

Interview with Curt Jellin.

Dec.9, 1977.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in a town by the name of Herne.

Q: And where is Herne?

A: This is in the Ruhr part of West Germany. It is between Essen and Dortmund.

Q: When were you born?

A: Oct. 22, 1908.

Q: Could you tell me a little about your education in Herne.

A: I was one of six children and first I went to a Jewish school for two years, then I went to a Protestant school for another two years and then I went to the Overreale schule.

Q: That was in Herne.

A: In Herne. My school started at the beginning of the first World War in 1914. So my father was a soldier and he had six children so most of the time I spent with relatives of mine also in West Germany.

Q: Your father was in the army and it was difficult...

A: In the army and my father had a men's clothing store and my mother had to attend the store in order to take care of the children and it was very hard and tough. One sister was with an aunt of mine and I spent two years with my grandparents.

Q: And where was that?

A: That was a place by the name of Raaden. This is in the northern part of West Germany between Hanover and Bremen.

Q: Is that when you went to the Protestant school?

A: Yes.

Q: And when you returned to Herne, was that after the war?

A: No, not after the war. It was in 1917. A sister of my mother was married and her husband was killed at the beginning, right at the beginning of the first World War and she was longing for company and she asked my mother that I should spend some time with her. And so the last years of the war, I spent with her.

Q: At the end of the war, you returned to school in Herne?

A: Yes.

Q: Did your father return to his business?

A: My father returned to the business and all the children assembled home again and were united again.

Q: Under the Treaty of Versailles, the Ruhr was...

A: The Ruhr was, especially the city of Herne, was occupied by French troops.

Q: How did you feel growing up in an occupied area?

A: We took it with...not with enthusiasm, but as children as something new and interesting. It was not much, not big changes I would say.

Q: Was there a strong anti-French feeling among the Germans?

A: Some of the Germans hated the occupation altogether. We had a lot of colored troops -- French colored troops from Algiers. This was something especially for the Germans, new.

Q: As you were growing up and continuing in the Overreale schule, what were conditions like for you in Germany?

A: The conditions were very, very bad. We had very little food and had terrific inflation.

Q: 1922?

A: 1922. If we would have the support of our grandparents, they lived in the northern part of Germany, we would have been very, very bad off.

Q: Do you think that your father's business was harmed by the French occupation?

A: Yes. We had...the Germans objected to the occupation. My father, he was liberal and he even did business with the French people and this was sometimes very, very bad for him. The Germans objected to it and we had, sometimes we had terrible, terrible incidents.

Q: What kind of incidents?

A: I recall once, there were thousands of Germans in front of my father's store, one morning and they wanted to storm the whole place. And I was a boy of 13-14 years of age. I notified the French gendarmerie and they came to the help of my father.

Q: Just curious, why did you notify the gendarmerie instead of the local German police?

A: No. The local police would not have done anything. So, they helped my father and they came right in front of the mass and told them to disburse or there would be bloodshed. And this was his luck.

Q: Did you notice any anti-Semitism involved in this?

A: No, no, not at that time. Not at all.

Q: Do you remember the election of 1932?

A: Absolutely. The election I remember very well. This was the time I already spent in Cologne. I was, as an older son in Germany, supposed to take charge, take over the business of my father and I had to learn that trade. And I recall in 1928, it was the opening of a big clothing store, Bamberger and Hertz. They had branches all over, in Frankfurt, Munich, Leipzig, Stuttgart. They opened up a store. So I applied for the job and I got this job. I went to Cologne and I spent a couple of very happy years in Cologne until 1933, until the change of Hitler.

Q: Did most people feel or know that a vote for Hindenburg would be a vote for Hitler?

A: Yes.

Q: You think so?

A: Absolutely. Certainly. He was a very, very weak man, Hindenburg, and he was only a puppet and everybody knew he didn't have a chance.

Q: What happened to you in Cologne after Hitler came to power?

A: I remember the speeches from Goering, Goebbels, every night and I remember April 1<sup>st</sup>...but first of all, I want to tell you something. On Dec. 31, 1932, at a little group New Year's Party and I had a gentile girlfriend at the time. I took her home and her father was a terrible anti-Semite. He was waiting for her. First, he gave her a slap in the face and told her "I told you not to go out with that Jew."

