

This is tape 2, side 1, with the continuation of an interview with Mr. Herbert Broh. And Mr. Broh is showing me his report card from the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School. And I'm looking at a term ending the 9th of July, 1943, and signed by--

Hartwich.

It's Lucy Hartwich--

Lucy, yes.

--and Mr. Gossenheimer.

Yeah.

Yes. Did you want to tell me a little bit about this?

Well, [LAUGHS] as you can see, Japanese was not my best subject.

No? [LAUGHS]

And this is a better one. Well, that was two years prior.

OK.

And we didn't-- I don't know. I just-- I didn't really care much for school. I was the joker. I was the joker of the class.

Mhm?

[LAUGHS] So I think I was the joker of the class. And-- or let's, "talkative," did it say, on this one? Anyway, one of them, it says, I was very talkative.

Well, this one says you could do much better.

Do much better, yeah.

You should study more and be more attentive.

[LAUGHS] More attentive. Right. [LAUGHS] This is a earlier and much better one. No, I had a ball, there, again. I mean, I was-- [LAUGHS] I was carefree, so to speak. And I made a lot of friends there.

Tell me about that. Tell me about your friends.

My friends? See, I had two types of friends.

Mhm?

Friends from this school, here, were-- some of these were-- did not go to cheder-- did not go to the yeshiva. So consequently, they were a different breed of people, so to speak. I don't know if that's the right terminology or not. But some of them were nonobservant. I mean, it was just like--

And then, of course, the transition takes place when I had few, made friends in cheder. And so from one extreme to the other.

Did you have both groups of friends at the same time? Or did--

Yeah.

--did you move?

No, I was bar mitzvahed-- yes, this is 1943--

Yes.

--evidently, I must have had friends on both on the same time. Yeah.

Mhm?

We had a fellow that-- and I don't know his last name-- too bad. He went to Australia-- very good friend. Name is Willy. And he was half-Jewish. His mother was not Jewish, or somebody wasn't Jewish. And-- best friend, one of my best friends, you know? And--

And--

It did not make any difference to me, at that time, whether somebody was religious or nonreligious-- you know, to me, personally.

What impact had this all had on your parents, in terms of how their home was-- you say your cousin had also become--

Oh, yes, yes.

--you know, observant and wanted to keep kosher.

Sure.

So that meant the whole household changed.

The whole household yeah-- not the people that he rented, the other people that my uncle rented. No, they-- to my recollection, they were not that observant. No.

But the kitchen had been kosher?

Oh. Well, the kitchen-- everybody was on their own. We usually sometimes cooked-- cooked separate. We cooked-- you know, we had our own pots and pans.

OK.

You know, so there was no-- the only time we-- sometimes we ate together, just the family, but not the other people.

Did your parents then also become more observant?

My parents? No, not so much. My uncle did, though-- became more observant. But not-- no, I don't think so. I didn't go to-- he never went to the Shabbat services with me. I went-- to me, that was compulsory-- obligation to do that, you know. And I was sometimes ashamed-- which was just wrong. I mean, so ridiculous.

Sometimes my dad wouldn't wear a hat, so he would go to one street, and I would go on the other street. God forbid one of my rabbis should see me with my dad, you know? I was embarrassed. I was embarrassed, actually.

And this is wrong, sometimes when-- when they teach kids, well, if it has something to do with, you know, you can break this commandment "Thou shalt honor your parents." You know? You can break these commandments only in certain circumstances, when it pertains toward Judaism.

And it was wrong, you know? I realized it later in years. I mean, it was ridiculous. Why should I be ashamed to go with my father on the street? So, anyway, it's--

And then, later on, I changed myself, and I changed. So in order to comply to-- I can be-- like I said, I can be acclimated to any surroundings, to any community. I can mix in easy with secular people. You know, I can act the same way, [LAUGHS] you know, to respect.

Do you attribute this flexibility in any way to your experience in Shanghai?

No. No, it's my own feeling.

It's just your personality.

My own personality-- personal feeling. I learned, and I'm very tolerant, and a lot of adversity happened in my life, after I left Shanghai. And I do not have any-- just like Rabbi Kushner, what happens to--

Good things happen--

--good things-- well, what happens to the bad--

Bad things.

Bad things happen to good people. Yeah.

Mhm.

That's-- I feel the same. I mean, I have this tremendous faith, you know, and things. You know, like I said, to me personally Shanghai was the best years of my life. And the adversity [LAUGHS] came after I came to this country, certain thing. I mean, it's silly, but the things were happening in this country that-- you know, I was married, and a sick wife, and I lost a son at 40, and all these kind of things.

And it seems like my cousin, despite-- I mean, he has 23 grandchildren. Sometimes I get a little bit jealous, because their life-- but they live in a different world. And they don't face reality sometimes [INAUDIBLE]. But they live their own little-- I mean, like Fiddler on the Roof. They're contented. And you know.

So sometimes I wonder, well, is this a good life or not? You know? So I go back and forth sometimes, you know. But in general speaking, no, no I'm a pretty happy-go-lucky fellow.

So you had this ability, as a kid, to be friends with these--

Oh, definitely.

