HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HENRY KAHN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Harriet Richman
Date: April 26, 1982

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HK - Henry Kahn [interviewee]
HR - Harriet Richman [interviewer]
Date: April 26, 1982

Tape one, side one:

HR: Can you tell me when and where you were born and when and a little bit about your family?

HK: I was born in Munich, Germany on September 27, 1925, to an upper middle-class Jewish family. My family was -- the business end of it was a German representative for Silesian[1] coal. They were coal wholesalers.

HR: Tell me a little bit about your life. What was it like before the war or before your life was changed by the Nazis?

HK: Well, it was a pleasant life. We had -- we lived in one of the better parts of Munich then and we were a close knit family. We had a summer home near Munich and that is where the family got together during the summer. Nothing too exciting.

HR: You told me that you were an only child. Did you have a large extended family or …

HK: Well, I had an aunt who was a widow, who had one daughter, and I more or less grew up with my cousin. We were very close. I had an uncle who was a bachelor on my father's side and my grandparents on my mother's side who -- and my grandfather was the patriarch of the family and then I had a grandmother who was very close on my father's side and her family I was not so close with. Her sisters, and she had many sisters and brothers. She was the widow of an official of the King of Bavaria government. He was an architect, an engineer really, who built all the roads in and around Munich. He died in the line of service back in 1907, when he was traveling to survey some roads. When he was traveling along the river Isar, which flows through Munich, and the boat capsized in a flood stage of the river. He and several of his companions at the time, who were also engineers, and the fellow that navigated the boat. A few were rescued but he and several others drowned and there is still a monument at that point along the banks of the Isar. I didn't look for the picture, but it's there with the pictures of my son when we were there in front of it -- because he was one of the most prominent officials of the town.

HR: What was his name?

HK: August Kahn.

HR: August. That's interesting.

HK: August. Well, he was one of the few Jewish employees of the king's government. My grandmother lived off the pension, a generous pension from the

[1]Silesia – East German area near Poland

government that I recall -- and my uncle was a lawyer and a playwright. He was very popular in Munich, which had an artists' quarter. He was very active in that.

HR: Well, was there a large Jewish population in Munich?

HK: Fairly large. It came in two sections: the Orthodox and the Reformed. The Reformed was the main. These were the Jewish business and professional people, and there was not too much intermingling with the more Orthodox.

HR: Were the Orthodox Jews more recent arrivals [unclear]?

HK: Yes, these were more or less people that came from Poland, whereas the more -- the professional and the business segment of the population had roots going back to the early, late 18th and early 19th century and they had immigrated. These were the people that had immigrated through France from Spain through France, Holland and so on, and then settled on the way. My family tree on my father's side goes back to Dutch Jews, and people that lived in Alsace-Lorraine and traveled. My mother's side, on the other hand, came from Bohemia. Now my grandfather -- I have my parent's pictures upstairs if you want to see them -- my grandfather came from Regensburg, Ratisbon, originally, and my grandmother came from Bohemia. Her father was a manufacturer of some sort, I don't know exactly what. He had a lot of daughters and he supplied Franz Joseph, the Austrian Emperor, with some things and he was given a title, as a matter of fact, which was not inherited by any of the daughters. It could only be inherited by a son and he never had a son. If he did, I seem to recall he had a son who died in infancy. He had a lot of daughters. One of them was my grandmother who was a twin. Her twin sister lived in Vienna, Austria, and she lived with two maiden sisters, one of whom was an artist and the other one was in some kind of handicraft business also. The twin sister had a daughter who lived in New York and I lost all contact with her. I looked her up when I was in New York the last time to telegram my father. My father was in contact with her, but she was a divorcee and in her seventies. I don't know what happened to her. And the other two maiden aunts – one of them died before the war, and the other one was lost in the war.

HR: Well, these two Jewish communities in Munich, did they live in specific sections of Munich or separate from each other?

HK: Orthodox Jews lived in a certain quarter in Munich, right, and they were less assimilated. More assimilated Jews lived throughout.

HR: There was no such thing as Jews could not live in any particular part of the city?

HK: No. Somehow or another they just stayed together like they did in the United States because when they came there was a language problem. As a matter of fact, they did not speak Yiddish there because the Yiddish language was more or less unknown in Germany proper because that language was developed by people who immigrated to Russia and Poland. And when they immigrated those countries and came to the United States -- some of them settled in France, in Paris -- and the first time I heard

the Jewish language, Yiddish, as such was when I was in Paris. I didn't even know the language existed.

HR: At what age are you talking about, when you were a child?

HK: Yes, about 13.

HR: You didn't know it existed?

HK: We were all, my family at least, and -- maybe the Orthodox segment of the populations knew about it, but we never heard Yiddish. Now the funny thing is after 4th grade I had to attend a segregated school, only Jews, and we had people from both sides of the track, so to speak, in that school, and there I heard no Yiddish. Hebrew, yes. Yiddish, no. So the Yiddish language was at that time virtually unknown, to me, anyway.

HR: In Germany?

HK: In Germany.

HR: What Jewish affiliations did you have? Did your family belong to a synagogue? Or organizations?

HK: Oh yes, a synagogue.

HR: Do you remember the name of it?

HK: It had no name. It was "the synagogue." There was one in each town. There was a Conservative, and then there was the Orthodox, and it was usually known by its location. This one was the synagogue on the Herzog Max Street. That was where it was located. The other synagogue, which was Orthodox, which I had never seen at the time, is now more less a rebuilt synagogue in Munich. When I was in Munich, the first time...

HR: What year was that? You went back?

HK: Yes. '76 I believe. We went to a Friday night service.

HR: At which synagogue?

HK: The only one that is extant.

HR: That's the Orthodox?

HK: Well, it is rather Orthodox. We belong here to Reform. And my wife and son and I walked into the synagogue which was in the back court of the Jewish Community Service Building.

HR: Was it existing when you were a child?

