

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Joseph Fenster
January 14, 2014
RG-50.106*0233

PREFACE

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JOSEPH FENSTER

January 14, 2014

Julie Kopel: My name is Julie Kopel and I am interviewing Joseph Fenster. The date is January 14, 2014 and the interview is being conducted for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am in New York and Mr. Fenster is in Florida. Hi, Mr. Fenster, how are you?

Joseph Fenster: Good, good. Thank you. Can I call you Julie?

Q: Julie Yes, please do

A: Thank you Julie.

Q: Now what would you prefer I call you?

A: Plain Joe.

Q: Joe. Ok, I got it. Ok, Joe so we're going to get started now. And can you please tell me what was your name at birth?

A: Ok. It was Joseph **Fensterheim**.

Q: Can you spell that please? Your last name?

A: F-E-N-S-T-E-R-H-E-I-M

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Paris, France.

Q: What is your date of birth?

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A: You want the whole date?

Q: Yes, please.

A: Ok, 6 18 32, June the 18th, 1932.

Q: Can you tell me a little about your family?

A: Yes. My mother and father, first of all immigrated from Poland, from Krakow to France. I don't remember the year because of course I wasn't born then. But we never discussed that. And my father was **Chaskiel** or Charles Fensterheim. Chaskiel is Polish.

Q: Can you please spell that name?

A: C-H-A-S-K-I-E-L. Chaskiel. And my mother's name was Sophie, S-O-P-H-I-E.

Q: What was her maiden name?

A: **Bachner**, B-A-C-H-N-E-R. She was a housewife. My father was a tailor by profession and they settled in Paris, France and ultimately in 1932 I was born and I don't know whether they had another place before I was born, but after I was born and I was aware of my whereabouts, we were living in the ninth district of Paris. In a one room apartment. Then as I indicated in my outline, my father not only a tailor by profession but in 1939 when the World War Two started when the Germans first of all invaded France somewhere in 1939, my father had joined the army, the French army. It was either a foreign division or a Polish division. I don't know. He never discussed that with me. He stayed in the army until he was discharged and as I indicated in the outline, in my outline, I never knew why he was discharged. And he came back to us in 1940. At that time I was eight years old.

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Q: Did you have any siblings?

A: Yes. I have a sister. Her name was Paulette Fensterheim. She ultimately was, this is going to the end of my outline, but she ultimately was, her name was changed to Paulette Elkins when she came to the United States and ultimately she married and became Paulette Brown. She presently lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She was born the 27th of April 1940. She was, she married and had two sons. Her husband died a few years ago, by the name of Sidney, Sidney Brown.

Q: There was a good spread between the two of you. Cause you were born in 32. You were about eight when she was born.

A: She was born in 1940, 27 April 1940. So then when my father came back shortly after, a few months. This is a very few months that I can recall. You know I was eight years old. He was doing, and I think I indicated that in my outline. We were doing errands for my mother and the Germans had already occupied Paris. And of course being Jewish, we were all required, not only to register by name, address, so forth and so on and also wear the star of David. And everybody was required to do so. So I can recall quite vividly that two German soldiers, seeing us with, walking with the star of David on our chest, so to speak, stopped us and asked my father for a **carte d'identite** which is an ID card, which we were all required to carry. And my father spoke several languages. He spoke over nine languages and when he was asked what nationality, he replied, being a Polack, excuse the expression, since I am one hundred percent Polack myself. That can't you read and I think he said it in French and I think he repeated it in German, since he was fluent in German as well. And the Germans didn't quite care for his reply and they arrested him and they didn't touch me. My father told me in French to go home. And I did and I ran home so to speak. And I told – my mother asked me what happened because she had sent us for an errand and I came back empty handed, even without what she asked me but without my father. And I told her what happened, what transpired and she understood because he was a character, so to speak. So he was, he was released shortly after. I would say if I can recall, it was either 24 or 48 hours. And at that time there were not amassing or gathering Jews for deportation. And so he was released and shortly after, this is when the recall for men only. He was recalled supposedly by the French military, since he had been in the French military. And he was recalled and we

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reported, we accompanied, my mother and I, we accompanied him to a place in Paris, in the ninth district of Paris and which was around the Place de l'Opera. I don't recall the building or anything like this. I was too young to recall, something like this.

Q: Do you mind if I go back just a little bit. Actually before your father's arrest. I know you were very young so obviously if you can't remember these details, don't worry about it. But I would like to ask what was the nature of your religious life with your family in Paris during those early years?

A: Religious wise?

Q: Yes.

A: Not much. We didn't attend a synagogue or anything like that, that I can recall.

Q: Did your family have any political affiliation?

A: Not that I know of, no.

Q: Did you have other members of your family living in Paris, either family who was already there or had come from Poland with your parents?

A: Yes, we had, my mother had two sisters. The first one was living in Cleveland, Ohio and she immigrated. She met an American and ultimately they got married and immigrated, she immigrated to Cleveland, Ohio.

Q: Before the war?

A: Before the war, yes. To other sister. The first one by the name of **Fernande** Bernstein, B-E-R, I hope I'm spelling it right, B-E-R-N-S-T-E-I-N, Fernande is with an E, the ending is with an E. And her husband was Dolek, D-O-L-E-K and they had a daughter by the name of Lilian

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Bernstein. Her other sister was Anna. A-N-N-A. Micenmacher. M-I-C-E-N-M-A-C-H-E-R. And I can't remember her husband's name to save my life. Her son, they had one son by the name of Marcel who was about two years younger than I was. Lilian was the daughter of Fernande Bernstein, was two years, about two years older than I was. Born in, around 1930, also --. And Marcel was about two or three years younger than I was. And then we had a cousin by the name of Maya. As I indicated in my outline to you, she was a milliner, designed and created women's hats. At that time I guess there was, in France, it was big deal fashion wise. And my grandmother of course was Rose Bachner, actually real name was **Ruchla**, R-U-C-H-L-A but she went by the name of Rose, which interpreted is actually Rose, Ruchla. And she was living in Paris in the swanky district of Paris, which was the Rue de **Rivoli** . My cousin was living in the, I'm thinking it's still the ninth district, not too far from – in a very beautiful apartment as well where her workshop and everything else was.

And so those were the relatives that were actually living in France. My paternal grandmother and grandfather, I never knew them. They never came to France. They must have died during World War Two as well, because Poland was also invaded by the Germans. I never got to know them. I don't know who they were or whatever, except on my father's death certificate where it names his father and his mother's name.

Q: Did you parents become French citizens?

A: No, not that I know of, no. I'm pretty sure they didn't.

Q: What about anything you remember about daily life for you during those years, living in Paris. What language did you speak at home? Did you go to school?

A: Yes.

Q: Sort of a little bit more, paint me a picture of what day to day life was like for you.

A: Yeah well of course, as a young kid, I did go to school. And before the war and during the war. And until 1942.

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Q: It was a secular school?

