

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Hugo Langshur
February 9, 2015
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PREFACE

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HUGO LANGSHUR

February 9, 2015

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Hugo Langshur. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on February 9th, 2015 over the telephone at the Museum and in St. Lambert, Quebec in Canada. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Hugo Langshur: My full name is Herbert Hugo **Langshur**.

Q: Is that the name you were born with?

A: Yes, except very stupidly I, at one point I left out the C between the S and the H in my name, thinking it was for very simplification and it turned out to be not a simplification at all. People call me Langs-herd sometimes.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in a small provincial city about 20,000 inhabitants by the name of **Jagendorf** in, it was in Germany and its Czech name is **Krnov**. It was originally about over a thousand years ago it was a Slavonic settlement, a small settlement and then later on Germans settled it and indeed, it was very close, in those days, it was actually adjacent to the half a mile to the German frontier. Nowadays it's the Polish frontier. Has a habit of changing things around a bit.

Q: When were you born?

A: Beg your pardon.

Q: When were you born, what was the date of your birth?

A: It was in 1921.

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Q: What month and what date?

A: 15th December.

Q: Ok. Let's talk a little bit about your family. Your parents, what were their names?

A: It was unusual. I was born, I was brought by a stork. My mother was in hospital with a bad migraine at the time.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: My father's name was Sigmund and my mother's name was Anna and she was born Kohn, K-O-H-N.

Q: Were they from the same area?

A: She was born in the same, in the same town. My father was born in a very small village in the Bohemian forest. Czechoslovakia, as it was in those days. It was very much like a mess. It looks a bit like a sausage from west to east. And my father's birthplace was completely in the western end. And mine would have been and my mother would have been half way along the sausage in the north.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your parents' backgrounds, how much education they had.

A: My father was a, had a very good degree. A degree of doctor of philosophy for the Charles University in Prague. And he was a teacher at a secondary school. And my mother, my mother didn't have, I think she had a secretarial college or some such thing. I don't think she was a typist. In those days typewriters were hardly invented, were they? And she had no particular – she had good schooling but that was all.

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Q: Did she work outside the home? You said she did some secretarial work.

A: No, no, no. She never, she never did work. She spent some of her very formative years in Vienna where her sister was married. And then she moved back to the home town to look, mainly to look after her mother who was quite sick. Very sorry for her parents, I think, I understand. So she was there and that is where she met my father. My father had been stationed in what was teaching at the technical school there.

Q: Was your family a religious family? Did they have a religious background, your parents?

A: Well my grand, my maternal grandfather was very, very religious indeed. And my father's schooling I think was, to learn Hebrew writing at the age of four, he told me at one time. And but yes my father was a pillar of our synagogue. My mother was less, a little bit less interest in that. More socially interested in what was going on in synagogue than perhaps religiousness.

Q: Did you observe any holidays at home?

A: Yes, we were not kosher. We were not kosher but we did observe holidays. We lit candles on Friday night which I still try to do. Sometimes I forget but I try to do with my wife who by the way converted to Judaism when she married me. It was her initiative not mine. And we, of course, the Seder was always a grand occasion. Hanukkah was wonderful festival. And yeah, we fasted on Yom Kippur, my mother as well. And I fasted from the age of 13 and I fasted to the age of 80, essentially because of, I can get a feeling of remembrance and piety for my parents. And as I say until 80, I thought that I had done my duty sufficiently in that regard and stopped fasting.

Q: Did you have any siblings?

A: No, no siblings. No my mother's migraine was too severe to contemplate any other. It was apparently a difficult birth.

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Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: We spoke German. My father and I spoke a little Czech to each other. Neither of us were too proficient in the language. We could get by and I spoke a bit better than my father. But we spoke German. And my father was quite a linguist. He spoke English and he taught English. He spoke French and he taught French and I think he was also pretty good in ancient Greek.

Q: Were your parents Zionists?

A: Less in correspondence with friends.

Q: Were your parents Zionists?

A: Moderately so. It wasn't really, it was really hardly ever mentioned. And we were not, I can't say we were particularly that. We were not in any way politically opposed to it but not actively pulled by it.

Q: Let's now talk about your schooling. You said you were born in 1921. When did you start school?

A: We started school at the age of six I think. I was maybe not quite six, five and three-quarters, something like that. And I stopped schooling at the age of 16 when I left, when I left very suddenly. More or less.

Q: We'll get to that but I just wanted to know. Was it a public elementary school that you started out?

A: Fully for four years and then went over to the secondary school which had a course in those days. There were two types of secondary schools. There was a, something called a technical, more technical, more scientifically oriented school which was the school in our town which had

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seven years of general classes, seven years. And then there was another type of school which was more classical, more emphasis on Latin or and so average tuition had eight years. But my, ours was seven years.

Q: And that's the one you went to, the one with –

A: The one I went to, yeah.

Q: There were Jewish students and non-Jewish students in your class.

A: There was not many Jewish students. You know we didn't have many Jews, too many Jews, but it wasn't a very large Jewish community. We had about 300 or thereabouts between 50 I would judge Jewish people in –

Q: In the whole town?

A: Yeah.

Q: What about your neighborhood. So you had non-Jewish neighbors also. Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors?

A: What happened is our, the immediate, one of the, looking onto the street from our house, the right hand neighbor it so happened was Jewish. And the left hand neighbor was not Jewish but was – it was not a Jewish district at all.

Q: Did you experience any or sense any anti-Semitism when you were young?

A: Oh yes, there was quite a bit of anti-Semitism and we got, not during the early 20s. I wasn't conscious of it, but during the 30s it got worse and –

Q: What was the first experience you remembered?

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A: Well the first experience I suppose was running the gamut of some urchins who were mocking me and riling me on the way to synagogue. I think that was my earliest experience of anti-Semitism.

Q: And how old were you then?

A: I couldn't remember. Maybe something like 11, ten, 11. I don't, yes, maybe something like that.

Q: And what were, do you remember your thoughts and your feelings?

A: Well I was pretty scared. No because it you know there were several of them and they were quite nasty so.

Q: Were you physically hurt?

A: They stopped short of that. They stopped short of that and there were two ways to the synagogue. One was a short route which went through a lane where they were, where those chaps were and I then took the long way which was the safer way.

Q: Did you tell your parents about this?

A: I suppose so. I can't remember. I suppose I must have, yes.

Q: What about in school itself. Where there any anti-Semitic?

A: Later on of course there were some people. Yeah there was, but my best friend I should say was certainly not Jewish, was Catholic and in school, there was one guy who was, one chap who was obviously was known to be very much, what developed into a Nazi party. And another one who was, I thought was a good kind and later thought, later thought that he might have made a

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good Gestapo man. And they sang some German nationalist songs, occasionally later on. Later 30s which made me feel very much, very different. Scared.

Q: Again is this something that you and your parents talked about?

