

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Adolf Grübaum**  
**March 31, 2015**  
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## PREFACE

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## **ADOLF GRÜNBAUM**

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Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection interview of Adolf Grünbaum. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on March 31, 2015 and is taking place over the telephone at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Adolf Grünbaum: Adolf, A-D-O-L-F last name **Grünbaum**, G-R-U-N as in Nancy-B as in Boy-A-U-M, Grünbaum, Adolf Grünbaum. Originally my name had an umlaut on the first U.

Q: Is that the name you were born with?

A: Yes, a German name with the umlaut on the first U.

Q: Where were you born and when were you born?

A: Born in Cologne on the Rhine in Germany on May 15, 1923.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your family now. Your parents' names were?

A: Benjamin and Anna Grünbaum, Benjamin and Anna Grünbaum.

Q: And where were they from, from Cologne also?

A: Yes.

Q: And do you know when they were born?

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A: Well they were, 18, my father I think 1891 and my mother 1893. I'm not sure of some of this.

Q: That's ok. What kind of work did they do, did your father do?

A: Father was a businessman and my mother was a housewife mostly.

Q: What kind of business did your father have?

A: Textiles.

Q: How would you describe your family? Was it middle class or upper class?

A: Middle (both talking)

Q: What about any siblings? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

A: Yes, I had two. One is a sister named Susanne but she got married and her last name is **Reins**, R-E-I-N-S, Reins Susanne. She became a, in the Great Neck, New York high school system, Great Neck, New York which has a very fine school system. She became the chairperson of a modern language department in the high school system.

Q: And your brother?

A: My brother became a medical doctor and then a psychiatrist.

Q: What is his name?

A: Norbert Grünbaum, N-O-R-B-E-R-T. Norbert Grünbaum.

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Q: Let's talk a little bit about the neighborhood that you lived in. Was it a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews?

A: In Cologne, yes. Cologne is a very heavily Roman Catholic city. It has a very famous, world famous cathedral, called the Dom, D-O-M and that was the dominant influence in the city. And of course it was heavily Roman Catholic.

Q: How religious was your family?

A: Fairly. My father was not orthodox by any means, but I would say they were what American Jewish would call conservative religiously.

Q: Your schooling? You went to elementary school? In Cologne?

A: Yes, oh yes. First I went to elementary school which is called in Germany. Do you know any German?

Q: Just a tiny bit. Just a few words.

A: **Volk shule**, V-O-L-K means people. Volk shule for four years. And then I went to a Jewish high school. In fact, Jews were no longer accepted in the non-Jewish high schools in Cologne. And that school has a well-known name because it's named after some important thing in Israel. It was called **Jawne**, J-A-W-N-E, Jawne and it was a gymnasium they called it, a high school and was a lyceum. It was a co-ed school.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your life up to 1933 when Hitler came into power. How would you describe yourself as a young boy in those years. Were you a very independent child?

A: Well I was, I didn't seem to have any difficulties in terms of family relationships but I was very early on a non-believer in religion. I became an atheist quite early in my life. I would say at

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age 12. At age ten the Nazis came to power. In 33 the Nazis came to power April fifth, 1933.

And I soon became an atheist but given the political situation, it would have been a violation of the solidarity with the Jewish community if I had not agreed to a bar mitzvah. And I had one. It was a very nice event, you know. My family invited everybody and it was ok.

Q: What about extended family? Did you have grandparents, aunts, uncles nearby?

A: Yes but they all perished because they, as soon as the Nazis came to power, they emigrated to Belgium where they had friends and then when the Nazis overran Belgium, they deported them and killed them along with the others.

Q: How did you occupy your time up to 1933? Were you interested in sports? I'm talking about as a young child before Hitler came into power? Were you interested in sports or --?

A: Not especially. I'll tell you why, because very early the Nazis who wanted to prove the physical inferiority of Jews forbade the physical education instruction in the Jewish schools. So I had a very limited exposure. By the way, do you know that I published an autobiography?

Q: Yes.

A: You have it, do you?

Q: Yes.