A: No. No, it was a public school. And I did what most kids do, play around. Play around and I went to school. I don't even remember which school I went to. The turmoil that I underwent just names just escape me. But anyway I went to school just like any other kid and played around, any other. My main language was French but my parents being Polish and my grandmother also being Polish and speaking about, herself about seven to nine languages. I picked up quite a bit of the languages. Polish, as well as French, as well as German and so and they used to say a few things to me in Polish and German and Jewish. And of course French. I mean of course their main language was Polish. That's their main language, and of course Jewish. Jewish dialect.

Q: Yiddish?

A: Yiddish, yes. Thank you for reminding me.

Q: I was just clarifying. Thank you.

A: So in 19, let me see 1942, that's when I stopped going to school.

Q: Did your sister, she was only two at the time. Your mother was home taking care of her and your father was a tailor like what you said, right?

A: Was a tailor, yes ma'am.

Q: You said it was a one room apartment?

A: Yes we had a one room apartment in the ninth district, on the fourth floor.

Q: You all lived together in that one room?

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A: With a community toilet. We didn't have any -- I mean this one room apartment was quite small and we had, it was kitchen and everything else. And so we were, well my father was finally getting established I guess and with him being in the military, we were quite poor. And I think I so indicated in my outline.

Q: Do you remember sort of any friends that you made during those years or if you participated, if you had any hobbies or any affiliation with any organizations? I know you were very young, but anything else that sort of comes to mind during that time.

A: No, I didn't. Yes, I know I had acquaintances if you will. Not real buddies when I was going to school but I was going to school up to the age of nine, ten years old. So I don't recall. I had acquaintances, people that I mean kids that I played with but -- and then I don't recall my mother and father when they were both together having any acquaintances or friends if you will, during their togetherness so to speak before. I mean once again I think we, since we were quite poor, friends -- there weren't that many friends we could get together with, that I could recall anyway. The only thing that we did get together is with family.

Q: You had a lot of family living in France.

A: Yeah, once again, our main matriarch was my grandmother, Rose Bachner and she was the one that held the so to speak the family together. So that's about all I can say about my childhood. As far as my childhood in Paris. From the day I was born til 1942, before things started to materialize as far as the gathering of Jews in Europe.

Q: Do you remember any anti-Semitism going on during those years, either in your school or in your neighborhood? And sort of along those lines, what was the relationship between the Jews and the non-Jews in where you were living?

A: In the building, we had a building superintendent. They call it a concierge. And I think we were, I mean in fact I'm pretty sure, we were the only Jews living in that building. And it was an apartment building in the ninth district of Paris. In fact it was near, it was right in the Place

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Pigalle, P-I-G-A-L-L-E. The Place Pigalle after the war became quite a pornographic type of thing after the war. There was all kinds of burlesque and prostitution and everything else. And at least that's what I've heard anyway when I was old enough to find out. But we were living there and once again, not to be redundant, we were the only Jews in that building.

Q: Did you feel that you were the only Jews in the building? Do you think people were anti-Semitic –

A: No, people didn't associate, that I can recall, with one another within that building. I don't think they even knew, except for one person that – I remember on the third floor that she was, I remember her and my grandmother had some conversations. But no close association. Otherwise, not, the status of being poor just didn't entertain itself to, for much association I guess.

Q: Were there a lot of Jews who attended your school?

A: Not that I recall. I mean I do remember some kids wearing the star of David when we were required but not before. I don't recall any Jewish boys or girls prior to the requirement of wearing the star of David.

Q: Do you remember when you started being required to wear it and if there were any other sort of laws or rules that you had to follow around that time?

A: We were required to register, as I told you previously. We were required to register. And upon registration we were, the French government gave us the star of David which has **Juif**, J-U-I-F, which meant Jew, translated meant Jew. And this was I would say this was in 1940, yeah in 1940 when the requirement was levied upon the Jews. And so at that time, I saw maybe a couple Jewish kids, but I don't recall. I don't recall their name or anything like it as standing out. And I think I indicated also, I was put in a Jewish orphanage and it was quite hectic because they had begun to gather the men and so my grandmother and Maya decided to move me out of the one Jewish orphanage and put me into another orphanage. And that didn't work out because I was

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picked on and called a dirty Jew, a **sal** Juif and it became hectic for the Jewish population in Europe and in France as well. And so Maya and my grandmother, as I indicated, pulled me out. My grandmother also had been in charge of my sister. She had taken care of my sister during the deportation.

Q: Just take me back a little bit before you were put in the orphanage. Your father and your mother were arrested right?

A: Yes.

Q: Ok so first tell me about the day, your father was arrested first, correct?

A: Yes, well –

Q: First tell me about how that came about and sort of what happened that day. You were still living at home at the time, right?

A: He got a notice to report. He got a notice to report and the report was sent by the French military under the French government. And that's when I told you we reported to a place near the Place de l'Opera and when we got there the French gendarme, or the police met us and in this humongous room so to speak, and we were still together. And all of a sudden the German, the German soldiers and the German military came in and told the French police to separate the children and women from the men. And that was in 1940. And that was it. We saw, I saw my father once before he was sent to Auschwitz.

Q: You mean after he was arrested you were able to see him once.

A: Yes, well what happened he was first interned and I put it down I think in October 1940. Then he was transferred to another French camp in November of that same year. And then he was transferred to another camp in 1941 and another camp during the 1941 and then he went to another camp by the name of **Compiègne**, which is sort of north of Paris in May 1942. And all

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these camps were under direction of the German occupation forces. But the French were actually manning the camps. And then my father was deported to Auschwitz in June 1942 and then according to the death certificate that I acquired from the French authority, he was, the death certificate indicates that he was, he died in July 1942. About a month or so after arriving in Auschwitz. So he wasn't immediately gassed as many Jews were. As to my mother –

Q: And at what point did you see him –

A: In Compiègne.

Q: You were able to come visit him?

A: Yes, we saw him for less than an hour. He had sent a postcard to my mother and indicating that he could be seen and where he was so we took if I'm not mistaken, if I remember right, we took the train and we saw him for less than an hour. And of course he didn't know where he was being shipped.

Q: Do you remember anything about that visit, like what he had said about where he was at the time, how he was being treated, anything like that?

A: He already started looking excuse the expression. He started looking like hell already because he had been almost two years in I'll call it labor camps. And he had lost a lot of weight and his being was not normal, that's for sure. And his physique had degraded itself. So he went through some hard time I guess and I don't guess. I know. And he ultimately out of Compiègne was deported to Auschwitz. And he was I presume that he had to be strong enough to last for a month but having been interned for a couple of years I'm sure he was weaker than his original being. And he succumbed to either he got gassed or he just died from hunger and labor and everything else. I don't know how he died. So I can only assume that he was either gassed or he succumbed to weakness and hunger after all these years of being interned.