A: You see, the coming of Hitler and Hitler's taking of Austria first and things began to get really very difficult and we were very conscious of the growing anti-Semitism, the growing danger and then we had refugees coming from Germany during the Hitler years. And so one was very conscious of what was going on. It was very – and of course the Czech Republic had its great political difficulties, internal political difficulties with the German population. A total out of about 14 million total inhabitants, three and a half were Germans. An awful lot. My father, the majority of the Jews, by far the majority of the Jews relative to us and what their nationality was. Actually they were actually put down periodically in our government form would say German and not many would say Jewish. One of the ironies of the thing is for example, Franz Kafka was you know internationally famous endowed in our, now paraded as a Czech author. He was a German speaking Jew from Prague. Nothing, had very little to do with Czech really except he was living in an environment where well the Czechs ruled the roost.

Q: When did you first start hearing about a man named Hitler? Was in 1933 when he became chancellor or later? Do you remember when you first started hearing about him?

A: I really can't answer that. I was a, certainly it was known in 1933. I might have.

Q: You were only 12 years old, you know you were young.

A: I might have got wise to it a bit earlier. I sort of grew up late and I was really quite naïve as a child I think, in retrospect.

Q: Did you belong to, get on another topic. Did you have any interest in sports? And therefore come in contact with non-Jewish contemporaries?

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A: Well many of my relationships, they were with non-Jews. I had very good, good relationships with most of my classmates and so on.

Q: What about the faculty? Did you experience any anti-Semitism from the faculty at your schools?

A: Not overtly. There were one or two of the teachers who were known to be German nationalists but not overtly, no. Not overtly. There were two, I think there must have been, well I would think maybe something like 15 or so, 15 to 20 teachers. And out of those teachers there were in my time there were just two Jews. My father and one other person. It was before that, it was earlier, ten years earlier there were only three. So he was, it was very largely and indeed the major religion of the area was Catholic. A few Protestants but it was mostly Catholic.

Q: Did you have a bar mitzvah?

A: Yes, I did yes.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about it?

A: Well my memories is, I had -- they bought me a new hat a trilby which I didn't like. And they made me walk with that, across, with my father across to the synagogue and I prayed that I would not meet any friends, any people who knew me. Because that was, I was so unhappy about the hat. But yeah it was all right. I mean I said Haftorah and I didn't sing it, I just read it.

Q: This is 1934, right?

A: Right, right, yes and I had some very nice presents from the various uncles and aunts and so on.

Q: That was going to be my next question. Your extended family, did you have a large extended family nearby?

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A: Yes, perhaps. My father's side particularly. My father was very much a family man and his mother, I think he was one of 12 children, nine of them growing to adult. So there was a good deal of relationships with them. Or rather, you know. They didn't live close by, they didn't live close by but one was conscious of them and one heard tales about them and so on. We had no telephone and in any case in those days, even if we had had a telephone, long distances calls were very expensive. So most of it was by correspondence. My father was a good correspondent and my mother was one of about half a dozen, not quite half, four, four or five I think. One lived in, two lived in Berlin, came to visit occasionally. And two uncles that is to say. And there were some sisters. She was, her older sister had married and moved to England to London in the early 1900s. So she was much older than my mother. She was 18 years older than my mother so they were established in England, fortunately as it turned out later on. And another sister married and lived in Vienna. That was very convenient because we went to Vienna like that it was quite, at least once a year. That was always an important occasion, joyous occasion.

Q: How much did you know about what was happening in Germany in the 30s? For instance, the 36 Olympics let's say or the Nuremberg laws. You were a teenager, but how aware were you?

A: The Nuremberg laws, really weren't in detail I wouldn't have known. I would have known that they had anti-Semitic legislation and that things were very bad and so on. And –

Q: Was it something you talked about with your Jewish friends? Again, you were young, I know. You were teenagers.

A: Not particularly. I think it was always in the back of our minds. As the 30s wore on, and particularly after Hitler marched into Austria, it was sort of very much in our minds.

Q: Did you know about the 1936 Olympics?

A: Yes, yes, yes, it was, made quite a splash of course. It made quite a splash.

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Q: Did you have any reaction to any of it? Do you remember any thoughts you had as a young man, a teenager?

A: I was very impressed with Jesse Owens, very impressed that he managed to do the hundred meters in I think 10.3 seconds, something like that. And I don't remember particularly that I was glad that Hitler got a black eye. I don't remember that particularly.

Q: How would you describe yourself at the time? Were you an independent child? Did you go off and do things on your own?

A: The only child in that. My parents were fairly conventionally strict and fairly narrow. It didn't give me much liberty. And I don't really remember that I was being very good conversations with my parents. I loved and adored and respected my father and so on but not so much my mother. But, when I well it's maybe become to that, the only conversations I had with my father really began after I left home and they were my correspondents.

Q: We'll get to that. You went along. You were 13, 14, 15.

A: Yeah, I was quite a good boy and so on. And at one point even at the age I think, it was shortly after bar mitzvah, the rabbi that we had, who was not a very good person, not a very good, was not very respected. And he was quite old. He was a bit sick and sort of more tolerated rather than respected. Put it to my father that I should, should let me study for the rabbinate. I was not particularly adverse to that at the time, it occurred to me but I wasn't averse to that.

Q: You said you spoke German with your family. Did you listen to Hitler's speeches at all or –

A: Well one couldn't help occasionally hearing him speak, yeah. But we didn't get a radio in our house until the mid-30s. And after that one heard, yes.

Q: What was it like for you to hear him ranting over the radio?

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A: Well it was probably very threatening, obviously and demagogic and, a big demagogue

Q: Did you yourself feel personally in danger as a teenager?

A: In personally in danger and I think that would be no. I don't think I felt personally in danger. No. I felt uncomfortable or, and worried, a bit worried about what might happen but I did not feel personally endangered.

Q: With the non-Jewish friends of yours when you were doing sports or things like that, did you talk about those kind of problems with Hitler being in power in Germany?

A: No, I don't think so but let me tell you a little story here. We sat in our school, we sat in desks in, two people to the same desk, two children at the same desk. The chap next to me for several years was a dolt. He was, I think he was _____ and so I let him copy from me and I whispered answers to him when he was asked questions and so on. And he was the son of a farmer in a nearby village. And they really, he must have told his parents and the parents were fairly grateful to me and he invited me once. And I again later found out really that they lived, their farm was along a stream that divided, was at the frontier between Germany and Czechoslovakia. And his father was dressed at the time in the, was dressed at the time, there was a dress that the German, the Nazis, the Czech Nazi party favored. And he was dressed like that so I realized what he was and he made no bones about this. He said, when he spoke, I remember him saying that it's very easy to throw, the stream wasn't too wide, very easy to throw out from Germany into across the border, throwing across the river. So the parents, they were good Nazis. I'm sure he made a very good Nazi after Hitler moved in.

Q: What was the next big change for you?

