were with them unexpectedly. Everything was spread out so the plan did not work out. He realized that the other side of the Channel was France but he did not know which part until it was secured. Then he was told it was Normandy. It dawned on them that it was D-Day. Some soldiers, including his unit, went down to pull out the bodies from the water onto the beach. Most of the dead were young, his age. If he met someone age 30, that was unusual. He stayed a couple of weeks on the beach. They pitched tents. As outfits arrived, they set up a food kitchen and water.

100:00 The German prisoners who were captured were marched along the beach and he looked at them. He said, "Ich bin Judein" (I am Jewish.) so they would see what a Jew looks like and they turned their heads away. It made him feel good. Later when he was fighting inland, he removed a German pistol from a captured soldier and brought it home. Roz did not want it so he threw away the ammunition and kept the gun. He kept it in the basement for a long time but did not show it to his children. When the police announced that you can turn in a gun without any questions asked, he took it to the 77th Precinct in Fresh Meadows and the cops got excited over it. Roz felt better that it was out of the house. They first lived in Glen Oakes before they built the house in '59, the year they got rid of the gun. The German prisoner was an officer. The bunkers were blasted up on the hill so he did not go in. The firing died down slowly and all the units were shipped inland to cross France.

105:00 The soldiers carried carbines, a rifle or a pistol and an ammunition belt when hitting the beach but landed in deep water and many drowned as were equipment laden down with water up to the shoulders. Some of the soldiers they pulled out of the water were moaning so were still alive. His leg did not bother him much so was able to get some bodies out. First he hid behind the crossbars on the beach without realizing there was a bomb behind each one.

110:00 When a unit arrived, they were given a specific place to go in France, Belgium, Holland or Germany. They set up units in defense activities for certain maneuvers and supplied anti-aircraft if needed. At one town, he knocked on a door and asked to use the bathroom with his broken French. The people loved Americans; there were no problems. He saw some action in Belgium. There were no problems in Holland as the Dutch were nice. At

the time of the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans dropped a parachute battalion and several were picked up near his outfit so he saw the captured men. Behind the barbed wires, they were hard-looking. Then they were taken to a POW camp. He saw Dachau after liberation.

115:00 What he saw is hard to describe. He read the newspaper in the States but did not see it once he arrived in England. He knew little about the Jews. They went to a picturesque town in Wales, Western Supermane, on the Bristol Channel. They went on a boat and practiced disembarking to the beach without realizing it was a rehearsal for D-Day landing. He was told it was a maneuver. They did not realize that they were anticipating an invasion. It was easier to land at Bristol Beach as no one was shooting and they were not laden down with equipment. His unit was at the rear for anti-aircraft protection so did not fight in the Battle of the Bulge. Mattledee (?) was a bad area as he saw fallen bodies. Gerald was at Poznan in '45 in Breslau, Holland and the Jewish Chaplain asked him if he would like to attend services. He went to a convent and nuns greeted them with a prepared dinner. One said they have a surprise and removed the carpet and saw a trapdoor and returned with a group of Jewish men they had hidden from the Germans.

120:00 They had fed and cared for them and when they saw men in uniform with guns, they froze. Gerald spoke Yiddish to them to calm them down as they were shaking. He did not know Dutch so could not converse with them. They were terrified to speak when they saw them. They calmed down and ate with them and the nuns covered up the trapdoor with the carpet. Gerald does not know what happened to them later. He does not think they had to go back down. He was mystified at seeing them. There were seven or eight middle-aged men. The nuns spoke a few words of English. They expected Americans to come as the Jewish Chaplain must have warned them. There was no shooting when they arrived.

125:00 Then his unit went to Germany and ended up in Kaufbeuren. Bavaria. It was picturesque and had a brewery that made beer which they drank. Then they transferred to different ports to leave for the States. He was in Aachen attacking a German unit and they were in the rear with anti-aircraft guns. Though he was not in the fighting, he could hear it. Gerald spent the Army of Occupation in Bavaria where there was beer and pretty girls. They had no problems with the German civilians as they kept to themselves since they did not know how the Americans would act towards them. Gerald always carried at least a pistol when he walked through the town as he did not know what would occur. There was no fraternization. The Germans might nod. There weren't many girls and too many guys. When the war ended, Gerald was in a gun position in Germany and someone came by in a jeep and told him the war was over. There was a big roar and he asked, "Are you sure?" and they responded, "Yes." More trucks came up the road.

130:00 Once he came upon Soviet soldiers. They heard a foreign language in the woods and parted the trees and starred at each other and cheered and laughed. It was just before the war ended and each group went their own way. There was still some fighting. He was in a big city blasted by bombers, perhaps Heidelberg. Villages and small towns were not destroyed. Bavaria was not destroyed. Just after liberation, he was in Dachau which he knew was a concentration camp. He went there with a few guys. About 15 to 20 SS guards were laying on the ground behind barbed wire. They were talking and laughing and one walked over and spit at him.

