

So we'll start to record. We're going to start all over now. I'm going to say, good morning, this is Barbara Kreines, and it's Wednesday, April 28, 1981. And I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Albert Geisel in his beautiful apartment in Roselawn on Section Road. And it is a beautiful apartment.

Mr. Geisel, would you begin this morning by telling us a little bit about your birthplace, when you were born, and about your general family background in Germany?

I am Albert Geisel. I was born May 18, 1907 in Rheinbach near Bonn as a son of Hermann and Sophie Geisel. I had two older sisters and one younger brother. When I was six years old, I attended a Catholic partial school to my 13th year when I graduated. After that I attended for three years what would you call a trade school. And I entered the business of my father. He was-- we had a meat market and were cattle dealers.

In 1913, when, I was attending school, we had a big occasion in our town. The kaiser, or rather, the emperor, was passing our town, and all schoolchildren were lining up the streets. Then in 1914, when World War number one started, I still remember very well as soldiers from all over were quartered in private houses. They came with horses and everything. Everything went to the west into France-- first into Belgium.

My mother, who had four brothers, who were living near the Belgian border, about 30, 32 miles where we were living, who had all also a meat market, they had to close-- they had to close their businesses when they all were inducted in the army.

My youngest uncle, Uncle Karl, he already was wounded in Belgium. But he was lucky. He was transferred back into Germany and stayed all during the war in Berlin. They all advanced to corporal, sergeant, and second lieutenant. The second lieutenant, my Uncle Alex, and when the Germans-- Germany was defeated in the war, he rode back on his horse and was lucky. And a shell did strike his cap, but he was not wounded.

But might I go back? In December 1916, my father was inducted in the army also. He was one of the oldest soldiers. He was born in October '69. If he had born in August '69, he had not been inducted anymore. He had his basic training in Koblenz am Rhein. And on one day, he had a few days' leave, but then through an informers for bad weather, he was ordered back to his unit, and was all by himself back out to France without any notice. And he had really a rough time.

But at that time, as I say before, we were four children. My mother was all by herself with the four children. I never will forget. I was 10 years old when I slaughtered the first calf. My older sister was four years older than I am. She helped my mother cutting up meat.

But the hardship was really great. My mother, who weighed 180 pounds, she went down to 125 pounds. But then at the end-- no, I guess it was at the beginning of April 18, 1918, my father got his discharge due to his age.

Going a little back about our family history, we were for generation and generation in the same locality. My mother-- or better, my mother's mother, my grandmother, she came from Godesburg, also near Bonn. My father's mother, she came from Unkel am Rhein, a city near Remagen.

So coming back to my private life, as I grew older grew older our community consisted of about 99% of people of the Catholic faith. And I had only Catholic friends, hardly, any connections with Jews. And socially, Sundays, we went to walks in the park or went for playing cards in the house or maybe in a saloon for an hour or two. And after that, we attended our business. The farmers had to attend the cattle. We had maybe cattle. I attend cattle.

And during the week, we had our house there. We had our business. We had land. We had farm. We had-- we were very well-to-do people.

And yet you knew you were Jewish. And how did you express that Jewishness? Was there any Jewish community at all?

Oh, yes. We had about-- we had our synagogues there. We had about 12 Jewish families in our community. And in the

surrounding villages, there were maybe-- I mean, the next villages were maybe three miles apart, and they had maybe three or four Jewish families. And very many, they attended the service in Rheinbach, in our community.

It was Orthodox, I guess? What kind of a-- do you remember? And who conducted it? There wasn't a rabbi there?

There was no rabbi, but yes, you could say Orthodox because at that time we were eating kosher meat. My dad was a chauffeur. And so there were other people. But as soon the Nazis came and they took the knives away, naturally we ate all meat which was cattle, from cattle which were not killed kosher, maybe under the circumstances.

How was the-- how large was the community itself?

About 5,000 population. But in our community, as I said before, we had a meat market, and there were about 10 meat markets. But at the beginning, the Jews, they were selling only beef or lamb, no pork. But later when I grew older, we had everything. We slaughtered pigs and everything.

But my dad was so conscientious what quality meat he was handling. He had only the best, and I guess there was nobody in town who didn't buy the meat in our place. Also, there were 10 competitors. And we had--

So socially or a business-like, we didn't any-- it didn't feel any different. But there were certain people, also they were dealing with us business, but business concern. But socially, they looked a little down on us. For instance, when we became an age where we learned dancing, the teacher came. And on one side there were the girls and on one side the men. For instance, when my sisters were in that position, there were certain big farmers sons who hesitated to dance with.

But those occasions, they were in the minority. I mean, it doesn't appear very often.

The boys would get bar mitzvah?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. My bar mitzvah was as big as a wedding. I mean, big attendance and everything. Oh, yes. And--

It sounds like there was a lot of tolerance and was very tolerant of one another's beliefs.

So in other words, when my dad came back from the army, we had inflation. We got really poor. We had all to start from the beginning. But I was pretty much pushing on. I was more or less running the show, and everything was developing to our satisfaction.