Now as to my mother, she and oh – you asked me about whether I didn't partake in any conversation between my mother and my father during the short time that we got to see him. I

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was and I think that's, I stated I was more or less a bystander little kid. I mean I remember him hugging me but that's about it. We didn't engage in any conversation. So that's about all I can say. That was, the last we saw of him was in 1942.

Now, once again, I've got to tell you and I think I so stated, he was quite a rugged individual. And with a character, a temper, I can recall a temper. He didn't take much from anybody. And he was, I don't know whether I should tell you this. But he was not very kind to my mother. That's all I'm going to tell you.

Q: I understand.

A: And I saw that first hand, by the way. But I don't want to go through – I cherish his memory so I don't want to go through telling you what his unkindness was. And as far as my mother. We got a call from her sister, Anna. And she wanted my mother to, she, we didn't have a phone by the way. It was the concierge of the building superintendent. We had given the number to her sister, the concierge number to her sister. So she called and wanted us to, she wanted mother to come in and, because – and they had already taken the father. The French authority under the direction of the Germans had already taken the father. And I guess she wanted my mother to be with her and this and the other. So my mother had to take the Metro and she left me behind.

Q: With your sister?

A: With my grandmother and we never saw my mother again and ultimately I so stated and I'm assuming because that was the, in 1942 and I think Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Museum, US Holocaust Museum has that on record. They had what they called the **Velodrome d'Hiver**, the **Vél d'Hiver** they called it which is the stadium, the stadium, the winter stadium which was a humongous stadium where they were amassing the Jews and taking them there during the period of seven to ten days and they were – Since she was picked up, I'm either assuming that she was picked up at the Metro because she never got to her sister Anna. So she must have been picked up and within, this was in if I'm not mistaken. My mother was taken in July of 42. And she was, and all I got from the French authority is what they call an **avis disparation** [ph] which is a disappearing notice. And that's all they could, after all these years I could never get an official

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death certificate. She was arrested in July. In fact I'm looking at it right now. The round up was about six to ten days and she was arrested on the 19th of July and sent after the Velodrome d'Hiver sent to **Drancy**, D-R-A-N-C-Y. And she left Drancy on the 24th of July. So we're talking a five day span in which she was arrested and deported and deported to Auschwitz on the 24th of July so and presumably she was somewhat of a frail person, as I indicated in the outline. And she couldn't have endured any hard labor and this and that and the other. And even if she was robust, they were marching the Jews off the convoy. She went by convoy. I don't have the convoy number in front of me. She went by convoy to Auschwitz and most likely off the convoy marched directly into the gas chamber. So –

Q: Your grandmother was already living with you and your sister at the time?

A: Yes. Let me retrack some. When all this happened, my grandma was also, first of all she was living in a very swanky part of Paris. She had a swanky apartment, quite roomy. And they were looking for her as well. Her building superintendent had told her that they had come in looking for her and so when all this happened she moved into a, with us and she moved into – when my mother was taken she moved in permanently with us into this one room apartment. They came looking, when they start, looking for women and children, they came – the first time they came and I think I said so, was they came to the concierge, the superintendent and she said well they're not home. And they left. That's the French authority, not the Germans because the French had formed what they called a Vichy government and there was, under the direction of the German occupational forces. And so the French were directed, the French police were directed to gather the Jews and imprison them. Anyway, the second time, they – what happened after the first time, the concierge told us to move into a two room apartment which was the people were gone at that time. They were not Jewish or anything like this. They were gone so I don't know for what span of time they were gone but they told us to move in. And the second time they came looking for us, this time they didn't take the concierge's word that we were gone. They actually went up to the fourth floor. There was no elevator by the way. And you had to walk up the stairs. And knocked on the one room apartment that we had vacated a few days, quite a few days back. And knocked on the door and shouted our last name, Fensterheim. Fensterheim. And of course there

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was no answer. So they left and the concierge told us shortly after that they had left and she told our grandmother that we better do something because they most likely will come back again. At that time my mother got together with her cousin, Maya, M-A-Y-A and this is when I was dispatched so to speak to Normandy and I so stated in my outline where I was, there was three of us Jewish boys that were taken in by a priest in Normandy.

Q: This was after the orphanages. First you were sent to orphanages in Paris, right?

A: This is after the orphanage. Yeah.

Q: Your mom is arrested. You're living in the two bedroom apartment with your grandmother?

A: Yes.

Q: And your grandmother decides that it's no longer safe there?

A: Yes.

Q: And that's when she sends you to the orphanages.

A: Yes and then shortly after. I didn't last too long in any of the orphanages. I didn't last –

Q: So your mom had already been gone at this point?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: You had just said your mom had been visiting with your cousin Maya.

A: My grandmother.

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Q: Your grandmother, ok, I got you. I apologize. Your grandmother had been visiting with Anna and you were in the orphanages but not for too long.

A: Not so long at all.

Q: And your sister was with you as well?

A: No. My grandmother had taken her and she went someplace and I don't recall where. It was outside of Paris and she became a somewhat of a maid and then being a woman of a certain age. Maya and my grandmother found a Christian family to take my sister, right out of a place, right outside of Paris.

Q: And this is while you're in the orphanages?

A: Yes, and my grandmother –

Q: I know you were only there for a short amount of time. I'm sorry I didn't mean to interrupt. Please go ahead.

A: Yes, I was in the orphanages, the two orphanages in a very short period of time.

Q: Do you have any sort of recollections from those orphanages? Were there other Jewish kids there also?

A: In the last one that I was in where it was an integrated orphanage where must have been Christian and this, that and the other, whatever. I didn't see anyone being. At that time I don't recall anyone having, wearing the star of David. I was being picked on like mad here and so I told my grandmother and she in fact reiterated what I had said and what happened, what was happening and so that's when Maya was able and I don't know how she got the name of the priest, the abbey and that was taking, was sheltering if you will sheltering Jewish kids. So that's when I went, once again that's when I was dispatched to Normandy.

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Q: How did you get there?

A: It was by train.

Q: Did someone come and retrieve you and take you there or you went by yourself?

A: I went by myself. I was ten years old. At that time kids could, you wouldn't do this here in the United States. You wouldn't do this to any, I didn't do this to any of my kids. Let them go, eight or ten years old by themselves any distance.

Q: So you took a train to Normandy where you met this priest and put in the abbey, correct?

A: Yes. And so let me see. Where was I? Ok. I'm trying to recall. Ok. To an abbey in Normandy and the town was called Belleville. I have some photographs but none of the priests and, of the last, well ok, What I'm trying to do right now is I'm going to go on the web and the French and try to remember, I don't recall the priest's name. But the first thing he did, we took off. In fact when I traveled I took off, I didn't have the star of David. I was a young kid who you know, nobody that looked at me as a young kid you know. And the first thing he made sure and I so stated in my outline, shortly after our arrival, he had us baptized. He had baptism certificate predated. And he was part of the French Resistance. And so it was unbelievable. And then he made us attend Mass and in fact, I could, one of the Jewish boys became a priest, by the way. I'm trying to remember. If I remember right, his name was Morrison. I've been trying to recall names. And the other kid was I don't recall.

