United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Fred Taucher
April 26, 2001
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Fred Taucher, conducted on April 26, 2001 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

FRED TAUCHER
April 26, 2001

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher, conducted by Gail Schwartz on April 26th, 2001 at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is tape number one, side A. Please give us your full name.

Answer: It is Fred H. – wait, the middle name is Horace Taucher, t-a-u-c-h-e-r.

Q: And is th-that the name that you were born with?

A: No, it is not. My name at birth was Horst Alfred Taucher. And Horst – Horst became Horace and Alfred became Fred.

Q: And where you were born and when were you born?

A: I was born January 29th, 1933 in Berlin, Germany.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your family first. Ho – How long had the family been in this area?

A: In this area, actually – in Washington, D.C., not very long.

Q: No, no, no, I meant in – in Berlin.

A: Oh, in Berlin. Well, I cannot tell you exactly, but I do know that my father was born in New York, New York, in Manhattan. In fact, he went through high school in New York and then went to Germany with his parents.

Q: Were – were – were his parents born in the United States?

A: I do not know. I do not know if my grandparents were born in the U.S. I – I think they were born in Germany, lived here and then went back to Germany. And when my father was, like I say, 19 years old he went to Germany with his parents. He learned to be a tailor while in Berlin and he did get married very late in his life. He was married, I think at – about the age of 42 or 43 years to my mother, who also – it was my mother's second marriage. And my mother was born

in Oberschlesien, that's near Breslau, which is now Poland. And my brother was – she had a number of brothers and sisters all in Oberschlesien and they were dentists and lawyers. She had one sister who was an opera singer by the name of Rosie Albach(ph) Gerstel. She actually passed away about a month before I learned that she was living in Vancouver, British Columbia, which was about a two and a half hour drive from where I lived in Seattle, Washington.

Q: What are your parents' names?

A: My father's name was Julius Taucher, and of course he succumbed in Auschwitz in 1943, short – almost immediately after he was arrested. My mother's name was Teresa, but she was born – her maiden name was Gerstel, g-e-r-s-t-e-l.

Q: And your brother's name and his a – and when was he born?

A: My brother's name now is Henry Ernest, but he's born – when he was born it was E-Ernst Henry. And he was born January 3rd, 1932. He's a year older than I am.

Q: Yeah, and did – did – do you or did you have other siblings?

A: Well, from – a – a stepbrother, so to speak, from my mother's first marriage, she had son, which was Klaus Gerstel. And in a way he c-committed suicide. He was arrested, or on the way to be arrested in 1942. And when the SS came to arrest him, at that time we – he was living in the apartment, it was kind of ghetto apartment where they forced all the Jews to be in. And it had a circular type of a stairway. I think it had about six stories in that building. And when he learned that the SS were there to arrest him, he ran up to the top of the stairway, the circular stairway and dove headfirst, which of course killed him, but he says I am not going to go to a concentration camp.

Q: How old was he at the time?

A: He wa – I think he was 19 or 20 years old.

Q: Did you have a – a large extended family? You've talked about your mother's family, was your father's family still in the United States or were there any in Germany?

A: No, there were two nephews that left, one when all of this broke – came out in Germany about 1938, one nephew of my father's went to South America, in Argentina, I believe, while the other one couldn't make it to South America and he ended up in Shanghai during the war. And after the war, both of – which turned out to be our cousins, my brother and my cousin, they did go to the – came to the U.S. and lived – and settled down in Joplin, Missouri.

Q: But while you were growing up, di-did you have co – before the war – while you were growing up, did you have contact with this – these extended cousins and so forth?

A: Yes, we did meet and they were – they lived in Breslau and they were very well off. One cousin was crippled, but he still was very well off, he was a piano player and I think he also played some kind of a piano. He di – per-performed a lot of c-c-concert pia – he was a concert pianist, what I'm trying to say.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: While the other one, I don't know what he did, but he did own an automobile and he made – drove to Berlin many times to visit us, or actually took us to Breslau and we – my father and his nephews were very close.

Q: Now let's talk about your immediate family. Di – again, before the war.

A: Before the war.

Q: Were your parents very politically active?

A: Not to my knowledge, I do not know.

Q: Do you know if they were Zionists?

A: No, they were not. Neither one of my parents were very religious. We were a very Reform type of a Jewish family.

Q: Did you have as – any kind of religious training as a very young child?

A: Yes, we did go to temple every Friday as long as the temple was [indecipherable]. We even learned some Hebrew and we knew how to say the prayers in Hebrew.

Q: And how did you learn these prayers?

A: We did learn in the Jewish school, the two years – little over two years that I went through school, my brother three years, we did learn Hebrew – ah, the prayers.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Neither my brother or I do know Hebrew now, but I still, amazingly enough I can still say some of the prayers.

Q: Mm-hm. What was the name of the temple that you went to?

A: I do not know. I do not know.

Q: All right. What kind of neighborhood did you live in? Was – was it a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews?

A: No, I would say 90 percent were Jewish. My father was a tailor, he had a tailor shop in Berlin, very close to the Kurfürstendamm, which is the main shopping center, one block off from there, and it was primarily Jewish businesses or tailors in other stores.

Q: And did you have any non-Jewish friends? You said you went to a Jewish school. Again, we're talking pre-war.

A: Yes, my parents had a number of non-Jewish friends. One of them – here's the amazing thing, one of them was a midwife to my birth, and she was a high ranking member of the Nazi party. She had pictures of Hitler and her throughout her entire apartment.

Q: And how did your father know her?

A: That, I wish I had an answer, I do not know. I don't know if my father hired her as a midwife, or if my mother did. But she was the midwife to my birth, may – possibly – my father was a man and ladies' tailor, he'd sew dresses as well as man suits and maybe he did some clothing for her. I do not know.

Q: And her name?

A: Her name was Gertrude Noelting, it's g-e-r-t-u-d-e, which is a pretty common German fir – lady's first name. And –

Q: T – t-r-u-d-e?

A: Yes, Gertrude, and her last name was Noelting, which is – using the American spelling, it's n-o-e-l-t-i-n-g.

Q: So, how would you describe yourself as a young child? Were you very independent, or were you more dependent on your parents type of child?

A: Well, I would say both. At first we, of course, were very dependent on our parents. But when our father was arrested in 1943, we realized – and I say we, my brother and I – realized what was happening. Well, we already realized what was happening back in 19 – November 9, 1938, Kristallnacht. Of course, I was not quite six years old. I was born in '33, January. And then I realized what was happening. And of course the Germans took my father's store away. They destroyed his inventory. They destroyed his sewing machines. Excuse me. [coughs] They destroyed everything and then forced us to live, again, in a apartment unit there. There were – I don't know how many different levels in that building there was, but we had one room below the kitchen. And that's what we had and that's what every other Jewish family had that had two kids.

They each h-had one room with a kitchen, a small kitchen. It was one bathroom in each floor for every 10 in – in that floor.

Q: So much had happened after you were born that you obviously weren't aware of, being an infant and a – and a toddler and a small child. Before Kristallnacht, do you have any memories, or is that your first – do you have any memories of people in uniform, of flags, of anything, or is Kristallnacht your first memory?

A: No, no, I do have memory of that. Si -- again, since we lived in the Jewish area, the Hitler youth already, kids 10 years old, there were many a times when we – the kids spit – spit at us. We could not defend ou-ourselves, even if we were at such an age where we could have – maybe we're stronger than those kids that spit at us or kicked us and so forth, but we were not permitted to hit anybody that had a Hitler youth uniform.

Q: How did you know that, as a very young child?

A: We were told.

Q: By?

A: By the Jewish community, in school and so forth, that the best thing is walk away, otherwise it'll be tougher on us.

Q: So this is something that was discussed openly in school –

A: That's right.

Q: – by your teachers?

A: That is correct.

Q: What about your family? Did you talk this over with your parents?

A: I – I – I wished I had an answer, I do not remember that. I do not.

Q: Now, what about with your brother? Were you very close to your brother as a young child?

A: We were [indecipherable] – oh, my brother and I were very close together and even today we still are very close together even though I live in Seattle, he lives in Los Angeles, but we are very close.

Q: So as two young boys, and I know very young, and you see these frightening situate – or part of these frightening situations, did you talk this over with your brother?

A: Okay, yes we did. Nowadays, even though my brother is a year older, he hardly remembers what transpired. He just wiped this whole thing out of his memory. If I can say here, last week, of course, was Holocaust Remembrance week. I was asked by the you – army in Fort Lewis, Washington, to talk about the Holocaust. The army there specifically asked Holocaust survivors, preferably concentration camp ho – su-survivors that have also been in the U.S. military, preferably in military service. I spent time in the U.S. Army, received a warrant officer commission during my service in Korea and I t-talked about the Holocaust. I did want my brother to talk about the Holocaust, but – and the reason I wanted him to talk, he spent time in Vietnam, he spent 22 years in the arm – U.S. Army, retired a major, a much higher ranking officer than me. But he says he just can't talk about it, he doesn't remember it and does not want to talk about it. And he's [indecipherable] he can't remember what has happened, yet he's a year older. He cannot speak German any more. While he was in the military he was stationed in Germany, in Heidelberg for three years, but never had anything to do with the Germans.

Q: When you were little, in the 30's, were – did you and your brother talk about what was happening?

A: No, not that I can recall. We started talking about it, together with our parents too, after Kristallnacht. And we were told, just try and stay away from Hitler youth. Don't get involved, don't get into arguments. And of course, in 1941, I think it was, when we had to wear the Jewish

Star of David. And there were – it's not just wearing the star, there were limitations made, what – we couldn't go to a store except between five and six o'clock in the afternoon. And there were so many restrictions, we couldn't use public transportation. And my brother and I talked about it, but we knew there was nothing we could do and just hoping that it will get better.

Q: What does a man like Hitler mean to a five year old German Jewish child?

A: I wish I had an answer for that. I – I – we knew that he was not good for us, but we always thought it would become better. And again, we were unique inasmuch our father was an American citizen. And our father never thought that he would be arrested and sent to a concentration camp. He figured our family would eventually be given exceptions. He just didn't think it would happen. And – go ahead.

Q: What language did you speak at home, since your father was American?

A: Only German. We did not know any English. In fact, when my brother and I came to the – the U.S. after the war, it was only German.

Q: Do you know why your father didn't raise you from birth to be bilingual because he's – he had lived in America?

A: I think he was afraid to teach us English. Just – actually, my father, even though he was an American citizen, he served in the German army during World War I. And again, that was another reason that he f-felt, like many Jews that was in the German army during World War – World War I, figured that they would not ever be arrested. And even when my father lost his business, his tailor shop and was moved – a-and we had to go and live in this apartment, he had to go into slave labor, but he figured that's the worst that the Germans will do to him, they forced him into forced labor. And – but still he never thought that he'd ever be arrested.

Q: Describe the school you went to in the beginning.

A: I wished I could, but I do know we had hundred to 150 kids in class. And that's about all I can remember. I do not know the name of the schools, which I did learn last year when I found the ca – archives in the east of Berlin, in Potsdam. But other than that I just do not remember.

Q: But it was a Jewish school with Jewish children and Jewish teachers?

A: That is correct, but there were way too many kids in a class, and –

Q: How old were you when you began school?

A: Well, I began school when I was six years old, in 1939. There was – was some kind of a school almost e-equivalent to kindergarten here, yeah, when I was five years old.

Q: So now let's talk about Kristallnacht, because that was a pivotal point. As a five and a half year old, what – what do you remember about that time?

A: I remember it was in the middle of the night, which I really think was about four in the morning, when all of a sudden – maybe I should go back a little bit before the actual Kristallnacht. It was probably two or three days prior to Kristallnacht. The shop windows were just painted with pic – Jude, which means Jew, in front. And – well, you couldn't look out, they were just plain painted with cuss words, so to speak, being a Jew and so forth.

Q: And you were old enough to know what that implied?

A: Yes, yes, I was old enough. And –

Q: How did you – how does a young child interpret that?

A: Again, I wished I had an answer and could gi – tell you how my feeling was, but I thought it was terrible that the shop windows of my father were all painted. Very bad. And then my father was forced to clean and make those windows completely clean and it took him all day to have – I think he had two razor blades to scrape all the paint off. And – but he wer – every other shop owner, Jewish shop owner in the street was forced to do the same thing.

Q: Did you see your father do this?

A: Yes, I saw, in fact, I tried to help. We – our – we tried to help him, but very little we could do, especially he only had two razor blades, and he was forced to do it. And it was two days later, after the windows were all taken – cleaned, that's when then they shattered all the windows. And we lived in the back of the store, and of course we saw what was happening. We were scared, and I knew in my – I still remember my mother's – my – my mother saying, what are we going to do? They've took our store away, they've ruined everything. And I remember my father telling my mother, well don't worry, that's what we have insurance for. We have insurance for vandalism, for theft, and we'll just have the insurance companies replace everything. Of course, that never happened. And I do remember this like it was yesterday. Yeah, it was – I was five years and 10 month old. And you kind of grew up quickly and became mature prematurely.

Q: Wh – to see Germans in uniform, what is that vision like for a child?

A: Very bad. I – I feared, especially the brown uniforms, which was in the SR, or the SA, or the black uniforms with a skull, which were the SS. We feared that. It was something that chilled your bodies, at least that's what it did to me. I – I knew what it was. When I – it goes right back watching the Hitler youth uniform. When I see a kid in a Hitler youth uniform, I walked and tried not to be seen by them, especially when – going back to 1941 when we had to wear the yellow star. We just shied away from them.

Q: Did you have nightmares of –

A: Not as a child, but afterwards, and even occasionally when I – I'd – a year ago when I was in Berlin, I visited the old SS headquarters, which was Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 9. And I – that evening I had nightmares. In fact, I was asked to give a taped interview over there. They had my

record that I was tortured there. And yes, I had some pretty bad headquarters – I mean, nightmares.

Q: So, le-let's get back to Kristallnacht.

A: Right, Kristallnacht –

Q: So you woke up the next morning, and –

A: That's right. Well, I woke up when they shattered the window, just the noise from the window shattering and the noises. And again, you – down Jews, and so forth. A-And you – you don't deserve to be living here. And I remember that li – again, like I said, like it was yesterday. And –

Q: Did you – did you share a room with your brother?

A: Yes, in fact we only had – actually we had two rooms. One room my brother and I lived – and these were small room, almost – what you almost have a – like a walk-in closet over here. And then my mother and I had another room. And we had a small kitchen and a small –

Q: Yeah, but this was in the first apartment that you grew up in.

A: That's right.

Q: Okay, so then what happened?

A: And then we had to move from that apartment into a smaller apartment unit. And this is where I said we had one room per family, plus a kitchen.

Q: And your father?

A: He was there, too. Of course, I wa – remember, this was probably in fi – '42.

Q: No, no, no, no, we're still at – at Kristallnacht.

A: Oh, still at Kristallnacht.

Q: Yeah, let's go through this –

A: Oh, there we just [indecipherable]

Q: – chronologically.

A: Okay, I'm sorry. The Kristallnacht we were actually in the store. We had two rooms in the back of the store. In-Incidentally, that same store that I remember from Kristallnacht is still at the same location, it was not bombed out.

Q: So th-the – the store windows were broken, your father said insurance would cover it, and then what happened?

A: Right. Then what happened, of course, insurance didn't cover it, and the Germans gave my father, I think two or three days to move out and they told her that we have to move to this apartment unit, which was Commandant Strasse 63, I remember that address. And incidentally, when I again visited Berlin, I tried to look up that old apartment unit. Unfortunately it – it was bombed, but the entire block is flat because this – the old Berlin wall separating east and west Berlin went right through it. So that is no longer in existence. It's just an empty lot right now.

Q: So it was late November, or early December '38 that you moved?

A: It was November, probably. Well, Kristallnacht was November nine and I would say about the 10th or the 11th – 11th or 12th when we had to move.

Q: Oh, you had to move immediately.

A: We had to move immediately, I think the – two or three days. And –

Q: Were you able to take everything with you?

A: No, they – they took most of our – everything – most of what we had they took away. They just scatter it out in the streets. We had very, very little to take along. Some clothing. I think my father had some – he must have suspected something, but some of the material that he made clothing out of, he had someplace else. And he did some sewing for us once we moved in the apartment, and he did this late at night, because there – after he was forced to work on the

railroad, and – which was slave labor. But at night he would sew some clothing for us so that we had something to wear, because I think everything we owned really, was taken away.

Q: Did you have any special toys or anything that you were able to take with you, you and your brother?

A: No, they were – we had no toys, or – we – we just didn't grow up with toys. We – I think my brother and I, I don't know what we did for play. I don't think we played. We just – we just didn't. I –

Q: Even before Kristallnacht?