--guys and-- and girls, as well?

Not so much with girls, no. I-- see that-- again, sure-- looked at girls. I mean, you had this feeling for-- when I was a little older, 14, I had this-- but that was, again, a taboo.

Because you had become more identified with the--

No, that tied with religion.

--traditional--

Traditional way, yeah. I'll tell you a little humorous story about taboo now. On Yom Kippur, we-- there is this Torah portion of all these Commandments-- thou shalt not do this, and thou shalt not do that. Thou shalt not-- it's all in the-- you know we studied this in the Torah. And thou shalt not lay with any-- doesn't say "cohabit," but lay with any beast or any animal. But it just said "lay."

So I asked a rabbi, at that time, what does it mean? Geh weiter, he said-- "go to the next page." You know?

[LAUGHS]

Wouldn't explain anything. I mean, you were so naive. So we had a cat, in China. And that cat-- [LAUGHS] yes, you guessed it-- was laying on my bed all the time. Ever since that portion-- I've learned it-- I shushed him away.

[LAUGHS]

I shushed him away, [LAUGHS] because I'm not supposed to lay with you, you know?

[LAUGHS]

[LAUGHS] So that's how, in a way, it's kind of a comic-- but that's how they teach you, you know. I mean, until later on in years, I mean, when you went to yeshiva, to the big yeshiva, then, of course, then you knew more about the facts of life. But I was so naive about the facts of life, even when I was a-- when I left Shanghai, I didn't even know the facts of life till much later.

Now, when you dropped out of the Kadoorie school, around the time of your bar--

Yeah, I think I was about 14. Yeah, I can see it was-- I was 13 here.

At that point, did your friendships change?

No, no. No, we kept--

Or you still kept your relationships--

We still kept in touch, yeah.

OK.

A lot of people left Kadoorie school, for some reason or another. I don't know why. But no, even the people that did not leave the Kadoorie school-- no, we always were in contact.

Do you remember any contact with the children of the Jews who had lived in Shanghai before you got there-- the Sephardi community or the Russian community?

No, the only contact I had was my English teacher. I don't even know if I can see her name here or not. I've forgotten the name.

Was that-- was that--

Mmm --

--LB?

Well,

Would that be LB? Would that be-- or would that--

Hmm. Could be an LB. Could be.

Her initials might be LB.

Could be, pretty much. Could be.

And she was-- she was from one of these communities?

Yeah, she was a Sephardic. She was from Iraq. And I didn't have much contact, otherwise, except we had-- later on, they had a-- in combination with the cheder, they had a whole group of Bet Ya'akov girls. And they were--

I remember this one gal. She was from Iraq. Her name was Sima. And I had a little crush on her.

Ah.

Now, she was--

But that's about--

So she was from the earlier Sephardi families--

--earlier Sephardi families, yeah--

--who joined the--

But I don't know much about--

--the Bet Ya'akov school.

Exactly.

Interesting.

Yeah. And of course, I met one Russian individual. He was from-- well, they lived in China since the, you know. He came-- one of the wealthy Russians came to give us-- every Hanukkah, he gave us shoes. Yeah, that was-- he donated shoes for us, every Hanukkah.

When you were in the school.

Not in the school. In the cheder.

In the cheder.

Yeah. Didn't have-- the Russians didn't have much to do with the Kadoorie school.

OK. The Sephardi did.

The Sephardi? I don't think so, either.

OK, they just--

--they had their own little community, their own school.

OK.

Yeah. I didn't come in contact with too many Sephardic Jews.

When you had your bar mitzvah, can you describe what it was like?

Oh, it was a feast. It was a feast.

And this was during the war--

During the war-- 1943. I was taught-- the bar mitzvah, I was taught by another refugee, who was specializing in teaching boys the bar mitzvah. His name was Amsterdam. And he lived in one of these homes, these Heime. I forget which one it was-- Chaoufoong Heim or Ward Road Heim? I don't know-- one of these.

And he-- it was a heck of a way of living, you know, because they had no privacy in those homes.

These were the camps.

Camps-- well, "camps."

They were-- in quotes.

Yeah.

It was a communal--

Yeah, right, but they all slept in one big auditorium. They had these bunk beds, you know. And there was hardly any privacy there. And these were-- that particular tape of Mr. Hepner, he described these. And I think he lived in one of those camps.

But you were always able to live in this house.

In a house, and then, after my uncle exchanged this house, we lived in another house. And--

And you did not find--

I tried not--

--your food was not limited.

Was not, no, that I know of, no. We didn't have-- I mean, maybe have a repetition of foods like rice and-- yeah, I remember rice and little bits of meat, you know, that goulash-type thing. And kasha. We had a lot of kasha. And eggplants. I remember eggplant, well, plentiful eggplants there. And tofu, a lot of the tofu.

And we had eggs, plentiful eggs, there, as I remember.