After I left, I went home and I heard some shots and this was the terrible incident I had. Three communists killed a couple of Nazis -- very prominent Nazis and I didn't pay any attention. I went straight home. The next morning, over the radio, in the newspapers, they were asking for anybody who knew anything about it -- saw anything. I didn't want any part of it and I never told anyone for a long time. And those three people, those three socialists or communists, they were caught and of course they were hanged in Cologne and even Mr. Goering was present at the time of the hanging. They were hanged at the Cologne prison they called it klingelhutz. So then, I'll go a little bit further -- April, the first -- it was the day of boycott. I walked into the store and I was told by the owner --you better go home today -- everything is closed. All Jewish stores all over Germany have to be closed on April 1<sup>st</sup> to show the public which are the Jewish stores. In order to go home, I had to pass a German square -- they called it Neuwangt? -- and there was an attachment of SS troops. As I passed the place, they were hollering at me -- there is a Jew, there is a Jew. I was pretty well known through my work and I was active in sports and so they arrested me and they forced me to carry a big flag written on it was "Wir Juden sind Eure Unglück" -- We Jews are your Misfortune. I took the flag and threw the flag on the ground. And following, it was not hard for the SS to reach me and gave me a terrible beating. They knocked my teeth out and a few months before I had an appendix operation and they kicked me in the stomach. And then they forced me again to carry the flag. It was 10 o'clock in the morning until 9 o'clock at night through the streets and hundreds of people were following me spitting at me, and kicking and beating me up. I forced myself not to give up. So at night at 9 o'clock, I had to stand to attention and then there came a special order, I should be freed and they told me about face and I made the wrong turn and again, they gave me a beating and then they let me go. Two days later, I landed up in the hospital. I had another operation, a stomach operation. This was one of the worst incidents I had.

Q: As a boy who grew up without experiencing much anti-Semitism, how did you react to something like this?

A: I was very eager to try to overcome it. I forced myself to take it because at that time -- we or I had the feeling Hitler wouldn't be there for a much longer time. Even my big-shot boss, he told me -- you stay on. It will only be for a short time. Otherwise, I would have taken the initiative and tried to get out of Germany. I had a sister here who had come in 1928. She always hated Germany and she never came back to Germany. So I had a chance to come to the United States. We were six children, and my mother and father -- unfortunately, they were gassed and one sister tried to go to England but she couldn't make it anymore and she was sent to a camp in Riga. She lived in Riga all through the war and in the last couple of days, they also killed her in Riga. She was in charge of the gold which was knocked out from the dead people and she knew where this gold was hidden and before the Russian advance, she was killed. One of my brothers went 1936 to Buenos Aires. Another brother of mine, he was in Buchenwald, the concentration camp but he waited and he came out on the last boat -- he went to

Cuba. He couldn't come to the United States -- they wouldn't let him in here and then he stayed in Cuba for a year and then he came to the United States

Q: After this beating in 1933, did things quiet down for you as far as harassment by the Nazis?

A: Well. There was always something. It happened to me, to my family -- former good friends turned out to be just the opposite later -- turned out to be real terrible Nazis. I had once, instead to take my lesson at the time with that gentile girl -- to give up the friendship -- I was still friendly with this girl and one day I went to a restaurant in Cologne -- it was on a Saturday night and we had dinner and there was a dance. There was one of these SS obersturmbandfuehrer -- big-shot man. He was the head of the Cologne stadium. I even recall his name -- Lorman. He came over to our table and he asked this girl to dance with him. She said I don't dance. He grabbed me -- he was a big six foot four guy and he threw me out bodily out of this restaurant and then she walked out after me. She was a very liberal minded girl -- went to art school and was absolutely not an anti-Semite -- not a Nazi altogether. But later on, I was forced to give it up.

Q: How were you forced?

A: I received a letter from her father and he wrote to me (I still have it) and said I'm still friendly with his daughter. Take yourself a Juden Sara. You brought a Christian family into constant trouble. From now on, I will watch you and have you watched by the NSDAP and then he signed off with Heil Hitler.

Q: Did you remain with Bamberger & Hertz?

A: Yes. I stayed there until the place went over into Aryan hands and then

Q: When was that?

A: 1938. And then my boss he asked me to come to Munich and help him to Arisier, his place in Munich.

Q: You mean to sell it?

A: To help him turn over the place into completely Aryan hands.

Q: I assume Bamberger & Hertz were both Jews?

A: There was no Hertz -- Hertz was only a silent partner. This was Mr. Bamberger and that's what I did. Then I went to Munich -- this was the end of 1938.

Q: You had thought during all this time that Hitler wouldn't last long. How did you feel at this point?

