

Testimonial of Walter Horn
January 6, 1978

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Berlin in 1901 in July. In other words, I'm seventy six years old.

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

A: I was raised in Berlin and visited the high school there and then afterwards; I came into an apprenticeship in a wholesale place for buttons and buckles. It was a well-known wholesaler in Berlin. Later on I changed the position when my apprenticeship was over and became a salesman and I was traveling almost to all parts of Germany, for many, many years with good success.

Q: When did you become an apprentice?

A: In 1916.

Q: When did you become a salesman?

A: In 1922.

Q: While you were growing up in Berlin, how would you describe the relationship between the Jewish and the Christian children that you went to school with.

A: This was good – no sign of any anti-Semitism.

Q: When you became a salesman and you traveled all over Germany, did you belong to any organizations – cultural or political?

A: No, I never belonged to any organizations.

Q: What did you do with your free time when you were working as a young man?

A: Well, there wasn't much free time left because I can say that I was at least ten months on the road.

Q: Was your father in business?

A: My father was a beampter for the Jewish community in Berlin. He was an inspector and a very religious man.

Q: So you had a religious upbringing.

A: Yes. We had a kosher household.

Q: How did Hitler's coming to power effect you personally in 1933?

A: In 1933, I would say in the beginning of his power, I didn't feel too much about him. You could travel all over as before but by and by, it became worse as many hotels outside of Berlin in the country did not accept Jews as guests. There were many signs in many – but that was later on – in 1934, in 1935 – Juden Nicht Erwünscht. And that was the first problem. Customers were reluctant to Adolf Hitler. I had in the first years of his power no difficulty that they say we don't buy from you anymore – you are a Jew or you have a Jewish firm which you represent. That gave no difficulties in the first years.

Q: When you say the hotels displayed signs Juden Underwünscht, did you ever try...

A: No. I never stayed in them. We had a choice sometimes. Let's say you came into a place like Stettin, there were 20 hotels in Stettin. The one had the sign on and the other has not. So we changed to the place where we could stay without the signs on. But then afterwards, when a few years went by, it became more and more difficult.

Q: Did your firm, or you, when you sold, have more of a Jewish trade or more Christian?

A: They had mixed customers – Jewish as well as Gentile.

Q: But the Gentile customers in the beginning...

A: They did not felt too good to Adolf Hitler in the beginning. You know everything takes time because Adolf Hitler told the people just the opposite of what they believed in and so it took a while until they became Nazis.

Q: Did you feel at the time that he wouldn't last long?

A: Nobody could say that. Ya, the people felt partly so. And there were even – what I think is quite criminal – before he came to power, we heard references by Jewish people – let him take over and let him show what he can do for us. And that was criminal in my opinion. I had many disputes with the people and said you won't be able to get rid of him if he takes over – then it is too late if we feel it what he is saying against Jews.

Q: Did you serve in the first World War?

A: No, I did not.

Q: Did you feel that the Jews in Germany were very patriotic?

- A: Oh, yes they were. More than this. And the good slogan was not fulfilled – what said – what promised "Das Vaterland Dank is Euch Gewiss" – that was not fulfilled.
- Q: When did you begin to feel the difference in attitude...?
- A: I would say it could be the year of 1935 about – there is started. One day – there I got for instance from one good customer I remember that very clearly – a postcard from my company. It said, in German, "im interesse unders geschefts, tilen wir ihn mit das wir in zukumpft keine nicht Aryschen vertreter mehr emphanen werd". That was the beginning – that I could say I felt in strongly. And the customer was lost for me. I couldn't go anymore and they sent a gentile man over. It was about 1935.
- Q: When you were told about that card, how did you feel about it?
- A: I was very depressed. In the first place, I was insulted by being a Jew and secondly I lost a customer, a very good customer. That was in Hannover-Wunden near Kassel. And then it became worse and worse from year to year. And then came the question of the so-called Arisierung of the companies. And then came lately a new law out – beginning October 1, of 1938, every traveler had a certificate for being able to travel and these cards lost their validity on October 1938. That means in other words, after this period it was impossible for a Jewish traveler to be on the road anymore. And that finished everything. And then came just about this same time the message that my company was Arisiert.
- Q: The boss of this company was a Jewish man.
- A: They were Jewish men – there were three owners of the company. And funny enough, the last man of the company was in the Aufbau with a totes anzig, Mr. Oscar Papeheimer with 93 years, here in New York. He was the last of the Mohegans.
- Q: Did you know anybody at this time, either customers or former friends who joined the Party?
- A: No.
- Q: Up to 1938, did you consider emigrating?
- A: Yes. In 1938 in the summer, I was on my vacation in Baden-Baden and we talked it over with friends that there will be no staying anymore for Jews in Germany. We knew we had to leave but nobody knew where to go. Then came first the 9th of November – I was caught in a Jewish hotel in Bad Hartzburg and they brought me to a concentration camp in Buchenwald where I had to stay for two months.

