

Fred Blau

By Julie Kennedy
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Fred Bl.~u Holocaust Memoirs January 25, 1988 10:25 am.

It's January 25, 1988. It's 51 years after we left Hitler's Austria. I want to tell you first a little bit of my background and of my wife's background. My wife is not talking now because we are always together since 53 years; where ever we go, what ever we do we are always together, bad times and in good times. My parents, well, my great great and grandparents settled after Spain in Hungary from my mother's side, my father's side settled in Vienna, Austria and there, my grand grandfather, my grandfather, my father, and myself were born in Vienna, Austria. My wife was born in Poland, she came after much misery to Vienna where I was fortunate to met her. We got married in 1935.

CAN YOU GIVE US THE NAMES OF YOUR PARENTS?

Ma father's name is Rudolph Blau, B-l-a-u, my mother's name was (phon.) Hedrich Sugar, a Hungarian name. We were very happy in Vienna, my father was a musician, gave concerts in concert halls, uh, it was like I understand, a wonder child. At five years he gave his first concert in Vienna. It's nothing unusual in Austria, we had a Mozart a Schubert, a Strauss, a Beethoven, so my father was one of them. We had a very happy life, our family was very close, we were about 20-30 people, and unusual to American standards we listened always to the oldest. The oldest was my grandmother, my mother's mother, she came from Hungary, and whatever we decided, whatever we did, we ask not only the children, but the grownups, asked her for advice, and she seemed to be very capable doing that. She was a school teacher, my grandfather was the principle of a school, t'nat's why they met, and then when they came to Vienna she retired, my grandfather died unfortunately. I became a jeweler.

Before Hitler, it's very hard to understand, all Austrian people in (unintelligible) they were united, of not liking the Jews. They used to have bad times too, and to get used to the phrase "it's all the Jews fault~ and educated people did not believe that, but not the, unfortunately , the uneducated people were the majority. I became a jeweler, I wanted to study, but it didn't work out that way, I became a jeweler, and had a little, had a store, my wife was very active with me in the store and it was very, very nice. We actually belonged to the middle class, we were not very rich, we were not very poor. But we lived a very happy nice life. On Saturday we went to the synagogue to pray to our God, on Sunday we went to the Opera to listen to music, and one day, it was March 13, 1939, I never forget it, it will be in my bones as long as I live,

it was 6 o'clock, it was on a Friday and we had fish. Friday it was customary to have fish, we turned on the radio and we heard Hitler is marching in Austria, Glory to him. All the Jews have to stay home, not to move out, they'll by tell what to do. Everybody else on the streets with flowers and greetings. I, well it was the biggest shock in my life. I was prepared for everything else, I was prepared what God does to all of us, we had to come and go as best prepared (?), one day my father, my mother will die, I was prepared for all these things but I wasn't prepared for this. Because two days ago, two days before, our counselor, we had a counselor, his name was Shushnik, said don't worry, nothing will happen, everything is wonderful, I just came from (ph.) Bertesgaarten - that's a little town in the mountains-and personally everything will be fine.

Well, after a sleepless night, in the morning we woke up, Vienna was painted in swastikas, every house, every, every, every place. We walked down, there were in the little parks, Vienna has a lot of parks, every park, every bench was written, in big letters, ~'Jews and dogs are not permitted" to sit in a bench or come in the park. That was our first how do you do. A few days later we were on the second floor, on the third floor was a Jewish family, very nice, middle class, didn't do any harm to a fly, they had two daughters. One was about 18, one was 24, one was after college, one was going in college, her name was (ph.) Extym, very nice people. In the morning, when was it, in the afternoon, two Nazi stormtroopers, that with the brown uniforms, came and told us do you have any girls here? We said no, only two boys, my brother and myself, my brother by the way, got killed by the Nazis, Hans, Hans Blau. He, he was beaten, he was in University in Vienna and as he walked out with other people it was very easy to see who was Jewish and who was not Jewish, any Jew had a little swastika, a little emblem on his here, on his lapel, I mean, any Nazi had his swastika on his lapel, and whoever was not wearing it was naturally not a Nazi. Uh they came with, they walked out a few days later, they had chains from, uh, from uh, cars, snow chains, and they beat up not only him, but another few that were there too. But I come away from (unintelligible).

The nazis came, the stormtroopers knocked on the door and asked if we had girls in our apartment, we said no. They went up to the third floor and took the 18 yesr old girl and the 24 year old girl and they said they be back soon, they will make the beds for our stormtroopers cause we have no girls, we need a few girls, but um, they came next day in the morning, we all were waiting in the hall, there the girls mother and father and we were and those very close, and the girls came in rags, they were raped naturally, I don't know from how many stormtroopers. Well the older one, went up to the roof and jumped down, and was dead right away, the younger one, I don't know what happened to her, the mother got crazy, she was lucky, she didn't know

from that moment on what happened to her. That's a little instance, I (unin.) all by myself.

