

Tape One Begin Side One --Donald Bender

7/11/84

By Julie Orenstein

Q: This is an interview with Donald Bender by Julie Orenstein conducted July 11, 1984, in the kitchen of his home. Can you tell me your full name?

A: Donald Henry Bender.

Q: And may I ask your age?

A: I'm 70.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Wuppertal. That was part of Prussia and now they are twin cities now. They have been combined. They're called Elberfeld and Barmen.

Q: And did you grow up there?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What was it like? Was it a big city or a small town?

A: Well now we never considered the borderline between one town and the other, therefore it was around 500,000. Idyllic located among mountains around there, or hilly. I mean, not real mountains.

Q: And was it a big commercial city?

A: Yes, very much textile and surrounded by family-owned hardware producing enterprise. Small places, where -- you may be familiar with the name Solingen Zwillingwerk cutlery and reimsig household appliances. Washing machines and such, grinders, and so on, and a lot of these small factories that were family owned and run by the family members in Barmen was a lot of textiles, spinneries, I mean, where they got the yarn and also rubber bands quite a bit

Q: And do you know how or when your family came to that city?

A: Well my family originally came from another part of Germany, the Maifeld region near Koblenz and Mayen. I don't know whether you know these towns or not. In fact my parents were cousins and my father was born in Munstermaifeld which is a small city and my mother was born in Polch which is a small overgrown village and you could walk it in an hour and fifteen minutes, the distance.

- Q: What did they do for a living?
- A: My father was a typesetter and hand typesetter, you know, mother never worked.
- Q: And what kind of education did they have?
- A: They all had grade school education.
- Q: And did your father ever go to college at all?
- A: No he did not. He served his apprenticeship as a typesetter four years and then he went to Elberfeld after eight. Besides later on in life when he had already bought him home he also did beauty care and such for animal, I mean dogs. And I mean trimming and clipping ears and all this kind of stuff that goes with it, so he had a sideline to supplement his income.
- Q: And he did this as you were growing up?
- A: Oh, yeah. In fact I had to help him sometimes to hold the dogs.
- Q: And were they very religious?
- A: Uh, my mother was somehow religious. My father was not.
- Q: He didn't go to temple?
- A: No.
- Q: Did your mother send you?
- A: I went to Hebrew school in preparation to be bar mitzvah and I was bar mitzvah against my own will because I was dead set against it. I had a difference of opinion with our Hebrew teacher. I resented his favoring the children of the rich people and I told him off in class and walked out.
- Q: That sounds just like my husband.
- A: I walked out on him. I said I wasn't coming back and I didn't. I had to be coaxed by the cantor, you know, that I be prepared for bar mitzvah. I didn't want to be bar mitzvah at that time, you know. So, I got bar mitzvah and I used to know how to read. I made it my purpose to forget all about it and I can't read anymore.
- Q: Did your father want you to be bar mitzvah? Was...
- A: Uh, that was more like my mother more than anything else.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I had one sister.

Q: Was she older or younger?

A: She was just less than a year younger -- or older.

Q: And did anybody else live in your house with you, grandparents or aunts or uncles?

A: No, no. No family members. We had tenants.

Q: You had tenants?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you live in an apartment building?

A: No, no, we owned a private home, but the upstairs was divided into apartments and we had three tenants.

Q: Do you remember what they were like at all, were -- or did they change all the time?

A: No they didn't change too often, but there were about 40 people let's put it that way. All gentiles.

Q: Were they men-gentiles?

A: Yeah, gentiles.

Q: Usually men or couples?

A: They were families.

Q: What languages were spoken in your home?

A: German only.

Q: No other languages?

A: No other languages.

Q: Your parents didn't practice or learn in school any other languages?

A: No.

Q: Did you at all? Learn in school?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Did you learn in school, any languages?

A: I did not.

Q: What was your social standing? Did you think of yourself as a little richer than everyone else or a little poorer?

A: No!

Q: Just average –

A: We were a family of the laboring class, working family.

Q: And did your parents have any Jewish friends or any gentile friends?

A: No. Almost exclusive gentile friends.

Q: And so they were pretty much assimilated into –

A: Definitely.

Q: They didn't live in a Jewish neighborhood?

A: No.

Q: Did they go to any social events at the synagogue?

A: My mother used to attend services and my sister sometime would go. It was the male part of the family didn't show much interest in this.

Q: That's interesting because usually the women didn't go and the men did.

A: No, no.

Q: So that was the opposite. Did they belong to groups, then, outside the synagogue? Did they belong to clubs or –

A: Yes. My father was very interested in dog breeding, racing, and my mother used to have all kinds of fowl for hobbies. I mean chickens, geese and ducks, and turkeys -- all this stuff -- and used to join organizations that way, I mean. In fact,

he used to raise prize-winning Pomeranians. Had a house full of silver cups and all this stuff and personally when I was growing up, I belonged to the Socialist Labor Youth. I was a Socialist. I'm still a Social Democrat by heart and so was my father.

Q: That was a little risky wasn't it?

A: I was very active and later on I joined the Reichbanner which was the Socialist militia and I was well known and that's why later on things began to happen.

Q: Yeah. When you were young did your parents go to the theater or to concerts?

A: Once in a while yes. I mean I used to go to variety performances with my dad and so on. I used to go to see it sometimes. See some of the operettas. Operas – I could never understand what they were singing about even in German. Operettas, yes, I mean “Fledermaus” and “The Merry Widow,” something like that. And we had the necessary supply of records of the orchestra music. And my father used to raise canaries. When it comes to animals we like 'em all. And my grandparents lived in the country, both sides, they usually had cows and horses and that was a joy to me. I used to make pets out of the horse or the cows.

Q: So your childhood -- In your childhood you were pretty much surrounded by animals.

A: Oh yeah. On the average we had about a dozen dogs. I mean we were breeding anyhow, and one or more cats. Yes.

Q: And do you remember very much about your childhood before you started school? What was it like?

A: Uh, not much. I spent part of my really early youth with my grandparents -- World War I. See I went to school at my grandparent's home until I was almost close to 8, I mean, one or more years of school there because they had something to eat and there was nothing to eat in the city. In fact my sister and I were split up. My sister was with my grandparents on my mother's side, and I was with the grandparents on my father's side.

Q: So that was for economic reasons because they...

A: Because there was no food in the city. World War I, in the aftermath, yes. I was about 8 years old when I came back home and started to go to school in my hometown.

Q: And what year was that when you came back home, when you were 8?

- A: Well, now, let's figure it out. 8 years -- I was about 8 years old. That was about '21, 1921 or '22, something like that.
- Q: OK, let's see and then when you came back -- well, when you were with your grandparents were you in public school?
- A: Yeah, in fact in the city where I was with my grandparents they didn't have any real public school, they had a seminary school where the seminary students like interns taught in their last years of their education. We had a different teacher each hour. Almost -- it was a good school, yes, and in fact the teachers were not allowed to lay hands on us. If we misbehaved we stand in the aisle and the -- I don't know what they called him, the name. The guy who was in charge of the church. Not the priest. Used to come every hour around and ask, "What did this one do? What did that one" -- and he used to beat the devil out of us. Oh, yeah, I'll never forget his name. He used to do a good job.
- Q: So he could spank you, but not...
- A: I got it only once, that was enough. He used to use the hickory stick you use to hang the sausage in the smokehouse with so -- very effective.
- Q: I imagine.
- A: Yes. So I went to school there for almost two years and then came home and then I started going to public school. Well, I was a fire redhead and very quick-tempered and consequently at school I did not tolerate a female teacher to spank me and I found that I changed schools. Oh, I got nasty grades, too, on account of it, because when she put me over her knee, I had a safety pin in my lapel and I used it. She didn't attempt to spank me anymore, so. Then I switched to a school which was free of that action and that was a Catholic school. I think, or whatever, I don't know. Anyways there I was alright. I used to fight, I mean, I was short, but I could fight. Consequently, I got along. Somebody call me a dirty Jew, I'd slap their face before I even knew it. The fight was on. Or any name. So I went through school and as far as qualification was concerned I never had any problems with the subjects. I was always among the leaders. I used to have competition for a prize where composition was concerned or math I was among the first three at all times and after that my father wanted to send me to higher education, but I was afraid of my dad. I figured, if I flunk it once he'll beat the living daylight out of me. Because when he found out I got a spanking at school, I got another one at home. That's the way it was. So I didn't want to go. So I became apprenticed plumbing and tinning for four years, took my exam. I'm a journeyman plumber and tinner. I still have my diploma. Oh, yeah.
- Q: How old were you when you started your apprenticeship?

