

Interview with Dr. Hans Liebermann

Series Survivors of the Holocaust—Oral History Project of Dayton, Ohio

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Q: Dr. Liebermann, how old are you?

A: I will be 78 next month.

Q: And you were born -- what month and date?

A: On the 9th of September, 1900.

Q: That's coincidental because I am a September 7th boy and you're September 9th.
Where were you born?

A: In middle sized town for European standards. In Beuthen, Upper Silesia.

Q: And did you grow up there?

A: I grew up there.

Q: What size town was it?

A: About, at the time, 50,000 to 60,000 thousand population.

Q: Was it industrial, mining?

A: Industrial, agricultural district in Upper Silesia.

Q: Do you know when your family came to that area, your parents or grandparents?

A: My grandparents lived in Upper Silesia for the previous 100--150 years, and I have been on the cemetery where the entire row of Liebermanns were buried.

Q: Was your family very large? Did you have many brothers and sisters?

A: I had one brother.

Q: What was the occupation of your parents? Your father.

- A: My father had a small hardware store. And my father and my mother -- it was a "poppa, momma" business, and they made a very decent living so that they could support the family. There were no luxuries. We were rather lower middle class income people.
- Q: Was the hardware business traditional within your family? Had your grandparents also been in the hardware business?
- A: No. My grandfather, on my father's side had a farm and a little hotel and country store. He died at a very early age, in 1874, of an accident. And this grandmother died in childbirth when my father was born, in 1869. On the side of my mother, the grandparents on my mother's side, the father was a furrier. He lived in a small town in Silesia, also. They were married in 1899.
- Q: Is your brother younger than you?
- A: I had a younger brother, who, after he left Germany for South Africa, served in the British army there, in order not to be a prisoner of war since he was an enemy alien. I brought him to this country and he died here of a heart attack shortly after coming here,
- Q: What level of education did your parents have?
- A: Both of my parents never saw a high school. We loved them just the same. What they had was common sense and that was best expressed in their respect for education. When we were small kids, eight years, nine years, ten years old, all we heard "the more you learn the better you will be off." My father would say, "I don't want you to stand here behind a counter and wait for customers to come to buy something. I think you should be more. And I also remember that he said, "Actually, I cannot even advise you what to do for I don't know. I have to rely on what you will do and the only thing you have to promise me is that you will do the best you can." You know, it is traditional among Jewish people, the respect for learning. And, that was in our family always, although my father and my mother never had a chance to do anything on their own. My father was an orphan. He was in an orphanage, and when he was fourteen he was sent as an apprentice to a hardware store from where he learned his apprenticeship, and afterwards, he started his own little hardware store.
- Q: Did you work much in the hardware store?
- A: Yes, as a kid, we all helped, it was a family business. Everybody had to sweep the floors, and all these things, and we did all these things.
- Q: In this small city where you grew up, was there much of your family there other than your immediate family?

A: No.

Q: Did other members of your family live in nearby towns, villages and cities, or were you rather isolated as a family from the rest of your family?

A: There was the sister of my mother living in the town about 30 miles away, and in another direction, about 35 miles away, a brother of my father who had a hardware store also.

Q: Did you have much contact with these aunts, uncles and cousins?

A: We visited. Maybe we saw them every month, every six weeks. They came over to see us, or we visited them.

Q: Let me ask you about the religious practices in your home. Would you characterize your home as being very religious, moderately religious, casually religious?

A: Moderately religious. My father would go to services every Friday night, and even when I was established as a physician in another city about 40 miles away, for Friday night, whenever I could do it practicing medicine, we would take the train over to this city, to Beuthen, for Friday night supper, you know, which was celebrated in the traditional ways.

Q: Did you keep Kosher?

A: I tell you. I remember the time when my mother kept a Kosher household. I was maybe ten, twelve years old, and one day she said to me, "Hans, you know dad has trouble with his gall bladder, and I was told I had to cook everything with pure lard," and she said to me, "I think we should not cook extra for your father and I think the Lord will not mind if for the sake of being together as a family, we will not observe this Kashrus." I remember when my mother said it. But you know, it was customary there that for the High Holy Days, New Year's and the Day of Atonement, my father's and everybody's store was closed on these days. And, there is something you might be interested in, you know, German Jews with all the emancipation, and all the achievements, were actually handicapped, insofar as so many lines of professions and trades were closed to the Jews. For instance, agriculture was closed.

Q: By official practice?

A: Not by official practice, but you could not be a member of all these organizations. The trade unions, the guilds, were closed. You could not get apprenticeships for Jewish youngsters. Heavy industry was closed for Jews. You could not get into the chemical industry. The academic world was closed as far as institutions were concerned. In order to get an appointment in the academic world, you had to

convert, and there were quite a number of formerly Jewish professors on the faculty. At the time, this racial thing was not very prominent in its importance. It was so, for instance, in the medical faculty when I went to the University of Breslau, there were four or five former Jews who converted, and became Professors and Chairmen of their departments, but, what I wanted to say is that the professional structure of the German Jews was the retail trade. In the city where I come from, there were maybe 1,500, 1,800 Jews. Jewish souls. During the holidays, the stores were closed. You thought it was a public holiday, for sixty, seventy percent of the retail stores were in the hands of the Jews, for there was no other outlet. The second outlet in the academic world was medicine and jurisprudence. Why? With these professions you had not to be connected with institutions who would not accept Jews.

Q: Did you engage in private practice?

A: Right. You know, the entire population of Germany, there were 70,000,000 people, and there were 550,000 Jews. It was less than half percent, and there were fourteen percent of the physicians were Jews, and twenty-six percent of the attorneys were Jews. There was one more thing which I forgot to mention. I don't know, are you interested in this topic?

Q: Yes, please keep on.

A: The press was also open for Jews. You had very prominent Jewish editors and publishers. But, the great majority of the Jewish lower and financially lower and middle class Jews were engaged in the retail business, for that was one of the few outlets where they could work.

Q: So then, in essence, you came from a very typical family, because your parents were in the retail trade?

A: Yes.

Q: You say that there were 1,500 to 1,800 Jews living in Beuthen.

A: Yes.

Q: Was it a close knit Jewish community? I guess, what I'm asking is was there, I know it is a Germany in which there is emancipation and assimilation, but was there much of a ghetto attitude in Beuthen among the Jews?

A: Number one. In Germany, synagogues were not as the synagogues and churches here are more or less social institutions. People went to church to pray and they went to the synagogue to pray. But, there was no Men's Club and there was no Sisterhood, and there were no social events, maybe there were one or two social events during the season for money raising. That was all. The social contacts

were primarily with Jews. There was always anti-Semitism around. You did not want to offend and the German Jews were very reluctant to “stick out of the crowd.”

Q: Yes, I understand exactly what you are saying. What language did your family speak? Was it German?

A: Yes, German. German Jews did not speak Yiddish. They spoke German. Do you know why? What is Yiddish?

Q: It is a mixture of German and Hebrew.

A: No. Oh, excuse me. I don't mean to say no. Yiddish is the XIV century idiom of the German language. You know when the Polish and the Russian Jews were driven out of Germany during the period of the Black Death, 1338, and when they came into Poland and Russia where they were invited at that time to stimulate the still feudal economy there, they were not allowed to live in the cities and they lived in Ghettos. They never had an opportunity of integrating in the Polish and Russian environment. They continued to speak this German idiom without participating in the evolution of the German language even since then, and of course, this German idiom of the time was mixed up with Polish, Russian, Hebrew expressions. The result is Yiddish.

Q: Did you not know Yiddish at all? Did you not speak it?

A: I did not! I did not! As a matter of fact, my parents didn't either. This is the family tree of my wife's family which goes back to 1600 something. And I can trace my family back to 1700. You know the funny thing, that in spite of all this, we were so assimilated that we did not realize at that time fully all the restrictions we were living under.

Q: The restrictions of professions, economics, social?

A: Right. For instance, I remember that there was a big celebration in this hometown of mine. The Kaiser was coming down. There was a monument to Frederick the Great, the Prussian king, which was dedicated on the public square and all the religious functionaries were invited. The Burgomeister, the mayor, introduced to His Majesty all the functionaries, but he did not introduce the Rabbi who was standing there. You see, there were these very subtle things, he was invited, but not recognized.

Q: Present, but not recognized.

In this matter of language, you come from an area which I could describe as a no man's land in Europe, fought over by Czechs and Austrians, Poles. There was a heavy German, a heavy Polish population in your region too, wasn't there?

- A: There was a Polish population there too; but, in 1900, after the last war in Upper Silesia, there was a vote. Part of it went to Poland but the Jewish minority was strictly German.
- Q: There is a dialect spoken in the region. I think it is called “Wasser Polish” (washed down Polish). (HL helps find the word). Did you speak that?
- A: No, I never.
- Q: Did you understand it?
- A: I understand it...understood and learned some words. My father had to know Polish, my mother didn't, in order to carry n his business with Polish customers. But the great majority, especially in the city were German, and spoke German.
- Q: You characterize your family as being lower middle class.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Income wise?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Did that enable you to take vacations? Did you travel much as a boy?
- A: No, we did not travel at all. Our vacation was that you got two slices of bread and some cherries or apples, and we went to the river and went swimming, with a book and so on. I really did not, we never traveled, that was beyond our budget. Of courses there were some rather wealthy Jewish people who did travel and went to resorts. The only time that I remember when my mother went to a spa was when she had heart trouble and it was considered essential and so for three or four weeks she went to this spa in order to take the baths and the mud packing and so on.
- Q: You said a while ago that most of your contact was within the Jewish Community.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Did you have any close contacts with the gentile community, or were they just casual?
- A: My parents had certain contacts over the years, with customers, and they would bring them some food or flowers for the Jewish holy days, but, intimate contacts we didn't have with non-Jews.

Q: What sort of activities, or associations, was your family a member of? Was there a Hardware Dealer's Association, for example?

A: No.

Q: Was there a Chamber of Commerce?

A: Yes, there was a Chamber of Commerce which consisted of paying the dues. You know, theirs was a small business and my parents hardly earned a livelihood. As a matter of fact, in 28 years they had never been on a vacation, and after I was through with my studies and my residency and started practicing, and got along very well, I saw to it, and they did it reluctantly, I sent them on a vacation to the mountains for two weeks. I threatened them that I would not be able to go on a vacation if they didn't go first. You know, it was a different world. I don't know if you still have that today.

Q: I suspect less so!

Given this level of income which your family had, how would you describe the culture, or the appreciation of culture? For example, could you go to the theater? Did you have the income?

A: Yes. My parents always went to the theater. They were not concertgoers, but they had the subscription for the winter season. They went to the theater once every couple of weeks. Movies were just then beginning. For five cents you went to a movie. There were these short movies which lasted five minutes with an interpreter accompanying it. There were no sound movies. I remember on Saturday afternoon, and it was Sabbath afternoon, we each got five pennies and we could go to the movies. At that time, you got a ticket with the letter "A" so that you would not see these movies for a second time on the same ticket, all the "A's" had to go out. They were checking, so that others could go in.

Q: Was your father politically inclined? Did he participate in politics?

A: No.

Q: Not at all? Not on any level?

A: No! No!

Q: Could I pursue that? Was that typical of the Jewish community in Beuthen? Were they non-political? Or were there a few who were politically active?

A: I tell you that Beuthen, as well as the remainder of Upper Silesia, was 98% Catholic and politics were a matter of the Catholics. 1.7% were Protestant and the

rest included the few Jews. The Catholic Church in this portion of Upper Silesia, at that time was the entrenched party. Whenever you have such a majority, there just is no politicking. You know that in Germany, even today, the Christian Social Party is a Catholic party which is today particularly strong in Rheinland Baden Wurttemberg and they are united around the Catholic faith, a rather conservative party against the social democratic party.

Q: Did your father vote even?

A: Oh, yes! They voted.

Q: They did not belong to a party, they did not go to meetings?

A: You know, the voting, I don't know if you are familiar with this. In Prussia there was a three class voting. That means that your voting strength was according to your income. There were three classes, and it was so that in the upper class there were, maybe, sixty people who had as much influence as, maybe, three thousand people in the second class, and maybe, one hundred thousand in the third class. I don't know if you had ever heard that?

Q: No, I had never heard that.

A: You were listed according to your federal income. Those people with property and wealth had more to say than the poor people. It was called "Drei Klassen Wahlrecht" (the right to vote along three classes) or three class elections.

Q: Mentioning property reminds me to ask you whether where you lived was connected to the store. Did you live above the store?

A: Above the store. But my parents rented the store, and the apartment. They did not have any real estate.

Q: Do you remember the address? The Street and the number?

A: Yes.

Q: What was it?

A: Beuthen, Oberschlesien, Rink 8. Rink is the Market Square. As a matter of fact, I don't want to deviate too much, but across the square from the store there was a Catholic Church which was built in 1245. The corner stone said Anno Domine 1245. You know, you lived with history.

Q: Now can we talk about your education? What kind of school did you go to? Was it public, was Jewish, was it private or what?

