

George and Renee Tobias

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G: I was born in 1923 in Danzig.

Q: Did you grow up in Danzig?

G: Grew up until the age of 14.

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

G: Alright. I went to grammar school and then I went to the German Gymnasium for the first three years and then that was 1933 and then all the Jewish boys were thrown out of the German gymnasium and the Jewish community formed a Jewish gymnasium and I went there for another three years until I finished ober tertia which is five years of gymnasium and that was the end of my education in Germany. After that I went to France and continued my education there.

Q: Up to the time you were thrown out of the gymnasium in 1933, what was your relationship with the non – Jewish children in the neighborhood, in school?

G: First of all, let's talk about the pre – school years that I can remember. We lived in an apartment house where there were about 10 apartments. Out of the 10 apartments, there were two families that had young children. One was a gentile family and the other a Jewish family. I played with the boys of both families without any distinction – there was absolutely as far as I can remember no difference in closeness between myself and the gentile family or the Jewish family. It was something that didn't even come up. Then, we were talking about grammar school – in grammar school, there were perhaps three or four Jewish children in my various classes and I remember that the only time that the question came up was when the subject of religion was taught, the three or four Jewish kids got up and went to their religion class which was a class where practically the entire school was combined into – there were perhaps 20 Jewish children in the whole grammar school and that was the only time where a distinction was made. I don't remember any incident in grammar school and this would be up to 1932. I don't remember any incident where the Jewish question came up in the least – not from any of the children and not from any of the teachers.

Q: In 1933, you had to leave the school...

G: No, that was grammar school. I went to grammar school from 1928 to 1932 and then I transferred – I must have gone to gymnasium in 1932 and as I said, in grammar school, I don't remember anything or any incident coming up in anti – Semitism absolutely none. There wasn't even a question about what are you or are you Jewish. I don't remember anything like that. Danzig had perhaps

somewhere in the neighborhood of six or seven gymnasiums. Out of the 6 or 7 gymnasiums – we had one Polish gymnasium because Danzig after all was a free state – apart from Germany – had it's own government but the Polish railroads ran the railroad system of Danzig and there was a Polish post office so there were somewhere around 2,000 Poles living in Danzig and they had their own gymnasium. This was an entirely different colony so to speak. Basically, Danzig was a German city. Out of these seven gymnasiums, I went to one of them.

Q: Was it a free choice?

G: Absolutely free choice. I would say in those days Danzig was a fairly representative city as far as economics of German cities were concerned. I would say that 20% of the school population went to gymnasium – 80% went to vocational schools. That is fairly representative of all Germany. You picked the gymnasium in accordance with your future plans. My parents had plans that I should study medicine simply because I had a few uncles who were doctors. This was not a foregone conclusion but it was something of a preference. Now if your education was geared toward the study of medicine or law, there was a greater emphasis on Latin and on liberal arts than on the technical subjects like mathematics and physics so you went to a gymnasium – they called it in those days humanitsches gymnasium rather than the real gymnasium which was geared toward the technical subjects. So I went to the humanistic gymnasium – that was the one where you started your first foreign language was Latin and then ancient Greek and then you started with the living languages whereas in the Real Gymnasium you started with either English or French. So, I must have finished grammar school in 1932 and gone to the humanistic gymnasium and in the first year, I don't remember – there may have been about 3 Jewish boys in a class of about 25 or 30. I did not feel any kind of discrimination and as far as my friends were concerned I probably had as much of a social relationship with gentile boys as I had with Jewish boys at that particular time.

Q: When was the cut – off point when you had to go to the Jewish school?

G: Okay, now let me think – approximately a year later – that must have been in 1933 when Hitler came to power, in Germany the Nazis had not yet seized power in Danzig. Danzig was still teetering – it still had a socialistic kind of coalition in the Parliament. So in my second year, the only thing that happened was that there appeared all of a sudden in the gymnasium a bunch of Hitler Youth uniforms and I don't ever remember getting any kind of feedback from boys in my own class but I remember getting verbal let's say slander from strangers in the school who might have recognized that I had Jewish features or something like this or I may have been pointed out as a Jew and once in a while, I would hear myself being called dirty Jew or something like that. That was perhaps the first time that I heard anything like that. And this was also the time when the Nazis first made an open appearance in the street – where you had S.S. or S.A contingents marching through the streets singing Nazi songs. They were permitted to do so because

under the Danzig Parliamentary law which was by the way, I don't know if I should digress but the government of Danzig was completely patterned according to the United States government. They had a lower house which was called Volkstag and an upper house which was called Senate and the only difference between the American system and the Danzig system was instead of having an elected president, the League of Nations appointed a High Commissioner who ultimately had the right to veto anything which the Danzig Parliament would declare – who by the way was only a figurehead...

Q: I'll come back to that in a moment because it plays a role in what happens in Danzig but I wanted to get back to school for a moment...

G: Okay, now comes 1933 – my third year in school. Something very drastic happened. The old director retires – the school director and he is replaced by a principal who is an avowed Nazi who comes into the classroom and sets the law right then and there that first of all at the beginning of every school day, every body had to get up and salute the Hitler salute and he even, the first time he came into the classroom he asked the question are there any Jews in this class? So I got up and a couple of the other Jewish boys got up and he said something to the effect now take a good look at these boys – at these three – because they are the cause of all our ills and they are only out for one thing and that is rabach. And he calls on me and he says, explain to your classmates what the word rabach means. I had never heard the word before so he said – he made a bad remark that I was a liar in front of the class. This was the ultimate aim of the Jew – to make rabach and that means to exploit everybody else for their own benefit.

Q: As an eleven year old boy, that must have been very hard...

G: Yes, it was but at the same time – it had already started – I got already a little bit shoved around. At that time I was never really beaten up but I used to get an elbow in the ribs in a corridor – not by my classmates – but it was visible that there were anti – Semitic stirrings and they were done on purpose. It was nothing terribly problematic because boys shove each other around out of pure fun and that happens in schools everywhere but to get an elbow into the ribs just out of nowhere, you know that the reason for it was just plain – he's a Jew boy, let's give him an elbow.

Q: In your own class, did any of your classmates come to your defense?

G: No, they did not come to my defense but I did not feel myself ostracized or I did not feel that anyone – first of all, no matter what school you go to, you only have maybe three or four buddies. The rest is kind of – you know you are indifferent to. But even the ones I was indifferent to and even if they came in Nazi uniforms which a few did, I never experienced any act of verbal or physical attack. You can't feel ostracism of you are indifferent to the boys so they – those who I was not friendly with before, what difference did they make and those that I was

friendly with absolutely remained friends with me even after I left that school so there was really no – I never experienced any act of – even negative thing due to this action on the part of the principal.

Q: Did the principal continue to harass the Jewish kids?

G: Well, he would drop in every once in a while and say something derogatory about the Jews. Interestingly enough, his name was Heydrich – I don't know if he spelled it like the Czechoslovakian Heydrich or whether perhaps it was the same Heydrich but this man was a fanatic Jew – hater but the rest of the faculty had remained basically unchanged and I must say in all fairness, that I never felt the slightest bit of anti – Semitism from any of my teachers – not any of them.

QL When such things happen like the time with the rabach, did you go home and tell your parents?

G: Oh yes, sure.

Q: How did they try to explain this whole situation to you as an eleven year old?

G: They didn't really have to explain too much to me because my parents were quite concerned – my father particularly was very concerned about the Nazis from way back.

Q: What do you mean way back?

G: Even back to the late 1920's – he sensed that this could very easily get into a serious matter – that there were too many organized people, and organized Jew – hating and so on. And the combination of things happening – the S.A. marching through the streets, the Stuermer coming out and being displayed in public places , all these – if you had even as a ten or eleven year old, you were conscious of the fact that there was a political party that called themselves Nazis who were out and out Jew haters and anti – Jew in every respect and that it would be of utmost necessity to contain this faction in order to have peace or quiet...

Q: What type of business was your father in?

G: Textiles.

Q: Self – employed?

G: Yes.

Q: Retail?

G: Both. We had a retail and a wholesale store.

- Q: Did the Nazis coming to power in 1933 affect your father's business then?
- G: Yes. To some extent it did. This is a paradoxical thing – this by the way brings to mind this Skokie proposition that is going to come up now. The Constitution of Danzig had declared complete freedom of – political freedom and you actually had a 11 parties had their own uniforms, had their own columns marching except that the Nazis were particularly military in their overt aspect – they did more marching than anyone. But whenever there was a march going on, it might be socialists or communists who would all of a sudden come out from around a corner with clubs and would result in a fight of some sort but the Nazis were actually given the freedom of organizing themselves and of walking around with placards in front of Jewish stores and to boycott – just like a picket and they took advantage of that as early as 1933 – immediately after the Nazis seized power in Germany although they did not yet have a majority in the Parliament, nevertheless as a minority they were very well organized and they started to picket stores and it was more of an annoyance in the beginning because the people who wanted to buy from Jews did so anyhow. They may have been shouted at just like if you go into a store here while the employees are on strike. You cannot pinpoint the loss of business due to the Nazis because the era coincided with the depression. Don't forget, when you are talking about 1932 or 33, you don't know if the hard times as far as business is concerned was caused – I have a hunch it was caused more by the economic situation which existed.
- Q: But the follow up is that business increased in general as Hitler got Germany out of the depression. Under normal circumstances, business should have prospered as time went on...
- G: My father's business was not a criterion because he switched from his own textile business about the time – 1933 – and became a factory representative from various industries on the continent who were exporting to Scandinavia. My father took advantage of the fact that Danzig was located on the Baltic and was an excellent distribution point for Scandinavia. So he switched from a wholesale and retail business to a distributorship. So far as his career is concerned, I cannot really point anything towards any political thing.
- Q: Did he travel to the Scandinavian countries?
- G: Yes. He traveled there frequently and was always very much impressed by the Scandinavian countries – for him it was always a great relief because these heavy war clouds that were on the horizon bothered him a great deal and every time he came back from there, he would rave about the fact that everything was so nice and peaceful there. Also, there are other things which might interest you about my father. My father's only avid sport was bowling and he got himself into a German bowling league. I think one other man and he were in a bowling club – a sports club. This bowling club may have had 100 members and my father was a