A: My relatives in England, my mother's relatives in England, particularly my mother's sister in England had two children. One was – a boy and a girl. And the boy was, or the man was a great Zionist and he was very active in the English Zionist circles. And the daughter married well, somebody who was commercially economically quite successful, another Jew from old German

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Jewish families, emigrated from Germany from Frankfurt in about 1850s. So these two people particularly the daughter recognized, was fairly aware of the political developments and she urged my parents to emigrate. And increasing, became increasingly vociferous about it, increasingly pressing about it. In the later 30s. And so there were discussions at home about this and –

Q: In front of you?

A: Not always in front of me. No, not always in front of me. You see these were things which were mostly kept between my parents and my parents' friends and youngsters were, I was frozen out of some of these things. It was rather sad but it was supposed to be grown up talk. And of course the comments were passed on. And my father was very much against emigrating. He was, did not wish to lose his pension rights. And I know that was a big thing. And my mother was very much a creature of our home town and very much used to her circle of friends and very reluctant to somewhat abandon her mode of life. Even my father at one point had an opportunity to become the principal of a very sizeable school in a town, a larger town than ours, about 30 miles away from our, 35 miles away from ours. And my mother didn't want to leave, didn't want him to take that. It would have been quite a promotion financially very advantageous but she didn't want him to do it. She was very much a creature of our little community. And they were much against it. And they said no, it can't be so bad and da, da, da. They didn't want. They didn't want to, they weren't really wise enough I suppose. Others, very few actually, very few of our friends left, their friends, I'm sorry, their friends left. Their close friends in particular, my father's best local friend, was a state employee, was in charge of a region in the state railways and he too said he wouldn't want to let his pension go and these dogs, these no goods and so on and so forth. So sadly, they were not sufficiently aware of – well no one really knew that it get bad as all that. No one really knew that, did one? Couldn't really envisage the extent of the disenfranchisement and, one couldn't imagine that.

Q: So you continued to go to school and then the next change?

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A: There were various -- Hitler became more and more pressing, used the German population in Czechoslovakia as a springboard and it became an international hot potato and in May 1938, early May 1938, early May, it was a particularly ____ occasion and the Czech army mobilized. It was not a long mobilization. Nothing came of it and then a week or two later, I think they were demobilized again. But my cousin in England in the Navy was absolutely adamant and told my parents, phoned through friends, friends with a telephone and phone calls were arranged. So was absolutely adamant that at least they send, at least me out to London. So I was not part, party to those negotiations, those expectations. I was told, told, you will go to London. You will go and you must not tell anybody. You will just vanish from school. Don't tell your friends. You will go overnight to London. And arrangements were made for me to go to London in the end of May. So exactly this was done. I went, I didn't, I just stopped going to school and stopped seeing my friends and we left on a train. Train was early in the morning. We went to the station and I left. It was a sad --

Q: Let's talk about your thoughts and your feelings.

A: It was traumatic.

Q: I can imagine.

A: Quite traumatic and --

Q: Did you try to talk your parents out of it? Out of sending you?

A: I didn't try to talk my parents out of it. It was out of the question it was a fait accompli. I tried to talk to my parents. I said when are you coming after me, you know? But you should be coming. You should, told us to come and then so on. I tried that and they couldn't. They didn't say no, we won't but they were supposed to make it easier for me. They also, they held out the prospect that maybe we will see each other again in the not too distant future. Meanwhile I am to go to London and, the plan was for me to, to pass London matric, to go in for London matric, London matriculation. And in September, the exam was in September. I spoke English, I should

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say. My father had taught me English and I went about eight years of age, we visited London. I stayed there for several weeks and I picked up the language quite well at the time. Coming back I forgot it again a bit and my father tried to teach me English from, mostly from Shakespeare. Of course you know it wasn't exactly ____, it was on Sunday mornings particularly. And Sunday mornings we had other plans, with friends. So I spoke English, spoke English fairly well, fairly well with a strong accent and so on which I still have.

Q: Did you bring anything special with you? What did you take with you when you left home?

A: I think no, not anything special. Just the necessities of clothes and my **tfillin**. I used my tfillin also in the morning, my tfillin. Continued to do that in England. On that I can talk to you later, but –

Q: Did you bring any books with you that you –

A: I don't remember whether I take any books. No I don't think I was taking, I might have taken a book to read on the train, but no, no, not otherwise.

Q: Your parents go with you, what was your journey to England?

A: We went to our local station and I got on the train and –

Q: With them or you said goodbye then?

A: They stayed on the platform, on the platform and –

Q: Were there any other students with you or were you by yourself?

A: I just, nobody we knew at the time was on there, though, I hadn't met anybody and so we tried. We tried very hard not to cry and be very brave and of course we no one, increasing found difficult remember how difficult it was to find something to say, something appropriate to say.

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Q: You got on the train and then where did it stop? Where did you get off?

A: The train stop, overnight stop was to be in Prague. I was to be, supposed to stay in Prague overnight. With good friends of my father. And next morning continue by train to Germany. From Germany to Belgium and across to Dover, from Belgium we embarked . I don't remember where I left from.

Q: Do you remember feeling very lonely on the trip? What were your thoughts as a 16 year old?

A: The night in Prague was very interesting because the people I stayed with were, he was a professor of pharmacology in advanced medicine, the dean of the medical faculty of Charles University in Prague. He was a very successful scientific scientist and they lived in a wonderful, they had developed some and exploited some medicines. So they were quite well off and they had a wonderful villa and it was in remarkable and he had a wonderful collection of old books and so on. And it was very much of an eye opener to a different kind of different world. I remember how impressed I was at the time and that must have deflected my sadness.

Q: And then continued on again by yourself. Making all these connections.

A: It was like and I don't remember whether I had to change trains on way north, but changing trains was always a bit of a traumatic thing with the luggage and so on so that's one of the reasons that they only had one piece of luggage to make it easier for –

Q: Did you talk to any of the other passengers?

A: Not that I recall, no. I don't think so, I don't think so. I don't recall that. I don't recall that, no. There were so many new impressions. It was the first time really that I had been by myself. I mean we had been to—it was not the first time I was on a train, we had done train journeys before and so on. I had always been in the company of my parents or I had been in the company

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for local small journeys with friends. But I had never been so far away from our home town on my own. And so it was a new, very much of a new experience.

Q: Did you look old for your age or younger for your age? What was your appearance?

A: I looked my age. I suppose I looked my age. I was dressed in the usual. It was warm. I was dressed in the usual short pants which boys of my age would wear in those days. And I suppose I was fairly inconspicuous.

Q: You get to England.

A: Yes, I was -- my first impression. I was met at Victoria station by my cousin with her son. Her son who was eight years old, I think at the time, the boy. And they whisked me in their car, a chauffeur driven Daimler. A Daimler was a good car. And they whisked me to their home through the streets of London, from Park Lane, Marble Arch, Hyde Park, Marble Arch up to Hampstead. And then the place where they lived in Hampstead.

Q: What were their names?

A: It was all, it was all overwhelming.

Q: What were the names of your relatives?

