

Taped on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The date is February the 28th, 1997. I'm interviewing Frank Ephraim. My name is Nancy Alper. This is tape number one, side A. Frank, please tell me your name at birth, your date of birth, and your place of birth.

My name at birth was Franz Gunter Ephraim. I was born on the 19th of February, 1931 in Berlin, Germany. The actual district of birth was Charlottenburg, district of Berlin.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about your parents and their background?

My father, who was born in 1903, was a businessman. He originally was an inventor and held patents of things like an alligator clip for the electrical or radio industry. And after the crash, he went into another kind of business. He worked for a large firm that made diesel engines, narrow gauge engines for sugar cane plantations in South America and parts of Asia. And he worked there until the Nuremberg laws 1936 no longer allowed him to work in an organization of that kind. Then he went to work for a textile firm. And that's where he was until we left Germany in 1939. His father and mother actually owned a clothing store in one of the sections of Berlin called Friedenau.

My mother was born in a town called Schneidemuhl, which is in West Prussia. And her father was a veterinarian who had to do with mostly farm animals. They were married in 1928 and came to live in Berlin. And there she was basically a housewife and did some work for a advertising firm for some years. But then most of the time she did not. She was at home.

Why don't you tell me your mother's maiden name and a little bit about her family, including where they came from?

As I mentioned, they came from a town called Schneidemuhl, which actually served as a railhead for the Battle of Tannenberg in the First World War. My grandfather, whose name was Heymann, H-E-Y-M-A-N-N, served in that first World War. He was a major of cavalry, a veterinary surgeon for a cavalry regiment that served also in Tannenberg as well as Verdun. My mother grew up in Schneidemuhl.

And her mother, again, was a housewife that did not have a particular profession. My mother had a twin brother and sister, eight years younger than she. And they emigrated early from Germany to the United States. Actually, they first went to Italy and in 1934 after the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933. So she lived in Berlin with my father, and I was born, say, three years after they were married in 1931.

Tell me a little bit about the Jewish background both of your parents.

Both of my parents came from Jewish homes. Both grandparents were Jewish. They were members of a Jewish temple in Berlin. It was a synagogue on Prinzregentren Strasse. And they attended that relatively regularly. And even though during the somewhat difficult times after the rise of Adolf Hitler, they still, of course, went to the synagogue. In fact, my father was there on the night of Kristallnacht, November the 9th, 1938 and did see the ruins of the synagogue that next morning.

Was theirs a more orthodox background, either one of them or did they both come from very assimilated families?

They were relatively assimilated. They were not orthodox. My grandfather on my mother's side, the veterinarian, of course, in his profession, it was extremely difficult to practice any orthodox religion, because he had to deal with farm animals, including pigs and cattle. So that he was not orthodox. On my father's side, they were also not orthodox. We're what one would consider conservative, and they went to a conservative synagogue as far back as I can remember. So I was brought up in the conservative level of Judaism.

How long, as far as you know, were both of your families in the area that today we would think of as Germany or Prussia?

Well, my grandparents on my mother's side, the veterinarian, he died in 1933, not long after Adolf Hitler came to power.

And my grandmother died six months later. So I barely knew them. I was two years old. On my father's side, both parents, both his parents were born in Berlin. And my grandfather died actually the day before Kristallnacht on November the 8th, 1938 after a illness, a heart problem. My grandmother lived, and she and my uncle, my father's younger brother, were both taken to Litzmannstadt, which the Germans named for Lodz in Poland. My grandmother died on the transport nearing the ghetto, and my uncle died in the ghetto itself. I believe was 1942 that he died there.

How were you able to ascertain that? At what point did you find out what had happened to those family members?

Shortly after the Second World War, the Red Cross had gathered names of people based on lists that were available to them as to place of death. And my father just found that out. Oh, it must have been sometime in 1949 or so. Now, both names are listed in the Gedenkbuch, which the Germans have published in 1986 I believe was the first edition. It's a two volume book that lists apparently over 100,000 German Jews that perished. And it shows where they were from, their maiden names, and where they were taken and death if the date of death was known. And they were designated as missing if the date of death is unknown. For example, people who perished in Auschwitz, there would be no date of death known.

You may have said this, but I didn't get it. What was your mother's maiden name?

Mother's maiden name was Charlotte Heymann. She also had three other middle names. It was Rosa Ernestine. I've forgotten the third one.

How did your parents meet?

My parents met when my father visited Schneidemuhl, I guess visiting other relatives that lived in the area. And they met in that area. My mother belonged or my grandfather, actually, belonged to a lodge. In those days, that was sort of a common thing, particularly for people in the professions. And it was actually, it was known as the Odd Fellows Lodge. It's an international organization. But they have branches all over the world, and he was a member of that. And there was a lot of social activity that went along with being a member of the lodge. And at one of the affairs there, they were introduced and that's how they met.

Both of them it sounds like led an integrated life with the general social life in the area at the time and they didn't just function within their own Jewish communities. Is that correct?

To a large degree, although they were always close to the Jewish community. They were part of it. In a place like Schneidemuhl, which was a town or city probably somewhere in the neighborhood of 80,000 or 90,000 people, there were naturally only a few Jewish families who, of course, knew one another and went to the same synagogue or there may have been more than one synagogue. However, they did deal with everyone else.

Certainly my grandfather being a veterinarian did all the veterinary work of the whole farming area in the area. And he was also the town's meat inspector, which sort of went along with being a veterinarian. So that integrated him with the rest of the population as the family. Very often farmers did not pay in cash. They paid in goods like eggs or butter. So that was the practice in those days.