10:35 Then, it became impossible to live any more in our apartment. We lived there, I was born in that apartment, a man came, our official and he told us we have to move. My grandmother, my mother, my wife, my father, myself, and my, yeah, well, my brother wasn't there anymore. We have to move and they give us a little room on the eighth floor in the 18th district of Vienna, 86, on the 8 floor, it was not a room, it was like a tool room, only not in the basement, in Vienna you had the tools and the suitcases on the roof. Each one had a little room there, without, with only a tiny little window, where you could only see the pigeons. All day long, and so we moved there, and there were pigeons and that was all we could see. To walk, we all walked around,

DID YOU HAVE ANY FURNITURE?

a few, we took only the beds, they let us take only the beds, that's it, so we were hiding there, and then began the beginning of our exodus. We, it was the task of the young ones, the older ones, they couldn't go in the streets, I was chosen, I went in the morning, or late in the evening in the grocery, they know me when I was a kid, some of them naturally call me, if you don't go right away we call the SS, but a few of them are very nice and kind, and the older people, some older people were not Nazis really and they gave us for money double the price, but they gave us food, we had something in the house every day. And then, we had to stay on line for passports. That was a tragedy.

DID YOU HAVE TO WEAR A YELLOW STAR?

No, no it was the beginning, that yellow star came later. During the war came the yellow star. That was not in Vienna because all the Jews were killed or moved to Dachau.

SO THIS WAS IN 1939?

That was in 1939. We were the lucky ones so to speak. We just went on the street, and I just give you an impression, its very hard to believe, but believe me, you have to believe me, because I don't talk with my mouth, I talk with my heart now. I went down on the street and I saw old people with white beards, they were chosen, they were the chosen ones and the Nazis were young kids, 18, 20, 24, with brown uniforms (unin.) and gave each of them their own toothbrush, with that toothbrush they have to clean the sidewalk but they have to make it fast, and they told them that if they don't do it fast, they will be killed or they will be sent away. They stood around them and watched them and it was heartbreaking to see these people doing that. that was one incident. Then we went to counselors. We went

to different counselors to ask for visas, but we couldn't get passports so we had to stand on line by the police precinct. We stood on line for, we came there about 6 o'clock in the evening, and we stood there until the morning, about 9 o'clock in the morning when they opened up the doors, and we were about 4, 5000 people and they took 6 people a day, so we, to show you how they played with us, we were fortunate, we were maybe the fifth or the sixth because we go to stand on line 5 o'clock, maybe 6 o'clock in the evening. And in the morning we were very happy, if they take 6 people, we will be one of the 6. The doors opened, a young man came out and said, ok we take 6 people, the last one who came in. That was one of the games.

We were standing on the street, and certainly about 10, or 12 or 14 police on horses came, and went right into us, so we had to run away, and when we came back we were fighting who was first, and on like that, and that was another game that they played, to see us argue between us. We finally, after staying there for hours and days and nights, got our passport, we were very happy, a day later they decided, a passport is not valid, because from now on every passport has to have a J stamped into the passport, J for Jew. We did that, we stood in line for a couple of weeks, finally we were one of the 6, we got a passport, they said passport is no good, because every man, Jewish male has to have Israel in his passport, every female has to have Sarah in her passport. One day, I have to repeat, we were the lucky ones. For instance, one day I visited a friend. He had a pharmacy not far from us, not far from our house. I visited him because we couldn't work anymore, they took away our jobs, everything away from us. I visited him, and I had to go to the man's room, I went to the man's room. In the mean time, they knocked on his door, I found out later, two SS men came, they ask him if he is Jewish, he says yes they took him away, I came out and he wasn't there anymore. I was the lucky one, he was the unlucky one. The...

DO YOU THINK HE WAS KILLED, ARE YOU CERTAIN?

He was killed, he was killed, yeah... My grandmother decided we should have a meeting, our family, that's why I told you before we were brought up the older one has the right to talk, and to decide. We were there about 15, 16 in the family, we close the door and she says I called you because I have a wonderful idea, I think she was 70 at that time, and it will be I know, I can feel it, I can't give you no proof, but we will all have a bad end, things will be very bad, now I will ask you lets close all the windows, put paper in the windows and open up the gas oven, and while we all fall asleep, and this will be the best thing for our family, and well, we voted on that, and it was voted down with one voice because my uncle, he was a pharmacist, said you may be right, that we all be murdered, but maybe 1 or 2

persons will be alive after everything is over, and wouldn't it be better if one or 2 people be alive to tell this story, than nobody tell this story. Maybe this is the cowardly way out. Well, I'm here today to tell you the story, so in that case my grandmother was maybe not right. By the way they send her to Auschwitz when she was 70, and she was burned.

