

OK. Right now?

Wait a minute. Are you ready?

Yeah. It's rolling.

OK.

The tape isn't rolling here.

Are we rolling? We have a--

OK, now--

Wait, wait, wait. How can we be rolling? I don't have my audio thing on. Is this OK?

[SIDE CONVERSATIONS].

Oops, you know what happened? OK.

Say everything now.

All right. This is December 29, 1987. And I'm here with Walter Chotzen. And we're in Honolulu, Hawaii.

And Walter, I'm just going to start. When I go through the interviewing, a little bit of it, what I'm going to do is ask you a few questions just for the record, for the data. And then we'll go on from there and get into some of the stories.

First of all, what's your name and address?

I'm Walter Chotzen. Living at--

And when were you born and where were you born?

I was born on May 17, 1911, in Ziegenhals, Germany, goat's neck translated.

Goat's neck, Germany.

A small town on the Czechoslovakian border and the Sudeten mountains.

OK. And are you married, Walter?

Yes, I am. Is it possible for us to get closer, Wayne? I don't like this angle. Can I get closer?

Walter can scoot up or--

Walter, do you want to scoot up a little? OK.

Ready to be a mama.

She's ready.

Everything's rolling.

Ready?

One second. Keep your papers quiet as you go. OK?

OK. Today is December 29, 1987. And I'm here with Walter Chotzen. I'm Judy Weightman. And we're in Honolulu, Hawaii at the Flagg residence.

And Walter, when were you born and where were you born?

I was born May 17, 1911 in Ziegenhals, Germany on the Czechoslovakian border, a small town, a town of about 10,000 people at the Czechoslovakian border in the Sudeten mountains.

And could you tell me a little bit about your family?

Yes. My father was already, I think about 57 or some when I was born. I had two older sisters. And one was 10 years older. And she's still alive, fortunately.

And the other one died at a rather young age. She was six years older than I am. But she died in Sweden.

And you have a sister 10 years older than you?

A sister, yeah, she's still alive.

And she's in New York.

In New York.

New York, right.

Right. How do you know I know all, see all, tell all.

[LAUGHTER]

Bonnie told me. I wanted to ask you several questions that I really know the answers to, I know. But I'm going to ask you for the record. And are you married, Walter?

Yes, I certainly am, successfully so. I have eight children.

Eight children and your wife is Carla.

Carla, and she's a professional photographer. And we've been married for 43 years.

I didn't realize that.

43.

And can you tell me a little bit about your family growing up in Germany? And a town of 10,000, were there many Jewish people there?

There were about 12 to 15 Jewish families in town. And most of them, there were a few small retail merchants, but quite a number of manufacturers. My father was one of them.

My father manufactured wooden articles that go into breweries and paper mills. Bungs, B-U-N-G-S, most people don't know what it is.

I never heard of it.

But it's sort of like a cork, but of wood. The beer barrels were closed with those things in those days. And he also manufactured brewery pitch, which was sprayed into beer casks. And then he had also a wholesale brewery supply business.

And there's quite a few interesting things that happened after Hitler came to power. I became a junior partner. I was-- shall I talk about this now? Is this the time to talk about this?

Yeah, whenever you feel like it. Yes.

First, I hated school. I was not a very good student. I was sent to the University of Berlin. And I was supposed to become an engineer or then maybe a graduate merchant, of course.

And I found that these courses were so ridiculously theoretical. And I came from a school which was very basic, where things like chemistry were very much explained to us. So when I came to the university and there was a chemistry professor who came out with his assistant, and he wrote formulas rapidly on the blackboard and another man did experiments, when I watched the experiments, I missed the formulas. I missed what he was talking about or the other way around.

And I got very angry. And I quit after, I think, one or two semesters. And through connections of my mother, I got into a very interesting business firm, a manufacturing of office supplies. They manufactured desks and chairs. They did all the printing. And they sold bookkeeping systems.

So it was a very varied manufacturing. And I became an apprentice there. And after two years, they hired me as an employee. And then Hitler came.

This was in Berlin?

In Berlin, yeah, in Berlin. And Hitler came. And my firm was selling merchandise to the city of Berlin, to the state of Prussia, and to the federal government of Germany.

