

National Council of Jewish Women Sarasota-Manatee Section  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
Dr. Jacob Leinwand, Survivor  
June 10, 1986  
Bradenton, Florida

- Q: Today is Tuesday, June 10, 1986. I am at the house of Dr. Jacob Leinwand, in Bradenton, Florida. Dr. Leinwand has been kind enough to agree to make a taped interview of his experiences. He is a Holocaust survivor, and comes from Austria. We are going to ask Dr. Leinwand to start by telling us about his early life, his family, what his parents did for a living, if he had brothers and sisters, and other information that will help us understand him as an entire person. Please go ahead with your story, Dr. Leinwand.
- A: I was born September 1, 1909 in Lemberg, Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. It was...at that time it was the time of...of...Galicia, capital of Galicia, and at the age of three, we moved in...um...(background in a female voice...to...) we moved to...we moved to Austria, Vienna, and we lived in a district where quite a few Jews were congregated, and I stayed there...or, I lived there until...until 1938, when I had to leave Vienna because of the persecution of the Jews. Uh...I went to the...to all...the high schools and to the gymnasium in Vienna and I graduated in 1928 from the Gymnasium. It was High School, sort of and was under the auspices of the Zionist organization and the founder of this Gymnasium was Zvi Peretz Chias, our Chief Rabbi of Vienna at that time. And...uh..we were geared for the...later on I joined the Hashoner Hatzair, the Zionist Youth Organization, and we prepared to go...at that time, to Palestine. At the age of 14, my father persuaded me to stay in the High School Gymnasium, and to follow my education until 1928, when I graduated from the High School, at that time, before the Matura, and was accepted into the medical school of the university of Vienna, medical school, medical department.
- Q: May I ask you a question? There were several things...were you an only child?
- A: No, we were not...I was not an only child. I was the middle one. We were five children at home. I had an older brother, and then I had...I was a twin...but I had twin sisters, then came I, and then I had a younger brother.
- Q: And what did your parents do for a living?
- A: Uh...in 1914...when the first World War broke out...was declared the war, my father, at the age of 39 or 40, had to go back to his kader and he was...became...unfortunately became the first prisoner of war.
- Q: Go back to his...what's a kader?

A: What?

Q: What's a kader? You said he had to go back to his kader...

A: That's where he had to be assembled...to go to war...

Q: Oh, I see...

A: That was a place...the first World War. And in the beginning of the war, he was taken a prisoner of war by the Russians and he was sent to Siberia. He spent about two years in Siberia and he was in the medical department...he was sort of in the laboratory division, and he got...I remember I was a very young man, about 5 or 6 years old, a child. And, I was very...and I was very...it was hard for me not to see my father until the age of 6 or 7.

Q: How did your family manage during that time?

A: At that time there was no social security or social services. Nothing. My mother took in roomers and we had some savings. My father had a factory before he left. And we struggled through it very well. In the post war, the situation was very terrible in Austria. We were deprived of all the things that young people had.

Q: You mention now that you got into medical school. Was there a problem at that point with Jewish people going into medical school?

A: There was no problem. At that time it was a Socialist government in 1928 of Austria, and, once you passed your Matura examination, that means examination from the high school properly, that means you have to be admitted to any school you wanted. There was no...they couldn't refuse you admission. To stay there was a different story.

Q: Well you had to earn the right to stay there.

A: ...you had to earn...that's correct.

Q: In your recollection, did you experience any anti-Semitism early on in your life?

A: Not until there was a situation, just before Hitler came to power in 1933.

Q: Not even as a small child growing up?

A: No, I was only 26 and was in medical school.

Q: Yes, but I am saying, as a small child did you experience anything that you would interpret as anti-Semitism?

A: Actually not. Not...I don't think...no.

Q: Did your family observe their religion?

A: We were...yes, we went to the...for the High Holy Days. We had tickets. We went...to the...for Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. We had some get-together and went to the shul at that time. We had a Seder Passovers, just like average Jews, but we were not too religious. I went to the Cheder but we were...I was geared to join the Hashomer Hatzair, the Zionist Organization. We were geared for Palestine at that time.

