

Interview with Gunter Haimann
August 6, 2007

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Gunter Haimann**, conducted by **Gail Schwartz** on August 6th, 2007, in **Silver Spring, Maryland**. This is tape number one, side **A**.

What is your full name? Your full name, your name at birth.

Answer: That -- that's it.

Q: It --

A: My full name is **Gunter Haimann**.

Q: Do you have a middle name?

A: No.

Q: No. And that is the name you were born with?

A: That's right.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In **Koblenz, Germany**.

Q: And your date of birth?

A: January 26, 1922.

Q: Let's talk about your family, who -- the members of your family. Tell me about your parents.

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A: My -- my fa -- my -- my parents are very -- very ha -- very well -- big on my number -- on my number of people. The-They wonderful people, they were -- they were very good to me as a student. I went to a -- a [indecipherable] which is a -- German for a high school where -- where was whole lot of [indecipherable] months afterwards. Anyway -- but my parents took care of me all the time.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: **Max**, call **Maximilian Max**, and **L-Lillian Haimann**.

Q: Mm-hm. And where was your father born?

A: In **Kirchberg**. Is there -- a picture there of a si -- on the steep -- on the stoops, sitting there with the children. He was born in a little town in **Koblenz** which is a - - on -- what, 40 miles north of **Ko-Koblenz**.

Q: And your mother's name?

A: **Hirsch**, her last name hir -- hir --

Q: And her -- her first -- her first name?

A: Oh, alee -- **Lillian Haimann**, or ha-ha -- her name was **Hirsch** before.

Q: Mm-hm. And where was she born?

A: In a little town along the **Mosel** in **Budek**, which -- well, which is [indecipherable] little town, and still is little town.

Q: Mm-hm. And how did they meet?

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A: Don't know.

Q: And when -- th-then they got married, they met each other, what does your father do? What kind of work did your father do?

A: My father -- th-the earliest I can tell you about, that he worked with machines. He manufactured machines, including weighing machines for -- for bars and grills, and weight -- weight machines for people to get weighed on. And he traveled in -- in the area of **Koblenz** within -- within 50 miles, I would say. And he -- he was also a wounded li -- a wa -- a war veteran, as a German soldier, where his hand was completely crippled and he could -- he would not drive. That's about the only thing, he did everything else, but he was not be able to drive. And he was a very [indecipherable] person. He made a family wa -- very wonderful and close, and he ma -- made us [indecipherable] my mother was a -- a very correct lady. She had to go to her vacations like the German women did, and my father made sure that she got to the right places. It was a very nice family, and we had enough money to live in the very nice areas in -- in **Koblenz**.

Q: What street did you live on, do you remember?

A: What street?

Q: Do you remember the address?

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A: Yeah. I'm -- wa -- what I left, this was **Koblenz**, that's from a -- my father's house. This is his house. I saw -- I could draw another pictures of it after it was ruined by the dri -- American dri -- bombers.

Q: What street was your house on?

A: **Kleerstrasser. Kleerstasser 74.**

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And there was a [indecipherable] there's two, one, two, and he owned it with a fellow by the name of **Richel**, who is another Jewish fellow, who own -- owned the cigar store. So together they did a very nice -- had a -- had a very nice life. But [indecipherable] you know -- you know the ending.

Q: Yeah, we'll get to that. We'll get to that. Do you have -- I mean -- a brother?

Did you have a brother?

A: I have a brother who is four years younger.

Q: And his name?

A: **Ernest.**

Q: **Ernest.** So let's -- was the neighborhood a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews? It must have been if his -- that Mr. **Richel** was --

A: I wouldn't say Jews [indecipherable]. I don't think it was a very important thing at the time, and I remember.

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Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: It was a neighborhood which would -- had businesses and par -- apartments at the same time. It was still a small -- it's a small town. So the -- the -- the neighborhood, it cul -- it cul -- accu -- got accustomed to the **[indecipherable]** who lived there and the people who work there. Very calm neighborhood.

Q: Did you have a large extended family, aunts and uncles or grandparents nearby?

A: My father had three brothers and a sister, which lived not in **Koblenz**. They lived in co -- in **Düsseldorf**. And my -- my mother had a brother who lived in **Koblenz** who was in the wine business and he so -- he was probably -- he came over to this country as a refugee. His wife was not a Jewish woman, who was a Christian woman, but a very good one. A wonderful wom-woman, wonderful to us, and we were very close. They live here in **Broadway** in **New York**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And we had good times.

Q: How -- how religious was your family? Were they observant?

A: Pardon me?

Q: How religious was your family? Were they a very observant Jewish family?

A: I don't know what you mean.

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Q: Did your family -- it was a Jewish family, did you observe any Jewish holidays?

A: Oh yes. We -- we -- in -- generally we were Jewish people. We feel very, very Jewish, all this.

Q: Did -- did you belong to a synagogue?

A: As a -- as a young fellow, I -- I belonged to a yel -- yeah, a -- a -- a youth group. Not a **[indecipherable]** a religious one, but a youth group from -- formed by the chur -- by the -- by the -- the temple.

Q: So your family belonged to a temple?

A: Mm. No. Only me, sometimes.

Q: And did you observe Passover, or any of the holidays? Passover, or Hanukkah?

Did you observe any of those holidays at home?

A: Did I do any holi -- da -- what?

Q: Did you observe any of the Jewish holidays at home?

A: Yes. I observed the time where you had to **[indecipherable]** **ma-matzel**, we did. And some of the holidays, yes. It -- it -- it was -- it was forced on -- onto us by -- by -- by politics, to be closer to -- to your -- to your religion than you really were.

Q: Was your family a Zionist family? Were your parents Zionists?

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A: What? Are they what?

Q: Were your f -- parents Zionists?

A: Zionists?

Q: Yeah.

A: No. They were American at -- they were German people who lived in **Germany**, very happily and loved this country.

Q: How many generations back did your family live in **Germany**, do you know?

A: How far -- when do they come from someplace else, you mean? I think they came from **Spain**, but my knowledge is as -- very limited. I don't think I would -- can comment on it any further. That maybe the great-grandfather came from **Spain**.

Q: Now, growing up you went to public school?

A: Yes, I went to --

Q: You went as a little boy, as a little boy you went to public school with Jewish --

A: Public school for four years.

Q: Yeah, with Jewish and non-Jewish children?

A: Together, mixture.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: There was no -- no difference.

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Q: And any anti-Semitism?

A: None. Very little. I don't remember se -- se -- anti-Semitism from any one of my je -- friends in the class --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- until of -- ca -- became a **Hitler** neighborhood --

Q: Right.

A: -- you know, a political neighborhood.

Q: Yeah.

A: Then of course it changed completely.

Q: Yeah. So, if fre -- and the -- so then -- oh, up til 1933, when **Hitler** came into power, you had no --

A: No, no [indecipherable]

Q: -- no problems.

A: Even after that, it took awhile, only.

Q: Oh. All right.

A: He didn't just jump right in.

Q: Yeah. So you played with non-Jewish children.

A: Yes.

Q: And the teachers --

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A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. A-And --

A: And the soccer team had 11 people, and there isn't -- they didn't have that many Jewish player -- [indecipherable] players. No, there -- there was no -- no problem at all. All our friends were mixed. Friends were -- we went to each other's house, whether we were German or Jews, it was un -- unnecessary, i-i-it was never even mentioned until the **Hitler** youth br -- started, and then changed completely.

Q: What language did you speak at home, German?

A: **Koblenz, Germany.**

Q: German. So you felt very German, as a child?

A: I felt [indecipherable] I-I was very happy in ger -- happy in **Germany**. My father made ar-arrangements for me to have a fu-future life in this business he has. And -- you know, and the soccer teams were mixed with the -- with the different color -- different kinds of people from -- so thi -- it was a very nice place to live, specially **Koblenz**.

Q: What were -- what were your hobbies? Did you like to read, or did you like music, or sports?

A: What would you what?

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Q: Did you have any hobbies, growing up?

