

Michel Margosis

Tape 1, Side A

August 20, 1998

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Abstract

This interview is a follow-up on Michel Margosis's post-Holocaust experiences. He was born September 2, 1928 in Brussels, Belgium to parents who were born in Odessa and had 2 older siblings born in Iran. The Germans invaded Belgium May 10, 1940 and four days later the five of them left by train. Summer of '40 they hid and worked on a farm south of Toulouse. His father fled to Portugal and Michel went with his mother to Marseille. Then they decided to cross the Pyrenees and hired one guide for \$40,000 to get them to Spain and another to get them to Barcelona. They were arrested and Michel was placed in an orphanage and the other three were placed in jail. After two weeks, the Joint Distribution Committee placed them in a hotel except for his brother who was sent to a concentration camp near Bilbao. Michel was placed in a convoy of children under 16 for the US and stayed with a cousin in Brooklyn. He was almost 15 years old when he attended school for the first time in three years. He also tried to get his family over here. For a year he would jump and hide when he heard airplanes overhead as he did not know if they were friendly or enemy. When the War ended his siblings were in Palestine and his parents were in Portugal. He was happy when he became a citizen in '49. When he joined the Army for two years, he was a chemist with a degree but the Army wanted him to be an interpreter in Zweibrücken. He did not feel comfortable to be stationed in Germany so was sent to France. He got a Master's degree and worked for the Food and Drug Administration. Michel married an American. After they had two children, they joined Beth El Reform Synagogue in 1967 in Alexandria, VA. On their 15th Anniversary in 1972, Michel took the family to Europe to retrace his steps in Belgium, France and Spain. When their train left Amsterdam, he could tell when they arrived in Germany and wanted to leave. Nevertheless, he has been able to attend professional conferences in Europe and converse in German.

This interview is part 2 of a follow-up on Michel Margosis's post-Holocaust experiences. It focuses on his feelings towards the Holocaust and the Holocaust Museum. He believes the Holocaust was a unique event and cannot be compared to other events. He started his relationship with the Holocaust Museum in 1983 when he became a volunteer after seeing a group of survivors with whom he felt rapport. He looks for Belgium neighbors when visitors come to the Museum or when he attends Holocaust events. His activities as a volunteer at the Museum are diverse as it includes registering survivors at the Registry, translating French, Spanish and sometimes Russian, and work for the Visitors Center and Speaker's Bureau. Michel wants the Museum to have more exhibits on those who escaped during the Holocaust and more interpreters for foreign visitors. He tries not to go on the 3rd floor as it upsets him. He enjoys

meeting visitors from all over the world at the Museum. He felt isolated in his professional life as a chemist, but now he can volunteer more.

Summary

00:00 This interview is a follow-up on Michel's post-Holocaust experiences. The interviewer has reviewed the previous interview with him for the Jewish Community Council on February 26, 1989, the 20-page memoir he wrote in 1998 and a section of his book, "Tramp and Spirit." He was born September 2, 1928 in Brussels, Belgium. His parents were born in Odessa. His father was a journalist, an active Zionist, who was sent to Siberia but escaped to Persia and the couple became Iranian citizens. His older brother and sister were born there and they moved to Belgium where his father published two newspapers in Yiddish and French. The children belonged to Hasholim Hashar (?) (a Zionist group). The Germans invaded Belgium May 10, 1940 and four days later the five of them left by train where they hid under a bench when they were strafed by the Germans. They hid and worked on a farm south of Toulouse the summer of '40. His father fled to Portugal and he went with his mother to Marseille to the Persian Ligation. They were detained and escaped from the camp. His mother supported the children by using the Black Market. Michel went to a Scout Camp the summer of '41. After the Allied invasion of North Africa, they decided to cross the Pyrenees. They took a train to Toulouse and when they saw German officers, his mother used sign language to communicate. First they hired a guide for \$40,000 to get them to Spain and then another guide to get them to Barcelona. They were arrested and Michel was placed in an orphanage and the other three were placed in jail. After two weeks, the Joint Distribution Committee placed them in a hotel except for his brother who was sent to a concentration camp near Bilbao. Michel was placed in a convoy of children under 16 for the US. They took a train to Lisbon and saw his father and Michel boarded a Portuguese ship.