Then when the war-- when Hitler came to power, as I mentioned before, socially we had nothing to worry. And we were financially so well off that we didn't worry because we thought, how many people are worse off than we are and we never had done anything wrong as far as having a parking ticket, any violations. And also there were propaganda that people shouldn't deal with Jews, but still the farmers dealt with us. Belonged to the party or not to the party, they were dealing with us.

Also they were threatened. The fact wouldn't even the bishop [GERMAN] I mean, the Catholic higher priest, they were denounced openly that they were dealing still with the Jews. Because he was proud that he was, mentioned that he was dealing with us. But nevertheless, that went on and on and on.

Finally, everything was rationed, and a Nazi was put in charge to the market in Bonn. From there, later on were the cattle that distribute. And the classification came, a, b, c, d, that means quality-wise. And naturally, the Jews couldn't get the best quality. They gave them cattle which couldn't even walk anymore. But nevertheless, I had good friends to whom I gave that kind of meat what I used to produce sausage. And they had more the best quality meat which they had no use for.

So they were astonished as I still could keep up my trade and had the best meat to sell. Because I got it from the competition who had no use for it, and I didn't have to sell the poor quality meat because I had an outlet for it.

Then came with hogs. They didn't get any. My sister, who was not Jewish-looking whatsoever, she went in the office of that so-called Nazi, and he said, sure, you get a hog. Yeah. Somebody mentioned Jew. No, you are not Jewish. So for one week that helped. She got a hog. But the next time, it was out.

So making the story short, in 1938, I was ordered to the big office in Bonn when I was asked, I should give up my trade. But in the meantime, there was not much trade anymore. I mean, just that you had the permission. And I said to that man, I did nothing wrong, and I am not going to give it up.

So the man said-- was a very nice man. He said, now, listen. You know they don't want that you have it. If we let you have your trade, you give it up the first of the year voluntarily. I said that is a deal. Because I mean, I only want to show I had not done nothing wrong.

But in the meantime, my brother had emigrated to New York, to America. And we were told that a very distant relative-

Was your brother in the business with you?

A very distant relative who was in America also with his sister when his parents were living in Dusseldorf. They were leaving Germany, and at that time I was asked to visit them in order to give them some messages to my brother or to hear something, news about my brother and the life in America.

And I had a fairly new car. On Wednesday, I had the car outside and didn't want to use it anymore. I want to leave it clean to travel to Dusseldorf, which was about 90 miles from Rheinbach. And on a Thursday morning, I take my bike and go to two neighboring villages. The first one was Miel and then Ludendorf.

And that was a little after noon time. I left that village and drove with one hand on my bike. With the other hand, I was eating a sandwich. And then came opposite towards me on a bike one of a bigger richer farmer, wealthy farmers from that village. And he goes off the bike and he asked, Geisel, where are you going? I ask why?

Yeah, I just come from Rheinbach. They arrested all Jews there, including your dad and your fat mayor, an SA, was watching how they tear the synagogue down. Now, one can imagine I couldn't eat my sandwich anymore. I turned around and went back in that village and went to a customer.

And I said Mrs. [? Schacher, ?] that Peter Fuchs ] just comes and tells me that and that. So she said to one of her sons-- those people had two sons-- Henry, you get your bike and you go to Rheinbach and find out what is what. And I was sitting there and wait.

How long was the distance?

About four miles. And after two hours, that fellow comes back and says, not looking in my face anymore, I couldn't reach your people. I went to your neighbor, who was a farmer, and through the wall I talked to your sister and said-- and they told me that your dad is arrested, and if you don't come home, they will arrest your mother and your sister also.

So that fellow's mother said, Albert, what can you do? You have to go home, and go from that village Ludendorf in order to get to Rheinbach, I had to pass Oberdrees, another village. And there were two farmers, women, making the expression, oh, there is still one coming.

So in the end of that village, a custom of ours, we had a saloon there. I go in there, and I said, Frau [? Merber, ?] I use your phone. I didn't ask for an answer. I go and called my sister. And she said, Albert, you better be here by then and then. Otherwise, they will get me and mother too.

In the outskirts of Rheinbach, there was the newest and biggest penitentiary of Prussia with all the houses where the guards were living. Was almost a village by itself. But in the outskirts there, my sister, another distant cousin came

already, expecting me and informed me what is going on. And in order to go out to our house, we had to pass the main street.

I was wearing long brown boots like the SA-- SA was wearing. And I came home. My mother had cooked some pea soup she wants to give me, but I wasn't able to eat pea soup. So my sister accompanied me, and we went to the courthouse.

And as I said, a small community, everything, everybody knows each other. And the caretaker of the courthouse, a real smart party man, addressed me only Mr. Geisel, Mr. Geisel. I had taken a prayer book along. And he said to the fellow, take some sheets for Mr. Geisel and take some books to read for Mr. Geisel. And I was put in a cell by myself.

And after a few hours, I hear slamming of doors. And finally, my cell door was opened. And party people from Bonn came and asked, what is your name? What was your occupation? My occupation is cattle dealer because I still had the permission. So they left me. Was on a Thursday.