And they said if you employ Jews, you can't sell us anything, although the firm was actually Jewish. But the firm was what they called [GERMAN]. They changed. The Jewish owner went out and through some dealing, the former manager became the acting director. How they did all these details, I don't know. But it became an Aryan firm.

How old were you, about, at this time, Walter?

20, 21, something like that. And so I was discharged, of course, in order to have the few-- there were no other Jewish employees, hardly, I believe, besides the owner. And I went back to my father's business in my hometown. My father, as I said, my father was in a manufacturing business.

And my father was a very powerful person. And it was very difficult to work there. And I wasn't very happy. Also, there was hardly anybody to associate with. You were shunned by most of the people--

Why was that?

--after a few years. Because you were a Jew, and it was dangerous for the Gentiles to associate with Jews. And I had friends, all my friends were Gentile, mostly Protestants, strangely enough, although my hometown was largely Catholic. But the Protestants were in a small minority and therefore they were a little bit more accessible to associate with Jews, even before Hitler came to power. So most of my friends, my main friends, two of them, were Protestants.

And after Hitler came to power, they were just embarrassed to show that they wanted to associate with the Jews. So in

the streets, they would go the other way when they saw me coming or something like this. So except one, he was very loyal to me. He came to me one day and said that I could help him out financially. He had stolen the money for the Hitler Youth group that he was heading and would I please bail him out.

Oh, no.

And I said, no, thank you.

[GASPS]

That was after he had been shunning you?

Well, he wasn't quite as radical shunning as some of the others. But he did also try to keep away until he needed very badly to get in touch with me. Then he knew me.

So it was a very unpleasant situation. There were, for example, I was wanting to dance. And I wanted to go out.

And I went out, for example, I remember one evening I went to a dance. And my hometown, I should interrupt here, was not only an industrial town, there were quite a few factories, a large pulp mill, and a paper mill, a cotton mill, a cigarette, cigar box factory, my father's factory, a shirt factory. There were quite a few Jewish manufacturers in that town.

And so part of the town was a resort town. Not a high class resort, but a resort for insurance companies, and so forth. They had sanitariums and places like that. They called them cure places, sparse, and so forth. Yeah.

And so part of the town was very pretty. It was in the mountains, the small mountains there. It was the foothills of the Sudeten mountains. And it was very attractive, a very attractive area.

So I wanted to dance. I went in one of those dance places, hotels where they had dance floor. And I wanted to dance there with some of my fellow students. And of course, nobody wanted to dance with me. I couldn't go. I sat there, you see, and it was just very, very bad.

And interesting, as from a business point, my father sent me out to give me some variety because I was sitting in the small town. And I couldn't go anywhere. The only place we could go and be reasonably free was going across the Czechoslovakian border.

And there the Sudeten Germans were just as anti-Semitic or more so. But they needed the money. This was sort of a resort area. And of course, the Czechs were very liberal. And the Czechs were running the country.

The Sudeten Germans were a minority there. They hated the Czechs. But the Czechs were running the country. And they were liberal, available.

So I wanted to tell you that my father, in order to give me a little more variety, sent me on business trips. And that was after Hitler came to power. He had quite a few large customers that had come to buy from him through ads in the trade papers, paid journals.

They knew he was Jewish? Nobody knew that he was Jewish till I came around. Because if you didn't say Heil, Hitler when you went in and when you went out, they knew that you were Jewish.

So I couldn't say Heil Hitler. And I wouldn't say Heil Hitler. So I came in said good morning, good evening, and went out. They knew we were Jewish. And they quit buying.

So wherever I went, the people, the customers that had been buying from us quit buying because they found out that we were Jewish. So my father lost his business. So it was not very successful, my business trip.

And some of the agony in Dresden, a beautiful city, there was one hotel in which Jews could still stay. They would let Jews stay.

And in this hotel, I went in the evening to drink, have a beer or whatever. There were some Gentile young people sitting at a large table, perhaps seven, six, or seven, or eight people. And they were very friendly looking, very nice looking.