A: No, it was all public school! All public schools were Catholic schools. I went to grade school for three years. If you wanted to have a better education, or had in mind an academic career, or something like that, you went to the Gymnasium, and you continued there until you got your mature.

Q: So this is what you did.

A: Yes, this is what I did. I got up to the last grade in 1917. I was drafted into the German army in March 1917.

Q: Yes, there are a lot of questions I want to ask you about that, but let me stay with education for just a minute. Was this Gymnasium a Jewish Gymnasium?

A: No.

Q: Catholic?

A: Yes.

Q: How many Jews would you estimate? What percentage of the student body of this Gymnasium was Jewish, would you estimate?

A: In a class of forty there may have been three or four Jewish students. You know, there were only fifteen hundred Jews among sixty thousand people.

Q: Was there discrimination? Subtle? Blatant? Open? Hidden?

A: I will tell you!

Q: For example, did the Catholic boys tease you or scorn your religion or anything like that? Were they cruel?

A: I will tell you. There were occasions where that was the case. There were occasions where you hit them for this, and so on; but, as a rule, Catholics having been a minority in Germany, were not at that time so aggressively anti-Semitic. But, of course, the Catholic Church at that time was hostile to any other faith. You know, at that time, the Catholic Church was not as liberal as it is today. As a matter of fact, in Germany, there was a crucifix in our classrooms. There was also a picture of Christ. What do you think Christ looked like, blue eyes and blond hair. You know that was a German Christ. It was so nationalistic, a thing which came to our mind only later, the contradiction, but, when you look back at it today, it is unbelievable. The Old Testament hardly played any role in Catholic teaching.

Q: It was all the New Testament, the Life of Christ?

- A: Yes, and the Jews killed Christ!
- Q: Was that constantly brought out?
- A: Yes, certainly! That was actually the basis of the anti-Semitism in Germany. The Jews don't deserve any better because they killed Christ.
- Q: Were the teachers in the Gymnasium all Catholic, I suppose?
- A: No! No!
- Q: Were there prayers?
- A: No! The Rabbi came to the school while the other kids had their religious instruction which was three times a week. We, all the Jewish kids were in one room and we had our religious instruction, besides the religious instruction which was furnished at the Hebrew school, outside of official school hours, in the afternoon,
- Q: Did you go to that?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Would you characterize your school days as happy?
- A: Yes. You know, we didn't know any better, at that time.
- Q: Yes, it is only with reflections and comparisons that other realizations can come to compare.
- A: Yes, we didn't know any better!
- Q: Now, when you left, at what point did you make the determination to become a doctor?
- A: I tell you, I always felt that I wanted to study medicine. As I told you, my father told me, "I can't advise you. I don't know how much I will be able to help you. I will do the best I can." And in 1917, I was drafted into the German Army. Can you read German?
- Q: No.
- A: I have here a draft notice. Oh, it so happened in "1918."
- Q: 1918! (This is at variance with the 1917 figure HL had been giving).

- A: Yes, 1918. March, that I had to come for the medical examination, cleanly washed, yes, cleanly washed. Do you know what that is?
- Q: No.
- A: That is a fee schedule dictated by Friedrich Wilhelm, King of Prussia. You have the schedule of everything here.
- Q: What date is this?
- A: 1725.
- Q: That is fascinating!
- A: It is an odd thing. You know, we lived history.
- Q: Sure. This is something which we here in the U.S. don't have a sense of!
- A: Yes, this is a young country, a young country.
- Q: We don't have the old buildings which are constant reminders.
- A: Yes, as I told you, across the street was a Catholic Church, Anno Domine 1245.
- Q: So, are you saying that you had not decided on any career at the point where you were drafted into the Army?
- A: Oh, yes! I always wanted to be a doctor, and our parents did encourage us not to stay in the retail trade. My brother, who was two years younger, he also studied. He had a PH.D. in economics.
- Q: How long were you in the army?
- A: I was in the army from March to December. Then the war was over.
- Q: Right, the war was over in November.
- A: I was discharged in December.
- Q: Those war years, there, in Upper Silesia, was there much fighting in the area?
- A: No. That was all, the armistice in the East, with Russia, Poland was part of Russia at the time, was concluded in Best-Litovsk which is far east of Warsaw.
- Q: So you are not aware, or are you aware, of any hardships from 1914 through 1918?

A: We didn't have anything to eat! That's all. I had rickets. Look at my wrists.

Q: Other than a short supply of food do you recall any hardships?

A: Hardships! You know when the war went sour, it was blamed on the Jews, and the Ministry of war decreed that there should be an inquest how many Jews were in the army, in the armed forces, compared with the general population. And so on, and so on! And since it proved that it was absolutely as should have been, according to the population, the report was never published. But, it was done and it was announced that there will be an investigation whether the Jews, that is the percentage of Jews was according to the population.

Q: Was there then growing anti-Semitism?

A: Right.

Q: About 1915, 1916.

A: That was 1917, and 1918.

Q: That was just about the time that you were ending up your schooling.

A: Yes, and I was given my Matura.

Q: From the Gymnasium.

A: My Matura, you know the certificate, when I left the school and I could enroll in the university.

Q: Yes! Was there open anti-Semitism? For example, were you aware of signs saying, "Jews are not wanted here"..."Jews do not enter"...in 1917, 1918?

A: No, no! Actually the number of Jews was so small and in that time, most of the Jews were still in the retail trade, and in the lower income groups, although, there were very wealthy Jews too. But, they also did not "stick out." That came later, when the entire professional and trade balance was different. When there was prominence in the medical field, when there was prominence of the Jews in the press, when there was prominence in jurisprudence, then it came out!

Q: This tape is just ending. Could we terminate the interview and then next week we can talk about your experiences in the army and your training in the University?

A: All right, I will be glad to do that.

Q: This is Tuesday, August 22, 1978, and I am in the living room of Dr. Hans Liebermann on Cumberland Avenue, for the second of a series of interviews.

Dr. Liebermann, I think that today we should probably cover the period of your life in the army and in medical school, and perhaps we will get as far as establishing your practice after you graduated from medical school. However, before we start, let me ask you if there is anything which came to your mind after the first interview that you would like to make a comment on, concerning your earlier life in Beuthen, your school days, your family, your family's business, your social ambience, or anything like that?

A: No. Actually we had a very happy, close family relationship. As I told you, neither of my parents ever saw high school, but they had common sense, and, as I told you, they had great respect for learning, and that guided us through the grade school and high school years. We did not go on fancy vacations. The budget was so that it was just enough to be comfortable, we did not go out to hotels and restaurants to eat. We lived a very harmonious, but simple, good family life. My father was a rather pious man, although he was not orthodox, he was not an orthodox Jew, but, he went to the Synagogue regularly; so did we, we went to Hebrew school. As I said, we had a happy childhood, and it never occurred to us that there were people around who went to the seaside, to the mountains for vacations!

Q: Would you say that it was natural your becoming a teenager, and your finishing the Gymnasium and your getting ready to leave home, that brought an end to this; or would you say that WWI had anything of a major impact on it?

A: You know WWI broke out when I was 14 years old and after the war was dragging on for a couple of years, we did not have anything to eat and to do because of the isolation and blockade of Germany, which was very effective in WW! It was tough! I remember that the peasants from around town came into my father's store and brought eggs and butter in exchange for hardware items which were to be sold.

Q: A barter economy?

A: Right! I was in the second highest grade when in March 1918 I was drafted into the army.

Q: Then you didn't actually graduate from the Gymnasium?

A: I graduated! I graduated! When you were only one year away from graduation, you took the examination at that time and you were given your Matura -- Abiturium in German. That is what I got, I remember it was on a Friday afternoon, when I came home from school, that the notice, which you saw, was there. The notice that I had to appear for induction on that, or that day. I got it

about ten days ahead of time, and I went right back to school and showed it to the principal. He said, "All right! Monday morning you come in and we will start the written examination, and then with the final oral examination."

Q: Did you ever finish that last year after you got out of the army?

A: No! No! I got credit for that because I was in the army.

Q: Did your induction catch you by surprise, or did you expect it?

A: I tell you, I was 17 years old. I did not think that it would be so imminent, but at that time German human resources were so low that they took us kids. We were all undernourished. My height was five feet and I weighed 101 lbs., and we were still taken in the army! I served in the heavy artillery unit and we were lodged in a schoolhouse, forty kids in one big room, in three tiered beds! Then we started a new life! At that time, armies were not mechanized and specialized! Most of the training was marching, running and obstacle jumping and things like these. The technical was just that you had to familiarize yourself with the revolvers and the handguns, take them apart, clean them and that was all. The same thing applied, of course, to the heavy howitzer artillery pieces, etc.

Q: Were you stationed near Beuthen?

A: No! No!

Q: How far away did you have to move?

A: About three hours away by train, in a rather large city.

Q: What was it?

A: Breslau, which is today Polish, it is Wroclaw! Of course, the school building in which we were lodged was outside of the city. The most enjoyable thing was, three times a week -- two hours of hospital duty. That was the most enjoyable of the whole thing. That I really liked.

Q: Was Breslau threatened militarily?

A: No! Never!

Q: So you never saw active duty, combat duty, then?

A: I did not see combat. No. But we were sent to the occupied territories. You know, I believe that we touched on that the last time, due to the Russian revolution in 1917, there was no active fighting on the East front anymore. But, Germany at that time, had vast occupied territories, and there we were ordered to

watch or secure ammunition and supply depots. That was right in the country, after the basic training, which took about four months, we were on this duty. As a matter of fact, we were sent out there to what was Poland, even then, so that all men who were ready for combat could be sent to France and Belgium, in order to re-supply, and make up for the German losses. You know at 101 lbs. as a little boy, you know I grew afterwards, when we had things to eat, they could not possibly send us to combat. You know when you're a sixteen or seventeen year old kid in America, or anywhere, I had rickets, you probably see how thin my wrists are, and that was the only thing they could do. They sent us to Poland for guard duty.

Q: Do you remember attitudes which were expressed in the last phase of the war? Were the German people caught by surprise? Were they prepared for the defeat? Were they resentful? Were they pleased that it was over?

A: I think that we discussed what was called in Germany "Judenzalung," counting of the Jews in the army and comparing that to the percentage of Jews in the general population. The result was that when the war was being lost, it was the fault of the Jews, as the result is very often. You know, that has been through history, again and again, that it has been blamed on this insignificant percentage of people, about half to three quarters of one, of the population, which at that time was underprivileged anyway. We didn't see it that way, but as far as choice of profession and influence in the general public, dealings are concerned. But that was the way to find a scapegoat and that was the Jewish population. The Jews and the Socialists were blamed. The Communists, you know.

Q: Did you feel much discrimination while you were in the army? Were you aware of much discrimination? You told me something that your sergeant said -- could you repeat it, because that was not on the tape. You told me that the other day.

A: He thought that he was funny when he said that. During the assembly on Sunday morning that was 8:30 after we had breakfast. The breakfast consisted of bread with turnip marmalade and coffee, which was made of roasted rye grains. We never saw milk. There was an assembly of two tiers. After the orders for the day, the top sergeant ordered "the Protestants in a line on the left and the Catholics in a line on the right. Jews, gypsies and others, get out of here.' And that was not done in a malicious way, do you understand, he thought that was funny.

Q: Were there many Jews in your detachment?

A: I think there were three Jews amongst one hundred. Three or four. You have to realize that the population was less than one percent.

Q: Were there other evidences of this kind happening while you were in the service?

- A: I was even in a special course for officer's training. After the basic training was over, I was in a course for officer's training. That means for training as a commissioned officer. I don't know why or how, but that never amounted to anything. It was broken off the moment we were transferred to guard duty in Poland.
- Q: So, in effect, when were you mustered out? You went in March of 1918, when did you go out?
- A: That was the end of November, at the end of the war. The war was over on the 9th, 10th, 11th of November.
- Q: So you saw about six or seven months of service.
- A: Yes.
- Q: You had not been home since you were inducted and left home, in effect you had not been home since you left for Breslau, to the time you were discharged.
- A: I was home once and that was for the Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashanah, you know, the New Year's holiday. The Jewish soldiers got two days or three days of leave, and I was home in uniform.
- Q: Again, back to attitudes and impressions. Are you aware of any keen disappointments on the part of the Jewish population with whom you associated during the war that Germany had been defeated?
- A: No. We were so assimilated. The concept of the Jewish community was that we were Germans first who happened to be Jewish, that was the concept of the German Jew. You know, labor was not privileged either. The entire Socialist movement was considered anti-national, not international, but anti-national in contrast to the national goals of the German empire. You know it was not. The Jews at that time thought that we all lived a rather happy time, a rather good life without the restrictions of which we were not aware.
- Q: Yes, I understand what you are saying. In effect, what you are saying is that you shared the disappointment, the drain of defeat with the general population.
- A: Certainly, oh yes, certainly. We were not happy about it. That was our defeat.
- Q: One other question before we leave this topic. There was a lot of propaganda in the allied countries against the Germans, talking about German atrocities in Belgium and so forth, the mistreatment of children in Belgium after the invasion.
- A: That is not true.

