

OK. So now, we are talking later on in the day with Mr. Frank Cohen. It is June 24, 2020. And before lunch, we were at the point of our interview where you were talking about the events that marked those five-- or four years between the time of your arrival in late '38 to the United States and your induction into the military forces. And one of them was, of course, Pearl Harbor.

And then we went and talked about how much did your family and circle of friends, their circle of friends, anticipate this war? And you were quite clear that they all knew it was happening, it was just a question of when. So let's go further from that. Did you finish high school?

Oh, yes, of course. What happened was, in junior high school, I did pretty well at the end. And they recommended that I go into Stuyvesant High School. Stuyvesant High School needed a-- you needed to pass a test before you were accepted, as well as your grades. And--

So-- excuse me, Stuyvesant High School is part of the New York public school system?

Yes, it is.

New York City public school system, OK. And is it a special school?

No, it's just a advanced school for pre-college training. In other words, it's academic, rather than anything else.

OK.

And I was told to put down language handicapped, which I put down. But I really didn't need that. And I was accepted, and I went to Stuyvesant.

And Stuyvesant, with the junior high school business, is a three-year school. The first year, you have a afternoon session. You just go there from 12:40 till 3-something or other. And the second two years morning session, and that's from 8:00 in the morning to 12:40.

I see.

So it was always only a half a day of school. But then they gave you a lot of homework to make up for that, I guess. Where is Stuyvesant located in New York City? Where was it located?

It's downtown in New York. I had to go down under-- with the subway on the West Side, and shuttle over at Times Square, and go further down to 14th Street on the East Side, and walk about a mile towards the East River.

Well, that's kind of a hike from Manhattan. It's like, one end of Manhattan to the other end.

Well, at least from mid-Manhattan all the way down to the south part, you know?

Were you still living in the basement apartment?

I always was able to go with Paul, the friend from Austria. He went to Stuyvesant as well, with me. And we always met at the 72nd subway station. I was coming in from further uptown. And he met me there, and then we traveled together.

OK. Were there other kids from Germany or Austria in your high school, other kids who had the same kind of background as you two did?

Yes. He came from Austria. And he was the only one with me who came from Europe. But I met-- when I was in high school, I went to the afternoon recreational things that the junior high school had that was right where I lived at that time. We had moved from 145th Street back to 116th Street. And 116th-- excuse me, to 108th Street, not 116th-- to

108th Street.

And at 108th Street, there is a junior high school also, as well as a Catholic private school. So [? basically ?] the street had a lot of schools. But I went to the public school for afternoon, play ping-pong. You remember I was almost champion on the boat?

Yeah.

So I was still [AUDIO OUT] ping-pong, and that's where I met my wife, believe it or not.

No kidding?

I was still in high school, and she was in junior high school, in that junior high school. And we played ping-pong together. And there were two girls, and Paul came and played. And we called one girl Ping, and the other one Pong.

Oh god!

[LAUGHTER]

And I liked Pong better than Ping. And what is Pong's real name?

Well, Pong's real name is Pauline [? Brimberg. ?]

I see. And was she also from Europe, or had her parents and grandparents been born in the United States?

Well, she was born in Brooklyn, New York.

I see. OK.

Practically overseas, but it was Brooklyn.

Well, I know Manhattan looks at all the other Boroughs as if they're foreign countries. There's-- you know. So I mean, 108th Street, it also sounds like that's close to Columbia University, if we're talking the West Side?

Yes. Well, as a matter of fact, after 108th Street, after I went to the army and got married, my mother married again by the name of Charlie Tuck, who came from Breslau, also. And they moved to 116th Street, which was right at Columbia University.

Yeah.

Broadway and 116th.

That's right. So in this other apartment on 108th Street, was that down in the basement again, or was that somewhere else?

No, but it was another terrible apartment. It was what they might call a railroad apartment. What happens is, you come into the apartment in the living room. And then you go from the living room, to the bedroom, to another bedroom, to the kitchen, to the bathroom-- all in a row.

No corridor? No corridor?

Just horrible.

It's inexpensive.

It was inexpensive.

Yeah. And I think I hear Pong there, don't I?

Yeah, Pong is talking.

OK. Hello, Mrs. Pauline.

She remembers my terrible apartment.

Terrible.

Well, she lived on 107th Street, just around the block. But her apartment was much nicer.

Well, that is at least convenient, you know?

Yes, it was very convenient.

Yeah.

I remember her phone-- Academy-24442.

I have a question that's looping in a little bit to the Germany part. Did you have a radio in Germany?

Oh, yes, we had radio. As a matter of fact, we had it connected at one time, without telling the authorities-- and my parents always were very cautious about telling me, be careful, never say that you are listening to the radio, because it's not connected to the authorities. But later on, they legitimized it somehow, I guess.

I see.

But it was [? a ?] big deal. And then when Hitler came, you were on the street, you could hear all of Hitler's talk. Because everybody had their radio on, and it was loud enough to come through the windows.

