

This is tape 3, side 1, of an interview with Mr. Herbert [NON-ENGLISH].

I started to say what I've learned and what my reaction was, living in China. If there was any aftereffect, it didn't affect me in later years. No, it didn't. But I've learned-- I've learned lessons, many lessons.

One lesson I mentioned is that human life was-- there was no value in human life, primarily, among the Chinese people in those days. And--

When you say there was no value, you mean this is how the Japanese perceived it or the Chinese?

Well, among themselves even. Among the Chinese themselves, there was no-- the Japanese at least made it mandatory to be that the Chinese were inoculated, in order not to spread disease. But the Chinese would never have done that.

And the survival of Chinese beggars, the ones that couldn't make it were-- survival was on a minimum. And a thing that is in my mind again is that the starving Chinese people, especially among the beggars, were just, they died on the street, and even the people that were not beggars had their infants-- they wrapped them around and let them freeze to death-- or maybe they were dead already-- in their straw mats. And I've seen that. And I could not figure out why.

And at the end of a week or so, then a truck came and, with pitchforks, they picked up those corpses, just like garbage cans. I mean, like garbage collection. Well, that sticks in my mind, yes. But it did not affect me per se.

But it's something you remember.

It's something I remember. Of course, the primitive living that we lived during the time that I remember, of course, when we did not have all the luxury we had in our first house, of course-- but again, we survived that. There was no problem.

You mentioned, before, about Mr. Meisinger.

Yeah. I had no inkling about that at all-- and until after the war.

What was your understanding of what that was all about? How did you understand it, at the time?

Well, that was already after the war. And because, I guess, he was the according to the paper, that he described all the Treblinka camps and-- and they had a whole series and they-- in our local paper. And that-- I could not believe that the Japanese would do that-- would annihilate-- annihilate the Jewish population, including the Russian Jews.

When-- you were aware when he came to Shanghai--

I was not aware. No.

OK.

I wasn't aware.

So were you aware that there was some talk about whether or not there was a plan?

Uh-uh. No, until after the war, I've learned it. I've learned that after the war. As a matter of fact, I did not learn it after I came to the United States.

When you learned it, how was it described to you? Was it described as an actual plan to annihilate the Jews of Shanghai?

That's right. That's right.

Or that it was a hoax?

No, no. I thought it was a hoax, but the rumors were-- and I don't know. I cannot confirm that, that they were starting to build any preparation for a concentration camp.

This is what you heard.

Yes, what I heard. Yeah. No, I cannot confirm or deny [or the -- that they were starting to-- and then, miraculously, the-- just the atom bomb was bombed, and then the war was over. Now--

And then, in the concentration camp was to be a death camp? Or--

A death camp, yeah.

It was to be a death camp.

That was supposed to be a death camp, yeah.

So your understanding of it is that there was an actual plan.

A plan, exactly. But not-- I learned, not-- not until I even came to the States. And it wasn't even discussed in Shanghai, for some reason or another.

You don't think your parents were aware of it? Or it wasn't--

I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know. It never was discussed. And not-- I just heard it from other people.

And that what stopped it was the fact that the war ended.

That the war ended, yeah.

OK.

Now, I talked to a Russian woman here that came to this reunion . And she says that the plan was to annihilate all Jews. And due to the atom bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima, she was saved. I mean, her life was saved. I'm still in disbelief that this would have had happened, because my conception of the Japanese were that they respected the religion, because they--

Did you ever hear of the Amshinov rebbe? He was-- well, I guess, the Amshinov, he was from the town of Amshinov, somewhere in Poland or Lithuania somewhere. He had a beard. He looked like a -- I mean, he-- like Moses himself. He could live outside the perimeter of the ghetto. He had his own horse and wagon.

Now, was he a refugee--

He was a refugee, like everybody else.

He was. Uh-huh?

But he they respected him so much. And he was respected by others, too. I mean, he was almost like a saint, like a miracle worker, almost like that Rabbi Schneerson here.

Mm.

So that's how he was. And I know [LAUGHS] some people even think Rabbi Schneerson is probably the Messiah. [LAUGHS] But anyway, I don't want to say--

But this particular rebbe, from the town of-- can you spell the town?

I only know that his-- I cannot even spell it. It's [MUMBLING] I just said it. MUMBLING} - trying to figure out word I can't even--

OK. But it was--

Something like that, you know.

But he was that special.

If you go back to the tape, I probably said it very clearly. But he was-- yeah. He was--

He was that special.