05:00 U-boat sailors boarded the ship but left them alone. Michel landed in Philadelphia on June 22, 1943 and went to his cousin in Brooklyn. He became a citizen in '49, graduated from college, spent two years in the Army, got a Master's degree, worked for the Food and Drug Administration, got married and had two children. He feels he must have been independent as a child as his mother worked and he was alone in Marseille. His friend had a bakery so he would go there to eat and went to the beach and did what he wanted. Michel was always optimistic and did not realize the danger he was in until he came to the US and realized what he had escaped. Except for his sister, he felt close to his family. There was a three-year difference between him and his brother and they got closer as they got older. The family had a 3-tier language system as the parents spoke Yiddish to each other, spoke Russian to the children and the children spoke French to each other. When he arrived in the US, Michel knew little English but Yiddish came back to him. He was

12 when he arrived and knew that something terrible had happened as had seen movies about World War I. The French had built the Maginot Line and felt secure so he was optimistic. His father was worried as he had gone through the Russian Revolution. Michel was not worried about an invasion or thought to seek support. Even before '33 his father thought to migrate as knew what was happening and knew of the plight of the Jews in Russia. He felt that the best place to go was the US but they could not go due to the quota system. You had to be British or German born to get into the US.

10:00 Michel does not know how his father managed to come in '46. He does not recall his father talking about the danger to the children but he wrote about it and spoke politics with his colleagues. After the War, they talked about it. His father left in June 1940 for Portugal. The children were treated as adults as had to work on the farm and not just be a guest. Michel was 12 years old when he left Belgium and does not recall taking anything special. He acquired a few items in France such as a big dictionary which he carried to the US. It disappeared upon arrival and he thought his brother took it. Michel also collected stamps and brought them to the US. He went along with his family when he left Belgium. The family did not feel that they were Belgium although they had no problems with the Belgium people. He did not realize that they were leaving permanently but just thought they were moving to another city. Although Michel was born in Belgium, he did not feel Belgium. He married an American and does not know if she feels more American than he. Michel was a happy-go-lucky child at 12 and lived a child's life. When Belgium was invaded, he heard the strange noise of the bombing in the distance and was not worried. The strafing on the train was more immediate and many left and did not return. His father said to hide under the bench as the shots would ricochet. He was not afraid as was too optimistic. His father left them in Fazy (?), a small town, when he went to Vichy.

15:00 They heard some people went to Marseille so they went there. His father could only obtain papers for himself. His mother had to learn how to be on her own. They received a letter from his father that he was not returning. His mother cried and carried on as it was difficult for them to survive on their own. They continued writing to his father in Portugal. They knew the letters were censored as they were taped. Then communication stopped as mail was not permitted out of France. Portugal was run by the Allies although the country was run by a dictator. When Michel's father was in Siberia, his mother left for Palestine. Later, she left her mother, brother and sister in Palestine and rejoined her husband so they could be a family. In 1939 his father went to Geneva to report to a Zionist conference and could not return because War was declared. His mother was alone and showed courage. Michel's mother kept to herself and might have spoken to her older sister. She did not confide her plans.

.20:00 Michel saw chocolate and cigarettes in the house and sometimes borrowed them. They went to the Pyrenees as Michel's sister needed treatment with medicinal waters. The

borders closed so they used their money to get them taken over. Michel could not discourage his mother as he did not learn about her plans ahead of time. They were detained in a camp in Toulouse. At first it was a reception camp for immigrants and they were given blankets but when they spoke to the inmates his mother got worried what kind of place it really was. When everyone was asleep, they ran away. It was a good thing as the inmates ended up in Drancy and Auschwitz. He did not mind leaving the camp as it was a military camp and no fun. They needed to leave but at 13, he did not feel brave. He was often hungry and, as they lived in a small town, he would eat grapes, climb trees for fruit or obtain watermelon. Youth today are different from most youth in those days. His brother had a fabulous Bar Mitzvah. Joseph Schmidt (?) was invited and he escaped to Switzerland but his car blew up. Michel was envious of the Bar Mitzvah for which they made many preparations. Michel did not feel that he missed too much but thought of having a double Bar Mitzvah with his son but it would be too much work so he did not have it. He recalls that the German soldiers were their enemy and his mother thought to use sign language.