135:00 He felt like shooting him but another soldier told him that if he killed the POW, he would be court-martialed. The German smiled and laughed in his face. Gerald saw the shower with the gas jets. There were a few prisoners left as they were too sick to be moved. Gerald went into the bunkhouse where people laid on dirty barracks. He saw mountains of children's shoes, thousands of pairs which was frightening. It still sticks in his mind today. He did not see the prisoners. Several buildings looked like offices. He moved around freely. No one guarded him.

140:00 Gerald saw two marked places. One was a place with mad dogs that were sicked onto the inmates (the dogs were no longer there) and the other was a place where the prisoners kneeled over and were whipped. Dachau was a large area and he spent a couple of hours there. He saw Munich. It was a big city and was bombed out. They pitched tents in Kaufbeuren as were there for a few weeks. They would walk into town for drinks and something to eat. They saw few civilians. Then he went to Camp Lucky Strike in England and embarked for the US. He spent a couple of weeks there. One unit at a time was shipped out. Again he was seasick on the ship. It was a passenger ship they took to New York where Kate Smith greeted them with her songs. He returned December '45 and was discharged.

145:00 It was April '44 when he was shipped out to England. After Paris was liberated, his unit was sent to St. Denis, the suburbs of Paris, a working class area, and set up guns in case the Germans decided to bomb Paris. He walked into Paris and stood under the Arc D'Triomphe. He spent a great day walking through Paris and returned to St. Denis alone. He saw the Eiffel Tower. It was a big city. He saw other GIs. Some were looking for brothels. He went into a bar and pointed to the drink he wanted and had a glass of liquor. Gerald walked around and enjoyed it. He had been close to action but not always in it.

150:00 It changed him that Hitler was gone and they defeated the Nazis. They liberated the concentration camps. He was part of it so it changed him as he saw death close up. His unit moved on wheeled vehicles and towed guns behind them. They were never on tracks. The experience left him with some memories but he is not always traumatized. The hardest part was people questioning him about what he did when he was in the service. He never discussed the war with Mark but told Barbara some things. She

realizes that it is easier to question him now than before. His parents never questioned him and he is glad that they did not. The night he came home to Crown Heights as he was discharged, he got off the subway at Utica Avenue and went into Dubrow's to see if there were any of his friends there.

155:00 Then he walked to his father's store and his mother saw him and fainted. They had no idea that he was coming home then. His father just gasped. His father was a veteran so knew something of war. Gerald met Roz in 1950 through a mutual friend and they dated a year and got married in '51. He had a beautiful wedding in the Rabbi's apartment. Roz's mother was a delight. Twice he met Roz's father briefly after a date and one night they saw a light on the porch. It was a Saturday night and Roz ran as though something was wrong. The family were big card players and played poker. Apparently, her father put his head down on the table and died. After the war, Gerald met a girl he knew from school who had a contact with the US Employment Service.

160:00 She submitted his name and he obtained a job at a paper merchant company that sells printing paper to printers and publishers. They wanted to hire a veteran for their company on Hutchinson Street in Manhattan so he got the job. He was Orders Clerk to the General Manager, Sid Greenberg, the Jewish owner. He worked there until it was sold to a Midwest Company, Savon-Robbins in Cincinnati. They had offices throughout the country. First it moved to Carstad (?), New Jersey and he had the New Jersey, Manhattan and Brooklyn territory. He had a car and worked himself up and ended up with a profit-sharing plan. He had a couple of hundred thousand when he left. They insisted that he retire at 66 but he wanted to stay. They said that he would have to commute to Cincinnati if he stayed so he left. New York has Community Boards. They lived in a house in CBA in Fresh Meadows so he volunteered three days a week from 9 to 12 to answer the phone. They asked him if he would like to be hired as a city employee and get paid. He did not want to work full-time so they said it would be 20 hours. He accepted for three or four years and he was Assistant to the District Manager. He enjoyed it. There were all kinds of problems. Once a week he would go with the Building Inspector to find dirty houses. He would go with the Police Sergeant of the 170th Precinct once a week to see if there was any illegal gambling. Roz said it was time to quit. He did not work long enough for a pension.

165:00 Gerald has awakened many memories in this interview. Jim Finkel, his son-in-law, was helpful. Gerald will show his commendation letter, Purple Heart and picture. His experience strengthened him as the Nazis were eliminated; that was the whole essence of his being in the Army. It did not embitter him but he was glad that they erased Hitler, and liberated the concentration camps and crematoriums. It was worth being in the Army. (They show the framed commendation letter and have trouble focusing it.)

170:00 (They show the commendation given to him for what he did on the beach to help the wounded and needy – this was given instead of the bronze star and stripes for a buck sergeant as an officer said, “Not for the Jew boy.”) He feels strongly that he was able to help other soldiers. (Then they show the Purple Heart for the wounds he sustained on Omaha Beach on D-Day. All wounded GIs received it.) (Then the medal is shown that he received for being in Normandy after D-Day.) (A fourth item is shown, a Certificate of Congressional Recognition” which was given by local congressmen which was a political device. Gerald mentions photographs of himself and his father but they are not shown.)

173:43