So they were more or less part of the rest of the community, not segregated or separated. There was no ghetto in that town, as there were few ghettos in Germany. There may have been districts which were largely Jewish, but as a rule, not.

Your father grew up in Berlin. Is that correct?

That's correct. Yes, my father grew up in Berlin. And he went to school. He was a teenager during the First World War and sort of took care of the family because his father was in the military, the German army, the Kaiser's army at that time and was on the front. I think he was on the Western Front near Verdun. So he had to take care of his mother and younger brother. So he was working.

And as I mentioned before, he did very well at inventions, holding patents. And then later on that sort of dissipated as the crash 1929 occurred. And then he went to work for this engineering locomotive-- this locomotive engineering firm. It was called Orenstein und Koppel. They're a well known firm in that field in Germany. Still exist.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about the family store that you mentioned?

Yes. My grandfather, that's my father's father who had the strange name of Adolf. Because in those days, that was a fairly common name. Adolf Ephraim. And he and my grandmother owned a clothing store in a district called Friedenau, which is sort of south of the center of Berlin. And they ran that store throughout their life.

And my father, though, never actually worked there. He did his own thing. And I think his younger brother too was interested in other areas. So they ran the store until they retired. And that must have been in 1936 or so, because my grandfather then took ill and died two years later. But they ran this-- it was a general clothing store. That's all I really know about it. I don't recall having ever been there, but that's what I had heard.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about your childhood? And I realize you were very young when you left Germany, but what do you recall about your family and your Jewishness in Berlin at that time when you were growing up?

Well, my first recollections as a kid were probably when I was perhaps two or three years old. I'm estimating that. We were living in an area of Berlin called Steglitz and it was an apartment flat. And I played in a large area nearby. And then we moved to an area called Charlottenburg in the district of Halensee specifically. And there I went first to something like a nursery school.

And I played with a lot of different kids. We lived on the street. The street's name was [PLACE NAME]. It was a dead end street which led off a larger street called Paulsborner Strasse, which was one of the larger streets in Berlin. And there we also lived in an apartment on the ground level. And the street, there were lots of kids on the street from different families. Predominantly, they were non-Jewish. Since again, one did not live necessarily in a Jewish area, since there weren't very many of those. There was one, I recall. And I played with all these other kids.

However, one began to notice even at the age of four or five that there were kids who had joined the Hitler Youth, and they would occasionally appear in uniform, sort of a khaki top and black pants and they all wore daggers. And they would say that the dagger should not be pulled out of a scabbard unless you actually plan to use it.

The other game and toys that they liked to play with at the time were ball bearings. Germany had been up front in the development in a factory of ball bearings. So the big thing was for a kid to have a ball bearing. And they would roll it along. But of course, the Jewish kids couldn't get hold of one of those, because for some reason, they were only available from certain sources and perhaps through the Nazi youth movement or the Hitler Youth. And so these kids had these ball bearings with which they played.

And they would always ask me as a little kid, are you a full Jew, are you a half a Jew or what? Because by then, of course, they were being indoctrinated thoroughly as to the ills of the Jews, which they just simply accepted and practiced. I mean, you were considered to be a Jew and as such and not really a member of their group or their society. Although they would not take an active or physical role in that, certainly at that time.

Two of the kids I remember very well. One was my age. One I was a little younger. They were the sons of what we call the portier. The portier of an apartment building is like the, I don't know what do we call it today here. Concierge. This man was responsible for all the maintenance and repair and he lived in one of the apartments also on the ground floor, just sort of next door.

In fact, they invited me to one of their Christmas Eve fairs. Well, he got dressed up as Santa Claus and handed out goodies. And he also gave me a packet of German style cookies. And so that was kind of interesting. I mean, they were not openly anti-Semitic. They were, of course, aware of what was going on. I mean, whenever there was a major holiday in Germany, Adolf Hitler's birthday, for example, April the 20th, the Nazi swastika flags would be hanging from the balconies three stories down.

It was very obvious that they were all hanging up the flag. Very often there would be a uniformed SS, the black uniform, the Schutzstaffel, that would be hanging around the area or have families living there. This was I'm estimating 1935, '36 by then. I was four or five years old.

In Germany, you started school at the age of six and you did not start in kindergarten. That's something that is really and more of an American thing. Although there were kindergartens in Germany, these were the nursery schools. So you started the equivalent of first grade. Actually, in German it's the eighth grade and then went to seventh and sixth. Eighth would be achte, which is the German term for the eighth.

I went to school started in 1937. The school was a Jewish school, because at that time Jews were no longer allowed to go to the regular schools, the public schools in Germany. So this Jewish school had been founded by a woman of the name of Toni Lessler. And she was an experienced educator and opened up this school in a former villa near the Grunewald, which is a very nice area. And I went to school there.

The way it worked is my parents had a dog. And actually, the dog was older than I. And he had an English name. His name was Monkey. And he was a white haired terrier. And I would head off for school down the street, head for the well known street in Berlin called Kurfurstendamm, where I pick up a street car. It was a number 76. And I took it to school.

And on my way back, my mother would meet me. The dog would sort of run back and forth as I was coming down the street. And so I remember that very well, of course, in those days. But also that street would often be used by-- I would often see people wearing the Nazi uniform, the Stormtrooper uniform, the tan and black or the SS all black. And they would march up and down the street. There were lots of them around in Berlin, obviously. So these people-- at that time, my looks were such that I was never considered to be Jewish. I had sort of white blond hair and blue eyes. So at first glance, nobody would recognize me as a Jew, at least from their description of what you would look like.