25:00 She was extremely courageous to remain on the train with the troops but Michel was not too worried. His French is as good as a native and he lost his Belgium accent. Michel was not afraid of the German soldiers and he did not speak to them. The soldiers were laughing. They called the soldiers, "Bosh." Michel did not know about Nazis at that time. They would sing dirty songs about Hitler. He knew about Hitler, Goring and propaganda from reading the newspapers. He feared them so they continued going in the opposite direction. He was isolated from his brother and sister as they all had different friends. When he was 14, his brother was 17 and his sister was more mature and did not talk to them. At home they were together for dinner. During the day, Michel went skating and to the beach. He got to know the street as he hid in the slums. He was put in an orphanage but the separation was not bad as there were other children there and he knew he was in a neutral country so would not be returned. Earlier refugees were returned to France. He presumed that he would see his mother soon. He thought they were separated as they had no official entry papers. He thought he would see his father soon. It was upsetting when his brother was sent away. There was violence in his camp due to the Poles. There were also prisoners in the camp from the Civil War. His brother wrote to their mother but not to him. Michel was going alone to the US and leaving his family. When he heard that only children under 16 were allowed to leave, he tried to get papers for his mother.

30:00 When he arrived in the US, he told his uncle to send papers and contacted the Consulate and the State Department. He was told to wait. He wanted his family to join him. Michel was almost 15 years old and attended school for the first time in three years. He had more responsibilities to get his family over here. He left Portugal on a neutral ship so he felt safe. He was alone on the ship. He was not afraid as was optimistic. On American

soil, he got scared as he saw more than expected such as dirigibles patrolling the port. He was happy to see that stores with goods were open so the War did not touch them. He knew about cowboy and Indian movies and that the US became independent from England. He did not know that it took 200 years to desegregate. He did not know about the racial problems. His best friend was Black as his mother was Danish and his father from the Cameroons which was a German Protectorate until World War I. They had some German attachments and worked for the German government. His friend was too young for his brother and sister to be friendly with. Michel did not know English upon his arrival and got some help from his French teacher

35:00 By taking French for a year or two, he learned English while the children learned French. Michel learned about the New York State government which was uninteresting to him. Michel did better in his second year and analyzed the Midsummer's Night Dream which he read in French first. In his third year, Michel joined the Honor Society. He was able to communicate with others which made him feel good. At first he learned Italian cuss words. **Tape 1, Side B.** Michel did not talk to other American teenagers at high school about his experience as they were surprised when he jumped and hid when he heard airplanes overhead. He told them he did not know if they were friendly or enemy planes so protected himself. He did it for a year and then realized the enemy did not come here. He met Jews, Italians and Greeks and learned Italian and Greek words. The day he became a citizen was a very important day of his life. His witnesses were the aunt and uncle of a man who came with him on the ship. It was a strange feeling to be an American and he could vote so was very proud. Now he feels the same as other Americans, as faithful today as when he arrived. It is nice to visit Belgium but he does not want to live there. He could not find greater contentment anywhere else.

40:00 He is glad to be a part of the system that put on the US Army uniform but did not care for the NCO or company commander at Ft. Dix who said they would be treated as pack animals. He did not like to use their name as it was humiliating as he escaped a world where he was considered an animal. Michel is glad that he enlisted and served his time. No one in the Army knew his childhood as he did not tell anyone. He made no friends there nor when he changed from rifleman to Medic. He did not feel like a survivor but felt like a refugee. He felt elevated when the Holocaust Museum opened. It was a worthwhile experience to serve in the Army but he would not reenlist as it was not a career for him. When the War was over in 1945 he went to Times Square and saw lots of people kissing. It was very exciting and he thought things would improve. His siblings were in Palestine and his parents were in Portugal. He is thankful his parents are together. He felt the world would heal. He was young and it was exciting. If he had not gone through his childhood experience, it is impossible to know if his life would be different. He does not know how the War affected him. His sister has been here for many years.