A: Then I had already given up the idea. I was 100% sure that he would stay on for a long time and that it was time for me to get out of Germany if I was ever to get out. Then I went to Munich and I worked there for a couple of weeks and the place was taken over by a general manager who was a gentile -- very fine gentleman. After we finished this, I took off a week and took a trip with a friend of mine into Austria -- Innsbruck, Salzburg, and we wound up in Berchtesgaden. This was November 8, 1938. We were sitting there one night having dinner and we hear over the radio an announcement -- this terrible thing happened in Paris. This Jewish man by the name of Grynspan killed von Rath and I noticed the uproar of all the people at the restaurant. It was a little hotel. I told my friend -- it's getting hot -- let's get out of here and don't stay here tonight. Also, we were dressed like tourists. I was wearing short leather pants. I looked more or less like a Bavarian so they didn't have the idea that we were Jewish. But we took our consequences and we paid and went to the railroad station and we went to Munich. When we arrived in Munich I still see the picture, the whole city was turned upside down. All the big department stores -- all destroyed. I even noticed one very, very terrible incident. There was a little man's clothing store and the owner was a Polish Jew. They took him by his hands and his feet and threw him through his own window. As we came, I said to my friend, don't let us go home. We will be arrested and we will be sent to Dachau.

Q: What made you think of that?

A: Because all the Jews were being rounded up. This we found out already. So we didn't go home. We went to a friendly couple. He was Jewish and she was a gentile girl -- they were married and she was hiding us on top of her roof -- this was about, we stayed there until about one or two o'clock. In between, Nazis came into her apartment and wanted to take her husband and she insisted her husband is out of town. At two o'clock in the morning, we walked out of the building and we walked into a big park in Munich -- Englischer Garten and we stayed there until the next morning at six o'clock. Then I went to the new owner of Bamberger & Hertz -- his name was (missing). And he took us in and told us to stay on top of the building, on top of the floor, as long as we have to. And we stayed there for three or four days. He gave us food, lodging, use of the telephone and he was very, very generous and we have to thank him a lot.

Q: When you came to Munich after living in Cologne all these years, did you have to register or...

A: No. I -- normally should have registered but I didn't have any intention because I knew I only had to stay there for two weeks or so.

Q: I thought they might not have known about you.

A: That was a possibility too but they didn't pay any attention. Registered or not registered, you were Jewish. I always said the gentile people have a sixth sense, they knew how to recognize a Jew -- always.

Q: Were the employees of Bamberger mostly Jewish?

A: No, not at all. I would say they were about 75% gentiles and 25% Jews.

Q: What happened to you after Kristallnacht?

A: I stayed there -- upstairs -- three days --

(Tape turned).

A: Picked up on calls from upstairs I made several calls and I spoke to my mother and she told me that my father was picked up and sent to a camp and my brother was sent to Buchenwald and all my uncles were sent to concentration camp. In other words, more or less all the Jews were rounded up and sent to camps. I was very fortunate so I took all kinds of precautions not to fall into the trap. I took a train in Munich with the intention to go back to K $\ddot{o}$ ln. I bought myself a Nazi paper -- the Volkischer Beobachter and put it in my pocket with the intention to show the conductor that he is not dealing with a Jew. I had a sleeping car ticket and I spoke to him a few words and I even gave him a few marks tip. The train stopped near Dachau and I hear the order "All Jews out of the train". The conductor said "no, no, this man, he isn't Jewish -- he is reading the Volkischer Beobachter". So this was another fortunate thing I did. I arrived next day in K $\ddot{o}$ ln. I made it my business not to get off on the main railroad station. I got off before Cologne and I took the streetcar into the city. I didn't go back to my apartment -- I lived with a Jewish family and I knew if I went to a Jewish family I would be also arrested. I went to gentile people -- I knew they were friends of ours, absolutely no Nazis and I stayed there for a few days. In the meantime, I noticed, I lived not far from the synagogue in K $\ddot{o}$ ln on the Rohnstrasse -- it was completely burned out, completely destroyed. All the Jewish people had been arrested and put into camps. Then, of course, I tried everything under the sun to get my affidavit in order to get out of Germany.

Q: How did you go about doing this?

A: I had an application in Stuttgart which was the location of the American consulate. I went to Stuttgart and I arrived in Stuttgart and in order to go to the consulate, I had to wait two days so I had to stay somewhere. I couldn't get a room in any hotel, in any pension or even restaurant. There was a rabbi standing there at the railroad station and he asked me "Are you going to the American consulate?" and I said "Yes, sure, but I can't get a place to sleep." You come with me, he said, I have six children and it makes no difference. He took me to his

house and he said sleep there. I went to bed and another boy was sleeping in the same bed. I forgot his name but it was a terrific gesture and I was very thankful.

