

National Council of Jewish Women Sarasota-Manatee Section  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
Interview with Manfred Simon, Survivor  
March 24, 1986  
Sarasota, Florida

(Note: For inexplicable reasons, the first portion of this interview is not recorded on this tape. There was a considerable amount of time which elapsed between the interview and the transcription and so it was not possible to reconstruct what happened to the beginning material. In the normal course of an interview, there is an opening statement by the interviewer, in this case Elinor Borenstine, giving her name, the date and place of the interview and introducing the interviewee, in this case Mr. Manfred Simon. The material in this interview is extremely interesting and valuable. We apologize for the missing information, but certainly deem it worthy to be included in this project.)

Q: Anything like that that you belonged to?

A: No, not at that age that I remember. It was schooling uh in the regular school system and schooling being taught in the Hebrew sense, also. Affiliation for myself at that age I don't recall.

Q: Okay, now uh in this high school. This was how many years? And you began at what age?

A: Well, we begin, we begin in school at the age of five and this was...I would say...and this was about three or four years schooling that I had when I left Frankfurt, Germany.

Q: I see. Okay, uh, did you have a larger family; this was your immediate family. Did your mother and father have other family? Brothers, sisters?

A: Oh, yes, yes, we had ah uncles and aunts.

Q: Oh, that's it.

A: ...and cousins and it was quite a sizeable family that I remember and well known in the circles and well known in the social department and so my father, I want to bring out if you ask me this question, there have to be ties because ah we went back I know that my father was born in Frankfurt, my grandfather was born in Frankfurt, so that some generations you go back to this town, so there must be ties uh certainly there were.

Q: Okay. Now when your mother first decided there was trouble and she wanted to leave, uh, where did she want to go?

A: Well, my mother came from a small town which was called Memel and that was part of Lithuania. That was East Prussia, above Danzig. It was -- her parents lived there, still lived there. And the good part it was a summer resort, it's the Baltic Sea. Even in good times, she took her children, during the summer months, to be at the seashore with the children. Now only it became a bit of a one --way trip, with no return. She took us there, the children. Same way as every year before -- we are going to the seashore and then we will see when the summer's over. In the meantime, during the summer it became less tolerable for Jewish people to live in Germany. Pressures came on that we were not used to and my mother decided to enroll me into school. My sister I think was just about to begin the first year school and my father hesitated of coming, still. He did his business in Germany. I am not quite sure year if it was another full year, but for a little while, until it became intolerable and more or less were not open any more for him to travel freely, as we had, with a normal passport, with a normal visa, with purchasing a railroad ticket as you would in normal days...this has disappeared. So it became a little bit of a problem. My father had to liquidate, or rather leave things, and had to get over the closed borders, or illegal borders, or (words missing in original transcript) borders, into Belgium first. Then again it took months, with contacts, to work his way over borders into Holland. From Holland, where he had big business connections, it had to be worked out for months again to put him on a freighter that went to England and then to Memel, which was a port. He was a number of months on a ship. We had contact very little, but then we had radio contact via Holland. The ship came into the open sea, into Memel, could not come to the coast close enough because of my father, because he was illegally stowed away and the captain knew very well about it. It was worthwhile for the captain to expose himself and take that chance. It took 10 days to lie out on high sea, with the Lithuanian government being aware of the fact there was a ship, but for some reason requested night landing. And we succeeded during one night, with a small rowboat to get him off high sea and bring him into port. And this was the beginning of his joining us, illegal, no passport, stateless, something unknown in today, what it is to be a stateless human being. It means a person without any country. And that is bad, tough, and sometimes unbelievable what one has to go through to walk freely the street of whatever country, without having anybody speak for you. We were stateless people.

Q: You, also?

A: Of course. The system in Europe was that whoever the head of the household was the head of the family and he had a passport of a country that automatically made the wife and children the same thing. And if he had no passport, that made the wife and the children the same thing. And that continues. It does not mean that if you become of a certain age that I can work away from home and say I have nothing to do.

Q: Surely. This was in the neighborhood of 1932, '33?

- A: This was exactly -- we left in '33 and it finished up, I would say, in 1934, in Memel. I went to school in Memel. I was barmitzvah in 1936. I remember vividly a tremendous big affair. Everything was fine and dandy.
- Q: And your father was there?
- A: Oh, my father was there. My father was working. It was expensive to live because we were stateless immigrants and remained on that status I guess until the war began. It wasn't as the system as we have here, that if you wait five years you apply for your citizenship and you become a citizen. Stateless means you remain until you die-- stateless.
- Q: Um, hum.
- A: Over there. I went to normal public schools, I went to the finest high schools, which we call gymnasium. Gymnasium...to graduate from the gymnasium is a bit more of an education than we offer in this country, in the United States. A youngster graduating from gymnasium has an equivalent of a minimum of two to three years into college. (words missing in original transcript) he is well into his third year of college. That is normal school. In 1938, which was my senior year for school my parents decided to give me the finer of the finest education a parent can offer and send me into another foreign country, to Sweden, to complete the schooling that was needed and to finish up with some background of living in another country, of having other parents, and this was called an "Internat." Internat means, actually I think it is, I will explain it as a dormitory type living and you eat and you study. I graduated that a year later, 1939, I believe. Yes, 1939. At that time the Baltic Sea has been mined already by the Germans. And to go back was not the safest way. We did not have the means of air transportation that we have today. Where everything is by plane. You pick it up and in a few hours you are at your destination. Primarily over water was by boat and over land was by train. At that time, when I graduated, my father was on a business trip back from Holland to Memel, to Lithuania. He stopped off in Stockholm and I met with my father there and my father said to me that he would like for me to remain here. And I was very homesick and I said "Under no circumstances will I remain here." And he said, "Dangerous moving." No, I forgot to mention something. During the time when I was in Sweden, during that year, Memel was overrun by Hitler troops. And while I was in school, my parents were forced to flee, once again, to Kovno, which was the capitol of Lithuania. I intimated that ( words missing in original transcription) coming earlier, but...so now having mentioned that during the final school years, Memel was occupied by Germany, we had to leave once again and now my return home was not to Memel, where I left from, but it was to Kovno. Kovno is not a port, it is not on the water, so we had to get first to Riga. Riga is the capitol of Latvia. Latvia is part of the Baltic States. The Baltic States where history for geographical reasons, three – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Latvia has a port which is called Riga. So one has to get

there in order to pick up a train and get over the border into the next country. However, my father tried everything under the sun to convince me not to join them back home. And I decided I will go. Silently, quietly, but not too quietly he arranged for me to continue sleeping in the hotel, while he leaves early in the morning for the port. And arranged with local friends, Swedish friends, to take me and settle me there. Well, this didn't work because I didn't sleep during the night. I knew that this was coming and of course I was on the boat with him going back and we were praying all the time on the ship that the ship should not blow up due to hitting a mine, which we knew were laid, but nobody can see. We made port of Riga, which is -- I don't know exactly any more, but if I am correct it was a two-day crossing.. And we had now the communication. These days it was not what it is today, that you knew every minute of television what was going on, whether you are up in the air or below the water, wherever. We had no knowledge what is going on in the world until we landed and the only thing we found out when we landed is that there is nobody at pier side to pick anybody up. So no families -- nobody until we knew problem. And coming into town we had problems crossing the border from Latvia into Lithuania, because we knew there is a war going on. The war was breaking out. That was in 1938 or maybe '39, I don't remember now the year when it was. It was '37 when I came to Sweden, so it could be '38 or '39. But, as you know, in 1939, where Hitler went into Poland and that was in September 1<sup>st</sup> of 1939. So we were right in the battlefield. We came back home, succeeded in getting back to Kovno, back to the family, my mother, my sister, grandparents, back home. It was still a normal life. The war started in September 1<sup>st</sup> with Poland. He ran into Warsaw quite quickly. But it stopped here and there. I went...I took a job in Kovno in order to prepare myself to be permitted to come to the United States. During these years, in America, everything was a quota system. And so many people were allowed from this country and so many people were allowed from that country. And our quota, being a small country, was very small, A lot of people wanted to go.

Q: What made you want to go to America? Did you have family over here?

A: No. We had, yes, we had cousins and aunts, but really not parents or grandparents. But this was the country to go to. There were two countries to go to. It was either England or it was America. This is what we knew -- two countries. Then, in order to come to America, a lot easier, if one had a profession. At that time that was needed here, what was told us, if I could get anything like baking or confectionary work and so on. So, fine. So you went to the finest coffee house and my parents, of course, constantly or daily or on weekends, having your coffee in coffee house or your tea, your "kaffe klatch" in these places and you knew well each owner. So it was arranged that, for a slight nominal fee, instead of paying me, that my parents paid them to give me the necessary education, so I

can get a piece of paper that says I am a confectioner, that I can make pies and cakes with decorations on top, something which is not too well known here. Because here the decorations are terrible. I criticize to this day.

Q: Ha-ha.

A: You buy a beautiful cake with roses on top, but if you go in your back yard and you look at what a rose looks like and you look what a cabbage head looks like, you will find out that these are cabbage heads and not roses.

Q: (laughter).