very good bowler – he was a very popular guy – he was one of the boys. This was a bowling club which was comprised of a fairly nice cross section – bourgeois, upper middle class type of people. They had some bowling clubs which were mostly proletarian but this one was upper middle class. He had a very interesting pipe line – through some freak this bowling club was very popular and there were three high ranking police officers of the Danzig police that were members and they are probably responsible for having – as a matter of fact they are responsible for our survival as our family goes because way back in 1932, they were already warning my father about things that were going on. They knew that in Germany the Gestapo was making – building concentration camps. They were the ones who told my father – Joe, if things continue the way they do, we advise you to look around because as far as we are concerned, Germany holds no future for the Jews. They were extremely good in retrospect. These police officers influenced my father's thinking and foresight and this will explain something later on why I was one of the first youngsters in Danzig who was sent out by their parents to other countries. But to go back to the general atmosphere as it existed in school in those first two years of gymnasium, it was quite tolerable. By the way, when I related these maligning incidents of the new principal to my father, he went to school and complained about it, especially as a World War 1 veteran – you know, they were very, very sensitive about that – frontkaempfer but it didn't get him anyplace. At the same time, the same type of situation occurred in the other gymnasiums and this also coincided with the preferred discharge of Jewish teachers in Germany proper. Apparently when the Jewish community in Danzig organized to form their own Jewish gymnasium they advertised for teachers who had been dismissed in Germany and this small gymnasium was built up with a fantastic teaching staff. Actually we had college professors teaching us on a secondary level.

- Q: Were you notified that you could no longer go to the gymnasium you were attending?
- G: No, I was never notified. I could have – I don't know how long I could have stayed in the German gymnasium. By the time I was in the third year – quarter – I must have been around 12 by that time, these verbal attacks became more frequent but they were certainly nothing that a person could not have tolerated. I was fairly – I was annoyed by them but they didn't make a tremendous impact on me. I was complaining about it at home but at the same time, we were aware that the Jewish gymnasium was formed. So why continue in an atmosphere which became more adverse or more unpleasant if you have a Jewish gymnasium. At the same time also, for instance one of the things which were very annoying and embarrassing was that one of the courses was music and from 1933 on – the music course was basically singing and what did they sing, they sang Schubert and things like this – all of a sudden, they had a repertoire of Nazi marching songs. Now the 2 or 3 Jews in the class absolutely – the teacher said right away – boys, you don't have to sing along. Even the music teacher who was forced to

instruct the boys in these songs – I had the feeling that his heart wasn't in it at all. But it was an imposition to be sitting there listening to this.

Q: Did they ever have any instruction along political lines?

G: No. This was the only thing I remember of Nazi nature being taught.

Q: When you switched over to the Jewish school, as a 12 year old, did you like the idea of making the switch?

G: I was happy about it. First of all, this was not an easy thing. The Jewish gymnasium was a Real Gymnasium so I had to take cram courses in French and English to get me up to date because I had had Latin and Greek so I had to catch up. But this didn't annoy me and I felt quite happy. This was also a time where things happened very very fast. The fact that more and more German boys came into school with Nazi uniforms, there was a Zionist Scout organization called Maccabi Hazair which was non – political Zionist – let's put it this way, it was a Zionist organization but a boy scout organization so that it did not have any leanings as to revisionists or the Habonim which were the left Zionists. They were wearing boy scout uniforms – traditional boy scout uniforms with a boy scout hat and boy scout pants and we were very proud to wear boy scout uniforms while the Nazi boys were wearing Nazi uniforms. Among 13 and 14 year olds this was a matter of pride.

Q: Did they speak much about Israel?

G: Oh it was entirely Zionist. The difference was this – we had youngsters who belonged to the Betar which was the revisionist wing like the Irgun or Likud. They had Habonim which were socialist Zionists like the Histadrut people and they had kids belonging to factional type groups whereas we were Zionists but we did not commit ourselves to any internal political leanings left or right. We were Zionist boy scouts.

Q: How much discussion was there about going to Palestine?

G: The whole direction was geared toward Palestine. I know what you are driving at because in the gymnasium there was an entire faction who were absolutely avidly anti – Zionist. I remember the JJB – Jung Judischer Bund – they were first Germans and then they were Jews and they were absolutely appalled about thinking about emigration to Palestine.

Q: How did belonging to this organization either influence or conflict with discussions that you were hearing at home?

G: First of all, my father was probably not a Zionist in the idealistic sense, but he was certainly – he recognized the eventual necessity of getting out of Germany.

- Q: We're talking 1934 – 5?
- G: Yes. He was one of the few at that time. He might have been considered a prophet of doom at the time but he definitely considered Palestine as a possible destination although he didn't have strong leanings in that direction. Getting out was more important than where to get out to. He was sympathetic to Zionism although he was not a Zionist. The fact that my Zionist organization was a true boy scout organization without any political commitment probably pleased my parents but I think it was less that. I would say that perhaps the most important factor was that there was a social status involved too. The wealthiest and the oldest Danzig families – now my father was born Viennese and he came to Danzig as an outsider so to speak after WW1 – the old Danzig Jewish families considered themselves quite aristocratic and their children belonged to the JJB which was certainly anything but Zionist. They were the ones that felt that in this bastion of culture – Germany – nothing barbaric like the prophets of doom were predicting could ever happen and their children belonged to the JJB. But of the Zionist faction, the nicest element belonged to this Maccabi Hazair. The Habonim had more the proletarian kind of kids – the children of tailors and butchers – the tradespeople. So my parents were happy that I belonged there because it was a nice type of youngster who belonged.
- Q: During all this time, your father's occupation as a sales representative was...
- G: Was continuing and was – there was a noticeable increase in business when you go towards 1935, 6, 7. Things were looking up.
- Q: Do you remember when he came home from the Scandinavian countries, any conversations about perspectives that he may have gotten about Germany from there?
- G: No, I don't think that he – I don't remember him talking in this vein because he probably relied more on what he saw in Germany than what the Scandinavians may have been thinking.
- Q: Danzig was under the auspices of the League at the time, did your family think that this was adequate protection?
- G: No, definitely not. In the first place, the population of Danzig – Danzig was a German area, a German enclave, which was actually not under the jurisdiction of Germany. Like many of the border Germans who were living on the outside of Germany, you had a much more fervent nationalism than the Germans themselves. I don't know – you may have heard that from people who lived in Silesia or in the Alsace or if you take the Czechoslovakian situation – you always find that the Germans that lived outside the borders of Germany but adjacent to Germany were extremely militant in their outlook – they were much more



nationalistic Germans – they had to be – so that you find that the excesses of those nationalistic Germans – first of all, they found that the Nazi party was the answer to their prayer – as far as expressing nationalism was concerned.

Q: What about their fervor about rejoining Germany?

G: Oh, absolutely, that's *conditio sine qua non*. As far as making Danzig part of the Reich – that was of course, condition no.1 As a matter of fact, in the elections of 1935, the Nazis actually gained the majority in the Volkstag – the lower house – and thus the government actually became a Nazi government – they made the laws in Danzig. There was still a conflict because the Senate did not have a Nazi majority and there was the High Commissioner with veto power. But the whole thing tipped the scales all of a sudden – it was like the dam burst – there was no doubt about it – Danzig is German and we are going to rejoin the Reich and from what I know now, the population of Danzig was much more Nazi oriented than for instance what I hear my wife telling me about Stuttgart – they weren't that fervently Nazi. And since anti-Semitism was one of the great mainstays or doctrines of the Nazi party and since basically the Jews of Danzig were a rather affluent group – they found a very natural outlet. There was no doubt in my mind that if there was any place where things would be bad – it would be in Danzig.

Q: Did you see signs *Juden Verboten* or *Juden Unerwünscht*?

G: Not yet. Danzig didn't have it yet. That was something which came only after the *Kristallnacht*. Up to 1938, there were no restrictions in public places.

Q: At what point do you remember first hearing discussions that you must leave Danzig?

G: It must have been around 1937 because I remember that it was in 1937 that we applied for emigration visas to the United States and at that time also, there was something very interesting which was peculiar to Danzig. Danzig had its own monetary system and also its own monetary laws. And Danzig didn't have any monetary restrictions. You were unable to – Germany already had laws that restricted the flow of money to other countries. Danzig was like the United States – there was a complete freedom of flow of money which enabled parents who wanted to send their children abroad to study to send them because there was no restriction as far as getting the money out to enable them to do this. So, I had relatives in France who were writing – who heard about what was going on and who were corresponding and saying look, since you agree with us that Germany has no future, why don't you let George come to France and in France his future is certainly more secure than in Germany. My parents discussed this and they asked me how I felt about it – I was quite mature. First of all, I must tell you that anti-Semitism became more overt after I had switched schools – now we're talking about 1936 and I'm already in the Jewish gymnasium and the Nazis are a majority and you can see more and more kids in Hitler Youth Uniforms and we

had aside from the Maccabi Hazair – we also had – every Jewish kid went to the Tourn Verein.

Q: Sports group?