And I was so desperate for company, to talk to someone, be able to speak, that I just ordered the whole round of drinks for them. And they took it. They didn't reject it.

But they ignored it completely. Nobody spoke to me. Not one single person spoke to me.

So I got drunk that night. And I was just miserable, absolutely miserable. And this was sort of the pattern.

And I don't know. It was the story that I recorded about being called for the draft. Is that already in the record?

No, no.

Should I repeat this?

Yeah, anything. One story we probably should repeat, because you talked a part of it on the tape, but we didn't have anything on the video, remember, on that, either, just on the audio. But the battery with the car?

Yes, I did want that, too.

OK. Go ahead. Because we don't really have any of this on tape.

I see. Well, although Jews were not allowed to serve in the armed forces, they had to register for the draft. And when my year was called up, we were told to go to a dance hall outside of town, a very shabby place and be there at a certain time.

And when I came there, there were, of course, being a small town, most of my friends that I had gone to school with. They were all there. And everybody ignored me. There was nobody.

One young man whispered to me when walking by me, hi, Walt, hope you're OK, or something like this. This was in German, of course. So then finally, we were all called into the examination room, a large, large room. And we had to be stripped totally naked. And I was the only circumcised man in the whole bunch.

And the doctor, the Nazi officer came in a military uniform, with a swastika band on his arm, and very military and sharp. And the one when I was called up to be in the middle of the circle, everybody was standing around in a circle naked. And I was in the middle. And I stumbled when I had to make my knee bends.

So he made some very nasty remarks about those flat-footed heroes that he was-- we have one of those. And the people just loved, they howled with laughter, much more than-- it wasn't all that funny to them, either. But they wanted to show their patriotism.

And I wanted to evaporate into the air. It was just one of the most miserable experiences that I ever have gone through.

What did you do, Walter, when--

There was nothing to do. And you don't cry. You just bite your teeth. And you take the stuff. And you walk out. And you never forget it.

Actually, I did push it down so far that I only remembered it after I was in a counseling session once. Then came

something similar, it appeared to me in sort of a semisleep stage, and I couldn't figure out what it was. And then this thing came up and I remembered everything about this.

Did those people ever say anything to you afterwards? I mean, did they ever apologize?

There was no afterwards. I was gone before Hitler got into the worst part of it then.

So even when you went outside and they were away from that Nazi, they still did not say anything.

No, no, no, no, no. Nobody said anything. Nobody talked to me. There was nobody there to talk to me. They all ignored me.

So I want to tell a little bit about the financial situation. So my father found that his business was going down and down. And he wanted to get out of Germany. And that was already arranged through my brother-in-law, who was a doctor in New York. And so-- hi.

It was arranged that I would go to America. And my parents had finally decided. First my father said, you should get married, we should stay, everything will change, it will get better again. No soup is eaten as hot as it is cooked was one of the sayings. And so nobody really believed what was going to happen was possible.

So in any case, first of all, when he came to sell the factory-- first of all, we had to find out how to get money out of Germany. That was one thing.

When was this, about, Walter? Do you remember?

That was '35, '36.

So you were thinking, even that early, that you had to get out.

When I came back home, the winter of '33, '35. Yeah, something like that, '37. I left Germany in '38. So it was '36, '37.

And of course, legally, you couldn't take any money out of Germany at all. And so I came up with an idea. That since we lived on the border, and we were able to cross the border as often as we wanted to, as border, we were not restricted. We had sort of a border pass.

And we had a little car. And so I came up with the idea to use a pill, what you call an ampoule, is that the word you use?

A pill.

A little pill container, glass container that had pills in it, a round glass with a cork. They had corks in it. And I cut up some lead pipe, which you can up with a knife or somehow. It's very soft metal.

And I made heavy chips to make that heavy. And I poured automobile oil into the-- no, no, I didn't do that. I wove the money into the glass thing, the paper money. And then I corked it up.

And then I threw it into a spare can of oil. So it stayed on the bottom. So even if you shook it, the oil would keep it from making any noise.

Once even at the border, the border patrol asked to show him the oil. And he looked at it. And he shook it. And it didn't shake.

That must have been really scary.