A: Even before Kristallnacht, yeah. We did – I probably should mention that. We lived pretty – pretty close to a small park and so forth, which had a river and so forth and I know there was one time when some Hitler youth pushed my brother into the river in Berlin. And my brother, of course, did not know how to swim at that time and he almost drowned and some German worker in a bi – on a bicycle saw my brother drowning and he jumped in and saved him. And of course, he had the Jewish Star on David on my – my brother had that on, but that German still saved him and made sure that my brother was alright and found out where we lived and took my brother actually home, in this apartment. Well, my father then, again had material and sewed him, this man, some clothing and so forth. Well, that poor ma – gentleman was arrested because he saved a Jew. And I do not know whatever happened to him. He was not permitted to talk to us any more, but I do remember that he was arrested for saving a Jew.

Q: Do you know his name?

A: No, I do not know. I wished – if I knew his name I would try – would have tried to look him up.

Q: So, you moved out of your apartment at – a couple days after Kristallnacht.

A: Right.

Q: And then what did you do? Did you still go to school?

A: No, I think – yes, we did. We went to school through 1942, again to a Jewish school, and of course there were many, many kids in one class. And learning, I would say most of my schooling was self studied at our mother. Yeah, I think probably our mother taught us more how to read than what we learned in school.

Q: Did your mother work with your father in the store?

A: No, not really, she pretty much took care of us, and again, gave us classes, how to write and read.

Q: And did anything happen to your extended family on Kristallnacht?

A: Well again, like I say, I had a stepbrother from my mother's previous er – marr-marriage. And of course he killed himself the day he was supposed to have been arrested. And we've had – but most of our extended family, especially from our mother's side, lived in Breslau, which is now Poland. And we had one aunt in Berlin, but she too was one of the early ones that was arrested and was in – shipped to Theresienstadt and I do not know if she died over there. We lost track. And I've done some research on it and I can't find any record on her. And of course all of m – most of my father's relatives either were – remained in the U.S. or went to South America.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher. This is tape number one, side B and we've already talked about Kristallnacht and your moving into the n – into an apartment. Let's now talk about your father, what he did after his store was destroyed.

A: It was shortly after Kristallnacht when his store was destroyed, his property taken away and we were forced into living into a big apartment unit where many, many Jews were forced to live. And my father was forced to work on the railroad. Rather than being a tailor he was forced to work doing hard labor. It was s – definitely slave labor. And he was actually forced to live there until hi-his arrest in 1943.

Q: So, did he come back at night, or –

A: Yes, he did come back every night, completely exhausted. And I do remember that, as young as I was. I mean, he could hardly move, but he did come back and he ate what little food my mother had to cook for him.

Q: Where did your mother get the food?

A: Well, that was another problem a-after the Kristallnacht, when she cou – only had a choice to go to – to stores by – owned by Jews, between five and six o'clock in the evening. And – and what I think my mother did, she went to the store long before five o'clock so that she would be one of the first in line to buy what necessary food products she could get. And it was very, very small.

Q: Prior to that, I understand that the Germans forced the Jewish men to take the name in their identification papers of Israel and the mothers – or the women to take the name of Sarah. Did that happen to your parents?

A: Yes, it did. Their names became – the middle name was always Israel or Sarah and actually, I think even as boys we had – we became Israel, was one of the names. I just vaguely remember that.

Q: Did your – did your parents say anything about that to you?

A: Not really, not really, but yeah, I think every boy was Israel and every girl was Sarah.

Q: Did you have your own papers, or your parents ha-had you on their papers?

A: I do not recall that, I think our parents had the papers, I don't think we had our own papers.

Q: Prior to Kristallnacht, there was the anschluss in – in – in Austria. Did – were you aware of that?

A: No, we were not. I did not learn this really, until I was older.

Q: Had your parents, or especially your father, ever thought of leaving at this time, or did they make any efforts to try to leave?

A: Yes. Back in 1934, I understand, they did make an effort to leave and we all got as far as Holland. But – it may have been 1936, we got as far as Rotterdam I think, but I think the Germans already were doing a lot of things and even though they haven't – hadn't invaded Holland yet, but the – the – they forced my father to go back to Berlin. Apparently the – he didn't have the proper papers to leave Germany. And of course – and he had to pay – every penny he had, he had to pay just to get back to Berlin, and he just didn't have the financial resources to get us – to get us back out. But then again he was so convinced, being an American, that they are going to leave him alone. They'll give him a rough time, but he felt he'd be left alone. And again, like a lot of people, especially business people were arrested and sent to concentration camp, going back to 1941 and 1942. My father wasn't arrested until 1943, and I think there are

records here at the Holocaust Museum, the date he was arrested, even the transport number. I do not remember now.

Q: But – but you were saying, to go backwards, that in 1936 he was able to get you – the four of you to – to – th-the four of you in family to – to Rotterdam?

A: I believe it was 1936, I cannot be sure of the dates, cause again I was too young, I – I know we moved someplace, and – but I do not know. But I know through when I lived with my cousins after I came here to the U.S., they said that he took us all once to Holland then had to turn back, but then he ran out of money.

Q: Now, you're attending school, you're in your new, smaller apartment. Your father is doing slave labor, your mother is trying to get food and you're attending school with your brother? And did you again have any contact with non-Jews then, children your age?

A: None whatsoever. Other kids, they wouldn't – they wouldn't dare associate with Jews, and it was strictly other Jewish kids that we were in contact with.

Q: Did you play games as a child during this time? Were you ab – were the young children able to – I don't want to use the word disregard, but you know, b-be normal children and play games during this very difficult time?

A: I do not remember, I do not think we played games. I just cannot remember that we ever played games. I think the times were so complicated. I think in school the teachers concentrated more in group learning and little bit of Hebrew, you know, we studied like the Hebrew alphabet and so forth.

Q: But your lessons were in German?

A: Yes, in German. Again, we did learn the Hebrew alphabet, the aleph, bet, gimmel, dalet and so forth, which I still know today.

Q: What did the United States mean to a six, seven year old German child under stress?

A: It definitely meant, this is where we're going to go. Our father always told us how great the U.S. are and someday we're all going to move to the U.S. after the war is over. The U.S. will win the w – will prevail and we're all going to go to New York. And we were pretty much raised with that mentality, that to live – to go to the United States, it was – we said America.

Q: What did it mean to you, what did it represent?

A: It represented i – I guess you could say freedom and that it is the best country in the world to grow up.

Q: So you continued school in 1940. Were you aware – granted, you were seven – you know, young, of what Hitler was doing and invading other countries in 1940?

A: Yes, we did. We were aware of that.

Q: How did you know it?

A: Well –

Q: Did you have a radio?

A: Yes, we had a radio and we heard it on the radio and we listened to Hitler and his other cronies, and yes, we were fully aware of it.

Q: Do you remember his voice on the radio?

A: Oh yes, I remember his screaming, definitely. Occasionally, which we weren't supposed to, I – this is just – as we are talking now, I do remember once in awhile, illegally, we took our S-Star of David off and did attend a movie thea – watched a movie, maybe a comedy or something, that we'd go to a public movie. And of course in these movies they also had all this prop – propaganda. And I do remember that now, but I never thought about this until right now.

Q: How did you know you'd have to wear a Star of David?

A: Oh that – every – I would say even a five year old kid knew that.

Q: How?

A: I think it was publicized – told by our parents, and everybody. We just knew we were inferior citizens and we had to wear that [indecipherable]

Q: Did you feel inferior?

A: We didn't feel inferior, but we knew to the Germans we were inferior. And I think it – I probably shouldn't compare, but I will. I think it's the same way when the Afro-Americans at one time had to sit at the back of the bus, they had separate public restrooms. And while I don't think the average child – black person realized that they were treated as a inferior citizen, but they were treated that way, and this is, I think how we felt in Berlin during the war, in Germany during the war.

Q: And t-tell me about the yellow star, where you wore it and how it was put on your clothes.

A: The yellow star was on our left chest, really, and it was – had to be sewn on, it had to be sewn on neatly. And of course our father being a tailor, he did that. And we – when we went outside into the public streets, we had to wear it. And if you didn't wear it you were arrested, whether you were a five year old or a 55 year old.

Q: What did you feel like wearing a yellow star?

A: I felt scared, always scared, because I knew that other kids could come, even if they were three year old, or four year olds, they could spit at us, they cou – if they had a stick they could hit us and we couldn't hit back. And so yes, I was scared and really afraid to go out. And again sometimes I think we were blessed, both my brother and I, we did not really look Jewish. So sometimes we did take the chance and did not wear the star and did go out and went to a movie theater and so forth.

Q: Wh-When you say you didn't look Jewish, can you describe yourself?

A: Well, you know, there are certain people, you can tell they're Jewish. Oh, you may make a mistake, like even some Egyptians look Jewish, but we were not obvious Jewish looking, otherwise we never would have survived living in Berlin.

Q: Were you fair coloring, and –

A: Yes, yes, very fair coloring and sometimes people thought my brother is a little darker colored, but he looked more Italian, and in those days Italy and Germany were still allies.

Q: So did you – w-were you ever did – spat upon? Did any of the nay –

A: Oh yes, yes, we were spat upon many times. And like I said earlier, my brother was pushed in the water, almost – could have drowned. And we underwent – probably my brother went through s – more severe pan – punishments than I was, for some reason.

Q: Because he was a year older?

A: Yeah, I think so, or it's just where he was at, we weren't always together. And he was – he was mistreated more than I was, I believe, at the beginning of the war.

Q: And what about your other Jewish friends, other little Jewish boys? Did you act out any of this or talk this over with them?

A: Again, here is a mind that is blank, I don't remember. I do remember being with other Jewish kids, sometimes walking to school together. And I don't think a day went by where we didn't – weren't – not beat up, bu-but mistreated by the German kids, especially Hitler youth kids and Hitler youth was 10 years and ol – over.

Q: Do you get used to this treatment? Does a child get used to this treatment?

A: Well, they expect it. It's – I don't think you ever get used to something like that and I know I never did, but I expected it and it's just something I knew was going to happen. I don't know how else I can explain that.

Q: And again, did you confide in your – in your parents?

A: Oh yes, oh definitely. And again, I don't remember what my parents said. My mother just said well, those days will pass by, just be patient. These were, I think, what my parents were saying.

Q: So you felt your parents were a comfort to you at this time.

A: Oh, very much so. Very much so. Our parents did comfort us as much as they could.

Q: And so then it's 1941, you're still at school, your father is doing slave labor –

A: Right.

Q: – and life goes on. Any recollection during that year, or even with Pearl Harbor in December, any – the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December and Americans going into the war.

A: No, we – we didn't know about that. I did know that Franklin Roosevelt was president. I do remember this, but I do not remember Japan bombing Pearl Harbor. I never even heard of Pearl Harbor, so no, I did not know anything like that.

Q: Now, you said this German woman who was your midwife was an acquaintance of your family. Was there any relationship with her during this time? Had you known about her at this point in your life, in 1940 – '41?

A: Yes, I did, because there were times, going even back to 1939 where we did visit her at her apartment. And she had a – an apartment in the better part of Berlin, Schöneberg and we did visit her. Sometimes she had dinner for us. And, in fact there were times th – when she picked us up where we lived and we did remove our Star of David when we had to wear it, and we went with

her to her apartment and there we were very safe because she also – I think she had a special I.D. or something, that she was a high ranking Nazi member, a personal friend of Hitler. So nobody bothered her when – especially when we were with her, too.

Q: Was she married?

A: No, she was never married and at that time she was probably in her middle 50's. She died when she was 79 years old, I believe, a-after the war.

Q: I'm sure you're always asked how do you explain the fact that this Nazi party member was so helpful to you.

A: Okay.

Q: Even at that time, and we'll get to more later, of course.

A: Okay, when I was younger I couldn't figure that out at all, but now, being older and seeing what has happened, my guess is that she was such a Nazi fanatic, she was a good friend of Hitler and deep inside she was convinced that Hitler did not know what was going on. She used to tell that to my father, to my mother, that Hitler doesn't know what's going on. Once he learns what's going on, he's going to stop that. And I believe because of that mentality, she was convinced if she would be caught helping us, that Hitler would free her and she would say everything to Hitler. A-And I think that's the only reason that I can think of why she helped us. And of course she mu-must also feel that she brought me onto this world. And I think that's the only reason. And I think I'm the only Jewish person she ever assisted in a birth.

Q: Did she deli – she did not deliver your brother?

A: No, she did not. My brother I think was delivered at a Jewish hospital in Berlin.

Q: And how is that you were not?

A: Again, I don't know. I – I – I th – somehow either my father or my mother befriended her, and I guess this would have been my mother's actually third child, me, and I guess she wasn't as uncomfortable being assisted by a midwife.

Q: So, were you born at home?

A: Yes, I was. In fact it was – my father ha – actually, he had two stores, one of them was within two blocks of each other and the first store is where I was born. I think that was in Petsalozzi(ph) strasse. And then later on Leipne(ph) strasse, which was at Kristallnacht.

Q: So you would go t-to her house and – the four of you a-and visit with her, and fi – through 1941 and did life go on in this difficult way til 1942? And then what happened in 1943?

A: Well, in 1943, one day our father didn't come home. And again, we did have a number of n-non-Jewish friends that were against the Hitler regime. And it was one woman that says, leave your apartment, the Germans are arresting everybody. They took your father away, he's – he was arrested.

Q: So that's how you heard, through this woman?

A: That's right, who was a friend of ours and she – I think she owned a – a laundry or something like that. But, just outside the Jewish section of Berlin. And – and she is the one that told us, and it's – really, it was very close. When we gathered the few things that we owned – as I say we, my mother, my brother and I, the few things we owned, we left the apartment and there was a back entrance. We went out the back entrance and we understand that the SS came up the front entrance. So we just barely escaped.

Q: How much time elapsed between the time the woman told you and the time you left?

A: Again, I'm guessing here, I would say less than an hour. It was very, very close.

Q: So your father was taken away when he was on the labor battalion?

A: That is correct, he was, right from work taken away. And again, from what I see, the record showed he was shipped to Auschwitz and probably – again, talking to Auschwitz survivors, they say normally what happened is when they arrived in Auschwitz, they had two sides. One side they were tattooed and they were in the work parade, the other side di – were not even – didn't even get a number, they were put in the gas chamber and my father was one of those.

Q: Your father was what, late 40's, or 50 by then?

A: I would say he was – I think my father was in the early 50's at the time. Well, my father, I – I can probably figure it out. I am not sure. He was born either 1981 or 1991.

Q: Now, you mean 1891.

A: Yeah, I mean 18 – 1891, yes, or nin – 1891, I'm not sure.

Q: So he – so he was 53.

A: Right. And again, he was murdered in Auschwitz, roughly two days after he arrived there from what other people tell me that have been there.

Q: So your mother got you two boys together.

A: Right.

Q: And where did she and you go?

A: Okay, again we're going right back to this Nazi midwife. She, because of her friendship with Hitler, had a summer cabin in the outskirts of Berlin. And only high ranking SS officers could have cabins there. And this is where she put us. She told all the other officers, military officers, mostly SS, that our father was a – a – I guess a colonel or something in the army – ar – German army and he was out in the fronts in – in the front line in ka – Russia. And we lived there, right amongst the SS, or the wives of the SS. But then of course wintertime came along –

Q: Well – well now wa – wait a minute, what about papers? Did you mother – wh-wh-when this happened in the beginning, what kind of papers did your mother have? She didn't have these papers.

A: Fraulein Noelting, the midwife, she provided my mother with papers, where we went under different names and us kids went under different names. And again, she was right up with her party and we ha – there was bombing and a lot of civilians were killed during bomb air raids back in the 40's. And so this midwife, she found out what family with – what mother with two children were killed at a certain – our age, were killed at certain a-a-apartments, or houses. And she got us those types of identification. And that's how we lived. Of course, then after six months or so, people were wondering – sometimes my – maybe I should go – my brother and I would act like we'd go to school. We'd wear the bags to go as if we were going to school, but we never did go to school. We didn't dare go to school because of every child had to go into physical training and then you take a bath. Well, us being boys, being circumcised would give us away. So we never went to school. But then people got kind of suspicious, they – nobody ever saw us in school, other kids. So this midwife says, you have to leave from there. And then again we took on different I.D. and we moved from area to area, place to place. Some of the places I do not know, but I –

Q: So the first location you stayed for six months. What was your new identification, who were you?

A: I was – it so happened I was Horst Grossman. My mother was a Grossman, I don't know what her first name was, and my brother was a Grossman.

Q: These were German, not Jewish Grossmans.

A: These were German named people that were killed during an air raid.

Q: She obviously felt very positive towards Jews then, she had no negative feelings towards Jews, or – or were – or did she and you were just special cases?

A: I believe we were special cases because she used to complain about Jews, they all have so much money and they are ruining the economy of Germany. I used to hear her say things like that, even to my mother. And yet she said, but our family was different. She was very strange. Well, when – after the war, when only my brother and I survived, she was real upset when we told her we're going to try and go to America. And she was very upset because she says, you are Germans, you can't leave. And when my brother and I did leave Germany, and we wrote to her once we got to the U.S., she would never answer us, she was so upset. She said we don't show any thank you.

Q: What would you two boys do during the time the Jew – the German children were in school? What would you do, you'd take your schoolbags and what would you do?

A: What we did, we – this was out in forest type of an area and we would just walk inside the forest. In fact, we would pick mushrooms, this is what we ate all the time. My brother and I and our mother too, we got to know every edible mushroom. And instead of going to school, we would pick mushrooms, so that's what we had to eat most of the time.