- A: I left school when I was fourteen. I mean that's the usual time over there. That's when you're done with grade school. Now, there when I was apprenticed I also attended the occupational school one day a week and took additional courses in mechanical drawings and such. In other words, I got a complete education as a plumber and tinner including copper spinning. I mean I still can do it, but the thing is that my first master -- we had a difference of opinion. I didn't want to work overtime and he fired me so I got a second master to finish my apprenticeship and I got fired from him because he cheated me out of part of my wages. I got paid for the first year instead of getting the second and third year apprenticeship, so the minute I got done with the third year I got fired, naturally and I was unemployed. In fact I did my pieces for the exam in another man's shop. Alright, so I was unemployed for a while.
- Q: Uh, let's -- go back to your public school years. Was there a lot of anti-Semitism in the school?
- A: Uh, not too much.
- Q: You weren't treated...
- A: Every once in a while you were called a dirty Jew and that's when the fight started, I mean, I used to beat the hell out of 'em.
- Q: Just the other students, then, no-teachers didn't...
- A: No teachers, no, no, you didn't feel it especially in the school without religion. It was a more Socialistic direction and we got along fine and besides that I used to fight so well that if someone were foolish enough and we got into each other and realized we were an even match then we became friends. Oh, yeah.
- Q: And then during your apprenticeship were you apprenticed mostly to gentiles?
- A: Only. Exclusively.
- Q: And they never treated you badly?
- A: No. Oh, my second boss, he made a mistake once, he slapped me once and he never repeated that because I threw a piece of equipment at him and missed him. If I woulda hit him it woulda killed him.
- Q: Oh, boy.
- A: Like I said. I was quick tempered. And I just warned him that he better never do it again. He never tried it. No, uh, then I was unemployed after my apprenticeship was up and drew unemployment compensation which wasn't very much. Any rate the fifth of March, 1983, was the last so-called legal election...

Q: How old were you then?

A: Well, uh, let's see 1933. I was 20 years old. They broke into my parents' home to come and get me. But before that they once threw a bomb in the house that went off and I slept right through it. Yeah. We lived on the main floor, but I was sleeping on the third floor. I never heard it.

Q: Now why did they know you? You said you were well known.

A: Because I was active as a member of the Socialist Labor Youth and also later on with the Reichbanner which is the Socialist militia. Each party had their own militia.

Q: When did you join the militia?

A: When I was about 14 years old. Something like that -- 15. I also was a member of the labor union. I was active. So, at any rate, the fifth of March, they broke into the house -- they're coming for me. And I went out the back fence into my neighbor's place which was a restaurant and a bowling alley, and that woman politely opened the doors for the storm troopers to come and get me. And they come in, they surrounded me, one of them laid the, uh, hit me with the rubber truncheon across my chest and later I had blisters under the skin. At any rate -- and then started to lead me out and the minute I was out the door I threw my arms around -- I used to be strong -- threw them aside and started running zigzag at first, but they were getting too close and they were firing at me, but they were getting too close and then I abandoned zigzagging and ran straight. I got hit in the lung because I spit blood. I knew it was my lung and a little later on I got shot in the knee, but I could still run and I got to the police station. And at that time they were not formed as member of the political party and there I asked them which hospital to go to, because I knew which one of them was fair and they called an ambulance and I was taken to the hospital. And I spent four years-weeks in the hospital and while there I had a brace on my leg up to my seat and I used to take that darn thing off and go to the bathroom and that made my knee swell up again and they had to apply it again for a while longer. At any rate, when I was released from there -- it was a Catholic hospital. They were very good to us. The Nazis, they were not allowed to come in, so, uh, I mean, just to show you something -- you see that one?

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: That's the bullet hole.

Q: Right there by your kneecap.

A: It just grazed my kneecap. It didn't, uh, bother it. However, I still maintain a high sensitivity over here (indicates the area where the bullet existed on the outside of his left leg.) In fact, for a year, I couldn't stand a sheet on my leg. I had to sleep with my leg stuck out. Well, so the day I was released -- the same morning I took off on a bike and started visiting all my relatives. I had some in Cologne. I had some in, uh, Munchen-Gladbach and I was heading toward my grandparents in Munstermaifeld, visited all of them, kept on going, and procured some spending money by knocking on a Jewish family's door, so, uh, in Jewish they say a schnorer.

(Both laugh)

Q: I know the meaning.

A: Because I had to have some money, see, I did that for a while and I stayed with a relative in a small place, Kaisersesh, I mean, not too far from the (near Kochem on the Mosel.) And then I decided to move on and I worked my way into the Saar Basin. On the border I got rid of my bike and I smuggled across the border without a passport. Hell, I never had one in my life 'til I came to this country. Then...

Q: What border did you cross? Into what country?

A: Uh, the Saar Basin was separate. I mean the French were occupying that after World War I and you had to cross the border at night. So I got into the Saar Basin. I had to work my way down to the French border and in Forbach I went to the police station there. I mean a Jewish organization and they referred me to the police station -- now wait a minute. Back, back, back. I went to the Sheriff's station down in -- is your, are you running out? -- Anyway, I forget now, I can't think of the name of that place down there, oh, in Saar Basin I went to the Jewish help station and they referred -- told me where to cross the border into France. I mean, you have to walk across. At nighttime I walked across and that night I spent in the woods. The next day I went to the foreign office. The foreign office which was in the police station in Forbach. It was French. Still is. And there I got a so-called passpartout instead of a passport which allowed me to be a political refugee. I was political because they knew my whole story. And then they shipped me off to Metz and in Metz I got asked, "Would you like to go to Paris?" Now Paris was like a magnet, you know. The city of lights. Naturally I wanted to go to Paris. So, fine, first we nearly starved to death because we got down, I think it was a Saturday there. I'm not sure. Yeah, we had to wait for the Sabbath was over before they fed us. At any rate, the next day we had to go to welfare to get a ticket, and the ticket was as big as a legal paper, to go to Paris, but in Paris we were referred to the Jewish HIAS and report there which, uh, provided us with a place to stay and meal tickets. Oh, it sounded so good. They gave us lodging at the palais de peuple that's how they present it, "people's palace." You know what it was? Salvation Army. Yeah, Salvation Army. Well, we got over

there, we had a cubicle there and one meal a day. I nearly starved to death. Besides I was a heavy smoker and I was running out of money. I used to sell some of the meal tickets to buy tobacco. Well I stayed there. Then they moved us from there -- Salvation Army -- to a Kasern on the perimeter of Paris. No, first they moved us outside of, I can't think of the name anymore -- not too far from the side of the Seine, in Kaserns, and then they tried to ship us into the south of France as agricultural workers. And I'm not gonna go, I told them, I got a trade. So they shipped us back into town, I mean the ones who didn't want to go and we were in a cecern n the boulevard. I was in one for a while and then later on into a small pension/hotel combined in town -- one meal a day. I nearly starved to death. So I started working as a plumber without permit. You need a work permit in France. Just for meals. There were some huge restaurants there and they had some plumbing to do so we did it. Any rate, after I'd been there nine months in Paris, that was the heavy season of the year, I got tired of starving. I mean one meal a day. I lost weight. I went back to Germany. Which wasn't -- I mean back to the south. I just went back to my relatives. And they didn't like the idea, when I wanted to go back to Germany.