But may I interrupt you? All this happened-- by coincidence, I had not listened to the radio, and I didn't know what had happened in Paris when that so-called Rath was murdered. And that was the reason they took all those actions against the Jews.

But that evening, my dad was released because nobody should be arrested over 60 years old. My dad was past 60 years old. They let him go. The next Friday before lunch, we were called out. There was a big commotion at the courthouse, and everybody was assembled. My sister's there with a packed suitcase for me and a truck waiting for us. And we all loaded on that truck and driven through the city, then out of the city.

We didn't know what our destination was, but then we were brought to the penitentiary in Brauweiler. That was near Cologne. That was on a Friday. Then I was put together in a cell. There were already three more people, one from Bonn, one young fellow from Brühl-- That's all close by-- 16 years old.

And so every day for a short time we were let out. And if I remember well, on a Monday morning, it was about 1:30 in the morning, we were called out. The first time that I saw floodlights, I mean it was in the middle of the night was daylight. And we were lined up and escorted from the police in Cologne.

Cologne was the biggest city in the Rhineland. And they called the police a Schupo. They were escorting us on both sides, and we were marched to the railroad station in Brauweiler. And at that time, in Germany, the railroad had first, second, third, and fourth class. First and second class were nice upholstered cars. The third class was cars with small compartments with two wooden benches, which hold maybe eight people. And the fourth class were huge cars which had wooden benches in the middle and aisle.

And with us was a distant cousin of ours. He had been a prisoner of war in the First World War when he said, keep your nose back, keep your nose back. So those people on that railroad station, they were forced in those cars that they couldn't move anymore. And finally as that cousin said, keep your nose back, there were only 14 people left.

So we came in that car. We had plenty of room to sit and to stretch and were accompanied with those Schupos. I wanted to have conversation with them because I knew some people in the Schupo. And they said, yeah, we are not supposed to talk to you. So we left then that Brauweiler, the next big station what we passed.

Can I interrupt you? Who was-- I'm a little confused. Just you went? Not the rest of your family?

Just for my family? Yeah, only one. yes, yes, yes, yes. There was only my parents and my sister with her two boys left and myself. But the rest of the men from our community. And when we pass-- when we passed Cologne, our train consisted of about 600 people. From Cologne, we went up along the river Rhine to Koblenz.

There were some more cars connected then. We were not 600 people-- 1,200 people. And all big railway station which we were passing, through the loudspeaker came, special train number so and so and so and so.

And I myself had no idea where we were going. And I don't recall anymore if we traveled for a couple of days, but those Schupos, there were very decent. And those big railroad stations where we had to stop, with our money they went to the commission stands and got some chocolate or a cup of coffee or something.

So finally it was at night. We came to a railroad station. And our Schupo escorts left with the words "you will think of us very often." In the same moment from one side of the train, SS came with machine guns, came in on one side on the left on the other side with a warning, nobody goes on a door, nobody goes on a window. You will be shot.

So we're sitting quietly. And then we heard slamming of doors. And finally, our door were opened. And when we got out after being for a few days or nights in there, and it was November, cold, misty winter night, we were sweating and shivering when we came in that cold.

We were lined up. On another platform was a whole train with cattle cars. And then we were marched with that cattle car, myself with one hand my suitcase. Then that cattle car was opened. Get in that car. And at that time, I was pretty much alert. I didn't use the steps on that car. There were two steps on that car.

With one hand, a handle on that car, with the other step I was in that car. But the one who wasn't as fast right with the machine gun butt over them. Now, as I said, we were only 14 to 16 people. The door was closed after that. But after a few minutes, that door was open. Some more people came in. Again, beating with us because those people were not quite as alert and as fast. And--

So that was repeated and repeated. But nobody could move anymore. Then the door still was opened up. And the people were-- it was impossible, impossible. Nevertheless, like you load sheep in a car, crush them in there.

Then the people couldn't breathe. I was lucky. I was fairly tall and could breathe over the head of the other people. And then people in the corner of those cars were air shafts. They wanted to open them up. Then they shout, we shoot if you don't stay away from that. All right.

After a short time, we heard a whistle and the locomotive pulled on. But only a few yards in order to stop and go backwards only to shake us up. So I don't know how long, 15 minutes, 20 minutes that went on. And then we stood.

But I must say, that railroad station was Munich where we were. And then after that short trip, get out, very careful, very careful. Because in the meantime, from that mist that was kind of ice slippery, then we were lined up again to four people. And then we were in Dachau. Then the commands.

One, two, three, forward, march. Double time, stop, double time. And I was real-- like a machine. But those people who were maybe physically were not alert as much, with those machine gun butts, bing, bing, bing.

So that was only a small distance. I don't know how many thousand people were assembled, and then some SS big shots from SS was standing there in their long woolen coat and big boots and held a speech. Then we were marched between barracks.