However, once we got on the streetcar nearing Lessler Schule, the Jewish school, there were often people on the streetcar who would make cracks about the kids getting off there. Like, these damn Jews, and something of that order. So you were familiar with anti-Semitism right off the bat. Also whenever we walked down the street, there were restaurants which had signs on them, so Jews not allowed. And then of course in 1937, by that time park benches, which were mostly painted green, a few of them were repainted yellow and had a black J in the center of them. Those were for Jews. Jews were not allowed to sit on the green benches, only the yellow benches. So I saw that.

And on occasion, my father, who was always very interested in many different technical things, being sort of an engineering mind, we would visit parts of town. He took me to the middle of Berlin, called the Berlin Mitte, the Unter den Linden, a very famous Avenue. And there was some sort of a parade going on. And one of the things that I noticed was that Berlin had a police force that wore blue uniforms and had sort of black shiny [? schÄckels ?]. That was a particular style of uniform for the Berlin police. They were called Schutzpolizei. But that was contracted to Schupo.

So you always know that was the cop on the beat. And they were usually very competent people. They were typical policemen. Except they changed the green uniforms for special occasions when they had a Nazi parade or something like that. So that was something that sticks in my mind as seeing a whole group of them rather than wearing their regular blue were now wearing green. Unter den Linden, often there was a parade and we would watch that, even though it was a Nazi parade. I mean, you could still see that and see who was marching and you could see them with their drums and banners and that sort of thing.

The other thing is he would take me to the railroad station. He was interested in trains. So there we would see all different kinds of trains coming. And one of the famous trains in Germany at the time in English would be called the flying hamburger.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

It was a train that ran between Hamburg and Berlin. It was a high speed train in those days, as fast as you could get in

that time. So these are some of the things we would do. We were still able to do these kinds of excursions. However, entrance to restaurants or entrance to certain movie theaters and entrance to-- in fact, I don't recall, I only recall having been to a movie once in my whole time in Berlin, which was I was born in '31 I left in '39. So in those eight years.

And that was when I was taken one weekend to an aunt of my mother's. She had six aunts and two uncles. And the aunt lived in a sort of a suburb of Berlin called Karlshorst. It was on the eastern part of Berlin. My uncle there was a physician. And they had no children. So I stayed with them for the weekend, and she did take me to a movie. They were playing a movie with Shirley Temple in it. It was something where she was being chased by hordes of horsemen that I don't recall exactly on the subject or what the title of the movie was, but that was one of my entertainments in Berlin.

But going back to the school, the Lessler Schule, that had a sort of an interesting-- I don't know if I should move ahead. This is like a flashback thing. Lessler Schule, as I mentioned, was run by Toni Lessler. It had all the grades up through the, well, the last years of the equivalent of high school in Germany. So it must've been about 12 different grades in the school. There was a dean of students who my parents knew sort of socially. And he was a sort of disciplinarian. And I had a few run ins with him because I always was the kind of kid that liked to goof off or do different things.

When I entered the first grade, before we go further, I just want to identify the district that I lived in in Germany. As I mentioned, the street's name was [INAUDIBLE]. Sort of a weird name. And it was just a short block dead end street and led off from a larger street called Paulsborner Strasse. The actual area's name was Halensee. And it was sort of near Charlottenburg, which is a major district of Berlin. If one were to look at a map, it would be sort of in the slightly south central area of Berlin. It is today close to the Konrad Adenauer Platz. That, of course, that name is more recent than that, dating back from that period. There is a very large church, a red brick church, in that neighborhood.

And there is a playground that my mother used to take me to. It had a large sandlot. And I recall playing there. In fact, I recall playing there with a Turkish kid. He was a son of a consul or something like that and in the sandlot. And strangely enough, a few years ago in 1992 and also again 1995, I was back in Berlin and went back to that same playground. It's still there and has the same name. It's Hochmeisterplatz is the name of the playground. And the name of the church is the Hochmeisterkirche, which is about a block away.

Would you characterize this neighborhood as upper middle class? And I assume also it was mixed religiously.

Yes. It was, of course, mixed religiously. Predominantly German Lutheran or Evangelisch is what the Germans call the Protestant faith. Jews live there. I think if you take a look at Berlin with probably population of a million or more, Jews numbering about 150,000. We're talking anywhere from 6% to 10% or more Jewish, something in that neighborhood.

Relatively well mixed throughout Berlin except for one area, which was where the name of the streets were like Grenadierstrasse or [PLACE NAME]. That area was largely inhabited by Jews who were more recent immigrants from places in the east, such as Poland. Had a fairly good sized community of people who were refugees from Polish persecution and became integrated into the German Jewish community slowly. But they in many cases lived in one area, as is fairly usual for new immigrants.

But the area we lived in is hard to classify. Probably middle class to upper middle class. In that particular area of Halensee, there were villas, individual homes in those days, which of course were relatively expensive and used by the well-to-do. There was a railroad station not far away. There was-- I don't recall too much else. Primarily residential, most of that area.

We were talking about the school, I believe. Oh, and I wanted to ask you, was this a public school or was it a private school? And were you required to go to a Jewish school at that time?

Yes, the school was a private school, as I mentioned, run by Toni Lessler and her staff. And we were forced to go to schools like that because we were no longer allowed to attend German public schools. All Jewish children were sent off away from the public schools and had to attend a private school, a Jewish school.

Let me rephrase the question slightly. I've interviewed people who had to go to Jewish schools, but those Jewish schools

were funded by the government for the public. It sounds like that what you're saying, at least about Berlin in particular, if not Germany as a whole, you couldn't go to the normal public schools, but public Jewish schools were not furnished for you or paid for by the government.

I don't remember that precisely. There may have been some public schools financed by the state. I'm not aware of it, though. I wouldn't have that piece of information. This particular school I don't believe was financed by the state. There were several schools like that.

