

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Gilbert Waganheim**  
**January 13, 2015**  
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## PREFACE

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## **GILBERT WAGANHEIM**

### **January 13, 2015**

Question: Today is Tuesday, 13 January, 2015. We are interviewing Mr. **Gilbert Waganheim** at **Leisure World** in **Silver Spring, Maryland**. It is four minutes past 10 a.m., eastern time. Thank you for having the interview with us, sir. Could you please tell us your name, and when and where you were born?

Answer: **Gilbert Waganheim, w-a-g-a-n-h-e-i-m**. I was born in **Baltimore**, November 18, 1921.

Q: Did you grow up there?

A: I grew up in **Baltimore**, and – you want me to go through –

Q: Yes.

A: I was in **Baltimore** until I went to the service in 1942. I graduated high school, **Baltimore** – it's **Baltimore** – I'm losing the – anyway, I grew up in various areas of **Baltimore**. I lived wa – 12 years old, I lived in **Garrison Avenue**, which is close to **Pimlico** race track, and I used to sell newspapers in the – in the track during race time. I grew up normal, had friends and I don't know how – who – where do we go from here.

Q: Sure. No worries. I just want to know about your – tell us about your high school life. What would – did you enjoy high school? Do you – were you good in any particular subjects? Did you play sports?

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A: Well actually, I had a difficult time. My folks weren't yet – didn't make much of a living, so I quit in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, finished in night school, and went to work. I worked for a – a company that – a jobber. And I would travel to eastern shore, other places, and call on small stores that sell a variety of – of panties, socks, very – I've forgotten the group which you would call, but the small retail stores. And I didn't spend much time with sports or otherwise. Actually, I was always trying to earn a living for my folks. And let's see –

Q: Were your f – were your fol – what did you folks do?

A: Well, my father was a trouser maker, worked for a shop. But he had a – a – a – a business of, we would get bags of – of rolls, bagels and so forth, challahs, and we would deliver to homes. And after – after school I would deliver – in fact, we would – we'd deliver rolls and bread in the mornings before I went to school, and then of course he went to the shop and he made trousers.

Q: Was your – were your parents born in the **United States**?

A: No, my mother was born in **Grodno, Poland**. My father was born in **Riga, Latvia**.

Q: Okay.

A: And they came to **Baltimore**, married –

Q: So they weren't – did – they met in **Europe**, or did they meet in the **States**?

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A: Th-They met in the **States**.

Q: Okay, fair enough.

A: Yeah. In eastern **Baltimore** there was a – a – a large Jewish population, they were part of it. And that was – they met some – in the – in the groups.

Q: Did you grow up in an observant household?

A: Well, we – we – we started kosher, not strictly. But we – we appeared to – the – we – we belonged to synagogue, and we never had seafood, or – or – or non-kosher food, but as time went along – went on, we – we sort of dropped kosher and – and – although we – we'd – she – my folks would – would deal with kosher markets.

Q: Right.

A: But I wasn't – I've never eaten treyf, I still don't. And I met my wife in **Washington** – well – well in – let me – let me get – backtrack. As I said, I grew up, I have a – I had two brothers. I was the oldest. My middle brother is about seven years younger than me, and my younger brother was about 13. He died in the – well, let's s – let's say, after I – wh-while I was in the service, my folks moved from **Baltimore** to **Washington**. They took over a cleaning store in south **Washington**. So when I returned from the service, I moved, of course th – moved to **Washington**, and after a few years, I met my wife, and we got married and had th –

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we had – we have two sons, **Philip** and **Arthur**. And they eventually married and had families. And they live in **Florida**, both families.

Q: Let's go back to your childhood for just a moment, okay?

A: Yes.

Q: You said you sort of fell away from kosher slowly – or at least not strictly observant.

A: Well, as I remember – let me see, I'm – I'm trying to remember now whether my folks died here – yi – well, of course they died – died in the **Washington** area. I – I would say, not strictly kosher. Well, the – I didn't – I didn't – I don't remember – well, I've never eaten treyf food.

Q: Sure.

A: So –

Q: Where – where I'm going with this is –

A: Yeah.