- 45:00 Her husband died and he was a hero during the war. Michel was always optimistic and that would not have changed if he was in an annihilation camp but lucky that he was one step ahead for which he is thankful for his mother. Maybe he would not have survived. His mother was strong as she was Jewish and that makes you resilient. His father was sent to Siberia and survived so that might have strengthened him. Motherhood gives you strength and courage. Physically he looks like his father but he does not know if he is as strong and dedicated as he was. He hopes he has acquired the best traits of his parents. Sights and sounds of today bring back childhood memories. When he first moved to Brooklyn, he saw trolleys and heard their clang, clang which reminded him of trolleys in Europe. He used to sneak on trolleys as a child. The food is different. He never went to restaurants as a child. There were two department stores in Belgium and department stores today are different. He liked to ride the escalator in department stores. The smell of French fries on Belgium street carts recalls a good feeling. He had a bad feeling in Verdun Cemetery in France. He was stationed there and it made him depressed.
- 50:00 He saw human bones and shells. He was stationed there as a Medic and did his duty and went to Belgium on leave. He did not feel Belgium but felt American. Also in Paris, he felt American. He did not feel at home so came back to Brooklyn. When he returned, he was thankful to be a US citizen. Once when he and his wife returned from Paris, they were glad to be in the US. He felt totally at home and appreciates it more. He loves to travel, loves French restaurants and Paris sights but loves the US. His wife is 2nd or 3rd generation as one parent was born here. Her parents attended Cornell in upper New York State. American GI parties were held Friday night but then he found out about services on Friday night. His father was Orthodox and would take him to services. The Army service was Reform and in English which he could relate to as he never learned Hebrew. His wife is Reform as her father was refused entrance to an Orthodox synagogue because he did not have a ticket but a Reform Temple accepted him. Michel was married by a Reform Rabbi in his wife's parents' Temple. When they had children, Michel and his wife joined Beth El in 1967 in Alexandria.
- 55:00 As a child in Belgium, Michel was called Jewish, the Chosen People, and it meant something to him. His father had strong Jewish feelings as he was Zionist, trained at cheder (Hebrew School) and was close to Bialek, the foremost poet. When Michel was old enough, he appreciated the poet. When his children were teenagers, he did not compare them to his dangerous journey at their age. He does not relate his experiences to his children. When his son was confirmed at 16, he had doubts and the Rabbi said that everyone has doubts. His son was married to a Conservative woman by a Rabbi and they have no problems.
- 60:00 Michel realizes that Germany still exists today. The first composition that he wrote in high school was that it would be nice if it did not exist but that is not possible. Germany tried to make restitution and tried to be part of the world of nations. To his sorrow, there

are too many Nazis in the world and we should try to get rid of them. The Germans are not Nazis and the Nazis are not German. They each have their own philosophy. Germany today is all right. Sometimes he wants to forget the past. Austrians want to bury it. He does not know what will happen in Switzerland to the claims. Michel was a chemist with a degree but the Army wanted him to be an interpreter for French and Spanish and he was stationed in Zweibrücken. He did not want to be stationed in Germany and asked to be stationed elsewhere. In '52 he was still angry from the War and was sent to France. On his 15th Anniversary in 1972, Michel took the family to Europe to retrace his steps in Belgium, France and Spain. When their train left Amsterdam, he could tell when they arrived in Germany and wanted to leave. He felt uncomfortable. He has been back professionally for international Chemistry meetings in Vienna, Salzburg and Baden Baden where he associated with Germans. He had no problems with them as he did not have a political philosophy. His father died while he was in the Army and he flew out from Frankfurt where he did not feel comfortable. He felt he did not belong and was not welcomed. He has no desire to see Germany. Since he loves Mozart he is willing to go to Salzburg and he likes to listen to Beethoven.