HK: Well, there was the Orthodox, the location of it. I don't know how much of it was rebuilt. It may have been more or less that synagogue. I really don't know. I wanted to talk to some people -- we walked in downstairs in the synagogue and the men almost went into apoplexy. My wife was downstairs -- no women were allowed downstairs, and my son and I had no *yarmulkes*. So they quickly ushered her out to go upstairs and they found some *yarmulkes* for my son and myself. My son had just been bar-mitzvahed. It was a rather Orthodox service, type of service and I wanted to speak with the Rabbi who had been on vacation, the man conducting the service was just one of the congregants. I wanted to speak to some people after the service -- it was a rather

Orthodox service where everybody wore *tallis*, *yarmulke*. The whole service was conducted in Hebrew and it wasn't at all the service we were accustomed to. My son wanted to leave right away. He was very impatient. He had just been 13 at that time or 14, he was just going on 14. And I wanted to speak to some people after the service. The funny thing is that not one person stopped to speak to me; they all rushed out. I spoke with them in German and they all said they had no time. Finally, I spoke to somebody who was there from New York who was there on business and he explained the whole situation. They were all trying to get home.

HR: It was *Shabbos*? It was Friday night and they had to go home.

HK: Nobody would give me any information except this New Yorker who was [phone rings. Machine off and then on]. Alright, going back to the synagogue itself, it was right behind...

HR: Tell us the name of it and where it was, and this is the Reform congregation?

HK: Yes, the Reform congregation which was -- there were two synagogues in Munich: the Orthodox, which was a small, very Orthodox synagogue, attended mostly by those people who had come west from Poland and settled in that vicinity because they would not ride on *Shabbos*. Most of the people attending this synagogue would, of course, take trolleys or automobiles to travel on *Shabbos*. Here is a picture of the synagogue. It was a typical Moorish type architecture, common throughout Europe and even in the United States, of synagogues built in that era, but mostly in Germany itself. They were all these imposing brick, most of them, not all, but most of them were of this type. And it was right behind the Art Alliance which stood across the street on one of the main thoroughfares in Munich and the Nazis did not like this structure to be overlooking the Art Alliance and they tore it down in July 1938 and built a parking lot. I remember I was in school and the rumor went right through the school that all the people who had pews, who owned pews in the synagogue, were called to take out their belongings like *tallis* -- you wore *tallis* and *yarmulke* in that synagogue. Of course it was Conservative. When I came home my father told me he had picked up his *tallis* and prayer books from his pew because they were tearing down the building, which they did. Right next to it is the building that housed the community center.

HR: Was there a connection between the two?

HK: No, there was sort of an open, sort of an alleyway between the two buildings. You can't see it because of the perspective here. But it was an adjacent building and that housed the chapel as well as offices for the congregation. My cousin's wedding was the last wedding held in that synagogue. My parents were married in that synagogue. My cousin's wedding was in May of '38 and was the last wedding held there, in that synagogue.

HR: Do you want to tell us her name?

HK: Her name was Annelise. Her maiden name was Meyer. Her married name was in Munich, Grünhut. It's Gruen now. They live in Milwaukee and he is a businessman in Milwaukee.

HR: Now they didn't tear this building down?

HK: Oh, eventually they did.

HR: But, right at that point they did not?

HK: At that point, they left that building because it was not towering over the Art Alliance. It was just one of those buildings which was the whole block more or less of that type. As I said, the chapel was housed in that building, and I was bar mitzvah in that building, in that chapel in that building. My bar mitzvah was in October '38, one of the last bar mitzvahs in Munich, because it was right before Crystal Night which was November 9, 1938. Now, as far as that particular picture goes it has an interesting history. Because when we were in Munich in 1976 we went through shopping one Sunday evening looking at the department store windows and so on. And we came to a very nice interior decorator's, or more or less a place selling furniture and interior decorations and so on. And in the window were etchings of various Munich scenes, like famous fountains, famous buildings and all of a sudden, I came across the Munich synagogue. I said to my wife, "We are going to come back here tomorrow when the store is open, and I will get a half dozen of these and give one to my father and one to my cousin and to other people we know." So we went back the next day and the first salesman I approached said, "Oh, no, these are not for sale, they are single items from a collection, they belong to the widow of the artist who made them, and they are not for sale." But they let me talk to the decorator, who is a friend of that widow's and maybe I can get it through him. So this fellow, who I thought was a much younger fellow than I--and as it turned out, he was only a year younger than I, come and we spoke briefly and he said, "No, they are not for sale, they belong to the widow of Felix Brittner who was the artist who made them, those etchings. They are not for sale." But we were talking for a while and he said, "I will tell you what, I am an artist myself and I will make a copy of it and I will send it to you," and within three weeks after we came back, this came. That is the interesting part. This is the story about it. This is the picture of the fellow who made the drawing, Hans Meyer. He is the one that made the ink drawing from the etching. This is an original ink drawing.

HR: And Felix...

HK: Felix Brittner is the architect that made the etchings.

HR: Right.

HK: He was an architect by profession. He made the etchings and his widow exhibited them at the store.

HR: I see and Ernest Meyer copied it.

HK: He made a copy in ink and sent it to me back in 1976, the 25th of October, 1976. I thanked him. I think I paid him a nominal fee, very, very little. I think about

equivalent to $30.00. And he thanked me and pretty soon he sent me occasional drawings he made. He was an artist and sort of a friendship blossomed. He said we will have a standing invitation when we come back to Munich; his wife will make a real Bavarian dinner for us. And I wrote to him Christmas and sent him a Christmas card and Easter card, and he always sends me a drawing around Christmas time of some Christmas scene in Munich. He knew I was Jewish of course, because of this. Well, when we went back in 1980, I think it was 1980 we went, yes, I was a guest of the city of Munich. I will tell you about that too, any person that had to leave, any Jew that had to leave because of persecution, is a guest of the city of Munich for up two weeks. Everything is free, hotel, food, theatre tickets and so on, an interview with the mayor, and so on. But you have to put in a year in advance. So we did that in '79, and '80 we went. We were staying in Munich for two weeks in a very nice hotel, beautiful room with bath, and they gave you cash for your dinners plus theatre tickets and then they wish you well. And you see the mayor, and they give you a first class opera seat and so on, and they treat you like sort of a VIP out of friendship or restitution, I don't know. Well anyway, at that time I visited Ernst Meyer. I called him when we came in. I had his phone number and I had no answer. I called several times and I finally called his wife at work and she told me that her husband is in the hospital. He has a very bad case of bronchitis but he wants to see us definitely and they invited us over for an evening, at which time he came out of the hospital. They gave him sort of a weekend pass and on the next Monday he went back into the hospital. And as it turned out, as I suspected, it wasn't bronchitis, it was cancer, and he died shortly thereafter. He died the 22nd of January, 1981.