A: But you wouldn't see any more (words missing in original transcript). Ah, I took this up. In the meantime, I also went to night school, evening school, to Lithuanian high school where they taught English and also I took English as a foreign language. I felt now that I should learn to see to pick up a little bit more the street language, so I should be able a little bit to converse if I do get to America and on that bench in school I met my wife who also took that up. I had met her once before, but it was not significant. Now it became significant. And that was, at that time, it was now life continued with us normal until 1941. In 1941, in 1940 already, it became the battleground. That means the Germans marched into Kovno, the Russians came back and threw out the Germans. And this went on twice, back and forth. It was a battleground that means today you are a German, tomorrow you are a Russian. There's two ways, both ways, that the Jews had to suffer. From the Germans we know that the Jew was suffering because he was born to the Jewish religion and this was his crime. Nothing else. The Russians did not show open anti-Semitism. Also we do know that anti-Semitism exists. But the Russians went again for the rich people because the rich people are the ones who are anti-Communist. If you have money, you cannot be a Communist and if you are a Communist, you cannot have money. So it is not...it is needless to say that a lot of Jewish people have been very well-to-do. So these were automatically the enemies of the country the moment they marched in. My family was one of them. So my father hidden out in a basement of a butcher shop in the freezer, because that was thought to be more or less safe. Why, I don't know. It was safe. I again, ah, thought that I could become a proletarian by putting on leather boots, leather coat, you know, as you would today like the motorcycle gang. You know, become a gang guy, gang-looking guy...

Q: Sure, sure.

A: And I got away with it. You know, I marched down to the captain. After all, I haven't done anything wrong. So I wasn't bothered. That time the

wave went away and, uh, normal life began as Russian citizens automatically. All of a sudden, we were Russian citizens and for a moment you were happy about it, because we didn't have to be anymore stateless. That was personal. All of a sudden, automatically, you had a passport in your pocket.

Q: Oh, yes, yes.

A: Automatically you had a passport in your pocket, so at least you were somebody. Really nobody, but still it felt like somebody. Also, we take it for granted in this country, well, the passport is due to me. The passport is mine. Big deal, I got one. Sure I was born and raised here. Don't take it for granted. Be proud that you have it. It's a very important part of your life. You cannot live without a heart and you cannot live very much without a passport, if you want to get along.

Q: We don't realize that.

A: We don't realize that and therefore I want -- I know it from experience, I know, I want to emphasize that don't take it lightly. Have one, it costs only a few dollars. It's yours for the asking. Ah, we lived under the Russians, of course. If you had a home or an apartment, as you used to, you know, so many bedrooms and comfort and maids and servants and what was normal life to us, all of a sudden disappeared. All of a sudden it came decrees that a family of four is allowed to live in so many square feet and I don't know exactly how many square feet any more, but so many square feet as we were the four of 'em was just about the size of one bedroom. So, if the apartment consisted of six, seven rooms, the other five rooms or six rooms were automatically occupied by other families. So you didn't have to put an ad in the paper and say I got five rooms for rent. The five rooms were confiscated and overtaken immediately. So this was something that we didn't like, but it still didn't mean life and death. Ah, we continued living this abnormal life until, until June, no that was in 1940, '41. At that time, the Germans came back again -- pushed the Russians out and now started the game over again. Now we became again the Jews who were not wanted. And, of course, the Germans prepared, ah, an area of Kovno for the ghetto to put in all the Jews. The ghetto was established in a suburb of Kovno which is called Slabotka. Slabotka is very well known in Jewish religious circles, worldly, because was a most famous Yeshiva, a school of higher learning, world renown. The orthodox people were studying and living in Slabotka. So this was convenient for the Germans to take over, since this was primarily Jewish, so all they had to do was put a wire fence around it and that's it and whoever doesn't live there, of course, they herded in. And one of 'em was, of course our family. Now we did -- we had time. Yet there was a certain day when that was to be closed. We were already instructed to wear yellow stars

indicating to the public that whoever wore a yellow star is a Jew.

Uh, Jews had to wear that, but they were still free to walk the streets. Of course you were free to walk the streets, but you were not safe from being molested or being hit by stones or nasty remarks, such as "Dirty Jews" and things of that sort. I, having been a German-born Jew, have the German language as a mother tongue, spoke the German with a dialect, having had blue eyes and my name being Manfred Zemon had no problem of walking the streets without the yellow star and I did so. Until one day, I remember some post office workers sitting on the stoop of the post office during lunch hour, and I happened to walk by, somebody made the remark, "This looks like a dirty Jew." But I stood up, I stopped immediately, being insulted, and I walked up and let him have it, "How dare they calling me that name?" and continued on my way and I wasn't further molested, until we had to enter the Kovno ghetto, which it was known, and that began in June 1941.

Q: You were 18?

A: I was 18 years old, barely – I was 17, 18 years old, yeh. In 1941, uh, the gates to the ghettos were closed and, of course, this was a completely new life, living, life style. We had organized by the Germans a Jewish government, as you would call it today, without --meaningless, actually. We had a head of the ghetto, an elder Jew, an elder Yehuda, who was called the president. I recall his name was Dr. Elkes, a medical man, a very fine man. And then there was a Judenrat, which is -- which is, I would say a governing body of that ghetto...

Q: ...as a representative...

A: ...a representative for various departments, you know; little schooling for kids and a little security. Then we had a police force. The Jewish police force, of course, there were no clubs, there were no pistols, there were no rifles. There was a hat, a uniform hat, and an armband that indicated that he was a policeman -- beware. The power over the inhabitants...

Q: ...of the ghetto?

A: Of the ghetto, which was an irony in itself, you know. I mean what do you expect one Jew to beat the other one? But we were controlled by the German police, who walked and controlled the ghetto from the outside with dogs, with rifles, with pistols, with electricity. So we were nothing but walking targets. But we tried to live as normal a life as we could. The population was recruited to work.

Q: How many of them were you in this ghetto approximately?

A: I really don't remember. I don't want to give you a figure. Whatever figure I give you would be more than guessing. I should know, but I really don't know.

Q: It's all right, not important.

A: Uh, the work force consisted for, for domestic, where there was some little manufacturing done for the Germans. Primarily people were marched out every day from the ghetto into the cities, into factories. The factories were paying the Germans for the labor, not to us. Uh, they were moved out in groups which were called "Colona" and then there was a Colona Fuehrer, which is called the leader, the head of it, who was a Jew, and the moment you left that fence, that gate, of course you had German guards left and right, rifles that are ready to shoot. We were walking primarily in not the finest shoes, not the best walking shoes. I remember having walked in wooden shoes which were called "klumpus". This is just a slang expression, I suppose. And so you know these wooden shoes, primarily the Dutch wear them. They weren't as nicely decorated, but this is, in essence, what they wear and it isn't easy to walk and and to live in these shoes, uh, if you're not used to it. And we were not used to it. I personally worked in a work brigade building an airport. Slave labor, hard work and the minimum of food, minimum, uh, toilet facilities were very restricted. We did not know any more what a bathroom was, or toilet. But we did know, we learned to know what a latrine is. And this is actually what was available to us.

Q: Did this work force include women also?

A: Yes.

Q: Everyone?

A: Yup. The work force, the women, however, were primarily left in the ghettos and they did their work in the ghettos that had to be done in ghettos. And of course the ghettos was part of the city. It was a big area of land and houses, uh, so it took...women were doing also homework. But if you were not capable of being on a work force, uh, it was not, it didn't speak we for you. Because actually, what do we need you for, because the German always said "We feed you." Well the feeding, I must admit, uh, we have been, if we have been out in the city, we were trying individually to promote our survival and I remember the little while I had a whole business running. I came (laughter) -- it's true -- I came every night and people came to me and I would take from them tablecloths, linen, uh, bed sheets and I would wrap this around my body and next day march out with the force to work and somehow over the time, we made contact with



the farmers or whatever it was close to us and they would bring us bacons, butter, bread, and then we had the job to smuggle that stuff in. And this is not easy to smuggle in. It is the same way as when you come through Customs. The only thing is you're here. They're not very kind and nice, say what you please, open your bag up. There they go with the bayonet right through you, you see. And if they stuck you point blank and you had flour around your back and they were put in like a corset, well everything ran out there. And if it happened to be a mistake, so the blood came out instead of the flour. Not a big thing; normal at that time. The life in the ghetto was abnormal. We had immediately -- I would say six months after coming into the ghetto, we had the first pogrom, I would call it, if this is a word that is better known. In Russian it's called an "ablava," which is a surprise...

Q: Raid?

A: Raid -- thank you. Uh, we were told that they need five hundred of the most intellectual people for special purposes, which is course, to benefit us. We would not have to work in the fields or building airports or in heat and cold and weather. We would have work that would go together with our education, with our brains. Now, of course, everybody would have loved to be considered the most intelligent one. Well, people assembled and I remember exactly where, but the location wouldn't make any difference. On a school yard, schoolhouses, in back of us and lined up like you would line up 500 soldiers for attention, standing at attention. And I was among them. And so was a young boy. Somehow, I think that our common senses, the common sense is something that we did have, something that we do not see today much at all anymore. Because nothing is being done today anymore that I can see, by common sense. But everything is being done today by seminars, tapes, my making actually recording machines out of us, to repeat what we have heard just now and we cannot deviate, because it wasn't on the tape. So, therefore, our common sense doesn't exist any more or has been taken from us. It's killed. We were different. In those days, it was a matter of survival and it was a matter of not making mistakes. If you made a mistake, there was only one you could make and the second one you had no chance anymore. I stood in line and somehow, something told me this does not smell very good. I had nothing really to indicate to me that it was so. But I decided to fall out, to disappear, which wasn't easy either anymore, because at that moment they were counting -- 1, 2, 3 -- so I was one of the 500. And you cannot just fall out and then all of a sudden there's 499, because you take a chance that they'll wipe out the whole 499, if they don't produce the 500, or if there's more. I decided to get -- fall back, actually.