A: Good. Well I mentioned there that I didn't like sports because I associated it with Nazi political parades. But after I had been in the United States a while, I realized that that was foolish, that in this country it played a wholesome role as far as human relations were concerned.

Q: When you were very young did you have non-Jewish friends?

A: Oh yes.

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Q: So you played, as a little boy, with other children who were not Jewish.

A: Three for example. But on the other hand, as I mentioned in my autobiography I very early was exposed to bigotry because on our street which was named after the famous Flemish painter Paul Rubens, R-U-B-E-N-S, Rubens, it was called **Rubenstrasse**, Rubens street. There I was attacked because they said that the Jews had killed their savior. I remember the German sentence as if it were yesterday. The Jews have killed our savior.

Q: How old were you then, when that happened?

A: I was ten.

Q: Ten. When did you first start hearing about a man named Hitler? Do you remember your first exposure?

A: No. My parents must have mentioned it very soon. It was on their minds, of course.

Q: What was the first change when Hitler came into power? What was the first change that you noticed in your life? Again, you were a young boy. I know you were only ten.

A: In every way you were conscious of it, but I can't remember the details because after all I was only ten.

Q: Yeah I know. You were a young boy. So you stayed in your school in the beginning and then you had to leave that school, you said.

A: Well no. I mean I was not going to be allowed to go to a regular gymnasium, so there was a Jewish gymnasium called Jawne, J-A-W-N-E, academically first rate. I went to that from age ten until I emigrated at the age 14 and a half.

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Q: Let's talk about those years between 33 and until you emigrated.

A: We emigrated February 1938.

Q: Let's talk about those intervening years between 33 and 38. What you did and some of your thoughts.

A: Well it's hard for me to remember. Ordinary school, maybe not ordinary but I was a school boy and I attended the Jawne very –

Q: Did you keep your non-Jewish neighborhood friends?

A: Did I what, see them?

Q: Were they still your friends?

A: Well some of them of course they started to avoid me. Some others were still neighborly.

Q: You went to their houses? Their parents let you come to their house?

A: Vaguely, that's a little fuzzy in my mind.

Q: Were you ever physically assaulted?

A: Well not really. I think I got a few smacks maybe but it was not serious. I was never beaten up so to speak.

Q: Who were the teachers in the Jewish school?

A: Oh excellent. I remember them very well.



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Q: Who were some of them?

A: Well there was a woman by the way who was not what's called German but German literature and everything and her name was Esther Frank, F-R-A-N-K. Esther Frank, and I admired her greatly and she emigrated to New York actually and I even got in touch with her here.

I also got in touch with a man who is world renowned. His name was Bruno B-R-U-N-O Kisch, K-I-S-C-H. Bruno Kisch. He was a professor of cardiology at the University of Cologne and I admired him greatly you know. In Germany a professor is god. And I saw him after I came to the United States in New York and he wrote a book belief, I'll give you the title. The name is Belief in God and Knowledge of Nature. And that book I translated even though my English wasn't fully adequate yet. It was once I had come to New York, after we'd been here a few years. I translated that into English.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about some of your memories, as you said you were young, between 1933 and 38 when you left. Is there anything that stands out in your mind of those years before you left?

A: As it connects with Bruno Kisch also. Because Jews were excluded from even a swimming pool that was in the neighborhood, the Jewish community created what they called a cultural facility, a **Kulturbund**, B-U-N-D, bund. Kulturbund. And that teacher had concerts and lectures and Bruno Kisch was a very dynamic member of that group. But you know the concerts, the Jews were not allowed to play Beethoven or Brahms or any German composers. Would you believe? So the Kulturbund, the culture association operated within real constraints.

Q: As the restrictions increased for Jews in Germany in that time was that something you discussed with your parents? Did they talk about it? I mean I know you were young.

A: I mean every time some other thing happened it was reported and we were so conscious of it, it was almost a daily occurrence.

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Q: Do you remember ever being very frightened?

A: Well not acutely frightened at any one time but I was generally fearful naturally.