Q: O.K.

A: Now. After I went to school for over five years, I graduated in 1936 from the medical school University of Vienna. Now, naturally, at that time, it was already tough for Jews to get a position or a job in a hospital. Now, after the Anschluss, in 1938, I had to...I worked in the only hospital that was left for Jews to be treated. It was the Rothschild Hospital in Vienna.

Q: Please explain briefly what the Anschluss was.

A: The Anschluss was occupation and the annexation of Austria to the German Reich. Hitler was only in power since 1933. And the Anschluss came in 1938. The Anschluss came in 1938.

Q: O.K.

A: Now, when I went...the only thing I was allowed to do was to work in this only Jewish hospital, the Rothschild Hospital, and to treat Jewish patients. At that time, quite a few Jews were admitted, especially in the outpatient department, with burns of the hands from acid because they had to scrub the floors under the Nazis' direction...and monuments...different labor...and, at that time, like in every little...what do you call that?...let's see...the Gauleiter...there was in every district, in every business there had to be a Nazi or the Gestapo representative in this place. In the hospital, in Vienna there was also a Nazi, and they had the authority to give out letters of necessity. For instance, like Dr. Jacob Leinwand...had...he is not...he has to work here...he is essential to our work. And, please, when he goes on the street, he should not be touched by anybody...and that. I kept on...with me...on my body...in my pocket. One day I was sent out to do something...to do some work. I went to see a patient and I had a...I was at that time...I was in the Urology Dept...being a physician at that time. I didn't get paid, but I had to go to visit some patient and to do some work on them, like a nurse or aide, or orderly work...an assistant to the patient. And then, on my way home, I came to my District, but usually quite a few Jews are congregated, and the streets were completely empty. There was nobody there, and I was afraid to ask...the

eratzia...That means, the Nazis were called SA and SS. They went to the houses and picked up...collected the Jews and then, in paddy wagons, and sent them to, at that time the concentration camp was Dachau.

Q: Had that happened before? Before this particular time you are talking about?

A: Not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge.

Q: But you had heard of this happening elsewhere?

A: It was happening elsewhere. Most of the people were involved...like politically involved...but not those people who didn't have any kind of connections...politics...who had lived by themselves. You know.

Q: After the Anschluss, and you have already described some of the changes that it made in your daily life...were the Jews forced to move into a kind of Ghetto situation, or were they allowed to remain wherever they had lived before?

A: They were allowed to remain where they were before. There was no ghetto at that time. In fact, we had a small synagogue in our apartment where we used to live. We congregated there, and had, sometimes, there was no money anymore,...had...what you call it...soup...?

Q: Soup kitchens?

A: Yes. Soup kitchens, at that time. They were spread all over. Now, on my way home, as I said to you before, the streets were empty and, all of a sudden, I heard somebody patting my shoulder. "Can I speak a little German? Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes". "Are you an Austrian citizen?" I said, "Yes". Because at that time all Austria was annexed and the Nazis, the Germans, did not want to start with any other nationality, even if they were Jews. Do you understand?

Q: Go ahead. I understand.

A: And, "Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes". "Come with me. Come with me.", he said. I took that letter out and showed him the letter. And he said to me, "Look, Doctor, I am reading your letter. You are all right with me. I will let you go. But, I am warning you, I cannot promise you that one of the Nazis,..." the Germans were still a distinction between the Austrians and the Germans at that time who were occupying Germany, that they will read your letter, read your advice...and I am warning you...I am really pleading with you to leave this country as soon as you can."

Q: Where was your family at this point?

A: My family was all together. There were seven people together in one house.

Q: None of you had married? None of the children had married?

A: No.

Q: O.K.

A: My sister was in England at that time. She got a permit to be away, and my brother-in-law, at that time, was in a concentration camp at that time.

Q: When this person said to you, "I advise you to leave", did you take that as a serious warning?