Q: Three Jewish kids in total at the abbey?

A: There were only three of us.

Q: You were all baptized and sort of taken in by this priest?

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A: Yes, we were. He almost did it right away. He just wanted to make sure that and he predated the baptism certificate which I don't have in my possession by the way. It was done so there was any question because all of a sudden three kids appeared in this small town.

Q: Did you all come together, or you met those other two boys once you were there?

A: No we did not come together. I don't know who came first or whatever. I don't recall. But we didn't come together. It was installing safeguards if you will to make sure that the questions and there must have been questioning in town, that all of a sudden three young boys appeared. And so he was quite a charitable and good, a good man besides being a priest. So we stayed there. I stayed there til 1946 but right after the 1944 liberation the priest sent me to one of his orphanage in Carteret, C-A-R-T-E-R-E-T and which was not too far from – it was on the water. It was a town on the water with beaches and this and that and the other. Cause I remember I was swimming in the ocean. But in 1942 to 44, late 44, I was there at Belleville.

Q: In the abbey?

A: In the abbey. With a priest and also he had, and so I stated that he had a family, his sister, her husband and two kids. And during that time, during the occupation, the priest, the abbey had some land and we cultivated the land and I don't know whether it was an acre or what. It was a small piece of land. And the three of us were put to work and I once again, not to be redundant, I so stated that during the occupation there wasn't that many Germans in that town but they confiscated food from our garden if you will and confiscated food from other people. And we ate very sparsely. I was. I did mention the fact that Normandy was a cider country so there were cider apples and I found myself eating a lot of cider apples.

And ultimately and I so stated that at 14 years old, when I came to the United States, I was 57 pounds. I looked like a kid of eight or nine years old. You know. Retracting somewhat. During the time at the abbey he farmed us out to other farmers so and the farmers compensated the priest for our labor by food which we brought back but the food was mostly for his family. We got, I could recall, we got a lot of soup and with some potatoes but hardly any meat. The only, the only time I can recall eating fairly well was when we were farmed out to these farmers who were

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able to either hide their food from the Germans or what. But we ate fairly well and so, and after enduring, during the – oh by the way, I did mention the fact too that there was suspicion by the townspeople because once again there was three boys that all of a sudden that made their appearance at the abbey. Invariably the suspicion was they must have been Jewish and he's trying to do something you know. And so the Germans came storming in one day and I was laid up. I was laid up. I had gotten hurt in the field. And I was laid up and they came looking and he showed them the, that we were orphans. He showed them the predated baptism certificates. He couldn't show them, how did he, how did he answer whatever question there was. How did he get the pre-dated baptism certificate? And but it was him that baptized us. So I don't know what transpired. I was not purely accepted. I just overheard some of the conversation but not all of it. Cause they were moving around. And at another time being part of the French resistance, He did hide some, in 1944 when the American forces came in, but prior to the ninth, the liberation or the (water break)

Prior to the invasion in sixth of June 1944, paratroopers had parachuted into France and they were, you know whether they were a Green Beret at that time, I don't know what they were. And he had a kid, paratroopers hiding in his cider vat. He had a cider vat believe it or not. But it was an empty and the Germans came in looking at this one time and shortly after they came in the first time. And there must have been the suspicion that he could have been in the French resistance and they came in the second time, looked all over the, and I was still laid up. And they looked all over the abbey and inside and outside and couldn't find anything and they left. And so he was quite a patriot and besides being a generous person and a kind person. So and oh I've got to say this too. Prior to the invasion, and I think I so stated, we moved to the woods, the forest and we, he had somebody dug up a big trench in there. And himself, his family and the three of us went into the woods and we stayed there because there was bombardment and this that and the other and planes flying all over. And shooting on both sides and but he had his boys going after food. And but he told us what to do in case, at that time we were, I was 12. And the guy, the other one of the kids was 14 or 15 years old. He was older and the other one was about my age. And we went after food and water constantly and he told us, he said make sure that you hear close gunfire from the ground or from the air, hit the dirt. And so we did. We did a couple of times. And finally we heard the in sixth of June. It took about, almost ten days and we were not too far from the **Sainte Mere Eglise** where the one of the invasion forces came in, the beaches of

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Sainte Mere Eglise and we were, but it took them about ten – we were maybe about 30, 40 kilometers, 30 kilometers, maybe I don't know. I can't recall. I didn't check the map yet. But it took them ten days to get in and all of a sudden the church bell rang and so the priest had us move back to the abbey. And we met, well the church rang for one reason, because the Americans had come into town which --

Q: How long had you been living in the forest at that point?

A: For a good, for a good two weeks.

Q: And he was living there with his family as well?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And you knew he was a part of the French resistance at this point?

A: Yes. We knew that because I didn't see the American that he was hiding but there was a lot of traffic going in and out of that, the barn where the cider vats were. And so there was, and ultimately he told us who he was and what he had done. And one time we saw – oh, I think I told you. And one time we saw planes, airplanes, American airplanes. The sky was full. I mean unbelievable. And one, the horizon was full of, and we were, the three of us got scared because we were, I guess they were on their way to Germany to bomb Berlin or whatever. And we hid in the dirt because we thought they were – but we never saw any bombs being dropped this close you know. And so and then during our ventures to get food and after we got to the abbey we still had to go get food because we – so we went to the farmers to acquire some food and that's when we saw the remnants of the German occupation and the remnants of the invasion forces, the American invasion forces, having left our, the field and our town and this and that and the other. And we gathered horses and Germans had left behind and then we had left. We gathered, we found all kinds of C ration or K, whatever at that time. They were C rations and ammo and this and that and the other which not only the Germans had left behind but also the Americans had left behind. And I think I so stated we were horsing around with a pineapple looking, it was a

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little pineapple like and it happened to be a grenade, American grenade. We knew what a German grenade looked like because – but we didn't know what an American grenade looked like and we were horsing around throwing it to one another and this and that and the other, until we got to the abbey with our findings. And the priest saw what we had in hand and he looked and of course in a, in an American grenade there's a pin. That you have to pull. But anyway he must have known that it was a grenade. And he crossed himself, he crossed himself and says oh my gosh he says and he said we were so lucky that we didn't pull the pin. But anyway once again he had two Americans by the way in an empty vat. On the property. And so I think I told you about the phone and this and that and the other. And ok in 1945 –

Q: These two Americans were. Tell me about them.

A: I never met them.

Q: Ok. You just knew that they were there?

A: Yep, I never met them so I don't know who they were or what, or but this was prior, he had them there prior to the actual invasion.

Q: You don't know what they were doing there?