Q: It has been proven that it was not true, but what I am asking is, do you recall any similar type of propaganda in Germany against the allies? About atrocities?

A: Against the Russians. Against the Russians. That the Russians burned whole families in houses, that was a similar thing. There was a fear of the Russians. It was never against the French or the British, or the Americans.

Q: Now, what happened when you were out in late November of 1918? You returned home, I suppose?

A: I returned home for about one week, and then I went to Breslau to matriculate, and I started my studies.

Q: Can you recall when that decision had been made that that was the next step to go to Breslau or at least to go to a university, and where you committed?

A: As a matter of fact, I registered (inscribed) while I was in the army already, while I was in Breslau. I could not attend courses, you know, but I was already a student at Breslau University while I was in uniform, after the basic training. When the winter semester started in August, I registered and after I came home, maybe four or five days later, I went to Breslau and started at that time. These were not normal times. There were courses beginning again on the first of November, and on the first of December, and so on, and there were accelerated courses and you could, at that time, in Europe (learn at your own speed). Medical school in Europe was a six year course, you didn't go to college. I think I explained the system to you.

Q: No, you didn't and I wish you would go into some detail about medical training and how courses were structured and so forth. I think that would be very valuable.

A: But, I think I told you that in the third or fourth grade you took an entrance examination for the Gymnasium toward a college preparatory course.

Q: Yes, oh yes.

A: And, I believe I told you that only ten or twelve percent of all the starters graduated. For that reason, you had no difficulty. Once you had your diploma you could go to any university and be admitted. It was not as it is here, it is questionable what is the better system, the tension; "Will you be admitted to school and so on." I think that the training in the German high school was much deeper and much more intense and especially in the humanities, with Greek Philosophy, and generally humanities and history, was much more intense than it is here. Here you can practically graduate with arithmetic and home economics and automobile driving, etc., but you had a much more classical background when you graduated from the Gymnasium, and you could start right at that time with

anatomy, physiology, botany, zoology, embryology. It was a course of two and a half years. You know, German education at the universities was and is still entirely different. There is no roll call. If you attended, it was all right, if you didn't attend general lectures it did not matter. It mattered whether you passed the written and the oral examinations. It was not, as I said there was no roll call, (the attendance which mattered). Of course it was to your advantage to attend, but there was no strict enforcement of attendance.

Q: So you say it took six years to get a medical degree.

A: Yes, after two and a half years you took, what is called Physicum, that is the first examination of basic sciences subjects, botany, embryology, zoology, etc. Then you came into the clinic for three and a half years, and, of course, clinics you had to attend, and you were called on to present cases for general discussion, and so on, but, for formal lectures, there never has been an attendance record.

Q: How much of the three and a half clinical class was actual clinical experience as opposed to classroom? Clinical experience on the floor, that is?

A: I will tell you, there was a lot of clinical experiences. We all attended clinics. At that time there were no films, at that time you had to bring the patient in and show the symptoms and when it was a rather serious case, the patient was rolled out and the discussion was not held in the presence of the patient.

Q: What about the faculty at Breslau? Was it outstanding or average?

A: It was an excellent facility. I don't know whether we talked about it. In Breslau, among the faculty, there were quite a number of converted Jews. You know, if you wanted, to teach you had to convert.

Q: Yes, you mentioned that, if one wanted a university post one had to convert.

A: Right. I think that Breslau was one of the outstanding universities, on the same level. Now, I did not study in Breslau all the time. After the first two and a half years, I went to Freiburg. You know, in the Black Forest. You went to certain universities where there were outstanding scholars and lecturers in particular subjects. In Freiburg there was a man who had a very excellent reputation and who was a very good lecturer. Ashoff, in pathology, and I stayed for a year in Freiburg. Then I went for another year, two semesters, to Berlin. That was the center of German science. Then I went back to Breslau in order to graduate, after another year.

Q: Did you specialize? Did one decide to specialize in this period of six years, or did specialization come later?

- A: I never practiced general medicine. When I was in my ninth semester, I felt that my special interest was ear, nose and throat. As a matter of fact, I recall that I was never interested in gynecology and obstetrics. I remember when I was in my oral examination with the professor of gynecology and obstetrics. He examined me for about twenty minutes, I was the only one present, and said to me, "Herr Liebermann, Sie haben alle fragen beantwortet und ich gebe (unable to translate) ein good -- one is excellent and two is good. (Mr. Liebermann, you have answered all the questions and I give you a grade of good, "but you have no knowledge, no practical knowledge of gynecology and obstetrics." And I said, "Professor, what makes you think, or what makes you tell me that?" and he said you just reconstruct things as they have to occur without any positive knowledge. So I said to him, "After you told me that I get a grade not only passing, but a grade of good, I tell you that I have never been interested in the field of gynecology and obstetrics, and I promise you that I will never deliver a woman in my life anymore. I will practice ear, nose and throat. I consider your remarks as a great compliment that I can reconstruct the cases." That was one of the funny things which happened.
- Q: Where did you do your ear, nose and throat work, in Berlin or in Freiburg?
- A: In Breslau.
- Q: In Breslau?
- A: First I had my internship. I had that at the university hospital in Hamburg. And then I finished five years of residency in Breslau.
- Q: That is after the six years of university?
- A: Right, I had five years of residency in Breslau. That was very pleasant, you know, I was very happy at that time doing what I wanted to do and having the opportunity of doing it. These were very happy years.
- Q: That is interesting that you say that, because one of the questions I wanted to ask you was about life in Germany in the 1920's. You knew there is this image of German student life, here in the United States, that perhaps comes from the Student Prince.
- A: Drinking, dueling, enjoying?
- Q: Having a generally good time and not concentrating very much on academics. Is that true?
- A: I will tell you there were students whom it took five to six years until they took the examination which was due after five semesters, that is after two and a half years. You could stay at the university and work or not work, and so on. It was

what they called academic freedom. Really, and there were, especially in those fraternities, which were dueling and drinking fraternities. There were, of course, ambitious and studious personalities, too; but, the average was a similar situation here, what did qualify, before the first Sputnik went up, the successful American. To have been a newspaper boy, to have been born on a farm, preferably in a log cabin, a newspaper boy, a letter man in college. These were the qualifications. If you were studious, if you went studying, you were a square. You know that changed after the first Sputnik. At that time, how many Jews did you have in academic circles at universities? At that time I believe it dawned on the American people that they could not go on, just the way they were. They could not go on in this present age and we had a similar situation. You know, in order to, as a Jew, hold a position, you had to have a background not as good, but maybe better, as the other fellow, and some of it, of course, manifested itself in being pushy and so on. You know the attributes which are given to Jews in general, but it comes out of a not an inferiority feeling, but out of a feeling that if there is a choice between two, the Jew has a chance only if he has to offer something more. I hope you understand.

Q: Yes.

A: That I don't mean that in any way of pretending that the Jews are better, you understand?

A: Yes! There is so much I want to ask you about these years which you describe as being happy, these years of the 1920's, and yet it was a very sad time for Germany. Were you personally happy?

A: I was involved in my studies and my research and so on. That was a very happy time. You know, of course, that you could see the growing anti-Semitism. I remember when I was in Berlin in the charity hospital, and I came out of a course in dermatology. I think that it was in June 1923, no 21 or 22, and there were extras (in the paper) that Radenau was killed. You know, he was a Jewish foreign minister. That was one of the first signs of the aggressiveness of what was going to come. And, of course, when I say that I was happy, you more or less abstracted yourself as a way of going ahead with your own accomplishments.

Q: Accomplishing your goals, etc. But, for example, were you aware of any anti-Semitic feelings on the part of your professors? Did any of that ever come out in the 20's?

A: They were, most of them were rather collegiate to non-Jews, very formal and rather reserved towards Jews. The same thing was the case when I had my internship and my first year of residency. That was a very formal, you know it was so formal that when you talked to your professors, you almost stood at attention.

- Q: Did that bother you?
- A: Pardon! I will tell you at that time you felt that is the way it is supposed to be. Although you were aware that the majority of your professors and your clients, later on, were very formal towards Jews, and more relaxed towards the others.
- Q: I am curious, you may not want to talk about this. Please feel free to say no, but you described yourself as coming from a lower middle class background. How was this university education financed? Did your family finance it? Was there an arrangement in Germany that the state financed the education?
- A: I want to tell you one thing, in Europe, to this very day, higher education is free.
- Q: That is what I wondered, if it was all free.
- A: Higher education was free, but you had to pay certain lab fees, course fees, etc. But education was free. I subsidized myself, and so did my brother later. He took over from me. I developed, in Breslau, a reputation that I tutored high school students in mathematics, physics and chemistry. I could have had more students, but I needed time for myself to study. I always had a long, busy day. I studied sometimes until 11:00 o'clock at night, since in the afternoon I gave these tutorial lessons. So, I got through. I lived in a furnished room. There were no dormitories. I lived in a furnished room in the house of a physician. Well, a simple, a very simple life.
- Q: Most of your fellow students, those you associated with, were they Jews? A mixture of gentiles and Jews? Or mostly gentiles? Or did these distinctions make no difference?
- A: Oh, yes, there was a difference. I belonged to a Jewish fraternity. That already made you Jewish. There were practically no fraternities where there were Jews and gentiles together. The gentile fraternities were the hotbeds of anti-Semitism. So, I can say that nine out of ten contacts were Jewish.
- Q: Do you recall any hateful, bitter incidents in medical school? Things said, action taken that harmed you in any way? You may wonder why I am probing in this area, but what I am trying to establish is how free a Jewish student was in medical school in Germany in the 1920's, or how restricted he was?
- A: He was restricted, and we really did not feel this way, since we were, today I might say too, assimilated. We felt that is the way Jews lived.
- Q: Did you Jewish Germans keep up with politics at all while you were a student, did you have no time for this?

- A: When you were 21 you could exercise your right to vote. I always voted for the middle of the way, maybe bourgeois Democratic Party. "Demokratische Partei." That was a rather small group. Out of an assembly of about four hundred, they had maybe, sixty to seventy seats. Besides the Jews, there were a certain quantity of people who were liberal.
- Q: That's all right that noise won't bother. Were you at all concerned about such people as Rosa Luxemburg and this party, this revolt?
- A: Yes! They were embarrassing! The German Jews did not want, did not appreciate the exposure of the undesirable elements. They did not appreciate it, they were embarrassed by it. You know Rosa Luxemburg, on the other hand there were politicians who were first class such as Ludwig Frank. Frank and Hirsch who were Socialists, that is Social-Democrats. However, this Frank, who was a prominent man in the Social-Democrat party, was an attorney and died during WWI on the battlefield. There were men of prominence you could be proud of, but Rosa Luxemburg, Eisener -- I don't know if you had heard of him -- they were radicals and played a role in the revolution, they were radicals and radicals embarrassed the Jews who were a middle class society.
- Q: My tape is about to run out and I think that I will not ask you another leading question. Let's stop today and we will resume later on.
- A: All right.
- Q: This is the third session with Dr. Liebermann. It is Monday, August 28, 1978 and we are in the living room of his house.
- Dr. Liebermann, last time, toward the end of the conversation, we were discussing your medical education, your stay in Berlin and your studies at the University of Breslau. I was beginning to question you a little bit about the growing troubles of Germany in the 1920's, the economic difficulties, the inflation of 1923.
- A: Yes, 1923 was the high point of the inflation. It stopped in November 1923 when the new currency was introduced, and that was four and a half million marks to one new mark. Imagine the enormity of the inflation.
- Q: Did that effect, in the period of the early 20's, your way of life very much while you were a student? Were you an extremely poverty stricken student, or were you able to manage?
- A: I will tell you that with few exceptions, all the students were in the same boat. It was extremely hard to find a job, part-time job, and a lot of time I needed for myself. I believe that I told you previously that I was tutoring high school

students in Math, chemistry and physics, that gave me some income and some I got from my parents.

Q: Also, 1923 was a very important year insofar as the history of the Nazi party was concerned. That was the year of the Beerhall Putsch. Do you recall being aware of the appearance of the Nazi party?

A: But, of course. Although, where I lived in Silesia, it was not so acute as it was in Berlin or in Munich or in Nuremberg. But you saw the shadows already and it took until two or three years later, until 1927 or 28 until there was the first Nazi newspaper in Silesia.

Q: Do you recall exactly where you were? Were you in Berlin or Breslau?

A: When?

Q: In 1923.

A: On a Saturday afternoon, coming out of a clinic, attending a lecture on Dermatology, when there were extras in the street which reported the assassination of Radenauer. That was in June. Yes. And all these things were not very encouraging. It was unpleasant, as a matter of fact, it contributed to the fact that Jews and the small Jewish sector of the population reacted more or less. There were a lot of gentiles who did not want openly any close communication with Jews at the time.

Q: When did you finish your medical school, was it 1928 or 1929?

A: 1923!

Q: When did you establish a practice? When did you open a practice?

A: 1928. Until the beginning of 1924, I was an intern. I served my internship. Then I served five years as a resident in ear, nose and throat. After that I established the practice of my own.