G: Yes, it was the Bar Kochba or the Maccabi. In Northern Germany it was the Bar Kochba and we had our own gym and twice a week – I think Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 8, we had gym – this was in addition to athletics in school. We also had this gym and we had incidents where some of the Nazi kids – it was quite a long walk – it must have been a 20 minute walk – from the gym to my house and they knew I was coming out of the gym and one time, I was quite heavily roughed up. They accosted me – about 4 or 5 of them and I came home bloodied up and this was quite something – you know a Jewish mother, Jewish parents get quite hysterical when their 14 year old comes home all bloodied up and when the relatives from France say, why don't you have him come to France? In parenthesis, I might say that in the Maccabi Hazair, we organized – if any of us was roughed up in going home by ourselves, we started a system whereby 6 or 7 of us followed the particular fellow a block away and there were – there was later one thing one thing which during World War 11 bore out again and made me quite contemptible about the German Army. The German Army was always beautifully – an organized and oiled machine as long as it had the upper hand. The moment that they found a match – they disintegrated very fast. Whenever we had an incident where we suspected that they would pounce – 5 or 6 of them would pounce on one guy, 7 or 8 of us would follow and if we just ran towards those 5 or 6, they made an about face and ran away – they never got into a fight – those Nazi boys – unless they had a 4-1 majority. It gave you a very interesting insight to the German character as far as courage is concerned – personal courage. From my earliest observations as a boy fighting with Germans and then later on, during the war, I've always had the impression that the Germans really had an inferiority complex about their own prowess – they want to live up to the Germanic legends of great physical feats of courage and I have never been able to see man to man that a German would be a particularly courageous fighter. During WW 11, every country that the Nazis occupied had underground organizations which were taking pot shots at the Nazis and sabotaging them left and right, when the Allies occupied Germany, there was not one German who ever lifted one little finger against the occupying authorities. I knew that very early – they were great heroes when they were in the majority...

Q: In relation to that, as a 13 old boy, how did you feel about not being accepted by this growing group of your own age group?

G: I would say there was a sense of isolation. I would say I was convinced that there was no future in Danzig or even in Germany. I was convinced that I would have a new life outside of Germany – whether it was in America or in Palestine.

Q: But as a 13 year old...

- G: I would imagine every child has vague plans of where he is going to live – perhaps our youngsters might have ideas about California, that they might not stay here in the East – but my own feelings were quite pronounced. I knew there was a kind of day to day temporariness about my life. You saw things going on – for instance, the fact that your teachers had come out of Germany and they regarded Danzig only as a stepping stone to – it gave them a breathing spell to resettle themselves. In 1936-7, there was an equal division between those people who thought that the whole thing was temporary and was going to blow over and those who were pessimistic or realistic enough to know that it was time to make plans to get out and this was reinforced by the fact that there were people – not only professors – but there were other people from Germany who came to Danzig just to use Danzig as a stepping stone and there were all kinds of rumors that came from Germany. Well, of course the Nuremburg Laws were the first fantastic disappointment...
- Q: But were they put into effect in Danzig?
- G: No, they were not in effect in Danzig at all. But they were close enough that basically it was a great disturbance and the rumors about concentration camps. Those who didn't believe thought it was a rumor – those who did believe it knew in their hearts that it was true. My father's buddies in the police dept. assured him that it was true. That they had their pipeline in Germany – that they were drinking with some fellows in the police dept. and they were telling them that the Gestapo boys were preparing concentration camps and that they had some in operation already.
- Q: What did the word mean at the time to you?
- G: To me it meant something synonymous to a prison camp. I did not – I imagined something like chain gang type of thing that you saw in American movies. I don't know who gave me the idea – whether I asked my father – what is a concentration camp. It was vague in those days. So, I was one of the first in my school, where my parents were considering taking me out and sending me out of Danzig. It is difficult now to remember what my feelings were – they were probably extremely mixed. First of all, in every youth of 14, there is a certain amount of romanticism if he has a chance to go to a foreign country. And from early childhood, I was fanatic about traveling in general. I had accompanied my father, as I told you, he was Viennese and we had gone back on occasion to Austria where his relatives lived. I had accompanied my father several times to Scandinavia – I loved to travel. This is probably also one of the reasons why I am in my profession. And so the idea of going to France was kind of romantic. Don't forget also the entire somberness of growing up in the early 30's – I'm sure I must have had the kind of – I'm sure I was way ahead of for instance what our youth would be thinking of. Our concern with future must have been present in the same way as perhaps an 18 year old American kid is. We were much more conscious about things at a much

earlier age because of the rumblings that were on the horizon so that I could also understand the wisdom of getting out of Germany. I could also – you give a teen – age child a chance to get out of his parent’s home, it means a certain amount of freedom. From a purely psychological point of view, I don’t know how I felt but it was a positive feeling. I think I had very little apprehension about leaving. I felt perfectly secure because I was going to a country where I had relatives who actually wanted me to come...

Q: Were you an only child?

G: Yes, an only child. There was no doubt that I could return home on vacations which turned to be correct for a couple of years and even though in today’s terms, it is not a great distance, in those days to go to France from Danzig across all of Germany – it was quite a distance involved.

Q: Where did you go in France?

G: I went to a small town called Besancon, which was in the French Jura not far from the Swiss border. The reason we settled...interestingly enough, my family was in Paris and the good secondary schools in and around Paris were quite hard to get into – they were swamped. And very good friends of ours had their relatives in Besancon and this was a sort of completely forgotten place which had a super high school – as a matter of fact, it’s the birthplace of Victor Hugo and the relatives of these friends of ours said that they would be happy to have me stay at their house and that the school was wide open – there would be no problem. So, instead of waiting for a year or more to get into one of the good schools around Paris, I was able to go there right away. This created quite a hassle in the Danzig gymnasium. I think I kind of started an avalanche because immediately, as I was telling my friends of leaving Danzig to go and study – immediately everybody who had family in England, in France, in Holland started making enquiries and saw the validity of such thinking and the management of the school was quite unhappy about that. They said why start a panic and so on – it isn’t that acute. Well, first of all the management of the school was probably of that faction which did not want to believe that things were so serious and secondly, it was a matter of losing tuition. Out of my class which was ober tertia which was the fifth year of high school, I would say about 5 or 6 boys or girls – by the way this was my first experience of co – ed schooling because the grammar schools and gymnasiums were separate but the Jewish one was co – ed. 5 or 6 that left very shortly after I did. Actually I was the first one to leave and that was in the winter of 1937.

Q: Just to clarify for myself. You mentioned that your parents had applied for a visa to the United States also in 1937. Did they have relatives here?

G: Yes. We had cousins here and we did apply for a visa but it was a matter of routing.

- Q: A precaution?
- G: Yes. They had not even – they got in touch with the cousins here and they were of course asking them to procure affidavits. Telephone rings.
- Q: We were talking about leaving the gymnasium and going to the school in the Jura. Do you remember the day that you left?
- G: Definitely. It's entirely clear in my mind. As a matter of fact, my father accompanied me up to Berlin and from there, I went to Besancon. I remember I changed trains in Strasbourg. One interesting factor that I might mention – if you were a Danzig citizen, the free city of Danzig had their own passports. Now I didn't have a Danzig passport – I had an Austrian passport because in Europe your nationality comes after your father. My father being Viennese had an Austrian passport – regardless of where I was born or lived, I was automatically an Austrian. So, when it came to travel, I had to go to the Austrian consulate and get myself an Austrian passport. So I traveled on an Austrian passport and in 1937, Austria was still a sovereign country. I did not need any visa as an Austrian for either Germany or France. All I needed was the passport. My father accompanied me to Berlin where we had relatives and he had some business and I went from Berlin on – I took a train to Strasbourg and changed there for another train to Besancon and this was quite a traumatic situation because as it turned out, I arrived in Besancon after a night on the train and at the station – I was standing there. I had thought that I would be picked up by these people but there was nobody there and there was a Frenchman standing there with his car and he saw me there with my suitcase looking disappointed so he said what's the matter? And I said I had hoped to be picked up and he said where do these people live and I gave him the address and he said I'm passing by and I'll give you a lift. The railroad station was quite a bit away from where they lived and he dropped me there and this was the first time I had any encounter with what it meant to be in a state of emigration. These people – these relatives of our friends who lived in Besancon – had lived in Schweinfurt, Germany before they left Germany a year before this. They had come to France in economic straits and the building in which they could afford to live was probably something like medieval – maybe 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century. For a youngster who has grown up in an upper middle – class home which was quite comfortable which was the equivalent of the type of home that I have here – to come to a house which was located in I wouldn't say slum but certainly in a poor section of town – very old building – walking up an outside stairway. First you had to go into a courtyard. In the courtyard – it was not unsimilar to New York fire escape, the stairway was outside going up to the fourth floor with one toilet to each floor on these outside verandas – quite impoverished looking – the apartment itself. So, you come to a foreign country and you're dumped into a set – up which was quite a bit different than the set – up that you had. I dumped my bags and went out in the street and I walked around in the street crying for about 3 or 4 hours and I came back and I was quite unhappy. And the next day, in the building, there were 2 or 3 chaps my own age

they said, come along, we're going out to play football or whatever, and twenty four hours later, everything was roses because these young fellows were just buddies and they were very curious about where I had come from and then a day or two later, I went to that school And I was kind of a novelty there and everybody hung around me and they were highly – you know in those days – the Bosch – in France, you're enemy is my enemy. If you left because of the Bosch, you're a friend of ours.

Q: Did you encounter much anti – Germany feeling?

G: Oh yes, the French were quite – they had quite a complex about the Bosch – they were extremely paranoid about the Germans. You can't wipe out something like – this is only 18, 19 years after the end of WW1. France had lost 2 million of the flower of their youth. This was a tremendous trauma...

Q: In terms of yourself, did they regard you as a German?