HER NAME?

Her name is Ila Sugar, and her in this temple you see her candlestick next to the torah, because her candlestick went to Engalnd, from England to Jamaica with somebody, from Jamaica to New York, from New York to Phoenix, and I give it to (unin.) here. The original candlestick she had when she was a young girl. One day, I just want to tell you one instance, this instance, I have to repeat, is the story of a lucky one, like me. Somebody came to me in a time like this of fear, and um, I can't, its very hard to explain the time, how you lived actually, you were not scared, scared you were when everything was over actually, you were uncertain what you did, what you, for instance, they made, um I don't know what story I should tell you first, oh yeah, somebody told there is a lawyer who took over the apartement of the famous opera star Leo (ph.) Schlezac, you probably never heard of him but he was very famous, like Pavaroti now in the United States. He father was not, but his mother or his grandmother was Jewish, so they kill him, his apartment was empty, so the SS men, the SS is with the black uniform, he was there, he was a lawyer, and everybody knew, except us we didn't find out. He had the right to give out visas and passports, that means not to a country, but to get out of Austria at least to give you a passport with a paper that you can go.

EXCUSE ME, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ORIGINAL PASSPORT THAT YOU GOT WITH THE ISRAEL.

No good really, it wasn't good, it wasn't good. But this man was famous, like I understood later on, for playing games with someone. He had the right to give out passports, as many as he wanted and it was thought, you go there, and he will look at you and let you talk, and if he likes you, he will tell you, I like you, that's his game, and he will get you a passport, and he let you go, and if he didn't say I like you, he took you to Dachau, because he was a guard in Dachau Saturdays and Sundays. And I just want to tell you this because I can't forget that, we decided all night long, my wife and myself, should we go, shouldn't we go, maybe he even say he don't like us and we finished, we'll be killed. Finally in the morning, after a sleepless night, we came to the conclusion, let's try, maybe we'll die anyhow, so we have nothing to lose. We were already very low in our, not physical, but spiritual, we were very, very low in every way. So when I saw my grandmother, she cried, my mother

cried, my father cried, but we were young, and we both decided, we'll do it. We got an audience, or an audition, whatever you call it, finally he say ok, he will see us. We came to his apartment, a beautiful apartment, and there was a man, maybe 26 years old, with a black, big black boots, a black uniform, he looked like a giant, because these uniforms are made, you should be scared, so he said come in, come in, so we both walked in, inside terrible terrible scared, outside not, somehow or the other, when you are young, you act different, we came in he said sit down, we sit down, he had a swastika here, and one here, all over, so he said, he walks in and he said to me, talk. So I started to talk and I said my name is Fred Blau, I was born in Vienna, my father was born, my grandfather was born and my greatgrandfather was born. I didn't choose to be Jewish, Chinese, Japanese. Certainly I'm told I have to leave the country, I have to leave everything I had the jewelery store, they took my jewelery store away, I earned it the hard way, I did everything what the law required, I never did anything crooked in my life, and I showed him a paper, oh, I forgot to tell you that. Every one in Vienna had to have a paper from the police that he did not do anything wrong - he never went to court, he paid his taxes, if there was anything against him in his lifetime, he went. They took him right away to Dachau. At the beginning it started that way. Later they took anybody without a reason. So he says to me, ok, talk, so I tell him, I have to leave, and I tell him that's very hard for me because I leave my parents here, and my grandmother, and I told him the whole story, anything what came to my mind, and when I was finished he looked at me with cold, gray staring eyes, even today I see them in front of me, and he stared at me and he said, you know, I like you. And he said, and in this moment, the bell rang, and he said, no, no, sit, sit sit. And I was, and a woman came in, a beautiful blond, in the thirties, and I remember how beautiful she was, and she came in and he said to her, you can talk, you can talk in front of these two people, did you bring the money? She said, no, I didn't know, so he said to her, How much money you have? So, I forgot, maybe ten thousand schilling, I don't know, that's the wrong (unin.). So she said, that's all I put together, that's all I have, so he said, ok, I tell you what ten o'clock in the night you come tonight with the money, you bring me the money, and I saw your husband last week in Dachau, he will come back after next week, I will make it that he comes back. He, she cried, and kissed his hands, and we were just looking, and then she went away, and he told me after, I want to tell you something. See this woman, this beautiful woman? Tonight she will come in my bed, and I will take a lot of money, and her husband will never come, because I killed him myself, last week. I just tell you all this because I was the lucky one. He told us next day in the morning, 8 o'clock we should be by the police, and we get our passports. We should bring pictures, two pictures each,