We have to throw our suitcases away. Then those barracks, there was-- when you entered those barracks, to the left and right was a room. And as I said, that distant cousin of ours again, keep your nose back, keep your nose back. Those ones who went in first, there was a rafter when you go in there, but the lid was taken off so there was a hole. and people who were not alert and they tripped over that hole.

But on left and right were standing one of those first inmates of the prison camp, those former communists. They were standing in there and beating the people from the left to the right when they were entering those Rooms then came shout again from inside, impossible with this filth. We can't breathe anymore.

And there again we were only less than 20 people left. We were left then in that other empty room all by ourselves. And we were then lined up, and then came an SS and started on first, what was your occupation? I was a banker in Cologne.

Where you got those ribbons from?

There were rewards what I got in World War number one to save 650 people's lives to live-- when we were stationed in Italy. When I was-- listen, a mine was being laid or something. So then that man was then really impressed. So that particular man said, may I ask for some water for myself and for my comrades here? You get water.

Then in a few minutes, they came with a bucket with water what was handed from one to the other. And I can assure you, champagne can't taste as good as that water tasted. Then the floor was covered with straw. We had to lay down. We couldn't stand up. We had to lay down.

Then they came around and throw everybody a piece of dry rye bread. But I hadn't eaten for a couple of days. Nobody was able to swallow that bread because it didn't go down the throat. And I myself, I kept myself a little fresh as my sister had given me in my suitcase quite a bit a peppermint along. And so for myself and the others I distributed peppermint. So after that first night, we had to fall out again and picked up our suitcases. And then we were processed.

But that went so slow, so slow. In the meantime, one SS came after the other. What was your occupation and this and this and that? But finally, it became my turn. On a table was sitting an SS and a former communist, a political prisoner as his assistant.

I had to empty my suitcase. I had there quite a number of stockings, which my mother had knitted, and three, four, five shirts, and had a prayer book. And as soon he saw that, he threw that away. And then he had a piece of paper. He said, what is that kind of Jewish writing?

I said, that is a diploma what my great-grandfather got when he served in the army from 1894 to 1897 in [GERMAN]. Then he said to that helper, put it together with values. Then I had 40 marks in money along. And due to that, I was the only one who could keep the money. Everybody had every penny taken away. From there, we got all-- the barber had our hair taken off. They were out of prison garb, so we could keep our clothes, our suits. But I had to give up my boots. I got shoes issued.

From there we went in a bathroom with all kinds of showers, all in tile, wonderful. And coming under that shower, that gave you new life. Wonderful. And lucky as I was again, as soon as [INAUDIBLE] was through, then we had to go, nude as we were, to a row of doctors to become examined. But as soon I was through, SS came. And they took that movable shower head, and the people were asked, come over here. Open your mouth. Say ah. And they put that water in their mouth, and the people got to the floor.

The fact, I know quite a few one, horse dealer from Euskirchen, nearby city, and that did him bum on the floor. I know one cattle dealer, he had a crippled leg. He had to wear on his shoes high heels. Him, men more than six feet tall, open your mouth, eh! Until they fell to the floor.

All right. From there, we came then to our assigned barracks. I was in block 26 room one. And the funniest part what was, there was one fellow, Walter [? Berns ?] from Cologne. We left Germany over from Holland to England where I had to stay, oh, for a year before I am able to come to America.

And that's the same Walter [? Berns. ?] He was assigned to the same barracks where I was. His father, he was in block 28, the next block. And the other people from my hometown, they weren't block 28. But then it happened, they had a PX. Every day, we could make a list where somebody was sent to buy food for us, like bread or dairy butter, what you were not even able to buy on the outside anymore. And we were so surprised.

And so everybody, maybe some acquaintance of mine, for 14, 16 people were gathering around me, and I helped them through. Everybody-- I felt sorry for the others had to look on because you could take care of dozens but not of hundreds.

But after a few days, that was interrupted, that we couldn't buy-- only could buy certain things. But then after being there, you could write home for money, and they could send you, if I recall right, every two weeks \$15. But anyhow,

being in that barracks, after two days, we were called to give our clothes up. In the meantime, they had enough prison clothes again. It was the blue and white stripes, just thin linen.

But at that time when I went there, and I had only a few pennies with me, I said to that political prisoner, let me get out my suitcase. And I gave him those few pennies and-- but find your suitcase and hundreds of suitcases. And he was anxious himself, but I made it. When I took three or four pairs of socks out or my shirts out, when I came back to the barracks, and that wearing one shirt, I wore five shirts.

I was out already before they were able to. And then from other times, we had to go. You had your picture taken. You had to sit in a chair. And as soon that picture was taken, if you were not alert and were out of that chair, they pushed a button and a needle came out where you were sitting.

But as I said we were marching. And I was fairly tall, and I was pretty much in front. And our political prisoners were our direct guards. And I heard a voice, don't fall asleep in front. But I never was expecting that he was referring to me. All of a sudden, I was hit on my behind that I couldn't stand the pain. And I can assure you, for more than a half a year when I was laying in bed and was shifting from one side, I had to go on my hands not that I was able but that was only a minor infliction.