I went into a school building, or like a school barrack which was in back of

me, straight in back of me, against the wall. There was an opening and I went into a locker and just put myself straight into the locker and stayed there for a little while and they marched 'em out -- the 500. I stayed there for hours. Nobody was there anymore. I must admit that I was a bit shaky...

Q: I guess...

A: Didn't know did I do right, didn't know did I do wrong, didn't know what's all about it. But I could have made very easily a mistake and said, "Well, this is my chance and I threw it away." It was not. The 500 have never been seen or heard of, not a one of 'em. They went straight to the seventh fort, which is a fort -- is a...

Q: A fort as we know it?

A: Uh, huh.

Q: Oh, all right; I understand.

A: It's, it's...

Q: An encampment, of soldiers?

A: Yes it, that was where they were taken and they were shot, point blank. The reason for that was very simple. If you take away the highest intellect, then the body is worthless. And this was the purpose of the German. Cut 'em off from their brains and the rest of the body we can move around.

Q: Did you know that at the time?

A: No, no. If you knew at the time, you wouldn't have 500 people, you would have 200.

Q: No, no, I mean did you know directly after?

A: We knew shortly thereafter what it was. Of course we were looking. We were very happy for the 500 that they had secured themselves, that the ghetto itself, the people, inhabitants, the family, were very happy whoever went and the others, of course were very disappointed that they were not part of it.

Ah, after a little while the length of time, we found out the disaster that all of them have been killed, cold-blooded and, of course we were elated -- my family were elated that it worked out this way for me. At that time,

already, as a young fellow, I got a feeling that, if God has spared me this time, I think I'll make it for other times, too. He'll be with me now. And I guess He was, because I'm here to tell the story.

Thereafter, work, hard labor, little food, little more food for people who were able to organize food. Some families had it better, some families had it worse. Uh, pogroms were always were something there. The next case were older people, where they brought us again into a big market place. And again, it was right and left. We didn't know whether you were...whether the right was good or whether the left was the good or the bad. So it was really no reason for you to push yourself, I want to go here, I want to go there. Because you really didn't know where you push. You only knew that after, whether it was right or was wrong. Whoever went the wrong way or was directed to the left which was the wrong way, that was the one who has never been seen anymore. They primarily were elderly people, sick people, crippled people. Uh, healthy, able bodied -- bodies, uh, were the ones which they still kept because the Germans made their living, their money, with slave labor. That's what we were. We were slave labors paid by the individual contractor, builders, farmers, or whatever needed labor. It was paid to the government -- whatever the going price it was, not to us. So, some good came out of it. Besides that, we were very good for cannon powder, also. Uh, these people were always taken to the forts. Forts we had around the Kovno, some mountains around and that's where these...I'm looking for the English word for the translation of...the actual translation of a fort. It doesn't come to me because at this moment, I guess, my mind is thinking a little bit back again in the German language, which I never do.

Q: It will come to you in a little while.

A: I have to transfer now back into German and back into English.

Q: Right. Where was your sister all this time? Was she doing the same thing you were?

A: Yeah, my sister was --we were together -- my father, my mother, my sister and I. Uh, I was dating at the time, my wife. I married my wife in 1944, in the same ghetto I'm speaking about, secretly Uh, we did have a rabbi. He chased us, I remember, seven times around the table. And I guess that this was all that was necessary. That's about all I remember and of course, there was no presence of -- presence of parents and a few witnesses only, because everything was extremely secretive and it really didn't mean that much because it's just the opposite of what's today. Today it's free living where we can live together and nobody says anything without having a marriage vow. At that time, it was impossible to move together with a marriage vow. So it is just the other way around, because

this would be against the likings of the Germans. Uh, the ghetto Kovno was...became part of the concentration camp Dachau in 1943, I believe. Nothing that has changed really, but we fell in under the jurisdiction of a concentration camp instead of being called a ghetto -- really, what the difference is?

Q: You were still living in houses though?

A: Oh, we were still living behind barbed wire. Yes, sure we were. Ah, but we were still...the difference was that we still had our own clothes to wear, you see. We were not in uniforms or...uh, so the world can see what we look like in striped clothing and etc., and other things, marked, numbered. Uh...we were still, uh...we still had our names. Our identification was still the name, not the serial number, as it became in Dachau.

Uh, in 19--...in 1944, on March 28<sup>th</sup>, I happened to remember that day so well because this was the birthday of my father, alavasholem. My father was a very orthodox and a very pious Jew. My father has daily put his tefillim on. I think the English word for that is -- help me out.

Q: Phylacteries.

A: Yes, I would have said, of course the wrong word and that's why I asked you to help me out. I had something else in mind. But, I'll tell you that later when the tape is off.

Q: (Laughter)

A: Had every morning his tallis on and did every single day, three times a day, did duties that he has known and the duties and that he has taught his children, myself. So, to me, he was the teacher, the father, holiness in itself. I have worked in a ghetto. First on the airport, then through some assistance, as we called protection --in Jewish, as we call it, "protectia". It was a very famous word and God bless the guy who had that protectia. He needed it; otherwise it was tough. I became a Jewish policeman. Not too well liked. Jewish, the name...to be a member of the Jewish police force -- it wasn't very favorable to speak about it after the liberation, but I never was concerned to talk about it, because I knew I wasn't involved with anything and I didn't do anything for my benefit while I was hurting the other parties. So, I have gone with a high head immediately after liberation to this day. Never was afraid to mention that I was a policeman. Uh, most of the policeman have never mentioned that thereafter. I don't blame them either. Because they weren't too nice off. Uh, after that, being a policeman, my father-in-law... yes, at that time I was already married so my father-in-law was working for the Gestapo. The Gestapo is the...the ones who do not know what it is today -- was the police -- the

police force of the Gestapo. I guess that is the way I would interpret it. Uh, he worked for them. They had about 10 Jews whom they picked up every day and brought back to the headquarters in the city and they had...uh...these 10 Jews were there to clean the cars, do butler service, maid service. They were their personal guides and, of course, they picked what they liked and they had a better position than the rest of us, because they were closer to a kitchen, you know. They...ah...maybe threw them a bone that was not eaten up. All the meat wasn't eaten off. So, it was nicer and you were protected a bit from the elements, from weather. So, my father-in-law succeeded...no, yes...and one day he came back and he says, "On this and that date in the coming week there's going to be another pogrom." He knew it because he worked in the garage part and they had to paint up the glass --the windows of the buses. So we knew this is for us because the public should not be able to see what's being hauled away. So, what he did is, he said, "I'll take you all on this day with me to work. I have arranged it with this big shot and that big shot that I can bring you along." So he got me. He had my wife, his family, my mother, my sister and we could not arrange to get my father on that bus. We couldn't get him on the bus and we tried everything under the sun that was possible. But somehow it just didn't work. Thinking of him all day long...didn't know what was happening, didn't know that there was anything happening. We knew. We saw it and when we came back at night into the ghetto from work, we have seen a total destruction. And, of course, what happened was exactly --they mowed them down with machine guns. They...uh...hauled them away to the forts again and there was no recourse of questioning, "What happened? Where did it happen? Where did they go? What did you do? Uh...or is there police force or is there court or is there a judge or...no such thing." We were worse off than any animal because an animal has a protection yet. We had none so, of course, when we came back and I ran with my mother to the house we lived, from the bus, and there was no more Papa. My father, the pious man, the holy man, while standing towards the east, where he said the Shmona Essa -- we know this as a fact--with his tallis and his tefillim on, undisturbed, because you don't move when you say the Shmona Essa. We didn't live by the comfort that we are trying to have today in our Jewish religion. They have plucked the bullet straight into his head with praying to the God. That was the man -- the thing in our life --that was the end of it. At that time, Hitler gave a speech, that same day, and he ended the speech -- and I remember that -- with these words, "God is with us." And when he said that, and I was a young man of 20 years of age, I took my belief...I wore tzitsis. For those who don't know what it is, find out what it is. Uh...I took them off and never worn them since. I'm not any more orthodox, but I know what I've learned. I have also been, during my younger days, for a short time, a yeshiva bocher in a Telsa Yeshiva in Tels, Lithuania. That is not in Ohio -- that is in Lithuania.

We have been now in the ghetto until -- I should remember the date in 1944, but it...

Q: What, approximately a month after?

A: Yah...I don't remember now -- it was sometime in '44. Yet, you asked me questions... questions, but you have to remember this is 42 years ago.

Q: Yes.

A: ...and, I mean...the date...

Q: Well, about, about.

A: Don't hold me, because I don't want to put questions into anybody's mind, that he was wrong with a month here. He said this month...So, I better not, because I don't remember it actually and time may be of importance, the month, but since I don't remember it exactly, I want to hold off.

Q: All right.

A: But if it is important, I can find out.

Q: It is not important.