G: No, absolutely not. First of all, I was very careful to avoid the word German because I had an Austrian passport so – even through Austria was German ally, they were considered by the French as being much more docile. But aside from that, they knew that the Germans persecuted the Jews and they knew that I had come because of the German persecution of the Jew...

Q: How were you aware of all of this in the beginning?

G: I was. You were quite aware of things that went on. You saw it in the press – you saw it all around you. You knew that the French had no love for the Germans and therefore, you were very quick to make them understand that you were a refugee from the Germans and I was very anxious to have the record set clear – that I was an Austrian number one and that I was getting out of Danzig because of what is going on in Germany.

Q: Was French a problem for you – I know you had said you had studied it?

G: It took me three days to be – to have absolutely no problem in getting along and it took maybe two months to be fluent. At that age, it is no problem at all.

Q: These people that you stayed with...

G: They were paid room and board – this was arranged in advance and the French schools were free so I didn't have to pay for schooling.

Q: How did they receive you?

G: They treated me very well. First of all, they had two daughters and one of them was my age and they briefed me how to get along in French and with Frenchman

and at the same time, as I mentioned, when the kids in the apartment heard that I had arrived, they came up and they took me out to play and to go on hikes and whatever have you. And there was one kid who went to the same school and we walked together and the status that I had in the first – I arrived in January and school ended the first of July – my status was that of a non – matriculated student. I would sit there and not be responsible for anything from the point of view of tests – just a listener – for the first – up to July. Then I would be quizzed by my professors and they would decide where I would fit into the school system. This caused absolutely no interruption – as it turned out, I was then for the next year put into the same grade that I would have had if I had stayed in Germany.

Q: On your vacation, did you return to Danzig?

G: Yes, I returned and then I came back after the vacation and in early 1939, I made my baccalaureate from high school and then I went back to Danzig during the Easter vacation in 1939. That was after the Kristallnacht. The Jews had to move together by then. But there was one event which came before. The Germans occupied Austria in 1938 and I had to turn in my Austrian passport and get a German passport instead. If I had been a Danzig citizen, I still would have had a Danzig passport but I got a German passport with a J on it.

Q: In 1938 already?

G: Immediately, because the Austrian passports were declared null and void by the Germans and so you had to turn in your Austrian passport...

Q: Where did you get this German passport?

G: At the nearest consulate in France.

Q: When you went to the consulate...

G: I didn't go. I mailed the Austrian passport in and they mailed me a German passport back.

Q: When you saw this "J" on...

G: It didn't surprise me at all because I knew that others had gotten it so it didn't surprise me in the least but it caused me a good deal of annoyance. I had made a few trips home as an Austrian and I was completely unmolested at the borders and the first time, I went back with that passport with a J on it, I really got the treatment by the Gestapo – by the border guard, always interrogated, and then, I remember, I went home during the Easter vacation of 1939. This was the first vacation that I went home since – in November, 1938 was the Kristallnacht. I went home in April, 1939 and that was an entirely different proposition. It was a gloomy situation. I remember, my parents had had to vacate their apartment and

had to move together with two other families in one apartment – 3 families were occupying one apartment. There was an atmosphere of panic in Danzig...

Q: How did you notice or feel this atmosphere of panic?

G: Well, first of all, the mere fact that these people were forced to live together – they had to by law move together. A Jewish family was not allowed to occupy more than one room or a certain amount of space. They all had lost, each and every one of them had lost or abandoned their businesses and they all concentrated on one thing – where will we go? Argentina, Cuba, United States – everybody was just running wild – where will we go to?

Q: Along these lines, how did they get information about where to go?

G: They were grasping at anything, just to give you an example – what happened to my parents and this of course was a blessing in disguise which if it had been successful would have ended in sure death. They had – the Germans had a sort of planned vacation type thing – the Nazis had – which they called “Kraft durch Freude” – that was Strength through Joy and they had trips – organized package trips and one of those trips was a steamer cruise to the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – and this steamer stopped in Danzig and took on some Nazis from Danzig and people who wanted to pay for this and went on to the Baltic. And my father had the idea of just getting off in Riga, in Latvia and just walk down the gangplank and with a few thousand marks in his pocket or something and see what he could do about establishing a temporary toehold and waiting to go somewhere outside of Europe. This was 1939 and in 1938 had been the first crisis – the Chamberlain – Daladier Munich talks and WW 11 was temporarily averted but for how long? And Czechoslovakia had already been occupied and it could happen any day so you get out and maybe if there’s a stepping stone like Latvia. What happened was that everybody could go ashore in Riga but they had to give their passports to the purser and just before the steamer landed in Riga, an announcement came over the loudspeaker – Mr. and Mrs. Tobias, come to the purser’s office. And there, they were informed that as a Jew, you are not allowed to get off and take a shore excursion. So they had to stay on board and come right back and when they came to Danzig, they were allowed to get off. So that didn’t work. If it had worked, I imagine they would never have gotten out of Europe.

Q: You’re father intended to take money – had money how did he at that point I don’t think you were allowed to leave Germany with more than ten RM (money).

G: It was not Germany yet – it was still the free city of Danzig, there was nothing against the law – if he had a million dollars he could have taken it with him. There was absolutely no law against taking money and that, interestingly enough, they didn’t even bother to search them because if they would have been German residents and they would have been caught taking money out of Germany that would have meant God knows what. But since they were residents of Danzig



there was no point of searching them because there was no law of taking money out of Danzig.

Q: Had their passports been replaced in the same way?

G: Also, yes. In the same way as their passports had been replaced in the same manner but nevertheless it said born in, resident of Danzig. If you were a resident of Danzig you were under the laws of Danzig. So they did not, by taking money along, and I don't know what sum was involved, but it doesn't matter – he did not do anything against the law so they couldn't touch him. Now, I was home for the Easter vacation (39) and this was perhaps in May or June of 39 when this happened so I had already gone back. On my way back, on my last visit to Danzig, going through Germany back to France, I had again changed trains in Berlin and I was on my way to Paris and in Aachen, where the French – Belgian border was I was on a train which was supposedly to go directly from Berlin to Paris. The Gestapo came into my compartment, they looked at my passport, they said, "Jew, out!" And the officer said to his subordinate, he said "by the way did you rent this pillow? In Mutopa you could buy a pillow for the night." "Yes, that's mine." "Take it with him – see if he's hiding anything in the pillow." And I got taken down there and got three hours of the most humiliating search – they ripped my luggage apart and they were looking back and forth and the only thing that I had on me of any value was a gold watch that I had gotten for my Bar Mitzvah. I was carrying that and they were debating about it – they finally threw it on the floor and it went into a million pieces and I just put the casing into my pocket. Anyway, I missed the train and I had to wait in Aachen for a few hours and in the meantime whenever one of these SS guys came around I got a slap in the face, or something like this, you know, real heroes. And then I had to undress and they looked up into the, you know, all places. By the way, I had a wonderful revenge. The first city, as an American GI, that we occupied in Germany was Aachen, the same place, and we had taken an entire bunch of 200 of the border SS that we had taken prisoner and who were in one compound. I got a hold of them and they had to do to each other exactly the same things that I had to go through three years before. It was sort of a sweet revenge. They were very embarrassed. It was the middle of the winter and they had to undress in the courtyard and look up each others' rectum and things like that which they had done to me and so on.

Q: As a sixteen year old boy traveling alone I'm sure you were quite frightened.

G: Well, I was amazingly...I admired myself in a sense afterwards because I was amazingly composed there. I didn't quite understand why these grown – up men took such a delight to shove – I was always a little fellow, I was a late bloomer. I started growing after I was maybe seventeen years old and so on. So I was actually a kid. At sixteen or fifteen I looked more like thirteen years old. And here were these grown – up guys in their uniforms and so on with guns by their side and they took such delight in slapping a thirteen year old boy around, you know, that size. That just didn't sit well with me but I just figured okay, I am

ready for anything. But they didn't find anything; they just ripped all my baggage apart and they couldn't find anything that I smuggled. They just let me go and gave me a few kicks in the behind and so on. And I came to Paris. Instead of arriving in the morning I arrived late in the evening. In the meantime, this business with my parents, they tried to get to Riga, which failed.

Q: Why did you go to Paris instead of back to Besancon?

G: Well first of all by that time I had finished high school and my parents transferred me to something which is similar to the Cornell hotel management school. They thought that would be a good profession to learn and that was in Nice and I was already going down to Nice to this hotel management school.

Q: On that trip when you were back in Danzig, when we were talking about the panic that you noticed. How did you see it?

G: The atmosphere was pretty grim. I left Danzig after that stay with a feeling of tremendous trepidation. This entire situation that I had witnessed there – the people – the morale – it had changed tremendously. My last vacation had been summer 38 before the Kristallnacht. This was seven months later. The people are living like, you know. Although I had come down as far as standard of living is concerned by moving in with these people in France so that the physical aspect did not bother me but the idea because they were friends with each other so that if they had a four – room apartment and three families were living there everything was very nice but the point was that they were forced to be so and there was an atmosphere of gloom and everybody from morning until night went into the coffee houses of the cafes whatever. For the Jews there would be only one topic of conversation and that was what did you find out at the Cuban consulate of what do you think about the idea of going to Madagascar or this and that. All the topics were how does one save one's hide. There was a tremendous panic. Another thing that had happened which put the Danzig Jewish population into an absolute trauma was that there was a contingent of people from Danzig who had chartered an old tub from the port of Constanza in Romania the Black Sea – an old freighter with which the people of Danzig wanted to go into Palestine through the Black Sea. They were refused entry into Palestine and that old freighter was traveling around Greek waters etc. And I don't know what kind of diseases broke out and everything. The whole thing ended in a big fiasco. That had been just around that time so people died and people got terribly sick. I don't know what eventually happened. This was common knowledge in Danzig. This had happened just before so people were absolutely running scared.