An interesting facet about this school was the fact that Toni Lessler left Germany in the middle of 1939. We left in February of '39. And I only found out a year ago, 1996, through an interesting method that currently in the '90s, '80s and '90s, Berlin publishes a little newsletter which they send to former inhabitants, Jewish inhabitants of Berlin. And in it, I found an ad by a man who attended this Lessler Schule.

This was the first time I'd ever heard of anyone that went to the same school as I did. I contacted him. He lives in Toronto. And I actually had lunch with him on one of my trips up to Toronto. And he revealed to me that when this Toni Lessler left the school, another woman educator took it over, and her name was Goldschmidt. And from then on, the school was called the Goldschmidt Schule.

The Goldschmidt Schule is well known for two reasons. Number one, the book Stella by Whitmer. I forgot. Anyway, a person, Stella, went to the Goldschmidt Schule. That's one thing. The other is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the fourth floor where you begin the permanent exhibition, there is a video. It's close to where the movie on anti-Semitism is. And that video shows children in a school. Which when I always looked at it, the school looked awfully familiar. And it shows that kids writing Hebrew on the blackboard and shows them at various activities, all Jewish children.

And at the end it says, Goldschmidt Schule. And I always thought, well, that must have been that other school called Goldschmidt Schule. I now know that was my school, Lessler Schule, because it changed names in the middle of 1939. 57 years later, I finally discovered that that's what I've been looking at when I'm on duty up on the fourth floor as a volunteer. I see that and I now realize that was really my school. So it's a strange feeling.

You were going to tell me something about the school itself. And I assume there were certain unique characteristics of her teaching methods or the way this school was conducted.

Well, the unique thing about the school was that certainly at that time, we're talking now about the years 1936 through 1939, I went there actually for two years, '37 through '39. The school mixed the required curriculum in all the fields, arithmetic and writing. And at that time, the first year, we had to learn the old German style script, which is called Sütterlin, which no one else could read. But that's how we began school. Only in our second year did we learn the Latin, which is very useful. Because once I emigrated, Latin was the only thing, and Sütterlin would have really fouled me up royally.

However, this school also, of course, had a Jewish component, which meant that everyone who went there took the religious part of it, which is the holidays, the practices, the Jewish religion, its history, its current condition. We learned Hebrew, to write and to read. And of course, at the same time, we learned to read and write German. So it had all those features of a complete what you say in the United States would be a Jewish high school or Jewish day school.

And it had excellent teachers, because those teachers also were no longer able to work in the public or other schools. So they went to work in this school. So we had some of the finest teachers in Germany in these schools. And Jews, of course, value education, and so this worked extremely well. People who went to those schools got an excellent education. I only attended two years, so my experience is limited.

However, we also did excursions. We were still able to go out of town or in town to parks to view things as a group. This was always awkward, because in public with a large group of Jewish children, there would be all kinds of things that you'd hear from bystanders, Germans. Any notion that the Germans had no knowledge or had no feeling or had no sense of what was occurring is not true. They certainly did. They were fully aware of the situation. Anti-Semitism at that

time in Germany was predominant. You find it at every street corner. That was a given.

For example, there was a small store on the corner of our street where you could buy milk and bread and things like that. So a small chain. The actual name of the chain was Bolle B-O-L-L-E with a little accent on the E. And they also had a logo, which is like a little man but just a line drawing. And you'd walk in there and the Germans would come in there. Very often they would walk in and give the Nazi salute and say Heil Hitler as a common greeting, and when they left they did the same thing.

And as a Jew, the discrimination was rampant and obvious and open. There was no covert activity. Sure, many Germans were uncomfortable with this and openly did not participate, but a great many did. So you were always in that situation where either you could not enter, you were cursed or somehow excluded or whatever. You were certainly not an equal member of society. That was obvious every day and every hour of the day, essentially, once you were out in the open. And every time you listened to the radio, same thing.

When you were with your school, you said that there were anti-Semitic comments or acts. I assume that you were identifiably Jewish as a group of children with teachers and the people around you knew that you were Jewish. And I wanted to ask you if you remember armbands and any other characteristics that would have told people that you were Jewish.

At that time, that is where I'm going up through 1939, Jews in Germany were still not required to wear the yellow star. That occurred some years later, a year or so later. There were no actual badges required, no armbands required, nothing of that sort. These things did come about later. However, let's face it, a small group or a larger group of children with teachers, I guess there were characteristics that identified us as Jews.

And since perhaps the largest-- there were not a large number of people with blond hair and blue eyes like mine and perhaps some darker in complexion possibly or with other facial characteristics that one would expect to find among Jews, particularly if you were a German. Because by that time, they were so keyed on the racial and physical characteristics as being depicted on the pictures and posters and other descriptions that they began to sense very quickly that you were Jewish.

In the school itself, and you may have been too young, but if you were discussing any kind of German history or information about the German government, I was curious what you remembered about how that material was presented to the children.

I was perhaps too young for classes that dealt in politics or in government. By and large, those subjects were not taught at the elementary level. There was some history dealing with, well, in those days, of course, the First World War and times before. And the First World War saw Jews as part of the German society. Although, again, there was certainly anti-Semitism. However, as I mentioned about my two grandfathers, both served in the German army. My grandfather had the rank of major. That's from my mother's side, the veterinarian. He was the regimental veterinarian. And the other grandfather, I don't know what he was. I'm just guessing he probably was an enlisted person.

So the history was given-- I don't remember as having gotten much there. Certainly at my age, I was six, seven, eight years old. Politics, they stayed away from that by and large, a Jewish school with the conditions and situation as it was. There was at one time when another group of children joined us because they had to leave the building and that was their school that was being taken over, expropriated. And so they had to join our school. And so there was this tremendous tension.