A: People are still alive who will remember that. Not many of them are as young as we, however..

Q: You're right, you're right.

A: I am in contact, by the way, uh...I'll tell you that later. The, uh...in 1944, the ghetto was to be liquidated and the Jews herded onto one place for transportation to the unknown. Could have been to the death camps, could have been to the forts, to oblivion. We had no idea. Didn't know which way it was. We were all assembled and we were still many a thousands up there on this one big open field and the last memory that I have from that ghetto is where my uncle, a medical doctor, Dr. Jacob Burstein and his wife decided that it was not for them any more and right there and then he had one portion -- if that is the right expression of poison or capsule which would be sufficient for one person but it didn't work on two. So, of course they were both going wild -- running around. There were plenty of doctors there who tried to...his colleagues...to tried to help subdue, calm, use whatever they had, didn't succeed with them. He was going now wild being under the effect. Both of them were going in circles and the German put him very quick out of his miseries by shooting him in front of all of us. This is the last that I remember. His wife,

however, allowed to be helped and she survived in camps and came back to the Baltic States, to Latvia, remarried and died a normal death. I have been in touch with her, have helped her, have sent packages. My mother helped her and, so, she lived a miserable life. She married a Communist officer. I don't know how she fell into that and had children by him. We never seen her again but we knew when she died and she died a normal death. We came from there – women, lock, stock and barrel as you would call women, children and men, that's lock, stock and barrel that's what we owned.

Q: That's it, nothing?

A: Nothing else. Uh...in uh...um animal, animal...cows see uh, how do you transport cows in these wagons and trains ah.

Q: Oh, oh, cattle trains.

A: Cattle trains, yes, simple word, thanks for helping me. Uh cattle trains, taking out until we came. Of course, food was non – existent. Bathrooms were non – existent. So we ate there. We slept there. We made there and all in the one enclosure – men, women, children. The worst thing that the Germans maybe have done or very bad part is that they succeeded immediately to take away our pride because we happen to be very proud people. And when you take away from us cleanliness and when you take away from us the identity, then it's already somewhat a lot of us that have been killed in this way. So this was taken away and we came to a hm uh hm train stop in Germany that was called Stutthof, a city where the women have been unloaded and we didn't know what this was, where this was, or what happened to them. They got off and the men continued.

Q: Did that include your wife?

A: That included my wife. That included my mother.

Q: And your sister?

A: And included my sister. It included my mother-in-law. That included all the female members of the family. At that moment, there was an aunt of my wife's with a little cousin of hers who was some years younger. You have to remember when I say little that means, if I'm 20 years old, then I'm already an old man at the time you see so the kid is 15 years old. I'd say it's a kid, too, looking back today. Uh and mother, the aunt of my wife, the mother of this cousin of this boy said to me "Manfred, whatever happens (his name was Lola). She says Lola is your child. You become a father now. I put him in your hands." This was the greatest burden that I remember ever befell me, because, literally, I have never forgotten that

and I have done what she told me and it was a terrible job for me because I could not return that boy to her alive. She was alive after the war. I could not face that woman, anymore. I did, I was -- she came to see me and I tried to avoid her because I just didn't know how to tell a mother that I did not succeed. The men continued for days in these cattle cars. Our end station was Dachau and we came into these various camps which are called lags and they had laga 1 and laga 2 and laga 3 and each one was worse than the other one. This was the Hungarians, this was the Lithuanians. This was the sick...uh part- so- called hospital. I suppose if one can ever connect it with a hospital. I don't know, but that's what it was. And, this is where it started all over again. Now there were no more -- your clothes were taken away. You were landed on a field again there. You were x-rayed by human eyes standing split-naked, marching around the street. You were x-rayed to the extent whether you had God forbid succeeded in smuggling a piece of jewelry or some money or whatnot. I remember, on this field, standing around waiting your turn and they were actually going with their fingers, bare fingers, right up your rectum, mouth, anything, any cavity that your body had was checked through and I remember, being a youngster, some elderly people and including the Doctor Elkins who came to me with a bundle of money, and somehow they smuggled it around all the time and says "take it" and I said "No, No" no, no, no, I said "I'm not going to be killed for that. I'll be killed but I don't have to do that because you can't get away with it." So, these are memories that are linked that I remember and...um...we started the...Dachau, of course, uh...I don't think there's anything that the world doesn't know about Dachau by this time 40 years later today...uh...I was first personally in the place called Lunsberg which is a city in Bavaria. By the way Dachau is in the Bavarian part of Germany. Lunsberg prison where we were sitting for a few days turned out later after the war the place where Hitler was sitting and Hitler wrote his book "Mein Kampf" in the same cell block that I was sitting in, not that it was of any significant to me nor did I know that he was sitting in there but I learned that after the war...uh...that this was where I was in. Well, I would rather have been in a room where it said George Washington slept here but it worked out a little different. Uh, hard labor, insecure, sickness, diseases, hunger, exposure to the point, personally, where, as strong as I was, I finally faltered. I guess the years have taken...it's now 4 years, practically uh...from a strong fellow...uh...it got to me and I had swollen legs, swollen body, swollen was from hunger, also you don't know any more, you don't feel anything any more, yourself, because actually you're not a human being any more. Un...lice...lice that infested my skin, and to this date, I can take my shirt off and people will ask me "Was that an operation?" and I will say "No, these are lice." I have it on my leg. I have it on my belly. You just think it was another little skin graft or something...operation. Normal lice...lice entered who entered any wounds that you had and they were breeding in the wounds and there was no...uh...medication or



anybody to attend to the wounds so they had a good time and your clothing or the sweater, what little piece that you had, was, of course, infested with lice and, in order to kill lice, we had these iron stoves at night going on you know for to keep a little warm so you would take your sweater for example or whatever you had on and you would put it against the hot stove and you would hear the machine gun sounds br bu br bu (ah) the heat, the fire knocked them open, do you follow?

Q: Of course!

A: Th tu ch ch, so this was another way of entertaining and getting rid of them. I was finally put into the sick quarters. It was called the revere and you were lying on...on boards, not beds. But, you know, like one plank going across for 30 or 40 feet and bodies were lying there and blankets were on top of them. And I don't know, once a day or so, somebody brought some soup in there, I guess. It was called soup but I guess it was nothing but hot water or maybe drinking water or whatever. I don't know. At that time came through an elderly person to me. At that time I guess he was younger then than I am today but, being 20, he was an elderly person to me. His name was Elias Friedman and he stopped in front of me -- among all these people he came through he was working in the kitchen and he looked at me and said "Burstein, Burstein" or "Bushstein" was my mother's maiden name and my grandfather worked for this Mr. Friedman, who had a flour mill and he knew me as a little boy because the family was close and he recognized me and he didn't know my name. but he knew "Burstein" and he said "Burstein" and I with the little strength that was in me shook my neck, lying down, and he sent two fellows who were a little better off than I, and they carried me -- literally carried me -- put their hands underneath my rear end -- I put my arms around their shoulders and they carried me off into the kitchen where he instructed the kitchen people to put thick soup into my canister instead of the water and he did that every day. I could not walk there. I had no legs to walk on anymore, and he brought me back this way. He just nourished me back.

Q: How did he obtain such an exalted position?

A: Well, it's the same thing, how people will say well how did he attain to be that day in the...

Q: Of course.

A: ...in the Gestapo when everybody else was wiped out.

Q: Of course.

A: It is somehow due to age or maybe due to his German background he

was also German background. The German liked him better because he was one of theirs. Who knows, you know, there is a Jewish word that's called "chein". I don't know whether you are familiar with that. And so, somebody had "chein" or he had "chein" with somebody and you liked the man and that's all what I mean. You, know, so you picked him out.

Q: Surely.

A: Maybe he was a little cleaner than the other one. He says, "Well, this is a Jew bastard but at least he's a little cleaner Jew bastard than the other one." Whatever, we don't know and that brought me back onto my feet and I was able to continue. In the meantime, my father-in-law, who was with me and that little nephew, that little boy, he and my father-in-law became sick. He got ah gangrene and was taken away from this camp, in another camp where he died. And now came the end...to a closer...toward the end of the war. The reason we knew it came closer to the end of the war because we had not newspapers, radios, televisions or any communication with anybody -- was because we started seeing more planes. We started seeing some...we heard some bombs...we heard some explosions. Uh, we knew. Ah, something is happening in the vicinity.

Q: And it gave you hope.

A: Within your reach. Hope, well hope is something that is part of being Jewish. A Jew has never been able to succeed, to live without hope. This is our heritage. You will hear us say very often when questions are asked. "Will you be there? Will you come? Can I count on you?" The answer normally is "With God's help." You see and this is all. I hope I'll be around. I surely will be there. But it's always hope. So as long as he had hope we went, but if you would have asked me point blank at that time, uh..."Will you make it?" Well, the answer would be very simple, very quick. None of us will make it. None of us. There was no way of making to come out of there. Some of them lasted longer. The ones who fell at the wayside were the big husky men -- the ones you would think, you would think are the shtarker, the strong ones oh. They got something to go by now. The skinny one, the frail looking one. He was the one that was much stronger.

Q: Wiry?