Q: Did you have freedom to go out on the street by yourself?

A: Yes.

Q: So you did. And what was it like to see the swastika or German soldiers in uniform?

A: It was very intimidating of course. We didn't see many soldiers. We saw SA, people in Nazi uniforms, civilians, they were the so called SA troops. The brown shirts in English. There was also the SS was notorious. And they became of course the killers in the concentration camps.

Q: So what is it like for a 12, 13, 14 year old boy to see that, see someone like that?

A: Very intimidating but –

Q: Did they talk to you?

A: Who?

Q: The German SS or SA, did they –

A: They were adults.

Q: No, I know. Did they speak to you at all?

A: They wouldn't have bothered with me. You know I was nothing to them.

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Q: Was this something that you talked over with your Jewish friends? The other boys your age?

A: I don't remember. I mean it was so familiar, so omnipresent that it wasn't a matter of talking it over. It's just, it's a part of daily life.

Q: Did you have any special hobbies when you were young? Do you like to read?

A: Oh, absolutely. I very soon liked to read and that's how I got into this philosophy and I'll tell you in this connection. As I mentioned I soon became a non-believer in religion, but of course I became bar mitzvah as part of the ritual and it would have been disloyal to the Jewish community if I hadn't. I was going to say something about what you were saying. Oh yes, I picked up, I got interested in philosophy thanks to the rabbi there at the synagogue. And the synagogue by the way was very close to the founding home of the world famous German toilet water 4711. You know 4711 is a world famous German toilet water and that house was right near on the same street the synagogue to which we belonged. And that synagogue had two rabbis. And their sermons got me interested in philosophy. And though I became a non-believer I got interested in philosophy through their sermons. I bought a big fat book. The Germans had wonderful series called Croucher of the present. That was the series and there was a book on philosophy. There was a book on history and so on. And I bought the big fat philosophy book and I tried to read it until I didn't understand it adequately, but I thought I did.

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

A: German of course.

Q: Did you know any other languages or just –

A: I picked up, as my first foreign language in those days was French. And I would go to the, downtown to the railroad station where foreigners would come, overhear them talking French. And also English which I didn't understand because I had only about four months of English before coming to the United States. In those days in gymnasium French was the lingua franca,

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the international language and English became the second language. And I had only a few months of it.

Q: Did you feel very Jewish or did you feel very German? How would you describe yourself?

A: They were both co-present, without any question.

Q: So it was equal, you're saying. You felt equally German and Jewish.

A: Yes. I did not think even then that the Nazis owned German civilization cause I knew that **anti-datism** and that it had all kinds of people like **Letsing** and other people who would have abhorred the Nazism.

Q: What about actions like the Nuremberg laws came into effect. Did you know about that as a teenager?

A: I don't remember that. I knew that there were so many prohibitions and injunctions that it was all very scary.

Q: What could you not do once the laws came, you yourself.

A: I very soon knew for example that I couldn't use the pool at the corner of our street. It was a bathhouse, so called. And I, it said on there in German, Jews not desired. (German) That means you were not allowed in there.

Q: What does that do to a young teenage boy to see a sign like that?

A: Well it's scary but it gives you a sense of rejection. But at the same time I had a sense of defiance.

Q: How did you defy that?

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A: Psychologically. I said the hell with them and they're bad people and what they say is false.

Q: Did you talk this over with your parents?

A: Well I'm sure but I mean it was so common as a daily occurrence that there was no special conversation about it. As it occurred.

Q: Your brother and sister were younger than you, right?

A: Both, yes. Excuse me. My sister is five years younger and my brother was six years younger, the younger brother.

Q: What about the Olympics, the 1936 Olympics. Do you have any memories of that?

A: No, but of course the Nazis made a lot of that. And got a lot of international visibility out of it.

Q: You yourself have no memories.

A: No. Specially, no.

Q: Here you are a young teenager going along and going to school. What was the next big change?

A: Well the next big change was the emigration to the United States. And when we came to the United States with my very limited English, I had to really struggle at first in school because when I came to New York where my parents had relatives, I attended classes of course in English and at first I had a hard time. That's cause I had so little preparation in English.