HR: This is a memory card, isn't it?

HK: Well, they usually send it out in Germany. It is a black bordered obituary, which they send to relatives and friends. So he died with cancer.

HR: When do you think this picture was taken?

HK: She sent me this to have a memory of not in pain, but the way he looked. I don't know exactly when it was taken.

HR: It wasn't too long before he died but he looks so well.

HK: Yes, we went over and we had a very nice evening at their place. He was a prisoner of war in America and he didn't speak any English, so my wife and he could converse very little. I did all the translating but he did learn in the prisoner of war camp some American song, he brought out his guitar, and sang, "Home on the Range." He was very nice and he made this drawing for me. He gave me a whole slew of drawings and he said "Come back when we come to Germany again," but of course he passed away.

HR: Was there any discussion between the two of you about what happened?

HK: Well, he was very much -- he was a youngster, he was a year younger than I, so he was in school. He didn't know many Jews, he came from a poor section of Germany. He was forced to join the Hitler Youth and he didn't want to. He would much rather sit at home and draw. But they picked him up and forced him, more or less, into

the Hitler Youth. That's the way he told me the story. His wife, on the other hand, her father was a police official. They had no contact with Jews other than what she said was his line of duty, and they felt badly at the time. But they didn't know them so they didn't feel too badly, I feel and he was in the German army. He was taken prisoner and I think it was Africa and came -- he said he looked to be taken prisoner very soon and he led a very nice life in the United States traveling from prisoner of war camp to prisoner of war camp. He belonged to the Hitler Youth but he said he was never much in favor of it but he did this for me. You know, it's hard. These people, as Niemöller said, they didn't do much when they went after the Jews because they weren't Jews. When they went after the Catholics they didn't do much because they weren't Catholics. By the time they went after the Protestants it was too late. It was a well orchestrated plan of annihilation. Many of the people did not really have Jewish acquaintances. They just didn't pay any attention.

HR: Before we get on to things more in that line, let's just go back and talk again about Jewish life in Munich before the war. You belonged to the synagogue, you became a bar mitzvah. Did you have other affiliations with other Jewish organizations?

HK: Well, after fourth grade, from grade five on, Jewish youngsters were no longer allowed to attend public school.

HR: What year was that?

HK: Fourth grade, let's see, that was about 1935. Roughly about 1935. My teacher at the Jewish – of course all the Jewish elementary teachers and secondary teachers lost their jobs, and, of course they were hired by the Jewish Community. They became teachers of the [unclear]. My fifth grade teacher was the uncle of Henry Kissinger. Kissinger's father was an elementary teacher and he had two brothers. Two of them went to Munich, one of them married and had some children and he was my teacher and his brother was also a teacher. All of them were lost in the war. But that was the uncle of Henry Kissinger. He was my fifth grade teacher. I attended the school from grade five, six, and in grade seven, I think it was grade seven or maybe it was five, I'm not quite sure, there was a quota of Jewish children that could attend so-called better schools.

HR: These Jewish schools, where were they housed?

HK: Well, one of them was, oh, wait a minute, there was a third synagogue I believe down at -- I don't know what the section was called. It's right near one of the better hotels and Kanalstrasse was the name of the street. And that's where the Jewish elementary school was housed. But, of course, it became so overly large with the population, so they had the back part of a public school building in one of the neighborhoods, and it was in the back -- and our lunch period had to be different from the others, so we had no contact with the other children. We walked in the back earlier than the other school opened and we left earlier; our lunch periods were at such a time that the

other kids weren't out there. It was part of the school system in Munich, it was housed there. Oh, I lost my train of thought.

HR: You were saying about something that happened in either the fifth, sixth or seventh grade.

HK: Oh, yes, there was a limited number of Jewish youngsters that could attend the so-called better schools, privately run, so my parents wanted me to go to that. I attended some tutoring sessions to be brought up to the level of these schools.

HR: Were these better schools still Jewish schools?

HK: No, they were gentile. They were the gentile students.

HR: And you went to them?

HK: Let me finish. They were allowed to have three per hundred, like three percent Jewish, so they secured a place for me at this school. I went to the -- I was tutored in biology, which I didn't have in the Jewish school, I was tutored in math, and I was tutored in English so I would be up to par for that grade level, whatever it was, five, six, seven, I guess it was fifth grade, I am not quite sure. Well, I finally transferred to that school. The first day was very nice. We had very small classes. We had departmentalized subjects, not like in a Jewish school, where one teacher taught everything. But we had one teacher for biology. We had another teacher for English. We had another teacher for -- well, even in the Jewish school the English teacher was somebody else. Okay, the art teacher was somebody else, and the religious teacher was somebody else. It was the cantor, as a matter of fact, from the synagogue. But here we had different teachers for most of the subjects, German, English, biology, and I can't remember all of the other subjects, history. And the first day went very well. The second day, one of the kids asked me if I was Aryan and I said, "No," and from that day, I had no more friends to talk with. The kids avoided me like the plague. In fact, they made some remarks in class, and I lasted three days. After that I'd had it. I was totally ignored; I was not beaten or anything, but I was totally ignored and after three days, went back to the Jewish school, and there the kids made a big fuss about it, how was it, and so on and so on.

HR: Did most of the children drop out do you think or don't you know?

HK: There was one other Jewish kid at that school. I would see him at lunch and he was walking by himself. There was nobody talking with him. I didn't talk with him, I didn't know him, and maybe most of the kids dropped out.

HR: Like you left, so you didn't know.

HK: I have no idea, there were so few. There were -- I don't know what the Jewish population was in Munich at that time, but it was about 6-, 7,000, at least. The Jewish population in Munich right now is about 4- or 4,500. I found that out from when I was there in 1980, and I was talking to the president of the congregation. Not the congregation, the community, who happened to have known my uncle because he was rather popular. He was one of the returnees and said to me that there were four families

that returned, 4 out of those 5,000 families and even those are elderly and some of them, I think, might have died by then. Of course, they could live fairly well because Germany at this time is rather generous in their restitution, and people live very comfortably on what they were paying, and so they live in Germany. But only four of them returned. All the others were East Europeans who had come out of the concentration camps and displaced persons camps. And they were -- there are more or less business people, not professionals, because they had no education as such because they were Jewish. Maybe some of the younger ones, maybe, but the older ones were in business, storekeepers. That's what the population is there now. Well, anyway, I lasted three days, and I went back to the Jewish school. I was happy to be back. The school lasted until November the 10th, 1938, at which time, of course, there was Crystal Night, November 9th and 10th, and that was the end of school, and nobody went back and I don't know what became of it. I have one friend who went from first grade on with me through that school. He was the son of a mixed marriage. His father was Jewish and his mother was gentile. His sister went to England. He stayed in Germany during the war. He was friendly with some of the 100% Jewish youngsters who were not able to leave, and were not transported to various places. And from what I understand, I saw him in 1978. His father was saved because his wife was a Gentile. Usually spouses of mixed marriages to some extent survived. My own uncle survived -- my father's uncle survived. Those that were married to Gentiles, and Walter, who was my friend from first grade, he survived, had some difficult...