A: Very, very, very serious. I know, that, at that time, quite a few people already tried to escape Austria and to go into neighboring countries. They went to Italy. They went to Switzerland. They went to Hungary and to Yugoslavia and to the...all the other neighboring countries...to Finland, Norwegian, Sweden. They went all over to try to escape Austria, but I went from one consulate to the next. In fact, I want to tell you something. I was registered at the American consulate for emigration...I was on the waiting list under the Polish quota. It was terrible at that time to wait. So I went from one consulate to the next and I couldn't find it, except in the small...there was a small, little country, the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. This small country, said, "Yes, you are a physician, yes...we have a population of 300,000 people. We can only take in 10% of our population. The government lets us 10% of our population to get into this country for refuge...to escape Nazis." So, I went home right away, and called one of the...I didn't take my brothers, but I took my best friend. We packed our rucksack. We left everything there. I said "good-bye" to my mother. She said, "Well how long can Hitler last?" Nobody would believe that Hitler will live such a...survive...this situation and never come back...so, in the meantime...

Q: So, they didn't feel threatened? Your parents didn't feel threatened?

A: They felt threatened. But, you know, with older people, they were in their sixties, it is very, very hard to get yourself away, and they figured, well, maybe...in the (words missing in original transcript) meantime, they took in only the younger people in the concentration camp. That was (words missing in original transcript) at that time. It was about '38, right after the Anschluss. The Anschluss was March 12, 1938. And, now, we went back...we took the train from Vienna and we went through Germany on the train, crossing the border up to Trier, that was a border town between Luxemburg and Vienna...uh...between Luxemburg and Germany. And, I didn't take my Austrian passport with me. I took the International Students' Service book and...the students are very highly regarded in Europe at that time. They know nothing will happen. And, in the corridors of the trains, we saw quite a few of the Nazis, S.A. walking back and forth and looking

at everybody, and asked me, "What are you doing here?" We are almost entering the war, and, "We are going to Luxemburg, we want to go...we have a convention there." We were young at that time...and in our twenties...they said, "All right." They didn't do anything then. But...there was something fishy about them...about us. And, just before we came to Trier, which is the border line between Austria.....between Vienna.....between Germany and Luxemburg, they came to us...the Nazis. They frisked us to find out if we had anything on us. They said, "Get out, you Jews." Then, they found out they never saw (words missing in original transcript) Jews in their life before. "Get out." So we went out. There was only one...one train from Trier to Luxemburg. Across the border...

Q: You were probably happy to get out.

A: I came. I fell on my knees and kissed the earth. Because I knew I was safe. But I had a terrible guilt complex because of this. Because I am saved and my brothers and my sister are there and my parents are there. How can I, how can I help them? So, we met with friends here and we were supported at that time by the EZRA. EZRA was part of the Joint Distribution Committee of the States, the United States, the Jewish, and they sent money...support...they knew what was going to happen...they know more than we did...they tried to help us. And, with those special funds for us, we were put up in a nice hotel. We had good food. Everything was taken care of. But, we were not allowed to work because the population was so small and foreigners coming in taking some jobs away that time, that they wouldn't let us work. So, I couldn't do nothing about it. In the meantime, I found out that, I have to...I got a letter from my parents and from my sister, that her...husband,,husband to be...was in Dachau in a concentration camp...and the only way for him to get out was to send him tickets to leave Europe from Dachau. It goes off to Africa. So, I was running to get it. And I sent a ticket. He went to Morocco, to Niger.

Q: They really would let you out of a concentration camp if you had passage to leave?

A: At that time, yes. It was just in the beginning. It was not before the Crystal Night, Kristallnacht. You have probably heard about it...

Q: Yes, of course.

A: Before that time, there was still a little bit of good...the Germans, until 1933 till 1938, they could leave Germany with all their belongings, with all their money. Later on, they were glad they could get out alive, you know. That was...

Q: With the clothes on their backs...

