HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ELI ROCK

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Natalie Packel
Date: May 11, 1996

This page left intentionally blank.

ER - Eli Rock [interviewee]
NP - Natalie Packel [interviewer]
Date: May 11, 1996

Tape one, side one:

NP: Today is June the 11th, and this is Natalie Packel, interviewing Mr. Eli Rock. [tape off then on] Mr. Rock, is it so that you served with the armed forces during the Second World War?

ER: I drove an ambulance in an American organization called the American Field Service, which provided volunteer ambulance drivers to the British and French Armies. And these were usually, not always, men who had not been accepted by the military in this country. A few of them got in before America got into the war, but quite a number of them who were like I was, 4-F. I had a congenital heart condition which had, I had completely overcome and played football and what not, but it was enough to turn, for the army to make me a 4-F and I was restive and I found this opportunity to go overseas for this organization which had furnished ambulance drivers to the British and the French Armies. And I served with the First French Army, initially in France and then in Germany until the end of the war. And during that period I was only vaguely aware of the problem of concentration camp survivors and displaced persons, because I once saw somehow on a highway in--near Stuttgart, a group of people who had survived a concentration camp and were marching down a highway or something and who looked very skeletal in the brand new suits that they were wearing. It's amazing, like many people, of course, I had no knowledge of what the Germans had done. That only, that information only began to come out at a later date and even I think the Allied authorities were not aware of what horrible treatment the Germans had handed out to deportees, and particularly to the Jewish people who came under their care. So I just wasn't aware of these problems during the war. [tape off then on]

NP: I understand that you were with the Joint Distribution Committee?

ER: Yes.

NP: How did that come about?

ER: When the war ended I was released by the French Army and I could have gone home right after, as many of my friends driving an ambulance with--we, our group drove ambulances with both the British and the French Armies and most of the people after the war could go home in short order, and they did. But I was young and a bachelor and I didn't know when I'd get back to Europe. And so I looked around for a job to stay in Europe and I went over to UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association, which was the official United Nations relief organization to deal with these problems. And...

NP: If I may interrupt you, what date, what time?

ER: This would have been, the war ended on May 12th, so this would have been some time in May, 1945. And I spoke to a friend of mine from Philadelphia who had done some work for UNRRA and his wife was with the Quaker organization in this country and they had gone over, they had done work for the Quakers in Paris. And I, we looked each other up. They were not Jewish.

NP: And his name, too?

ER: Bennett Schauffler, S-C-H-A-U-F-F-L-E-R. And his wife, Marnie. Now Marnie was doing work for the Quakers in Europe and they were not Quakers but Marnie had been with the Quaker relief program for quite a while. And they were in Paris on that work and I spoke to them. And as I say, I think Ben was there for UNRRA and I spoke to Ben, Bennett, about a possible job with UNRRA, because I thought I'd like to stay over. I'd had some administrative experience. My job before I went overseas was as Disputes Director of the Regional War Labor Board in, based in Philadelphia, where I did get, I was, I became the head of that division, of the Disputes division of that office. And so I had had executive administrative experience and I thought maybe UNRRA could keep, give me a job so I could stay on in Europe for a while after the war. I hadn't been in Europe, I certainly hadn't had a chance to see much of Europe except where I drove an ambulance. So I thought I could get a job with them. And now that did not come about. UNRRA was not in need of my services or there were just some procedural red tape kind of problems. And Ben and Marnie, who knew about the Joint Distribution Committee, because I think they had once taken a boatload of Jewish children from Lisbon to the States--they had escorted the boatload--and they knew Joe Schwartz, the legendary Joe Schwartz, whom I will talk about and concerning whom I have some memorabilia. Or, I wrote an article once about Joe Schwartz for *The Jewish Exponent* in which I described him. They had gotten to know Joe Schwartz, and they sent me to the JDC office in Paris. This was May 15 or so, May 12th, 1945. And the JDC had only a skeletal program at that time. They had not been--first of all, the war had cut off shipping. They could not send over, they couldn't have done much before the end of the war because they couldn't go into areas where their services were needed. And so they were short-handed. They didn't have their usual social work, relief work, or trainees available in Paris. And so they were glad to hire me, an American, particularly because I had had experience in Germany and they were gonna have to set up a program in Germany and I knew my way around Germany from being there as an ambulance driver.