A: Wiry uh uh the sick person, of course, didn't have any chances because he was useless to the Germans. Uh...it came to the point where American troops came closer and it came to the point where we were they decided to evacuate us. So, they put children, if there were still...by this time they were already not...I mean they were not small children, young,

youngsters on the train. Again the cattle cars, into nowhere. No destination. Just go whichever way the bomb is not flying or uh and us, they started on a march. Well, we marched, I think 8 or 7 days, and we found out at the end that we really marched in a circle. We were still at the same place but we marched all the time because the Americans or the allies were bombing. It was always circular. So, when they took us north, it came from north. So, they turned us east and we went to east and west and so we went.. The end result was, you know, constantly circles. The trail had been bombed. People in the train were dead. One of them was the young cousin of my wife who was killed actually by the Americans.

Q: Oh!

A: Nobody can is blaming anybody but he was killed by the Americans. American bomb has bombed that train. Of course, they didn't know what was on the train. We were back again in Alach, which is just in the same vicinity as Dachau. Also, concentration camp, barbed wires. When the Americans came and the only reason we knew now that the end is there, was because all of a sudden we had no more German guarding us. We had the barbed wires about us but nobody would make a move , you know. But, of course, it was suspicious -- the whole thing and we knew that's it. The first truckloads of soldiers, coming in to look at us were colored troops, black troops, black soldiers, or Negroes, if you want, whichever is the right word today. And I must admit since I have never in my life seen a black person, I know I've seen them in bunches that I have said "now comes the Holocaust." Because to see an army of black was unknown to us. We didn't know...we didn't know these people, once in awhile we have seen a person. My wife says she has seen once a black person in the circus but I don't recall ever having seen a black person nor did we know what black people are. So to us, this was very strange and scary. But it turned out that they were the best-hearted, friendliest, concerned. They came by in open trucks and we stood behind the barbed wire, electricity was cut off evidently, and they threw overboard the personal belongings, whatever they had, chewing gum, cigarettes, pencils, pens, uh...whatever was in their pocket came over the fence and all concerned...uh...some of them had tears in their eyes. I mean what we have seen in them they have seen in us. They didn't know what -- what this looks like. We didn't know what they looked like because we didn't look like normal people. We were swollen. We were skinny. We were hungry.

Q: Were you still in the hospital at that time?

A: No, no, no, no, I was marching.

Q: Oh, that's right, you were marching around.

A: I was back on my feet.

Q: Right.

A: We were liberated and...uh...the end wasn't...this was not...we didn't suffer enough yet. We were quarantined because we...the camp came down with typhus. So our liberation wasn't there...back in there, so if you didn't die one way, we died the other way. And from that typhus camp which was strictly watched by the Americans not to get out for reasons of not carrying on with it. I escaped through barbed wire, through machine gun fire by the Americans.

Q: MM.

A: Because I didn't have typhus and I certainly didn't want it this time, because there was no way that my body could have fought that disease yet. I succeeded in coming out of there. The bullets did not hit me. It was night time. The flashes of the thing. I know that we were several guys. We were just there. They were just not good sharpshooters or they didn't want to hit us. And,...uh...I came to somewhere else, into Munich, I met up with another friend of mine and we stayed together. Uh...we have personally taken revenge wherever we could take revenge at that time. Either by plundering, robbing, killing. Whatever we did to the Germans, it was certainly done out of revenge and without hesitation...any hesitation. Nobody should ever consider any person who has done any of these things as a cruel bad person. No, he should be considered as a hero for having done that. And some of us have succeeded. Some of them have not succeeded. This is the end of the war. Uh...we tried to straighten out our...straighten out our lives.

Q: How did you find your wife?

A: We were...this was the concern of everybody who remained wherever in Europe, female or male. Where is my next one, wife, husband, son, father, daughter, mother...uh, first we were taking care of ourselves. I was very successful right away because I was in Germany with my language and, uh...a little guts and I felt that this is my world now and there's nobody coming in my way with anything. God help the one who comes in my way! No mercy. I lived in Munich. If you have seen a Jewish woman somewhere you would stop her and you would say maybe you would know about my husband, wife, son or so on. Another person would stop you and would say maybe you run across my father, aunt, uncle or grandmother. And, you would stop just people and talk. Who knows maybe stupid question -- but let me ask anyway. So this was the conversation and I remember it was already...so I was prepared. I was

doing financially well already. Uh, but I had nobody and I said I'm going to go every place and any place until I find either my wife my people or if I find the graveyard where they lie. I will not stop on rumors and whatever it takes, it will take. And, at that time, I was a member...was in Munich. Very little things...uh...restaurants were open. Very little coffee houses were open but one day I came into a coffee house to have some coffee or maybe a little bite -- I don't remember -- and I ran across a lady, Jewish lady, and I said to her "I think I your face is familiar" and she says "Sure, you know me." And she happened to be a female doctor from Kovno and she said to me, I said "Where you coming from?" and she says, "I'm coming from Vienna and I'm traveling because I heard that my family member -- I don't remember what is there. What can you tell me about it." I said...I said "You know I have so far found nobody. I'm looking for Mama, I'm looking for my wife, which she didn't know that I married and she said, "Let me tell you something. I was with your wife in the ladies' bathroom in Vienna a week ago...uh...so she is fine and she is looking for you." And I asked her how she is doing, whether she needs any help and so on. I told her I said I can give her everything that she needs. I thanks God, I've got everything and I had everything. And of course this was the first life sign but I still don't know where to go. I couldn't pick up and call up Eastern Airlines. You know, make a reservation to Vienna.

A: Right.

A: You know, on the next flight in an hour...uh...you have a discount fare? It was just no normal transportation. Everything was bombed out, there's a war that was on. And so there's no transportation, nothing, not even highways which were halfway good. And then I had no address either. I had nothing. No mail -- nothing. At that time, I had to stop because I could not...I could not go any further...uh...I had no more contact to make there, I couldn't go. So, I decided that I'm going to look for my mother and my sister. And I decided they might have gone back to Russia. Who knows, people did, you know, you don't know what's right and wrong again. But I cannot go back to the Russian territory because I'm now a traitor for not having come back.

Q: Hm hmmm

A: So, I'm not going to risk that but I was bribing some people to go to Poland and then gave enough -- watches was the big thing at that time -- you know, uh, things of that sort to bribe again maybe, uh, uh, a Russian soldier or Polish soldier to find...to go into Lithuania to ask among Jewish people...was all prepared plans and for a big price to bring 'em back in a sack, in anything, I don't care. And...uh...at that moment; yah, that was prepared so but I traveled in the meantime first through camp sites in Germany, British zone, French zone, American zone, not Russian zone,

And a friend of mine, a German Jew, strictly German who spoke nothing but German, who was 100 % German said "I go with you. I have nobody. I go with you" and we went on coal trains or cattle trains whatever moved, we jumped on. Don't know where to go but wherever it went and landed that was a place to go and we came in to a city not far where the train stopped after weeks sitting on these coal trains called Bergen Belsen. Bergen Belsen.

I am now entering Bergen Belsen, which was one of the very famous, notorious, concentration camps. At this time, I found this camp surrounded with the same barbed wires. Still with guards, but not German guards. These were English guards. I just could not understand that the liberation has been already some time before, that we were still under guard with watch towers, as in the days before. Coming to the gate, I was checked and searched by the British, and led into camp, completely unknown to me -- anybody,, anything that was moving inside. It was a lovely day, and people, young people, were walking...uh...the camp streets, and I said to my pal, who traveled with me, after listening to the language spoken by the people there, which was Jewish. And, then when I walked further, I determined that these people were either Lithuanian Jews or Jews from Bialystok. Because Bialystok and Lithuania -- the accent is exactly alike. You cannot differentiate between the two when they speak. So, it had to be one or the other, and I said to my German friend, who walked with me, I said "Do me a favor. You become, at this moment, deaf and dumb." I meant that very seriously, because a German, Jew or not Jew, was not liked, and since he spoke only German, and nothing else, I just did not want to let on to that -- so I told him, "You have to act. And, acting might be tough, so you must now be deaf and dumb. And, hold on as long as you can." I approached the first bunch of girls that walked down the street, and I asked them in Jewish from where they come. And, the moment I asked them, in their own native slang Jewish --that's the only way that I knew -- and it was theirs. Alike. They immediately got so excited and hollered all over the place, screamed out, "A Bialystoker ingle is da. A lebediker." Meaning, "A Jewish boy from Bialystok is here, and he is alive." That was a rarity, that was not known to them -- and, of course, it became like a flock of birds around me. And, then, I introduced my friend as one who suffers -- as one who is now deaf and dumb due to the war, and therefore he cannot respond to anything that is going on -- and, they took me into one of their rooms, and, of course, a little time passed and the word went like a fire through the camp that there is a live Jewish boy among us. So, all of these girls -- this was a female camp. So, all Of these girls, of course, begged and screamed and asked, in any way, shape or form, to get through. "Maybe you know this man and this man and this man" which were dear ones of theirs, brothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, husbands and regrettably, after we calmed down a little bit, of course, I couldn't tell them anything, because I really didn't

know any of them. I could have run across somebody, but it would have been very unlikely even to remember a name. But, that was the situation at that time. That was the only way you could get about the news...about a dear one. There was no newspaper. There was no telephone. There was no television. There was nothing, except nose to nose contact, if you were lucky enough. And, I was there for the same purpose. To find out whether really my wife or my mother -- although I knew about my wife through that lady in Austria, but, then, I tried again to get some more news and some more information, if I could. I asked primarily about my mother now, and my sister, and these were not the people they were together with. These were not Lithuanians. These were from Bialystok people, as I thought they would be, because I didn't recognize...walking down the street already, I didn't recognize any similarities. You would have figured somebody you would have recognized.