A: Her name was Elsie, Elsie, her married name was Layton which was a transformation, transposition from **Loebenstein** and you know an awful lot of people, particularly during the First World War, changed their names from German sounding. For example the Battenbergs changed it to Mountbatten. So it was for them. And my cousin, Elsie's father changed his from **Gudenrein** to Gilbert. And her husband's family had changed it from Loebenstein to Layton. Elsie Layton was her name, my cousin's name. She was at the time, probably in mid-30s. She was a very attractive lady in her late 30s, 30s. And her son's name was Peter. He was about eight. He was one of three children.

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Q: Did you live with them?

A: Yes. They put me up in their house, a beautiful house and I grew to be very fond eventually but maybe this comes later, very fond eventually if her husband James. James Layton. Yeah it was, they put me up there. I was in the, put up in what was called the day nursery. It was quite a sizeable room, but it was very cold. My first impression was how cold it was in London compared to my home there in central Europe. It was quite, in London it was humid or it was cooler. I always felt cold in there.

Q: You went to school?

A: No, I didn't. I had private lessons. They arranged for a private tutor. They arranged for a tutor to teach me what was necessary for the matriculation exam. That was very largely cause we had to do a Shakespeare play and we had to know it from beginning to end or backwards and really very thorough. It was fortunately it was a nice play, Julius Caesar. We had to, on the readings to do. And we also were, on a subject I had to do mathematics was, we were pretty well schooled in mathematics by my home town and the old school was pretty good. But the English curriculum, it was the matriculation in those days was quite centered on the Euclidean geometry and proofs why two parallel lines don't meet in infinity. And this kind of thing. And this we had not been taught. So I had to pick all that up, new. And then the, a foreign language was also required and I said well easy if I take German, it'll be easy. And then I had another subject which was, we could choose from a number, choose another language and I chose Czech as another subject. I didn't have to do much work in Czech. I had to do in German, and I had to do English very much.

Q: What about friends? Did you make friends? Easily?

A: Did I make friends? Yes, a little bit. I made friends with some of the Elsie's husband's relatives. There were some youngsters my age.

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Q: What kind of communication did you have with your parents?

A: Well we did once telephone. To arrange you know you had to, the long distance phone you had to plan it ahead and say we will call at such and such a time and the communication was put through and they were, friends were they telephoned, where there was a telephone. And when it came to speaking we had to be short because it was expensive and when it came to speaking you just, what could you say. It was really quite disappointing. It was platitudes. And it seems that, it left me very frustrated feeling.

Q: But you were able to write letters back and forth?

A: Yes we wrote and one of the subjects that was dear to my father's heart, he was a very keen stenographer. And I was a keen stenographer as well, so we would, my mother could also write shorthand, although not very well. And we corresponded in shorthand with my father, yes.

Q: Did they tell you what was going on in your town, in your home town at the time?

A: Yes and you know but a lot of the letters were exultations to be a good boy, to be grateful to be polite and to dress warmly enough and so on and so forth. You know I had made no decisions for myself when I was at home, no decisions at all. And I remember at one point I asked my cousin Elsie whether I should change my underwear. And it was overheard by her daughter who was younger than I but, I think two years younger than I, three years younger. And she overheard and she was, she laughed and she remembered it. To this day I think she remembers it.

Q: Did you know what was happening in your town?

A: Yes. I mean. Yes. We had to be reasonably careful also what to write. The Czech republic was pretty liberal but one had to be a bit careful. And they felt that maybe the Czech republic, the Czech government should make more attempts to accommodate the German speaking population. But of course, it was, would have been for the birds. And then well I'm going ahead now. Immediately you know September, when it was Munich agreement, Chamberlain was in

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October of that year. And of course my parents had to leave, then decided overnight to leave my home town to travel into the interior of the country to, to stay with relatives, mother's relatives in another city in Moravia.

Q: And they got there?

A: Oh yes, they stayed there with them, yes. They stayed there with them and they stayed there with them until they were thrown out by – they lived in a rather nice villa and then the Gestapo took over the villa. So they had to find other accommodation and until they were shipped to **Theresienstadt**.

Q: Do you know when that was?

A: Yes, that was in beginning of July 1942.

Q: Did they survive?

A: No. Unfortunately they weren't very long in Theresienstadt because they found out later on of course, the transport left in at the 28th of July and the transport, yeah. And the relative to who, the relative who welcomed them in the city where they lived in Moravia, on the same transport. Then they cleaned out, you know cleaned out areas and it was very well organized by the bloody Germans at the time. So and they were shipped off to the east. They were shipped off to a place called **Baranovice** which is what is it today, it's Belarus. White Russia. And again they were shot in a woods nearby right after their arrival there. So their suffering was not very long but one of the things I've never done is and I cannot do and don't ever want to do is face up to the detailed description of the train journey and what happened afterwards. I just don't want to think about it. And when I see photos from films I look away. I just, it serves no useful purpose, I don't take that.

Q: You're in England at the time and you're studying for the matriculation exams?

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A: Yes.

Q: And then what happened?

A: Well yes, I managed to pass. And to pass it was in London University and in Kensington in an old Victorian huge building. And there was a very large hall and I was maybe one of a group, maybe 100 candidates. I don't know. And next to me was, there were three individual seats, desks, and then a corridor and then I remember people from all over, of various ages. It was by no means all youngsters. There were some almost middle aged people who were also candidates for matriculation, people wanted to improve themselves. To this day I find it difficult to remember whether a pound is 12 or 16 ounces. And this was a question I actually I was going to whisper to my very surprised neighbor across the aisle. How many ounces. And the most difficult subject, the most difficult subject which almost tanked me turned out to be Czech because I suppose the person who set the exam from anybody who would take Czech must be an absolutely native Czech speaker and have a good education. It was a very tough exam, very tough. In fact it included a section in Slovak and my goodness. Slovak is similar to Czech but it's, it is still sufficiently different.

Q: What happened in September 39 when the war started?

A: So after I passed the exam my cousin said it would be good for me to have a change of residency and he enrolled me in so called holiday boy in Margate College. It was a private school in Margate, not very far from London in the Thames, near the Thames estuary. And an old public school and I, when I say public school, in England the public school is something like Harrow or Eton. It's not what we call a public school here. So I was there and I did not have to take classes. I just participated in the other parts of the school life. For some weeks and for a few months I think, for a few months actually I was there. During that time they had the Munich agreement and so on and so forth.

Q: What about the war starting in September 39?