Q: Did you belong to the great synagogue?

G: Oh yes, absolutely.

Q: Was there conversation within the synagogue?

- G: The synagogue had been burned down during Kristallnacht.
- Q: Again, it was a free state still so...
- G: But the Nazis burned it down. The Nazis had practically free reign. They had free reign, they had as far as Nuremburg laws went. Whether they were legally executed or illegally executed, the Nazis had free reign after the Kristallnacht. The only laws against which they could not do anything were the amounts of things the Jews were permitted to take out or money etc. because this was outside of their realm but from a purely technical point of view there was nobody to stop them from harassing Jews, breaking their businesses up, herding them together. The Danzig police was doing absolutely nothing to stop the S.S. or the storm-troopers from doing anything. They had the upper hand. The other political parties were completely powerless, absolutely nothing to say anymore at that point.
- Q: Did the people realize that Poland would be the next step for Hitler?
- G: They realized that Poland would be the next step and they were completely...Poland was absolutely no help whatsoever.
- Q: No, but what I meant was that once Hitler came to Poland that Danzig would be...
- G: Yes, would be immediately counted a part of the German Reich. It was already there. I mean you could see people walking around. This was the first time when I had an inkling of what fifth column was. The Jews in Danzig knew that there was a tremendous amount of German Gestapo in Danzig or German officials without uniforms. They were wearing a certain type of trenchcoat – you couldn't miss them and they were already there. This was all just a matter of the day the war would start this was just automatic.
- Q: Did they realize the urgency that if the war should start in Poland that they might be trapped?
- G: Oh, absolutely.
- Q: They realized that?
- G: Oh, no question.
- Q: That's what I meant.
- G: No doubt about it that they were already...they realized that already during the Munch statement. Oh yes, I would say they realized that.

- Q: So that you were seeing a sense of panic or urgency.
- G: Oh absolutely. They were probably much more panicky than the people in Germany.
- Q: That's what I had in mind. When you left to go back to Paris, in fact to Nice, was it difficult that time to leave? I mean difficult for you to leave your family at that time?
- G: Well, you know, interestingly enough, the time before I left that was at the end of my summer vacation of 38. My parents urged me to get out of Germany, out of Danzig early because the Munich thing was impending and France was already mobilizing and they wanted me outside if there would be a war. So I left early. And this was already the first time that I was psyched up that this might be the last time I would see my parents. And then came Munich and there was a stalemate for that year and I went back once more and again I had at that time a definite feeling that anything can pop any moment. So I had grave trepidations about everything. It was tough and of course my parents could not hide the fact that they were happy that I should go out to a country where there was freedom. And nobody thought the Germans would occupy France as fast as they did and so on. At any rate there was definitely that kind of atmosphere.
- Q: Did you notice, in looking at your parents, between the early years (1934-5) and now (1938) Did you see a difference in them?
- G: Well to a slight degree. If it had not been for the fact that my father had been one of the early ones to urge this sort of thing, I may have noticed a much greater change. But since the events only reinforced what he had been saying all along, it was not such a drastic thing. In other words, although there may have been an exterior or physical thing that was noticeable, there was no difference in their thinking. Whereas some of my parents' friends who had not believed in it, they were much more shook up by it because they had to revise their entire thinking. So the change was more one of outward things, of material things. If you had lived in comfortable surroundings and all of a sudden you live in cramped quarters, this kind of thing is a physical thing, whereas from a psychological point of view I think there wasn't too much to be seen.
- Q: Was your mother of the same mind as your father?
- G: Yeah, very much so. She did not have that kind of political sense but she went along with him in that way.
- Q: Your mother was from Danzig, right?
- G: No, she was actually from Silesia but it doesn't matter.

- Q: Did her family live...
- G: Most of the family lived in upper Silesia.
- Q: And your father's family was still in Vienna?
- G: Well they had scattered, which brings me to the next point. One of my father's brothers had settled in Czechoslovakia and the other brother had gone to a resort town on the Adriatic, Abatzia, which was Italy, and he was living there and he is living there now. He is my only surviving relative, actually who is still alive. This brings me to the next episode. These bowling friends of my father, these police people, which had remained friends. Now comes July of 39 and my father gets a telephone call from one of his high up police friends to come and meet him. He gets himself up to meet his friend and says, "Can you get ready in three hours and get the hell out of here?" "Yes," my father says, "I can if necessary." So he says, "I've got a tip for you. There is a tremendous troop movement going from Germany through the Brenner Pass and there has been a clattering of messages going through that all the passenger trains for the next three days should go through the Brenner Pass, through the Italian border without stopping in order not to hold up traffic of the military trains. He said, "If you can get yourself right now on a train to Berlin and hop a train to Italy, you'll zip through the Brenner Pass, through the German – Italian border without any examination or anything. These trains have to roll through, they're not allowed to stop during the next forty – eight hours."
- Q: Meaning essentially illegally?
- G: Illegally, meaning essentially that all trains have to roll through the Brenner Pass, the German – Italian borders without stopping so as not to hold up these materials movements – whatever they were carrying and shipping – tanks, through the Brenner Pass. So my father got himself packed. So they got themselves ready and they were ready to do anything, so they hopped a train, one to Berlin, and from Berlin a train that was destined for Florence or anything and the mere fact that my father had a brother living in Italy, in Abatzia, was an added incentive to get out into Italy.
- Q: Once he got to Italy, once he got off the train, the Italians, being allies of the Germans, would have...
- G: No, the Italians were extremely decent throughout the war. Previous to that you would have needed an Italian visa and they wouldn't have gotten an Italian visa and they wouldn't have gotten an Italian visa.
- Q: But what were they going to do without an Italian visa?

- G: Well, if they had not had my uncle in Italy they would even have gone under these circumstances. There must have been hundreds of Germans living in Milan and surroundings and so on that had somehow slipped across into Italy. But the fact that my father had a brother there was even an added incentive...he didn't think twice about going to Italy – "Oh I'm going to join my brother". And so it was absolutely correct – the train rode right through the Brenner and they got themselves out in Verona or someplace and hopped a train for Abatzia and completely unexpected arrived at my uncle's house and that was fine as far as that went because the war broke out a couple of weeks later and that would have been the end. I had, interesting also, and this was 39. Now the war broke out in 39 and I started the hotel management school in 39. I was in Nice. Oh yes. They were in Abatzia, the war was on, but there was no war yet between Italy and France...it was just, you know, Italy had remained neutral up to the point where the Germans occupied France. So in 39 I had thus heard from my parents that they had arrived in Italy. I went to school and no problem with money or anything like that. What my father had done, he had in the meantime gotten all our money out to America, just sent it officially to America, to our relatives here.
- Q: A free city?
- G: The relatives in America were sending money that my father had with them to Italy for them and to France for me. And this hotel management school had a very terrific institution during vacations – you actually were farmed out to hotels for work experience. I remember that when the war broke out I was working at a hotel in Evian – on the shore of Lake Geneva and I had tried to get myself an Italian visa to visit my parents in Italy. And I sent my passport someplace, I don't know, to the Italian consulate or something to get a visa and never got the passport back. It was finished. And then the war broke out and I was completely cut off from my parents then. And once the war broke out the only way that I heard from them was through America because they could write to America and they forwarded the mail to me.
- Q: They couldn't write directly to you?
- G: No, I don't think so...I think at the beginning they could...No, you're right, after Italy got into the war then it stopped, but that's a little fuzzy in my mind. I had no passport at all at that point – I couldn't go anywhere. I was just in France, that's all.
- QL Evian – the same place as the Avian conference?
- G: Yes.
- Q: How long did you stay in the school or in work experience?

G: Yah. I stayed in the school; I went back to finish the school as a matter of fact. I finished it in 1940, in June of 40. The moment I finished the school I was interned by the French. Because this was another thing, a very peculiar quirk. The French really, being at war with Germany and the Austrians being German, whatever it was, they interned everyone who was German, whether he was a Jewish German or not Jewish German, what did they know? So on my seventeenth birthday I had to report to the police station where I was taken to an internment camp where there were a bunch of Nazis and Jew as well, you know, all mixed together.

Q: Where were you taken?

G: This was a place in Provence, near Aix – en – Provence, called Les Milles, a brick factory just outside Aix – en – Provence, in the south of France. We had a very decent camp commander, a French camp commander because I remember when the German armies were approaching Lyon, we sent a delegation of the Jewish internees, sent a delegation to him, and I was one of the delegation because at the time when it came to negotiating I had been a high school graduate already, and so on. I spoke French like a native Frenchman and as far as negotiating I was...my French was among those other young guys whose French was flawless. We went to the camp commandant and explained to him that if the Germans are advancing further and would advance to as far as where we were they would make mincemeat out of us. First you could see where the non – Jewish internees were preparing for the day of liberation. They were starting to have victory speeches and victory rallies and we poor Jews were there, you know, trembling for the Germans to come and take us back or something. As it turned out, you know the French signed the armistice and the Germans did not come that far. There was Vichy France. But I was one of the delegation sent to the French camp commander and the Germans were approaching were about four or five hundred miles away and we were explaining to this camp commander that as Jews we would just be dead, that's all. And he understood that perfectly and he said, "Gentlemen, I am personally going to issue each and every one of you a travel document and a discharge document, a document of liberation. And there were about five or six of us that had good handwritings and we just sat down and for about 500 people we typed up and wrote out documents, first of all a document that stated that we had been officially and duly released from internment camp, signed by the commander, and another one, a document which was asking the French authorities to let us travel freely within the zone because we would be endangered by the Germans. So within a matter of 48 hours or so every one of the Jewish people had a couple of these documents and they just opened the gates to us and let us out. The non – Jewish Germans stayed right there and waited for their buddies to come and liberate them.

