

## HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS IN MIAMI VALLEY, OHIO

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, DAYTON, OHIO  
WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY, in conjunction with  
JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF DAYTON

Interview July 21, 1981

Interviewee: Dr. Felix Garfunkel = FG

Interviewer: Carole Erich = CE

Q: My name is Carole Erich. The date is July 21, 1981. The time is 7:00 p.m. I am in the home of Dr. Felix Garfunkel at 5593 Mad River Road in Centerville?

A: In Washington Township.

Q: In Washington Township, Ohio. Dr. Garfunkel, I want to ask you your age, please.

A: 50. I just became that day before yesterday.

Q: Oh. July 19th.

A: I am sorry, the 17th, July 17th.

Q: And the year of your birth was?

A: I was born in 1931.

Q: And you were born where?

A: In Cernauti, Romania. (Town is spelled by FG but could not be located in the Atlas, however after much trial including various attempts at phonetic spelling Cernovcy was located at 48.18N, 25.56E. This is it. It is on the Prut River.) That is the Northern part of Romania, which the Romanians got after WW1, they received that as part of the compensation, I guess. It became part of Romania between WW1 and WWII.

Q: Were your parents from the same area?

A: Yes, from the same area, which had been Austria.

Q: Could I please ask your father and mother's names and your mother's maiden name?

A: My mother's maiden name was Frieda Blumengarten. My father's name is Marcus Garfunkel.

Q: They lived in that area?

A: They have lived in the same city, they were born in that city.

Q: How far back in Romanian history does your family go? Do you have any idea?

A: I could not gather a very long history back, however, I know that their parents lived there. They did not have any other records concerning how far back they went.

Q: Both sides of your family were Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: I would like to ask you a little about your early childhood, in your area in Romania. The area where you were born. First of all how many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I was an only child.

Q: You grew up in this area, went to school locally.

A: Yes, I went to school locally. This was a town of about 120,000 people. My father was a businessman. We had what I would call a middle class family. I went to school, to kindergarten first, then to public school. While I was in the 3rd grade, the Russians came in since that was 1940. The Soviets made an arrangement with Hitler where they took a part of Romania and Poland, just north of us.

Q: You are getting a little ahead of me, but you did anticipate one question I was going to ask. You said your father was a businessman? What business was he in?

A: In coal and coke - some high carbon coal for industrial usage and wood for burning, firewood.

Q: Did he own the company?

A: Yes.

Q: He was an owner? How large a company was this?

A: He had gotten it from his parents, from his father. It was not very large. You mean size?

- Q: Yes, I am trying to get the idea of the size of his company as to whether it was affected later on by the Russians. (The Russians seized all private businesses, no matter how small.)
- A: Yes, I would say it occupied between half an acre and an acre. It might have been a little larger. It contained a number of sheds, which had one side open. He still used a lot of horse drawn carts for delivery. He had one nicer big building, which had a scale outside of it, just like you have truck scales here on the interstate. There the carts or trucks would come in front of the building to be weighed. He had a set of people working for him.
- Q: That was important. I wanted to establish how big an outfit it was. Your mother did not work?
- A: No.
- Q: Did you have help in the home? Did she have any outside help?
- A: Yes, she had a young lady who helped during the day. I don't remember whether it was full time or part time, but at least a few times in the week.
- Q: She (the helper) did not necessarily become an intimate part of the family? Such as a live-in help?
- A: Yes, as a matter of fact, yes, they did have a live-in maid. That's right. But, she was just cleaning and helping taking care of me. I remember that my mother was cooking.
- Q: Was the maid a Jewish girl?
- A: No, she was a Romanian Christian girl.
- Q: The town which you mentioned, where you were born and raised, which I am not sure I can remember or pronounce, was there a Jewish section in this town? Or was it a predominately Catholic town? Or how did it divide itself?
- A: It is a very interesting town in the sense that it had a combination of populations. It was very close to the border with the Soviet Union (the Ukraine) and what was previously a Russian province of Bessarabia (therefore it must be quite a bit further east than the Cerna River, possibly in an area which was annexed to the USSR after WWII, since the Romanians at one time sided with the Germans, and therefore the name was changed). Bessarabia had also become a part of Romania after WWI and the border was then on the River Dnestr. (FG spells it as Dniestre, however the transcriber's Atlas shows it as Dnestri.) The river went through our town called the Prut. (FG spells this again. This river appears to make the boundary of the USSR, at least in 1989.) There was 120 km between

one river and the other which was the border. That is about 70 miles. It was also close to the border with Poland, which was further northwest, but it wasn't that close. The population in that town and around the town was a mixture of a lot of Germans - Schwabish (Schwabenland is Bavaria) who were in the countryside, some Ukrainians, who spoke Ukrainian, particularly in the marketplace where they came in with the groceries. Then there were people who came in after WWI and who administered the area and it was their language which you had to learn when you went to school, or if you wanted to get something from a public office. However the population, basically, all spoke German because it used to be part of Austria and there was a goodly amount of Ukrainians, and they used a Slavic language. So people who had been raised in that city, or who lived in that city knew several languages. It was an international type of a city. There was a section of the city that was predominately Jewish. There was a large Jewish population there, probably like 40,000 to 60,000. A good part of the city was Jewish, something like 30% to 40%. My understanding is that it was because there was a lot of trade going through from the west to the Soviet Union - to Russia and back (also a border town might have provided refuge to Jews fleeing from anti-Jewish pogroms under the Czars in the XIXth and early XXth centuries) also, involving Poland through that town. Then, when they closed all the borders, which they did, they cut off the trade. There were a lot of people in the adjacent province of Bessarabia, who lost their livelihood in the little villages and in the countryside, and moved into the city. That is why the city had a lot of people of different origins. They (Jews) could live any place in town. We did not actually live in the Jewish part of town. There used to be a Jewish section which had more Jewish population, but the Jewish population lived all around the town.

Q: You said that your family did not live in what could be called the Jewish section?

A: We lived outside, but close to it.

Q: Were your neighbors predominately Catholics?

A: This went with the nationality. You see the Ukraine is Greek-Orthodox and many of the Germans were Protestants, and some were Catholics. The dominant religion of the town was Greek-Orthodox, the same as Romania is. Russia and Romania is Greek-Orthodox.

Q: Very little Catholic?

A: Yes, very little Catholic. Those who were Catholics were more liable to be refugees from Poland.

Q: Then, I will ask you, in conjunction with that; what were your friendships composed of? the children whom you played with? Your associates? Did they tend to be from the Jewish section, or were they as integrated as the city itself?

A: Most of them were from the Jewish section, I would say that almost all were. The city was not integrated. There were many different ethnic or nationality groups, who met in different areas and in the schools. However, the friendships which I had were mostly with Jewish kids.

Q: From what you are saying, I got the impression that although there were quite a few ethnic groups, they tended to stay within their own groups. To go along with that, you said that most of your friends were of the Jewish religion and background. Was your family Jewish Orthodox?

A: Yes. Not completely observant, but you could call them Orthodox.

Q: Did they observe all the (Jewish) holidays?

A: Yes, they observed all the holidays and they were very religious people. However, they did not observe it to the sense that the Orthodox are associated many times with a certain custom of wear (i.e., clothing - probably meaning not the Hassidic clothes, of the fur hats and the long black coats) and the custom of not cutting the sideburns. Not too extreme, but more in the modern sense of the Orthodox branch.

Q: Now you were born in 1931, which was a rather interesting year as far as the NAZI (meaning the party led by Hitler which was officially National-Socialist party. This party was one of the minor parties making up the German Republic with its capital in Weimar until the elections of 1933) rise to power, which became quite evident during that year. Can I ask you aside from the fact that you mentioned the Russians and the agreement they had with the Germans (that accord was signed in August 1939) and through which they entered into Romania; was the Jewish community in your area affected by what was taking place in Germany in the 1930's? Obviously, you can't remember from your own experience.

A: Very slightly. Yes, I will be glad to answer this as best I can. I remember that as very small children we heard very frequently something and we were aware that the adults were very emotionally upset by listening to the radio or the speeches of Adolf Hitler and always listened to the news about what was going on, such as an invasion here or an invasion there, threat of wars. The adults were always huddling around the radio and had everybody be quiet so that they could hear a distant broadcast, perhaps from Germany or from wherever. There was tension in the city and there was anti-Semitism in the sense that the kids were frequently trying to pick fights with Jewish kids and to beat them up. We used to go around in groups. Many times we had fights. We realized that something serious was going on. That is the way it was until the Russians came in. One day the Russians came in unexpectedly. There obviously was no fight or anything. It was just like a parade. They just walked in like a parade. They took the

administration over. A few days later my father went to his business and came back and said that he found a seal (at the door of his business). That happened to all of businesses in town. They all had a seal reading: "This is property of the State" on it, which continued: "Do not remove under penalty of law." This meant that you would be infringing the law and that you would be arrested immediately. So he had to go and look for a job. He got a job somewhere else.

Q: You are getting way ahead of me again. First of all what year did that take place?

A: In 1940. (The pact between Germany and Russia had been signed in August 1939 and Poland had been dismembered in September 1939.)

Q: O.K., you are about 9 years old at this point.

A: Right.

Q: You said that as a child you had quite a few fights or were part of quite a few fights which were going on. Now aside from the childhood problems, which you had, did your parents experience anti-Semitism on their social level. Were they ostracized prior to this business of the Russians marching in?

A: I don't mean to say that there were a lot of fights. We had a very normal, very happy life. However, while going to school I am aware of a few times when I had to either avoid some kids who were waiting for me or get into fights. Whether my parents were made to feel bad? They were aware of anti-Semitism, but the town was so heavily divided between all these types of community that you could live totally in your community without being exposed to much. So I am not aware of discrimination in a great way. I am only talking from hearsay.

Q: Your parents, or the Jewish community, was apparently more frightened by what was taking place in Germany and never expected a move from the East? From the Russians?

A: That is right.

Q: Had Hitler made any overtures directly in Romania? Had this come about by then?

A: No. Without taking into consideration the will of the people in any way, the region was just divided up.

Q: Considering that the Russians and the Germans were allied at that time. OK, you are 9 years old, the Russians have moved in. Do you remember that day? Does your memory account for that exactly. You said that they marched in and

just took over. Do you remember actually seeing this come about or is it hearsay for you?

A: It is hearsay. I did not see them that day, but I saw them shortly afterward. I remember kind of a combination of a festive occasion and a sad occasion and an apprehensive mood in the city. It was not a mood of war or of immediate danger. It was like a parade. Some people, that is some Communists, came out and greeted them very happily. However, most people kept to themselves and stayed out of their way.

Q: Did you know that the Russians were working together with the Germans? Or did they assume that the Russians were there to protect them from the Germans?