NP: Excuse me, your experience in Germany was as the ambulance driver.

ER: Initially that was...

NP: Initially.

ER: ...the total experience. And, but I also could speak, my French was pretty good and they could use me in Paris in dealing with the French Jewish committees that they were dealing with. So, whatever the reasons, they just had no staff and they hired me. And a man named Arthur Greenly headed up the program, the office in Paris, on *Rue de*

Teheran...

NP: Mmm!

ER: And, do you know that street or...

NP: I, yes, yes, I've have read about it. I've seen it in certain articles.

ER: Yeah.

NP: O.K.

ER: And I was, I worked in that office. And I was Arthur's translator when he had a deal with the French Jews, and I...

NP: What language did you speak?

ER: Well, I--my French was quite good. I had had a lot of French in school. And then I had served with the French Army in where I'd had to speak French. So at that time, and of course language capacity fails with passage of time, but it was fresher then. And so I was useful to the Joint Distribution Committee in Paris and I helped set up a program in Germany where the JDC could at least have some role. We did not--we had not been able to bring over any significant amount of relief supplies because all the shipping was tied up with military stuff. And we didn't have any staff, because again, it was difficult to bring over staff during the war. And we did have some European staff, like William Bein in Warsaw, but...

NP: How do you spell his name?

ER: B-E-I-N, Bill Bein. And he was, well, he was in Warsaw, but in the Warsaw Ghetto during the German occupation, there was a man named Guzik, who headed up the Joint Distribution Committee, the JDC's program *in* the ghetto, when--and administered relief assistance to people in the ghetto by borrowing money with no, nothing but the Joint Distribution Committee's name as credit. And then he was able to bring in a few supplies and whatnot, smuggle them in with this borrowed money. Now, incidentally, to digress, later, when I worked for the JDC in New York, one of my functions was to serve with the Joint's claims committee, which passed on, I was a staff person for the claims committee, which passed on claims from Warsaw Ghetto survivors or their heirs, for repayment of money that they had loaned to the, to Guzik in the ghetto days. And it was really a fascinating experience, to...

NP: I am a bit confused. Where would they have gotten this money? These were survivors within the ghetto?

ER: Every, in the ghetto people had jewelry, and they had dollars under their mattresses. Every, yeah, this was common in pre-war Europe. Everybody, the dollar was the most valuable currency, and so he...

NP: But aren't you speaking now of post-war?

ER: No, that was post-war repayment.

NP: All right.

ER: But during the war the Joint's program in the ghetto, they couldn't bring in, it could not bring in supplies. And it did its best to help people by borrowing money from

people in the ghetto.

NP: Within the ghetto, yes.

ER: Within the ghetto, and then using that to buy, bring in supplies for needy people. [tape off then on]

NP: We can continue.

ER: Now that meant that the JDC had obligated itself to repay these people. Unfortunately the head of the Joint's program in the ghetto, a man named Guzik was, and they had very inadequate, the JDC people in the ghetto had very inadequate records. They couldn't keep records but they had maintained records of these, and they had a memory of what they had borrowed. But Guzik, after surviving the Nazis and living in the ghetto, was killed after the war in a plane crash, coming to...

NP: G-U-Z-I-...

ER: Yeah...

NP: G-U-...

ER: G-U-Z-I-K. And now his assistant--an elderly lady by the time we met her, in the ghetto; I've forgotten her name--came to, was brought to New York by the JDC and from her memory and notes we were able to reconstruct a, some record of what the JDC owed, based on those borrowings. And then we had people, the people who had loaned them money, or more often, or equally often their heirs or relatives who had heard that they had loaned their, the original person had loaned jewelry or money to the JDC, and who wanted repayment. And we of course wanted to repay them, but we certainly had to have some adequate basis for doing it. So we set up a claims committee of--in New York City--of a board member and several other lawyers. And I was the administrator in the JDC office that worked with that claims committee. And I worked for the JDC in New York from, I came back from Europe in '47. I first worked for the JDC in Berlin, first in Bavaria, from the end of the war until the end of 1945. As I say, oh I didn't, I skipped something. I had come into Paris. I had looked for a job. I got a job with the JDC, and I stayed with it; I worked in the Paris office of the JDC until July, when I was sent back into Germany to head up the JDC program, its new program, in Bavaria, based on my knowledge, again, of, well, I was, the JDC had very few staff people at that time. And so I was given this very dramatic kind of job, working in, particularly at Feldafing, which was the first Jewish, all-Jewish DP camp, in Bavaria--very overcrowded.