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

HK: …50% Jewish and 50% gentile. His father survived the war because of his marriage to a gentile woman who would not leave him, who would not leave him. They survived somehow or other. Walter was picked up several times, transported to camps and always escaped. The last time they picked him up and took him to Dachau he escaped out of the train and made his way down to the Swiss border and by the time he reached the Swiss border the war was over; he returned home. After the war, his father, who was an accountant for a shirt manufacturer, who had, well -- the manufacturer had died in Germany, prior to the war. His widow -- the owner was actually a partnership. The name of the shirt manufacturer was Neumeyer and Triest. An interesting little story: Neumeyer died in Germany from leukemia prior to the Holocaust. His widow sold her part, I think, to Triest and immigrated with the two children. She died here. Her son is a Ph.D. in pharmacology and teaches in one of the universities in New York. The daughter, this young man's sister, she is married to or divorced now, I think, from an engineer from Poland, and she lives somewhere in New York. There is still some connection with them. I hear about them. I don't hear from them at any time. Anyway, Triest owned the factory fully and left Germany. I don't know exactly what happened to him but his son was in the American army. He was an interpreter of Streicher. He does not look Jewish; he is blond, blue eyes. As the story goes, Walter told me afterwards, that when Streicher was interviewed, and he said, "We were looking for men like you, blond, blue-eyed men in Germany, the Germanic race." So, he looked up and he said, "I have news to tell you, I am 100% Jewish," and that is how the story goes. Anyway, Walter survived the war. His father bought that factory and passed away and Walter became very wealthy and retired a gentleman farmer in Munich, near Munich, at this time. He is my age. He is six months older than I and he is retired.

HR: When did you see him?

HK: I saw him in '78. We were very good friends. We had a very nice time but somehow or other, I don't know what happened, but he never answered my letters. He is married to a woman who, like he, was half-Jewish and survived the war and became very wealthy after the war. All those people that survived the war and were half-Jewish became rather wealthy.

HR: Do you know, from having seen him in '78, whether he had any Jewish affiliation or is living any kind of a Jewish life?

HK: No, I don't think they are living a Jewish life. Both half-Jews, I don't think they -- he has some contact with some Jewish or half-Jewish friends that survived the war but no Jewish affiliation as such, as far as I know.

HR: Could you go back now to the *Kristallnacht* and tell us your memories of that?

HK: That night, yes, that was...

HR: Leading up to it?

HK: Well, leading up to it, it was a controlled press, you had no idea. Oh well, I'll tell you what it was leading up to it, yes, I do recall now. All Jews of Polish descent were picked up one night, and this is what precipitated the assassination attempt on -- what caused the Crystal Night. All Jews of Polish descent were picked up one night and put on a train with a few belongings and shipped back to the Polish border. They were being shipped back to Poland. The Polish government got wind of it and they took all ethnic Germans and put them on a train and shipped them to the border. You don't know the story? So, by the time the trains reached the Polish border, there were two trains, one was German ethnics, the other one was Jews of Polish descent and there was a stand off. And they decided to take them all back home, because, at least, the Jews had something, and the Germans had none. So the Nazis were better off with the Jews than with the ethnic Germans whom they had to then give some kind of subsistence. So, they took them back. And I remember in school, the kids were telling us stories. They were called up in the front of the room to tell us their experiences. Less than 50% were of that Polish descent, so they told their experiences, that they were picked up and they were taken on the train. They were having a grand time as kids. They were singing and then they went back. They stood at the border and then they were taken back and that was the end of it. Well, that incident precipitated a young fellow whose parents were on that transport who was living in Paris, France at the time. His name was Greenspan[2], I think it was. I have it in here, I have it in this little book, what precipitated it because here is a headline of the paper and I still have the paper upstairs. Do you see how fast we forget? I am getting very, very forgetful these days. Well anyway, I think his name was Greenspan. I'm sure that Nora knows about this, what precipitated it. He went to the German Legation in Paris and the first German official he could find, he shot him. So he came across a minor official, who wasn't even a Nazi at the time -- his name was vom Rath, who was shot, and the Germans were going to recall him afterwards anyway, because he was not an ardent Nazi. Yes, Ernst vom Rath had been mortally wounded by Herschel Greenspan, whose parents were on that transport. And he suffered with the wound for one or two days and then died. Let me show you this. Of course, as soon as he died, this is what made the headline, "Jewish Murder Attempt in the German Legation in Paris," and then, of course, that precipitated the *Kristallnacht*, which I am sure you all know had been well planned, and so the whole thing, and nobody knew anything about it because of the controlled press.

HR: We want to hear your particular memory of it.

HK: At five o'clock in the morning we got a call from somebody in the family that they were arresting all Jews, "Get out and go to the American Consulate." Now we

