

*Tape five, side one:*

JF: You were describing your brother-in-law's reaction, and your sister's reaction to you coming to their home.

KK: It's only natural. We didn't see each other for six years, for the first time again.

JF: Had they been in their home all this time?

KK: They were all the time in their home.

JF: How did they escape?

KK: Because in Germany, when the head of the house is an Aryan and he has a Jewish wife, he saves her life because he was the head of the house.

JF: She did not convert?

KK: No, no. They're married, not in a church, not in a synagogue, civil marriage. And everybody had his own religion. But I didn't feel very good there with my sister in the house. First, they had nothing to eat. There were still the ration cards; the war was over, but they still had those ration cards. Only what she could give me to eat was little bit potatoes and little bit water soup like, again, I felt like I'm again in the concentration camp. She had nothing to eat, either. She made a little bit soup out of flour with a little bit sugar. That's what we eat as dinner. She has ration cards for meat, but there was no meat in those stores, in those butcher stores. And the first Friday night—I came around on Tuesday, June 12, I think it was...came back to Berlin. And the first Friday night I was thinking, I'm gonna look if I find more Jewish people. I went to the nearest synagogue. Certainly, I knew before that the Nazis burned all the synagogues in 1938, in November, so I came to the synagogue and the American bombs did the rest. So I was standing there and said to myself, "Where should I go now...should I go home, back to my sister's apartment or shall I go further looking for other Jewish people? My sister couldn't tell me, she was living like in isolation. She has no friends there [among the] other people.

JF: Was she accepted, do you think, by the other Germans, the non-Jewish Germans, whom they were living with?

KK: I don't know, I don't know. The only thing I know is that she was alive. She was thin and her face was small...they had not much to eat during the war time...but she was alive, that's all. So I want to go away back to the synagogue, I want to go away and then I hear from far away Friday night those Jewish songs, like you hear in the synagogue (hums softly)...those Friday night songs, and I went around the sound, and I came in the back of the synagogue was a big place, a free place, and there was a little chapel in the back. In the back, the singing was coming from there. I opened up the door and there was a little chapel, around thirty people, maybe, were there, ten or twelve women and the rest men, old men, and the *chazan* was singing. I was very happy. I find other Jews and I looked the people over and I looked across. The men were sitting on one side and the women on the other. It was an Orthodox place. And I looked and looked at my wife. My wife, I mean

I looked at her and I asked the man next to me if he knows this girl over there. And he said, "Yes, I know her. You want me to ask her. Have you...?" After the service we went out and he introduced me to this girl and we talked...I didn't talk much because I was ashamed of myself. I had no teeth, my upper teeth were out. You know, I think I told you this in my story that the Nazis, they had to take out my teeth because they were loose. No hair on my head...every two weeks we got our hair taken off, you know. As prisoners. And I wasn't nice dressed. Old suit on and here still was my number on the chest of the suit. Civil suit, and the name...no, no, not the number, "Buchenwald" had here a sign on it. And we talked a little bit and I brought her home where she was living. And I said "Good-bye" to her. And the next Friday night we saw each other again and so we met each other and became friends. That's it. And then we married...

JF: You married in Berlin?

KK: In Berlin, from an American Chaplain.

JF: When did you get married?

KK: We got married in Purim, 1946. American Chaplain married us in full uniform. Shuboff, his name was Shuboff. He was living in Boston, but he was stationed in Berlin. An American section in Berlin. Then when I came back to Berlin from concentration camp, Berlin was conquered from the Russian Army. The whole city of Berlin was conquered from the Russian Army. And after a couple of months, the Allied powers [divided] the city off in four parts. One was the Russian section, an American section, an English section and a French section. I was living certainly in the English section of Berlin. English part of Berlin. And we married and our daughter got born in December.

JF: She was born in Berlin?

KK: Yes, in Berlin. We got a nice apartment without windows, only cardboard on the windows, [exchange between Mr. K. and wife here]...Nice bedroom, kitchen and a toilet.

JF: Were you able to work?

KK: No...Yes...this I tell you. After we married my wife talked to her cousin. Her cousin was the president from the Jewish *Gemeinde* [congregation] in Berlin. And he give me a job as a clerk. So I was a clerk in the *Gemeinde*, yes.

JF: And your daughter was born, when?

KK: In December my daughter was born, and when my wife wants to buy a little bit milk for the baby, those Nazi women start to holler at her in the milk store. "*Komt die Juden*," the Jewish *belge*—a word like animals, like. "Come the Jewish *belge* and *trinkt* [drink] the little bit milk away." So both us said, "We can't live here anymore." The same Nazism comes out again after a year, you know, this starts to go [again], on top Nazis again. And the English soldiers weren't very nice to them.