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A: Yes, it had always been somehow understood even in my home town that I was going to do, going to study engineering. And so once, in England there were two ways of doing this. Either you went to a university and you went through and you got your bachelor of engineering or science. And the other way of doing it was to serve an indentured apprenticeship, serve an apprenticeship of four years or so. And at the same time take classes, technical classes which are part of the apprenticeship scheme. And after that take some additional examinations and become a member of the institution of mechanical engineers which is a profession, professional association. And it was considered at the time that the apprenticeship and the practical combination of practical and technical education would be superior to going to a university. Besides that I think that was, probably a consideration. University I would have had to have financial support and my parents had some small amount of money in England, invested badly in some bonds and weren't worth very much. And I suppose with an apprenticeship you do get not a living wage but you get some money. You earn some money while you do that. So that was the thing that was chosen for me. And my, and James, Elsie's husband was a stock broker and he had connections via the stock exchange. And some directors of a big, big local company and so it was, I was offered an apprenticeship by this person, in the case. And actually all the apprentices, all my, any other, all the other apprentices, there weren't very many of them, maybe in my class there were something like six or eight apprenticeships, apprentices, colleagues. And they were all there. All had this apprenticeship granted to them by private influence. Private influence. It was a way to do it. That's the way it was done.

Q: You did that and then I was wondering –

A: Yes, I should, in the beginning, in the apprenticeship class, in the beginning of February of 1939.

Q: February 1939. Now Kristallnacht had already happened a couple months before. Were you –

A: It was already bad and I was increasingly pressing with my parents. Why don't you come? Why don't you come? And my cousin was also pressing. And it was getting to be very difficult

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in those days to get out of there already, you know. Permission to emigrate. When finally I think my parents did make up their mind, they sent out several cases of belongings. That arrived in England so by the time they made up their minds, it was too late. They couldn't manage it any more, couldn't manage it any more.

Q: So you started your apprenticeship and then comes September 39.

A: Suburb, in a western suburb of London and a company that made the London _____ and London ____ thing quarries and so on. and I started but I moved into lodgings in Crow's Nest. They were glad to get rid of me in their house because I had not a good relationship with the daughter. We're good friends now but we couldn't stand each other.

Q: Did your life change when the war started?

A: The war didn't start until later in 1939, right?

Q: Right, September 39 is when –

A: I will come to that. I found some lodgings with me within fairly reasonable distance of the factory was a Jewish woman, in the same community where Charlie Chaplin was born. Not far from that. And she turned out to be a bitch, an absolute bitch. I hated her and I found myself other lodgings with a very nice old lady, a Mrs. Roberts, a nice old lady. Really nice old lady whose husband had been dead in the First World War and she carried on a small grocery business, very small one and had a son and a daughter. And the daughter had an illegitimate child and I got to be very fond of Henry. It's there that, in their kitchen which also served as a living room, a large kitchen, that we heard Mr. Chamberlain declaring war. And we heard immediately afterwards we heard the siren went off, the air raid siren went off. It was a false alarm, false alarm but it went off practically immediately after his broadcast. And oh I should say one thing. Where these _____ it was not very far from the airport where Mr. Chamberlain came back with his piece of paper you know after he _____ need Hitler's signature. Had a signature

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on this piece of paper and he ____ so this was not very far from there. I wasn't there. This was before, before. In 1938.

Q: 1938 right. Then how long did you stay at your apprenticeship after England went to war?

A: It was a four year apprenticeship and during that time I passed the ____, there were several exams to be passed, technical exams in the nearby technical college. And twice a week, an afternoon a week, two evenings a week and on Saturdays in college rather than to go to the factory. In those days one worked on Saturdays certainly mornings anyway.

Q: How did conditions change once the war started? The atmosphere and the safety, anything you can talk about.

A: Well we were not ____ until 1940, after Hitler invaded Prague and we started the Blitz. Everyone was very conscious of what went on and the change of government from Chamberlain to Churchill. And nobody was aware in May, end of May 1940 no one was aware to what extent, how dicey things were and how easily it might have been for Churchill to be overruled and defeated. England asking for arrangement with Hitler. Then those orders in which Lord Halifax wanted the foreign sympathy, favored, wanted to do. I'm not sure whether you know about this. You know a series of vital meetings in later May 1940 which is easy when Churchill finally carried off his wish to resist power by all means necessary succumb anything. He had not, I would not be talking to you .

Q: I'm sure. So you stayed and then you eventually went into the army didn't you.

A: Yes in --

Q: When was that?

A: There was occupation you see. Being a union apprentice we called the reserved occupation is the thing. We were not subject to call up and after I finished the apprenticeship, I went to work

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for another design bureau and they had most important military contract and they wouldn't want to let me go. But I wanted to volunteer for the army and when did I start volunteering. I think it was 1943. And the thing I wanted to go in the merchant navy. It was my, I liked it and thought that I would like the sea and I wanted to go to the merchant navy and I went to the recruiting place for merchant navy. With my technical qualifications I would have been entitled to be an officer either engineer officer, probably engineer officer rather than navigation officer but engineer officer anyway. So I stood in line and suddenly the corpsman up from the front of the line, stokers only, stokers only. So I realized I was in the wrong place. And I turned around and I left. I wouldn't want to be a stoker. Anyway so when that came to nothing, then I volunteered for the army for the technical, so called electrical and mechanical engineers. It was the branch of the army that was charged with seeing maintenance of all the mechanical and electrical equipment and they took their time. They took their time, best part of a year I think before they got in touch with me and so on.

Q: Where were you stationed?

A: In the meantime of course I'd gone through the Blitz and I was often in the center of London during the Blitz.

Q: Did you go into the shelters and things like that?

A: In the shelters but strangely enough I don't know whether you know there was huge raid a fire raid when the whole city went up in flames, in London in the commercial district in a mad moment. Huge damage was done in those days and there is mortar ___ the walls are not involved. It wouldn't help very much. And there I was not quite there but I was in, very close by and visiting some of – and things came down, fire balls came down and this was in the vicinity of the children's hospital. Anyway one did what one had to do and I ran to the nearest, and then I ran to the nearest underground and made my way home eventually. In the factory, we were in the Blitz. There were many times when we went, when the sirens went, we carried on working. But in they had, a special signal was sent. When that signal was sounded, everybody stopped the

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machines and run to the nearest prepared shelter. They dug some underground shelters and some and one sat there and waited until the bomb was --

Q: Did you feel very British by then?

A: Well increasingly, yes increasingly and that's really one thing I might mention. I did not gravitate towards the Czech emigres. I had friends from my home town, one particular one who was very much, who had also been able to get to England. And he gravitated rather to the Czech side, but I didn't. I never felt comfortable there.

Q: Then what happened?

A: Eventually they called me up for a, where I would go to a war of so called WOSB which was an acronym for war office selection board and that meant that you go to -- they would have said whether or not you would be a good subject for engineers for officer training. And I managed to pass that. And then nothing happened again for quite a few times and eventually they called me up in February 1944. February 1944 they called me up. And I had to go through ordinary six months of primary training and then battle training and it was --but it was one finished up very, very fit. I remember that.

Q: At this point did you know what had happened to your parents?

A: No, no.

Q: You did not know.