Oh, it was terribly scary. So I did this. And then I went-- on the border, you had to be very careful. You wouldn't want

any of the Sudeten German people to know what you were doing.

But we had relatives in Czechoslovakia, in Prague. And we had a good friend, a Jewish doctor in this small town that I went to. And he would mail this money to Prague for us.

And then our Prague relatives kept it in a savings account. And then when Hitler marched into Prague, it was gone, you know. It was all lost.

So all that money was lost. But in any case, when I had this money in the oil can, I would go to the woods there, drive into the forest, and pour the money out, pour the oil out over my hands till the ampule came out into my hand. And then I wrapped it in some paper and took it to our friend and handed him the money. And that was the way I handled it. And it was a relatively safe way of doing it.

No one ever caught you?

No one ever caught me. No, except that one morning, after I had applied for the American visa, one morning at 7 o'clock, which was earlier than we usually-- just about the time I got up, but my parents' didn't. There came a call on the phone.

I went to the phone. And it was said this is the Gestapo. And we want to have you come with your auto papers, with your automobile papers to the police station and be there at 8 o'clock in the morning. And so I was there 8 o'clock in the morning. And I was scared.

Thank you.

[BACKGROUND NOISES].

OK, Walter. You were saying that they called you into the [PLACE NAME].

Yes. They called me in. They took me to a villa that they were occupying in this town quite a ways out in a very nice area. And they set me down.

And they didn't say anything why they called me. They came in. They entered my car. And I drove them out where they wanted to go.

Who were these people?

Two private-- the Gestapo police guys, secret state police is the translated word, name. And they said to me we know that you smuggled money out of Germany. They said we know that. And we have proof.

So I knew that this was life and death if I say yes, I admit it. That was the end of me. I knew that.

So I took a deep breath and I looked at them and I said, no, I've never done that. And so they said, we have papers to prove this. And they pulled out of a briefcase some documents and said you have been on this and this date, you crossed the border at a certain place.

And I knew I was off, because I'd never crossed the border at the place they said. They were just trying, because some of our workers in the factory lived on the Czechoslovakian side and crossed the border there. So they thought that maybe through these workers I shoved money out. In any case, they gave the wrong border. I was able to pull out my car documents, my border documents, and there was no border crossing on that place.

And I said, I have never gone across that border. And they said, well, I guess we'll give you the OK to go to America, they said.

And they let you go then?

They let me go. And they said we will approve of your application for a passport.

This was right before you were leaving, then, to get out.

Several months, probably, I suspect.

What do you think they wanted to do? I mean, did they want to keep you there, or did they want--

Well, if they would have found out that I was smuggling money out of Germany, I would have gone to a concentration camp or I would have been eliminated even before that. I would have gone in lawsuit and capital crime and executed. I don't know. I'm quite sure. I'm quite positive of that.

How did they treat you when they let you go?

Then they were courteous, cold, but courteous. They were not even rough with me. I was never manhandled, never was I hit or beaten or in any way manhandled, especially not by official people.

Did you ever see anyone who was?

I know people who were, yes. Yes, in my hometown, there was a manufacturer who was blackmailed to pay money into some very right wing organization. And he refused. And they beat him up. He was beaten up very badly.

But in my area, the Catholics weren't quite as Nazi, and so on. We didn't have a great deal of trouble. Even at the Crystal Night, there was no trouble in our town, I don't think. I have never heard of it.

I may have been already gone. I don't know when that actually was. Oh, no, I was still in Germany, I believe. But I know that there was no problem in our hometown.

When your father lost the factory, when was that?

That was quite interesting. I would guess about 1938 or so, it also goes to show how corrupt the people were, the Nazis had took it upon themselves to determine how much my father was allowed to sell his factory for so that they could sell it cheaply to some of their cohorts. And so in order to overcome this, we found a party member, a Nazi party member, whom we paid to bribe some of the people in this big city who were in charge of determining the price to boost it up.

And he was not a Nazi, but he was a member of the Nazi party. He wore the swastika on his button. And he also later on brought some money to Holland for me, which he hid under his-- built into his car.

And he was a Nazi member. In other words, they were all to be bought. Everybody could be bought in those days.