[2]Herschel Grynszpan

already had visas to go, to come to America. So it was just a matter of hurrying it up to get out of Germany. The thing was you just couldn't leave, you had to have a passport, you had to have a country to go. I mean nobody, Switzerland, France, Italy, England, nobody would leave you in without some kind of a visa. Purely because you had no money, I suspect. I was 13 at the time. I really didn't pay much attention to it but I knew our boat would sail on the 26th of January, 1939. This was November the 10th, 1938. Where are you going to keep yourself between November the 10th and January the 13th or 15th, I don't recall exactly, when the boat would sail from England. So, you have to go a few weeks to Paris, to England, a few weeks to Switzerland, a few weeks to France, and so on, and for that you needed to have some kind of a visa. I have the papers upstairs as a matter of fact. Anyway, we got this call, "Go to the American Embassy in Stuttgart," which was about 60 or 70 miles from Munich, and "See what you can do to get out faster." And so, we left very early, about six o'clock that morning. I remember it was very heavy fog, you couldn't see anything in front of you. At that time already, the so-called Autobahn, which was a precursor of the superhighway, had existed between Munich and Stuttgart. In fact, there was a direct line between Munich and Stuttgart on the Autobahn. It was so foggy that, when we got on, my father was on the wrong side of the Autobahn, couldn't even see. There was very little traffic. All of a sudden, we saw a truck coming on the other way and then we realized that we were on the wrong side of the Autobahn. We were on the left hand side. So we cut across the grass barrier and as soon as we left the surroundings of Munich the fog lifted and it became a nice clear day. It may have helped us to get out of Munich at the time because they were stopping cars, from what we heard we heard later. But it was so foggy that nobody saw us leave and we were on the wrong side of the Autobahn and nobody would think anything there, so we just left. We came to the American Embassy in Stuttgart, the Consulate, not the Embassy, but the Consulate, and the people were jammed in the place and they were constant announcements made that only American citizens were under the protection of the American consulate. They could not extend their protection to anybody else. So people didn't leave anyway because people were arrested all over. By then everybody knew, all the men were arrested. They were sent to the various concentration camps. My uncle was arrested at the time. He did not have a visa at the time to go anywhere. My cousin and her husband, who is now in Milwaukee, went to our country home in the country near Munich. And when he heard everybody was arrested by the Gestapo, he figured he would go to the village constable and get arrested there, which he did. He had a very nice time in the local jail there. They treated him well. Nobody bothered him, everybody knew each other, and he stayed there for a couple of weeks in the jail where our country home was located. They treated him very, very well because we were a respected family in that place. My uncle went to Dachau, didn't have too bad a time there and he was out within two weeks. He stayed two weeks and then, with a promise to get out of Germany. You know, just an intimidation type thing. Anyway, we went to

Stuttgart. We got a permit to leave Germany faster and with the help of the -- I don't think it was much help from the American consulate, but my father went to various consulates: the Swiss Consulate, the French Consulate, the English Consulate, and we could stay two weeks in Switzerland, a couple of days in Paris, about two weeks until the boat leaves in London, and we were all set to leave early in December. Then we went back to Munich. We did some business together in Munich, a couple of days...

HR: Were you afraid to go back to Munich?

HK: Not at all. Oh no, yes, we did because everybody was being arrested so much. We went back to Munich. We stayed in our apartment during the day and went for walks at night in the dark. I was not too unhappy. Nobody knew what was happening. It didn't seem too bad. From what we heard from my cousin's husband in the prison in the country, he had a great time. So, things weren't too bad there. We kids we went around and really we were not too intimidated at the time.

HR: But your father couldn't have a business?

HK: Oh, no, his business had stopped some years before. He was just retired, living off his money. We were very wealthy and he didn't need to work. The only thing we did there was go to the various consulates to get permission to stay so long.

HR: Excuse me. Did your father retire because he wanted to?

HK: No.

HR: He was fairly young?

HK: Yes, he was in his late forties, his mid-forties, but his business had to be liquidated because they were not allowed -- as I said, the electric company, the gas works, the railroad all bought coal from that business and they were no longer allowed to patronize Jewish businesses. So there were no private customers, there were all German agencies. The electric company, that's all state owned, it's not private, in Germany. Railroads all state owned, or at least, they are municipally owned. So they could no longer purchase from Jews, so my father liquidated the business. And somebody else took over and continued the business.

HR: He had enough funds to do this?

HK: Oh, yes, there was no problem. He was going to outwait the German government. He wanted to come to America, and he could have transferred at that time plenty of money. But my aunt, whose daughter was going to school, my cousin, would not leave, and my mother, therefore, said to my father, she promised, and my father promised my grandparents that he would take care of my aunt who had plenty of money. But she was a widow, by herself, with a young daughter and she didn't want to leave. So we didn't leave and then I guess it wasn't too important at the time because we were fairly well to do and had a nice place to live, we were going to outwait, outwait the German government, which obviously we couldn't. After Crystal Night, we went to get some papers to leave. We went to get the steamship ticket and so on and I remember on the street one woman take a peculiar look at us and run.

HR: Were you wearing...

HK: No, no, there was no, that was before the Israel or Sarah middle name had to be taken by Jews so it was before that. It was only your appearance that made you appear Jewish. She ran, and we went to our car. We started to drive, and all of a sudden, a big car went ahead of us. We had a Mercedes, a bigger Mercedes went ahead of us, waved us, guys and policeman came, "Gestapo, go to the Gestapo." My mother and father went in the front seat and I went in the rear seat and one of the men went into the car and said, "Follow us." And he was in the rear seat with me. So, we went to the Gestapo headquarters and my mother...

HR: All because of this woman?

HK: She singled us out and told them the car we were driving, a black Mercedes with such and such a license plate and they caught us within a very short distance. I didn't think anything of it. Anyway, if they had caught up, if we had taken a different turnpike, I don't know what would have happened. Anyway, my mother and I were chased out of the courtyard and told to go home. My father was taken and I said, "Where is he going?" and they said, "Oh, he is going to Dachau and you will never see him again."

HR: Was this one of the Germans?

HK: One of the Germans. They were not even police, they were just hangers on. Well, we went home and we didn't know what to do and within an hour or two, my father came home. He showed them the steamship tickets, he showed them, and he had all of the passports with him, he had everything with him, and showed that he was leaving, so he went home and that was the end of that. So we still were fairly happy that we were going to leave Germany. A couple of days later -- this whole apartment house where we lived was Jewish homes and most of the parties in each home were six or eight people. [Unclear] families living there, you know, they are small apartment houses. A six room apartment is a large apartment. So, there were in one of the apartments, a Gestapo agent came up and said they will be up shortly. My parents came home. The Gestapo came in with packers. They took all of my father's books, took all of the things that they wanted and that was it, jewelry and so on and so on.

HR: What were you allowed to keep, housewares items or anything?

