

Not the land of milk and honey. And when you first came here, you thought it probably would be the land of milk and honey. Why do you think that-- what changed your mind? Changed your mind it's probably a bad phrase. But what changed that opinion?

Well, I think, in order to make a living and to advance, you have to put a lot of effort into it. The other countries in the world where you work five, six hours a day and make a living, naturally, the standard of living isn't as high. And you are not-- within that context, you are-- you accept the standard of living in the country that you live in. And you're-- by and large are satisfied.

But in this country, your standard of living is high. And to achieve a reasonable standard of living, you have to put out. And you have to spend long hours in general by the average person to obtain what you think is adequate for you in life.

When you returned home from the CBs, from the army, how did you get back into the electronics business?

Well, when you're in electronics, I think it's probably, for a lot of people, like a love affair, which you try to always enhance your knowledge because that's the state of the art. And you try to keep up with everything new. And so it was, even when I was in the service, that the closest thing to electronics that I got to was an electrical warehouse.

And also, I went to a school in Honolulu, where they taught electronics-- electrical items. And when I went back here-- as a matter of fact, I had taken a high school equivalency test while I was still in the Navy, which at the time was accepted in every state except New York and California.

I had passed that, naturally, with flying colors. But that didn't do me any good until after I went to the RCA Institute and I took a course there. And when I afterwards showed the completion of the course, I went to my former high school and where I received my high school diploma.

And did you come back to live in Washington Heights?

Yes.

During-- again, how did you find your first job when you came back?

Like millions of others, through the United States Employment Service.

OK. And while you were-- what did you do with your free time for recreation?

Well, I hung around with the neighboring groups and friends.

Did you join any clubs or organizations?

Yes. I joined the Tabernacle Youth Group at the time. And I have very fond memories of that period.

Were your friends then mostly of the German Jewish group?

At that time, I would say yes, since I was rather spending a lot of time of the group in the Tabernacle at that time. Yes.

Would you say that your friends today are still more of the German Jewish group or more of the American?

My friends today, most are of the German Jewish group, yes.

Why do you think that has persisted?

Well, I think it's probably more through circumstances rather than-- the design rather than that I wouldn't look out for

making friends with other persons. The friendships that I have now have been in existence for a long time. And you have a tendency to stick to old friendships, naturally.

In your employment, you mentioned that you got the job through the United States Employment Service. Did you meet many Americans through your job?

No, it was a rather short period that I was working there. And the reason why I had to leave is kind of noteworthy. This was shortly after the war. And the company was very nice and very cooperative. It happened to have been the-- was something that you might be familiar with, Helene Curtis, is products for the beauty shop.

And all throughout my subsequent life, I tried to stay within the-- my field of endeavor. And I repaired hair dryers at the time. And the reason why I was laid off is because I had a job of somebody who left that company to be in the service. And he came back from the service. And it was the law at that time when you left at a certain job, you had the first priority when you come back to retain that same job. So I had to leave at that time.

Oh, so this other serviceman came back?

And got that-- the job that I had, yes.

And from there on how did you proceed in electronics?

Well, I had a number of other jobs. My history is rather fast to tell. I worked for a number of firms, including Emerson Electronics and Fisher Radio. And it was during a spell of inactivity for about three or four weeks that I was laid off because it was summertime, because they didn't have enough work for Emerson that my aunt, who lived with me in France, who now had a store in the Bronx, said to me, well, across the street from me-- from her is a radio store which was going out of business.

And I jokingly said, oh, well, maybe I buy the whole business. It turned out I did with a partner, who I had for a year and a half. I was in the same location for 21 years.

And what made me close was rather-- not that especially unique, which happened to a lot of stores, is that the landlord abandoned the building. And I went on vacation. And when I came back, the ceiling fell down because of the water leaks. And I did not, since that time, open up another store, although I felt I would want to. And I'm now working in New Jersey.

You mentioned that you bought this store.

Yes.

You had been in the army. And you were only here two years before. Were you able to have enough capital to make the investment to buy it?