It wasn't because he was a friend of yours that he did this?

Well, he was our insurance man, my father's insurance man. So he did quite a lot of business with my father. But he was not a Nazi.

And he brought that under danger of his life when he got that money into Holland. I was already in Holland, coming to America. And he met me there and brought this money [? for what's set ?] to be timed.

But so my father found one of his clients, a very wealthy landowner, who wanted to give our factory as a gift to his daughter, to the bridegroom, to the fiance of his daughter, a very nice, charming, young German man, and from a very well-known industrial family who bought the factory. And the official price was still very low. But my father arranged that under the table, this father-in-law of this future owner paid quite a substantial sum in cash.

And he actually did pay it?

He did. Oh, yes, he did pay it. And in order to get it out of Germany-- my brother-in-law and my sister lived in Sweden at the time already. They had already left Germany.

So photographic equipment, my brother-in-law had a photographic shop. Photographic equipment was very valuable. German photograph equipment is high quality. So somebody was found in Berlin who would see to it that shipments of these photographic equipment were, thank God, got out of Germany somehow. And that was, of course, all very expensive. You had to bribe everybody, and so forth.

And three shipments, they were \$30,000, were put into three shipments of photographic equipment of which only one arrived. The first one arrived. The other two never arrived.

You never found out what--

We never found what happened, no. So most of that money was gone. So there were just a few hundred dollars left for my parents, which they finally sent to me in Rotterdam. And in fact, when I arrived in Rotterdam, I would have gotten about \$600. But suddenly, the market was devaluated. And what I got was \$400. And that's all the money I brought to America.

Wow. Right.

So therefore, my parents-- I had nothing. I had just a camera, which I sold. And what else can I--

Well, I wanted to know your-- I'm going to [? change ?] this a little bit. When your parents were there and you left, what were your feelings about that?

Well, it was very, very sad. I saw them standing at the station, waving goodbye. And then I was gone. And I didn't know whether I'll ever see them again. That was very hard, very difficult because we were a very, very close family.

And I also felt that I was the one who wanted to support them when I got over. And of course, I didn't know how or when and where. Fortunately, they came. They went to Sweden about a year later. And they were in hiding, more or less, in Berlin. They didn't register.

Everybody in Germany has to register, wherever you are. Whether you're in a hotel or whether you're in a private home, you have to always register. But they did not. They stayed in Berlin until their visa came through.

And so they went to Sweden first. And they stayed in Sweden, I believe, I got in '38. And they came in about a year and a half. They stayed with my sister in Sweden.

And then they came to Japan, because the war was already going on in the Western Front. They couldn't take a boat from Holland or from Germany or anyplace. But they went via Russia with the Siberian railroad to Vladivostok and from Vladivostok to Japan, and then from Japan with a ship to Seattle. And I lived in Seattle at the time.

How did you keep in touch through all of that?

Well, through Sweden, between Seattle and Sweden, there was no problem to write to each other. But my parents expected that I would live in a tent in the suburbs because I was working for \$15 a week in those days. However, I mean, I knew that they were coming. I knew I had to find a living, a decent living.

And I had a friend who had been a lawyer in the neighborhood of my hometown. He was our family lawyer and who had lost his law practice, of course, like all lawyers did under Hitler. And became first a legal advisor, and made still-- a very bright young man. And then he went to America. He went to Texas and became a representative for a dress

manufacturer in New York and did extremely well.

And he suggested, he had found out that Washington, Oregon-- and I lived in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, and Montana was one territory, about three times the size of Germany, that was available because the previous manufacturer's agent had done a very bad job there. So it had not been worked for a couple of years.

And he said I should go to New York and see the manager there and he told me exactly what to say, how much I should ask for as a weekly allowance, and so forth. So in any case, I went to New York.

They were on strike, the company. And the manager was very, very busy. And so he said, do you think you can sell dresses? And I said oh, of course, I can sell anything, I said. You see.

And so he said, how much do you want a week. And I told him I want \$55 a week allowance. This was a lot of money in those days.

And he says have you got a car. I knew that I could get a car. I had arranged that through my father and a cousin he had in Detroit. And so I went, yes, I have a car arranged. All right.