A: Well you know in any war since I spent 20 years in the military, you got a special forces and now you've got the, these Navy SEALs and this that and the other, going in trying to invading or having your regular forces come in. So I don't know whether they're special forces. I'm assuming that they were because it was before the invasion. So –

Q: Before the invasion did you feel somewhat protected by the priest and safe there?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Even though it was a small community you felt safe?

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A: Yeah it was once the community, because they saw us in the church. I mean people at that time were very pious and religious, you know religious. They attended church week, not just weekly, sometimes daily. And we could do Low Mass, High Mass and everything else and we did funerals. We did weddings. And church weddings and church funerals and so forth, so on. So people, the towns people began to recognize us and say well we're part of the, what the priest – they also revered the priest because he was such a kind person to the villagers. He was a good, I presume they loved him because he was a good priest as well.

So, yes, there was for the time I was there, before the invasion, the three of us felt we were protected and also the townspeople saw us as part of his entourage if you will.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about the abbey. What were the living quarters like? Anything you remember about it.

A: Yeah the three of us were in one room. And the abbey was like most abbeys I guess at that time in France. It was, I would say if I recall properly. There was a kitchen. He was in a room, his family and the kids were, had two rooms and we were in another room. And there was a barn, as I said. We, that's about it. There was nothing else of any structural -- that I can recall. I would say that there was a kitchen of course and one bath for everybody.

Q: Can you describe the priest a little bit. What was your relationship like with him personally?

A: Yeah he was I would say he was five ten, five 11. He was not, he was I'm trying to think the word in English. **Postof** [ph].

Q: I wish I knew French.

A: Well I speak French fluently. Still after all these years. But anyway he was well fed for some reason. He didn't suffer from hunger what I recall. Postof and he stood erect nicely. He had a stern look on him. He didn't have to mince any words if you will. But yet the kindness inside of him was, well, for having saved us from extinction if you will. That speaks for itself. And his

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sister was you know the regular lady that she was and I don't recall that much about her. This that and the other. We didn't have much contact with, we never ate with them. We ate separately because they had the food. Don't misunderstand. We didn't starve but we didn't eat as well as they did and I recall at that time too, when the Germans occupied and we had what they call a **boulangerie**, a bakery, well French baguettes as we know it now and as we know it before the war was not what we had during the Occupation. The bread was somewhat dark because we had the remnants of the good flour was somewhat dark. And if you rolled the dough and throw it at somebody you could knock them out so to speak. It was not – and we had, we did get, every day we got a small piece because everything was rationed. Everything was rationed and I don't recall whether, because there was rationing we had stamps and I don't recall us having, of course we didn't know because I think it was a sister that was in charge of getting the food prepared and buying and this that and the other. But it was him that sent us off to the farmers. And once again we brought in the food that the farmers gave us for our labor. But he himself, I can remember was stood up nicely, erect. He was, he had somewhat I try to, I don't want to say overweight but he was well fed. Ok. I'll leave it at that. Please interrupt me if there's any –

Q: I hope I'm not interrupting too much. I just want to make sure that we cover as many details as you can remember.

A: As I said when we ate, when we guys sat down, we ate, there was no such thing as beef. The farmers were able to grow rabbits and I remember when we went to the farmers we had rabbit meat and the funny thing about it. I don't know whether it's the custom now but at that time in Normandy there was a pot set in the middle of the table and we sat with the farmers and they gave us a knife and we plunged the knife into the pot and there was no plates. We ate plenty, actually we ate it off our thumb. And so they were trying to do their best also to survive. That was the, I guess the *modus operandus* is to survive during any occupation. So and then once again, somewhere in 44, 45 I was shipped to Carteret and I was there for, til 46 when my grandmother reunited us. My sister was I told you, let me see if I got where she was.

Q: Where did you say you were shipped after the invasion? Liberation, sorry.

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A: Belleville, Belleville, Normandy.

Q: I know, but where did you go after the Americans liberated?

A: Oh, ok, shortly after I went to Carteret, C-A-R-T-E-R-E-T.

Q: You traveled there by yourself?

A: Yes.

Q: Because you were going to meet your grandmother?

A: No, no, because I didn't meet. This was 44, 45. And I didn't meet my grandmother til 46.
Shortly after –

Q: So you just decided to go there because the war had ended and you were sort of emerged from your hiding?

A: No the priest had an orphanage there in Carteret. He had a regular orphanage.

Q: And he sent you there?

A: He sent two of us over there.

Q: What happened to the third Jewish boy you were with?

A: At that time the boy was 17, 16, 17 and he had already indicated that he wanted to become a priest. Ok so I guess he must have indicated that to the priest and so just the two of us were sent. And that was a regular orphanage that he had run and there was no Jewish kid except the two of us when we got there. But this is why he didn't send us. He kept us in the abbey because he was able to indoctrinate us into the Catholic religion to alleviate any suspicion that the

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townspeople might have and ultimately when the invasion was done and I'm not saying, at that time the war was not quite over yet. And he finally sent us to Carteret the two of us. And there was a lady and I've got her photo somewhere with her name. I can't recall her name. But she was in charge of the orphanage. And I do have a photo of her and so –

Q: You said you also have a photograph of the abbey, right?

A: Yeah, I think so but I'm going to have to look for it.

Q: If you can find any of these I'm sure the Museum would love to see them or make copies or we could talk about that afterwards?

A: I got photos of my, not only of my parents but my grandmother, her sister or the, my mother's sisters and all that.

Q: I'm sure they'd love to see all of those.

A: I could scan them on the web and send it on the web. If you need it.

Q: I think that would be great. We will be in touch with the right person at the Museum afterwards.

A: Ok. So my grandmother and Maya at that time. Maya also went into hiding but don't ask me where because I don't know. Once again my mother, my grandmother became a maid and after the war she came back into Paris and got together with Maya and since we had my aunt in Cleveland, Ohio and we had my grandmother had cousins in Little Rock, Arkansas. And so did Maya of course but since she was part of the family. So both of them got together after the war or before you know, after the war. And got together and were able to communicate with some of the relatives here in the United States and the lawyer by the name of Bennett was able to, his name was Edward Bennett. He was a lawyer who was able to get the proper paperwork, the visas and all this in order for us to immigrate to the United States.

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Q: How did your grandmother find you?

A: She knew where I was because –

Q: She had been in touch with the priest who told her that you had been moved to the orphanage?

A: And so did Maya know. Maya –

Q: And your sister? They had retrieved your sister from the family who had been hiding her at that point?