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Q: Let's back up a little bit. We'll talk about coming to America in a minute, but let's go back to Germany. Your parents told you that you would be leaving.

A: Oh yes.

Q: What was your reaction?

A: I was eager.

Q: What did the United States mean to you at that age?

A: Well a haven. A refuge. My father had a younger brother who had emigrated to the United States even well before the Nazis. So we knew that we had some access to a new life through my uncle.

Q: You were pleased when your parents told you that you would be leaving?

A: Oh yes. I remember to this day how they traveled to the American consulate which was located in the southern German city of Stuttgart to get their visas. And I was very happy when they returned with the visas.

Q: They did not have difficulty doing the paperwork and getting the visas and –

A: At that time, but it soon got to be difficult.

Q: In what way?

A: Was November 38 during the pogroms when the Goebbels, you know there was a Jew in Paris named Greenspan, assassinated the German – Goebbels said the righteous wrath of the German people will express itself and they smashed businesses and windows of businesses and –

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Q: I thought you left in spring of 38 and so you were there during Kristallnacht?

A: I was there during November of, what a minute. We emigrated in February of 38. We were not there during November of 38.

Q: Right, and that's when all that happened.

A: But I heard about all of it.

Q: But you had already left Germany.

A: Yes.

Q: We're still, let's stay in Germany. Your father got the paperwork done and the visas and you were looking forward to leaving.

A: To going. Yes and we left via Belgium, via Antwerp.

Q: How did you get to Belgium? By train?

A: By train, yes. I remember when we went to the border area in Aachen, the city of Aachen which is near the west German border and it was, my father and mother were nervous that all should go well as we were leaving.

Q: Did you take anything special with you, any belongings, any favorite books? Anything that meant something to you?

A: Oh yes, I got my – I still have the diaries that I kept in German. I have quite a few of these mementos.

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Q: You were able to take that with you?

A: Yes and by the way I might anticipate later when I was in the US army military intelligence, I was stationed at the former Gestapo headquarters in Berlin and I brought back Hitler's stationery, nameplates that Hitler used in his books. Those are all in my files here.

Q: You took your diaries. Anything else? Any games, any equipment, anything special that meant –

A: No, mostly written material.

Q: You went through Belgium and then where did you go?

A: Well then we went straight to New York.

Q: How did you get there?

A: On a boat called the **Ildeinstein**, that's Ildeinstein, I-L-D-E-I-N, Ildeinstein.

Q: What was a German line?

A: Yes it was a Cunard I think but it was one of those international lines I think.

Q: Who else was on the boat with you? Were there other refugees, people who had to leave?

A: I can't remember frankly.

Q: Were there other children your age?

A: There were some I guess, yes, but I have no distinct memories of that boat ride.



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Q: You don't?

A: No.

Q: Ok. And then you land in New York.

A: Yes, and my uncle was there and received us.

Q: And his name?

A: His name was Leo Grunbaum, L-E-O.

Q: So he meets you? Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

A: Yes, I certainly did.

Q: What did it mean to a teenager?

A: Oh I knew about it. I had heard about it. Very impressive to see that, and it meant of course, a symbol about attain new freedom.

Q: What were your parents' state of mind?

A: They were very eagerly anticipatory. What I didn't know, believe it or not, Germany having been in those days what it was. I had never seen a black person in my life. And when we came to New York there were all kinds of course on the docks and I stared at them a little bit because I was so curious. Just sheer curiosity. My father told me not to stare.

Q: Where did you go?

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A: We then went to New York City and I went to DeWitt Clinton high school.

Q: Did you live with your relatives or did your family get their own apartment?

A: They got an apartment for us, yes and rented one for us. I, you'll be interested in this. Because I was so new and didn't know the language I wanted very much to go to a school where I knew at least one other kid from Cologne. And I knew that there was such a place in the Bronx, which was an hour and a half or more by subway ride away from Brooklyn where we lived. We lived at the south end of Brooklyn and this was at the northern end of the Bronx, **Mocholu** parkway. DeWitt Clinton high school named after DeWitt Clinton. And there was a boy there from Cologne and because he was there, I enrolled in the exact school. And commuted. I had to get up at five in the morning because I had to be in my classroom. You know the beginning you go to a classroom that a bunch of students together.