So I had the job. I came home. Two days later, my parents came. They thought I would live in a tent outside of town. But I had rented a very nice apartment. I had a car.

[LAUGHTER]

I just awaited them at the dock. It was a very moving reunion for me. It was very, very moving.

What did you say to each other?

Oh, I cried like a baby. I didn't say anything. It took quite a while.

Did you think you'd ever see them again?

Oh, yes. I had the hope. I also knew that they were safe, they were in Sweden.

This is when they were in Sweden already.

Yes, before that, it didn't take very long from my departure to theirs. I think I got word from them. I wasn't too worried about them.

I was worried for a while. And we didn't know what was happening to people at the time, where they disappeared to and why they disappeared, and so forth. So I wasn't that worried about them.

And I knew that they had a visa. They were working on a visa to go to America via Sweden, or something like that. It was arranged.

And what about your brother and sister?

I don't have any brother.

Your sisters?

And my two sisters, yeah.

Your brother-in-law with--

Yeah, the younger sister, the sister that is six years older than I was in Sweden. Her husband and she moved from Berlin. They lived in Berlin to Sweden.

And they stayed in Sweden?

They stayed in Sweden. Their son is still in Sweden. And the eldest sister was married to a physician who lived in New York. That's how we got out of Germany. He gave us the affidavits, the whole family. He got out in '35, I believe, already. Yeah.

OK.

And so through him, we got into America. But he died about 10 years ago, something like that, 12 years ago. But my sister is still alive, that one.

Do you want to tell us a little bit about your grandparents? And how long was your family in Germany?

I have a Hebrew book at home, a commentary to the Shulchan Aruch. And that is in handwritten [INAUDIBLE] marks in it. And it says translated, this Holy Book was brought by my father, the honorable Samson Hudson from the holy city of Chotzen in Bohemia to the holy city of [NON-ENGLISH], which was a town by the German name was ZÃ¼tz, ZÃ¼tz.

And so the story is that this ancestor of mine, and he was my father's great-great-grandfather, came from this town, which was exactly spelled the way-- I have a postcard with that same name, so the picture of that town.

Which is your name?

It's my name, yeah. Came into ZÃ¼tz, probably because he wanted a more Jewish life. There are lots of Jews in this little town. And then the family moved to this town 16 kilometers, about 12 miles from my hometown, a little bigger city where there were several Jewish families.

And they were peddlers. They started to peddle, that is piece goods and notions, things like that, ribbons and things like that. And they went with the packs on their back and probably a horse, I suspect.

But one of the two, one of them, a friend of my ancestor made it very big. They became huge factories. They started out the same way, but our family was unfortunately more in the books and he was in the money. And so he became very big.

They had huge factories. They employed thousands of people all over the world. They were the foremost damask weavers in the world.

Oh.

And in this little town, and when I left, of course, that was taken away from them just as much as from us, the family. So then my father's father moved from that town into our hometown, where I was born, and started a thread factory. And my father said he made the worst thread that anybody In Germany ever made.

And for some reason, he got a big head for some reason. Because that was about in 1870, when Germany had beaten France and there was a great deal of resurgence of success in business and finance, and financial adventure, and so forth in Germany. So my grandfather built a beautiful villa and a beautiful, big, large factory and went bankrupt almost instantly.

So my father had to pull hot potatoes out of the fire. And he did that. But he changed the business from the thread, finally.

I still remember, as a little boy, going into a large hall where women were spinning thread. I still remember that very vaguely. But later on, those became all woodworking machines. And my father was loaned money by the Gentile people in town. There were some very fine people in this town that helped him.

To start the business up again?

To start anew, to change his business and start it up again.

So your family was actually in Germany about five generations?

Yeah, at least. Myself, my father, my grandfather, his father, five generations. You have that pretty well figured out, yeah.

And what about your mother's family?

My mother's family was an interesting story, too. I don't know much about beyond my grandfather. But my grandfather lived in a very small town in the country where there were a lot of wealthy landholders, many of them aristocrats, barons this and that, and so forth. And he had a liquor manufacturing plant that's very small and also a tavern, or something like that, liquor room where people could come and drink, and so forth. And he made a lot of money and became very wealthy.