NP: Had you had a knowledge of the Jewish--of the DP camps that were not all Jewish?

ER: Yes, as a matter of fact there was another camp nearby that--Wolfratshausen it was called eventually, W-O-L-, *Wofrat*-, W-O-F-R-A-T, *hausen*, H-A-U-S-E-N which had been set up originally as a catch-all DP camp into which both Polish Jews and Polish gentiles, who had been deported to Germany under the Nazis from Poland, were housed. It soon became evident to the army and UNRRA that you could not put Jewish and non-Jewish Polish DPs into the same camp, because the Polish Jews remembered how as they

were being deported from Poland there were often Poles standing on the side cheering the Germans, they so hated Jews. There was a tremendous amount of antisemitism in Poland and after everything that had happened to them the Jewish survivors were hardly in a mood to live together in that DP camp with Polish Christians.

NP: If I may ask, General Eisenhower at the time, was he working with you or, and General Patton?

ER: Yes. Here's a picture I have of Eisenhower. Well, I got a picture of Eisenhower at the Holocaust Museum. But he came to--I'm gonna come to that in a minute...

NP: Surely.

ER: He came to Feldafing in the summer of '45.

NP: This was General Eisenhower.

ER: Eisenhower and Patton. And I was part of the group that escorted them through the camp. The, but in terms of my personal journey, the war ended. I went to work for the Joint Distribution in Paris and helped in various ways. And in July, when we obtained permission to, we had to get permission to send our people in to work with the concentration camp survivors, and there were other people in the J, working on this for the JDC, including Jake Trobe, who later became my boss. Jake Trobe is currently living in the Philadelphia area at...

NP: Is that so? Oh.

ER: At a retirement home, retirement apartments. I'll think of the name in a minute, out on the Main Line. The, anyway, the JDC recruited various people because there was need to, desperate need to help these survivors. And we could only be a subsidiary organization to the, to UNRRA, which had the supplies, the manpower, and the entitlement, the permission to work in these DP camps. So we had to be an accredited agency under UNRRA. And so when I came into Feldafing it was in that role. I worked first in Paris. We obtained permission to send people into Germany. And I went back into Germany with one of the first, well, the first team that went into Bavaria. And I had four lovely people as part of my team. And we went into Feldafing and established an office there.

NP: Feldafing was in Bavaria?

ER: Feldafing was in Bavaria.

NP: Could you describe the...

ER: Yes.

NP: ...physical...

ER: There were basically two Jewish camps for the survivors after the war. Feldafing was one and there was another one nearby whose name I, which I've temporarily forgotten.

NP: Foehrenwald, is it?

ER: No, Foehrenwald was...

NP: Foehren-...

ER: Not yet established. The other camp was not as big as Feldafing but it, and it originally was a, it had a mixture also of Jewish and non-Jewish DPs. Foehrenwald was next to Feldafing [phone; tape off then on].

NP: Do continue.

ER: Feldafing, some of this I've written up, and I've got with me here some of the things I've written in the past.

NP: Oh boy, do you think...

ER: And also something I...

NP: ...maybe we could copy and have for the Archives?

ER: Yeah, oh I'll definitely give you such. I've got an article that I wrote about Dr. Joseph Schwartz...

NP: All right.

ER: Way back in 198- [phone] I thought I transferred the calls.

NP: It sounds like she picked it up.

ER: Oh it rings once, yeah.

NP: Rings once, yeah.