HK: They just took things and my father had to make a list of things he was going to take and all those things were included. Then, when he went to the proper authorities to say you can't take those things because they were taken by the Gestapo, they crossed them off his list. Then the Gestapo came back and took my father and said, "Why are you telling them that the Gestapo took your things?" So he had some difficulty there with one of the officials but he came home a couple of hours later and everything was settled. And he had to leave within 24 hours, so my father went to Switzerland that night and my mother and I and one of the maids who stayed with us, got some things in order for the transfer to the United States. We left within a week. We met my father in

Zurich and the girl went out with us. She wore some expensive jewelry my parents had bought under her clothes in case; she left it there for us. She did everything. On the way home she was stopped at the border, why she went with us to Switzerland. And she had a difficult time, she had a very difficult time. She survived the war. After the war, my parents sent an awful lot of things -- more or less supported her. When my mother became ill with cancer, she was going to come and take care of her but then she took ill, and she never came. [unclear].

HR: It was somebody that you knew for a long time?

HK: She was our cook for some 15 to 20 years and she was the only one that could stay with us because all female employees under the age of 35 had to leave Jewish employ because of miscegenation, racial purity, and these were the Nuremberg racial laws. But she was over 35 so she could stay and, you know, she took an awful lot of ribbing from the other girls [unclear]. So, that was the end of that. Then we left, we went to Zurich. We stayed in Zurich a few weeks without any money.

HR: Could we just stop a little bit and not get too far ahead of the story, there are still some things that I would like to ask about your life in Munich? Could you tell us if you have any memories about how you felt or how your parents felt when Hitler came to power? You were very young, but do you remember that at all?

HK: When Hitler came to power, I was six years old, no, no, no, I was eight years old, I am sorry. No, I don't remember too much. It really didn't influence us. They were considered street bullies and ruffians and to some of the business people, from what I recall, even supported the Nazi Party to be left alone. When these guys in the uniform came in soliciting their funds, people gave. They figured they were better off giving than having it taken or having their stores damaged or things like that. Of course, we didn't have a store so it was not -- everybody knew each other. There was no great intimidation. [unclear] All right, the only effect we had of the Nuremburg Laws was that our maids that were younger than 35 had to leave our employ. That was about the only change. My father's business liquidation, of course, but that really didn't affect us too much because we had sufficient income to live in the same manner.

HR: What was your father's feeling when he had to liquidate his business? Was he...

HK: I was rather young then. Excuse me. I don't really remember much about it because I don't think he was too unhappy to liquidate the business. It didn't affect our lives that much. As far as leaving Germany at the "Night of the Long Knives"[3], when the Nazi Party purged itself, we went to Italy, because we knew something was up, but not quite -- nobody knew exactly what, but we got out of the way. Things were always in an upheaval in Germany around that time. I mean after the war, with the Communists coming, in there were always upheavals. There was always shooting, there really wasn't

[3]June 30 – July 2, 1934 – purge of SA (*Sturmabteilung*) by Hitler's order.

anything out of the extraordinary to have some upheaval in those days, as far as my parents were concerned. During the inflation, during the Munich Communist uprising in 1919, this was all very familiar, so when the "Night of the Long Knives" happened, and I think it was in 1931, we went to Italy. I remember staying at a very nice place in Italy, and seeing, being introduced to Emil Jannings, the famous movie star who was there at that time. He stayed at the same hotel. I don't remember much about that. During the period from 1933 to 1938, most of our contacts were with non-Jews. Yes, yes, their behavior was no different, and we were always respected, and...

HR: You really didn't experience really too much antisemitism?

HK: Not until we started to travel a little bit in Germany and saw signs in the various places, "Jews are not wanted," in various towns. These were signs that were posted in various towns. We took a trip up the Rhine in 1936 with the car and in many places we saw signs, *Juden unerwünscht*, [German: Jews not wanted].

HR: And these signs were not appearing in Munich?

HK: No, these signs were in various hotels, at the city limits, in various smaller towns, and opened our eyes, but we really didn't think too much of it because there were not that many Jews in the small towns. We went to hotels. My father said he's Jewish, do they mind, they said no. They took his money and we stayed anyway. So, there was no, these were just uncomfortable signs, really nothing overt personally. Coming home from school one time, I met some former friends, acquaintances from school who beat me up a little bit, you know, for being Jewish, but nothing much. I came home and nothing -- greengrocers, you know, the push cart greengrocers that were at various corners, I used to purchase from her, she chased them. A woman, an elderly woman, she chased the kids. So, it was really nothing, I had no problem, no serious problem. Certainly not as many problems as people find here, now.

HR: Do you think there is more antisemitism?

HK: I'm talking about racial problems. There are more racial problems than there were back then, as I recall.

HR: So, do you want to go on now and tell us. Your father had gone on to Switzerland?

HK: Well, he had to leave within 24 hours because he said to the official that okay, the things we could take out of Germany that the Gestapo had taken, certain things that were on the list and the Gestapo was very unkind and took a very unkind view of this, of having expropriated those things, and my father had to leave within 24 hours. My mother and I followed within a week, and then we stayed a couple, about two weeks in Zurich. We were helped financially. My father was an amateur magician. Some of the people -- he had acquaintances all over the place -- some of the acquaintances we had in Zurich realized his position and they invited friends, and my father put on a show, and then they collected some money for him. It was very demeaning and degrading, but it gave us some money. The same thing happened in Paris, but in Paris we had my

mother's first cousin, and an uncle and his wife. We stayed with them. We could only stay in Paris for a few days. We didn't get a long visa to stay in Paris because Paris had many, many Jews that already had fled. And then we went to London, and in London the HIAS took care of us. There was a boarding house operated by refugees, more or less for refugees, everything was German there. People stayed there. We stayed there for two weeks. It was -- I know I recall being New Year's 1939 in Paris. I remember being Christmas 1938 in Zurich, so we must have left Paris right after New Year's. The fourth or fifth of January. It was rather cold and dismal in London. We had our room paid for by the HIAS, but the heat was extra. There was no central heat in the house. Each room had a gas heater, where you had to deposit a shilling for the gas heater to turn on for a couple of hours or one shilling for a bucket of coal. I remember looking out of the window and seeing, excuse me, because I remember quite well looking out of the window of the room and seeing coal delivered next door. It cost a shilling from the boarding house to get a bucket of coal. And here they were delivering coal and they were spilling some. And I went out and picked it the coal. The man said something to me but I couldn't understand him. I didn't speak any English and I couldn't answer him and he said something to me whether to leave it alone or what, I don't know. I picked up the coal and we had heat that night. We stayed in London two weeks, and then we went first class on the boat. The reason my father took first class passage all along, every railroad we purchased first class, hoping to exchange it for a cheaper class and get some money back. The United States line would not do that. They would not exchange our first class tickets to second or third class.