Q: – I'm just wondering, growing up in **Baltimore** –

A: Yes.

Q: – in eastern **Baltimore**, and this, was it simply a – a conscientious decision on the part of your family and your family alone, or did you feel certain pressures from assimilation? Did you feel anything –

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A: No – as far as food?

Q: Yes.

A: No, not really.

Q: Okay.

A: I would say they stayed kosher throughout.

Q: Okay.

A: So I guess it wasn't til I came to **Washington**, that when I married, I – I wasn't strictly kosher.

Q: Sure. There are – I'm – I don't recall whether or not we covered it, but please state to your date of birth.

A: November 18, 1921.

Q: Thank you. Okay, so just overall, how would you describe your childhood? Did you enjoy it? Did you – did you like your childhood? Was it rough and tumble and urban, or was it more, perhaps sheltered and quiet? Or how would you – overall, how would you describe your childhood?

A: Normal. I had friends, and through school I – I had none non-Jewish friends. In – when I was around 10 years old, we lived – lived in a mixed area, and I recall that we had – we had ballgames between Jews and Gentiles.

Q: Okay.

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A: And I didn't really socialize with non-Jews, and I guess I grew up in a normal – normal way. As I said though, but I was always helping my – my parent earn a living, and so I got through. Nothing – nothing outstanding, it's just a normal – a normal life.

Q: I'm curious about the ballgames. How did they end up? Did – did – did – did the Jews and the Gentiles sort of split the wins and the losses more or less evenly, or did – were you the dominant team, or –

A: Well, I was very good, whether it was baseball or football. And I guess it was a mixture. Sometimes we won, sometimes we lost.

Q: Okay. So, you're working as a jobber, distributing undergarments, socks, things of that nature –

A: Yes.

Q: – to various shops, more or less in the **Washington, D.C.** area, or did you have a large geographic area that you were responsible for?

A: This is when I was living in south **Baltimore**. We had some customers in – in the area, the north – northwest **Baltimore**, but I recall I would go to the eastern shore, and there were stores in eastern **Maryland**. And where else? What – what's another large – I – I would have customers in different parts of – of eastern shore.

Q: Did you travel by car, or ca –



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A: Yeah, I had a car. And I had big suitcases, and I would take orders with whatever items they – they wanted.

Q: How old were you at that time?

A: I guess around 16.

Q: Okay.

A: 17.

Q: And how long did you carry on that job?

A: Until I went into the army.

Q: Tell me about that. When – were you conscripted, were you –

A: I – I was drafted in November of 1942.

Q: Okay.

A: When I became 21.

Q: Fair enough. Now, the war itself, when –

A: I –

Q: – did you first become a-aware? Were you – when did you first become aware, if at all, that this – Jews in **Germany** and throughout **Europe** were specifically being targeted for harassment and violence? Did you know before going in the service, or did you know ab – when did that – exactly did that happen?

A: I don't recall.

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Q: Okay.

A: I don't –

Q: Let's go back to conscription.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you given the option of the European or **Pacific** theater?

A: Well, let's – first of all, I was drafted into elev – a – a new organization called 11<sup>th</sup> armored division. And we originated in **Louisiana**. I was in the 42<sup>nd</sup> tank battalion of the 11<sup>th</sup> armored division, and I trained as a tanker. And because of my written tests that I took, plus the – the training I got, I was – I – I – I cou – I could have become a – an officer. At that time I have ant-anti-Semitism in the service, specifically in – in the area that I was training as a tanker. And I had some anti-**Semitinism**(ph) involved, and because of that, I had an opportunity to go to headquarters of 42<sup>nd</sup> tank battalion, and so that's what I did. And I became assistant to the adjutant there. And then, of course, we went overseas, and I went on – and as I was – I was – I was transferred to the – the headquarters as a clerk typist, and so that was my title, although I didn't – when we went overseas, I didn't do any typing or anything. I w – I was the assistant to the adjutant and of course the battalion commander gave instructions – wanted instructions to the – the adjutant. And of course, my being the noncom, I did the – whatever had to be done.