Well, I must say, I was the proud possessor of \$500, which was a great sum of money at that time. That was in 1948. And I borrowed some additional money, which I subsequently repaid. And I made a go of it.

You mentioned that now, you're in New Jersey, you're employed in electronics.

I'm employed in New Jersey, yes, in Bogen Electronics, which is a division of the Lear Siegler. I'm working in the engineering department.

I just would like to come back, just for a moment, to your mother. During all this time, you mentioned that she was working in a restaurant in Washington Heights--

Yes.

--around 116th?

Oren's Cafeteria.

Which?

Oren's Cafeteria.

In looking back at-- how would you say that your mother adjusted to living in America?

She adjusted very well. And the prevailing attitude at the time was that, as opposed from some groups of people today that come to this country, to try to Americanize as fast as possible and to be within the mainstream of American life. And the idea was to be become a productive member and a contributing member of the American society and the-- in the neighborhood that we lived in.

In terms of her life, she probably had a better-- a more comfortable life in Germany than she did, certainly in the beginning years--

Absolutely.

--here.

Yes.

Did that show itself in her-- did you feel that about her, that she felt that? Did you--

No. No, I did not. I did not because the freedom afforded here, the atmosphere was so much-- how should I say-- enhancing to one's being, then the gathering storm, as to say, that there was in Germany, yes.

Did she miss some of the luxuries that perhaps she had in Germany?

Well, some people-- this is a matter of individualism. Some people can't stop talking about, oh, it was so good then. We had this and we had that. And we were up that high. But in the case of my mother and my family, we were glad to be here. And we were not given to complaints.

OK. I just want to go on to your children just for a second. Do you feel that you were a different parent than the parents of your children's American counterparts? Do you remember?

Yes, that was hard.

Naturally. Yes.

How so?

Well, it's simply a matter of-- well, you bring to your children what your background brings to you. It's as simple as that. You're the-- your own life experiences are kind of-- is transposed into what you give your children.

Have your children ever pointed up to you that you were different parents than, let's say, their friends' parents?

No, not really directly, but possibly indirectly they did, yes.

Do you think of yourself today as more a part of the American mainstream or more a part of the German Jewish community in New York?

That's a tough question. I consider myself more in the American mainstream, yes.

OK. When you say it's a tough question, why do you say that?

Because as I said, I like to do more within the Jewish community. And somehow, I did not put into action what I feel, which is-- which I don't feel very good about.

Happens in day to day.

Right. But my interests are rather multifaceted. And like a lot of people, feel that you're American first and you're Jewish second. And sometimes, it's a hard thing to reconcile. And sometimes, you have mixed feelings about it, especially in the times that we live in, especially with Israel. And these kind of feelings, I think, probably will become more pronounced as it relates to Israel.

Also, the parallel between that in Germany.

Yes. It was very gratifying to me to know that several years ago, when the war started in Israel, that there were a lot of yeshiva boys going around in the area and collecting for Israel. And within no time at all, they collected thousands of dollars spontaneously. And this was a very gratifying thing to know, that something like this can happen in this country.

In terms of-- you brought up something interesting. In terms of your children, do you think they think of themselves more as Americans? How should I put that? Do you think they think of themselves as Americans first, or Jewish first, or simultaneous?

I don't really know.

The reason I ask that is only because they don't have the same experience.

That's right. I don't really know. I wouldn't want to say something that I am not really sure. I don't-- I think it's a hard question. I think it's a hard question for all of us, in terms of--

I don't want people-- have you ever been back to Germany?

No. I have not been. And I don't think, up until now, I could have brought myself to go back to Germany. However, I do intend to go to Germany one of those years for two reasons and two reasons only.

And that is-- one is to visit the grave of my grandfather, who I mentioned briefly at almost the beginning of the interview. And the other thing is, hopefully, to go with my wife and to show her where I lived and, consequently, for myself to go where my wife was in Berlin and to get an idea of where she lived. But more so than that, much more than that, I'm looking forward to a visit to Israel, whenever the opportunity arises-- comes up.

OK.