A: I c -- I can't think of any here. Schooling took a lot of t-time in
[indecipherable] Koblenz. First of all, the school tess -- took until about two,
three o'clock. And there was rel-religious schools were given to the different
religions, so we went to religious school, and the Jewish school in the temple.

Q: Oh.

A: A-And th-that was more or less part of the life.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And when the -- we had a Jewish holiday, all the Jewish people came out of the
-- to the markets, where they -- the temple was, and they send this -- they
[indecipherable] holi -- holi -- the holiday, and there was never any -- any sort of
danger, or [indecipherable] anything like that. It was completely fa -- until I came
over here, I didn't know what it was.

Q: Yeah. Well, so were you interested in sports? You said you played soccer.

A: I played -- I played soccer.

Q: Any other sports?

A: Soccer.

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Q: Just soccer, okay. And then, when did things start to change? When did conditions start to change for you? You -- you said when **Hitler** came into power in 1933, you didn't --

A: No, we didn't --

Q: -- you were 11 years old.

A: No, I -- I didn't know how serious it was, I couldn't know at my age.

Q: Right.

A: But I don't know whether my parents knew. My f -- my father said he didn't ac-act it. My father went to different places, he went in and he says, **heil Hitler**.

He felt, if that's the way they have to make a living, so they **heil Hitler** their good morning.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: He did that for awhile. He was a -- he was a very respected businessman.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And he had to build this house. This was quite an accomplishment for a man who came out a little town, to have a house like this. So my grandchildren got this house, they went over there, look at it.

Q: So -- so when was the first change that you noticed in your life, and what year?

You mentioned about --

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A: That I'm out of school. That was really the -- the beginning of it.

Q: Wh-Whe-When did that happen?

A: That -- that -- I'm not wanted in cla -- in school any more.

Q: How did you --

A: It's -- it's as early as I remember that I was not actually thrown out, but don't come back here. You know, you had to sing a song that the German ha -- hat -- the **Hitler** song, before every class. So it didn't even bother me at that time, because it was a song. But when we finally were thrown out, more or less right out of school, my mother says -- decided that was for me to get -- time to get out of the --

Germany.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It's too bad that she didn't have enough sense to -- to take herself out of there, too. They had a chance to go. My brother never came home, and he was four years younger, so -- those were tough years.

Q: You mentioned something about the **Hitler** youth?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was your experience with them?

A: They had -- they -- they took advantage of you. **Jude, Jude, Jude**, the name **Jude** was [indecipherable] how -- how are you, **Jude, Jude, Jude**, like a stinking

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dog. That's about the size of it. So we -- so you -- the only thing wa-was, had to get -- had I -- ha -- I was thrown out of school at that time.

Q: Who told you you couldn't come back to school, the teachers?

A: I think it must have been the -- the gymnasium [indecipherable]

Q: The -- the teachers?

A: Gi -- well, th-the gi -- the gymnasium [indecipherable] the one tha -- the -- the people who were in charge of that. They told us, out. And lot of the other schools, smaller schools were left -- left a little later, but that's when -- when -- when I -- my mo -- my mother and father thought it was time to go.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And let me just tell you one thing. My father did have a sister here in the **United States**, which were came -- which were -- came here in 1914, so she was already a -- a -- an American through and through. And she -- she thought it would be good for me to move. That's -- that's the beginning.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: But what -- but my parents never thought that it would -- there would ever come to the -- to term that the -- that they would have to leave there, or that they would do anything wrong. And when I finally -- when I finally -- let me finish the story?

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Q: Well, now, I'm -- I --

A: There is something to that. There -- when I finally came to -- that my father and mother were go -- coming, they went to **Stuttgart** and **Koblenz**, which is the -- the -- the seat of an American consulate, to apply for a visa and a -- a permit. Now my par -- when people here send the -- the necessary papers, they were not official enough to allow a family of three more to make a living here. So the American government decided that this is not the pla -- they -- they -- they cannot, without help from somebody else in ge -- in **America**, make a living here. So on that basis, they tried other places, and a lot of my friends, their parents came over. And they could never come out, and they were sen -- then sent to **Poland** in the concentration camp, and killed.

Q: Oh. How long did you stay in **Germany** after you couldn't go to school, and before you left?

A: I -- I think it was the -- within a month.

Q: It was a matter of months?

A: Yeah, it was already a matter -- a question to -- whether I should go or not go at that time. They knew that I had to go.

Q: Yeah, but I meant you were out of school just for a few months before you left for the **United States**, is that what you're saying?

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A: I'm -- I'm saying that the feeling that we have to get out was there.

Q: Yes.

A: So as soon as possible, I don't remember exactly the time schedule --

Q: Okay.

A: -- but she -- but they did the best that they -- they had to make the applications --

Q: Right.

A: -- to the consulate in the -- in the u -- in the **United States**. And I had to go to -- for the -- to **Stuttgart** where there's a counselor. And they gave me all the examinations and essay, and then they said you can go.

Q: Yeah. So you went to school til about 1936 --

A: Right.

Q: -- or early '37 --

A: Correct.

Q: -- okay. So what was your response at the age of 15 that you would have to leave your family? That's a tremendous --

A: Excitement.

Q: Excitement?

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A: Excitement. Yeah, I didn't realize the -- the real danger, I was really -- I'm too young -- I was either too young or too stupid. I couldn't understand it that why -- why I go by myself.

Q: But you weren't frightened to leave your family?

A: Pardon me?

Q: Were you afraid to leave your family?

A: No, not at all. I was not afraid. I-I-I was the kind of guy who lived -- I -- I used to go to bicycle riding for long distances. And I didn't feel that way at all. Matter of fact, when I came to here in this country, they s -- were surprised how easily I got along with the boys playing soccer, right in the middle of the -- **78th** Street, where we lived.

Q: So you were -- you would describe yourself as a very independent child when you were in **Germany**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, I was -- I -- I -- I -- the fr -- my friends were [**indecipherable**] all of -- all of them, were almost all gone. You know, the German friends which I had.

Q: Yeah.

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A: The German friends wouldn't talk to me any more after all, because the -- that was t-too dangerous.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: But this is --

Q: Did that bother you, when your German friends wouldn't talk to you?

A: I don't remember that, I don't remember. I don't remember anybody bothering me, but I don't remember.

Q: Do you remember you being -- feeling bad about that, that your German friends wouldn't talk to you?

A: No, I wish I would have -- I would feel that way, but I don't -- I didn't.

Q: You didn't.

A: They were human beings to me, they were boys, they were f -- played -- guys I played with, not guys I -- it was a -- it was a rough time in my life. And when I came over here, **United States** was not in good shape in 1900 -- in th-that time. Not a real good shape that they could afford so many people. So over here my parents -- when I came, my people who took me in, my -- there was a my -- an aunt of mine, didn't have the kind of money to really ta -- put me up. So in the beginning my father used to send 20 or 30 dollars whenever he got **[indecipherable]**. Then after awhile they -- he -- he didn't have any more money,

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and then all of a sudden I hear -- I don't hear any more at all. And that's how that -
- [indecipherable] to nothing, until I didn't find out that **Koblenz** was being
evacuated by the Jews. And I didn't know whether they're going to anywhere. But
all I found out later on that they were sent to **Poland**. And I found through
different organization, the Jewish organization, that they were sent to **Poland** and
they were killed there.

Q: Yeah.

A: I did get some money from **Germany**. If [indecipherable] is interested at all, I
got 5,000 dollars from -- from [indecipherable] because I -- my father owned that
house. That house was worth a lot of money. But at that time they were willing to
give -- give me five gra -- I was the only one left of the family, they were giving
me 5,000 dollars. I want to tell you what I did with it. I took my kids, when they
were about eight, I took them to **Germany**, show them where I was born. And
that's what I did with it.

Q: Yeah. Let's talk about when you left, how -- how you came over to the **United**
States. So your parents told you you'd be coming to the **United States** --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and you said you were excited. And ho --

A: I was excited is exactly right.

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Q: And where di -- how did you leave? What did you take with you?