Q: Now, where did you choose to open your practice?

A: I came from Upper Silesia and I went to a city of Upper Silesia where I could get an appointment at the city hospital. In the German cities of the size of 50,000, 60,000, 80,000, there was only one hospital and there was not the open staff system. You had to go to a city where you could get a staff appointment. In this city, I was the ear nose and throat man, although there were six other ones in this town who had privileges in the hospital. There was only one other one who had privileges in the hospital (this is an apparent contradiction -- probably one of syntax about the six "other ones in this town." And those who did not have

hospital privileges had to make do with rather primitive substitutes, which they called clinics. There In started. I opened my office in the middle of December 1928, after five years of residency, and there I got along very well.

Q: What town was it?

A: Leibitz.

Q: How far is that from Beuthen?

A: From Beuthen? Oh, about 30 miles.

Q: To get this position in the hospital, was it just the matter of making an application and supporting it with recommendations, or did you have to sit for some kind of examination?

A; Oh, I had to have the recommendations. My boss was influential and recommended me; so I got an appointment.

Q: When did you meet Mrs. Liebermann?

A; I met her in 1923, just when I graduated medical school.

Q: Is she a native of Breslau?

A: No. She was born in Opeln, which is about an hour's train ride from Breslau, and one hour's train ride from Leibitz. We met at a social occasion in my fraternity.

Q: At the University of Breslau?

A: Yes.

Q: When were you married?

A: I got married in February, 1928.

Q: The same year you opened up your practice?

A: Yes.

Q: Now, would you mind describing Leibitz to me? What size town was it? What size Jewish population?

A: It was a city of about 90,000, a very old city. As old as Silesian cities were, which until the seven year war, under Frederick the Great, you are a historian, belonged to the German-Austrian-Roman Empire. It was conquered by Frederick

the Great, and belonged to Prussia ever since -- in 1756, or something like that. It was an industrial city with coal mines and steel mills and with a vast agricultural population supporting it as a region. It was very comfortable to live there. We lived in an apartment as was the custom in Europe and I had my office with a separate entrance. The office was on one side and the apartment on the other side on the same floor.

Q: Was the population of Leibitz mainly German or was there a sizeable Polish population?

A: The population in the city was maybe eighty percent German, but the surrounding country was only fifty percent German. The rest was Polish. But, in the germanization process, which had been going on since Frederick the Great had conquered it, a lot of the Poles had to learn to speak German and the schools were German. Thus, the kids, even if they spoke Polish at home, had to learn German in class for the official language. That was not a bilingual section of the country. The official language was German, the same as now the Quebecois wanted to make and actually already made that the official language for the administration and the public schools, and so on, should be French.

Q: What was the Jewish population of Leibitz?

A: The Jewish population was between 1,000 and 1,100 souls. But, as I told you, since there was this restriction in the profession, and occupations and business, it was mostly in retail business that they were active with some professional men.

Q: How many doctors were in Leibitz at that time?

A: There were about 100-110 and there were maybe fifteen Jewish doctors, which was very high in comparison to a little over half percent of the general population.

Q: Was there a medical association to which you belonged in Leibitz?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you hold any position of leadership in that organization?

A: No, that was not done, you know, nobody cared for that. Jews never had a career in the medical societies, or never had a chance. And, as I told you before, we were not particularly bothered by it. On the other hand, we were so assimilated, that we didn't resent that.

Q: You accepted that as normal?

A: Right. As a matter of fact, in this medical society they were all Catholics, and the Protestant doctor did not hold any office either.

Q: Do you recall the appearance of the first manifestation of the Nazi movement in the region?

A: They had marches, but that came in 1931-32.

Q: Not in the late 20's?

A: In the late 20's and in the 30's. As I explained to you, they liked to come to Jewish doctors.

Q: What sort of a sensation did that give you?

A: What?

Q: Knowing what the Nazi party stood for and yet having a Nazi party member appear in your office for treatment? Were you resentful? Fearful?

A: I was not fearful. I was just hurt that this fellow came to me in spite of the fact that he was a Nazi. He did not come to me to please me, he came in spite of the fact that he was a Nazi.

Q: When did you begin to become concerned? Can you recall?

A: Did you ever hear of the American Jewish Congress? The American Jewish Committee? These are the organizations which are concerned with rights of American citizenship. And we had a similar, and I believe I mentioned it, organization in Germany; "den Zentraverein Deutcher Staht Burger Judischen Glaubens." That means the "Central Organization of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith." As the name tells you, that shows how assimilated the German Jews were. And during the first years -- in the 20's and in 30 and 31 -- you really thought, and we erroneously thought, that this was a thing which would blow over and the people would come to their senses. And you know that this organization, of which I was a member, and where I was active, felt that there was nothing to fear. There was another organization called "Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus" (Association in Defense against anti-Semitism.) that means it was an organization primarily to fight anti-Semitism. You know, being so assimilated and believing what the authorities said, who had knowledge and had studied these questions. I don't mean government authorities, I mean those people who really were sociologists and had a deep knowledge of the psychology of the movement, they all felt that this was nothing really so damaging, that it would actually lead to an exodus or to the point where Jews would perish in Germany. We did not believe that until Hitler actually came to power.

Q: On January 30, 1932?

A: Right! I remember, I remember, that was on a Saturday afternoon. We were with friends, a doctor friend, who was an obstetrician, and we were sitting and listening to the radio, when we heard what was going on in Berlin. The government had resigned and Hitler had taken over, and so on.

Q: And you were aware from that moment?

A: That, the thing was that our organization said; "Don't give up any position you are holding! Since we still believe that this is a passing event." And now we lived in a region of Germany, in Upper Silesia, which was protected by the Geneva Treaty. You know part of it had become Polish, and part of it was German. For fifteen years, I believe, until 1937, that was protected and they could not do a thing officially against the Jews. And we thought, all right, even if they take over during the next few years, we will be protected, which was a false security feeling. And I must say, insofar, as my practice was concerned, everything was going all right. We did not, at that time, spend our vacations in Germany, we went to Czechoslovakia, to Austria, to Switzerland, to Italy, you know there are no distances there. You have been to Europe? You have traveled in Europe? There are really no distances in Europe. The moment this treaty lapsed, then it was as it was in the rest of Germany. I think that was in October that this treaty lapsed.

Q: Of 1937?

A: Yes. In the beginning of 1938, one of the first things was that we could not lead enterprises. That was all over Germany, but in the Germany proper it was earlier, that Jewish businessmen could not give expert opinions on health conditions of what they called Germans, since they were not Germans, and then they told us that our membership in the medical society was terminated, and that we could not attend any meetings anymore. And things like these. The last thing which was in March of 1938 was that they told me that my license would be revoked as of July 1, 1938, so that I would not be able to practice medicine anymore. But fortunately, I did not wait until that time when I saw how things were and when I detected, I don't know if we talked about this, that people recognized my car when I made a house call. We didn't talk about that? You know, people continued to come to my office, but as the pressure on them grew, a father who came with a child, and I said, "this child needs an operation." The father would say, "I am a teacher and I cannot afford to take my child to a hospital employing a Jewish doctor. As long as I can come to the office here, it's all right, but that I cannot do, otherwise I lose my job." Or, I remember very clearly one case where I was called out at eleven o'clock at night by parents who had a very sick child. It was about two years old, it was screaming, and I went there. This kid had an ear infection, a middle ear infection, with bulging eardrums and a temperature of 105 degrees F. At that time, what did you do? You rolled the kid in a blanket, gave the kid a few drops of a mild anesthetic and with indirect light lanced both eardrums and relieved the pressure -- the pain was gone and the child would wake

up within a couple of minutes. This child was dehydrated, it was very sick, as a matter of fact, I gave this child something to stimulate the heart action because this child had a pulse rate of over 160. I stayed there for about one hour and a half and then I left and went home. I said, "I am going to see this kid tomorrow sometime, if there is anything critical, you call me." At 6:30 in the morning, these people called me, "The child is fine, he is walking around, he had a big breakfast and so on." This was all wrong for there could not have been any such recovery, but apparently my car was detected there, and they had gotten hell. I never heard anything from these people anymore since they were intimidated, and so on. After more of these things, I realized that it was no longer possible to practice medicine.

Q: Could we back up a little bit and let me ask you some details about this kind of thing which was beginning to happen?

A: Yes.

Q: What was your reaction, for example, to the men, the school teacher who said that he could not afford to, politically, for fear of losing his job, to have his son treated by you. Did you wither? I know you would not display anger, but were you angry? Resentful?

A: I can only say that I felt that this man was scared to death, and justifiably so. I said, "Then you go to another physician and when you have a chance, tell him that I feel that this child needs an operation badly. See to it that this child is being seen in two days." This man said to me, "Maybe you think that I am a coward, but I still have to eat." You know, to a Jew, they could say that, they could not say that in public. No, I was not resentful against this man.

Q: You say that after the protection was removed in 1937, after the agreement lapsed, The Geneva Treaty, that you were informed of certain things, that you had to withdraw from the Medical Society, that eventually your license would be taken away from you. How were you informed? Was it by letter? By mail?

A: By letter, stating, "Heil Hitler, you are herewith informed that your membership in the Medical Society has been revoked and you will not be allowed to attend any meetings of the Society in the future."

Q: Did you ever have any direct contact with Gestapo?

A: Yes.

Q: (Note: GESTAPO stands for Geheime Stats Polizei, i.e., Secret State Police).

Q: When did that occur?

- A: That was in 1938, when I had direct contact with the Gestapo. In 1938, that is a long affair, but you can only understand it, if I give you the background of that.
- Q: Do you mind? I wish you would.
- A: In Berlin (Note that this is probably in error and HL means Leibitz). Where I had my office in 1930, when my lease was expiring, my landlord said to me, "If you want to stay here I have to have a second mortgage on this house. I have to have a mortgage of \$10,000, a second mortgage." I said, "And what are you giving me?" And he said, "As long as you have the money here in the house, I am not going to raise the rent." That was alright, and there was a contractual agreement which allowed me, when I terminated, which at that time was nor foreseeable that I would ever terminate that, that I have to give them three months notice for the repayment. And after I was here, in the U.S. on a visitor's visa for information since I did not have any contact. I had no relatives, etc. So I came over here -- and we will talk about that later, -- and I decided that I would give up, or be forced to give up, my office, my practice in April 1938. I gave notice so that I would get the money back in three months. Within about six weeks, the attorney of the owner called me that he would send over a receipt which I should sign and then he would transfer the money to my bank. He asked me to which bank do you want to have that check deposited? I said, "send it to the City Bank," that was across the street from my office. I signed the receipt and the next day two Gestapo men identified themselves and came to my office in the midst of office hours, and said to me, "You withdrew 10,000 Marks from the Dresdner Bank yesterday." Jews were suspect of swindling money away and hoarding, which was not allowed. I said, "I did not." "I know that the \$20,000 were deposited in the Dresdner Bank, but you withdrew them right away." "I did not." "You liar" and so on. "Dirty Jew, liar." And I said, "I would like to make one telephone call," And I called the President of the City Bank across the street. They were patients of mine, or had been, at least. I said to him, "Mr. Oshovsky, I am in danger of my life right now, and I have to ask you for a favor. I want you to come up with my credit statement to my office, it is just across the street, and you can save my life." For I knew what had happened. They had sent, as I understood afterwards, the money which had been originally in the Dresdner Bank, which was a different bank, where I had an account. They put it in and for pure chicanery, they put it in and put it out, sent it to the City Bank and informed the Gestapo that \$10,000 was withdrawn.
- Q: Who are they? The lawyer?
- A: No! The bank! And after they saw that, that man came over. Fortunately, that (the deposit), I guess) was already in. So they (the Gestapo agents) left.
- Q: They cleared off?

A: Yes. But, you know what you go through when you have two Gestapo men with revolvers next to you and they tell you that you are lying and so on and so on. I don't know what would have happened if this fellow would have been out of the office. He was nice enough and these were people who were always very nice. In order to show us they were decent, they sent us flowers from their garden every week. You know, there were more people who did things like this in order to show us that it was not their cup of tea.

Q: Was there censorship of the Silesia newspapers about what was going on in the rest of Germany during the period of this agreement?

A: No! No! In Germany proper, it was much worse than it was (in Silesia) at that time.

Q: And you knew it was?

A: Yes, I knew it was. Unfortunately, the first few years, this citizenship organization misled their Jewish membership with the intention probably to hold their jobs, etc. About the actual outlook it was always, "Don't give up anything, hold any position you still have and don't go away." They discourage emigration.

Q: No, I didn't know that it was discouraged. I didn't have any idea.

A: In the first few years, they actually discouraged emigration when they said, "This is something which will blow over, don't give up anything you still hold." That was a mistake.

Q: When Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933, I have a list here of the chronology of events from 1933 on into the forties. Could I just read you some items?

A: Sure.

Q: Let me see if you can recall them and remember your impressions or reaction.

A: Yes!

Q: For example the Reichstag Fire in February 1933.