My brother got a boat ticket for me to Shanghai and that gave the cause to let me out of the concentration camp.

Q: What happened to you in that town – Bad Hartzburg – on Kristallnacht?

A: Kristallnacht – we were in the hotel and about 2 a.m., all windows were smashed in the hotel and we knew there was going on some organized work of the Nazis. In the morning then, we were transported to Braunschweig and from Braunschweig out to Wolfenbittel and in Wolfenbittel was a penitentiary. We stood there overnight and then were transported further down to Buchenwald.

Q: How did they transport you?

A: Trucks. No, in Braunschweig, we were loaded into trains, transported to Weimar and there we were loaded onto trucks and then down, I don't know how many kilometers, 10-15 km to Buchenwald.

Q: What was your impression when you came to Buchenwald?

A: Ja. I knew before – the people were mumbling what is going on in the concentration camps and we knew before that it wasn't too friendly a reception – we knew that.

Q: How did you feel on that 9th of November?

A: Very badly, very depressed. It wasn't a pleasure to be caught by Nazis. The treatment was not too good. People were beaten and thrown in the truck and awful thing occurred.

Q: When you came to Buchenwald, was it worse than you anticipated?

A: No, it wasn't worse because we knew before because we spoke to people who had been released from there and that one man had told us what is going on is undescrivable. We knew there were no horrible things.

Q: Did they cause you any bodily harm?

A: No, they did not personally attack me, but that was a lucky thing – other people had to suffer.

Q: What was a typical day there like?

A: It was an eternity to stay for two months over there. It was not as though you were living a regular life. You were in a barracks under the most primitive circumstances. No opportunity to wash yourself – nothing. You get your piece of bread and sometimes, a soup or so. The food was not even too bad.

- Q: What did you get to eat?
- A: Soups, a piece of sausage, a piece of bread. Sometimes coffee, sometimes tea.
- Q: Did you have to work?
- A: No, we did not work.
- Q: Was your brother there too?
- A: No, I was the only one in the family who was caught.
- Q: You mentioned that your brother got you a ticket to Shanghai and that enabled you to be released from Buchenwald. How did you prepare to leave?
- A: They gave me four weeks time for leaving. So I prepared – to go shopping, to buy this for Shanghai. We investigated what is right to take along – what is not right. But the people didn't give me the right advice.
- Q: When you say the people, were these organizations?
- A: No, private people. I bought a tropical helmet in a store on Potsdamerstrasse in Berlin – that was for tropischer austristung- a store. And I said, what is good as a transfer, what would you recommend because you couldn't take money along and you looked for objects to sell over there. He said take soap – the soap was cheaper in Shanghai than it was in Berlin.
- Q: Did you have any trouble buying at the time?
- A: No, none. The people in Berlin – they felt everything much later than in the provinces.
- Q: That's an interesting point, since you were a salesman...
- A: When I came home, you know and I told my parents what is going on, they couldn't comprehend it. They said how is that possible and my father always said "die machen was sie wollen".
- Q: There must have been many parades in Berlin...
- A: But I didn't feel too much of it because I was always on the road.
- Q: Did you notice any difference between one section of Germany and another in terms of Nazi strength?

- A: A little bit stronger in some places. Then one day, the gauleiter of Pommern told Adolf Hitler, "Pommern is Judenrein".
- Q: When your brother purchased this ticket to Shanghai, was that for you alone or for all of your family?
- A: For me alone.
- Q: How did you feel about going to a place – Shanghai was quite far away and quite different?
- A: Ja. Nobody knew anything about Shanghai. When I arrived there, I was one of the first immigrants to arrive there and they had a committee, a relief committee, and they rented buildings to shelter the people. At that time there were not so many, a few hundred, and then it grew up to 18,000.
- Q: It must have been very difficult on the day you left Germany.
- A: In one respect I was glad because that was unbearable to stay there because by this time they felt it in Berlin as well as they felt it in other cities. In one respect, I was glad – on the other hand, to leave the parents and sisters and brother was not too good. We didn't know if there would be a chance to see them in life again anymore.
- Q: Were they able to emigrate?
- A: Afterwards, yes. My brother came one year later to Shanghai and he died over there from typhus and my parents came in 1941 via the last way – via Siberia by train and from Kobe out, they took a boat. And they died in 1941 within a period of 10 days. My mother first – they were old people. My father was 79 and my mother was 71.
- Q: It must have been very difficult for them...
- A: My mother like it in Shanghai. Ach, that was so interesting – there are people over people in the streets and they were selling this and this. My mother wasn't interested in everything but she said everything would have been fine and smooth if my brother, her son, wouldn't have died over there.
- Q: You mentioned that you had sisters as well.
- A: Yes, they went to America. They had affidavits.
- Q: What was the route you took to Shanghai?