You don't remember any limits of--

I don't remember actually any limits. No. As a matter of fact, my mother sent me out for bread, to the bakery. So my cousin and I went for bread, and-- [LAUGHS] I mean, let's put it this way. It was not that that it was plentiful, but it was

sufficient to-- so we used--

We took a rickshaw ride. And guess what. Instead of-- we didn't have any money, so we gave this [LAUGHS] coolie our bread--

Oh! [LAUGHS]

--for our rickshaw ride. Because never heard the end of it. [LAUGHS] So, that day, we were out of bread, but we had a rickshaw ride.

[LAUGHS]

[LAUGHS] I don't know-- forget how old I was. 12, 11--

That's wonderful.

[LAUGHS]

Now, you said, when you had your bar mitzvah, this was within the yeshiva, at this point?

Yeah, within the yeshiva compound, yes. Well, within the cheder compound, in the same shul we were brought up-- we learned, in the morning, we learned-- well, actually, in the morning I went to school every day. But--

And what was the name of the shul?

Ohel Moshe. Ohel Moshe School. Ohel Moshe. It was within the perimeter of the, quote unquote, "ghetto." And the shul was built by Russians, also. As a matter of fact, the shammash was-- [LAUGHS] the shammash went, was a Russian.

Hmm. What--

You know what a shammash is.

Yes, of course. What was it like, the day of your bar mitzvah? Can you remember?

The day of the bar mitzvah, first of all, they complimented my dad. They wished my dad-- oh what a good job he did. Oh, what a good job. What a good job. But little did they know that my mother pushed me to go to cheder.

Ah. [LAUGHS]

See, this is what-- they always give the credit to the men. And it was a little bit not-- it was not too fair. You know, there are prayer books, nowadays, where it says "Blessed be Thou, oh, Lord our God, who's not created me as a woman." And then the woman says "Blessed be Thou, our Lord, God of the universe, who created me according to thy will." And these Orthodox prayer books still have that, you know.

Mhm.

[LAUGHS] So it's kind of a little bit prejudicial statement. But then--

Did you feel that, at the time?

No, no, no, I-- no, not really. But later on in years, I'd elaborate these things. You can. No, I didn't.

But it was your mother who had pushed you.

Yeah.

Would have encouraged you.

My mother always pushed me, encouraged me to go. Yeah. My dad worked, anyway. My dad was working for a Japanese or a Chinese factory. He was a watchman. And it was managed by Japanese. They made bolts-- bolts and-- nuts and bolts.

You're showing me a picture that you drew on the back of one of your report cards.

[LAUGHS]

You want to describe it?

In 1941-- I don't even know what that is.

OK.

It's just a scribble.

OK.

Let's see, how old was I? 11 years old. 11 years.

Your father was able to work, the entire time that you were in--

Yes, yeah, he did. And he worked for this Chinese factory. And it was managed by Japanese. I'm sure these nuts and bolts we're not going for any civilian use. I'm sure it was going toward the war--

It was going toward the war effort?

Going toward the war effort, I'm sure.

OK.

But he had a job there.

Do you know whether or not he was able to work out a way of getting any money to Shanghai before you left?

I don't know. I think the-- I remember, they hid some American money, after the war, in suitcases, because it was against the law to even have American money doing the tremendous inflation that they had. That was against the Chinese government, even to own any-- people were doing black markets there. But that's the only time of money that I remembered--

Where do you think they got the American money? In-- do you think they brought it with them?

No, they probably-- well, he worked for the American army, too, after the war.

Oh, in Shanghai.

In Shanghai.

OK.



Yeah. Not to lose some of the story--

But the bar mitzvah, we were talking.

Let's, yes.

Yeah, we, and like I said, they complimented my dad. And then it was a regular feast. And--

That your mother prepared? That the--

No, the people-- oh, my mother and my aunt and the whole community almost, the whole-- did prepare for it. We were all within the spectrum of this cheder, you know. Not the people that were associated with this school, but the people that were associated with the cheder and the yeshiva, they all made these preparations and--

Special foods?

Oh, I don't remember.

But it felt like a feast.

It felt-- yeah, it felt like a feast. Yeah. And I attended a wedding there. My cousin was married. I mean, my cousin's-- the female-- my female cousin, naturally.

The older--

The girl cousin, the older one--

Yes, yes.

--was married there. And I attended all the sheva berachot, you know, the seven blessings. Every day, they had a feast. That was during the war. And they had schnapps and the vodka and all kinds of stuff. I mean--

Were you--

It was available, then.

It was there.

It was there, if you had money to purchase.

Were you aware of the difficulty that other refugees were having?

Yes, we were aware of-- a lot of times, we ate in this community kitchen. I mean, you're talking about-- I mean, not all the time. It was plentiful. I mean, we had to go to this community kitchen, and then we got our meals, and then we had some sad, poor-- I mean, where sad-looking people sold their-- practically the shirt of their back, in order to survive, there. Yes, I seen those.

I mean, I was one of the lucky ones that did not go through that. And I'm sure Mr. Hepner was one of the unlucky ones-- what I gather from this video. I have to talk to him here. I'll probably meet him here. That we're in the same category as well.

Did you have any idea of who was running, for instance, these community kitchens-- where the help was coming from?

The help was coming partially from the religious Jews, because it was managed by mashgiach to be sure it's kosher.