A: Yes. There was a --- my sister was with a Christian family, a French Christian family by the name of **Cioci** – C-I-O-C-I and just in a suburb of Paris and she was there from two years old to six years old. And they wanted to adopt her but my grandmother didn't want to and they were, as I wrote they were somewhat devastated that she was reclaimed from them. To this day, by the way, I got together with a great granddaughter of the family. She's, the man and wife, the man who kept her and sheltered her for the four years, died. And the woman is 92 years old as of right now. And they wanted, I submitted a short, I wrote to you – I submitted a short synopsis of my story as to the connection that I have with my sister, as far as family, what happened, what transpired with us, prior to the war. What happened to our family during the occupation, the German occupation. And ultimately our immigration to the United States. I didn't go into lengthy details because what they want to do is submit to the French authority and they call it **Les Justes**, the just. To recognize, to honor them and recognize them for their efforts in sheltering Jewish children. So they wanted more information and I said well no, the information that I gave you is enough for the connection that my sister has with me and the family that we lost. But the application should be concerned and should be strictly between that family and my sister and what they did for her, not my story. I gave you the relationship and that's it. And I got a call from one of the person that is in charge of writing up the application and she wanted more.

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We talked for about an hour and from France. And she wanted more and I said no, that's it. I'm not giving you any more of my details, my own details. And so I don't know.

Q: Did she talk to your sister?

A: I, We had a slight fall out so I haven't talked to her in about three or four years. We had a slight fall out and well just to give you, after we got to the States, we were shipped to Edward Bennett's sister back in Georgia, **Unadella**.

Q: Edward Bennett was the lawyer who arranged for you to immigrate to the US?

A: Yes. And she, I guess she had a rough time with them and she had thought she was adopted and after their death she found out she had taken their name as Paulette Elkins. But she found out she was never adopted so legally she was not an Elkins, she was still a Fensterheim. And so it took a toll on her and she felt cheated if you will for all these years having been with them for, until their death. And so she changed completely. And, of course, I was shipped out. I think I wrote to you. I was shipped out to, out of Unadella also. They insisted that the lady, Bessie Elkins insisted that we call her mom and dad. And as duly, at 14 years old, I could do it. I had lost my parent at an early age, eight years old in 1940 and 42, eight and ten, and I just couldn't bring myself at 14 to call anybody else mom and dad. And so we didn't see eye to eye on that particular subject. And we didn't see eye to eye on other things. And I was going to school and integrating myself with the activities which I had sorely missed. Or never had, actually during the war years and there again I was being restricted.

Q: By the family you were living with?

A: I was being restricted in 99.9 percent of the activities. And so as a teenager, 14, I guess I somewhat rebelled.

Q: Why were you being restricted by them?

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A: They were the only Jewish family in Unadella, Georgia.

Q: They were nervous to be integrated into the outside world?

A: And they didn't have any, they ran a fabric store, Harry Elkins ran a fabric store and there was no – I mean acquaintances but no get together with anybody or anything. I guess we were – and I'm not saying that we were ostracized in any way there but they did look, they did know that we were Jews and so that also was somewhat of a stigma they attached to us for being Jewish. But –

Q: Your sister was adjusting with the family a little better?

A: Oh yeah, much more so, much more so. She was six years old when they got her. I mean at six years old there's not much adjustment to be had. She didn't experience, she was too young to experience any displacement or atrocity or could even understand what happened to her real mom and dad. And so I was I guess I became a handful for them and they told, she told her brother and I wrote it down too. I was shipped to Arkansas, Sulphur Springs, Arkansas, a military school and within two or three months, for my senior year in high school. By the way I couldn't speak a word of English when I got to the States. In school I was put into sophomore year because of my age, I guess. I don't know and we had to do hand language and the teacher was patient and kind and even the kids were trying to help me but as kids we start learning fast languages and so I was helped in many ways. And then when I went to this military school for my senior year, after three months the payments to school were terminated and I was left hanging where the superintendent of the schools, I wrote that was going to let me go. But I don't know, I didn't know where in the world I was going to go because I was by myself. And my grandmother at that time had died. My cousin, my aunt in Cleveland had a disabled husband. He had Parkinson's disease and he ultimately died. And she had one daughter who was living in Boca Raton, Florida, which, we see her every so often. I have a wife, I wrote to you. I have a wife of 58 years and she's handicapped as well. She has, she is walking with a walker and she underwent surgery in 2010 and the surgeon botched the surgery so that's another story.

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Q: I'm so sorry to hear that.

A: And so I'm the only one that, well anyway to make a long story short, my aunt in Cleveland couldn't afford to take me and so I did go for a few days to Cleveland which I didn't write down. I did go for a few days in Cleveland and I got recalled by the superintendent to come back to Sulphur Spring, Arkansas. He had found a family, a local family who had an adopted son and they were willing to pay for the remaining year of the military school. And then never adopted me or anything like this. Never asked for anything, never wanted me, never wanted to, my repaying them for not only the money but their kindness and this that and the other. And so and it was a Christian family as well. And they knew that I was the only Jewish boy in the military school.

And so Julie, I can talk about, I underwent so many displacements. In the years, is that and I guess I must have inherited my father's strong character because I survived and the survival itself and thank god for my, thank god to my grandmother and Maya and all the people involved for my survival. The man invariably were priest. The priest was god sent. And –

Q: Did you keep in touch with the priest or his family or anything like that after the war?

A: Shortly. And we lost contact. And he ultimately died anyway so and I never got to know when he died or anything like this and –

Q: You said you don't remember his name, right?

A: No but I'll find it.

Q: That would be helpful.

A: Because he should be enshrined. Not only enshrined within the church as well as with the French authorities because he was a, for having done what he did, not only for us but for the

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Americans, the liberation and everything else we don't meet these type of people on a daily basis and you've got to have a certain chutzpah.

Q: Yeah, I mean to sacrifice your own life like that is obviously very remarkable. And you don't see it every day.

A: I was fortunate in that and unfortunately that my family was disseminated to the point of, there was me. Me and my sister and then, of course, I wrote to you where I spent quite a few years, well 20 years in the military. And I would have loved to have finished my degree but Korea was on at that time. And even though the oil company that I was working for in Tulsa, Oklahoma had indicated that they would pay for the next four years of my engineering. Instead I went to – I was 1A classification and I would have been drafted. I would have been drafted and I didn't want to go into the army. And even though a Texas oil company had written a letter to the effect that they would send me to school. And I took it to the draft board. They sort of chuckled and said if I had been a senator's son, that would have been something else but I wasn't. So I went and enlisted and then ultimately during my first tour in Europe, I met my wife and I indicated that we celebrated our anniversary in 20, yeah I can remember that. And if I can't remember I have a ring with my date, the date inscribed inside my ring. We were married 24 September 55. And she blessed me with three children and we have four grandkids now. We speak French. Well we speak English but when you're sort of a linguist and right away besides my ____ at school to get my degree, I also went to Brown University for languages. And I majored in French and German and took up Russian and Spanish and but my major was French and German.

Q: This was after, well you were in the army for so long. At what point did you go to Brown?

A: In –

Q: Not the army, the air force I'm sorry.