The fact, some other time we were marching. We would halt. And one other SS comes. We looked at each other, like a sudden, he tells me, what, did you try to hit me? Just provocation. And then with his gloved hand, he hit me in the face. But it was more aggravating than harmful. That was, thanks God, the only experience what I had.

So I was-- in the meantime, that was a daily routine. As I said, we had to go in the morning or in the evening. One poor fellow, he was carrying from his other people only sheet thrown him. Only a skeleton, and one day he was dead anyhow. I mean, it was nothing left of him.

But one episode, as I was a block 26 room one, and in room two, one of political prisoners, they must have beaten him half crazy, was now the boss in that room two. And one day he comes in our ROOM and there was a young fellow, an athlete, more than six feet tall.

And he made a remark, all the equipment here is only crap anyhow. He was referring to the stonework. What did you say? That's all crap what you got here. And that political prisoner, small guy, he could hardly reach him, hit that guy left and right in the face. What did you say about it this? It's all crap what you got here. Very proud young fellow.

And he said, what did you say? And he kept on hitting him and hitting him only in the face and mouth. And finally the blood comes out in his mouth and his nose. And we were begging that guy say every nice number one. And finally he said, everything. So then he let him go.

So another time, we were all assembled out there. Those big SS there, they called names. And there come some poor old Jewish people in their prison dress. And what is your name? So on. Now, in order to make it short, they call out maybe a dozen people. Look at them. In other words, what creatures. They represent seven million marks. You know, former big shots in big business and so on.

Then there always were informers. As I said, I was lucky and wore my warm underwear. And other people, there were people from Austria, from South Germany. They were arrested at their job, off the street. Some, they were doing road work, construction work. They had nothing. Just when somebody must have told them, they had under their prison clothes that linen clothes themselves, blocked up with newspapers. Paper holds warmth. And somebody had informed about that.

So when we were all appealed on a big place, you had to put it all there. And afterwards, they had to also clean it up. So those people were later on freezing to death. Well, in the meantime comes Christmas. Or I may interrupt myself again.

We was were so hungry, you pick up your Food there was in a corner like you put potatoes for the pigs. We could pick up a potato or two but you were eating them with the peeling as they were. There were herrings. They were not cleaned.

You ate them head and tail and everything. Even if you were thirsty like the dickens afterwards.

So in the meantime, Christmas came along and the first time we had a good meal. We had soup meat and soup that tastes like a home-cooked meal. We felt wonderful. The following day, we had just the leftover but still it tasted good.

Then the 28th of December, my name was called. And all those people whose names were called were processed and could be discharged. But where we were standing there, you had to go before the doctors again. And those who were physically not fit. The fact, there was one fellow, Alfred [? Berney ?] from Norway he was all the time he couldn't wear shoes. He was walking on boards.

He had his hands always in sleeves. They were full of pus, all infected. And his name was called, but he didn't get his discharge because the outside world shouldn't see in what conditions we were. So I guess it was in the afternoon before we were processed.

We came in a train, a warm train, a short ride. 10 minutes, 15 minutes, we came to the railroad station in Munich where a Jewish committee took over. And then we got our tickets on the train. And naturally, before I left, I gave all my shirts to the people who were left. And I looked funny because I had a shirt. No collar and tie with my bare head. But we're able to travel with other civilians in the train.

So the second day in the morning at 8:30, I arrived in Bonn. We had to change trains. But from the railroad station, I called home that I would come with a train so and so. And I came then home. That was about the 28th, 29th of December 30, 1918-- 1938.

But going back, as I said, I had two sisters. They were married in Mosbach, Baden. And they had applied for quota to emigrate to United States. And one of my visits in Mosbach. They had to do something in the American consulate in Stuttgart. And they asked me to come along, I should register too. And I was laughing, at that time it was not right to emigrate because there was-- I liked it too much where I was.

And so I got the quota number 10,000 and something. And actually when I came back from that visit home, my sister at home said, yeah, you think only of yourself. Why didn't you take a quota number for us too? But then they made arrangements from home. And in the meantime, they got already the quota number 25,000 and something.

What's a quota number?

Well, that many people can emigrate. You see at that time only 2,000 to 3,000 people a year were allowed to emigrate. And at that time, while I was in Dachau, and the reason that I got my discharge first, those getting the discharge who had been veterans of World War number one, and they asked us first, while I was in concentration lager, they had to give up our car. But then they want to sell all our possessions, house and land.

And my sister claimed we can do nothing. My brother took care of all financial things. We can do nothing without him. And she went several times to the Gestapo in Bonn-- in Cologne. And as I said, she was-- as she didn't look Jewish, she was always fairly well accepted. And finally, due to that, I got my discharge.

But then I got on a [GERMAN] visa. That means I had no permit to work, that I could emigrate to England in order to wait for my quota number. So in March '39, I left Germany, went to England, hardly speaking the language. And from Harwich, the port city of England, we left from Hook of Holland, the port city in Holland. When they arrived in Harwich, England, the port city, and there was with a train to London.