Q: Right, a home room.

A: A home room is the word I was looking for. And he was there and that meant a lot to me.

Q: Were you able to make friends easily at that point or did you feel like an outsider?

A: Well fairly soon. The language barrier was not insignificant because boys wouldn't be particularly interested in talking to somebody that's stumbling.

Q: But you picked up English after a while?

A: Very soon. Yeah one thing that was really episodic. In my English, so called English class because we had to take math and English and so on, there was a student who, what was I going to say about him? I've forgotten now what I was going to say. But anyhow there was one, yes, one kid whom I befriended and I looked him up in New York. I knew he was there and he was going to DeWitt Clinton high school in the Bronx. Because I knew him and nobody else, I commuted by subway an hour and a half each day from south Bronx to DeWitt Clinton high

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school.

Q: What kind of work was your father able to get in New York?

A: Well it was very tragic actually because he soon, the doctors thought that it was the strain of the Nazi thing because he was interrogated by the Gestapo once and he got very terrified. He developed spinal arthritis and that was very painful and in order to be able to earn a living he wanted to get rid of it as much as he could. And so he underwent a major spinal operation which was a failure and after that he was mostly, he was in considerable pain and was mostly an invalid. He couldn't hold a job. And my mother had to jump into the breach and she had three kids in the house. She took a job, low paying of course, because she didn't have any special skills. She was a housewife. And that was not an easy time.

Q: How long did you stay in high school?

A: Well not very long. I think from February 38 until June of, I think it was until early 1940. Cause I know in September 1940 I went to Wesleyan University.

Q: What were your family's reaction when war broke out in September 39?

A: Well, that it was expected.

Q: Did they have any correspondence with friends or relatives back in –

A: In Europe?

Q: In Europe.

A: Yes, with the surviving relatives til of course they were deported and disappeared.

Q: Now you've graduated from high school and you decided to go to Wesleyan you said?

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A: Because when I was in high school, I met a fellow who came, who had graduated the year before from DeWitt Clinton high school and I happened to run into him. And we got, to became acquainted and he, although he was only a freshman at Wesleyan, he went back to talk to the dean of admission and told the dean that I thought I was a very promising kid. The dean granted me a scholarship which would have been impossible for me to go to Wesleyan without it. And I went.

Q: Did you adjust all right to it? Was there any –

A: At the beginning it wasn't so easy because I was still, as they say a greenhorn.

Q: You spent four years there?

A: I spent, no, I graduated because the war had begun -- accelerated basis. In the fall of 43, I think.

Q: But you were able lot make friends?

A: Oh yes.

Q: I'm sure your English was fine by then.

A: It started, I picked it up very quickly. My wife tells me -- I met her by the way early on. A bunch of kids knew her and knew me. So I met her and she said at first I spoke with a clearly pronounced German – but not long afterwards, just a few years later when I looked her up again, she said I spoke the way I talk now.

Q: You completed and you got your degree?

A: Yes.

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Q: And then what happened?

A: So then I was, the first work at Columbia University division of war research. Some of that is in my autobiography by the way. In New York. And then I entered the army and by the way I was naturalized and I considered it in the army. And –

Q: What was that like to become an American citizen?

A: It was thrilling.

Q: Was it?

A: Yes.

Q: Had your parents become citizens yet?

A: I'm not sure but they soon did. Either before or after, I don't remember.

Q: Did you have a special ceremony?

A: No, it was just I think some justice of the peace or somebody.

Q: But it was emotionally meaningful for you?

A: Definitely.

Q: You're in the army now?

A: And I was then sent to military intelligence training school at Camp Ritchie, Maryland. There

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was a reunion of the Camp Ritchie graduates not long ago to which I went, the Washington, DC area, in your area. There at Camp Ritchie.