A: The worst things happened, I guess, in 1942 when I was here already. So, then, it was all right for 1½ years, from 1938. I was there in July 1938 until 1939 I had to

do something with my two brothers to save them. So, I went to the government there in Luxemburg. I told them I have two brothers and I want to save them. So, they said, "We still have open." So, I got my younger brother out. Henry. And I sent him. I called and sent him a ticket and said, "Come right away." "Come right away and come in here." So, he came. He left his parents and he was with me, in Luxemburg. And, then I had an older brother, too. I went to the Committee, and want to save another brother. I have one more brother. It was a small country. They were very congenial. And, it was...on Yom Kippur night. I met some...we were invited to break the fast...by people who owned a store...a big department store...and his wife was not Jewish. She had even a cross...and she said, "What's the matter, Jack why are you so sad?" "I am terribly upset. I want to get my brother out of there...how could I do it?" So, she told me, "Don't worry. Let him come to the border in Trier, and I, as a Christian, will go over the border and bring your brother over here." Now, they couldn't remain there any more because the border...they gave a transit visa for one night to stay in Luxemburg, and then, we shipped him into Belgium, so he was safe. So now, my older brother was safe, and my younger brother was with me. We lived there until, from '38 until September 1, 1939. September 1, 1939 was the date the war was declared between Austria, between Germany and England and France at that time. The war was on and I was in a defenseless country in Luxemburg...and I figured, "Oh, no, I will not remain in a defenseless country." There was no army. They were a small country and my best bet would be to leave as soon as possible. Where to go, I did not know. But, my brother and I, we decided to go into France, and we would be behind the Maginot line. Remember...

Q: Yes, they thought it was going to be a very safe place to be.

A: Yes. I go behind the Maginot line and, we were, at that time, we went to...Nice...not Nice...it was Nancy. It was a little French town...small Nancy...and we figured, now we are behind the Maginot line...we will probably be safe, and we went to the prefecture...the prefecture was the police department in France. Have you been there?

Q: Yes.

A: And, in France, we went to the prefecture, and told him our story, that we just came over from across the border and we wanted to join...we had both decided...we want to join the French army to fight Hitler. We were young at that time. And, the policeman commanded us "What kind of a...what nationality are you?" And we said, "We are Jews." "But, what nationality are you?" "We are Austrians." "Oh, no. As Austrians you are our enemy alien...and we give you a choice. Either you join the French Foreign Legion or you remain here as a prisoner, a civil prisoner of war...in a camp...in a what do you call it..."

A: In an internment camp?

A: In an internment camp. To be in an internment camp. We grant you that you came with the best intentions to the...but we can't help you.

Q: You must have been very disappointed at that response.

A: Well, I was disappointed...I...uh...my brother stated, if we have to die, we are going to die in Europe, not in the French Foreign Legion. We can never get out. So, we were interned there. And, I met the Commander of the camp. I told him my story. "Look, I came back with the best intentions, to serve your country, and look what they are doing to me. (words missing in original transcript). He was bilingual. Because it was Alsace-Lorraine at that time, they had the Maginot Line was switching over. Sometimes, in previous years, they were in Germany, then it belonged to France. So, he was bilingual. He understood my tensions. He said, "I can't help you..." and, then there was was a....what do you call it...a sergeant...he was a real Frenchman...there were no exceptions. That man has to make the labor for them to put in terrible? floors in the fort...that was fortified, you know, because there was a borderline against Germany.

Q: But they didn't want to use your services as a doctor in the camp?

A: At that time...at that time...nothing. But the commander was very bright and said, "Let's wait. I have to wait for my superior, who was a colonel, when he comes from the bigger town, from Alsace. He will come and we'll tell him your story." He came into my...he came up and he introduced me as a physician to the camp commander, who was a colonel. He was very smart-looking, tall, highly intelligent. I didn't speak his language and he didn't speak my language. He spoke French and I spoke, at that time, only German. We had a good connection there, because the Commander spoke both languages, and, after he told him the story, he shook his head and he took off the Red Cross band and put it on my arm, and told me, "You'll be the doctor of this internment camp. You'll be the physician with al, the privileges attached." So, they gave me an infirmary, and I was sleeping in the infirmary, and you know who was my assistant?