Oh, wow.

So whoever you were, you were listening to Hitler's speeches.

Well, it's-- it is invasive. It sounds like it's all-invasive.

Yeah, it was. Yeah.

And in the states, I take it you had a radio in that railroad apartment, is that so?

Oh, yes. We had radio. Absolutely.

Were there German language stations?

No, we never listened to-- there may have been, but I never listened to it. And my parents didn't listen to--

OK.

--German radio stations.

One of the reasons I'm asking this is, I'm trying to get a sense of, where did you get your news from? What were the main sources of news? Was it this German language paper you mentioned before?

Yeah, that was the main source when we first came over, and for the first two or three years, definitely.

OK.

And after that, my parents were also sufficiently trained in English that they listened to the radio, and listened to the news from the radio, which they trusted more, really.

OK. OK. Did you ever recall listening to any of the broadcasts by American journalists who were in Europe at the time, whether they were in Berlin, like William Shirer, or I believe Edward Murrow, who was based in London? And they gave these famous, famous broadcasts, kind of as the war was going on, as to what was going on. Does that ever--

No.

--cross your mind, or your path?

During the war-- well, we may have listened to them before the wars, before I went into the army. I wouldn't remember who the commentators were at that time. There were not that famous. They became famous during the war.

And during the war, I didn't listen to them because we never listened to anything.

OK.

The only news [AUDIO OUT] got was with-- from the Stars and Stripes, the newspaper of the army.

I see.

That was the only news source where we could tell whether we were advancing or retreating.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, also-- it's sort of like, the most crucial piece of information if you're in the military, you know? OK, so what about high school, then? What are some of your memories of high school? Was there anything distinctive in particular, something that has stayed with you?

Well, the most distinctive, when remembering that was, I was lazy. And instead of opting another language like French, which I had had for about a year or two in Germany, instead of opting for French, I opted for German. So I ended up grading all the papers. The instructor just turned it over to me, and I graded the papers for him. And I gave people A, B, C, or D.

Oh, my goodness. And they're all your classmates, huh?

Yeah. That was my German class. It was definitely an A for the whole-- But otherwise, it's amazing. I can't remember the names of any of these instructors, or anything.

Uh-huh.

But yet, I can remember Herr Schumann from the second and third grade. Hmm.

Well, that's-- but Herr Schumann was quite distinctive, in a quite distinctive time, too.

Yes.

A much more heightened context.

Yes.

Had I asked you already about whether there were other refugee kids at Stuyvesant High School? Or was it just you and Paul who were in that high school?

Oh, I was [AUDIO OUT] but Paula knew a lot of girls who also had come from Europe. And she was friends with them, and I met a few of them.

OK.

But I never became close, except that I had dated Paula.

Mm-hmm.

And then the worst [AUDIO OUT] that happened was, when I went to war, I wrote to a lot of kids, but I never wrote to Paula.

Oh!

I had to pick that up after I came back, and we were both at CCNY, and I re-established the friendship. But to my biggest regret, and something I'll never hear the end of, I never wrote her.

Oh! Ooh!

That's terrible, isn't it?

It is. It is. Were you--

Do I have to-- yes?

Then you're having to-- you're having to make up for it for decades later.

I've made up for it for the last 70 years. It hasn't finished yet.

Well, that's cute. That's fine.

We're married [AUDIO OUT] years, does she know that?

Yes, 71 years.

You've been married? Well, mazel tov, you know? Congratulations.

Well, thank you.

So many of us--

In November, it'll be 72.

In November. What date in November?

Third of November.

Third of November. Well, congratulations.

[INAUDIBLE] [? I had a ?] [INAUDIBLE].

OK. So were you-- at some point after Pearl Harbor, it comes to your consciousness that the entry of the United States also has some real, direct implications for you, that you might end up being part of that entry into World War II.

Yes, it--

As you were finishing your high school, and-- I see that you had one summer term at CCNY-- what does CCNY stand for, by the way?

City College of New York.

OK. Were you thinking of enlisting? Or were you going to wait for the draft? Or--

Well, you see, as an enemy alien, which I was, I was not allowed to enlist. I had to wait for the draft. But that was not a problem, because I was 18 on August 1st. And in September, I was drafted.

Oh, wow. So that was fast. That was very fast.

It went very [AUDIO OUT] They needed-- they needed troops real quickly. Mm-hmm.

And tell me a little-- walk me through what that process was-- you know, where you first were, where you went after that, how your enemy alien status affected your basic training, or military training, and how things progressed.

Yeah. I'm going to have to break for about two minutes, because they're at our door taking our temperature.

OK. So I'll call you back in two minutes, OK?

Well, either hold on, or call back, whichever you want to do.

I will call back.

Gone.

Oh, she's coming back, or what?

I don't know.

Well, I'd better check.

I'm going to call back.

Let me check.

I'll call back, OK?

[INAUDIBLE].

All right.

Not there.