Q: When did you go back, what year was that?

A: I was certified a political refugee, I mean, it seems like a fool. I went -- I got shot, and so on. I went back in '34. That was in '33 when I went over and in '34 I went back and I bummed around from one relative to the other, when my parents wrote me when it would be safe and to come back. Be alright. Well, now we were corresponding under an assumed name. I mean they never knew my address. It used to be, uh, whatever they call it, poste restante. You know that system?

Q: No.

A: Well, in Europe you can -- in other words, it's a post office box anybody can use.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: Poste restante means "resting mail," you know, it rests until you pick it up. So we used to correspond that way. I never had a return address or anything. I just -- where they sent it to the poste restante. So then, after much hesitation, I mean, first off I went to some of my relatives and the first time I got there for a Friday evening meal I couldn't hold it. I was down to ninety-five pounds. I was sicker than a dog. I was half starved. At any rate, I bummed around and eventually I went back home and I didn't feel so good coming back, but they left us alone and I was drawing unemployment insurance. Things were not very well, I mean, but you weren't bothered too much. They came out with one decree after another, quite a few decrees to limit your movements. You were not allowed to have -- I used to have a motorcycle which I had -- my father sold later on. And you weren't allowed this and that, and at any rate, I saw an ad in the paper --

somebody wanted a plumber and tinner -- and I went and applied, but I told him right away, "Now I want you to know that I'm Jewish." And that man told me, "I don't have any city orders. It doesn't make a bit of difference to me." And I offered to work for him for one week, if he wouldn't be satisfied, he wouldn't have to pay me, because I knew my trade, and so he took me on and I got paid after a week and I worked there until papers came through from my relatives here signed for me to go to the States. I quit the job. And I got out...

Q: What year was that?

A: Uh, '37.

Q: And you'd been communicating with your relatives here about coming to the United States?

A: Yeah, but they only signed for me, not for the whole family.

Q: Did the rest of your family -- they didn't want to go?

A: They perished. No, they perished. They didn't sign the papers for them and that's one thing I still hold against my aunt who is still alive. She's 96 years old.

Q: Did -- and your -- did your parents want to go?

A: Sure, they wanted to go.

Q: Why didn't she, uh...

A: (shrugs) They had enough money to do it, believe me. They had -- at that time I didn't speak English, but I saw they had \$100,000 there, in real estate there, and all this stuff. So that is something I -- inside of me I still hold against them because I was young and I was able and ready to work. I would have supported them. So, uh, at any rate, I went back and I worked for the man. I had letters of recommendation and all. So I came over here and I didn't speak the language, I had about 2 or 3 hours of lessons in English. In the meantime, I had learned enough French in Paris that I got along very well. In fact I took my wife back twice, I mean the first time we went to Paris -- we spent last October -- we spent 18 days in Paris and I didn't have any trouble. I speak about 70% French, but when it comes to grammar, forget it. Uh, I said it unintentionally, the French word grammar. But I am not that good. I talk okay. I know it, however, I can converse and, uh, get along.

Q: Did you meet your wife in Germany?

A: No, right here. She's a native Daytonian.

- Q: Oh, really. So, how old were you when you came over, then?
- A: I was twenty-two years old, around there. I came in '37, I was -- no, I was 23.
- Q: Now let's go back a little bit. In 1930 it was beginning -- to -- anti-Semitism was beginning to increase...
- A: Well, at that time, it wasn't so bad, I mean, you had the storm troopers building up. I mean, you were living in Kaserns and so on. They had demonstration marches that they marched and so on, they used to have their nasty songs already, but at that time I was active on the other side and at times the Communists and Socialists combined to fight the Fascists. In fact, before, we beat the hell out of them a couple of times they were not even allowed to show their uniform. I mean the uniform was forbidden for a while. Hitler attempted to come one to Wuppertal, but he realized that was too dangerous for him. My hometown was red and Renscheidt. I mentioned before, was red also. They had mined the place where he was supposed to speak. I mean my hometown was always more socialist or communist than anything else. So he changed his mind and he arrived in Dusseldorf he didn't come to Wuppertal. Goebbels was raised with Catholic money in my hometown, and educated with Catholic money. And he was hated like poison, too. The Nazi movement was starting, and they were gaining more and more votes during the elections and it kept building up from '30 to '33 when the old man who practically was in his second childhood turned over the government to Hitler as the chancellor and that's when they came with the so-called law, to give him power and they start out outlawing the opposition parties. When they set the Reichstag on fire and blamed that poor Dutchman and killed him for it and all these subterfuges. Then they outlawed all the opposition parties. After the election of 5th of March, 1933, they came with the so-called auxiliary police who were nothing but storm troopers carrying weapons. They went on the rampage taking revenge. They killed one of my friends. They were doing this in his own doorway, they shot him to death. I don't know whether it will be worthwhile mentioning the name or not. I've forgotten his first name but his last name was Ziegfried Laufer. In his parent's home they shot him to death, I mean, in the doorway. And that's the same way they came after me, they were gonna take revenge, they were gonna kill me and I knew that and I'd rather get shot to death than beaten to death. I had that choice. No! Uh, ask a question. It may be more pertinent.
- Q: I guess what I'm wondering is, was that -- was it in 1933 or so that you began to feel that your political activities were not going to be able to stand up against the Nazi party?
- A: Well they were outlawed then.
- Q: Yeah, and that was when you began to think about just leaving instead of fighting?

- A: Well, I always had the notion to go to the 'States. You see over there everybody thinks the gold lays in the street, you just bend over and pick it up. Well, it isn't so, you work for it. But freedom and everything else -- it wasn't as much -- I mean originally my plan as you were asking refers to my telling him that he would have lived a very different life if the rise of the Nazi party had not forced him to leave his homeland was very simple. I was a journeyman. The next step would have been the master exam. We had a place where I would have had my shop, already, it was an addition to the house that was planned, but due to all this business then and stopping bullets and so on I was more tempted to leave and go to the 'States.
- Q: So that was a thought that had been in the back of your mind...
- A: Oh, yeah. Yes. And then they signed the papers there was no holding me then. Get ready, get all the -- get the passport and so on, get all the permits and clearances and I felt a sign of relief when I was aboard ship, it was an American ship.
- Q: And that was 1934.
- A: That was 1933 when I left Germ -- I arrived in the States on February 27th and I could even give you the date when I -- we left Hamburg, because I got the old passport yet. I don't recall right now off-hand how long it took, but we left the tenth or 12th. I don't know it took that long to come over. I came on the President Roosevelt which was later sold to the British government and was sank in World War II. It had a sister ship, too, you know.
- Q: So, you arrived in the United States Feb...
- A: 27th.
- Q: 19...
- A: '37, yeah. And I stayed overnight in New York with a relative of mine. I had a cousin there and an aunt and then the next day, practically, on the bus, I came to Dayton.
- Q: Why did you come here?
- A: Because the aunt who signed the papers for me was living in Dayton.
- Q: And what about was her age at that time?
- A: At that time? Well, now, let's see. This was '37 that makes it 47 years ago . at that time I was 23 and she is 96 now. Then, how we gonna figure that out? Well, she was about 42 years old.

Q: And was she married?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you moved in with them at that time?

A: Uh, I stayed with them until I started making the marvelous sum of 12 dollars a week and then I moved out and I rented a room On Cambridge Avenue. I, uh, they got me a job as an errand boy, an apprentice in an optical place, I mean, as optician. I became the errand boy.