Now they were very kind. They were very lovely. I became one of them. My friend, also. But, night approached, and no male can be in that camp. And, so they decided that we stay here anyhow, and they wouldn't let us out. We were one of theirs. One of their brothers. One of their kin. So, they had bunk beds they slept in, and they gave us a double bunk, while some of the girls crawled in together in another bunk. And, we were tired, and we fell asleep. But, in the middle of the night, we heard a lot of thundering, and hitting on doors, and knocking on walls, and, although I was fast asleep, I felt a hand over my mouth, not to make noise or ask, "Who is there?" And the girl whispered in my ear -- it was dark -- and she says to me, "The British are outside...were coming in...and you and your friend better get up quickly and get out through the window. This was on the first floor. We opened the window and went into the darkness, unfamiliar to us -- what it looks out there, looks like. In our shorts...ran out in the back yard. They turned the lights on, and we could see from the dark into the light -- from the outside into the inside that the British came in, with their rifles, with their bayonets in front there, and looked for men in every room, because they knew they signed in two, but they signed out none. Didn't find us. Came back in again, into the room, through the window, and continued sleeping until the morning and that was everything fine and dandy. Then we left camp.

From there on, we continued further -- same transportation. Find a coal train -- get on top of it. No schedules. Maybe they leave in an hour. Maybe they leave today. Maybe it leaves tomorrow. If a horse and buggy came by, hop on that and go. Go. Going to nowhere. And after so many days of being nowhere, we came in to...we came in to Hamburg. I was hesitating a moment to say Hamburg, because I wasn't sure whether it was Hamburg or was it Bremen. But, I think it was Hamburg. Yes, it was. And, there we stood again. There was a bombed--out railroad station, in the middle of the city, I guess. And, coming out there, all I had was a

pack, a rucksack, and my friend had it, too. And, there was water -- like a pier and there were people sitting like waiting for a ferry or something to go somewhere. And, I asked them where we are, and they told us where we are, and I asked them, "Would you know this city well?" And they said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, is there a Jewish congregation here". Is there a Jewish synagogue here in town? Is there a rabbi in town here? Is there anything that has... somewhere where Jews are organized?" And, a man said to me, "Yes." That he was Jewish too. But, I guess, he was Jewish more by convenience after the war. Certainly, nobody knew about him during the war, that he had any contact with Jews. So, maybe he was a little bit of a Jew. Maybe some blood went through him. But, anyhow, he directed me where to go, which was at the other end of town. On the other end of town -- how do you get to the other end of town? If there is no transportation...

Q: Walk?

A: Well, you cannot walk. You know, it is not like...you know...it is a big Jewish city, and to go from one end to the other end takes another month. But, lucky there came a farmer through with a wagon, and he took us along, and he dropped us off where we had to go. I came to the door of the head of the Jewish community in Hamburg, formed after the war. And, knocking on the door, a lady opened up, and I asked for the gentleman, and I was told that he wasn't in, and she looked us over. She said to me, "Who are you?" And I said, "The truth of the matter is...I am here...we are searching for family. I am searching for my mother. I am searching for my sister. I am searching for everybody...for anybody." And, she said...and I told her what my name was. I told her my name was "Zemon", which is the pronunciation of Simon in Germany...spelled the same way. And she says, "Please come in." Made us very comfortable. And, said to me, "Is your mother Rosel Simon?" And, I said, "Yes." I don't know how to express and to tell what went through me, at that moment, because I realized that they are alive, before asking further questions. And she told me, "You know, only a few days ago, they left from here. They stayed right here, in this house of mine, and slept. And, they left here for Munich, because your mother learned that her son, which is you, evidently, is alive in Munich, and she is working her way over to you." So, I learned from her, that she would have to go first...O.K. I have to retract...I have to make a correction here because it just now comes to me. That was not in Hamburg. That happened in Bremen, and I realize that now because she told me that "Your mother had to go to Hamburg first, in order to continue." The third girl that she mentioned did not...she didn't know the name, and the way she had explained to me her looks and her walks and her height, etc., didn't...were not similar to that of my wife. I did not recognize her by the explanation, and I couldn't think, either, who else it could have been. But they traveled together. So, my thoughts went back again now that, I



guess, my wife somehow was split away and she somehow landed in Vienna as that other doctor lady had told me, and I wasn't concerned any more. Once I knew they were alive, I really didn't have any further concern as to find them, and I was in no particular rush. I was satisfied now, and the rest of it will fall in line. And, this lady offered to stay in her house, and we thanked her for it. I didn't want to impose. Although I didn't know where I am going to be tonight. I didn't know one night from the next. And, I asked her whether there are any Jewish women around here, and she told me that there is an island that can only be reached by ferry, by boat. It's about an hour's ride and that there is a whole group of Jewish women having been liberated. And, she directed me back to that pier where I have been earlier, and she told me that the ferry is leaving at certain times. So, we barreled our way back to that pier. There was no way of calling a taxi or anything else because it didn't exist. I come to the pier and there was that ferry waiting, and my friend and I boarded that boat, and, just, after when it left, we looked around us...I remember that so vividly -- there were the staircases that go to the second deck, and we stood on the first one, and I found myself surrounded by Jewish women staring at my face, and I, staring in their face, because we know each other. These were women from Kovno, from Lithuania, who have been that day in town to take passport pictures, for whatever reasons and returned back to their quarters on that island. I don't remember the name of the island and I stood there...I mean...I don't think you can imagine what it means to look at tens and twenty...I don't know how many women...in faces you don't know who they are. You recognize the faces, You know them. And, you feel, all of a sudden, among your own.

Q: How many years had that been, Manny?

A: Well, that has been, still that has been in 1945, so it it's exactly 41 years ago.

Q: No, no, no. Since you have seen them in Kovno?

A: Oh, since I have seen these people? Well, these people I have seen probably sometimes during the ghettos...some people, you know were older...my mother's age...who recognized me as the child of...

Q: Right. But, I mean how many years had it been, about?

A: Oh, I would...could be two, three and four years and up, you know. Some of them may have been toward the end in the ghetto. Some of them maybe have left earlier. I don't know. But, a number of years. But, all of a sudden, we became novelties to each other, and I was a greater novelty to them than they were to me, because they didn't know any more what a male looks like, a Jewish male who came back. They had no...no contact.

They lost everybody. Lost everybody. So, of course, again it started all over...the same thing. Do you know him? And do you know him? And do you know him? Do you know...is he alive? Is he dead? Have you seen him? Haven't you seen him? What can you tell me about him? You have no idea? Rumors? Anything. Some of them I could tell. Some good news. Most of them -- it was sad news. But, I was told by them that my mother is alive, and that my sister is alive, and that my mother has lost an eye due to typhus, and that they are fine. And, of course, the excitement was great when they found out that I was alive in Munich. The third girl was a little girl that my sister picked up, her age, and my sister, at the time was...uh...probably seventeen years old -- sixteen, seventeen. The little girl was the same age, and, just...they took her along...an orphan. An orphan, and I guess, Mama says, "Come with me." That's what I gathered at that time. I recognized it was not family. It was a strange girl. And, now, before I left Munich to go on this extensive trip, and I didn't know where I would end up, or when I would return, or if I will return, everything went unscheduled, I left word in a Jewish organization in Munich, and gave the key to my place to a good friend of mine, who was one of the leaders of the organization. His name is Dr. Gershwin today...Gershowitz at that time. Dr. Gershwin is still a dear friend, and we are still very much in touch with each other, and he has only been visiting with his family...with us...here in Sarasota two weeks ago. Uh...I told him, "Should Mama or my wife come into these offices -- and that's where you would go -- any place you come, you find an organization and you go -- remember what to tell them, where I went. Give them the keys and lead them to this place. There is everything in that place for them for months to eat. There was everything loaded up and have a good life. I'll be back." Money, everything was there for them. All this left the word that with the eventuality, with the hope, and to this date, forty years later, I still live -- on one vitamin -- and that is hope.

Now since I knew that they were well and safe and in good hands, I decided there was no rush for me to barrel my way back, and I went further to Frankfurt because Frankfurt was the city I was born in. Also, I didn't remember anything of it. But, I felt that I could find out and learn some other things maybe about some other people in that town. And, found my way to Frankfurt, found very little Jewishness coming back -- people having come back, found transportation back to Munich with Jewish soldiers who were...made some transports available from one time to another one...military transports.

Q: American soldiers?

A: American soldiers, yes. And, on these transport trucks, really no comfort or anything exciting or anything enthusiastic about these things. These were not Concord airplanes that took you there in style. We came to

Munich, and that is...and I found...and I went to the organization, and immediately I was told in the organization...I didn't meet my friend there...that my mother and my sister and a third girl went in to a sanatorium. A sanatorium in English translated -- I really don't know.

Q: Rest home?