we had pictures. Next day in the morning, by 5 o'clock we were ready by the policeman, exactly 8 o'clock well-organized as they are, he came and we went through all these Nazi police and guards, and 50 minutes later we had our passports. He said to me by 6 o'clock in the evening I want you out of Vienna. If you're not out of Vienna by then, we'll have you in Dachau, both of you, we want you out. Well, afternoon, we went to the Swiss border, both of us, at night we went under the bridge, there's a river, Rhine, on top of the bridge every half hour were police with dogs, big German shepard dogs, so we had to go underneath, and we stood in the water, up to here (thigh high), and after two, three hours we made it to the other side and we were in Switzerland. From Switzerland, after a few months we went to Italy, from Italy to the United States, I found my freedom again. Thank you.

ALRIGHT, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO BACKTRACK A LITTLE BIT, TO NAMING ALL THE FIFTEEN PEOPLE THAT WERE IN THIS LITTLE ROOM, AND HOW YOUR DAILY LIVES, HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET FOOD.

Alright, that was not easy, ok we were, we were, my father, Rudolph Blau, my mother Hedrich Blau, my grandmother Ila Sugar, my wife Gerdie Blau, myself, my uncle Julius Sugar, he was a pharmacist in 1944, they called all the pharmacists in (unin.) in Hungary to come to the railroad station because they needed them to come for people, for wounZed people, because they don't have enough doctors, he went there and they shot every one of them at the railroad station. My cousin Stefan Sugar lived with us and he was with his brother, his brother got killed in a concentration camp, but not in Dachau, somewhere else. He was four years in a concentration camp. He was the lucky one too, he got out, he survived, he lives now in Hungary. And my aunt Greta Sugar, she was killed too. You want to know what we did all day?

HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET FOOD AND...

10:59 Ok, I was the only one who walked out from the house, once in a while, my wife too, because she had parents in Vienna too, and they took them to the poilce and they let them out and they went in the night too, to Switzerland one day. The same way that we went.

DID THEY SURVIVE?

They survived. In the morning we woke up and we had a little tiny room, we opened the window, and as I told you before, we saw only pigeons, every day we counted pigeons, 11, 9, 10, that was the only thing we could do, and to hold our strength, so to speak, we walked around the room, in the morning and the afternoon, we walked, just walked around.

The sometimes in the morning, or sometimes late afternoon, I went down 8 floors, and around in one of the groceries, a small, tiny grocery, and I asked them to get me anything they had, so they gave me, I remember, one day was a very fortunate day, they gave me one orange, for all of us, and they gave me bread and sometimes (unin.) or whatever they had left over. They didn't give me meat, or real cheeses, they gave me the end pieces always, you know...

AND YOU HAD TO PAY FOR THIS?

Oh we had to pay for this, twice as much as (laughs) and they were good people, but not as much as that. And then that was the whole thing, we had nothing else, they took our radio away, later on they took the radio away too, there was, every house had a, uh, how do you explain you this, in every house there lived about oh, 40 people, and they choose one as a "good Nazi", he's responsible for everything what goes on in the house.

FOR THE TENANTS.

For the tenants, yes. And, uh, nobody bothered us up there on the 8th floor. We were so to speak, in hiding.

DID THEY, FOR THOSE WHO WERE NOT FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO GET OUT, DID THEY CONCENTRATE THE JEWS OF VIENNA IN A GHETTO, OR...

No, they just took them away. Vienna had between 200 and 250 thousand Jews. And all Austria was what, 2 million. But in Vienna there was one part, that was, it was not like a ghetto but, where maybe 80 thousand people lived together.

THIS WAS A NEIGHBOURHOOD?

It was an hour away from us, yes, and they took people on the street, they took them and chased them. One day, I just tell you what you do when you're in big danger, we went to a council in, uh, an English council, we were on the street and we were maybe 5000 people, as many as the street could hold, and it was in a block, and the council of England had, was in the middle of the block and we were standing there, there was nothing else to do, just stay from the morning til the night, or in the night until the morning until they open up, hopefully they give you some visa. Well we were standing there for days, and one day, four trucks came, two trucks on this side of the block and two trucks on this side of the block (indicates with his hands), and we were in the middle, thousands of us, and with a loudspeaker they said, all the Jews will be transferred to Dachau, but only the male, female out, so all the female, they, my wife too, they (unin.) out, and they blocked the two entrances, or exits, and you couldn't get out, couldn't go in, and they took big

trucks, and they took down the wooden planks, and they took, and now they made a chain from Nazis, but they had no uniforms, in that time it was too early, it was 1939, so each one holding hands, and everyone off to Dachau, so I was running, and was holding one hand on one side and holding one on the other side with the other guy, they only my age about, so my wife, I saw my wife far away, but she thought I became crazy, only a crazy man can do things like that, and then they got them all on the truck and they (motion with hands indicating gone away). But this is only one instance.

TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR SCHOOLING AND CHILDHOOD, YOUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND ALL THAT.

I, uh, that's very interesting you brought that up, I wouldn't have said that. but you brought that up. I went in kindergaarten in Hungary, Hungary-Austria was an empire, (unin.) in case you didn't know your history. Not only Austria and Hungary, but Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia. But in Vienna, in public school, and after public school, Austria lost the war, that's the first world war, I, they sent me, my parents sent me to Germany, to military camp, young kids, military camp in uniform, this is typical of Germans, because we didn't have enough to eat in Vienna, another mouth to feed, uh, my brother was there, so for me it was, so they sent me there, and there I got in the morning hot chocolate with a piece of bread, and lunch time, a piece of bread with rice, and, but we survived, and next to me was a young, I was the only Jew there, nobody bothered nobody, it was a normal situation. Next to me was a young fellow, his name was Exner, uh I became friends because he was next to me, and uh, we had no beds, we slept on straw, but each one had a small straw bed, so in the night I cried and he cried, and during the day we were too ashamed to cry, well anyhow, we became good friends, after 5, 6 years we came back and we saw each other and then we went in school together again him and me, and then we didn't see each other anymore. I went to gymnasium, uh, college, whatever you call it, everything in Vienna, I was born and raised, and then, I have now grown few years, then Hitler came, and we stood in line by the police precinct, I didn't brought that up before, and we stood in line the whole night, til in the morning, and in the morning, that was '39, they took six people, and out came a man in a brown uniform, and he looked taller than he was with his hair, and he said all the Jews should be eradicated, and (unin,) and killed and every Jew is no good, and so forth and their routine Hitler told them to read the book ~'Mein Kampf" and they will know what to do, and suddenly I said to my wife, my God, this is my friend, Exner, and he looked at me and he yelled, and I hear his yelling even today, and he said especially youj I can tell by the look on your face, you should be killed right now. We shouldn't wait to send you to Dachau to waste money on you, you'll be the first one, I

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tell you what from all you thousands, you come right now with your wife and you be the first one. And he took me and my wife and I figured, I was, Actully, nothing came to my mind in that moment, and he took me in that room and he said to me, (extends his hand, as to be shaken) I wish you all the luck in the world, and shook hands with me and that...

SO THAT WAS THE PRETENSE ON HIS PART?

That is correct, in front of all the other people, (unin.) I have to tell you too, because it was, it is interesting. As I said, I was the lucky one, again.

NOW, YOU WERE AWARE OF DACHAU, AND YOU WERE AWARE OF CONCENTRATION CAMPS WHILE YOU WERE...

Only of Dachau, at that time we didn't know anything about other camps, but Dachau wasn't too far away from Vienna so we were aware of that, yes.

AND MOST PEOPLE THAT WERE TAKEN WERE TAKEN TO DACHAU?

Yes, you see, it is very hard to explain the mentality of people when you endanger, people in the train, both of us, to Switzerland, and all we took ws four dollars a person, they allowed us 4 dollars a person, we came to New York with 8 dollars.

ANY BELONGINGS, DID THEY ALLOW YOU...

Nothing, just what we had, with 4 dollars, and there were a girl in our compartment on the train, I just want to tell you that because I remember that now, her name was Schecter, and she founded a bakery store, in Vienna, and we were all three of us all alone, and we were travelling, and suddenly she took out a big roll of money and she said to me do you have money too, and I said no, we took only what they allowed us to, four dollars, and she said I took all the money from my father, from my mother, what they gave us to survive, and when we got near the border, she took the money and, in Europe the train is different then they are here, each one has a radiator in the compartment, and she took the money and put it in the radiator, and she said as soon as we coming out, as soon as we over the border, I take the money out, I hope you don't say anything. Naturally not, we were happy we were alive. So when we came to the border, the SS came, that's the black uniforms, the top notches, and they told me, and they told my wife, you come with us to a different compartment and get stripped and to the other girl, I wasn't listening what they told her. To me a Nazi came and he stripped because in my passport was Jew, that I am a Jew, I was standing there, just like God made me, just with my stockings on, and I said to him, do you want me to take my stockings off, and he said, no it is not necessary,

go ahead, go back. A woman took care of my wife and gave her a thorough examination, and she came back after a few minutes, but the girl wasn't in the compartment, so we were sitting there, actually I was praying in that time, and then two SS men came in, again, I said to my wife, oh no! and he said to me, did you put money behind the radiator? I said no, so he looked at me wondering, and he said to the other guys, I think you don't, it's not you, it's not your wife, its that girl who was here, did you notice anything, I said no, I wasn't paying any attention, and in this minute, the train started rolling again, and I said to him, what happened to the girl? Where is she? He says, she is on her way to Dachau. So this shows you, that was little things, I show you that I was the lucky one, but that will stay in my mind always.