- A: The route was by train to Trieste and from there we boarded the one boat of the Lloyd Trestino Steamboat – Italian company.
- Q: Were most of the people on the boat German Jews?
- A: No. Only a part but it was fully booked and I was lucky enough to get a ticket for first class. I paid myself in Germany.
- Q: You mentioned when you came to Shanghai, there was a relief committee who had arranged for shelter. Were these the Heims?
- A: Right. They called it Heime.
- Q: What kind of condition existed in the Heimes?
- A: It was very primitive, very primitive. The food was good in the first time, but then afterwards when the number of people increased, it became worse because it was expensive. They had relief money from America, from the JOINT and from the HICEM.
- Q: Who ran the relief committee?
- A: They were people elected and they founded the Jewish community congregation and it sort of grew up by itself.
- Q: There was a Jewish community in Shanghai before...
- A: But that was Russian. They partly gave money or gave loans for the people which was refunded by American organizations. So, everything was okay until the second World War broke out because then all the connections were broken – to America and elsewhere.
- Q: Before we come to that, how did you earn a living in Shanghai?
- A: I had so many jobs over there – it was so – you changed every four weeks – you were peddling with raincoats – I was peddling together with another friend and if this was not lucrative enough, I took over a job selling chemicals. Then I was a member of a choir – a mens' choir over there and we made a few pennies and so on.
- Q: How did you get these jobs?
- A: Through friends of course.
- Q: Were these jobs within the community or outside in the city of Shanghai?

- A: In the city of Shanghai. I could go looking for customers whenever I want.
- Q: Who did you – it's such a different culture - ...
- A: Chinese people. Most of the Chinese people – the educated people – they speak a good English in Shanghai.
- Q: Did you deal with the Japanese also?
- A: No, not too much.
- Q: What were your impressions of Shanghai?
- A: Impressions of Shanghai – that is a city where you cannot stay forever – from the beginning on – you cannot compete in business with the Chinese people because they are people without any demands – primitive. If they make a few pennies a day, they are satisfied. It is not like here – the people have money like hell. You found in the morning – particularly in the winter time, people dead in the street – starved to death. They cannot care – they don't know exactly are they a population of 600 millions or 800 millions. They cannot take care for everybody. It's impossible.
- Q: Were you able to earn enough money to keep yourself going?
- A: Yes. In a most primitive way. You wouldn't believe how little a human being needs to stay alive. How little he or she needs. It is no comparison to the United States at all. And here, very often I have very severe debates and discussions with people. I tell the people and that is my conviction. Poverty among the Jews in the United States is almost to me unknown because a poor man is a man in the eyes of American people who has no automobile, who has no color television or he has no sail boat in the river. That is a poor man in the United States. In China, a man possesses what he has on his body – the lumpen what he has on his body – that is his possession. Here, no country – not the most honest country in the world without criminals and not so rich country in the world without poor people – that does not exist. But expresses in percentages – what is a poor man – what is a poor man in America. I would say – a man who doesn't know how to pay his rent tomorrow and a man who doesn't know what food to put on the table – without any means. In China – out of 800 million, 600 million are starving. There are millions of people who are never able to buy new goods – newly fabricated goods. The second hand deal is the biggest deal over there. You have dealers in the streets with old shoes, with old suits, with old ties, everything is old. They just cannot afford to buy it. And that is the difference between here.
- Q: Were you selling second hand things?