Q: Your brother, I presume.

A: Oh, you are smart. I made my brother my assistant here and I was eating at the officers' mess, you know. For Christmas, I was given presents, and, one thing I didn't know, I had to join them, in the morning at 10 o'clock to drink Pernod--- that was a heavy drink with coffee and Pernod. But, I had to play the game with them.

Q: It doesn't sound like such a bad game.

A: No. That was already in 1939...yah, 1940,1940. In 1940, in the beginning, there was building a Rothschild Committee in Paris, France...and in some internment camps were all over France, because there were very few refugees there already,



and they had to be assembled because they were not fighters. They would not let them join the French army and some had been in the French Foreign Legion actually, and some had died there. So they came to my camp and interviewed me and said to me, "Do you have affidavits?" I said, "Yes." "Where are your affidavits now?" The affidavits have been sent from Vienna. The American Consulate transferred them to Antwerp in Belgium. Luxemburg, itself, didn't have a consulate.

Q: What were the affidavits for?

A: For me to emigrate to the United States.

Q: I see.

A: Immigration. Immigration. At that time, you had a quota system. Do you know about those things?

Q: Yes. Didn't somebody in this country have to promise that (double voices)

A: Yes. I have a cousin there. Yes. Yes. She sent in already the...suffice to say, I was giving a letter, and within two weeks, that was in the beginning of February, in 1940, to go to the American consulate in Paris, and to be examined there, to take my physical, and to get my visa to the United States. Only I got it, not my brother. I guess they were looking for physicians. Roosevelt already was preparing already was preparing for the war. And, but I was still a prisoner in some ways. I was interned. They wouldn't let me loose by myself to go to Paris, so I had an accompanist, a soldier...accompanist, a soldier

Q: An escort?

A: An escort. Soldier, who was (my wife is in the room). An escort soldier. He was so happy to go with me to Paris, to get away from that line there. I can see his radiating face yet. And, finally, I went to the consulate. That was his job (words missing in original transcript) most times. But he couldn't let me off. I was examined. I got my visa but now I need transportation. I need transportation. Where shall I go? And I was assigned to an embarkation camp to wait for the fare, to wait for the trip...to Bordeaux, France, southern part of France, in Bordeaux. Now, I was again, the same thing as when I start, a prisoner. They didn't select me as a physician because of the short stay. They were only there for embarkation and waiting for transportation. And I became quite ill there. I had either pneumonia or tuberculosis. I had to be admitted to the hospital. Admitted. Oh, my God! What am I going to do now? I am waiting for transportation while in the hospital. So, I was pleading with the chief medical officer. "Please. Let me go! Never mind the chart, what it says. I have to go, because I got to get really better. I was young. Because I am waiting for transportation." And finally, I got my...uh...I was supposed to leave from St.

Nazaire, France, with the S.S. Champlain. The boat was S.S. Champlain from St. Nazaire, France, to the United States. I have to be there on May 10.

Q: 1940?

A: May 10, 1940. America was not at war yet. And, then, I came to the...In 1940, May 10, there was already something...the Panzer division of Germany. They were starting in...they didn't...there was an attrition between the Maginot Line; on one side, the French, and on the other side, the Germans. In the meantime, Hitler had already started to rumble with the Panzer division. They went around the Maginot Line into...into Holland, and from Holland, down south to Belgium and from Belgium into France.

Q: That was something that they never anticipated. That they would go around the Maginot Line.

A: Well you know the story about the Maginot Line. So, I got transportation with a bus. We were maybe 10-15 people on a vacation, going to join some people in St. Nazaire. We are going up North from the Southern part, and they are coming down...all the refugees are coming down from the North, down South to save themselves, because Hitler was following. Some of them were shaking their fists. Said, "What are you doing? Where are you going? Are you going to fight us?" In the meantime they didn't realize that we are going to St. Nazaire to the boat dock. So, we boarded the S.S. Champlain. We were completely blacked out because the bombers were already rolling...the German bombers over France, and we boarded the boat, May 10, 1940. I remember it like today. It took us seven days, a week, to go...to arrive in New York harbor. May 17, 1940, we arrived in New York harbor. In the meantime, we were completely blacked out. I had the address and telephone number of my cousins, in the Bronx. Do you know New York?