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Q: Let's go back to the – the na – the anti-Semitism that you experienced inside the army.

A: Yes.

Q: Talk about that, the nature of it. How did you feel it, how were you exposed to it?

A: Well, what happened was, a – a incident, for example, during the growing of th – of the – of the division, of the company, the battalions. People were transferring in and out, and there was a – a Jewish soldier, **Weinberg**(ph), that transferred out, and the – several of – of the soldiers said good, we got rid of another Jew. At that point I said, I'm Jewish. They couldn't understand. I didn't look Jewish, my name wasn't Jewish. And I says, well, you didn't – you don't see the horns coming out? At any rate, I – I had a different feeling with – with these soldiers, who were part of my tank – tank company. And so I didn't feel comfortable going to officer training, coming back, and dealing with – with anti-Semites in my outfit, fighting the Germans. So, that was – that was why I transferred to the company. And course we didn't have any – I didn't have to deal with any anti-Semitism while in the battalion headquarters. So that was – that was the experience I had.

Q: Okay. Do you recall when and how you received your call-up notice? Where were you, how did you receive it?

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A: I was in **Baltimore** on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. As I said, I was working for this jobber, and I got notice that I – I'm in – I'm drafted into the army.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: I took it in stride. I knew I had to go, and so I had –

Q: Where did you first go to training? Where was your initial training?

A: In **Louisiana**.

Q: What was it like?

A: Camp **Polk**.

Q: What was it like?

A: Well, course it's all new. As I said, I was in a tank battalion and I was in the – I was in **C** company, if I recall. And trained with others, learning all about tanks, and the armaments, and I was an expert with – with a submachine gun. Got a medal there, and I learned the 75 millimeter cannon. And I also trained, or learned the .45 pistol. And I learned my – I learned the armaments very well.

Q: Was it difficult?

A: No, it's – it's practice, a lot of time.

Q: So wa-was it a physical challenge, a mental challenge, or –

A: Well, it's both physical and mental.

Q: Sure. But you did well.

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A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Certainly well enough to be solicited for officer training.

A: Yes.

Q: So.

A: But I turned that down, as I said.

Q: Right.

A: Cause I didn't feel comfortable if I came back as an officer. Although I recall there was a Jewish officer that was in one of the companies, and I don't recall many Jewish soldiers after that.

Q: How did you cross over to **Europe**, by boat?

A: We went – yes.

Q: When and where did you leave?

A: Well, let's see if ... ah, we went over in December of 1944.

Q: And that was by ship?

A: By boat, yes, by ship.

Q: And what harbor did you leave, do you remember?

A: Well, we went to **England**.

Q: Okay.

A: We landed in **England**.

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Q: Did you stay in **England** for any length of time?

A: Yeah, we stayed in **England** for quite a time.

Q: What were you doing there, training and –

A: We were training, yes.

Q: What did you think of the English?

A: I had no problems with them. If I recall, I even – I even dated a – a Jewish girl, and invited to – invited to the home, and – but that wasn't anything more. And then, of course, we went over to **France**. Let's see. On December 16, 1944, the Germans launched a – a counterattack 50 mile radius in the **Ardennes**. And let's see – okay, and then when – when we went into **France**, our first assignment was to guard the – hold the section of the **Moose** River, where the German attack was expected, but on the 26 – December 26, the fourth armored broke through the German lines, and we leave **Bastogne**, where the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne had been – had surrendered, and – and so the evening of December 31<sup>st</sup>, our division went to – had a 250 mile, or 150 mile march to – to **Bastogne**, where we were involved with the – the – the battle – **Bastogne** – what was it called? The – the – let's see, where we became part of General **Patton's** Third Army, and we were in the combat command **A**, and we went to – we – we went to **Rehrival, Belgium**. That was our first area, and it snowed very heavy. And a patrol discovered over 101 infantry bodies dead.

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They brought back an SS officer to our headquarters, and – and understanding Yiddish, I attempted to interrogate him, but I wasn't too successful with the German, so they brought over interpreters from headquarters that took over, and – and – and interviewed – inter – interrogated him. I noticed the captain of D company was angered with the discovery of the American dead bodies, and he took some prisoners, lined them a – on the wall, and killed them. And I recall that I – I had to take the bodies and put them in – in bags.