A: That's also a little story. My father and mother took me to **Bremen**. I come to the -- to the -- to the barrier to go on the boat -- ship, and my par -- and they asked me what -- they ki -- the Germans spoke to me German, naturally I didn't speak anything English, and said, I guess you got all kinds of money and all kinds of stuff, in a joking way. I bet you're loaded here [**indecipherable**]. So I said, oh, I'm a real big shot, I have everything. So you know what he did? They took me on board, they took me apart. They took every piece of my clothes off. They took every piece of my clothes off, my shoes underneath, they took the shoes off, they thought there may be something underneath there. Would you believe that? And then I -- and I really -- I really was -- thought I was a joker. So that was a --

Q: What was the name of your boat?

A: The **Manhattan**. **SS Manhattan**, or the **SS Washington**, was two ships who were [**indecipherable**]. One was the **SS Washington**, one was the **SS Manhattan**. I don't know which one it was. Those two went back and forth.

Q: Yeah. And what did your parents say to you? Do you remember what you and your parents talked about when you were saying goodbye?

A: What you say?

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Q: Do you remember what you and your parents said to each other when you were saying goodbye?

A: My father said a prayer. They [indecipherable]. I -- I don't like to talk a --

Q: Okay.

A: And I don't remember it well, myself.

Q: Yeah. So then you were on --

A: I came in, I was on top of the boat, and I looked down, they were standing there, and [indecipherable] forget, I would forget.

Q: I'm sure. I'm sure.

A: It's a long time since I talked about this.

Q: Yeah. And then on -- who else was on -- who were the other passengers on this ship? Were there other children like you?

A: Oh yes, cu -- I don't remember the -- there was a lot of people who are im-im-immigrating into, Jewish, American, ger -- and Germans.

Q: Were there other children?

A: And my father spoke to some of them before I went on and [indecipherable] to -- to look out after me.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And because when I got here, somebody took me off the boat, who was an uncle. And a -- a person I -- p-person I didn't even know, but he was an uncle.

Q: And at that time you did not speak English?

A: No, not a word.

Q: Okay. And -- and then you -- you moved in with your relatives.

A: And then the excitement of the ship, and the -- and the -- to sit on -- to sit on the -- on -- on the boat and look at the -- at **Coney Island**. They were explaining to us **Coney Island**. You could see **Coney Island** from -- from the ship. And the excitement of the people br -- to go back to the **United States** in general, was immense. And I never forget that either, you know?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And they -- they made that tr-trip worthwhile, you know, I mean, at least. And I was -- my father gave it -- somebody, they must have given somebody money, because that man who was -- took care of me really well. Made sure I had enough to eat and stuff like that. Not that -- the Americans gave us plenty of ice cream. We never even had ice cream before we got there. An ice cream. And then being o-on the boat, there was a couple movie stars on the boat, so we watched **[indecipherable]** from the sides. It was the excitement.

Q: Were there other teenagers, other children?

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A: I think so. I don't remember. None I know of.

Q: Yeah.

A: None that I know of.

Q: And so you landed. What did **America** mean to you as a 15 year old boy? Do you remember what it meant to you?

A: Yeah, [indecipherable] **America** was like. I don't know, I don't know. I could -- I don't remember the -- the -- how I felt about it. It was excitement. In general it was the excitement. You know you are going to a free country, a free country where everybody gets fr -- is treated alike, and I can go to school again, an-and that somebody is going to take care of me. And not that these people wanted me so badly, but they took it for granted that that's part of their duty, that -- was a relative.

Q: Did you start school right away?

A: Right away. There I had a very good experience. I went to a neighborhood in **Queens**, and the lady in th-the -- the teacher ti -- tis a -- not the teacher, the superintendent, or what? Who is the --

Q: The principal?

A: The principal. The principal decided she's going to teach me English. So she took me up for an hour every day in class, and sh -- made me -- made me learn --

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play English. And the best English I learned on the -- on the soccer team. But how she took care of me, so at -- at the -- at the graduation she made a big speech about how well I adjusted to the American life. Which was not so hard to adjust to. You know, I lived in a nice -- a fairly nice neighborhood.

Q: And you were living with your relatives.

A: Yes, an -- an an -- an aunt.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Very nice people.

Q: Yeah. And then you went on to high school, and you were in high school?

A: I went to high school.

Q: What high school did you go to?

A: Sha -- jer -- **Franklin K. Lane**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: In **Queens**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And -- and when I -- I saw that I needed some more money because I was getting older, I went to night school in -- **Thomas Jefferson** in -- in **Brooklyn**, to be able to get enough money so I can have -- a-at least go to movies or something like that.

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Q: Uh-huh.

A: These were -- these people didn't -- they had enough money to help me, but they really didn't have enough money to take care of me.

Q: Di --

A: M-My uncles and aunts there. They were -- they were fairly well de -- I wouldn't say well-to-do. They were struggling.

Q: Mm-hm. And did you have a lot of American friends?

A: Only. That's all there was. The neighborhood I live there was no German kids in it, all amer -- Jewish and -- and Christian, everything.

Q: Uh-huh, mm-hm.

A: And we played to -- soccer together. It was a -- it was the -- it was somewhat what I used to have in **Germany** when I was little, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Gunter Haimann**. This is tape number one, side **B**. And we were talking about the fact that you had come to the **United States**, you were playing soccer, you had American friends, you went to high

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school, you were living with your relatives, and then you went on to -- you also went to night school. What were you studying in night school?

A: It was mostly English. I took German as a -- as a cla -- as a course to get good marks, because I spoke German pretty well. So that's what I had, but w-was mostly English and [indecipherable] geography, whatever it is -- had to be. It was enough -- enough -- enough to -- to graduate school.

Q: And how old were you when you graduated?

A: I say 18 and a half or 19.

Q: Well, when you came to the **United States** at age 15, what grade did they put you in? Did they put you in high school?

A: No, I went into a public school.

Q: What grade, do you know? No?

A: They gave it to the -- th-the lady, the -- the principal. She decided on everything.

Q: Okay.

A: She decided when to go to high school, and when -- wh-why -- she's -- she's -- she thought she has more of a -- a way of finding out how you -- how I get along than anybody else.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

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A: And being a boy and getting -- playing a lot of sports was very easy for me.

Q: Yeah. Le-Let's go back. We didn't talk about in **Germany**, did you have a **Bar Mitzvah** in ger --

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us?

A: I had a **Bar Mitzvah** in my -- in our house, in the living room. The rabbi was in attendance, and about five or six rel-relatives. And we had a very nice dinner, it wasn't as -- quite as wild here, as it is here. But we had [**indecipherable**] **Bar Mitzvah**. The rabbi made a speech, and I don't consider that it was anything unusual about it at the time.

Q: So you -- did you read from the Bible? Did you chant?

A: Y-Yes, from the --

Q: From the T-Torah?

A: I had a -- I had a -- I had to make a -- some spee -- some -- little bit, maybe a page, a half a page.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Had na -- I wasn't too good at hero -- Hebrew.

Q: S-So you did observe, you did have the **Bar Mitzvah**?

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A: I [indecipherable] my parents. My parents wanted it and we had it in our house, not in a-any place else.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we had a big enough house.

Q: Yeah.

A: We had a beautiful place to live in, my -- my parents, until towards the end of it, when they had to move. It's --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- it's a -- such a -- when you talk about it, it's so hard to -- to understand how un-un-un-unders -- un-understanding people are. How they could be so completely un-understanding towards the Jewish people or anybody else. Because they're getting along now.

Q: So now you're back, you're in th -- in **New York**, and you graduate from high school.

A: Yes.

Q: And -- and you said it was a special ceremony cause they made a speech about you at the graduation. You said the principal said some words about you at the graduation?

A: Yeah.

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Q: What did she say? What kind of --

A: Sh --

Q: -- expressions did sh --

A: She -- she -- she wa -- she made a little speech ab -- to -- for the whole audi-
audience. And I can't remember that.

Q: Okay. And then what did you do after graduation?

A: Looking for a job at -- for nine dollars a week, or 12 dollars a week. Something
like that.

Q: And you said you wou --

A: Just wanted to get -- figure my parents were still alive at that time.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I was still hoping that I can have enough money to get -- to get my -- help
my parents to come back over.