Q: Why do you think you couldn't get a room?

A: Because they wouldn't take any Jews under any circumstances. And I went to the American consulate and I was able to get my affidavit.

Q: You had papers from your sister?

A: I had papers from my sister and a friend of my sister who was a judge here -- a very famous judge Bronsky. He also gave me an affidavit so I was able to get out of Germany. But in order to get out of Germany, this didn't mean I could go to the States right away. I had to go to Holland -- and I stayed there for four weeks.

Q: Why did you have to do this?

A: Because I had to wait. I booked on the George Washington at the time and I couldn't get any -- there was no vacancy until a certain date but in order not to waste any more time in Germany, I went to Holland and I stayed with good friends of mine. And people I once met in Belgium, on the coast of Belgium -- a very wealthy Dutch family from Rotterdam and I tried to talk the people into getting out of Holland as fast as possible.

Q: How did they react?

A: They had a daughter and this daughter studied medicine and I told these parents -- get your daughter out of Holland, if you don't want to go, because she doesn't have a chance in Holland. One of these days Hitler will attack Holland and you will not have a chance to survive. So they told me, We will open up our dykes. I said I'll tell you something. Hitler will take over Holland before breakfast. And that's just what happened. I found out the whole family was sent to concentration camp and completely killed -- each and every one. As a soldier, I was stationed for a time in Brussels and I had a chance to go to The Hague in Holland and I found out what happened to the family.

Q: When you went to Stuttgart, what did you find there -- it must have been deluged with people?

A: All the Jews stayed within the premises of the American consulate because everybody was afraid to walk out -- to get arrested or put into camps. We made it our business to stay within the boundary of the consulate.

Q: Was there a feeling of desperation among the people there?

- A: A lot of people weren't able to get their affidavits -- they needed some more papers and some more additional guarantees from their relatives here in the United States and it was very, very hard for a lot of people.
- Q: Let me just go back to the rest of your family. Your father and brother were still...
- A: Yes. My father in the meantime, was released out of Buchenwald because he was a frontkampfer from the first World War and my brother, he stayed for a long time in Buchenwald. My father and mother -- the children, we tried very hard to get them out of Germany and the American government was very, very tough and very hard on them -- always they needed some more additional papers and more papers until it was too late. We paid already for the tickets -- this was the one very bad feature of the United States government at the time.
- Q: Did your brother come back from Buchenwald?
- A: My brother came out from Buchenwald and he went to Hamburg and boarded a ship in Hamburg with all of his belongings -- his suitcases were ready to put on board ship. While he went on board the ship -- they were holding back all his belongings and he came over with a suit and the shirt he was wearing -- he arrived in Cuba without money and without a clean shirt. Then he stayed in Cuba for a year and he arrived in the United States and arrived at the time in Miami. He was told in Miami he shouldn't go to New York. At first he insisted he had his brother and sisters in New York but they said don't go to New York because there are too many refugees. We'll send you to New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Q: Was this HIAS?
- A: The HIAS sent him to New Orleans. They gave him shelter and a new set of clothing and he got a job and within the year he succeeded. He wasn't able to go into the army -- he always had a little heart trouble. Today he is on top of the world -- one of the biggest children's wear manufacturer in the U.S. He has a factory and has 450 people working.
- Q: That's wonderful. You came in 1939, right? How did you feel on the day that you left Germany?
- A: This was one of the happiest days of my life. After the trouble I went through I was glad to get back into freedom and liberty and not to be constricted to Nazism and I was also -- I had a little mixed feeling to leave my parents and sister behind but I had the feeling that we would be able to get my parents and our sister out of Germany. Till the last minute -- I even have -- till everything was absolutely impossible anymore. I still have a postal card from my mother on her way to the concentration camp -- she said we are leaving now and hope we will survive and see each other again.

Q: When you came to the United States, how were you first able to earn a living?

A: This is a story by itself. I arrived here with 10 dollars like everybody else. I came over on the George Washington and I remember boarding the ship in Southampton, England with another gentleman and I walked next to him and we were pressed for time because they took pictures. So I asked why they were taking pictures and they told me that the gentleman next to me was Mr. Benes, the Pres. of Czechoslovakia. I arrived here and my two sisters called for me at the ship -- it was on a Thursday and they said to me --they sent a telegram on board the ship -- you have to work tomorrow. I said work tomorrow -- they are waiting for me in the United States -- I should work tomorrow! It was a fact. A friend of mine came here a year earlier and he lived in Brooklyn and he worked in a pocket book factory and they were looking for a cutter. So my sister told me tomorrow morning you start a job in Brooklyn. I didn't even know where Brooklyn is -- I arrived in Brooklyn...