Q: What unit were you in at Camp Ritchie?

A: Called MFIU number two, field interrogation unit number two. We were trained to interrogate highly placed German both civilians and military people including SS generals.

Q: Were the other young men you were with also German refugees in your group?

A: Many, yes. Some very interesting ones. There was Sigmund Freud's nephew and he was a dynamo. He was a very impressive guy.

Q: What was his first name?

A: Harry. He had oddly an English first name, Harry Freud is from Vienna. A trained Viennese lawyer and he could round up 50,000 German troops and have them processed in five hours. He was a formidable character. But there were other very prominent people. Thomas Mann's son, one, was there. The world renowned mathematician named Herman **File** whose son was there. Quite a crew.

Q: What did you all talk about? Did you talk about your lives in Germany before the war or –

A: Whatever. It's very hard. Imagine if somebody asked you what you talked to that far back. Not be able to do it either.

Q: You got training in intelligence at Camp Ritchie, Fort Ritchie. Yeah.

A: I graduated and then I was sent to first we went to Paris for a short time for orientation. But then I was stationed in Berlin at the former Heinrich Himmler Gestapo headquarters. Can you

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believe that? In Berlin, right on what's called Lake **Wannsee**, W-A-N-N-S-E-E., Lake Wannsee. That was the place where in 1942, Himmler organized the Final Solution.

Q: The Wannsee conference.

A: Exactly. You know more about it than I do.

Q: As a Jewish young man do you remember what your thoughts were when you were there?

A: Well triumph that they had been defeated.

Q: To come back to Germany, did you feel like you were in a sense coming back home or did you feel very American.

A: Very American.

Q: You're wearing an American soldier's uniform.

A: Of course, but I didn't feel, after the alienation I didn't feel that I was coming home.

Q: You did not?

A: Not at all, no. It wasn't until years later when I met very decent Germans, colleagues specially in philosophy and so on that things changed.

Q: When were you at this place? When was this? Do you remember exactly when it was?

A: I think I returned in 46 from there. But I was there from 44 I think until 46.

Q: So the war was still going on?

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A: No, the war was over in April of 45.

Q: Yeah but you said you were there in 44.

A: Oh yes.

Q: So the war was still going on at time?

A: I remember when the announcement on the radio that President Roosevelt had died.

Q: In 45. Before that who had you interrogated? You said you interrogated some German –

A: All kinds of people.

Q: Any names that you can remember?

A: Yes. Alf, there as a famous German medical man who was actually Goebbels' doctor and his name was **Sauerbruch**, S-A-U-E-R-B-R-U-C-H. He was active in the Nazi medical establishment. His name was Ernst Ferdinand Sauerbruch. He was one that I interrogated. I interrogated some SS generals. And \_\_\_\_ I mentioned that in my autobiography. The German genealogist, an expert in family trees. And Euler, E-U-L-E-R and before I would interrogate one of these guys Euler would brief me. He knew the family histories of all the prominent Germans. He would give me the whole low down on the backgrounds of these people.

Q: What kind of questions would you ask these people?

A: Well at the beginning the Geneva convention required them to only give you their names, serial number and rank and but very soon of course they loosened up and I would ask them all kinds of things that the US army wanted to know. And –



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Q: Were they forthcoming?

A: Not very but very soon I broke them down for this reason. When they were not forthcoming, I would overwhelm them with knowledge of their family history, including scuttlebutt about dubious liaisons, escapades from their ancestors and that put them very much on the defensive. One of them said to me, we're supposed to be enemies he said but I must tell you that the American intelligence service is the greatest in all military history because he didn't know that I had a half an hour before been primed by Euler. I would rattle this off as if it was old hat.

Q: Did any of them know that you were Jewish?

A: I imagine it occurred to them. We didn't discuss that of course.

Q: They never said anything to you?

A: Oh, look they were very eager to please because they knew that I could make a lot of trouble for them. So they didn't – it was a very unequal situation. They weren't questioning me about anything. They were responding to what I said and hoping that they'll get by. That was the –

Q: You were questioning them about military intelligence.