Yeah.

So this particular kitchen was a kosher kitchen.

Yeah. It was definitely a kosher kitchen. Now, I don't know if there were other kitchens or not. I have no recollection. The people that lived in these Heime were-- I don't know if they had their own kitchen or not. But that particular kitchen my mother went to and I went to was a kosher kitchen, yes.

You mentioned, before, that you had every illness possible.

Yes.

Can you tell me--

But luckily I was inoculated. We all were inoculated for all these. And I was sent to a-- first, I had malaria-- and recurrent, every year-- recurrent. And this Dr. Wolff happened to be in our cabin, I remember when we came to-- we sailed to Shanghai. He had a-- that he brought from France, evidently-- he was in France, too-- a-- what is it called? Inoculation--

The vaccine?

The vaccine. He had a vaccine that's supposed to have cured malaria. And he gave me this vaccine. And I think he donated it to me, somehow, because I remember-- and ever since then, I never had a recurrence. That's what's weird. I mean--

Were you in a hospital?

Not for malaria. Yeah, maybe I was, too, but was not isolation hospital. It was the local hospital that was established by the refugees. Yes, and then I--

Do you remember the name of the hospital?

No, I don't.

But it was the special hospital--

Special--

--that was--

It was not special hospital. See, there was a-- when I acquired this typhus and typhoid, I was sent to an isolation hospital that was outside the ghetto, so to speak. And as we were-- I was taken by ambulance. And I could look outside the ambulance, and I remember very vividly that there was a ship at the Bund-- you know, the Bund thing-- you heard of the Bund. The--

The avenues.

--yeah. But the Bund was right by the Whangpoo River. There was all the-- bank buildings were built by Sassoon families. There was this ship, laying on its side. I didn't know what it was. So I was-- it was the Conte Verde, I think. It was an Italian luxury liner. And the Italians sank it, intended to sink it, so the Japanese intended to salvage it. It was for the war effort.

And I remember the big chains around the big bank building, in order to keep it afloat, on its side, over--

The Conte Verde.

I think it was the Conte Verde. Now, I could be wrong, but I think it was the Conte Verde, an Italian luxury liner. That's on the way to the hospital. And you have all these picture-- I mean, I have this in mind, yeah.

And then I went, came, I was in the hospital maybe for a week or so. And gosh, I've seen so many people die of cholera. I mean, it was a big, a big ward. The ward was, you know.

Now, this hospital where you were isolated--

It was a Chinese hospital.

--it was a Chinese hospital.

Yeah.

OK.

And they called it the "isolation hospital." People with these communicable diseases had to be there. And people-- like I said, people were-- I might see one person, two beds away from me. And the next time, he passed away. So that was a bad experience for me, seeing these--

You were a child, still.

Sure, I was 12, 13-- I was 12. And that was a bad experience for me.

Were you--

No, 12, 13-- maybe I was 14, yeah, 14.

Were you scared about what would happen to you, with the diseases?

Not really, because I know I was being-- you see, the reason why so many Chinese died-- they disregarded the inoculation. It was initiated by the Japanese, to be inoculated. But a lot of Chinese didn't care, you know, just didn't go for it. So the consequence-- if they acquired this disease, then there wasn't a chance to survive it.

Did the Japanese make the inoculations available to the community?

Yeah.

At no cost?

At no cost. Right.

But it was just a matter of whether they decided to follow through--

Decided-- yeah, exactly. Yeah. It was mandatory to be inoculated, but then who can control millions of Chinese? [LAUGHS] I mean, [INAUDIBLE] speaking. So--

What was the experience like in the other hospital? You said you had gone to the refugee hospital.

Yeah, well, I didn't stay there too long, with just malaria.

Mhm? And that's when you got the vaccine from Dr. Wolff--

Whether there or not, I do not remember. Maybe I got it there. Maybe I got it at home. I do not remember. Yeah. But definitely I know that certain-- that vaccine I got.

Did you know of any family members? Did you have the experience with family or with friends who died from the illnesses or any other cause or--

No, not family members, but I've-- there was a refugee-- I don't know his name-- two beds away from me, and he passed away.

This was in the--

And he talked to the Chinese nurses in German, as if they would understand him. So he was already-- so an unfortunate individual. I mean, very--

Now, this was in the isolation hospital?

Yeah, it was in isolation hospital.

OK. And he died--

I never experienced any bad effect on the other hospital. No, I didn't.

When the war started, how did you know? How did you find out?

Pearl Harbor?

Mhm?

Well, it was in the paper. We had our Shanghai Jewish--

And that's how you--

--the Chronicle.

--that's how you found out.

Yeah. Sure.

And what was--

During the war-- I have to tell you the truth-- instead of seeking shelter, when the B-29s flew over Shanghai to bomb Japan, my cousin and I, we went-- you know, all these houses had roofs, like, flat roofs-- we went up to the roofs and watched them. Never went to a shelter.

Watched them fly.

Fly. And the most humorous account which I was, we had a marine school that was behind our house. There was a Japanese marine school. And they tried to get these planes with rifles.