Q: Yes, I used to live there.

A: In the Bronx. On the Grand Concourse. But I couldn't do anything there. Meantime, we had the National Council of Jewish Women were there, and some other...HIAS was there...

Q: Hebrew International Aid Society?

A: Yes. To give us a hand, to do something. So I told them I am...uh...they said, "Right, now we can do nothing. We will give you...you have to take a cab and go to the shelter at 425 Lafayette Street." There was a shelter of the HIAS at that time. So, what am I going to do, I had a few shillings with me...the cab driver was so mad. I gave him all my money. He took me to the shelter at 425. In the meantime...

Q: Why wouldn't they let you make phone contact with your cousin?

A: Wait a second...they had to register me first. When I came there, to Lafayette Street, I figured, well, I am going to call them. There was no answer. In the afternoon, no answer. Well I knew that this was a broken English. I took the subway. Went to the Grand Concourse. I went up on the seventh floor where they used to live. I rang the bell. There was nobody home. There were two single girls...I thought, "My God, in America--you are working." I didn't realize you have to work in America.

Q: Laughter.

A: So, I went back to Lafayette Street and I told the receptionists. They called and they called. Then they thought, "We are going to fix them." They sent a night letter telegram to 1939 Grand Concourse. And, the next morning, I got a call from them and they picked me up and took me to their home. Now I was safe in America. Now, I got the bad feeling after what happens to you, the remorse and the terrible guilt feelings. I am here safe and all my family are not. I didn't know what to do.

Q: You got out just in the nick of time, it seems.

A: I was lucky. There were no boats anymore. Because Hitler invaded all of France. Occupied part of France and unoccupied part of France. The Vichy France, if you remember, and the other part. Now, I am here. What shall I do? I got to get a job. You know, in America you cannot stay. They are very nice to me, the Americans...they gave me a quarter to go to the movies to get some...at that time they didn't have any air-conditioning like now. The only time to cool off was...it was already May. The first thing I noticed when I arrived in New York Harbor was the terrible humidity. In May, humidity! Coming from Europe, there is no humidity...so, in the meantime, in the next couple of weeks, two weeks, there was a resettlement of foreign physicians, to see if they can't place some doctors as interns...not in a big...in New York City you couldn't get anything. There was no places to get an internship, residency or even running the elevators in the hospital, being on an emergency crew...you couldn't do anything. So, my cousin took me (words missing in original transcript) to go to Macy's. to buy a beautiful suit. A young man, 29 years old, you look good and you have an appointment there to meet all the Superintendents from different hospitals. They came from the mid-West. From all over, from the middle West and selected people. So, within two weeks, or one week I got a letter, from St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Lafayette, Indiana, "You are hereby appointed intern, as of July 1, 1940 to July 1, 1941." Now that's a good thing, already. I went to the middle West. I had a roommate there. I was single at that time. And, I had somebody to take care of me, my basic needs. A beautiful place to sleep. It was a different...

Q: In those days, people who had medical school education in Europe were considered to have far better training than people who were trained in this country.

A: That is another story. I will tell you. When the war broke out...no, even before the war broke out, in 1940, Pearl Harbor was December 7, 1941, there was a...and I sent a letter to the Surgeon General's office. I wanted to join the American army. I got a beautiful letter from the Surgeon General's office, from Washington D.C., "Dear Doctor Leinwand: Due to your recent arrival in the United states, and not being an American citizen, and not being a graduate of a Canadian or American medical school, we cannot avail ourselves of your loyal offer of services." But, at that time, you had to register for the draft. With this letter, I went to the draft, in Lafayette, Indiana. They told me, "Doctor, as long as you stay in this hospital, during the wartime, we will not draft you as a private. You are more valuable for us to be a doctor in the hospital than a private in the Army." So, I stayed there until the war was over. Then, in 1944, I got my license to practice medicine in New York State and then I went to different hospitals and then I married for the first time in 1947. I was up in Ft. George. Do you know where Ft. George is?