There was somebody from the Jewish committee-- that was at that time the Bloomsbury House-- who led us to the Bloomsbury House. And it happened at the Bloomsbury House, the lady in charge, very, very essential lady, Mrs. Schwab, and a fellow from the nearby village from us was the chauffeur of that lady. And while waiting, waiting, waiting to be processed from that committee, what happened to me, I was told, why don't you go and make your financial arrangements? Because I had money sent over from the United States to the Chase Manhattan Bank branch of London.



When I came there, huge room, people all like aristocrats, and me not speaking English. And they said, yeah, what kind of reference you got? I said, reference? I got a brother there, and I got my dad's cousin there. I don't know anybody in America. I mean, as good as I acquit myself.

Yeah, the reason that we asked for reference, we don't want any people who have connections with Al Capone as customers. But OK, we take your money. So they gave me a checkbook. In the meantime, I come back to that Bloomsbury House, and that fellow whom we know, he said, you take the subway, to Belsize Park Gardens. There is a rooming house where my parents lived too when they came here.

But my English was so good. I went to that station. I said, I want a ticket for Belsize Park. [LAUGHS] Because I didn't know. But anyhow, I made it there. And so every-- I was then able to attend every day a class to learn English. But my main reason was to find ways to get my parents and sister with her two boys out and thinking that the acquaintance of ours with the chauffeur of Mrs. Schwab, had a step ahead when he told me, oh, it's just a word. That's nothing.

But there was no progress and no progress. I am not ashamed to say I was laying in bed, crying how helpless I was, and not able to work. I became just more desperate and desperate. And that man himself, I mean, most likely he talked bigger than he was. But after a few months, he asked me to come in and see Mrs. Schwab. I go in that Mrs. Schwab, and I told her the situation.

She said, how much money you got? I said, yeah, my parents so and so. Yeah, can you spare 100 pounds or what it was? Or \$100? For your nephews? And said fine. I was with that lady not two minutes. I was referred to room so-and-so. And when I came, I come from Mrs. Schwab. Every was on the right feet. And in less than five minutes, there was the permission that my parents could come, my sister comes on a domestic permit to take care of my parents. And the children come on a children's permit.

So right away, the permit was there.

I wonder why it worked so quickly.

Then they were talking, there will be the war. And if I recall right, the war was already declared on a Saturday. I got a call from home. My sister is at the telephone, and she said, we are leaving today. We are tomorrow morning in London on Victoria station. And as I said, I was at that rooming house. And everybody looked so pity for me. There was already war, and they said we're coming.

The next morning, I go to the Victoria station, and the train comes. I mean I had, in the meantime that I had left in March, and that was in August. And then I see my parents on the [? boats. ?] And I took a taxi and went to the boarding house. And then everybody said, yeah, Geisel, I will tell you, we never believed that your parents still gotten out, and they were still lucky on the border. That was the last train for Germany-- was leaving Germany.

And they kept my father back, and the others were already in the train and the whistle blow already. And then finally they let my father go too. And so they arrived and then we went to the boarding house. And we stayed in there a short while. And the English people, they had vacated their houses and went to the country.

So there were apartments advertised, houses advertised. And I rented a house on Selborne Gardens. And the fact, Then in May 4-- march '40 I got-- my quota was called. I went to the American consulate and got my visa. Then most of the people from my boarding house were living at the same place. In my early talk, that Alfred [? Berns, ?] whom I never had seen any more in England, came on the same train on the same boat, went with me together again to America.

Then I left my parents and sister in England. And I left. And when we came, our ship should go from Liverpool, but we were delayed due to the German u-boats and stayed overnight in a hotel. Then we left with the SS Georgic, which was later torpedoed and sunk. But he was one of the biggest boats what the Cunard Line had. And I must say, the first evening, that meal was so wonderful, tasted so good and everybody--

The next morning, I got up, had wonderful breakfast. But I was wondering. The dining room was almost empty and the day before was crowded. So I went up to the upper deck. And there was a man who had been always so friendly, but he was standing on the railing of the boat relieving himself.

But I was laughing. That sea was so stormy. I went then on the upper deck, on a small stairs up. But everything was shaking, so I didn't stay. Only stand up up there only for a few minutes. And I went down there, but I was hardly down. I was in a bad-- bad shape myself. I made it to the bathroom, which was crowded.

Then I must say, I got so sick. I guess it took nine days to come over. I didn't leave my berth until the day before we hit the United States. And so I arrived in the United States. My sister in New York waited for me. My brother, who was in Chicago, but I intended to stay a week in New York.

I met some acquaintances in New York. They didn't let me feel easy. They said, if they offer you a job for \$10 a week, grab it with both hands. But if they offer you a job for \$18, expect the week after you are laid off. They don't keep you. So I wasn't feeling too good.

After a week, with the bus I traveled from New York to Chicago. Stayed there with my brother. It was distant cousins of ours. The fact, their father was a cousin of our father, who had come to this country when he was 10 years old, who was living in Chicago. And those girls, naturally they were American born. They invited me for supper, and they wanted to give me a treat and serve me corn on the cob. I said no, we feed that to pigs where I come from. You can eat that.