A: We corresponded and we had corresponded. And I wanted to say this earlier. And we were deflected. I wanted to say that you earlier. We corresponded, first we could correspond directly. Then we corresponded as many people did through a neutral country. And we had some friends in Budapest and so we corresponded. They wrote to those friends and they forwarded it and so on. And eventually that dried up, that thing wouldn't work anymore. So one corresponded

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through the occasional Red Cross message and I don't know you know the Red Cross message one didn't say very much. But I had a good correspondence with my father in the early days in shorthand and I still have some of those letters but I find it very, very, very difficult, very difficult to re-read. Very difficult.

Q: So you're in the army until the end of the war?

A: I was, it was afterwards. Afterwards I was –

Q: Until how long?

A: I graduated in the summer of – in fact I was made a second lieutenant, I called it graduate from the cadet school. And in summer of 1944 and I recall that the V1s and the V2s came down was in, I visited London on weekends because we were not stationed far from London. And it was quite incredible. Those V2s really scary, was really scary because at first you heard a bang and it was you know, it happened and if you heard the sound where the sound came because of people ____ . the sound came after the impact and technologically it was weeks ahead of what we had, our side, it was weeks ahead.

And then I was stationed. They transferred me to north of Scotland, the Inverness, very beautiful area and I stayed for a while. And from there then they – I wanted to try to get to Italy. My idea was to fight up through Italy and eventually close to Czechoslovakia and see what was going on. And one had the idea that things were not going well but I personally didn't know until, didn't really realize until I think quite late in the war that there would have been the extent to which, what was, they did, what happened. Of course the government tried not to, the government I think the government, the American and the English government knew more but I mean it's inexplicable that they didn't try to do a little bit more to prevent some of the murders. They couldn't have helped my parents because my parents were murdered in 1942. It might have helped a little bit Hungarian Jews that weren't, did that in 1944.

Q: Where were you when the war was over?

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A: I was in the army. I went, I tried to get to Italy and I didn't. Eventually they posted me to west Africa of all places, to what is now Ghana.

Q: This is when the war is over. You're talking about now when the war is over.

A: At that time, I wouldn't know. I went abroad in I think it was in October or November 1944.

Q: So the war is still going on

A: It was still going on and the idea was to train some west African divisions to go and fight, then go take them to Burma. And try it in far east against the Japanese. And that didn't work out because they called it the west African troops, they're not particularly, they had sent a small contingent or an early contingent over. I think in 1943 already and they didn't turn out to be very good. So they eventually they changed their mind about that. They did not send, want to send any additional divisions. Again I put in for a transfer to Italy. And eventually did transfer me to Italy after I think I had about a year in west Africa, first in Ghana, then in Nigeria, in some of the areas which are now being overrun by Boko Haram. It's a little bit of a known quantity to me. And so eventually I was transferred to, we arrived in Naples. And in Naples when they were shipped, went up to, oh by the time I got to Naples the campaign was over. Campaign was over. It was already they transported me to Austria and they posted me to a city in Austria, a big city I think second biggest city named Graz where there was a big swath of them, REM and royal electric mechanic engineers, big workshop. Big repairs went out. So this is where I finished up and then they transferred me after a year there or, you know we were, demobilization was supposed to be in accordance with the first in, first out kind of. Having been linked in I wasn't due to be out yet. And so after about a year in Austria, I was pulled into an ex cavalry regiment, a very good regiment the 16th lancers and we were transferred from Austria to the north of Germany, to very close to the Danish border. Well by that time, the cold war was, had started in a big way.

Q: Then you left the British army, when was that?

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A: I, they forgot me. Eventually in 19, I should have been demobilized in 1947 but they forgot me for a while and it suited me because I wanted to do certain things that I wanted to do, while I was in the armed forces and so but eventually I said well how about me. I think you forgot me. so then they moved very fast and I was demobilized in January 48.

Q: When did you hear about your parents?

A: I found out about the fate of my parents.

Q: When did you find that out?

A: I found it out in 1945 really.

Q: In 1945.

A: I found it out in 1945. In 1946 when I was in Austria, forces in Austria, I made a pilgrimage to my home town which wasn't easy when I had first ____ . You get various permissions and from the Russians and so on. And no support. In 1946 I mean -- Vienna. I had to go to Vienna to get permission from the Czech, Czech whatever it was. And to get into Vienna from Graz. Graz was in the British zone of occupation but Vienna was in the Russian zone of occupation so although it was administered by the four powers of occupation, going from Graz to Vienna meant passing through the Russian zone. So I had to have a **propos** card, we called it, permission to go through there and it wasn't easy to get into zone support. So on and so forth. Anyway, I went to, eventually I went to my home town.

Q: What did you find there?

A: Well I went to our, where we lived and the people who had rented a store downstairs in the, in our house in the shop, the ground floor. He was a German Catholic but he was married to a Czech Catholic so being a Czech Catholic they were allowed to stay. I should say that in 1945, late 1945 and in early 1946 the Czech government ethnically cleaned up, cleaned that out, what

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remains of the **Sudeten** Germans and shipped them to Germany. In a very brutal way. And so but he being married to a Czech, they were allowed to remain there. And they had moved upstairs to our apartment as it were. And but nothing was there. The furniture had all gone. It had been packaged up, was all changed there, taken there. I must explain also, I didn't have just one mother. I had three mothers because we had a factotum, an old lady who was my mother's wet nurse. She was brought in by my grandmother to wet nurse my mother. And she stayed with us for over 50 years and she was part of the family. During the war, she died during the war of grief essentially. She died of grief. And she had a sister and slightly older sister who also came and lived in, came and lived in our home town and oo. Anyway. She also had to leave. I was too late, I came too late, came to my home town too late. In uniform, you know I kept the English army cap. You know locally I was quite a big shot I suppose and I might have been able to intercede but I was too late. She had already been cleaned out. And she had been, she was my third mother really. And the two ladies were. Anyway so I went to the cemetery and the cemetery was of course, as some other things were in bad shape. My grandfather or grandparents, and great grand, were buried there from my mother's side. And but I should add here, that the cemetery suffered during the Nazi time but it suffered more during the communists. There was group of young Czechs who made it their business of trying to revive the Jewish heritage of the city the Jewish memory of the city and to renovate and to -- what is left of the cemetery and they did marvelous work. I should also tell you about the state of our synagogues, if you wouldn't mind. Can I talk about it now? Our synagogue was one of the few synagogues which were not destroyed in Kristallnacht and the thing, there is an interesting story. There was a town councilor who was by profession he was a builder. The town councilor said we should not destroy this. We need an archive and we need a place for an archive and it would be a pity to destroy this. And he and the mayor, he convinced the mayor and they went to the Gestapo, the local Gestapo leader and got special permission not to destroy the synagogue. It was used as an archive. Of course, it had to be empty. They had to empty it. So it was used as an archive and then again during the communist time it suffered. And again this group of young Czechs did wonderful things to trying to refurbish it. And then more recently a few years ago the European Union granted vast sums of money, millions of Euros to renovate a few synagogues that had not been destroyed. They did renovate it. But there are no Jews in Jagendorf now, but did renovate.