People were killed more by shrapnel than by-- by antiaircraft, you know, by shrapnel, than bombs. Well, as you'll recall, and probably you heard from somebody else, there was one day-- I think it was July 17, 1945, before the war, we were bombed. And that--

This is tape 2, side 2, with an interview with Mr. Herbert Broh. We were talking about the bombing of Hongkew.

Hongkew. Yes, I remember that episode. I was-- I was roaming around-- there was a place called SACRA. That was really heavily damaged, this building. people who lived there, was-- it was not a-- it wasn't a camp like the Ward Road camp was. I mean, we used to play around-- we used to play there quite often. We were kids. And we felt funny. We became alienated from the time of the bombing, you know. We were evacuated--

You became alienated--

Alienated, in respect to, we had the same friends, and so all of us met there, you know, just-- and then somehow we dispersed-- we were dispersed after-- because we were going in different directions. I don't know why. I have no explanation why.

Your experience meant that you had to separate.

We had to separate, yeah, because we were evacuated. But that particular place was heavily bombed or was heavily damaged. Our house, where we lived, was not shockproof anymore. So we were evacuated-- temporarily, that is-- to the Kadoorie school, which was in bungalows. They built bungalows--

Where-- the Kadoorie school where you had gone.

Yeah. Was gone. Now, the first--

The one you had attended--

Yeah.

--as a younger child.

As a younger child. I was 15, then. Excuse me. And so we were evacuated to the Kadoorie school, because they were each bungalows that we-- so we lived just like the Heimes, in bunk beds, I mean, that. So I had experienced, too, how it would feel to live not in a house but in a community type. So it was exactly the same way it was-- we lived in like they lived in these Heimes, in these camps.

So what was that experience like for you?

For me, it was exciting. [LAUGHS] I don't know. It was different. We had a big courtyard, big yard, and, you know, they had bungalows around a big yard. The most--

But the adverse experience, of course, I had was the bodies that they found. They piled them up just like wood, the Chinese. And I think we lost 30-some or 40 refugees. And the 300 over, you know. And they had--

Oh, the marine school that was behind us was damaged, too. That's why our house was kind of not shockproof anymore. So then, all of a sudden, the capitulation came.

And the day of the-- when Japan capitulated, we had a aircraft flying low over the Kadoorie school and dropping leaflets with the signature of General Wedemeyer. I think he thought it was a POW camp. I think-- that plane. He probably did not realize it was just us humble refugees. [LAUGHS] And he said, don't despair. I remember that. Don't despair. The American forces will be coming your way, blah, blah, blah.

How did that hit you?

That-- it was not quite aware of what's happening. There were-- OK, take this scenario, here. Excuse me. OK, around the Kadoorie school, there were ammunition dumps. And I've seen it. I still see it. I know people who remember it. I see

the Japanese soldiers, guarding these ammunition dumps with fixed bayonets yet.

Now, the war was over the day of the capitulation. And they were guarding these ammunition. It would be. If they would not have guarded ammunition with Chinese going in, and there would have been devastation. Chinese were throwing crackers, you know, their firecrackers. That was there know New Year's, Chinese New Year. They liked the-- liked their firecrackers too.

But here, that was a risk that they did. Because here were still armed Japanese. But they didn't harm them, no. No, so that same day, the day after the capitulation, some-- I think they were the first servicemen that came to the shores of Shanghai. All of a sudden, I've seen big fellows. I think they must have been Swedes. And they were the flyers of-- and they were coming to apologize to some of the people that were wounded. And I never forget this in my life. If I would have had, that time, a camcorder, that would have been something-- or a camera.

A fellow, one of the refugees, had an American flag hidden all through the war years. Raised up the American flag, and us-- we were 15, you know, and we sang "God Bless America." [LAUGHS] I can still feel the tears come to my eyes. That was such an emotional day-- unbelievable, unbelievable.

And so then they went around all these-- these little bungalows and introduced themselves. And I never met them personally.

These were Swedes and--

No, I'm saying they were like Swede--

They were, they-- oh, they looked.

I'm just making a comment. I don't know what they were.

They were American troops?

Of course-- American flyers--

They were definitely American.

--American Air Force people.

During the war, how did you perceive what was going on? How did it feel to you?

The feeling of the war-- did I mention already that I worked in this jewelry store?

You had started to talk about that.

I was working in this jewelry store, as an apprentice, and I was going to cheder and yeshiva in the afternoon or late in the evening. And it was damaged, during the war. I mean, during this bomb raid. But before that, we had to build the-- we had to-- I helped my boss-- oh. I can't think of it. What do you call it when-- when-- bunkers-- not bunkers.

A bomb shelter?

Bomb-- not bomb shelter. Excuse me. No, where troops go into the hole-- foxholes, like. Well, like a foxhole.

OK?

OK, what the Japanese expected was street fighting, actually. That was in 1944, late 1944. And they expected street fighting, so we had to make their foxholes for them.

They expected street fighting with the Allied troops.

Yeah. Or with the Chinese, with the Allied troops-- who knows? And we had to--

You built the foxholes.