A: Definitely. That was an affair which was staged by the Nazis in order to have reason for existing and fighting communism!

Q: Did that frighten you? Did you begin to feel personally threatened?

A: Certainly it frightened you, but the basic thing was that the majority of the German Jews, myself included, felt that a thing like that would actually not be

possible and lasting. You know we were so assimilated that we did not think that was lasting.

Q: Did you know about the concentration camps? Or, when did you first learn of the concentration camps?

A: That we learned in 1933-34. It was primarily for Communists and Socialists in concentration camps. That was a frightening thing. Primarily, it was that there were so many concentration camps -- there were not enough Jews for them. There were Jews among the people in the beginning who were put into the concentration camps, but, it was primarily in the beginning, for Socialists and Communists.

Q: In other words, you are saying that the Jews who were put in concentration camps in 33 and 34 were not there because they were Jews, but because they were Socialists and Communists?

A: They were Jews who may have broken the law and they would have gotten, maybe, three months, but they gave them the three months and put them into concentration camps afterwards. Do you see what I mean?

Q: Yes! Yes! January of 34? The sterilization laws for the unfit? Doctors?

A: You know, there was not one outcry of anyone of the non-Jewish physicians! The way the medical profession accepted all that was unbelievable. There was no question of ethics, etc. It was just so, as a matter of fact, I had, for instance two of us ear, nose throat men in Leibitz. For years we had both a subscription to the journals, to the professional journals in otolaryngology, ear, nose and throat, and we did that together and we always exchanged them and after that was through we gave it to the Medical Society, to the library of the Medical Society. But we were with this couple, they were Catholics, Dr. Bayer, I don't know if he still lives, we were on such terms that we visited, oh, every couple or three months, mutually, in our homes, for dinner, and we were on good terms. After January 30th, this fellow cancelled the subscription and put it under his own name only. Not only that, when Jewish physicians were not allowed to do any work anymore for insurance companies, I remember that a patient came to me and told me, "Doctor, didn't you tell me that you were always on good terms with Dr. Bayer?" I said, "Yes, we were." And he said, 'You know, when I came to his office,' for he had to for reinstatement to work, he had to go to him, I could not sign that. He said, "You are still going to this Jew?" You know, it was so that no one, from this moment on, and that had nothing to do with this treaty, you know, the treaty, the treaty protection. I remember that on the 31st of March 1933, I was in the hospital in the afternoon and the Chief of Staff, a surgeon saw me leave and he said to me, "Liebermann," you know that in Europe you don't call yourself by first names, you call yourself by the last name, but not with Herr etc. He said to me, "Liebermann, are you going home now?" and it was within walking distance,

maybe ten minutes. And I said, "Yes." And he says, "Wait a minute, I am going with you." He wanted to demonstrate that he was an old German, exclusive, conservative, that he did not like that and he walked along the main street and brought me to my house. He wanted to show me that he does not approve of it; but, while I was already here in the U.S. and Lotte and our son was still in Germany -- we will come to that later, my son broke his arm and she called him and he said, "I don't take care of Jews anymore." That was about five years later. At that time, my wife had to call a Catholic physician, an orthopedic physician, in Beuthen whom she knew and I knew very well, and asked him if he would take care of him. He said that he would. She had to, at that time, you were not allowed to drive a car anymore. She had to rent a taxi, drive with this kid with the broken arm to Beuthen. He arrived here in the U.S; with a cast. You know he wanted to show "I am class' and then later!

Q: After five years of intimidation he gave in?

A: Right. Although I believe that he could have done that without recrimination, but he said, "I don't care, why should I? Why should I take any chances," and so on. In the beginning he wanted to show that he was a man of class. But that was the situation.

This is the fourth interview with Dr. Hans Liebermann in his home. It is Wednesday 20, 1978--5: PM.

Q: It has been three weeks since we last talked, and, at the end of the last interview we were talking about the beginning repression. You made one statement that I would like to get you to elaborate on a little bit, and that was that Upper Silesia was protected by a treaty.

A: The Treaty of Geneva.

Q: By the Treaty of Geneva and that the anti-Semitic laws, the Nuremberg laws....

A: Were not enforced until 1937, when this treaty had lapsed.

Q: Now, was there any attempt to enforce it before the treaty ended. In the realm of higher politics, were you aware of any Nazi attempt to try to do away with the treaty before 1937? Did it come to a natural death, or did Hitler just simply start not observing the terms of the treaty?

A: I will tell you that Upper Silesia was such a small territory that it really did not matter and the Nazis, knowing that this treaty was to expire in a year or two or three, they let it go. But, unofficially you know, you could not go to a picture show, you could not go to a restaurant, after 1935. If you did not meet at one's home, if there were any cultural or other events, it had to be in the synagogue of the city. In Europe, each city had one congregation and one synagogue, that is

- every Jewish congregation had one synagogue and there were cultural events. There were, you know, a lot of Jewish artists who were cut out, and as long as they still stayed in Germany, in order to survive they played, or offered their services to Jewish audiences.
- Q: So, for all practical purposes, although the treaty was in effect, most of the anti-Semitic actions were taking place?
- A: Right. Yes.
- Q: You know, it is rather unknown, I never read much about this interim period. That is after Hitler came to power and the period of, say, 1937 or 38. You are talking about the cultural life that comes to be centered around the synagogues. Could you recall some of the types of events you attended, some of the artists whom you heard? What kind of programs there were? What kind of audiences they had?
- A: There were such philosophers, like Martin Buber, who were speaking to the community. There were, also, the Rabbis who were prominent, who would speak to a community of literary and philosophical questions. You paid an entrance fee as you did when you went to a concert. But, gradually, that subsided also, and there was more repressions, there was more emigration.
- Q: Were these operated on a subscription basis? Did you buy a season ticket to a cultural series? Or what?
- A: No! That was not, that could not be done. You were notified that next week there would be this event. You know, in a community under stress, you cannot plan for six months because you did not know what would be in two weeks.
- Q: How was the publicity handled? By word of mouth? By mail?
- A: By mail, word of mouth, telephone, etc.
- Q: Was there a congregational newspaper? A bulletin or something?
- A: That was a small congregation in which we lived. I told you that there were 1,000 or so Jewish souls only. There was one Jewish newspaper in Germany. That was the Hamburger Judische Familienblatt." The Hamburg Jewish Family Newspaper, which I think was published as long as I was there. It was just reporting rather innocently certain things which were not offensive, which did not criticize, because otherwise, as you know, newspapers were suppressed.
- Q: What about religious life within the Jewish community? In this period after 1933, would you say that it intensified? Or did you not see a change?

- A: I come from rather a liberal background. We have never been Temple goers every week. We usually went to the Synagogue on the High Holy Days, in the evenings and the morning services on Tom Kippur, you know what it is, in the evening and the daylight services. But during the year, we were not regular Temple goers. And the amazing thing was when Jews could not go anymore to a restaurant or a movie or to a concert or to the theater, the Synagogues were filled on a regular Friday night and for regular Shabbat Services. I remember one instance when I came here to Dayton, and Dayton has a rather middle class Jewish community. You know, the structure is middle class. You have a rather small amount of blue collar workers, there are white collar workers, professionals and business people, and I remember, at that time, I was here for about a year, I was asked to serve on the Religious Committee. I want to tell you that I remember the Rabbi who chaired this meeting, said, "You know something has to be done to increase the attendance for Friday night services. Since we have just too few congregants who attend services." Then there were different proposals made which I didn't agree. Then the Rabbi said to me, "Hans, what do you have to say?" I said, "Actually, I don't have anything positive to say. But I would want to make an observation. For years, in Germany the Rabbis were speaking from the pulpit and criticizing the congregation for not attending services, and the Synagogues are empty except on the High Holy Days. He castigated the congregation, and so on. I went through all that. Rabbi, then came a time when on a regular Friday night, the Synagogue was filled so that people were standing in the aisles, and the Rabbis were not happy about that, for that was the time when the Jews could not go to a concert and could not congregate anywhere else but in the Synagogue. The Rabbis were not happy about it. I hope that this never happens here, in this country."
- Q: So there was a complete intensification of religious life?
- A: I tell you, you cannot call it intensification. It was despair. It was, for a lot of people, they were thrown out of jobs, they did not know where to go out of the house. They could not go to the city parks. You could not go for a walk, etc. there were signs, "Jews are not Permitted." So they went to the Synagogue. It was not the resurgence of Jewish life, it was just our opportunity to go somewhere. You know, it was not a rebirth of the faith.
- Q: Was there a community council in Leibitz?
- A: There was a Synagogue and in Europe you went to the Synagogue to pray. There was no men's club, there was no sisterhood. There were no social events, it was just to go and pray and that was it. There was no community council. As I explained to you, the Jewish community in Germany was a middle class, upper middle class, community. Whenever there was any need for support for somebody who due to illness, or due to misfortune, could not meet his responsibilities, or did not have enough finds -- that was done privately. There was no organization. The Rabbi, or some representative, or council of the

congregation would come to me and to others, and tell me, "Give me that and that sum, we need it" and that was all! They would come to people who could afford it. There was no organized charity! It may have been in Berlin. There it existed, and in the larger communities like Breslau or Frankfurt, but in the small communities, there was no need for organized welfare or charity.

Q: I was wondering, one thing which prompted me to ask this question, in many, perhaps not all, but in many communities with significant Jewish population, after Hitler imposed his will on the people, Judenrats were organized. Now was that an organization which Hitler devised and imposed, or was it an organization which had long existed but which he simply tried to control?

A: Judenrat is something which was organized very late, after the Kristallnacht. You know, when there was real need, when people were thrown out of their apartments, when two or three families had to live together, each in one room, and three or four families had to share one kitchen, and they had to live in non-desirable parts of town since their apartments were requisitioned by the Nazis.

Q: So it is under the force of this kind of circumstances that the community organizations then began?

A: And began! Yes, in the smaller communities!

Q: Now, what about your family? What about your parents in Beuthen?

A: My mother died of a heart attack in 1936, and was buried there. My father, I hoped to bring him over here, I went first, had my wife and son come later, I told you that, about four months later. I had arranged a visit to Cuba, you know, at that time the U.S. closed its doors. You know, with these quota arrangements, and there were no quotas in 1939, 40 and so on. My father, I got a visa for him to Cuba. I had borrowed the money to pay for the visa which was \$300,00. After I paid for that, and paid for the transportation -- these boats, at that time, left from Portugal to Cuba -- my father was on the train from Upper Silesia via Berlin, Switzerland, Italy, Spain to Portugal. It was to leave from there. He got sick on the train on the way to Berlin, was taken off the train to the Jewish hospital, apparently with pneumonia, and was there for two days. The Jewish hospital was requisitioned by the Nazis and all the patients were put on the train to Theresesienstadt. He arrived alive in Theresienstadt. I heard through communications via Switzerland, that when he arrived he saw there not his parents, who were deported there already, (parents probably meant relatives rather than parents which is the German meaning) and they told friends in Switzerland by mail, that he died there on the day after he had arrived, which was Yom Kippur day in 1942 or 43, I cannot recall right now, it was in 42, I think.

Q: What about your brother?

A: My brother who had a PH.D degree and was an executive in a big department store, lost his job and went to Austria, where he got an adequate job, and where I went to see him. When Hitler came, in order not to be caught there, as an émigré he and his family went across the border to Italy. He telephoned with me and I arranged that he could get tickets, he did not want to go to the U.S. I don't know whether it would have been possible due to the quota system, anyway. His wife had relatives in South Africa and he decided to go to South Africa. When he got to South Africa, while he was on the boat, they closed the borders against new immigrants1

Q: Into South Africa?

A: Yes. He had only ten days to stay there, and the only alternative for him was to go to Rhodesia, which is north of there. He arrived there in the beginning of 1939. When the war broke out, he had a German passport, in order not to be put in a prisoner-of-war camp with his family, he volunteered into the army. He served in the army, he was 35 or 36. Finally, after two years, he became an executive sergeant, a top sergeant, in charge of a prisoner-of-war camp of Italian prisoners. One day, he wrote -- you know communications were very poor at that time -- that he had been sick in bed for six weeks and he is so annoyed since they all thought that he was malingering when he said that he cannot walk. Finally, after seven or eight weeks, he got up and he was again on duty. When the war was over, non-British did not get a working permit there. After he was in the army for the British, he could not get a working permit there, he wrote me that. And, through a friend who had contacts with a Jewish friend here, he managed at that time, there were no regular passenger communications then. I could manage to bring him over here and he came over here. He was a broken man! I sent him to a friend of mine, who is an internist here, and he called me to say, "Did you know, I did not talk to your brother, purposely I did not want to shock him, but he looks terrible." And what he had was a coronary. That was not recognized, at that time there were no electrocardiograms and so on. They really thought that since they could not hear anything, find anything, he was actually malingering. That ate him up and he died here two years later of another coronary.

Q: What about his family? His wife and children?

A: His wife died.

Q: In Rhodesia?