A: They were aware that there was a very terrible power, a militaristic power rising in Europe and that that was Germany. They were not concerned about the Russians, that much. So when they walked in, the people were pragmatists (probably meaning that they tried to rationalize events) and recognized the fact that this had happened. So of course, you had a lot of people come out and greet them and say that they are glad to see them because they were afraid of consequences later on.

Q: Sort of like the lesser of two evils? If there had to be someone moving in, they apparently preferred the Russians to the Germans, for obvious reasons, I assume.

A: I don't remember that that much. I just remember a lot of discussions, political discussions. I remember still better that there were some people whom my parents probably knew who, having Communist leanings, were out there and very happy. They were extremely happy. Some people kissed the horses on which the Russians were riding. However they also told me, and I heard them say many times, before a year had passed that they changed their minds and tried to flee the country to the West. They had terminated their Communism. A lot of people who did not know the Soviets and had a lot of Communist ideas, or ideology, considered themselves Communists. They were spouting their ideas and fighting for them and being jailed for them; they were later exposed to Communism and they had to live under Communism in the Soviet Union and they totally changed their ideas. Then they didn't want anything to do with them.

Q: Were your parents political?

A: No.

Q: Did they vote at all?

A: I don't really know. I don't remember that.

- Q: Were they social people? Did they belong to clubs? or things of that type?
- A: They did most of their socializing with family. They both were members of large families. There was a large family.
- Q: In that city?
- A: Yes.
- Q: So you were not really isolated? You had a lot of cousins.
- A: Yes, a lot of cousins. Also, I had cousins in the neighboring towns 20 or 30 miles away. We used to travel by train to see them, or by car. We didn't have a car (a car, unless it was directly relevant to one's way of earning a living was a luxury). We went by bus or taxi.
- Q: You mentioned that it was a bilingual city, actually not bilingual, but multilingual. How many languages did you speak?
- A: Three main languages were spoken there. My home language was German. I also learned some Yiddish, which is very close to German. (Yiddish is defined as a "High German dialect," i.e., a dialect of German spoken in the north of Germany developed under Hebrew and Slavic influence and written in Hebrew characters. It was adapted to the local language in many places.) I heard it being spoken. We spoke German at home. I also learned Ukrainian when I went shopping with my mother. Then I had to learn Romanian when I went to school, when I went to kindergarten and then to school and learned to read and write. In school you have to know the main language. I picked up the language and found it very easy to learn, at least for me. I had a facility for languages, so I learned Romanian. Since then I have forgotten a lot of it. I learn fast and I forget some of the languages; I will later tell you why. Later on you will see that we moved to the Ukraine during the war. There I learned Russian and Ukrainian. Later we went to France, and there I learned French. Then I went to South America and I learned Spanish and when I was speaking Spanish most of the time and no Romanian since the two are a little bit similar (both are languages derived from Latin sources) I forget Romanian. I still understand it, but I cannot speak it any longer because I cannot think of the 4 words, they come more readily in other languages.
- Q: And then English? OK, we are going back to the point where your father's business was apparently just closed down. Did they take it over and run it, or did they just close it down?
- A: They took it over. I don't think that they ran it.



Q: Your father was given no compensation.

A: Nothing.

Q: He just had to find a job. What kind of work did he find?

A: I think that he worked for the municipality, in the sanitation department. Something to do in an office.

Q: What kind of education did he have?

A: He had a high school education.

Q: Now at this time in 1940, what was taking place within Germany and Poland and other countries? You know that there was something going on at that point while the Russians are just moving in and taking over. You said that you were aware of what was going on in Germany at that time. Do you recall what it was?

A: What was that?

Q: What the Germans were doing. Had they moved into Poland as yet? (Poland had been overrun and divided between Germany and Russia in Sept. 1939. The Baltic states were annexed by Russia shortly thereafter. Finland was attacked by Russia in the fall of 1939, but it was not actually defeated, just exhausted. Denmark and Norway were invaded by Germany and occupied in March-April 1940. Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg were invaded and occupied in May 1940 by Germany which went on to invade France, defeat it and occupy two-thirds of the country in June 1940. Italy attacked France in June 1940 and thereby, entered the war on the side of Germany. Italy invaded Albania in spring of 1940, but failed to crush it because of Greek help. The Germans thereupon invaded Yugoslavia and other Balkan countries driving the Greek army, who were helped by the British into Crete, where they were defeated. Germany attacked Russia through Poland in June 1941.)

A: You mean after the Russians came into your city?

Q: About that same time.

A: I learned that later. I didn't know that much. I don't remember what happened at that time.

Q: OK, the Russians have moved in?

A: Oh, people were saying that the Russians had taken part of Poland, a little part from their border (actually Russia annexed the eastern half of Poland in Sept. 1939, at the time they occupied the area of Romania between the Dnestr and the

Prut rivers). Actually the problem which I am having is that they occupied a province of Romania. It was subdivided in north and south Bucovina. The Russians occupied the northern Bucovina, not the southern Bucovina and they occupied Bessarabia.

Q: What I was getting at before, about Poland was that I was wondering whether the Jewish community was aware of the Jewish people in Germany being deported to Poland (obviously deportation to Poland did not start until after Poland was dismembered which was when the Russians marched into Cernovcy and other areas given to it by the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in 1939. There had been one earlier attempt to dump Jews of Polish descent living in Germany into a no-man's land in southeastern Poland which took place several weeks prior to the German invasion of Poland). I was wondering whether Romania had an influx of Romanian-German Jews being deported from Germany back into Romania. Did they experience that at that time?

A: Yes, we had some refugees from Poland. Later on a lot of refugees came from Poland (that must have been as the Jews were running from the NAZI invaders after the Russians had marched into Cernovcy. Prior to that the Romanians with their "Iron Guard" were a little more benevolent to the Jews than the NAZI's).

Q: None of them were Romanian Germans that they would just pick up and get rid of? Kicked out of Germany into Romania? You were not aware of that?

A: No, no, no Germans! No, we didn't get any Germans, just Polish refugees.

Q: Was there a receiving station with accommodations made for these refugees? Within the Jewish community of the city?

A: I don't know that.

Q: These may be questions that you have no way of answering. I was just wondering, kind of picking your brain a little on the subject. In 1940 the Russians had moved in and now how is this changing your personal life? You are 9 years old, going to school.

A: It changed quite drastically, because we had to move from the apartment where we were to smaller apartment and my father was working in a different area and my schooling suddenly started in Russian. Yes, they were not considerate about what the population was speaking or what their background was; from then on it was Russia (to forcibly get the people to use Russian was considered the surest way to incorporate the Moldavian Socialist Republic into the USSR). There were a lot of things happening at that time. You could hear about the hardship of people who were affected; they had to move and they had to leave a lot of things behind. During that period I continued with my schooling in the Russian language. I learned some Russian. it was only in the later part of that year, just

before the war with the Germans broke out, that they started a real terror campaign. This terror campaign was not in the sense of killing anybody. They would come in the middle of the night and tried to evacuate people out of their homes into different areas of the country than where they were living. The rumor was they they were going to interchange the entire population. They were going to move the whole population out little by little and bring new people in from deep in the Soviet Union. That is how they were going to make it a Russian place. So everyone was terrorized by that. You didn't know when they were coming. Usually the police came at 2:00 a.m. They knocked at the door and said, "You are under arrest and you have to leave with us right away! Take only what you can pick up."

Q: Can I ask you whether this was directed toward the Jewish community, or against the city in general?

A: No, no! That was against the city in general. That is one thing I must tell you. The Russians were not discriminating on the basis of anything about religion, language, sex or national origin, only about political affiliation and about your background, as far as whether you were educated, had some wealth, had some employees working for you, or you were just a simple worker yourself all your life.

Q: Now please explain the difference it would make to them whether you were a businessman or not.

A: They, at first, started saying, "Those who employed other people were exploiting the people and therefore had a low social standing and should get lower jobs and should not be trusted as much." Then they wanted to set everybody against everybody else. They indoctrinated children in the politics of the state. They said that you should denounce anybody whom you had heard make statements against the state, including your own parents. They had spies in every building. I mean people who were informers. You had to watch who you talked to about what, what you said to whom. People were disappearing overnight, being sent to prison because of something they had said. There was a general recognition that if you were a businessman, no matter how small a businessman, or if you had your own drugstore or whatever, you had been in the ruling classes. If you had been a laborer some place, then you were a little safer from being sent away. Rumors had it that first they were going to send those people who had some wealth or education away, but that eventually they were going to send everybody away.

Q: Now basically you were moved from a large apartment to a smaller apartment first. I was curious about the fact that you were saying that your father had changed jobs. Was it mandatory that everybody worked? Was it a case where they insisted that he would find work or was he just lucky enough to find something? (In 1939-40 jobs in the US were not yet plentiful.)

- A: In the central society they said that who works eats, who doesn't work doesn't eat. That is all there was to it.
- Q: But there was no discrimination against keeping people from getting jobs. In other words, if they were of the "exploiter class," which your father, being an owner of a business was, they did not select him out and say, "you cannot work."
- A: They would not give him a supervisory position.
- Q: But he was not held back as far as getting a job, any job?
- A: No.
- Q: OK, that is what I tried to determine. I was just wondering how they acted toward these people.
- A: Oh no, they were smarter than that. They wouldn't take somebody and not let them work because they needed workers. If you did anything it was for the good of the state. If you don't do anything you don't have any usefulness. They were not stupid, I can tell you. This cannot be said about the Germans.
- Q: I am finding out while we are talking, that their techniques are quite different from what the Germans had as techniques. That is why my questions sound a little naive, maybe.
- A: I know that they were stupid, at least that is what we thought.
- Q: Did you think the Russians were stupid?
- A: Oh no, not the Russians, the Germans. Incidentally, this is a concept which exists in Austria and has existed for centuries, that the Germans are not as smart as Austrians. The Germans are very straight forward and don't know anything about any negotiations or looking at all the possibilities. They are only straight forward. They are the type who would march, if you tell them to, all march into the water, they would march into the water because you told them so.
- Q: The Germans?
- A: Yes.
- Q: That's interesting. OK! I'd like you to go on now and tell what happened in the time period after you had been moved. Had your family been terrorized in the middle of the night and moved out of the city?
- A: No. No we had not, we had not been touched.