WERE YOU, DID YOU LOSE ANY PRIVILEGES, LIKE STORE LICENSES, BEFORE HITLER ACTUALLY INVADED?

No.

BEFORE HITLER CAME YOU HAD ALL YOUR PRIVILEGES?

Before? Yes, yes. It was a complete surprise like I understand before Hitler invaded Poland, it was a big surprise for a lot of people. We were told two days before, we at home, I had my store, at a shop, at a factory where we told because a lot of people ask questions, and they were told in the radio, there is nothing to be afraid, everything will be fine, and like I told you it was a big shock to us.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT AFTER YOU CROSSED TO SWITZERLAND, WHAT CONDITIONS WERE...

Well I just want to tell you a little tiny thing, I can't forget when they went to the border, there was a girl, and her name I think was Ast, and she had a little baby that she wanted to go over the border too, and they didn't let her go, and the Swiss people didn't let her go,

DID SHE HAVE A PASSPORT?

No, so she took the baby, and put it in the snow, just put it in the snow, and said if you don't take me take the baby, please, and she cried and all that stuff, and they took her back, the Swiss, right away, and the baby was laying there, in the snow. Well, anyhow, I just remembered that, we went to Switzerland, and there in Switzerland, there was a committee that they gave us every week ten dollars, to what ever, to manage with ten dollars, and then we were lucky, I have to always tell you that. The first, we tried to mingle with God, and we went in the synagogue, and there, it was I think Friday night, and we went there, and suddenly a man came to us very nice dressed and he said to us, you are

refugees, you are not from here. So we told him, How you know? So he said, you never look up at your eyes, you always look under ground, and this is how we know right away who is a refugee, and who is, you never look straight. that's the first time I noticed he was right. His name was Guggenhiem, he belonged to the family Guggenheim in New York, a very famous, rich family who did a lot of good, and he, he said to us, I take you under my wings while you are in Switzerland, you come to me whenever you are hungry, whenever you have a chance. And he phrased it very nicely, I'd be very honoured to have you, and we came, we had lunch there, we had suppers, he was a gentleman, I'll never forget him. Unfortunately he died a few years later. I have to tell you that because I can't emphasize you enough that I was one of the lucky ones that went through all this. One day I got a letter, Switzerland is a very small contry, that says, I want you should come to Zurich, Zurich is the (unin.) and I will meet you in the restaurant, and I will have a red flower in my lapel, and I want you should have a newspaper, and I want you should come to my place where I am sitting and tell me it is a nice day, then I know its you. So I went to the committee, and said a very funny thing happened, oh, my name is Peter, well we decided, all of us decided, I should go, I have nothing to lose, I want to see what its all about. I went, I took the train, they paid for it, I went to Zurich, I went to the restauant, and I saw a man sitting with a red carnation in his lapel, having a newspaper, I took my newspaper, and carried to him, and I said It's a nice day, and he said Mr. Blau? I said yes. Sit down. So I sit down. He said to me you probably wonder why I sent you a letter. So I said Yes. He said, I heard a lot about you, you have an uncle in England, I said yes. I heard about you and your wife, you're very nice people, and he took out a piece of chocolate, this is for your wife, give this to your wife, and here's an envelope, this is for you, so I said to him, what is, I was scared, I thought maybe there was some spying done or whatever, you never know, so I said what is this all about? He said, here you have thousand dollars. This is for you. And when you come to the United Staes, everything will be strange to you, and you will have a lot of hardship, and it was that way, by the way, and this will help you and will bring you over the hurdle in the middle. So I said that is very nice of you, but give me your name and address, and the first thing, when I am able to, I will send the money back. So he said to me, first of all, I know you have only 8 dollars with you with your wife, the first reason, the second reason is that I can't give you my name and I can't give you my address because I work for the underground, against the Nazis, and every week I go to Germany and back, and I help people whenever I can. But you have to promise me something, so I said, What I have to promise? When you come to money one day, you take the thousand dollars I give you, and you give it somebody else. And that's what I did, I just remembered.

HOW LONG WERE YOU IN SWITZERLAND?

About half a year. From Switzerland we went to Italy, and from Italy to the States.