65:00 Still he does not understand how such cultured people can be animals. He heard that 6 million Jews were killed. His father had the constitution of Israel and framed it in his house. On September 2, 1943 the Nazis were scouring his neighborhood in Brussels and picked up people and later scurried through his neighborhood in Marseilles. Michel cannot think of the number 6 million. He knew that some died in Russia. His mother's brother became an administrator in Russia. Most of her family did not leave Russia. They have no relatives in France and Belgium. In 1972 he got a phone call and found out that cousins had left Russia. A friend says they lead a different life in Russia. He has been here over 50 years, a lifetime, and still has some attachment to the old country. It does not feel real when he is in Belgium and France as he knows where to go but it is not home anymore and maybe never was. Now he has a different life and he is a different person. He feels there are too many Eichmanns loose in the world and hopes Israeli intelligence find them as no one else is interested. The US hired the best Nazis and should not have done it but no government is pure with no mistakes. It was strange to see the American flag flying next to the Nazi flag in Barcelona as both embassies are next to each other. He feels proud to see the US flag, the stars and stripes. He has no feeling when he sees the British flag. When Michel arrived, Roosevelt had been in power so long and got all the credit of saving the world. Michel did not know that the Jews could not come and refugees were refused entry. He might have been angrier but did not know. He thought Roosevelt typified the nation. Truman seemed the man of the people. He felt Democratic. In Europe most of Michel's friends were not Jewish. When he arrived here, Michel's best friend came from the Congo. He thought liking someone is what counts. He was attuned to existing together.

Michel Margosis

Tape 2, Side A

August 20, 1998

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Abstract

This interview is part 2 of a follow-up on Michel Margosis's post-Holocaust experiences. It focuses on his feelings towards the Holocaust and the Holocaust Museum. He believes the Holocaust was a unique event and cannot be compared to other events. He started his relationship with the Holocaust Museum in 1983 when he became a volunteer after seeing a group of survivors with whom he felt rapport. He looks for Belgium neighbors when visitors come to the Museum or when he attends Holocaust events. His activities as a volunteer at the Museum are diverse as it includes registering survivors at the Registry, translating French, Spanish and sometimes Russian, and work for the Visitors Center and Speaker's Bureau. Michel wants the Museum to have more exhibits on those who escaped during the Holocaust and more interpreters for foreign visitors. He tries not to go on the 3rd floor as it upsets him. He enjoys meeting visitors from all over the world at the Museum. He felt isolated in his professional life as a chemist, but now he can volunteer more.

Summary

00:00 Regarding Michel's feeling towards the Civil Rights Movement, he mentions the attempted assassination of President Truman by Puerto Ricans and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and President Kennedy as all these events affect him negatively. As for the former Yugoslavia and Ruanda, he feels the Holocaust Museum thinks more deeply about them than he does. Michel does not relate such events to the Holocaust as they are about different values and different people. He feels the Holocaust is unique as the German government tried to achieve elimination of all the Jews. He does not feel it is similar to getting rid of the white man in Africa, the Tutsis in Ruanda or the Catholics getting rid of the Protestants in Ireland. The values are not the same. Michel feels that racism will always exist as long as there are two different people but it is not the same as a country geared to extinction of the Jews. The Spanish Inquisition may not have been worse but it had a similar purpose as conversion was its purpose. They mostly wanted to convert people rather than extinction. When he sees refugees fleeing, Michel does not relate to it.

05:00 Perhaps it is because his experiences are so long ago. His first experience at the Holocaust Museum was before he became a volunteer. It was in 1983 when he was still working. There was a reunion of Jewish Survivors of Benjamin Mead's group held outside of his building and he went over and talked to them and realized that he saw himself. He got approved to become a volunteer at the Holocaust Museum. He went to

the office on L Street and took training to work for them. He is not a death camp survivor so he can tolerate more than others. He saw people like himself. He looked for the Belgium desk on the mall. He looked for old friends there as his father published one of the two Jewish newspapers in Brussels so was well-known. He thought he would reestablish contacts. People in Belgium are not like the Poles. There were many people who went over the Pyrenees and hid in Marseilles. When he worked as a Research Chemist, he was isolated and only had time to go out to publish and go to meetings. As a volunteer he wore the red jacket and worked with people. He told visitors where the bathroom is. He wanted to encourage survivors to sign up and give an oral history. He energized survivors to register, sometimes there was an entire family including a spouse, children and grandchildren. This denies Hitler his victory to show that Jews have survived and multiplied. Now his volunteer work is interpreter for French and Spanish and some Russian, working for the Registry, translating books from Belgium and Marseille and participating in the Speaker's Bureau where he speaks to Social Security and Schools.