- Q: Now how much time had elapsed? And what has taken place after your father had taken up his new job and you were living in the smaller apartment? You were still going to school?
- A: I was going to school. Just the regular way of life. We didn't have any shortages as I remember, no shortages of any kind. We continued the same life. There were just the rumors, which I talked about, rumors about the future.
- Q: How long did it take before something did take place?
- A: Until the war. Eleven months. (So this must have been happening in July of 1940, to make the timing fit.)
- Q: Then what happened?
- A: After eleven months, which was June of 1941, we were woken up in the middle of the night, rather in the early morning, about 4 or 5 o'clock, by sirens and we heard shooting and bombings. We had been bombed by German airplanes. Within 24 or 48 hours, we saw a lot of Soviet troops running and hurrying across, moving back. The Germans had attacked in a lightning fashion (the famous "Blitzkrieg" moving like a thunderstorm) and the Russians were fully in retreat. The Germans, once in a while, came over with planes and bombed. They tried to bomb the railroad station. I was there, visiting with a friend and I got scared because it was in the middle of a bombing, but we were still looking out to see what happened. You see those little black puffs of ack-ack, the anti-aircraft guns.
- Q: Now what was happening with the people in the city? I imagine chaos.
- A: No, no. They did not come after the population. As I said they came with very few planes, they did not come in mass. That was an American characteristic (actually the main airplane raids were concentrated in the north on the main invasion road to Vilnius-Leningrad and Smolensk-Moskow) of mass bombing. They came with a few planes and looked for strategic targets, like railroad stations or a bridge. There were a lot of sirens and the people did not get that panicky. You were supposed to go into shelters when the sirens gave you the warning, but many people, you know, didn't do it. We were kids, we just liked to look up outside. There were short raids and I heard them say that the Russians had those double winged planes (biplanes had been the most common planes in the early 1930's) which they called "Kokurusniks," which means like corn, like cornplanes. One shot the other one up because they didn't know much. They weren't very good. They didn't know what they were doing.
- Q: How many troops are you talking about, as far as the Russians were concerned? How large a contingent of troops were there in the area?

A: Ground troops?

Q: Yes. Do you have any idea how many were there? At the time?

A: I have no idea, but they had large masses of troops.

Q: The Germans were shooting them? Shooting at the Russian troops?

A: As far as I know they just declared war and the Russians started running. The front collapsed because it was manned by a large contingent of Ukrainian troops. The Ukraine is a large part of Russia, you know, of western Russia. They didn't have their loyalty for the Soviet Union, they thought they were going to surrender right away. So, many of them surrendered and they left no one to defend the borders, and the Germans just walked through. There wasn't a lot of shooting at all. They just marched straight through.

Q: So they came in and took over the town, I assume? All right. What changes took place at that point?

A: At that point, there were a lot of changes, because at that point everybody got really disturbed. There was really a tremendous upheaval and panic, because those people who first received the Russians well were now declared by other people to be Communists and that they ought to be shot, because first they were with the enemy and then they had to prove some loyalty to the new conquerors. There was anarchy. The Romanians were not there, the Russians were not there, there was just the German army, who was passing through and they had no interest in the population. They were going after the Russians. There was no law or order, so you had a lot of people just doing what they wanted to. There were a lot of killings and arbitrary shootings, between enemies, also between the people. Some came and looked their employers up, if they had not been happy with their employers, they tried to kill them. There were robberies. There just was no order. There was no authority. In the first few days, the Germans just went through, after the Russians. The Romanian army had not come back yet, or if they did, they did not have enough time - or inclination - to establish any kind of law. I remember that at that time, one old employee of my father's came to our house and wanted to interrogate him about a gun which my father used to have, that he knew about. That was a hand gun. He came with a policeman, or something like that, whom he had found someplace. My parents got scared and shoved me over to a neighbor, after all we lived in an apartment, so that I would be protected in case this guy would kill them. I don't know what happened. They talked a lot. They didn't do any violence, or didn't rob or anything. In this way we were lucky. In some places people got killed that way. Not a whole lot of people got killed. There were a few days of real anarchy.

Q: Considering the fact that the Germans had moved in, do you recall the reaction of the Jewish community or of your own family. That was quite a thing.

- A: Oh yes! There was panic among a lot of the people. As I have said, Jewish people were panicky.
- Q: Was there a case where people tried to just vacate the area, to leave, to migrate to anywhere?
- A: Oh, there was no place to go to. I remember that my parents were considering leaving before the war in 1936, 1937, or so. They were discussing it, because my father had an uncle and some brothers and sisters in the Americas. He had a brother and a sister in Brazil. He had a brother in the US. He had cousins in other countries in South America. In Ecuador, where we finally went. He did not want to leave his business. He didn't think that it was going to be that serious. He felt that he had what he needed there. When this happened, there was no place to go. Nobody wanted to run with the Russians, except maybe some of the Communist leaders of the party, or something like that. There was practically no one whom I know who went with the Russians.
- Q: Had there been in the community of the city itself, the Jewish community, different people migrating over those years, people that you know of? An exodus of any sort?
- A: You mean migrating out of the city?
- Q: Yes, migrating out of the city.
- A: Yes, yes.
- Q: Were they leaving (Europe). Even though your father had thought of it and didn't go, there were Jewish people who were leaving Romania?
- A: Yes! As I was saying that area was very prosperous as a center of trade before WWI and after that it became very depressed. The depression was due to the loss of all that trade it no longer was an open door from the Ukraine to Vienna and the rest of Central Europe) and industry and also because they did not want to serve in the Romanian army, that is the young men, so they left for the US, or other parts in the West.
- Q: OK, the German military have passed through the city, following the Russians with anarchy reigning for about 2 to 3 days. What took place at that point?
- A: They reestablished the Romanian rule (Romanian soldiers were fighting the Russians alongside the Germans). They declared right away that the Jews had lost all their civil rights, and established the ghetto. This meant that a small section of the city was set aside and all the Jews had to live there. They just had to, they could not live anywhere else; if they did they would be immediately

arrested and prosecuted, possibly shot. The Jews had to wear a yellow star (the sizes of these yellow stars to be worn on one's outside garment, and their location, was fixed by law). Jews could not go out at night. There was a curfew for Jews. We had to leave our apartment and go and live with an aunt of mine who lived in that ghetto area. In that way several families were crowded together.

Q: Can I ask you this, a very personal question, what were your feelings at that time about what was happening to Jewish people. Do you have any really strong feelings about why the Jewish community was singled out? Did you, as a young child, realize what was happening and why was it happening to you as a people as opposed to, shall we say, some other people?

A: As a child I didn't, but later on I did. At this point I did not think too much about it, actually not at all at this point, in that context, however, I did later when I was for 4 years in the Ukraine under constant peril of being exterminated. I had the knowledge that they wanted to exterminate the Jews, then. However, at that point we are talking about in 1941, we were with the entire family (except for those who lived abroad) in an area which was politically in a great upheaval. They claimed that they were treating us that way and we did not know for sure whether it was like that just there, or whether it was like that everywhere. We thought it was like that just in that area because we were under the Russians for a year, and that they suspected us of being Communists and now that the NAZI's were there they had certain things to counteract or kind of sterilize the area. We thought that we were being punished for what had happened a year before (it had happened as a result of the pact between the Germans and the Russians). We did not realize how extensive that policy was at that moment, or what it meant. We were still, as I said, with all our family together.

Q: Was your father still working?

A: No! Not after the Germans came in.

Q: Now the ghetto was established. I assume that at this point shortages became paramount in your existences.

A: I don't remember any shortages.

Q: That is interesting.

A: I still don't remember any. We had very adequately things to eat and everything. They were much more humane than they were in other places. I remember that one of my aunts who had her husband's mother, who was a senior citizen, they did not have to leave to move into the ghetto, because of extenuating circumstances. They said that if you had a senior citizen, or someone who was crippled or some other type of handicapped people, you could stay where you



are, if moving into the ghetto would prove to be a great hardship. So they remained in their apartment.

Q: Did they take any of the Jewish community leaders? Anyone with any influence within the community out. In other words, was the Jewish community left intact?

A: I doubt it. They treated everybody like members of one mass.

Q: Did you attend school? I realize it was summertime when the Germans moved in.

A: Not after the Germans came, the NAZI's came in. However, we continued to get some instruction in Hebrew from the Rabbis we had access to. That was religious training.

Q: How big of a community are we talking about? How big was the ghetto? How many people were in it?

A: There were a lot of people in a very small area.

Q: How large a population?

A: About 60,000.

Q: Can you tell me what takes place. The sequence of events following this?

A: That was a very short period that we were there and maybe that is why we didn't have shortages. It was only a period of 2 weeks. It was a tremendous upheaval and everybody was very upset and concerned. Nobody worked and there were no normal functions of any kind. They put out a decree to put to rest all rumors that because Romania had lost this province here to Russia, the people had to go to Russia. So they brought in railroad trains and filled the cars up with a lot of people and then locked the doors after telling us we were going to paradise. Then they sent us to the East, into Russia proper. Then they unloaded us. The train was full of people. I think that they must have forced people to board the train. I don't remember that very clearly. Anyway they really filled those box cars up. We traveled all night long. We didn't know where we were going. They never opened the doors while we were traveling. When they opened the doors, we were at the border of the river. It was a big river, the Dnestr River, like the Ohio River; well not as big as the Ohio, but almost. It was a bad time of the year to cross the river, the river had flooded shortly before and it was muddy all over. There were just soldiers with guns and they yelled at everybody to get out and started beating people over the head, if they were slow. People just got out and carried something, then they started herding us on foot, to a bridge and they wanted to herd us across. On the other side was the Ukraine and Russia. So they were herding us across. I forgot to mention one interesting thing; which is

now in my mind, a thing which I remember very vividly. When the Russians were there (in Cernovcy) and the war just broke out, the next day after the bombing, they said that everybody had to bring their electronic equipment, that is radios and any other electronic equipment to the Central Post Office. That was a huge building with cathedral ceilings, several stories high, like the Capitol. It looked very huge to me, but maybe it wasn't like the Capitol. Everybody from the whole city had to bring it there. If you were caught with a radio afterwards, after that date, you were considered being a spy, that you were using it for transmission of military information, and you would be shot on the spot. That was already military rule. So I remember bringing in, with my father, that radio which was almost as huge as this TV set. It was a Horniphone, a German manufactured radio. That room was full of beautiful radios. They closed the room up and set it on fire, and burned the entire place down completely. I remember that. The Russians tried to destroy as much as they could before they left an area, so that there would not be anything left for the enemy to take advantage of.

Q: I wonder if it ever occurred to you, to your family and to the other people, who were being herded in these box cars to go to the East, were you aware of the concentration camps?

A: Oh yes!

Q: Did it not occur to the people that they might be going to a concentration camp, rather than to this, so called paradise?

A: Yes, they were just saying that but nobody believed that. We thought we were going to the concentration camps.

Q: OK. You were saying that it occurred to you that they were not telling the truth?

A: Yes, everybody thought we were going to get killed, or put in a concentration camp.

Q: Do you recall your own personal feelings at that time, as a young 10 year old boy?