ER: Yeah, that's right. The JDC Paris office, and the rest of the world in May, 1945, was not yet fully aware of the totality, virtual totality, of the destruction of the European Jews. The, and Russian Jews. The word, during the war, had begun to drift out about what was happening. And the, in any event, the Joint had neither the staff nor the material supplies. It did bring in supplies but it, they were limited. There was one batch of supplies that were brought in from Sweden to Bavaria, which the JDC arranged-food and clothing and whatnot. And the, here I was in Europe wanting to find something to do. My friends the Schaufflers, referred me. They knew Joe Schwartz, from having served with a, on a Quaker mission of evacuating Jewish children from Portugal during the war. They were on that, on a special ship that, and they were not Jewish. They were wonderful people, very good friends. And I looked them up. They were in Paris on this kind of work, after the war, and we of course were happy to see each other in Paris. We had been friends in Philadelphia. And they referred me to the JDC as a poss-, oh, and I hadn't been able to get a job with UNRRA. I just, I never even knew about the JDC. I just hadn't been very active in Jewish affairs and my total experience in America was, well, I was *bar mitzvah* and we went to services on the high holidays, and that sort of thing, and my mother certainly kept kosher. We lived in a, an Italian neighborhood up in Rochester, New York, where I was born. And through my growing up my closest friends were Italian kids or a guy I met in the seventh grade--his name is Joseph Platt--who came from the other side of the tracks so to speak, the older, Protestant side of the tracks in Rochester. And Joe and I became very close friends because we had discovered that we were born on the same day. In the seventh grade we discovered that and we've been close friends ever since. And, but I, and I, through college I didn't, there wasn't mu-, any really Jewish fraternity, there was, but without a fraternity house at Rochester where I went, the University of Rochester. And I had

participated in sports and I just my, we didn't live in the Jewish neighborhood of Rochester. So I was just not, being a Jew was not a major part of my consciousness, at least in terms of athletic and social activities. And the, and here I was, after the war, and the job that was available, which I found, was at the JDC, and I knew very little about the JDC. And I, in the course of the next four or five years where I, during which I worked for the JDC, I became extremely identified and I still kept all my close gentile friends. But my world really changed greatly. And it was the result of these years I worked for the Joint Distribution Committee. And it started with Feldafing, when I dispatched myself from Paris to work in Feldafing with a team of, I was the head of a team of five people, consisting of Henri Heitan, and Ruth Scharlot Heitan. Henri was a doctor, and they were, she was originally a German Jew and I think he was originally a Polish Jew. They had come into the JDC office after the war while I was working there and said they wanted to offer their services. And Henri...

NP: Were these people French? Were they living...

ER: They were living in France.

NP: Oh, I see.

ER: Henri had a successful medical practice and, in, I believe it was southern France but somehow they got to us. And Ruth was a German Jew originally. And they had no children. They were wonderful people. And I have here an article that Henri Heitan wrote.

NP: Oh wonderful.

ER: It's only the top part of it, and it tells ab-, it's not in very good English, but it, I made a copy of it and it tells about Feldafing. The opening sentence for example says, "Feldafing camp, a center of about 5,000 Jewish DPs, has finally, on the end of October, settled down to a stabilized population of about 3600 people. However, etc." So I made this, the copy of his report and I'll give that to you now.

NP: Thank you, thank you, yes.

ER: Now, when I came to Paris after the war and got the job for the JDC, Dr. Joseph Schwartz was the head of the Joint Distribution Committee's European program and he was not there when I initially was hired. I was hired by a man named Arthur Greenly, who had been a social worker in the United States and he was running the Paris office, with its limited facilities and limited services. And that was on *Rue de Teheran*. And Arthur could see that with my having just come out of Germany with my experience there and with a very obvious need to set up some sort of program in Germany, that I could be useful even though my experience had been with the War Labor Board as an administrator in labor management disputes in the United States before I went overseas to drive an ambulance. And, but I was an American. I could also speak better-than-average, well, I could speak fairly good French at that time and again that was--but the main thing is they had no bodies. They hadn't been able to bring over staff or supplies and so he hired me and I was delighted. And I lived there in Paris for a couple of months, until, and helped obtain

permission from the authorities to send in a team to supplement the UNRRA work in Germany. UNRRA did, I mean we could own, we were not a major player. I, well the JDC perhaps indicated that we were important and, the program, and it was certainly helpful for Allied Jewish Appeal fund raising, to indicate that we were important. The fact is we could only supplement UNRRA and...