However, I do recall one episode. Well, this had to do more with Judaism. There was the-- I forgot. It was one of the festival, Jewish festivals. It was Sukkot, where we were given a grapefruit. And that was an unusual fruit for that part of the world, but they were available, apparently. And our teacher, who was called Miss Fraulein [PERSONAL NAME] was her name, and explained the meaning of all of this. But I don't recall a great deal of politics, history being taught or discussed at that level, anyway.

Do you remember government inspectors or any government officials coming to the school to look it over for any

purpose while you were there?

No, I don't.

This is Nancy Alper. I'm interviewing Frank Ephraim for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It's February the 28th, 1997. And this is the second side, side B, of the first tape of our interview. Frank, I was getting ready to ask you, I know that by then the ban on Jews being in public places had occurred, or at least that's my understanding. And you mentioned the schools going out occasionally on excursions. And I'm wondering how that worked, given that there was a ban on Jews in public.

The way it worked, the excursions were very limited. They were in one instance I recall going out to a park. Or actually that was the Grunewald, which is a park in the city of Berlin. Where we just walked, took sort of a nature walk, if you will and had a picnic. We brought our own food and looked at trees and looked at birds and looked at foliage and shrubs. And the teachers accompanying us were [INAUDIBLE] explain things.

The other thing, quite aside from the school I went to in Berlin, my parents sent me for two summers and, let me see, it must have been the summer of '36 and the summer of '37 or it was '37 and '38. I forgot which one. They sent me to a camp in the Riesengebirge, which is near Czechoslovakia. And that camp was actually a mountain camp. A huge home, all Jewish, run by two women. One was a PhD, a doctor. One was actually a medical doctor and the other one was a PhD in education.

And they ran this home all year, actually. But in the summer, they would take children of various ages. And it was a full boarding and everything. And there we actually went on long excursions in the mountains and the forests and over rushing streams that we had to cross. So that was a very delightful experience. I would go up by train. My mother would take me. She would actually take me to the place and then go back. And I would stay there for approximately six weeks.

And again, this was during the Nazi regime. That place was operating. It was all Jewish. And as far as I know, I don't know how long it operated. I doubt much past 1939. But that was an extra added experience in the summer.

Going back to the Lessler Schule in Berlin, as I mentioned before, it was a mix of education. There was a fairly strong effort to educate children in the Jewish faith and the Jewish practices. This was not a reform type of Judaism. Perhaps people often misunderstand. Although Reform Judaism was perhaps first formulated in Germany or in Europe, it never grew to any kind of dimension that we know of in this country, in the United States today. It was a very small affair. The predominant gradations were the orthodoxy and even much larger were the conservative movements of various shades or levels. So that most of the synagogues in Berlin were conservative. There was none that I recall that was quote "reform" unquote. So that's pretty much all I remember about the school.

Although one thing, the very first day that I went to school, we all followed the German tradition, which is every child received from parents and relatives sort of a large bag full of candy, of different kinds of candy. It's shaped like a cone, a huge cone. And it came in various sizes. Anything from about a foot to about three feet long, which was filled with boxes of candy or candies in bags or that sort of thing.

It's a traditional German type of event which occurs when the child goes to his very first class in a school. So the Jewish school also followed that practice. In fact, they followed every German practice. Because after all, the people that went there and their parents were of the German culture in addition to being Jewish. So it was a dual thing. But things of that nature were done in German style.

Do you remember supplies or materials changing, conditions changing at the school, I understand this is the child's impression, up until the time that you and your parents fled Berlin?

Well, I did not notice anything in particular. One of the things that I did notice was that the Germans certainly in Berlin, as far as I know, began a program of conservation. In other words, they offered two or three different kinds of garbage cans, and they had a cardboard pig that they handed out to everyone. There was a placard in the shape of a pig and the color pink. And on it were written all the things that were to be put in this one garbage can that could be used to feed



pigs. That was the idea. So that they would have pig food available based on the garbage that was dumped by people in apartment houses and homes. So that was one of the beginning practices of conserving materials and food.

They, of course, had various programs. The collection of silver paper. I recall that everyone even in the Jewish school, mind you, was collecting silver paper, wrappings from chocolate and putting it into a ball. And that would eventually, once the ball was about three or four inches in diameter, would be turned in, and that went to some sort of war effort to be melted down for its content. There was other conservation moves. A clothing collection for what the Germans called [GERMAN] winter help for the poor.

I also recall, and we go back nowadays, we talk about the persecution of the gypsies. There was quite a gypsy community in Berlin. They used to come down the street with a horse and wagon and either beg or offer to work or whatever or pick up old things. And they would with horse drawn vehicle would then move through the streets. And gypsies were onboard. So we did get to know what gypsies, who they were and more or less what they did.

There were also times I recall the first sort of as an aside the mail trucks that delivered the mail or brought mail to the area were electrically driven vehicles. It's very unusual for that time. There were also interesting things about Berlin. For example, the streetcars always were a double, a main car and one that was hooked on. And the one that was hooked on was called a smoker. You were allowed to smoke on that one but not in the main car. Whereas Berlin had a major subway, and I went on that a couple of times with my father.

Once he took me-- he always wanted to see things and have me look at things. [? Whatever they were ?]. Again, mostly in the technical area, because that was a great interest. Berlin has a very large tower, not as large as the Eiffel Tower, but it's a telegraph tower which is very high and has a restaurant halfway up and an observation platform at the top. It's called a [GERMAN], meaning sparks, but it refers to radio. So we went up in that one time up to the top and down again. We were able to do that. At that point in that particular place, there was no sign no Jews allowed. But these places began to be rare. So that he had to sort of work hard to find out where one could go and not be confronted with these placards or this prohibition.