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A: In 1976 to 78 and so and then because I was, I went to the VA. The VA well it was better than the GI Bill. I was, I had a -- what is that. I had an injury while I was in the military. I was injured and I lost my left ear and my left hearing and then my right is about 80, 75, 85 percent gone so I'm wearing a hearing aid and then I was injured. I lost part of my feeling in my left hand. I was going under the, full tuition for the one year of my bachelors and full tuition for under graduate. Uncle paid for right down to pencil, paper everything. So I was fortunate there. So nothing to complain.

But I will say this. I wish, of course I wish dearly that my family besides what we have right now, what my wife and I created but I wish we had family but otherwise you could say I was self-made. It was me. After I got out of high school, I was on my own. I wasn't even 17 years old when I got out of high school. So I was on my own, so we call that self-made or whatever. And hard work. So, but I did it and I'm now a young 81, Julie.

Q: It really is an amazing story and so many aspects of it, just so interesting and also not the usual sort of Holocaust survivor story that you hear. And I don't know many survivors who then went back to serve in the military and return to Europe. That must have been difficult emotionally for you to sort of go back to war.

A: So we were, we used to have the one room apartment so it had been converted to a luxury and, the building, the whole building was converted when I went back. I went back to Paris. My wife and I went to Paris about two or three times so I went, I also went to Paris before I got married and so I went to, and I still, the advantage I spoke French fluently. In fact to also tell you, you won't believe this. When I visited Paris because I never visited Paris before when I was a kid, living there. I went to the regular tourist attractions, this and that and the other and I was in the cathedral of Notre Dame. I wanted to see what Notre Dame looked like because that's a tourist attraction and I was there and sitting down and not kneeling or anything like and I was sitting down and a priest came over to me, a young priest. And they had several priests and I guess there must be a one that's in charge of all the younger priests, or senior priest. Came over to me and he says do you know how to serve Mass. I says, and I was in civvies because most of the time I wore civvies when I was in the military. But I was in civilian clothes and he asked me

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where – I said yeah, I know how to serve Mass. And I said, he says we need somebody. Can you help us out? Well would you believe I served the High Mass at Notre Dame in Paris?

Q: That's an amazing story.

A: I couldn't believe it. I told him, I says my gosh it's been so many years, so many years. He said don't worry. He said the priests will help you out.

Q: Did you become like a practicing Jew after the war?

A: No. And I will say this. We got, both my wife and I got married in church. In 1955. And after 1955 we never, I never practiced Catholicism, never practiced Jewish or anything. We're good people is that I've seen things in the Church or well, let's say in the Church. I had a, I was in the military and I saw the Midnight Mass for Christmas. I went one time to Midnight Mass, Christmas Midnight Mass. And I saw GIs that I knew that came in from town, got confession, got communion, were absolved and went back downtown to drink and to do whatever they did, what GIs would do. And so there was a major that was conducting the – later on I went up to him. I says how can you give absolution to someone that you know is as soon as they have a confession and communion, they're going to go back to what they were doing and what they confessed to you? He said well we know that but we can't deny the, you know. I said that's, to me that's two faced and another instance is we were stationed in Hawaii, my wife and I. And we had three kids and on a Sunday morning, the guy comes over to me and he says, and I was washing my automobile. He says Joe he says, don't you ever go to church or whatever. Synagogue all this. I said no. And he says, he said well you should. I said whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. I said what do you mean should? He said well it would do you a lot of good. I said let me tell you something. I said I got three kids and you got about four kids. I said I hear those kids use four letter words and all this thing. Now my kids never used four letter words. I said so I said don't be telling me what, what's good for me. I said do you ever say blessings at a table, whether you're Jewish or Catholic or Protestant. I do, without a, without – I bless the food. I said I know what it is to be hungry. I said so don't be preaching to me. And he wouldn't talk to me for about four months. And then finally after four months, he came over and apologized to me and he says

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I was out of line. And I said well I appreciate your apology and, but I don't have to go to church or synagogue or anything like this. We're good people. And both my wife and I raised our kids. We raised them right. One, all three of them are well to do, not only financially but character wise and this and that and the other. You couldn't ask for any better. I thank god for whether it's the Jewish God, or the Christian God. I don't care who the God is a, did a good job for me and for my family and the family that I have now, that I didn't have when I was growing up. And that to me is a big plus in my life. And of course it was thank god for the help with my wife. And as I indicated too she prodded me throughout the years to tell my story.

Q: I'm so happy you did.

A: Well I felt, there's no shame in my story. Whatsoever. And I think you heard that not only the actual Auschwitz survivor but family of survivors. They wanted that protection of the atrocity and the suffering that they them self, went through and they didn't want to bring this out, not from any shame but from a protection you know. I just didn't want to.

Q: Did you share your story with your kids or grandchildren?

A: Some, but not as detailed as I have with you. My youngest daughter, my son, my oldest daughter and two of the grandkids but not as detail and whatever I've written, I've already printed and I'm going to present to them. And I want to present it also to my cousin in Boca Raton because she also asked me to tell my story. And her name by the way is Shirley, Fant, F-A-N-T. And she's the daughter of my aunt in Cleveland who is deceased right now but she's the daughter of **Gisella** Friedman. I'm going to present this outline and then be open for any further details that they may have or any questions that they may want answered. And give them what I gave you and if I can recall more I will. If they ask me something that you haven't asked me, I have it. Sometimes you've got to be prodded in order to do some recollection.

Q: I hope I didn't prod too much and I hope I didn't interrupt you too much. I apologize if I did. But I really thank you. My one last question. You've answered a bit of it before, but how do you think what you experienced during the war affected you when you were raising your children

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and the values and the, just everything you were instilling them. How do you think your experiences affected all of that?

A: Well sometimes I felt I was somewhat over protective. Something that I never experienced so I wanted to insure that they themselves were not in harm's way in any way, whatever.

Q: That makes sense.

A: Number one. Number two we try to, we tried and sometimes kids today growing up even in the 50s, especially in the 60s and 70s. It's a different generation altogether. They don't look at 15 and 16. I don't know if you have any children. At 15 and 16 they know everything.

Q: My oldest is eight so, but I'm soon approaching those times.

A: They know everything and so they think they know everything. And so all of them, all three of them gave us the run around for a while until they matured. But they had, and the reason is Julie, is they had everything. They had everything. I mean they didn't suffer anything. They had a lot of the kindness, the goodies if you will. They didn't suffer. And maybe we were over protective. I don't know. I felt that they had to honor their parents but especially their mother. I did not know my father as much as I did my mother. I think most kids growing up that's what happens too. And I told even today, sometimes I have to remind them that their mother is my wife, my sweetheart, my lover and it's their mother. And I want them to recognize that and honor – they don't have to send her a card on mother's day. Sometimes, most of the times they don't. But I want them to pick up the phone. My kids are 53, 55, and 57. So and I got grandkids that are from 22 to 27. Thank god for one thing. We live in the villages, Julie. We live in the villages. There's about 100,000 population. We have everything. We got a free movie theaters, we've got three town squares. Entertainment every night. We got all facets of people coming from all parts of this fine country. We've got all activities. I mean you name it. At my age, I do karate three times a week. And I'm in good shape. My wife and I before her surgery, we used to do 100 miles on the bicycles. And I swim 50 laps every day. I play, we have what we call pickle ball here. I don't know whether you ever heard of that.