Q: Did – i – what was upsetting to command and staff about the American bodies? Was it the nature? Did they appear to have been executed, or –

A: What?

Q: When you said that you found de – the – the-the bodies, the American bodies.

A: Yes.

Q: And that upset people.

A: Yes.

Q: Wi – was it – did they die as the result of an – of a – of a combat engagement, or did they appear to have been captured and then executed?

A: That's wa – wa – they – they captured and executed.

Q: Okay, so this is what –

A: Yes.

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Q: – got everyone –

A: Very upset.

Q: Correct.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Including yourself.

A: Yes.

Q: Right. So you saw both the Americans, and then the subsequent round-up of the Germans as well.

A: Oh, of course.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. Of course, our line companies did the – you know, captured the Germans and so forth. I was in headquarters –

Q: Right.

A: – and so I wasn't directly – although – although once – once we captured the – the soldiers is – I was aware of what happened.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.



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Q: Did you identify those parti – was it thought that those particular German soldiers who were captured were the ones who were responsible for the execution of the Americans?

A: I don't – I – I don't think I felt that way. I – I didn't know.

Q: Right.

A: I didn't know.

Q: But they were there.

A: Yes.

Q: And you were angry.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Do you real – hang on just for a moment, before we press on.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you recall your very first engagement with the enemy?

A: Personally?

Q: Yes.

A: I suppose it was when – when we captured a officer, and th – and the – the – my battalion commander asked me to interrogate the – he knew I was – he knew I was Jewish, and he thought maybe I had a – a – I was very versed in speaking German,

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which I wasn't. So, I – I – I can't tell you how I felt at the time. I think things lead up to what happens, and you take it as a matter of stride, I – I ge – I think.

Q: Would you say retrospectively, looking back, when you're there in **Europe**, the war in on proper, you're part of it.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you feel that your training up to that point equipped you to deal with war? Did you feel as if you were prepared?

A: Yes. Yes. As – as all the members of our division were.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: What – did you form an opinion of the enemy? Were they good soldiers, sloppy soldiers, were they –

A: Well, I recall the various things I did when we ha – we set up a camp. I recall that we had some German soldiers that we made **KP**, and I-I-I was guarding – at one point I was – I was guarding – I – I did a various – various things. But one – at one time I – I was guarding prisoners, I recall telling this German that he wasn't doing a good job of cleaning the large soup vats, and he tried to – he says, I'm doing the best I can. And – and that ended that conversation. But I – I didn't really have any direct contact, as such, with – with – with the German soldiers, other than,

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as I said, at one time I was there. O-Other times I would – I would go into a burnt out tank, and scrape the carcass from the inside, put it in a bag, cause we didn't want to leave any s-soldiers behind, so –

Q: So these were Americans that you had to extract?

A: These are – th-these are American, yeah. One of the tanks of – of one of our companies. So –

Q: That had to have been extraordinarily traumatic.

A: Yes. Yeah. Everything there was – it's a – but we took things in stride. Soldiers did their job. We – we – we did well, and after – after we left bast – **Bastogne**, we – we traveled south, and went through **Luxembourg**, and then **Germany**.

Q: Were you engaging the enemy as you're going along?

A: Oh yes, of course. We're all fighting, as i – as i – as – as I remember, the main force of Germans were defeated in the **Bastogne** area, and of course there's still plenty of fighting going on, and we ge – our – our division fought and engaged the enemies as we went down. And then when we got down to – near **Austria**, as a – as I told you, General **Patton** was the Third Army commander, and – and instructions were that we weren't supposed to go into **Austria**. But **Patton** didn't like – didn't – didn't like that, and so we went into austr – **Austria** also. And that's where – okay, and as I said, the Russians were supposed to take over the – **Austria**, and – and