DID YOU HAVE A VISA AND PASSPORT TO THE UNITED STATES?

Yes, yes.

WHEN YOU LEFT SWITZERLAND YOU ALREADY HAD IT?

No, I tell you what happened, you bring all these things out in me. There was a man in, we had no visa because visa you could get only with an affidavit, and an affidavit you get only when you know someone in the United States, there was a man in Chicago, a man named Friedman, he died unfortunately five years ago, he had about three or four pharmacies, and he decided he wants to help people in Europe, not only Jews, he wants to help people that are threatened by Hitler, and we were fortunate to, he wrote to us to send us an affidavit to Switzerland. The council in Switzerland told us you can't go to the American council in Switzerland because he don't like Jews and he won't give any Jew a visa.

IN SWITZERLAND? I THOUGHT SWITZERLAND WAS A FRIEND?

Yeah, Switzerland, but the ambassador wasn't a friend. So he said don't go to the council, because you wouldn't get it. So we said, how can we manage it? And he said, you go back to Vienna for one day, and when you are young, you do crazy things, and we did crazy things, and God help me, and we arranged that day, we sent a telegram to Mr. Friedman in Chicago, please send affidavit to Vienna again. I went to police precinct in Switzerland and I told them the story, and he said why can't you go here, and I said they won't give it to a Jew, because the ambassador in Switzerland at that time didn't like Jews. I think he liked Kennedy's father at that time. He was more of a Germany, but everything's politics. So, he listened to me and he put in my passport you could come any time back to Switzerland, the commissioner, the police commissioner of Switzerland, but now I have to go to the German embassy, to the Germans, to the Nazis.

IT WAS VERY DANGEROUS, WASN'T IT?

Yes, very. When you're young, you're crazy. We went to the German embassy and I told them and they said, are you crazy? You know who we are, we are the Nazis, we are not your friends. We want you out, and you want to go back? Why don't you ask, he said, because the ambassador in Switzerland is one of your friends, he doesn't give us a visa, or in Vienna. You wouldn't believe it, he said, ok, I

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give you 24 hours, if you don't get a passport, our passports, 24 hours we have to be back in Switzerland or Dachau.

YOU WENT WITH YOUR WIFE?

Yeah, my wife. We went in the evening, in the morning we went to Vienna and first thing we didn't go. I went to see my grandmother and my mother and they thought we really got crazy. Anyhow, we just made it fast, we went to the embassy, and we got our visa in two hours, and we went back by train and we, it was twenty-one hours, we had still three hours left. Are we finished?

PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AFTER YOU CAME TO THE UNITED STATES.

How much time? In 10 minutes?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE TIME.

Ok, in Switzerland, this is very hard to swallow, but only young people can understand what I did. Uh, we, in Switzerland they told us, when you come in a strange country, you have to get new roots, and you will get through a lot, a lot of bad things, except your father is very rich and lives in the United States, if you have nobody, its very tough, and we had nobody, and he said to me, a counselor was there, whatever they ask you there, say yes. Never say no, if it's no good, they find out in time, in no time, and if you're lucky like you, like they understand, everything will be ok. I came to the States and I'm a jeweler, right? And we had eight dollars, and we got a little tiny room...

WHAT ABOUT THE THOUSAND DOLLARS YOU RECEIVED?

I didn't touch that, that was for emergencies, I want to prove myself, I wasn't good with the language, and I didn't understand nobody, and I didn't know what it was all about, but I had to work, I had to, we were both ready to work, so the first thing, there was this place in New York they call (ph.) Hyass, somewhere on 14th street down there, they help you wherever they can, wherever they could, so I said, I don't want no charity, I want to work, and they had a blackboard that said the needed a tailor, whose a tailor? raised my hand, I'm a tailor. I was told so, and I had the courage to do so, because I thought a lot will be with me, I'll be ok. So I saw the address was down on 7th avenue in New York there where all the dressmakers down there and you name it. That was on a Saturday morning, there was nobody working, only the manager and he was, he had about a hundred sewing machines, electric ones, I never in my life knew how to do that. And he said the Hyass send you , I said yes. Are you a tailor? Yes, very good. What can you do?

and I said what do you want? Well, actually I need a man who can do sleeves, I said that's the one, I make sleeves. Ok, I put you here by the machines, I'm busy now, I have to prepare for Monday morning. Now its funny, but it was very, very sad in that time, you know what go over this, and I uh, I didn't even know what he wanted, go over this and let's see how you're doing. Well he went away and I was staying there, and I looked at this and I put my foot down and I broke a needle. And I went to the next machine, and I bent already a few inches, and broke again another needle, I broke about ten, twenty needles, so he came back and said, I put you here by this machine, why are you over here by the window? I said by the window, it is much better, this is the machine I will use. So he said no, and looked and said, oh my God, you broke every machine, it takes me hours til I fix all this again, who sent you over here? What is it with you, and he was very angry, so he said to me, come in my office...