[LAUGHTER]

And so the first thing was going hunting for an apartment, my brother and myself, finding one in an apartment building, furnished apartment, daily maid service, \$40 a month. Then with my uncle was very well known in the business world. Me, a meat man, learned meat man. He sent me all to the meat packing houses up to Armour Company. But as I said, I have left Germany like a lord, dressed with the best clothes from head to feet.

So when I first went to Armour Company, they had every day where they were showing the place but the tour was over. But when they saw me, over loudspeaker, there's somebody wants to see, inspect-- they thought a visitor from the old country gave me a special tour just by myself to the place. So I saw the process of a packing house, from slaughtering the cattle until the process when they were sold the butter and cheese.

And when I saw the process, my heart fell to my feet that I should work under those conditions. But nevertheless, a higher up gentlemen who knew my Uncle Charlie, my dad's cousin, they had a nice talk to me. All his encouragement was, yeah, leave your address and give your-- make an application with the secretary. That was it.

Then I went to a big place. They had all the hotel supplies, [? Selfour ?] Brothers. When I came there, I was led in the office. I told them that you fell down. I just come from Germany. I was reception. They want to know about the conditions there every night when I was through.

Yeah, right now this is very slow but leave your address so and so. I was pretty much discouraged. That I was-- when I left England, there were people in our boarding house. Go and say hello. We have nephews in Chicago. And I go to those people. In the meantime, they were cattle dealers. And I said, your uncle's son says hello.

Yeah, you say you go tomorrow morning on 46th on Halstead. Hygrade is opening a new plant there. You see there for this work. I take the L and go in that-- go there, and I see there the first time a huge trailer unloading all of the beef. And I was scared to open my mouth. And I'm standing there and until it was all unloaded.

And I see a guy who is scaling that. And I go to him and I said, listen, Mr. Worth sent me here. Maybe you have work for a butcher. That man answered not one word. With one hand, he opened the cooler door, and he called in that cooler, Stanley, here is a fellow who claims to be a butcher. Give him a hook and a knife.

And I was standing there in my best clothes. And so he gives me a hook and a knife. They came some [? Bilko ?]

customers who talked German. They felt very, very sorry for me. They want to be helpful even that. But they let me do piecework. At that time, I was a greenhorn. Everybody was taking advantage of me.

Well, I worked in that place for three days. And after three days, I had earned \$5.04. But in the meantime, I had made an application at the packing of Oscar Mayer. And the second week, I worked there again and made \$5.48.

I was afraid when I come home I see in the mailbox a notice from Oscar Mayer, I would like to see you at your earliest convenience, John [? Meyer, ?] the superintendent. But in the meantime, at Hygrade, that type of meat, I had already big infection on my finger. And all that night, I was bathing my finger and bathing my finger. The next morning, I go to the Oscar Mayer room, and I came in the office.

And I start stuttering with my English. That fellow told me, you can talk German to me. He had come himself eight years before from Germany. But in the meantime, he was already superintendent. And then he talked to me for about an hour. Then he said, yeah, you go to the doctor and examine. And then on Monday, you can start working, not telling me what I would make or nothing.

Then he turned around and he said, I want to introduce you to your boss. He introduced me to Gottfried Meyer. That was the nephew of the chairman of Oscar Mayer. Everybody was really pleasant. So I go to the doctor. Dr. Showalter, and they examined me. On Monday morning, I started working. And they put me in the boning department.

And the others, they were cutting the meat off the bone. And I should just clean the bone. And the assistant foreman was a German fellow too. Already at lunchtime, I said, Frank, that is no work for me, cleaning the bones. Naturally, I talk German to him.

And so after lunchtime, he told an American fellow, you clean the bone and Albert cleans the meat. And then that [? red ?] guy was just a greenhorn. He was rubbing in his beard and all, but that didn't help much.

So I was standing there. But in the meat packing business, in May is the slowest time then, when big companies like Armour, Swift at that time, laid the people off, 20,000, 30,000 at a time, that only big people with big seniority keeping their jobs. And so it was slow at Oscar Mayer too, but they were very decent.

They came then and asked me, Albert, you want to work in the hog-cutting floor instead laying me off. But at that time, it was still a 48-hour a week. And so they put me in that hog-cutting floor. But may I interrupt you? After a week working in that boning place and I got my check, I got my check \$20.80, I felt like a king.

And I worked decent. So coming in that hog-cutting floor, I had to trim, trim on slabs bacon. And I was wondering, you had to put the trimming in a barrel with your clock number on it. And they called the boss of that hog-cutting floor the slave driver. He only addressed me not with my name. I was Landsmann.

And at five minutes to 8:00, everybody had to stand attention-- at attention at the table. At 8 o'clock, the whistle blows. Then with the heel of the knife, they made noise on the table. Everybody had to go.

The people were scared to use the bathroom. They had to stay on their job. Then in the evening, that what you had done was put on the scale, your lock number and the weight on it. At that time, couple days later, that slave driver comes to me, Landsmann, can't you do any better?