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**Patton** didn't like the – the Russians either. And so li – going down, one of our companies, one of the companies was making – was doing reconnaissance, and on the road – on a certain road, a German **Jeep** with the German pa – the commander of – of – of the – of – of the camp, was coming towards them, a – with a white flag, and they surrendered. And it turns out he was telling them of the – of the – of **Mauthausen**, that i-it was – it was five miles back. And the reason they – they wanted – they – they gave up to us, is they didn't want the Russians, because the Russians would – would – would just kill them. And so that was how we learned of – of the concentration camp. The next morning, I went with the battalion commander and the adjutant into the camp. That was my first seeing it. And of course, what I observed was piles of shoes, piles of other things. And course, lot of dead bodies. And then I went into the – into the camp, and I went into a particular – wait a minute, I'm – I'm losing words. But I went in and I spoke with some of the survivors. And I asked, is there anything that –

Q: Now, hang on just for a moment –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You spoke with some of the survivors because you spoke Yiddish –

A: Yes

Q: – you were speaking in Yiddish –

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A: Yes.

Q: – not – not – not English, correct?

A: Yeah, English, yeah.

Q: Okay, so tell me about your conversations with them.

A: And so, I said, is there anything I can do. And I recall several coming to me and saying, could you write a letter to my relative in **Chicago**, if I remember that – that was – that particular situation. And so I took the information, and I did write a letter to I – I don't recall having an-any copies, so I – I don't know, bu-but this is my memory, that I wrote a letter and told of that – that this person was safe. And so that stood out in my mind.

Q: What did you think as you were approaching the camp? Before you entered the camp proper, did you know what its purpose was?

A: No.

Q: Did you –

A: No.

Q: So as you're approaching it, what do you see?

A: Well, I saw – what – what happened was, the German – there was a big quarry, and the Germans got cement out of there. And what they – they used, they set up this – th-this camp, with all the captured Jews that – that had to work in – in the

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quarries. And that is – that is how the camp came about. And the – the prisoners worked in the quarries, getting the cement or wha – wi – wi – the – w-with – wi – which would be the cement that they would be making. So what was my first – I-I – this has been a long time, so I – I really – I really can't remember how I felt in – in seeing it.

Q: Were there still Germans – and then ba – by that I mean soldiers, inside the camp, or not?

A: Well, what we did, wa – we – we – tho – our – our line companies went in, and of course, yes, there were Germans in there, and they all surrendered, of course. And of course our – our company – companies took them out, and we eventually took them back to headquarters. But as I said, I was in the headquarters of the battalion, and I didn't physically get involved with – with the soldiers there. We – we had our other – you know, others that were doing it.

Q: Once you and the battalion were inside the camp proper, what did you have to do? Did you have to start giving medical attention, did you start distributing food?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, of course, of course. We have a – a medical battalion with us, and so they went in and did what they had to do, yes.

Q: And did you feed the prisoners, or was that not in your – did you – did you give them food, did you give the prisoners food, or –

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A: I-I – I can't tell you, but the – th-the company – the soldiers in the – in the various companies did what you had to do. So I didn't – I personally wasn't involved with that.

Q: Okay. But you understood, if no – if for no other reason than language, that a very large number of them were Jewish? The prisoners.

A: Y-Yes.

Q: Did you – do you recall how you felt about that?

A: Well, I was angry learning of what's happened, but I – I can't – I can't tell you my feelings at the time. It's –

Q: You said in your written testimony –

A: Yes.

Q: – that at a certain point, as you are advancing through the camp, you came to the crematoria.

A: Oh, yes, yes. Here's a picture of – of the oven.

Q: Now, this is the one that you saw.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And as I said, when my father had this bread route, and – and – and breads and challahs and so forth, I used to go to the bakery and they had ovens. That's where

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they made the challahs and so forth. And when I saw this, it it – it made it – it brought me back to mind of the ovens in – in the bakery. And so –

Q: Did you understand when you saw that, what it was used for, and why it was being used?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Was it physical obvious?

A: I – I learned – I learned as we went in what was – what was happening, and what they – what did – the Germans had done.

Q: And was it the prisoners who you we – that were telling you this information?

A: I don't recall.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't recall.

Q: Do you recall how long you spent inside the camp itself?

A: I was there maybe just several hours.

Q: Okay.