Q: How did you get there?

A: They took me by taxi to Brooklyn and then my friend told me how to get there to this place -- this was in Greenpoint and I lived in 1824 Caton Avenue in Brooklyn. I had a little room which I shared with this friend. In the meantime, he gave up this job, and I was supposed to take over his job. He worked during the night and I worked during the day. When he was off I slept and when I was off, he slept in the same bed. So I arrived there and they asked me you're a cutter. So I said yes, I'm a cutter. They told me, always say yes. So, I'm a cutter. For two days, the owner told me what to do. I did my best and I did everything wrong. After two days, he said you're not a cutter, you don't know anything about it. Instead he gave me a broom -- from now on, you clean up the factory. So I cleaned up the factory for two weeks and then he said to me we are a little off-season now -- we will call you back. I told my sister he will call me back and my sister said, forget about it. They always tell you they will call back -- look for a new job.

Q: Did you know English at this point?

A: Very, very little. So I got a new job. I was in Brooklyn with a big outfit -- they dyed straw from China. It was a very hot stove but I had to work during the night. They told me for eight hours but in reality I stayed there for twelve hours and I was not used to working during the night -- standing at a hot stove -- a hot oven. They dyed ladies straw material which was later made into straw hats. And one night -- and the father of the boss -- he was in charge during the night of the factory. One night I was so dead tired that I fell asleep and he took a piece of iron and hit the stove and he woke me up and I was so mad. I had already learned a few slang words and I used those three initial words -- SOB. He fired me right on the spot. So then I went into my own business -- peddling. I went downtown to

Allen Street and tried to get some neckties and tried to peddle neckties. There was a man there, he said to me -- You want to peddle neckties? I said yes. He gave me 15-20 dozen neckties free and I peddled the neckties -- any price from ten cents to a dollar. Whatever I was able to get. They were mostly black ties and I went on the trolley cars and sold to the conductors at the time black neckties. I took trolley cars from Brooklyn to the city of Yonkers and I made a poor living -- just got along. One day I took my neckties in a bag and I went to Harlem into a bar. There was a man there and he said you give me your satchel, your little bag. I see to it that you sell all your neckties. I gave him the bag and said where's the money. He said get the hell out. So I went to a policeman -- he was on horseback and I told him the story. He said who told you to go into a bar in Harlem. You better get out of here. So I lost my money. I lost my neckties and I had a hard time to repay the man on Allen Street. I could go on and on until one day, I tried to improve my English a little and I tried to get back into my old line. I walked on Broadway and I saw a big clothing store -- Simon Ackerman -- it was opposite the Metropolitan opera at the time and I saw a big sign Going Out of business. I looked in the store and they were busy, busy, busy and I walked in there and I took my coat off, it was in the fall -- October -- I took my overcoat off and started to hang up the suits on racks. A man came over to me and said you work here? I said you see I'm working here. I was desperate -- I needed the money. He said do you want to work here? I said I told you I'm working here. He said I'm the general manager. His name was Mr. Penger. He said all right, you can work here. I give you 12 dollars. This was 11 o'clock in the morning. After he hired me officially, I didn't hang up the suits anymore -- I sold suits. And I did so well during the day that he gave me the same night eighteen dollars already and he said you wait. The store was open until 10 o'clock at night, every night. Then, he said we have dinner together. I felt the whole world was coming to an end all of a sudden. Within the weeks, I got very friendly with him and he liked me very much and this was before Thanksgiving. He invited me to his house -- his brother was a chief district attorney here and his whole family was there -- it was a wonderful evening and I was friendly with him until the day he died. He was a very great help to me.

Q: Did you stay with Simon Ackerman?

A: I stayed until they went out of business and then this particular gentleman opened up his own store in the same vicinity and I stayed with him and two other men and I stayed very friendly with him. After he went out of business, he also went out of business, then, it was hard for me to get a job in this line and I intended to go -- at the time Bond's opened up a big store on Broadway -- but they told me to wait two months. I walked downtown on Fifth Avenue. There was another firm there -- Brooks. They asked me if I would work for them, and I started the next day to work there and I stayed until the war broke out. They had five sons and I was very close with one of the sons and we intended to open up a store in New Haven. I went to New Haven and looked over the location and everything was

set. We rented the place -- I came home and found an invitation from President Roosevelt. Greetings.