You mentioned two things that I wanted you to amplify on if you could. One was antisemitic posters you mentioned. And the other was when you went out in such a way that you were recognizably Jewish, whatever the reason, people would make remarks. And I was wondering if you had more specific memories of what those were, what people's attitude was.

Well, basically the expressions that people used when they dealt with or saw Jews, those that made remarks, the English translation was a dirty Jew. Or they'd say Judenkinder, which is sort of a demeaning term for Jewish kids or Jewish children. Or they would say Sau Jude, which means pig Jew or dirty Jew. They would also use expressions like that.

As far as the advertising or billboard type of materials concerned, Berlin, like perhaps other large cities, has these large round poster kiosks. [GERMAN] as they called them in German. And on which were posted all kinds of things, announcements and so forth. And occasionally you'd see rallies announced. And sometimes you'd notice that the subject was the Jew and the problems that they're causing the Germans.

Cartoons of the like I don't recall seeing. Sure, they were there, but for some reason, they were not that obvious. They were probably more obvious in little booklets or books that were given to German children in their schools. Since we didn't go to those schools, we did not see those books. On occasion, we might see them if other German children we were playing with had a book like that. But that was relatively rare. I don't recall seeing that a great deal.

The friends in your neighborhood that you played with, you mentioned that some of them were in the Hitler Youth. And I'm wondering how you felt treated by most of those children or what, if any, other individual incidents you remember about how you were being treated when you went outside to play?

Well, it was mostly one of either exclusion or being part of the group but not at their, shall we say, level out there. However, you're still dealing with children, in most cases. And these were young children, my age, ages four, five, six, seven, eight. And these children were not as inculcated. They were not as rabid, because they had just sort of heard it.

And like children hear things, they repeat them. But their heart wasn't necessarily into that.

And you were still another person that they played with. Or if you had a toy that they liked, then you'd join them or we would wear hats of various kinds or whatever things we did as kids. We ran. We had a sleigh, had sleighs or sleds in the winter time. And so there was not-- the sort of discrimination there was not as great as it was among older children and adults, I'm sure. So I was still a fairly young fellow, so I didn't really get that much of a negative reaction from them.

What do you remember about what your parents were saying when you were around either to each other or to you by way of explanation of this differentiation between Germans and Jews and just generally what was going on politically at the time?

Well, they didn't say a great deal. For one thing, we would occasionally listen to-- we had a radio, and we listen to that. And speeches and occasionally to hear Hitler speak or what have you. They mostly practiced being careful. And they would be very careful of what they said in public and also what I might utter in public. They would prefer that we not speak too much or little at all in public.

And as a result, these were things that I always wondered why we are going about it in this fashion. I was a fairly open type of person even then. And so that was a little bit dismayed of having to keep my mouth shut. But I realized the reason for it, and that was because there was a rampant underlying atmosphere of anti-Semitism with remarks with everything else that one saw.

And the explanation, there wasn't any. Because in many ways, many people initially thought, at least certainly in the first years of Hitler's regime, that this will blow over. This guy wouldn't last very long or whatever. In this, they were all wrong. And so perhaps they were just hoping that things would subside and blow over or change. The Nazis were capable of changing the atmosphere. As we well know, in the 1936 Olympics, they cleaned up things and subdued things so that they would be recognized internationally.

So there was always, of course, there were newspapers around and there were magazines around. And we did not get, of course, the German *Völkischer Beobachter*. This was the Nazi paper. We got the regular newspaper and it had some articles from this and that. Certainly it was anti-Semitic. I didn't read the newspaper thoroughly at the time. I read mostly the books and stuff that we got at school. And we observed all the Jewish holidays and I read some of the Jewish books and things of that sort.

We didn't go into great discussions. My mother was of the kind that was always more inclined to try to subdue the situation and not give great explanations. It was difficult to explain. It was very difficult. When you are in a situation like that, what is there to explain? It's there and you don't know why and you can't explain it. So I don't think they were able to explain it. No one was able to really explain it.

I assume too a lot of what they evolved into doing by way of their public behavior was pretty instinctive. They just began to respond in a certain way or anticipate things that were going to happen. But as you say, it would be very hard to articulate.

The primary reason for acting in the way they did and most Jews did was there was no way out there was no one to go to. There was no one to complain to. The authorities were the ones that were conducting these campaigns. It's like say in the United States you elected a President that suddenly decided the same thing, that he'd like to get rid of the Jews, like to keep them out of society, would want to expropriate everything they owned. And the judges and courts and the authorities and officials all were along the same lines. There is no one that you could complain to. And that, of course, puts a crimp on everything you wish to do. The only way out is to leave, if you could. And that's, of course, what they began to plan.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about your family life within the apartment where you lived and your life with your parents at that time, including the Jewish part of it?

At that time, again, my age was approximately six, seven, eight. As I recall, the apartment I had my own room. At the

time, my father and then I and my mother, we were great entertaining ourselves. I got into that habit early in life, perhaps because of the environment we lived in, but also that was sort of my instinct to be technically self-sufficient. And I was interested in puppets and we had those and built a small puppet theater that was built.

And we had relatives in the United States who lived in places like St. Paul, Minnesota. This was a part of my grandmother's family. It was my grandmother's brother, who came to the United States in the late 1800s and established himself as a rancher in North Dakota. And they drove cattle and ended up in St. Paul, where he settled, and married a woman who came from Pennsylvania, a Jewish woman. And they were married in Pennsylvania. And they raised a family in the United States.