NP: UNRRA was a major player?

ER: UNRRA had the official responsibility and facilities and staff to administer relief in the displaced persons camps after the war.

NP: Mr. Rock, excuse me-

Tape one, side two:

NP: This is the interview of Eli Rock, with Natalie Packel, side B, tape one. Yes, Mr. Rock, how was it being among the Germans?

ER: Well I'd been in Germany during the war, driving this ambulance. And we, with the French Army, and we would be in isolated places sometimes and we would simply requisition a house or took over a bedroom in a house, this fellow ambulance driver and I. And the Germans were very friendly and they knew they had lost the war and they wanted to ingratiate themselves. But I had no, I quickly developed an acute antipathy for the Germans, and when I got into Bavaria, and worked there for the JDC, and saw the condition of the survivors and heard their stories and realized what a total extermination there had been--by the brothers and husbands of these very nice friendly Germans--I grew extremely, extremely full of hate. I even hated little five-year-old German children, when I saw how healthy and well-nourished they were compared to what few children there were in the DP camps, and with the realization that most of the children, Jewish children, had been killed. And so it was not, it was a long time before I could forget my hatred of the Germans. In any event, the opportunity opened up to do something in Germany and...

NP: Your main aim at Feldafing was...

ER: Was to supplement, to help in any way that we could, to have a presence. We also sent a team into the British occupied zone of Germany near, oh, it had the same name as a big extermina-, a, you know, a concentration camp in northern Germany. I've forgotten. And my friend...

NP: We might use this as a source.

ER: Yeah, that could be. And my friend Jake Trobe worked up there and became the head of the, both sections of Germany. But there was this big concentration camp, which now became a displaced persons camp, in northern Germany. And the other major camp was Feldafing. And these, we're talking these very early days. And as I started to say, there was also an adjacent place called Wolfratshausen, which it had another name. And the, I believe I helped bring about the establishment of Wolfratshausen. There, I was very much aware of the very overcrowded conditions in Feldafing and early on after I arrived there in July, 1945...

NP: Excuse me, I...

ER: Yes.

NP: This, I have this book open...

ER: Yes.

NP: By Yehuda Bauer...

ER: Yes.

NP: And there is a map, and there are, there is Feldafing, I believe, in here.

ER: Yes, Feldafing is the only location shown on this.

NP: I see.

ER: This, they, it does not show the other Jewish DP camps in southern Bavaria at that time. The...

NP: All right, all right. And Feldafing housed 3500 people, did you say?

ER: That's what...

NP: Something like...

ER: The report says, one of our reports. And it had, there isn't a, Feldafing was originally a German Army barracks. And it was a series of multi-level buildings, or maybe they were not multi-level, but anyway it housed many fewer people--but it was a German Army camp--than we now had to place there, because there were such limited facilities in that immediate post-war period. And we had to, people were wandering, first of all there were the people still wearing concentration camp pajamas, who needed to be housed. They were, as I say, UNRRA established camps for the survivors, and we went in to supplement. And Feldafing was one of those camps.

NP: All right, excuse me. I understand that the chaplains of the U.S. Army were really the first persons that the unfortunate souls saw, and bonded with.

ER: Well that's true. There were a number of chaplains in Bavaria. Abe Klausner was particularly active and outstanding. He was everywhere in those early days, finding places to put up survivors. He took over a wonderful monastery, convent, in Bavaria, where, which was never an official place. But for a period of time it was just a great place for a couple of hundred survivors. Chaim Greenberg, I think, stayed there. Abe helped set up a central committee of Jewish survivors in Bavaria. It was, they established themselves, to help govern themselves. This had nothing to do with UNRRA, but they were extremely helpful in whatever relief programs there were. And this guy, Abe Klausner, found supplies. He found places. There was a Dr. Chaim Greenberg, who was chairman of that central committee in those early days in Bavaria. And of course most of these people got out as soon as they could and went to Palestine or they went to the States. And, but they did things, this central committee, and anyway, we set up an office in Munich. Initially my team worked in Feldafing and did whatever we could. And Dr. Heitan's report will give you some description of what our medical people did. And we...