- A: We sold in the first place for being able to stay alive what we had in our luggage. And we took along many things – was it new or was it used – it didn't mean anything. You could sell anything what you had – except one object, I remember – a so called gefluegel sheerer – a chicken shears – you could not get rid of it because they didn't know what it was – that was the only object.
- Q: How did you get around in Shanghai?
- A: That was no difficulty – you used the bus, you used the tramway.
- Q: How did you make yourself understood?
- A: With English.
- Q: Did you know English when you arrived there?
- A: At that time I knew a good working English. I had an English teacher in Germany before I left privately. And then the conductor told you where to go and you had a map of Shanghai city.
- Q: How did the Chinese people react to...
- A: Very friendly, very friendly. The people are very nice people. I can't say anything against the Chinese people. It is different with the Japanese. The Japanese are called sometimes the Prussians of Asia and it is so.
- Q: In what sense is it so?
- A: In the sense that they were war mongers and we were strictly under the rules of the Japanese in the part – Hongkew – of Shanghai.
- Q: When your parents and your brother came, did you all live in the Heim?
- A: First in the Heim and then we had a private room and that was something. They felt like a millionaire – like a king – when they were able to live in a private room instead of the home.
- Q: Did you rent this room?
- A: Yes, from private people.
- Q: Chinese People?
- A: No, in this part of Shanghai, there were a colony of Russians, White Russians who left Russia in 1917 when the Revolution broke out.

- Q: I read somewhere that there were small alleys that led to these rooms...
- A: They were not alleys, lanes they called it.
- Q: Were the living conditions there better than in the Heim?
- A: Sure they were better. You are alone and in the Heim you were together in a hall of maybe fifteen or twenty people.
- Q: In the Heim, did they have any provisions for families to be together?
- A: Mostly couples together and bachelors together. They had many of these so-called homes.
- Q: How did you adjust to the different climate between Europe and Shanghai?
- A: The climate is not too good for Europeans over there. They have very seldom snow but it is never the less so cold over there that you need a radiator or a heater or something like this and very warm clothing in the winter. In the summer, is much more humid then it is here. I put my shoes in a drawer – a black pair of shoes – and when I opened it, they were looking white. That was all mold.
- Q: Were you prepared for these conditions?
- A: No. That was new for us. We didn't know that – we knew very little about Shanghai because there were no people before us over there.
- Q: Did you have trouble with the diseases that existed in Shanghai?
- A: It was very bad – infectious diseases, they had and many people become victims of these diseases.
- Q: Were there any medical facilities?
- A: Oh yes. There were two hospitals – one infection hospital and then for general diseases and good doctors from Europe – Jewish doctors from Europe – from Germany and from Vienna.
- Q: Were these hospital run by the European community?
- A: Yes. Sure.
- Q: How did the beginning of the war affect the refugee community in Shanghai?
- A: First, in a financial way. They were cut off from all parts of the world. And it was a disaster – they didn't know how to feed the people without money from

abroad. But then I heard that the Russian people who were in very good financial conditions, they have a loan and that was refunded after the war by the American institutions here.

Q: How did you feel about being in Shanghai when the war broke out?

A: Very, very lost. We didn't know what our fate would be in the future. And what we had brought in the luggage, that was almost sold. There wasn't much left in the luggage and that was our rescue and many people, they were sold out. When my parents came in 1941, they brought big trunks along and there were carpets in for sale and such things so maybe we sold a carpet and we had to live for a few weeks or so additionally to that which we got from the relief committee and that was not sufficient in no way. And that is the reason that many people died over there of under ernehrung (malnutrition).

Q: Did your parents have any difficulty in bringing things like carpets out of Germany in 1941?

A: No. This they could do. But they couldn't bring along gold, silver or ornaments because of the Juden Abgabe.

Q: What did you do with any free time you had in Shanghai?

A: We had a very big circle of friends over there because everyone was in the same miserable condition as we were and so they were very very close together – much closer than here in America. And I must say it was much easier to live in Shanghai as a schnorer as to live in the United States as a schnorer – much much easier because most of the people - the majority was without means – two-thirds was without any means.

Q: Did you have any other means of recreation?

A: They founded a little theater where they played comedies and musicals in a very primitive form, of course.

Q: Who did they get to perform?

A: People who were professional theater people partly and also amateurs.

Q: How would you describe the morale of the people in Shanghai?

A: The morale was excellent I would say. When you see what is going on here in the United States with the criminals where people have to live are in comparison to the style of living of the immigrants in Shanghai, the people have no reason at all to be a criminal here and you have them by the thousands. They murder people for a dollar.