Q: What was the name of the company?

A: It was the Valley optical company. It was owned by Dr. Le Montree. Maybe that name has shown up here, who had three nephews who he put through school, and they were all optometrists and the second one passed away not too long ago. They were the Slutsky brothers, there's a younger one yet, Jerome, yah. I became an optician, I mean, a benchman. That means you cut lenses. I mean, you, uh, you pick out the lens you need for the prescription, like, they hand you the prescription, mark 'em and cut 'em in a machine that grind the edges and drill holes in them if necessary or bevel them on the machine and put 'em in a frame, Or-I know you can't see without your glasses. I can see that, too. I can tell what prescription you have. You are very near-sighted. I can tell by looking at you. So you learn that and you don't forget anymore. So I worked there until I, uh-oh, by the way, I forgot to say when they reestablished the compulsory service in the military in Germany I had to muster. And the same day when I had to go muster I spit out the bullet which was in my lung. They couldn't remove it. I spit it out.

Q: Isn't that something.

A: It worked up. I still have it. It was a 32 caliber. So, I mustered and I was found qualified, however, they would not take any Jewish citizens. And when I came to this country when the draft came I had to muster again and I was found qualified and my boss, a man by the name of Gordon Krauss -- I don't know whether he's still alive or not. He should be a little older than I am, I don't know if he's still alive. Well, he applied for deferment and I didn't care. One way I thought I was missing something, the other way I thought I didn't care, so he kept getting them one after another and suddenly there was no more deferment and in my job he was going to replace me with two women, not just one -- two of 'em. So in '42 I had my choice, they asked me whether I was ready or willing to bear arms for this country because I wasn't a citizen yet. I had taken my citizen course and all this stuff, in fact I was becoming close to becoming a citizen -- five years. So I came over here with the idea of staying and also you can't just take, you have to give and so I thought "Yes I'm ready, I guess," so I was in the service and I was drafted. It didn't take too long to become corporal and I was an optician -- I tried

to get in the medical corps, but, uh, you know the army selection -- they call so many names off the roster and "step over there" and some more names and "step over there." I ended up in the signal corps. I became a wire chief eventually.

Q: I'd like to ask you something, to just go back a little bit. I've talked to a few people and listened to some interviews and it seems very common that people who had skills in Europe came here and ended up in very different professions. Now, how is it that a plumber becomes an optician?

A: I tell you why. When I attempted to approach plumbing enterprises, including Jewish ones I was told, "Well, it's unionized, and you'd have to start as an apprentice again." And you know what I told 'em then. I mean, I don't want to go into details, but I had no intention of being apprentice for four years again. That's why I didn't follow my trade. And without bragging I knew my trade and I still can do my trade, but I'm not interested. Now, like in this house, I took out all the galvanized pipe and replaced it with copper. I don't need anybody else to do it for me. No, that's the reason why I didn't follow this trade. Now, I was working there and I never was one to do job-hopping from one to the other, so I stayed with them and eventually I was making a decent wage, too. So then Uncle Sam wanted me worse than the boss and I was in the service and I went in and within six months or so I was a corporal and it didn't take much longer to become a sergeant, too. I was in the signal corps, I mean, I must have done alright in school, I mean, uh, you know, school. Went overseas as a buck sergeant. Overseas eventually I applied for military government or counter-intelligence and I ended up in counter-intelligence.

Q: Uh, where were you first when you went overseas? What country did they send you to?

A: Well, we landed in England and we flew to France and then I was a member of a flying detachment that looked for German equipment. I was as far as Dresden in the Ural -- in the, uh, I don't know what kind of mountains over there looking for German equipment and I specialized -- I was a member of the Air Force then. They had a landing system which was better than ours. We used a gyro for each function and they had one gyro for all of 'em. The for -- Foreigncare system I think it was called. I forgot. At any rate we went after that and the Russians were already there. We went after the equipment as far as Dresden and further out and back -- I was in Stendal on the Elbe when Germany surrendered. The German Fifth Army Corps surrendered to us. I was temporarily a guard in a prison camp. I had the unpleasant job of guarding SS women. Now there...

Q: Now, where was this again?

A: In Stendal on the Elbe. And there I didn't have any doubt about it that I would shoot to kill. I want to give the impression that "you want them to flee, I shoot to kill." I meant it. I had a shell in the chamber I wouldn't hesitate one moment

because I hate the sight of SS. In fact when we were on the move into Germany in Traben-Trarbach I was given a SS man as a prisoner. Now, I went overseas with the idea that the first one I meet as long as we are armed, one of us is gonna die. However he was disarmed and I'm not a murderer, so I couldn't do it. In fact I had the pleasure of taking the police chief in Windsheim/Aish prisoner. He had forgotten to indicate on a form -- I mean, I remember he was SS. Now we were always digging and one morning I walked in there and I had my pistol in front of me. "Alright give me your weapon," then I said -- I told his assistant there, "Lock him up." Now, we had found out he was a member in the SS. That was in the questionnaire.

Q: Now, this is still during the war?

A: Oh, yeah. I mean, after Germany surrendered. That was when I was an investigative officer. Counter-intelligence.

Q: So this would have been '46?

A: I was overseas 'til '47, working as a counter-intelligence officer.

Q: So your job was pretty much to find SS members and take them into custody?

A: Uh, my job was counter-intelligence activity, to dig in the records and so on and find them out. And also reviewing what they had on the questionnaires. Oh, I had a mess of people under me and commissions to move around and I continued when I came back to this country. I was in the service till '49. I ended up in the Intelligence Section First Army Headquarters governor's Island. There I had all the German scientists under my control. They were limited in their movements. They had to get permission and I also had control over construction. Aerial photography. I had to approve whether they could get through or not.

Q: This was after you came back to this country?

A: Yeah, back from overseas.

Q: You were observing the German scientists who were working on...

A: They were over there after the war, yes.

Q: ...the rockets?

A: You see, they were forced in -- in fact I participated in some of this gathering of German scientists. I won't disclose any details, but we'd just come in with a few vehicles, and that was in regard to map-making, and we'd come in where they were making -- you know, "You go with me. Pack a little suitcase, you're on your way," you know. I mean just like that. "Your wife, your family can join

you depending after a year,” and they were on their way to the United States. Whether they liked it or not. Russia was doing the same thing. That was how we got scientists. So after this we did some of these things. We had operational things which I won't mention because we -- somehow I feel obligated -- the undercover details which are secret, you know, top secret. I don't tell about them. I had a top secret, secret clearance in New York. Oh, yeah. Amazing it seems, I was a foreign born, they send me back to Germany and they gave me a top secret clearance here, too, while I was in the service. Well, at any rate, that's about it in a nutshell, unless you have some more particular questions you want me to answer .

Q: Well, I'm curious about just a few things. When did you meet your wife?

A: I met her when I came to this country. I used to go to the Massada for awhile. In fact, after I was able to converse -- I mean I learned it whether I like it or not -- I was taking out a different girl almost every night for awhile. Oh, I got to know quite a few of 'em. I got to know her and well, it got kinda serious and I got in the service and eventually I got sent over to Saint Louis -- to Saint Louis for awhile. Couldn't even think of the name of that darn place. Walter Winchell used to call that place the hellhole of the Army. I thought I was in the army...I was still a member of the air force, but there the thirty mile hikes and all this stuff. At any rate she came down there and actually we got married by the Justice of the Peace down there, but we didn't consummate any marriage. Back in August suddenly I had a -- I was transferred all of a sudden I got a leave. No, I think it was down South. I shipped in new recruits and I got a leave. I had to borrow the money to come home, uh. I'm getting mixed up there. I had to borrow the money one time to come on a leave -- to come from the South. But we got married here in, uh, August the 15. I got leave, I came home and we got married by the Rabbi and all that whole business. And then we lived in Columbus awhile together. That's where she became pregnant and my daughter was eventually born, but by that time I was already back overseas and after I got back from overseas, well we began fussing and fighting again and we had a difference of opinion. My mother-in-law and I couldn't get along. In fact I got thrown out of the house. She told me to get the "H" out of here and I did get out.