Q: And you had communication with your parents still?

A: Yes.

Q: So this was not --

A: Well, we had communication -- I don't remember th-the -- we had some sort of
a com --

Q: Communication?

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A: -- connection, yeah. Because I had to have it. Or maybe I just ca -- hoped that there's -- that th--there's a possibility they still may be alive. Because I don't think there was any ed -- any medication -- any --

Q: Communication.

A: -- communication, except -- except -- no, because they were sent to **Poland** by **Hitler**, so there couldn't have been any. The only a -- the only one I got was from the Red Cross, from another area -- ou-outfit like the Red Cross. There was no -- it's just what they know.

Q: Mm-hm. So you graduated from high school in 1941, and you looked for a job?

A: I looked for a job --

Q: You said you were 19 --

A: -- ve-ve-very hard at that time, that was after the war. There really was -- especially prices, the -- the money which you got was hardly anything worth -- you couldn't even live on it, I think it was maybe 12 - 13 dollars a week da -- at that time, for a young kid like me.

Q: Wa -- okay, so you graduated in June of '41?

A: Probably.

Q: Okay, and you -- then did you get a job?

A: I got a job at a -- at a automobile carburetor rebuilding place.

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Q: Mm-hm.

A: On 66th Street in **New York City**. All [indecipherable] and I think I made 12 dollars a week.

Q: Mm-hm. And then you worked for them for how long?

A: Until I don't -- I don't know, I don't remember the -- some of the **frequencies**. I di -- I -- I moved around plenty.

Q: You had different jobs, is that what you're saying? You had different --

A: I had no trouble finding jobs. I had tr-trouble finding money.

Q: Okay.

A: I mean, a-and any money [indecipherable]. And then, of course, came the army.

Q: Well, then came December 7th, 1941.

A: Yeah, well then, of course, they -- then --

Q: Do you remember that day?

A: -- then things picked up a little bit. Business picked up, everybody had to work.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I don't remember tha -- anything diffi -- difficult, or in -- hard to b -- to -- that I had -- did anything unusual.

Q: Okay.

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A: I don't think I was old enough to understand what's really going on.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you remember December 7th, 19 - four -- **Pearl Harbor**?

A: Not -- not offhand, no.

Q: Okay. And so you continued to work until -- and then what happened?

A: How -- I continued to work, but I got a better job.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I -- I got another job, then I-I got up to 20 dollars a week and I suppose that was a lot of money at the time, and so [indecipherable] came the army. In the army, of course, I'm making 90 dollars a month.

Q: When did you go into the army?

A: 25 -- in '45.

Q: Well, a little earlier than that. More --

A: '45?

Q: No, the war was over in '45.

A: It couldn't be '45?

Q: No. So you went into the army, and --

A: I going -- go in the army --

Q: -- and wh -- and wh -- and what -- wh -- and what --

A: Pardon me?

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Q: And then you wh-what -- where -- where were you stationed?

A: Oh, when I went in the army, they looked at me, they saw a little German boy who don't speak good English, what's he doing in the army? But th -- he drafted me.

Q: Okay.

A: And I really enjoyed in -- in -- in -- and wanted to be in the army.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Got in the army in **Fort Dix**.

Q: In **New Jersey**.

A: **Fort Dix** didn't know what to do with us. They didn't know what to do with us. I'm not speaking good English, I -- I -- I don't know anything about anything.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So they put me in the kitchen. So I was working in the kitchen as **KP** for two or three months. Getting -- getting good and fat, but I -- what I -- but I did -- did complain. And I did complain because I was feeled, if other people complain, I can complain. And they gave me a -- th-they put me in the ca -- in a place in -- down -- down south, a-a-and -- where they made th -- they -- they want to teach me how to make **Morse** Code. Speak to each other a-all -- in a **Morse** Code because I didn't have to worry about the language so much. So I had a -- and

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worked myself up to a -- to a lieutenant colonel's [indecipherable] and I was in a -- in the maneuver with him for two months, to give him these -- the signals, so -- so they can communicate. And in that thing, in that thing, I-I came on and I get a notice in -- in -- it was carl -- in -- in [indecipherable] on maneuvers, all German speaking people, please report to wa -- headquarters. That's me. I go to headquarters. He said listen, you gotta chance to do something here. You gotta chance to make yourself a name, or whatever. We can teach you how to ta --

[phone ringing]

Q: You were talking about how you were now down south in the **United States** --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in the army, and they needed German speaking --

A: Spe -- they need German speaking people --

Q: Soldiers, yeah.

A: -- did I tell that?

Q: Yes, yeah.

A: So when I -- I -- I was told that I can -- I can join a -- a -- a school to teach interrogation. And it's taken my three months, and it's done in **Maryland, Camp Ritchie. Camp Ritchie, Maryland.** And they'll give you a -- give you a test before, and if I'm interested in a re-report this -- this -- which hap -- ever

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happened, I reported it. And I did go to the school. I went to **Cambridge** u -- beautiful place. That's where the **Clintons** go. Beautiful. We had -- we were there three months, and we t -- heard how to -- to interrogate. You know how you do that? You have prisoners, American guys, they're playing prisoners, they teach them how to do -- well -- well, that was a big job. And I speak German, so to me it came natural. So they used a lot of German Jews, who -- for that purpose. And I loved to get out of that -- the -- the swamp in the -- in the -- in down, and I went that school, and I don't know, three months after that I got a call, get ready, we're going overseas.

Q: Well now, were you a citizen yet?

A: Pardon me?

Q: Had you become a **United States** citizen?

A: So what is -- that's what I said, you think [indecipherable] should be a citizen.

So I said -- he di -- they didn't realize it. So they took us to [indecipherable] house, and they made me a citizen. And --

Q: What did it feel like to be a citizen?

A: I wa -- I felt like a citizen anyway. I mean, I di-di-di -- it didn't -- didn't bother me whether they make me a citizen or not. They're not going to sent me back to **Germany**. So I -- I went over there, and went over on the **Queen Mary** with

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15,000 other soldiers. We had no place to sleep, no place to la -- ah, it was awful. English food. The English tomatoes we had them for breakfast. So I bitched, just like the other soldiers. I'm getting -- I became a bitcher. Now, we went over to **E-England** and they assigned me to the first division. The first division is the number one division of the **United States** Army. Is the [indecipherable] machine given to people who will get first the in -- and do in combat, always. So I said [indecipherable] and I joined the first division. And when I enlisted to the first division, and I listened to all those guys, how they all die, and before they even dead, they were so worried about everything, I says [indecipherable] maybe this is not a good place for me. Maybe I can get a better job. So I asked the colonel, I'm not so sure whether I'd -- I -- I don't like to be on boats, and that's -- you have to be on boats over there. He said, I got another job for you, the airborne. We need a man in a hundred -- hund -- what is it, five or six, or five or s -- five or six parachute infantry.

Q: 101st Airborne?

A: 101st Airborne.

Q: First Airborne.

A: If you want that, we'll transfer you to **England** to the -- the -- and you have to learn how to jump an airplane. That's also a job that takes about two weeks. So I

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went -- I made 14 jumps, and they made me a paratrooper, and I -- they assigned me to a five or six parachute infantry, which is one of the regiment of the hu -- 101st Airborne. And that's where I made it all the way through, through the whole war, wouldn't -- I didn't get killed, would you believe it?

Q: So now you're in **England**, and then what happened?

A: From where?

Q: From **England**, you said you were put into the 101st, and you learned how to parachute.

A: Oh yeah, we -- we jumped on **D-Day**, you know, we jumped. We jumped on **D-Day**, the night before five -- I have the whole book here, it's -- I jumped at -- what is it?

Q: So you left **England** to go on **D-Day** in June of '44, to jump on -- into **Normandy**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And where did you land?

A: In **Carentan** par -- in -- **Carentan** is the little French town where we had landed it. Say, maybe you heard Saint wi -- **Mere-eglise, St. Mere-eglise**? It's right next to it. That was 101st Airborne, we jumped there. Very confusing, lot of people got -- lot of killed -- got killed. Lot of -- very, very confusing because as

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the -- the planes, they were -- some of the planes that mo -- listened to the -- to the -- to the real thing. They put them in the -- in the wrong places where they -- they were afraid to go, where there was too much flak, so that they would be shot down.