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Q: Let's move on. you stayed in Europe until when.

A: Well I stayed in Europe and then I stayed in London and I worked in London. Did engineering work in London and stayed there until the beginning of, til 1941.

Q: 1951 you mean.

A: Sorry, 1951 yes.

Q: Where did you go then?

A: I went to Canada. I wanted, was aiming to go to Toronto where there is aeronautical industry. And I came to Montreal in the end of May 1951 and I liked Montreal very much and I found a job there in a nascent aeronautical industry.

Q: Why did you want to leave London?

A: Why did I want to leave London. You know my experience in the colonies, Ghana. The Gold Coast in those days and Nigeria, made me gave me the taste that life abroad could be perhaps sweeter than life in England and so in fact I originally tried after, came my first try after demobilization, I had an opportunity to go to Malaysia and work for a company in Malaysia and decided not to, for several reasons at the time. And I felt, strangely not too much at home in England in those days. Foreigners were somewhat still looked down on. I think this was a very narrow view of mine and it was perhaps I was disappointed in the progress that I made, too after demobilization, professional progress and so I was always had the eye out for going abroad. At one time I contemplated going to the Argentine where another mother, another sister of my mother's had found refuge. And then I contemplated going, somebody said why don't you go to New Zealand or plainly and I said that's too far away. And United States didn't particularly beckon me. And although it would have been easy to get in there. But Canada I was eligible for immigration to Canada.

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Q: So you're 30 years old and you're in Montreal and you stayed in that?

A: And I stayed, yes. And only then in _____ working.

Q: Can we now talk about some of your thoughts and your feelings about what you went through. What are your feelings about Germany?

A: Well you know I am not a good hater. My wife sometimes blames me for not being a good hater. I find it difficult to put blame on everyone and I ask myself too, that if I had not been Jewish, how would I have acted? Would I have been different from the others. And I don't think I would. I would have gone along. I might not have been, I would not have been an active Nazi but I would go along, as most of my classmates did you know. As most of my classmates, those that weren't killed. They didn't come back from the German front. _____ Makes them put up and shut up and just went along. No but not one of those who survived was in any way particularly active but they went along with it. And I ask myself what would I have done and being, and answering this question that way, I found it difficult to be a completely condemnatory. I'm condemnatory of course on the inhumanity of this. But let me tell you another story which I like to tell it. When I was in Graz, I met a young woman and this young woman was the only Austrian I met in those days who ever consented, who told me that she was a Nazi. But she said, I joined. I told her I was Jewish and then she said well I'll tell you a story and she was, she said she had a little son. And the son was, the father of an SS man she had married during the war. And when the SS man came home and told her what they were doing in Poland, in the east, she threw him out. And she threw him out and the son is the only person ever who still calls me uncle. So they weren't all you know lacked there. When they went along for various reasons they were afraid not to. It may have been advantageous to do it and they're humans you know. They were too and it's very difficult for us to, for me to put up a front of condemn, of wholesale condemnation.

Q: Since you've been to Canada have you been back to Germany at all?

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A: Yes, I have been back to Germany. I have been back to this year. I took up with my ex classmate in 1995. I figured it's 60 years of silence would be quite enough. And they had, the classmates, they were all established very well established in West Germany. There was one that was established in East Germany. She was a communist. I was actually in West Germany. They had, like any other class, and they had a school class. They had everyone class meetings, reunions. And I my wife and I went to, well of course reunions eventually. And I had prepared a speech because I figured there would be an opportunity together at a dinner and then afterwards would make a speech. And I slaved over that speech. What shall I say to them? What shall I say to them? And then finally I decided that it would be churlish of me to make that speech because they're all very kind and apologetic and human and so we took up again. We took up again. It was difficult but, and some tears were shed but many sides.

Q: Do you think your experience made you more Jewish or less, feeling less Jewish?

A: No more, no less, no more, no less. I don't think so. You know I am very conscious where I am but I try to ____, There was quite a bit of anti-Semitism in Canada you know at the time when I came here. I was quite wise to it. And I tried to play my Jewishness down as far as my employer was concerned. Until such time as the company had, became, a Jew became president of the company. And they talked. Anyway. And I am, I should say one other thing. In 1948 when I came out of the army and tried to find my way again in England, you know the war of, in Israel broke out. And the Arabs and –

Q: The war of independence?

A: Yes and I wondered whether I should volunteer, go there and do a training. And I decided I was, I decided that I would not. And the reason I decided was quite interesting. At the time, of course and still today fortunately, United States is a great supporter of Israel and I think ____ used the United States, support Israel. The state would no longer be allowed to exist. And you know you might reflect on this today and maybe, maybe the same ____ America today. So there was that and I was also, you were saying, more or less Jewish you really recall that there were several attempts to, in 1947 or 1948, 47 to land illegal immigrants in Israel and they were

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intercepted by the British. There was one contingent that was sent back to a camp in **Lubeck** in Austria, in Germany. And it was a brother regiment the fourth Hussars who were stationed in Lubeck and who were charged with guarding the people in this camp. Cause I had some acquaintances in the four months before Hussars officers and on one occasion I said take me to the camp. And we went through the, we went through the camp. There I was, captain in the British army with a little swagger stick under my arm and sort of well-dressed and going through the camp of people. I might so easily have been on the other side. Or easily have been on the other side. And imagine that he was there. And here in Canada now, I didn't personally come in contact with personally suffered from anti-Semitism. And you know it's a pretty good country in this concern. My wife is from an old French Canadian family and her father, her family were very rightest and were very much in favor of **Pétain**. One of her grandparents I think her grandfather, grand something, anyway, carried on a long correspondence with Marshall Petain with Vichy-ites anyway.

Q: Do you have any children?

A: Yes, I have three children. I have three boys and one died unfortunately. And two, very nice. One is in Chicago, has a nice family. And the other one is in Boston, has a nice family. The one in Chicago is married to a very, very nice non-Jewish person. The children are not being brought up in any kind of faith. And my son in Boston is married to a Jewish person and brought up, I should say their mother, my first wife was also non-Jewish and anything. She said why should I burden my children with Jewishness? And she died a young woman, very young in her 40s. And I imbued my family in Boston with a dubious attitude about Jews. Finally married a Jewish girl. He goes to temple with her. They have two children and had a bar mitzvah a couple of years ago.

Q: When your boys were the age that you were when you had to leave your parents, did that bring back memories of that difficult time?

A: Well memories of that difficult time are with me all the time. All the time, all the time.

Q: But I was saying especially when your boys were that age.

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A: No.

Q: That you were, you know, you were about 16 and 17 when you had to leave.

A: More when they were 13 years old, the bar mitzvah time. That came more into my mind at that time. But of course you know when you compare all the time what their youth was like and my -- versus my own youth. I mean as -- I had a cousin, a cousin who lived in Czechoslovakia, the son of a brother of my father. And I spent a summer with them in ___ 12, we knew each other very well, he didn't survive. Didn't survive. I named one of my sons after him. And but you know all these things are always present and --

Q: Where did he lose his life? This cousin of yours?