--right. And as a matter of fact, he was blessed at my-- my cousin that became a rabbi was blessed by him. I remember him visiting us in that [INAUDIBLE] synagogue.

Yes.

Yes.

Now, when you came to the United States, you did not stay with the watch-repair work--

I did. I worked for Goodman Jewelers and tried to reestablish my-- but I hated every minute of it. And then, I went to the University of Minnesota for a year, and I dropped that. Then finally, I came-- I was married there, in Minnesota, and came to the United States--

I came to-- came to--

LA?

No, well, to Riverside, California. And then I worked for a company for 40 years, in quality control. I liked this job. Then I'm acquired this job as cantor 22 years ago. [LAUGHS] I'm still doing it. And by the way, when we were sponsored--

The way we came to the United States, we were sponsored by a pretend cousin of ours.

Ah!

I don't know if you know that-- if you're aware of it.

A pretend cousin.

Pretend cousin. In other words, a cousin, I forgot his name, but this family lived in Cleveland and supposed to be improvised cousin of ours--

Did you know--

[BOTH TALKING] Yeah, no, they were strangers. But in other words, the stipulation, the conditions, the conditions

was that we were not supposed to be in touch with -- them In other words, they were sponsoring us, and that was it. It was a pretend cousin. in order to quicker to sponsor us to come to the United States.

Who organized that?

The HIAS.

This was through HIAS. OK.

That was through HIAS. Yeah.

And they were getting backers, anonymous backers--

Backers, yeah, anonymous backers.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

That's what they told us not to come in contact with them.

And did you?

Oh, no, we never-- we never had any reason to-- any reason to.

Is there anything else that you want to add about this time?

I can't think of anything, except the emotional aspect that I experienced in Shanghai, like I told you about. And I'd like to visit Shanghai sometime again. Well, I have a little-- I have friends, Chinese people, now, that they are almost [NON-ENGLISH] with me.

[LAUGHS]

I'll tell you why.

Met them in this-- met them here, in-- I have a friend, my friend-- I have a friend that I lived with. She always-- one of these-- let's put it this way. She was a friend of the family. And I'm staying with her now in a-- since I had heart surgery, I was staying with her.

And she had a graduate student that she rents out a room for a graduate student. She lives right close by University of California-- University of Riverside, Southern California Riverside, UCR. And this happened to be a Chinese girl. And she was born in Shanghai. And her parents are still in Shanghai. And she graduated.

So there was a common bond between her and I. We talked about streets and so on. And unfortunately I never learned to speak Chinese. I mean, I was in the Korean War. I would have had it made, if I would have known Chinese, because I would have been an interpreter. But unfortunately I never adopted that language, because we didn't need to. We had our own language.

You learned Yiddish! [LAUGHS]

Between Yiddish, German, and English, you know.

Uh-huh.

So [LAUGHS] anyway, so she fell in love with a fellow from Taiwan-- very unique. And they were married. They have two kids now.

And we were so-- cause this lady and I, we were her adopted parents, so to speak. So on her wedding, we were invited to their wedding, in Fremont, California. She asked me if I want to be the entertainer because I play the musical saw, this is a carpenter's saw.

And I played on my harmonica. [LAUGHS] So-- so I did, and I they want to hire somebody else, a fiddler or somebody, and then they-- she heard me, and she -- hey, Herb, why don't you do this? So I did. And I asked, so I do double talk. And I said, would they be offended if I would double-talk Chinese, you know, a satire way? So she said, no, no.

And a massive ceremony-- [INAUDIBLE] it was it her friend. I asked the same question. She says, no, go ahead. So I did. And-- what I've learned about China and Shanghai and so on and so forth.

And I played a tune, a Chinese tune, which, I had no idea what I was playing, because I just adapted the hearing, you know, a sound. And would you believe that people, old-timers, were humming that tune. I had no idea what I was playing.

Oh. But it stayed with you.

It stayed with me, yeah. So anyway, I saw there were numerous, there -- on their wedding, he was-- her husband works for a pharmaceutical. He also went to UCR. And he works in statistics. He works for-- a good job in a pharmaceutical company.

So anyway, so they had a child and have two children now. And they they called me Poppy, and they called my friend Bobi

Oh.

And anyhow, they--

That's a wonderful legacy.

--one of these days, I might marry this woman. who knows, you know? And now they have another child. And we are so close, so close. So if I go to Shanghai -- she wanted to bring her parents to this country. And she still wants to.

But I like to go there when they were still living in Shanghai. I mean, I have a good place to go. And they want to-- they had some pictures I'm going to show you, some pictures that they took presently of Hongkew.