--foxholes for them. And each store had a foxhole. Yeah.

What were the Japanese like, towards you?

To me?

Yeah.

My boss had-- his main clientele were Japanese and religious people, his--

Religious Jews?

Religious Jews--

And Japanese.

--and Japanese. Japanese colonels came and bought watches and showed-- colonels came, Japanese soldiers, you know, colonels, captains-- I don't know. They showed pictures of their wives in Japan. You know, it's very strange-- never felt that the animosity that-- I never felt any animosity. I'm sure they-- my dad-- I mean, his boss really was Japanese.

And so your family did not experience--

He had never, ever experienced any, except when he had to go to get the special pass from-- in order to go to work for this Mr. Ghoya.

Yes. What was that like?

Well, I never went-- well, yeah, I did go to-- I sought a pass to go somewhere to be an apprentice in a-- in a prostheses factory.

To make prostheses.

They made prostheses. That would have been a good thing, but then somehow it didn't work out.

OK.

So it didn't work out.

But the--

But then--

--that was the day that you needed to get a pass to go there.

Yeah. That was the day. And I think they were Germans. See, that's why they could be outside. They were in the French concession. I had to go to the French concession. You know, that was their business. And after the war-- well, I'll tell you that.

But did you meet Ghoya, that day?

I-- no. No. It was his partner, Kubota. Ever hear of him?

And was that different?

Yeah, Kubota was a different individual altogether.

I've heard that now, and I heard different stories, now, yesterday. I heard that Kubota was a fellow that gave out the passes just like that, without any-- and I have heard, later on, that he was a American counterspy. So, now then I hear that Ghoya was an American counterspy, and he didn't have any choice but to show authority or humiliation against the refugees. Now, I don't know.

You heard this when?

Just yesterday.

Oh, just yesterday.

But I don't know. I don't know.

Your father, though, had experiences with Ghoya. Yeah. Yeah, but he-- he had a lengthy pass. I mean, he didn't have to go there every day.

OK.

You know, he had a lengthy pass to go to his place of employment.

By and large, when you were working in the jewelry store, you were inside--

Yeah.

--the restricted area.

Yeah, inside, there was-- right. You should see all the shops, all these refugee shops, I mean, they had a provision store. You had a leather-goods store. You had-- we had pretty well self-sufficient stores. I mean, they were all refugees.

And I met a lady downstairs, and by coincidence, I knew there-- her parents had a leather-goods store next to the jewelry store. And I met them in Santa Monica. I'd never met this lady. She's about 10 years younger than I am.

And there was some, there's a shudder came to me. And I stayed over at their house in Santa Monica, by coincidence, because I met them on a bus. And I was taking a-- I had three days off from my work, you know. And I intended to go to the beach by myself and do a little strolling, walking down the beach.

And I landed up in Santa Monica with her parents. And I stayed overnight there. I never did do the beach. So--

Too much to talk about.

Too much, you bet. They had a button store in Santa Monica.

Now, when you talk about this exhilaration when the war ended, when you saw the American troops--

Yeah. Well, the American-- well, the American troops, I'd seen later on-- fewer-- maybe a few-- first, the Chinese troops



came in, the Nationalist, the Chinese troops came in-- occupied Shanghai.

What was that like?

They were poor-looking [LAUGHS] soldiers, with straw boots and straw-- I don't know how in the world they survived in the battlefield-- very poor-equipped soldiers. World War II-- World War I cannons. Well, the Japanese had World War I cannons, too.

But then, later on, little by little, the navy came in, and the armed forces came in. And then, of course, my dad did work for the armed force as a carpenter, I think it was.

And that might be where he got the American money you said--

Yeah, it could be. Could be. Yeah.

The experience after the war, in terms of deciding or trying to make plans to leave-- do recall that?

Yeah, sure. Well, we went through HIAS. And HIAS-- my dad was lucky, because he had the German quota. At that time, they went by quota systems. I guess they still do it today, I imagine.

And people from Austria, they were not so lucky they had to seek refuge-- I mean, they had to seek other places to go, because the United States would not take any people from Austria.

Hmm.

See, my cousin that was married in Shanghai, her husband was Austrian, so he couldn't come to the United States. So he went to Australia-- Australia. Now, my cousin, her brother came to the United States.

Your friend-- the cousin who you--

No, my cousin--

--the male cousin that you were good friends with.

Yeah.

Yes.

Yeah, he came-- now, he joined the yeshiva. I mean, he was in yeshiva, and the complete yeshiva went to Canada first. And then it came to the United States.

This is the Mir yeshiva.

The Mir yeshiva.

Mhm?

I'll tell you another-- that was a remarkable story. Just take this scenario. The Mir yeshiva-- they were ready to leave Shanghai. They were on the boats. And the rest of the secular people, I mean, the-- well, there were a lot of these from the cheder, the teachers from the cheders, and the Lubavitchers, a lot of the Lubavitcher people were-- there was a mixture of Lubavitchers and Lubliner people. See, they never stopped, these Lubliners, Lubavitchers.

How do you understand that they didn't starve?

Because I was there. [LAUGHS]. I mean, I didn't.

