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Summary

George (né Joseph) Leavitt, born September 1, 1921 in Chicago, IL, discusses his parents Joseph (Jonah) Oscar (played klezmer) and Gussie (née Turoff), both born in Ukraine, sister Margaret, brother Raymond, brother that died of ptomaine poisoning, "Mother never stopping grieving him"; family spoke English in home, Uncle Joseph, Aunt Pearl (mother's sister), grandparents, other extended family; attends Chicago's Lowell school and Tuley High; plays trumpet in DePaul University Concert Band, received some scholarship; father later went onstage to receive George's DePaul diploma since George was serving in Army (N Africa); discussion re: earlier Hebrew school, bar-mitzvah, experiencing some antisemitism growing up; George's passion for classical music; working at Tom McCann's selling shoes to assist college payments; "Mother cried all the time reading about what was happening." (in Holocaust); basic training Miami Beach "So hot! No AC"; Southern Pines, NC, became a teletyper/US Army Corp, endures some antisemitism being only one of two Jewish in his operation; preparing to be shipped overseas, marriage to Ida Probst (met in grade school), married by rabbi at Seymour Johnson Field; "Lot of Japanese there," fascinated with their swagger and martial arts expertise; embarked from Camp Patrick Henry; eventually enters Straits of Gibraltar, seeing fire exchange between their P40 escorts and enemy; celebrating Rosh Hashanah on ship; attending Army interfaith service (Tunis); assigned to 2nd Operations Group (oldest in Army Air Corp) Foggia, Italy, put in charge of supplies; enduring bombing; meeting British Army Palestinian Jews who volunteered to fly on their Army Corp's lead plane, assist monitoring radio scrambles (England hadn't wanted to teach Palestinian Jews to fight); discussion of Jewish Brigade; Sept 1943 GI's take over hotel for survivors of Gravina-Altamura concentration camp; assisting Italian Jewish woman and her aunt; celebrating Passover 1945; Palestinian Jewish soldiers rescue Gravina-Altamura children who had been deprived of education, took over farm to shelter them, taught them to read/write, eventually immigrated children to Palestine; same soldiers form Jewish Clubs "wherever they went"; Palestinian Jewish soldiers also solicited guns from George to potentially arm against British, concerned Brits were future enemy; George's mother sends to George women's clothing to give to refugees; corresponding nearly every day with wife back home; General Twining assisting rescuing Jews off an island that were brought into Foggia; catching Hepatitis A, miserable conditions in hospital; experiencing first opera; war ends, transferred first to Naples; "tingle in my spine" seeing Statue of Liberty, taken to Camp Kilmer, after yrs. of powdered eggs, the joy of eating fresh eggs; returning home, joining Jewish organizations; learning of assassinations of S.S. officers by Palestinian Jewish soldiers; discussion on Eisenhower's quote "Get it all on record now-get the films, some bastard will get up and say that this never happened."; later learning British made Palestinian Jewish soldiers march on ship (returning to Palestine) naked, concerned they were going to smuggle things; daughter marries son of Auschwitz survivor; George's son, grandchildren; becomes CPA, wife worked for American Red Cross; expressions of appreciation to US but also concerns for its future on separation of Church and State; George shares photographs from the war.