10:00 He is more and more active so that people will know the kind of things done to others because they are different. Michel feels the Museum has been successful in achieving this. The survivor group does not agree on everything as they have different values but he encourages others to do what they can. He gives special tours when survivors arrive. When he faces his own past, he feels it was not so bad as it could have been. He is in good shape and content with his life. Once he was in touch with Jack Singer who was from Belgium. They were both working and busy. As he became a Senior Scientist he was more in demand so did not work much with the Holocaust. He considered himself a refugee from '33 to '35. When he saw the original Permanent Collection exhibit, Michel felt it was his home. He wants the Museum to have more exhibits about the people who escaped. Several thousand escaped to Spain including many intellectuals. Volunteers have little input to the exhibits but they have input on other programs.

15:00 An exhibit could explain that from 1945 to 1957 refugees shifted from one camp to another and did not return to their home country. He works in the Visitors Center and tries to stay on the first floor as he has a hard time to face the exhibits on the 3rd floor. He tells people about the early computer on the 4th floor and about the insignias on camp uniforms. They had two triangles to characterize each type of group such as homosexuals and there is a chart indicating how they measured the physiognomy such as the long nose on Jews. The change came from the US immigration policies in the 30s. Michel believes that 60% of visitors to the Holocaust Museum are non-Jews. He often speaks to people who come in groups and he speaks in French to Canadians. If they have a special interest he tells them things that pertain such as telling an archeologist about the milk jar. He imparts history, values and his own feelings. The ID cards show different plans for each person. They were going to have ID cards on each floor that tell you

where to go but the ones used are different. Some visitors escaped from Europe and came to the US and he tells them they can speak to a survivor if they desire.

- .20:00 He may have something in common with visitors who are survivors. He feels good to use his experiences. He used to teach chemistry to children and tell if it's pseudo-science. At Registry you find the true story. Through the Registry, Michel learned that his brother's best friend came from Warsaw to Belgium and they always thought he was born in Belgium as he spoke the language without an accent. Michel feels he acquired a lot of knowledge from the Museum. His wife is depressed and only came once the past year and would not go on the floors. Going through the Permanent Collection affected him, especially the 4th floor movies. The first time it took him four hours. He went two weeks later and, again, it took him four hours. Michel wrote his biography because his son asked him what he did during the War. His son was affected and spent six hours at the Museum though he does not want to join the Children of Survivors Group. It was an awful experience when the children of survivors met the children of the executioners. One lady at the Museum always looks like she is crying but she stays with the group. His daughter went once to the Museum but she is not interested. Michel is interested in the Hidden Children exhibit as he realizes that he is a "hidden child."
- 25:00 He has not met any hidden children so he has not joined their organization. He does not believe that volunteers are rejected from serving. He thinks they contribute a lot. Michel wants the Museum to sponsor the translation of "Deportation." He asked the attorney to help. Since he moved to the Wexler Center, nothing has been done. At first he joined the VAB (Volunteer Advisory Board) but there are so many people with different ideas that it is difficult. Volunteers do not get paid so have no say. They have more to offer. He speaks to Flora and she speaks of Father Bruno who saved her. She tells visitors to go to the 2nd floor to look at her picture. She returned to Belgium and visited the Order. The priest who took care of Michel in Spain was of the same material. Liberation did not bring the same feelings as others. The General who occupied Omaha Beach was the liberator. Michel cannot express the kind of feelings that a survivor brings as part of the history. He is glad that he was lucky but can bring things up that the visitor can appreciate.
- 30:00 A non-Jewish non-survivor attorney with boys the same age as Michel's took the course and is working here. The staff is not Jewish but most volunteers are Jewish. Survivors at his Temple will contribute money but will not go to the Museum. Most will not show their affiliation as they do not want to return to the past. He has good rapport with the volunteer survivors and the staff. Those volunteers and staff who are not survivors do a good job. Michel must commit at least four hours a week. Many volunteers come more. He volunteers for the Visitors Center on Tuesdays, comes on Thursdays to the Research Center and may come another time. A memorable experience was at the Registry when a young woman came with her cousin's ID card and wanted to contact her but they are not

permitted to divulge addresses. He looked it up anyway but the woman left without leaving her address. He has met some French-speaking Canadians and Belgians from his old neighborhood of Sanjeur (?). Immediately, he asked them their address.