NP: I just, excuse me, that was one of the first concerns, to...

ER: Yes.

NP: ...diagnose the illnesses, the physical...

ER: Yes.

NP: ...illnesses and to get them to hospitals. Were there hospitals where you...

ER: Well, there were medical facilities that, again, had to be set up. UNRRA worked at this, but, and as Dr. Heitan's report points out, there were doctors among the survivors. But also outside doctors were provided by UNRRA or the Joint Distribution Committee, mostly UNRRA, and there were indeed major health needs for the concentration camps survivors. As we know, many of them died even after they were rescued. They were in such terrible condition. Now we, Bavaria was not a major point for

that. The people were found, I think, in Poland and northern Germany. The Russian-occupied, there was also the Russian-occupied zone of Germany, which the Russian Army had taken and held after the war. And we could only work in the western part of Germany where the American Army had come in with part, and the British and the French. So the problem was far broader than what I confronted or could see, in that post-war period.

NP: Mr. Rock, you said there were doctors among the survivors. There were teachers among those survivors I would imagine.

ER: Yes.

NP: Did they organize schools?

ER: Yes, they--there were some, number one there weren't any children.

NP: There weren't any children in Feldafing?

ER: Very few, because these were sole survivors whose families had been wiped out, and they were only beginning to realize it. And I'll never forget some woebegone Jewish survivor in his concentration camp pajamas walking up to me one day. I was in a uniform. I looked official. The JDC people in those camps wore uniforms, like the UNRRA people and military types of uniforms. And he sort of slouched up to me in a woebegone manner and he spoke apologetically. And my initial reaction was rather negative, his whole appearance. And all he wanted to do, and I felt of course very ashamed of my reaction, was to ask me if I could help him find his wife and children that he hadn't seen since he was deported. And he was beginning to realize that maybe they hadn't survived. And it just tore me apart inside when he, I mean at first my initial reaction was so wrong and of course I learned to react differently. But they were really a pitiful remnant, the ones that were found wandering. And they were wandering around on foot! There were no communications. There were--I have mentioned this, I think, in one of my reports--no, everything was chaos after, as it must always be after a war in terms of telephones and buses and public transportation. And the, so...

NP: Excuse me, there were medical needs first and foremost. There were needs to find relatives.

ER: Yes.

NP: Connections.

ER: That's right. Now the JDC's perhaps major, or most significant contribution was in helping to find relatives. Initially that was very difficult because we didn't have any kind of communication or records. And people were wandering all around Germany looking for each other, or looking for survivors. And they'd come through these camps and stay for a while and then move on because there was no way to find out if anybody had survived. And they'd go on foot. They would hitch rides. They would come in to Paris and it was, we did set up early on a tracing bureau. And I, there was this one story that I used to tell when I worked, when I was making speeches for the Allied Jewish Appeal after the war. I haven't gotten yet to my period in Berlin, but I was in, director of the J, or co-director of the JDC's program in Berlin, starting in January, 1946. And I was in Berlin for the, first

I was in Bavaria for the latter half of '45. Then I went back to the States in December of '45, intending to stay, to return to my profession, which was labor relations. But I had already acquired some valuable experience with this whole problem. I'd been in Germany for this latter half of 1945. The JDC was going to have great burdens and responsibilities. And so Dr. Joseph Schwartz, the head of the JDC's overseas, European program, and a memorable, memorable individual--and as I say I've written a tribute to him in October, 1971 in *The Jewish Exponent* in Philadelphia which describes him--he invited me over to his house in December, 1945. I told him, uneq-...

NP: Where was this house?

ER: In New York. I had told him unequivocally that I could not go back. I had to go back to my profession: labor relation arbitration and the law. And, but he persuaded me to come up to his apartment in New York. His wife was there and he had not, she had not seen much of him during the prior years because he was so, going all over Europe working on the JDC programs. Anyway, he was a very persuasive guy and he fed me a couple of scotches and I agreed to go back into Germany and therein was the course of my life changed. I went back to Germany in January of '46 and I worked in Berlin for the Joint. He sent me to Berlin, where the JDC had a big program, or a big need. And I stayed until the spring of '47. I came back to the States in '47. I expected then to go back to my profession but Moses Levitt, the head of the JDC in the States, persuaded me to stay with the JDC office in New York because I was a lawyer and they had these various needs, like the claims that were being made by the people who survived the Warsaw Ghetto, or by the relatives. And there was also a developing new program of restitution for the Jewish survivors in Europe. And that involved setting up, working with the federal government to set up a program in the American occupied areas of Germany.