HOW DID HE SPEAK TO YOU, WHAT LANGUAGE?

Jewish. I didn't speak Jewish either, I spoke German, but I understood what he meant, when his face is red and starts yelling, I know what its all about, so he said to me, what are you, what is it with you? (unin.) I'm a Jew, so he said what are you doing down at this place, and I said I need money, I have to work, help me out, I was told in Switzerland say yes, so I say yes to everything, and he says to me, I like you because you have guts and not everyone has guts like you have, what you did just now. I will employ you, but you need a union card, this is a union place. Isaid ok, but how get I a union card? He give an address, and I went over there to the union, and there was standing people with white hair, with old people, and I was young at that time, so he took me in the room and says what you want. I said I want a union card. He said, how long you in this country? I said three days. He said, see all these people here with the white hair, and everything, they have union cards and no job, and you come in here and want a union card. Go home, learn the language then you come here and we can see, are you a tailor, and I said I'm a tailor, so I said to him in that time, and in that moment I went what I said, maybe an hour later, I didn't meant it, but at that moment I meant it, I said to him, you know what? You don't have to give me a union card, but I could up to the top of this roof, and jump off, because I have nothings to lose, but I have to emphasize that I meant it, in that moment I really meant it, maybe ten minutes later I didn't, I can jump down, and only God and you know its your fault, but every night you go to bed and in the morning you wake up and then you know it is your fault, and I must convinced him that I meant it in that moment, so he said to me, ok, I give you a union card, I don't want that on my conscience and I give you a job, too. So I said, No, No you only have to give

me a job at this place because this man will teach me, well, I didn't say this man will teach me, but I said this man will take care of me. He said no, no, no he will take advantage of you, wouldn't pay you like he should if you are such a good tailor. I thanked him and that was finished of my tailor job. Next day I came to the Hyass again and they had an opening for a glasier, I raised my hand and say I am a glasier, I say this because you ask me, so he says, but you were here yesterday, so I said that was my twin brother, it wasn't me so he seems he believed me. So he said you're a glasier, I said yes, I'm a glasier, and he gave me the address of the office. It was a very dirty, big place under the Brooklyn bridge, they have places like this, and he made monograms for glasses, a, b, c, and like that. It was on a machine, I never did that in my life, and I broke about 40-50 glasses right away, I mean you have to know how to do that, and he didn't admire my guts but he drove me out. And then a few days later, I got a job as a jeweler. I started at the bottom, and then I became a designer, and then became a manager, and then became the boss and that took 30 years.

AND WHAT CITY WERE YOU IN?

In New York all this time, but it took thirty years to make me what I am. And that's my story.

WHAT YEAR DID YOU ARRIVE TO THE UNITED STATES?

1939. But the war broke out.

YOU WERE SOMETIME IN VIENNA.

In the beginning we were in Vienna, then we were into Switzerland a few months, in the end of 1939.

WELL, IT'S A VERY ADMIRABLE STORY.

I just told you everything because I went through Hitler, but I was the lucky one, only my nerves a little bit shattered.

AND YOUR FAMILY UNFORTUNATELY...

Yes they mostly...

DID YOU EVER HAVE ANY CHILDREN AFTER ALL?

Yes we have here two children, born in the States.

AND WHAT ARE THERE NAMES?

Our son in Elliott Blau, and he is a doctor, and back to the old story, my wife went to work, and I worked hard so they could go to college, and our daughter is married to a doctor, and is a schooteacher here in Phoeni~.

AND WHAT IS HER NAME?

Globerman, Hannah Globerman, and she is married to a doctor.

YOU REALLY ACCOMPLISHED A LOT BECAUSE YOU SENT THEM TO, YOU EDUCATED THEM...

There is only one question I have, and it is a very important question, a question and an answer, if I tell my story, or part of my story to my children, they say, oh come on, that's not like that, that's impossible, that's the question, now the answer is this: you have to believe what was going on, or to swallow that, to believe it.

THAT'S WHY WE ARE TAKING THE ORAL HISTORY, AND IT IS UNBELIEVABLE TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENED TO OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WAR.

And not just Jews, you have no idea how many people suffered.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THIS UNFORTUNATE THING COULD HAPPEN AGAIN, THIS ANTI-SEMITISM?

Yes, it could if we let it.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS ON HOW TO PREVENT IT?

To tell the story over, and over, and over again, and then maybe we come to a happy ending that evil will not prevail.

WELL I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND YOUR INSPIRATIONAL STORY.

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