A: Yes! You have the feelings. It is a very, very strong feeling of wishing to live, of hoping to live, of being totally revulsed by the attitude that, because of no fault of your own, just because you were born in a certain type of family, or time period, you were not permitted your life. There also was a total, tremendous desire to be able to escape and live. The whole unfairness of it appeared unbelievable to me.

Q: Did anyone actually try to escape? Did they find any means of escaping?

A: Yes! I was actually going to say that. People were very aware of everything and cared and tried to do whatever they could. There were rumors going around,

that once we got on the other side of the Dniestr River, we would be killed. Actually they told us that all the Jewish population in the Ukraine had been exterminated, and that was true. When the Germans came to the Ukraine everybody (meaning all the Jews) there was herded together and immediately destroyed, if they hadn't previously escaped. Many of the Jews escaped earlier with the Russian troops. We found no Jewish population in the Ukraine. Anyway we were going through this muddy, rainy, soaking wet place, where we couldn't even sit down without getting soaked in the mud, with all our bundles. We dragged it all with us. We were very, very tired. You know half a day, going across that bridge was a lot. There was a town on the other side, a good-sized town called Mogilev (Mogilev-Podolski is located 48.27N, 27.48E). The town was being flooded. It was pretty close to the river so a lot of it was flooded (the transcriber seems to remember that the Russians opened or blew up some dams in order to gain some time for their retreat). They kept herding us on the streets and some people ran away. I ran away with my father and my uncle and my cousin. At one moment we abandoned the column when they were not watching us. We ran into a house which stood abandoned, empty and flooded. There was just mud inside. I remember my father finding someplace some boards. He put the boards down in the mud and I lay down and I actually slept. I didn't know what happened after that. They were all discussing in a very upset way, in a very distressed way, about finding my mother and the other girls. They had separated us. They were going out to some kind of military camp. There, they lost each other and then they found each other. It was a whole nightmare of stories. They finally escaped from there. In the meantime, we didn't know where they were, we had gotten separated and we had gotten hold of that abandoned house and flooded out. We stayed in there. It took a couple of days, until we got reunited with the rest of the family. I understand that somewhere they marched the rest of the people somewhere even farther in the interior and I believe they were killed.

Q: OK, then you, your father, your uncle and your cousin, the 3 of you, or 4 of you?

A: No, there was just one of my cousins, and me; there were just 2 of us. My cousin was a boy. I also had a girl cousin, the boy's sister.

Q: But there were just some males who had darted into this house?

A: Yes.

Q: When you say "you slept," you mean that you fell asleep. Your dad got the boards and you lay down on them and you fell asleep. Now this column, I am assuming at the same time continued to move down the road. Do you have any idea whether your father had been able to talk this over with your mother or was it an instantaneous type of thing?

A: It was just instinct (the instinct of self-preservation).

- Q: OK! The mother and the other women including the cousins, had gone on with the column. Now, you say that they went to some central area, the military camps?
- A: Yes, to a huge building, which had been empty like a military garrison type of a building.
- Q: How far away from you, did they end up, at that building?
- A: Apparently, it was on the outskirts of the city. It was a good distance away, one mile, maybe 2 miles away. I don't really know.
- Q: Everyone had apparently gone away with the 4 of you in this empty house. I am sure that it was rather chaotic to decide what to do at this point.
- A: It was.
- Q: Did you try to get back with the group, or did you try to stay away from them. You were torn away between the two. Can you tell me, you just mentioned briefly, what you thought?
- A: Well, the feeling was that eventually everyone would escape and get together. There was no question of going back to the group.
- Q: Oh, I see. Your mother apparently was aware that this escape had taken place, in other words, she saw that you had gotten away?
- A: No. The men and the women were all separated. She and her sister and one niece got separated also, because they had trouble. They told a whole long story, which I don't even remember very well. How they found each other; they told each other, when they were just alone and others didn't know where they were.
- Q: Did they know where you were?
- A: No! No!
- Q: They had no idea exactly what happened.
- A: No.
- Q: How then did you get back together? How did this take place?
- A: That is one of the difficult things. I don't remember exactly, although my cousin had told the story several times. It is very long. I don't remember how, but they

found each other. They talked with other people, with people they knew and they said "I saw your husband, or wife over there." It was apparently a huge building, or group of buildings where they wound up.

Q: What I was basically asking was: "how did you, your small group, get back together?"

A: We got together. They came to that house.

Q: How?

A: I don't know. I can't remember. I really don't know.

Q: However, basically, when you were there, at this particular time, were you free to roam? Were the women also free?

A: The town was composed of many people, I mean people who lived there, and you could get lost in a town, at least, that is what we thought.

Q: And the women, your mother and cousin and all were able to leave the group?

A: Yes, somehow they were able to leave also. Then somehow they found us. they were looking for us, I guess, backtracking to the edges of the road to see when we might have escaped.

Q: That must have been quite a long ordeal?

A: It was.

Q: OK, how many of you were there in this house?

A: Oh, there was someone else there also. There was my family and my aunt's family and my uncle's brother's family. They were all there. There were 3 or 4 families in that house. There was nothing in that house, just mud. So we were there for a while and then we started looking for a house to rent in the city. They limited us to a ghetto again; to a section of the town. Now this was under Romanian control now, in the city of Mogilev. However, the city was full of Ukrainian population, the people were Greek-Orthodox. They had been in the Soviet Union before, right on the border (on the east shore of the Dneestr). Many of the Ukrainians had escaped with the Russian army and then surrendered to the Germans. Somehow we rented a house where we could stay. It was a small little house which had a mud floor. They refinished the floor maybe once or twice a year. That was the Ukrainian style. You had to take mud and dampen it and straw and mix it up and dry it out in the sun and then finish it up on the floor. That was the floor.

- Q: What kind of huts were these? Were they any kind of straw huts? In the whole basic construction?
- A: No! The floor was. It was a brick building. The floor was mud. I don't remember what the roof was. The people lived very primitively there in the Ukraine. I bet that they still must be living that way, now. However, they were nice people and we lived between the Ukrainian people. We had brought very little with us, but for some reason my family was smart enough to survive. They took their jewelry, including diamonds or gold or whatever. They opened up the silver knives. The handles came apart if you melted them down and hid them there, then they sealed it. So with all the knives, they had some jewelry left. They could barter that for groceries with the Ukrainian peasants. They were trading it by the sack, such as a sack of potatoes or flour. From that you had to make your own bread by mixing it up and letting it rise and then putting it into the oven. Neighbors would not mind because they - I don't know if you know the Russian ovens? They are solid brick and very large like this (obviously making some hand signals). They make a fire in them and it gets very hot, after burning for several hours. Then you put out the fire and put the bread in. The heat is still there and that will bake the bread - had the advantage of hot bricks to get started for the next baking cycle. So we baked in these ovens also; we baked bread for a while. We had varied foods. We ate potatoes and maybe bread. We bought pig's fat, lard from the farmers, it was like bacon except that there was no meat on it. That is what we were eating. We also ate corn baked into cornbread or mush (the corn which was grown in Europe prior to the end of WWII was suitable only for animal feeding, not for human consumption).
- Q: You briefly mentioned that the people (with) whom you moved in were Greek Orthodox, and were very nice. I assume then that they were very receptive to you. Were you, as a Jewish community, well received by this group, on the whole, or did you happen to personally, as a family to be lucky?
- A: Oh, yes, it was person to person. There was nothing organized about it. They were not asked, whether people can come in. They were a people who were used to be occupied. They had been an occupied people for many generations. They didn't want the Russians at all. They wanted them out. However, they knew that they couldn't get them out. They were, like the Poles, kind of hateful people; very tragic people in their history (their country had often been a battleground including battles between the Russians and the Turks). They were antagonistic to us but they were a different type of people than we had known. Some of them would never look at you and others may take pity on you, or something. I know that our neighbors had boys my age whom I got to be very good friends with. We went to the horses and I helped them in the fields. I went to the river with them. I had a fairly good time. I went skiing with them in the winter. Of course, we were on boards, not on skis.
- Q: You were still being identified as Jewish people?

A: Yes.

Q: With the star?

A: Yes, you had to do that. You had to do that. They were poor, also, and they were suffering from poverty. We had an outhouse. Four families lived in one house, practically in one room.

Q: Were the men able to find work?

A: No! There wasn't any work. Later they were taken to work for free, as slave labor, on the bridge. They didn't get anything for it. They had to do that. Later on there was a lot of typhus and malnutrition. People died of that. There were very few violent deaths. The Romanians did not, as far as I know, do any mass killing (this area of the Ukraine was administered by the Romanians for the Germans) or mass destruction. They mostly left people alone. They took some people to work on the bridges, the Germans did. However, the people who died, died of malnutrition or diseases. That is the way it was until one day, during the third summer, they rounded us up and took us 12 miles inland to a military garrison called Skassinets. They herded a lot of people there and kept us there for 3 months. That was really bad. There was hunger there. Again we could barter with the peasants who were going by and obtain stuff.

Q: You must have said how long you were in this original Romanian community, before you were moved. How long were you among the Greek Orthodox in the Ukrainian community?

A: This was all part of the Ukraine. The whole country was Ukraine!

Q: I meant in this area.

A: That is the whole country!

Q: I realize that, but in this particular community.

A: You mean in the city? In the city of Mogilev?

Q: Yes.

A: That was a big city.

Q: How long were you there?

A: We were in that city for the entire period of time, except for that third summer, for three months, we were taken away from the city to Skassinet (transcriber is not

quite certain that this is the correct spelling for this place, which is located 12 miles from Mogilev).

Q: OK. I was assuming that they were moving you all out and further inland.

A: No, we stayed there all the time.

Q: Was there any attempt made to establish any kind of school at all?

A: I was given instruction in Hebrew and in Bible and other religious instruction (FG's 13th birthday was coming up, the time for the Bar Mitzvah of the Jewish boy). I learned a lot of Hebrew. There was a Rabbi living in the housing area, a young couple. That couple was very young. They were really Orthodox. He knew a lot and he was trying to teach me.

Q: But there was no attempt by the Romanians to establish any kind of school?

A: No! No, sir! They had nothing! They had nothing! There was no school for anybody. It was war.

Q: Was the war being fought in the area where you were at that time?

A: No. Further away (to the east and to the north). Much further away.

Q: You were never bothered again by the Russian troops, or the German troops in that particular area where you were under the command of the Romanians?

A: Not that I know consciously of, except that I remember, as I said, walking with a friend of mine. I came back walking with this friend of mine, a Ukrainian whose name was Bolotka Nadinia. I used to wear glasses when I was small. I used to be farsighted. We were bringing the horses back. Then a soldier called me over and said, "Let me see those glasses!" He dropped my glasses. I said, "I won't be able to see! You have to give me back my glasses! Please give me back the glasses." My friend also pleaded with him. So he gave me back my glasses. I had thought he was going to break them or something. He just gave me back my glasses. So, there were soldiers roaming around. We tried to avoid them.