NP: Excuse me, this restitution program, personal property...

ER: It was both personal and real property, and the problem there, for where there were survivors, there was a Jewish claims conference and if there were surviving individuals or relatives they could make the claims. And, but there was a big problem for the situation in which the, Hitler had been most successful, in other words where he had totally destroyed a family and there were no relatives to claim the property and the Germans held that property. And unless there was some way to reclaim it the Germans would end up holding it and being enriched by the property in those families where they had been most successful in their destruction of Jewish families. Obviously that could not be permitted, everybody agreed, and, but who would claim this? Who would get this property? So I helped set up, in those days, in, when I worked for the JDC in New York, something called the JRSO: Jewish Restitution Successor Organization. And we obtained a kind of legal successorship for the unclaimed property and we set up a program to find and claim the unclaimed property in Germany. And that became a quite important program. And it helped raise money for the embryo new Jewish State in Palestine. And it brought over cultural objects to the States, the religious objects and art. And there was a very valuable

painting by a well-known painter that was unclaimed and it was turned over to this organization, which used it then for Jewish purposes. So that was a second part, I mean, Joe Schwartz persuaded me to go back to Berlin for the year 1946. I came back in the spring of '47 and I, then went to work for the JDC and I stayed with the JDC for another four years or so, in New York. And I worked on these various matters that I've described. And I finally in the early '50s left the JDC and went back to my profession. So that's the extent of my experience with all of this [unclear]. It was an important part of my life.

NP: Just to come back to Feldafing and your observations then, your recollections now. Were you witness to any marriages within the camp?

ER: Uh I must have been. I don't...

NP: Was there a beginning that you were...

ER: There were, certainly, marriages, of people who had never been married, wanted to get married, and people who were widowed wanted to remarry. And there was a great need for children. People wanted to have children. They missed the sound of children's voices they would tell me. And I, in many ways my experience was a more immediate one, when I came back in '46 and went to, was sent to Berlin, where we had a more important role than I had, than the JDC had in Bavaria. But I do want to mention the incident of that second DP camp that was set up in, because other people have claimed credit for this, and...

NP: Is that Wolfratshausen?

ER: Wolfratshausen, or Foehrenwald. It had two names.[1]

NP: Oh, it was Foehren-...

ER: Foehren-, it was the same camp. Foehrenwald, F-O-E-R-E-N-... (Foehrebwald)

NP: R-E-N-W-...

ER: W-A-L-D.

NP: All right.

ER: Foehrenwald, or Wolfratshausen. My version of how that was established is as follows. While I was stationed at Feldafing, which was terribly overcrowded, word had gotten back, American visitors came through Feldafing--rabbis from delegations--and they had gone back to the States and brought back horrific stories about the terribly overcrowded conditions in Feldafing or some other camps. Here were the survivors, the pitiful few survivors of Hitler's extermination program, and they were living in rooms where the bunks were four or six tiers high and there were inadequate supplies. And the Germans, who had done all this, were visible on the outside, living a normal life with apparently better food supplies. There were shortages everywhere. And you saw their healthy children walking on the streets or going to school and you, whereas all the Jewish

[1] The armament plant D.S.C. was situated in a fir wood of Foehrenwald, within the triangle Wolfratshausen-Geltwig-Neufohrn according to *Das national sozialistische Laserazystem*, p.19.

children were gone. And this anger communicated itself to Harry Truman, by Jews who came back from visiting. And he directed Eisenhower to look into it. And Eisenhower came to Feldafing in the summer of 1945, with Patton. Now Patton had, Patton's Third Army had conquered Bavaria. And they were left with, there were displaced, DP camps in many parts of Germany. But the ones in Bavaria were under Patton's control and his army, which occupied Bavaria. And he had the responsibility of overseeing these relief camps, these DP camps. Well, he was a fighting General, and these refugees wandering around and being in camps were black marketeers and they were taking things from the Germans. And this was a headache for them. And so he couldn't care less really about what was happening. And he saw them as a negative...