And the land young landowners who came borrowed money from him. And he was so flattered that these fine, high class aristocrats were borrowing money from him that he gave all his money to these guys and lost almost everything and hanged himself.

Oh, no.

Yes. They moved to the big city. He thought he had [INAUDIBLE] didn't need to work anymore. And nobody paid him back, except one guy came and paid for his cousin or something 30,000 marks, which was enough to send one of the sons to college to become a lawyer and my mother to art school.

She was an artist. My mother was a painter. And I still have quite a few painters and pictures are at the house.

But she went then, married my father, and went to the little town. In our hometown, she gave up painting for some strange reason. I don't know why. But she worked and she helped out in the office.

Did you have a synagogue in your town?

No. We had what we called a prayer room, just a prayer room. I became bar mitzvahed by-- the rabbi came to our town. And then bar mitzvah was in the county seat, which they had a synagogue. And I was bar mitzvahed there.

What about when you were going through early school, elementary school and high school? Was the religious school required during that period of time?

No, although we learned, I learned some Hebrew. But it was a pretty painful experience. And I had to start out-- I started out at the girls' school because that was the only private school that they could send me. They didn't want to send me to a public school, I guess that was [INAUDIBLE].

But then, later on, the director of the public school, the school principal of the public school opened up a pre-college, or what do you call it, pre-high school, a pre-high school school, in the first grades of high school. And he was an alcoholic and a terrible guy. And he was beating us up terribly.

We were beaten terribly. We never went to school without having our pants upholstered in the back with some pillows or something like that.

Did you tell your parents?

Oh, sure. My father took me finally out when I came home with a blue eye, with a swollen eye because one of the guys had pushed me, or one of the teachers had pushed me against the door post. I admit that I wasn't a good student. And I was not the most pliable of the students they had there probably.

And so I utilized that to complain bitterly. And he took me out of that school and put me into the hands of a private tutor so that I could go to the high school in the next city. We had to go every morning, take the train. I had to transfer once. And it took about an hour to go the 17 kilometers, which is about 12 miles, something like that, from one town to another.

Wow. And you did that every day?

Every day to go for one year. But we used to drink on the train. We smoked, of course, and everything like this.

And so finally, a school opened up in my hometown, a high school. That high school that was especially sort of a democratic type of thing. They wanted to have public school students to be able to go to college.

So they started this particular type school. It was a very nice school, very modern, and very, very lovely. And so I enjoyed going there. And I finally graduated there.

Did you have non-Jewish friends at that school, then, too? All.

Oh, always, only. Because you only had a few?

I was the only Jew in school.

Right. So even though there were 10 or 12 Jewish families?

Yeah, there may have been a few more. I can't say this for sure.

But very few Jewish children your age.

Yes.

So was there, in the early years, before the Nazis, before Hitler, was there any overt anti-Semitism that you knew?

Yes. Yes. First of all, as a kid, I remember kids would run after me, Jew boy, Jew boy, little kids. And I would come home and ask why they do that, and so on.

Because I had to walk to go through a fairly cheap neighborhood to get into my school. And our place was on the other end of town. And so they were very poor people.

And also, I noticed, I became aware of later, of course, that there was a social separation. A certain class of people, my father, the men would go and have beer and do bowling on Sundays. But the families would not intermingle very much with some of the wealthier, high, so-called first class families in town. There was definitely a break.

There were some. My father had some doctor friends, the people who had-- and you talk about anti-Semitism, my father was very friendly with a doctor, with a physician who was a very bright, very warm man. And they talked about-- what do they call this-- the Testament, where they claim the Russians came from Russia and Poland, where they claim that the Jews, they were--

The elders of Zion?

Yes, that the Jews were--

Thought it was the elders of Zion.

Well, something like that, the Jews were killing, on Pesach, they were killing Gentile children.

And eating the blood.

And my father read this somewhere and mentioned to his Christian doctor friend how outrageous it was. And he said oh, he said, I believe that some fanatic people would do that, he said. There are some fanatic Jews which will do that, he said. See, this is the type of mentality.