- 35:00 He does not want to live in the past but one needs to know the past to know the future. He does not want to see another inquisition. The best way to avoid incidents or accidents is to find out the cause to prevent it. He met the star of "The Nasty Girl," a young German girl when he asked her to close her umbrella. She was searching for the facts of the movie. **Tape 2, Side B.** When he saw the town of Pasau, as a scientist he had a strange feeling as science was instrumental to destruct the Jews including the production of gunpowder, toxins and nerve gas. It made him feel sorry that he is a chemist. He felt good working for the Food and Drug Administration as had the opportunity to make people feel better. He met survivors from other towns in Belgium. On the second floor is a picture of a hidden child which he sees all the time and met her when she visited the Museum. He has a good feeling when he sees Nesse and Regina as he has a special relationship with them. He also feels good about other volunteer work.
- 40:00 His wife is active in the Parkinsons Foundation raising funds and tries to keep up with advances in the field. He worked with the public radio station. He feels that without Mozart, life would not be as rich as it is. He gives his time by going to the studio and answers the phone. After his surgery, he used the button at the Holocaust Museum door and the rent-a-cop said it is not for him. He parked his car and walked in and felt it is his building as he is with friends and family and feels good. If he sees a lost person, he asks if he can help them whether at the Museum or on the street. He has a claim for reparations. His mother in the early 60s made a claim to the German government. He applied too late. His German lawyer died and he was told not to bother any further. Then he was told that he could resubmit so he did so. His father was in Geneva in '39 and might have banked some money but his name was not on such list so Michel does not expect anything. When he downsized to move here, his wife said to get rid of his stuff so he threw out his chemistry notes but kept his books. He did not toss out his Museum information.
- 45:00 It was difficult moving to a smaller place as he had an active professional life with many papers. Nick visited the Museum and asked the survivors and interns to take a picture of him in front of three monitors with Flora and Regina. A French actor from Hogan's Heroes in California helped with one exhibit and is still in contact with the Museum. The actor was affected by visiting Germany and a camp. Michel felt he had a good time as a refugee on the farm as he was free with no school and made friends with the cows and the horses. He milked the cows and drank their warm milk and climbed the trees for fruit which felt good. He did not feel he was doing evil when he got watermelon off a truck. Getting sufficient food was difficult. A month ago he wanted to put vegetables in

chicken soup and only had rutabaga. He used it and had a nightmare as it was the only food in Marseilles. Beans was the only food in Spain.

50:00 1942 was not long after the Civil War and there was a food shortage in Spain. The bleached bread in the US surprised him. Some of those in the volunteer survivor group feel that others are not Jewish enough. Michel feels that it is an American Museum and should be open to the public, not just Jews, as it gives the history of the Holocaust and educates the American public. Jews were the main target but others suffered as much. Some feel that the Museum needs more people who can read Yiddish and Polish but fewer and fewer people are knowledgeable in those languages. They want someone at the Museum all the time to speak and read Yiddish. The public is not always American. A guide was provided for a Japanese family by translating into French. Michel does not feel against the Japanese as he feels against the German. If the Japanese are willing to help translate that is helpful. Michel feels that each volunteer can be identified with a language so they can help foreign visitors. Barney can help out. He would like the lawyer to see if permission is needed to publish in English as now it can only be done in-house. Michel desires exhibits about escaping to such places as England and Switzerland. His brother-in-law escaped through Spain to Palestine and enlisted in the Jewish Brigade. The Wexler Center has little on that or on the Pyrenees.

55:00 Michel hopes he can continue to help as he will be 70 soon. He does things while he can. Survivors are fewer in number and may not want to do a lot. As one reaches his age, memory goes. He is proud to be an American and proud to help out at the Museum. He is content with his life as a chemist and saw his methods printed in the Official Compendium. He does not get paid but gets paid in more ways than money. Though he is no longer active in his synagogue, he still keeps in touch with Rabbis by sending them jokes. He makes people feel better even if they are impaired. His mother said to seize the day and enjoy what you can to the fullest.

58:00