They would occasionally send us a package of stuff, clothes. I remember my first Keds shoes. I was the only kid in the block who had anything like that. Unknown in Germany. And things of that sort. And packages of food, which was unusual or whatever. And so we had that contact on occasion.

Now, in my youth, I was a sickly child at times. I ran through bouts of diphtheria. So I was ill for quite a while. Tonsillitis was one of my most favorite illnesses. And so I often had the problem with that. Whooping cough and stuff. But my father was great at building stuff, handicrafts or kits or models. So early on I had also inherited a set of soldiers that dated from the First World War. I believe may have been one of my grandfather's toys. So I was into doing toys a lot, making things, and designing things, drawing a great deal. So this is how we entertain ourselves.

I went to nursery school before I went through the Lessler Schule that began in 1937. But before that, I spent a couple of years in so-called nursery day school, which is not far away. And again, this was with Jewish kids. And we went to various little parties occasionally that were held in different homes the parents would hold. And sometimes you would do a lot of reading.

My father worked pretty hard at his job. He occasionally had to travel. He went to fairs which were in Leipzig and another place called Jena, J-E-N-A, which was also a center of fairs.

And one time I think during that period, My mother took me back through her home town of Schneidemuhl by train. That was the only out of town excursion that I recall other than my visits, my summer camps to the Riesengebirge, the mountains in Czechoslovakia, near Czechoslovakia. But I was the only child. So as I say, it was a lot of reading, occasionally listening to radio, music. That's about all I recall. I don't remember too much else.

Did you celebrate Shabbos and were there any other Jewish practices being practiced in the home? Keeping kosher, for example.

No, we never kept kosher. There was the Sabbath candles, lighting of the candles. Hanukkah, which was celebrated, of course, with gifts. Unlike in the United States, other countries you only give gifts the first night. And that was a practice that we held. Other holidays, Sukkot was a holiday we celebrated. Purim was another one. But that was also at school. People would dress up and do that sort of thing. So these were the Jewish practices.

As I say, it was not an Orthodox home. There was no Hebrew, no great sit down and reading or anything of that sort. We know some of the songs that went along with the religion. But not a kosher home. Perhaps there weren't that many strictly kosher homes in Germany. There was obviously a large kosher Orthodox community, but the predominant Jewish community was conservative.

Do you remember getting together with other family members in general for Jewish locations? In particular, say, Passover or Shabbos?

Well, there was a yearly Seder at my grandfather's house, which he presided and that where we had the Seder ceremony each year. That's one. There was, of course, the fast of Yom Kippur, which both my parents held up to this very day. So that was another occasion. There were other families who occasionally came to visit. The problem you had by then was people were not doing much visiting with one another. They stayed home for various reasons. Both the persecution reason, the danger, the fear. So there was not a great deal of that.

I do recall one night, it was 1938, I believe, late '38, in the middle of the night was a knock on the door. And what appeared was a man who had arrived on motorcycle from Schneidemuhl, my mother's hometown. He had to flee because the Nazis were about to enter his house, tear it apart, and take him in. So he managed to flee. He had a friend who give him some gasoline for his motorcycle, and he rode all night by motorcycle to Berlin.

And this was a relative of my mother's, I believe. I'm not sure of the exact relationship. And he was joined about a month later. He stayed with us and he was joined a month later by his wife and son. And they finally left Germany. In fact, they took the similar route we did by ship. And he actually died on board ship and he was buried in a place called [? Aden ?] at the end of the Suez Canal. And his wife and son went on and ended up in Singapore, which was on the route, and they had relatives there, and they stayed in Singapore and only later went to Australia, where they then settled. But that was an incident that sticks out.

Do you remember any of the specifics about why he was going to be picked up by the Germans or how he knew?

How he knew. That's always a very interesting facet of life or had been in Germany. Very often the Germans would send a Gestapo agent or someone to the house. And then the people that were the subject of that interview, if you will, began to get very nervous and figured that it won't be long before someone would come along and arrest him, because they knew that had happened to other people.

Because Jews were already being arrested, as probably everyone knows, almost 1933. A concentration camp Sachsenhausen, Oranienburg, work and later Dachau and Buchenwald were already set up for that purpose. So they sense that and so he fled. And apparently even fled at a point where they had apparently already entered the house, began to go through all their things, the mattresses, looking for money papers and God knows what, and he managed to sneak out with his motorbike and by on foot and then he got it gassed up and off he went. So he went just at a moment's notice.

So apparently these things happen, particularly in the smaller towns, in the villages. Not so much in Berlin. After all, there you are dealing with a very large city. Everyone's watching. So the arrests would have to be done in the middle of the night, which is the usual case, 4:00 in the morning or so.

And my father had to spend nights outside the house. He did that on a whole number of occasions. He stayed with two maiden aunts of his in Berlin. And the only way-- he would come home toward the morning and my mother would sort of flick the kitchen light on so he could see it from a distance. And by flicking the light on, that was like a signal to tell him the coast was clear, that no one had been to the house to ask for him. So that I remember very distinctly. That happened we're talking now 1938.

So this would have been the time that men were starting to be picked up.

Oh yes, yes. Yes, they were picked up. Relatives, friends already being picked up, taken to Sachsenhausen and Oranienburg, which is right outside of Berlin, and put into those camps. Those days many were released after about four or five weeks or whatever and went back home. However, once you got into that rut, you know your days were numbered there. And the rush to leave really began to grow.

To digress a bit, you had mentioned the Olympics and that the Nazis were able to put on a pretty face for the international community. As a child, what do you remember, if anything, about the happening of the Olympics?