A: No. I suppose maybe we could consider it as a home to recuperate in. Where you have the comforts and the care, yet you are not confined to a bed, and you don't need, really, a doctor. But, you are taken care of. And, this again was somewhere past the town, but transportation was bad, again, to get to it. I rested a night at home. In the morning I got to the train so far, and from there I think another twenty-five miles to walk. And, I set out to walk out. That's all. It's not a big thing. And, on the way, on that highway walking, I sang a little bit, and philosophized a little bit, I guess, to waste the time. And all of a sudden -- you know, here and there you find a house standing, and all of a sudden, I hear somebody screaming, in the middle of nowhere, my name. So, I look up, look around, and I looked up at the house. There stands a house, and who was looking out the window -- Mrs. Gershwin -- not only was she the wife of my friend -- but Miriam Gershwin went to school with me in Memel. And she somehow was living in that house after the war. So, of course I stopped there. I rested there. I got a little something to drink, and we chatted, and she knew exactly that Mother was there, and where it was. So, this was a pleasant break, and now, when I come to my Mother she was waiting for me because she knew that I went to see her, and she knew that I had to come back for her one of these days. And, the whole hospital...or...or...the recuperation house...the whole place knew about me. I evidently was the most famous person there. Also, nobody knew who it was. I was the son of Mrs. Simon. And, the moment I came into that big place, and I caught the man who was mopping the floors, and I said, "Could you tell me which room I could find Mrs. Simon?" and he knew right away. He said right away, "You must be the son. You are the son. The whole house is waiting." I said, "oh, my God." And, of course, I don't have to tell you the meeting of...the meeting of a mother of a child...I am not talking about me, the child meeting the mother. It is something. It is an unforgettable affair. Indescribable. And that was, actually, more or less, the end of this story. Of course we were happy. My sister, everybody was fine. The little girl was...the girl that they befriended and stayed with them. And, I took them out of there. As a matter of fact, the doctors in that place...one was...one of them was a cousin of my mother and the other one was an old friend of the family. I met a lot of people there whom we knew, and I said to my mother and to my sister that they don't belong here. Although it is very nice, but, that I will take them into a very beautiful place which I was going to get for them in the mountains -- in the Bavarian mountains -- in the Bavarian Alps -- in...uh...maybe half

an hour's drive away from Garmisch -- Partenkirchen, which is a world renowned ski resort to this date and always has been. And, I came...and I arranged and I came there and got them a very nice little place. And then there was Rosh Hashanah that came, and there was a Jewish camp -- a displaced persons camp -- not any more concentration camp -- we cannot mix the two things up. Here they were free at least, but they were under supervision of Jewish organizations like the Joint Distribution Committee, like the HIAS, and I remember, on Rosh Hashanah, when General Eisenhower came through and came to the tent where we had our services. And, the tent did not really have many seats, but everybody found seating around and above and below, and he welcomed us and gave us confidence and strength, and when he left, I went up to him and I said to him, in the broken English that I thought was English, but really wasn't, with his interpreter. I told him of my plight and I told him that I have a sick mother and that I have a sister and they deserve better, and I said, "the whole town here is of the finest villas.' And I assured him that every second one, if not every one, has been a former Nazi homestead. And he told me to hop in the jeep that he was riding, and we went to a villa, and he confiscated this villa, and he says to me, "That's for your mother.' That was it. I needed no lawyers. I needed no deeds, deed restrictions...all these things we know when we buy a piece of property now. Search title.

Q: He was Eisenhower. What else could you need?

A: This...well, he was the commanding general. He was the god in that country. He had this...I brought my mother and my sister there. We had a most gorgeous villa, and the most gorgeous furniture, with the most gorgeous piano, that my mother needed because she was a concert pianist. And, it wasn't just a piano, but it was a...

Q: Grand piano?

A: Grand piano, thank you. And, that's where we settled. It was very beautiful, but I still not have seen my wife. And, then I touched slowly and talked to my mother about all the happenings, and so on, and I asked her, "What do you know about Dita?' Dita being my wife. After reluctantly getting out of it, trying not to answer, my own mother told me that my wife is not alive. And, I said, "Mama, I understand that she is alive." She said, "No. She is not.' But, I said, "Mama, if she is not alive, I will not believe it until I know where she lies, and until that moment, she isn't dead." And, I said, "I am going to work on it -- to bring her -- to find her, dead or alive. And, when I am being told that she is dead, that person also has to know where she lies. And, when I know that, then I will travel there."

Meantime, weeks passed. Every day, I went to see Mama. I lived in

Munich, and that was an hour's train ride. We had a train there. And so, it was okay to commute for me, and I went every day into the city, and back in the evening to Mama, and every morning, I took an early train. Mama would get up and play the piano for me and she played one song for me that was extremely dear to me, meaningful. And that was "My Yiddisha Mama." And there is a little significance to this song to me, because, first of all, I remember, as a little boy, that Mama played that song for her Mama, for my Grandmother, who loved it so much. And, when she played it for her, I guess it became meaningful to me in later years. I remember having marched in a concentration camp to work every day, in my striped uniforms, six men in a row, groups of maybe thirty men, guards in front and back of you, marching down the dust and dirt road to every place you worked, wherever this was, at that time. And we had along with us the ration, food ration for the day which consisted of a tiny piece of bread -- not a slice of bread -- but a tiny piece of bread and a little soup, dishwater, and there were many days I remember I walked once next to an old Jewish man who walked next to me. When I say old, he was much older than I am, because I was a child, a young man, and I...I was heavy of heart, and we walked, and I said to him. "Do you remember the words to the Jewish...to the Yiddisha Mama?" I could sing the song, but I didn't have all the vocabulary for it.. And, he says, "Sure, I know every word of it." I said, "Could you sing it for me while we marched on." And he says to me, "What else do you want from me?" And he said, "Who can sing at a time like this?" And I said to him, "Mister, I give you my daily ration if you sing it for me. It will be better nourishment for me than that piece of bread. It doesn't make any difference. I wouldn't hold out, anyhow, with that bread or without that bread." And, of course, this being a big payment, a whole day's work, he sang it to me. And, we marched, and I cried, and I was grateful to him and thankful. And I didn't want to eat that bread. This was the greatest nourishment that I had. So, Mama knew that, and every morning, she played that song for me and then I went to the railroad station. And, why did I go every day into Munich? Because I was hoping that my wife will come in somehow. Because, in the meantime, during the days...so one day I found a letter from a former German soldier who was a prisoner of war by the British, I believe, and he ran across my wife in Vienna, and he was on the way home. He was now let loose, and he went home to Munich where he came from originally. And, my wife says,...said to him because she found out from other people now that I am in Munich, and she gave along a little letter to him, to me, in Munich and he dropped it off at a Jewish organization where I found it. He had left his name and address. And, so, I went to see him, although he was a German...he was a soldier...he was now out of uniform, and I asked him, and he gave me all the information he could, and gave me the first live account of her, and told me not to move...not to go there...because that's what she says...that she is trying to barrel her way over from Vienna. That this was not easy. You see, these were not open borders to go. You just didn't have to find

transportation. You also had to go a little bit above and around things, because, now, you still didn't have passports. We had very little identification. If anything, they were worthless. So, he warned me not to move.

Q: To stay in Munich?

A: My wife realized that I would get excited and that I would come...try to come over, and then we'll...the same thing what happened with my mother, although she didn't know that story of my mother. So, every day, I was hoping that she will come in. I knew now that she knows where to move. And, uh...she got the information again through people who traveled her way, like I traveled the other way. Again, you know, and somebody must have told her, "Yes. Your husband is fine and well."

Q: That was the original Jewish Geography.

A: Geography?

Q: We play Jewish Geography all the time. Do you know?

A: What is Jewish Geography?

Q: Well, do know somebody in Detroit by the name of...? Do you know somebody in Kansas City by the name of...?

A: Oh, I see, yes. Well, this turned out later, also. You are right, because everybody, when you came to Israel, shortly after the war, as I have, everybody would ask you. He said, "Do you know my uncle in...in America?" "Where is America?" "I don't know where in America." Sure, where in America?" "What do you think this is -- a small town? This is a dorf or something like that?" But, this is...you are right. This is probably Jewish Geography. I never realized that we would call it that way. Uh...one morning, I tiptoed out of the house to the railroad station, because Mama was asleep. I didn't want her...to wake up. And, while I waited at the railroad station, which was only a few minutes from the house, uh...and I heard, already, the whistle of the train approaching the station, I also listened...heard when my Mama came running in a nightgown with a robe over to the railroad station, and said, "Manfred, Manfred." And I said, "Yes, Mama, what is happening." And she says to me, "I didn't play the Yiddisha Mama for you and you cannot take the train" And I did not take the train. And I went back to the house and Mama had to play The Yiddisha Mama and I took a later train into town, but as irony will have it, on that morning, my wife, with her mother -- with my mother-in-law, who was a physician -- came in and stayed. We had some, I guess, a couple of bunk beds for people to put them up temporarily

there in that confiscated building where the Jewish organization was. And, when I came, there was a big yard, with cobblestones, and two staircases going up to it and I said, "Oh, I swear that's my mother-in-law sitting there," From the back. I couldn't...because I remember her hairdo, and, of course I started getting...you can imagine getting a little bit excited, and this was my mother-in-law, and of course the hugging and the kissing and the crying, and I said, "Where is Dita?" and she says, "she is searching the rooms here for you.' She thought I sleep there, you see, because she got that address. And they had these bunk beds. People sleeping there.