Q: I just want to backtrack for a second. When you were in Nice, when the French came, how did the French go about interning you?

G: Well it was a very simple thing. You had in France things were done by proclamation. First of all, like for instance, when you mobilize the army, you had these round cylinders on the streets where they had advertising plackets. The mobilization would be posted. And there would be a sign posted first of all on the first day of war, that every person of German nationality over the age of seventeen must report to the prefecture or something, room number so and so for further instructions. So right away as the war broke out, every German national, whether Jewish or not Jewish, had to report if he were seventeen or over, if he were male. And so they were just told at that point: Go home and pack your bags and take this and that stuff and report at a train station at this and this hour and this is how they were interned. But when the war broke out I was not seventeen yet, I was sixteen, and on my seventeenth birthday, the law was if a German national reaches his seventeenth birthday he has to report to the prefecture for further instructions. So all I did was, on the day before my seventeenth birthday I reported to the prefecture in Nice and the first thing they did was I had to report to a French military camp and I was put in a stockade, together with French soldiers who had either gone AWOL or something like that, into the stockade, until there were about 20 of us in that week from the neighborhood who had reached our seventeenth birthday and when they had a busload they took us from Nice to Les Milles which was the nearest internment camp.

Q: When you reported to the prefecture, was this a frightening experience or...

G: Not at all, not in the least, because first of all we knew that, for instance, the wives of intern people had visited their husbands, they knew that these internment camps were nothing at all, that they were basically the internees were watched by the French troops, just in terms it was a confinement. They could play football, they could play chess, they could play cards, they could do what they want. The only thing is if they wanted to go town they only allowed two or three at a time per week to go to town. You got permission, there was no mistreatment. The food was the same that the French army was getting. Young fellows who had been going to school in France usually got a job in the office to do clerical work which I for instance did.

Q: Was it paid?

G: Volunteered, volunteered for that. No, I don't think we got paid. The only thing is that instead of having to eat with the internees we got to eat with the soldiers or the sergeants or something like that. It was a slightly better deal from the point of view of food or something like that.

Q: But in general for the internees, did they have to work?

G: No, they were not put to work at all. It was just a matter of we were inspected that we kept our quarters clean and we had to inspect for reports for physical examination once a week or something like that, so that there would be no lice or



anything. But otherwise there it was like being in a vacation camp technically. It was an old brick factory where everybody got a mattress and blankets and you just made yourself comfortable wherever you wanted to. There was a huge amount of property around it and one piece of property was used for a football field and another one the guys would just sit around and play cards and do whatever they wanted to.

Q: When you say 'a mattress' you mean including a bed or...

G: No, just on the floor and blankets. They didn't have cots or anything like that. What you did, there were plenty of bricks around, you usually built sort of an area with bricks around yourself and put your mattress on the floor and got your blankets and that was all. No hardship for a young fellow. I would say some of the older guys might have been uncomfortable.

Q: You lost your passport in this shuffle in Nice. What prevented you from just not reporting as a German?

G: Well you had, every person living in France had to have an identity card. And I never got rid of my identity card. You had to have identification papers. As a matter of fact, after the war broke out, there were roadblocks on the spot and things like that. If you were caught without your identity papers you were in trouble.

Q: After you got out of Les Milles, or got your papers through this negotiation, what happened to you then?

G: This was a period of great uncertainty.

Q: How long were you there?

G: I was there about two weeks, that's all because that was from the middle of June to the end of June. By the time we got out, a few days after we got out, they signed the armistice and I headed back to Nice where I had all my friends and at that time Vichy France was created. And we were quite relieved that the Germans themselves had not come that far south, but it was quite rough living under Vichy France, not that anybody was harassed or anything, but it was difficult to even survive from even a physical point of view. The Germans were bleeding France from an agricultural point of view and you had to live on food stamps. For example a physical worker got halfway decent ration of food stamps. But the refugees like us who didn't work or were going to school and so on, got the white collar rations. The white collar rations were very meager, the blue collar workers were getting twice as much. For a 17, 18 year old boy to go hungry, you know, this is the time of the great appetite, as I was telling you. I started growing just at the time of my internment, that was the time when I needed food the most, so it was pretty rough. This is very funny, I worked in a restaurant

for no pay from six in the morning 'til nine at night just for food. That was fine – I got enough to eat that way.

Q: How did you get that job?

G: Oh, that was relatively simple because once you were a graduate of this hotel management school, the director was a very nice chap. He got you a student permit to do practical kind of work as a student. In other words, I couldn't have gotten a job as a job, but as a student without pay I could get it. And of course they had to feed me. So in that respect I was quite well off.

Q: At this point even though this was Vichy France and they had signed the agreement did you make any plans to leave then?

G: That was the summer of 1940. In the fall of 1940 I heard from my relatives in America that my parents were about to get their visa in Italy. My father had been taken to an internment camp, you couldn't call it a concentration camp. All the Jews were rounded up in Italy and put into internment camps. It was not much worse than what we had in France, so the Italians again were very decent. There was no beating or anything like that.

Q: Were you aware of this?

G: Yes, I was aware of it and my mother had to go into what was called confinement. She had to go to a little village and was not permitted to leave the premises of the village. Together with another two or three women they were living in the little village. And my father had to go to this camp in Kilabria.

Q: Kilabria, isn't that almost Sicily?

G: Almost Sicily, right. Down at the cold Firamonte? Towers. Most of the Jews were interned there. And they could write to America and my relatives in America used to write to me and I heard from my parents that way. And they wrote me that my parents had been called to the American consulate in Naples, that they were getting their visa. And they were trying to see to it that I could get my visa in Nice. And there was a great deal of red tape, it didn't work. My parents got their visa late in December of 40 and because you had an American visa you could get a transit visa for France, for Spain, for Portugal, and so they got their transit visa through France and they managed to come through Nice. And the first thing we did was my father asked for an appointment at the American consulate in Nice and we went to him and we showed him the visas that he had and (asked) whether he could do anything, after all I was a minor of eighteen in those days. And that American consul was an absolute bastard. As a matter of fact later on he was in the same U.S. intelligence unit as I and I almost killed that guy when I saw him again. It was the first, that was the only time in

my life that I ever saw my father cry because he said, "Look, we applied for our visa as a family. He is our only child and we have to leave him here while we have a visa for America?" He said, "No, there's no way of doing it." But look anything is worth it. Please send a cable to Washington, see what you can do and so on. The guy would not budge an inch. The only thing was he had a secretary who was sitting in and she caught us at the door. She was a French girl working for the American consul and she said, "Look, if you want to have a valid tip from us, get to America as fast as possible and get your boy out on a non quota deal because if your own parents are already there, a minor child, it's almost an automatic thing." So they left and their transit visa through France was good for 48 hours or something like that.

Q: When they got the visas, the visas came for two, not for three?

G: The visas only came to Naples, but it only came for them, nothing for me. Nothing came to me and therefore the problem arose.

Q: When they had the transit visa for 48 hours, they were going through France. Where were they going to catch transportation?

G: Spain and Portugal.

Q: Both?

G: Right, France, Spain and Portugal, to leave there?

Q: When they left you there...

G: Well that was quite traumatic, you know what I mean. First of all, this was the funniest thing, my father practically left me all his clothing because everything I had at that point was up to my elbows and up to my knees. So my father took me to a tailor and he took about three or four suits, coats and the tailor just tied it up a bit because my father was a bit heavier than I was. But then they got out and went to Spain and Portugal and did indeed go to America as quickly as possible and from the first day here they started working on the visa situation.

Q: During all this time, the money flow from America was easy and constant?

G: Yes, well because the flow from America, anybody could get money in, there was no problem there, the French were very happy to get American dollars and pay me Vichy francs.

Q: Did you live under hardships? Or what was your life like?

G: My life was quite bearable because I worked hard because to work in a French restaurant as a comey, as a type of fifth wheel, you did everything from sweeping

the floor. It didn't bother me at all to wash dishes, to peel potatoes, it was like doing kp in the army, something like that. At age 18 to get in a good meal three times that was very very important and I had enough money from America to pay my rent, to go to the movies, to do this and that. So I had a very carefree life and I had friends so it was very bearable. But I also knew that this war was not going to be very favorable and to get out was of paramount importance.

Q: How long did it take after your parents got to America?

G: It got into a terrible situation. First of all my parents went through France in January and reached America in March. And they went to work immediately on my visa and I was called over to the consulate somewhere at the end of June to have a physical and to sign final papers and I actually had an appointment like to come next Tuesday to pick up the visa. And I come Tuesday and the secretary greets me with a long face and she says, "I'm sorry, no visa. They just passed a new law in the United States (this was 1941) that people would only be entitled to receive a visa if the sponsor had a check by the FBI that they were desirable people." In other words they wanted to prevent fifth column (spies) or something to come into the United States. So there was an actual law that stopped the visas and it took my father quite a bit of doing in political circles with congressmen and all kinds of things to get them to have the FBI background check made in a hurry and I was among the first three people after this prohibition, this new law, from June to October, four months later, one of the first to get a visa granted after the sponsors here in the United States had been checked out. And so this was October of 1941 and as soon as you got your American visa you could go to Marseilles and get yourself a transit visa for Spain and Portugal.

Q: The only way to go was over Spain and Portugal?

G: The only way out was over Spain and Portugal.

Q: No boats going from northern France?

G: From northern France, no.

Q: How about southern France?

G: No, just that was the only way out and my parents had paid when I got to Lisbon all steamship lines had been prepaid passage money. I only had to wait about ten days for a ship to get on but I got here in November if 41 and on December 7 the war broke out so that was just in the nick of time.