The Olympics. That brings to mind another incident or two. The Olympics were held, of course, at the new stadium that was built for that purpose. And strangely enough, my school, the Lessler Schule and other Jewish schools and German schools all were at a large athletic event at that stadium. We performed at that time, I recall, we had a medicine ball routine which we went through. My gym teacher at the Lessler Schule got us through those routines. And we performed in our blue and white uniforms with the Star of David, strangely enough, among all these other Germans with their schools at that stadium.

On top of that, one weekend we were near Berlin in what was now a separate Jewish rowing or racing shell club. And there they had the racing shows. So the oars had the Star of David on it. And across there was the German racing club with the swastika on their oars. And they're both racing up and down and I can imagine there may have been some words exchanged. But it was still possible to do that. Although, again, that didn't last for very long, this separate, and of course, Jewish activity. Because we no longer could belong to the German clubs or the German schools.

But yes, that was that event. That just preceded the Olympics. It was probably one of those affairs put on or allowed or a practice carried out to sort of subdue the whole notion of persecution. And that's what I do recall. I do recall the Olympics, '36, I was five years old. I remember something about a major event. Of course, we were told about things at that time that was going to happen. I don't recall details. I don't remember any personages or anyone like that. But that particular event where we were at this huge stadium, the Olympic stadium, doing our thing along with other Jewish schools and loads of other German schools, schoolchildren, doing their various athletic activities.

Were either of your parents involved politically or with any sort of Zionist organization at all?

No, they were not. They were certainly aware of it. We all, of course, were aware of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, as it was known at the time. And certainly there were moves afoot to take children to Palestine. And there were offers to do that by various people. I actually was-- they were contemplating at one point to do that with me or to send me to England on a child transport or to be taken to the United States by other relatives of my mother's family's many branches who were still allowed to come to the US. He was a physician, this man and his wife.

And these people, the American side of the family out of St. Paul, Minnesota had given them an affidavit to come, because he had immediate job possibilities as a physician. And he in turn was a Russian, actually, who his wife had met when he was a prisoner of war, no less. In First World War. So there were all these different things were being thought about and discussed. But my mother being a very anxious kind of person was not willing to sort of ship me off to some unknown. And so we did wait till we were able to get out as a family.

I take it you were hearing these discussions going on around you. And I'm wondering how you felt about this sort of free floating conversation about your fate.

Well, you were always a bit anxious about that, obviously, not knowing where all this would lead and the discontinuity that you felt at the time. However, you began to sort of go along with it or go with the flow, so to speak, because it was happening to others. And you could sense there was a coming to an end of things in Germany for Jews. Not quite the end-- that we could not foresee the end as it actually occurred. But certainly all the symptoms were there, that you were no longer part of that society. You were segregated in that society.

And it did not seem to pass, as many people had hoped. So these options began to emerge into reality. There was a time when you sort of crossed the Rubicon even as a child and you knew that there was a very mushy or gray future here that needed to be resolved. And so therefore, you absorbed these possibilities as real after a while.

How did your father's loss of his employment sort of plug in to the kinds of discussions that you were hearing in this gray, murky area when you were a child? What do you remember about his losing his job?

Well, he sort of was a very capable guy. And when he left one job, he almost immediately floated into another. As I mentioned before, he began as an inventor, essentially, on his own. That dissipated with the crash of '29, I believe, the inflation, horrendous economic problems in Germany and Europe generally. And then he worked for this engineering firm with the diesel locomotives and stuff, which was very interesting for him. He dealt with foreigners, with Turks and South Americans. And he put together these big packages for engines for narrow gauge plantations and so on. And then that dissipated into a firm which handled textiles, textile production.

And he always worked. I mean, there was no time when he was out of work. So he was always earning a living, and that sort of kept us going. So that helped. There was never a period of any length, I believe, of unemployment. So I did not sense a problem. Although financially we were not wealthy, on the other hand, we were not poor. So we were able to hang on as a sort of middle class family throughout. So that was the situation at the time.

What became, of course, of central importance was how, when, where, and why to leave. On my mother's side, it was less of a problem psychologically. Both her parents had died. Her various other relatives, her younger brother and sister, the twins, had gone to Italy where he continued to study medicine. And then they immigrated to the United States where he finished at the University of Chicago.

And they were brought to the United States again by this American side of the family, got affidavits to bring them over in the mid '30s. So her side was in large measure, although not completely, out of Germany. There was another couple who came to Berlin from a place called Dramburg, where they lived and they perished in the Holocaust, she in Auschwitz and he in Theresienstadt.

But my father's was a little bit tougher. His mother and his brother. His brother was younger and his brother was always one of these adventures sorts. Oh, I'll get out somehow, no problem. I'll slip into France, whatever. His mother, that was difficult. An older woman and it was more difficult, of course, to leave her. But he had to in the end.

And my father was a person who was not that inclined to make a major change. So there was a bit of a duality here. But we managed to get out, and I'll cover that a little later in detail, through a relative of my mother's who lived in the Philippines and gave us an affidavit to enter the Philippines. But I'll cover that a little later in more detail.

Did you get the sense that your father's employment was going downhill in any way or that he was being discriminated against or sort of pushed to the wall as time went by in any of these positions?

I didn't get that sense, but it certainly happened, because he had to-- given the Nuremberg laws, the limitations on employment began to grow. Anyone who was employed in any kind of skill, bricklaying, [? or so, ?] plumbing, had to go out of that business. The Jews were essentially left to small retail operations or sales operations or very small enterprises.

And of course, he saw that coming. And that too naturally worked on him. I don't know to what degree. He was not a man who went to great lengths to complain. And this was not his style. He was not-- my mother tended to be a complainer, he not. And so you did not hear any gripe or moan about that hardly at all.

What do you remember about your grandfather's death the night before Kristallnacht?