Q: Were you already a citizen?

A: No, I wasn't a citizen. Then, we had to give up our plans. I was inducted into the service and my good friend from Brooks -- he was so disgusted. He tried to volunteer but he was oversized. He was a fellow six feet six inches tall and 280 lbs. But he tried everything under the sun and he also was inducted. But I wasn't -- I didn't volunteer. I had a good job and I was trying this enterprise and I wasn't so eager at the time to go into the service. But I couldn't get out of it -- I had a very low induction number so I went into the service. I went to Fort Dix and from there, I went to Fort Lee in Virginia and from there I went to the infantry in Camp Gordon in Georgia. I stayed there a whole year and then all of a sudden, my colonel called me over and he said you have to leave our outfit and be transferred to Army Intelligence in camp Ritchie, Maryland

Q: Did they recommend you for Army Intelligence or did you volunteer?

A: No, I didn't volunteer -- I never knew there was an outfit like that. So then I went to Camp Ritchie and after a few days in Camp Ritchie, we were sent to Frederick, MD. And we were all sworn in as citizens before we went overseas.

(Turn in tape).

A: We landed in Glasgow, Scotland. We went over with the Queen Elizabeth. We had 60,000 troops on it besides the foreign secretary Stetinius and Joe Lewis who was on the boat. And

Q: This was 1943?

A: Yes, 1943. And then in Glasgow it took us a whole day to be barged out in small boats and then by railroad all through England to a place -- Wooden? on the Edge in England. We stayed there for a while and then from there, we went to Clevedon -- near Bristol and we got some additional training.

Q: In intelligence work?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your assignment when you went on to the continent?

A: I was trained in psychological warfare in broadcasting.

Q: How did you use this?

A: In July, 1944, we went into France and we arrived in Quarantaine? in Normandy and there was still fighting going on. In the beginning we didn't have any special assignment. I was very fortunate -- I wasn't called for any duty on board ship because some of our boys were called off before the invasion and we never saw them again. They went with the invasion and were wiped out. But we arrived in Normandy and went through France and were then stationed for quite some time in a place -- Perrier in France and then we went to Verdun. In Verdun one day I was notified to report at once to Luxemburg. In Luxemburg, I had to report to a British Navy Commander McLaughlin. He was stationed in mobile radio unit and there were some other boys there -- British, American, some of German background and they gave me a sheet of paper to read this particular piece of paper -- a script. After I finished the Navy commander told me to go back to my hotel. I was stationed in a hotel in Luxemburg and a few days later he informed me that my voice was chosen to be a commentator and broadcaster. Then I went back to Verdun to pick up my belongings and check out of my unit -- I was transferred to a different unit. And in Luxemburg we occupied a beautiful home of the former Gestapo director -- his name was Osann and it was like a castle. We stayed there and everything connected with our secret radio station.

Q: Who were you broadcasting to?

A: This was a radio station -- we broadcasted every night between 12 o'clock and 6 o'clock A.M., to Germans because the German radio stations were all destroyed. So they had no other communications then to listen to this radio station. There was one secret radio station in London and one in Luxemburg. We called it Operation Annie. We had some very fine editors with us -- among them the daughter of Thomas Mann and the son of Thomas Mann. We had a Professor of German background. Professor Zeitlin of Ohio State College and a Professor Gerard from Harvard. We had Lehr Edell and Padover who was the dean of political science at the New School and from time to time we had very fine writer here from the States. All in all it was a very well organized unit.

Q: Were most of these people from Germany?

A: German and Americans too, but mostly German writers.

Q: Within your unit, what was the feeling about broadcasting into Germany?

A: Everything was done with enthusiasm. We had German actors with us. One time we took a German prisoner -- his name was Thyssen. His brother was a communist leader in Germany. We broadcasted every night -- an hour or two hours alive and it was put on tape.

Q: What type of broadcast was this?

A: We gave facts and lies in between.

Q: What was the purpose?

A: To bring some turmoil among the German people. We told them certain German generals gave up. They were disgusted with Goebbels or we told them Mr. Goering is leaving the country -- he is going to Sweden. Or we told them the wife of Goebbels was killed by Germans. We gave them stories but in between we gave them facts too. We told them thousands and thousands of Germans have run over to the American lines. We had with us the famous Hans Habe who was a terrific writer and we had good people.

Q: The purpose was to upset morale?

A: Upset morale and take prisoners in order to take information.

Q: Did you take many prisoners?