- Q: Among the German Jews, was the outbreak of the war demoralizing?
- A: Sure it was. It brought a change in, a, the financial status of many people. There were many who were supported with good amounts of money from America from relatives and that stopped completely. So, they were forced – first they had their private rooms and many of them were forced to move into the Heim and that was a terrible change. People didn't have anything to wear anymore – they were running around without coats – in lumpen. They had to steal what they had and there was nothing else but the little relief from the committee and that was not sufficient to keep the people alive.
- Q: What happened when they set up the Hongkew ghetto after the war broke out? Did it change anything?
- A: It changed in so far as the people couldn't move wherever they wanted. I couldn't go to the city. I had to stay without special permission in the district and that was wide enough to have a decent amount of space to move.
- Mrs H: But you told me that you lived together with 60 or 70 people and just had a bed with a curtain around it.
- A: But that was in the Heim.
- Q: Did you need identification cards in the ghetto?
- A: Yes. We got identification cards with a yellow frame around it and that meant Jewish so it could be recognized by anyone very fast. And that lasted until the war was over and the Japanese surrendered.
- Q: Did the Japanese ever discriminate against the Jews?
- A: No. You can't say that. They were very strict in their regulations. It was hard to work against it and it followed hard punishment but people shouldn't have done that in some cases, it was their own fault.
- Q: What do you mean, "shouldn't have done that"
- A: I mean people left the district without having any permission and that was an offense and this offense when it was brought to the court was punishable.
- Q: What kind of court was it brought to?
- A: The Japanese court. There was a man who everybody was very afraid for – with the name Goya. Goya was acting according to Asiatic measurements. The man was not very tender and he told the court after the war when they put him in jail –

he said he had the permission to have full power about the Jews – he could even kill them if there was a reason for it. But he didn't do it and sometimes very strong measurements were taken by him. For instance, they beat up people when he found out that they had offended somehow. I saw him on a balcony standing with a very tall man. He asked him questions and so far as I could understand from a distance, the man did something wrong and he slapped him in his face and he did that with many people.

Q: Was there any chance of defense?

A: No. Immigrant justice did not exist at this time. That Mr. Goya – he studied the way police in the United States – he had full power and everything was taken to the Japanese court so far as he could not solve the case himself.

Q: When the ghetto was set up, you didn't know how long it would last...?

A: Nobody knew. But then one day, we noticed that no airplanes were flying over the Shanghai territory anymore. And I said to friends of mine – there must be going on something what we don't know about. And that was the result of the atom bomb what fell over Japan the first time.

Q: After the war broke out, was it more difficult for you to live than before?

A: No, I wouldn't say that. It was very hard – everything was very primitive. The cost was very small. Sometimes in the so-called kasha soup – there were worms in but it didn't harm the people. The only goal was to survive.

Q: When we talked the last time, you mentioned that your parents also came to Shanghai. When did they come?

A: They came in 1940 just one day before Rosh Hashanah. They arrived by boat. They came via Moscow with the trans-Siberian railroad. That was that time the only connection. They passed the Manchurai and it was an international train with the shutters down when they passed by Manchuria because it was a war territory at that time. The train was first class and they stopped in Moscow for one night in the Metropol and it was full of the finest delicacies.

Q: How old were your parents when they came to Shanghai?

A: My father was 77 and my mother was 69 and they survived one year in Shanghai. They died within ten days of each other.

Q: How did they adjust?

A: Very nicely, but after the death of my brother, of course, the good humor was gone. My mother never came over it – never.

Q: Your brother died in Shanghai?

A: Yes. On the 7th of June, 1941. He died of yellow fever and spotted typhus and the whole sickness lasted not longer than five days.

Q: Did he have good care while he was sick?

A: Yes. He was in the infection hospital ruled by the immigrants. I talked to the doctor and the doctor said that in this case, there is only one solution. Either it becomes good in a very short time or it is fatal. And in my opinion the doctor said, it would be fatal. "Very sorry to give you that very sad message but I think it will be fatal". And now the question for me was how to inform my parents about this terrible thing that had to be expected. At first, I told them it is not very good and the doctors are doing everything what could be done and then he died one night at 2 A.M. The next morning I came to the parents and said it is very, very bad – I think it is hopeless but at that time my brother was dead already. I slowly prepared them for the inevitable. My mother didn't go to the funeral – only my father did and good friends stood with her in the apartment.

Q: Were there cemeteries?

A: Yes. There were two. The one was filled and then they started another one – new land was bought.

Q: How did your brother get yellow fever and spotted typhoid?

A: Nobody knows. The cause of infection nobody knows. There were people who were of the opinion that it was brought by vermin – but that's not for sure.

Q: How long was your brother in Shanghai?

A: One year. He came in 1940 and died in 1941. And then was a rabbi who died of the same cause.

Q: Had your father been self-employed in Germany?

A: He was an officer in Germany – an inspector with the Jewish community in Berlin.