A: Yes, I asked them about all kinds of things, sure.

Q: You stayed there in Germany until when?

A: Well I think I can't remember but I have it written down. I think I returned home. I was discharged in 46, at Fort Dix in New Jersey.

Q: When you were questioning these people and then you would write up a report after?

A: Oh yes.

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Q: Was there anything that stays in your mind specifically that from their answers that you can talk about or you're not allowed to talk about it.

A: Well by now I'm sure that's no problem. I don't have any secrets from then.

Q: Nothing that surprised you?

A: Nothing, no. I, as I said, they were really overwhelmed, by the fact that I knew all this stuff I did know because they didn't know where I'd gotten it. They thought it was just old hat for me.

Q: You're discharged you said in 46 at Fort Dix. And where did you go after that?

A: Well I came back to the United States and very soon I decided to go to graduate school at Yale. I studied what I had always wanted to study to become a philosopher of science, studied both physics and mathematics and philosophy, took a master's degree. This was all at Yale in physics and then a PhD in philosophy of science. I became an academic.

Q: How were your parents at that time? Were they –

A: Well

Q: Managing ok?

A: More or less. My father as I said --

Q: Yeah was incapacitated, you said.

A: But my mother probably had the help from the relatives and my mother was earning some money, working. And it was not easy because I wanted my brother and my sister also to get an education. And I arranged that actually. It was remarkable. I very early developed a facility for

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meeting prominent people and I met a -- let's see. This was to help my brother. I met Israel Strauss who was the chief diagnostician of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Imagine a little pipsqueak meeting him. And I spoke to him and I said I had a brother who very much wanted to study medicine. And he got him a fellowship from I still remember the name of the **Dazian** foundation, D-A-Z-I-A-N that I had never heard of. And so he was able to go to medical school. And my sister went to graduate school in romance languages at the University of Wisconsin and then she became the chairperson of the modern language department in the very good high school system in Great Neck, New York.

Q: Did your brother serve in the army?

A: No, he was too young.

Q: So you've gotten your degree, your PhD in philosophy and then what happened, where did you go?

A: At first I, I think for a short time, I worked at Columbia University division of war research. Then I was offered a job at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, in Bethlehem and I went there and I had there, in the philosophy of science class, the cream of their science and engineering students and I very much enjoyed that. So much so that although I had offers from very much better known institutions like the University of Chicago, Hopkins, I stayed there for ten years until Pitt came along with this big offer of an Andrew Mellon professorship.

Q: This is the University of Pittsburgh?

A: Yes. In 1960 and I couldn't resist that and I took it and then here I've had a wonderful career at Pitt.

Q: So you've stayed there since then, since 1960?

A: Oh yes, even though as I said I had all kinds of offers.

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Q: Do you have any children?

A: Yes, we have a daughter named Barbara Grunbaum who is married. She lives in -- she does historical documentaries, Montgomery County television in Maryland.

Q: Can we talk a little bit now about some of your thoughts about your experience during the war? What are your thoughts about Germany now? In today's world?

A: It has certainly changed a very great deal and I am hoping that a democratic social system is there to stay.

Q: Have you been back many -- I know you've been back a little bit. Have you been back many times or do you --

A: I was given two honorary doctorates in Germany. One is from the University of Cologne and the other one is from the University of **Konstanz**, K-O-N-S-T-A-N-Z, Konstanz at Cologne.

Q: What was in it like to go back to Cologne after you were, you couldn't go to their school when you were much younger?

A: It was a sense of historical vindication.

Q: Did you feel at home there, in the city?

A: No, I haven't felt at home anywhere except here, in this country. I didn't feel at home. No I felt comfortable because I know the language and could connect with the people but I didn't have any sense of this is my lost home.

Q: Do you receive reparations at all? Or did your parents?

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A: No we didn't.

Q: Did they apply for –

A: I don't think so.

Q: What were your thoughts during the Eichmann trial?

A: Well I was very pleased that it was being conducted and I was proud of the **Mossad** intelligence service that captured him.