NP: Not...

ER: ...as a problem.

NP: Excuse me, not as victims?

ER: Not Patton. Patton, well, he'd lost a lot of soldiers. They had fought hard, and successfully. There was still a war with Japan. As a military man, refugees were a nuisance. And they, but when the word came back to Truman by visitors, and he directed Eisenhower, who was then stationed in, oh, near Frankfurt I think, in the U.S. Army headquarters, to go visit the DP camps and do something about it. And Patton went along with them, and there was a visit by Eisenhower and Patton to Feldafing in the summer of 1945. And I was one of the people stationed there who accompanied them. And I remember we walked by a room that had these six tiers of bunks and Jews living in them. And the Jews, some of them were still wearing concentration camp pajamas, and they looked terrible. And Patton turned to Eisenhower--Eisenhower said, in my presence, "George, if Harry could see this he would blow his top!" And Patton in my presence said, "General, when I was last here, these conditions were not so [unclear]." And it was a total lie. He'd never been there. One of, oh, I know, what preceded that conversation was, we came to a room where there were some sewing machine heads, the sewing machine parts, sitting on a floor. And Irving Smith, who was the army, a lieutenant who had been assigned to military government to govern Feldafing, over UNRRA, he was Jewish. And he had tried to do his best in Feldafing. And the, Eisenhower and Patton inspecting the camp at Truman's direction, came to this room where there were sewing machine heads sitting on the floor. Now, idleness, and the need for vocational training, were major problems. And obviously those, and clothing, and obviously those sewing machines could be used productively, and they weren't being used at all. So they stopped and looked at those sewing, idle sewing machines, and Eisenhower turned to lieutenant Smith and said, "What are those sewing machines doing there, lieutenant? Why aren't you using them?" And Smith said, "Well we need tables." "Well, why haven't you gotten the tables?" And he said, "Well I, I've tried. I went into Bavaria, to Munich, and went to G-2 or G-4, General Patton's headquarters, to try to get some tables requisitioned or something. And General, nothing has happened on that score." And Eisenhower turned to Smith and he said, "Whom

did you go to?" Well, he named the General so-and-so. "So if I wanted to find out who was responsible for this, I would go to that General?" And Smith sort of, shaking in his boots, because he knew that General was right there and was part of the inspection party. He said, "Yes, General." Anyway, at that point Patton said, "General, when I was last here, these conditions did not exist." Oh, one of the things that Eisenhower said to Patton is memorable conversation which I remember once telling friends of mine in California about. There were the sewing machines. Irving Smith hadn't been able to get tables, and Eisenhower turned to Patton and he said, "George," he said, "I just don't understand this. If we had some guns here, some artillery, without foundations, bases for them, and we had some bases over here, now neither one of those things would be any good by themselves, would they, George? And what we would try to do would be to get the two of them together, wouldn't we, George?" He spoke to him as though Patton was a child. And that was a point in which Patton was wriggling, visibly, with embarrassment, and said, "General, this situation was not like this when I was last here." And it was a total lie. He'd never been there. And I was standing there. I knew it, and other people knew that he'd never been there. But, you, I could never get angry at General Patton. He should never have been given this kind of responsibility. He didn't know anything about relief. He was only interested in fighting, which is what he should have done, and they were still gonna have to go over to the Pacific and fight the Japs and lose lots of people. So he and his army, oh, there was a Colonel who came in to me one day when he was in Bavaria, when the criticism was taking place. And he identified himself as a lieutenant colonel so-and-so. And it was a famous name, that I can't remember at this point. And he said, "Look, reports are going back," and he was the military guy in charge of this area. And he came in to my office or called me in, I've forgotten what. I think he called me in. And he said, "Look," he said, "my career's in the army. I'm a West Pointer. I come from a line of military people from Texas. And I am in danger of compromising my career because of these complaints about what is happening in these displaced persons camps under my jurisdiction in Bavaria. And tell me what I can do, and I'll do whatever I can." And he did bring in, at that point he-