You just, you observed it.

They were observed-- yeah, because I--

You watched--

--I went-- I ate with them, I dined with them--

How do you understand that that--

Well, the thing is, the only thing-- that the Orthodox Russian Jews supported them. And that's the only thing, the only solution that I have. If you become religious, you were pretty well-off. If you do not-- if you remain unobservant, you were a loser, so to speak. I-- it sounds not too fair, that way, but I--

So when you talk about the Lubliners, you're talking about the--

There were just a handful of them.

--from the big yeshiva in Lublin.

Yeah. Yeah. Right, well, they came from there, yes--

Originally.

--but also Lubavitch-- some Lubavitch came from-- they were from Lithuania also. I think that's where the Lubavitch came from originally. Mirrer, though, Mirrer were more modern Orthodox. They were not Hasidim. They were called misnagdims.

The misnagdim.

Misnagdim, yeah. So-- but they were, of course, religious. They were. See, they were more maybe learned, or they took their studies very seriously, whereas the Hasidims and Lubavitcher were more of the spiritual-- dance a lot, sang a lot. Or I don't say that. They were very-- [LAUGHS] I'm sure they're very-- I mean, studious. I mean, they knew about.

But anyway, the-- so I was trying to get away from it. So I joined Toastmasters, and that's when my father's good for one story, go in the middle, and go back to the first one. So I'll tell you.

So here were the people from the Mir yeshiva, up there. My cousin was there, too. And here we were, the rest of us. And now can you picture this, the turmoil on this wharf? You know, people, you know, and rickshaws and what have you. And we started out to sang Ani Ma'amin, the song. Ever heard of it?

Ani--

(SINGING) Ani Ma'amin-- you could hear a pin drop. Like a miracle! You could have hear a pin drop.

Oh.

They started it. We started it. Ooh-- that was something else

Oh, my.

Yeah. So it was one of these highlights of Shanghai that I never will forget. You know, the one where we raised the

American flag, and singing Ani Ma'amin to the parting yeshiva.

Now this-- the Mir yeshiva left before you did?

Yeah, before, yeah. They left maybe a year before we did.

When did you leave?

1947.

And you came--

Then we went to Minnesota.

You came directly--

Oh no, no, not directly, but we directly to San Francisco. See, that's--

You were able to go to the United States in 1947.

Yeah. So my-- yeah, that's another thing. My first experience in-- my first luxury. My first luxury. There was no luxury in Shanghai-- by no means.

But my first luxury-- of course, we had to-- for one thing, you could not drink water from the faucet. You had to drink water-- you had to boil it first. And it was cheaper to buy boiled water from the vendor than boiling the water yourself. The gas was too expensive. And I never recall doing-- although we had gas, but we never used the gas stove. We used the charcoals. That's the only way of-- the cheapest way of doing.

So anyway, the first-- so the first luxury I had, when we went on the ship-- called the former troop transport, Marine Adder-- I hit the water fountain and drank from the water fountain. To me, that was the biggest luxury in life, just to-- went back and forth. Milk-- same thing with milk. You know.

Came to San Francisco, and we bought milk from the store, you know, how you could get milk from store, in the refrigerator. Now I don't drink enough milk. I don't drink enough water. You know. But things that we take for granted, oh.

During that time, did you have any information about what was going on in Europe?

Yeah, after the war, because we had a special--

No, during-- during the war.

No, not during the war. I had no--

You had no idea--

--conception--

--what was going on--

--no conception, no.

--with Hitler or the--

The concentration camps.

--the camps?

Not to my knowledge. Maybe my parents knew, but not to my knowledge.

It wasn't discussed.

It was not discussed. I don't think it-- I don't think the news were-- it was only in the Japanese theater. There was not too much of a-- well, sure, there's some news of Europe, but never-- I don't think there was-- maybe somebody remembered, here, but I sure didn't.

See, I did my thing. I went to cheder. I went to this, and I have worked in this jewelry store.

And that was it.

That was it.

Yeah.

And we did davening three times a day, you know, and [LAUGHS] that was another little-- this fellow was shomer Shabbat, you know, the-- Mr. Brenner, he was the owner of the jewelry store.

Mr. Brenner.

Brenner. And so he was a little bit of a, I should say, hypocrite. And here comes one of these rabbis from-- I don't know if he was Lubavitcher or he was-- [LAUGHS] and he bought something from him. And it was late in the afternoon. And he asked me-- he used to call me Herschel. You know. And-- can you speak Yiddish?

And he said, in Yiddish, he said, Herschel, du hast shon gedavent Mincha? I said, [LAUGHS] no, I didn't. Oh, [SPEAKING YIDDISH]. You know, just to make a show--

To go to daven Mincha.

Mincha, to the afternoon prayer. So to show this fellow that he was strict with his-- never cared about every day. He cared less whether I davened Mincha or not every day. You know, who cares? But just because he was standing there, buying some-- intending to buy some merchandise--

I see.

[LAUGHS] He was sending me to the other room, to daven Mincha.

So you did speak Yiddish.

I-- yeah, well, that's how we learned-- in cheder, in yeshiva.