Q: No, I am not sure where it is.

VOICE: The tip of Manhattan Island. The northern tip of Manhattan Island.

A: Near where the Fourth Reich is, the people that used to live there. Cabrini Blvd. Senecus Ave.

VOICE: The German refugees were centered there. And he worked for another doctor there.

A: First I bought an office and started practicing medicine there. Two lovely children. We have two lovely children, and four lovely grandchildren.

Q: Where are your children?

A: My son is in Israel. In a Moshav.

Q: He made Aliyah?

A: Ya. But four years ago. Got two beautiful grandchildren there. They are living in a Moshav near Elan?

Q: A Moshav is not really a Kibbutz. It's a collective community.

A: That's correct. And then, I have a daughter and a son-in-law in Kansas City. They are lawyers...

VOICE: He's a lawyer, and Ellen, his daughter, is director of all Jewish activities, teenage and adult Jewish activities for the city of Kansas.

Q: That's quite a responsibility.

A: Yes. They are both musicologists. One studied at Juilliard and Boulder, Colorado. My son-in-law has a doctorate. But he came back...he can't make any money so he became a lawyer.

Q: You didn't tell me about your family in Europe. What became of them?

A: That was...that's a terrible story. My brother was hidden by the Italians in underground, Northern Italy. He told story the other day. He left France later on, and he came here around 1949.

Q: Came here in 1949?

A: Came to America in 1949.

VOICE: And during that time, he was an actuary. He is an actuary. Very bright.

Q: This is Henry you are talking about?

A: Yes.

Q: How did he get to Italy?

A: He just fled. Over the border.

Q: The Italians were...

A: You are taking long chances...you have only one thing to save is your life...you take long chances. And, he was hidden by Italian farmers. They were against, at that time they were against Mussolini...

Q: They were not really anti-Semitic, were they, the Italians...?

A: No, no, absolutely not. Unless some of the Mussolini guards, maybe...And, my older brother I found out he was in Paris. He was quite ill. He had pleurisy and tuberculosis, and he was hidden in a hospital, in a French hospital, and, when the Nazis came in to make a roster, to find out, the French officer said, "Get out of here, there is nobody here Jewish, only sick people here...no politicals are here." So, he was saved. He came back and finally was liberated.

Q: When did he get to America?

A: In 1949. He came in later. And both of them got married. My Henry went from Paris, and he worked for the Joint Distribution Committee and he married in 1948 on the date when my daughter was born. September 17, 1948. He was married. And he came in later. He is an actuary, but now retired. He is only in his 60s. We are now in the 70s.

Q: And your parents?

A: My mother died a natural death. She had hypertension and she...she...in Vienna. And my father and the other sister, not the twin sister, were taken away.

VOICE: They never knew what happened to them. They had been rounded up.

A: You know what Yahrzeit is, right?

Q: Yes, of course I know.

A: Yahrzeit, I am having for them on the Holocaust Day, for those. That's my story.

Q: There must be a lot of people that observe that as a Yahrzeit because they don't really know.

A: That's right. What else would you like to ask me?

VOICE: Well he worked in New York as a physician. Also he had his own private office.

A: I have a very good...the facts are there. The talking...I need somebody, a ghost-writer or somebody.

Q: You are doing very well.

VOICE: Jack came to New York and he worked as a physician. He had his own private office practice and he also worked as a part-time employee in the Dept. of Hospitals for the City of New York.

A: Now there is another thing that I want to mention. That I am getting a pension from the City of New York and I even get a pension from Vienna, a very small pension from Vienna. I have a lot of remorse though.

Q: That you are getting it?

A: Yes.

Q: I mean you should be glad to get it. They owe you everything.