A: We took many. Again we had a lot of American non-commissioned officers of German background. They were also schooled for interrogation in Army intelligence in Ritchie?. Their purpose was to interview these prisoners.

Q: Did you know at the time about the camps?

A: Of course, I made a lot of reports about the camps. I found this before -- I had to read it over the radio -- a report of how, it is written in German of course, this is a story of how Hitler enjoyed the killing of his generals.

Q: This was written by your writers?

A: Yes, but it was facts. And in two voices we had to bring this to the German public. These were the facts about the time they wanted to assassinate Hitler -- what he did with the German generals.

Q: After Stauffenberg's attempt to assassinate Hitler?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you at any time go into Germany?

A: After our assignment, when we were finished. First, there was the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944. Then we had to get out of Luxemburg -- we had to burn everything. It looked for a few days like the German advance would take -- recapture this territory. So our man in charge, Col. Powell, he told all our men of Jewish background -- of German background to get out of Luxemburg.

Q: Where did you go?

A: We went to Verdun where we stayed for a few days until everything cleared up and then we went back to Luxemburg. After the war was almost over, we were assigned to Bad Nauheim in Germany. This was our headquarters. Then we opened up the so-called psychological department -- newspapers, radio and again I helped open up Radio Frankfurt and then I had a program on Radio Frankfurt.

Q: What was the purpose of Radio Frankfurt?

A: To tell the people about the new type of government they have to expect under American, British supervision. I stayed for quite some time in Bad Nauheim.

Q: How did it feel to be back in Germany?

A: First of all, I couldn't look at the Germans at the beginning. But I had a job to do. We had to interview Germans. Every time a German city was taken, the first thing we did always, we went to the local post office and took over the mail. The mail had been there for a long time because there was no transportation and then we made it our business to read the mail and study it. And out of the mail we got most of our information.

Q: What type of information could you get?

A: For instance, certain Nazis, they wrote to their son in the army on the Russian front -- I dig up a hole and put all the important things in and covered it up with sand. And sometimes, I went to the woman and I asked her what did you do with all your secret stuff -- she said I have nothing. I said how about taking a shovel. She got all flushed and we went out to her garden and I told her to dig a hole there and we found the things. It was sometimes very important to us -- to find out about the memberships of the Nazis. But whenever I had to interview somebody, they always told me they were forced to join the Party. So I always tried to get ahead of them and asked when you were forced to join the Party -- they were always forced. Anyway, we got a lot of information and we made a lot of arrests. All in all, it was a great satisfaction to me.

Q: As you had to do with these Germans, it must have been difficult to think of your own past -- to think that you had lived there for a good part of your life and what happened to your parents. How did you cope with that?

A: Sometimes, it wasn't easy. Of course, most of the Germans I came in contact with were very nice and helpful. But sometimes, I had to go so far and couldn't go further. Once, I had some little incident in Bad Nauheim -- I had a roll of film and I went into a drug store and it was on a rainy day. I came out of the drug store and I slipped. And I hear a German woman saying to her husband -- I hope he breaks his neck. I confronted her and asked what did you say and she said nothing, nothing. Of course, I was mad like hell. I gave her a slap in the face and

had her arrested and I told the man in our counter intelligence what happened. And he said all right, we'll take care of her. So they kept her there for a few days.

Q: Did you go back to Koln?

A: I went back to Koln and I went to the Koln Judische Krankenhaus, they called in Judische Azile at the time and in this particular Krankenhaus, all the survivors from the concentration camps came back and I tried to be helpful as much as I could. I supplied them with army blankets and food -- whatever I could get hold of. And I tried to contact relatives all over the world and the city was completely bombed out -- it was hardly recognizable. I thought it would take a hundred years to rebuild the city. Then of course I went back to my hometown. My colonel was a former Lt. Governor from New Jersey -- his name was Col. Powell and he was a very fine man. He said to me, Curt, whenever your city is taken, make it your business to go to your city and find out what happened. So I went with an American captain to my hometown. The first thing I went to the place where my father and mother lived and I was told there was a certain Nazi -- an anti-Semite in the worst way, he told them every time there was an air attack not to go into the air raid shelter but to go on top of the building. I told my captain all about it and I was wearing my helmet and had my pistol and so I walked into the apartment and the woman opened the door. She didn't recognize me but I knew her. I said where is your husband and she said I don't know. So I said, maybe he is hidden here somewhere and I walked into the apartment. I turned everything upside down -- all the furniture and then I asked her if she had had Jews living here in your house -- Jellin. She said oh yes, they were always so nice and we got along so well. I said you lousy B. I told her and I was steaming mad. Then, finally he came in the apartment and I said what happened to the Jews who lived here. He said the Jellins, they all went to the United States. I said you liar -- and I took him along -- I put him in the staff car and I took him out of town and we did something to him -- I was in the mood to knock him off and I would have gotten help from my captain too. But I didn't have the nerve because first of all this was British territory and they even approached me -- a British officer who said you are not here in Russia. You are not allowed to do this.