A: As I said, at the time, we were still fighting in – in – in – where was that? In – in – in **Austria**. Anyway, no, we – we had to leave. But we left behind soldiers that would be doing what they had to do, clean-up and so forth.

Q: Mm. But you were still in pursuit of the enemy, so had to move out.



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A: Oh yeah, we were fight – we were fighting in – in a town in – in – in **Austria** now. What – if – if you want to take these papers –

Q: Sure, of course. Thank you. Did that experience, this experience of being in the camp –

A: Yes?

Q: – after leaving the camp, you had to, as you say, go in pursuit of the enemy –

A: Yes.

Q: – who was in a full retreat.

A: Yes.

Q: Did it change your understanding of why you were fighting the war? Did it change that at all?

A: No, we knew we had to fight the Germans. I did learn of – of what they were doing to the Jews. Of course, I didn't know at the end of the year – at the end of the – how many Jews were killed, and I wasn't – I wasn't happy with – with what I'd learned.

Q: Of course not. As you're pursuing the enemy deeper into **Austria**, at some point, relatively soon, you get word that the war is over. How and when did that happen?

A: While we were still in that town. We stayed there until the – the war was – then we got news of the war ending.

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Q: Do you recall how that news was transmitted? How did you learn that the war was over?

A: I'm sure my adjutant, my commander learned of it, and I don't know how. I guess word of mouth.

Q: Were you excited, happy, or relieved to – how would you describe your emotions?

A: My emotions were – I was very happy, but we had already – we felt that we had captured the enemy in – in – in **Austria**, and just – just biding there until the war ended.

Q: How much longer did you spend in **Europe** after the war was over?

A: I don't recall. I think – I think our division went back – you know, I don't recall – the last I remember is being in the – in this town in **Austria** and telling that the war is over, but I don't remember how we – how I got home. Whether we – we went to **England** – I don't know, ma – maybe –

Q: Sure –

A: – maybe that tells us –

Q: It's quite all right.

A: – I don – I don't know.

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Q: It's quite all right if you don't remember. Do you remember returning to the **United States**?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you feel?

A: Very happy to get back.

Q: Where did you come in, do you remember what port – what port did you come into?

A: I think **Baltimore** –

Q: Okay.

A: – where we –

Q: So – so home.

A: – wa – wa – yeah, where we had left, yes.

Q: Very fortunate.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you go immediately to your parents?

A: Well, my parents were living in **Washington** –

Q: Oh, that's right –

A: – at the time.

Q: – I beg your pardon.

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A: So I guess – I don't recall how I went. I – I – how I went from **Baltimore** to **Washington**. It – it – yeah, I don't – don't remember.

Q: It's quite all right. How long – mu-much longer did you stay in the service after the war was over?

A: I was out immediately.

Q: So, very quick discharge.

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do?

A: What'd I do?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: See ... I don't recall. I don't recall.

Q: Do you recall your first job after coming back out of the military? Did you return to the job as a salesperson, or – or not?

A: No, they – this – this was in **Baltimore** –

Q: Right.

A: – I was selling. I don't know what my first job was.

Q: It's quite all right.

A: I don't remember.

Q: You said you met your wife after the war.

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A: Oh yes.

Q: Okay. Where and how did you meet her?

A: I met her through some friends. I had it – a group of friends that – that I knew, and this one person invited my wife to – I met her at – at this friend's house, and that's the way it started.

Q: Ah, dou rec –

A: I dated her, and –

Q: Do you recall – that first meeting her at the friend's house, do you recall initially how you – what you thought about her?

A: I liked what I saw.

Q: Yes.

A: I see –

Q: And did you get the impression that she liked you as well?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you recall what your first date was?

A: What?

Q: Do you recall your first date?

A: No.

Q: No. Okay. How soon after meeting her did you know this was the one?

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A: I think immediately. I recall my – my mother invited her to dinner, that's how she met my family. Fir – first of all, I – I met her family first, where – and then, as time went on, we – we got married.

Q: And did the respective families like one another, did you – did her parents like you, did your – her – your parents like them?