A: No.

VOICE: Don't go having remorse that you are getting it!

A: That I am having remorse? No.

VOICE: Jack, that's what you just said.

Q: That's what you just said. That you have remorse about getting the pension.

VOICE: No, he is getting the pension, a very small pension from Vienna. From Vienna...from Austria. It took a long time for it to come through because they had to verify the fact that he was born in...that he was living in Vienna and that he was persecuted.

A: Was persecuted.

VOICE: Was persecuted, worked for no money. So finally he gets a very small pension.

A: The small pension is because the...this is because...remorse? No. They are having remorse. Not I.

Q: I don't think they have any remorse.

VOICE: They have no remorse. Not with Waldheim being elected as the new president of Austria.

Q: That's a pretty bad situation. If you were to single out one thing in your experience during the Holocaust, that stands out in your memory, what one thing would that be?

A: One thing is when I have the consultation with my brother, what we should do. Should we join...you understand that was a very important decision to make.

Q: But how about just getting over...

VOICE: That is when he visited Lafayette, Indiana, went to St. Elizabeth's Hospital after a forty-five year absence.

A: That's not so important. But, she wants to know the outstanding thing from me. This was not a decision to make. I was lucky. I didn't have any decision to make.

Q: They just found you a job. The job found you.

A: No, I am talking about going into Luxemburg. That decision. There was no question about what to make. The important decision to make was shall I go to Africa or shall I stay here? That is a very...very...as far as I am concerned that was a very important for the future of my life.

Q: Yes, and it probably shaped your life more than you can ever realize.

A: That's correct...eventually...I didn't realize. I thought I would go in the internment camp and I would be like anybody else. In the meantime, I was lucky enough that a man came up and made me a physician so at least...

Q: What were the conditions like in the internment camp? Did you have enough to eat? Were you able to keep reasonably clean?

A: Well until I became a physician. No, it was very bad. The French...what you call it...those floors were ice cold, marble...

Q: Marble?

A: Marble floors we had to sleep on. Not much...

Q: How did they have marble floors in an internment camp?

VOICE: He slept on cement floors in the internment camp

A: Cement floors.

VOICE: They had very little food.

Q: O.K. Well, I can't think of anything else to ask you. Is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven't asked?

A: No, but the reason why I am telling you this story is that I hope and pray to God that our future generations will not have to go through this terrible experience that I went through here.

Q: Well...

A: I want to add something else.

Q: O.K.

A: I would like to add something that when I first...the first two or three weeks when I came to New York, in 1940, I had a guilt complex. I wanted to save my parents and I wanted to save my brothers, and, at the suggestion of one of my cousins, I got a lawyer and the lawyer...I don't know how I paid for it...and I got a lawyer...I



wanted to get some visas for my parents...and at that time it was just before Pearl Harbor, before the war and the Congress was terrible. I had to go to the Congress.

Q: The national Congress, in Washington?

A: Yes, yes. I was subpoenaed. I wanted to tell them the story, and they thought that I was doing some espionage work or something.

Q: They didn't believe you?

A: No. Finally they believed me, you know, but they were very...it was a terrible situation. I am coming to save my parents, family and that was what they were going to do to me. The lawyer should have known about it. Once they subpoena you, they want to know your story, but whatever happened, I wanted to save my family.

VOICE: And Javits was involved as the lawyer.

A: Jack Javits, yes.

VOICE: The Senator Jack Javits.

Q: He was the lawyer that you had at that time?

A: No, that was later on. Later on, in 1949, after the war was over already, I know I got...they were instrumental in getting my brothers over too.

Q: It was nice that they were on your side. It was nice that we had a Jewish Congressman.

A: Yes, he was Congressman and became Senator from my district.

Q: Well, I certainly appreciate your giving of yourself and your time in telling your story, because it does add to our collection of information. As I told you, this will be shared with high schools and the university and community groups and it will be available in libraries for people doing reference, and, with the hope, among other things, that it will prevent this kind of thing from ever happening again.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much.