Q: Now, Your wife was living with her parents then?

A: So. Anyway I came back and my son was born thirteen years after my daughter, yeah. But he is my pride and joy in fact -- (tape runs out)

End of Side One.

Begin Side Two.

[Julie Orenstein had asked what Donald Bender did to learn the fates of his family members]

A: ...and in all that time on a leave I had to give his home address because I was gonna go to Holland and you were not allowed to go into the British zone -- you did not have a free zone -- and my home town was in it, so I just plainly lied. I was gonna go to Holland and had no intentions of going to Holland. When I got to my hometown I looked up my childhood friend. I had a friend there who was a Social Democrat just like myself and his military service -- he was transferred. First chance he had he surrendered to the British. He was a British prisoner for awhile. And first thing I looked up and I was happy to find out the war didn't eat him up.

Q: Now, he was a gentile?

A: And he visited my parents the last man -- in fact I think he loaned them the money and even a suitcase. How he endangered himself by visiting them, so, naturally, we're still friends. Fine, that was one time. Then I made inquiries -- there was a Jewish community there. Couldn't find out very much except they were carried to the East. I sent some of my informants East, but I couldn't find out much. See I was a member of CIC [Counter Intelligence Corp.] I could write tickets and food. I made them all available in order to be able to bribe my way through. Cigarettes, you name it. Even silk stockings for the women, just to get 'em to talk. I've had Germans working for me that -- I was driving an Opel or a Mercedes and got stopped on the way -- sitting next to me reach for his kennkarte and I reach for my kennkarte. That German policeman never knew he was dealing with an American. And even the German, he didn't know that he was working for an American. And that was part of my work. I was in civvies all the time, except I was armed which the German policeman didn't know. I had two sets of identities; the American as an officer and also the German. So that was one thing, now, how I found out -- you coming back to this -- I couldn't find out too much there, however, I went and made contact with a German writer who wrote the book "Dachau Started in Wuppertal" and I wrote to him for a copy and I also wanted to find out where he got all the information. The last time I was in Germany I made it my business -- he was on vacation -- I made it my business to wait till he come back and get together with him and I had a copy of a list of all the people being deported. They went to Theresienstadt, I believe. That's where they were carried. I went that far and the next time we were planning to go to Israel this past May, but my wife was sick, that's when I intended to go down there and see what else I can find out. In the book he mentioned my sister and her children, that's why I went back to him. And there are dates. And I also investigated I was in Kaisersesch. I know where my uncle who moved to Cologne got taken away from Cologne. I know. I investigated that as much as I could and that's how I found out. And we added up the ones who were carried away, about 40. My sister married after I left Germany, had two sons, and she married a gentile. However when it became time for them to report to be deported or "resettled in the East," as it was said, he volunteered to join his family. He went along and, naturally, perished too.

Q: So they were in Dachau?

A: No, they went to Theresienstadt. No, I had the list, the copies. My name was on there also. I made photostatic copies. I got that far. So that's how I know. And I investigated my grandparents home, so now my grandparents -- when my grandfather dies and my grandmother came to this country and lived one week -- now, I made the statement then, then when I heard they were going to bring her over here, that she's unable, I think, I mean somebody else could have taken her place. She died within a week. She's buried in Appleton, Wisconsin because I have an aunt and uncle that live -- she's on the outs with me now. She got mad at me because I am lazy when it comes to writing. So at any rate, I checked that out. I mean, they were carried off. I had them in Kaisersesch, Munstermaifeld, Cologne, Bonn, Munchen-Gladbach. I checked them all out. Now I had a lot of cousins. Now, I have some of them in this country...

Q: Now most of them that are in this country, did they come before you came?

A: Yeah, yeah. No, there were some that came after. Right after this, for example papers for an aunt of mine and the family came over here. I got a cousin in New York, now, one of the uncles of mine, they came to New York to the other one who signed the whole family. There were several families who came the same time or a little later when it was still permissible. Afterwards, you couldn't come out anymore. See, I left legally. I got a passport. I got permission, and I got certificate that I didn't owe any taxes, you know and all this stuff.

Q: You left when you could still do that.

A: Yes. I came with the total sum of \$40,00 and so I was allowed to leave. So I was legal there. So, we lost that many people that the war carried away, and sooner or later I got some restitution that paid for the house we own. It wasn't very much.

Q: Now, how did you find out that you could get restitution?

A: Well, somehow or another my aunt in Pittsburg -- I mean the one who came a little later -- they had started procedure and they wrote to me and I just joined the game.

Q: And how was it all -- did that go through the UN?

A: No, that went through a lawyer in Mayen which is not too far from there. And it dragged on and on and a lot of trouble. In fact, when I came to Germany, you know, on my first time, I knew who had participated in shooting me. I went to the police to see them and started proceeding against them. The guy died before they finally had him in the court. He claimed it was his brother, he had two brothers, but I know which one he was and he died before the court proceedings got done. Oh, yes. I pressed charges. So, no, they had started proceedings over there and I

just followed. I joined them. And I had my parents declared dead, an un-natural death, had them declared dead the fifth of May, 1945. That was when Germany surrendered. So, I'm the sole heir. I got compensated. Some of the money is in this house, too, so anyway, later on they kept sending me papers applying for compensation, I mean Social Security. Well, for a while I didn't bother. Too much paper works. Well at the last minute I found out about it and I wrote them a letter and I had the papers approved, see, so I could claim -- I think I had 16 years I think on my family. I think I was four months left, of it would have been finished and after I applied for a couple of years or so then they finally agreed to pay me and I got back pay of about \$11,000 to start with. See I could prove -- I mean, the way they had it set up, I think you had to prove four years under employment and they would give you ten years. And I could easily prove, for I had the recommendation of my oldest boss and so that wasn't bad. And then, uh, they paid me and I get Social Security from Germany, too. And then I came back, they should contribute to my health insurance this year then I got another small increase and they have an annual cost of living increase also, but the problem is this last one they increased in, I mean, they lowered the contribution to the health insurance, so it's a matter of about \$10,00 more a month. See that process was on a commission basis. I think there was five percent of the annual pension input for five years, so what the heck, I might as well have that money, too. I still have some left, so I'm not too bad off I mean and I got pay from my employer which isn't too much, but it all counts. Right now I got an estimate I'm going to have central air for the whole house and this one is just about \$2,000.

Q: That'll be nice to have.

A: That's the next thing. Well I have three estimates. I always go with three and the last one I like best. Not that it is cheaper, no, but I like the compressor and the kind of equipment he's going to use. He's using the biggest compressor and I'd rather have the biggest one, even if it costs a little more that way.

Q: Now, let me, let's see. I'm just going to get a timetable. You came back to the United States after serving in the Air Force...

A: Three years maximum, it was, for an officer, Air Force, so I came back in 1947.

Q: '47. And then did you -- were you a civilian at that point?

A: No. I stayed in until '49.

Q: And what did you do in this country? What was your -- oh, you were telling me you were...

A: As a serviceman?

Q: You were observing the German scientists.