Q: What did your mother do?

A: Oh, I think she – she stayed at the cabin and she washed clothes. I think she did wash clothing fo – wash and did other things for some other people to get some income.

Q: On – in your free time, or when the German children were not in school, did you play with them, did you talk with them?

A: I don't remember. I think we did, but I can't be sure. There are so many blanks that I can't really tell you for sure if we did or not. I think we did. I do know – one thing I do remember,

during the – there was a vacation period about four weeks or so and there was one kid – a German kid, not Jewish, who drove – he was 15 years old and he drove a milk delivery vehicle, it was a motorized vehicle. And I – I helped him deliver the milk. And he was pretty much a real Nazi believer, Hitler youth, but somehow he – he befriended me, and we became friends. Of course, I didn't tell him who I was. And I know there was a time where I helped him deliver the fresh milk.

Q: What's it like – what was it like to see a swastika?

A: Fear. Just plain fear. Of course you saw it, no matter where you went you saw it. And the swastika was actually easier to get used to. The thing that bothered me was the – the skull that the SS had on, or even some soldiers that were affiliated with the SS all wore that – that skull. That was, to me, worse than the swastika.

Q: Why?

A: Well, because I knew that were the ones that would kill the Jews – they would kill us, and we knew that.

Q: Were you ever afraid when you were with these young German boys that you would let your guard down and say something that was inappropriate?

A: No, again we were mature enough. We never were – feared that because we knew we would not let our guard down. And that includes my brother too. We knew what to say and what not to say.

Q: Even – even at such a young age?

A: Yes, yes we did. And we also knew that we were not to expose ourselves in a restroom or so forth, because we knew if we did we would be dead.

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher. This is tape number two, side A. Just exactly wa-was this cabin – where was this cabin located?

A: Okay, it was east of Spandau and the place was called Berger Uplager(ph). And again, to get there you had to actually walk, probably worth a 20 or 30 minute walk from the train station, and right in the midst of a forest. And that was the name of the place, Berger Uplager(ph).

Q: What was the atmosphere like there among the – the SS families, the women and the children, what is – was it a joyous atmosphere, a relaxed atmosphere?

A: Very joyous and a relaxed atmosphere. Again, these were all, like I said earlier, SS. They had the food, they had everything. And you didn't think there was a war going on, to them.

Q: Did the SS people come to visit?

A: No, they didn't, because again they knew to – as far as they knew, our father was in the Russian front and – and my mother always showed like she was so sad, she didn't know where Father was exactly, that they pretty much left her alone, as far as I can remember. And we didn't mix too much with the – and most of them didn't even have kids there, and – because again they were probably, most of the people there were in their late 30's, early 40's and they had kids who are – probably were in se – in Seattle, I almost said. They were probably in Berlin taking training in the Hitler youth, because they were all Hitler youth age.

Q: So you really didn't talk to the adults?

A: Very little. I cannot really remember it. I'm sure we did, but again there's so many blanks. I'm sure we did but I can't – I just cannot remember.

Q: And you did not know at that time what happened to your father.

A: No, we knew he was in Auschwitz because he wrote, right after he was arrested he wrote a postcard and said that he is in Auschwitz, things are going fine and will see you all when I get back. And that's the – and this postcard was written to this midwife and she was a little concerned that they would watch her because she got a letter from a Jew. But again, with her affiliation with the SS and with Hitler, they never did anything.

Q: What did she do – what did she do, this woman, Frau Noe-Noelting, as a job? As work, as an occupation. I know she was a midwife, is that what she continued to do?

A: Yes, she continued being a midwife and she brought a lot of kids into this world.

Q: But as a member of a Nazi party – of the – of the Nazi party, did she have any specific duties? Or she was just a good Nazi?

A: She was just a good friend of Hitler and some of the other people, but she did not like Himmler, Goering or Goebbels. She said they're – those are the people that are at fault what is being done to the Jews, and as soon as Hitler knows about it, it'll stop. In the meantime, she did her job as a midwife. I do remember that.

Q: Did she ever see Hitler during the time that you were with her?

A: I don't believe she did. She tried to, but he was so busy that he just didn't have time to see her. But I do know she has made attempts to talk with Hitler.

Q: How did she get this connection, was it through her family?

A: I do not know. I do not know how she and Hitler became friends, but like I said earlier, there were pictures of her and Hitler together, even Hitler had her – his arm around her in pictures of that. How they became friends, I have no idea.

Q: So then you left this first location because she told you it wasn't safe to stay and then where did you go?

A: Again, sa – I – we lived in different places throughout Berlin, where I do not know. But then even that got a little bad –

Q: You went back to the city then?

A: To the city. We went back to the city of Berlin. But then – things got bad, but again this midwife found another family that was wiped out, by the name of Schmitz. And it so happened this woman had children, two boys, almost our age and they wi – they looked a li – somewhat like us. So we actually took their I.D., pictures of them, and we moved to a reso-sort area in Binz auf Rügen. It's a eastern part of Germany and my mother had a job there as a – as a maid at one of the – at a big hotel again, where soldiers took their own rest and recuperation. And she was – my mother became a maid over there, and had an income. But again, after about four months we had to move, because again, school. We didn't dare go to school. In fact there was a time where all the German kids had to work out on a farm and pick vegetables and things, so there was no school. And so my brother and I were out there with the other German kids, boys and girls, pulling vegetables and things like that. But then it got – school started and we had to move because we didn't dare go to school again. And so we went back to Berlin, again this midwife, she mailed – via mail she sent us the proper documents that we needed in case there's an I.D. check. But at that time we almost has the proper I.D. for Hitler youth. But we were lucky that there was no I.D. check on our way to Berlin, back from Binz auf Raden(ph) on the train, because we would have been caught of the – it was very, very, very scary when we went in public transportation. But we ended up back in Berlin. I think we kept that identification until the end of the war, the – by the name of Schmitz. I don't remember what first name we had, but again we moved from area to area and then, I don't know where now, in 1945, let's say –

Q: Well, le-let's wait a little bit. Did you have any kind of a shorthand communications wi – communication system with your brother, so if you were out together and there was a problem, you could kind of signal him? Do you know what I'm saying? So you wouldn't have to talk, but you could – either with your eyes, or ar – in – anyway – or hands, or with your mother? Any – do you know what I'm saying? Any kind of back-up protection if things got really bad and you really couldn't say it openly.

A: Yes, we had some notes. For instance, if we – if one of us, my mother, brother or I noticed something that could be a possible Gestapo checking for I.D., if we thought it was, we'd make some hand notes and we slowly in di – different pe – not together, we'd disappear. Because some there, sometimes you could almost guess it. We got so we could feel that that was a Gestapo.

Q: So you had hand motions?

A: Yeah, we had the hand motions and then we'd me – le-leave one at a time, and we wouldn't ha – never go into a restroom, because they – they caught a lot of il – so full – so-called illegal people in restrooms. And so we usually stayed out and tried to move away within two or three blocks from where we were at, then we'd get back together. Yes, we – we did have that, just like we always had a meeting place if we got separated.

Q: Wherever you were. Was this – did this change day by day?

A: Not day by day but maybe every third day we'd say, well, if we get separated, let's meet at this train station, or lets meet at this building. We always decided on a place to meet.

Q: So you – well then what – again, what did you and your brother do during the day while the other children were at school? You – you are 11 and he's 12.

A: Right.

Q: [sneezes] Excuse me.

A: Yeah, again, I d – I don't remember. I just don't know what we did. We'd walk. Of course now you know you had air raids almost daily. The U.S. used to bomb daytime, the British bombed at night and we spend a lot of time in air raid shelters. Especially when we're g – now going to 1944, a lot of our time was spent in air raid shelters.

Q: Did you go to church?

A: No, we never did go to a church, and of course temples were not available. But we – we did not.

Q: Why didn't you go to church to show you're a good Christian.

A: We – I don't think we were at places long enough, but for some reason we never did. Again, our mother must have had a reason not to go to a church.

Q: Di-Did she always provide enough food for you?

A: Well, she tried to, but there were times – there were times where we didn't have anything to eat for two or three days. It was not easy. The – probably where we had most of the food where we did not starve was that short time that we lived in that summer cabin in Berlin and also when we were in that hotel, this resort hotel in Binz auf Rügen. There was had ample food. Again, I think my mother took it from the kitchen at times.

Q: When you walked down the street in Berlin, were you aware that there were other Jews on the street who were hiding? Did you sense other Jews being nearby who were under false papers?

A: No, could not tell. We did not. I'm sure there were and they probably didn't know we were Jewish. No, I ba – I believe that the – the Jews that were living like we were, under false – assumed names and so forth, did not know anyone else that was in hiding.

Q: Di – had she delivered any other Jewish babies?

A: I do not know, I don't think so. I think I was probably the only one that she had delivered.

Q: Did you know if she sheltered other Jews?

A: Definitely not. I know we were the only ones.

Q: How do you know that?

A: She'd say that, she'd tell my mother that. She said, you are the only ones I am helping and I know that if Hitler catches me, he'll free me and everything will be by – will be forgiven and the concentration camps would be eliminated once Hitler knew about it.

Q: Did she tell any of her family or her friends about you?

A: She had an adopted daughter, and she's the only one that knew. And her daughter was in the photography business and I think she developed things against – for the – for the Nazis. Pictures that were taken an that were maybe tough to – to really make a good picture out of, she was able to i-improve the – the pictures of it. I mean, you know, photography was still not too good at the time. In fact, she would even color them if they wanted colored pictures. She would actually manually color the pictures. And, but again, she kept her mouth shut, and she was the only one that knew that we were Jewish.

Q: And what was her name and did you have contact with her?

A: Yes, m – in fact, my brother saw – visited her when he was stationed in the army in Heidelberg.

Q: No, I mean, during the 40's wer – did you have contact with her?

A: Yes, I did have contact. In fact, this one picture that I showed to you here, she took that.

Q: I meant during the war.

A: During the war, yes, we did. In fact, she lived with g – Noelting in Berlin, in Schöneberg.

Q: What was her name?

A: Traute, t-r-a-u-t-e, I think it was Holinova, h-o-l-i-n-o-v-a. I could be wrong on the spelling. But she too has died now.

Q: So, did you stay in different places once you were back in Berlin, or did you move around?

A: We moved around all the time and until the beginni – beginning of 1945 when we lived in different subway stations.

Q: Why weren't you in an apartment?

A: Well, it got so that we didn't know where to go any more and the bombing was ak – like I said earlier, day and night. And the shelters, the bomb shelters were overcrowded. We couldn't get in, and to be in a bomb shelter again as kids, had to be in Hitler youth uniform, which we didn't have. And we were afraid to be caught in a bomb shelter, so we stayed in subway stations, which a lot of other Germans, at the end stayed, because the subway stations were pretty deep down and they were probably one of the safest places to be until bef – the day before the Russians came in.

Q: Did people question you on the street why you weren't in a Hitler youth uniform? Did anybody ever ask you?

A: Only once I can remember where I was asked, why aren't you in uniform, I'd say it's being cleaned. And that's the only time I was ever asked.

Q: So what did you do during the day?

A: I wished I could give you an answer for that, I do not re – I do not remember. I don't know what we did.

Q: And you still thought your father was alive?

A: Yes, we did, yes. Again, our father had us convinced that he being American, they'll give him a bad time, but he'll be released.

Q: What was your mother's state of mind?

A: She too thought that he would be freed. She definitely did.

Q: Was she calm during this time? What – how would you describe this woman?

A: She – to us she was very calm, and always the – things will get better, don't fear. We'll be together with the father, then we'll go to America and so forth. To us she was calm, but I'm sure she was in constant fear. I'm just certain about it.

Q: Then she had no contact with any other Jews as far as you know?

A: As far as I know, no. I know there was a – another person, not Jewish, who helped us out quite a bit, he was a doctor and also analyzed x-rays and so forth, he had a x-ray business. And he – he was an M.D. and I think the was partly the underground, because th – he was arrested at the tail end of the war. And I know he is the one that gave my mother quite a bit of information, and where we can stay and where we could not stay. But other than that, my wa – mother didn't have too much contact with anyone else.

Q: Ho-How did she get in contact with him and what was his name?

A: I do not know his name and I don't know how they got into contact, I – I do not remember it. I do not even know what part of Berlin that was, but I do remember having gone there a couple of times, maybe even more than that. But I do not know the name.

Q: So now you're sleeping in the subway station.

A: Right.

Q: How do you sleep in this –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: H-How do you sleep in the subway station?

A: Well again, we were kids and we'd just go on a bench and lie down on a bench. It was very cold at times, but you got used to that.

Q: Did you feel very old going through these terrifying experiences?

A: Well, let's put it this way, I did not feel like a 10 - 11 or 12 year old. We grew up, we matured very, very early in life. And yes, I see other – I would see other 10 year old and I see how – what a child they were and I say, they must be a lot younger than me. I do recall that.

Q: Did you feel very German then, or very Jewish, or both?

A: Sometimes I felt German. I had to feel German in order to save myself, but I – deep inside I felt Jewish, yes, definitely.

Q: Were you angry then that you were Jewish and so you had to go through all these terrible – this terrible ordeal?

A: No, I was not angry, I was just wishing why can't we be like anyone else. I was not angry being Jewish, no, but I just was wishing I could be – that this discrimination against the Jews wouldn't be, that it would stop. And why am I different than any other German kid? I – maybe I regretted it, but I was not angry.

Q: And – and then what? So you – you – as I said, you were living in the subway station until?

A: Until the end of the war. Actually, what happened is we were at one subway station, and all of a sudden it started being flooded, water came gushing through there. And all the people that were at that station started moving – the s-subways were not running – on the tracks to another station. And very few of us had anything to eat or to drink. Some people started drinking the water that was stuving – coming through, and most of those people actually died due to diseases, I think typhoid or whatever it brought. And there were times my brother and I were going to drink it, and we kind of kept each other from drinking it. We knew that that is dirty, we're not going to

drink it. And we, with quite a few other Germans, moved to the next station, which was not flooded then. And we probably spent – and my – our mother was still alive then, and – who kind of kept us, too, from drinking it. And we got to the other station that was not flooded, and – but we needed water, and so my mother went outside the station upstairs to a fire hydrant to get water. And she didn't come back down. And I went up and I do remember seeing her lying at the fire hydrant. And actually she was killed, I don't know if it was German or Russians, but the crossfire between the Russians and the Germans. And so – and I never could get the water, I was forced to go back down into the subway station by German soldiers. I was a kid, and he forced me to go back down. And I would say that same day, all of a sudden two Russian soldiers came into that subway station with Tommy guns – machine guns in each hand and everyone – everyone down in that subway tunnel started clapping. There were a few German soldiers there, they threw down their weapons and surrendered to those two Russian soldiers. And again, this was at Anhalter Bahnhof, which is no longer a subway station, but the station is still there as a – a memorial, so to speak. And that was the end of the war for us. And we then –

Q: Let – let – let's go back a little bit. I'm sure it's painful, but you come upstairs and you see your mother –

A: It was very [indecipherable]

Q: –an-and how did you break the news to your brother?

A: Okay, at the time I didn't know if she really was dead or just injured. And I told my brother I saw our mother, she was up at the fire hydrant, but the Germans wouldn't let me get to it, and I think she is okay, but I don't know. That's really what I told him. And I didn't know, I – it was just the way I felt. And of course we never did see her again. And, in fact, up to this day, I do not know if she was killed or injured because the Russians took a lot of – especially women and

children, they loaded them on truck and s-shipped them to Russia, especially women. In fact, after the war my brother and I were loaded onto trucks many times to be – to go to Russia, but we knew Berlin like a book, we – there wasn't an address we couldn't find. And we, for awhile were guides to some of the Russian officers going from point A to point B.

Q: Previous to you losing your mother, were di – di – wasn't there a situation where you were taken away?