Q: Which soldiers were these now?

A: There were both types, Germans and Romanians (after the Germans invaded Romania, that country became a satellite until the Russians occupied it in 1945). Romanians were patrolling. Germans were in columns moving through.

Q: OK, now you said that during the third summer, that you were in this particular city, you were moved out for 3 months.



A: Yes, they moved us out for 3 months and we escaped from there.

Q: Ah!

A: Yes, they moved us into there (Skassinet) and that was really a bad camp. We were all crowded together in this huge, huge building. There was nothing. Just people and more people; masses of people like an overcrowded prison. It was surrounded by wire, that is barbed wire and soldiers. They were saying that they were going to kill us in there. So we decided that we were going to make our escape. My mother and I and 2 other ladies - I believe my aunt and my girl cousin - in the middle of the night we escaped out through the barbed wire. We went into hiding in the tall corn. It was in the middle of the summer. By hiding from clump of corn to clump of corn we walked back to Mogilev, trying not to be detected. At one time some peasants saw us and we thought that they were going to give us away for sure, but they didn't. We kept hiding. We walked only during the night. Finally we made it back to the city.

Q: Now how far a distance was that?

A: Well, it is hard to say, maybe it was about 60 miles or something like that (earlier FG had talked about 12 miles, so an error exists somewhere).

Q: Were you still wearing the identification (yellow star)?

A: Yes.

Q: Had it occurred to you, to your family, to discard the identification and blend in anyway. No one spoke the language well enough to do that?

A: No. (It was punishable by instant death to be caught not wearing the star, if you were Jewish, in any area under German control.) You could not blend in with the population. The population was quite different. They were a different nationality, different religion and social background. They were real peasants. They belonged in their village and their houses, you just couldn't blend in. They had different clothes. They were wearing what you see in a museum of native clothing. You see some of their clothes when you see the native dances. That is what they wear, embroidered skirts and shirts. Just by looking at us they could see that we are a different people.

Q: Did you have to carry a passport, anything of that type? Identification papers?

A: We had thrown the identification papers away.

Q: OK, you had returned to the city. Your father and uncle are still in the camp?

A: They joined us later. Again, I don't know how.

- Q: You don't know how they ran away! Did you return to the house where you had been?
- A: Yes. To the same house.
- Q: Were you not concerned that they would just come and pick you up and take you right back again? Or possibly even kill you for escaping?
- A: No, we were not. We were amongst a mass of people. I wish that I had my mother here so that I could ask her all these questions. Now that we are going through it, there is a lot which I don't remember. Unfortunately, she passed away. My father's memory is not acute enough to remember anything anymore about that.
- Q: You are doing very well considering how old you were at the time. There were many things about which you may not really have been aware of.
- A: Probably, if you had interviewed me 30 years ago, I would have been able to tell you a lot more.
- Q: I don't think I would have been old enough to do it.
- A: That's right - you could not have done that.
- Q: OK. You have returned to the city. I was just thinking; would this be a good place to stop for tonight and maybe continue on at another time. There seems to still be quite a bit we have to talk about. Would you feel comfortable about doing that?
- A: If you like to, or if you would like to continue, I am not too tired.
- Q: OK, we decided to continue on, at this time.
- A: I don't remember too much more about it.
- Q: You have returned to the house in Mogilev. I just wondered what took place after your return.
- A: Well, we started to get pretty emaciated. I used to be a pretty chubby child always. I lost a lot of weight. The main thing is when you become under-nourished and lose protein, you become sensitive to infections. I remember getting boils which would not heal on my face. I still have some scars. These boils went on and on and on. I had other diseases, probably diphtheria or whatever it was. Then I overcome them. It got increasingly difficult to feed yourself. The last couple of years, or rather the last year, my father was taken

away for slave labor and you never knew whether they would come back. Everybody lived with the certain knowledge that each day is just very precious because we knew that they were going to kill us. They intended to kill us. They just didn't get around to it. We hoped that the allies would win the war and come to liberate us. We kept hoping. Some people just had had communications through radios, because we became aware when the US got into the war. There was a great celebration then. They were aware once in a while, of what was going on, on how the war was going on. We heard rumors about what was going on, about the battle of Stalingrad (Stalingrad now called Volgograd - 48.44N, 44.25E, on the river Volga was the battle in 1943, which marked the eastern most penetration of the German armies in WWII. After a stubborn Russian resistance and strong counter attack, the German army group under Marshall Von Paulus surrendered to the Russians with its weapons on Feb. 2, 1943). We were also aware of that maybe because of the local population. I know that my friend, Bolotka, he had a brother who was in his early twenties and was an officer in the Russian army. He came back in a German uniform to visit. He discarded the uniform and went into the forest as a partisan. Those were the guerrilla fighters (they played havoc with the German lines of supplies). In the beginning the Ukrainians were happy that the Germans attacked because they were against the Russians (the Ukrainian farmers had born the brunt of the forced collectivization of the farms in Russia during the 1930's), they wanted to get rid of the Communists and the Soviets, but then, when they realized who the Germans were and they were not treated well, otherwise said they realized that the Germans were worse, they deserted the Germans. Then they became partisan or guerrilla fighters, warriors in the forest against the Germans. They sabotaged them and endangered their lives on a daily basis in order to fight the Germans.

Q: How did they react to the Romanian administration? Since the Romanians were in charge of the area.

A: Who?

Q: I am basically talking about the city you were in, where you had established yourself and which you said was being administered by the Romanians as overlords over the Ukrainian population. How did they react to that particular period when the Romanians were in charge of them, or in charge of the city I would think? Do you have any idea? Obviously they hated the Russians and they hated the Germans worse. I was just wondering whether they transferred their hatred to the Romanians?

A: It is unfortunate, but the way I would put that is: the Romanians were from a small country, they were trying to survive. They did it by following the Germans. Of course, the Germans turned on the Romanians also. The Romanians resented the Germans very much. When they came to a bridge, the Germans demanded that the Romanians step aside and wait for them to pass first. The Romanians were treated as second class citizens. They did not have the power

to be a very effective administration. I don't know if they made too many waves there. The Ukrainians, basically, felt that they were being occupied and, as I said, they started fighting increasingly in numbers of people against the troops. The civilians just lived and minded their own business. They worked in the fields and they cared for their horses. They just tried to survive.

Q: You said at one point that your father had been "taken away for slave labor." Do you know anything about that?

A: He had to go everyday to work on the bridge and do heavy labor. He got very little food, just some soup. Then, in the evening, they were sent home. They were glad to have survived another day.

Q: Now this was when you were living in the city of Mogilev?

A: Yes.

Q: When he had been moved inland, during that new camp, during the summer. (it must have been 1944.)

A: There was nothing there. People were on top of each other, just sitting there. (by that time it must have been obvious to anyone in authority that the "NAZI's thousand year Reich" was crumbling)

Q: I thought that from there they had sent gangs into slavery.

A: Maybe he worked there also. (It was from there that FG and his 3 female relatives escaped by crawling through the barbed wire.) He might have, I think that he might have.

Q: How long was it before he was able to rejoin you?

A: That is right, he was taken in and out with a labor group everyday and brought back and they escaped from a labor group, also to the city.

Q: Can I ask you something about an item which seems rather interesting. A family which is able to escape and reunite, then escape again and reunite again; was this unusual? Were people, families commonly able to do this as a routine thing, or was your family exceptional?

A: That is a good question. I never even thought about it. However, I think that it was the usual thing there, because the Romanians were taking them and I don't think that they were shooting anybody. People escaped. I didn't hear of anybody being killed. I heard of people getting sick enough and die because of the typhus, which was rampant and epidemic because of lice and fleas. We had fleas. We had to look all the time for the fleas. There were very difficult living

conditions. However, there were not Germans administering that - there were the Romanians. They were really not guarding the people like you do in a prison, or like the Germans did in their extermination camps. They kind of took it easy and people who wanted to escape, they escaped. It was a common thing.

- Q: When your family had been reunited in that city, living in that house again, you said before that they survived on the wealth which they had brought with them, primarily. Now, how long could that wealth last, or how long did it last? Then what? How were you able to feed such a large group of people?
- A: There was always some bartering going along. A piece of clothing, whatever, could be used. The Ukrainians were very, very poor, not because they didn't have wealth like the land (the Ukraine used to be known as the bread basket of Russia, prior to the period of Stalin) and food and their own products. They had no material nor industrial things because they had been under the Soviet rule before the war. They had no consumer goods. As far as they were concerned, we, in Romania were a Western country, so to speak. Whatever we had was new to them. They just didn't have these things. That is why there was a lot of bartering going on. They hadn't seen any good materials, any good shirts, any good anything, except what they made themselves in their houses and in their fields. There were just no consumer goods.
- Q: When your family had forcibly vacated this house that they had been in for 3 years to go for 3 months to that camp, which you mentioned, was there any case of ransacking in the area which you left, or did you take things with you and then return with them? How did that work out?
- A: When we left the house?
- Q: Yes. On your move inland, did you take your things with you?
- A: You always knew some people with whom you had had social contact before, maybe you had been neighbors. You knew that you lost these things and you had no more use for them. So there was nothing you could do about it. You were better off giving it to somebody than just leaving and they were going to come and get it. So I think that my mother gave the things away to a neighbor. That is our piano and our furniture. (Obviously he is now talking about their leaving Cernovcy, not Mogilev, to which place they had returned after the 3 months.)O She just gave them as gifts.
- Q: How did you get a piano and furniture? (Apparently CE is puzzled about the switch also.)
- A: Like when something happens to you, when you know that you are going to die, you take your possessions and try to give it to whoever you want to . You give it away!

Q: My question still is: you moved into this abandoned house, which had nothing in it, not even a floor. Where did you get a piano? and furniture? and that kind of thing?

A: Oh! I thought that we were talking about my home in Cernovcy.

Q: Oh, I am sorry, no I am still in the Ukraine.

A: Yes, but I thought you were referring to “who did you give your things to?” (Transcriber attempted to straighten that out, calling it “house” in Mogilev and “home” in Cernovcy.) Well we gave them away originally when we moved from the larger apartment to the smaller apartment. Then we had to give it away. When we left the apartment in Cernovcy to go by train, we had nothing but what we could carry with us.

Q: You went back further than I did.

A: Yes.

Q: I meant merely when you went from the city in the Ukraine to the camp for that 3 months stay. I wondered whether you were allowed to take the few possessions which you had at that time with you, and carried them back when you escaped.

A: Yes, you grabbed what you had.

Q: There were very difficult conditions. Sure. Now can you give me some idea about how much time we are talking about? Is this a matter of months or is it years. What year are we talking about?

A: I tried to say that. We came there in 1941 and stayed until 1944.