- A: No, here I was in charge of running the Three-O-First 'C' Detachment. I was Acting detachment commander.
- Q: And what did they do?
- A: They investigate subversive activity within the limitation of the country, that's the limitation on that. I supervised the German scientist, control, uh, construction projects by aerial surveillance, so they wouldn't get into sensitive areas and so on. You had to prove this, that was our job, and also make the write the reports about all kinds of things, you know, in the service you've got all kinds of reports; equipment report, personnel report, that was all my assignment. I was the Acting Commander. I used to approve rations, quarters for our men. As the Acting Commander I assigned them by order of the Major who was in charge. In fact, the Major wasn't visible very often. I was the Commanding officer.
- Q: And then after that?
- A: Then after my wife didn't want to join me, I could have gotten quarters as an officer -- I applied for release from the service. See, you don't get discharged, you have to apply for a release. And I left the service in '49.
- Q: Now, what part of the country were you serving in at that time?
- A: I was at Governor's Island, New York.
- Q: New York. And she didn't want to...
- A: No, she didn't want to join me, for she didn't want to leave her sick father.
- Q: Oh, I see, so she was in Columbus?
- A: She was in Dayton. Right here.
- Q: She was in Dayton.
- A: Oh, she left me in Columbus, again, to go back home and I went on step by step. I went in Columbus and then when they called -- came, they needed interpreters -- I went to Windshein/Aish. I was transferred to Germany and I went overseas and then I went, after my fighting days were over -- I mean I had battle scars. I could prove I was in a fighting zone. And after the fighting was over I applied for military government and counter-intelligence, and counter-intelligence got me first and I went to European intelligence school in OberAmmergau, a nice area, four weeks -- it was make or break. Either you made the course or you got kicked out of counter-intelligence. So I didn't get kicked out. And later on I was working as satisfactorily to my superiors that they asked me to apply for a

commission. Now, I didn't know the difference between a second lieutenant and warrant officer and I applied for warrant officer and I had to go to a (word missing) in Frankfurt and be interviewed by my superiors and believe me I nearly got blinded by all the brass. Generals and full Colonels and all. And that quiz was such a way that eventually I came to the point I didn't care whether I made it or not, just get me outta here. I didn't care. But apparently I satisfied their questions and February the 15th, uh, February the first, 1947, I became a Staff Sergeant because the ratings is open and closed, open and closed, I went in all the time and the 15th of February I was called to Frankfurt to accept or reject the appointment as a Warrant Officer and we went in, we had to wear uniform, and we went in, two of us, we were Staff Sergeants and had to raise our hand and take the oath of an officer before they signed the second page of our discharge. They didn't take a chance on it. They wouldn't sign both sides because, if they didn't have us take the oath of office, we would have been civilians. So we were sworn in as officers they pinned the insignia on us and we came outside and here come a coupla GI's and they salute they salute and we looked at each other and we thought, "Who the heck" -- we forgot we had them things on our shoulder. We snapped to it and returned the salute and we had to go to the officer's mess and PX because that was off limits before. We had to see what it was like. We were not allowed in there otherwise. And from there on the way back we were stationed in Ausbach, then, I believe, on the way back to the railway station we picked our insignias off our shoulders -- counter-intelligence doesn't wear insignias. I was at that time in charge over Full Colonels -- it didn't matter where I was even in charge. The same thing happened to me in Columbus. I had generals were even taking orders from me, for I was an instructor bombsight so we picked them insignias off and then I worked as a counter-intelligence officer. In fact I was in charge of a branch office in Windsheim for a while. I had the key to the city hall -this long. You couldn't carry it in your pocket, you know, those old fashioned keys and people there used to -- they just shot somebody -- a political prisoner -- "terminal discharge." They had to report to me in the office and it didn't matter to me they were always handcuffed and they sit on a cushion and it didn't bother me, because they were bad enough to be automatically locked up so I didn't feel mercenary. So they were sick, so what? They didn't bother about other people being sick, but they had to come to me to extend their stay at home. Always, the arrested people, I had to carry them to the next place they going along the -- like a concentration camp, likely. I had one Obersturm fuehrer under arrest and he asked for information whether he could go home to pack some things. I took him to his home I told him, "Look, you make any attempt to escape, I'll have to shoot to kill you," but I helped him, I suggested things for him to take along and so on, for I knew he was gone for at least a year. So. But he hadn't done a thing. He was the least of the captivity and we had to arrest him. And I had investigated him and he hadn't done a thing or hurt anybody, I knew he hadn't. So I treated him like a human being. See, don't forget, there were a lot of members from the SS who were not volunteering. They were pressed into this service. They were draftees and then switched into the SS. Which I found out afterward. I wanted to hang a lot more, but the Nazis said that, I knew, before

when I went to school, so that's one of the things. I enjoyed my work. I stayed on as long as I could, because of wife and I were not on the best of terms. Well, that happens...

Q: When you're away a lot.

A: We were not even corresponding. My mother-in-law had something to do with it, because I didn't hesitate to tell her right to her face to mind her own business. Try to run my life and that was out.

Q: So, when you came back in '49, did you get a job then?

A: In '49 first off my wife and I had a meeting at the former Gibbons to see whether we get together or not, because she wrote to me what am I going to do about her? I wrote her back, "You waited this long, you wait -- I plan to be back in the 'State at such and such time -- you'll wait 'til then. And we had a meeting and then we made another -- we decided to make another attempt, so, fine, uh. What then? Oh, at that time my mother-in-law had died, I think. Yeah, she had died. And my father-in-law asked me to move in with them. At any rate, I was an optician and I went first off at that, so I looked for work and I had set my price. I wasn't going to work for a certain amount and I wasn't going to settle for less, I forgot what it was, \$75,-- a week, or something like that. And I didn't apply for unemployment. I mean, I had that -- what was it -- \$20,00 a week for 6 months or whatever it was. That -- I didn't even apply for that, or ration cards. I had enough money saved I could live without it, so eventually I found a job at a Valley optical place here in town for the price I wanted to work. So my job which was supposed to be waiting -- the whole company wasn't there anymore. They had sold it, so that finished that, so I started working and I worked for about one month, for my father-in-law asked me to join him and he was paying the wages I was making then, plus he was going to pay the tax.

Q: Was your father-in-law an optician?

A: He was in the grocery business. Yeah. And so I joined him and he was a nice guy. You couldn't find a nicer guy, I mean may he rest in peace. And after the first year together -- I didn't invest a penny -- I set out to buy a car. Now, I had enough money to do that and also -- I worked with him. After the first year he split the profits with me -- I didn't have any money invested. So -- and then he decided to sell out to my youngest brother-in-law and I as equal partners and he had enough money he didn't overcharge us, and then my youngest brother-in-law was called back in the Korean war -- he was a captain. He had studied to become a Professor of Sociology. At any rate, we were partners until he was called back and then I made up a contract with him that I was going to pay him six percent interest, which you couldn't get in a bank his investment, took inventory and whatever increase later on that would have been half his, too and then I made money. I put more equipment in and I made money on the grocery store.

Q: What was the name of the store?

A: Knollwood Market. Originally it was Block's market but since his name was Block and mine was Bender we called it Knollwood Market. I made money. I was saving about \$500 a month regularly, so, uh, not bad. So, anyway when he came back he didn't want to stay. He wanted to get back to school and finish his education, so I thought, "Fine, I'm not going to be paying him any investment, so I might as well pay off." I took inventory, paid him half of what it was worth with interest and it was my store after twelve years. And then come the 1-75, I had to get out of the way.

Q: Aw. What year was that?

A: Uh, I forgot. It was in '61. I moved away from there. Then I bought a store called Western Market -- an aunt of mine, I mean, my father-in-law's sister owned the building -- and I bought that store and it was a bona fide lemon. I was stuck with that thing for 5 years and I lost money on the average about \$1,000 a year, it cost me. I finally auctioned it off and I went into insurance. I didn't even know you needed a license to go into insurance. I found out.

Q: So you became an independent insurance salesman?