Ah. You didn't-- not from Germany.

Not from Germany.

Not from Germany.

Oh, no, no.

And your family did not--

No my, no.

--did not speak Yiddish.

No, no, of course not.

But the yeshiva--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--yeshiva, that's how we learned. It was humorous, to see-- well, there's some students, when they had to give a lecture or an essay of something or another-- yeah, a lecture of some kind, on what we learned, he spoke in a very high German. Some people could not adapt to the Yiddish. It was-- we were laughing at him, because he was speaking with High German.

Mhm.

[LAUGHS] but I, like I said, I did have a grand time, there, all through the years. I never had any regrets-- never-- I wish I can go back sometime, you know, to-- a lot of people went back there to-- but it was one of my best years, without reservations.

What do you think about that affected the rest of your life?

The rest of my life? Being-- well, there was always a rub-off of Judaism. I was thankful, indirectly-- which I didn't mention before. Indirectly, I have to thank Mr. Sugihara for my higher learning in Judaism, because, due to him, the Mir yeshiva came to the-- well, they went to Kobe, and then they went to--

I have his book, by the way. I bought his book. He had a-- his son is lecturing all over the United States. Yeah.

So, thanks to Sugihara, you got the Jewish education that you got.

Real Jewish education. Yeah. The real Jewish education. And they were pushing-- these people were pushing me toward this education, you know. And despite the Russian Jews were religious people, rabbi-- chief rabbi was Russian. He was Rabbi Ashkenazi. He was his chief rabbi. And so--

But they did not mix too much in this-- in the ghetto, this ghetto area. So, but, you know. But it was through them, like well, it was obvious the Mir yeshiva was there.

This was the most significant piece--

The most significant, yeah, I would say, the most significant aspect of-- that's why I'm a cantor now. I'm in cantor in Sun City, California.

So you studied here, or you--

No, I said no.

It was from your learning there.

I remember, from-- yeah. I-- to conduct services, I primarily learned from Shanghai. Now, there are certain prayers that I-- as a matter of fact, when I was hired, so to speak-- I was working, and then I did this part-time. I went down to Fairfax Avenue-- you know where that is? --in Los Angeles-- and [LAUGHS] bought cantorial training records.

[LAUGHS] OK!

That was 22 years ago. And I'm there for 22 years in that congregation.

Oh.

And I don't have any-- my card here. And [LAUGHS] so to-- I made a tape on 78 records, you know, cassette tape. And then it came back, more or less. I had the biggest-- the scariest part was the Kol Nidre. I wanted to have it, make it-- do it perfect, you know. But-- so I even took Perry Como's rendition of Kol Nidre. That's [LAUGHS] a pretty good rendition.

Wonderful.

And actually I took it between him and between another cantor on that record. So I did OK.

Is there anything else you'd like to add before we--

Well, I never had any remorse, being there-- was-- to me, it was an exciting time. And it was-- we only can speak for my parents. They're the ones that lived in anxiety-- didn't know what-- they didn't know about this-- the results of this-- they hadn't even heard about this doctor, so-called, Meisinger that came and-- from-- the Butcher of Warsaw, wasn't it-- and to try to annihilate us.

But the biggest-- the bottom line is, the biggest irony is, you couldn't say that the Japanese move was an antisemitic move. Because the simple reason-- the Russian Jews lived outside the ghetto, like free people. The Iraqi Jews were interned, like, with the rest of the internees and were treated the same way, but not as Jews.

So we were the so-called stateless refugees which [LAUGHS] were primarily Jews. In my evaluation, in order to pacify the Germans, the Japanese had to do something. Remember the Fiddler on the Roof? In order to pacify the tsar, they made this disturbance in during the wedding.

Mhm.

--the same thing. And so-- so I never-- I myself never had any animosity against the Japanese. Now, my cousin that lived here in Philadelphia, they were-- I don't think-- now, I don't know how the attitude changed or not. But they wouldn't buy a Japanese car.

Mm.

So people had bad experiences with some Japanese people. And so the war-- I mean, you know, our marines did bad things to the Japanese, too. I mean-- but again, I mean, there's no comparison. The Bataan March-- I mean, there's the atrocities that they did. I've seen atrocities against the Chinese. I mean, I was there before the war, before the-- no, before the American War.

You saw this.

Yeah, I mean, they hit-- you know, this Garden Bridge? You know, we had these-- I don't know if I mentioned this already or not. We had a French gendarme, I guess, and a Japanese gendarme, an American soldier, and a British soldier, guarding the Garden Bridge. And of course, the Chinese, when they crossed over, they had to bow to the Japanese. In case they didn't bow, then he would hit with the butt of the rifles.

Oh.

I've seen that. So they treated the Chinese very badly. You know. That's the only time I've seen-- but I didn't see severe

atrocities. You know, and beggars, I mean, you know, that was a common sight. And the common sight during the wintertime-- not our people but the refugees and the Chinese. They used to pick them up, like a garbage collector, you know, on a pitchfork. I've see that. That's the only thing that kind of--

That stays in your mind.

--stays in my mind.