HR: You paid for these tickets in Germany, and that was okay, but you could only -- what were you saying, how many…?

HK: Only 20 marks or so, and you had to have a list of everything you carried. As far as the final transfer of goods, yes, you purchased a, what was called a lift van. It was a huge wooden box. In fact, the Jews immigrating to Israel, Palestine in those days, used to take those boxes and lived in them in the kibbutz. They cut in windows and these were sturdy, wooden boxes, I guess they put a roof over it and they lived in them. So the story went. Anyway, we had a lot of antiques, we were very wealthy, a lot of antiques -- and our cousin, to come to the United States in those days, you had to have a sponsor in the United States. I am sure you are aware of it. People who had no sponsor perished...

[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one:

HK: There was the policy of allowing only a percentage of German Jews -- of Jews according to the nationality of people living in the United States. In other words, there were numbers of Germans living in the United States from 1935 to '36 then a certain percentage of Germans could be admitted. Now we have some acquaintances who were born in Africa, South Africa. Well, they received a very low quota number from the United States Consulate because there were not many South Africans applying to come to the United States, and that was according to your place of birth. If you were born in Germany, you were considered a German, if you were born in South Africa, you were South African. So most of the Jews, of course, were Germans, and there was a limited number, I forget what the number was, I have it upstairs. I'm sure Nora[4] knows about it. At any rate, I calculated at the time I wrote this that quota had -- there were about a half a million Jews in Germany and if that quota had to stand it would have taken some 70 or 80 years for the Jews of Germany to be let out. So the United States was not very helpful. You had to have somebody here. Now we have a rather prominent cousin from Philadelphia who was a cousin of my grandmother's first cousin who sponsored us. First, my father, my father would not leave without us. So just before the Crystal Night this cousin sponsored my mother and myself also. To sponsor somebody, I don't know if you know the laws, if you were sponsoring a blood relative it was depending on the degree, brothers, sisters, parents, children, you didn't have to vouch for much money. But if it were cousins or second cousins, you had to vouch $20,000.00, or something like that per person. And in those days, with the Depression, it was a lot of money. And the reason of course, given was that they didn't want to have a lot of unemployed people coming to the United States. And people who have no skills -- even doctors, doctors weren't allowed to practice. They had to learn English first. I remember my doctor, our personal doctor, acted as a male nurse in New York for a long time before he was allowed to take the boards and practice again as an M.D. But I should have written this down. But in 1938, there was only a small number of people allowed to come into the United States. So when we got on the boat, we wanted to -- my father wanted to get the difference. Oh, we were talking about antiques. We wrote to our cousin if antiques would be of any value in the United States, and she said, "Bring all of the antiques you can." But these were German antiques and she didn't know that there was no market for German antiques in those days. So we had to rent a house and it was filled with lots of paintings and antiques which my father didn't sell until after my mother had passed away for very nominal sums then according to the prices of antiques today. Anyway, what else?

[4]Mr. Kahn is referring to Professor Nora Levin, z'l, the founder of the Holocaust Oral History Archive at Gratz College.

HR: The Nazis didn't realize the value of those things when they came to take things from you?

HK: Well, you had to pay a flee tax, a tax to flee Germany, it was called tax *Reichsflucht,* fleeing from the Reich. Of course all my father's funds were confiscated, but after the war some of it was given back. We even found the car. As far as post-war Germany is concerned -- the non-Nazi officials, they tried. They can't give lives back but whatever they could do with material things, they have tried to do.

HR: You were telling us now about being in London, how long did you stay in London?

HK: Two weeks. About two weeks.

HR: Two weeks. And then you left from London and came to New York?

HK: Directly to Philadelphia, a few hours from New York. The boat, the SS Manhattan, the same boat that Henry Kissinger was on. After New York our cousin's wife was there with the car and took us right away to Philadelphia. And that was it.

HR: And you started to go to school in Philadelphia?

HK: Within a week I started to go to school.

HR: Did your father then get into business here?

HK: No, no, my father had a very tough time breaking in to things. He finally got a job, as a clerk. I will show you something upstairs, do you want to see some of those things? Maybe I should bring them down since your tape recorder's down here. Okay, I mentioned my cousin who is a prominent Philadelphia lawyer. His son is editor and publisher of the Northern Virginian Sun, the daily hometown newspaper of Fairfax, Falls Church, and McLean and Vienna County in Virginia. Now he is publisher and editor and once a week, he has a front page editorial. Usually at *Pesach*, he puts in an editorial about *Pesach*. This *Pesach*, as a matter of fact, he is always there at the *seder*. He said this year's *Pesach* editorial was several weeks earlier. It is always called, "Editor's Viewpoint," his name is Herman Obermayer and "Remembering Tyranny's Costs." When my father died, it really affected him. Can I read the editorial?

HR: Sure.

HK: Here's the editorial.

"I was not close to cousin Paul. I saw him rarely during the past 30 years. But when he died this week I lost something. A direct link to a terrifying part of modern history was severed. Paul was a refugee. In a gut-level, non-intellectual way he taught me what can happen when a civilized nation goes mad. He made Hitler a threatening reality to me. Pictures of death camps and ghetto uprisings are starkly horrifying. But they are abstractions. Paul was real. When the Nazis came to power he was middle-aged and established. He was assimilated and cultured. He collected rare coins and antique porcelains. He was a typical well-to-do businessman. He managed a retail coal business which had been in his wife's family for generations. He had a Black Forest vacation home. It's not all exactly accurate, but accurate enough. But two years after Hitler