JF: Which section of Berlin were you living in? Under whose control...the English?

KK: The English. Before, it was all Russian and the Nazis were all disappeared, they hid themselves in cellars, somewhere outside, in the country. And we said, "No, we cannot live here anymore. This is the same Nazis, the *selbe risches* [same anti-Semitism] again." We said, "We gonna go somewhere." So we were talking between us...to America we couldn't go, not the United States we couldn't go because you couldn't go out of the English section. If we were living in the American section, you could go to the United States, as a displaced person. After a certain time, the English section was open for immigration to the U.S. It opened up for immigration, so we could go to the U.S., in 1947.

JF: Now, you have shown me a prayer book that you received...

KK: After the liberation, first came the war troops, what had nothing to do, only fighting. And afterwards came a different kind of American soldiers. They take over the camp, we have visitors from the U.S., people with those big hats, those Texan hats came, and we looked at them. General Eisenhower was visiting the camps and members from Congress came to visit the camps, and they showed them everything. And we got Chaplains, American Chaplains came in uniform, Jewish Chaplains and the Christian Chaplains. Jewish Chaplains naturally came to us Jews, talking to us and then he put out a whole list from all those survivors...Jewish survivors from Buchenwald. My name was on the list. They sent this list to the U.S. and the list came to all the Jewish papers in the U.S. And my sister here in the U.S. saw on those lists that I am alive, and then she wrote to us. Then the Chaplain gave every Jew, he gave us a little *siddur* [prayer book] in Hebrew and in English translation. Until today I still have this little *siddur*.

JF: And the *siddur* is engraved or is dedicated to you...

KK: No, no, no, this is my handwriting. This is my handwriting. "*Zur Erinnerung an den tag der Befreiung.*" In English: "In remembrance on the day of the liberation Weimar-Buchenwald, 11th day, April '45." I wrote this in here.

JF: This was the first time you say that religion was re-introduced into...

KK: To us...but I tell you the truth, I couldn't believe in God anymore. What my eyes saw...I couldn't believe there is a God in heaven can see this and do nothing. So, but my wife, she gave me back the belief in God again, after we met.

JF: Have you suffered much from the physical distress you had during the war, since your liberation?

KK: When I came to the U.S., my wounds broke open.

JF: On your feet?

KK: On my feet. You know I [not clear]. What, what's this? Sores, wounds...of [in] German they say wounds, wounded. Sores. I don't know, when you ask me "sore," I think sores only if you have a little bit skin like open.

JF: These were large ones.

KK: Large ones, I don't know why. My feet were swollen up and the wounds opened up.

JF: This was how many years after the war?

KK: '47, when I came to the U.S. in August. Maybe two months. Later, suddenly my feet broke open. And I went to the Mt. Sinai Hospital on 5th Street, 5th and Reed and they treated this.

JF: Were there any other repercussions of...?

KK: No, not at all, except my hearing. My hearing got worse and worse after the years...from those [hits] on the head.

JF: When they hit you on the head your hearing was affected?

KK: Yes.

JF: Were you aware of your hearing loss at the time in the camps?

KK: Not so much. You can't think in the camp. You don't think anymore. You are like a piece of meat. You eat your little bit water soup, your nose runs in the water soup and you eat it. You had no handkerchief in your pocket. You had nothing. You go on the toilet you have to clean yourself with the hand with water. There is no paper, toilet paper in those toilets.

JF: Is there anything else you want to add to what you've told us?

KK: I say only one thing. If I lived through six years alone [in] concentration camp, from '39 to '45, was the angel watching over me? Why me? Why he let me live so long?

JF: Why, do you think? What do you think kept you alive during those years?

KK: I don't know till today. I don't know, was the angel watching me? But [where] was the angel for the six million other Jews? So I don't know till today. But God [rewarded] me, give me like, for all my suffering, he give me a wonderful wife, but make a human being better out of me. She feeds me...first time I couldn't eat, she take a bite and put it to me in my mouth, because I couldn't eat without teeth...She made a human being back out of me. And I say today, "If God let me live, it must have a reason," so I try to do good things to other people. I help out and I go to old age homes when I have time...I have plenty of time now...I'm retired. To help people, to feed people, I shave those inmates in the old age homes. I do what I can to help people. I think it is my second life, I live now. Must have a purpose that God let me live. That's what I say.

JF: I'm very glad I could talk to you. Thank you so much.

KK: O.K.