Q: OK. That is what I wanted to clear up. 3 years! (That is what FG had stated earlier.)

A: Yes, 3 1/2 years all together.

Q: Now what took place in 1944 which changed things?

A: In 1944, we increasingly started to hear about and actually see the Germans pull back. We knew that they were pulling back and that the Russians were coming. We started to raise our hopes. We thought that the Germans were going to kill us before they left, we felt sure about it. We just hoped that we would be able to survive. Then one day, or rather one night, we started hearing in the far distance the boom of big guns, cannons from the front. The next day we had some Germans move in with us. They came from the front. It was an officer with the

SS sign (the SS sign or Schutz Staffel were the black shirted NAZI elite troops, who provided Hitler's personal guard as well as the guards of concentration camps, etc.) who just walked in and said they he needed a house to stay in overnight and they looked at some maps and they made themselves at home. My mother, again, shoved me to the next room, where there was another family, that young Rabbi, to sleep with them. We had heard, actually, for 3 nights, bombardment by cannons from the front. That night we heard a lot of shooting of rockets. They were shooting the rockets which they called the Katuschia. (This, at least what it sounds like to the transcriber.) They were small rockets loaded on trucks. There were 8 and 8, 16, of them in two batteries in back of a truck. When they went through they just made a whistling sound (sound imitated by FG). We were in the city of Mogilev on the Dnestr river. The city was built down towards the river and, on the other side, there was a hill going up. They were shooting up the other side of the hill all the time. We heard explosions at night and there were rumors that the Russians, the partisans, particularly the Ukrainians were in German uniforms and they started sabotaging the German lines. They would go across the bridge and blow it up while the Germans were still on the east side. So our guests, they had to leave in a hurry. They got up and left. The last several hours they just jumped into the river on boards and anything to get across because they were cut off. So then the Russians came.

Q: So it is the Russians who were cutting the Germans off at that point? With the help of the partisans? That particular night, I am just curious, whether the family was afraid that these particular Germans might kill them. The ones who had moved into the house. Was that a real fear, or did they realize that these people were there and were going to be gone? You said that there was constant fear, always fear of death.

A: Yes, constantly, we thought we were going to die. I constantly used to think "how can I do it, that I can survive." I knew that I was not going to be able to survive and I was thinking about how one can improve humanity to the point where people would realize that one cannot do things like that, such barbaric things, and such wild things. For years I have had ideas like that.

Q: Now you were just 13, when that took place in 1944. That is still very young.

A: I was not 13 yet. I got back home to Cernovcy by the time I was 13.

Q: That is still quite young. So now the Germans are retreating, the Russians are moving in. What was taking place at this point as far as your family is concerned?

A: When the Russians came in?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh, that felt as if, all of a sudden, a heavy weight came off your chest, and you are totally free and you can breathe. The Russians just walked in with their tanks and distributed some candy. We felt liberated, totally liberated and free. There still was fighting going on with bombardments at night and all this. Now the Germans started to bombard the Russians, who had come into the city, but it was nothing worse than a thunderstorm. We didn't care too much at all. Then we knew that we were going to survive. We were very, very happy. Then we got enough to eat. That is really the happiest moment you can imagine when you can eat after a long hunger.

Q: Can I ask you what time of the year we are talking about now? Was it summer or winter?

A: Summer.

Q: Can you tell me a little about the season. For the situation, as bad as it was for the 3 years which you lived under these conditions - I have heard of Russian winters being dreadful (CE fails to realize that she is talking of the south of Russia).

A: But you have never heard of the summers, have you?

Q: No.

A: The most beautiful summers and the most fragrant flowers grew. I remember that air, it was so perfumed in the summer. There were such beautiful flowers all over the place. The fields were just very fertile and very, very beautiful. You were working the soil with your feet by digging the ground with a shovel in order to prepare the soil for planting. The winters were tough but we had some fun in the winter, too. As I said we went skiing. It was cold. I don't remember any particular suffering from the weather except that we were clothed well. I just remember how beautiful the summers were. Just beautiful. The flowers, as I said, and the air so clean, the butterflies and such. We just played constantly outside, it was just beautiful.

Q: It is rather an extraordinary childhood, considering that you were only 13 years old by this time. You had been through just about the extremes you could possibly have gone through. Your memories run from terror to some very beautiful thoughts of the country you were in, despite the war which was going on. You kind of ran the gamut of emotions for a child that young.

A: We had everything, but more of it.

Q: OK. The Russians have moved in now and you feel a great feeling of relief that you are not going to be killed.



- A: Yes, tremendous happiness in looking forward to the future. It was a feeling like if you get a million or more.
- Q: Had you been aware of some of what was going on. You said that some people had radios and were aware of what was going on. Had you been aware of what was happening to the Jewish people in Germany?
- A: No! Well, no, we were not aware of exactly what was happening. We knew that the NAZI's (NAZI stands for National Sozialistische Partei; the party led and started by Adolf Hitler) wanted to exterminate the whole Jewish people. We knew that we had been transported where we were to be exterminated! We did not know about the details of the ovens and Auschwitz and Dachau. I don't remember knowing that, but just the fact of knowing that they were killing all the Jews and that we were there to be killed in just a matter of time was enough. We knew that the Germans were going to kill us and we realized that the Romanians would not turn us over to the Germans. We did not know how long that was going to last. We didn't think that the Romanians could hold out. They didn't hold out for anything else against the Germans. But we didn't know any details of how they did it. We thought that they shot them all. In Russia they shot them. They took them out, you hear all the horror stories, they just came and rounded up all the Jews in a village. Then they had them dig a grave (actually a trench), lined them up and shot them and pushed them in the grave. That was that! They didn't use any sophisticated method.
- Q: You just made what I consider to be a very important point, when you said that the Romanians apparently did not turn over the Jewish people. Earlier you had said that they were not necessarily very strong, as a national and military unit. Do you have any idea about how they managed to keep the strength where it was absolutely needed for the lives of your people. At the same time they tended to be somewhat wishy-washy. It seems like a paradox.
- A: I don't know. I really don't know. Antonescu (Gen. Ion Antonescu was the absolute ruler of Romania after King Carol was forced to abdicate after he had been forced to give up the province of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina to Russia as the result of the German-Russian treaty. In fact, although King Michael was nominally King. King Michael overthrew Antonescu in August 1944 and Romania switched sides in the war from the Axis to the Allied side) was the ruler of the country. Maybe some of his conditions may have been about that; I don't know what the details were.
- Q: Do you have any idea how many Romanian Jewish people were actually killed?
- A: There were some figures made public, but I don't know for sure. There must have been a few hundred thousand. However, there were many Romanian Jews, who survived.

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Here the tape ends and the new tape is started by summary of the fact that the portion just discussed pertained to the departure of the Germans from the Ukraine area where the family of Dr. Felix Garfunkel was and the Russians moving into the area.

Q: Now from that point on, can you tell me how events changed. You say that you felt that you had been liberated. Now you were convinced that you were going to survive. The Germans were in retreat. How long did your family stay in the Ukraine, from that point?

A: As little as possible. We right away moved into a different apartment in the city, after all the ghetto requirements were over and there was room available. That meant that we were closer to the river and to the hustle and bustle of the city. We could hear the bombing in the night. My father was taken by Russians into the military right away. He wound up in the Medical Corps. He had no experience in medicine, but he wound up working as an orderly in a military hospital, I believe that the hospital was finally located in Czechoslovakia. Then, we were left alone, my mother and myself, her sister and the kids. Then we made our way back by foot to Cernovcy. We had no transportation. Everything was still chaotic. I remember that we hit upon the idea that we were going to take one of those freight trains which went by at night. We thought that we will get on and that nobody would see us and then to ride back to our hometown. So one very dark night, in the middle of the night, when the guard was looking away, we scurried on a freight train. The train was composed of box cars which were open on top with a lot of merchandise. The cars were just bulging. We made it up and tried to get a foothold and then sit down. We tried to make ourselves small. After a while the trains started moving. We held on and we traveled all night long. When it started getting light outside a little bit, we looked at what we were sitting on. We were sitting on live ammunition, which they were shipping to the front. But we had covered a good distance.

Q: Had it ever occurred to you, at that point, that you may have been advancing too quickly, in other words, that you may have been getting into an area that had not quite been liberated as yet and maybe putting yourselves back in danger? If you had held back a while longer until things settled in that area and then moved in, would that not have been safer? In other words, I am thinking that you might be advancing to where the fighting was taking place. (Also in a battle, it is always possible for the losing side to launch a counterattack and regain much ground as was done during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium later on, in Dec. 1944. That, however is hardly the reasoning you can expect from a 13 year old.)

A: No, there was no danger of that because they really moved fast and by the time we started moving back to our hometown, the Front had moved way into eastern Europe, almost into the border of Germany. (Events were happening very rapidly at the time, way outside of the ability of FG to know. Some focal points were: 7-20-44, Front was on the Dnestr River; 7-23-44 Soviet troops drive on Vistula River in the North; 8-23-44 King Michael fires General Antonescu; 9-5-44 Russians troops enter Bucharest; 10-22-44 Soviet troops launch major drive in Ukraine; 1-17-45 Russian troops occupy Warsaw; 1-20-45 Russian troops surround Budapest.) So they were several countries away. They were very far away.

Q: When did you get off this box car?

A: We got off the next morning. We kept walking, then we stayed overnight in a village. The following day we moved on by foot. We finally made it home and then we went to my aunt's house. We were so glad to see each other that it was unbelievable. We stayed there for a few days then my mother took a job and I went to school, we also got an apartment. Her job was to work in an ice cream parlor, dishing out ice cream. I kept on at school then I tried to learn a trade. I became Bar Mizvohed there, when I became 13 years old, that July. So we were moving about May (at that time the front lines must have been very close to Cernovcy, indeed). I believe that we were liberated in May.

Q: Of 1944?

A: Yes, 1944.

Q: About your father? He had been sent to Czechoslovakia?

A: Yes, he was taken by the military. We didn't know where he was at the time, until he wrote to us.

Q: My question was, had the arrangements been made that he would return to your aunt's place and meet you there sometime in the future?

A: I imagine that they would think of that, I guess, because he wrote to us. I am not very aware of the communications between my parents throughout that time.

Q: I am also kind of curious that an ice cream shop would be functioning in what I would assume to be a war-torn country. (Actually there were no true battles in Romania proper, after the German rout from the Ukraine.) It seemed rather a peaceful operation.

a: Oh, it is a very good thing. Vanilla ice cream in Russia tastes very good. Yes, it was working and the movies were functioning. We were really living! People who were living at that time were like coming back from the dead. We enjoyed

life fully, 200% more than you can imagine. It is only after you come through horrible experiences like that, that you can really enjoy and be happy, because “after the darkest night, you best appreciate the light.” It is the contrast. “Joie de vivre” (French expression meaning “the enjoyment of life”) of the life in you was so strong that everyone seemed to have just a ball. We went to movies and went everywhere. There was an interesting phenomenon then, my cousin, who is older than I am by 5 years, which means that, at the time he was 17, going on 18, just back from a concentration camp, went with me to the movies; in the middle of the movie, all of a sudden he got hit on the head with a crutch. He really started bleeding. It turned out that some of the soldiers who got injured in the war got very upset when they saw somebody home who was not in uniform. They thought that he was a coward or something and tried to hit him.