became Germany's chancellor, Paul's way of life was in a shambles. He abandoned his business because Gentiles were forbidden to buy from him. His brother, a lawyer, had his license to practice revoked. When hooligans damaged his coal yard he was not allowed to file an insurance claim. His son could not attend public school. His bank accounts were blocked. He was disenfranchised. Still, Paul did not want to leave Munich's elegant suburbs. His family had lived in Bavaria for more than 200 years. His ancestors were the first Jews granted full citizenship rights in 1803. He was ill-prepared for menial labor. Even well-tailored suits could not obscure the fact that he was pudgy and soft. He spoke no English. He had no marketable skills. Yet, he was better off than most. He had relatives in Philadelphia that were willing to sponsor him. He was never destitute. Starvation never threatened. But new immigrants were unwelcome additions to job-applicant lists. America was in the midst of the Great Depression. One fourth of the work force was unemployed. Paul's wife became a masseuse. He became a clerk in a big garage. She hated her job; it was degrading. She traveled by subway and trolley to work in the homes of the rich. Pampered, uncultured women tipped her as if she were a servant. Paul was bitter. Adapting to humble circumstances was difficult. Before Hitler, a nationwide Amateur Magicians Club had elected him an officer. He entertained at clubs and parties. His neighbors made a fuss over him. But his talents were unsalable in America. A beguiling magician needs a smooth tongue as well as a quick hand. Broken English is unacceptable. The Nazis' fastidiousness provided reminders of the life he left behind. Each quarter his bank sent him an accounting of his blocked assets. Dividends were collected. Coupons were clipped. Before World War II Jews were rarely killed or tortured. Assaulting their property and their dignity, their capacity to earn a living, forced them to flee. Crematoriums and gas chambers came later. Paul's mother stayed behind. She was too old to learn a new language. She felt secure. As a high-ranking civil servant's widow, she received a government pension, but she died violently in Theresienstadt death camp. Adolph Hitler died in a Berlin bunker almost 40 years ago. For many people he had only an historic name but for me he was a very real person. My cousin's unhappiness made me an aware youth. Paul's life demonstrated the fragile, illusory nature of security. Parents can quickly snatch away the comforts which wealth purchases."

HR: Now, your father just died two months ago at the age of 92?

HK: Yes, it's still hard for me.

HR: Yes, I can imagine. And you say that he didn't really adapt here?

HK: Yes, he adapted fairly well. This is not too accurate. There are many inaccuracies. But I thought it was very nice of him to write it.

HR: Yes.

HK: From what I understand, he got many, many favorable comments, letters written to him. My son was flabbergasted when I sent him a copy of this.

HR: How did your father establish his relationship with Speer? Do you want to tell us about that?

HK: About 9 or 10 years ago or more, Speer was on the television admitting his guilt and my father wrote to him. My father was homesick for Germany all the time. He was in Germany, as late as '81 he traveled to Germany. He and my mother had been in Germany at least twice and when my mother passed away he went there once and then he went back, again, in '81. So my father must have been over there three or four times or more visiting friends, visiting graves. So he wrote to Germany about his background and Speer wrote back saying that he has had many favorable comments, but what meant most to him was my father's. Out of that came a rather lengthy correspondence and when my father visited Germany in '62 or '61, '61 he went to visit him, and when I was there in '67 I visited him. Speer felt that he owed an explanation to posterity and he was willing to talk to anybody. At the time I was over there, of course, I also visited Simon Wiesenthal, and as it turned out, Wiesenthal and Speer were fairly good friends.

HR: What were some of the things that you talked to Speer about when you visited him?

HK: Oh gee, I can't recall.

HR: You don't recall?

HK: I have better recall of the distant past but I have the whole correspondence up there, about 87 letters plus all his books. And the last thing Speer wrote my father was in 1985 or '86. He was planning to publish a book on his 25 years since his release from Spandau and if my father would object to have his name mentioned and some of the friendly correspondence he had had with him. I told my father about it and it didn't register at the time. And I wrote back and said, yes, it certainly would be all right. I gave him permission to do it, but of course he died before he had a chance to write his book. His wife wrote back to me. This may be unknown to a lot of people, but Speer published four or five books, and incidentally, it's going to be on television. There is going to be a television show about his book, "Inside the Third Reich." The television show is on May 9, 8 to 11 and May 10, channel 3, 9 to 11. All the royalties, and I found that out later, all the royalties that book brought in is given to Israel and he has supported anonymously several old age Jewish homes in the United States. [unclear] If money can buy peace of mind I guess he tried to buy it, but he did donate anonymously quite large sums of money from many of his books, particularly to Jewish old age homes.

HR: What I want to know now is of the family you left behind in Germany, were there any survivors?

HK: Not family, no.

HR: Your grandparents were lost.

HK: My grandparents died in '38, so that was before the war. My grandmother went to Theresienstadt. She didn't die, from what I understand, a violent death. She died of old age; she was in her late eighties. Because of people that were in Theresienstadt,

that survived Theresienstadt-- that was, Theresienstadt was not a horror camp. It was bad, but it was one of the better ones to be in. It was a ghetto, it wasn't a camp at all. And...

HR: What of your cousins and the rest of the people?

HK: My cousins came over here. My family wasn't that large. My uncle came over. He died in California, the lawyer. There was a large German community, German-Jewish community, and he was very well-liked. He got menial jobs there, but he was happy. I don't know how happy he was. He died in '51.

HR: So for the most part you family did all get out.

HK: Except for my grandmother and of course, her sister and her family. Now, my grandmother's two brothers were married to Gentiles, and they survived the war. Both of them. One died right after the war, and the other one, the other one, his wife was killed in a bombing raid in Nuremburg, and then he moved in with her niece, a gentile woman.

HR: Did those two brothers that stayed in Germany, survived in Germany? Did they get out?

HK: No, it was Uncle Carl. I only met Uncle Carl once, but after the war he and his niece purchased our country home. So when we there, every time we were there, we visited her in our, it was something very nostalgic about it. The first time it was very hard. She lives there. Her son, she has two sons, she was widowed, and she took care of Uncle Carl who became a widower when his wife was killed. And his wife's niece was this Rosa, her name is Rosa. [unclear] She lives in this house now. [unclear] It's deteriorated some and she sold off parcels of land. It was a huge tract of land and she made more money than she paid for it, but so be it. But her sons, one is a veterinary doctor, the other one is the conductor of a large symphony orchestra in Germany, Frankfurt Symphony Orchestra, and his wife, the second wife is an international opera star, and I can't think of her name, Schaeffer. They are supposed to come here, I don't know.

HR: So, then your family, you really all [unclear]?

HK: It's a small family.

HR: A small family.

HK: I have one aunt and one uncle, they survived, my cousin survived, her husband survived. His parents, my cousin's in-laws, perished. His brother and sister survived and all the people that didn't leave. In those days, you see, as we said, death camps didn't exist in those days, and most of the German Jews of the half a million Germans, a lot of them, I shouldn't say most, a lot of the German Jews that had relatives here in the United States survived.

HR: Okay, well, thank you very much and we appreciate your giving us this interview.

[Tape two, side one ended. Interview ended.]