Q: So you di -- you --

A: Lucky enough, I made it down from the airplane, and we had -- we had clickers so that we -- that we don't have to speak German. The ke -- click -- click the one click and two click. Yeah.

Q: So you were with other paratroopers, parachuters --

A: Yes, I was -- I was -- I was part of a parachute team, five or six.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I was -- we in charge of -- in other words, when it -- when -- when the -- when the -- the -- they're working on the -- o-on the area, they -- they trying to clear the area, they get a -- a -- a prisoner [indecipherable] find out what's the matter him. Wh-Where is he going? You know, the American soldiers, get going, I haven't got much time. So it was very difficult sometimes to k -- to keep an American -- a German al-alive to talk to him. Th-There -- these -- these boys were hot from -- from ameri -- from -- from **England**, also in the middle of -- of -- of being shot at from all over the place, bullets and th-the -- the -- the -- the --

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the flak was flying from -- from -- from the -- from the -- from the ships, from -- from the ba -- from ot -- it-it was -- we dug -- I dug so many holes. I tr -- we tried to dig down and o -- sideways, because there was so many things flying around. But lucky enough I made it, I made -- I got hurt a couple of times, but never -- I got see the fr -- the -- the -- the -- the por -- por -- what do you call the -- the Purple Heart. I got the Purple Heart.

Q: You were wounded?

A: Yeah.

Q: You were wounded.

A: Got wounded in the town of **Bastogne**. That, I'm sure you heard about it. I was [indecipherable] **Bastogne** speaking to prisoners when they were shooting -- when the German bombs were bombing **Bastogne**. So it was not a fun -- a fun thing, even though the American soldiers are very, very, very terrific. They good - - they good work, hard working people, and so many of them got killed. Unbelievable.

Q: Now here you are, a Jewish soldier, and you're interrogating German prisoners.

A: No [indecipherable] was.

Q: No what?

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A: Never mind -- never mind the name Jews. If they would have made the wo -- woulda -- word -- the word Jewish, or they say something like that, I would -- I would have killed them, I think. Maybe. I don't whether I would have done that. You know, and I would think --

Q: But what was your -- what were your feelings here --

A: **[indecipherable]** feelings think -- ma -- my -- basically feels that he's a soldier like I am. He is a soldier like I am. He is doing his duty for the country. How can you shoot a man like that? You can -- when -- when you couldn't help it

[indecipherable] the shooting was going on and you hit people, you didn't even know you're hitting them, but when you're right in front of them, you have them in front of you, and say you **[indecipherable]** you say something or I shoot, I couldn't do that. Not -- every day is people who do that.

Q: And there were some American soldiers who did that?

A: There's always somebody who gets killed.

Q: Right, right.

A: There's -- there's so much blood, so much blood in -- in a ca -- in a war, it's hard to believe. And when you see those young kids who -- 18 and 19 years old, you see them laying in the dirt with their -- the-their stuff coming out all over, and that -- it's a terrible thing and you never forget it. Enough of that.

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Q: But my -- my question is, being a Jewish soldier and knowing that your parents were left over, and -- and your brother, did that influence your feelings towards these German soldiers? Your particular situation, do you think that influenced you?

A: I don't know, I -- yeah, I -- I -- you know, I think -- I think, when I'm a soldier, I'm a soldier against a soldier. Not against a Jew, or a Christian or anything else.

Q: Right.

A: I'm a soldier. I'm going to kill this guy, everything, unless he kills me. So it really has nothing to do with -- with religion.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I -- I will -- I will -- listen, I ha -- I had awful lot of people in -- in front of me who could have been shot.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Can you imagine how many people -- sometimes 10 - 15 guys, Americans, will bring in prisoners [indecipherable] you can't go shoot them all. It don't make sense. Tho -- some of those poor guys, they're just as bad off as I was.

Q: So now you are working your way from **France**, and where -- wher -- how did you move through **Europe**? What was your pathway through **Europe**, once you'd landed, once you parachuted into **France**?

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A: After -- well, we parachuted twice, once in -- in -- in **France** and once in **Holland** --

Q: Oh.

A: -- on a Jewish holiday, **Rosh Hashonah**, they made me jump.

Q: Oh, you parachuted --

A: The -- there was a -- parachuted -- we para -- right near a zone in -- in -- in -- in -- in **Holland**. We were there to a reunion a few years ago, with my wife.

Q: This was in 1944, I guess?

A: Yeah.

Q: In the fall of '44?

A: No, no, no, this -- this -- this meeting we had, it was just about five years ago.

Q: No, no, no, no, when you parachuted in. When you parachuted into **Holland**.

A: Yes?

Q: It was in the fall of 1944. It was after **D-Day**.

A: After **D-Day**, yeah.

Q: Yeah, so it was the fall of '44.

A: Yeah, well the -- that -- that was -- the war was on the way, our wa-way.

Q: Yeah. And then -- yeah, an-and -- and then you -- you -- and you -- were -- you were still interrogating German soldiers?

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A: Pardon me?

Q: Were you still interrogating German sol --

A: I'm continue interrogating all the time.

Q: What kind of questions did you ask them?

A: The questions I -- where you shooting, who shooting at me? What kind of gun is it? Is it -- is it a machine gun, is it a -- a rifle? Are there more than five people, is there a hundred people? What's -- what's the -- what -- what for -- what's the chance for us to get in th -- in there? Can we -- can we go? And you hope to God - - out of six guys you get one question. This is -- this was my job, and -- a-and whether it worked or not, I don't know.

Q: Did anybody ever ask you how -- any of the prisoners ever --

A: Yes --

Q: -- ask you why -- how do you know German so well?

A: No. What I got, I got mostly German sol-soldier [indecipherable] officer said, if you want to kill me, shoot me. You haven't got the guts.

Q: Oh.

A: That's what he said, right in my face. And I didn't shoot him.

Q: Right. But nobody asked you how did you know German so well?

A: I don't know.

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Q: Mm-hm.

A: I don't remember. My German was -- must have been pretty good.

Q: Yeah, I'm sure it was. And then w -- after th -- **Holland**, where did you go?

A: Now after **Holland** came jo -- **Bastogne**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In **Bastogne**, then we went into **Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf. Düsseldorf** I lost one of my -- one of our officers, the colonel, and I -- and I -- and then -- he took a -- he wanted [**indecipherable**] he wanted to see how these things are near the **Rhine**. We would l-l-lay along the **Rhine**, and we lost that -- that c-colonel. Very nice man, very well done. Just killed him, just like that. For no reason they -- the war was almost on the way, you could see the war was on the way off. And he wants to go, I want to see it.

Q: Do you remember his name? Do you know -- remember his name?

A: No.

Q: No? All right, so now you're in **Düsseldorf**, and then where do you --

A: I know, I know because his -- was in charge of me.

Q: Yeah. And then you continued on from **Düsseldorf** to where?

A: After war?

Q: **Düsseldorf**, after **Düsseldorf**, where did you --

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A: Huh?

Q: Where did you go after **Düsseldorf**?

A: **Düsseldorf**, we went towards -- **Düsseldorf** we went towards southern **Germany**. The Russians were moving and we were moving towards **Russia**. We were going towards the downward, down, down [indecipherable] and we ended up in -- near **Garmisch Partenkirchen** garden -- **Garmisch Partenkirchen**.

Q: **Partenkirchen**, yeah.

A: In **Garmischen** we were -- we were -- we found all kinds of things. I found **Hitler's** fake -- **Hitler's** signatures [indecipherable] I have them in a -- in a book. Do you see any things with **Hitler** in that pile? You'll find it, if -- I found **Hitler's** stationary, so I wrote some letters on that stationary and sent it to the **New York Times** here, or to one of the newspapers. I have two [indecipherable] of it here in a -- if you find any, keep them. Here -- you know [indecipherable] to me. And I-I wrote a letter to my cousin, who gave it to the **Herald-Tribune** I think at that time was -- it was -- it went out of business [indecipherable]. And tells me -- tells of how a German Jewish boy goes o -- gets **Hitler's** papers, writes them --

Q: Wh-Where exactly did you find this stationary?