Q: When did the Germans come into Vichy France?

G: After we attacked north Africa in 1942.

Q: So you were out by then. When you came over did you come over by regular passenger boat?

G: Yes.

Q: When you came to New York, I take it your parents met you, where did you go that day? Where did they live?

G: they lived in Washington Heights; they had rented a room in a seven room apartment. There were about 5 or 6 other tenants in the seven room apartment on Fort Washington Avenue and 161<sup>st</sup> Street, the address at that time. And just before I came they had managed to get me another room in that apartment so that's where we went.

Q: At that point when your parents had come here, I assume the funds were not unlimited when your father came here. What kind of job did he find?

G: He found a job with a clothing manufacturer in the shipping department making up shipments, packages, and so on.

Q: A clothing manufacturer, meaning like the garment district?

G: Men's clothing. They are located mainly around 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

Q: Did he find that difficult? It's usually dominated by an American – Jewish group.

G: No, not at all. He had always said he was ready to carry crates or be a stevedore at a port rather than stay in Europe. No, they were extremely happy to have escaped and they worked extremely hard which did not bother them. Times were getting better, they could even save a few pennies; there was an entire reversal of having been without any income for two, three or four years and then being able to work gainfully. That was very good for the morale. The war was of course raging by that time; they were of course grateful to be here in relative safety. So I'm sure that my parents were very content as far as that aspect of life is concerned. I'm always comparing our way of emigration with the people who came after World War 11 who felt that the flesh pots of Europe, what they had left behind there was better than what was waiting for them in America. I think that the people who arrived in America just at the eve of WW 2 were so grateful for having escaped Europe that they did not mind any hardships. That was perfectly all right; working hard never hurt anybody.

Q: Did your mother work too?

G: Yes of course, my mother worked too. She was sewing brassieres in a lady's garments factory.

- Q: When you came and you now had two rooms in a seven room apartment, how did your mother arrange the cooking and the eating?
- G: Well, the first thing, first of all it didn't affect us very greatly because we were there for maybe a month or two because my parents were looking for an apartment of their own when I came so this was very transitory. It was a very short period of time. The other thing was that I, my first job, I was hardly here for three days, I couldn't wait to go to work. And the first job that I got was a waiter's job in a nightclub and I had a completely upside down kind of schedule. I started work at nine in the evening and I came home, it closed at 4 in the morning and I came home at 5 in the morning. I remember I used to get, there was a bakery on Broadway, I used to pick up at 5 in the morning hot fresh rolls. My parents had those for breakfast and I was sleeping till 2 in the afternoon and then I would go to the movies at 2 in the afternoon and they would come home for dinner and I would be off and I would eat dinner in the nightclub first before I started working. So we had an upside down kind of life. The nightclub lasted about four weeks and then they closed up.
- Q: How did you get that job in the nightclub?
- G: From my hotel management school they had sort of an alumni association which was called the Geneva association and they had an employment service for hotel and restaurant employees and I took the first slip they handed me and went right in there and started working. I didn't want to wait.
- Q: Did you know English well enough to...
- G: Oh yes, look, I had had English from the time I entered the Jewish gymnasium in the cram course through all the time in France. I must have had seven years of English in school. I was as fluent the day that I walked off the ship as I am today.
- Q: So that didn't present a problem.
- G: No problem.
- Q: When the nightclub closed what kind of job did you get?
- G: I must have had about five different jobs as waiters in hotels that lasted about a week or so. I wasn't cut out for that kind of stuff until finally when the manpower shortage made itself felt, this was maybe February of '42 already. I saw that they were advertising for an assistant manager of a restaurant in the Times Square area. I just went there and got the job. They were taking anybody at that time. So that was more to my liking. I was already in management. But first of all that was only for about four months because then I went into the army, but secondly it also gave me an insight into the whole hotel and restaurant business in the United States, which was completely and utterly, for someone who had gone to a hotel

school in France, it was just an absolute horror because over in Europe the people who work in hotels and restaurants. This is considered a skill where you have to go through an apprenticeship and work your way up and this is a career. In this country you just pick up a tray and you just throw it at people. I was completely shocked at what went on in the Waldorf Astoria, for instance. These are waiters? My God! If they had been in France they couldn't even have gotten a job as a shoeshine boy.

Q: How did you see waiters in the Waldorf Astoria?

G: Because I had a job there for a week and I just couldn't take that kind of thing; it was absolutely horrible. Furthermore I was appalled by the sanitary condition of the hotels and restaurants in this country. They are absolutely gruesomely filthy compared to Europe. They would be intolerable in Europe. So I made a resolution that when I would get out of the army, when the war would be over, the hotel and restaurant business would not be my cup of tea. I was going to be something else.

Q: When did you...did you get a draft notice?

G: Oh yes, I was drafted in 42.

Q: Did that surprise you after being here for...

G: No, I was waiting for the moment...I was 18 but then they were only taking 19 year olds but then they changed it to 18 year olds so I figured any time it must come. So I went late in 42.

Q: They didn't bother you as an enemy alien?

G: No, I wasn't an enemy alien because, this is how naive all these countries are about enemy, not enemy. The Austrians were not enemy aliens and the Germans were enemy aliens. Because of my father's birth I was an Austrian and Austrians were okay, but Germans were not. So I was not an enemy alien and I was drafted and that was that.

Q: When you were drafted, when did you find out that you were going to be sent to Europe?

G: Actually, I didn't know how things would run; it was all a series of accidents. I was first put through basic training like everybody else and when they went eeney meeney miney moe, I ended up in the medics for basic training. Then just when I was finishing basic training they were picking up everybody with a fairly high IQ, which they called AGCT and put them through a college program. It was called ASTP. I went to the University of Illinois for a few months just to learn technical subjects. Then they put me into the signal corps and then finally in 43 I met

someone here, I was on furlough in New York and he was telling me that he was in the intelligence service here in camp Richie in Maryland and he told me that he was coming home every week and I thought that was pretty good idea so I wrote to Washington that I thought I was better qualified for the intelligence service and they picked up that letter and I got transferred. Then I knew because then they asked for volunteer for OSS work and then I knew I would be going home.

Q: Did you volunteer for OSS work?

G: Oh yes. But that was a volunteer job.

Q: How did you feel about going back to Europe?

G: Oh, I felt that I had made myself useful as best as I could and there was no doubt in my mind that as I spoke languages like a native that they should take advantage of that. They were looking for people too, so it was a very good marriage, so to speak.

Q: But OSS work was sometimes very dangerous.

G: It was no more dangerous than anything else. I must say my entire life has been one lucky thing after another. You know, just always getting out of things in the last minute. I think it's much too glamorized, this business of dangerous. The espionage work and so on is not at all as it's fictionalized.

Q: But you did realize that you were going back toward Germany?

G: Oh yes, I was ready to go and operate behind...they told me that it entailed operating enemy lines.

Q: Once you got toward Germany, what were your feelings about...

G: The first phase of operation was in France. I was landed in the area of...first of all it took full advantage of the fact that I was completely familiar with the area around Nice and that I was completely fluent and knew every place and so on. We were a team of four and we were landed at night in southern France and they had already made preparations. In other words, I had to contact somebody who already had quarters for us and the most amusing thing was the time lapse from October 1941 to January 1943, this is only about over a year, I would meet people in the street, like school buddies and they would say, "Gee it's funny, you know, somebody said that you had gone to America." Or something like that. So I would say, "No, I was in Marseilles for a while but I wish I could have." And so on. And so at this time it was radically different. We arrived with papers with beautifully forged French papers. In other words, I was no longer as Austrian student living in France, but I was a French native, which was an entirely different thing. And I also had a document which showed that I was a member of the



Pétain party, that I was okay. For instance when we were in the cafe and the German Gestapo was hanging around and it showed that I was an officer in a German sympathizing group, a collaborator, he smiled at me and gave me my papers back. So it was just absolutely a breeze to live that way. We had access, we had ration books and coupons for five, everything forged. It was like a new world because the only people who could possibly betray us was one contact I had with a French FFI and one contact with a British agent and these were the only two people who could possibly be any danger to me if they would have gotten caught and talked or something like that. It was very remote; they were my only two contacts and my job was strictly to be...All we were, were messengers because it was a question of collecting information and it went through channels and back to the allies and I got bits of information from the interior of France which had to be relayed to the allies and we had to sometimes meet with someone on a beach and hand him a package which contained a lot of messages and so on and so forth.

Q: Psychologically it must have been a very different feeling to have been in France a year before...

G: Under completely different...but completely different...Psychologically I was feeling even better than the time in New York before that working in restaurants. I had a ball; I had an absolute ball. Because unless things went very wrong, I was practically in an untouchable, enviable kind of position. And it was extremely remote that I could get caught and so on.

Q: Also I had in mind your view towards the Germans must have...

G: At that time I was still dreaming of getting a machine gun and mowing them down and so on. Then came the liberation. 44 came and the allies landed in France, both in the north and in the south. So here I was, all the agents, all the British, French and American agents that had been operating in France were taken back to England for reassignment. I was still in the U.S. army but they had no longer any use for me, OSS wise, so they reassigned me. I became an interrogator on an interrogating team in the regular army. And I was a second lieutenant at the time and I had four other sergeants as part of the team and in about August of 1944 I was assigned to the seventh army division, actually as field interrogator. We were right up at the front together. The seventh division went through northern France into Belgium. And I must say one thing. It took exactly three days and things started falling into place in a most amazing way. I had built up an enormous hatred against the Germans. And as I told you before, I wished nothing more than to be able to kill them, just mow them down. So I am assigned as an interrogator to the seventh army division, we are right up at the front line and I am supposed to interrogate German prisoners. And the first day came for me to interrogate and I almost didn't believe my eyes because the German soldiers that were coming in were shaking in their boots and throwing themselves at my mercies, so to speak, and begging for "don't shoot" and "please" and "what do

you want to know” and volunteering everything that you wanted to know without any kind of... they were the most unashamed cowards in general that I have ever met. The great majority were begging for mercy, “Please don’t” “I’ll tell you everything you want to know” “Don’t shoot” or something like that. And after three days I said gee, this looks very familiar, this is just the kind of thing that I remember when we were following boys after gymnastics in the evening and how they pounced on one guy and when we came around the corner how they took off in a hurry. The same kind of thing, you know, they just...