A: He was killed as far as I know in Auschwitz.

Q: What are your sons' names?

A: The one who died was named after his name, Yannick was also named after a late cousin and after my father, Sigmund Simon and then my Boston son is named Alexander and my Chicago son is named Eric after a doll which I had as a child.

Q: Tell me again the name of your cousin who did not survive in Auschwitz. What was his name?

A: It was Yannick, Yanda which is a Bohemian name _____

Q: Have you been to Israel?

A: No. Strangely enough. I'm one of the few Jews who has never been to Israel and I haven't any particular desire to be in Israel. French Canadian friends have been to Israel and say we

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can't understand that you don't even want to go. There are so many things to see and so marvelous and da, da. And you know I have never had the desire. I had cousins of mine, another cousin, the daughter of another, the sister of my father, refugeed herself to Israel. She was one of the early immigrants in 1947. She had been interned in Mauritius in which _____ started a family there. Never been one of my priorities, never been one of my priorities.

Q: Because.

A: I have an uneasy feeling with Zionists. I don't know why. I'm not against them. I have friends who live in Israel and talk about it here and support it but anyway. I don't feel particularly guilty about having been to Israel, feel guilty about it.

Q: What were your thoughts during the Eichmann trial? Do you remember that?

A: Yes, well of course. I mean you know. Remarkable that the Americans get hold of him.

Q: Do you feel very Canadian now?

A: Go in Buchenwald ten years ago and came out. Waiting execution as I think it was called. Hitler wasn't the only one. There were many willing executioners but some who couldn't do a bloody thing about it.

Q: Do you have any nostalgia for your home town?

A: Yes, indeed. I went back several times and people were very nice. Yes, they were very nice, it was a very nice area. Very nice area but my home town is now here in well ensconced here.

Q: So you feel very Canadian?

A: I feel rather Canadian. Yes, if anybody I mean throughout life, should be asked on many occasions who are you, what are you. And they know and so at one time it was convenient to say

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Czech. Czech is my ____ or you are German. Well my mother tongue was German and my culture was that I imbibed as a young person was German. And Jewish, never felt you know – who want so become a rabbi. I lost my faith very quickly when I was in England. And I never felt particularly Jewish either and it was never very convenient to say Jewish being asked that question. So now I am very pleased to be able to say when somebody asks the question. To say Canadian, whatever that may mean.

Q: Say that again. When people ask you, you say what?

A: I say when somebody asks the question what nationality, what provenance are you. I'd be glad to say I am Canadian. It's a damn good answer.

Q: Do you think you would be a different person today if you hadn't gone through what you –

A: Well certainly. I mean if I hadn't gone through I mean you know we can't rewrite history. I would probably have gone to the technical high school in Brno and I might have finished up working somewhere in either here or in Germany or the Czech Republic.

Q: What about personality wise? Do you think you would be a different person emotionally?

A: Emotionally. I don't know. I really can't answer that question. I never asked myself that question. I don't know. I really don't know how to answer that. Would I have been different emotionally? Most certainly regrets would not be there. But certain loves would not be there but other affections would be there and other interests might be there.

Q: Have you been to any Holocaust museums?

A: Yes, nice little Holocaust museum here in Montreal. And been Prague. I've been to the **Altsneuschul** and so on. And a copy of my parents' names here. I was there with a group in Prague in December a few years ago. It was very cold I remember and I was with a small group of French Canadians. We travel, it happen we didn't know them. We just happened to join that

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particular group. It was a spontaneous thing to go over. And I went through that and these people had never even heard of it and when it was explained to them. The guide who took us a very nice young Czech woman who took us through there and she had never met anybody who was personally connected with the wall of names as I was.

Q: So your parents' names are on the wall?

A: Location, very emotional location, where these people lived. They did not know about this.

Q: And your parents' names are on the wall?

A: Oh yes, in Czech.

Q: Has the world learned anything from those years?

A: The world. There have been many genocides since then, have there not? And there are genocides going on today. I hope that Europe has learned something. I hope, I hope. I'm not sure but I'm not sure that it is, I think it is impossible to reoccur in such an organized manner. I think so. But you know brutality, brutality is extreme brutality. It is not the end of extreme brutality in one form. The ethnic cleansing of Czechoslovakia before the war is also a great brutality, a great brutality. But what happened in Rwanda, what's happening Syria, what's happening today in the Middle East. The Arab world would want to do to the Jews. Mass kill if they had, many of them would ____ if they had their choice. I don't know the world is a funny thing, you need to answer that in a definitive way.

Q: Do you receive reparations?

A: No, no I didn't receive any reparations. In between the laws of the Czech. No reparations. Some properties were restored to the sister of the cousin I talked to you about who escaped also to England and from there to the United States and she lived and died in Berkeley, California and some properties were restored to her. Not to me.

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Q: Is there anything else you wanted to add to this before we finish. Is there any thoughts or feelings that you wanted to include in this interview?

A: Yes, I think the important thing is to maintain some sort of flexibility. If my father had been more flexible, if my mother had been more and one has to maintain flexibility. One has to maintain a, the outset of possibilities and if they had got wiser earlier they might have, I think they would have had opportunities. There would have been opportunities to survive. In fact we had some relatives in the United States and part of my family, my father's family left a very small village in the Bohemian forest where they were all living in 1850s and established our line in North America, in the United States. One of the scions of that line had offered my parents, I found this out not so long ago through some and I know that. Had offered them an affidavit. And before they could execute an affidavit he died. So it was a stroke of fate. If he hadn't died, maybe my parents would have survived too. That's about all I have to say on that.

Q: Any message you wanted to leave to your grandchildren.

A: Well I have left a lot of messages. I have told some stories to them. My son in Boston has committed to some nice volumes on the computer and so on. So yeah, I've spoken to them about these things. Strangely enough and I'd like to mention, maybe finish the interview with a little story. My 14 year old grandson in Boston who had, at his bar mitzvah dedicated his bar mitzvah to the grandson of a rabbi in my home town. The grandson was a little boy by the name of Tomas who died very tragically. His parents, the son of my rabbi and his wife escaped, managed to travel, escape to managed on the last transport to Israel but were not allowed to take children. So entrusted their child to a trusted relative with the intention of having the child rejoin them as soon as possible. It was not possible and the child was taken and died. And my grandson found out about that. I have forgotten how he found out about it. And he dedicated his bar mitzvah to Tomas. Nice.

Q: Do you know the little boy's last name and where he died?

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A: **Rudolfo.**

Q: Where did he die, do you know?

A: I think he was taken to Auschwitz.

Q: It's very moving that your grandson did that. To honor that little boy. Very meaningful note to end on so I want to thank you for doing this interview. And I just want to close by saying that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Hugo Langshur.

A: Thank you very much.

(end)