Q: Do you recall his reaction at that time? Of that particular incident?

A: Well, he was of course, very appalled. It was a horrible thing!

Q: Was he tattooed? (CE asks about the concentration camp number tattoos.)

A: No. They did not tattoo us in Trans-Dnestr.

Q: But he was in a concentration camp, you say?

A: No, he was with me.

Q: Oh, I am sorry, I misunderstood. I thought that he had been sent in another direction and had been sent to a concentration camp.

A: No. No! We call it concentration camp in Trans-Dnestr. It was also a concentration camp. However, it was not the same type as we are talking about in Germany. It was more like a very close ghetto in the city, but it was still called a camp.

Q: How long was it before you heard from your father?

A: It would say it was about 2 months. Then he wrote to us. He was fine and we were fine. While I was going to school I took a part time job in a hospital with a man who was making artificial limbs. I was going to be an apprentice in that. I remember him taking me to the forest to cut wood, because we were starting from scratch. We went there in a big snowstorm with a sled and horses. We had to push the sled because the horses got stuck. So that is what we did then. We were marching a lot in school like soldiers. After another 11 months, almost the year had passed, all of a sudden there was announcement that people who had been born in Romania would be able to be repatriated. (On May 7, 1945, Adm. Doenitz then German Fuhrer, surrendered to the Allied forces.) Now I must say that this country where I had been born, that province and that city which used to

be Austria from the last century until the end of WWI, then became Romania between WWI and WWII was declared a part of the Soviet Union as soon as the Russians came in. That part of Romania is part of Russia now. It is probably part of the Ukraine (it was actually made a part of the Moldavian Socialist Soviet Republic). They said that they recognized that some Romanians may have been caught in that area and they would be "repatriated" if they would come Friday morning and sign up in such and such office. (The claim by "ethnic Germans" who want to rejoin their country had been used by Germany to demand the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and Poland prior to WWII. Russia did not wish to leave itself open to such future claims so they determined that anyone who claimed not to be Russian should move out then and there.) Well, we were there first thing Friday morning and we found a line which was several blocks long. There was no end to it. Everybody started to make up documents, that they were really not born here but way in the south. For 2 days they registered a lot of people to let them out, then they stopped. We were fortunate enough to have signed up. We got into trucks and we got moved across the border into Romania from Russia. I must tell you that, at that time, Romania was not part of the Soviet orbit (in 1947 King Michael abdicated and in 1948 Communists set up a Soviet type dictatorship when it joined the Soviet orbit). The King was still there. It was like going out of the prison again, from Russia into Romania. Then we moved to Bucharest (44.26N, 26.06E) when we were liberated for the second time into Romania. In Bucharest, we went to my aunt's brother-in-law, who had a beautiful home. They were lovely people. They really received us very nicely. We stayed with them for 2 weeks. We had an abundance of food and everything. Then we again rented an apartment. My mother went to work for a dentist, as I remember. She actually worked for 2 dentists. They were a husband and wife, who were both dentists. We stayed there for about 2 months, then my father came back from the military. The war had ended in 1945, May of 1945. After my father came back he took a job and we moved to Timisoara (45.45N, 21.13E), which is a city in Transylvania. There I went to school again.

Q: I want to ask you whether your father was ever compensated for his initial loss of his business?

A: My father is receiving a pension, from the German government. A monthly pension for living expenses.

Q: That had no connection to the loss of his plant? He was never compensated directly for that?

A: No! The Russians took it! They didn't compensate him, at least they haven't yet.

Q: One other question occurred to me. Now your aunt, who lived in the section which was taken over by the Russians survived the war.

A: In my hometown, Cenovcy, yes.

- Q: Now did she, considering the fact that she stayed there, survived the war there, did she leave with you, or did she remain in her home? Or did she retreat with you?
- A: She did not leave at that time, but she left afterwards, later, at another occasion. I don't remember how it came about. Many people escaped from Russia. I remember some young people took their chances to run across the border. Neighbors of ours, Jewish people, they had 2 beautiful young daughters and a son, who was a chemist tried to escape. One of the daughters got shot at the border trying to cross from Russia to Romania. She got killed. Many people escaped illegally, by running across the border and taking a chance to be killed. We went across legally with a transport, in a way legally, actually we were not completely legal, because we used to pretend of being born somewhere else, that we were going to be repatriated. As soon as we crossed we said where we were born, which was Cenovcy, but to the Russians we had said that we were born in Romania proper, in the south, in a different province, so that they would let us out. There you have an example of not telling the truth in order to accomplish something that was very important.
- Q: OK. You have moved to Bucharest, and you are back in school again. Having missed a great deal of schooling as a young child. I wonder how you adjusted to this, being older.
- A: I will tell you how. Well in Bucharest, we just stopped a little bit and then we moved to Timisoara. That is a beautiful city in Transylvania. There I went to school and applied myself so that I could take exams and catch up on my studies. I did two academic years in one and then I did three academic years in the second year. So I had 5 years of high school in 2 years; that means doing the work and taking the exams in each one. They permitted us to do that (many of the youngsters were in the same predicament since schooling had taken a back seat to warfare).
- Q: In regard to this, were you an exceptionally good student? I understand that it was a policy to do this but was it particularly easy for you as a student to be able to catch up and go ahead, as you did? Otherwise said, was this a difficult period for you?
- A: It was difficult for me, but I was glad that I could accomplish it. No, it wasn't easy.
- Q: Your mother was working, your father has returned and gotten a job, living in an apartment and you working hard to catch up to your schooling. Does anything now take place before you graduate from high school that we should mention before we go on.

- A: For the first time, my uncle in the US found out now that we were alive through HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society; this was the agency which coordinated the immigration of Jews to the US and thereby put family members in touch with each other. They became involved with the operation of the displaced person camps in Germany and other parts of Europe). We got their letters first and a package with chewing gum in it. I remember that. That was the first time I saw chewing gum. I thought that it was great. Then we wrote to them that we would like to get out of Europe, if we could, before some more trouble starts. So my uncle started working toward getting us out of Europe.
- Q: When you mentioned chewing gum, it occurred to me; did you ever, at any time, come in contact with American armed forces.
- A: No.
- Q: You are about 16 years old now, it was in about 1947 or 1948.
- A: Yes, in 1947. About 16 years old. When we left Romania.
- Q: You had graduated, or not graduated from high school?
- A: Not graduated. I only had credit for 5 years out of the required 6.
- Q: How long was it between the point where you had made contact with your uncle and your departure from Romania?
- A: About one to two years, I would say, I don't know exactly; between 1 and 2 years. We were in Timisoara more like 2 years. Then he prepared papers for us to come out to Ecuador. He did that because it would have been a long wait for our numbers to appear on the quota to be admitted to the US. (Until about 1948, the immigration to the US was governed by the laws of 1921 and 27. These laws set up national quotas set to favor immigration from the British Isles, followed by northern Europe. The quotas were based on proportion of population claiming descendency from various countries, and barred all persons of Chinese and Japanese origin.) So, once we had that, we applied for passports, for Romanian passports. We went to Bucharest to obtain exit visas. It took a lot of doing. We left with a boat in 1947. The Romanian boat went to Marseilles, France (48.18N, 5.24E) through the Middle East. We first stopped in Turkey, then outside Haifa, then Beirut, then Naples and then to Marseilles.
- Q: Do you remember the name of the boat?
- A: Yes. I believe that it was called the S.S. Moto Mavi Transylvania.
- Q: How long were you in France?

A: A whole year. We were in Marseilles for several weeks and then we got to Paris. We were accommodated in a hotel. The Ecuadorian consul would not give us a visa right away. He kept asking for documents. We didn't have any documents because they took everything away which we had. So every time we had to start getting witnesses, when we tried to get some documents. He kept asking for more and more identification and delayed giving us a visa for practically a year until he finally gave it to us.

Q: Were the HIAS people supporting you during this year in France?

A: Yes!

Q: Your father was not employed?

A: No. I went to a school also during that time. I went to a school run by ORT (another Jewish organization which still exists). The initials of this organization stand for Overseas Relief Training, or something like that (they usually train would-be immigrants to Israel). They trained young people. I went to school in Paris to the ORT school; they gave us soup and they gave us instructions. I learned electronics, such as how to solder, repair radios and such things. They did not teach academic courses. I wanted to go to Berlitz and learn Spanish and English, but I couldn't go to regular school.

Q: Did it ever occur to your family to seek passage to the land of Israel (immigration to Israel was limited to the point of being nonexistent, except for youngsters, until May of 1948 when statehood was voted in for Israel by the United Nations)?

A: Israel wasn't there yet.

Q: Well the land of Israel.

A: Yes, I know what you mean. Palestine.

Q: Yes, Palestine was under English rule at the time.

A: It was prohibited at that time to go to Palestine, and we had visas to go to Ecuador. We had nobody (no relatives) in Palestine. We had relatives both in the US and in Ecuador. We also had relatives in Brazil. My father had a cousin in Costa Rica. We had no one in Palestine. People were prohibited from going to Palestine. As a matter of fact, the Romanian ship had to stop way outside of the harbor when we stopped in Haifa, and the English patrols were constantly going around the ship to see that nobody jumped off the ship.

Q: So a year passed before you left for Ecuador, until the papers were finally ready for you to go. Do you recall the name of the ship you left France on to go to Ecuador?



A: It was a much bigger ship, I thought that you wanted the name. We left from LeHavre (49.30N, 0.08E). We had to take a train to go to LeHavre which is way in the north of France (LeHavre is actually located at the mouth of the estuary of the Seine, just west of Paris). From there we went to Rio de Janeiro (22.54S, 43.15W), which was then the capital of Brazil). On the way it stopped in Dakar, which used to be Western French Africa (capital of Senegal). In Rio de Janeiro, my father's brother, Karl, waited for us. He took us to my aunt's house. We stayed there. They had a beautiful house. We stayed there for several weeks, 2 months, I believe. My mother did not like it there. It was very hot in July in Rio de Janeiro (that is the middle of the winter in the Southern Hemisphere). Then we took a plane to Quito, Ecuador (0.13S, 78.30W, the capital of Ecuador, located high in the mountains). This was our final destination, the capital of Ecuador that is on the west coast of South America.