A: Hm?

Q: Where exactly did you find this stationary?

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A: In his hou -- in his house on -- on -- on top of the mountain. In **Garmisch Partenkirchen** the war was over two days before that.

Q: Oh, so now the war is already over.

A: Yeah, it was all over, the war. So we di --

Q: And **Hitler's** dead, you know that **Hitler** --

A: Hm?

Q: You knew that **Hitler** was dead?

A: No, I had no idea of anything. I ha -- I [indecipherable] everybody was still alive as far as we were concerned.

Q: Oh.

A: So these guys took -- took as many people [indecipherable] prisoners as possible. And two days after this, my colonel and I, we became friendly because he likes where I [indecipherable] I sometimes [indecipherable]. He said -- he calls me up, he said, get going, we gotta be there, we got something. That was -- the war was so over, two days already. We got a car. We gotta go, we have a big fish down in **Austria**. So we went in the **Jeep**, two of us. We got into -- in **Austria** and we went into a -- an old [indecipherable] you know, those old [indecipherable]. So we went in there, and there opens up a door. There sits Mr. **Goering**, with two American generals and his wife, and [indecipherable]. So

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what do I do? There's this maniac German in front of me. I should shoot him, right? In front of my colonel, and two generals? So the general said to me -- said -- said to my colonel that, let your men get rid of the people in this [indecipherable] and make it a -- an officer's place, where they can stay for a couple of days. I went inside, and there's Mrs. **Goering**, who I knew because from the movies, she's a movie star. I said to, Mrs. **Goering**, you may have to leave. A matter of fact, you get your ass out of here within 15 minutes, otherwise I'll boot you out of here myself. And I'm a Jewish boy. That's all. And I [indecipherable] around and she starts screaming and [indecipherable]. I said to the sergeant [indecipherable] just get rid of her. Get her out of the house and throw her outside, let -- let her walk out -- walk on. That's my **Goering** -- my life [indecipherable]. I saw him -- you see him sitting there all -- all dressed up in his uniforms and everything. And there's the American generals in their **Jeeps**, but **Goering** is in this beautiful st -- fancy go -- [indecipherable] fancy car he has, and a chauffeur there. But he didn't ask for [indecipherable]. He got to **Munich** and he killed himself. That wa --

Q: Did you say anything to **Goering**? Did you say anything to **Hermann Goering**?

A: No. No, they wouldn't let me -- first of all, the generals kept him -- kept me away from there too. That was too much of a fish for them to catch. Can you

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imagine? See that big, fat bastard in front of me? After all, I know he killed my parents and he killed everyth -- so many Jewish and American and all. What can you do? Take my gun and shoot? I'd be dead. The minute I would touch my gun I'd be dead. Because he was too much a -- too much of a guy to fi -- they want him alive.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Gunter Haimann**. This is tape number two, side **A**, and you were -- you had finished talking about telling Mrs. **Goering** to leave her house, which she did?

A: What's that?

Q: You had just finished telling the story about seeing **Hermann Goering** and Mrs. **Goering** and asking her to leave.

A: Yeah. Well, what happens -- what happens after that?

Q: Yeah. So sh -- did she leave then?

A: Oh, I don't know. That -- that was completely out of my say. I was just a sergeant, I was a tech sergeant. These were generals there.

Q: Okay, so you don't know if she left.

A: No, I know that -- my colonel told me they're putting them in the -- in the -- in the **Mercedes** -- they put them back in the **Mercedes** and take them to **Munich**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That's what he told me.

Q: Okay.

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A: And I'm sure that's what he did because he was -- I know wa -- h-he was put -- they would have put him back in the -- into **Munich**. That's where he died.

Q: While he was in the **Nuremberg** Trials.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I meant **Nuremberg** [indecipherable].

Q: Yeah, and then he committed suicide before he was to be hanged.

A: What?

Q: He committed suicide --

A: Yes.

Q: -- before he --

A: Well, this is --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- it's the same thing. He wouldn't have lived long anyway.

Q: Right. So then, where did you go after that? You're still -- you're still in **Germany**.

A: Yeah, well, wa -- then th -- we had about a month of n-not too much. We had [indecipherable] to fill and this -- and th-that's -- it's beautiful -- beautiful area where we were. [indecipherable] in -- in -- in -- in **Austria**. It's bel -- right below

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th-the German border. It's very, very gor-gorgeous country. And th -- don't forget, all those people are still Germans.

Q: While you were in **Germany**, while you were there, did you feel American or German?

A: Only -- only American, never German.

Q: You did not feel German?

A: No way. E-Even when I went to the bakery or something like that. No, unless the-they speak English, I never change. I never would dare change, no.

Q: Yeah, but I meant inside, did you feel any connection with **Germany**, having been born --

A: None at all.

Q: -- having been born there?

A: I felt very ji -- I felt just where I was belong, where I belong right now, in the army, in -- i-in where I was in -- in that area.

Q: What was it like for you to wear the uniform of an American soldier?

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of feeling did that give to you?

A: Supri -- su-sup-sup -- superiority. It is some sort of a superiority. It is something above [**indecipherable**] when you have so much in your hand, you

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have almost everybody there, you've even got a like -- you can sharpshoot anybody you want and you can -- probably can get away with it. So yo-you feel like shooting. We [indecipherable] we were not Germans, we are Americans. We -- yo- you should see in -- in the little town of **Turamsee**, the people came to flock -- flock to us, they want to be part of it, they want the -- they want a -- th-this -- the school they want to be part of, they wanted to -- to talk to us. And they di -- they really did -- th-th-the Austrians are much nicer than Germans. They were much nicer to us, because the war was over, too. But then, from then on was downhill. I'm finished after that. We spend about a month there, and I went mountain climbing one weekend with a -- a guide. They gave me a guide and we had two or three women who na -- knew the way, and they took us up -- guides, up to the mountains, to a place where we could sleep. Was beautiful. That's a beautiful country there.

Q: Now this you did on recreation?

A: This is -- yeah, the war is over.

Q: Did you go by -- earlier did you see any labor camps or other kind of prison camps?

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A: I-I went -- I -- I skipped that labor camp for a reason, it just hurts me. There was a place where -- where -- **Hitler** wrote a book, "**Mein Kampf**." He made a -- a -- a ca -- a -- a --

Q: This was when he was in prison, yeah.

A: Pardon me?

Q: When he was in prison.

A: Yeah. He made a camp out of -- against -- for the Jews, and we come into that camp. I was right in the beginning. I -- sometimes in the beginning, sometimes we -- we switch around so we have -- so we can watch what we doing. And all of a sudden I see guys walking around with **[indecipherable]**, you know? And -- and then they didn't know what to do, and I didn't know what to do either. I didn't know. I spoke to a -- the -- one of the colonels says, listen, these people haven't eaten anything. They haven't e-e -- they haven't gotten anything. I don't know -- we don't know what to do yet ourself. We don't know what the doctor says to do. The best thing is don't give everything away. Don't give all your candy and **[indecipherable]** you're gonna hurt them. You couldn't stop the Ameri -- you couldn't stop the Americans. They gave everything they could find. They **[indecipherable]**. A-And th-then -- then the -- we were there two nights, just to keep them calm. But they all in their uniform. You should see those little -- we

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went in th -- I went into one of those homes. I don't even want to describe -- describe it because it's unbelievable how that people can be alive in th -- it. What they went through and how long they were there, I don't know. But I don't remember if they were wi -- man or wife. I don't even remember that. I -- I co -- did one thing. I get in the middle of town -- because I speak German, I was rather involved in that time there. I put out on top -- on the top of one of those -- those -- those [indecipherable] there. I said, I want every one of these American -- these German soldiers to bring all their pay, all their p -- clothing, which they don't need all the time, and even if they need, and put them in the middle of that town so these people can eat -- they can live with it. So the -- the -- naturally they all came. They all -- came all -- they all were afraid they were gonna get killed. You know, [indecipherable] speaking the right way, whether they like it or not. And I had no intention of killing anybody. I wasn't alone, there was 20 of us, whole uniform. But we got most of them, and then the doctor spoke to us. Don't give them any food. Don't give them anything to eat. It's just killing them. They had nothing to eat for -- any [indecipherable]. That was awful. That's **"Mein Kampf"**. That was a -- I forgot that very quickly.