A: No, here! She died over here of cancer of the uterus. As a matter of fact, she was working and called me Sunday afternoon that she is vomiting all day and so on. She had been working until Saturday. She was a pharmacist. So I went over and I admitted her to the hospital and called in a surgeon. He said that he had to do an exploratory. It was a cancer beyond repair.

Q: Then she died?

A: Yes.

Q: And then their children? Or child?

A: There were two children. That is a confidential affair, yes?

Q: Now you made statements here and there about your coming to the States and I believe that it is time, in this conversation, that we begin to explore this in some details.

A: All right.

Q: How you got here? How your family got here? Part of this might be a little bit of repetition.

A: I believe that I told you that my wife went to Israel and I went to the U.S.

Q: No, I did not know that she went to Israel.

A: Oh! I mean visiting.

Q: You said that it was certain things which were beginning to happen in Leibitz towards doctors, certain things which were said and which convinced you that it was time to leave.

A: Right!

Q: Now, when you began to discuss this, what kind of conclusions did you reach, how did you map out what you were going to do? And, when did this take place?

A: Lotte went on a trip, by boat at that time, to Israel. I mean Palestine at that time, and I went to the U.S. as a visitor.

Q: In 1938?

A: In January, 1938, I went to the U.S. on a visitor's visa of thirty days.

Q: Could we explore this in some details? By what route, what ship?

A: I went by train to Hamburg, went on a German boat, the Europa, to New York.

Q: Was there any difficulty, at this time, early 1938, to travel like this? Did you have any trouble getting a visa?

- A: At that time? No! No! I went to the American Consul and he said, "What guarantee do you give me that you will come back?" I wanted a visitor's visa. I said, "My wife and my child are here." "That is all!" That is what he said to me. I said, "I am going to come back;" for I did not, could not make any provisions to go away. I just went for the purpose of getting an affidavit for I did not have any contacts which I could use by mail. I arrived here and I managed to get an affidavit of support. This affidavit, you know, people were afraid to give affidavits of support. Nobody has ever been held responsible for support -- for the Jewish community always took the responsibility off the individuals. I was here, and I looked around from New York. I had a fraternity brother in Cleveland.
- Q:" Who had been trained in medical school with you in Germany?
- A: Yes, and who lived in Germany proper, and was deprived of his license, although he was also in the army earlier. So he came here one and a half or two years before me and he told me not to stay in New York since it was overcrowded. That I should come to Ohio. I visited here in Ohio. I remember that I went by bus since I didn't have enough money to go by train. I mapped out, as much as I could as a matter of fact, he told me that the best I could do was to go to Columbus and register here, and be ready so that "when you come here you can take the next examination, and they see that you have been here, in the country." They did not ask me whether I was here permanently and so on, I just registered and then, after three and a half weeks, I went back to Germany.
- Q: By the Europa from New York?
- A: Yes, yes, that was again on the same boat.
- Q: Now, could I ask, were there many people on the boat doing the same thing you were doing? Were there a large number of Jews on the Europa at that time coming to the states to make plans?
- A: There were some and there were some who had immigration visas who could stay here, but there were not many Jews on this boat anyway.
- Q: Was it a German ship?
- A: It was a German ship. On the boat they were courteous and correct, decent help.
- Q: That is what I was going to ask. You were not segregated?
- A: The waiters, everything was all right. It was January 1938. I came back at the end of January 1938 with an affidavit of support. From Hamburg I went to Berlin and I made an application with the affidavit. I was told that it would take about one year until I could get a visa, by the secretary there.

- Q: Now this was at the American Embassy?
- A: Ah, yes! And there I was shocked. I was really shocked. I was told by a man in Berlin, a distant relative, that if this secretary who is making these appointments gets a piece of candy with a \$100 note, I can get the visa in three months. So I said, "I don't want to be guilty here of bribery, or anything." And he said, "I did this for three or four people already." He had a box of candy and he went to this woman who lived in Berlin, an American woman. Maybe I should not have been shocked, but I really was. Yes! And this man came out of there and he told me that he was asked, "How many are going to immigrate?" And he said, "Three, Dr. Liebermann, his wife and his son!" "Three, that will be \$300." 300 marks, marks, excuse me.
- Q: A mark at that time was worth how much?
- A: Two and a half marks was worth one dollar at that time. So, he didn't have the money with him at the time, so he came back and gave it to her. So, I got an appointment for vaccination, medical examination and the visa for May. In the meantime it was March. So the visa took until the beginning of June, that was three months. I got the appointment and we got the visa, and I left with the next boat, leaving all the other things to Lotte. For, you know, I was afraid for my life, I told you the incident which had happened with the Gestapo....!
- Q: The Gestapo!
- A: The Gestapo. I arrived here on the sixth of July, this time it was on the Bremen, also a German boat.
- Q: Out of Hamburg?
- A: Out of Hamburg, yes.
- Q: On the trip over in late June or early July, was there any difference of treatment by that time, or was it still the same courtesy?
- A: It was stern, correct, courteous and so on. I arrived here with two suitcases. I was standing there, on the pier. I had a cousin's wife who knew that I was coming. She did pick me up and I stayed for about four days in New York. I stayed at a hotel on Broadway and 53rd Street, Hotel Bryant. It was a hotel with beds, and I paid, it was a fourth class hotel, \$6.00 for the week. Yes. Then I called the sponsor who had given me the affidavit. I called him when I got back and I assured him that I would never bother him!
- Q: Yes, I was wondering who that sponsor was, it was a distant relative, wasn't it?

A: Yes! Did I tell you this story?

A: Not really. Who was it? Did he live in New York?

A: Yes. It was a man whom my father had talked about. Before I left, my father said to me, "We have one man over there who must be a very wealthy man, and I will write him a letter and maybe he will give you an affidavit." I tried for three days to get hold of him. On the fourth day, again and again and again. At that time it was five cents a call, and on the fourth day he was available. He said, "I got the letter. I want you to come to my home on Sunday, my secretary will tell you all the details." That was, that I should go on Sunday at one thirty to a penthouse apartment on 5th Avenue facing Central Park. After I was screened downstairs, I went up in the elevator and a colored butler opened the door, let me in. He said, "Mr. Marcus," that was his name, "will see you. Sit down." So I waited. He came in and he said, "Unfortunately I have no time. I have an urgent meeting downtown, but I can give you a lift if you want. We have to leave right away." So we left. In the car he said to me, "Where do you stay?" I said, "at the Hotel Bryant, 53rd and Broadway." He said to his chauffeur, listen to this, he said to his chauffeur, "This gentleman will get out at 57th and Broadway." And to me he said, "And then you walk these few blocks. You should not stay in such an obscure place." Really.

Q: How did that make you feel?

A: Listen, but he told me in the car that he would give me the affidavit. And he told me to be up, do you know who he was?

Q: No!

A: He was, in 1938, the Executive Vice President of the Bendix Corporation. He told me to be up, in his office, on the 48th floor of the RCA building. I told him that I had all the papers to be filled out and the only thing he had to have was from his accountant, a photostatic copy of his last year's tax return. That would be from 1937. I remember that I came in, I had to wait, then he came in and he asked me all the questions, and so on. The next line was, "My income, my taxable income, last year was," he looked at me and I said, "Mr. Marcus, I am not interested in knowing what your income is. If you want, skip this line and we will finish it and you will finish this line and seal the envelope. That is alright with me." And he said, "Doesn't matter." That is the first time I saw an American Income Tax return. This man had an income, a taxable income of \$81,300. In 1937!

Q: That was a fortune.

A: Pardon.

Q: That was a fortune.

A: Yes. Anyway, I thanked him and I said, "Mr. Marcus, I hope that I will be here in a few months and I will call you. If you want to see me, I will be glad to see you. If you don't want to see me, you will never hear from me, and I will never bother you." He said, "OK." I left with the letter and with the affidavit, and so on.

Q: Was he a distant relative?

A: Wait a minute!

Q: OK.

A: When I came home. Lotte waited for me in Hamburg, and we went to Opeln since there were her parents. When I told Lotte's father about my experience he was furious. I said, "What is the matter?" I think that he said, "You know, I did not want to prejudice you, but I have to tell you that is really it. I did not want you to meet this man with a prejudice, but I want to tell you how they got to America. In 1899, his father came to my father and asked him for a loan for one week, for 20,000 marks, and said that he had a business transaction and he has a reason why he does not want to go to a bank. He was never heard from anymore and he went with the 20,000 marks to the U.S. I had to give him credit that he gave me the affidavit, but I did not get a cup of coffee or anything from him. Of course Lotte's father was furious and he did not want to tell me that before. That was never paid back, or anything like that. And that had been a lot of money, 20,000 gold marks! You know, in Europe it was a lot of money. Anyway, when I arrived here, and I called, miraculously his secretary said, "Just a minute please" when I told her who I was and that I wanted to speak to Mr. Marcus. Then I waited for about two minutes on the phone. Then she came back and said, "I am sorry. I forgot that Mr. Marcus left yesterday for a trip overseas, and will not be back for three weeks." And that was it. Out. I wrote him a letter and never heard from him. You know that these are all experiences!

Q: As they say, it takes all kinds! What was the point of Mrs. Liebermann's going to Palestine? Was she looking for another alternative in case your's didn't work out?

A: At that time, it was very attractive to go to Palestine. For one reason, you could, under an agreement between Nazi Germany and Britain, the British owed the German government a large sum of money and you could pay to the German Reich Bank, you know, that is the Federal Reserve Bank, you could pay either 10,000 or 20,000 marks, which was the equivalent of \$5,000 or \$10,000, and you could be credited for that in the British bank in Palestine. Furthermore, you did not have to take an examination with a German license, you could practice wherever you wanted to. But, there were plenty of physicians, there were no hospitals. Most of the physicians were doing other work, like chicken farms and

orange groves and working. There was no need to practice medicine. There were no opportunities, at that time. That was 1938, that was ten years before the State of Israel was founded and since I was an ear, nose and throat specialist and I wanted to practice medicine, and I had never been a really nationalistic Jew. I told you of my assimilation in Germany. I came to the U.S. you see, and Lotte went there, our son was with the grandparents, while Lotte was in Israel and I was in America, and we decided on America.

Q: This tape is almost up.

This is the fifth interview with Dr. Hans Liebermann in his home. Today is September 26, 1978

Last week, when I talked with you, you were detailing to me all of the steps that you had to go through, all the procedures you had to go through in order to leave Germany. You had described your first trip to the U.s. and Mrs. Liebermann's trip to Israel, Palestine, to look over the possibility of settling there.

A: Practicing!

Q: Practicing there. Then you found the affidavit and went back to Germany. When did you arrive back in Germany from that first trip? Do you remember? What were the dates?

A: End of February 1938.

Q: How long was it before you left Germany permanently?

A; I left I think on the 28th or 29th of June 1938. I got the visa, one week earlier and I left on the first boat for which I could get a ticket. That was within a week since, at that time, as I told you before, our lives, especially those of those men who were still working, etc., were endangered. I left the finishing of all the transactions, and the government, I left to Lotte. I knew that she would be able to settle that. She felt relieved that I was gone.

Q: Then you arrived in the U.S.

A: On July 5th, 1938.

Q: How long was it before Mrs. Liebermann and your son joined you?

A: They came here at the end of October. I think on the 30th or 31st of October 1938.

Q: We have not mentioned your son. When was he born? What was his name?

A; His name is Franz and he was born in 1929.

Q: So he was nine years old.

A: He was nine years old. When this Hitler affair came out, he could not go to public school anymore, and there was a makeshift Jewish school made up for the Jewish kids. I think that in the entire school were maybe 100 or 150 kids. That was all makeshift.

Q: Yes, volunteer teachers? And classrooms?

A: Right! Right!

Q: Would it be more appropriate to talk to Mrs. Liebermann about these details of leaving? The bureaucracy and the red tape! Or do you have some indication about that? You weren't there, and you left that up to her.

A: Yes, I am. I know all about that. I leave that entirely up to you. What I want to say is that for every piece, you see this is European furniture and this is European furniture. For every piece you were allowed to take out you had to pay to the government, once over the price which was paid for the furniture. And since assets of Jewish citizens, Jewish people in Germany, were frozen anyway, you could not withdraw more than what you needed for your daily sustenance. It made no difference if you paid for the furniture over again since you could fortunately pay with German money for the transportation. So it made no difference, the money was no good anyway, so it was used up for that.

Q: Did you bring out a lot of your furniture, or just selected pieces? Did you leave most of it behind?

A: No, we brought out most of it, since it did not matter. Do you understand the point?

Q: Yes.

A: The money, you could not withdraw. I think I told you once, when the bank, out of sheer chicanery, denounced me to the Gestapo, that I withdrew 10,000 marks. Remember. And the Gestapo was in my house the next day. But, it did not matter, we took everything which was worthwhile and, which we thought may be useful, we brought to this country.

Q: Were a lot of your acquaintances and friends leaving as you were, or would you say that most of the people you associated with were staying?