Q: Let me ask you. On the two ships on which you traveled, on the one from Germany (she obviously means Romania) to France and the one from France to Rio de Janeiro, in either or both cases, were these refugee ships? (What is meant by a "refugee ship" is not clear.)

A: Not really. That Romanian ship was a luxury motor boat (probably meaning a regular ocean going passenger ship) but it had a lot of refugees on it. However, once you were on the boat, they treated you royally. Food which I hadn't seen for many, many years was served. It was just beautiful. They had a lot of refugees on it, but it was primarily a luxury liner. The boat from LeHavre was a regular ship transporting people (many ships traveling the route from LeHavre to South America carried mainly cargo, but also some passengers). It was not as elegant as the Romanian ship, however, it was a very fine regular ship, full of people. I think that there were a lot of refugees on it. However, it was not primarily a refugee boat, it was a regularly scheduled liner.

Q: You were aware of the fact that many of these people had come from Germany (the ships which were filled with people from the displaced person camps were usually chartered by HIAS or the US Government and left Homburg for New York) or from other areas or from France.

A: Yes, there were all kinds of refugees, that is right. Some of them were Turkish refugees, I remember, or from Morocco or from Eastern Europe or from Africa, all people who were refugees and were traveling to South America.

Q: I have a question about what you had gone through up to this point. You had mentioned a boy in the Ukraine by name, as a matter of fact a couple of times; had you established a lasting friendship during this era of your life? Were you able to reestablish a friendship with this boy that you had known?

A: No. You mean after I left.

Q: Right.

A: No. None whatsoever. There was no way. No mail, nothing. I didn't know his address anyway.

Q: As far as you traveling through France, or in France, nothing had been established at all, in any way between you and other people?

A: Yes, I had made friends with a number of people, as a matter of fact, close friends. One was a young man who roomed with me at that hotel (obviously in Paris). He went to Palestine. I believe that he became an officer there. He was a very capable young man. I also got friendly with a young girl who also went to Ecuador. We are still friends. She has her family. Whenever I go to Ecuador, I visit her. She lives in Quito. Her husband is a manufacturer of shirts. Her family and my family are now living in Lima, Peru (12.03S, 77.03W). These were all refugee people. We didn't make any contacts with the French. We were not together with the French. We stayed in a hotel.

Q: That is what I meant. Yes, among the refugees.

A: Yes, a number of refugees.

Q: OK, you have gone to Ecuador. Can you tell me about your life in Ecuador? What took place there? You returned to school, I assume.

A: Yes, I returned to high school and I graduated high school. We had a beautiful life there, at least it was for me. I think that it is a beautiful life. My father went into business there, with the help of his brother from the US. He came and loaned him some money. My father opened a business and operated it for 22 years. I went to school. I finished high school, then I went to medical school. After I finished medical school, we came to the US.

Q: May I ask what business your father went into?

A: He went into the retail business of men and women's clothing, he specialized in shirts and socks, underwear, sweaters, that kind of thing. During the time I was in medical school, I learned how to weave sweaters, then I started my own factory so that I could get married. I was still a student when I got married.

Q: Was there a large refugee community in the city of Quito?

A: No, that was relatively small. In the whole country, there were 4000 Jews - 3000 of those lived in Quito.

Q: Were you aware at the time that apparently many German NAZI's had also immigrated to South America?

A: I had heard of that, but didn't believe that there were many in Ecuador.

Q: It was not something that anybody gave much thought to?

A: No. Not much thought. You had a strong feeling every time you talked to a German. You wondered what he was before. They would always say, "Well, I didn't know what was happening. I think that is horrible. I would never have dreamed of that!" However, you guessed what they had done by age. When you knew someone who was in an age group that he could not have been a NAZI, doing all these things, you guessed that he was all right. However, if they are older you never have the confidence to believe what they say.

Q: Had you ever felt vindictive about these people? These Germans? These NAZI's? How do you feel about what took place in so far as they were concerned?

A: Not so much, except I considered like an accident which can happen any place. As far as vindictiveness is concerned, I think that I feel good when I think that Germany is divided. There is an "Eastern part and a Western part" of Germany. So I said, "Well, good." When I go to Germany and I see the American troops there I say that is good. I am glad to see the US troops there, or whatever other Allied troops there are.

Q: You went to medical school? What branch of medicine are you in?

A: I am in radiology, imaging.

Q: You came to the US in 1951 or 1953?

A: In 1958!

Q: Oh, '58. That is quite late. You had gotten married before that.

A: I went to Ecuador in 1948. I graduated in '58 and came over to the US.

Q: You were married, you said, at that time?

A: Yes. I got married in '54, at the end of '54.

Q: What is your wife's name?

A: Erika.

Q: Yes, that's right. You have 2 children?

A: 3.

Q: 3 children. Their names are?

A: David, he is 25; Janice, she is 22 and Michael is 19.

Q: Where were they born?

A: David was born in Ecuador. He came here when he was 2 1/2 years old. Janice and Michael were born in the US.

Q: Obviously you have become US citizens.

A: Yes.

Q: That is interesting.

A: We became citizens in 1963. Janice was born in Long Branch, New Jersey (40.17N, 73.59W) while I took my internship at Monmouth medical Center. Michael was born in Boston at Beth Israel hospital where I had my residency.

Q: Can I ask you why you came to the US at that time? Apparently things were quite nice in Ecuador. Why change?

A: Things were nice in Ecuador, but in Ecuador you can make a good living as a middle class person by being in business or industry. The professions were not as well paid. The professions were not as advanced and the facilities were not available as we have them here. Now, if I had been a general practitioner, I could have made out all right. I came here, to the US, for my graduate training. It is not easy to find modern, complete equipment for a radiologist, to work with in Ecuador. Besides that I felt my children would find a better future in the US. In Ecuador, they treated us very well, but you always were a foreigner there, because they have different physical appearance. You don't know what kind of foreigner you are, everyone is "gringo," which means Americans; even if you are from Russia, they still call you "American." You always look different, in the country. I thought that I would be a lot happier in the US. These are some of the reasons. The US with its freedom and its ideal of a melting pot.

Q: You were obviously happy in Ecuador, I wonder about your reactions when you got to the US. It is quite different here, I assume than what you were used to.

A: I was very happy here also when I came, but I had to work very hard as an intern.

- Q: I am going to ask you a couple of questions about that.
- A: I was glad that I survived the heavy work, and that I got used to it. As interns, we used to work 36 hours and then were off 1 1/2 hours. That is an intern in a hospital.
- Q: I know that they have that kind of schedule. You, and I assume, Erika too, although I don't know her story, have had, what I would consider a rather traumatic background, in your lives. You have had some very horrible experiences, and some very good experiences. I am asking the following questions for a professor, who is interested in this particular area of human development. You have raised 3 children. Have you conscientiously raised your children differently perhaps than you might have if you had not gone through this vast experience; the stress which you had to live through, and what have you. Were there things which you taught your children to know, or things that you did, which you may not have done, if you had not lived through this experience.
- A: I am sure that we are the results of what we have been, and that some of my experiences have come through. However, that was not my intention. My intention was to give them as happy and full life as possible. I have been sorry, many times and appalled to know how little they know about my background, how little I have talked to them about it. Perhaps, I didn't do a very good job in actually presenting my background to them, but if you take the general effect on raising children, there must have been something in it, perhaps. It must have been something, but it wasn't intentional.
- Q: I'd like to know also, whether you are a particularly religious man now?
- A: No! On the contrary, I have broken with the religion, so to speak. When I was a young child under those conditions, I kept always wondering about that whole story on which these persecutions are based and why we had to go through this and suffer. I have had a hard time believing religion. I am trying to. My family is more religious than I am. We go to a reform congregation. We belong to it and I go to all services, I mean on the Holy Days. I have tried to raise the kids in a really religious family. (FG's father, who had settled in Dayton when FG's mother died during a visit to Dayton of the older Garfunkels, joined the orthodox congregation in Dayton.) My daughter is pretty good in Jewish things (she became an ordained Rabbi in Reform Judaism). I cannot say that I am a very strong believer.
- Q: Were your sons Bar Mizvohed?
- A: Yes.
- Q: One more question. Basically, why did you come to Dayton? What brought you here?

- A: Actually during my internship, I looked for a residency in radiology and I was fortunate enough to get one in Cincinnati, which is one of the top schools, where there is a very good, truly world famous man. He is Professor of Radiology there, at Jewish Hospital. So I took my training there, then I went to Boston for year. Then I realized how good it was here and how much I liked Ohio, so I wanted to come back.
- Q: This makes me smile, because I am from the Boston area. That was my hometown, not truly my hometown, but I lived right outside of Boston.
- A: I liked Ohio better. I found that the people were a little cold there, until you get to know them.
- A: Oh! That is very true. New England is a little standoffish.
- A: They are not as friendly. The pace is easier, the weather is warmer here. I thought that the living was easier here, than in Boston. I had a hard time getting from Cromwell Avenue (transcriber is not at all sure of the name of the avenue) to City Hospital, that is certain.
- Q: The drivers are also notoriously bad there.
- A: It was also very expensive to live there. I didn't like it when I had to pay automobile insurance in Boston. Are you familiar with that?
- Q: Yes. Very much so. My parents still live there. But this is aside from our tape. Is there anything about which I have not asked you, or neglected to ask you, about your life, which you would like to include at this time? Otherwise, I think that we are about to wrap up this interview. I wonder if we have neglected anything, which you think is pertinent?
- A: I don't think that I said a lot of things which I might have thought about, sometime or other, but it doesn't occur to me now. During the 3 1/2 years, during which I was in a concentration camp in the Ukraine (actually FG was not in a camp at all, in the conventional sense of the term, except possibly for the 3 months during his third summer in the Ukraine) in Mogilev. That was a very hard and horrible experience. But I really don't have all that many recollections. However, even during these 3 1/2 years I had some happy times, as I said, playing with the kids. We cannot give as many details as all the older people, who may have a better recollection. I was thinking myself, when I talked to my friend, Murray (Dr. Murray Weisman is certainly the person being referred to. His story including his several years in the Auschwitz and other concentration camps is on file in the Dayton WSU Oral History archives) for a very long time about his horrible experiences. He asked me about my experiences. I have kind of a void (it appears that the Romanian dictator truly did not allow Romanian Jews to be

mistreated and abused the way the NAZI's treated other Jews). I might have blurred the recollections in my mind, or something but I just do not recollect that many details, from that time. I wish that I would be able to give you a lot more details. During these almost 4 years, when we were under war conditions in NAZI territory during the war, I just don't have that much to say about it. (Food in the Ukraine also does seem to have been more, according to human needs, than it was elsewhere.) I wish that I could say more.

Q: So I think that we are done. I would like to thank you very much for the time you spent with me, this evening.

A: I thank you.