And but then I was told how much on a minimum you had to do in order to be able that they keep you, to hold your job. But then I found out I did already one fourth more than it was required to do. But that other boy, he was a Polack, a slave driver. No, maybe he wasn't a friend of the Jews either.

And so I worked in that place only 28-- 28 hours a week. I don't remember after a week or two on a Friday, he comes to me. And he said, Landsmann, you want to work tomorrow for your first boss, Mr. [? Schaefer? ?]

That was the big boss from the boning department as well from the wholesale department. He was a German fellow too.

And I said, a poor devil has to work. He thought maybe for Shabbos I didn't. OK, you go then there.

The next morning, I go in that wholesale department. And they had there so many offals. And they pulling, pulling, trying to take so many barrels and barrels and barrels. And as I said, I was 100% expert. I didn't have to learn the trade here. And I worked there.

And when it was early afternoon, I saw them sticking their heads together, another fellow worker or another boss. Then that Mr. [? Schaefer ?] came to me. And he said, Albert, don't you want to work for me here? What do you have to work for that slave driver? And you don't work 28 hours. You work as long as you want to work. You can work 48 hours. You work as long as you want to work.

See, they never was used to somebody working like I worked. And for sure, I worked. So the next morning, Monday morning, that slave driver, in order to go to this hog-cutting floor, he had to pass my place. And he sees me working there.

Landsmann? Nanu? I said, yeah, I'm working. I will see to it-- having a good man and taking that away from me? Before I was not good enough, I was not fast enough. But anyhow, I stayed in that place. And I said, I had started there with Oscar Mayer with \$0.50 an hour. You had to belong to the union.

After I was four months there, a fellow worker said, Landsmann, how much money you make? I said \$0.50. That's not right. You are entitled for after three months and they don't lay you off, you're entailed for a nickel more. So I go to the office, and I say what about it? Your next paycheck, you get it.

Then after two months, I got an additional 7 1/2 cents raise. I got then 62 and 1/2 cents. But in the meantime, I stayed in that wholesale department, the same way wholesale that I was used to work at home in our own business. And you heard my name 100 times over that mic.

And in the fifth floor was the freezer. I called the fifth floor for an order. But I talked German. Then other people came from the boss of the shipping. What is the matter? Are we here in America or in the old country? Because they couldn't participate what I was talking about. But anyhow, I--

Then as I said I got 62 and 1/2 cents. Then automatically we got a raise to 67 and 1/2 cents. And there were people that were working there for 30 years that were making \$0.90 an hour. And well, let me skip a little bit.

I was there exactly 11.5 months. I was at that time, from over 700 people, among the three best paid people in the plant. Then in the meantime, the war-- as I said, the war broke out. And I had to go and register.

And at that time, your examination was still before an individual. That was in Hyde Park. And he talked to me, start on my head. You become a good soldier. And he said, take your pants down. And he said, pick them up. You have a rupture. You know, they don't take you. But you better tell your people.

So I got the classification 4F. I go, tell the boss about what they told me. They sent me back to that Dr. Showalter, and he examined me and he called the assistant. You have no rupture. But anyhow, I kept on working. I had my number was-- I had a very low registration number. And finally they got a notice from the draft board, concerning them.

He said, yeah, so and so, you have to go for examination. I said, I had my examination. It makes no difference, rupture or no rupture. So I had to go before the old specialists who examined you, and nobody told me anything if I had a rupture or no rupture.

After a few days, I got in a notice, re-classified, 1A. And then my brother, who was living with me, I guess I had 4,000 registration number. My brother had 10,000 or whatever it was. And he said, yeah, the war has to take a long time until before they call me. So I was in call to go downtown Chicago, and all examinations again and nothing. But in the afternoon, I was in the army. But I could ask for two weeks to straighten out things.

And it was then I had to report in November '42. I had my basic training in Camp Grant, Illinois. My brother who had that high number, he was inducted nine days after me. Went from Camp Grant, came to Camp Carson. Today, it's called Fort Carson, Colorado. Then to the Thermal Air Base in California near Indio, California. From there back to Camp Carson, Colorado. Then back to Berkeley Texas.

Then in November, '44 we were shipped overseas.

It's a week later now, and it's May 6, 1981. And we're speaking to Mr. Albert Geisel again this morning. And we're going-- since we talked a little bit about to the point where you were in the Second World War and in Europe. Now we'll go over that area lightly and see what happens and come back to the United States eventually.

We left from Boston and converted SS America to Scotland. And we had Thanksgiving near Glasgow in old barracks from World War number one. After being there for a few weeks, we went with the railroad through England to Southampton, crossed the Channel, and arrived in France, in Le Havre.

There we struck. We went to a place, Å%otretat, a former resort on the English Channel. And there we stayed-- we had-- we stayed there for a short time. Then it was when the Battle of the Bulge started when Von Rundstedt made that advance. We left Å%otretat to [? Villejuif, ?] a suburb of Paris where we took over a French hospital. And there we were very busy, but those casualties which we got there were tremendous.

As it was in the middle of winter, the biggest casualties were--