Oh. That would be a wonderful way for you to go back--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Yeah, it would be, before they would come to this country--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

And remarkably, we have so many Chinese-- their friends. And it's sort of coincidental that she prefers-- she had an American student now. but she prefers Asians, because why? Because they're just like family, because they don't have anybody here--

No.

--and they're just like family. And all the Asians, she had them, that she had at her rental were all contacts. they email to them and everything. Still in contact with them. That's beautiful. So anyway, China gave me a good, optimistic-- or good-- not "optimistic," but a good attitude and a good-- a good-- not an adversity, by no means.

Yes.

We've seen a lot of anguish, a lot of things that stay with you, of course. But personally, I never regret it, and I would do it over again.

Oh.

[LAUGHS]

Mr. Broh thank you--

Oh, you're welcome. [LAUGHS]

--so much.

Sometimes, I can't-- you want to think-- say things, the right things, you [? can't ?] express.

You have said a great deal. And I thank you.

Well, I thank you.

This is an additional memory that Mr. Broh would like to add to his testimony.

[INAUDIBLE] to show Josie Fisher some Shanghai pictures. I came across a picture of my mother, here, that-- when she was working, and I forgot to mention this in the tapes. She was working, all through the war years, for the kindergarten. There used to be a Komor kindergarten. I think Komor-- I don't know-- is he related to the Kadoorie or to the Sassoon families?

No, he worked with them, but he was separate--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Oh, he was separate. Was he Iraqi also? Was he an Iraqi Jew, or was he-- I don't even remember.

No, I don't believe he was. I don't remember. But anyhow, anyhow it was Komor.

Mhm? K-O-M-O-R, I believe.

K-O-M-O- -- Yeah. And this kindergarten. And as I can see, there are some ruins in the background, which was still ruins from the 1937 war with Japan. And this particular kindergarten was rebuilt. That was in the backyard of the--

I used to hang around there, quite a few times a few times. And this picture is with the staff. And this is my mother.

Ah. This here is-- she was a cook, in that particular kindergarten.

Now, she was able to do this throughout the--

Throughout the war years, yes. Yes.

Because--

It was still just like the Kadoorie school existed during the war years-- which, of course, all the English teachers, all the - were British subjects, whoever-- cannot recall too many of them--

Because it was outside the ghetto.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Well, yeah, but no. But no, that was within the ghetto.

It was within the ghetto, but it still functioned--

It still functioned--

--during the war.

Yeah.

OK.

But the Kadoorie school, there were some contradicting statements that was made yesterday. Now, I'm not sure if these bungalows I mentioned in the tape were built after the proclamation. I think now, as I vaguely remember-- because the original Kadoorie school was in a big building, like any other school-- any other high school. And I'm pretty sure the continuation-- the contingency, I guess-- of the Kadoorie school was that they built these bungalows within the area. But then the--

Because somebody said, no, the Kadoorie school was outside the perimeter of the ghetto. Then I said, no, Kadoorie school was within. So I must have gone to the Kadoorie school before they built-- now, funny, I do not remember that too well. I only remember the bungalows.

But it was the same school that you had gone to.

The same school, exactly.

OK.

Exactly. The same school.

The same school that you had gone to before you had to move into the restricted area.

Yeah, that's right. Right.

But both--

So the same token--

The Komor school--

--this kindergarten existed, but that happened to be within the district anyway.

Right.

And-- Yeah, so that existed.

Wonderful. OK.

Yeah.

Thank you.

You're welcome. [LAUGHS]

Mr. Broh is going to describe one more photograph for us.

This photograph that was sent by friends that I have in Shanghai. They are Chinese. And they photographed this memorial. And there's an inscription here, in Chinese and in English and in Hebrew.

And this was erected by--

By the Chinese government.

--by the Chinese government.

Yeah. And the description states-- it's [INAUDIBLE] very shiny, here, so I'm going to try to-- the best I can. "The designated area for stateless refugees from 1937 to 1941. Thousands of Jews came to Shanghai, fleeing from Nazi persecution and Japan. And Japanese-occupation authorities regarded them as stateless refugees and set up this designated area to restrict their residence and business. The designated area was bordered on the west by [PLACE NAME] Road"-- that says here G-- probably they changed the name-- [PLACE NAME] Road on the east side of [PLACE NAME] Road, and to the south of [PLACE NAME] Road, and the North by the [PLACE NAME] Road." I don't know. I hope I pronounce that right, "Hongkew District People Government." That's what it says-- "Hongkew District Government."

Thank--

You're welcome.