A: Actually – actually, no. My mother-in-law felt she – I don't think she cared for me. She wanted h-he-her daughter to marry – to meet somebody else, who – who had – she had met, but she decided she would like me better. And if I remember – as I said, my – my family wasn't too wealthy, and they had their own little clique of friends, and if I remember, my mother-in-law wasn't too happy with my family. That she was – I remember her trying to be a little soci – soc – socially she didn't feel we were in the same category.

Q: Mm-hm. Sure.

A: But my wife and I got along very well. My father-in-law was okay, and –

Q: When were you married?

A: Si – I th – I –

Q: It's quite all right if you don't recall exactly. Did you have children straightaway?

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A: No, no, I think that a year or two after we were married. Well, let me see, I think we were married in '46, and we hadn't had children for five years. My first son was – was born 1952, so –

Q: Okay.

A: And again, I'm – I'm trying to remember my jobs. I di – I'm – I'm – I'm not remembering.

Q: That's quite all right. Do you remember your main profession, what was generally –

A: Oh, yes. I went to accounting school.

Q: Okay.

A: I went to – it was called – what was it called? I got a accounting degree, a commercial – a commercial accounting. Oh yeah, my first year I went for – I went to work for an accountant the first time. Then, I got a job with a jewelry chain, **Frank** Jewelries, that's right. Which was part of the **Kay** jewelry operation. And if I recall, we had two or three jewelry stores as part of that – that – and I would go – I would audit, I think that's where – and of course I – I took the **CPS** test, and I was not successful. I tried several times. So I stayed as an accountant, and I'm – I'm not remembering.

Q: It's quite all right. Your experiences in the war –

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A: Yes.

Q: – not just the camp, everything.

A: Yes.

Q: Having to go in the – to the tanks and extract American soldiers.

A: Yes.

Q: The execution of the German soldiers, the execution of the American soldiers.

A: Yes.

Q: Everything that you experienced; after the war, did it continue to affect you?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: And in what way?

A: For quite a while, I – I wasn't depressed, but I – I recall even having to go to – I went to a group therapy; they would help me.

Q: With other soldier – former soldiers, or –

A: I don't know if they were soldiers, or otherwise.

Q: But that therapy helped?

A: Yes.

Q: Just the experience of talking it out, and sharing, or –

A: I – I guess that's – that's what helped.

Q: Yes.



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A: Yes.

Q: Did it trouble your sleep? Your memories.

A: I don't remember, but it may – it may have.

Q: Yeah.

A: Otherwise, I wouldn't have gone to – to therapy. But I finally got out of it, and – over time. But yes, the – this – the service did have an effect on me.

Q: Okay. Did your experience in the war change – did it change the way you felt about **Germany**, and Germans, after the war?

A: Yes. I didn't care much for Germans.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you ever return to **Europe** after the war?

A: Yes, with my wife. I've – we made two or three trips. I went back to the camp.

Q: To **Mauthausen**.

A: That was one of th – one of the – one of the trips I took.

Q: What was that experience like, returning to the camp years later?

A: Bringing back memories. I just tuda – took it a matter of – of fact, I think.

Q: Was it as you remembered it, structurally, or had it changed?

A: Well, the – the camp I – a-actually was no – there was no activity there, other than it being a – a – where we went back to – it was a – just a place to see, and –

Q: Did it help to have your wife with you?

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A: Well, it's – I – I told her of the various things, and we took it a matter of – of – of stride, you know, where –

Q: Sure.

A: Like we were visiting different parts of the country, of – of **Europe**, and memories would come back, but that's – that's it.

Q: Yeah. Sure. Is there anything that you'd like to say in closing? The – the recording here is going to be used by Holocaust historians and students of the Holocaust, as well as people, journalists who might be writing about the Holocaust in future, and what it is that you saw and experienced. Is there anything that you'd like to say in closing?

A: No, that it – it was an experience, and – no, no, I – I wish we could have saved more Jews, but that was – that was life. That – that's what – that's what happened.

Q: Okay. Mr. **Waganheim**, thank you very, very much for this interview. I very much appreciate it. But most of all, thank you for your service to the nation.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

A: Okay.

**Conclusion of Interview**