Q: Was it a difficult adjustment for him not to work in Shanghai?

A: He was at this time already retired in Germany. He was 77 year old and most of the people in Germany didn't work in that age anymore.

Q: You mentioned that the hope was to survive and get out. Did everyone have plans to re-emigrate once they could?

A: I would say that almost everyone did because to live among Chinese people is very difficult. You cannot compare this undeveloped country with America or with other European countries.

Q: In what way was it difficult to live among the Chinese?

A: The Chinese are a very strong competition. They work for pennies what we are not used to. It was very hard to compete with them in respect of business and secondly to live with a foreign race is another difficult question. It is not only seen financially but in other respects too.

Q: Do you mean sheer numbers or...?

A: It is not only numbers but culture. Asian people you never will learn to understand – that is my personal opinion. The man can stand in front of you with a laughing face and two minutes later, cuts your throat. The mentality of the Asian people is quite different as the Europeans, quite different. You will never understand the soul of a Chinese man despite that they are partly harmless. I mean every Chinese man is not a warrior or a murderer or so. I wouldn't say this but you cannot understand the mentality of the Chinese people.

Q: You said before that you did some selling among the Chinese.

A: Yes. We had Chinese customers. For instance, I sold raincoats for a German man who manufactured them. He had a tailor with him from Vienna. He manufactured it and gave us samples and we went over to Chinese people in the city and had partly success. Other people sold material for suits and coats and made some good money, relatively good money.

Q: You had been a salesman before in Europe. How would you characterize the difference between selling in Europe and selling in Shanghai?

A: This is almost the same system. You call on customers and either you have success or you don't have success. In this respect it is almost the same.

Q: How did you communicate with them?

A: They mostly speak a good English if they are educated people – a good English.

Q: Did they like to buy from the Europeans?

A: Oh yes. You see the style of dealing with merchandise is quite different as it is here or in Europe. The second hand deal

Tape changed.

Q: Were these raincoats also second hand?

A: No. That was brand new what we sold. But you walked through the streets and on each corner wherever you walked where there is a little free space, there is a man – a dealer with merchandise, let it be shoes, china ware – all lines included. And then of course, when you buy, you have to bargain – that is the main thing. A man who buys without bargaining is seen in the eyes of the Chinese people as an idiot. Nobody would buy without bargaining.

Q: How long did it take you to learn this?

A: Not long. This I knew when I made in former years trips to Italy – that is the same thing. Buying without bargaining did not exist in Shanghai and sometimes you went down to half the price – but – now comes the clue. The man gives you a notation. Let's say you ask the man how much, what means in Chinese language – cheedee – and then the man either he shows with his fingers how much dollars – Chinese dollars – this may be or he explains it in half well nice pidgin English how much it is. Of course, then you don't agree with his price. If he asks twenty dollars, you offer ten dollars. The man goes down and he says, "no, no, final fifteen dollars". You say "no, no", you walk away and then he calls you back and he says okay, ten dollars. If you made the offer of ten dollars and don't agree with that finally, the man is in a mood to kill you because they call it you lost face – you didn't stay to your word and that is the worst thing in China. This we learned over there. You can say, "no, no, no" or don't give him many number of price or so and walk away – that's okay. But if you make your limit and don't stay to your word, you are a tramp in the eyes of the Chinese.

Q: Did this ever happen to you?

A: No, but it happened to friends of mine and I was forewarned.

Q: When the war was over in 1945, how did the news come to you?

A: Oh yes. That was the most enjoyable. We knew everything was over, but then we had the sorrow of what happened to our relatives who did not leave Germany in time. There came always messages but they were always misplaced or taken to other territories and we never knew anything. We got messages sent by the Red Cross back – unknown and so on. Then we knew there was very little hope for these people.

Q: Did you still have relatives...?