Q: This British officer found you outside of town?

A: This British officer. So I had him arrested and they kept him for a certain time and the British let him go. He was a living beast -- this guy. And I found out what happened to my father and mother. They were supposed to be sent to a concentration camp. They weren't sent to the concentration camp. It was the last shipment because my father was a front soldier and with another man who was a doctor in town and was a medical doctor during the first World War -- they were put on a cattle train and the train was taken out of Herne and it was sealed and the whole car was gassed. That was their end. So then I did some more survey in the city and found out what happened to their things and such...

- Q: That must have been an awful time for you in Herne.
- A: Of course. I stayed there a few days and then I came back again. (Mr. Jellin didn't seem to want to continue on this vein).
- Q: Did you ever capture or interview Nazi officers?
- A: Yes, we even had once a German general and we took him prisoner near Trier and we took him to Luxemburg for interrogation. The only thing we could get out of him was that he was interested in the pension he would get from the German government. I remember Hans Habe saying he is no use to us, we'll send him back over to the German side otherwise, we have to feed him and treat him like a German general. But whenever, there was a German prisoner from Koln I was called to listen in to see if they were telling the truth. All in all, this was a very interesting period for me. I got a certain satisfaction out of it. Give them back in certain ways -- in the way I could.
- Q: How do you feel about the fact that we helped Germany rebuild so quickly?
- A: In the beginning, I was very much against it but the youth, the new -- the elderly people are entirely different. I guess from the new generation. And this was more or less the policy of the U.S. government to build up Germany against the East. And this has to be shown and proven if it was right or wrong.
- Q: To take the other side of the coin, how do you feel about the German policy of Wiedergutmachung?
- A: This was done by Mr. Adenauer who was a terrific man and no anti-Semite and no Nazi. I recall him as our Oberburgermeister in Germany (in Koln) and he was a wonderful man. I recall once a year we had in Germany this carnival and he visited with his family and we had the honor to have him in our store and he and his family occupied the corner windows in our store to watch the parade. I think he did most of the work to reciprocate the German Jews for the restitution.
- Q: Are most of your friends today of German Jewish background or are they American born Jews?
- A: They are mostly of European or German background.
- Q: Do you feel yourself more a part of the American mainstream or more a part of the German Jewish community in America?
- A: I think we feel more a part of the German Jewish community -- not of the American mainstream. Maybe, the point is that we live here in New York City. If we would live in a different part of the United States, it would be different. I

see this for instance with my brother in New Orleans. He is married to a woman from New Orleans and 99% of his friends are American Jews.

Q: What made you come to Washington Heights?

A: Not for any special reason -- not because of the German Jews. My wife didn't live here -- she spent most of her life near Copenhagen. She was born in Hamburg but her father left before Hitler and lived in Copenhagen.

Q: When you were dating here, did you date many American girls?

A: No, mostly girls of German Jewish background.

Q: Do you have any children?

A: No.

Q: In looking back, what do you think was the most difficult adjustment you had to make?

A: To come here and not to be a burden to anybody and find a living. To be independent otherwise I would say I didn't find it that hard. I got along very well with the American people. I'm pretty easy going. I never had any difficulty in the army with the American soldiers and I spent quite a few years with American boys and the same goes for living here in the United States.

Q: When you say you spent a lot of time with the American boys, did you notice any difference between working -- the working habits -- you were used to in Germany and the American system.?

A: I must say that. The American way of working is much, much easier than the way of working on the other side at least in my time.

Q: How do you mean easier?

A: Here, they are more broadminded, more generous, not so. Maybe the standard of ethic isn't as high here as it was in Germany.

Q: What do you mean by standard of ethic?

A: Here, you can take many things for granted while in Germany you had to work much harder, much more -- you had to show more, produce more. You had to show more respect.

Q: To the boss you mean?

A: Not only to the boss, but to the type of work you have been doing. It is very hard to compare. In Germany, you are trained for a certain kind of work. Here, you can -- you have to be very flexible. One day you can do one thing, next week you can do something else and make a living.

Q: Do you think the opportunities?

A: They are much greater here, absolutely.