Q: Surely.

A: So, she went through the rooms there. There was one guy who was lying with the back to the door, yah...with the back to the door. From the back, I looked to her...like it's me, so she pulled the blanket off from this poor guy there. But, it wasn't him, so, of course, this is where we met and this is how we got together, and I still remember the wardrobe she wore--that green coat with the big star on the back which was painted over, and I took her and her mother and we went to the next town -- not the same town my mother was in, but...because every stop where the train stopped, that was a resort place -- all in the Bavarian Alps. And, I took a room there and I opened up...the balconies were open. We looked at the mountains with snow on it. We were sitting in the sunshine, and I remember the first words when she walked into that room, that gorgeous room. And, she said, "...and white sheets". I only say that because you will know what a human being becomes like. She certainly knew what white sheets were. My wife came from a very affluent house. Her father, one of the big manufactures of crystal from Czechoslovakia. Her mother, a physician. Homes that were only served by servants and all of a sudden, some years later, a white sheet is such a big thing...became such a big thing. I guess a Picasso painting would not have opened your eyes up as this has at the moment.

Q: How long before you came to the United States?

A: Well, uh...uh...this was in '45...I guess another year. Because, shortly thereafter, now everything was more or less settled, uh...we were happy. We were all together. Uh...I went with Dita...after a few months, we decided to go to...to move to Frankfurt -- the two of us and in Frankfurt, coming back into the city, I had, again, a gorgeous apartment, confiscated on my behalf by the police, again because I was the only full-blooded born Jew in that town, who came back. We had hundreds, maybe thousands of Jews up there, but none of them were Frankfurt Jews. None of them were full-blooded Jews. All of a sudden, we had a lot of half-blooded Jews, quarter-blooded Jews. All of a sudden, the mother went to school with a

Jewish boy in class. I guess she said she is a quarter Jew. I don't know. And, so me coming back there. This, in itself, opened up the doors for me. I was very...we were young children yet. First, when I came into town I had to stay in a hotel or find somewhere, coming from the first hotel right off the railroad station, when I said, "I would like to have a room." And the man behind the desk said, "I am sorry sir, but this hotel is occupied by occupation troops. It's occupied by occupation troops for their purposes." And, I said, "Well, that's fine." I said, "I'm sure this is the right place for me." And, he says, "Well, they occupy that only...it's only for Jewish...members of the Jewish faith." I said, "Well," I said, "That's me." again. Because I didn't look Jewish and my name was not Jewish, and, uh...so...we got that. We got...we were settled there until the time when we went to the Dept for Housing and that is where the whole ball started rolling. Coming to the apartment that the housing authority had given us. They sent me with that piece of paper to the local precinct. And I came to the local precinct, and I said to the chief there...he said, "I'll send a man with you, but he is not in. Wait a few minutes." So, I sat and waited. And while I waited and chat a little bit with me, and he said to me, "Tell me, Mr. Simon, was your father, by any chance, Philip Simon?" I said, "Yah, that was my father..." and he says, "Oh, I knew him and you lived on this and that street, at the corner?" I said, 'that's right.' Now, this goes back twelve years.

Q: Surely.

A: Because we left in 1933. Now it is 1945. And, of course, that was a coincidence, and that, of course, opened up everything for me. Because here is the kid from the man that he knew. Do you follow me?

Q: Uh, huh.

A: And now had guilty feelings also, because he is a German, and he is the father who has been killed. So he sent along a policeman with me to get into the apartment. And, coming up to the apartment, and he rang the doorbell, and he says to them that...the lady opened up, with a little baby in her arm. And he said to her, and this was a Nazi, who was a member of the party, and this is why it was given to me. But he lived there. And he informed...the policeman informed the lady that I am the one who comes into the apartment. And, she, of course, tried to slam the door.. He stuck his leg...foot...in there, and a whole commotion ensued. And, he asked "Where is the husband?" And she says, 'He is not here.' And, they couldn't get her out. The pushing game started. It became unhealthy. It became loud, and this policeman turned to me and gave me orders, according to paragraph so and so and so and so, of the constitution, whatever he said up there to assist the police officer. And, I said, "Well, sir, that's just what I need. Just leave me alone. I am going to handle it



just the way I was taught to do that just not so long ago by her people.” That was on the first floor. I told the officer, “Open up the balcony door.” I picked her up by her rear pants and I put her face down right at the balcony, and I said, ...wiped off my hands...and I said, “That’s the way things are.” At that moment, her husband came out from the bedroom...

Q: He was there all the time.

A: ...all the time, but...you know he thought she could handle it.

Q: Surely.

A: ...the front. And he came out not to protect his wife, and he put the handcuffs on him and led him away. That was the end of it. My wife and I were in there, we had a gorgeous apartment -- an apartment that was beautifully furnished by probably 15-20 Jewish families. The finest of furnitures.. the finest of carpets. The finest of paintings. Piano. Everything you want. But, nothing really matched 100%. Exactly what has happened that you found a Persian carpet that was expensive, that they hauled out from that place. They found a beautiful credenza somewhere else, and hauled that up here, and so, everything they had was the most valuable thing, but it was not bought at one time where you matched things together. So, you knew from there that this has been hauled, robbed, stolen, plundered and probably the people killed. Normal life, we started out. We had a car. I had a chauffeur. We had a maid.

Q: You did very well.

A: Very well. And, I was the forerunner of the HIAS in Frankfurt on the Main, Germany. And I was there to help the people who came through and then the HIAS came and took over. I helped them. It was my job. I wasn’t paid for it. I was not looking to be paid for it. I didn’t need to be paid for it. And, then, when it came...in the meantime, yes, and then when it came to the time one day I got a call from a Jewish chaplain, who was leaving the community in Frankfurt. His name was Captain Vido. I don’t remember his first name, but I still have a letter at home, on a wall, hanging. And, by the way, Elinor, whenever you come in there, I’ll show you a wall full of this paraphernalia hanging there that I...a little bit...accumulated after the war.

Q: Good, I will come see that.

A: I know you have something very exciting for me because I know the history of your father, Eddie Jacobson, and I am fascinated by that, and since I am a reader of all biographies and autobiographies, of course I have Truman’s and I have all the stories in there, and when I met you, and

you told me -- only because of that.

Q: Tonight I will bring you the only really authentic history of what happened between my Daddy and...

A: I can read that?

Q: Yes.

A: I would appreciate that very much. Uh...I really did...I love these...all these stories and I am very familiar with them. So when I met you, it was old stories told again and it was an excitement to meet the daughter of this...to me... great man. It is even history brought them together. O.K. We are now being called by this Captain Vido. He says, "Can you help me tomorrow morning to register the Jewish people who want to emigrate to Israel and who want to emigrate to America? America has opened the doors to take immigration in there, and Israel also. Israel, of course, at that time was not Israel. It was still Palestine, and all immigration was done on an illegal basis because the British didn't let them in. And, I said to the Captain, I said, "I will be very happy to help you, but I would love to go, too." He said, 'Just put your name on top of the list.' And I said to him, "You know, Captain, that's very nice of you. But I have nobody to sponsor me." So, he said, "I will sponsor you." And, I went, in the morning, before I went in the morning, I sat down. Now, my mother was there. My sister came there. They moved also to Frankfurt in the meantime. Lived in the same building on another floor. And, I said, "Well, tell me...I put everybody, today, on a list. Where do you want to go? Do you want to go to Israel? Do you want to go to America?" So, my sister immediately looked at her boyfriend, who is her husband now...a great Zionist, a man who has channeled ammunition and guns, and what have you, to Palestine at the time. So she looked at him. He, of course, goes to Israel. So, of course, this was the end of that. The answer was, "We are going to Israel." My mother gave the answer immediately since the umbilical cord has never been cut between my mother and sister, so Mama goes with my sister, and my wife, having been brought up in a very Zionist way, having finished her total schooling into college in a Hebrew gymnasium, Hebrew language being the language of the studies, having only love for Israel, said, "I go there, too." I was differently...I was brought up in the same way, but I was more realistic. I was more thinking on the economic side. I said, "I am a young fellow. I gotta build up my life. I am not ready to build up a whole country." I said, "I am going to America." And my wife says, 'Well, what am I to do?' I said, " You go where you like to go. If we have to spit, we will split. But, I will not go and start all over again, and go to the farm and build up a country. No. I will not do that." So, the answer was very simple. As any nice Jewish woman would do, "I go where my husband goes." And, that's where she went, and we came

to the United States...uh...in May 1946. We were on the very first ship with refugees arriving in New York harbor after the war. And, of course, I remember where Jewish people came out en masse to greet us and to look with binoculars from afar, to see -- I suppose -- what these animals looked like. At least that's the way we felt -- I felt. So, we came here and this is the story. And, whatever happened thereafter -- that's fine. We are free here. The end, what I can report to you about my experiences -- what I still remember -- I am today 62 years old. I have a lovely wife. I have two lovely children. We have a daughter, highly educated, happily married, with two lovely grandchildren. My granddaughter, Lisa, is fourteen. My grandson, Darren, is eleven. I have a lovely son, Theodore, who is a physician in Sarasota, Florida, and we are a happy family and a healthy family. I am glad I could have told you a little bit about it. Thank you very much.

Q: May it continue for a long, long time.

A: Thank you.