- A: Oh yes, relatives, an uncle, aunts, cousins, friends, the whole family. A couple with a little baby, many people. Is there any family who did not have a loss in this disaster? I don't think so.
- Q: Was this the first contact you had in Shanghai with Europe?
- A: Yes. After the war.
- Q: How did the people in Shanghai feel about the future?
- A: Well, some people were lucky enough whose papers – immigration papers – were in good order. A short time after the war was over, they were called to the different consulates, to the Australian consulate, to the British consulate, to the American consulate and it happened very fast that they could leave Shanghai for their destination.
- Q: Did you have American papers?
- A: I had papers for America but it was not sufficient that I had an affidavit. In Berlin, we first should have for success a waiting number and we did not have that waiting number. That would have been a chance before the war broke out for me but this main papers was missing. So I had to wait the seven years until the war was over.
- Q: How did you go about trying to get to the United States?
- A: We contacted the consulate – the American. We knew that papers were at the consulate and then one day they gave me an appointment. The man contested the papers given by one of my cousins who was already in the States and he found out that it was not quite in order because my cousin made the statement that he possesses I don't know the exact amount anymore and he had only paid taxes on a very small amount. There was the difficulty but I could overcome it and I got the papers.
- Q: Was America the only place you considered going?
- A: I made application for Australia but that was denied. We knew that was hopeless. We even tried that from Germany before already.
- Q: How did you feel when you left Shanghai?
- A: I was more than happy. Reunited with my two sisters here and with my cousin who was the affidavit giver and we couldn't wait for the time to leave. And then I got also a little help – financial support from America. My sister, when they wrote a registered letter – there was always included a 10 dollar note, a five dollar bill. It was after the war another style of life for me in Shanghai because I had

money in my pocket. And nobody else than I myself can tell you that when people always holler into the world – nothing else than health, health. I can assure you the best health – by experience I had – the best health alone does not help you to have a good life – is not ... Let's formulate it in this way. No good life exists even in the best health without a little bit of money on the side. It is not worth to live in good health without money – that is life in practice.

Q: How did your life change once you had the money?

A: Oh, I went over to good restaurants where they had lunches, and the portions were very small. I didn't only order one portion, I ordered two menus – that meant two soups, two entrees, two desserts. That shows you right away that it was another style of life.

Q: Did you order two meals out of hunger?

A: Not only because I was hungry. But that showed me you are in a position to do something for yourself.

Q: How far did the ten dollars go vis a vis Chinese rates?

A: That was a half of a fortune over there. We had two currencies of good value. The Japanese yen and the American dollar. You could change it all over and get a lot of Chinese paper money. You know when I came over and I met a friend at Szechuan Road – that was in the middle of the city. And we were glad to see each other again – he was a man from Berlin whom I knew since he was a little boy. He said Walter, we are here half a year, we can tell you something about the circumstances about life in Shanghai. You must be able to live here – as he knew that I was practically out of money at that time – for \$5.00 American dollars a month. I was astonished – was that possible? Yes, you have to omit this and that – you cannot do things like put after shaving put cologne water on your face, this is luxury. You have to adjust to the plain life in Shanghai. But even this \$5.00 rate was a fortune in the time of the war where every connection was cut.

Q: You must have made a lot of friends in those 8 years in Shanghai...

A: Oh yes, and I must tell you it was much easier to live as a real schnorer in Shanghai than to live as a schnorer in the US – much easier, because at least two thirds of the emigrants over there – of the 18.000 people had almost nothing. And you didn't feel that you were a schnorer. These times of distress brought people closer together. I had many, many friends over there – really good friends – more than I have in New York.

Q: Was it hard as the Shanghai community broke up?

A: Yes. Many people went back to Germany. Other people went to Switzerland, Israel. It didn't help – we had to say good-bye from each other. And then I had

good correspondence with all these people in all parts of the world – years after this as far as they didn't die in the meantime.

Q: When you came to New York...actually you didn't come to New York. Where did you arrive?

A: Yes. I came to New York. I arrived in San Francisco and was there 3 or 4 days.

Q: Who paid for the passage from Shanghai to San Francisco?

A: The committee and then my relatives here – my two sisters – they sent \$100 to the committee to San Francisco for the railroad to New York. I came by railroad five days and five nights.

Q: What was your impression as you came across the United States?

A: Oh, I was full of expectations. I thought in a short time I would advance to President of the United States and that lowered them from month to month later on.

Q: What impressed you most when you came through the United States? You had spent most of your life in Europe, 8 years in Shanghai, and now were coming to a new place again.

A: I must say you don't see too much from a rolling train window. I only remember we passed by Salt Lake City and there were beautiful lights on the cathedral at night – that impressed me. Then you came to snow regions – it was in winter and then you came down and everything was green – it was in March.

Q: When you came to New York, did your two sisters meet you?

A: Yes, they met me at Grand Central Station – it was on a Sunday. They took a cab and went home to the Washington Heights apartment of my brother-in-law. I was very much impressed – the driver took the way along the Riverside Drive – the hills of New Jersey and the George Washington Bridge – it impressed me very much.

Q: Did you stay with your sister?

A: Yes, for the first month.

Q: How did you get a job?