A: Yes. We didn't – we didn't cover that. Yes, again, like I said, we moved around freely under false I.D., and again in a streetcar, and I was there by myself. I think I may have been on my way to this midwife, Noelting, because she had some groceries for us. And we'd do that, sometimes my brother went to see her. And this was on April 15th, 1945. I was caught in a streetcar. And the reason is they had what I always feared, we all of us feared, an I.D. check. And they had an I.D. check and I had the I.D., I was – I don't remember the first name, the last name was Schmitz. But I didn't have my Hitler youth card with me. So again, they make you drop the pants and they knew pretty much if you didn't have the Hitler youth I.D. you were Jewish. And of course, to a 12 year old having to drop their pants in front of everybody was a humiliation to begin with. And of course, I was circumcised, Jewish, and they – I was arrested. They tied me up, my hands behind my back, very tightly and they took me to Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 9. That was the SS headquarters. And they had a kind of a basement, like a dungeon where they questioned people, not just Jews, even Germans that helped Jews, or others that talked against the regime, they were tortured at that place. And again, according to the archives – the archives in Germany do not s-say what happened to me when I was arrested April 15th. It only showed that on April 17th, I was shipped to Dachau on a t – railcar, a train. Well, for t – two days there, between the 15th and the 17th, I was tortured, but they didn't get any information out of me because they beat me and

things they did, pulling teeth out, I have dentures. Pulling out teeth without any Novocain or anything, and usually I'd pass out, and they finally gave up and stuck me in one of those trains. And that was April 17, according to the archives. And I ended up, after two days roughly, i-in Dachau, which I believe was the only concentration camp that still was open and there with a route between Berlin and Munich. And of course Dachau was very close to Munich. I never left the train. The train, railcar that I was in was mostly – were mostly Russian soldiers, men and women soldiers. There were, I think, a couple of kids my age in there and a few other women and men, Germans, Jews, I do not know. Then there were a whole bunch of people on the floor of the train that were already dead, or were trampled to death, or been there a lot longer. I don't know how long they save, you know, kept the train in Berlin until it was full, completely full. So there were a number of people that I know were dead. There was nothing to eat, no water and no sanitation facilities. And it was – it was the worst hell I've ever been in. And it was either April 19th or April 20th, I do not know. Again, during th – fr – apar – from the records that were kept, I turned up missing April 20th. It may have been th-the day before. But during and air raid, there was an air raid, and somebody during that air raid opened up the door of the railcar that we were in. Why, I don't know. I kind of think is that the German guards – they were SS, they were volunteers to be there, I think knew the allies were right outside the camp because Dachau was liberated April 29th. And this was let's – let's say this was April 20th. And so I think to be maybe he or she, whoever opened the railcar door figured maybe they'd get better treatment. And so that door opened and whoever was strong enough, jumped out. I followed a bunch of Russian soldiers. There must have been 15 or 20 of them that I followed, and it wasn't too far. We ended up on a camp where there were nothing but Hitler youth and a few German soldiers. They were not SS, they were German soldiers, and they were teaching the Hitler youth kids how to fire a

rifle because at that time now they made everybody defend the Motherland – the Fatherland. And anyhow, the Russians overpowered the few German soldiers. Over half of the Russian soldiers were killed themselves, they were POWs, right, and they didn't have no weapons. But in groups they just attacked the Germans, and like I say, over half were killed.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: – of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher. This is tape number two, side B.

A: Okay, after the Russian soldiers ar – overpowered the Germans, the Hitler youth, even though they had weapons, but they were so frightened, they just froze. They just looked in awe, and the Russians did shoot every one of the Hitler youth, they killed every one of them. And then they started to move someplace and I wanted to follow them, and they said nein, nein, no you can't. And so what I did is I looked at the Hitler youth kids that were dead and took off the uniform of one of the kids that was my size and put on that uniform. And I followed the railroad tracks, because I knew there were old Autobahn, the freeway – not – not freeway, highway, was right next to the railara – railroad car. And so I walked towards there and I decided to flag down a car. And the first car that went by was a German SS car, a Mercedes and two SS officers were in. Well, they stopped, and I said I'm – I need to go back to Berlin, I was at this camp here and Russians came by and they killed everybody. I'm the only one that is left aline, and I want – a-alive, I want to go back to Berlin and meet – and go to my mother. And they said come on in, jump in, we have a message for Hitler, that's where we're going to. Now remember, I didn't – the only language I knew was German. I talked like a German, I was German, except they didn't know I was a German Jew. There were numerous roadblocks from Munich to Berlin, however, we were waived through every roadblock because they were again – I don't know what rank they were, but they were high in the SS and they had a little sticker on the windshield, and they hardly even ever slowed down for a roadblock, it was opened up for them to go through. And they dropped me off at Anhalter Bahnhof, which was – actually, that was our meeting place where we always said if we get separated, this is where we meet, and – and every day we'd go and meet

there. Well, we got to – I got to Anhalter Bahnhof and there was my mother and brother who almost fainted when they saw me in the Hitler youth uniform. But anyhow, this was – you see, it's so close to the war and we did then go to the Noelting, the midwife, we went to her home, and I did change clothes. I didn't dare stay in the Hitler youth uniform because they could take me like they did take Hitler youth kids and gave them a rifle to defend. So I didn't want to be in the Hitler youth. In fact, I think my brother and I both, she put Band-Aids on our feet like we were injured, and then put on civilian clothes and that's really how we lived until the Russians came in.

Q: How do you explain how you kept your equilibrium through all of this? You were so young, you were 12 years old. Let's even go back to the railcar. Well, no, let's even go back previous to that, to how you were tortured. Ho-ho – you were 12 years old.

A: That's right. Well, they were so animal-like. They had, like I say, after some pain, I passed out. And by the time – I was never – why I didn't talk, I do not know, I cannot tell you that. Another thing I want to mention, which I think nowadays, I was so thin. I mean when – after the war, when we lived with the Russians, I think I weighed 50 some pounds and my brother wasn't much heavier, that those SS who I got the ride with didn't recognize tha – how thin I was. I probably looked more like an eight year old than a 11 year old, but they didn't see that. I think their whole thing was to get to Berlin to let Hitler – probably what I think happened is because they knew the allies were outside, probably to ask Hitler what should be done. They could have been general officers, I'm – I don't know. But, I mean, we practically flew to Berlin. I mean, they drove that Mercedes as fast as it could be driven and of course they're – the only vehicles you saw on the Autobahn were military vehicles.

Q: And then when you were in the railcar, was that a cattle car?

A: It was a cattle car, and this is why even today, right here at this museum, I – I've been here four or five times, I have never been able to step foot in that cattle car that is right here at this museum.

Q: How do you explain your keeping your composure, your sanity in a car like that, when you were – when you were going through it?

A: Well, I knew I was going to die. I knew my – that s – that I was caught, they're taking me to a concentration camp, I didn't know which one and I knew the end of my life was near. And I accepted that. And of course my brother and my mother, we all knew that we are living from day to day and it could be at any time we could be arrested and put to a concentration camp. I mean, we knew our father went to Auschwitz, we knew that. Even though we thought, again, him being an American, he will survive.

Q: Did you know what a concentration camp was?

A: Yes, yes, we knew and we knew they were gassing Jews.

Q: How did you know that?

A: It spread. I believe the – this midwife told us. But we knew, and th-the word spread. The Germans knew it. Of course they said they didn't know, and now they all say they never knew, which is a lie. They all knew. And of course the way they beat people up into the railcars, I mean, not only Jews, also Jehovah Witness was one, gay people and of course Poles or other foreigners that were enemies of Germany. And they were just beaten, literally beaten up into the railcars and squeezed together like cattle.

Q: Did the older people in the railcar help you, as a 12 year old?

A: No, I would say the Russian soldiers helped me and actually kept me from getting down on the ground, because they knew if I would fall, I wou – could be dead, because I'd be trampled

on. And I will say the Russian – incidentally, they treated me well, and treated my brother well after they liberated Berlin.

Q: But in the railcar?

A: I-In the railcar they treated me very well. They kept me up and made sure that I stand up and don't try to lie down. And especially, I mean I – sleepy. You know, I was there at least two days, nothing to eat, nothing to drink. But they kept me from lying down.

Q: Was it dark?

A: Oh yes. There were – there was some light coming in daytime, but very little. And with all the people stacked in, it was mostly dark. And it was still – well again, we were so close together. That's one good thing, otherwise we would have been freezing. I mean April in Germany still gets – the nights get very cold.

Q: Was it all men, or was it men and women?

A: Men and women, men and women. And it was very unpleasant. There are things that – well, I was young enough really, I didn't know about a woman having a period. I didn't know about that. Of course, that transpired there. And a lot of people had diarrhea, and again, no sanitation facilities. And it's – that's what went on there and I'm not the only one that suffered like that. And – but again, the railcar was probably as wor – as bad as having been tortured, because in the torture, so much of it, I passed out. And though I woke up with pain, but still, the railcar was the worst thing that could have any – happened to anybody.

Q: Besides the Russian soldiers being of help to you, did you sense that people were helping others? Other people were helping –

A: You mean in the railcar?

Q: – other victims in the railcar?

A: No, I think – I think most of them were in there much longer and were too weak to do anything. And I think the Russian soldiers that helped me and were helpful, I think were c-caught on the eastern part of Berlin, which the Russian came in on. I think they were caught shortly – about the same time I was, or maybe it – two or three days sooner. But of course they were not tortured, they were just loaded on that railcar til it was completely full. But I don't think they were in too long and were still strong enough to survive this ordeal.

Q: What does death mean to a 12 year old? You said you knew you were going to die.

A: It meant strictly, that's it, you're going to be – you're going to be away from this world. It's – to me, I knew death. Of course, remember, I saw my stepbrother kill himself. And I knew he was dead, he would never be alive again. And that's really what it meant to me, I'll be just like Klaus, my s-stepbrother.

Q: Were you afraid of death?

A: No, that's the thing. My brother, and I think this is probably why he can't remember anything, he feared death, he – he feared the bombing. We sometimes had to hold him or he would run right into the fire, practically. He feared death and I didn't. I just took it one day at a time and always took it, and I guess I still feel like that today. I mean, I spent time in Korea and I just felt like, when the time comes, I – I'll die. And I thought my time was there when I was in the train, especially with all the dead people around me.

Q: When you got back to your mother and your brother after the railcar, did you tell them what you went through, and the tortures?

A: Yes, I told them where I was at, what happened. And of course, my mother just cried and hugged me and so thankful that I survived. And she suspected that is what had happened, because we had never been separated more than a – a day, never. No, I think one time, my

mother couldn't come back and she was gone for one night, but then we got together again. But other than that we've always spent the nights together, wherever.

Q: You were very, very quick thinking and quick witted to put on that Hitler youth uniform and flag down that car. What do you attribute that to? That was a very brilliant decision, and you were 12 years old.

A: Well – that's right. Well, I think my brother would have done the same thing. Again, maybe our mother brainwashed us in there – in this. And I think maybe this Frau Noelting told us whenever things like happen, what to do, I – I think, but I just knew what I had to do, especially when I couldn't follow the Russians and here I was all alone. And – and I decided, well, the only way I'm going to make it is put on the Hitler youth uniform, and hoping that I wouldn't be forced to take a rifle and start shooting. And again, I didn't know like, at the time that the allies were out or the – outside the Dachau camp that the ger – Russians were outside, I didn't know that. But I knew, we all knew the war was coming to an end, and we even knew that before I was arrested. We knew it was the end of the war coming. Well, we knew that and th-the word spread. People, Germans that were against the regime weren't afraid to talk any more that much. And I used to hear people say, look at all those tanks there – to other people – look at those tanks, there's not enough gasoline to operate the tanks, they're out of gas. And so the Germans weren't quite as afraid any more. But of course afterwards, and I – I do know women, I know men that would say, oh we're – we have a secret weapon. This just when the Russians were really fighting for Berlin, where we were, we have secret weapons and they going to take them, they're going to kill the – all the Russians that are coming in. There were still those fanatics around and I heard women say, oh, if these Russians should come in, I'm going to pour boiling water on them. And I'll do everything, they'll never get me, I'll kill them, and so forth. Of course, after the Russians

came in, oh how sweet you are. And – and honestly, the Russians would wa – rape the women right out in daylight in the street. Again, things I didn't know until it came true. And you know, I had no remorse on those women that used to – I used to hear in the train station that they are going to kill the Russian, they are going to knife them to death or they're gonna put boiling waters on them. That's how they felt then, and then they were friends. So, the Russians that came into Berlin were completely uneducated. They had no common sense, and they were – in fact, I wouldn't be surprised if those were released prisoners, because the Russian – I think the front line soldiers were maybe from Siberia, or people that were politically arrested or other – some reason other arrest. And they were – they were not the nicest people, and yet to us kids, they treated us well. And of – of course after Berlin was divided between the Russians, the French, the British and the U.S. troops, we then went to live with this midwife.

Q: When – so you – le-let's get back just chronologically, you – you – the ra – you found your mother, you saw that your mother had been shot.

A: Right.

Q: You came downstairs, you told your brother and then the Russian soldiers came in.

A: Right.

Q: And then what happened?

A: What happened, we went to the Russian soldiers and we found somebody that spoke German – no, we even found a Jewish soldier. We found a Russian Jewish soldier who spook – spoke Yiddish. And so we communicated in Yiddish and said we were hungry and we told them we were Yiddish, right? And they gave us food, they gave us water. They actually nourished us back a little bit.

Q: Did you feel liberated at that moment?

A: Yes, we felt liberated.

Q: And what did that mean to you boys?

A: Freedom, food. We can talk freely. We don't have to worry about being arrested by the Nazis. We don't have to worry about being beaten or spit upon by other German kids. That's what it meant, it just meant full freedom. And – and after we received food and everything from the Russians, we then – this Russian soldier, I don't know what his rank was, or what, but he was – this Jewish soldier was a little bit more educated and we became the guide to his officer, and showed him where to go in Berlin from point A to point B, because we knew it so well.

Q: Wher-Where were you living?

A: We were still living with the Russians, very close to this Anhalter Bahnhof, the train station where our mother was killed, we think. In fact, this soldier wa – by the time we went back outside the train station, our mother was not – there was nobody by this fire hydrant. And that Jewish soldier did try to find our mother, but couldn't. So we do not know if she was taken to Russia or buried, or what.

Q: And you s – you still expected to find your father?

A: Right. But then after – after the division between the Russians, the – and the Americans when Berlin was divided up in sectors, and then we went to live with that midwife, we knew that – that – we found out that the people that were in concentration camp by that time would have been back in Berlin or we would have known and our father would have known to get in touch with this midwife. And when he didn't – and the same thing with our mother – we knew our mother – again, we didn't know, and of course, I still don't know. Even today I don't know if our mother died in this crossfire or if she was sent to Russia, because the Russians did take thousands of – of kids and women to Russia. I'm sure you are aware of that. And so that, we don't know. We did,

before we came to the U.S., we had to identify our mother, and we had to get a birth ad – a – a – a death certificate of our mother. And we said well, we don't know. Well, if you want to leave Germany you need to have a death certificate. So there were a whole bunch of people and so we just identified yes, that was our mother. They showed us pictures of several people, I said yes, that's our mother, so we could get a death certificate. But if she really died there, we don't know.

Q: You stayed with the Russian soldiers –

A: For a –

Q: For how long?

A: Well, I – I'm not sure. There must be records. When – when Berlin was divided into the four sectors, it was until the division, we stayed with the Russians. One thing is, we were their guide, but trains didn't run and things like this, until the division really, and wa – there was no way we could have gotten to Schöneberg to the – to the midwife, and we didn't even know if she was still alive or – or what. But it was after the di-division that we went to Schöneberg, to the midwife.

Q: Before that did you meet with people – meet people who had also been in hiding, other Jews?

A: Well, you saw the picture of the synagogue, but no that was – no, I didn't, no.

Q: I-I meant in the very beginning, after liberation.

A: At the very beginning no, we did not meet anyone that was in hiding. No, I'm co – incorrect there. I know of about two or three people that also received this concentration camp I.D. that were not in hiding, that were out of concentration camps, because the Russian government, or the Russian military produced these I.D.'s that we were in concentration camp very close to where I was at at that Anhalter Bahnhof. And I – I did meet two or three people, elderly people that did

get out of a concentration camp and also received this I.D. But as far as people that were living in hiding, at that time no, I ha – did not meet anyone.

Q: So then you – you went back to this woman –

A: That's right.

Q: -- the – the midwife?

A: To the midwife. And of course – she actually signed us up, we did go to a German school there after the war for a little bit, but not very long, about two months.

Q: She was willing to take you back in?

A: Yes, she took us back in and –

Q: Did you assume your old names, your real names?

A: Yes, we – we assumed our real name and she even provided clothing for us because we wore practically rags. But we weren't the only Germans that wore rags, you couldn't buy clothing during the war. But anyhow, she got us some clothing and signed us up to a school. And I think she started me in the second grade and my brother in the third grade in Germany. But we only went to that school for about a month or two, and then the British military, they inherited what used to be a – a rest and cu – recuperation camp outside of Berlin, about three or four hours drive out of Berlin in Lüneburg, and where the Germans had a rest and recuperation camp. And they took a bunch of – at that time now, kids that were either in hiding or in concentration camp, they looked those people up, including my brother and I, and in British ambulances they drove us to this former [indecipherable] camp in Lüneburg, where we were nursed – we were given complete physical examinations and we were nursed back into health. And that is straight – before we went to that camp, my brother and I then got to know some of the Jewish American soldiers who opened up the synagogue, and this one, Werner Nathan was his name, a private in

the U.S. Army, and he is the one that actually was responsible in opening up that synagogue at Rosh Hashanah, and he got us in touch, or got the Joint Distribution Committee in touch with us, who sponsored us to come to the States. Well, trying to. And while we were waiting to co-come to the U.S., we went to this rest camp that the British sponsored, that should have been for, I think eight weeks. For two months. Well, we were there about three months when a American soldier, not Werner Nathan, some other American soldier came, looked for us and says we are going to be coming to the United States. We have our – our visas and we're going to come to the U.S. So we left that camp early, went back to Berlin and he drove us back to Berlin and I don't know if it was a private vehicle or U.S. Army vehicle, I don't remember.