Q: What was -- what was the name of that camp?

A: **"Mein Kampf"**?

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Q: No, no, no, what was the name of the camp that you came across?

A: I just said -- I said, I try to forget again.

Q: Oh, okay, yeah. Did you come across any other camps, prison camps?

A: No, that's the only one.

Q: That's the only one.

A: Don't forget, I'm -- I'm -- I'm with a first, front line company. 101st is no -- no -- they don't jus -- they don't sit around waiting for work.

Q: Did you meet --

A: I -- I-I -- I -- I was walking along in -- in **Holland**, into a nice area. Things are quiet and they was running, the children were walking around, all of them **[indecipherable]**. Next to me, everything started flying. Some guys collected guns and -- and ammunition. They wanted to somehow collect something or other. They blew about four or five American soldiers right in the air. Right here, standing there. After you **[indecipherable]** where that happened. So I tell you, I don't care what you say, you don't think -- those things you don't forget. But that's

[indecipherable]

Q: What you were --

A: -- generally speaking, we --

Q: Wa --

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A: It's -- it's -- it's not easy -- it's not easy to repeat this, either.

Q: [indecipherable] I know.

A: Yeah.

Q: I know. Wel --

A: Do you know, I -- I think of -- I think of what happened to my parents when they went to camp. How did they -- how were they treated, or were they killed right away? I hope so. Will I ever find out? I doubt it. It's tough life. But I have a nice family now.

Q: When you were -- when you were walking along, did you just see any survivors walking down the roads at all?

A: You mean when I had -- when they blew up?

Q: After the war was over, and you said you --

A: After what?

Q: The war was over, and you were --

A: Yeah. Oh, in **Germany**.

Q: In **Germany**, did y -- yeah, did you --

A: I -- I tell you, I [indecipherable] civilians [indecipherable] too, in **Germany**.

Q: Such as?

A: At **Germany**, I -- I h -- I had -- I had my children there, too.

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Q: Well, no, we haven't gotten to that

A: Yeah, but I took -- I -- I -- I came across some people who were sick. They should have killed everybody, they should have killed all the Americans. When you hear things like that, there -- there's always something like that.

Q: Yeah. No, but what I was asking was, this is immediately after the war, and you had come across that one camp where you saw the survivors, but when you are out walking on the roads, did you see any other survivors walking? People trying to get back to their town?

A: Ah, the soldiers?

Q: Soldier -- or -- or -- or --

A: After the war?

Q: -- some Holocaust survivors, Holocaust survi -- did you see any of them walking home?

A: Oh, lots of them after the war [indecipherable] by the hundreds. They all walk, always -- all in -- my job was a -- oh, what? At least 10 or five -- 15 days, we had a group of -- I got about 30 -- 30 girls who speak German, who know how to ta -- type. They got the -- in the [indecipherable] in town I wa -- I was at, and we gave discharge papers. The Germans were afraid to go home. They afraid to go home with their [indecipherable] without the discharge paper. So we made some sa --

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sa -- would you believe that? But that's true, it's happen. They were afraid that they were so -- they -- they -- they were scared, or something like that. Such proud people. Ph-Phony bastards, that's all they were.

Q: So did you come across any Holocaust survivors in other places?

A: No, only in that camp, there's --

Q: Only in the camp.

A: Yeah, in that camp.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: I didn't -- I wa -- don't forget, most of the ca -- were in -- in camps in **Poland**, I think.

Q: Right, right, mm-hm. And so you stayed for how much longer in -- in the army in **Europe**?

A: To wa -- how long did I stay in the army?

Q: Yeah, in **Europe**, in **Germany**.

A: No, I di -- th-they -- they let me go in Camp **Dix**. They took me home --

Q: When did you come back to the **United States**?

A: On the ship, on a Swedish ship.

Q: When?

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A: About a -- within -- within the months after the war was over. It was very quick, and they put me in a -- in a Swedish ship. That was difficult to [indecipherable] the police had -- the cops put -- they were afraid of -- a lot of the soldiers had a lot of money. They got money paid and they were gambling like crazy on -- on -- on the ships. So that also was a problem.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And all these problems are all with the -- cause that -- when the -- when there's too much money. But after I was back in the **United States**, they -- they didn't -- within two days I was out of the army. They gave me my money, I -- I -- I -- I think I got 1400 dollars pay -- back pay or whatever it is.

Q: And what did you do then?

A: I went to -- to the aunt where -- she died in the meantime, during the war, but her ska -- her -- her a -- that's [indecipherable] is the -- well, si -- I'm con -- no connection with -- with the -- with **René**, but they also connected a little bit. So when I went back I went there, I went to the house. That's all I had, I had nothing else. So I -- I ha -- I paid her -- I had to pay my -- my dues.

Q: I wanted to ask you, when you were in **Germany**, did you want to go back to **Koblenz** to check --

A: I did. I did when I was in --

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Q: No, while you were in --

A: -- when I was in **Düsseldorf**, wh -- wh -- I told you the man died. I took the [indecipherable] and I spoke to one of the police officers that -- what I want to do. Tell him that I had my parents lived -- used to live there, and they have a house there, they had a house there. I want to know what I can find [indecipherable]. They ga-ga-gave me a **Jeep** and a man, and we went down the **Rhine** from co -- from **Cologne** to **Koblenz**. And I found very little, except one person I knew, somehow was related to my uncle, who was married to a non-Jewish man -- a woman. But -- and I went -- nothing really important there. Listen, I -- I didn't -- I got letters from teachers, they need [indecipherable] they need food there, that I'd always took care of you when -- when -- when -- when -- when school was on, I be -- I never gave you a bad mark, and thing -- stories -- stories like that, just to get some food.

Q: This is while you were still in the army?

A: Yeah -- no, no, I'm here now.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah, things weren't good after that in **Germany**, not right away.

Q: Right. But when you went to -- when you went back to your town --

A: Tow -- my -- I only met one person I knew.

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Q: Just the one person, yeah, uh-huh.

A: My father's -- my father's house who -- I went right to it, I met the policeman. The policeman was very well known because he was a -- a -- a tall man with a big ma -- moustache. So he was the one who used to direct the fi -- th-the -- the signal when people make the right and the left turn. At that time they had one l-light in **Koblenz**. So when I met him, I says -- I told him who I was, he says, yeah, I know your father. I knew where he was. I know they took him away, but that's all we know.

Q: And that's the first time you heard about your parents?

A: That's all. Later I, through Red Cross I went -- I went th-through Red Cross, I ha -- I found out. I don't know what date that was.

Q: Uh-huh. All right, now you're back in the **United States** --

A: Hooray!

Q: -- and you're discharged from the army, and you look for a job, you said? You started looking for work?

A: Yeah, th -- let's see. Yeah, oh my cousin who I lived with awhile, he is in the cleaning business. They used to clean big buildings like -- big stores like **Macy's** and stuff like that. And he say, I got a job for you. You a sergeant, you can -- you know how to tel -- put me in a [**indecipherable**] station, clean the

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[indecipherable] station, five times a week. And kee -- make sure that the people [indecipherable] different places, stuff like that. I lasted one week. Said, no, I'm not going to be a captain or a soldier any more, no. So I don't know, I find -- I -- I -- I got different jobs. Finally got in the luncheonette business and that's where I stayed. [indecipherable]

Q: You want to stop?

A: No. In [indecipherable] business I st -- I met my wife.

Q: Oh.

A: Her father was in the luncheonette business, so I -- I went into business with him. Then when he --

Q: Wa -- is she amer -- was she American?

A: American.

Q: She was American?

A: Yeah. And she -- she was -- worked a-and we accumulated a few dollars. We did -- and not that I f -- I stole anything, but I did very well.