A: Through my brother-in-law. He got me a job at Spears on 14th Street. He asked for an opening for my brother-in-law – he just came over. And I was there for a few months.

Q: Did you like the job?

A: Yes. I liked the job – partly – but I knew it was not for steady. When you start here, you know, it is not always 100% right.

Q: How did you get another job?

A: I looked to see if I could get into my old button line and was then successful. You know, I was in – what do they call the people who are not regular members. First you inscribe your name as – you are not a regular member. You are in an interim member and then after a while they make you a regular member.

Q: A member of what?

A: Of the union. And the union gives you the job. And that happened that I came into the union which included the button line. So, I came to Blumenthal & Co.

Q: Were you married at this time?

A: No. I married in 1950.

Q: When you went to Blumenthal did you become a salesman again?

A: No. I did not become a salesman. I was a so-called order picker, that means I got the order sheets, picked out the merchandise that the customers ordered and that kept me busy.

Q: What did you think was the biggest adjustment you had to make in the United States?

A: I knew the language, I had relatives here, I had a job and could make money – I mean I never felt lost in New York.

Q: What did you do for recreation in those early years?

A: Not too much. I made excursions in the summer, went swimming on the weekends. And culturally, I went to concerts, to the opera. We started with the fifth balcony and then improved our seats.

Q: Had you gone to the opera and concerts in Germany too?

A: Oh yes. Steadily.

Q: Had you attended these kinds of events in Shanghai too?

- A: There was no opera in Shanghai – not even in the sense as it is here or in Europe. But music – Chinese or Asian – you don't understand. It is very strange to your ear and the opera which was there was not of too high value. They didn't steadily play – that was an, not of too high value. They didn't steadily play – that was an ensemble where one man sang in Russian, the other man sang in French, the third one in German and the conductor was an Italian man, Mr. Pacci, who died in the meantime.
- Q: These performances, whatever they were, did help to...?
- A: Sure, to put us in a better mood at least.
- Q: Having worked here and in Germany, do you think an employee is better off here or in Germany?
- A: This is a hard question. One man who has a special job makes money like hell here. Another man who is not trained in a special line of job doesn't make a tenth of the money that the other man makes. For instance, I had a late brother in law who **(UNABLE TO READ THE LAST LINE)**. He told me that he would never have made so much money in this special line in any other country as here in the United States. I cannot say the same thing when I was an order picker in the button line. I don't make not even a tenth of the money as a man who has a trade. But it was a union job and you were protected and the people don't take too much advantage of you but it is no comparison.
- Q: Did you ever consider going back to selling here?
- A: No. I didn't want to do that. They offered me to go here in the garment section to call on – I didn't like the people in the garment industry – shrewd people. They offered it to me but I didn't want to do it. I knew somebody who tried to do it. He was never successful. It was different here – with kickbacks and such shrewd people – not like it was in Europe. And you know in a big company – they had 10 salesman who called on customers in the garment section. What was left on customers for me? What they would have handed me over would have been linke stiebel (left feet).
- Q: Today, are most of your friends of the German Jewish community or American born?
- A: Mostly German Jewish. We belong to the Tabernacle, to the Leo Baeck Lodge which is a group of the Bnai Brith.
- Q: Have you ever been back to Germany?

A: No. I was never back to Germany and will never go back to Germany because you don't go back voluntarily to a country where you were fired from. That is my opinion. That would act against my personal honor and character.

Q: How do you feel about the Wiedergutmachung?

A: It is a blessing for all the people here and it will cease by itself when all the people die out.

Q: Did it change your attitude towards Germany?

A: No, it did not – that is in my opinion paying debts of war.

Q: By the way, you mentioned that you had dreams of becoming President of the United States. How did you feel as you were looking for a job and the realities set in? How did you feel about your hopes and expectations?

A: There is a saying here that a man of 50 years is on the job market a dead man and at this time I was already almost 50 years, so my expectations were not too great. I knew that I couldn't advance to a high position job and took it this way.

Q: How do you feel, in looking back, that living 8 years in Shanghai affected you, your philosophy of life?

A: You learn something what you did not know before, but in reality it was eight years of lost time, no doubt about it – the eight years were lost. When I left Shanghai that is right after the war, my weight was 92 pounds and now I am 150. But that has nothing to do, not only to do with the food you eat, but also with the climate and with what we went through.

Q: When you say lost time, how do you mean it?

A: It was lost time. I had to restrain from everything. I couldn't make any money. I was a nothing. It is the same was if you were to ask a man who spends eight years in a prison. It wasn't a good time, it wasn't lucrative – it was nothing.

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