Q: Have you been to Israel?

A: Oh many times. I've been there many times. I was there a number of times. I have relatives let me say. Some of our relatives emigrated to the United States but others had emigrated to Israel way back and I had a cousin, a first cousin who became a general in the Mossad in the Israeli intelligence service. Another cousin, a woman, who was married to a Supreme Court justice named Cohen on the Israeli Supreme Court. And another cousin, a younger cousin, one of whom in fact came and took a PhD in mathematics here at the University of Pittsburgh.

Q: When your parents, before the war, were your parents Zionists?

A: More or less, yes.

Q: Did you belong to any Zionist youth groups in Germany before you –

A: Oh I did, yes.

Q: What kind of group?

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A: It's called **HaShomer HaTzair**, guardians is the English translation. They were a very active Zionist group and they were left wing in Israel. And they were very active at organizing Zionist youth groups in Cologne.

Q: You went to meetings and had events?

A: Yes. We did, yes, although I couldn't remember the details now.

Q: Were you active at all in the civil rights movement in the United States? I mean here you came from a country that deprived you and your parents of their civil rights.

A: No, I supported it just politically and sometimes with money but not in any direct participatory way.

Q: Do you still consider yourself a Zionist?

A: Well I not only wish Israel well, we contribute money for things there that are worthwhile, not for everything but for some things.

Q: What about your thoughts about religion considering what you went through because you were Jewish? Did it make you more religious, less religious, did it change you – again you were a teenager I know when you left?

A: Yes and I have remained an atheist. Religion did nothing for – well I shouldn't say that. I mean organized religion gave emotional sustenance to people but I have no sympathies for this whatsoever. Partly because as a philosopher I consider it unsound.

Q: If you hadn't gone through what you went through, having to leave your country and you said having some unpleasant experiences in Cologne when you were young, do you think you would have been a different person?

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A: I suppose, but that's a very counterfactual – couldn't tell you what I would have been like really.

Q: Do you think it made you more independent coming at that time in your life when you were an adolescent?

A: Oh you had to be because you felt threatened and you felt that everybody was on his own so to speak. Except of course for the family support.

Q: Tell me what your parents' response was when the war was over and all the news came out about the terrible destruction of European Jewry. Do you, did they talk about it with you? I mean you were in your early 20s.

A: Everybody talked about it. We were all -- it was horrible but you know considering the Jewish history where adversity has occurred before, it was not the first one. One is sort of prepared for it in a way, cruel way.

Q: Are there any sights or sounds or smells that bring back those early years in Germany when the Nazis came to power? Anything that stimulates –

A: Active memories of what it was like. The fear.

Q: Is there anything that triggers it now in today's world?

A: No, not really.

Q: Do you read a lot about the war and the Holocaust?

A: Not a lot, no. I've read things but I read all kinds of things about Israel and the world and these things all lumped together.

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Q: Has the world learned any lessons from the Holocaust?

A: This remains to be seen I'm afraid.

Q: Have you been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

A: No, I have not, I'm ashamed to say. But in a way I feel that I haven't missed very much because I experienced so much of it.

Q: Yourself. Do you feel more comfortable with people who came from Europe and had a similar background to yours?

A: Not especially, no. I've become so acculturated that I feel comfortable with people mostly on an individual basis, not on the basis of their background.

Q: And are you comfortable talking to them about your background as a young man, coming from Germany and –

A: Oh yes.

Q: You're very comfortable speaking about that?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Do you think about those days more frequently as you've gotten older?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?



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A: You're a wonderful interrogator. That's what I would like to add. But no, not really. You've really covered the ground.

Q: Anything else you wanted to say that we haven't talked about?

A: I appreciate very much your interest in my views and you're taking the time to get them from me.

Q: That's very kind of you and we appreciate your –

A: What I would like to know is if anything gets published, I would very much like to receive a copy. Will I?

Q: We can talk about that in a minute. If you have nothing else to add, let me just finish the recording and then we can talk some more. Ok? So this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Adolf Grünbaum.

(end)