Q: When you were in this rest camp, there were other Jewish children, did you talk and compare stories?

A: No. Nobody wanted to talk about it. They didn't really want to talk about it, including me. We just survived, and some of them were living in conditions like – you know, maybe in a ceiling someplace and never saw daylight. Or somehow that they had – maybe people hid them, and really hid them. And mo – and lot of the kids I know were in – out in farms someplace. And – but again, lived in hiding where nobody knew that they were in that – a farmhouse. And – but nobody really wanted to talk about it too much.

Q: What do you attribute that to?

A: I don't think – even me at the time, I was still thinking, is this real? Am I really free? And yeah – and nobody asked. I may mention something here. Two years ago I met a woman, she too was in this rest camp. We met each other in Prague at the Child Survivors of the Holocaust conference. And – but if – we just didn't talk about it. And when I went back to Berlin after they rescue – recuperating, and my brother and I, and we told the midwife, Frau Noelting that we

were going to America. And oh, she was upset. She says, you're German, you can't go. But we did.

Q: T-Tell me more in detail how you met Werner Nathan.

A: After the – Berlin was divided, again our father being an American and being pretty much told that we're going to come to – go to America some day, we went to a U.S. Army camp. And where we lived in Schöneberg was the w – American sector, fortunately enough. And so we just went to an army camp and we started telling at the front gate really, is there anybody here that speaks German? And most of them don't, you know, and – and says yes, and they called this one private out, which was Werner Nathan. He is ori – was originally from Austria and they went to the States before the war. If he is alive he'd be in his 80's now. And anyhow, we talked with him – and he was very Orthodox, too. And he says, well he's in the process of finding a synagogue and they found a synagogue, the only synagogue in Berlin that was not burned. And that he was opening up that synagogue for Rosh Hashanah. And that's really how we met him.

Q: So he stayed in contact with you from that day on?

A: That's right. And he is the one that contacted the Joint Distribution Committee in New York.

Q: Did you go to the Rosh Hashanah services?

A: Yes. This is a picture, and here is my brother and I at the Rosh Hashanah services right here in this picture.

Q: What were your thoughts during that service?

A: Thanking God that we are alive, and – and afterwards this so – Werner Nathan forced us to study a little bit more Hebrew, and the various prayers. And I think it was a month or two later that we – maybe not even that long, I don't know exactly, is when we became Bar Mitzvah. My brother and I were the first two Jewish boys Bar Mitzvah in Berlin after the war.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher. This is tape number three, side A, and you had begun to talk about preparing for your Bar Mitzvah.

A: Right, well, having been away from really, the Jewish religion for all these war years, we were taught by this American serviceman, who was very Orthodox, and he probably knew as much as a rabbi, and he made sure that we learned all the prayers and says we have to be Bar Mitzvah. And even though I was only 12 years old and my brother were 13, he recruited one of the Jewish chaplains fr – chaplains from his American company in the army and we were officially Bar Mitzvah, went through all the various prayers. And I do not know the exactly – exact date, but I would say it was some time in 1946 and probably I would – I'm guessing now, between March and April of 1946 when we were Bar Mitzvah, becau –

Q: So you were already 13, cause you were 13 in January.

A: Ah, no I wa – that's correct, I was 13 in January, so I was th – that's right, I was 13 and my brother was 14. And of course, he was a year late before he could be Bar Mitzvah.

Q: Did you want to have a Bar Mitzvah?

A: Yes, we've always wanted to be Bar Mitzvah. I mean, even though we were never very religious, we were very conservative, but it was always our parents saying that when – I remember always saying when my brother becomes 13 years old he's going to be a man, he's going to be Bar Mitzvah. And the same thing was true with me. And yes, I did want to be Bar Mitzvah and we were very proud when we became Bar Mitzvah.

Q: Can you describe what you did?

A: No, that I do not remember. I do not remember, but I know there was a big party afterwards, at that synagogue, and it was a – a day of celebration, but what we did, I do not remember, but it was probably the most enjoyable time in our lives, from the day I can remember.

Q: Who came to the service?

A: A lot of Jewish, as well – Jewish U.S. soldiers, Russian soldiers and I'm not sure but I – something in my back of the mind, I – I'm sure that the midwife's stepdaughter, who was a photographer, I believe she took pictures. I do not have any of those pictures, but I b – do believe she was there taking pictures. And that's all I can really remember.

Q: Was it difficult not having your parents there at your Bar Mitzvah?

A: Of course it was. We missed our mother, we wished our father could have been there even though we knew the fact that he was dead and perished in Auschwitz. And so we – but we did miss our mother and again in – in th – at that time we still were not sure, we did not know whether she was still alive, or – or dead. We didn't know that, so yes, it was very, very hard not having our mother there, though we celebrated, it was joyous. But we still wished that our mother could have been there.

Q: Were you trying to locate your mother still, at that point?

A: Oh yes, all the time, we – whenever we learned of a place that had records, and regardless what section, whether it – whether it was French, British or what, we'd go over there and see if we could find anything on our mother. But we, of course, never found anything.

Q: Did Gertrude Noelting come to your Bar Mitzvah, or just her daughter?

A: I do not recall her coming, but I – I'm not 100 percent sure if her daughter came, but I – I really believe she did come and took fi – pictures, but I'm almost positive that Frau Noelting never did come to it.

Q: So d – and you had the celebration at the synagogue itself?

A: That is correct, they had a big celebration that we had food, and we had fruits that we haven't – had never seen, like a banana. We almost didn't know how to peel a banana and I believe we had banana the first time since the war. I do remember that.

Q: And your relationship with your brother then, did it – it was still as intensely close as it had been during the war?

A: Oh, very much so. We've been very close, even though after we got older and came to the U.S., just like brothers one year apart used to fight and argue, which we did, too, but still we were very close and even today we're still very close.

Q: And did you two talk about the wartime at that – in 1946, did you talk about the previous years?

A: No, we never did, even when we came to the States, we hardly ever talked about the war years. It's something that – and it was probably more so my brother than me. He just did not want to talk about it and so I didn't. He – he took the whole thing a lot harder than I did, I believe.

Q: And in order to get food you said you had this folder, this camp folder, the red – the red side of –

A: Oh, oh, oh, that, yes, most people that were – that have survived from a concentration camp, that were in a concentration camp, first in Berlin were given a little identification by the Russian soldiers, it was in German and Russian, indicating that we were discriminated against and have survived a concentration camp. And it was a red sheet of paper with the concentration camp logo. And once we – if – when we held that certificate going through lines, buying food or other items, we could just hold that and could go to the front of the line. And there was not a single

German that ever complained, us going to the front of the line. In fact, they turned the other way, they didn't even want to see this concentration camp logo, they all knew what it was. And we had full privileges, even when we took a train. Shortly after the war, some of the trains started running again in Berlin, and we could go to the train, never had to pay to ride the trains, I mean we had a free hand in Berlin right after the war.

Q: Were you able to go back to your original house, original apartment?

A: The original apartment – well, the apartment where th – I call it the ghetto type of a apartment, where we were forced to live, that was bombed out. That was no longer in existence. However, both of the stores, the first store that I remember as a very small child, that my father had in Petsalozzi(ph) strasse and not very far, couple of blocks from there in Leipne(ph) strasse, which was the street where – that suffered from the Kristallnacht, that store was still in existence. And I don't recall us visiting either one of those stores right after the war, before we came to the States. But I went back to Berlin for my first time in 1975, I believe, and I did visit that store. And it didn't change much, and I just, a year ago in berli – in April, a year ago when I was in Berlin, I did visit it and of course there's the one on Leipne(ph) strasse was for rent and the one on Petsalozzi(ph) strasse, there was a Chinese family living there and also they had a store of Chinese artifacts and souvenir type items. In fact, I stopped and talked with them. Their son, it so happened, graduated from the University of California, spoke pretty good English and I talked with him for probably close to an hour. And he found it very interesting that as a child I was living at that place, at a – it did some – was some major remodeling done and more space. Well, we had two bedrooms and a kitchen and a bathroom in that store when we lived there before the Kristallnacht. A-And now it had some much nicer and more roomy type of bedrooms and it was almost like a very comfortable type of an apartment.

Q: When you were with – studying with this young American soldier, was he helping other Jewish children?

A: If he was, I'm not aware of it. I don't think so because he still was a soldier and I think he was a company cook and he still had to do his duties there and in his off time he worked with us. So I doubt very much that he helped others, because we were not as a group. He worked with us strictly as individuals.

Q: Did you learn English then?

A: No, we did not. We – the only word of English I knew was hello, goodbye and where's the bathroom? And thank you. I think my brother learned a few more words of English. But incidentally, both my brother and I were able to communicate in Russian. We were not fluent, but we were able to communicate in Russian pretty good, because we've lived with the Russians for about 90 days.

Q: And you were able to pick up the ru – Russian language?

A: That's right. We were able to, and like I say, communicate and pick up, right. I have completely forgotten it, I still know a few words, but I could not carry on a conversation and I can understand very little.

Q: And then how much longer did you stay in Germany after your Bar Mitzvah?

A: Okay, again, I think the Bar Mitzvah was in the spring of 1946 and we left Berlin in September 1946.

Q: I forgot to ask you an important question, did you get any gifts for your Bar Mitzvah?

A: I don't believe we did. I don't recall that we received any gifts. We were just so happy to be amongst our own without fear of being arrested. That was a gift alone.

Q: Absolutely. Did you feel connected to the Russian Jewish soldiers?

A: At the time, yes. The – we didn't meet too many of them, but yes, they treated us well, and I was somewhat connected, but not as much as once the Americans came in. I mean, we didn't even keep track of the Russian and Jewish soldiers, except some of them were at the Bar Mitzvah. But we pretty much got connected to the American Jewish soldiers, both enlisted men as well as officers. I even remember some of the names, Lieutenant Nowalski(ph), who helped us out, and there were a few other officers. And the only names I can remember was Lieutenant Nowalski(ph) and Private Werner Nathan.

Q: Important names. And the name of the synagogue, you said you're not sure?

A: No, I wished I would know. I don't know the address, I – I do not know the name, but I do know it was the only synagogue not burned out, not burned by the Germans.

Q: What was your relationship with the German children your age, the non-Jewish chil-children? Did they talk to you, did you play with them, did you do anything with them? After the war.

A: After the war? Well again, we went to school for two or three months after the war, and we played with them and I still sensed there was some prejudice towards the Jews by some of them. But like I have shown you this – this is – the funny thing is is how I knew there was a write-up in this British magazine, The Illustrated. And there were – was a picture of my brother and I in that Illustrated. It was a German kid whose parents knew English and subscribed to that magazine. And they are the ones that showed us that magazine with our pictures in it.

Q: Right. You're talking about the October 6th, 1945 issue of The Illustrated?

A: That is the issue I am talking about. And it was really one Jewish boy that was in our class after the war, in Berlin, that brought that magazine to school and showed it to us.

Q: Mm-hm. And so you s – how – you said you sensed some prejudice on the part of the German children. How – an-an-and can you give an example?

A: They were not friendly to us aft – they know – knew we were Jewish. They could – they could see me go in front of a line to buy a loaf of bread, and they resented that. The adults, they didn't say a word, but th-the kids resented that. Of course, they probably didn't understand why we had those privileges. But I-I di – definitely saw resentment.

Q: Mm-hm. Wat – was there any more overt anti-Semitism? Any spitting, like you said before?

A: Not that I notice it. Not that I notice. I have notice anti-Semitism, especially in Munich in the last five years.

Q: We'll get to that. So you stayed, and you said Werner Nathan made arrangements with the American Joint Distribution – Jewish Distribution Committee. And so can you – let's just talk about th-those arrangements.

A: Okay. Werner – we again explained to Werner – fortunately he was fluent in German, as he came from Austria – that our father was an American citizen, died in Auschwitz and we want to come – go to America. And again he did, on his own, he contacted the Joint Distribution Committee in New York, and a-again, I don't remember how long it took, but I know in the meantime we went to Lüneburg where we went to a recuperation camp sponsored by the British military, who put us back into health. And it was an American soldier – in fact, I think it was that Lieutenant Nowalski(ph) that picked us up from Lüneburg, took us back to Berlin and it was – again, that must have been in late August, because September seventh we left Bremerhaven on the SS Marine Marlin, that was the ship, and went to New York. And besides – just recently I met an old man in Seattle, who was a seaman on the sister ship of the SS Marine Marlin, who also brought Jewish immigrants to the U.S. And usually people don't know anything about, never heard of a SS Marine Marlin, and he knew right away, he said that that was his – the – his sister ship. So it's quite a small world.

Q: What were your feelings about leaving Germany? You said that you felt partly German.

A: I felt more – I was German and I acted like a German during the war, living under false or assumed names. But the day we walked onto the ship, it was the greatest feeling you can imagine. And –

Q: Did you bring anything special with you from Germany?

A: No, we did not. We didn't want anything. Like when the Russians came into Berlin we – my brother and I each picked up some very expensive Leica cameras from photography stores. Everybody else took it, so we took some of this belongings. They took our belongings, the German. But we did not want anything German. We did not bring anything back that was German. We – on the ship, we made a few dollars on the ship. Well, I did, my brother got too seasick. He was sick most of the way across. For some reason I did not get seasick. And pe – other refugees that were on the ship wanted to buy shaving cream or things that was in the – that you could purchase on the ship. And they didn't want to stay in line and so I used to stay in line for – for them and buy what they wanted. In fact here's a – I still remember this one gentleman wanted chewing gum. And I purchased and I took the German pronunciation for ch-chewing gum, which would be shaving gum, and instead of getting chewing gum for him, I ended up with a tube of shaving cream. I still remember that. And I ended up – I have finally ended up selling it to somebody else, because he wanted chewing gum, not shaving cream.

Q: Were there – was it all refugees on the boat?

A: I would say 99 percent were refugees, and again those were people either that were – survived at a concentration camp or lived in hiding someplace, somewhere so – somewhere.

Q: And again, did you talk to each other about what you had gone through?

A: No, I don't believe – I didn't want to, my brother didn't want to and I don't think anyone aboard wanted to talk about what they went through. It's – yes, they wanted to get that out of their mind.

Q: And how long did the voyage take?

A: It took 10 days. We left September seventh, we arrived – when I saw the Statue of Liberty in New York, that was September 17th. Greatest sight you can see.

Q: And what was it like to put your foot down on American soil?

A: Oh, it was great. Something that we thought we would never see. And there were quite a few kids like us, orphan kids on that ship, again, also sponsored by the Joint Distribution Committee, most of them had no parents. And they were like we were, maybe some of them thought they had a relative there, but again didn't know. And again, it was representatives from the Joint that picked us up and took us to 441 Caldwell Avenue, Brooklyn – I mean, Bronx, New York. And of course we were fed and treated wonderfully. And the next day we were interviewed by German speaking people, and –

Q: Wa-Was this a family that you went to on – in the Bronx?

A: No, it was a – I really would say like an orphan home. It was for children, and we were in there and they had beds, several beds in a room. And they, of course, separated the boys and the girls.

Q: And then after your interview, what happened?

A: And then, of course, we told them that we had two uncles someplace in the U.S. And they said well, were they from Germany? And we said yes, they were originally from Breslau, now ber – Poland. And they said, well there is a newspaper that has a nationwide publication plus Canada. Of course, we didn't know Canada was a neighbor of the U.S. at the time. But they said

they will put an ad in the "Aufbau" and see if our uncles – at that time we still thought they were uncles – if our uncles by any chance were to read that newspaper, as most German speaking Jews were subscribers to that newspaper. Well, our uncles did not read it, but very good friends of theirs in Saint Louis, Missouri read that ad. And there were pages and pages and pages of kids or adults looking for people and most of them – it was arranged alphabetically, I believe, the ads, and these friends of my uncles, which turned out to be cousins, read that and called them. They were in Saint Louis, and my cousins – we'll call them my true things, my cousins from my father's side, were called up and said there are two kids, just came from Berlin and they are looking for Alfred and Felix tau – Taucher. And of course that's when we learned they were cousins. And my cousins were both brothers and they had just, actually not that long ago had come to the U.S., because one cousin lived in Shanghai during the war, while the other one lived in South America. But apparently they had kept in touch all through the war and they ended up in Joplin, Missouri. How they ended up in Joplin, I have no idea. But Joplin is a small community of about 35,000 people, and that's where they ended up. And since they were in Joplin when we were found, but they were single people, there was no woman in the house, the social welfare agency, Jewish social fe – agency wouldn't let us live there and so we went to live with foster parents in Kansas City, Missouri. A family by the name of Levinson, and he was a very Orthodox rabbi and of course very kosher and we lived with them for probably four or five months. But we had really problems living together, because we were not raised Orthodox. And so then we were moved into – in to another family.

Q: Did you go to school th-then?