Q: You spoke to them, I take it in German?

G: Of course.

Q: Did you let them know you were a Jew?

G: Absolutely, there was no opportunity or anything. You looked at the guy, you say, “German.....” You just bawled him out and you just treated him like a piece of rag and they would stand there and shake.

Q: Did you notice any difference between yourself and maybe an American interrogator of non – Jewish...

G: Well you...there were a lot of different philosophies among interrogators. There were those who didn’t hesitate to slap a guy around, in other words, to give him a slap in the face or a kick or something like that. I felt that I didn’t have to lower myself to even touch anybody. I had terrible contempt. This incident that I was telling you, this was months later, when we got into Aachen and I had my fun with these people. By that time I was...this was just, you know...I had nothing but contempt. And at that time I treated them with contempt. We had very few...if you got a German officer, as a rule, it was a different story. They had themselves under slightly better control. The German enlisted men that we got terribly cowardly as far as I’m concerned, as a rule.

Q: Were you aware at this point of what had gone on as far as 6 million...?

G: No, I was not aware then. I was aware of quite a bit of things that others were not aware of. I was aware of, for instance, and this gave me a lot of problems. While I was in Nice I was aware of the fact that there were people disappearing, Jews who had...Jewish refugees who all of a sudden disappeared. I knew that a lot of them were getting picked up by the Gestapo and we never saw any trace of them. So this was already, I had an inkling that something was going on and you did of course hear about atrocities and so on and these things trickled through in France and so on. But the extent, or the things that went on in Poland, in Auschwitz and things like that, that was not known. We knew what but we didn’t know to what extent, we didn’t know the compass that they involved.

- Q: Did you find any of that out as an interrogator or did you find it out when they were liberated?
- G: No, I never found it out as an interrogator for two reasons. First of all we did not...First of all we had sort of an unofficial committee in the various army units. When we liberated a town and there certain families which were hiding Jews, we immediately, these people were showered with food packages and cigarettes. Cigarettes was the currency of the war. We got cartons of cigarettes. We couldn't do enough. I remember in many instances we had enough power to give them political jobs, especially in Germany. When we occupied France or Belgium or Holland the provisional government was actually run by the resistance forces. So we could only recommend that the FFI or the Belgian resistance etcetera would reward families that would hide Jews. But in Germany if there was a German family that really was hiding Jews, we actually had enough power with the military government to, if these people wanted a good job or something, with the military government that they would immediately get them. So in a sense we had a good deal of leeway especially during the first few months. I returned back to the states actually rather shortly after the war ended but I know that during the few months that I was there, during the army of occupation, that we rewarded those people.
- Q: While you were in Europe, in Germany, did you notice the people coming back to like Badnauheim? from who had survived the camps?
- G: Not at all, no, nothing like that. The only people that we came across were those who were immediately liberated. They were usually asked if they wanted to stay on or if they wanted to go to a displaced persons camp.
- Q: Immediately liberated from Western Europe though, from in hiding.
- G: Right. They would either elect to stay on or to go into a dp camp, displaced persons camp. And the displaced persons committee would take care of them. But there was no time really to do anything on an organized scale.
- Q: When you found out what had happened to 6 million, did you realize how close you had come to being in France still in 1941?
- G: Oh I had realized that even at the time I had left. I had no illusions about surviving if I could not get out. And even at that time, I had nightmares for months after I had come to the United States that somehow I had gotten stuck over there. I was conscious of that even before the war broke out. Even from the actions of these border guards and so on I knew what was brewing. I had no illusions about that at all.
- Q: Even though you didn't have the concrete information about the extent?

- G: Even though that was the case.
- Q: When you left the army and returned to New York, what did you plan for your future?
- G: I first of all knew, as I told you before, that I did not want to return to the hotel business and I wanted to get myself a college degree. The fact that the GI bill of rights was there was very nice. I took my French school papers to Albany to the section called University of the State of New York. And they examined my papers and they said, "In order for you to get a bachelor's degree in college you are missing so and so many points." So I enrolled in Columbia and I went to Columbia for a year and a half and I got a bachelor's degree in a year and a half. And after that it was just a matter of pure coincidence. When I finished one of the job offers that I had was in a travel agency. That was more up my alley than going back to the hotel business.
- Q: Today, are most of your friends more American or more from your original background?
- G: No, I would say that most of our friends are part of the particular geographic area that we touched. Some of Renee's friends are from the tabernacle days which hasn't changed at all. Some friends are from our Riverdale time; some friends are from since we moved out here in Jersey. I think it's more a matter of geography than...if we for instance did not stay as close to New York as we did stay, we might not have as many friends from the old tabernacle crowd that Renee had. It's more geographical I think.
- Q: In your business you've met a lot of American – born colleagues. Do you feel yourself different from them in terms of the way you do business?
- G: No, I don't think so. Since the great majority of my life has been spent in America now, I think very much like they do, except when it comes to matters that touch upon the very questions, where the background may have something to do with it. And perhaps somewhat more vehement about political issues than someone who has been living the sheltered life of America. I'm probably more conscious of political happenings. There are things that bother me much more than someone who was born here. Like the Skokie business or something like that. I am much more concerned with that than maybe the average guy who grew up in this country.
- Q: As a parent, do you think you were a different parent from your American counterpart?
- G: Well only in that I am a psychological product of these years, in terms of my temper and my nervousness. I don't know whether the fact that I am a very nervous person is attributable to these very traumatic things happened during my

adolescence and therefore I am very short – fused and this particular aspect of my life may have had influence on my children. But I found that my children to this day have been quite indifferent about the Holocaust or my background and to them I have a feeling that it is as remote as the exodus from Egypt of our forefathers. And the fact that it only happened in the generation of their own father. I have a feeling that it is far removed from them. Maybe I am wrong or maybe it's going to take a certain amount of time as they mature and as certain events fall into place. That some of the things which they may have heard as children will influence their thinking at that particular time. But it is probably something that is at the present time in the back someplace, dormant, but might come out in some way.

Q: When you came back from the army, there wasn't too much of an interim between the time you came originally and when you went into the army. When you were dating, when you came back from the army, did you date girls mainly of German – Jewish background or American girls as well?

G: I think the people I hung out with was like that free synagogue, Rabbi Klein's group. I would say it was primarily refugee, top heavy. Again, this geographical situation because the entire west side of Manhattan was either German or even Viennese further down, in the nineties or eighties, but that's the same thing. They're still refugees.

Q: But at Columbia, did you meet American born girls?

G: I went to the Columbia school of business and in the school of business there were only men at that time. I didn't meet any girls at Columbia.

Q: Do you consider yourself more a part of the American mainstream or more part of the German – refugee community?

G: Oh, I would say the American. I would say this though. Again, I have to qualify this. If we would not be as close to the German group through the tabernacle or through my profession, where there are a lot of people who prefer me because I can speak German to them etcetera. If we would be living elsewhere we would be completely assimilated to that particular environment. I think it's only a geographical accident that we have any connection still because I could see myself very comfortable with American – born Jews anywhere, in any town in America. And our circles of friends are divided right in the middle there. We have those who are American born and those who are of the old refugees. But I think it's because of a geographic accident and that is all there is to it. If we had for any reason gone to a town in America which had both, let's say, we would not necessarily have veered towards the refugee side of it. It would have been a matter of indifference to us, wouldn't you think? That it would have been the people themselves for what they are rather than from where they came from?

- R: Yeah, but we have friends from Germany, or people that we knew in Germany that we are still friendly with.
- G: Or in a tabernacle crowd.
- R: Because we lived in Washington Heights, of course.
- G: But let's say we...
- R: The Jewish community sold the synagogue, sold the synagogue to have money for all the Jews – they are legal, they are not legal, when they hired a boat and they went to Israel with this money which they got from the synagogue. But I have still the last newspaper with the synagogue in picture, the last service in the synagogue in Danzig. You can imagine it was a very sad thing.
- G: Wasn't it burned?
- R: No, they made something out of it, a sport house. But anyway, my late husband and I, we were supposed to go with this boat too, SS Samaretur (?) because (illegible) we have sent him to France. And we were pretty young couple at this time but we got telegrams from American cousins, please don't go – and from my late family in Poland: (language?) You shouldn't go.
- G: You're talking now about this ship that they chartered from Romania, the Dassig (?)
- Q: That's the one you told me about?
- G: The ship was from Constanza Romania. They wouldn't let them in in Palestine at that time, right?
- R: And they were many many weeks on water. I think after six or eight weeks they got the message, they landed, but they were made to land.
- Q: Did they land illegally in Palestine?
- R: Yah.
- Q: That's the ship you told me about but I had heard something about how they sold the insides of the synagogue to the Joint Distribution Committee and they got money to try and help...
- R: This I cannot tell exactly if it was the money from the insides or the money from the building.
- Q: When was the last service?

G: in 39.

Q: After Kristallnacht?

R: I think 38, right after Kristallnacht. I can tell you if I look up this last newspaper, on the community.

THE END.