A: No, I had a business and the first time I flunked the exam for the license by one point. It still makes me mad when I think about it. You needed 65 out of 100 and I got 74. Then I got so darn mad and I really studied. The first time I took it easy. The next time when I took the exam -- they don't tell you the score, but I kept score where I had any doubts and I am positive I made about 97. I'm positive of that. So the first year I needed another \$1,000 to support myself. I wasn't making enough money, but then I started and now I'm getting maximum social Security. I was an independent agent in the end, I mean, a general agent.

Q: Did you start with a company then?

A: Yeah.

Q: With which?

A: Inter Ocean, which are now -- they used to be independent, but they're now part of Cincinnati Financial Corporation and I was with them, I mean, counting retirement benefits for 30 years, but actually I was with them 16. See they changed my whole set up. They made everybody a general agent. No more retirement accumulation, nothing. So in three years I didn't have any accumulation. But I worked as a general agent the last few years, prepaid my taxes. If I tell you I gained \$1,500 every month then I tell you something. I mean I was estimated under \$22,500 and I went over it and my wife was working as a

teacher. Now her money was estimated too, but there were times when we still had to pay more even with a 38% profit we made, so...

Q: Where did she teach?

A: Well, she teaches at the public school system, City of Dayton.

Q: Elementary level?

A: Yeah. For a couple of years she taught at Roth in high school and then she gradually worked from the seventh grade down to the second and third as she got older, so she's got 21 years. At any rate, my son started schooling. Now my son used to go to Camp Ramah and we used to go up there on visitor's day every year, that was routine. I love it. It's in Wisconsin. I love it. And then he started -- he selected Washington University in Saint Louis and was accepted there. He also was a little bit on the lazy side -- he was on probation for a little while. He majored in History and Political science. What are you going to do with it? Work for the govt. Anyway he got to meet a nice little lady in Rockford, Ill, or somewheres, place with his friends. I mean some of his camp friends are there and she went to University of Iowa in -- where is it? Iowa City, I think, and so eventually I got him a car. Usually he was running back and forth, eventually he asked permission whether he could transfer there. I put a few stipulations on it. If you are behaving and your grades not dropped, alright. I let you transfer. He transferred and he graduated a little bit later than she did, almost the same year. I mean he had to take a summer course in between to make up for the grades he lost and soon. At any rate, he graduated there and he started -- and she graduated with honors. She took accounting got 3 stars on her gown. She's got that gown at home. I've seen it, yeah, nice lady. So, he started working. Chicago was his magnet. Started working for the Gap and I wasn't very happy when he did that. You know Gap, uh, clothing?

Q: Oh, the clothing store, the jeans...

A: Yeah, oh that stuff's crazy. Well, he found out soon enough and then he got a job with CNA, a large insurance firm, as a claim adjuster and he worked for them several years until IWE was after him he they wanted an insurance broker, and he's a broker with Merrill-Lynch now. And his wife started out with, oh, a well known auditing firm -- oh, what the heck. I can't think about it.

Q: H&R block

A: No, no, no. A bigger one than H.R. Block. I mean, all the big companies. In the town, in right downtown in Chicago. And them -- they use to get the cream of the crop. They'd take 20 or 30 graduates at one time, and eventually she got laid off, I mean they reduced the staff, so she started working for some insurance company and she still works for another one now, but I couldn't even tell you the name, but

there she is in a managerial position already and I don't know what the girl makes, but she makes as much as my son, maybe more. I don't know. She's a...

Q: They have kids?

A: No, not yet. She's a licensed auditor, a certified accountant in Iowa and Illinois. No, they don't have any children. She is a couple of months older or so than my son. I heard her say when she was still a girlfriend she wants to work till she's 30 before she thinks about a family. But I think she ought to do it because my son's going to be 27 and she's 27 now. They've bought their first home and she's a lovely little girl. She's shorter than I am. I have my son's -- I don't carry any pictures except my son. There is his high school graduation picture and this is his wedding picture and now let me take it out...

Q: His name is Howard, isn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: I went to school with him!

A: You know Howard?

A: Yes, I recognized him. I was in 5th grade with him at Jefferson.

A: At Jefferson and later on to that school -- it now belongs to the Girl Scouts, uh, Shoup Mill. He was bussed out there.

Q: No, I never...

A: That's Howard. And this is -- let me see if I can get it out of there. That's his wife. And there, now you can see it better.

Q: Oh, yeah. I always knew he'd be successful, he was such a nice boy.

A: He's my pride and joy, what are you talking about?

Q: I remember him very fondly. He was -- Well you know that school was pretty bad and he was a nice boy.

A: Well, but I tell you something, you know. I was kind of a mother hen there, and you know he ended up at Col White and I threatened Mr. Thomas, I think it was -- wait a minute. What was that principle's name? Not Thomas.

Q: I went there, too.

A: The guy who brought in all his mess. Thomas was one of them.

Q: Lacey was, uh.

A: I don't know, but I threatened him on the phone if necessary I'd come over there with a pistol in my hand and I managed to get him out of there and get him over to Fairview. And then I used to take him to Fairview and pick him up, too. I used to make it my business to be there at the right time. And Howard, when he was born I was home and I helped raise him and -- Is that thing still running? I hope not -- oh, for heavens sake you don't want that on there.

Q: mhm, sure.

A: So, I gave him all the bath till he was able to take his own. In fact that little stinker, I never had diapered a baby in my life and after he was about a week old or so momma had to go someplace and here he messed up his pants and I wasn't going to leave them. The pants didn't bother me as a grown up that doesn't bother you, he had #2 in there, but I wouldn't leave him lay in that mess. I cleaned him like I see momma do him and I oiled him and I powdered him and then I got the great big tent, I mean that's what the diaper looked like on that little bitty bottom, I did the best I can, but he must have been comfortable, he fell asleep. So momma came home, I told her, "Look, I diapered him the best I could." You know, I had to fold the thing and she repinned it. But I always made darn sure of one thing. I had a principle -- if somebody is stuck it'll be me, not the baby. And I got stuck a few times, you know with the pins, but I won't stick him. But I took care of the baby and I got the milk back, too, that's such a lovely thing, when your baby gets a bottle and all of a sudden this mess is all over you and the only thing you can do is make them comfortable and then you go to the bathroom and undress. That's all you can do. And we did everything together. Howard was a member of the Civil Air Patrol and daddy used to take time out to take him out there and time to pick him up and daddy would see that he got the full uniform, but Howard is such a gentle person, that when he went up in rank and he had to start giving orders that went against his training and he quit. Oh, he would have gone way up there. He was getting them one by one. He was lining up to become commander, but he could not give orders so he quit.

Q: I seem to remember now that I was also in an English class in our freshman year in high school with him, and I think he read the part of Romeo and I read the part of Juliet in a play, once. I remember him quite well, he was very nice.

A: What is your maiden name?

Q: Rollins, Julie Rollins.

A: He didn't say anything. No, I tell you we did everything together. Now, my wife never could go on -- maybe on a merry-go-round, maybe, but she got dizzy very easy. There wasn't an instrument of entertainment that Howard and his daddy

wouldn't go on. I mean, if the darn thing put you in a cage and turn you upside down, it didn't matter to me, because I always was that way. The only thing I would not go on is a roller coaster because when I was approximately 12 years old or something like that I nearly sailed out of one of them once. They had an exhibition right alongside the Rhine in Dusseldorf and I felt being lifted out and I held on for dear life I would have ended up in the River Rhine. And I wouldn't go on one of those things anymore. That was the only exception, but anything else which threw you around or -- daddy went with him. And Howard was interested in the Indian ruins and there were some on the other end of Ohio. I can't even think of the name of the place. We spent a whole Sunday going clear across Ohio driving over there. When we got there we were disappointed it was hardly anything worthwhile, but we went there. Anything Howard wanted to do, if it was possible, daddy and he did it. And the week before he got bar mitzvah I had another week -- he had another week to spend -- vacation or so on. Or I had a week of vacation. Howard and I went to Canada. And, listen, daddy never fools around. We left at 8:30 in the morning, at 5:00 in the evening I called momma from the other side of Buffalo, I mean, on the Canadian side. We had already a motel. Momma didn't believe me, I mean, I told her, if you don't believe I'll give you the number-call back. We -- I don't waste any time. At that time 70 was the speed limit, but I went as much as 95.