A: Yes, we started th – both of us started in the eight grade. Now remember, my brother went through the third grade, I went the second grade of school in Germany. Even after the war, the

short time we went to the German school then was still only the second grade, didn't know English. But we went to school in Kansas City, Missouri for two years, and they assigned a teacher to us who knew a little bit of German, not very much. She was Jewish, Mrs. Weinberg, and she worked as – worked with us – tutored us to learn English. And what my brother and I did after we started school, we took a German English dictionary and just studied it page by page, word for word. And after awhile it got so that we used words that the English teachers didn't understand, or we used it in the wrong context. And my brother then – this was in the ninth grade, I believe, I had a different English teacher than my brother did and my English teacher, she says – a Miss Ulrichi, she says, Fred, you have to buy some comic books and start reading comic books. I don't care what comic books you read, but buy comic books and you will have the – a much – maybe not the best grammar in the world, but you will get English that is being used every day. And I will say it really helped. Reading the comics, I had a – seeing the pictures and getting most of it out, I probably learned more English from that than anything.

Q: And what about your name? You were then – by then Fred? Was that your decision?

A: Oh, ba – my – my cousin who we lived with then, after Kansas City when we moved to Joplin – oh, I should say that. We went to school in Kansas City for two years, and then my – in the meantime my cousin brought in one of their aunts who was in Israel, at that time I believe still known as Palestine. Well, it was '48 when Palestine was – became an independent state. And they brought her there to Joplin from Israel and then we were permitted to live with them, and we went to the 10th, 11th and 12th grade in Joplin, Missouri.

Q: And you s – and – and when did you change your name?

A: We changed our name when we – we became citizen. Actually, I did not change my name from Horst Alfred until after I got out of the army. Maybe we should go back to that later. I finished high school, my brother finished high school.

Q: Did the – did the Missouri children accept you? Did you feel like an outside in the high school?

A: Not at all. We – in fact, we were asked to speak at assemblies about our – some of our lives in Germany and Berlin during the war. And didn't really want to talk about – we didn't talk to a lot of the detail because we were ashamed to talk about it. For instance, I didn't want to talk, in fact I didn't tell anybody I was in a concentration camp or in a train, I was too ashamed of it, especially how I was caught. I mean, no 12 year old kid wants to talk about why they were caught. And we didn't say that we were in a concentration camp, but we just talked what it was life, the bombing and how it was life, living in fear, trying not to get caught. And that's really most of the things that we talked about to other kids. But we were very well accepted by the kids. We made a lot of friends. In fact, both my brother and I go to reunion. In fact we have, in September, we have the 50th year reunion coming up in Joplin, which I plan to attend and so does my brother. And we've made a lot of friends there.

Q: Did you take part in school activities and sports?

A: Very much so. Not in sports so much, but I actually was in ROTC, Reserved Officer's Training. And we had rifle teams, we had drill teams a – which I participated. I also belonged to a – to various clubs, like the Key Club, which is the forerunners, I think to the Kiwanis, and I was very active. My brother was not too active, my brother – actually, my a – one of our cousins who we lived with was a pianist and he also taught piano, and my brother always wanted to learn the piano. So while I was involved in a lot of school activity, my brother practiced and played the

piano, but he, which I was not, got to really enjoy playing baseball, and learned – and became a very good baseball player. And he belonged to a baseball team, a high school baseball team and so forth. And that's where his activity was, while mine was in drill teams and rifle teams and Kiwanis clubs and so forth. In fact, I even learned how to be a speaker. And this is why I do a lot of speaking engagements now and it doesn't bother me to be – be speak in front of public, or even on TV, where I've taught many, many times.

Q: Did you feel very American at that point?

A: Yes, I did. I felt – after I got pretty proficient in English, in fact when I went in the U.S. Army, five years after coming here, nobody believed me that I was a – originally from Germany, I spoke English like an American, rather than a foreigner. Through the years I started speaking German again, also learned Japanese and I speak both languages. And so I – it seems like I've reacquired an accent.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: – volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher. This is tape number three, side B and you were talking about how you kept up – you were – you have an aptitude for languages. So then you graduated from high school, and what happened?

A: Graduated from high school in 1951 and then I applied to go to the University of Missouri law school, since I had two uncles from my mother's side that were lawyers. We also had uncles that were dentists, mostly from our mother's side. In fact, I know of one uncle who was in Shanghai during the war, and I met somebody in Seattle who – whose dentist was my uncle in Shanghai. But anyhow –

Q: You – bu-but you were – what about undergraduate at college? What do you mean you applied to law – you wanted to apply to law school?

A: I applied after I got out of high school, I applied to go to the University of Missouri and then eventually go into law school, right? Well, when I took the entrance examination for the University of Missouri, apparently my score on the English part of the test was above average. And I was told that I cheated because the results of the test score was much higher than it possibly could have been with the lack of education I have had and the short time that I have been in the U.S. I did ask to take the test over again, but back in 1951 that was not done. At – times have changed today. But so – since I could not go to the University of Missouri, I didn't really know what I wanted to study then, because my goal was to be a lawyer, just like my parents wanted me to be a lawyer, my brother to be a dentist. And so I was 18 and a half years old, or almost. They were just starting to draft 18 and a half year olds, so I decided to join the army and get that out of my – out of my life here. And so I joined the army.

Q: And this was during the Korean war?

A: That was ko – during the Korean war. And after I took my basic training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, I was assigned to a replacement company there as a company clerk. And then one of the generals who was reassigned from Fort Leonard Wood, who was reassigned to Germany, wanted a native speaking German to be his driver in Germany. So I was picked to be the driver for this general, since I was a native speaking German. But I, at that time I was not prepared to go back to Germany, and since I was still a citizen of the u – of Germany, I did not have to go.

Q: All right, you were not a citizen yet of the United States?

A: I was still a non-citizen. Now, I did take – this was kind of odd – I did take the examination for citizenship in Rolla, Missouri, a small city near Fort Leonard Wood. In fact this was a college town, I think it was a – still is a very well known engineering school. And this is where, in that city, I took my exam for citizenship. In fact, one of the questions that I was asked by the examiner – and I was in U.S. Army uniform, I was a corporal at the time – and this examiner, one of the questions asked, if I were called to serve in the U.S. military in time of war, would I do that? And I looked at him, I said, well… And he says yes, I – I'm sorry that I have to ask that, but that – that is the rule, and I realize you are in the military. It k-kind of struck me odd. And anyhow, I took my citizenship examination, which I passed. Of course, it was everything I had learned in high school, in government and so forth. Was a – to me – for me it was a very simple exam. And it was really about – shortly wi – thereafter, when I had the orders to go to Germany, but then I looked up the Jewish chaplain in Forth Leonard Wood, and I told him a little bit of my story, and of course he got my a – says no, I don't have to go and they canceled my order to Germany. But abou –

Q: Why did you not want to go to Germany?

A: I-I still had too many bad memories in Germany. And the feeling there, I just was not prepared. And I also – besides that, I didn't want to be a driver for a general. I wanted to learn something while I was in the military rather than drive a car around and be what I considered a nursemaid. And so my orders three days later were for Korea. And I had a two weeks leave, went back to Joplin, visited my friends and said the goodbyes and everything. And I went to Fort Lewis, Washington, which is about a fr – one hour drive out of Seattle. And I kind of fell in love with that part of the country and I said to myself, if I make it back alive from Korea, this is going to be home. And I went to Korea and that was 1952.

Q: How did you feel putting on an American army uniform?

A: Proud. I was very proud to be wearing the army uniform. And I think this is why I made, even through the enlisted rating, I made rank much faster than ma – the average American citizen counterpart. While these people complained about the military and they didn't want to work, I did my duty and I was proud of it. And I believe this is why in Korea, even though there were sergeants that were 15 years in the army, I passed them up and received the rank of warrant officer appointment, when others way ahead of me should have received it. It was probably a responsibility I had at my age that I shouldn't have had. I was only 20 years old when I became a warrant officer. 21 years old, I guess. But I always felt proud to be an American soldier.

Q: What were your duties in Korea?

A: In Korea I – my fir – my first duties were to code reports that came from the front lines, and pick out the soldiers that were killed in action, wounded in action, missing, and I also had the locator; an assignment I wasn't supposed to have had as I was not a U.S. citizen, but I had that assignment. And then I got – those papers I got ready to be put into, which now are computers, in those times they were machine accounting, we programmed them with – through plugboard

wires and punch cards. And the man that was really in charge and doing the actual operating of the equipment was a warrant officer. Well, he was killed driving over a mine and – which I didn't know, but he – he was late in bringing the reports in, which I had to code, for him to process through. But instead of him coming in, the – a colonel came in and stuck a couple of warrant officers' bars on my shoulder, tore off my sergeant stripes and says, you have just been appointed to a warrant officer, you are going to be – replace Mr. Eberhart(ph) – a warrant officer is addressed as mister – who was killed in action, and we will have a replacement for you shortly. After my replacement came in, they assigned another warrant officer to that unit and sent me to Japan for three weeks, where I learned how to operate those machines. And after three weeks I went back to Korea and continued the duties as a warrant officer.

Q: Did you ever – when you were in Korea, did you ever see any bodies?

A: I see – saw a lot of bodies.

Q: And did that remind you of your experience during the war, being in the railroad car and during the bombing of Berlin, seeing bodies?

A: No, it did not. It did not remind me at all. I s – was sad, seeing American soldiers dead, but it di – it was not even close to reminding me what it was like in the railroad car, because first of all, in the railroad car it was dark and you – most of the time you couldn't see the bodies, you couldn't see the faces. And even if you could, you didn't want to. And you just saw people that were dead and I never related that. I felt sorrow for the poor American soldiers that were killed. And again, it's just like I felt that way ever since a child in – during my life in Germany, that when my time is up I'm going to go, and if not, I'll keep on going and living.

Q: And how long did you stay in Korea?

A: Until the very tail end of the war, which I believe was September or October of ’53, I’m not quite sure. And after Korea I was transferred to Tokyo, where I was stationed for nine months. And actually – well, not at the time, I – I took up the martial arts over there, I took both judo and karate. And my instructor introduced me to his sister, who was Japanese, of course. And – and I fell in love and applied to get married. But as an officer – at that time an officer could not marry outside the race unless you go back to an enlisted rating. So I was due to be discharged then, so I went back to the States, took my discharge and then went back to Japan to get married. We were married in excess of 40 years but we are divorced now, but we’re still friends.

Q: So you got married in Japan and then brought your bride to the United States?

A: Yes, I did. Yes, I was married by the American consul in Tokyo. And – oh, one thing I should mention. While I was heading to Korea, the army sent my immigration records and citizenship records – that’s to be a citizen, to Germany, where my assignment was supposed to – where the first orders for it – for Germany. By the time everything got caught up I was going back to the States to be discharged. So I – when I got – before I got discharged again, being a warrant officer, an officer had to be a citizen before they can get discharged from the military. So I had to take a 10 day leave of absence, which I wanted to get paid for and the army arranged a special citizenship exam for me in Rolla, Missouri, where all my records were still, where I was taking my – took my examination. And they had a special hearing for me to sworn in as a citizen. Then I had to go back – I was at that time stationed at Fort Carlson, Colorado, and I had to go back to Fort Carlson, get my discharge.

Q: And to be a udis – U.S. citizen?

A: And then to be a u – a U.S. citizen, the greatest feeling that could ha – happen to – could have happened to me. And again, I was proud that I could serve in the U.S. Army, and even more proud then, to be a citizen.

Q: And then you came – and then you came back and – when you got discharged, and went to school?

A: No, I did not. I did not go to school. My – then my goal was to go back to Japan to get married.

Q: Right.

A: And I got a job – at that time, U.S. military people stoo – air force, navy, I – I should say air force, Marines and army were still going overseas to Korea, even though it was after the war, to Korea or Japan on ships. And I took a job a – on the military sea transportation service, that's a civilian group. We were taking troops overseas and bringing them back. And I took a job on one of those ships and got good pay and went back to Japan to get married. And came back after my marriage and took a job in – again I'll call it computers, in the – doing the same thing except – e-except I wasn't te – keeping track of casualties, my first job was working for an insurance company where I operated the machine accounting.

Q: Now, did you go back to Missouri or did you go to Seattle?

A: I went to Seattle. I went back to Missouri, visit my cousins and took some of the belongings I had there and went back to Seattle.

Q: And you're with your young bride?

A: No, no, she came – she didn't come o-over until about six or seven months later. Since I was a naturalized citizen, and a new naturalized citizen, it took me quite some time to get a passport for her. And since I was in Seattle, Washington, all my – again, my immigration and naturalization

paper were in Missouri, I had to apply for her visa through Missouri, and it was a – quite a lengthy operation.

Q: And then she came and what – then what happened?

A: Okay, she came over here and about a year later we had our first son. And six years later we had a daughter.

Q: And your w-work career?

A: I worked then – at that time I worked for a trucking company, again in machine accounting, and in 1960 I set up a com – this is when the first part of the computers came around [indecipherable] programming computers, and I took the second programming course in Seattle, back in 1959, learning how to program those new, beautiful computers, IBM computers, which were then the 1401. And took a job with a division of Boise Cascade Corporation, and I set up the very first computer installation for Greystone Concrete Products. Like I say, that was a division from Boise Cascade, it was – they made concrete blocks and pipe, cement products. And I se – they had 11 different locations and I set up the computer department in all 11 locations, and then became, besides being the – what was called the data processing manager, I also was made the assistant controller. And I put in many, many hours and in 1963, a – this Greystone division, some of the managers bought the division from Boise Cascade, and I was supposed to have been included as one of the owners but they cut me out, strictly the controller of that company, who was als – see – embezzling from the company. And of course, being the – in the accounting department, which was part of the data processing, I knew what was going on. And he cut me out as being a owner of the company. So in 1963, I resigned my position and started my own business, and – which is – I still have that business. Today, my company, the second

oldest privately owned computer company in Seattle. I have pretty much turned the business over to my son. I am still active in the financial area of the company.

Q: Speaking of your son and your daughter, when you were raising them, did you tell them about what you went through?

A: Ver – not too much. My son was never too much interested in it. My daughter was very much interested. And when my daughter went to the University of Washington, she decided she wanted to join a sorority. And I never pushed it or anything, she decided she wanted to join the AEPhi, which was a Jewish sorority. And she has taken a lot more interest in what we went through, and even now she is very much interested. I think she belongs to some kind of a Jewish friendship club here in Washington, D.C., where she is living.

Q: Did you r-raise your children Jewishly?

A: No, I did not, as a – neither m – none of my family were that Jewish and we – well, I do consider myself Jewish, but I am not a religious person. And of course my wife, being Japanese was not Jewish and is also not religious, that we let our kids do their own. And my daughter leans very much towards the Jewish religion, rather than anything else.

Q: Are your children bilingual?

A: My son is not. He never picked up the other language, even though at home we spoke Japanese. My son can understand Japanese, not everything. He can understand his mother, but other Japanese he can't really understand. But my daughter is very much bilingual. In high school she studied German and could communicate very well in German. And in Japanese, her Japanese now is much better than my Japanese. She – most of her clients – she works as a consultant for a company and all of her clients, not most – most of her c – yes, most of her clients are Japanese. She does have one client in London and I think she has two different clients

in Spain, where she has visited. But most of her clients are in Japan, and of course, she speaks it. And the strange thing is, to Japanese, my daughter does not look Japanese, she looks more American, more Caucasian. And when she speaks Japanese to the Japanese, they are just flabbergasted because she does not speak like a foreign, like an American Japanese, she speaks like a native Japanese.

Q: Are there any sights or sounds today, or smells that remind you of your wartime experience, that kind of triggers a memory?

A: Well, a good experience is in Seattle just about three weeks ago. Again, like I say, I'm still in the computer business today. One of the things we do is we host websites. The – we have a election coming up very shortly in Seattle, one of them is for mayor. A man that's running for mayor is presently the city attorney, who happens to be Jewish, and we are hosting his website. And his website is Sidran for Seattle mayor dot org, dot com, we've used all of them. Well somebody who doesn't like him put up another website and called it Mark Sidran dot com, which is this – this attorney who is running for, his first name. Well, his website is only Sidran for Seattle mayor because Mark Sidran was already taken. Well, that website has a huge swastika, and compares Mark Sidran as a – a Nazi, as an SS. And it's somebody that is upset with him. And that – seeing that swastika bothers me more now than it did when I saw it every day and lived with it in Germany during the regime. Another time – and I refuse to go back to Munich, Germany – I – a few years ago I had a client in Munich and we were doing big business, really, with each other. And finally – and we always talked over the phone, always in English. This was, of course, back quite some time, before email really, where we sent faxes. We sent faxes back and forth, always in English. And in 1979 I visited him in person. And we had a appointment at 15 minutes before 12 at his place. I got there at 15 minutes before 12, told his

receptionist who I was, and she said yes, I'll let Mr. – I forgot his name now – I'll let him know. And so I waited, and then I asked the receptionist, in English, she spoke pretty good English, I spoke no German at the time. And ask him well, does he have somebody with him, is he busy? She says no, but he must be busy, but he'll be out. And at exactly 12 o'clock – and at exactly 12 o'clock he comes out and he starts speaking German to me. Herr Taucher, and used the German pronunciation and didn't say I'm sorry or anything. And I spoke in English. And he didn't even know I spoke engli – German. We never before spoke German, it was strictly a business relationship in English. He spoke very good English when we talked over the phone. His communication in English and on faxes was excellent. And I said, don't you s-speak English? You know, we've been communicating – yes, bu – and in German he answers, but you are in Germany, you have to speak German. So I finally said, okay, I'll play your silly game. In German. Of course, that startled him. And the next thing he says, oh it's 12 o'clock, I have to go lunch. Well, thanks for stopping in. I said goodbye, and I have never communicated with this guy. And we gave him on an average of 70 to 80,000 dollars, U.S. dollars, a month in business. And we gave it to somebody else. And I have found other times in Munich, that is the mentality I find in Munich. Anyplace else, and that includes eastern Germany, I have not found that. The people say in eastern Germany you have a lot of anti-Semitism and so forth, I have not found that myself in eastern Germany. In Munich, yes, I can see kids even, 17 – 18 year old kids giving the Hitler youth – I-I mean, the Hitler salute. That is completely illegal and in Berlin, in east Germany that's not permitted and they get arrested. In Munich the police turns around. And I see the Nazi mentality all over again in Munich, and I refuse to go back to Munich.