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Q: No. What is that?

A: It's a miniature tennis court with a net, just like a tennis court. We have a solid paddle with a whiffle ball the size of a softball and our people, I'm playing events and we have age anywhere from in their 50s into the 90s here. And people can't believe it that I do all this and on top, I like to brag about it because I'm so active I've got a pulse of 44.

Q: You should brag about it. That's wonderful.

A: When I was in the military I was all Air Force in racquetball. Have you heard of racquetball?

Q: Yes, of course, my father is a big racquetball player.

A: I was all Air Force and I was sponsored by **Fujore** and **Ektelon** so I got out of the military in 1972. I was sponsored for 12 years by Fujore and Ektelon. I got all the equipment the rackets, the gloves, everything. So I was, we call ourselves a jock or an athlete. And I'm taking advantage even at my age of things that I can recall that I never could do or never had a chance of doing.

Q: That's truly wonderful. I'm so happy that you told me and shared your story with me and it really is an amazing and inspirational story. And how you were able to come to this country really with nothing, with no family, with nobody and just start this wonderful new life for yourself.

A: This country is fantastic. I don't care what -- and of course I haven't been in the military for 20 years. You see so many people's perspective of life and the experience you gain from the military whether it's well, you know it's in the military so you're somewhat disciplined. You're militarized, but this country give us the opportunity to do what we can or we wish we could and we do it. And this is what's so great about this country. We went back to Europe a few years ago and we saw my wife's -- she's got two brothers there. And her one brother has been living in this

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tenement house for years. He's never come out of it. And then the other brother he bought a house, another house, another house and so one took the opportunity even in France and it may not be, to me, France is not, it's where I was born, but that's it. I have strict allegiance to the United States. And I swear by it and they came over. Believe it or not, they came over twice and the one time in 2001. The last one came in 2001 with his wife and we went to New York and we couldn't get into the Empire State Building so we went into the World Trade Center and this was in May of 2001 and 9-11 came about and we were living in Rhode Island and I had just turned off the TV after breakfast and it was before eight o'clock and I went outside to do some work and all of a sudden we get a phone call from France. Her younger brother gave us a call and said are you looking at the TV. I said no. He talked to his sister. And my wife calls me back and we turn on the TV and when we saw the atrocity that came about on 9-11 and so we were lucky. What I'm saying, we were lucky that we were in the World Trade Center. It could have happened in May just as well as it did in September. We were lucky there. We escaped so to speak, but not for the people that died. But anyway if there's anything else, please by all means, if there's anything that I can expand on or anything. And I will take a look at our photographs. We had major damage to our house, by the way, Julie. We had what they call sink hole. The ground, my house and my next door neighbor's house in the villages suffered much more extensive damage than anybody else. It was a torrential rainfall, quite a few days and all of a sudden the ground gave way and the house moved and we had to move out. They told us to move our cars, our golf carts and everything else and we were out of this house for seven months and four days and so it could be, first of all it could be estimated and repaired and ultimately we moved back in, in March of last year of 2013. So we still, not unpacking mind you but the things that we misplaced and you know how it is. Sometimes it's hard to find.

Q: I'm sure the Museum would love to see those things, but take your time and whatever you come about, we'll certainly be in touch.

A: What do you plan on doing from here?

Q: I have to talk to the Museum. I actually don't work for the Museum. I'm a volunteer interviewer but I think they want to put your interview in their archives and in their collection. I

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imagine there'll be some sort of follow up in terms of what purposes you would like for, like can people who are going on their website access the interview, those sorts of things. But I'm not entirely sure, but I would certainly have the Museum contact you.

A: I wouldn't want sensitive data be put in such as well you're going to be sensitive about data such as birthdate and, my birthdate.

Q: Yes.

A: You know what I'm saying. With the fraudulent activities that's going on. Birthdays.

Q: No one random will have access to this information or anything like that. I mean I know for example like my grandfather did an interview for the Museum many years back and there is a portion of it that discusses a particular place in time. I think his was talking about the Krakow ghetto and so if someone were to go on the Museum's website and was researching information about the Krakow ghetto and they want to hear a bit about it from a survivor you can actually, here's a link to a clip from his interview. And I think those are the sorts of things that they use it for research purposes and just educational purposes. But again I can't speak to what they do with it entirely cause I don't work for them. But I certainly can have someone from the Museum answer all those questions for you.

A: Ok. I hope you don't hold it against me for not following Judaism you know.

Q: Of course I don't. Please, I'm not judgmental at all. I'm so thankful that you shared your story and you sound like a wonderful person and you sound like you have a wonderful family and no judgment here.

A: By the way I talked to the rabbi before submitting my paperwork. Rabbi Karen Allen who's out of Leesburg. She's the principal rabbi in the synagogue. I was giving her my story and she compiled it into the computer, the word processor, Microsoft Word. And she was going to finalize it and compile it and this and that and the other and it was never done. And for months, I

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had attended some of her seminars. I had attended some of her seminars and I asked I said if you don't have the time, she's pretty active. I said why don't you forward this document on to me so I can do it. And we had a, she had done 21 or 22 pages or 23 pages and but it was more gobbled gook than anything else. And so that's when I, after I received it, after four months of pleading with her, I received it and was able to compile it and write what I had sent you. And hopefully you were able to understand and decipher it. And I was trying to instigate more questions and more details if you had and you did. And you did.

Q: It was a great background for me to be able to conduct the interview because I sort of knew the time line of events and then I was able to ask you sort of more detailed questions about each of the things that happened so it was very helpful. Thank you very much.

A: I appreciate your call and your own time here.

Q: thank you again and it was really a pleasure to speak with you. I will have Noemi from the Museum be in touch with you so she can answer your questions about the interview.

A: I'll send you a picture of when I was 57 pounds.

Q: I'm sure they would like to see all of these. I don't know what you plan on doing with them but a lot of people, like my family decided to donate their pictures from the prewar years to the Museum and we have copies of everything but these are really cherished documents and photos and artifacts and the Museum is able to take better care of them than we were able to. It's just something to think about in case you decide to move forward with pictures.

A: Will I be hearing from anybody else? You said I might.

Q: If you have question about what they're going to do with the interview and I would certainly like for them to follow up with you about the pictures, then yes. If that's ok with you. I will tell them to please follow up with you.

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A: Ok that sounds good.

Q: Great, thank you so much Joe. It was really nice chatting with you. If you have any other questions too, please feel free to reach out. Thank you.

A: With you or Noemi.

Q: Noemi would probably be the best person. And if for some reason you need to get in touch with me, she can certainly pass along my information as well.

A: That sounds good.

Q: Thank you very much. Have a great day.

(end of interview)