A: Maybe fifty percent of the people managed to get out. There were other people, we had close friends, there were two attorneys who lived across the street, and were very close friends, who were so assimilated and both of them were army

veterans from WWI, and they were convinced that nothing could happen to them. You know, the German Jews were really assimilated to an extent, so were Lotte's parents, you will probably hear, I told you the story already. But, they thought that nothing could happen to them.

Q: Did most of the people you know, most of those leaving were associated with, choose to go to the U.S., or did they just disperse in all different directions?

A: They went wherever they could get a visa to go. Many of them went to Palestine. You know, as I explained to you, in Palestine you didn't have to take any examinations, there was no language barrier, since the use of the modern Hebrew language was not yet established. Most people in Palestine, at that time, were speaking either German or Polish or Yiddish. You know, that the revitalization of Hebrew as the modern language came up later and that really is a great achievement, to transform a classical language which was to a lot of us, only known as a praying medium, into a conversational language.

Q: This, I never thought about, but that is a remarkable achievement! This is a question which I am just asking for impressions. It just occurred to me as we are talking. Could you say that most of the people, most of the Jews, who were able to get out were professional people, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, teachers, and so forth, or was there a mixture?

A: There were all kinds of people. You know, for some people it was easier for they had relatives abroad, and they got help from people who were in Palestine, from people who were in England, to Czechoslovakia. You know that is a very tragic affair. Those people who went to Czechoslovakia and France and Holland and Belgium and England, and so on, when these countries, at that time, and Austria, I told you about my brother, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: When they were overrun, they were caught again!

Q: Now when you got to the U.S. the second time, permanently, in July 1938, you stayed for a while in New York.

A: I stayed in New York for three days!

Q: And then came to Dayton?

A: To Cleveland!

Q: To Cleveland! All right!

- A: I told you that I had a friend there who told me not to stay in New York or Cleveland. I told you that on my first trip! I was in Cleveland also in order to find out.
- Q: You took the exam on your first trip didn't you?
- A: No!
- Q: In Columbus?
- A: No! I registered! I registered at that time. I took the examination in December. The 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th of December. I took the Ohio State Board and had to wait for six weeks for the result.
- Q: Did you live with your friend in Cleveland?
- A: No, I had a furnished room. I had a furnished room for which I paid at that time, that is before your time!
- Q: No, it is not.
- A: How old are you?
- Q: 46. I was born in 1933.
- A: All right! Almost! You were a little boy. I paid at that time, for a small room on the fourth floor of an apartment house, of course there were no elevators and so on, \$2.50 a week with breakfast. I usually went down, there was a little delicatessen store, and for lunch I had a bologna or salami sandwich with a cup of coffee, and this fellow gave me an extra slice of bread, I paid fifteen cents. And the same thing, I paid twenty cents for dinner.
- Q: How did you spend your days? What did you do those days in Cleveland when you weren't practicing?
- A: I had to prepare for the State Boards. I had to learn conversational English. I did not take any lessons, but I listened to the radio and gradually it became better and better. I was spending all my time in the Medical Library since I did not have any money to buy books, and reference books, you could not take out of the Library. So usually I had breakfast at around 7.00 or 7.30, I went to the Library and I was sitting there until lunchtime. Two blocks away was this little Delicatessen, I had lunch and then went back to the Library. In the morning I usually started to study new stuff, which I had to review, and later, in the evening, in the late afternoon, you know, when you were not so receptive any more, I restudied what I had before in sequence so that I had all that arranged up there in an orderly fashion. And I did that six days a week!

Q: Three or four months?

A: August, September, October, November and on the 5th of December, the 4th or 5th of December, I started my examination.

Q: In that period, from the time you got to Cleveland until the time you took the exams, while you were studying in the Library, did you have much contact with the Cleveland Medical Group? What I am saying, were the doctors friendly or did they keep you at arms length?

A: They kept me away. I think that they were afraid that if they got friendly or something, they might feel obligated to me and I may feel that I wanted to borrow some money or something like that. They were correct. There was, for instance, one fellow who was a Neurologist who did a lot of research work, he came in three or four times a week. You know, I was at that time a novelty in Ohio. He would come up and talk to me for ten minutes. He wanted to know about medical problems, and how they are being handled, and professional problems in Germany, and how things are being run, hospital-wise, and so on. And I remember that on the 30th of September, I was standing, taking a book from the shelf and this man came in and said, "How are you today?" and I said, "I don't know. Today there is a meeting in Germany and this may mean war and my wife and my boy are still over there, and I really don't know!" You know what he did? He turned around, walked away and never talked to me as long as I was sitting there. Why, I was sitting there for two more months. He came to the Library, but nothing more. From that I learned that when someone asks you "How are you today?" you say, "Fine." For that is a phrase which is not an inquiry. You have to learn these things. Today you laugh about this incident, you know.

Q: But it hurts at the time.

A: Yes. I don't want to say it hurts, it just was not meant, it was just a phrase. It was not meant, and this fellow was not interested in me, he was interested in gathering information.

Q: Did you have any contact at all with Mrs. Liebermann during that period of time?

A: By letters.

Q: No phone calls?

A: No phone calls.

Q: Were the letters censored?

A: Yes! They were opened and marked that they were censored. Yes!

- Q: When did you have assurance that she was going to be able to get out? When did you know that she was going to?
- A: I tell you, she had the visa. She got the visa with me. This visa was good for a year. She had the visa and I didn't have any doubt that she would come. She told me one month before that she had booked on that boat and that they would arrive here, they arrived here on October 24, 1938. And we went back to Cleveland.
- Q: You met her in New York?
- A: I met her in New York so that she had not to go to Ellis Island. Somebody had to meet her.
- Q: Now when she went back to Cleveland, did you continue in your little room?
- A: No. Then we got an apartment, a one bedroom apartment, where there was a bedroom, and there was a couch in which our kid was sleeping in the living room. And there we lived. I rented it on October 15, until the middle of January, when we left Cleveland for Dayton.
- Q: When you took the exams were you frightened? Did you have assurance that you had done well? Did you feel that you had done well? Or were you just totally unknowing?
- A: I don't know. I don't know whether you are interested in these details, I told you about this man?
- Q: Yes, I am. Yes, I am. It all has something to say about your readjustment and how quickly this comes and so on.
- A: You know, when I came to Columbus I stayed at the National Hotel. The room was \$3.00 a night. And the examinations were in the ballroom of the National Hotel, which was a vast room and there were 100 men who took the examination. That was in winter. In summer there are more! You know, at the end of the school year.
- Q: Yes.
- A: And then we were sitting each in front of a card table. You know a bridge table. And they were about ten feet apart. You know the examination was two days. The written examination for one day and the oral examination. For the written examination you were handed questionnaires. Most of the questions were essay questions, not multiple choice, but essay questions. Where you had to discuss things. There I was, rather confused when I got this essay, the first subject was Chemistry, Bio-chemistry. Everyone started writing and I was reading and

analyzing the questions. You know they were so trained for this examination that they started. I thought, what is the matter with me? Anyway, I thought that I did rather well. Also, in the oral examination. I think that I told you this story. That the examiner was so curious about what was going on in Germany that he did not ask me any questions about obstetrics. When the examination was over, I was waiting at the hotel, in front of the hotel to take the streetcar to Union Station, which was about one mile away. There was a man standing next to me who said, "You are a physician, I can speak German to you." I said, "Yes, Ja" and he said, "For I think I saw you during the examination." I didn't know anybody there. And he said to me, "How do you think you did? Do you think you passed?" I said, "I really think I won." I really think that I was doing alright." He said, "You know, how often did you take the examination already?" "It's the first time!" "You know the first time I also thought I did! And here I am, the third time today. I hope they will have pity on me and they will pass me this time. I don't think that I did better than the first." This man was an Associate Professor of Neurology from the University of Hamburg. His name was Kaplan. And you know, I was just lucky that I passed. As a matter of fact, this man passed also. But here, in Ohio, it was an unwritten law that not more than fifty percent of the foreign graduates passed.

Q: How long was it after you took the exam, before you came to Dayton? A month?

A: No, I came earlier. You know, I studied, I was in Dayton already on my first visit. Since my friend I had suggested it.

Q: In Cleveland?

A: In Cleveland, he told me, he was right, that it would be better to be in a smaller town where you get to be known and integrate better than in a large city. He had to struggle in Cleveland. When I looked at the Medical Directory, I found that the youngest ear, nose, throat man, in Dayton at that time, was seventeen years older than I was. So I thought that may be a good business.

Q: I mean, you took the examination in early December. It was January when you moved to Dayton?

A: Right. End of January!

Q: End of January. Did you know anyone here in Dayton at that time, at all? Did you have any contact?

A: I was referred to a doctor here. His name was Olch, and his wife was very nice, very nice to us. We stayed at the Miami hotel, which does not exist anymore today, for three days. We rented a small apartment here, on Grand Avenue, which cost at that time, I believe \$35.00. we ordered our furniture which was then in

- Cleveland to be shipped to Dayton and furnished that. I opened, I got an office -- I told you about my difficulties.
- Q: No, I have no idea, about them, I read about them in the article which was written about you in the Dayton Jewish Chronicle, some years ago. But, you haven't really told me about them -- if you prefer not to.
- A: No! No! Listen!
- Q: I would like to get this on the tape, if I may.
- A: For instance, the Fidelity Building refused to let me in, although they had plenty -- you know, that at that time, the occupancy of the downtown buildings was about 60% to 70%. There were plenty of empty rooms. But the doctors!
- Q: On what basis?
- A: What?
- Q: Why would they not?
- A: Foreigner!
- Q: Foreigner, not Jewish? Just foreigner.
- A: I don't know! I don't know! Probably both. I did not want to go to the Reibold Building; and, in the Harries building they offered me an office .I paid \$75.00 a month for the office. As a matter of fact, there was a medical office there before and they just had to put in one more wall, to divide two rooms, that is one room into two, and I stayed in that office about four years, and then I went to larger offices, in the same building.
- Q: A foreigner coming into a strange city, a foreigner, or a medical doctor coming into a strange city, how does he spread the word that he is here and what his specialty is? What does he do? Put an announcement in the newspaper?
- A: I was advised not to put an announcement in, in order not to aggravate my situation.
- Q: Who advised you not to do that? Someone here in Dayton?
- A: Yes.
- Q: How would this have aggravated your situation/? I don't understand.

A: You know, at the Reibold Building the doctors threatened me that they will move out if they let me in. So, I could not go to the Fidelity Building. I applied for privileges in the three hospitals. I don't know, did we talk about that before?

Q: No! No!

A: I did that in January, and that was never answered. I was here about three to four weeks, when a doctor, a Catholic, Mike Healy, called me one day and said to me, "Dr. Liebermann, I heard that you were here, I would like to know you. I would like to know who you are, what you are, how you are, and so on. Would you come to my office?" "When?" and we talked for about half an hour, and then this man said to me, "Dr., I feel I heard about all these things, that the hospitals did not answer you, that you could not get into the Fidelity building. That they would not rent to you. I fear that we have to act like Christians." You know, in a way it is funny to act like Christians meaning to act like human beings. But you know that is, said.

Q: A way of speech.

A: A way of speech. And he said, "I am going to talk that over and find out and I will probably call you within a week." And within a week, three to four days later, he called me and asked me if I would come to his office again. So I came. and he said, "Now, listen, of course you cannot exist in Dayton without hospital facilities, and you cannot develop a practice in Dayton, and that is what I meant when I said that we have to act like Christians. I talked to the Mother Superior at Good Samaritan Hospital," he was the Chief of Staff, "and I want you to know, I want you to contact her. Make an appointment to see her, the Mother Superior there, and I, will make arrangements that you can get patients in there. But, please, don't mention me here to anybody." So, I called the Mother Superior. She told me to come out. She told me the same thing which Dr. Healy had said, and she said to me, "Doctor, if you need a bed here," as a matter of fact, I want to interrupt myself here, to tell you this. Do you know the average occupancy rate in the Dayton hospitals at that time, without any Blue Cross, Medicare, and other insurance was 55% and when, later on, I was ready to send a patient home, the floor supervisor, several times came to me and whispered, "This patient is a mother of three children and rather weak after surgery" and asked whether it would not be advisable to have her here for another two or three days. You know, I just want to give you the description of the atmosphere of the times. Today, you know, out-out, in order to save costs and so on. And she said, 'If you need a bed, you call me and I will see to it that you get a bed. If you need time in surgery, you call me and I will arrange that you get time in surgery. But there is one condition, if anybody asks you how did you apply and how did you do it and what did you do, and so on, just turn around and walk away, for we don't want to have any trouble with the medical profession.'

Q: This bad?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: This arouses my curiosity in many different ways. How many Jewish doctors were here in Dayton at that time?

A: There were ten Jewish doctors here and they were so insecure that they did not even come near me. It was not that there was hostility or so on, they were so insecure at that time, that they did not even come close to me!

Q: Not even for courtesy?

A: Nothing! Nothing!

Q: Why would the medical profession be that hostile? Did they think that your credentials were not up to U.S. standards?