Q: What does that do to you?

A: It – it hurts me, it bothers me. And again, if I were younger, I would probably get myself in trouble. But I – I will say my training in judo and karate does teach you discipline, and you don't start a fight. But I-I am afraid in my younger days, I could have lost myself. It does bother me.

Q: Do you think about your experien – your wartime experiences now often, more often?

A: Yeah. I do. What – when I really we – in fact, that's the first time in many, many years that I have nightmares is when I took Patricia, who you met, with me to Berlin last year, and I took her to the SS headquarters, the old SS – SS headquarters. In fact, that was Himmler's headquarters, where they also had the torture chamber. And they had some records of me, and I was asked to give a taped interview there. And the first thing, of course I asked, why do you want it for? What do you want it? And this gentleman who I talked to, he was in his middle 30's, I'd say, he says, well there's so much denial going on in Germany that we want to get interviews from people that have been here, whether they were Jewish or not Jewish. There were a number of Germans that were also arrested and tortured there, and we'd like to interview every one of them, and then we are s-spreading those tapes through high schools throughout Germany. So, of course I agreed to that interview and I had probably a 45 minute interview there, all in German, so that high school kids can fully understand it.

Q: I wanted to ask you before about that experience. How is it that you did not release any information when they were questioning you? You were so young.

A: I think it's – I first knew that if I released information, my mother and my brother would also be caught. I knew that first of all. Second, every time when I was ready to talk, they tortured me so much that I passed out. And when I came to again, again I passed out. I mean, there were times, I've told you some of them, like pulling teeth, filling teeth without any medication. Other times I remember they had me jump in a bathtub full of ice cubes, full of ice, and then

immediately go out in very hot water, and – which, I passed out. And it – things like that. Some of it I – I don't even want to talk about it, it's just – but when I did visit that place with Patricia, they make – made a memorial out of it now, maybe you're aware of that, I had nightmares for the next two or three nights in the hotel. Yeah, they really brought back the memories like it happened.

Q: Are there any smells that – that stimulate mem – are any smells that stimulate you?

A: Occasionally so-some things maybe – you smell something, maybe there was a dead animal around in a real hot climate. Yes, that – that does remind me, but I try to wipe it out of my mind. But yes, occasionally that has reminded me, mostly of the train. And even – I'll say it, even smelling dog feces, that reminds me of the train.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher. This is tape number four, side A, and we were talking about sounds and sights that – that trigger memory for you. Anything else that you wanted to include?

A: No, that's really – I believe again the smell sometimes of dead animal or what I said earlier is probably the only thing that – or when I see a swastika. Yeah, when I see a swastika, it's – it immediately reminds me – it reminds me of Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse neun, or nine, the torture chamber, what I call. It does remind me. And another thing is, like I said, it does remind me right here at the Holocaust Museum, when I am in front of that train, I cannot step foot. I've been reminded of this when I visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and they have that train up there on the stand. And that train that they have there looks just identical to the train that I was in. And I did have some nightmare that night at the hotel in Jerusalem. The rest of it, I can go – another thing I cannot do, I have actually visited the camp in Dachau once, and really I didn't have too many problems visiting it. It did give me an idea had I been out of the train what I – what it would have been like. And I was able to visit that. When I visited Prague a year ago for the Child Survivors of the Holocaust Conference in Prague, they had tours to Theresienstadt and also to Auschwitz. I could not go there. I decided not to go, because I lost a lot of my family in both of those places. Was some first in Theresienstadt and then in Auschwitz. And I decided there's no way I could go inside Auschwitz. So I chose not to take that tour. And th – I think in Prague, being in Prague and going through the Jewish cemetery there, even though I had no relatives in Prague, but it sure brought back memories.

Q: When you ju – got off of the train car in Dachau, did you see any part of the camp?

A: Well, I jo – only – I'm sorry – I only see the front, with a gate there, freiheit – Arbeit macht freiheit. I did see some people walking, mostly Nazis. I do remember seeing two or three people walking, I saw dead people. And of course some of them couldn't – no, I don't think the camp was really bombed. I think the – the allies and both – the Russians did not bomb the camp. And of course at that time they flew very low. I mean, there were some times when I was still in the train I thought the airplanes were going to land on top of the train. I mean, you could hear how close they were. And – but I saw – I can remember there were soldiers and I saw a few striped jackets, which were prisoners, but that's about all I remem – remember of inside the camp. And I think there were only a few privileged prisoners, I think, that could be close to the gate for some reason or another. But other than that I do not remember. But like I say again, I jumped off the train and then immediately followed all those Russian soldiers which was crossing the train going the other direction.

Q: Would you be a different person today, do you think, if you hadn't had the childhood that you did?

A: I don't think so. I think I probably wouldn't be as active in non-profit organizations that I am. But I don't think so. In fact, this bother me now, I hear kids in trouble, kids taking dope and so forth, drugs. And I feel the media is excusing the kids because they have come from broken homes or bad parents and so forth. I think it's still the child that wants it that way. I just cannot put all the blames on the parents. I think – I think the news media helps make the kids blame their parents. And they don't have to do what they are doing. I interviewed one time a former service man for a job, and he started talking that he took dope when he was in Vietnam, but you know how it is like in wartime? And I just had to take, and everybody else took dope. And I said listen, I've gone through a war too, in Korea, and not in Vietnam, but als – also si – was a

prisoner in a concentration camp, and I never dreamed of taking dope. That's not an excuse and I – I can't use you here in my company. And I didn't spend any more time. It a – I just wouldn't buy it. Yes, there are some kids that were abused by their parents or so – gran – or foster parents or what have you, but still some of it, it's up to the ki-kid. And I don't think I became a criminal. And – and people have asked me, well how come you have made something of yourself? And why do other kids get in trouble? I have no answer for it, but I do know that they don't have to be it.

Q: Do you seek out other survivors as friends and do you – if you meet one, do you feel a connection?

A: Yes, I definitely do. Yes, I do. I know what they've gone through and they know what I've gone through, yes. But a lot of survivors, again, they hold a – I don't know if it's a grudge, but they don't want to forget it, they want to live with the past. And I say hey, you don't want to forget it, but don't live with the past. Live with what it is now. A good example is we talked about – earlier about Lüneburg, and this recuperation camp put on by the British. There is one lady, Dodie Jacobson, I believe her – is her name. She fo-found me in Prague, when we were in Prague and we were at a workshop where we talked about our experiences during the war. And nobody wanted to speak up, and so I was the first to speak, and I was telling my story in Berlin, and my brother and I survived, etcetera. And all of a sudden this one lady, Dodie, interrupted, and she says, were you in Lüneburg? And I said yes, my brother and I were there. And she went hysterical, because she is one that was in Lüneburg with us. And she was never in a concentration camp, but lived in horrible condition in hiding. And today she has never gotten married, doesn't want to, can't get along with people. And again, she said it right at this workshop, she – there is – she – it's still from her time in Germany. She doesn't really want to

make good friends with anybody very long. And again I say, Dodie, these are different times. You gotta live with what's now. But she doesn't want to do it. And too many of the survivors live that way, which I think is wrong.

Q: Some say that they feel like two different people, one on the outside to the outside world, and a different person on the inside. Do you feel like that too?

A: Yeah, I do not feel that way, but I do – many of them that do feel that way, and I feel it's wrong. You have to – for instance, I do not hold any prejudice towards the younger generation German, except the ones that – those neo-Nazis. And s – but of course, we have them right here in the U.S. But the younger generation, the – the people 50 years old, even 60 years old and younger, I really don't have any grudge against them. They couldn't do anything about it, they were too young then. Most of them knew what was going on, but they didn't know how bad it was and they couldn't do anything. The people older than me, 72 years old, let's say, and older, they could have done something about it. And those I just – I can't be friends with them. I have a tough time talking to them. But you have to get over it. You don't have to be friends, but you can't just hold a grudge against the younger generation that couldn't help it.

Q: When you walk down the streets in Germany, I guess excluding Munich, do you feel comfortable?

A: Yes, I do. In fact, I can tell you another example that really surprised me. Two years ago when I was in Berlin, and as a – at the invitation of Berlin; they paid for my trip, they put me up at the Crown Plaza Hotel, that's a block off the Kurfürstendamm, one of the main thing of it, like Times Square. And wh-while we were having dinner there was a big party going on in the main ballroom. And I'm a curious kind of a person and I looked in, and I see a lot of people with a yarmulke on. So I kind of walked in and I asked somebody there, he was about 19 years old, with

a yarmulke, and I spoke German with him and I said, what's going on here? He said, this is a Bar Mitzvah. Do you know what a Bar Mitzvah is? I said yes, and I told him that I lived in Berlin all through the war. I didn't tell him I was in a concentration camp, I said I am an American now, but I am Jewish. And I asked him, how does it feel for a Jewish person like you, especially your age, living here in Berlin? And he looked at me kind of strange, he says, I am a German, he said. I am a German, I am a – Jewish is my religion. And that's how some of the Jewish community thinks today as a – that generation, the 19 years and younger generation. They consider themselves German and Jewish. Of course, Jewish is a religion and j – they should consider themselves as such. But that they just come right out and say, I'm German, Jewish is my religion. It really – it almost shocked me.

Q: What were your thoughts during the Eichmann trial?

A: What my thoughts were, hang him. Just don't waste the time. Everybody know – the world knows he was as guilty as could be. And sometimes – I don't believe in capital punishment, I guess, but Eichmann or any of those, definitely. Don't waste the time and money to keep them alive. That's how I felt.

Q: What are your attitudes towards food?

A: To – towards food?

Q: Towards food. You – you went through times of terrible hunger.

A: Right.

Q: Did it affect your attitude today?

A: It affects my attitude towards food. First of all I've said to myself a long time ago, that was all the lack of food I've had and where I've had to eat practically dirt, I ate food that we didn't know was poisonous or not, like plants, I have said I'm only going to eat food that I like. I'm not going

to do – eat food that I don't like. For instance, I never could get used to Oriental food, whether it's Chinese, Japanese, or what. Even though I was married to a Japanese for over 40 years, I refused to eat Japanese food. I have customers in Japan, I do go to Japan. Every one of my customers know that I will not eat Japanese food and they take me to western foods. I'm a very fussy eater and I just refuse to eat food that doesn't agree with me or I don't like. That's my attitude on food.

Q: Do you feel very safe here?

A: Yes, I do. I do. I don't care what area I am in, I do feel safe. I just – I've never had a problem. Yes, in my younger days I did need judo once when somebody tried to rob me, and I was able to defend myself, keep my property. I did break this – I was going to say gentleman, he was not a gentleman – break his arm. And afterwards the police – tha-that was in Chicago and one of the detectives from the Cook County police department called me in Seattle and asked me how much I weighed, how tall I was. And I could almost see a smile through this detective's face over the phone. What happened, the guy that tried to rob me was 180 pounds and six foot tall, and I broke his arm, and his lawyer said I used unnecessary roughness. But I was a little younger at that time, too. But I do feel safe, but part of it is probably due to my training.

Q: We talked about this before, and maybe just to revisit it again, talking about whether or not you were angry that people your age in the United Sta – Jews in – your age in the United States were safe, and yet your life was in danger and you had these terrible losses. Does that anger you today?

A: No, it does not. I have absolutely no anger towards that. What does anger me a little bit, and that is for instance, the ship the Saint Louis that was turned back to their death, so to speak. Even the German skipper wanted to go someplace where he could – he could free the people, and that

the U.S. did not admit them, that angers me. And again, while a lot of people, especially Jewish people – I know my cousins thought the world of Franklin Roosevelt. Well, I still blame him. He could have stopped all of that. He could have saved millions of Jews. And so I'm angry towards that. But other than that, no, I am not angry. But I'm angry, again, for anyone that could have been saved by the U.S., and di – wasn't. In fact, my brother – my brother, my father, my family should have been permitted to come to the U.S., without money. And again, I do not know, I was too young, I don't know if my father ever contacted the American consulate in Berlin, I do not know. But I think even if he had, I don't think he could have gotten out, he didn't have the money. And that does anger me.

Q: When your children were the ages that you were from let's say six to 12, you know –

A: Right.

Q: – during those difficult times, did that make you think even more of the – of your experiences, when they were going through the same age di – that you were?

A: I don't know if I can say that, I don't think so. I, of course remember what has happened, I think about it. I think about it right here in this building and of course this interview here. But other than that I try not to think about it. Of course I'm talking about it more than I used to. I have spoken to Rotaries, and like I say, I've spoken to the military. And it's much easier to talk about it now than it used to be.

Q: Wh-Why is that?

A: Maybe time and age. And I have gotten used to talking about it and feel it is necessary that the world still knows. I have found too many young people, educated people that know so little of what has happened. In fact, some of these people even believe what they read on the internet, that it didn't happen. And that's when I started to talk about it more, and that's why it's a lot

easier to talk about it now. Even today as we were talking there were some times, I don't know if you noticed, I was getting choked up a little bit. And that I can't help. But at one time I just could hardly talk, th – I had to take a break and couldn't talk about it. But now it's – it's not like that any more.

Q: Did your experience affect how you and your wife raised your children?

A: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. My wife – my ex-wife was very good in raising the children, and part of it is the Japanese culture too. And I'm very proud of both of my kids. And I have to give her the credit for it because I was starting a business and spent not enough time with the kids. And that's probably part of the fault why we ended up in a divorce that should have been much longer ago than it has. But I will – I definitely will give her the credit that our kids were raised properly and never have gotten into trouble. And of course I'm very proud of both of my kids.

Q: Do you feel a connection to Germany? Do you – do you feel German?

A: Not at all, I am an American, and I feel a very loyal American. If I were to be asked by the U.S. Army, or any U.S. military force, to serve in the military again due to some emergency, I would not say no. I would be ready to do it and I know my brother would go do the same thing. I-I definitely feel my allegiance is to the U.S. and not to Germany. And of course, I also feel very strongly about Israel, but I'm still an American more than an Israelite.

Q: What – what are your thoughts about Israel?

A: What my thoughts is, I hope someday there will be peace there. I feel very good that finally there is a country that Jews can live there, and hopefully again sometime in peace. I visited Israel for my first time in 1998, when Israel was celebrating their 50 year independence. I represented

the mayor of Seattle. And I was – it was quite an experience to be in Israel. I enjoyed visiting it and I do hope to visit Israel again. I feel it is part of me, but still, my country is the U.S.A.

Q: Were you active in the Civil Rights movement, or – ve – well, because you lived in a country where people's civil rights were denied?

A: No, I was never active in the Civil Rights. Again, I was too young, and of course – well, I don't know if you ever heard of The White Rose?

Q: Yes [inaudible]

A: Then you know I mean. These were Germans, and they were all executed. In fact, I think they were first tortured at the same place I was at, and then hung at Plötzensee, which was the place where the – where the gallows were where they hung the Germans that didn't go along with the regime or helped Jews or so forth.

Q: A-And what is the connection? We were talking about your activity in the Civil Rights mov –

A: Well, I was not – I was not active. I was just saying the people that were active did not live very long.

Q: No, no, no, I – that's not what I meant. I meant, were you active in the Civil Rights movement in the United States, because you had lived in a country that deprived others of civil rights. Did you – was this something that you've worked towards as an adult?

A: As an adult, no, I was not active. I think – I think you're going back to the 1960's and 70's. First of all, in Seattle, we did not have the problems there that you have had in other parts of the country. For instance, we've had Afro-American mayors in s – in – in Seattle. Exec – the present county executive is a – is a black man. And lately here we've had a few more problems, but that is because we get these activists coming in, not even from Seattle, that demonstrate on – any time there's something going on, starting when we had that WTO there. And these are people

that were – are actually being paid to demonstrate. And – but lately we ni – didna – we have not had good leadership in Seattle. The mayor, even though – the present mayor, even though I supported him, Paul Schell, is not very strong. The previous police chief, the present police chief is not very strong. And if anything I am an activist now to get those people out. And again I'm very much up within the city councilor, like I said earlier, I'm sort of on the sister city council of Seattle and I know most of the politicians.