Q: So you s --

A: I don't know how.

Q: So you stayed in the luncheonette business?

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A: Yeah, I went into a big company, where we had to -- 500 cafeterias, industrial cafeterias. In other words, if you have a big company, 500, we used to go in there and feed you.

Q: Oh.

A: And give you a bake -- break on food and stuff like that. And that -- and I was a -- a head supervisor for that. And I traveled 35,000 miles a year, just in a car [indecipherable] from -- from **Connecticut** to -- to -- to -- to all the place, I -- I'm telling you, crazy. I was always on the road.

Q: You lived in **New York**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you have children?

A: I have three children. **René** is one of them. And **Marco's** the -- the other one. Now I got two grandchildren, great grandchildren.

Q: And your thir -- and your third child's name is? Your third child's name?

A: The third child is my son.

Q: Si --

A: No, no, no. My daughter **Lillian**, she's a lawyer in -- where is **Lillian**?

[indecipherable] upstate in -- can't think of the name.

Q: That's okay, yeah. So you have -- and you have great-grandchildren?

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A: We di -- I did much more than I expected. Really, I did, and I'm very glad I did. At least I'm going to give the people a -- a good start in the -- i-in -- in the -- so when they gave -- we gave them a wedding present, they got a good present.

Q: Let's --

A: That's all I can do.

Q: Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about some of your thoughts and your feelings about what you went through, coming from **Germany**, and --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- coming to the **United States**. You continued to feel American? You --

A: I -- I --

Q: What does it -- what are your ties to **Germany** now? What -- what is your feelings --

A: My feelings is --

Q: -- about being German?

A: -- there will never be a place like the **United States**. Never. I mean, it's just a very unusual [**indecipherable**] it's just an unusual place. To be able to -- to -- to live in a place like that, in harmony with so many people, it's wonderful. And -- and -- and most people make the decent living, and nobody's killing themselves.

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That -- tha-that's what I call something which -- which nobody ever will equal, I don't think, at all.

Q: Do you feel that you are a different person today, or you were a different adult because of what you went through, because of the losses you had? The fact that you had to leave **Germany** at the age of 15 and come to the **United States**?

Would you have been a different person than you are today?

A: If I would have stayed in **Germany**?

Q: Well, if you hadn't had the challenges --

A: I think so. I think the American wa-way is the only way to live. It has nothing to do with really, the other people. Because here not everybody is going to be alike, but the biggest part of -- just -- just look at the -- the [indecipherable] the White House, what's going on at -- the time. It's mutual. It's somehow mutual that they're gonna get to a -- to a -- to a -- to a good -- they get together and they gonna get to an end. And they -- they gonna end up all right. At the end of the year we gonna have a good year. It's 90 percent all of the time. If it's not good, it's almost good. And there's gonna be some bad ones. There's gonna be a few bad ones, but very little compared to what -- what they had in the -- what they have in th -- in different pl-places the world. They don't even know how to live, people. They don't know what life is like. It's too bad -- it's just a -- it's too bad that I had to

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lose my wife. That's what hurts me more than anything else. And my wife was younger. She was 15 years younger than I am.

Q: Did she work? Did she have a job?

A: Yeah, she loved to, she -- she -- she worked in a -- in an office. And she had -- she worked for a gr -- [indecipherable] for people who -- who make [indecipherable] presses. And she has -- took care of the office, and she had what, four or five girls working for her. And she loved it. She was a good worker. She was the kind of wife everybody should have. I know I should have said that before -- before. No, but truly so. And I -- and I -- I just speak to her -- to the -- to the grandchildren about her.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Then you know the difference.

Q: When your children were 15 years old -- when your children were 15 --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did it bring back memories for you of what life was like for you when you were 15 and had to leave your family?

A: You know, I was so completely harmonized to American life that nothing else even matters in **Europe**, in any way.

Q: Mm-hm.

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A: There's nothing could hurt it. There's nothing could hurt the **United States** in -
- in my mind.

Q: Mm-hm. Did it -- did -- how religious are you now? Are you -- do you call
yourself religious, or secular, how do you --

A: Well, I'll tell you, we -- we should be a little bit more religious. I -- I tell you, I
-- I was **Bar Mitzvah** and her parents were not -- not -- not unusually re-religious.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I na -- I don't know why I'm not more religious, I should be more. But
now why should I be more religious, when I lost so much of it? But that's not a
fair way to look at it either. So you have -- now I have -- I have families who need
to th -- this religion, and I got -- I ca -- my wi -- grandchildren are terrific.

Q: What is it like -- you said you did go back to **Germany**, and you went back to
Koblenz. What -- what's that like? What was that --

A: [**indecipherable**] more often.

Q: Ye -- I'm sorry, you've been?

A: I go there often, too.

Q: What is your feelings when you go there?

A: I -- th-th -- my theory is that it could be very well made American, nice
American co-country, that there is [**indecipherable**] there, they have the

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ingredients of a nice country. They have a beautiful country and they have a -- they have a feeling [indecipherable] feeling are very nice. I like that country.

Q: But do you have feelings of ang --

A: [indecipherable] feeling towards the [indecipherable] I mean, the country itself. The co -- everything you go there seems to -- when you go there, o-overseas -- I took my -- I told you I took my family over there, and we traveled all over [indecipherable] fr-from **Amsterdam** to -- to -- all the way to -- to a ja -- what the hell is [indecipherable] all the time. And we really traveled every place, the kids -- kids liked it. My de -- my daughter was five year already at that time when I was [indecipherable]. And they like -- they went to -- we went to a place to eat, and the people came over [indecipherable] would you like to dance with us? Things like that you don't see here so much, but you see over there. They're like -- something like that.

Q: So, do you have any feelings of anger when you go to **Germany**?

A: For who?

Q: Of anger, anger. Angry. Are you angry when you go to --

A: I'm not angry, I-I -- I -- I -- I don't know who -- who am I going to get angry on? Wa -- I feel -- I feel bad I'm -- I'm a little bit of a burden on anybody.

Because **René** is really working hard on me.

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Q: No, I meant angry at the Germans when you're in **Germany**. That's what I meant, when you're -- do you have any feelings of --

A: [**indecipherable**] not, no. I have no anger there.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: I know they could do it again. I think they have the -- the -- in the make-up of making it again. But I'm not sure. I'm not going to find out.

Q: Why do you say you think they do?

A: Why do I say, because I -- they -- they have that -- that excitement in -- in them. It is that scr -- screaming in your face, and hitting you in the mouth and saying, no good for me, you're no good for me. I have that feeling they would be that way. We'll see. It seems to be all right, they seem to be calm. I -- I tell you, I'm not going back there, at this [**indecipherable**]

Q: Are there any -- today are there any sights or sounds or smells that remind you of your early childhood, or -- you know, your experiences? That kind of bring it back? Anything that you see, or hear, that you sense?

A: I don't know.

Q: But you said your childhood was a happy childhood, until -- until you --

A: Very happy. My parents made it happy. [**indecipherable**] you know --

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

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A: They did, really a good job. It's a sh -- it's a shame that some people have to suffer and others have, and I don't have to. So people who -- who are lucky enough to get through with it, without any trouble --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- they're lucky. It's just -- you know, just luck.

Q: Is there anything you wanted to add before we finish?

A: Yeah, what's new?

Q: Anything to your children or your grandchildren, or your great-grandchildren?

A: No, my kids are number one.

Q: Aww.

A: **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: I got two great-grandchildren. **[indecipherable]**

Q: I will, I will, okay. Anything you wanted to add before we finish the interview?

A: No. I had spoke too much already.

Q: No, you didn't speak eno -- well, thank you very, very much for doing the interview.

A: I'm glad I -- I -- I'm glad you appreciate it.

Q: I did.

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A: I don't know whether anybody else would appreciate it.

Q: I'm sure pe -- many people will.

A: Well, I tried. I tr-try to give my honest opinion, and that's what I can.

Q: Right.

A: I couldn't lie. I wouldn't know how to lie about these things.

Q: No. No, it was -- thank you for doing it. This concludes the **United States**

Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Gunter Haimann**.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Conclusion of Interview