Q: So Howard, of course was bar mitzvah. I guess I'm curious -- how is your religion different? After you came to the United States, did you find that you were more religious as a Jew?

A: None whatsoever.

Q: Are you a member of a temple?

A: No, I'm not a member. I became a member and then they started raising my dues without asking me, automatically. And I finally got disgusted. You don't spend my money for me, you don't know what I have. And I quit. I'm not a member. My wife is.

Q: Where is she a member?

A: At the BAU.

Q: Where is...

A: Right here on the corner.

Q: Oh, at Beth Abraham.

A: Oh, yeah. No, I have nothing to do with religion and I sweat blood, literally when Howard got bar mitzvah because my father-in-law was very religious. In fact he

was -- he had a function there. I don't know, I'll have to look at the diploma sitting in there to find out the name of it, I don't know. He was high up there. I sweat blood because I didn't want to mess up his bar mitzvah. Because that Howard was his pride and joy, he used to thrill him. But fortunately they had a little plastic number there, so I could read it and I know how to intone it and yet I was a little -- and my father-in-law told me I did fine. See, they don't just read, dead reading. I can and I know that sing-song, you know. I did it only for my father-in-law and my son. I wouldn't spoil a thing for my son.

Q: Is Howard religious?

A: Howard was raised that way, however, he is not like I am. I mean I'm almost an atheist, let's put it that way. In fact I intended to join the atheists when I was young and my mother hooped and hollered so much I figured alright I don't have to join them. I'm still going to think that way. So, I didn't join. But that's -- I grew up that way. And I refuse to be an old hypocrite. And that's what I feel like if I pretend. So, I don't know. Now, Howard was raised religious, he -- in fact he can translate and so on. He speaks some Hebrew. I mean, he was in Israel and he took the East European tour and he took the tour to Israel. Oh yes. One year he went East European class to Moscow and back down to Israel and we had arranged -- we were going to Europe. He called us from Israel while I was in my hometown and we talked and talked \$75.00 worth in one conversation. We were glad to hear from him. So he was raised religious. He be -- I think he belongs to a synagogue or shul in Chicago, already, because his wife was raised religious they both -- and they got the mazuzahs already in the house, already, and had the Rabbi say his things. Which doesn't mean anything to me. I mean they're here, too. Now, my wife was raised religious in fact she is so religious she says her prayers before she eats and all this stuff and she sits and holds her head. I turn away because to me -- I don't make fun of her, but it looks comical to me! In fact, I made her one problem from this. She usually lights the candles Friday evening without my participation. There comes a place or time and, uh, the first and second time -- well I'm kind of used to it now. I'll sit there quietly. I won't participate, but before they get start with that, I have something to eat because I'm not going to wait that long for them to get finally to it. The longer I sit the hungrier I get and the more aggravated I get. And then my daughter, she -- I told her already, "you should become a Rabbi." I mean she embarrasses -- the Hagaddah alone isn't enough she comes with two, three, four different books to add to it, yet, stories and all, "Rabbi such and such did such and such and so on." Oh! And I'm always waiting to get done with it so we eat. But that's the way it is, I mean, I'm not going to be a hypocrite. In fact, I think the last time I was in a synagogue -- Howard's bar mitzvah and the Howard's aufrauf and that was it. Oh maybe somebody was buried or dead. I mean her father attended the services, but otherwise I have not been back.

Q: Do you consider yourself a Zionist?

A: No, definitely not. Now I -- let's put it this way, my son claims -- somebody tried to persuade me that I am a Zionist. Let's put it this way, I'm not against Israel. But I'm not a Zionist. I don't believe that all the Jews should go to Israel. In fact in the 30's or so I had the chance to go to Israel. I mean, Hise was soliciting, uh, looking for young people to go. I started along and then I thought later uh-uh, I didn't feel like it and I changed my mind because I didn't believe I would feel happy among Jews only. I mean, I guess it's my way of living. My friends are always gentiles.

Q: That's interesting.

A: And even now I got more gen -- Oh, I got some Jewish friends. I mean, maybe it's a sign of benevolence. I mean, I help people sometimes. I don't remember, like Mr. -- what's his name again. Mr. Pinkas when he was sick and still had his store I would go over there. I had already retired. I cut meat for him under his direction because I used to cut meat in my store, but gentile way, not the Jewish way, so I had to cut it under his direction. Theirs is cut different.

Q: You had to learn how to cut it kosher?

A: Yes so, fine. I helped him 'til -- and he offered that place to me. I told him no. I mean, I could have walked in and taken over. I told him no. I don't want it and that's it. You see, the thing is, I used to be redheaded. I wanted to say something else, but uh, I want to keep it clean, so -- I've been in the service and I know, every cuss word, I hardly use any. I was just using an expression which sometimes is denoted with three letters and so, the last letter is a B. I mean, I used to be redheaded. So, I knew darn well sooner or later I would have spoken my piece. Some of these Jewish women can be a bona-fide pain in the neck. I've seen them in butcher shops and so on. But I wouldn't be able to take it. I'd speak my piece and lose a customer, maybe more than one. So I'm not interested. So I used to have a temper. The same way there's -- my wife befriended a Mrs. Cantor, I don't know whether you know her or not. She lost her husband just about a year ago. Well, she hasn't got anybody and so on. Well when we go to Cincinnati. My wife -- the first attempt my wife made to keep a kosher house, the kids were crying, "kosher, kosher." I told her, I said, "If you start a kosher house I'm going to walk out on you." I meant it, because I wasn't going to be the criminal in the eyes of my children, because I eat anything I feel like, pork, beef, veal, anything. Except poultry I won't touch. I had too much of it when I was a young child. My mother even raised them in the house. I will not eat 'em. So, about the second time that she asked, I said, "Well if it makes you happy go ahead. I think it's a bona-fide nuisance." But I won't do a thing here to spoil them, I mean, I won't mix them up or so on. I'll keep the dairy food and meat food separate and the dishes and so on -- What are you going to do, reload?

Q: Oh, we're gonna -- no, we're fine.

A: Fine, and now we go to Cincinnati to buy meat and I mean I found out the chuck meat, or hamburger, the best one comes from New York frozen. Better than Cincinnati or Chicago. Chicago is better than Cincinnati or Columbus, so we were using that and also she is using the frozen chicken. So we go to Cincinnati and buy them at Bilker's because they're much cheaper than here. For \$1;39 or something a pound you get whole friers or something and he had \$1.99 or something like that and I buy about ten at a time anyhow, so it pays me. So she got a friend or her sister over there. I'll take her along or bring her some. Or she has to go someplace, let her call me, I'll give transportation. I'll take her and I take her to the store. I do that once in a while, but that's all about the Jewish friends. I mean, a lot more know me than I know. Because I was married to a grocery store. And you don't have time to socialize. But religion Howard, I mean they don't keep a kosher house. Not that I know, they use pork. Now, I don't know when they eat out, like myself, too, order anything you feel like it. I mean I mix the cheese and the meat, yes. But otherwise they do a certain amount observe, I mean, they go home for the holidays one way or the other, I mean, either her home or ours -- his home. We were disappointed -- thought they'd make it for Seder this time. They went the other way. So, well. They're more religious than I am, I am the outcast when it comes to religion, religion -- I still believe the saying of the Second International. "Religion is an opium or a crutch for the people." I still believe it. And as long as you believe that you can't be religious.

End Side Two.