A: Yes, I got, I showed Dr. Healy my credentials, and my Boards and so on, and so on. But, you know, at that time, especially in ear, nose and throat, doctors who wanted to specialize went to Germany or Austria, and here, all of a sudden, came a man who has been there all his life, has been trained there all his life, and that was for them for a lot of them, of course, unjustified fear of whatever you want to call it.

Q: That you were better than they were because you had been.....

A: I don't say that I was better, but you know they all had advertised in the papers "Returned from special training in Vienna, specializing in ear, nose and throat surgery" and so on. That was the usual thing, at that time!

Q: So you attribute it mainly to their feeling threatened by you?

A: I tell you, it was not only threatened, but also, a foreigner was, you know!

Q: An unknown quantity!

A: Right! And when you realize that the entire quota from Germany was 20,000 visas a year. There were a lot of non-Jewish immigrants since, you know, the situation in Germany was not so good economically. It was not so good here either, but you know, in Europe, it was always a saying, "You know, in America, the money grows on trees, you just have to pick it up!" That is really what the European thought. America was for them something unattainable, in European countries, more progressive, more enterprising, and so on.

Q: Where then does the break come? Dr. Healy provides you with some slight break, and the Mother Superior at the hospital provides you with one.

A: Right!

Q: Where do the patients come from?

A: I got patients from the Sisters from Good Samaritan Hospital. In the beginning, I did not get any patients from Jewish doctors, but there were two or three Catholic doctors besides Dr. Healy who sent me patients occasionally, and so on. It goes so far, that during the first year, I had sometimes two or three days where I did not have a patient, and then I had one patient and then I may have had, the next day, two patients, and then no patients, so that by the end of the year, I had collected \$2,200,00. That was my collection from the office. And then something spectacular happened, which was meant, rather to destroy me than to help me. In March, I was here for a couple of months, the President of the Medical Society, did I ever tell you?

Q: No!

A: Called me and said to me, "I want to know you" and so on, and so on. And during the course of the conversation, he said to me, "Why don't you apply for membership in the Medical Society?" And I said, "You know, Dr. Salz," that was his name, "I have been here only a couple of months and I think, before I apply, I should give the medical profession an opportunity to know and see what I am doing, how I am doing, who I am' and so on. And he said, "I think we rather want you under our jurisdiction and I want you to apply. On the second floor, get a form so I went down and came back, filled it out. he said, 'I am going to sponsor you!" That was in March. In August, I had not heard from the Medical Society yet. So I called Dr. Salz and I was thinking, maybe he is embarrassed, he does not want, he may be afraid if he sticks his neck out people may, the other doctors may not refer any work to him. So, I called him, and I said, "Dr. Salz, I did not hear anything about my application for membership in the Medical Society and, if you change your mind, if you don't want to submit it, please tear it up and that will be the end of it.' He said once I sign it, it is signed, you can pick it up here in the office. So I picked it up and took it to the Medical Society. That was in August. And, one night, no one Saturday morning, the last Saturday morning, the meeting of the Medical Society has always been the fourth Friday of the month, I hear that my membership has been rejected, and what has been going on was that at this meeting, an amendment was passed that citizenship is required for membership in the Medical Society. And, without giving me a chance to withdraw my application, in the same meeting, they voted me down. And, that was front page news. "German Doctor refused Membership in the Medical Society." In an interview of another ear, nose and throat man, his name was, oh, I don't get his name right now, an interview with a reporter, also in the paper the following morning, "These foreign doctors don't amount to anything and they cannot become members of the Medical society for at least five or ten years, for they have to learn American ethics of Medicine." Wait! Am I too long?

Q: No! Go ahead!

A: At around 11.00 A.M. on this Saturday morning, the same reporter called me and he wanted to talk to me. I told him that I could not see him before 5.00 P.M. that afternoon. You know why? I had nobody whom I could ask what to do. I had to think it over and I did not want to jeopardize my situation. He came up at 5.00 P.M. Saturday afternoon. I went to the office in order to meet him. He talked to me and he said what do you have to say to that. I said, "You know, I can only say one thing, I am deeply disappointed by the action of the Medical Society, and, I must say, I am also disappointed that I have not been given a fair chance, not a chance to withdraw, and I always heard that Americans are so proud of fair play, and I don't think I got it. And that was in the paper, in the Sunday paper. I didn't know anybody there at the Journal Herald at that time. And there was a front, ah, on the editorial page, the first editorial, "In This Land of the Free," (that was the heading.) This editorial said, and I want to make it short, that Dr. Liebermann and his family, duly licensed to practice in the State of Ohio, came to Dayton in order to establish a practice of medicine. He was invited to apply for membership in the Medical Society. The Medical Society, last Friday night, adopted an amendment to their constitution requiring citizenship, and voted him down. Dr. Liebermann well knows that there are differences between persecutions in a dictatorship, and persecutions in a democracy. In a dictatorship it means concentration camps and possible death. In a democracy it means economic persecution. The Dayton Medical Society, the Montgomery County medical Society, has no reason to be proud of it's decision. All the votes were done by free men and see what happened! And the next morning, the next Monday, for that was Sunday, I had eleven new patients in my office, and things went running. That sounds like the story out of a novel.

Q: That is right, it does!

One question, I want to ask is at the medical meeting on that Friday night, did a reporter normally attend?

A: That must have been, this man must have been told, that must have been cooked up before!

Q: Could some doctor have leaked the verdict to the press?

A: I doubt it. I don't know.

Q: You never heard?

A: I never heard.

Q: You never heard who your friends were or who your enemies were?

A: No! No! I know this. I just read in the paper that this amendment to the constitution was adopted and I was not eligible, and I was voted down. On Monday, I had eleven new patients and from then on my practice was established!

Q: And your profits went up!

A: And the second year I collected \$9,600, which was money at that time, which was 1939.

Q: 1939.

A: That was the start of my practice in Dayton. You know it, it was meant to ruin me.

Q: Yes, that's right!

A: As a matter of fact, on this Sunday, my Rabbi, who wanted to be helpful and nice and so on, said to me, he came to the house and he said to me, "With this thing you got \$10,000.00 worth of free advertising in the City of Dayton!"

Q: We really haven't talked about your affiliation with a congregation when you came to Dayton. Did you do that rather quickly?

A: No. I did not. There were three congregations here, an Orthodox, a Conservative and a Reform. The Reform was closest to what German Jews who were rather, as I told you, assimilated were. I joined the Temple.

Q: Were those patients forthcoming from the congregation?

A: I will tell you!

Q: During that first year?

A: During the first year, very few, very few! And I did not join before July or August. You know the date for Holidays, the High Holy Days are in September or October, or such. I joined before.

Q: In a way this is a very sad story, this story of the resettlement in the U.S. in a way it is very happy. It is a sad story with a happy ending!

A: A happy ending, yes!

Q: What does this make you feel about the U.S.? Let me elaborate on that for a little bit. You know we have this feeling about ourselves, where we have the great open arms. You know we recite that inscription on the Statue of Liberty, "Send

me your poor, your oppressed, etc.,” do you think that is true, or from your experience that that is a myth?

A: I will tell you. I honestly say that this is still the best country in the world. You know, I have been fortunate that I could afford to travel all over the world. I was in Japan, in China, in Australia, in Alaska, and all over the U.S. before I went abroad, and Europe. I knew from before, and, you know, whenever we come back from a trip, and we felt that mostly when we came back from South America. It is good to come back to the U.S. For to live in south America under their dictatorships, where, on every street corner you have a policeman with a carbine or machine gun, or two policemen, when people disappear, and so on, and so on. This is still the best country in the world. I am not saying that to please anybody. That is really, honestly! This is the best country in the world!

Q: May we go on for just a few more minutes, so we can finish up?

A: Certainly.

Q: But, it requires me to change tapes. There are other questions, a few sort of difficult questions I want to ask you. These are difficult questions. They are not actually difficult, they are not easily answered, to put it that way, and sort of, I was fishing for an immediate answer.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you harbor, did you feel very bitter about the way the medical profession had treated you? Did you have to fight against that bitterness? I am talking in terms of making friends with the doctors and the medical profession who voted against you. Did that come easy, did it take a long time?

A: The first couple of years hardly anybody talked to me. You know, gradually you become part of it. And, of course, today, and even twenty years ago, and thirty years ago, you are with each other by first names, although there are people who don't like Jews, there are people who don't like to speak with anyone with an accent, and I will have an accent as long as I live. That also has special reasons. You know, there are two kinds of people practically, those with an acoustic and those with a visual mind. Those with an acoustic mind have much better an opportunity to, I might say, mimic, and get rid of their accent.. I am clearly a visual type. A visual type is the type for reality, who is systematic. The acoustic type is more for music and the dreaming type. Those people lose their accent, right away, for their ears are more receptive to these nuances. I, we, have a daughter-in-law, that is our son's wife, who teaches English in high school. She has been teaching English in high school for 15 years. After she got married, had her kids, when her oldest kid graduated from high school, she got her Master's degree, and since then she has been teaching English in high school. And you

know, for an English teacher, it is almost necessary to speak without an accent. Right? She is the typical acoustic type.

Q: I never thought of it in those terms, but I think there is much to what you are saying.

A: And, I am, you know, I like to read prose. I cannot get enthused about poetry. Those people who have the ear for the poetry, that is the acoustic type.

Q: You mentioned that you traveled considerably. Did you ever go back to Upper Silesia?

A: No. I never went behind the Iron Curtain, and I don't want to!

Q: Have you been back to Germany?

A: Yes. Many times.

Q: How do you feel when you go back to Germany? Do you have any sort of emotion?

A: I don't like it! We have. As a matter of fact, we have people in Germany. Every time we went to Europe, Lotte has a first cousin who survived in Germany, living in Frankfurt now, since she was married to a non-Jew. So, she survived and these people are lovely, nice people. We always went, either at the beginning or at the end of our trip. We fly to Frankfurt, or we leave from Frankfurt. We spent three or four days in their house. But, I don't think that I would like to go to German resorts.

Q: Why?

A: You see the people around there who did that to you! They have grown up.

Q: When you are in Germany, and not with your cousin, with Mrs. Liebermann's cousin's family, do you talk about the war? The Holocaust? The Nazism? Or, is the subject to be avoided?

A: I tell you, they don't want to hear about it. The schools try to take the children to Dachau to show them. But the grown up population, they want to know nothing about it. It goes so far that this cousin and her husband could not serve in the army in WWII since he lost his leg right here in WWI! He was dismissed, he was fired from his job since he did not want to divorce his wife and, a decent fellow, and they usually come together only with people where one party was non-Jewish. They also lived in the eastern part of Germany. When they came back to Frankfurt and he was reinstated with his government job, nobody talked to him. You know, he was also an intruder. And he says that it is very difficult, well

today it is mainly, he is older than I am. He is 80 or 81. But, even in Germany, within Germany he was the foreign fellow who came from East Germany competing in the company where he was reinstated

Q: Do you have any contact at all with people from Leibitz? Today? Friends? Former friends and acquaintances?

A: Jews?

Q: Anyone from Leibitz? Do you ever write to any of them? Have you kept in touch with any of them?

A: Yes, listen. The peculiar thing is when we travel around the world, not around the world you know what I mean?

Q: Here and there in the world?

A: Yes, we have friends and relatives everywhere, for German Jews are so dispersed and scattered around the world that I came to Sydney, Australia, I have a fraternity brother who is a dentist there. When we came to Melbourne, Australia, we have some of our best friends there, who lived in the same house with us. When I came to Japan I have a fraternity brother who is practicing internal medicine in Tokyo. You know, that makes it interesting, for you are not confined to tourist guides, you go right to the homes. Of course, when I go to Israel, when I go to England, we have really friends and relatives everywhere, you know that makes travel? When I went to South America, I have cousins in Rio de Janeiro. Lotte has a cousin in Buenos Aires and I have two cousins in Rio de Janeiro, and you know that makes it interesting that you really see how the people live, what their problems are, not that you just get a conducted tour.

Q: When did you retire from active practice?

A: After I had two heart attacks and a broken leg in 1973.

Q: Is that when you began to spend part of your year in Florida?

A: Yes. For in winter, in cold weather, it is very difficult, we have a very small apartment. One bedroom, small apartment, with a big terrace right on the waterfront. That is very nice!

Q: I have asked you a lot of questions over a number of hours. Is there anything that you would like to add that I did not cover in my questions? Is there anything that you thought of that you wanted to say, or any point you wanted to bring up, in the area you wanted to explore that was not prompted by a question on my part?

A: You know, I can only say what I said when we were at my one granddaughter's, who is a physician when she got married. I believe I told you that at the rehearsal dinner they wanted me to say something and I said to them, "When I look back on the fifty years" you know we had been married for 50 years last February, "When I look back on the fifty years I certainly cannot say that they were boring and I must say things turned out better than I ever hoped and expected." And, I said, "If I would be 18 years old today again, I would do it all over again." And while I said it, it occurred to me at the end, "I would even marry the same girl again." And, I told this bride and groom, "And I hope that after 50 years you will be able to say the same thing."

Q: This is marvelous! I thank you for all the time you have given.

A: Oh, no. Listen, that was a pleasure.