Q: So you are active in the political life of your city?

A: In the political life, yes, I am very active in the political life.

Q: Why is that?

A: Well, probably it goes back because about 30 years ago the former governor of the state of Washington, Albert D. Rosellini and I became good friends, strictly through my C.P.A. And my C.P.A. is a Sephardic Jew, also speaks Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, he speaks about seven languages. And the former governor is an American, but he is from Italian parents. In fact, a book has been written on him. And my C.P.A., Victor Barkey(ph) introduced me to Governor Rosellini, and they have been long, long friends, and they always speak Italian together. And over the years Governor Rosellini and I have become very close friends. And he is the man – again probably because I am in the computer business and I did mailings for candidates and so forth.

Q: So it's not because you were aware of what can happen when a political system goes awry?

A: No, definitely not, it is just that I helped in the political party and some of them – right now yes, I'm very active to get Mark Sidran elected as mayor, because first of all, he is Jewish and he tries to eliminate demonstration that shouldn't be there. Again, people like – that put up that

swastika, and he's definitely, of course, against that, and he is against, naturally, anti-Semitism. And lately we have seen a little bit of that in Seattle.

Q: What does that do to you?

A: It bothers me. And again, that's why I'm very much in support of Mark Sidran for mayor. And hopefully he will have a police chief that can do the right thing.

Q: When you see pictures of victims in Rwanda or the Sudan, what does that do to you?

A: That bothers me, definitely.

Q: Because of your childhood?

A: I'm sure it is, and again I say why does that happen? Again, I was all for the U.S. to help out with troops over there. I didn't like the way it was taken out. And again, i-it bothers me, is just like the U.S. could have helped many million of Jews being saved. And why they aren't helping out further bothers me. I don't like what happened in Iraq. I think they – it was good for us to be in there, but why not get rid of the main cancer in Iraq, which is still over there. And those things bother me.

Q: Do you think you are more sensitive to that than those of us who did not grow up in Europe?

A: I'm sure I am, I'm sure I am. I know a lot of people, including Jews in Seattle that did not like us going into Rwanda or Iraq and so forth. They say why should we get involved? I said, the same reason we should have been involved to save Jews. And some of them, like I say, even other Jewish people I know, were against that.

Q: Do you speak publicly about your experiences?

A: Yes, lately I have. I have spoken to two different rotary clubs in the Seattle area. I spoke to the troops in Fort Lewis, mostly officers. In fact, had a long talk afterwards with the assistant commanding general of Fort Lewis, a two star general. And yes, I do talk about it.

Q: Why?

A: Again, like I say, it cannot be forgotten and the people, so many of the younger generation, are not learning enough in s-schools. And I'm talking about even college students do not know enough about it, and they should know. And that's why it feels very important, people like me, survivors of the concentration camps, should speak publicly. And in Seattle now, we have the Holocaust Education Center, and they get the requests for speakers and I am signed up as a speaker.

Q: Do you – have you been to any conferences?

A: Yes, I attended the Child Survivors of the Holocaust Conference in Prague, and was the chairman of that ho – Child Survivors Conference of the Holocaust in Seattle, that we had last September. And the – prior to this I did not, as my ex didn't want me to go to any of that. But – and now I plan to go, as long as I'm healthy, I plan to go to every one. The next one is in Houston in October, and the following year it'll be in Montreal. And right now I'm not at liberty to say there's another city in another state that wants to have a conference. And they have asked me to help them organize it because they were in – the main organizers were in Seattle, and – and again, that state has very few survivors, which of course Washington state has, and I put on, I feel, a fairly decent conference.

Q: How is it that you got to be the one to put on the conference?

A: Well, first of all, the people in Seattle know what I've been very active. I serve on the United States Olympic Committee, and we put on several fundraisers that I have headed. And incidentally, Governor Rosellini is the head of the U.S. Olympic Committee for Washington state. I have also been involved in professional associations where I have put on conferences here. At that time data processing management association, of which –

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: – museum volunteer collection interview with Fred Taucher, and this is tape four, side B, and you were talking about putting on conferences.

A: And anyhow, some of the people in Seattle, the survivors and so forth, knew that I had been very active in different activities, putting on conferences and banquets and so forth. When I was in Prague, at the conference there, I was asked if Seattle could put th – on the conference, since initially it was scheduled for Vancouver, B.C., about a two hour drive from Seattle. And if – they cancelled the Vancouver consom – conference, but still wanted it, and then asked if we could put it on in Seattle. And I said, if I can get the proper facilities, yes. And so I found the proper facilities and then I got the survivors – child survivors of the Holocaust in Seattle, there were about eight or nine of them. And I presented that, and with the exception of two people that dropped out, they asked me to be the chairman of it. And that's how it came about that I headed that conference.

Q: And obviously you feel a connection to these other child survivors.

A: Oh, I certainly do. And we – we meet monthly. And we're just a small group, but we do meet monthly and kind of talk about how we survived and what we can do.

Q: Are you proud of yourself that you were able to make a life after such a difficult childhood?

A: Yes, I am. I am very proud of what has happened, and some of it I blame my parents for it. I mean, they tre – they raised us – and I'm saying rus – us, my brother and I, the proper way, even as young as we were. And I am proud of my accomplishments and I am proud of my brother's accomplishments. Be – being – going in as a private recruit in the army, no college education, working up to a field grade officer, which a major is, he can be proud of himself, and I am proud of him.

Q: Did he marry?

A: Well, he actually has been – he's on the third marriage right now. And as you probably know, a lot of survivors do have troubles staying married, but he now is married to a girl from s – originally from Scotland, and they've been married now for about 22 years.

Q: Does he have children?

A: He has one daughter from his very first mar – marriage, which he never should have married, and then he has two boys from his second marriage. I think he is somewhat in contact with one of the boys. And he has two children, a boy and a girl from his present marriage.

Q: Oh. Did you, when you c – came to this country, try to stay in touch with Frau Noelting?

A: Yes, we did, we wri – have written to her, but e – I think she wrote back once, and it was a very disturbing letter. She still – she was just as upset when we left Germany, and also wrote to us. First of all, she criticized the ge – the poor spelling and so forth, and grammar we used in German. Of course, we had a second and third grade education. So of course our writing skill wasn't very good in German. [sneeze] Bless you.

Q: Thank you.

A: And she criticized that and she really criticized us going to the U.S. And I think we did answer her, but we never heard anything from her. Now, my brother, when he was stationed as a military soldier – in fact I think he was a lieutenant or a captain at that time in the army – excuse me – and he was stationed in Heidelberg, he did visit Trowta(ph) Noelting, the stepdaughter, and they did get together. And I think they had a very good get together, and I think it was shortly after Frau Noelting had passed away, and they talked about her. She – she was very old in age, and really didn't want to die, but she knew she was dying.

Q: So your only contact with Frau Noelting was that one letter, and then her return –

A: That's what I can remember, and I'm pretty sure my brother will agree to that.

Q: And then what was your connection with Werner Nathan?

A: Again, I actually visited him with my ex-wife in New Jersey. And again, it must have been – I was an officer in the Data Processing Management Association and we had a convention in New York, that my ex went with me. And that must have been in '69 or '70 and we went to visit him, but then I lost track. I n – lost track of him once when I went to Korea in the army, but then I found his address again and actually was able to look him up. And he was doing very well, he had a very successful ber – furniture business. We went to his house. In fact, he picked us up at the airport, I think, in a new Cadillac at that time, I remember it. And he was very well off. But then again we lost track. Again I was in the midst of building a business and spending too much time in the business and didn't take time to write. And then I know I had written him again maybe six months or a year later and the letter came back and no forwarding address. So – and that's when we lost track. And he may be – may have moved out of Newark. But I have tried to look it up on the internet, but unless they have a listed phone number, you can't find them.

Q: Do you receive reparations?

A: No. And this is again one of my reasons that I'm going to Germany next month. It's one thing – first of all I play to reestablish my German citizenship. I have found out a lot of survivors, especially in our new group here, have rees – established their citizenship and I know some people are getting as much as 1100 dollars a month pension from the German government.

Q: When you say your new group, what do you mean?

A: The group that we have formed, each state has formed their own little group, a survivor's group and then we are combining it as the Holocaust Survivor Foundation, and all the various other groups. For instance, in Seattle we have formed the Survivors of the Holocaust Asset

Recovery Project. And we are going to join as an affiliate. We're still separate corporations, but we will be part of the Holocaust Survivors Foundation. And a number of these people, they are all elected officials from their own state, just like I am president of the Washington state group. And – and a lot of these people have reestablished their German citizenship because now in the U.S., dual citizenship is permitted. And by reestablishing the German citizenship, there is a chance to recev – receive a pension. And I'm going to take every penny I can get out of the German government.

Q: Why?

A: Well, they took too much away from my parents and from me, and I think I have a moral right to get some monies out of – I can live without it, I don't need the money, but I think morally it's right for me to get some money.

Q: What are your thoughts about Holocaust survivors today who are indigent or in – in dire straights?

A: Well, this is – I have a real problem with the – you have the Claims Conference, that has received billions of dollars. In fact, the U.S. government gave them four million dollars. And the – there are people, especially in Miami that are living out on the street and begging for food, that are concentration camp survivors and not receiving any money. We had, at our meeting two days ago, we had Gideon Taylor, the – I guess the s – executive vice president from the Claims Conference talking and say well, half of the survivors are living in Israel, and the Claims Conference also has to look out for the people living in Israel. And we have built memorials. Well, we don't want memorials. We want money for the people that need it the most, and so we are trying to do something. And first of – also, the Claims Conference is made up of mostly self appointed people that are not Holocaust survivors. And it should be Holocaust survivors that do

the distribution of the funds. And that's what we are working on right now, even if – if it's necessary, we will sue the Claims Conference. And they have to release some money because our people are dying. I have the 1999 tax return from the Claims Conference. Oh, I didn't bring it with me. I didn't bring it with me, but where they had, in the 1999 return, they had a profit, or income of over 247 million dollars. And yet they don't have money to pay the people that need it the most. That is not right. And Mr. Gideon Taylor, the executive director, in 1999 his salary was 184,000 dollars, plus 35,000 dollars in benefits, I don't know what those benefits are, plus expense money that we don't know how much. That shouldn't be. And we are, our group is trying to do something about it, and that's why we met here in Washington last November, and just this week. So in fact, I think you said you were at the – at our meeting place.

Q: Do you think the world has learned any lessons from the Holocaust?

A: I'm afraid not. I am hoping that they did, but did they really? Look what was going on in Yugoslavia. Even going back to Cambodia, the killing fields in Cambodia. I don't think they have learned, but I don't think anything has been as bad what it was through the – during the Nazi regime.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: Well, were six million Jews – people tortured and murdered. Children put to death. Yes, there were a lot of them, but I don't think that many. And forced in sof – put into forced labor until they couldn't stand up any more and then murdered. I think when they were murdered, they were murdered a little more quickly than what the Germans did. But a – a lesson learned? No, I'm afraid not. And again, it will take countries like the U.S., Great Britain or other free countries to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Q: When we were walking in the museum, we saw these young high school students outside. What lesson would you like to pass on to those young people who were standing in line?

A: When you see things like this happen, don't let it happen. If you are in military age and you get asked to serve in your military in – of your country, which appear to be American, U.S., serve, and serve proudly. I feel very strongly again, about the Vietnam war. It was wrong, we all know it was wrong. But for every American that refused to serve, somebody else went and died for it. While Bill Clinton, I thought, forgetting some of his personal problems, as a president he did a fairly good job. He was a real friend towards Israel and the Jews. But I never voted for him and never would vote for him, strictly because he said when he was 13 years old, I think, he said he was going to be president of the U.S.A. someday. And somebody, with that being in mind, avoiding the draft, going to a foreign country, and demonstrating against his own county – country about the Vietnam war, does not deserve to be a president. And that's why I never voted for that man. Like I said just earlier, every American man that refused to serve, somebody else went and died for it. Look at me, I was in the U.S. for five years, getting out of hell, but I served my country, and I was proud to serve. My brother served this country, and proud to serve, both of us as officers.

Q: You said that you – earlier on that you lost your childhood, you weren't a little boy after awhile. Did you ever get that childhood back?

A: No, no, that's – that's gone forever. I will say that when my brother and I first came to the States and lived in Kansas City, we for some reason started loving watching cowboy movies. We'd go all over Kansas City, if there was a cowboy movie on like a Roy Roger, or Gene Autry, Johnny McBrown, I can still remember some of those names, we loved to watch those movies.

And maybe that's maybe coming back a – a childhood where kids maybe at the age of 10 would love that. We were 13 and 14 and we loved those movies.

Q: Did you t-talk about your parents with your brother once you got to the United States? Is it still a topic of conversation?

A: Yes, at first we definitely did and we always for many years thereafter. We talked about it, we wondered where our mother was. And probably my brother more so than I, that I quit talking about it. We talked about our mother and father and he would start crying. And for some reason I – I would not – I – I mean, maybe mentally I was stronger than he was, I am not sure.

Q: Is – is it that he's more emotional that you?

A: He – he is more –

Q: What – what do you attribute the difference in response to your childhood?

A: I don't know. Again, maybe – I was younger and my brother was a year older and I think maybe he matured more – he was more mature in that respect than I was. A-Again, I can't really give you a full answer. But I remember more. And yet, when it came to memory of our parents, my brother was much more emotional than I was.

Q: Did he have more awareness of the danger that you were in, or do you think it was equal, that your awareness was the same as his?

A: We were both aware equally, but my brother was more a-afraid, more scared, not only of being caught by the SS or the Nazis, but also he was scared, very scared of the bombing. That frightened him, when he could hear the bombing, the artillery, the anti-aircraft. He was very, very frightened.

Q: Was it because of sound for – he was more sensitive to sound? You said he wanted to be a pianist. Do you think maybe the sound was more harsher for him?

A: You know, I never th – gave that a thought, but he is very musically inclined, and now is a very excellent pianist, incidentally. And I never gave that a thought, but maybe that's what it is. He – his sound is better. I mean, I tried to take a – violin lessons, but I'm just not musically inclined. But a – I don't know if that's it or not.

Q: Was he as physically strong as – as you?

A: Probably more so physically strong. Again, in sports, he was much better in sports than – than I was, especially in baseball. Too bad I bra – didn't bring it aga – along, I should ha – should make a picture. In 1947, the "Kansas City Star" had a picture of us both first coming to the U.S., to Kansas City, and we were playing baseball. I think my brother was a batter and I was a catcher.

Q: What did baseball represent to you?

A: America. And we learned how to play baseball very quickly. I was never very good at it and my brother was. I was a better swimmer, I – than my brother was. I think in – in sports my brother was much better than I was, except for swimming, which I could do better. I guess I am more in a individual sport like swimming and martial arts and so forth, while my brother was more in a team type of sports, like baseball.

Q: What are your children's names?

A: My son's name is Walter and my daughter's name is Audrey.

Q: Are they named after anybody specifically?

A: Walter was named after my uncle, who was a lawyer. No, I had two uncles by the name of Walter. One of them was a lawyer and one of them was a doctor – a – a dentist. And Audrey, her middle name we gave to – as Teresa, which was our mother's name. But actually, she thinks – she and her mother are very close, and she and I are very close and she doesn't hold our divorce

against each other. She – she understands her mother, and – but she did change her middle name to Cavanno(ph), my mother's maiden name. I mean, my wife's maiden name.

Q: Do you think that the – the interest in the Holocaust now is something that's permanent or just a passing –

A: No, I think it's permanent. Yeah, I think it's very permanent and my daughter is very much interested in it. When we had the conference in Seattle, the Child Survivors of the Holocaust, my daughter went to Seattle to participate in it. Because – I was probably one of the first to include second generation, much to the disagreement of the previous people from the Child Survivors. But I included quite a number of the second generation, I had seminars that both second generation and survivors could attend, because I found out some – a lot of the second generations wanted to be involved and hear from other survivors than just their parents. And so I did include a number of activities the second generation, and my daughter did attend a lot of the sessions.

Q: Is there anything you wanted to talk about that we haven't touched on?

A: No, I think we have pretty much touched everything, and I have – really feel good being able to give my story. And I think we've covered anything, unless you think of anything else you wanted to cover.

Q: Do you feel that you've lived a normal life after the war, once you got settled?

A: Yes, I feel I lived a normal life. I am fortunate that I was able to build up a business with a very minimum education. A lot of my education is self study. I've led here lately a very comfortable life. I will say back in the 60's when I started the business, it was not easy. It was working 14 hours a day, seven days a week, sometimes not taking a paycheck but made sure all employees got paid. But lately I've lived a very comfortable life and I think I can live the rest of

my life comfortably. And again, like I say, I enjoy traveling and I do quite a bit of it, and I just hope my health will hold out. But until it holds out, I'm going to enjoy life.

Q: Well, that's a wonderful note to end on. Thank you very much for doing the interview.

A: Sure, it's – really, I am glad I was able to talk about this.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Fred Taucher.

End of Tape Four, Side B

Conclusion of Interview